

By the Lips of Foreigners

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[0 : 00] It's very good to be back. I spoke at my first learners' exchange back when I was an Artizo intern in the years 2006 and 2008, so I remember many of you from that period here.

But it's been great to go on since and go into study and bring some of the questions that arose during my time as a member of St. John's. And so I hope that they connect in with some of the material that the Ever-Eclectic Learners' Exchange has up on its schedule, and I look forward to discussing some of it today as well.

You should have a handout in front of you, double-sided, which will give you some of the text for today. So the first half of the first page just has short headings that I'll be going through in terms of you can locate yourself within the sequence of the paper.

And then I've got our main text, 1 Corinthians 14, 20-25, at the base of that, which I'll be taking us through verse by verse in the kind of core of the paper.

And then on the back side of the page, you'll notice two texts from Isaiah, which are the ones being drawn on, I think, in this text, 1 Corinthians 14. And I want to go into that background a little to show you something of how I think we can understand this passage.

[1 : 13] So I've got two things I'm going to be doing largely today. One is to look at a broader way in which the church is trying to understand itself within the cultural context, and then to link that in with this very interesting and, I think, suggestive passage from 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul talks about an outsider coming into the context of Christian worship.

And I think it's one that's not often discussed in talking about the church or the Christian and a surrounding culture or its encounters with outsiders, but I think it has a lot more in thinking about ourselves as the people of God.

This is material that comes from, I delivered a paper in Edinburgh a month ago, and it was a conference on the use of scripture in Christian ethics. And so I've adapted it somewhat for this context, but I also wanted to preface it with a section that links it directly into conversation about the Anglican Church and how it has been trying to understand itself a little in view of the biblical witness.

So my first portion here is called Anglicans and Exiles, Singing the Song of the Lord in Post-Christian Canada. And I'd like to begin with an excerpt from a sermon of that title, preached nearly 20 years ago in Montreal.

It's an exposition of Psalm 137, and you may remember some of the phrases from that. By the waters of Babylon we sat down and left. When we remembered Zion, there are captors required of a song saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

[2 : 46] And the preacher connects it to the present state of the church. When I talk about the church, I want it understood that I mean 50 to 100 people gathering in a building that will hold four times that number.

They usually have the wisdom, the commitment, and the loyalty that comes with age. They are sustained by their liturgy. They have learned the patience and the comfort of the scriptures, the place and importance of the sacraments, and they are generous in giving back what has been given to them.

But they also have a deep sense that this won't go on much longer. The foreboding which weighs so heavily upon them can be wonderfully expressed in the question, How long can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

A land upon whom God's judgment must fall. This little congregation of people is not unfamiliar with the assurance, Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

But they are also among the peripheral eyes by the culture in which they live and whose welfare they seek. They have to live with indictments made against the church, its traditions, its hierarchy, and its proselytizing.

[4 : 02] They watch the great hammer of enlightenment smash down on the scriptures, The institution and the cherished traditions of the church. They suffer the agony of the moral failure and confusion in the church.

They watch the great doctrines of the church being trivialized. That small congregation of the faithful has accepted the indictment made against them by their prevailing culture.

They have been willing to learn a new language, to submit to new patterns of leadership, To seek the welfare of the great human enterprise, To accommodate the great triumphs of our culture, And to seek relevance by accommodation to contemporary ideologies.

Then this little community, in captivity to the culture to which it belongs, Has agreed not to sing the song as a public declaration.

The song that emotionally they cannot sing, politically they must not sing, And that, with the passage of time, they have forgotten how to sing. Except, of course, to entertain.

[5 : 06] The hand that has lost its skill must learn again the music. The voice which was dumb must miraculously break into song. Some of you may have been present as Harry Robinson preached these words at St. George's, Class du Canada, Montreal, on June 19, 1994.

At the Anglican Essentials Conference, in taking stock of the church's decline and malaise, He reached for the scriptural model of exile. His choice of Psalm 137 is evocatively connected to other language from the exilic accounts, Such as Jeremiah's famous letter to the exile, that we know, I know the plans I have for you, In which he also says, Seek the welfare of the city.

I'd like to now cite another use of that exilic language in the church. This is from a general synod document. It grounds the theological statement.

The exile was a real and traumatic dislocation for the citizens of Jerusalem, As it is for many Anglicans today. Moreover, we struggle to come to terms with our own contribution to our exile. Our temples have sheltered idols no less real than the idols of Ezekiel's vision. We have at times enjoyed power as status, prestige, and entitlement, Rather than as the gift of God to be set to work for the mission of God.

[6 : 33] We have sometimes loved the stability of the temple and the safety of the walls More than the covenant that calls us into God's mission. Our exile is not simply a matter of unfortunate circumstances.

To pretend otherwise, now as then, would constitute a simple act of willing blindness. And to live old patterns in this new reality trifles with the truth of our circumstances.

But the absence of temple and city walls of our former stability and security is not the absence of God. Hope is neither pretending nor wishful thinking.

Hope is joining our hearts and hands to the purpose of God in the present. Trusting that God's purpose encompasses our thriving as a people. As we work and pray for the common good in the place of exile.

That's the Anacan Church of Canada General Synod document. With the Vision 2019 statement. I believe it was their General Synod 2009. So from two different locations within the church.

[7 : 34] As you can hear, the conditions of belief in Canada are such that many Anglicans have sensed the Hebrew scriptures of exile to resonate with their present.

In many ways, this seems to be a positive direction. Reminding Christians of their calling to live in this world as strangers and exiles. To receive again the New Testament letters as the diaspora, the scattered.

And the language certainly resonates when we actually have to leave our property, our land. But the question I want to ask this morning and trace with you through this Corinthians text is, Is such identification what it means to be a Bible-based church?

How do we receive these scriptures today beyond the surface likeness of losing ground? Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his letters and papers from prison talks about the reality of the church losing ground. And what it tries to do in sensing that situation in the culture. So in considering these questions, I want to look at the use of biblical models more broadly.

[8 : 44] Second section, models of church and the external word. Given the marginalization of an overt Christian social ethic and the increasing difference in moral languages, there has been a

renewed emphasis on the church's visibility and recovering some of its distinctive practices and its catechesis or its ability to educate its own.

