Chapter 2

Literature Survey: Theme and Variations

What was the problem over inspired speech in Corinth? Answers abound. Surprisingly, nobody has recently dealt with the suggestion of John Chrysostom, that glossolalia was especially prized in Corinth and in the other early congregations because it was known to be the gift given to the apostles, in highly spectacular circumstances, at Pentecost.¹ Those who take seriously Luke's reports of glossolalia in the earliest Jewish-Christian churches sometimes suggest that Jewish-Christian pressure for converts to manifest glossolalia, or "Palestinian piety", was behind the problem encountered by Paul in Corinth.² Naturally, those who doubt that there is a connection between the Lukan and Pauline reports of glossolalia doubt that the problem can have a Jewish origin.³ But few modern scholars enquire deeply into the question of causation. It is one of the strengths of the "Hellenistic cult background" hypothesis that it at least attempts to find distinctively Corinthian reasons for what seems to have been a distinctively Corinthian issue.

Most scholars attempt, instead, merely an accurate description of the problem. Yet even so there is a range of views. Most simplistically, F.W. Beare argues that the occurrence of glossolalia itself is the problem: "There

¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians 29.1 and 35.1. A similar view is taken by J.C. Hurd, The Origins of 1 Corinthians, London, 1965, pp. 281 and 194-5, who suggests that it was Paul's early use of glossolalia, as against his later teaching about it, that so impressed the Corinthians with the importance of the gift. My own view, as will become apparent in Chapter 7, is similar to Chrysostom's, though I only discovered so after reaching my conclusions, and by accident.
² J.P.M. Sweet, "A Sign for Unbelievers: Paul's Attitude to Glossolalia", N.T.S., vol. 13, 1966-67, p. 246, following T.W. Manson, doubts that is a superabundance of glossolalia that is the problem, and suggests that it was the insistence (in Peter's name) on glossolalia.
³ See, for example, Hart, Tongues And Prophecy, p. 146. Hart is, however, correct to rule out the possibility that Apollos himself is the cause of the problem (pp. 148-9). Paul never refers to him at all negatively: see the further discussion below.
can be no doubt, then, that the main purpose of Paul is to discourage the practice of speaking with tongues among Christians." Others argue that the problem is not the practice of glossolalia, but the inordinately high value attached to the practice by (some of) the Corinthians. G. Dautzenberg suggests that in Paul's view the problem is the Corinthian preference for tongues over prophecy, and a number of scholars take up basically similar positions. For others still, the problems can be linked together under headings such as "misdirected individualism", without the attempt to ask where this attitude originated. Most recently, W.C. van Unnik has argued that scholarship overestimates the problem. Paul wishes to encourage the


5 D.M. Smith, "Glossolalia and Other Spiritual Gifts in New Testament Perspective", Interpretation, vol. 28, 1974, p. 312, suggests that "these Corinthian Christians put a high premium specifically on glossolalia". J.W. MacGorman, "Glossolalic Error and Its Correction: 1 Corinthians 12-14", Review and Expositor, vol. 80, 1983, p. 394, argues that the Corinthian glossolalists thought glossolalia the highest gift, the criterion of spirituality: an over-reaction with attempts to forbid it resulted. K. Stendahl, "Glossolalia and the Charismatic Movement", God's Christ and His People, ed. J. Jervell and W. Meeks, Oslo, 1977, p. 123, thought that glossolalia had "fired the imaginations of the Corinthian Christians" so that they were more than willing to use it in situations where it brought them contempt and mockery. Hart summarises the problem as "obsession with the spectacular", especially with regard to speech (Tongues And Prophecy, p. 154). W.A. Meeks, The First Urban Christians, Yale, 1983, pp. 119-121, has a good brief discussion of glossolalia as a source of prestige in Corinth, though his analysis of the phenomenon itself is far too dependent on only one or two modern psychological studies of glossolalia.

6 G. Dautzenberg, "Glossolalie", cols. 228, 238-9. B.A. Pearson, The Pneumatikos-Psykhikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians, Missoula, 1973, pp. 44-50, argues that the Corinthian preference for glossolalia, which he thinks they identified as prophecy, was based on a view of inspiration similar to that expressed in Philo, Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres 263-266, which he postulates was common in the Hellenistic world. In anticipation of the fuller discussion of Philo in Chapter 6 it ought simply to be said that this is a risky suggestion on two counts: nothing in the Philo passage is similar to what 1 Corinthians tells us about glossolalia, and any attempt to reconstruct the Corinthian view of inspiration must remain speculative. B.C. Johanson, "Tongues", thinks the problem arose out of competition between glossolalists and prophets for influence in Corinth. In his view the prophets were the natural leaders once Paul and Apollos had left, and the glossolalists within the congregation wanted influence. They and the prophets competed with each other for attention in the assembly.

7 Thus Engelsen, Glossolalia, pp. 127-132.
Corinthians to practise their gifts of inspired speech with all zeal: he merely wishes to fine-tune their priorities.8

Other issues prevalent in the Corinthian congregation are sometimes used to explain the problem. Here there are three main views. The first, now very much out of favour, is that identified with the work of W. Schmithals, which suggests that many or most of the various points at issue between Paul and his churches in Corinth (and elsewhere) can be related to disputes over Gnosticism.9 The second view is exemplified by the recent survey of Thiselton,10 who analyses "the problem in Corinth" as a case of "over-realised eschatology". Such an approach comes closer to a true causal explanation of the problem than most of those cited above, but does not go all the way, because it tells us little about why that problem might have developed in Corinth rather than elsewhere. Its second weakness, which is more significant for the Corinthian situation, is that while it convincingly links several issues in the Corinthian correspondence, it is very unconvincing when it comes to matters of inspired speech.11 The third view is that "the problem" in Corinth has to do with the influence of Hellenistic-Jewish speculation about σοφία. This case has been most fully developed in recent times by R.A. Horsley.12 Horsley's hypothesis seems to

8 W.C. van Unnik, "The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 12.31", Nov.T. vol. 35, part 2, 1993, pp. 142-159. The article was published posthumously by P.W. van der Horst, though its existence was reported by Jan J. Reiling in 1977, in his essay "Prophecy, the Spirit and the Church", in J. Panagopoulos, Vocation, pp. 58-76.
11 Thiselton, art.cit., especially p. 512: "an over-realised eschatology leads to an 'enthusiastic' view of the Spirit". How is such a generalisation to be made to apply to questions of inspired speech? In my view the only argument in its favour is the suggestion that glossolalia was understood as being the language of heaven, available to believers now. We will see, however, that such a position is based on the slenderest of evidence. R.P. Martin, op.cit., p. 88, suggests that the Corinthian enthusiasts saw themselves as already some kind of angelic beings, and that their glossolalia was thus viewed as the language of the angels. This is sheer speculation, unsupported by any evidence of which I am aware.
12 See most recently "Spiritual Elitism", pp. 203ff. The hypothesis was developed in
me to be an advance on that proposed by Thiselton, as it more adequately explains the question why the resurrection of the dead became problematic. It likewise provides a genuine causal link in the person of Apollos, whose "Alexandrine" style Horsley suggests as the origin of many Corinthian ideas. But again the point at which the hypothesis is weakest is the question of inspired speech. Horsley can provide no convincing background whatever to suggest that Hellenistic-Jewish wisdom speculation knew of glossolalic phenomena. Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians begins the discussion of τὰ πνευματικά, but Horsley admits that for this term he can find no useful parallel.

Horsley's earlier articles, "Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos: Distinctions of Spiritual Status among the Corinthians", *H.Th.R.* vol. 69, 1976, pp. 269-288, and "Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth", *C.B.Q.* vol. 39, 1977, pp. 224-239, and touched on briefly by B.A. Pearson, op.cit., p. 15. Horsley is careful not to argue that Hellenistic philosophical speculations similar to Philo's are actually the problem in Corinth: his case is that the striking similarities in vocabulary and concept help us to explain what the problem may have been. ("Spiritual Elitism", p. 207)

It is, of course, quite possible that a synthesis of the two views could be made that would account more adequately than either view alone for the group of issues in 1 Corinthians. Pearson points the way towards one possible synthesis, op.cit., pp. 24-25.

The development of Horsley's work by J.A. Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit: an Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1.18-3.20 Against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Greco-Roman Period*, Lanham, 1984, comes closer to providing a true background by showing that wisdom traditions stressed the role of the Spirit of God in the gaining of wisdom. This might well explain the problem over the use and abuse of prophecy, but certainly gets us no further with glossolalia. Compare E.E. Ellis, "Wisdom and Knowledge in 1 Corinthians", *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol. 25, 1974, pp. 82-98, and G. Dautzenberg, "Glossolalia", col. 238.

