

few are chosen. And sadly, even at the final wedding-supper, some shall find their way into the hall who have never seen the glory of Christ. They shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 22:11-14). May God grant us ears to hear, and eyes to see the glory of Christ.

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1 CORINTHIANS 14.20-25: PROPHECY AND  
TONGUES AS SIGNS OF GOD'S ATTITUDE

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PAUL'S instructions in 1 Cor. 14.20-25 have often seemed perplexing, primarily because he calls tongues a sign for unbelievers (vs. 22), but then seems to discourage the use of tongues when unbelievers are present (vs. 23). Similarly, he says that prophecy is for believers (vs. 22), but then encourages the use of prophecy when unbelievers are present (vss. 24-25). The entire section is further complicated by the fact that in vs. 21 Paul quotes Is. 28.11, which is itself part of a very difficult passage in the Old Testament.

The commentaries on 1 Corinthians provide a wide variety of suggested resolutions to the problem, but there is certainly no common consensus. Some commentators suggest that Paul is talking about two kinds of unbelievers, those who have heard the word of God and rejected it (vs. 22), and those who are first-time hearers or who are about to become believers (vss. 23-25).<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce says that prophecy is for believers "in the sense that it produces believers," thus making the entire passage in effect speak about unbelievers.<sup>2</sup> H. Conzelmann adds to Paul's explicit statement about tongues as a sign to unbelievers his own conviction that tongues are a sign also for believers.<sup>3</sup> C. K. Barrett, on the other hand, sees both tongues and (the Corinthian misuse of) prophecy as signs of judgment,<sup>4</sup> while R. Lenski says,

<sup>1</sup> L. Morris, 198; J. Héring (ET), 152f; S. Lewis Johnson (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*), 1254; G. G. Findlay (*Expositor's Greek Testament*), 910. (I have quoted the standard commentaries on 1 Cor. by the author's name only.)

<sup>2</sup> Bruce, 133; cf. F. Godet (ET), II, 293; perhaps F. W. Grosheide, 331; H. A. W. Meyer (ET), 326.

<sup>3</sup> Conzelmann (ET), 242. F. Fisher, 226f, follows Chrysostom (ET), 216, in saying that tongues were meant as a (positive) sign, but did not function that way in Corinth.

<sup>4</sup> Barrett, 324. Many commentators, however, do not think that Paul sees prophecy as a "sign" at all: cf. A. Robertson and A. Plummer, 317; J. Weiss, 332; H. L. Goudge, 128.

"So we see God using two signs; one of judgment for unbelievers and one of grace for believers."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps some help in understanding the passage can be given if we attempt to answer these three questions: (1) What was the meaning of the "other tongues" in Is. 28.11? (2) How does Paul's use of this OT passage relate to that original meaning? (3) In what sense are prophecies and tongues "signs"?

### 1. "Other tongues" in Is. 28.11

Is. 28.9-13, the passage in which this verse is found, is notoriously difficult, but if we begin by taking the Masoretic Text as it stands<sup>6</sup> we can make several observations, beginning with the conclusion in vs. 13 and working backwards. The term  $\text{בְּצִוְיָךְ}$ , "in order that," in vs. 13, makes it clear that when the word of the Lord comes to the Samaritans in the form "šaw lašaw . . . qaw laqaw," it will be a word of judgment. "The word of the Lord will be to them šaw lašaw, šaw lašaw, qaw laqaw, qaw laqaw ( $\text{שָׂו לָשָׂו לָשָׂו לָשָׂו לָשָׂו לָשָׂו}$ ) a little there, a little there, in order that ( $\text{בְּצִוְיָךְ}$ )<sup>7</sup> they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (Is. 28.13). That word of the Lord to them will lead to a certain result: they will start to go ( $\text{לָשָׂו}$ ) somewhere, but like a confused animal pursued by hunters they will fall and be taken. The word of the Lord thus functions as a word of judgment simply because it provides no clear guidance. With no one saying to them, "This is the way, walk in it" (Is. 30.21), the people will become easy prey for their adversaries.

But if  $\text{בְּצִוְיָךְ}$  requires this sense in vs. 13, then the strange "šaw lašaw . . . qaw laqaw" must be a set of sounds which give no coherent meaning to the hearers. Instead of being guided, they are confused by it. Now it might be a collection

<sup>5</sup> Lenski, 601; cf. C. Hodge, 295f. Among the commentators on 1 Corinthians, Lenski, is the closest to the viewpoint defended in this article.

<sup>6</sup> Paul's quotation is much closer to the MT than to the LXX here (see below).

<sup>7</sup> " $\text{בְּצִוְיָךְ}$  is always 'in order that,' never merely 'so that'" (BDB, 775). (BDB point out that sometimes in rhetorical passages it refers ironically to an unintended result of some action as if it were intended (*ibid.*), but all of the examples they cite refer to the sinful actions of foolish men, not to the words or deeds of God.)

of nonsense syllables,<sup>8</sup> but it is more probable that  $\text{שָׂו}$  and  $\text{לָשָׂו}$  are older names for the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet,  $\text{ש}$  and  $\text{ל}$ .<sup>9</sup> In that case "a little there, a little there" refers to the step by step learning process undertaken by someone who begins to learn a new language, or to a schoolmaster teaching young children to read. In either case it is a slow process, and meaningful messages certainly cannot be communicated to those who have not learned the first day's lesson, the letters of the alphabet. The word of the Lord will come to the Samaritans as sounds without meaning, as alphabet letters in a language in which they yet understand no words.

