

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe 75

Christopher Forbes

Prophecy and Inspired Speech
in Early Christianity
and its Hellenistic Environment



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Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

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by

Christopher Forbes



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Synopsis.

This book, originally a thesis submitted for a Ph.D. in Ancient History at Macquarie University in 1987, examines the hypothesis that the dispute between Paul and his converts in Corinth over inspired speech is best explained in terms of the pre-Christian religious experience of some of the Corinthians. That hypothesis suggests that Hellenistic enthusiastic religion involved its participants in experiences of inspired speech which closely resembled early Christian glossolalia and prophecy, either phenomenologically, conceptually, or both. It argues that some among the Corinthians brought with them from their pre-Christian background a view of the nature and status of inspired speech with which Paul found himself in conflict. The hypothesis is grounded, in the modern scholarly debate, in exegetical detail drawn largely from 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 (and to a lesser extent the book of Acts), and in comparative studies in Hellenistic religion.

It is my contention that the hypothesis is false. A close examination of the Hellenistic evidence presented by scholars for phenomena similar to early Christian glossolalia and prophecy produces no compelling parallels, either at the level of phenomena, or at the level of theological concepts. Those exegetical details which have been interpreted in the light of the hypothesis therefore require re-examination.

Chapter 2 surveys the contributions of scholars to this hypothesis since the publication, in 1959, of the relevant articles in Kittel's *Wörterbuch*. In Chapters 3 and 4 the early Christian phenomenon of glossolalia is analysed in detail. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 the evidence for proposed Hellenistic parallels is examined and found wanting. Chapter 7 then draws conclusions for the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12-14. An appendix surveys some related Jewish evidence.

Chapters 8 to 10 deal with early Christian prophecy. In Chapter 8 questions of definition appropriate to the drawing of cross-cultural parallels are dealt with, and several recent scholarly contributions treated. Chapters 9 and 10 are concerned with prophecy in Acts and the Letters of Paul, with particular emphasis on 1 Corinthians. Chapter 11 surveys prophecy and divination in the Hellenistic environment of the New Testament, and suggests several contrasts between Christian prophecy and prophecy in that Hellenistic world. A summary and conclusions follow.

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In the case of any book such as this there are always people who have been of great assistance, whose patience and kindness cannot go without thanks. In my case these include Dr. David Aune, Dr. Paul Barnett, Dr. Don Carson, Mr. Jeff Cayzer, Prof. James Dunn, Prof. Earle Ellis, Dr. Bruce Harris, Dr. Greg Horsley, Dr. Ros Kearsley (who beat me to finishing by six months), Prof. Ken Kitchen, Mrs. Catherine Kroeger, Dr. John Lee, Prof. Bruce Malina, Dr. Peter O'Brien, Dr. Boyo Ockinga, Prof. W.D. Smith and Dr. R.P. Spittler. Without their various contributions the writing of this book would have been much more difficult.

My heartfelt thanks must also go to all those friends, first at St. James', and now at St. Matthew's, who have prayed for me and my work over the years. They know that without their support it would all have been immeasurably harder.

For more than ten years Gordon Garner and Piers Crocker of the Australian Institute of Archaeology helped to keep butter on the bread. The Institute also paid for the computer on which most of this work was originally written. I could not have hoped for a more understanding employer or more prayerful friends. Prof. M.K. Hopkins of King's College insisted I think about something else while I was in Cambridge, and then gave me plenty of other things to think about. He might not recognise his influence, but it's here! The late Dr. Colin Hemer and the residents and staff of Tyndale House took this Antipodean to their hearts for a term, and made that term a most enjoyable and productive time.

My mother and father have spent years listening to me talking about subjects of the utmost obscurity without ever betraying any trace of discontent at my choice of career. Many years ago they said that they didn't mind what their children did, or how well they did it, so long as they did their best. They have never shown any regret at signing this blank cheque. Mum and Dad: here it is. And Dad, thanks for your help with the Index.