Indeed, a movement called ecclesial ethics has been recognized as carrying much of the dynamism in Christian ethics today, academic ethics in particular.

This has allowed for a new confidence in public witness through the scriptural narrative as it forms the community as a distinctive community of moral character.

The related metaphor of dramatic improvisation, seeing the church as playing out a sequence of the scripture, has been set forth by Anglicans such as the biblical scholar Tom Wright and the ethicist Samuel Wells.

And this has tried to recover a way in which the Christian community performs the fuller biblical story rather than just selectively choosing portions and translating that moral content into a public form of reason.

[10:06] Such an approach to ethics then often leads to framing what the church is, its identity, towards surrounding cultures through a model scriptural theme or event.

For instance, Christian interaction with non-Christians in the midst of moral diversity has been characterized by the model of hospitality, drawing particular on Jesus' practices of table fellowship, as well as the way that the Pentateuch made provisions for foreigners and talked about situations such as harvest cleanings being left for them, a way of hosting others within the land.

So hospitality has been one model that the church has seemed to enact towards cultures around it.

Alternately, and I've already introduced this somewhat with my opening quotes, the model of diaspora has framed a Christian ethic as the legacy of Christendom, Wayne's, drawing from the often cited letter of Jeremiah to the exiles, and characters such as Daniel and Esther.

Such models of a community and individuals hold promise for challenging ways in which the Bible is sometimes used in Christian ethics in a very topical and selective way, saying, let's just find the ethical parts of the books, rather than finding a whole framework within which to locate ourselves.

Strangely, though, one biblical text that receives very little mention in describing the interaction between different moral publics, the church and other communities, is 1 Corinthians 14, verses 20 to 25.

[11:47] This text is promising, I think, because of its unique treatment of the church's spirit-given and so highly particular forms of speech. And as you'll see from the text in front of you, this is a reference to the gifts of tongues and of prophecy.

And those particular forms of speech and interaction with outsiders to the church's culture and its language. It also provides a complex use of what is called intertextuality, where the echoes between the Testaments happen.

You'll see Paul quoting, you can see the citation there in 14, verse 21, actually quoting a passage from Isaiah. And then near the end of the text, a very strong delusion as well.

And so not only is this the church and the church at worship in relation with outsiders or unbelievers, as Paul terms them, it's also the church in relation to Israel and in relation to this background text, this Old Testament that is more informative to how the church understands itself. And one reason, I think, for the neglect of 1 Corinthians 14 on the question of the church's encounters is that it is a very difficult text to interpret.

[13:05] It has long provided what is called a notorious crux. This is particularly so given Paul's counterintuitive statement in 14, verse 22, that tongues are a sign not for believers, but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers, but for believers.

I'm going to go into that verse more in a second, but I'll just leave it for you now. You may have encountered this before and been perplexed by it. I often have, and in fact, J.B. Phillips, for those of you that know, his paraphrase ultimately, maybe there's a recognition, ultimately just says, this is wrong.

I'm going to change this. This is the one time, there's kind of a footnote to say, this is the one time where I'm going to do this, but it clearly needs to be designated differently. It would seem, from the context, and I'll show you this in a moment, that tongues are a sign for believers, not for unbelievers, and that prophecy is a sign for unbelievers, not for believers.

That's what we would expect from the context, but Paul's wording is the opposite. So that problem is one I hope to shed some light on today, and that's part of what our exchange would be about.

Indeed, I will seek to show that, although acknowledging this difficulty, biblical scholars still persist in reading against this designation, highlighting, for instance, the unbeliever or outsider's conversion, while losing sight that prophecy is supposed to be a sign for believers.

[14:35] In contrast, I will argue that the sign for believers can only be understood if we fully explore the substrata of these prophetic texts, these Isaiah texts that I've given you on the back of your sheet, invoked both by direct citation and by allusion.

Through this exegetical treatment, I hope to show the agility of the scriptural word, as it alternately shows the church in the threat of self-estrangement as church, and the promise of divine restoration.

I then want to argue that models of hospitality and diaspora, which I've introduced briefly, and we'll explore a little more fully later on, for Christian moral witness, must always be qualified by the fact that the church is always ever created by the divine word, and doesn't have a model that it can consistently draw on.

In Anglican terms, the claim to any model church must never take the place of continually hearing the public reading of the whole counsel of God, and the varied, often surprising roles that this reading and hearing might play in locating the church within the scriptural witness.

Let's look at this text then. 1 Corinthians 14, verses 20-21. And let me read the first, I'll read these verses as we go through to locate ourselves as we have to read through it.

[16:12] Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking, rather be infants in evil, but in thinking be adults. In the law it is written, by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, yet even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.

14, verse 20. Do not be children in your thinking, briskly summarizes Paul's criticism of the church's use of spiritual gifts. In contrast to the way the church elevated the spiritual ones in their midst, the pneumaticoid, Paul challenges them not to be children, idea in their thinking.

This childishness is a reference to the indiscriminate use of the gift of tongues, or what is sometimes called glossolalia, which, because of their sensationalism in thinking about this gift, and I think because of a certain self-absorption, has led them to lack concern for the effect of tongues' intelligibility on others.

Others just don't understand what is being said. This criticism in verse 20 leads then to Paul's quotation in 14, verse 21, of the Isaiah 28 statement against Israel's leaders.

By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people. Rather than a reference to simple foreign speech, Paul's use of this larger text plot, this larger context, draws on a judgment oracle from Isaiah that is very well matched to the Corinthian church in this moment.

[17:57] To go to it briefly, and I invite you to turn your sheet over and look at Isaiah 28 there. Isaiah 28 is a reference or a rendering of how the leaders of Israel were refusing to listen to the prophet.

They were wise and gifted in their own eyes, and they mimicked the prophet's seemingly elementary speech. So I think the prophet was reminding them of God's commands, and they saw themselves as a little more sophisticated.

And so they mockingly reply, it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, this is 9 and 10, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, as a way of mimicking the prophet's instruction to them.