The translation "precept upon precept . . . line upon line" (RSV, KJV; cf. NASB) is very unlikely because (i) a clear and simple repetition of God's precepts assuredly would *not* cause the people to "fall backward . . . and be taken" (vs. 13); (ii)  $\text{שָׂו}$  is simply an unknown word, and is never elsewhere used of God's command (in Hos. 5.11, its only other occurrence, following the  $\text{שָׂו}$  brings judgment); (iii) while  $\text{לָשָׂו}$ , which normally means a carpenter's measuring line, is used metaphorically to speak of God's building a kingdom according to righteousness and justice (Is. 28.17), it is never used to speak specifically of a standard by which men should guide their conduct; thus, it would also require an unprecedented sense here.

Further evidence that  $\text{שָׂו}$  and  $\text{לָשָׂו}$  are not meaningful words is the fact that nowhere in Jewish written tradition has anyone hit on a correct interpretation of the terms. The LXX translators

<sup>8</sup> BDB, 875, I. In this case "a little there, a little there" would mean that they only catch a distinct syllable once in a while, or that their learning of the language is extremely slow and comes a little at a time. Against this view are (i) the symmetrical repetition of each phrase, which makes the passage seem like more than mere nonsense syllables, and (ii) the fact that  $\text{ש}$  and  $\text{ל}$  are successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

<sup>9</sup> Wm. W. Hallo, "Isaiah 28.9-13 and the Ugaritic Abecedaries," *JBL* 77 (1958), esp. pp. 337-8. Hallo notes very early evidence for an order of letters in the alphabet, but no corresponding evidence for an early and uniform set of letter names. The pattern consonant + (any) vowel would have provided an easy naming system for many letters, and is probably preserved in *waw* and *taw*, as well as in Is. 28.11, 13,  $\text{שָׂו}$  and  $\text{לָשָׂו}$ , which would then be vocalized *saw* and *qaw*. (Cf. F. Field, *Hexapla* (Oxford: 1875) II, 479-80, where later Greek transliteration shows  $\sigma\alpha\upsilon\lambda\alpha\sigma\alpha\upsilon$  and  $\kappa\alpha\upsilon\lambda\alpha\kappa\alpha\upsilon$ ).

thought וַי was וַי "tribulation, distress," and translated θλίψις, and thought וַי was related to וַיְהִי "hope," and so translated ἐλπίς. The Isaiah Targum takes וַי as "commandment," but then launches out into a discourse about the people who walk after the desire of their own soul and think that God's sanctuary is a small (cf. וַיְהִי) thing.<sup>10</sup> The Syriac Peshitta translates "filth upon filth, and filth upon filth (cf. Heb.  $\sqrt{\text{filth}}$ , "filth"), vomit upon vomit, and vomit upon vomit."<sup>11</sup> Symmachus translates ἐντολή οὐκ ἐντολή as if the text read וַי הָיָה וַי, and Theodotion follows the Peshitta with δέισαλία εἰς δέισαλιαν . . . ἐμετός εἰς ἐμετόν, "filth to filth, vomit to vomit."<sup>12</sup> The Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (1 Q Is<sup>a</sup>) has וַי לַי וַי לַי וַי לַי (changing ו to י) in both vs. 10 and vs. 13, indicating that the scribe apparently had no idea what the phrase meant.<sup>13</sup>

So taking Is. 28.13 alone, we find two possible interpretations of "şaw" and "qaw." They might be old names for alphabet letters or they might possibly be meaningless syllables repeated in a mocking, singsong manner. It does not really matter which

<sup>10</sup> J. F. Stenning, ed. and trans., *The Targum of Isaiah* (Oxford, 1949), 88.

<sup>11</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Vern Poythress for providing me with a translation from Syriac of Is. 28.9-13.

<sup>12</sup> Field, *Hexapla*, II, 479-80. Using standard indices I was unable to locate any reference to Is. 28.10 or 13 in Philo, Josephus, the Mishnah, the Babylonian Talmud, the Midrash Rabbah, or the (extra-Biblical) Dead Sea Scrolls.

<sup>13</sup> The scroll quite clearly has ו not י in all eight places (cf. M. Burrows, et al., *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery* (New Haven, 1950), Vol. I, Plate XXII). The only known meanings of ו, "ship" or "wild beast" (BDB, 850), do not fit the context, so the scribe apparently wrote without understanding the meaning. It is in fact probable that the scribe was simply copying an earlier manuscript which had ו instead of י, for the exchange of ו and י does not seem to have been a common mistake in the Isaiah Scroll (it is not listed by M. Burrows in "Variant Readings in the Isaiah Manuscript," *BASOR* 113 (Feb., 1949), 25-26). Whenever the mistake was made, it was intentional, because eight different *waws* had to be changed for *yods*. Even if one ו was accidentally changed to י no scribe would insert an unknown word ו for י in the other seven places, unless ו was also an unknown word and the scribe had no way of knowing which was correct. So at a very early date, a scribe copying Is. 28.10 and 13 did not know what ו meant. (If Hallo is right, however (see n. 9 above), this could have been another early name for the letter ו, after the pattern consonant + (any) vowel).

they are,<sup>14</sup> for in either case they function for the hearers as sounds which carry no meaning and thereby lead to judgment and destruction.