Seven years in composition and as many again in revision is a long time to spend on one topic. It remains a matter of wonder to me that two people in particular, other than myself, have managed to maintain their interest in this work. One is Professor E.A. Judge, my Ph.D. supervisor, who has been

lavish of his time and skills in ways I could neither have predicted nor required of him. The other is my wife, Jan. She has shared it all, from the first gropings for a topic to the final form. She knows what that has meant to me. She also knows I could not have done it without her.

Many others have contributed in many ways. The essential concept and structure, however, are mine, as are the mistakes. It may be true that Teiresias prophesied about the past as well as the future, and that History is the prophet of truth. But "to know all things", as W.C. van Unnik points out, is the mark of a prophet, and I am not one, nor even the son of one.

Becky and Joey, it's for you, too. I'm glad you were too young to remember the last six months of getting it finished. I am also very glad that your generation is unlikely to grow up in a church where prophecy is as unfamiliar as it was for Jan and myself.

Abbreviations

Aune, <i>Prophecy</i>	D.E. Aune, <i>Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World</i> , Grand Rapids, 1983.
Boring, <i>Sayings</i>	M.E. Boring, <i>Sayings of the Risen Jesus: Christian Prophecy in the Synoptic Tradition</i> , Cambridge, 1982.
Carson, <i>Showing the Spirit</i>	D.A. Carson, <i>Showing the Spirit: a Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14</i> , Sydney, 1987.
Crone, <i>Prophecy</i>	T.M. Crone, <i>Early Christian Prophecy: a Study of its Origin and Function</i> , St. Mary's University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1973.
Currie, "Early Evidence"	S.D. Currie, "'Speaking in Tongues': Early Evidence Outside the New Testament Bearing on 'Glössais Lalein'", <i>Interpretation</i> , vol. 19, 1965, pp. 274-294.
Dautzenberg, "Glossolalie"	G. Dautzenberg, "Glossolalie", <i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> , vol. 11, 1981, cols. 225-246.
<i>Didyma Inscriptions</i>	<i>Didyma Inscriptions; Texts and List</i> , D.F. McCabe and M.A. Plunkett, eds., Princeton, 1985.
Engelsen, <i>Glossolalia</i>	N.I.J. Engelsen, <i>Glossolalia and Other Forms of Prophetic Speech According to 1 Corinthians 12-14</i> , unpublished Ph.D thesis, Yale, 1970.
Fascher, <i>Prophetes</i>	E. Fascher, <i>Prophetes: Eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung</i> , Giessen, 1927.

- Gillespie, *Prophecy and Tongues* T.W. Gillespie, *Prophecy and Tongues: the Concept of Christian Prophecy in the Pauline Theology.*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Claremont Graduate School and University Centre, 1971.
- Gillespie, "A Pattern" T.W. Gillespie, "A Pattern of Prophetic Speech in 1 Corinthians", *J.B.L.* vol. 97, no. 1, 1978, pp. 74-95.
- Grudem, *Gift* W. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, Washington, 1982
- Hart, *Tongues And Prophecy* M.E. Hart, *Speaking in Tongues and Prophecy as Understood by Paul and at Corinth, with reference to early Christian usage*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Durham, 1975.
- Hill, *Prophecy* *New Testament Prophecy*, London, 1979
- Horsley, "Spiritual Elitism" R.A. Horsley, " 'How can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?' Spiritual Elitism in Corinth", *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 20, 1978, pp. 202-231.
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- Thiselton, "Interpretation" A.C. Thiselton, "The 'Interpretation' of Tongues: a New Suggestion in the Light of Greek Usage in Philo and Josephus", *J.Th.S.*, vol. 30, 1979, pp. 15-36.

Wire, Women Prophets

A.C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: a Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric*, Minneapolis, 1990.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This book began as a fairly straightforward attempt to investigate Hellenistic culture for phenomena that might be enlightening as parallels to New Testament prophecy and other forms of inspired speech within first-century Christianity. The original conception was suggested to me by the fact that, among the recent outpouring of scholarly research on early Christian prophecy, a great deal of attention had been paid to the Old Testament background. Relatively little attention had been given to the understanding of prophecy in first-century Judaism, and very little systematic work at all had been done (or so it seemed at first), on the relevant Hellenistic phenomena. This appeared to be so despite the fact that our single most explicit source of information about early Christian prophecy, 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14, comes from a predominantly Hellenistic environment where the particular problems in view appear to many to have a distinctly Hellenistic basis.

