support. Witherington summarizes well on their importance:

> One gets the impression they were two of Paul's closest and most reliable workers, and it is likely they were involved in a wide range of activities from providing hospitality for Paul to church planting, to teaching and preaching (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; and Acts 18:1-3, 26-28). Clearly they were a major factor in the Gentile mission.[48]

To conclude, one can confidently state that this Christian couple had a long and distinguished service in the mission work of the first century. While in many ways their paths, their work, and even their mission activities closely resemble Paul's, there is a notable difference. Apart from which one is named first, the fact is they are always named together. Whereas Paul did his evangelistic work as a single person, they did theirs as married people. In so doing they had the additional benefit to the Christian mission of providing a meeting place through their house (into which they invited Gentiles). In this way also, they provide a cameo glimpse of the work of other Christians who also established and nurtured churches, Christians whose names remain unknown, but to whom, as Priscilla and Aquila, Gentile Christians are indebted even today.

[48]Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Church,* 114. Schumacher, *Theologie und Glaube* (1920): 98, insists that Priscilla's teaching was unoffical, private and not ministerial, since women could not teach in public gatherings (1 Cor 14:35 and 1 Tim 2:12). In some ways, this begs the question at issue.

Chapter Thirteen

WOMEN AND PROPHECY IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Gary Selby

One cannot read very far in the literature dealing with women in the contemporary church without encountering claims based upon the prophesying women mentioned at several points in the NT. For some, these prophetesses are an insignificant, if not an embarrassing, exception to what are otherwise viewed as clear and absolute prohibitions against all forms of public expression by women.[1] At the other extreme are those who view these women as forcing a complete reinterpretation of those very prohibitions and providing biblical evidence for free and unrestricted expression by women in the contemporary church.[2] In between are those who see in the women who prophesied some grounds for public expression, but only within very limited roles and situations.[3]

[1]See, for example, George W. Knight, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977).

[2]See John T. Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988): 311-58; Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Woman's Liberation* (Waco: Word, 1974): 169-81; and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her; A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1977).

[3]E.g., Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979): 100-28; Wayne A. Grudem, "Prophecy Yes, But Teaching—No: Paul's Consistent Advocacy of Women's Participation Without Governing Authority," *JETS* 30 (1987): 11-23; and H. Wayne House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990): 108-140.

This diversity of opinion obviously reflects differences in attitudes toward Scripture as well as the hermeneutical principles by which ancient texts are applied to current situations. However, it may also reflect divergent or incomplete understandings of what prophecy actually was in the ancient world and in the early church. While it is clear that women did prophesy in the Corinthian church, for instance, precisely what they did, how they were perceived, and under what special restrictions they worked must be understood in terms of ancient practice rather than in terms of current issues in today's churches.

1. *Backgrounds of Prophecy: An Overview*

A. *Methodological Matters*

In his summary of recent works on prophecy, Aune[4] observes that it is all too common to "regard the contribution of Greco-Roman prophetic and oracular traditions as being of little value in understanding the phenomenon of early Christian prophecy." Such neglect, according to Aune, reflects the implicit notion that whatever is distinctly Greco-Roman is somehow a corruption of the biblical norm, while continuities with the Jewish tradition indicate faithfulness to the biblical norm. The acute Hellenization of Judaism during the three centuries prior to the Christian era should be sufficient reason to avoid premature dismissal of Greco-Roman data. Hill,[5] reflecting this awareness, argues the influence of Greek ecstatic prophecy on the Corinthians.[6]

[4]David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983): 1-17.

[5]David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979): 121.

[6]J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy: A Study of the Eleventh Mandate* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), demonstrates the inroads made by Hellenistic magical divination into the Christian communities in and around Rome from the last decade of the first century to about the middle of the second.

Boring[7] reflects a similar understanding:

> It is too simple to claim that Christian prophecy is "biblical," "Israelite" or "Jewish," in contrast to "Greek" or "Hellenistic," for both these streams were complex realities, as was early Christian prophecy, and the streams did not always flow in separate channels.

B. *Prophecy in the Greco-Roman World*

The phenomenon of prophecy was widely attested in the Greek world, located, as Boring observes, "within the broad spectrum of devices by which information from the gods was transmitted and received."[8] In its earliest usage, the "prophecy" word group carried with it the idea of publicly declaring and making known[9] and to prophesy meant to be a proclaimer or an interpreter.[10] The public declaration of a divinely-received message was closely, though not always exclusively, associated with the institution known as the oracle, of which the one at Delphi was the most famous.[11]

[7]M. Eugene Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminister/Knox, 1991): 58.

[8]*Ibid.*, 49.

[9]E.g., Euripides, *Bacch.*, 211; Plato, *Resp.* 10.619c; *Leg. 9.871c.* See Helmut Krämer, "Προφήτης: A. The Word Group in Profane Greek," *TDNT,* 6.783-784.

[10]E.g., Pindar's, *Frag.* 150, invocation of the Muse: "Be thou mine oracle, and I shall be thine interpreter (προφητεύσω)." See the classic study of E. Fascher, *Προφήτης. Eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1927, augmented by H. Bacht, "Religionsgeschichtliches zum Inspirationsproblem. Die Pythischen Dialoge Plutarchs von Chäronea," *Scholastik* 17 (1942): 50-69; *idem*, "Die prophetische Inspiration in der kirchlichen Reflexion der vormontanistischen Zeit," *Scholastik* 19 (1944): 1-18; and *idem*, "Wahres und falsches Prophetentum," *Bib* 32 (1951): 237-62.

[11]For discussions of oracles in the ancient world, including others at Dodona, Ptoion, Corope, Claros, etc., see Robert Flacliere, *Greek Oracles*, (trans. D. Garman; London: Elek, 1965); H. W. Parke, *Greek Oracles* (London: Hutchinson, 1967).

There the god Apollo was believed to take possession of the priestess, called the "Pythia," inducing a trance-like state[12] in which she spoke the words of the god which were then "interpreted" by a prophet or prophetess for the inquirer.[13] Some earlier NT scholars attempted unsuccessfully to trace Christian prophecy to the oracular phenomena of classical Greek society.[14] However, although Christian prophecy cannot be equated with older forms of Greek prophecy such as the Delphic oracle,[15] the legacy of ancient oracular prophecy was significant in later Hellenistic society. Though the popularity of the Delphic oracle may have waned by the NT era,[16] such prophetesses were still frequently mentioned in writings contemporary with the NT.[17]

Classical times also witnessed wandering prophetesses called Sibyls who uttered spontaneous oracles in hexameter verse. Although the Sibyls practiced their arts centuries before the Christian era, the legends about them and the

[12]See Plato, *Phdr.* 244b, where Socrates states that the prophetess at Delphi and the priestess at Dodona "have conferred many splendid benefits upon Greece, both in private and in public affairs, but few or none when they have been in their right minds."

[13]The Pythia herself was commonly called προμάντις and only occasionally προφῆτις (see Herodotus, 6.66; 7.111, 141; Thucydides, 5.16). On this basis, Christopher Forbes, "Early Christian Inspired Speech and Hellenistic Popular Religon," *NovT* 28 (1986): 257-270, argues that the "prophet, at least at Delphi, had a separate function from the Pythia—perhaps that of interpreter or even administrator of the oracle." See also Plato, *Timaeus* 71e-72b.