As a result, because these leaders would not listen to the Lord's plain speech, mocking it with the repetitious nonsense syllables of verse 10, they incite the audible sign of judgment in verse 11, referred to as the stammering lip and the alien tongue.

Then we get an ominously verbatim repetition of verse 10 down in verse 13. So if you just notice those two verses, now you get that same line repeated word for word, which is meant to turn the leader's flippancy, and indeed drunken flippancy, if you know the larger context, back on them by their Assyrian invaders.

[19:29] And just as an aside here, that use of a foreign language as a means of showing judgment comes out of the Deuteronomic curses.

So when you're talking in the language of Deuteronomy verse 28, it says, the Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young.

And so in short, what I'm saying is that verse 10, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, is the closest English translation that we can get in terms of this, but it's also thought that these are maybe just nonsense syllables, sort of a yada, yada, yada.

And in fact, in the Hebrew, it sounds, I mean, it's got that repetitious quality, but it also is seen to maybe be a bit of a proto-tongues or a proto-gloss of aliyah.

This is what it sounds like in the Hebrew. So this is the precept upon precept line. Tzav la tzav, tzav la tzav, chav la chav, chav la chav, zehir sham, zehir sham.

[20 : 41] That's what the leaders are mimicking of the prophet. And the prophet says, thus the word of the Lord to you will be tzav la tzav, tzav la tzav, and it's going to come back on you.

But in this case, it's going to be a foreign tongue. And those nonsense syllables with which you mock the Lord's word are going to be heard by your invaders. You won't understand them.

Paul's rhetorical move is startling. Tongues were, in the church's valuation, an elevated spiritual form of speech, marked of the spiritual ones.

Rather than tongues serving to build up the church, however, and show their spiritual prowess, Paul links the gift and the Corinthians' use of it to the speech of a foreign nation that indicated God's action to tear down his people.

In Paul's transposition, then, the church's glossais, the church's tongues, become the Assyrian heteroglossais, other tongues.

[21 : 54] The people who would not hear, formerly Israel, then become the unbelievers, the Epistois, introduced in 14, verse 22, for whom tongues are the audible sign of judgment.

You see what's happening? He's inverting this and saying that your tongues as church is actually making you sound like not only the Israel who was under the threat of judgment, but the ones, the foreign nation that came to judge them and their foreign tongue, their foreign speech.

So it's a double remove. It's not only giving them the threat of being exiled, it's saying you're going to be the occupying army. You know, that's how you come off to others. And in fact, the outsider or unbeliever is now in the place of the people who hear.

That's my hypothesis from this review. Let's go on and see if this holds weight. Tongues as a sign of judgment and self-estrangement. 14 verse 22.

Here's the difficult verse. If the other wasn't difficult enough. Tongues then are a sign not for believers, but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers, but for believers.

[23 : 11] Verse 22 renders the implications of the Isaiah quotation, from which we've already drawn, with the transition, so then. So he's inferring this from that quotation.

Tongues then are a sign not for believers, but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers, but for believers. The order of signs here is surprising, inverting the expected recipients of each form of speech.

After all, from Paul's ensuing line of reasoning, tongues appear not to be a communicative sign for unbelievers, but to alienate them, as shown in their claim that the church is mad or out of their minds in verse 23.

On the other hand, prophecy seems startlingly effective in evoking their recognition and worship in verses 24 and 25. Again, this is why Phillips says, this is the sole instance of the translator departing from the accepted text, and suggests here that there's been a slip of the pen or a copyist error in rendering it to us.

If glossolalia are, in fact, a sign for unbelievers, most commentators go on to say this must be a sign of judgment. Therefore, the sign's very unintelligibility, the fact that an outsider does not understand tongues when it's being spoken in the church's assembly, shows judgment by reflecting and so reinforcing their sensory dullness as idolaters.

[24 : 43] Anthony Thistleton, the commentator, takes this farther by seeing a double-pronged effect to the use and misuse of tongues here. On the one hand, it's opaque as a religious phenomenon, and so outsiders, the gospel remains obscure to them, and it reinforces their status as beyond God's redemptive work.

So again, that idea that it's a sign of judgment, it keeps outsiders outside. Secondly, though, he argues that tongues makes many among God's own people feel like foreigners in their own home, and so shows the self-alienation of the body.

So if, as most commentators say, tongues are a way of judging those outside, because the Christians are speaking it, the others aren't understanding it, and therefore are leading, and it

reinforces their outsider status.

If that's the case, Thistleton says, that also shows the church is kind of self-estranged, and in fact, it should be alienating some of its own members who also don't understand what's being said when tongues are spoken.

Indeed, it's suggested, this reading is suggested in Paul's earlier hypothetical encounter in his own example of speaking and hearing tongues in their midst. This is back in verse 11, and if you don't have it, I don't want to briefly mention it, but of course, feel free to look this up.

[26 : 07] Using the metaphors of an indistinct instrument and a foreign language, he says, if then I do not know the meaning of a sound, I will be a foreigner, barbaros, barbarian, to the speaker, and the speaker will be a foreigner to me.

And so this is Paul talking about within the church, saying we would be foreigners to one another in the case of this type of speech. So that's partly behind this idea that the church would be showing itself estrangement in tongues being misunderstood or non-interpreted in its body.

Commentators do not, however, go on to explore this astonishing reversal of roles. That is, what it means for the ecclesia, presumed people of God, to take up the tongues of foreigners.

The statement in 14, verse 21, that even then they will not listen to me, refers to how unbelievers respond to hearing tongues, but such an outcome can only indicate the prior deafness and stubbornness of the church.

Paul's accusation of them being childish in verse 20 has then taken on a sharper edge. Their childish use of tongues show them to be ignorant, just like those foreign nations who, as the Lord's instrument, performed the alien work of judgment in Isaiah 28, 21.

[27 : 38] This fluidity of referent with the church not predictably inhabiting Israel's role, we often think the church is the one in the place of the people of God, but here I think they're placed differently, shows that the divine word is properly external to the church at every moment.

Even speech as spirited, as spirit-given, as glossolalia, can audibly show, in acting as a sign of judgment to unbelievers, that the church has become estranged from itself.