This original conception has both grown and contracted. It has grown for one primary reason. As I set myself to master the views of the secondary authorities on the subject it rapidly became clear the most promising lines of inquiry all pointed in one general direction. They noted the odd variety of issues to which Paul addresses himself in 1 Corinthians, and tried to relate them, usually in combinations, to the Hellenistic culture of their environment. Taken together, these studies suggested that the issues of dress and deportment in 1 Corinthians ch. 10, and the not always carefully distinguished issues of charismatic outcry, glossolalia, prophecy and the teaching role of women in chs. 11-14 ought to be investigated as related issues. Though I have not been able to investigate all of these issues in the same depth, the above suggestion is one I have set out to put to the test.

The conception has contracted as well. Reading the primary sources quickly showed me that the Hellenistic concept of "inspiration" was one that spread far beyond the boundaries of those matters related to early Christian prophecy and inspiration. The whole body of Greek poetry, for example, is

widely conceived of as being "inspired" in a sense closely related to the more strictly religious sense. I have therefore sought to limit my investigation to those forms of Hellenistic inspiration that have to do with strictly religious phenomena: primarily those to do with oracular practice, and "charismatic" and "enthusiastic" religion. Where this practice has been abandoned for a wider view, this has been noted in the text. There are, of course, other ways in which modern, ancient Hellenistic and New Testament conceptions of prophecy and inspiration fail to overlap or to mesh smoothly, but these need to be dealt with in detail.

The second way in which the conception has contracted is that it has been necessary to limit the area of study within early Christianity. In his recent major contribution to the study of early Christian prophecy, David Aune has forcefully argued that the preoccupation of scholarship with the canonical evidence for prophecy, over against any other forms of evidence, has seriously distorted our understanding of the subject.¹ I am in full agreement with him. Unfortunately the constraints placed on a thesis such as this mean that only a relatively small body of evidence can be meaningfully treated. Virtually all our explicit evidence as to the nature of early Christian prophecy in the first century is to be found in 1 Corinthians and the Acts of the Apostles. I have restricted the main thrust of my investigation to those sources, not because they are canonical, but because they are our earliest evidence. My conclusions, therefore, relate not to early Christian prophecy and inspired speech more widely, but to prophecy and inspired speech as they were conceived of by Paul and Luke.

The greatest single weakness of most recent attempts to relate early Christian prophecy to its Hellenistic environment has been the willingness to collect "parallel" material almost indiscriminately from Greek sources ranging over more than eight hundred years - from classical Greek literature of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. to writers like Iamblichus, and the Greek Magical Papyri of the third and fourth centuries A.D. This tendency is especially to be deplored when we consider that it appears to be a matter of consensus among scholars that between the middle of the first and the end of the second century A.D. several fairly basic changes occurred in beliefs related to our area of interest. Central to these changes was a widespread rise in the credibility of the miraculous, and an increasing fascination with occult and ecstatic phenomena, especially as evidence of divine powers or

¹ D.E. Aune, *Prophecy*, pp. 13-16.

divine activity. This phenomenon has been described by Dannemann in the following words:

As far as the educated and literary stratum of Greco-Roman culture is concerned, in the first century A.D. Plutarch and Seneca still confidently portray the divine sage Socrates, and his moral courage in the face of death, in order to dismiss attempts to authenticate figures as divine by their power to work miracles. But in the second century Lucian fights bitterly on several fronts trying to maintain this criterion; however, as the growth of the cults of such figures as Peregrinus and Alexander shows, he does not succeed. Philostratus and Porphyry give in; although still aware of the philosophical standards, they describe Apollonius and Pythagoras as both divine sages and miracle workers."²