Now we can examine vss. 11-12 more closely: "For with stammering<sup>15</sup> lips and with other tongues he will speak to this people, to whom he said, 'This is rest, give rest to the weary, and this is repose,' but they were not willing to hear." Isaiah must be the speaker here, for "the people" are referred to in the third person. Thus, the unspecified subject of "he will speak" and "he said" must be the Lord. In the past (note the perfects וַיִּשְׁרַח and וַיִּנְחַם) the Lord had spoken clear and comforting words to the people. But they had stubbornly resisted his word. So as a result Isaiah says that in the future the Lord will speak unclear words "with stammering lips and other tongues," as a punishment for their hardness of heart. This future speech of punishment is thus the same as the word of the Lord in vs. 13, "şaw laşaw . . .," which brings the hearers to destruction. So the words "şaw laşaw . . . qaw laqaw" are intended by Isaiah to represent the speech of foreigners whom Isaiah's Samaritan hearers cannot understand. This still does not tell us whether the words represent nonsense syllables or alphabet letters (the Samaritan hearers, like children, would only distinguish occasional letters, not meaningful words), but the intention to represent foreign speech is clear enough. The "stammering lips" and "other tongues" are the lips and tongues of foreign (Assyrian) invaders, whom the Samaritans will not understand.

Verses 9 and 10 remain difficult. Do they represent the words of Isaiah's hearers, who scoff (cf. vs. 22) and mimic his messages as if they were lessons for young children? Or are they the rhetorical question asked and answered by Isaiah himself: "To whom will the Lord teach knowledge, and to whom will he interpret the message? To young children in the next generation, who must learn a foreign language from the beginning. For it will be şaw laşaw . . ."? The former interpretation requires less to be read into the text, and is preferable. Such a view allows Derek Kidner to paraphrase 9-13, "Make nonsense

<sup>14</sup> In fact Paul himself probably did not know what the words meant, since Jewish tradition seems to have lost their meaning long before the first century A.D.

<sup>15</sup> Or "mocking, scornful" (וַיִּשְׁרַח; LXX φαυλισμόν).

of God's sense, and you will get your fill of it from Assyria."<sup>16</sup> But on either view, vss. 9-10 simply serve as a prologue to introduce vss. 11-13, whose meaning remains the same.

So the "other tongues" in Is. 28.11 are Isaiah's prediction of the foreign speech which the Lord would bring to the Samaritans by way of punishment<sup>17</sup> for their stubborn refusal to hear and obey his words.

## 2. Paul's use of Is. 28.11

Paul's quotation of this verse is quite free, but not foreign to the context. He writes, ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται ὅτι ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χεῖλεσιν ἑτέρων λαλήσω τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ, καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος. ὥστε αἱ γλώσσαι εἰς σημεῖόν εἰσιν οὐ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀπίστοις, ἡ δὲ προφητεία οὐ τοῖς ἀπίστοις ἀλλὰ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. (1 Cor. 14.21-22). His λαλήσω τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ, "I will speak to this people," aligns him with the MT (where the Lord is clearly the speaker), but not with the LXX (which has ὅτι λαλήσουσι τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ, "for they shall speak to this people").<sup>18</sup> He omits, "To whom he said, 'This is rest, give rest to the weary, and this is repose,'" and therefore changes the perfect "they would not hear" to a future, "they will not hear." Thus it has reference not to past stubbornness but to a future refusal to hear the speech in foreign tongues.<sup>19</sup> Paul further departs from the LXX, which used ἀκούειν for ἰδοῦν, and uses εἰσακούσονται instead. The nuance is different, for εἰσακούω means "hear and respond; obey; heed."<sup>20</sup> Οὐδ' οὕτως here means "not even so," "not even in that

<sup>16</sup> Derek Kidner, "Isaiah," *The New Bible Commentary, Revised* (London, 1970), 606.

<sup>17</sup> Invaders who speak a foreign language are seen as God's punishment to his disobedient people also in Dt. 28.49 ("The Lord will bring a nation against you . . . whose language (ἰδοῦν) you do not understand") and Jer. 5.15 ("I am bringing upon you . . . a nation whose language (ἰδοῦν) you do not know, nor can you understand what they say").

<sup>18</sup> "The apostle's knowledge of the original has enabled him to improve upon the faulty rendering of the LXX," H. B. Swete, *Introduction to the OT in Greek* (Cambridge, 1902), 402.

<sup>19</sup> This might be a further application drawn by Paul himself, or it might simply be based on an inference from Is. 28.13 where the result of the foreign speech is not repentance and obedience but destruction.