Let's explore this further in verse 23, a familiar madness. A great deal depends on the response of the outsiders or unbelievers to the phenomenon of the whole church speaking in tongues.

In verse 23, which I'll cite, if therefore the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say, you are out of their minds?

You are out of your minds. Mainesta, a single word. Stephen Chester has argued that this observation is not, in fact, a negative expression of sheer alienation.

[28 : 54] So, as one other commentator puts it, you could paraphrase this, these Christians are stark reading mad, and will make the exits as soon as possible. He says that's not necessarily the case.

And in doing so, he gathers up mounting observations that commentators have made that this was actually a term, a phrase, used to refer to the divine gift of madness in the Greco-Roman religions that outsiders in Corinth would be familiar with.

So, he recognizes that while tongues would not be an exact equivalent, this is how an outsider to Christian worship would probably place them socially.

They'd say, this reminds us somewhat of the ecstatic manifestations of worship that we've seen in the Corinthian temples. As such, it wouldn't be a completely negative association.

It would seem to have some, it would be a kind of mysterious religious expression and therefore could indicate a certain divine presence. The reason why Paul would be negative about this is that it does not signify enough.

[29 : 59] It does not have gospel clarity and conviction that we see in verses 24 and 25. But it's not necessarily just a you are out of your mind statement, I'm going. It's, this has got an intrigue to it.

This may be something, but it's just not God, gospel clarity that Paul thinks is not enough. While religiously familiar and so potentially alluring in that right, the outsiders are likely to gloss tongues as the typical mania they would associate with the Corinthian religions.

Paul's criticism then is probably not absolute, but relative. The way in which this is negatively construed as judgment only comes through recognizing the contrast in deep personal conviction and gospel clarity.

that prophecy will show in the following verses. The church knows only the lips of foreigners which, though familiar to Corinthian outsiders, do not voice a properly external word.

This taps into a long-standing Jewish criticism that depicts the people of God as indistinct from the nations, abdicating their call to be a light.

[31 : 12] The outsiders or unbelievers, in other words, are not making strange here. Rather, tongues represent an all-too familiar madness, and so do not have the convictional weight that prophecy will soon have.

And to that we turn, verses 24 and 25. prophesy. But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reproved by all and called to account by all, after the secrets of the unbeliever's hearts are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, God is really among you.

In verses 24 and 25, prophetic speech is far more penetrating than tongues, creating an encounter in which the secret of the unbeliever's hearts are disclosed.

This leads to their bowing and offering worship, *proskuneo*, in recognition that God is really among you. Given these cues, this is usually seen to be the unbeliever's conversion.

So it's a pretty miraculous moment at which the unbeliever or outsider is convicted and claims God's presence. While acknowledging the strength of this language though, and many commentators, and indeed many preachers are on at length about this, we have to resist shifting the focus of the passage to how prophecy functions as a converting sign for the unbeliever.

[32 : 48] Because that would be to reverse what Paul Paul has explicitly, if counterintuitively, set out in verse 22. Remember? Prophecy is not a sign for unbelievers, but for believers.

How then might this encounter function as a sign for believers, on whom no evident effect has taken place? The conviction, it seems, is for the outsider, the unbeliever.

In order to understand this, we need to see what is being referred to here. Because verse 25 contains a strong allusion to Isaiah 45, verse 14.

You can see that on the back of your sheets again, in which the Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sibians bring wealth and bow down, *proskuneo* in the cities of Jerusalem, before God's restored people, and exclaim, God is with you alone and there is no other, there is no God besides him.

In Paul's use of this allusion, the church is now depicted in the place of the restored nation of Israel as foreigners approach to speak to it.

[33 : 58] So in both Isaiah texts, you have foreigners coming in, right, to address the people of God. In the 28 text, you know, the foreigners by stammering lips in a foreign tongue, I will speak to this people.

In that earlier text, it's a way of judgment. It's an occupying army coming in and exiling the people of God, or leaning towards the exile. Whereas in 45, it's foreigners who approach, but their posture is very different, isn't it, for coming in, offering gifts and offering worship and acknowledging God's presence.

So in the earlier text, they're the sign of God's judgment, being used by God to that effect. In the latter text, they're the ones coming and offering worship to God. So I think it's very significant here that Paul is working with two different texts, both of which show foreigners coming to the people of God in order to depict this situation in Christian worship in which an outsider or unbeliever enters. In Paul's present association, as I mentioned, the church is depicted in the place of the restored nation. This is a jarring reversal of the Israel foreigner roles in the 14 verse 21 quotation.

As Gordon Fee argues, this confession of the unbeliever thus becomes a sign for believers in that it shows God's favor on his people.

[35 : 23] Such a sign of favor should be read as a far more textured event than merely being effective in making converts. Because mere effectiveness doesn't pay attention to the very important relocation within the book of Isaiah here.

Paul has moved from a pre-exile threat in Isaiah 28, a pre-exile threat of alienation through a foreigner, to a promise of restoration in 45 verse 14 from within the complicated conditions of exile. Often from chapter 40 on in Isaiah, we think this is a portion of scripture that's about consolation primarily. Comfort, comfort ye my people, 40 verse 1.

But in fact, it's very complex. There's a lot of argumentation. There are some trial scenes between God and his people. And there is kind of argument about an ongoing idolatry that is at hand in the nation.

And so as a result, a sign like foreigners coming and saying God is really among you would be very powerful because the church is a erode, the church rather. Israel's identity was very much in

question.

[36 : 41] In fact, at one point, God says to them, you are Israel in name only, to paraphrase, that's in I think 48. And so there's a question, identity, and exile in many ways.

You might link it to those earlier citations I made from two different Anglican contexts. Brings the people of God's identity into question. In order to have outsiders coming in and saying God is really among you, can function as a pretty powerful sign to a people that are questioning that.

Isaiah then renders the people of God in the midst of trials and confrontations, as I've said, who proclaim they are Israel in name only.

Such alienation from their calling, as well as their stubborn, idolatrous commitments, had in fact endured through exile, making their restoration seem elusive.