For Apollos as the causal agent see B.A. Pearson, op.cit., p. 18 and note 23, with the references cited there. Horsley, "Wisdom of Word", p. 231, and, more cautiously, "Spiritual Elitism", p. 207. Here Horsley seems to be suggesting that it is the Corinthian appropriation of Apollos' ideas and style that Paul sees as the problem, not the direct influence of Apollos himself. This seems much more likely to me. On glossolalic phenomena see Pearson, op.cit., pp. 44-46, Horsley, "Spiritual Elitism", p. 228 and note 54. While it is true that prophetic ecstasy features in Philo's philosophy, I can find no evidence for glossolalia whatsoever. On this matter see, in detail, Chapter 6. The closest we come to an explicit link is probably Philo's discussion of the kinds of gifts (δώρα) given by God to different categories of mankind, in *Migrations of Abraham* 46, 53, 70-106. But the parallel is far from close: the terminology is only vaguely similar, and the issue under discussion in each case is different (see Pearson, op.cit., p. 29). On the term πνευματικός Horsley says: "there is no convincing terminological parallel whatsoever in contemporary comparative material ... the term πνευματικός occurs by itself very few times in Philo, and then with little or no religious significance." ("Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos", pp. 270-271.)
While either or both of the two major schools of thought, represented by Thiselton and Horsley, outlined above, might explain the status-seeking and the elitism of the Corinthians, I contend that neither gives us any particular understanding of the relationship of these wide problems to that of inspired speech. Certainly the Corinthian use (or misuse) of inspired speech was related to their problems with individual status and elitism. But did those give rise to the problems over inspired speech? (They may have exacerbated them, of course.) Neither approach explains the origin of the use of inspired speech of the type we see Paul objecting to in Corinth.

The hypothesis that the "problem in Corinth" is the result of the importation by some of the Corinthians of values drawn from their pre-Christian religious experience, on the other hand, has the very considerable virtue that it does explicitly set out to relate the inspired speech phenomena at Corinth to the general background. The hypothesis can take varied forms. Perhaps the most common is simply that the Corinthian over-valuation of glossolalia derives from the experience of glossolalia, or similar phenomena, in Hellenistic religion.\(^6\) In its more developed form, this hypothesis then attempts to relate other features of Paul's language (and, by implication, that of the Corinthians), to a similar background. More sophisticated versions of the hypothesis argue that it is not merely with the high value placed on glossolalia that Paul takes issue, but with the Corinthian preference for glossolalia over prophecy. It is then argued that, in Hellenistic religion generally, prophecy normally took a form analogous to glossolalia. We will now briefly examine the ways in which this hypothesis has been developed in the literature of approximately the last thirty years, before turning to a detailed study of the New Testament and Hellenistic evidence on which such an hypothesis might be based.

As noted in Chapter 1, the articles on γλώσσα, πνεύμα and προφήτης from Kittel's and Friedrich's *Wörterbuch* form the baseline of our discussion.

\(^6\) Such a view is often based on the argument that ecstatic practices were foreign to early Christianity, but common within Hellenistic Religion. See, for example, W.C. Klein, who says that "St. Paul here addresses a congregation of recently converted pagans who are still behaving like pagans in a number of respects . . . They do not realize how much of the paganism in which they were bred has survived their adoption of Christianity. The first thing they have to learn is that a Christian cannot abandon himself uncritically to religious emotion. Whatever the intensity of the ecstatic experience they had as pagans, they were then idolaters. They let themselves go in those days." ("The Church and its Prophets", *Anglican Theological Review*, vol. 44 no. 1, 1962, p. 7.)
We begin with the article on γλώσσα by J. Behm. Under "glossolalia" he argues as follows:

Parallels may be found for this phenomenon in various forms and at various places in religious history.

In Gk. religion there is a series of comparable phenomena from the enthusiastic cult of the Thracian Dionysus with its γλώττις βασιλεία . . . to the divinatory manticism of the Delphic Phrygia (sic), of the Bacides, the Sibyls etc . . . Cf. also Plato on μανίας and προφητής in Tim., 71e-72a . . . Paul is aware of a similarity between Hellenism and Christianity in respect of these mystical and ecstatic phenomena. The distinguishing feature as he sees it is to be found in the religious content . . . Higher than the gift of tongues, which in view of their pagan background the Corinthians are inclined to view as the spiritual gift par excellence (1 C. 14:37, →πνευματικός), is the gift of prophecy . . .

A very similar point of view is to be found in Kleinknecht's treatment of the term πνεῦμα. Discussing the use of the term in manticism, he argues that

The religious view of pneuma takes on special significance at the pt. where it is most ancient, namely, in Apollonian inspiration-manticism . . . It evokes physical effects as the wind may also do: streaming hair, panting breath, violent filling or seizing or snatching away in a Bacchantic frenzy of ἐκστασις or μανία . . . The longest list of traditional effects of the spirit, which includes fiery phenomena, is to be found in Lucan De Bello Civili V, 169-174 . . . The supreme and (historically) most important result of the spirit's working is the giving of oracles . . . Theologically significant is the idea that πνεῦμα is the cause and source of ecstatic speech . . . From the standpoint of religious phenomenology the NT bears witness to the same original combination when it constantly links πνεῦμα and προφητεύει or when it refers to speaking in tongues as a gift of the Spirit (a reflection of Pythian prophesying in Corinth, 1 C. 12:14) . . .

In Kleinknecht's view the parallel with Delphi may be extended:

Plato is alluding to the historically developed cultic usage as a result of which the words of the Pythia, babbled out in ecstasy, are normally taken up, supplemented, clarified and made into valid oracles . . . The criticism to which Plato here subjects the manifestations of μανική ἐκστασις καὶ διηθής (Tim., 71e) is basically akin to the διακρίσεις πνευμάτων of 1 C. 12:10 . . . whereby Paul steers into the right channels the ecstatic glossolalia of the church in Corinth . . . the γλώσσα of the Christian ecstatic also need χρηματικά . . .

17 J. Behm, "Γλώσσα", in Kittel, ed., T.D.N.T., vol. 1, 1932, E.T. 1964, pp. 722-724. It should be noted that Behm does not exclude possible Jewish parallels for glossolalia (see p. 723), but he does argue that the Hellenistic parallels are the critical ones for understanding 1 Corinthians 12-14.

H. Krämer and G. Friedrich, on the other hand, in their treatments for the *Wörterbuch* of prophets and prophecy in the Greek world, and early Christian prophecy, though they cover similar ground, make no mention of the suggested parallels between Christianity and its environment. Indeed, they make virtually no use of parallels between Christianity and its environment at all, being content to outline the differing usages of terminology without speculating about wider phenomena.

In 1965 S.D. Currie published an important article on the non-canonical evidence bearing on the nature of glossolalia. In it he raised several issues related to our question. The first had to do with the Delphic parallel noted above. Commenting on Paul's statement that the response of an unbeliever to uninterpreted glossolalia would be "μανεσθε", he suggests that "The observer might not be able to decide whether the utterances are lunatic or mantic, frenzied or oracular."19 The presumption that oracles spoke in some form analogous to glossolalia is clear. The reverse possibility, that glossolalia was unintelligible in the way some recorded oracles are, is canvassed in his suggestion that glossolalia may be "dark sayings", "something oracular in character which needs to be interpreted."20 His final suggestion has to do with prophecy rather than glossolalia. He argues, in line with many other scholars, that one major distinction between Christian prophecy and Graeco-Roman oracles is that it is spontaneous rather than being a matter of responses. He comments: "Some early Christians thought it might be possible to be guided by a simple test: Oracular answers are to be distrusted: the Holy Spirit speaks of his own initiative, not in response to interrogation."21

In 1965 W.D. Smith published a little-noted article on the differing ways in which the Classical and Hellenistic world, and early Christianity, conceived of "the ways in which gods and δαιμόνια affected mortals".22 He argued that the belief that the gods actually entered into their prophets and spoke through them was not to be found in pre-Christian Greek literature, and that the Greek world uniformly believed that inspiration, μανία and related states were brought on, not by what we might call possession, i.e.

---

influence from within, but by influence from \textit{outside} the person. In support of his contention he argued that the ways in which such daimonic influence is countered are diagnostic: unwanted daimonic influence from without is cured by way of purifications, incantations, and the use of foods with special properties. Possession is cured by exorcism, and the first exorcism in secular Greek literature is to be found in Lucian. Even there the exorcist is a Palestinian.\textsuperscript{23}

Insofar as I am aware, Smith's article completely escaped the attention of New Testament scholars until the brief comment of D.E. Aune.\textsuperscript{24} Aune agrees that Smith's general case has been made out, but suggests two exceptions: Longinus' Peri Hypsous 13.2, and those persons known as "Eurycles". Peri Hypsous speaks of many (like the Pythia) being inspired to prophesy by the entry into their person of an \textit{αλλόφρον πνεύμα}, but it must be noted that these \textit{πνεύματα} are not \textit{δαιμόνες}: they are impersonal vapours, influences, rather than possessing "spirits" in any personal sense. Aune is correct, however, to point to Eurycles as evidence that some form of possession was not unknown, and Smith's contention that such people were quite atypical of purely Greek ideas of enthusiasm becomes harder to maintain. The evidence to do with Eurycles will be examined in Chapter 11.