<sup>20</sup> Εἰσακούω in the NT is used four times of God's answering prayer

case," or "not even then" (cf. Mk. 14.59; Bl.-D., §455, 2): not even when they hear foreign speech coming as punishment will they obey the Lord. We can translate, "'With other tongues and with other lips I will speak to this people, and not even then will they obey me,' says the Lord."<sup>21</sup> Paul understands very well that when God speaks to people in a language they cannot understand, it is a form of punishment for unbelief. Incomprehensible speech will not guide but confuse and lead to destruction. And it is one of the last in a series of divine rebukes, none of which have produced the desired repentance and obedience ("and not even then will they obey me"). So Derek Kidner, commenting on Is. 28, can say, "Paul's quotation of v. 11 in 1 Cor. 14.21 is thus a reminder, true to this context, that unknown tongues are not God's greeting to a believing congregation but His rebuke to an unbelieving one."<sup>22</sup>

## 3. Prophecy and tongues as signs

Paul interprets his quotation of Is. 28.11, "Therefore (ὥστε) tongues are a sign not for believers" (vs. 22). There is no need to translate αἱ γλώσσαι εἰς σημεῖον εἰσιν as "tongues are for a sign" (KJV, NASB), or even "tongues are intended as a sign"

(Mt. 6.7, Lk. 1.13, Ac. 10.31, Heb. 5.7), and only here of men's obedience. But it commonly translates ἰσχυρῶς in the OT with the sense "heed, obey" (Dt. 1.43, 9.23, etc.; cf. 1 Cl. 8.4).

<sup>21</sup> Paul's introductory formula ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται ὅτι simply shows that it is an OT quotation, and so γέγει κύριος is necessary to specify the speaker (*contra* E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1957), 107-112. Apparently Aquila produced a translation from the MT very similar to Paul's, for Origen says, "The prophecy of Isaiah is called 'law' by the Apostle, who tell us, 'In the law it is written, By men of strange tongues, and by the lips of strangers will I speak unto this people; and not even then will they hear me, saith the Lord'; and this is in effect what I found in Aquila's translation" (εὗρον γὰρ τὰ ἰσοδυναμοῦντα τῇ λέξει ταύτῃ ἐν τῇ τοῦ Ἀκύλου ἐρμηνείᾳ κείμενα). (Origen, *Philocalia* 9.2; text in J. A. Robinson, ed., *The Philocalia of Origen* (Cambridge, 1893), 55; ET in Geo. Lewis, *The Philocalia of Origen* (Edinburgh, 1911), 48-49.) The meaning seems to be, "This is indeed a quotation from Isaiah, for (γὰρ) I found a reading with the same force in Aquila's translation."

<sup>22</sup> Kidner, "Isaiah," 606. Is. 28.11 is quoted at Qumran to apply to false prophets who apparently spoke another language (1 QH 4.16-17). Here also the speech in other tongues is not a blessing but a curse.

(NEB), because εἰς + accusative often can replace a predicate nominative with no real change in meaning.<sup>23</sup> Paul simply says, "Tongues are a sign."

The second half of vs. 22 should be translated, "but prophecy is a sign, not to unbelievers but to believers," because of the following reasons: (i) The clear parallelism in the verse makes this the most natural reading, so that the reader automatically supplies εἰς σημεῖον ἐστίν: ὥστε αἱ γλώσσαι εἰς σημεῖον εἰσιν οὐ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀπίστοις ἢ δὲ προφητεία οὐ τοῖς ἀπίστοις ἀλλὰ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

(ii) On this view the δὲ has a very clear adversative function, and the two clauses form a symmetrical balance of equal but

<sup>23</sup> Cf. AG 229, 8a. This use of εἰς + acc. is most common with εἰμι and γίνομαι. In Lk. 13.19, where the mustard seed grew and became a great tree, p<sup>48</sup> p<sup>75</sup> \* A B have ἐγένετο εἰς δένδρον but D has simply ἐγένετο δένδρον. The parallel in Mt. 13.32 reads γίνεται δένδρον. In 1 Cor. 15.45, the first man Adam ἐλένετο . . . εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, and the last Adam εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν. In Lk. 3.5 (quoting Is. 40.4), the rough places shall be smooth roads (ἐσονταὶ αἱ τραχεῖαι εἰς ὁδοὺς λείας). Cf. also Heb. 1.5 and 2 Cor. 6.18 (2 Sam. [2K.] 7. 14), Heb. 8.10 (Jer. 31.32), Mt. 19.5, Eph. 5.31, 1 Cor. 6.16 (Gen. 2.24), 1 Jn. 5.8. Several of these are LXX quotations which reflect the Heb. הַיְיָ (Gen. 2.7, etc.; BDB 226, 2 e-g.), and indeed the construction is very common in the LXX (Gen. 9.13, Wisd. 14.11, 1 Macc. 1.36, Judith 5.10, 21, 24 etc.). But the LXX can also translate הַיְיָ as εἰμι without εἰς (Ex. 13.9, Dt. 28.46, Is. 8.18B) or put εἰς where there is no הַיְיָ (Is. 20.3B). So the translations "for a sign" and "intended as a sign," while grammatically acceptable as a use of εἰς (Mt. 21.46, Ac. 7.21, 13.22, 47, Wisd. 2.16; cf. Moule, *Idiom Book*, 70; but not usually (not ever?) with εἰμι or γίνομαι), are unnecessarily complicated for 1 Cor. 14.22, and are contrary to the other examples of εἰμι (or γίνομαι + accusative. (B1.-D. §145[1] differ, but with no convincing examples.)