[14]E.g., Hans Leisegang, *Der Heilige Geist: Das Wesen und Werden der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis in der Philosophie und Religion der Griechen* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1919).

[15]See C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1947), and Boring, *Continuing Voice of Jesus,* 48-51.

[16]E.g., Plutarch *De Pythiae oraculis* and *De defectu oraculorum,* appear to look back on a time in the past when oracle enjoyed greater prominence. Pausanias, *Phocis, Ozolian Locri* 12.11, also depicts oracles as prominent in the distant past. Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion* (New York: Harper, 1961): 124, asserts that "In the Hellenistic age the old oracles of Greece lost their popularity."

[17]See e.g., Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis.*

written oracles they left behind "were immensely popular and enjoyed excellent reputation"—even into NT times.[18] So famous were they, in fact, that even Jewish and Christian writers well into the first and second centuries mentioned the Sibyls and even quoted their prophecies.[19]

Prophecy existed in various forms in the Greco-Roman world of the NT era. 1) During the reign of Tiberius, Germanicus consulted the shrine of the Clarian Apollo,[20] and at a remote station in Britain a Tungrian cohort set up a votive inscription to the voice of the Clarian Apollo.[21] At Mt. Carmel, Vespasian received a prophecy of his coming greatness,[22] and in the shrine of the Paphian Venus Titus had his hopes confirmed.[23] Cicero[24] consulted the Pythia, as did Nero.[25] During the Hellenistic period (mid-fourth to mid-first centuries BC), the great oracle sanctuaries experienced a decline, but "the revival of oracles that began in the first century AD was just one expression of a widespread nostalgia for the past."[26] For example, the new

[18]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World,* 37. The earliest known classical reference is Heraclitus (sixth century BC), recorded in Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis* 397-99; 401; see also, Pausanius, *Phocis, Ozolian Locri* 12, and A. S. Pease "Sibylla," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press: 1970): 984.

[19]See for example, Josephus, *AJ* 1.118. References to the Sibyl by Christian authors include Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 2; *Strom.* 1.107.6; Justin Martyr, *First Apol.* 1.20; and later Lactantius *Div. Inst.* 1.6.

[20]Tacitus, *Annals* 2.54.

[21]Ludwig Friedländer, *Darstellungen aus der sittengeschichte Roms in der zeit von August bis zum ausgang der Antonine* (9th ed. by G. Wissowa; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1919): 4.469.

[22]Tacitus, *Historiarum* 2.78, who also notes that Vespasian openly kept at court an astrologer named Seleucus, whom he regarded as an oracle.

[23]Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum, Divus Titus* 5.

[24]Suetonius, *Cicero* 5.

[25]Suetonius, *Nero* 40.

[26]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity,* 51.

oracle of Asclepius in Paphlagonia achieved uncommon acceptance for its primarily medical oracles, in spite of strong criticism in which Epicureans and Christians found themselves in an uncommon alliance against pagan superstition.[27] Too, the oracles of Mopsus and Amphilochus were still flourishing.[28]

2) Independent of shrines was an eschatological prophecy, e.g., Hystaspes' (first century BC/AD) predictions of the destruction of the world followed by an age of bliss,[29] and spontaneous prophecies in Rome in response to crises.[30]

3) In another vein, Plutarch[31] mentions the entrance of a god in the manner of ventriloquists (πύθωνα; pythona) into prophets, prompting their utterances; however, these were not ventriloquists, but mediums speaking in trances with strange voices.[32]

4) In line with ancient usage, there were also prophets who did not so much predict as proclaim.[33] Philosophers

[27]Lucian of Samosata, *Alexander* 35.

[28]Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum* 414b.

[29]See J. Z. Smith, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic," *Religious Syncretism in Antiquity: Essays in Conversation with Geo Widengren* (ed. B. Pearson; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975): 131-56.

[30]See Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 55.31.2-3, regarding prophetic activity in Rome during a famine in 7 AD. Note also the prophecy of a famine by Agabus in Acts 11:27-30.

[31]Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum* 414e. See also Josephus, *Ant* 6.329.

[32]See E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1951): 71-72. Note the involuntary utterances of the slave girl with a πνεῦμα πύθωνα (spirit of divination) in Acts 16:16-18. See Mark 1:24-26; 3:11; 5:7-12, for examples of possession and involuntary speech. Early Christian fathers viewed these as demon possessed, e.g., Origen, *De principiis* 3.4-5; Jerome, *Ep. ad Avitum* 8.

[33]For discussion of "non ecstatic" uses of the term "prophecy," see Terrance Callan, "Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco-Roman Religion and in 1 Corinthians," *NovT* 27 (1985): 125-40. See also Theodore

whose principal task was teaching were sometimes called "prophets,"[34] e.g., Epicureans were referred to as προφῆται of Epicurus,[35] and Timon is called a prophet of the teaching of Pyrrho.[36] Among these wandering Hellenistic teachers was Apollonius of Tyana (3-97 AD), who principally taught Greek moral and civic virtues and only occasionally foretold the future.[37]

5) Within the mystery cults, still others prophesied in frenzied, ritualistic chants.[38] Polybius[39] mentions certain priests of Cybele who prophesied in ritualistic frenzy, foretelling Manilus Vulso's victory. Interestingly, while the Dionysiac cult at Rome was comprised largely of women, Livy depicts only men as prophesying, stating, "Men, as if insane, with fanatical tossings of their bodies, would utter prophecies."[40]

However, it was not uncommon for women to prophesy. Not only were there prophetesses in the oracular legacy[41] at Delphi, Dodona,[42] Dityma,[43] and Argos,[44] but prophetesses were still active in the later Hellenistic era at

Crone, *Early Christian Prophecy: A Study of its Origin and Function* (Baltimore: St. Mary's Univ. Press, 1973): 12, 44-45.

[34]See, among others, Lucian, *Vitarum Auctio* 8, and Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.47.

[35]Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis* 7 [397c].

[36]Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Mathematicos* 1.53

[37]Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 3.42; 4.18, 24.

[38]Livy, *Annals* 38.18.9.

[39]Polybius 21.37.5-7.

[40]Livy, *Annals* 39.13.12. See also Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 8.28, regarding an ecstatic follower of Cybele, whose prophecy is not of the future, but a confession of wrongdoing.

[41]Strabo, *Geography* 9.2.4; Pausanius 3.4.4; 10.12; Lucian, *Hermotimus* 6, all mention prophetesses.

[42]Strabo, *Geography* 9.2.4.

[43]Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 3.11.

[44]Pausanius, 2.24.1; Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 31.

certain shrines. Strabo[45] mentions current prophetesses (τὰς νῦν προφήτιδας). Plutarch[46] discusses differing influences to which such prophetesses were subjected and remarks, "the power of the spirit does not affect all persons nor the same persons always in the same way, but it only supplies an enkindling and an inception." Other prophetesses functioned apart from shrines, e.g., Martha, whose prophetic statements led to her becoming the religious advisor of Marius (second century BC).[47]

While Boring[48] cautions that NT prophecy cannot be identified with Hellenistic prophecy, Aune[49] argues that the influence of Hellenistic revelatory traditions was influential in certain components of post-apostolic Christianity. Whatever distinctions exist between Christian and Hellenistic prophecy in the NT era, it must be noted that for Christian women to be prophesying would hardly have seemed out of place in the Greco-Roman world.