And this encounter could be a sign that restoration is apparent. The context of Isaiah 45, verse 14 shows Israel in deep need of a clear external word of confirmation that God is among them.

[37 : 46] Although mention of God's hiddenness in 45, verse 15 brings to mind his alien work from earlier in the book, the emphasis is on the clarity of God's speech.

I did not speak in secret in a land of darkness. That this external word might function as primarily a sign for God's people is emphasized in a similar occurrence in 49, verse 23.

When at the moment that foreigners bow, the focus is not on their own altered perception, and their own conversion, as it were, but Israel's. Isaiah 49, verse 23.

Then you will know, Israel, that I am the Lord. Those who wait for me will not be put to shame. From exiled Israel to the church in Corinth, the people of God are recurrently in need of the sign of recognition that is shown with such wonderful clarity in 1 Corinthians 14, verse 25.

God is really among them. This is particularly so given how Paul has repeatedly criticized the Corinthian ecclesial ethic for being indistinguishable from outsiders or worse.

[38 : 57] You may remember the way in which he gets on their case regularly. I'll use for an example 1 Corinthians 5, verse 1. It is actually reported there is sexual immorality among you, but the kind that is not even found among the pagans.

There's constantly this challenge to the church not being distinct enough. And so to hear that term, God is really among you, would be a powerful statement. In both cases, Isaiah's threat is turned to promise.

The lips of foreigners verbally recognize God's real presence. Let me conclude with a few remarks, and then we can talk about this text together.

The agility of the pathetic word. In 1 Corinthians 14, 20-25, Paul's hypothetical pair of encounters offers the possibility of the church playing two very different roles from Israel's history.

Such associations show the internally disruptive potential in the church's inheritance of the Hebrew scriptures, the Old Testament.

[39 : 59] First, an ecclesial reading, or the reading of the church, inherits the threat of estrangement, as shown in the quotation in 14, verse 21. As I have argued, the church is not only susceptible to hearing a foreign language mediating God's judgment to them, but at a more astonishing remove, voicing that foreign tongue itself, being the one that shows God's alien work of judgment against others.

Secondly, the church inherits, though, the promise of recognition of an outside word signifying that the divine presence is really in the church's midst. The unbeliever's resulting worship thus instantiates the moral aim of spiritual gifts, the charismata, the edification or building up of the body of Christ.

Remember Paul regularly in 1 Corinthians 14, 12-14, talking about edification, the building up of the body being the goal of spiritual gifts. Here, that's very evident through the actual addition of converts.

In distinguishing between the scriptural prophecy, through which Paul narrates the use of the prophetic gift, we can see the constitutively reciprocal element of this encounter.

The church's prophetic speech calls forth a recognition from unbelievers that God is really among you, which is to say that they take up Isaiah's prophetic word, a part that is necessarily scripted for outsiders to the people of God.

[41 : 40] Thus, the scriptural prophecy is not the church's speech in its own right. The church does not own that prophecy. It is something that the church and its outsider publics play between them.

And therefore, it's not also the independent judgment of the world. Rather, in its freedom, the divine word stands over and against both publics, the outsiders or unbelievers, and the church in Corinth, and must be taken up by each in turn.

Both unbelievers and believers enact the Isaiah promise event, finding their respective places in it rather than the Bible serving as a deposit used only by one tradition in articulating its public claims. I think I will shift into conclusion here and discuss it rather than this last portion.

But in this, I go into a little more fully those earlier models I mentioned of hospitality and diaspora. We talk a bit about how this would challenge any hard reading of saying the church is host or the church is in exile.

[43 : 01] I think even pairing of those two examples show a certain tension at hand in any one being paradigmatic, because how can you both be at home and also ever always away from home?

And I cite a couple of strong readings either way to say the church is the one that hosts or is hospitable to others. And I can bring these out in our conversation if you'd like. And otherwise, the church is always out of its own property.

It's always out of its own space. It never is the one that kind of can inhabit one fully. But I explore a little bit how these models play. And I think how they play in contrast to how Paul very quickly shifts from one to the other.

He's working between two encounters that could happen in the same moment simultaneously in a Christian worship service or from sort of week to week, in which the outsider or unbeliever encounters tongues or encounters prophecy.

And in a very short compass, the church could either be seen as this foreign, unintelligible nation showing God's judgment and therefore kind of a sign of exilic judgment, but not the exiled ones, the actual ones performing the exile.

[44 : 12] Or it could be seen as recipient of the restoration promise. And so, in a sense, coming into one's own and being the ones in whom God's presence is found.

My conclusion, transvisibility and the recognition of faith. The scriptural models of hospitality and diaspora obviously require a fuller appraisal.

But these brief interactions have sought to show that any one ecclesial model must be held loosely. Indeed, this pairing can often prove at odds how does one spread a table for others without a home. While each model may have their respective moments, especially potentially in prophetic speech, 1 Corinthians 14 has shown that the prophetic word must be free to unsettle and reposition what the church's identity is, as well as where it is located in the presumed insider-outsider relation.

The turn to ecclesial visibility, there's been a strong turn towards reclaiming the language of the visible church, should be challenged then by highlighting what has been called the trans-visible nature of the church as an institution that requires the perception of faith that is ever attentive to the divine word.

[45 : 34] This is particularly so as the church can assume multiple roles within the scriptural inheritance, many of them unpredictable and disruptive to the intuitive sense of any one model.

There's a very strong intuitive draw to exilic language, and I think that's a good reason to suspect it. Paul's depictions of ecclesial speech in 1 Corinthians 14, 20-25 do not provide us with a model for the church, no external strategy for discerning the church's identity and ethic through the Bible.

Rather, in his complex use of the Old Testament, the scriptural word of prophecy defies all models, rendering in very short compass from one outsider encounter to the next, both the threat of self-estrangement to the people of God and an astonishing promise of restoration.

While the use of the Bible in providing a model for the church public is crucial to frame its ethics in the world and how it speaks, such a descriptive task must always be attentive to the divine word.

It is only through this prophetic scripture, this archetypal charism, and the prophecy within which it is performed, that the church's speech can carry its evangelical promise.