It is interesting that εἰς σημεῖον is not used in the LXX to refer to what might be called extraordinary or "miraculous" signs (except Num. 17.10 (25) A, Is. 55.13, perhaps Is. 8.18 \* A). However, this is not an indication that εἰς σημεῖον means "non-miraculous sign" while σημεῖον alone means "miraculous sign" (σημεῖον and εἰς σημεῖον are used interchangeably of the same phenomenon in Gen. 9.12, 13, 17; cf. Num. 17.10 [25] where A has εἰς but \*B omit it, similarly Is. 8.18, 20.3; also, σημεῖον alone is used of "non-miraculous" signs in Ex. 3.12, 13.19, 31.13, 17, Dt. 28.46, 1 K. [1 Sam.] 2.34, 10.1, 14.10, 4 K. (2 K.) 19.29, Is. 37.30, Jer. 51 (44).29). Rather, this is simply a function of the grammar: there usually is no need to say of an obvious miracle, "This is a sign," but it is often necessary to say that about some ordinary event which is to be a sign.

contrasting ideas. With the major alternative view, understanding the datives as simple datives of advantage without an elliptical εἰς σημεῖον, the sentence deals with two quite distinct topics: in part one, Paul discusses signs, but in part two, he discusses the proper beneficiaries of a particular gift. (So the KJV reads, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe," and the NEB has, "Clearly then these strange tongues are not intended as a sign for believers, but for unbelievers, whereas prophecy is *designed* not for unbelievers but for those who hold the faith.") It is necessary to import some idea into the second half of the verse on any reading, but the most natural one, and the one which provides the most clear contrast, is the idea of "sign" which lies so close at hand in the first half of the verse.

(iii) To say (with the KJV and NEB) that prophecy is designed for believers but not for unbelievers does not adequately explain the "therefore," with which Paul introduces vs. 23-25. In those verses Paul argues specifically that prophecy *does* have a positive function for unbelievers. But this reading would make Paul's argument become:

(a) Prophecy is designed not for unbelievers but for believers;

(b) therefore, you should prophesy to unbelievers. Such reasoning simply does not make sense, and a better solution is required.

(iv) The LXX meaning of σημεῖον fits exactly the idea that tongues are a sign to unbelievers but prophecy is a sign to believers, and such a view is confirmed by the meaning of vs. 25. In order to demonstrate that this is so, we now turn to an examination of the term σημεῖον in the LXX.

In the LXX, σημεῖον can often mean "an indication of God's attitude." These indications are either positive or negative: positive toward those who believe and obey God, but negative toward those who disbelieve and disobey him. Many signs are entirely positive: the rainbow (Gen. 9.12, 13, 14), the blood on the doorpost (Ex. 12.13), the invitation of the Philistines (1 Kgs. [1 Sam.] 14.10), the mark on the forehead (Ezk. 9.4, 6), or any other signs sought by people who feel forsaken by God (Ps. 73 [74].9, 85 [86].17) (cf. also Gen. 17.11, LXX Est. 10.3, 2 Macc. 6.13). Other signs are entirely negative, since

they show God's disapproval and warn of judgment unless repentance is quickly forthcoming: Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num. 26.10), the bronze censers of these men (Num. 16.38 (17.3); cf. vs. 40), Aaron's rod (Num. 17.10 [25]), the fulfilled curses (Dt. 28.46), the defeat of Pharaoh Hophra (Jer. 51 [44].29), and Ezekiel's iron wall (Ezk. 4.3) (cf. also Ps. 64 [65].8, Is. 20.3 B, 2 Macc. 15.35). But sometimes the term can be used of signs which are both positive and negative, indicating God's approval and blessing on his people and his disapproval and warning of judgment toward those who are disobeying him. This is especially true of the events of the Exodus: when God sent a plague of flies on the Egyptians but kept the flies out of the land of Goshen, it was a sign (σημείον, Ex. 5.23 A; Heb. [vs. 19]: תִּיָּבָה) of blessing to Israel but disapproval and warning to the Egyptians. The same signs and wonders can be negative signs to Pharaoh (Ex. 10.1-2, 11.9-10; Dt. 6.22, 11.3, Neh. 9.10) but positive signs to Israel (Dt. 4.34-35, 6.22, 7.19, 26.8; cf. also Num. 14.11, Dt. 29.3; [2] on the refusal of Israel to believe these positive signs) (cf. Ex. 7.3, Dt. 34.11, Josh. 24.5A, Ps. 77 (78).43, 104 (105).27, 134 (135).9, Jer. 39 (32).20-21, Wisd. 10.16, Sir. 45.3, Bar. 2.11). So σημεῖον, when used to mean "an indication of God's attitude," can take either a positive or negative sense.<sup>24</sup>

Also in the NT, σημεῖον can mean "an indication of God's approval and blessing" (Ac. 2.22, 43, 4.30, 5.12, 6.8, 8.6 [cf. vs. 8], 15.12, Lk. 2.34, Jn. 2.11, 4.54, 9.16; cf. Barn. 4.14, 1 Cl. 51.5) or "an indication of God's disapproval and a warning of judgment" (Lk. 11.30, 21.11, 25, Ac. 2.19; perhaps Mt. 12.39 [cf. vs. 41], 16.4; cf. 1 Cl. 11.2).