C. *Prophecy in Judaism*

Unlike Greco-Roman prophecy, in which there was a continuum from the ancient period to the NT era, a discontinuity exists between OT canonical prophecy and that of the NT period. Prophecy in Judaism in the NT era seems to be understood either as belonging to the distant past or the

[45]Strabo, *Geography* 7.7.12.

[46]Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum* 437-438.

[47]Plutarch, *Caius Marius* 17.1-3.

[48]Boring, *Continuing Voice of Jesus,* 49-50, however, overstates the case in declaring that the distinctive feature of Christian prophecy was its clarity.

[49]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 17, argues correctly, "what must be compared are not isolated features but features considered within their structural framework," yet he too easily dismisses contrasts between NT and pagan prophecy as a "theologically motivated attempt to make artificial distinctions between the biblical and the non-biblical world of thought in order to focus on the theologically normative character of the former and the illegitimate nature of the latter" (21).

eschatological future.[50] Nevertheless, Christian appropriation of Hebrew Scriptures did have some influence on the understanding of prophecy in the early church,[51] but it cannot be assumed that OT prophecy is *the* direct source for the reconstruction of the characteristics of early Christian prophecy.[52]

While much divination was condemned in ancient Israel,[53] some forms of divination were approved,[54] among which was prophecy—understandable verbal messages from the supernatural world conveyed through an inspired medium. As far back as the eleventh century BC, itinerant prophets such as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha served as holy men, sages, miracle workers, and soothsayers, and frequently worked in groups.[55] In the post-exilic temple, however, prophetic guilds were no longer active.[56] From an early period, court prophets were prominent consultants to

[50]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 81.

[51]Gerhard Dautzenberg, *Urchristliche Prophetie—Ihre Erforschung, ihre Voraussetzungen im Judentum und ihre Struktur im ersten Korintherbrief* (BWANT; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1975): 303.

[52]Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus*, 58.

[53]Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10; 1 Sam 15:23; 2 Kgs 17:17; Isa 3:2; Jer 27:7; Ezek 13:6; Mic 3:11. For extensive discussions of prophecy in the OT, see Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962); Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1983); and Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1978). For a broader treatment, see John T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East* (BJS, 169; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

[54]Gen 20:3, 6-7; 37:5-11; Lev 16:7-10; Deut 33:8; Josh 7:14-15; 1 Sam 10:20-21; 19:13-16; 23:9-12; Neh 7:65; Ezek 21:21; Dan 2:1-11.

[55]1 Sam 9; 19:20, 24; 1 Kgs 17; 18:17-29; 22:5-10; 2 Kgs 1:2-17; 2:9-15; 6:1-7, 8-10, 22; 13:14-21; 20:1-11.

[56]See D. L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977): 87.

the rulers.[57] Other prophets such as Amos and Isaiah were sometimes associated with holy places, religious rituals, and priests.[58] However, such prophets often disdained connection with a royal court or the temple, preferring to remain on the periphery of Israelite society and work independently to provoke social and religious reforms, at times conflicting with priests and kings.[59]

Prophecy was understood as the result of the coming of the Spirit of God upon one (1 Sam 19:20; Isa 61:1). That this sometimes produced ecstatic experiences (1 Sam 19:24) has been a matter of some debate, but that it provided the stimulus for the prophetic utterance and endowed it with the quality of divine revelation is unquestioned. This is a hallmark of prophetic activity.

Some ancient Israelite prophecy involved a revelatory trance experience, perhaps by possession[60] or a vision.[61] Common in the ancient Near East, such trances are thought by some to have been artificially induced, perhaps by music (1 Sam 10:5), dancing (1 Kgs 18:21), flagellation (1 Kgs 18:28-29), or group excitement (1 Sam 19:20-24).[62]

[57]1 Sam 28:5-6; 2 Sam 7:4-17; 1 Kgs 20:13-15, 35-42; 22:5-6; 2 Kgs 3:11-20; 6:8-10; 13:14-19; 2 Chr 12:5-8; 15:1-7. See A. Jepsen, *Nabi: Soziologische Studien zur alttestamentlichen Literatur und Religionsgeschichte* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1934): 94-99, 152-59.

[58]Amos 7:10-13; Isa 6:1-13; Jer 5:30-31. See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (trans. J. McHugh; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961): 2.384-86. Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962): 2.58-68, holds that many psalms had a prophetic origin.

[59]R. R. Wilson, "Early Israelite Prophecy," *Int* 32 (1978): 9-10. See also R. E. Clements, *Prophecy and Covenant* (Naperville, IL: A. Allenson, 1965): 119-29.

[60]Isa 8:11; Jer 15:17; Ezek 3:14.

[61]1 Kgs 22:19-23; Amos 1:1; 7:1; Hos 12:11.

[62]See Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (2nd ed.; London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1926): 1-2.158; Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 58-59. Cf. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 86-87.

Aune,[63] among others, argues that "artificially induced ecstasy" is pejorative. Still, such trances, even if artificially induced, were regarded as legitimate by the Israelites—though this behavior was sometimes labeled as drunkenness (Isa 28:7) or madness (1 Sam 16:14-16; 18:10-11).

As Lindblom[64] observes, the OT prophets, whose authority among their people "naturally depended on the fact that they were regarded as bearers of the divine word," had as their primary function to address abandonment of "the way of the Lord." Whereas rulers reinterpreted Israelite traditions in light of changing times, the OT prophets claimed divine authority to call Israel back to the ancient ideals and traditions of the premonarchical period. Prior to the eighth century BC, prophets were basically speakers, but after that time prophetic documents, such as Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, emerged alongside prophetic speech. In addressing these concerns, it was not uncommon for a prophet to point out the inevitably tragic results of taking a course of action other than "the way of the Lord." Prophetic predictions of the future emerge from these calls to religious and social renewal.

Though conflicts sometimes arose between prophets, the real conflicts were between independent prophets and prophets in the royal courts (1 Kgs 1)—which raised the problem of "true" and "false" prophets. Criteria for judging the genuineness of a prophet involved, among other things, 1) fulfillment of prediction (Deut 18:22), 2) message of judgment against breaking the covenant with God rather than a message of salvation which ignores the breaking of the covenant (Jer 28:8-9), 3) good moral conduct (Jer 23:14).

The prophetic ministry in Israel, moreover, did not end with the deaths of the canonical prophets Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi.[65] To the contrary, prophecy continued in

[63]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 87.

[64]Lindblom, *Prophecy*, 202.

[65]This assumption is based on a handful of texts that include *1 Macc* 4:46; 9:27; 14:41; *2 Bar* 85:3; *T. Benj.* 9:2; *b. Sanhedrin*

Judaism into the later NT era, but underwent a number of changes in form and function. OT ideas of prophecy cannot be imposed uncritically upon prophecy in the NT. Still, early Christian prophecy is to be seen, in Greenspahn's words as "part of a perfectly normal and continuing religious phenomenon."[66]

Jewish views of prophecy and the Spirit of God in the past and present exhibit considerable variety. A difference is observed between canonical prophecy of the earlier period and later practice.[67] For instance, Tosephta Sotah 13:2 says, "When the last of the prophets—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—died, the holy spirit ceased in Israel. Despite this they were informed by means of oracles [*bat qol*]."[68] However, some rabbis claimed prophetic ability[69] and viewed the activity of the Spirit as continuing.[70] Philo, whose understanding of prophecy most closely resembles that of the Greek world, believed that prophecy was still available to every good Israelite.[71] Some sects, particularly

11a-b; *b. Yoma* 9b; *b. Sotah* 48b; *t. Sotah* 13.2. For two cogent presentations demonstrating the fallacy or this belief, see Fredrick E. Greenspahn, "Why Prophecy Ceased," *JBL* 108 (1989): 37-49; and Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy,* 226-280.