To extend the point, in the first century Philo positively plays down the miraculous element in his interpretative recasting of the Moses traditions of the Old Testament, in favour of the "philosopher-king" motif. In the early third century, however, Philostratus' "Life of Apollonius" interweaves the two threads of philosophy and magic in a way that would have been unthinkable in Philo's time.³ In other words, the credibility of the supernatural and the miraculous was on the increase over the period under discussion, and the New Testament material dates from the early stage of the development. It is true that we can know very little of attitudes at the popular level, as opposed to the educated level referred to above, from which the vast bulk of our evidence comes. The same development may not occur there. But insofar as evidence contemporary with the New Testament is available, it is most unwise to base an argument on parallels which date

² Ruth Dannemann, *J.B.L.*, vol. 93, 1974, p. 130, in a review of D. L. Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker*. See also Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, p. 109, "The mind, in fact, from the second century on, comes under increasingly open, angry, and exasperated attack." See also p. 111: "It is instructive to compare the philosopher of an Augustan painting . . . , a face and pose to remember, surely, but no more than a man, or to compare the self-comfortable ordinariness of Seneca's appearance . . . with the later fourth or fifth century bust of a philosopher . . . He is shown at the moment of gnosis, head tilted back, long locks flying, mouth slack. His eyes above all focus attention. They are enormous and visionary." "So much for the changing attitudes of the aristocracy over the first four centuries A.D. They were willing to grant the importance of portents in the first century, of oracles in the second, of apparitions in the third and later, though to put the matter so shortly and schematically is no doubt a little misleading . . ." (p. 120.) A similar position is taken up by D.E. Aune, in "The Problem of the Genre of the Gospels", in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 2, ed. R.T. France and D. Wenham, Sheffield, 1981, p. 34, and H.W. Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor*, London, 1985, p. 74, p. 82.

³ For this issue generally see also Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, New Haven, 1967, pp. 72ff. He also notes the important place of Apuleius' "Apology" in this on-going development.

from the later stages of the development. I have chosen, therefore, to begin my selection of material with writers working within a century of the main New Testament authors. They cover the period from about 50 B.C. to about 150 A.D., and form the basis of my study. This period may reasonably be described as "the immediate environment" of the New Testament, though even across this relatively brief span, changes in attitude are notable. The ancient authors on whom I have especially concentrated are Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Philo, Josephus, Dio Chrysostom, and Plutarch (the *Moralia*). Together they form a substantial corpus of literature reflecting attitudes and beliefs in these centuries.

Scholarly attention to the topic of early Christian prophecy and inspired speech has two major focusses. The first of these is on the phenomena themselves, as they are described, and as information about them may be inferred, from the various New Testament and other early Christian documents.⁴ The second is on the attempt to detect the literary remains of early Christian prophecy within those documents, and hence to trace the influence of prophecy and inspired speech on the theological growth of the early Christian movement.⁵ Though it ought to be clear that the first of these two endeavours is logically prior to the second, perhaps the bulk of scholarly research has been directed to the second. My interest, for the purposes of this study, however, is in the first. This study will be concerned to elucidate the phenomena of early Christian inspired speech, and the relationship between these and inspired-speech phenomena in the Graeco-Roman world.

The range of evidence within the New Testament on the topic of early Christian prophecy is wide, indeed too wide to be properly dealt with in such a study as this. I have decided to concentrate on only two aspects within this topic. I will be concerned primarily with the reports of prophecy

⁴ Works focussing on this aspect of the topic include, notably, J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, London, 1975, for our purposes especially chapters 6-9, and D. Hill, *Prophecy*, esp. chapters 4-5.

⁵ The two most notable works on this aspect of the topic of the past few years both came to print while this study was in progress. They are M.E. Boring, *Sayings of the Risen Jesus: Christian Prophecy in the Synoptic Tradition*, London, 1982, and D.E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, Grand Rapids, 1983. Naturally, both these works include substantial contributions to the study of the phenomena of early Christian prophecy, but they are both concerned with these issues fundamentally as a prelude to the task of detecting and isolating prophetic material preserved in other contexts.

and other inspired speech-forms from the Pauline correspondence and the Book of Acts, with a lesser interest in related phenomena drawn from Luke's Gospel. These two aspects have been selected because they constitute the most accessible body of explicit evidence about the topic. I am therefore concerned with prophecy within the early churches in the first fifty years or so of their existence. The self-understanding of Jesus as a prophet, the place of John the Baptist, and similar issues, will not be treated here. Nor, for other reasons, will the Revelation to John, or the Epistle to the Hebrews, though both of these have much to tell us about early Christian prophecy. The addition of these two bodies of source material would simply expand the project beyond the bounds of manageability.

