

Commentary — From the Margins

Hearing the Spirit

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit [τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον] said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1–3)

1.

After paying for the four disciples to complete their Nasserite vows and after having purified himself (Acts 21:23–24; 26) seven days passed before certain Jews from Asia, seeing Paul in the temple, stirred up a riot (*v.* 27) by claiming that Paul was teaching “everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place” (*v.* 28). After Roman soldiers intervened to save Paul and ask him if he knew Greek (*v.* 37) implying that Paul and everyone in the temple was speaking Hebrew, Paul asks permission to speak to the Jews present—Luke records that Paul addressed them in Hebrew, an unnecessary statement if Acts was originally written in Hebrew ... what is the point of addressing the language in which Acts and the New Testament is written? The point is, simply, the Greek language did not have then in use many words for “God,” or for “covenants” or contracts or civil obligations, or for invisible forces. Koine Greek words [linguistic icons] had multiple meanings [linguistic objects] assigned to them, thereby establishing the necessity that many things are represented by the same word, making the context in which a word occurs as important in Koine Greek as word order is in modern English.

When Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote* in the late 16th-Century, Spanish used very few words, no more than an average American high school student uses today (which obviously is enough for communication from one person to another to occur). The greatness of Cervantes lies in his ability to use the same words [icons] to tell two or more stories at the same time, with all stories being valid but not necessarily appropriate for retelling in a similar way to how Shakespeare utilized the fact (of which the audience was aware) that all female roles in his dramas were played by men, thereby giving to seemingly inoffensive language (*parole*) bawdy humor. And when one set of words [linguistic icons] convey two or more sets of meaning [objects], translation is impossible, something that writers understand perhaps better than translators. The translators must decide which of several objects for an icon is the most appropriate then take that object

(not icon) to the second language and look for an icon in that second language that best represents the object. But the fallacy in translation is that the translator has preconceived ideas about what is the best object for the icon in the first language and the translator tends to neglect all of the otherwise appropriate objects for the icon in favor of the object the translator favors. Hence, Paul writes to Timothy,

Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, *imagining that godliness is a means of gain.* (1 Tim 6:2–5 emphasis added)

Imagining that godliness is a means of gain is central to the teaching of heresy; for Paul writes elsewhere,

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. ... And what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. (2 Cor 11:7–9, 12–15)

Therefore, the first “test” for whether a person teaches a different doctrine than what Paul taught isn't in the words of the person but whether the person teaches or preaches as a means of personal gain. Paul says to the Thessalonians,

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. (2 Thess 3:6–9)

Paul had the right to ask for support, for one is not to muzzle the ox that grinds the grain; but he didn't ask for support to establish a difference between him (and those who imitate him) and deceitful workmen, the servants of Satan who have disguised themselves as ministers of righteousness. He didn't ask for support to set an example so that without disputing about words disciples can

quickly identify who is and who isn't genuine. Disciples can, in any question of doctrine, resolve who is of God by simply sitting on their wallets and waiting for the false teachers to separate themselves from those who are genuinely of Christ by asking for support. The false teachers do not work for the Father and the Son so neither the Father nor the Son supply their needs. They are dependent upon the prince of this world to supply their needs; hence they will ask other men and women to support them.

Addressing the "trinity," what Trinitarian pastor does not ask for support? Name one if you can—and if you can't, your inability to name one speaks volumes about Trinitarian heretics calling genuine disciples *heretics*.

When multiple objects (meanings) can be assigned to a word, the appropriate object isn't necessarily the most obvious object. If the words are Scripture, only by hearing the voice of Jesus can the "correct" objects be assigned to the icons (words) recorded nearly two millennia ago, and Jesus' disciples hear His voice (John 10:27). Others do not. A disciple must hear Jesus' voice before the disciple can "hear" the words Jesus spoke. So it isn't to rabbinical Judaism or to Satan's seed (disciples that practice lawlessness) or to faithless scholars that disciples go to assign the "proper" object (meaning) to the words of Scripture. It is to Christ Jesus ... beginning disciples are easier to teach than are disciples decades in the faith, for newly drawn infant sons of God do not have to erase old assignments of meaning from the words of Scripture. They are eager to hear the voice of Jesus, who is just as eager to "speak" to them. In fact Jesus is so eager to speak to them that He spoke what He had to say in His three and a half year ministry in the 1st-Century CE. All that remains for endtime disciples to do is hear the voice of Jesus in order to assign His meanings to the words He spoke so long ago.