One of the very few writers to object strenuously to the proposition that Christian glossolalia was phenomenologically similar to inspired speech in Hellenistic religion is R.H. Gundry. In his important short article, "'Ecstatic Utterance' (N.E.B.)?", he argues that

The effectiveness of glossolalia as an authenticating sign . . . depended on its \textit{difference} from the ecstatic gobbledygook in Hellenistic religion . . . The fear that unbelievers will think glossolalists are mad stems solely from the Corinthian failure to require accompanying translation at all times, with the result that what Paul regarded as genuine human languages sounded to unbelievers like meaningless successions of syllables similar to the ecstatic speech in Hellenistic religions familiar to the hearers . . . Even if it were admitted that ecstatic utterance such as was practised in Hellenistic religion was invading Corinthian church meetings, Paul would be condemning it by presenting normative Christian glossolalia as something radically different in style as well as in content . . .

We have good reasons, then, to doubt that either Paul or Luke meant 'ecstatic utterance' when referring to speaking in tongues. Indeed, their apparent attempt to distinguish it from ecstatic utterance should make us hesitate to compare Christian glossolalia with ecstatic utterance in Hellenistic religion . . . \textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23} W.D. Smith, \textit{art.cit.}, pp. 407-409.


While Gundry's major point, that it is mistaken to argue that the New Testament writers believe glossolalia to be ecstatic, is well taken, other questions remain unanswered. His concession that "Even if it were admitted that ecstatic utterance such as was practised in Hellenistic religion was invading Corinthian church meetings, Paul would be condemning it" does leave the way open for such a case to be made. The question must remain: were forms of inspired speech in early Christianity and its environment sufficiently similar for an outsider or a recent convert to confuse them?

In an important article published the next year, J.P.M. Sweet argued that Paul's problem with his Corinthian converts over glossolalia (and other issues) had its origins, not in Hellenistic enthusiasm, but in the "demand... from the leaders of the Cephas party... to instil Palestinian piety and orthodoxy into the Corinthian church." Despite this, he argues that certain aspects of Paul's polemic suggest a 'pagan connection'. Specifically, he approves of J. Hering's reading of 1 Corinthians 12.2, to the effect that the Corinthians believed that "when they were pagans" they had been transported to the heavens, whereas in Paul's view they had been led away (διαγγέλων) to evil forces (the "dumb idols" of v.2). Further, Sweet thinks that the mention of gongs and cymbals in chapter 13.1, and the use of μίας in 14.23 and εἰσχυρός in 14.40, suggest (in different ways) some link with enthusiastic Hellenistic religion. All these points are highly suggestive, but they are only mentioned in passing: it is left to later scholars to develop what Sweet only hints at.

The thesis of N.I.J. Engelsen, *Glossolalia and Other Forms of Prophetic Speech According to 1 Corinthians 12-14*, completed in 1970, is the first full-scale study of which I am aware (within the time confines of this survey) which sets out to place Christian forms of inspired speech firmly within the context of such phenomena in the Graeco-Roman world. This Engelsen does with an extensive survey of prophetic phenomena in that world, including both the Jewish and Hellenistic traditions. His central thesis is that, in the Graeco-Roman world,

---

27 J.P.M. Sweet, *art.cit.*, p. 252, note 5. On the "gongs and cymbals" see also H. Riesenfeld, "Note supplémentaire sur I Cor. XIII", in *Coniectanea Neotestamentica*, vol. 12, Uppsala, 1948, pp. 50-53. He cites Athenaeus 14, p. 636a, 8 361 e, Anthologia Graeca 6.51, 6.94 1-3, 6, and Herodian 5.5.9. On this matter see also the fuller discussion in chapter 6, note 31.
in no place (sc. in pre-Christian literature) does a particular term for unintelligible speech appear, the reason being that unintelligible utterances were envisioned as an inherent feature of (ecstatic) prophetic speech . . . Paul offers the first evidence of a separation of intelligible and unintelligible speech by his separation of prophecy and speaking in tongues. 28

In other words, for Engelsen, Graeco-Roman prophetic speech is characteristically ecstatic and unintelligible, requiring interpretation before it can be understood at all, and Paul is the first (with the exception of Plato, who is treated in the body of the argument as an exceptional case), to make the distinction between intelligible and unintelligible forms of inspired speech. He sets out to justify this proposition by surveying evidence from classical Greece, first-century Judaism, and "late pre-Christian and early Christian era" evidence from outside the New Testament.

Engelsen's case is largely based on the account of Cassandra in Aeschylus' Agamemnon, the story of the visit of Mys of Caria to the oracle of Ptoan Apollo recorded in Herodotus, Plutarch and Pausanias, the kinds of terminology used by the Greeks to describe the obscurity of oracles, a reference to "Bacchic tongues" in Aristophanes, and Plato's treatment of inspiration and prophecy in his Timaeus. But on the methodological level it is very disappointing to find that by far the greatest emphasis is given to the classical Greek evidence, which is treated in some detail. The conclusions drawn from this evidence are then made definitive for the later evidence, and a pattern is extracted from this 'consensus'. Conspicuous by its absence is any real treatment of pre-Christian Hellenistic material. 29

Dealing with the fact that prophecy is widely described in our sources as unintelligible, Engelsen summarises the section of his case that deals with the Classical Greek evidence as follows:

It is not because the mantic purposely spoke in riddles or used archaic words. What he mediated in his frenzy was more or less unintelligible, and not related to any particular situation . . . The sources demonstrate beyond doubt the occurrence of involuntary or automatic speech within the Greek oracle cult. It is referred to by Plato in Timaeus as a recognised fact, and Aeschylus presupposes it in "Agamemnon" and uses it as a motif. He dramatises two features which characterise prophetic ecstasy. One is the strange

28 Engelsen, Glossolalia, p. ii.
29 Each of the points mentioned above, making up the core of Engelsen's argument, is treated in detail in chapters 5-7, below. My critical comments on Engelsen's overall case here are made because Engelsen's conclusions, which are in my view largely erroneous, have begun to find their way into the footnotes of others (see the comments in the last stages of this survey). His views seem likely to become part of the "received wisdom" of our subject, rather than being scrutinised in detail.
presentiment or "tremendum", the feeling of terror and inner pain which accompanies a special kind of ecstasy. The other is the unintelligibility of the frenzied utterances.\(^{30}\)

Engelsen's case, then, is that unintelligible speech was a commonplace form of prophecy in the classical world. He turns next to the evidence from the first and second centuries A.D. In Josephus, first of all, he is concerned with reports of "ecstatic prophecy", especially in the period of crisis leading up to the Jewish revolt. He discusses the well-known description by Lucian of the foundation, by Alexander "the false prophet", of his cult of Glykon/Asclepius at Abonouteichos, and the report in Origen's reply to Celsus of prophetism in the late second century. Finally he treats the reports of the nature of Montanist prophecy, and beliefs about inspired speech and angelic languages in Gnosticism. In each case, he argues, there is clear evidence that, as in the classical period, phenomena akin to glossolalia were believed to be characteristic of inspired speech.

We do not pretend that the collected material is exhaustive, but hopefully it is representative, and forms a dependable basis for the conclusion that unintelligible speech was a peculiarity inherent in prophecy. Ecstatic speech has a tendency to relapse into inarticulate ejaculations and rapturous speech flows, or it may have this character only...

As a result, Engelsen argues,

A special term for unintelligible speech is simply not available, because this kind of speech was not singled out as a category in its own right.\(^{31}\)

Paul made such a distinction, however, as part of his polemic against the "misdirected individualism" of the Corinthians, who preferred glossolalia to the more communally-orientated prophecy.\(^{32}\)

This conclusion, naturally, is only as convincing as Engelsen's collection of parallels for glossolalia. If, as I will be arguing, "ecstatic speech" of the kind Engelsen is discussing is (a) not actually phenomenologically or theologically similar to glossolalia, and (b) not at all common anyway, then a simple alternative presents itself: a special term for unintelligible speech was not available because it was not needed.

The second feature of Engelsen's case that requires comment here has been touched on briefly above. Between Plato in the early fourth century B.C. and Lucian in the mid-second century A.D. are more than five hundred

\(^{30}\) Engelsen, *Glossolalia*, p. 20.

\(^{31}\) Engelsen, *Glossolalia*, p. 60.

years. I have argued in the previous chapter that between the mid-first and mid-second centuries our evidence attests to an important change in attitudes to the paranormal. Yet the only evidence cited by Engelsen which is even close to contemporary with the New Testament is that of Josephus, where, significantly, he can suggest no single case of ecstatic unintelligibility. If "inarticulate ejaculations and rapturous speech flows" were a commonplace form of inspired speech in this period, it ought to be possible to document them. Yet the task appears to have hardly been attempted.

In the year following the completion of Engelsen's work a second important Ph.D. thesis was submitted which deals (independently) with much similar material. This is the work of T.W. Gillespie, "Prophecy and Tongues: the Concept of Christian Prophecy in the Pauline Theology". One important aspect of his work was elaborated further in his article of 1978, "A Pattern of Prophetic Speech in 1 Corinthians." Since the two are integrally related, they will be dealt with together.