Over the last thirty years and more a consensus has arisen within the work of those scholars who have set out to examine the Hellenistic evidence for parallels to the New Testament phenomena. This consensus, broadly stated, is that the inspired speech phenomena that we find within the New Testament, and the terminology that is used to describe them, can be, in many respects, closely paralleled within the world of Hellenistic popular religion. These parallels, it is suggested, help us to solve several otherwise extremely difficult exegetical puzzles within the text of the New Testament itself. The main form that this general argument takes centres on 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14, and suggests that in these chapters Paul sets out to correct ideas about the nature of glossolalia and prophecy that have their origins in the pre-Christian religious experience of the Corinthian congregation.

As I worked through the literature on this matter I became more and more convinced, on exegetical grounds, that this consensus was basically correct. However, as I turned to the primary Hellenistic evidence I began to have doubts, and these grew as my reading continued. I have now become convinced that the consensus is based on only the flimsiest of evidence, and must be abandoned, at least in its present form. It is extremely difficult to parallel many of the features of early Christian enthusiasm *at all* within Hellenistic religion and culture. Some features are, so far as I have been able to determine, unique. Certainly the differences between the two groups of phenomena are greater than the similarities. I have tried at all times to avoid overstressing the differences, and to note when they have to do with wider concerns than the "prophetic" or "inspired" phenomena themselves. For example, the differing roles of "the prophet" within Hellenistic culture and

early Christianity seem to me to have far more to do with the differences between the wider structures of those different "cultures" than with the prophetic phenomena themselves. None the less, these two sets of phenomena themselves are fundamentally different, and ought not to be confused.

1. A Note on the Evaluation of "Unique" Phenomena.

As mentioned above, at several important points in this book, the claim will be made that certain phenomena or conceptions are unique in their historical context. Such claims are not as popular as they once were among Biblical scholars. In the heady days of the "Biblical Theology" movement the claim that such and such a feature of the Biblical tradition was "unique" was often seen to imply that the feature in question, whether it were a particular view of the nature of time or of the value of historical events, or the relationship between humanity and the divine, was therefore particularly important, and likely to be of abiding value for modern questions. "Uniquely" Biblical points of view were therefore to be defended against extra-Biblical parallels, and their "loss" in the inter-Testamental period under the onslaught of Hellenisation (or earlier, under the pervasive influence of Canaanite, Mesopotamian or Iranian ideas), was to be deplored.⁶ In some cases this defence was justifiable on historical grounds (though in others it smacked of theological polemic). But is it necessarily the case that the unique is the important or the characteristic? Or that "unique" features of a phenomenon should automatically be treated as its "defining" features?

Scholars do not seem to be sure how to treat "unique" phenomena. For one thing, they are particularly vulnerable: they are the positive side of the "argument from silence", and a single clear counter-example refutes their claim. For another, the temptation to base interpretative judgements on them is strong, and the judgements may work either "for" or "against" the credibility of the phenomenon in question. As another example, we may cite the use of the "criterion of dissimilarity" in research into the question of the

⁶ Samuel Sandmel, "Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity: The Question of the Comfortable Theory", *H.U.C.A.*, vol. 50, 1979, pp. 137-148, is one who has been severely critical of such tendencies, and though I cannot agree with many of his examples, particularly those drawn from more recent research, his principal point seems to me to be well made.

reliability of the Gospel tradition.⁷ Put simply, the logical basis of this criterion is as follows: we can be more certain that a saying attributed to Jesus is actually from him if it contains ideas that are unique in their environment: that is, which cannot be found in first-century Judaism, or in the beliefs of the early churches. Put thus positively, the principle is unexceptionable. The unique becomes the (knowably) authentic. But the rigorous application of the method produces an unbalanced picture of the sayings of Jesus, which must of necessity emphasise his originality, and his lack of affinities with his environment.