When Paul was taken from the temple and arrested, Paul asked to speak to his countrymen, and he began by saying, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers" (Acts 21:3). Now, pause, if Paul was educated by Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of the Hebrew fathers—Paul's testimony—then did Paul not know the will of God? He didn't, did he? For later in his testimony he quotes what Ananias told him, "*The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name*" (Acts 22:14–16 emphasis added).

If after being educated at the feet of Gamaliel Paul still would have to learn the will of God, no one of the Pharisees knew the will of God. All were ignorant.

According to Ananias, Paul was called for three reasons:

1. To know the will of God;
2. To see the Righteous One;
3. To hear a voice from God's mouth.

These three things were to prepare Paul to be a witness to everyone, from the 1st-Century until the end of age, not just to Asia, Achaia, Judea, and Rome but all over the world.

Paul speaks of seeing the Righteous One when he writes,

I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. (2 Cor 12:1–5)

The “man” caught up to the third heaven isn’t a human being, for Paul says that flesh and blood cannot enter heaven (1 Cor 15:50), but the “new man” or new creature dwelling within the tent of flesh of his old man. This *new man* was born of spirit [πνεῦμα θεοῦ — from Matt 3:16] and is spirit [πνεῦμά — from John 3:6], which is like the wind [πνεῦμα — from John 3:8] and like the breath [πνεῦμα — from Rev 13:15] returned to the beast. But Paul’s *new man* that saw the Righteous One when in the third heaven wasn’t wind here on earth, nor was Paul’s *new man* the “life” that was given by Satan to the fourth beast of Daniel chapter 7 when this fourth beast appears in Scripture after having been dealt a mortal wound (Dan 7:11–12). In each case, communication is hindered by the Greek icon “πνεῦμα—*pneuma*” being assigned the objects usually assigned to the English icons “breath” (as in deep breath, moving air from outside to inside a person), “wind” (moving air from one location to another), and any invisible moving force. The Greek icon “πνεῦμα—*pneuma*” is the root of English words such as *pneumonia* (pertaining to the breath) and *pneumatic tools* (tools that do work via moving air).

A human being causes work to be done with his or her breath [Gr: πνεῦμα] when the person commands another to come or go. If the person being commanded is not standing beside the one who gives the command but is in another room or outside the building, the person only hears the voice of the one who gives the command. The person being commanded doesn’t think that the voice—the modulated breath [πνεῦμα] of the person giving the command—is another person, but the person being commanded recognizes (if the person has previously heard the voice of the one giving the command) the voice and understands that the voice belongs to a person not then bodily present.

Now, take the above illustration to what Ananias told Paul about hearing a voice from the mouth of God: both the breath (πνεῦμα — used metaphorically) of the Father and the Son are holy breaths [πνεῦμα ἅγιον — from John 20:22] and both function as human breath functions in this world, giving life to the body and doing work for the entity. Disciples are the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). They have individually been raised from the dead by the Father (John 5:21) when He draw them from this world (John 6:44, 65) by giving them a second breath of life; i.e., life via receipt of His breath [πνεῦμα θεοῦ]. Therefore, when Barnabas, Simeon (Niger), Lucius, Manaen, and Saul/Paul were worshipping the Lord and fasting, they heard a voice that was not the voice of a person. They didn’t “feel” some sort of urge within themselves; they heard with their minds and perhaps with their ears audible words as if the words were conveyed to the ears of each of

them by modulated human breath coming from another room. And the “voice” said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). The first person “I” doesn’t give personhood to the voice, the breath [τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον] which spoke to them ... a parent will, after scolding a misbehaving child, will sometimes say something like, *I’m wasting my breath*. And so it is with the divine breath of the Father, who seldom speaks directly to human beings so that His words are seemingly heard with the ear. He isn’t about to *waste His breath*. But Paul was destined to hear a voice from His mouth, and Paul did indeed hear words from the mouth of Jesus (Acts 9:4, 6) and words from the mouth of the Father (Acts 13:2), with others also hearing these latter words as confirmation that Paul was indeed called by God to do a work.

Now, how do I know that certain prophets and teachers at Antioch heard the voice of the Father as words and not as inner groaning or feelings? I know because on Thursday of the second full week of January 2002, about 10:12 CST, as I was turning into the parking lot of Southeastern Illinois College, Harrisburg, where I was scheduled to teach two classes beginning at 10:30, I heard uttered words that were like words heard with my ears, but words that didn’t disseminate as ephemeral human speech does. There was no one in the pickup with me to speak to me. The radio wasn’t on. There was no cell-phone. Yet I heard very clearly the distinct words, *It’s time to reread prophecy*.