From our point of view Gillespie's most important contribution is twofold. First, at an exegetical level, he sets out to analyse Paul's comments on inspired speech in 1 Corinthians 12-14 as relating to one central issue. Second, he relates this issue to an understanding of the nature of inspired speech in Hellenistic religion. Gillespie sets out to understand how the opening words of ch. 12, "Now about spiritual things / people", relate to the stated problem in v.3, that of the statement "Anathema Iesous". The statement is attributed to a prophet within the Corinthian congregation. Gillespie's suggestion is as follows.

The propheticism at work in the Corinthian congregation has taken a form strongly influenced by the "pre-Christian encounter of the Gentiles of the congregation with the religious ecstasy of Hellenistic enthusiasm". For the Corinthians, prophecy, which according to Gillespie they called interchangeably either "word of knowledge" or "word of wisdom", was intelligible utterance under inspiration, which was then vindicated and legitimated by being immediately followed with ecstatic, unintelligible

---

33 T.W. Gillespie, Prophecy and Tongues, and "A Pattern". On the question of whether πνευματικῶν is masculine or neuter see Prophecy and Tongues, pp. 35ff, p. 44. On the link between the "anathema" question, prophetic speech and glossolalia, see Prophecy and Tongues, pp. 57ff.
34 Gillespie, Prophecy and Tongues, pp. 57ff.
35 Gillespie, Prophecy and Tongues, p. 37.
speech: glossolalia. This glossolalia was understood as the sure proof of inspiration. However,

The cursing of the earthly Jesus by a recognised prophet within the congregation has rendered the prophetic word problematic. How is the authenticity of the prophet's claim to Spirit-inspiration to be determined? Until now the practice has been to look for an ecstatic sign of their divine possession, specifically that expression of inspired utterance which Paul designates as "tongues". In response, the apostle points up the deceptiveness of such ecstatic signs (12:2), and calls for the critical discernment of the spirits (12:10c) on the basis of the church's confession that "Jesus is Lord" (12:3). In creating a theological context for the ensuing discussion (12:4-31), he effectively separates the charisma of "tongues" from the Corinthian "word of wisdom" (="word of knowledge") in his enumeration of the Spirit's distribution of the charismata to each member of the congregation (12:8-10). By this means "tongues" is not only severed from all proclaimers of the word (apostles, prophets, teachers, 12:29-30), but is devalued as such as the least of the gifts . . .

. . . The subordination of "tongues" as the least of the gifts involves, therefore, not only its devaluation but its separation from that very form of charismatic speech with which it was essentially associated in Corinthian practice. The hidden polemical point of the first enumeration in 12:8-10 is thus more than a confirmation of the spiritual endowment of the entire congregation . . . the distribution of these particular gifts to different members of the community effectively separates them, and thus eliminates the sign value of "tongues" in relation to the prophetic "word of wisdom" by creating an independent status for "tongues" among the charismata . . . Paul's insistence that "tongues" must become intelligible through "translation" in order to be legitimate within the assembled community (14:5, 13, 27-28) in effect gives it a new function and thus an independent status among the charismata.36

This is clearly a subtle and ingenious reconstruction of the Corinthian situation, and exegetically speaking it has much to recommend it. It has the virtue of linking together the problems in chapters 1-3 of I Corinthians with those in chapters 12-14, and also of making very good sense of the relationships between the various sections of Paul's argument. It is not Gillespie's intention in his thesis to provide a detailed justification of his view of "Hellenistic enthusiasm", since it seems to him to be well entrenched in the literature on the topic. He is satisfied to briefly cite Origen's Contra Celsum and Lucian's Alexander the False Prophet, as well as Irenaeus' Against Heresies, to establish the point. He takes up the Origen reference in more detail in his 1978 article.

In this article he is at pains to show that the kind of prophecy described by Celsus for the late second century has clear links with the prophetic phenomena he has postulated within the Corinthian congregation. He takes

36 Gillespie, Prophecy and Tongues, pp. 70-71, and cf. p. 67.
up the three parts of Celsius' characterisation of the prophets of his day, and describes them as comprising (a) a prophetic claim, based on the \( \epsilon\gamma\omega\ldots\epsilon\iota\mu \) formula well known in antiquity, (b) the prophetic message, beginning with a \( \eta\kappa\omega \) formula, and (c) a "prophetic legitimation", which took the form of glossolalia or a closely related phenomenon.\(^{37}\) He is well aware of the problems associated with the Celsius passage, especially the possibility of Origen's having worked over the material he presents, thus making it unreliable for the reconstruction of the ideas of the Palestinian prophets it describes. None the less, he believes that most especially in the third element, the legitimation by glossolalia, we have evidence for a widespread pattern in antiquity.

What Celsius (and Lucian) understood as the nonsense born of madness was accepted at the level of *Volksreligion* as the sure sign that a prophet was genuinely inspired by the god for whom he spoke. By lifting the prophet to this high level of ecstasy, the deity thereby authenticated the message delivered previously in understandable language. Put simply, among the common people "tongues" was recognised as the divine legitimation of prophecy in the Hellenistic age...\(^{38}\)

There are two problems with this reconstruction that need to be noted here. The first is that the evidence of Lucian does not exactly follow the pattern suggested by Gillespie. Alexander does not normally follow his oracles with frenzied ravings at all. On the one occasion of his dramatic entry into Abonouteichos he *precedes* them this way - and it is to be noted that his gibberish is accompanied by what are (I will argue below) far clearer signs of divine inspiration: violent tossings of the head and foaming at the mouth, for example. The second is that the passage of the Contra Celsum from which this understanding is drawn is quite clearly the most violently polemical part of Celsius' portrayal of the "prophets", being loaded with emotive terminology. It is thus the most likely to be distorted.

Leaving these matters aside, however, we return to Gillespie's thesis. Continuing his case, he argues that it is not only the Corinthian understanding of prophecy that is influenced by Hellenistic religion; so is Paul's reply.

In thus differentiating between prophecy and "tongues", Paul appears to be drawing upon the distinction in antiquity between two types of Spirit-inspiration. In both the human subject is believed to be filled with the divine presence (\( \epsilon\theta\omicron\omicron\omicron\alpha\omicron\omicron\varsigma \), \( \epsilon\theta\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\alpha\omicron\xi\omicron\omicron\varsigma \)), thus altering his normal psychic condition (\( \epsilon\nu \xi\kappa\omicron\tau\alpha\omicron\omicron\varsigma \)) (*sic*). The difference is that in

37 Gillespie, "A Pattern", pp. 75-77.
38 Gillespie, "A Pattern", p. 82.
one instance the subject's normal rational powers are not neutralised, clear thinking remains, while in the other the νοος is overcome, clear consciousness being subverted.  

If Gillespie is arguing that Paul is distinguishing between "ecstatic" glossolalia and "non-ecstatic" prophecy, he needs to show that this was the distinction that Paul was drawing between the two forms of inspired speech. To me this seems most unlikely. The instructions he gives as to how glossolalia and prophecy are to be managed within the assembly are too similar, and presume in both cases that the practitioners were capable of following his instructions. This could hardly be so if glossolalia took place in a frame of mind in which "νοος is overcome, clear consciousness being subverted". But the question of ecstasy will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 3, below. The related question, as to whether the "distinction in antiquity between two types of Spirit-inspiration" has been correctly understood, will be taken up in Chapter 5.

Gillespie's exegesis of the "sign-character" of tongues is thoroughly consistent with his overall position. Paul's statements about tongues as a sign reflect a Corinthian slogan to the effect that tongues are a sign for believers, based on what Gillespie has argued is the common view of the time. Given Paul's generally negative attitude to "signs and wonders", he argues, it is Paul's point that

It is only unbelievers who hold such ecstatic manifestations to be signs of the Spirit's presence in the word of the prophet (cf. 1 Cor. 12:2). For the believer, no such sign is required in that he recognises the understandable message of the prophet as its own sign.  

Thus he interprets the response of the unbeliever in vv. 24-5 of 1 Cor. 14, "μανεθεντε", as meaning "you are possessed". This, for Paul, is not sufficient. Not only does such a response fail to do justice to Christian monotheism (for who knows what divinity may be the cause of this possession?), but it also focuses attention on the believers, rather than on their God.

If "tongues" produces the response "You are possessed [by God]", prophecy brings forth the confession, "God is surely present among you."  