[47 : 00] Okay, it's been a difficult text, 1 Corinthians 14. I hope that has given some light on it, but I'm certainly open to talking.

And I thought perhaps I could open with a question to you, which is, does that language, either of church's host, church's hospitality, or that language of exile, church's diaspora, does that resonate with terms you've heard?

I quoted at the start a sermon of Harry Robinson's, a general synod document from the Union of Church of Canada, both of which used that language of exile quite readily. I'm wondering if that's

something that you all have heard as well, in depicting the voice of the church and Canadian culture.

I haven't used, I guess maybe exile wasn't the word I was thinking of, but marginalized as a no longer, Christianity is no longer the dominant religion in the culture.

Sure. We're increasingly, we can expect increasing intolerance, persecution. Obviously, we're not physically exiled, but in a cultural sense, yes, indeed.

[48 : 18] Is that typically shown positively or negatively? I mean, positively it can be to say, this is good, it means that only the serious need apply, this type of thing.

I mean, it has a refining aspect. But negatively, it's more of a sense that we've lost influence, we've lost influence. I would say the latter. The negative. Yeah, well, Christ's words about being trampled underfoot.

Yeah. Yeah, I think that's where we're at. I had a peculiar experience five days ago at the massage therapist. Why does the spirit always do these things to me when I sit side down?

I'm not sure. He had read an article in the paper about the Mennonite Church, that is his former fourth theater. I had read the article.

He told me that a bunch of raving fundamentalists were going into the center of town, and they were going to be doing this and that, and they are using credit cards. And I said, David, the entire world is using credit cards.

[49 : 22] What's wrong with the church doing that? I said, this is a Mennonite organization. They're not a bunch of raving fundamentalists. I work for the Mennonites. You know, and I think we have former Mennonites here who would attest to the fact that they're not in the lunatic fringe of, let's say, Southern Republicans or something like that.

And there was a sense of panic. And now, this guy does like to be argumentative with me, and I'm usually good for argument.

But I sensed this. He's really worried about this. I mean, I said, you, a baptized Anglican, are really concerned about this. And he said, well, I'm not a believer.

You know that. And I said, then why is this striking you with such force, you know? And I said, is it wrong for people to explain their friendship with Jesus and want others to understand that?

Is this what you're saying? And he said, well, I don't know about that. And I said, exactly. You don't know about that. And maybe you ought to wait and see what these people are doing.

[50 : 32] But, you know, they moved from the Fifth Avenue Theater, and they're down there now to the center of town. You know, it's like the barbarians are coming. I would sense that this sense of panic that he was displaying is a challenge to his unbelief.

And he kind of doesn't know what's going on, but he believes what he read in the newspaper. How would you read something like that in the context of the exiles moving back into the center of control?

It is interesting that it's a Mennonite church who would, I think, generally inhabit the language of exile really more than a church like the Anglican church, which would have more of a sense of being at the center of town.

You know what I mean? Thank you. So that is interesting because a lot of the claiming of the language of exile in a positive light has been coming from the sort of Anabaptist quarter.

You know, so theologians like John Howard Yoder was very influential in this before his death, and he started to talk a lot about exile being a paradigm, but very much something that would be heard in Mennonite circles, I think.

[51 : 48] So all that to say, I think that the Mennonite church is an interesting case there because it would inhabit that more readily, whereas I think largely in Anglican context, it's seen as a negative thing. It's a displacement of the moment.

The reality is that they have been exiled. You know, 600 years of being refugees and in somebody else's land. Sure. Obviously, it has a significance for them historically that Anglicans wouldn't feel. Sure. But I felt that, in a sense, he was being possibly convicted for his unbelief, or maybe it was the fringes of that.

I don't know how to proceed with this. It's interesting because you mentioned lunatic fringe, I mean, language like that, right? Yeah. It's interesting. I mean, in our text, you are out of your mind. You know, it's easy for us to say, oh, they're just saying these Christians are crazy, because we're so used to hearing that in a way that something like what the loosely termed new atheist challenge is,

kind of that this is irrational.

It's not only wrong, it's also sort of a bit lunatic. So, I know that can be a defense. I mean, that can be a way of having to deal seriously with a different witness.

[52 : 55] I mean, a form of life that's really challenging at its core, potentially. So, that certainly could be very possible in this case. Let me, I'm not quite sure. I just let this hand first. We'll let it do first.

And then more. Does the church, at the first Pentecost, qualify as an exile church?

And heaven chose to translate the first sermons, the first aspects of the good news, into 17 languages.

And Peter probably was talking Aramaic. I don't know. But does that fit in to your scheme of things? Not your scheme of things.

Scripture scheme of things. That heaven did choose languages, rather than the evidence of the language of angels, to try and announce itself in some way.

[54 : 01] So, how do you place that? I think that's a wonderful connection. So, the use of tongues, and in a sense a gift of tongues at Pentecost, which is, in fact, an intelligible hearing of human languages by all present, in distinction from the 1 Corinthians 14 gift of tongues, which, as you say, the language of angels seems to be this language that is no human language, but is an intimate language with God, which can be interpreted to others, but isn't any human language.

So, I certainly would agree to a distinction there. And I think it is powerful that at the birth of the church, you have an undoing of that. Well, you have an undoing of the sense of there being these barriers between peoples that we can't understand each other.

And so, in a way that, I mean, very interestingly, actually, I was going to treat this in the section on hospitality, because Luke Brotherton, who's a young theologian, Duke, I think, he talks about the model of hospitality being rooted in the Pentecost ascension moment.

And so, there's a way in which the church plays the host to others because of how Christ has been, you know, exalted, and the gift has been poured out to make its actions and speech unintelligible to the world.

So, I think that that, I think that that has power, and that has weight. It's just, it seems that that doesn't stop Paul, sort of post-Pentecost, from challenging the church to say, you can still be unintelligible, you can still have these ways in which you sort of work against your birth, you know, you work against the Pentecostal charism of being understood and being able to penetrate, you know, hard hearts.