[66]Greenspahn, *JBL* (1989): 41. See also Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 103-106.

[67]See Otto Michel, "Spätjüdisches Prophetentum," *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann* (ed. W. Eltester; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954): 60-66.

[68]See Greenspahn, *JBL* (1989): 43.

[69]H. L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1924): 2.128.

[70]Martin Hengel, *The Zealots* (trans. D. Smith; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989): 234-35.

[71]Philo, *Div. Her.* 259. See also R. Meyer's, "Προφήτης," *TDNT,* 6.821-23, discussion of prophecy in light of Alexandrian theology. Showing the influence of Greek revelatory traditions, Philo at times depicted prophecy as an ecstatic phenomenon in which an indiviudal "truly under the control of divine inspiration has no power of apprehension when he speaks but serves as the channel for the insistent

apocalyptic or millenarian, revered the Torah, yet placed premium upon the alternative forms of revelation through both written and oral prophetic activity.[72]

Common to later Jewish prophecy is the general absence of the tendency to imitate OT prophetic formulas and speech forms.[73] Becker[74] suggests four types of prophets active in Judaism of the NT era: 1) the prophet who, continuing the OT role, is endowed with the Spirit and knows God's will apart from the law (1 Macc 4:46), 2) the political-nationalistic prophet, without an eschatological self-understanding (see Josephus, *Ant.* 13.282-83, 311-12; 15.373ff; *Bell.* 2.113),[75] 3) eschatological prophets

words of Another's prompting" (*De Spec. Leg.* 1.65). But see 4.192, where he says that "to a prophet nothing is unknown." For other discussions in Philo of prophecy as a frenzied or ecstatic phenomenon, see *Div. Her.* 249-252; 265-66). As Callan, *NovT* (1985): 125-140, esp. 133-34, has pointed out, however, Philo also recognized another type of prophecy in which the prophet spoke the words of God, but without being entranced. See *De Vit. Mos.* 2.188. In fact, Philo's belief that the entire Pentateuch consisted of oracles given through Moses (*De Vit. Mos.* 2.188), in contrast to the eight specific instances of entranced prophecy which he attributes to Moses (*De Vit. Mos.* 2.246-92), leads Callan, *NovT* (1985): 134, to conclude that Philo viewed this non-ecstatic prophecy as the more important.

[72]Jack P. Lewis, "What do we mean by Jabneh?" *JBR* 32 (1964): 125-132, has argued convincingly that the OT canon was not set by the legendary "council" of Jabneh.

[73]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Judaism*, 106, states, "the integrity of the various forms of early Jewish prophecy is revealed most clearly in its independence from OT prototypes."

[74]Jürgen Becker, *Johannes der Täufer und Jesus von Nazareth* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972): 44-60. See also Hengel, *Zealots*, 234-36.

[75]In his accounts of Jewish history, Josephus, for whom prophecy is characteristically the ability to foretell future events, mentions numerous prophets and instances of prophetic activity continuing up through the period of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. *Ant* 13.299, which attributes to Hyrcanus the "three greatest privileges, the rule of the nation, the office of high-priest, and the gift of prophecy: for the Deity was with him and enabled him to foresee and

(Theudas [Josephus, *Ant.* 20.97-98; Acts 5:36] and the Egyptian Jew [Josephus, *Bell.* 2.261ff.]; messianic prophets [Josephus, *Ant.* 18.85]); and 4) a charismatic prophet who demands repentance if Israel is to escape judgment, e.g., the Teacher of Righteousness (1*QpHab* 2:2-3; 7:4-7).[76]

Apocalypticism was widespread in Judaism of the NT era. From the early second century BC, several apocalyptic sects and movements arose within Palestinian Judaism and generated apocalypses for sympathizers who shared their eschatological orientation. A response to the insoluble problem of anxiety and helplessness permeating Palestinian Judaism due to the oppressive conditions, apocalyptic eschatology (the idea that God would intervene to bring a catastrophic end to evil) was a form of political and religious

foretell the future." Other references to prophetic activity in Josephus appear remarkably similar to that recorded in Acts 21:10-11.

[76]Of the Qumran Hymns, Millar Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1958): 381, observes that "the most distinctive individual element is the consciousness of having received a divine revelation." Further, many scholars believe that this prophetic consciousness expressed itself particularly in the form of an inspired interpretation of Scripture modeled after the example of Daniel 9:2, such as that which characterizes the Commentary on Habakkuk *QpHab*. Thus Ellis, "The Role of the Christian Prophet in Acts," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (ed. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970): 59, argues, "Without identifying themselves as prophets, the teachers at Qumran engage in an interpretation of Scripture that has as its model the activity of Daniel the prophet." See also *idem*, "Prophecy in the Early Church," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the New Testament* (Supp. vol.; ed. K. Crim; Nashville: Abingdon, 1976): 700-701, and Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran In Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981): 167-69, 213-214. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977): 199-219, sees this "inspired interpretation" as an important part of the role of the prophet in the early church. In addition to his works cited above, Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity,* 339-46, however, offers a convincing refutation of this position, going so far as to assert that "There is virtually no evidence . . . that this activity was carried out by those who were labeled 'prophets' in early Christianity."

protest. Apocalyptic visions and visionary literature emerged from the legacy of traditional Israelite prophecy.[77] Such pseudonymous documents as 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch, and the Apocalypse of Abraham, present revelatory literature through visions, woes and laments, testaments, hymns, etc. The clear pattern of correspondence between great historical acts of redemption in Israel's past and new acts anticipated in God's eschatological redemption emerged as a pattern of interpretation in apocalyptic literature.

In common with canonical prophecy, apocalypticism evidences concern for principles and values as they should work out in society, as well as concern for God's judgment when those matters are ignored. A major distinction between OT prophecy and apocalyptic is that the former stressed repentance in view of imminent judgment, whereas the latter offered no conditional aspect but only a predetermined verdict of God.[78] Prophetic leaders, sometimes called "messiahs," who might arise in this connection were thought to have been selected by God and given supernatural powers to bring about the eschatological rule of God.[79]

One aspect of eschatological deliverance is messianic. The Davidic messiah of popular expectation was thought to be a military figure whose task was to defeat the oppressors and to restore Israel. This human, Davidic messiah whose work was principally militaristic and political is not separable from the transcendental, eschatological figure commonly called the "Son of man."[80] Along with this figure, there was

[77]Richard A. Horsley with John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985): 151.

[78]John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1992): 17, rightly states that concentration on eschatological aspects of apocalyptic distorts important emphases on cosmological concerns.

[79]See Joseph Bonsirven, *Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Christ* (trans. W. Wolf; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965): 172-225.