T.W. Gillespie, L.T. Johnson

Gillespie has thus produced a sophisticated reconstruction of the background and details of Paul's dispute with his Corinthian converts. Both the evidence related to Hellenistic religion and inspired speech, and several other issues raised by Gillespie's work, will be consider in the chapters which follow, but for now one important exegetical problem needs to be touched upon. For the problem in these verses is not quite as Gillespie outlines it. If his understanding of the link between prophecy and tongues were correct, and glossolalia normally followed each episode of prophecy, it would be rare for an unbeliever to hear tongues unaccompanied by prophecy. Thus Paul's counter-suggestion "but if you all prophesy" as an alternative to "if you are all speaking in tongues" would make no sense, if directed to the problem Gillespie has outlined. If they were all speaking in tongues, they would all have been prophesying. But the unbeliever's "μαίνεσθε" is clearly a response to tongues alone. That is the point of Paul's rejoinder: he requires intelligibility. We must argue, then, that whatever the merits of Gillespie's discussion of the Hellenistic evidence, his solution appears not to fit the problem in Corinth insofar as we can deduce it from Paul's rejoinder. 42

In the same year, 1971, L.T. Johnson published a short article entitled "Norms for True and False Prophecy in First Corinthians". His essential point is that

Paul's concern is that both the Christians of Corinth and their pagan neighbours will equate Christian prophecy with the ecstatic, frenzied prophecy which was well known in the Hellenistic world. Since of all the gifts that of tongues seemed most like these ecstatic ravings, Paul is especially concerned to separate the charm of prophecy from any identification with this gift and consequently remove it from any danger of being mistaken for pagan prophecy. 43

On this basis Johnson then argues that glossolalia is ecstatic, but prophecy is not. Like Sweet and Héring, he argues that 1 Corinthians 12.2 refers to the pre-Christian experience of members of the congregation. Again, like Gillespie, he argues that "μαίνεσθε" in 1 Corinthians 14.23 means that "Paul has the unbeliever mistake the Christian prayer meeting as just one more enthusiastic Hellenistic cult." 44 But Johnson goes beyond the

42 For a brief critique along similar lines see A.C. Wire, Women Prophets, p. 140.
44 L.T. Johnson, art. cit., p. 41.
previously cited scholars by considering Hellenistic prophecy in its own right, not only insofar as it can be argued that it resembles glossolalia.

Here he makes five major points. He claims that

1) Inspiration was possession in the strictest sense. The prophet lost his own consciousness . . . He was only the passive instrument of the god, and could neither know nor control what he said . . . 2) Prophecy was usually expressed in the mantic frenzy, which included loud shouts and unintelligible ravings . . . 3) The prophetic experience was more or less dependent on material means of arousal, ranging from the playing of musical instruments to the sniffing of chthonic fumes . . . 4) The initiative for inspiration therefore lay in a real way with man. The prophet could induce his state of possession, even though once it came, he experienced the state as coming from "outside" . . . 5) The content of the prophecies corresponded to the mode of delivery. They were rarely clear, and they dealt more with ambiguous predictions concerning the future of men, than with communicating God's will to them. The prophet was less a spokesman for God than a medium of supernatural and morally neutral knowledge.48

In all this Johnson summarises and develops the views of a number of earlier scholars, notably E. Fascher, K. Prümm and H. Bacht. In each of these five cases his conclusions will be subject to detailed treatment in Chapter 11. For the moment it is sufficient to note that his contribution extends the range of the debate by treating Hellenistic prophecy seriously both where it does, and where it does not, resemble glossolalia.

While the 1973 monograph of Jannes Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, subtitled "A Study of the Eleventh Mandate", deals almost exclusively with the post-apostolic period, it is an important example of precisely the kind of research that this study sets out to undertake. At the methodological level, Reiling argues that

it is not only commendable to look for Hellenistic parallels, but even necessary. Unless we are prepared to take into account the meaning of those parallels, and to interpret them in terms of their function in the thought of the writer which we study, we shall be unable to penetrate the deepest level of his thoughts.46

With this principle I can only agree, and I cannot see that it is any less applicable to Paul and Luke than to Hermas.

The central thrust of Reiling's work is that the picture of true and false prophecy given in the Eleventh Mandate of Hermas shows us clearly that Hellenistic forms of divination were finding their way into the second-century church. In Reiling's view, the "false prophet" in Hermas is in


fact a semi-Christianised diviner, operating within or on the borders of the
church. Hermas sets himself to combat this phenomenon, and his description
of the false prophet and his tests for distinguishing him from the true prophet
form the evidence on which Reiling draws.

In second-century Christianity generally, criteria for detecting false
prophecy were varied. The Didache, for example, specifically rules out any
testing of a prophet while he is speaking, and insists on moral guidelines for
discernment. While Hermas also suggests such tests, his main emphasis is
elsewhere. For him the main characteristics of the false prophet are as
follows. He prophesies in response to enquiries, not spontaneously; he
prophesies to individuals, not to the gathered congregation; and he charges a
fee. He prophesies according to what they want to hear. He occasionally
tells the truth in order to trap people: or rather, the devil does, through him.
The true prophet can be detected by the qualities of his life. He is filled with
the divine spirit when Christians gather, and prophesies to them there. The
false prophet, on the other hand, can be detected by his ambition, his
shamelessness and talkativeness, and the luxury of his life. He avoids the
gathering of Christians, and if he does come among them, his (diabolical)
spirit leaves him, and he is revealed to all as helpless.

So far this material can simply be read off from the Eleventh Mandate.
Reiling goes on to correlate it with what we know of divinatory practice.
The diviner prophesies in response to enquiries, and charges a fee. He tends
to do this publicly, for the sake of publicity: Hermas' diviners operate
covertly through fear of condemnation within the church. There is no
evidence that they are Gnostics, and doctrinal issues play no part in Hermas'
polemic against them. They cannot be Montanists, for they are much too
too early, and most of the criteria would be of no value in detecting Montanism.
Rather they are to be seen as semi-Christianised μάντεις such as Peregrinus
Proteus seems to have been for one period of his career.

Reiling then sets out to find a convincing background from the Hellenistic
world against which to place these diviners.

It is tempting to compare the false prophet in Hermas with the 'theoi andres' of that
time, such as Alexander of Abonuteichos or Apollonius of Tyana, but the Christian

---

47 On this particular point see the critical note of D.E. Aune, "Herm. Man. 11.2:
103-4.
'mantis' operates on a much smaller scale... A very striking and illuminating parallel, however, is found in Apuleius' description of a Chaldaean diviner, operating in Corinth.\textsuperscript{48}

Reiling is correct to prefer his Diophanes to the better known "prophets" he cites: they are even less appropriate when we are dealing with N.T. prophetic phenomena, as we shall see.

Turning to the true prophet, or rather "the prophet" used absolutely, he sketches Hermas' characterisation. Here the picture becomes complex, but let it suffice to say that Reiling is able to show convincingly that Hermas' "prophet", with his attendant "angel of the prophetic spirit", is a composite of Jewish, Christian and Hellenistic elements.\textsuperscript{49} There are several subtle problems of terminology to do with the "inspiration event", in which a man "full of the divine spirit" is "filled with the prophetic spirit". Reiling believes these phrases can be understood in terms of what I would call a "modal" understanding of the spirit: the "prophetic spirit" is the latent power of the Holy Spirit, and "having the divine Spirit" is the base experience on which all else depends. "A man must have the divine spirit in him if the prophetic spirit is to speak through him."\textsuperscript{50}

Reiling also distinguishes very clearly between apostles, prophets and teachers, and argues that "ecstasy" in the sense of total loss of consciousness is not to be seen as a defining characteristic of either Hellenistic or Christian forms of prophecy.\textsuperscript{51}

We turn now to one of the most important works in this field: T.M. Crone's \textit{Early Christian Prophecy: a Study of its Origin and Function}.\textsuperscript{52} This Tübingen dissertation attempts to situate early Christian prophecy in its Hellenistic environment. Crone sets out to survey the phenomenon of prophecy in the Graeco-Roman world. This he does under two major headings. The first is Oracle Prophets. He briefly discusses what is known about the functioning of the major oracular shrines in Greece, and their personnel. The terminology used to describe the various functionaries is described. Firstly, the person actually inspired by the god in question can, at Delphi at least, be called both a προφητής and a προφήτης. There are also separate persons, in this case priests, whose job he argues it is to interpret

\textsuperscript{48} J. Reiling, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 81.

\textsuperscript{49} J. Reiling, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 110-111.

\textsuperscript{50} J. Reiling, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{51} J. Reiling, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 17.

the oracle to the enquirer. They are specifically called προφήται. However, it ought not to be assumed that because the oracle needed interpreting, it was totally unintelligible. Crone points out that a reference in Plutarch seems to suggest that the oracle was intelligible, and that the task of the προφήτης was more to put it into polished form than into plain Greek.\footnote{Crone, Prophecy, pp. 33-34, citing Plutarch, de Def. Orac. 51, Mor. 438b.} The term προφήτης, in his view, is neutral with regard to both inspiration and ecstasy: it can imply either or both, but it need not. Crone can cite one case from Herodotus where a prophet speaks to an enquirer in a language unknown to himself, but known to the enquirer,\footnote{Herodotus 8.135: the prophet answers Mys the Carian in his native language, Crone, Prophecy, p. 36. For a detailed examination of this incident see chapter 5.} but beyond this example "xenoglossy" does not seem to him to be associated with prophecy.