On the other hand, scholars can easily treat unique phenomena only so as to do away with them, or to treat them as aberrant. At the risk of prejudicing my own case, I offer the following example: Joseph Fontenrose and others clearly distinguish between the "mantic" or prophetic frenzy and Bacchanalian frenzy.⁸ Yet in two cases known to me it is claimed that Bacchants in their frenzy give prophecies. However, since one of these cases is the highly coloured account in Livy of the suppression of the "Bacchanalian Conspiracy", and the other uses the prophecies of the Maenads simply as proof that Dionysus shares attributes with other recognised gods, and since in neither case is the prophetic side of Bacchanalian frenzy developed in any detail at all, I feel myself free to argue, along the same lines as Fontenrose, that prophetic phenomena were not a significant aspect of Dionysiac experience.⁹ In other words, the rare or unique becomes the inauthentic or the unimportant.

Too often the interpretation scholars have drawn from the claim that a phenomenon is unique has been based on personal bias rather than

⁷ For a recent critique of the use of this criterion with particular reference to the question of isolating the sayings of Christian prophets in the Synoptic tradition see J.D.G. Dunn, "Prophetic T-Sayings and the Jesus tradition: The importance of testing prophetic utterances within early Christianity", *N.T.S.*, vol. 24, 1977-78, N.B. pp. 197-198.

⁸ J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, p. 207; K. Latte, "The Coming of the Pythia", *H.Th.R.*, vol. 33, 1940, pp. 9-18.

⁹ For the full development of this case, see Chapter 6, "Glossolalia and the Cults of Dionysus and Cybele". A similar, though more clear-cut example is the one and only case known to me where the inspired speech of the Delphic prophetess is described as resembling another language. This case may be treated as exceptional and aberrant because it is so clearly treated as such by the ancient authors. See Herodotus 8.135, Plutarch, *Mor.* 412 a, *Life of Aristides* 19.1-2, Pausanias, 23.6. Again, for a full treatment of this case see Chapter 5, "Glossolalia and Hellenistic Inspiration: Delphic and Delian Apollo."

inferential logic. Let us recognise, then, that "unique" events or phenomena are, quite simply, unique. The importance of each case cannot be decided on that criterion alone. Each case will need to be judged carefully, with due regard for the limits of current knowledge (and in this study, the limits of the evidence being surveyed), and, most importantly, each case will have to be judged on its own particular merits.

2. A Note on the Evaluation of Parallels.

The enormous scholarly output of the "History of Religions School", which attempted to understand early Christianity within the broad context of the tradition of ancient religion, has often been criticised for its over-use of parallels drawn from a wide historical and cultural range.¹⁰ Yet few historians articulate the distinctions between the possible purposes of comparison, or what the proper way to use cross-cultural parallels might be. Of course the distinction between merely formal parallels and genetic parallels is usually observed,¹¹ but direct or indirect borrowing, or common origins, are not the only relationships that can lead to parallels in cultural phenomena.

The use of cultural parallels changes according to the question being asked by the historian. The historian who is inquiring about the links between early Christianity and its environment will use comparisons differently from the historian who is asking about the factors which distinguish it from that environment.¹² It is our task to avoid the effects of this problem by asking: precisely how strong are the parallels between early

¹⁰ See, for example, the comments of C.H. Dodd on the work of Reitzenstein: "... it depends on too many arbitrary assumptions. It is not too much to say that in Reitzenstein's later work much of ancient literature became one vast jig-saw puzzle, to be dissected and reassembled by methods which often had too little regard for the maxim that a chain is as strong as its weakest link." (*The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 1953, p. 121, note 3.)

¹¹ Compare the judicious comments of B.M. Metzger, "Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity", *Historical and Literary Studies, Pagan, Jewish and Christian*, Leiden, 1968, pp. 9-10.