So when Paul says "tongues are a sign not to believers but to unbelievers" he is using σημεῖον in a familiar and well-established sense. Toward those who disbelieve, signs as indications of God's attitude in the OT are always negative. They indicate God's disapproval and carry a warning of judgment. This was precisely the function of the "other tongues" in Is. 28.11 and Paul quite naturally applies the term σημεῖον to them.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> תִּיָּבָה as a divine warning also occurs at 1 QH 15.20.

<sup>25</sup> J. P. M. Sweet, "A Sign for Unbelievers: Paul's Attitude to Glosso-lalia," *NTS* 13 (1966-67), 240-57, rightly understands Paul in vs. 22 to be saying that according to the OT the sign value of tongues is as a

But signs for those who believe and obey God in the OT are generally positive. They indicate God's presence and power among his people to bless them. Thus Paul can quite easily apply the term to prophecy in a positive sense: prophecy is an indication of God's approval and blessing on the congregation because it shows that God is actively present in the assembled church.<sup>26</sup>

This means that the οὖν, "therefore," in vs. 23 is quite natural. We can paraphrase Paul's thought as follows: "When God speaks to people in a language they cannot understand, it signifies his anger and results in their turning farther away from him. Therefore (οὖν, vs. 23), if outsiders<sup>27</sup> or unbelievers come in and you speak in a language they cannot understand, you will simply drive them away. This is the inevitable result of incomprehensible speech. Furthermore, in your childish way of acting (vs. 20)<sup>28</sup> you will be giving a "sign" to the unbelievers which

sign against unbelievers, not for believers (p. 244). I agree with his view that Paul did not oppose tongues completely, but only the Corinthians' overestimate of them. However, his suggestion that the Cephas party was responsible for the great demand for tongues at Corinth (p. 246f), while interesting, does not seem necessary: a more likely explanation is that the sinful pride of the Corinthian Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 1.30, 3.21, 4.7, 18-19, 5.6, 8.1-2, 12.21-24, 13.4) quite naturally found expression in the gift which was the most unusual and noticeable in public worship.

James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London, 1975), 231, also sees σημεῖον in 1 Cor. 14.20-25 as a sign of God's attitude.

<sup>26</sup> In the OT it is a sign of God's judgment on the people when prophecy is taken away (Ps. 74.9, Is. 29.10, Lam. 2.9, Mic. 3.6), whereas the gift of prophecy is counted such a blessing that in Am. 2.10-11 it is listed alongside the Exodus as an outstanding gift of God.

In the extra-biblical literature the presence of prophecy is also seen to indicate God's favor (both for the congregation and for the individual), but its absence his displeasure (especially on the people as a whole): cf. Mekilta, Pisha 1.165-66 (Lauterbach, I, 15), Jos. A. 8.296, T. Ps. -Jon. to Ex. 33.16, b. Sanh. 11a, Num. R. 20.2, b. Sanh. 39b, b. Pes. 66b, b. Shab. 92a, b. Suk. 28a, b. B. B. 134a, b. Ned. 38a, Num. R. 13.9, Eccl. R. on 1.8, sec. 6, Philo, *Quis Her.* 249; cf. J. Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature* (London, 1912), 243, 248-49.

<sup>27</sup> AG, p. 371 hold that the ἰδιώτης here is more than an unbeliever but less than a member, but it is more likely simply a synonym for ἄπιστος cf. H. Schlier, *TDNT* III, 217 and Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 243.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jer. 4.22, where the Lord says his people are "stupid children . . . skilled in doing evil."

is entirely wrong, because their hardness of heart has not reached the point where they deserve that severe sign of judgment.<sup>29</sup> So when you come together (vs. 26), if anyone speaks in a tongue, be sure someone interprets (vs. 27); otherwise, the tongue-speaker should be quiet in the church (vs. 29)."

Similarly with prophecy, vss. 24–25 follow quite easily from the statement in vs. 22 that prophecy is a sign to believers. Once again we paraphrase: "Prophecy is an indication of God's presence among the congregation to bless it (vs. 22). Therefore (οὖν, vs. 23), if an outsider comes in and everyone prophesies (vs. 24), you will be speaking about the secrets of the outsider's heart which he thought no one knew. He will realize that these prophecies must be the result of God's working, and he will fall on his face and declare, 'Truly God is among you' (vs. 25). In this way prophecy will be a sure sign to you that God really is at work in your midst."