Crone's treatment of oracular prophecy in the Greek world shows a far greater awareness of the technicalities of the subject than those of previous writers. The second major heading under which he examines possible parallels to Christian prophetism is "The Hellenistic Wandering Preacher". He suggests that "they offer the closest comparison in the Hellenistic world to the Christian prophets".\footnote{Crone, Prophecy, p. 39.} Crone's treatment of his four chosen examples, Apollonius of Tyana, Alexander of Abonouteichos, Pythagoras and Peregrinus Proteus, is examined in detail in Chapter 8, below. For the present we should note that the criteria by which he believes a comparison is possible are as follows. Both Christian prophets and Hellenistic wandering teachers are said to exhibit the following: wandering and teaching activities, gathering of followers, moral and civic virtue as the content of teaching, wonder-working, second sight and prediction, and inspiration or divination.

It is not until the concluding chapter of his work that he himself evaluates his "parallels" in any detail. Though he believes that his second-century "prophets" have first-century antecedents, he admits that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate a real parallel between the Hellenistic phenomena he has been discussing and first-century Christian prophecy. Summarising his case, he says:

we have compared him [sc. the Christian prophet] to the popular eschatological preacher in Palestinian Judaism and to the wandering preacher of contemporary Hellenistic religion . . . the Jewish counterpart offers points of comparison in terms of the eschatological nature of his message and the inspired enthusiasm with which he proclaimed it. The Greek counterpart represents a broad category of religious propagandist who in certain areas of the church influenced the Christian prophet in his
life-style and the understanding of his function...there are sufficient indications to conclude that this Hellenistic counterpart exercised an influence on the Christian prophet already in the first century...[nonetheless] Christian prophecy cannot be explained by an appeal to the Hellenistic wandering preacher and philosopher...we have been able to explain first-century Christian prophecy in light of its Jewish origins with some influence from the Hellenistic wandering preacher...

Since Crone had argued earlier that Paul's congregations did not know of wandering prophets and that the earliest mention of such itinerants is in Matthew and the Didache, and since he gives no details as to what the "indications" that "this Hellenistic counterpart exercised an influence on the Christian prophet already in the first century" might be, I believe we are free to argue that he has not shown any substantial parallel between Christian prophecy in the churches of Luke and Paul and Hellenistic wandering teachers. When we add to this the caveat expressed by Reiling above about the scale of the activities of Hellenistic teachers and wonder-workers, the care needed in making use of such parallels becomes even greater. Crone is aware of these problems, and it seems to me he really makes use his parallels only with respect to the second century Christian phenomena. He comments that "all our evidence points to contemporary Judaism as the origin of early Christian prophecy" and the fact that Peregrinus became for a period a Christian prophet is "the only direct link between the wandering preacher and the Christian prophet, and the reference is too late to draw any conclusions for the first century."  

In Part II of his thesis Crone sets out to interpret early Christian prophecy against the background he has sketched for it. As we have noted above, he does not feel that the case for Hellenistic parallels for first-century phenomena has been made out. It is therefore not surprising that he argues

56 Crone, Prophecy, pp. 290, 286, 289.
58 Crone, Prophecy, p. 286. Of Crone's picture of early Christian prophets, Aune, Prophecy, p. 9 says: "his conception of the early Christian prophet is a blend of the eschatological orientation and inspired prophetic consciousness of the prophets of the Jewish liberation movement combined with the hortatory and admonitory emphases and even peripatetic life-style of the wandering Hellenistic moral philosophers." But this seems to me to fail to take account of Crone's proper caution. Aune's comment might well apply as a statement of Crone's conception of prophecy according to the Didache, but it certainly does not apply in the cases of Luke and Paul, where Crone does not believe that Christian prophets exhibit a "peripatetic life-style". However, it must be admitted that Crone's final conclusions are not totally clear as to how influential he thinks Hellenistic factors were in the first century.
59 Crone, Prophecy, pp. 281, 286.
that the origin of Christian prophecy must be sought in its Judaic background. But here there is no need for us to follow him further.

Between 1973 and 1978 a number of articles and monographs took up aspects of the relationship between early Christian and Hellenistic inspired speech without breaking any essentially new ground. M.E. Boring suggested a program of research into the background of early Christian prophecy, "to explore the phenomenon of prophecy in the Hellenistic world prior to and apart from its manifestation in early Christianity."60 U.B. Müller found himself confident enough of the essentially Hellenistic nature of glossolalia to argue that, since the closest known parallel to glossolalia is to be found in the Testament of Job, that document must be regarded as a product of Hellenistic Judaism.61 Both James Dunn, in his important work Jesus and the Spirit, and M.E. Hart, in a Durham Ph.D. thesis, argued that any real understanding of Paul's view of glossolalia and its interpretation must take into account the closely parallel understanding of prophecy and its interpretation at Delphi, and in the thought of Plato.62 Hart developed the point further, arguing (correctly, in my view, at least in terms of her negative point) that "interpretation" at Delphi was not a matter of "translation" (because Delphic utterances were not gibberish), but rather a matter of "explanation". She also argued, with Behm and Engelsen, that glossolalia was paralleled in the "Bacchic tongues" of the Dionysiac cult, in inspired speech in Gnosticism, and in the "new prophecy" of the Montanists. Finally, in line with all these parallels, she argued that the μανεσθε of 1 Corinthians 14.23, attributed by Paul to the outsider overhearing glossolalia, was a statement of recognition of divine activity: "you are inspired" rather than "you are insane".63 Likewise in 1975, H.J. Tschiedel published an article in which he argued that a miracle very similar to that recorded by Luke of Pentecost was a regular feature of the cult of Delian Apollo, as recorded in the "Homerian" Hymn to Apollo.64 R.A. Harrisville, in a very thorough survey

63 Hart, Tongues And Prophecy: Dionysiac cult and "Bacchic tongues", pp. 10-12, p. 111 note 17, Gnosticism, p. 19, Montanism, pp. 105-6, μανεσθε, p. 240. Hart's case, though very similar in many points to that of Engelsen, appears to be quite independent.
64 H.J. Tschiedel, "Ein Pfingstwunder im Apollonhymnus", Zeitschrift für Religions-
of the problem of the terminology of glossolalia, supported the view of Nils
Engelsen that in all likelihood the reason that the pre-Christian world had no
special terms for glossolalia was that it had not previously been considered a
separate category of ecstatic speech. Harrisville, however, was not
interested in the Hellenistic parallels. Finally, F.F. Bruce, in his major
survey of Paul's career and theology, argued briefly that the dispute between
Paul and the Corinthians over inspired speech had its background in Pythian
practice and/or Dionysiac cult, both prominent in the proximity of Corinth.

The next major development in the attempt to link together the various
issues addressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12-14 came with the publication
by R. and C.C. Kroeger of a short paper entitled "An Inquiry into Evidence
of Maenadism in the Corinthian Congregation". The hypothesis put
forward provocatively links the issue of inspired speech and the issue of
disorder among the women into one complex of Hellenistic influence:
Dionysiac religion. The Kroegers argue that

The Apostle specifically complains that the congregation gives the impression of ritual
madness (14:23). . . . women were the recipients par excellence [sc. of divine frenzy] and
thereby earned the title "mad women" or maenads . . . The city of Corinth was a major
center of Dionysiac cult . . . Even a cursory reading of the first Corinthian Epistle reveals
the affinity of the new converts for their former pagan modes . . . They were asked . . . to
refrain from attending pagan feasts -- a notable feature of Dionysiac cult during the
Roman period. Formerly they served dumb idols, wrote Paul, and were "carried away"
(γυρευομενον) apparently a reference to ecstatic mystery religion. Significantly,
there was drunkenness (another Dionysiac attribute) at the Lord's Supper. Rather than
bemoan the presence of fornication in their midst, the Corinthians were complacent and
indeed "puffed up." It is hard to understand their satisfaction apart from a cultic
background which represented certain extramarital sex acts as sacramental in nature.

They then argue that the complex of issues - inspired speech, propriety of
hairstyle and gender-role reversal - found in 1 Corinthians 11-14 is
particularly suggestive of a Dionysiac cult background, where inspired
frenzy, wildly flying hair (and shorn heads) and ritual transvestitism were
commonplace. They likewise argue that what Paul rejects about Corinthian
glossolalia and prophecy is the uncontrolled clamor that results when many

und Geistesgeschichte, vol. 27, 1975, pp. 22-39. This case is dealt with in detail in
Chapter 5.


67 "An Inquiry into Evidence of Maenadism in the Corinthian Congregation", S.B.L.

speak at once, reminiscent of the din of the cults where trumpets and
stringed instruments likewise gave forth inarticulate sounds in the general
tumult. In this context, they argue, Paul forbids, not any speech by women,
but specifically the ecstatic shouts of converted maenads, the ὀλαλυγμός.
He commands instead the silence that characterised other phases of
Dionysiac cult: "A gentle and quiet phase of worship was surely far more in
accord with Christian κοινωνία than frenzy . . . therefore women were
asked to subdue themselves in compliance with the law." The Kroegers
argue that since no particular Jewish law on the submission of women can
be produced, it is plausible to argue that the law in question is one of the
common Hellenistic-Roman laws regulating the involvement of women in
ecstatic cults.