¹² Gerd Theissen describes these two styles as "contrasting" and "analogizing" comparison, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, Edinburgh, 1982, p. 194. He emphasises that they are the opposing sides of the same comparative method, as no comparison can be exclusively "analogizing" (as that would indicate identity, not comparability) or exclusively "contrasting" (as that would exclude comparability altogether).

Christianity and its environment with regard to inspired speech? And if the parallels are strong, what do they mean?

The next question, of necessity, is: what constitutes a strong parallel? In general the following points apply. In the study of cultural phenomena, one ought to study parallels not of isolated phenomena or concepts, but of complexes of phenomena or concepts.¹³ At the level of artefacts, for example, the fact that two tribes both use a particular style of working to sharpen stone may or may not be significant. It may, for example, be dependent purely on the physical properties of the best available stone. But if both tribes use this method of stone-working on only one particular type of tool, and always in association with another particular style of decoration, then the parallel is infinitely more likely to have cultural and historical significance. At the level of concepts rather than artefacts, we should look not merely for parallel terminology, but for parallel *complexes* of terminology, and even more importantly, for parallel complexes of ideas and phenomena related to this terminology. In our particular case a close parallel in terms of inspired speech would be not merely the use of the terms for "prophecy", but the fact of similar prophetic phenomena, recognisable to members of both cultures as similar, performing similar social functions, and perhaps even understood by way of similar conceptual frameworks. The more the features of the complex of concepts and phenomena we call "prophecy" are similar, the stronger the parallel. Naturally, the value of the parallel is also affected by its proximity to the New Testament phenomena in time and space. But granting that we have a parallel, the next question must be, what does the parallel mean?

There at least three possibilities. Strong parallels can indicate that a custom or concept in two cultures has a common origin, or is borrowed by one from the other: these are genetic parallels. For very strong parallels, with, say, parallel phenomena, terminology and concepts, this is the most likely case. Alternatively, parallels can indicate common underlying patterns, otherwise obscure. Parallels in political organisation, for example, can be related to parallels in family organisation, obscured by differing terminology. In our case, parallels in inspired speech might be related to parallels at the religious level more generally. These parallels themselves would then need investigation. Finally, parallels could indicate independent

¹³ Cf. D.E. Aune, *Prophecy*, p. 17: "What must be compared are not isolated features but features considered within their structural framework."

responses to similar environmental factors, whether that environmental factor is a physical one (as in the hypothetical stone-working case above) or a cultural one. For example, the fact that different client states rebelling against the Romans tended to organise their armies according to the Roman model is not evidence of common origins. It is evidence of independent borrowing brought on by a common cultural environment, in which the success of Roman military methods was a clearly observable fact.

What we need to ask, then, is: if we do find parallels, into which of these categories (if any) do they fall? Naturally, if our parallels are judged to have failed, this will not exclude the possibility that one of the above types of relationship existed. It will merely fail to provide evidence for it.

In the survey that follows I have attempted to outline the development of scholarly views on the relationship between early Christian inspired speech and its suggested Hellenistic parallels. The aim of the survey is to show how various threads of evidence, some derived exegetically from the New Testament alone, others drawn directly from the Hellenistic context, have been combined to form a coherent hypothesis about the nature of early Christian inspired speech and, more particularly, about the dispute over inspired speech between St. Paul and his Corinthian converts. Though the major conclusions of my research are occasionally foreshadowed, I have made no attempt within the survey itself to interact with every detail of the cases presented. They are extensively treated in the chapters that follow. Issues that do require critical comment within the survey are dealt with immediately.

3. Final Note.

The portion of Chapter 5 that deals with the cult of Delphic Apollo has appeared in an earlier form in the journal *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 28, part 3, 1986, pp. 257-270, under the title "Early Christian Inspired Speech and Hellenistic Popular Religion".

In the later stages of the preparation of this thesis for presentation the major work of D.E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, came to my attention. At this point chapters 3-7 were already in virtually final form. Naturally, however, so major a contribution to the scholarly discussion could not be ignored, and I have done my best to take account of Aune's views. However, the main lines of my own research were already clear to me, and Aune's work has not affected the overall

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