It might be objected that this interpretation makes ἀπίστος means "hardened unbeliever" in vs. 22 but "interested unbeliever" in vss. 23–24. This objection is not really accurate, because ἄπιστος must mean simply "unbeliever" (of whatever type) in both places. In fact, if it did not refer to all unbelievers in vs. 22, Paul's argument would not hold together. In vss. 21–22 Paul argues that when tongues have been used against unbelievers they have been a very severe and perhaps final indication of God's displeasure,<sup>30</sup> and they have resulted in further turning from God. On the basis of that historical example, Paul then cautions the Corinthians not to use tongues in the presence of unbelievers, lest the same thing happen (vs. 23). So Paul is saying that against even *interested* unbelievers, tongues would function as an indication of God's disapproval and would bring punishment. Tongues, according to vs. 23, would be a σημεῖον

<sup>29</sup> A similar mistaken eagerness to speak nonsense to unbelievers is demonstrated by the author of *Hermas* in *Vis.* 1.4.2, where the understandable part of the ancient lady's message was said to be for the righteous, but the earlier part which could not be understood was "for the heathen and the apostates."

<sup>30</sup> The "other tongues" in vs. 21 are seen by Paul as one of the last in a series of increasingly severe rebukes from God, as is clear from the context of Is. 28.11, where Isaiah speaks to those who had persistently rejected his message, and from the οὐδ' οὕτως, "not even then," of vs. 21, by which it is implied that other, earlier rebukes had also failed.

τοῖς ἀπίστοις not only for hardened unbelievers but also for visitors to the Corinthian church, and as such, it would be so wrong to use it that Paul must carefully caution against it. Therefore, ἀπίστοις in vs. 22 must refer to unbelievers generally, even though the specific example in vs. 21 deals with hardened unbelievers in particular.

It should also be noted here that Paul's reaction to this recognition of the sign function of tongues is not to forbid tongues in public worship, but to regulate the use of tongues so that they will always be interpreted when spoken in public (vss. 27–28). This seems to be a very appropriate response, for it is only *incomprehensible* tongues which have this negative function toward unbelievers, both in Is. 28.11 and in 1 Cor. 14.23. But when a speech in tongues is interpreted, it is no longer incomprehensible and it no longer retains this ominous sign function.

Therefore, it is important to realize that in 1 Cor. 14.20–23 Paul is not talking about the function of tongues in general but only about the negative result of one particular abuse of tongues,<sup>31</sup> namely, the abuse of speaking in public without an interpreter (and probably speaking more than one at a time [cf. vss. 23, 27]) so that it all became a scene of unedifying confusion. Concerning the proper public function of the use of tongues plus interpretation, or the proper private function of speaking in tongues, Paul is elsewhere quite positive (12.10–11, 21–22, 14.4, 5, 18, 26–28, 39). So to use Paul's discussion of an *abuse* of tongues in 14.20–23 as the basis for a general polemic against all other (acceptable) uses of tongues is quite contrary to the entire context in 1 Cor. 12–14.

Returning now to a consideration of prophecy, we are in a position to understand vss. 24–25 more clearly. "If you all prophesy" in vs. 24 is probably to be understood as a hypothetical situation which Paul need not have thought would ever actually occur (μὴ πάντες προφήται; , 12.29). Nevertheless, if

<sup>31</sup> This crucial point is overlooked by O. Palmer Robertson, "Tongues: Sign of Convenantial Curse and Blessing," *WTJ* 38 (1975–76), 43–53. Neither Robertson nor Zane Hodges, "The Purpose of Tongues," *Bib. Sac.* 120 (1963), 226–33, adequately takes account of the fact that at Corinth any unbeliever who entered, whether Jew or Gentile, would not understand what was spoken in tongues (14.2, 9, 11, 16, 19, 23, 28): Paul's whole concern in ch. 14 is to contrast intelligible with unintelligible speech.

several people prophesy the outsider is "convicted" (ἐλέγχεται) of sin and "called to account" (ἀνακρίνεται)<sup>32</sup> by several different people (vs. 24), presumably in different ways or with respect to different matters. In this way the secret sins of his heart are "disclosed" (φανερὰ γίνεται, vs. 25). Although vs. 24 might simply mean that the outsider hears some general prophecy or preaching and is inwardly convicted of his sin, vs. 25 must mean that specific mention of one or more of his particular, individual sins is made in the prophecies<sup>33</sup> (although the prophets and the congregation may or may not know to whom their words apply; cf. 1 Pet. 1.11, Ac. 2.30, 21.11 ?). This is true because (i) φανερός (18 times) and φανερόω (49 times) in the NT always refer to a public, external manifestation, and are never used of private or secret communication of information or of the internal working of God in a person's mind or heart,<sup>34</sup> and (ii) the reaction of the outsider — "falling on his face he will worship God, declaring, 'Truly God is among you' " — is not normally one that accompanies even good preaching, but Paul seems quite sure that it will happen. Now Paul might have thought this would happen occasionally with a mention of general

Robertson argues that tongues were a sign of the transition between God's dealing with Israel and his dealing with all nations. That might possibly be true in some contexts (Ac. 2 ?), but it is totally foreign to the context of 1 Cor. 12-14, where Paul makes no mention of the Gentile inclusion or of judgment on the Jews. In the absence of any specific application of 1 Cor. 14.21 by Paul to Jews, it is much more likely that Paul is using Is. 28.11-12 not in a predictive sense (with reference to Jews) but in an illustrative sense (with reference to all unbelievers).

<sup>32</sup> AG, 56, 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Contra* U. Müller, *Prophetie und Predigt im Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh, 1975), 25, n. 25.