Clearly what is involved here is a thorough-going reinterpretation of
Paul's problem in 1 Corinthians, though it is presented only in outline. In
later material, privately circulated, the Kroegers have listed what they
consider to be no less than thirty-nine distinct points of contact between 1
Corinthians and Hellenistic ecstatic religion. While some of them are
doubtless only common metaphors - the concept of offering metaphorical
milk to neophytes, not solid food, is too commonplace a notion to indicate
any particular background - the cumulative case is impressive. Two
questions, however, must be asked. At an exegetical level, we must ask:
how compelling is the suggestion that it is ritual outcry and clamour (as
opposed to, say, glossolalia without interpretation) to which Paul is
objecting? Especially among women? Can the two concepts be so easily
equated? At the level of Hellenistic religious practice, however, the critical
question must be: how similar was inspired speech within Christianity to that
practised in Dionysiac circles?

With the contribution of the Kroegers the main lines of the scholarly
"consensus" are set. Writers since have, in the main, accepted various
features of the outline presented above, and developed its implications. P.
Roberts, in a short article in the Expository Times, argued that

ecstatic religious experience . . . was a part of the fabric of life for the common man in
many parts of the ancient world. He met it in many of his religious cults and mysteries.
Ecstatic experience, in fact, is a part of the common religious heritage of mankind and
was no stranger in the first-century Mediterranean world . . .

---
70 P. Roberts, "A Sign - Christian or Pagan?", Expository Times, vol. 90, no. 7, April
1979, pp. 199-203.
Paul's language in describing tongues as "a sign for unbelievers" is thus thoroughly explicable. Tongues (by implication a common feature of such "ecstatic experience") are a sign that unbelievers will recognise as evidence of some divine activity or other. Paul's objection is that they will communicate nothing explicitly Christian, for the same reason. David Hill suggested, without detailed argument, that the tension between Paul and the Corinthians was caused by a cross-cultural disagreement about the nature of prophecy. In his essay, "Christian Prophets as Teachers or Instructors in the Church" he argues that

It is most likely that Paul derived his view of προφητεία from Old Testament-Jewish models and possibly from contact with prophets (as portrayed in Acts) influenced by such models, whereas the Corinthians' understanding reflects the Greek ecstatic model: its practitioners were employed in the Mystery cults and these activities and experiences were described by terms like μαντίς, μανίτις and ἔφοιτος - terms not used of Christian prophets.

In his New Testament Prophecy Hill again speaks of the Corinthians being influenced by the "Greek ecstatic model" of prophecy, but since his discussion does not distinguish between glossolalia and prophecy at this point, his view is unclear.\(^\text{71}\)

Here at least one comment must be made: it seems most unlikely that any "Greek model" of prophecy ought to be derived from the mystery cults: oracles and mysteries were different things altogether, and practitioners of prophecy were not employed by the cults, as far as we know. Prophetic and "telestic" μάντια were distinguished even in antiquity, at the level of theory,\(^\text{72}\) and at the level of cult were very different phenomena. We need only note that oracles were among the most publicly accessible institutions of Hellenistic religion, whereas the Mysteries were the most relentlessly private and secretive. Hill's blending of two such different religious phenomena seems to me to be a symptom of the strength of the "consensus" view that he here articulates: so entrenched is it that it no longer even requires close attention to the evidence.

In 1980 Morton Smith argued that glossolalia - and many other features of Pauline congregational practice - closely reflect contemporary magical practice. He argued that

\(^{71}\) D. Hill, "Christian Prophets as Teachers or Instructors in the Church", in Panagopoulos, Vocation, p. 110, note 6, and Prophecy, p. 121.

\(^{72}\) See, for example, Plato, Phaedrus, 265b.
Invocation of spirits to prophesy was perhaps the commonest of ancient magical practices. It regularly led to revelations... Such pronouncements often culminated in inarticulate utterances which seem to have resembled very closely the noises the Christians made when they "spoke in tongues."

Though it can certainly be argued that the formulae by which spirits were invoked in order to produce revelations resembled glossolalia, I am not aware of any evidence to support Smith's view that magical revelations ever culminated in inarticulate utterances. Certainly he does not cite any. We should also note that in the Magical papyri "there is very little evidence for the phenomenon of possession trance. In an era when possession trance was regarded as a typical way of understanding oracular inspiration, the emphasis in the magical papyri is decidedly on the vision trance." The case for a relationship between magical ritual and glossolalia is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

The major work of M.E. Boring, Sayings of the Risen Jesus, likewise maintains the consensus view. He draws heavily on what Hill describes as "the Greek ecstatic model" of prophecy, and explains Paul's clash with his Corinthian converts with the suggestion that they were heavily influenced by "the common Hellenistic view that prophetic speech is validated by glossolalia". For this, of course, he cites Gillespie. Drawing on the presumed Dionysiac parallels, he also argues that

For Paul, ματυρεται (sic) (14.23) is a stinging rebuke, not a goal to be sought after, as it was in the Bacchic experience of the Dionysian cult... the prophet, like the speaker in tongues, is in control of himself and can be silent - though he may have to be reminded that this is the case... Paul's understanding of the prophetic experience is to be seen against the Old Testament-Jewish-Rabbinic background, rather than as a reflection of the Hellenistic enthusiastic view of prophecy.

Approaching the topic from the terminological end, J. Painter argues that Paul's problem with the "Pneumatikoi" in Corinth can only fully be understood when we realise that "The constellation of terms used by the self-styled πνευματικοί, to which attention has been drawn, was also used by certain Gnostic sects and in the mystery cults." In support of this conclusion he cites Reitzenstein and W. Scott. "Either this is the source of the Corinthian terminology or no source is known to us... the problem of

74 Thus Aune, Prophecy, p. 45.
75 M.E. Boring, Sayings, pp. 82-84.
76 Boring, Sayings, p. 85.
the πνευματικοί is to be understood in the context of pagan ecstatic religion.\textsuperscript{77}

The classic consensus case was extensively presented at a more popular level in 1983 by H.W. House, in an article entitled "Tongues and the Mystery Religions of Corinth". He argued that in Corinth

Religious ecstasy, particularly glossolalia, is found in the mystery religions or the religion of Apollo... The slave girl that Paul encountered on the way to Corinth had a spirit of Python, or one inspired by Apollo. The ecstatic tongues-speaking of the oracle and the subsequent interpretation by the priest at Delphi are widely known. The cult of Apollo was widespread in Achaia, but especially around the temple of Delphi across from Corinth. This religion easily could have provided the kind of impetus for spiritual experience found in the Corinthian church... With the ecstaticism of Dionysianism and the emphasis on tongues-speaking and oracles in the religion of Apollo, it is not surprising that the Corinthians carried these pagan ideas in the church at Corinth, especially the practice of glossolalia for which both of these religions are known (though the Dionysian cult did not include interpretation of the glossolalia as did that of Apollo)... The very phrase γλώσσας ἐλάττων, 'to speak in tongues', was not invented by the New Testament writers, but borrowed from ordinary speech.\textsuperscript{78}

In favour of this contention House presents the following considerations: Paul's mention of "gongs and cymbals", reminiscent of the Mysteries, the Corinthian use of the term πνευματικός, Paul's use of the term μυστήριον in 1 Corinthians 14.2 (which he takes to be an allusion to pagan mysteries), the self-centered attitude to worship he believes to be common to both the Mysteries and the Corinthians, the problem over the vocal role of women, and the interest in spirits and in ecstasy.\textsuperscript{79} He also cites F.F. Bruce and R. and C.C. Kroeger in support of various of his points.

It is important to point out that there are a number of very doubtful statements in all this, even if the consensus view here propounded is correct. First, there is no evidence at all that "spirits of Python" were identified with Apollo. Python, the ancient serpent of Delphi, was slain and replaced by Apollo, and nothing in our evidence about "pythons" in the Hellenistic period suggests that anybody thought they were inspired by Apollo. Second, there is no suggestion of which I am aware that anything resembling glossolalia was to be found in the cult of Apollo anywhere else but at


\textsuperscript{79} H.W. House, art.cit., pp. 140-142.
Delphi, as part of the cult of Delphic Apollo (and just possibly at Delos: but House does not suggest this). There is certainly no evidence that it was widespread in the cult of Apollo more generally. We also see here again the straightforward link between ecstaticism and glossolalia that characterises so many of the arguments brought forward in support of the "consensus".

The one major recent exception, at the exegetical level, to this consensus, is the article of A. Méhat, "L’enseignement sur «les choses de l’esprit»". Méhat argues that under the almost universal effect of the view that phenomena influenced by paganism are under consideration in 1 Corinthians 12, verses 1-3 have been badly misunderstood. He points out that it is very odd that, having suggested that the problem in Corinth may be due to Corinthian ignorance about spiritual gifts, he should then suggest that the problem is due to prior knowledge of pagan ecstasy. He argues that the term μανεσθε in 14.23 need have no reference to religious frenzy at all, that the "gongs and cymbals" of 13.1 are simply metaphors of noise, and that διαγόμενοι in 12.2 can have several meanings other than a reference to ecstatic experiences in the Mysteries. He also asks whether there could have been sufficient initiates in the Mysteries in Corinth to force us to assume that some must have been present among the converts of Paul. All of this is, it seems to me, a timely reminder that what looks to one scholar like exegetical evidence supported by cross-cultural parallels may look to another like a circular argument. Whether Méhat's argument is convincing or not, his article sharply raises an issue which, as we have seen, has been increasingly taken for granted. Méhat's view has recently been accepted by D.A. Carson.