There was no context for the words to be uttered other than it was exactly forty years to the day and probably to the minute after Garner Ted Armstrong, on behalf of his father, rejected revelation for the most visible fellowship of the Body of Christ ... I didn’t know about what had occurred forty years earlier until months later. I know I sat in the parking lot, not really able to get to class for quite a few minutes as I tried to make sense of what had just happened: I had just heard words conveyed by the breath of God. And as soon as I got home from teaching those two classes, I began doing what I was told; I began to reread prophecy, and I found that it didn’t say what we (as disciples in the Churches of God) had been told that it said. I found that the visible things of this world revealed the invisible things of God (Rom 1:20), and that the visible things of this world form the shadows or types (chiral images) of the invisible things of God, that the prophecies of Daniel had been sealed and kept secret by shadows.

The English word “spirit” enters the language as a Middle English loan word borrowed from Norman French which in turn borrowed the Latin icon *spīritus*, used in Latin to represent “breath” or the “breath of a god,” with the god either of heaven or of Mount Olympus. In Latin the breath of Jupiter would be *sacra spīritus* [holy spirit], but obviously not the breath of the Father or the Son. So context becomes critical in determining what meaning will be assigned to the linguistic icon.

Concerning Acts 13:2, what Luke writes is (originally all in uncials and without accents or separation into words), “λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ νηστεόντων εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, Ἀφορίσατε δὴ μοι τὸν Βαρναβᾶν καὶ Σαῦλον εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτούς” (a literal translation of which is, “Ministering and they to the Lord and fasting, said the spirit the holy, ‘Set apart then for me Barnabas and Saul to the work which I have called them,’” and what Luke writes certainly has the πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον speaking to those who were

ministering and fasting. But it is the Father that speaks to those who were fasting, and what is heard are the Father's words coming through the Father's divine breath. But again, the Father doesn't breathe air, so those praying and fasting did not hear a man speaking through controlled modulations of physical breath, with these modulations causing sound waves to travel through the air by one gas molecule bumping into another, transferring energy to it, until a human voice is heard feet or yards away by pulsating air molecules bumping against eardrums. They heard the voice of God through the modulations of spirit or breath of God within the mind.

To hear with the ears requires sound waves to be formed in the envelope of air surrounding a person's head, but the divine words of God are not heard with the ears but within the mind in a manner that would seem to have the words heard with the ear.

The Psalmist wrote,

O Lord, how manifold are your works! / In wisdom have you made them all; / the earth is full of your creatures. / ... When you hide your face, they are dismayed; / when you take away their breath, they die / and return to dust. / When you send forth your Spirit [breath], they are created, / and you renew the face of the ground. (Ps 104:27, 29–30)

The divine breath of *YHWH* creates life and renews the face of the ground, but it was *Yah*, or *the Logos* [ὁ λόγος] who created all that has been made (John 1:3) — *YHWH* is one, who are two [ὁ λόγος & τὸν θεόν] that function as one deity as Adam and Eve were two who became one flesh (Gen 2:24) through marriage. All things were created by ὁ λόγος (John 1:3); thus, it was by the divine breath of ὁ λόγος that life was created. This, now, leaves the divine breath of τὸν θεόν to renew (as in recreate, or spiritually create) the face of the ground ... in the structure of Hebraic poetics, being created is physical, the work of *Yah* [*YH*], whereas renewing the face of the ground is spiritual, the work of the conjoined *YHWH*. **To renew what has been created is to cause the physical to become spiritual in a manner similar to the coming of the new heavens and new earth after death has been thrown into the lake of fire** (Rev 21:1).

When the *Logos/Theos* entered His creation as His only Son (John 3:16), the man Jesus of Nazareth, He spoke only the words of the Father, the previously Unknown God. But these words of the Father were (for lack of a better phrase) too big to be conveyed by modulations of air; thus, the recorded healings that Jesus performed are part of the speech-acts of the Father that Jesus delivered through the Father's divine breath; πνευμα ἅγιον, usually now translated as the Holy Spirit.

- In the seven recorded Sabbath healings, the words Jesus spoke coupled with the healings constituted the speech-acts of the Father as He, the Father, delivered a message to Israel through Jesus on these Sabbath days.
- When Jesus asked the Father to glorify His name, a voice came from heaven that the crowd heard as thunder (John 12:28–30). “Sound” was heard for the crowd's sake, but this *sound* was not intelligible to the crowd even though some said that an angel had spoken to Jesus.