<sup>34</sup> The "manifestation" indicated by these words is always public, something to be seen and known by all observers (cf. Ac. 4.16, Mt. 6.14, Phil. 1.13, 1 Tim. 4.15; Jn. 3.21, Rom. 1.19, Eph. 5.13, 1 Pet. 5.4; Cf. also E. Burton, *Galatians*, 433ff). The only possible exception to this statement is Mt. 1.20, but even here, within the context of the dream, the manifestation is external to Joseph and thereby "public"; it is not (in the dream) seen merely as an idea in his mind.

D. Lührmann, *Das Offenbarungsverständnis bei Paulus und in paulinischen Gemeinden* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1965), 38, fails to distinguish ἀποκαλύπτω from φανερόω and therefore wrongly sees 1 Cor. 14.30 as a reference to all gifts, after the pattern of 1 Cor. 12.7.

kinds of sins, but his statement (if it applies to every situation like this) is more understandable if he thought the prophecies would contain something very striking and unusual, such as specific mention of the visitor's sins. The visitor will think that these Christians know things that could only have been revealed to them by God: they know the secrets of his heart. It seems to be the fact of knowledge acquired by "supernatural" means, not merely the conviction of sin, which effectively convinces the outsider of God's presence.<sup>35</sup>

That is why it is prophecy (rather than some other gift) which Paul calls a "sign to believers." The distinctiveness of prophecy is that it must be based on a revelation (1 Cor. 14.29), and a revelation (ἀποκάλυψις) as it functions in prophecy is always something which, according to Paul, comes spontaneously (as in 1 Cor. 14.29) and comes only from God.<sup>36</sup> Where there is prophecy, then, it is an unmistakable sign or indication of God's presence and blessing on the congregation — it is a "sign for believers" — and even an outsider who visits will be able to recognize this.

If the preceding analysis is correct, 1 Cor. 14.20-25 can be understood as a reasonable and consistent statement by Paul: Uninterpreted tongues are a sign to unbelievers of God's displeasure and impending judgment (vss. 21-22a), and Paul, not wanting the Corinthians to give unbelievers this sign, discourages the childish (vs. 20) use of uninterpreted tongues in the Corinthian church meeting (vs. 23). Prophecy, however, is a

<sup>35</sup> A close parallel to 1 Cor. 14.25 is found in Dan. 2.46-47, where Nebuchadnezzar falls on his face and confesses that Daniel's God is the true God because Daniel has been able to reveal the mystery of the king's dream. In Sir. 1.30 it is the Lord who will reveal the secrets of the arrogant man and cast him down "in the midst of the congregation." (Cf. also Jn. 4.19, Ac. 5.1-11; E. Best, "Prophets and Preachers," *SJT* 12 (1959), 146).

<sup>36</sup> Ἀποκαλύπτω occurs 26 times in the NT, and ἀποκάλυψις 18 times. Neither one is ever used to speak of human activity or communication (for which γνωρίζω is often used, especially in Paul). A "revelation" is always given by the activity of God (Mt. 11.25, 16.17, Gal. 1.16, Phil. 3.5), of Christ (Mt. 11.27, Gal. 1.12), or of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2.10, Eph. 3.5), or is a result of events brought about directly by them (especially the Parousia: Rom. 2.5, 8.9, 1 Cor. 1.7, 1 Pet. 1.7, etc.). In 1 Cor. 2.8-10 there is a contrast between human means of getting knowledge and revelation from God.



clear sign of God's presence with and blessing on believers (vs. 22b), and so Paul naturally encourages its use when unbelievers are present, in order that they may see this sign and thereby come to Christian faith (vss. 24-25).

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A CRITIQUE OF W. N. PICKERING'S *THE  
IDENTITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT*  
*A Review Article*

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IN recent years there has been a revival at the popular level of an advocacy of the *Textus Receptus* and the King James Version. Much of this is simply the rhetoric of misinformed fundamentalism, although it has recently found some cohesive visibility by the formation of the (tax-exempt) Dean Burgon Society.<sup>1</sup> An attempt at a more informed defense of this text has been offered by Zane Hodges of Dallas Seminary, although it is not the TR *per se* but rather the Majority text (= the Byzantine text-type) that he has advocated. More recently one of Hodges' students, W. N. Pickering, has published a monograph which spells out this position in some detail.<sup>2</sup> Since this book is apparently having considerable influence among translators in the Third World, not to mention the American Bible belt, and since the arguments of this book may appear convincing to the non-expert, I offer the following critique to show why the book offers no serious challenge to textual studies.

It should be noted at the outset that the book suffers on page after page from misrepresentations of scholarly research, the use of rhetoric in the place of argument, and an apparent lack of first-hand acquaintance with much of the primary data. It is tempting in such a case to go through the book *seriatem* and to point out its many errors, hoping that the cumulative effect of such a display will tell its own story. However, I shall limit myself here to three of the more substantial matters, which taken together seem totally to negate Pickering's arguments: (1) his understanding of text critical methodology; (2) his understanding of the causes of textual corruption; (3) his un-

<sup>1</sup> This "Society" was formed in Philadelphia, November 3-4, 1978, and publishes a newsletter, "The Dean Burgon News," beginning January, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville: Nelson, 1977).