In 1985 T. Callan published an important review of the nature of prophecy in both early Christianity and its environment. His article is significant, because it takes account of the work of Bacht, Crone, Engelsen, Hill and others. He, however, is not concerned with glossolalia, but with prophecy. In brief, he argues that the term προφήτης is most commonly used in our period, in relation to oracles, to designate the person more accurately called the μάντις, the inspired person who, in a trance or ecstasy, receives an oracle. It is, in Callan's view, less commonly used of

---

non-inspired persons who act as spokesmen in other capacities. Against this background Hellenistic Judaism developed theories about kinds of prophecy which did, and which did not, involve trance. In this context Callan suggests that Paul, faced with a view that did not differentiate glossolalia from prophecy, made use of this pre-existing distinction to focus the Corinthians' attention on what he saw as the more productive forms of inspired speech. Callan's case is dealt with in detail in Chapter 8, but here I must simply say briefly that his main case seems to me to be mistaken.

In 1986, W. Richardson cited with approval the general conclusions of Nils Engelsen, arguing that

He shows convincingly that similar phenomena occurred in various circles, Greco-Roman as well as Jewish, but they were referred to under the general category of 'prophecy' or 'divination'. It appears that Paul is the only one who narrows the meaning of the phrase (sc. speaking in tongues?) to unintelligible speech, and thus puts prophecy in a separate category.\(^\text{84}\)

Two major works remain for us to complete our survey. The first of these, which I have held up a little in terms of strict chronological order, is G. Dautzenberg's major article on glossolalia in the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*.\(^\text{85}\) This is the best and most detailed recent survey of the subject, and summarises the modern debate very well. He prefers the parallels with prophetic mania to those with Dionysiac ecstasy, citing Plato's discussion of prophecy and its interpretation in the *Timaeus*, though he, like James Dunn, notes that the parallel between Paul and Plato on this point is not perfect. He thinks there is a distant link only between glossolalia and the Magical Papyri, but cites Tschiegel for the concept of miraculous languages related to heavenly languages. He is cautious of the evidence of Celsus reported by Origen, rightly arguing that we cannot know to what extent this report has been coloured by Christian elements, but more confident of parallels within Gnosticism. He believes that the Testament of Job and the Apocalypse of Zephaniah provide the closest substantial parallel to early Christian glossolalia, and argues that the concept of divine or angelic languages is again the important link that unites the various phenomena.

Thus, while Jewish parallels help us to understand the origins of glossolalia, the Hellenistic parallels explain how it so easily took root in the Hellenistic churches such as that in Corinth. Ecstatic speech, according to Dautzenberg,


\(^{85}\) G. Dautzenberg, "Glossolalie", cols. 225-246.
is a universal human phenomenon. Glossolalia is the particular form that it took on within early Christianity, with its own characteristic terminology and conceptual framework.\textsuperscript{86}

This is clearly a nuanced piece of argument, but the claim remains that substantial parallels exist at the phenomenological level between glossolalia and "ecstatic speech" in the Hellenistic world. Dautzenberg doubts, however, that these parallels explain the dispute in Corinth.

The final work which must be taken into consideration here is the massive contribution of D.E. Aune, \textit{Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World}.\textsuperscript{87} It would be folly to pretend that what follows is anything more than the briefest of comments on the five hundred and some pages of Aune's masterly survey, but none the less some comments must be made.

Aune's primary concern is not with the phenomena of early Christian prophecy, but with the detection of the fossilized remnants of prophecy embedded in the New Testament and other early Christian literature. Naturally, however, this leads him to an extensive consideration of the phenomena themselves. He accepts the suggestion of Engelsen that Paul was probably the first to differentiate between glossolalia and other forms of inspired speech, and that of Gillespie, that glossolalia was often viewed as divine legitimation of prophecy. He also argues that in 1 Corinthians 12.2 Paul "was in all probability referring to pagan religious experiences of possession trance".\textsuperscript{88} He is one of the few, however, to point out that there is very little evidence to support the view that the Pythia's words were "ecstatic gibberish", thus implicitly raising doubts about the parallel between Delphi and glossolalia\textsuperscript{89} He makes no comment of which I am aware on the postulated Dionysiac parallels, but (unlike House, for example) distinguishes correctly between Delphic and Dionysiac \textit{ἐνθουσιασμὸς}.\textsuperscript{90}

Aune is highly critical of the kinds of distinction between Christian and Hellenistic prophecy suggested by Bacht and L.T. Johnson, arguing (rightly, in my view) that they are, by and large, theologically motivated, and not

\textsuperscript{86} G. Dautzenberg, "Glossolalie", cols. 234-236.
\textsuperscript{87} Grand Rapids, 1983.
\textsuperscript{88} Aune, \textit{Prophecy}, p. 195, pp. 42 and note 221, 72 and note 133, p. 257.
\textsuperscript{89} Aune, \textit{Prophecy}, p. 31, note 103, pp. 39 (discussing Plato, Timaeus 71-2), 50-52.
\textsuperscript{90} Aune, \textit{Prophecy}, pp. 21, 42
very useful historically.\textsuperscript{91} His own view is more difficult to summarise. He
does believe, however, that

Although Israelite-Jewish and Greco-Roman revelatory traditions have many mutually
distinct features, the interpenetration of east and west during the Hellenistic and Roman
period makes it very difficult if not impossible to untangle the blended elements (even if
such an untangling were desirable). Christian prophecy is most adequately treated if it is
regarded as a distinctively Christian institution; if so, any typology of Christian
prophetism should be based primarily on internal rather than external criteria.\textsuperscript{92}

Beyond this Aune does not summarise his own views as to the
relationship between Christian prophecy and prophecy in its environment,
though a large number of issues in that relationship are treated individually.
He sees clearly, for example, that Graeco-Roman prophecy is far more
strongly institutionalised than Christian prophecy, and far more closely
related to particular places: early Christianity knows of no oracular shrines,
but only of oracular people.\textsuperscript{93} He also argues for the well-known distinction
between technical divination and inspired prophecy, but surprisingly does
not point out that early Christianity totally eschewed all forms of technical
divination.\textsuperscript{94} But Aune is far more interested in the literary forms taken by
prophecy than in such matters. His work ought not to be judged by what it
does not do, when it does so much. Other matters related to his view of
"congregational prophecy" and the spontaneity of Christian prophecy will be
discussed in detail in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

We have seen that the hypothesis that Paul's dispute with his Corinthian
converts has to do with a view of inspired speech they have inherited from
their pre-Christian religious experience has much to commend it. Several
features of Paul's argument - his mention of their experience of being
"carried away to dumb idols", his negative use of the images of gongs and
cymbals, his disparaging of glossolalia in favour of prophecy, and his view
of the "sign" value of glossolalia - can be plausibly interpreted in the light of
such an hypothesis. Likewise, a quantity of external evidence has been
amassed which would seem to suggest strongly that glossolalia or something
very similar was widely known in Hellenistic religion. We have seen that
scholars have generally argued that Christian prophecy is less closely related
to Hellenistic phenomena than is glossolalia, and that again this helps us to

\textsuperscript{91} Aune, \textit{Prophecy}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{92} Aune, \textit{Prophecy}, p. 230.
\textsuperscript{94} Aune, \textit{Prophecy}, pp. 35-6. On this matter see also chapter 11.
understand Paul's preference for prophecy over glossolalia. But in each case dissenting voices have been raised. A. Méhat has strongly criticised the exegetical consensus, while R.H. Gundry, T.M. Crone and D.E. Aune have raised doubts about certain features of the Hellenistic evidence.

Yet at the same time the general hypothesis has become so firmly entrenched that scholars as diverse as F.F. Bruce and U.B. Müller can take it for granted or make it the basis of further work, and others, such as Morton Smith and H.W. House, can argue it with little regard for the niceties of the evidence. What is needed is a thorough-going investigation of this evidence: not merely the exegetical evidence, but more importantly the direct evidence for inspired speech phenomena in the immediate environment of the New Testament. If this evidence proves adequate to sustain the hypothesis, then the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12-14 can be developed in detail. If, however, as I contend, the evidence will not support the hypothesis, then exegetical alternatives can be considered.

We turn, then, to the main section of this thesis. In the next two chapters, numbers Three and Four, the New Testament evidence on glossolalia will be examined in detail. The following three chapters, numbers Five, Six and Seven, will cover the proposed Hellenistic parallel phenomena, and consider some of the exegetical consequences if (as I argue) the "consensus" hypothesis is to be abandoned. The next three chapters will examine prophecy, chapter Eight generally, and chapters Nine and Ten as we find it in Acts and the letters of Paul. The focus will be on 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14. Chapter Eleven will survey the relationship between early Christian prophecy (as described in the previous chapters) and prophecy in the wider Hellenistic world.