- When the prophet Daniel was by the Tigris, he lifted up his eyes and saw a vision. Only he saw the vision. The men with him felt a great trembling and fled (Dan 10:7).
- At Sinai, when the Lord spoke, the people heard thunder and the sound of trumpets, and they saw flashes of lightning and the mountain smoking. They were afraid, and they asked Moses not to let God speak to them lest they die (Ex 20:18–20)

No mortal man is able to hear the voice of God as His divine breath [$\piνευμα \acute{\alpha}γιον$] conveys His words or to see God unless God has specifically chosen the person to be an instrument for Him. The utterances of God must cross dimensions, and they don't come across as precisely enunciated words in a human language that all men can hear; rather, for most of humankind, the utterances of God occur as groaning of the spirit, perceived through feelings and subconscious suggestions. Yet for the person whom God has chosen to do a work for Him, the utterances of God will be heard as perfectly enunciated words, and not as feelings arising from a person's subconscious. The man Jesus heard the words of the Father as Moses heard the words of *Yah* and as Saul heard the words of the glorified Jesus when he was on the road to Damascus.

Paul writes to the saints at Corinth that, "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation ... no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:10–11). Elsewhere, he writes, "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized" (1 Cor 14:3–38). So Paul writes that he, not others who came from Jerusalem, knows the will of God, and lays the foundation for the spiritual house of God. Paul's claim is both bold and based upon Paul receiving his gospel not from any man but "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12).

Certainly Paul preached his gospel privately to those who seemed influential in Jerusalem in order to make sure he was not running in vain (Gal 2:2). About this he writes, "And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me" (v. 6).

Paul learned nothing [*added nothing to me*] from the first disciples in Jerusalem fourteen years after his calling; so the testimony of Paul is that he, Paul, learned the will of God directly through revelation and not from any person.

For emphasis let it be known: since Paul recorded the fulfillment of the first two of the three things Ananias prophesied, disciples should expect to find in Scripture confirmation of the third thing: hearing a call from the mouth of the Righteous One or hearing the voice of God.

The utterances of God will be—and really can only be—conveyed by the divine breath of God [$\piνευμα \acute{\alpha}γιον$]. Thus, for Paul to hear the voice of God, he must hear the Holy Spirit [*again, $\piνευμα \acute{\alpha}γιον$*] speak in words to him.

- If an anointed one hears the voice of God, this anointed one hears the Holy Spirit speak words rather than merely "hearing" the Holy Spirit through the groaning of the spirit conveyed in feelings and subconscious thoughts.

- Ananias prophesied that Paul would hear the voice of God, the sound of which can only be conveyed through utterance by the Holy Spirit.

Too many disciples sloppily speak of the Holy Spirit telling them to do this or to do that when they have heard nothing with their ears or their minds. Rather, they have had a feeling of some sort, and they conclude that the feeling they experienced was the Holy Spirit speaking to them ... indeed, that feeling might have come from the deep groaning of the spirit, or it might be from the person's mind recalling nearly forgotten knowledge. There is no reliable way to truly distinguish one from the other.

How can the person know for certain if a feeling has come from the Holy Spirit or from another spirit? The answer: only by testing the spirit.

Did the Holy Spirit tell WWII veteran Max Archer, then an infantry corporal in the winter of 1944, to throw his boot across the room one night when his patrol was getting ready to go out? Hearing no voice but feeling a strong urge, he threw his boot across the room while getting dressed. And just as soon as he threw the boot, he thought about how stupid the act was. He retrieved his boot and put it on. But the few extra minutes that it took for him to get his boot caused him to leave late. Every other member of the patrol was killed before he caught up with his squad.

Years later, as a Sabbatarian disciple Max credited the Holy Spirit for intervening and saving his life. He retold the story by saying that the Holy Spirit told him to throw the boot across the room. Yet he acknowledges that he heard nothing with either his ears or his mind. What he experienced was a feeling—and for most disciples, this is how communication through the spirit occurs.

But the Apostle Paul was an exception: he heard the voice of God. He heard uttered words as apparently did those with Paul on several occasions.

When Max Archer told the story of his brush with death his breath didn't need personhood for the words conveyed by his voice to be heard by those near him. Nor does the breath [πνευμα] of God need personhood for the voice of God to be heard by those chosen to hear words with the mind and not to just feel the groaning of the Spirit.

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