[55 : 51] And you have, of course, this wonderful conversion that ensues from that sermon at Pentecost. And so, there's a way in which that's probably this founding moment for the church that gives it an enormous sense of identity and how, hopefully, it's going to be relating in power and in the word to other publics.

But then, in Corinth, he has to say, you know, you're sort of the inverse of that. You're in this unintelligible language. So, I think it's a nice co-text to bring in on this, absolutely.

Yeah. It does say in Corinthians that all the gifts are for the good of the whole church. Except tongues, you can use that by yourself if you have that gift.

But when you're in the corporate group, you have to use it for the good of all. And there has to be interpretation. Because how do you know otherwise if someone's just going, you know, to impress others?

So, there has to be an interpreter. And then you know. And the message has to be, the interpretation has to be, obviously, coherent and understandable and tangible to the whole group.

[56 : 58] Sure. Otherwise, it could be just somebody trying to, you know, act the goat as you used to say. Act the goat. So, therefore, you don't know then if it's a legitimate gift.

If there's no interpretation. Sure. It's like any language, I mean. There's no interpretation. How do you know? Proper interpreter. Yeah, in a sense. It definitely, and that's, I mean, you may be referring to the direct context afterwards, verse 26 on, you know, where it talks about, if any speak in a tongue, there would be two or at most three in each in turn, unless someone interprets.

So, that type of order. Yeah. And Paul, in many ways, is talking about an order. Not, I think, in an impositional kind of mode, but in a sense of the dynamic peace that the spirit creates, and that we need to receive and facilitate in a fashion in which it can be heard and now heard.

Yes. So, thank you. That's an important context. Yeah. We'll go here first. Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Language is very interesting and very important in itself.

Everyone has a mother tongue. And our mother tongue is one of our major forces of personal and cultural identity, obviously.

[58 : 21] And so, the scripture, for instance, is talking about foreign languages and not foreign, which divides people in terms of their origins and their affiliations and their identities, whatever.

Sure. Question. How would our friends in the summer institution program interpret what you just said?

Would they agree or disagree? Tell me a little about the program you're referring to. These are languages who go to cultures where they do not speak the major languages or the economic languages or when natives go to, usually today's third world, and translate, they often record for the first time the native language.

Yeah. And they also translate the Bible. So, they're linguists. They're descriptive linguists, by and large. Sure. But their motives are missionary motives. Yeah. Yeah.

Well, I think the missionary motive would be very much supported by this text in the sense that Paul has a very clear priority in 1 Corinthians 14 of saying, you know, one of the things about prophecy that's so significant is its intelligibility.

[59 : 43] It can be heard. It can convict. It can cut to the heart. And I think for a translator, that's really empowering. That's really encouraging because it's a sense that we need people to be able to hear in their own tongue.

I mean, Paul, in many ways, in arguing with the Corinthians in high rhetorical style, says, I speak in tongues. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. You know? But I would rather speak few intelligible words than albums of words in the tongue.

There's a sense for wanting to be heard and wanting to communicate powerfully through a language that the other person can understand. So I think it would say, although tongue stands kind of over and against any language as an angelic speech, as it were, it's not, there's a strong impetus to the work of the translator in being able to have the prophetic gift, but certainly the scriptures as a prophetic mode itself, accessible to people that wouldn't otherwise be able to hear.

So does that answer the question you're after there? I mean, I think that this gives very good sort of indirect support to the work of translation, even if that's not at its heart.

But certainly a distinctiveness of Christianity as a religion has been how its scriptures are translated readily, and we don't insist on the Hebrew or Greek, you know, and speaking, the tongue that gave.

[61 : 09] I think that understanding those languages is crucial to, you know, interpreting, but we want this scripture to be read in the production. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. Yeah. Or, I'll let Edie go, she was first. Well, I think Harvey would. I'll let our speaker decide.

Thank you. Your hand was up early, early, and then we'll go Harvey, and then we'll go Edie. Okay. Go ahead. I'm just thinking, Isaiah 45, 14 says, God is with you alone, and there is no other, there is no God besides him.

I just have had experience of being in charismatic churches where tongues are used and where interpretations are given, and I'm just thinking, and even the church downtown, I'm just thinking, let's not put God in a box.

God is God, and he does whatever he wishes to do, whether we understand it or not. He works every way possible. I'm thinking of the hundreds of people who came to the Lord or were restored or whatever through the charismatic movement in the 80s and 90s, the vineyards, the Toronto Blessing, hundreds of believers, non-believers, whatever, would flock into church to see what was going on.

[62 : 34] So I'm just thinking about it. Whatever means that God's word is spreading, it's going forward. And people, there were some corrections that had to be made there, so more of the public speaking was if someone spoke in tongues, there was an English interpretation to benefit everyone.

And a lot of folks, even in this church, use tongues to pray, to praise God, to worship. So let's not disparage that too much.

If we don't understand it, it's okay, but God is using that in different ways. And God is even, in that article that Sheila referred to, there's church planting going on in downtown Vancouver.

It's very exciting. You know? And by whatever means, whether it's moving into the theater there or doing it on the streets, whatever means, God is using all of these methods.

He's using Alpha, has used Alpha to bring hundreds of people to the Lord. Alpha teaches the word and has a charismatic element to it too. And God uses all of these things.

[63 : 47] So God is God. Some of his ways are hidden to us, but let's not disparage his ways. I like that you quoted the God is with you statement, which of course is an outsider naming what they see.

I think it's important that it's the outsider naming it rather than the people claiming it themselves, i.e. God is with us alone. I think there's a place for, you know, saying God is with us, absolutely.

But I think part of the issue with Corinth, for instance, in the church is that they're claiming a certain spiritual reality and God's presence with them in a way that's problematic.

And so Paul is, on the one hand, referring to scripture to, I think, guide and correct, but also is saying you need others to acknowledge this. And through the kind of fruit of their conversion, we'll see whether that's the case or not.

You know? So there's an importance to the outsider's recognition that seems to constitute whether this is a work of God. That's one of the keys, is there fruit from this activity or not? And it seems to me that there has been a tremendous amount of people coming to the Lord in these groups that use that.