[80]The enigmatic "Son of man" has been variously understood. See Matthew Black, "Jesus and the Son of Man," *JSNT* 1 (1978): 4-17;

expected a returning Elijah as an eschatological prophet (Sir 48:1-14, based on Mal 4:5-6 [MT 3:23-24]); see 4 Ezra 6:26) who would be a forerunner of the messiah (1 En 90:31=Enoch). Also expected was an eschatological "prophet like Moses" (based on Deut 18:15; see 1*QS* 9:10-12 and 4*QTestim* 1-20) who would combine the roles of redeemer, prophet, interpreter of Torah, wonder worker, and sufferer.[81] Leaders of revolutionary movements who maintained a close connection with the wilderness yet swayed large crowds with ideas of liberation were often called prophets.[82] Josephus, *Bell* 2:259, even mentions "false prophets" who provoked insurrections among the people.[83] Too, charismatic leaders in Jewish millenarian movements were regarded as prophets (e.g., Bar Kochba). So, various prophetic types, quite unlike the OT prophets, were active and expected in Judaism of the NT era.

In the Jewish prophetic tradition, as in the Greek world, a woman exercising the gift of prophecy would not have been unheard of or out of place. The canonical Scriptures apply the title "prophetess" to five women: Miriam (Exod 15:20); Deborah (Judg 4:4); Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chron 34:22-28); Noadiah (Neh 6:14); the wife of Isaiah

idem, "Aramaic *bar nasha* and the Son of Man," *ET* 95 (1984): 200-06; James H. Charlesworth, "From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology: Some Caveats and Perspectives," *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (ed. J. Neusner, W. S. Green, and E. Frerichs; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987): 237-41; Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* (WUNT, 38; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986). Alternatively, Geza Vermes, "The Present State of the Son of Man Debate," *JJS* 29 (1978): 121-43; Barnabas Lindars, *Jesus, Son of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); and Maurice Casey, "Method in Our Madness, and Madness in Their Methods: Some Approaches to the Son of Man in Recent Scholarship," *JSNT* 42 (1991): 17-43.

[81]With Meyer, "Προφήτης," *TDNT*, 6.826. Cf. Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 149.

[82]P. W. Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets—AD 40-70—Their Intentions and Origin," *NTS* 27 (1981): 679-697.

[83]See also Josephus, *Ant.* 18.85-87; 20.97-98, 169-71.

(Isa 8:3).[84] Though their numbers are not great, each is mentioned without hesitation or further explanation, indicating that their existence and ministries posed no problems for either the biblical writers or their audiences.

Non-canonical Jewish writings mention Jewish women in similar kinds of prophetic activity.[85] The Babylonian Talmud recognizes seven women who prophesied to Israel: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Anna, Abigail, Huldah, and Esther.[86] Targum Judg 5:9 likewise records that the prophetess Deborah, under prophetic inspiration, "did not cease to give exposition of the Torah."[87] In the apocryphal book of Judith, Judith clearly assumes a prophetic role.[88] Therefore, we may conclude that in Judaism as in Greek religion, the prophetic task was not exclusively reserved for men, but was open to women as well.

2. *Women Prophets in 1 Cor 11*

While early Christian prophecy must be understood against the background of its complex antecedents in Greco-Roman and Israelite-Jewish prophecy, it was a multifaceted phenomenon that defies simplistic definition. Significantly different opinions exist concerning the identity of the Corinthian women prophets, precisely what they did, how they were perceived, and to what extent restrictions were placed upon them.

[84]N. J. Opperwall, "Prophetess," *ISBE* (rev. G. W. Bromily; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-88): 3.1004.

[85]See Randall D. Chesnutt, "Revelatory Experiences Attributed to Biblical Women in Early Jewish Literature," *"Women Like This"—New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. A.-J. Levine; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991): 107-125, on revelatory experiences attributed to biblical women in postbiblical expansions in *Jubilees, Joseph and Aseneth*, and the *Testament of Job*.

[86]*b. Meg.* 14a. See Opperwall, "Prophetess," *ISBE*, 3:1004.

[87]Cited in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 4.116.

[88]*Judith* 8:11-36; 9:1-14; 16:1-17.

A. *Early Christian Prophecy.* Tremendous importance was attached to prophecy in the early church, as indicated in Acts 2:16-21, as well as the lists of functionaries in Rom 12:6, 1 Cor 12:28, and Eph 4:11. More than a little speculation exists regarding these Christian prophets.[89] While most seem to view all Christians as potential prophets,[90] some make a distinction between "prophets" as a special "office" and those "ordinary" church members who prophesy."[91] However, such a distinction has not been established and seems to owe its existence to theological motivation. Too, while roles of strengthening, encouraging, and comforting are commonly acknowledged as characteristic,[92] prophecy is also said to include pastoral preaching and teaching, including charismatic exegesis of OT writings.[93] Others, however, emphasize the function of revelations through spontaneous utterance, thus separating it from teaching and preaching.[94] Depictions of early Christian prophecy as either essentially cognitive or charismatic seem influenced by theological predisposition. Likewise, emphasis on the decline of prophetic activity in the post-apostolic period[95] or

[89]Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (New York: University Press of America, 1982): 3.

[90]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 195.

[91]E.g., F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953): 298-99. See also A. von Harnack, "Die Lehre der Zwölf Apostel," TU 2 (1884): 93-158. Cf. Gerhard Friedrich, "Προφήτης," *TDNT* 6:848-55.

[92]E. Cothenet, "Prophétisme dans le Nouveau Testament," *DBSupp.* 8. cols. 1297-1301.

[93]E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 182-87.

[94]Siegfried Schatzmann, *A Pauline Theology of Charismata* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989): 22. See also G. Dautzenberg, *Urchristliche Prophetie: Ihre Forschung, ihre Voraussetzungen im Judentum und ihre Struktur im ersten Korintherbrief* (BWANT, ed. S. Herrmann and K. Rengstorf; Stuttgart: W. Kohlmammer, 1975): 4.301, who suggests utterances of mysteries and enigmatic riddles.

[95]E.g., Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "Canon, Regulae Fidei, and Continuing Revelation in the Early Church," *Church, Word and Spirit* (ed. J. Bradley and R. Muller; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 72.

continuation beyond the early period either in charismatic[96] or liturgical (evangelistic)[97] modes seems often theologically influenced.

The first insight into the nature and function of prophecy in Christian literature is 1 Thess 5:19-22: "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil." While the specific situation which occasioned this instruction cannot be determined, it seems clear that some sort of problem has arisen in the Thessalonian congregation, leading some to reject prophecy. In response, Paul advocates the acceptance of prophecy, but allows for its critical evaluation. From this text, it can be concluded that: 1) the Holy Spirit and prophecy are joined together in "a cause and effect relationship"[98]—a relationship which is emphasized in many other places in the NT as well;[99] 2) prophecy is addressed here as a normal congregational activity; and 3) in contrast to the texts which indicate the enormous influence of prophecy in the early church, it appears obvious that prophecy's influence was not unlimited, but rather was subject to testing (δοκιμάζω) by others in the church.[100] If Paul is referring to prophetic activity in his conjecture that the misconceptions distressing the Thessalonian church might have come about "by spirit"

[96]E.g., David Reagan, *The Master Plan: Making Sense of the Controversies Surrounding Bible Prophecy Today* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993); Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

[97]Cothenet, "Prophétisme," *DBSup.* 8: cols. 1222-1337.