[65 : 00] Good. I'll have to hear more about that. I have been away from the Vancouver context for a few years, but it's exciting to hear. So, is it, it's all over a dollar, but isn't it? You know ethicists better than I do, but the third pillar, I think he calls it, of Christian ethics, is time.

What time is it for this action? I don't know if it helps the exegesis here or not, but I, as I heard you wonderfully unfold the course, to the extent that this can be wonderfully unfolded, I hear, I can almost hear Paul with James in Jerusalem having this conversation.

What time is it in the Gentile mission? So I really like your emphasis on what time is it for the church?

And to discern that is so hard. It needs, I think James would say, seek wisdom from above to know what time it can be. Because you can act wrongly at the time.

And be so blind to what God, we're having a good time at church, speaking in tongues, but God isn't doing anything here, because you haven't discerned the time yet.

[66 : 11] I know that's awfully general, but it really came home to me as you were up to know that. Are you interested in time as you do this exegesis? What time is it for Gentiles?

Who would understand this important, this rabbinic subtlety from Paul, if not someone maybe from, maybe the good circumcision party, from James?

Have you got an idea of who's reading this initially? Sure. I mean, we're the first past reading. We'll talk there, I think, for a year and a half, right? So there's a sense in which they've been drawn into this background a little bit.

So I don't think it's, again, there's that question of how much of this would be heard, right? But I think that Paul's teaching there, as well as some other ongoing teaching from the here in the context of Acts background on the core of the church, helps in terms of saying this would be somewhat intelligible.

In terms of the instance of time, I like that very much. And you mentioned Oliver O'Donovan. I mean, he talks about how the church lives out the moments of the Gospels, you know, in its various gifts.

[67 : 24] And so the four moments, as it were, of the incarnation, passion being one, Pentecost, or Ascension, Pentecost being another. And he's very much interested in, this is a desired nation, in placing the church within those moments and the various gifts that kind of flow out from them.

So with the Ascension, the gift of prophetic speech, the archetypal cares, he lives with that. So he very much, and just even in that two-volume, desire of nation, ways of judgment, and incidentally, he was one of the respondents to this paper at the Edinburgh Conference, so we got to talk about Donal.

He very much is about discerning those signs of the time in which we can speak. But I think he also, in his response to this paper, said, you know, the way ideology often happens is when you have a sensed connection with a particular context.

So exilic scripture being a clear, seeming link when the church is losing its buildings and being repurposed and deconsecrated and everything else, that seems to link with the exilic scripture, he says.

That's immediately when you suspect it as, in fact, the moment for discernment, because it can be very deceptively easy to say this is our moment and thereby harden it and keep ourselves from hearing that there's, in fact, a divine promise of restoration on its way, or that moment to moment we can be acting not like the exile ones, like the, you know, nation that put Israel in exile in the first place, and that then is a call to, you know, renewal within the church itself.

[69 : 04] So there's a, I think, a versatility you need in hearing that I've picked up from him that I like in terms of naming the moment and not being too quick to say the church is an exile, that's the Canadian reality for the 20th and 21st centuries.

And then you don't hear, you don't hear the lectionary in the same way you might otherwise hear it, because you're always placing the church in the displaced space, you know. Does that help in terms of a response?

We had a few questions there. Oh, no, yes, yes, that's, maybe I overrate who, who's reading it, yes. But anyway, thanks very much.

Sure. I'll follow that a bit more with you in terms of how Corinth would hear it. I had some extra material here for me to discuss EDU. I don't know if this is repeating itself, but I was thinking while you were speaking of what Paul wrote in the previous verses, about 13 and on, where he talked about his own personal view, I believe, of Kant's interpretation and when it was proper.

And then it's not, and you quoted the verse, that he would rather say five intelligible words in the Bible. And so I've never had difficulty understanding that he does believe that tongues are for the unbelievers.

[70 : 25] But I may not be able to explain carefully, but sometimes I've heard people say, well, okay, on the first 10th class Sunday, tongues are definitely not believers.

Many relent to the Lord. And so, Paul, I think we'll be having that in mind as well. But he's saying there is a, there is a, the part can be wrong, no matter whether they are believers or unbelievers. And in another place, he said, well, let everything he's done in the Lord. And too often, I think the mystery of the way Paul wrote this, people will explain it by saying, well, it doesn't exist now anyway, so it doesn't matter.

But I think that's a wrong attitude. I think it does exist now. And many churches want to keep that aspect of worship buried because it's mysterious and not completely comprehensible.

But I think we have to face the reality. I think that's what my promise is addressing. That there is a time, I think it's right in that as well.

[71 : 38] But it maybe depends upon where each congregation is, much more so than where it is in a micro-faithful church. It's also, I mean, that I think there's a question of control, too, and a very human desire to predict what happens at a given service.

And I think this is an interesting text to read in an Anglican context to say, you know, we have a liturgy that is very nourishing and is very challenging in its own right.

I mean, the call to confession, that type of thing. I mean, this is not a complacent set of words. But there is a predictability to it that means you may not hear readily.

And especially if the lectionary has alighted parts of Scripture, which I suspect it does. You know, there's a way in which you don't even hear Scripture fully in the context of a service, let alone a prophetic moment in which someone speaks in the time, you know, for what the church needs to hear.

Hopefully, good preaching will incorporate that in. But I think in Corinth, you've got, I mean, they've gone a little while with it, but you've got at least the potential of the Spirit's dynamism at play in tongues and prophecy that brings a more, maybe, direct or overt sense that God is speaking in the moment to us now.

[72 : 51] And it's not just the word from 1662, as it were, you know. So I think that it's a good challenge to take that. Yeah, and I think just in one more thing, also the way that many people understand prophecy is not true.

It's not somebody standing up and saying, I predict that the end of the world is going to come. It is helpful for believers because prophecy can often be an admonition or a warning.

And so I think unbelievers would want to hear that. Sure. While the conviction comes, and it seems to be joyfully taken in this verse, that's the hope, too, is that even conviction can bring the sense of hope.

That's why we should have a good question. We can get in the signal here, so I think we should wrap up. Joseph had a word. We'd be happy to talk after. All right. Well, I'd like to thank you for a really inspiring and...