[98]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 191.

[99]In addition to the texts in the Gospels and Acts which have already been examined, the connection of prophecy with the Holy Spirit is strongly emphasized in 2 Pet 1:20-21. Athough talking specifically about the prophets of the OT, the view of prophecy which underlies it may be said to hold for what is said of prophecy in the NT as well.

[100]In addition to the insights into early Christian prophecy mentioned here, Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 191, assumes from this text that prophecy was somehow a factor in an intramural church conflict.

(2 Thess 2:2), then a similar limiting of prophecy's influence is reflected in that text (see also 1 John 4:1 and 2 Pet 2:1).

In other places, prophets are clearly identified as church leaders, included among such roles in the early church as apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph 4:11-13; 1 Cor 12:28).[101] As further evidence of their importance they are described along with the apostles in Eph 2:20 as being a constituent element in the foundation of the church. Finally, several texts in the epistles provide insight into the prophets' function in the early church. Clearly, their role in general has to do with building up the church (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 14:3-4, 12; Eph 4:11-16). Rom 12:3-8 makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is at work in churches, and that wherever the Spirit is found, prophecy will be manifested. More specifically, in Eph 3:2-6, Christian prophets (along with the apostles) are said to have been given divine insight into the "mystery of God"—and since the prophet's task was fundamentally a task of proclaiming, implied in that insight is the responsibility of publicly announcing that mystery. Further, in a way that calls to mind the "setting apart" of Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:1-3, Paul reminds Timothy in 1 Tim 4:14 not to neglect his gift "given to you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you." Though not clear in details, prophecy was clearly involved in Timothy's call to ministry.

B. *Women Prophets in 1 Cor 11.* Of all the NT epistles, of course, the one which contains the most extensive treatment of prophecy is 1 Corinthians 11-14 where, in a discussion of spiritual gifts and Christian worship, Paul deals with prophecy in several different contexts. First is his discussion of prophecy and head coverings in 11:2-16; second,

[101]Prophecy is the only constant in the Pauline lists of "charismata" (1 Cor 12:8-11, 28-30; 13:1-2; Rom 12:6-8). If the order in which they are listed reflects a ranking in order of importance, then prophets are second in importance only to apostles. But see Stephen S. Smalley, "Spiritual Gifts and 1 Corinthians 12-16," *JBL* 87 (1968): 527-33, who argues that the order in which these gifts are listed, at least in 1 Cor 12, in no way reflects any ranking of importance.

Paul's mention of prophecy among the other spiritual gifts in chap. 12; third, there is his treatment of prophecy and tongues in 14:1-25; and finally, his concluding instruction for orderly worship in 14:26-40. Each of these texts, not surprisingly, has been the subject of intense, continuing debate among scholars who seek to understand their historical background, their precise meaning, and their implications for current church practice. While an exhaustive treatment of this section of 1 Corinthians is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to inquire into precisely what the Corinthian women prophets did, how they might have been perceived by those around them, and under what circumstances they worked.

In this connection, Wire[102] has sought to reconstruct the social and theological dimensions of the Corinthian women prophets. She works from three assumptions: 1) Paul is a rhetorician and all argument in 1 Corinthians serves the function of persuasion, 2) it must not be presumed that Paul's view is correct or that the readers' is incorrect, and 3) while reference is made only occasionally in 1 Corinthians to women prophets, much of the letter is actually written in terms of them. Consequently, Wire does not separate the few passages which speak of women from the issues addressed throughout 1 Corinthians, but in her analysis finds Paul speaking consistently to this group of women throughout the letter.

Wire's depiction of these Corinthian women prophets leaves little to the imagination. Acutely aware of their having been created anew in Christ, they revel in the gifts of the Spirit, including wisdom, prophecy, and ecstatic utterances. Many of them, Wire argues, have opted for celibate lives devoted to prayer, yet remaining free to enjoy food with no restrictions in common meals with all people. Further, they do not disdain apparent disorder in worship, but thrive "on

[102]Antionette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction of Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990): esp. chap. 6, "Women in the Image and Glory of God: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16."

the expression and interaction of many voices" (147). Thus, Paul is seen as arguing throughout the letter that these women prophets must restrain themselves and submit to a more established social order. So, while he appears in chap. 11 to acknowledge a right to pray and prophesy in public worship, he actually prohibits them from doing so in chap. 14.

However, a number of scholars, among them Scroggs,[103] have raised serious questions about Wire's conclusions. Certainly her tendency to view all statements about women in the Corinthian community as references to the women prophets is unwarranted. Her conclusion that chaps. 1-4, and 15, which appear to be directed to the church as a whole, actually represented Paul's refutation of the theology of the women prophets is likewise unnecessary, as is her assumption that virtually everything Paul opposes in the letter is somehow related to the women prophets. Further, while Paul obviously wishes to persuade his audience, Wire's suggestion that his rhetoric is disingenuously manipulative remains to be proved. Finally, it may be questioned whether her conclusion about the relationship between 11:2-16 and 14:33-36 is true, for if Paul disapproves in chap. 14 what he accepts in chap. 11, then his rhetorical ability stands in considerable question.[104] In short, one cannot assume that the Corinthian women prophets are somehow involved in every issue addressed in 1 Corinthians, but only that they posed a problem in the public assemblies of the church—and represented only one aspect of problems associated with corporate worship dealt with in 1 Cor 11-14.

The principal text in 1 Corinthians in which Paul deals with the women prophets is 11:2-16, where he discusses the

[103]See the review of Wire by Robin Scroggs, *JBL* 111 (1992): 546-48.

[104]See also the review of Wire by Robert Gundry, *JAAR* 61 (1993): 392-94.

issue of prophecy in relation to head coverings.[105] Most scholars agree that this text concerns a problem with practices that are occurring in a public setting in which the church is gathered for worship.[106] It begins and ends with an appeal to tradition (παράδοσις, v. 2; συνήθεια, v. 16), which, as an *inclusio*, serves to situate Paul's argument within a context of accepted church practice. The main argument begins in v. 3, centering on the word "head" (κεφαλή): the head of every husband is Christ, the head of the wife is the man, and the head of Christ is God.[107] On the basis of this theological assertion, Paul describes the problem in vv. 4-5, which involves the blurring of gender distinctions, and insists that a man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his "head" (Christ) while a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her "head" (husband). Appealing to their sense of social decorum, Paul asserts that a woman who thus participates without a head covering might as well have her head shaved (v. 6), i.e., appealing to her sense of honor rather than shame. Then, in vv. 7-10, Paul appeals to respect for gender distinctions created by God and to the presence of angels,[108] perhaps as guardians of the created

[105]For a discussion of the various problems in this passage, see Mark C. Black, "1 Cor. 11:2-16—A Re-investigation," *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 1.191-218.

[106]This worship setting can be assumed for a number of reasons. If private practices were under consideration, one wonders why the issue would even have been raised and especially, why it would be included in a section of text which clearly is treating other issues related to public worship. From all other indications, moreover, prophecy was a public activity and there is no compelling reason to believe that the prophecy under consideration is any exception. For further discussion, see Osburn's chapter in this volume, as well as Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity,* 196, and Stagg and Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus,* 177.

[107]For discussion of the meaning of the term "head," see Kenneth V. Neller, "'Submission' in Eph. 5:21-33," *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 1.251-58.

[108]A number of ancient texts describe angels as, in Talbert's, *Reading Corinthians,* 69, words, "entrusted by God to watch over the

order, as further evidence for the relationships he has posited in v. 3, with its implication that she keep a "sign of authority" (i.e., the head covering on her head).[109] As a balance to that assertion, however, Paul includes a parenthetical statement that in the Lord men and women are interdependent (vv. 11-12) and share a certain complementarity. Finally, in vv. 13-16, he appeals 1) to what is commonly accepted as appropriate, 2) to "common sense"—that since "by nature" (custom) women have long hair and men have short, women should keep their heads covered and men should not, and 3) to universal church practice of women wearing veils in public worship.

Of what did the prophetic activity of these Corinthian women consist, which Paul seeks here to regulate?

orders of creation." See, for example, *1 Enoch* 60:12, 16-21; 61:10; 72:1; 82:3; *Jub.* 2:2-3; *1QH* 1.10-11. For a slightly different view see Henry J. Cadbury, "A Qumran Parallel to Paul," *HTR* 51 (1958): 1-2; and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the NT," *Essays on the Semitic Background to the New Testament* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974): 187-204. Based on his reading of *1QM* 7:4-6 and *1QSa* 2:3-11, in comparison with Lev 21:17-23, Fitzmyer observes, "We are invited by the evidence of Qumran to understand that the unveiled head of a woman is like bodily defect which should be excluded from such an assembly, because holy angels are present in their congregation" (200).

[109]Traditionally, this was taken to mean a sign of her submission. For discussion of the range of interpretations of ἐξουσία see Fitzmyer, "Qumran Angelology," *Essays on the Semitic Background to the New Testament,* 191-194. However, Morna D. Hooker, "Authority On Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor. XI.10," *NTS* 10 (1963-64): 410-16, followed by a number of others, has argued that ἐξουσία here denotes a sign of *her* authority to do what, previously, she had been forbidden to do: ". . . [n]ow woman, too speaks to God in prayer and declares his word in prophecy: to do this she needs authority and power from God. The headcovering which symbolizes the effacement of man's glory in the presence of God also serves as the sign of the ἐξουσία which is given to the woman" (415-416). See also Conzelmann, *I Corinthians,* 69, who believes that "the sign of authority refers to the headcovering which serves as a social symbol of the woman's femaleness."

Opinions vary considerably. While Aune[110] has emphasized the influence of Hellenistic revelatory traditions in post-apostolic Christianity, Boring[111] wisely cautions that NT prophecy itself cannot be identified with Hellenistic prophecy. Indeed, nothing suggests that these Corinthian prophetesses functioned in the manner of Hellentistic oracular prophets, wandering Sybils, or frenzied ritualistic chanters of the mystery religions. Just what relationship might exist between these prophetesses and the Hellenistic mediums speaking in trances remains unclear, although there may be some possible relationship with prophetic moral teaching, as among the Epicureans.

On the other hand, while there is some indication of the continuing existence of the OT prophetic role in which one knows the will of God apart from the Law, OT prophecy is not *the* source for NT prophecy either.[112] While various types of prophets were active and expected in Judaism in the NT era, the Corinthian prophetesses do not appear to have shared the political-nationalistic or revolutionary emphasis that characterized the prophetic activity of many of their Jewish contemporaries. However, some relationship may exist with Jewish eschatological prophets, who stressed principles and values as they work out in society and God's judgment when they are ignored. Perhaps the most that can be said with certainty regarding the relationship of early Christian and Jewish prophetic activity is that early Christian prophecy bears a resemblance to prophecy as a continuing religious phenomenon in Judaism.

From the evidence of the NT itself, prophets were considered to be a constituent element in the founding of the church (Eph 2:20). Ellis[113] and Vermes[114] have both suggested that NT prophets were involved in inspired

[110]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity,* 17.

[111]Boring, *Continuing Voice of Jesus,* 49-50.

[112]*Ibid.*, 58.

[113]Ellis, "Role of the Christian Prophet in Acts," *Apostolic History and the Gospel,* 59.

[114]Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls,* 213-14.

interpretation of the OT text, but Aune[115] has argued that no evidence exists that this is the case. Grosheide[116] posits a distinction between the prophetic "office," and "ordinary" Christians who prophesy. However, such a distinction cannot be maintained. Hill[117] stresses the "pastoral preaching" and "exhortatory teaching" aspects of prophecy, but Boring[118] prefers a definition of NT prophecy based on that of the SBL Seminar on Early Christian Prophecy (1972-77). At the very least, the early Christian prophets—and presumably the Corinthian prophetesses—were engaged in publicly announcing the "mystery" (Eph 3:2-6), as well as in strengthening, encouraging, and comforting. That there were inherent possibilities of failure in the prophetic role seems clear enough from the admonition in 1 Thess 5:20 not to despise prophecy, but to subject prophetic messages to critical examination. Similarly, in 1 Cor 14:29, prophets are to be subject to "discernment."

Most importantly, the evidence of 1 Cor 11 clearly indicates that this prophetic activity was carried out publicly by women in the Christian assemblies at Corinth. The practice itself is not at issue. What is at issue is the manner in which the Corinthian prophetesses were engaged in that

[115]Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 339-46.

[116]Grosheide, *First Epistle to the Corinthians,* 298-99.

[117]Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 105, 126, 129, 138, 143-44. On pp. 8-9, Hill adapts the SBL Seminar on Early Christian Prophecy (1972-77) as follows: "A Christian prophet is a Christian who functions within the church, occasionally or regularly, as a divinely-inspired speaker who receives intelligible and authoritative revelations or messages which he is impelled to deliver publicly, in oral or written form, to Christian individuals and/or the Christian community."

[118]Cf. M. E. Boring's review of Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, in *JBL* 100 (1981): 300-02, which criticizes Hill for positing a working definition, but actually operating with another definition of Christian prophecy based on content (e.g., pastoral exhortation). Boring, *Continuing Voice of Jesus*, 38, posits: "The early Christian prophet was an immediately inspired spokesperson for the risen Jesus, who received intelligible messages that he or she felt impelled to deliver to the Christian community or, as a representative of the community, to the general public."

practice. They were doing so in a way—with heads uncovered—that threatened what Paul believed to be a proper male-female relationship. To preserve decorum, therefore, Paul insists that men pray or prophesy with heads uncovered, while women do so with heads covered. Certainly women praying or prophesying in the assembly posed no problem for the Corinthians; from his discussion, neither did women praying or prophesying in the assembly cause problems for Paul, provided they did so in a manner consistent with proper male-female relationships.

Finally, this understanding of 1 Cor 11:2-16 supports the interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 which views Paul's command that "women should be silent" as addressed to a specific problem in the Corinthian church, rather than being absolute prohibitions for all women.[119] His use of the present infinitive construction in 14:34-35 to describe the speaking which women are not allowed to do (λαλεῖν; lit., to keep on speaking) probably indicates a continual, disruptive speaking out.[120] Paul's reference to the asking of questions clarifies the sort of expression he seeks to prohibit. Finally, the text's parallel position with the instructions on tongues and prophecy, with the parallel use of σιγάω (be silent, vv. 28, 30), gives the impression that Paul does not intend to enjoin total silence on women any more than he intends absolutely to silence tongues or prophets. Rather, he wishes to limit their expression in the assembly—just as he does tongues and prophecy—so that order and peace will prevail in the Corinthian worship. What he has said earlier in chap. 11, then, is not contradicted in chap. 14. Paul's concern in both texts is not with women speaking in the assembly, but rather, with their doing so in a way that is inappropriate (11) or disruptive (14).

[119]For a more detailed discussion, see Carroll D. Osburn, "The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35," *Essays On Women in Earliest Christianity*, 1.219-42.

[120]*Ibid.*, 233-34. For discussion of the durative character of the Greek present infinitve, see F. W. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. and rev. R. Funk; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961): 174.

Conclusion

While the evidence is neither exhaustive nor as detailed as one would prefer it to be, the foregoing analysis nevertheless yields a number of conclusions about prophets and prophecy in general, and the role of women in particular. Prophecy is viewed in the NT, first and foremost, as a supernatural gift given by the Holy Spirit. Paul includes prophecy in his lists of "gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:8-11; Eph 4:7-12), and connects the rejection of prophecy with "quenching the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19). Possession of the gift of prophecy, not surprisingly, enables persons to know what cannot be known by normal human means, whether that knowledge is of the future (Acts 11:27; 21:10; Rev 1:1-3), or of the will of God for the church in a particular situation (Acts 13:1-3). Prophecy in the NT is also a decidedly public gift, one which involves speaking publicly and intelligibly the message received from God.[121] The prophet's message seems to have been a spontaneous rather than prepared discourse.[122] The prophetic message, moreover is directed

[121]For a discussion of the distinction between prophecy and other gifts involving speech, see Friedrich, "Προφήτης" *TDNT*, 6.851-55. H. Greeven, "Propheten, Lehrer, Vorsteher bei Paulus," *ZNW* 44 (1952-53): 29ff., argued that there is no clear distinction in the NT between prophecy and teaching. Grudem, *JETS* (1987): 11-23, on the other hand, argued that there is indeed a clear distinction between the two and that teaching was far more important in the early church than prophecy. He greatly overstates this distinction between prophecy and teaching, however, and his argument that teaching was more important than prophecy is unconvincing. See also Grudem, *The Gift of Propehcy in 1 Corinthians*. A number of scholars have attempted to reconstruct prophetic mesages on the basis of other texts, both in and outside of the NT. See, for example, W. C. Van Unnik, "A Formula Describing Prophecy," *NTS* 9 (1962-63): 86-94; and Thomas W. Gillespie, "A Pattern of Prophetic Speech in First Corinthians," *JBL* 97 (1978): 74-95.

[122]Boring, *Continuing Voice of Jesus*, 38, emphasizes this characteristic in his definition of a prophet: "The early Christian prophet was an immediately inspired spokesperson for the risen Jesus, who received intelligible messages that he or she felt impelled to deliver

primarily toward the church, whether to individual Christians (Acts 21:10), or to congregations assembled for worship (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Cor 11-14). Most frequently their message was one of comfort and exhortation to the church (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Cor 14:3). Through prophecy, listeners were informed or instructed (1 Cor 14:19), and at times, warned and brought under judgment (1 Cor 14:24—25). Prophets are thus listed among the persons with spiritual gifts whose task is to build up the church (Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:11-16). At the same time, Paul stressed in 14:32 that, "the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet," i.e., prophecy can and should be controlled by the prophet.

Prophets do not seem to have occupied an "office" as such, but were known more informally, through the exercise of their gifts, as persons to whom God had given special revelations and who communicated them to the church.[123] They were often, therefore, persons of great influence in the early church. In response to prophetic messages, for example, the Antioch church took up a collection of gifts for the poor in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30) and began a far-reaching mission to the Gentile world (Acts 13:1-3). Perhaps because of their influence, prophets were chosen to accompany the letter of the "Jerusalem Council" to the Gentile believers (Acts 15:22,32). So great in fact, was the influence of prophets in the early church that the NT, in numerous places, warns of false prophets and provides criteria for judging their character and their messages in order to ensure that they are authentically prophets of God.

to the Christian community . . . ." For this reason and because of the emphasis on knowledge to the average person, early Christian prophecy resists comparison to contemporary preaching and teaching. For an excellent discussion, see Ernest Best, "Prophets and Preachers," *SJT* 12 (1959): 129-50.

[123]For discussions of prophets as leaders in the early Church, see Greeven, *ZNW* (1952-53): 31ff.; Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 90-105. Cf. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 196ff., for a somewhat different view.

The evidence of the NT further indicates that this prophetic role was not exclusively reserved for men, but included women as well. References to women prophesying, though not as numerous as references to men, are distributed throughout the NT in a way that suggests a general acceptance of prophetesses in the early church. While the references to women prophesying do not explicitly describe their ministries, there is nothing to suggest that they functioned in their role differently than their male counterparts. Certainly, they carried on their ministries within a set of prescribed constraints–but so also did the men who prophesied and prayed.[124] In the absence of evidence to the contrary, therefore, it is plausible to assume that in their prophetic ministries women exercised roles of public expression and influence in the early church just as men did. They were viewed by the church as having received inspired messages from God which they proclaimed to the church–at times in the context of Christian worship. Possessing the gift of prophecy, they were undoubtedly persons of influence and would have been instrumental in determining the direction of the church. From the evidence of the women who prophesied we may thus conclude that the early church viewed whatever restrictions were placed upon woman not as absolute prohibitions against all expression, but rather, as parameters within which that expression could freely take place. In this way, the women who prophesied in the first century Christian church enjoyed an equality of expression and influence alongside of their brothers in Christ.

[124]See Richard Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 14," *NTS* 34 (1988): 481-505.

Chapter Fourteen

1 COR 11:2-16— PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

Carroll D. Osburn

Certainly 1 Cor 11:2-16 presents several of the most difficult interpretive tasks in the NT, all of which are contingent to some extent on whether Paul is referring to a public or private assembly. A basic problem underlying the interpretation of 11:2-16 involves the relationship of 11:2-16 with 14:33-35. Three basic positions have emerged in scholarship on this matter: 1) 11:2-16 is taken with the preceding material beginning in 8:1 (which treats eating in a domestic setting meat offered to idols), so that the women in chap. 11 pray and prophesy in a private setting, thus reducing conflict with the public assembly in chap. 14[1], 2) 11:2-16 is a public assembly, but Paul actually mandates that women are not to pray or prophesy,[2] which coheres with the prohibition against women speaking in public in chap. 14, and 3) 11:2-16 is taken with chaps. 11-14 which treat the public assembly of the church, meaning that women did pray and prophesy publicly, but with stipulated conditions of cultural propriety.[3] Even so, the relation of 11:2-16 to 14:33-35 is variously understood by those who adopt this view. Consequently, it is instructive to examine and critique each of these views.

[1]See e.g., Philipp Bachmann, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (KNT 7; 3rd ed.; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1921): 345-62.

[2]See F. C. Synge, "Studies in Texts—1 Cor 11:2-16," *Theology* 56 (1953): 143.

[3]Most commentaries assume 11:2-16 to go with the following section which treats the public assembly and do not argue the issue. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 505, n. 54, does more than most when he relegates the matter to a brief footnote.