

Commentary — From the Margins

The Circumcision Faction as Shadow

Throughout the Apostle Paul's ministry he fought a long-running battle with the circumcision faction or party (Gal 2:12), influential men from Jerusalem who taught that disciples must first become circumcised Israelites before these disciples could become spiritual Israelites. In order for a disciple to be circumcised, the disciple must have a penis. Therefore, the circumcision faction taught (whether directly or indirectly cannot now be determined, for their written teachings were not canonized) that salvation was only available to men or through men, that women could only be saved through a man as her covering. A similar teaching today exists among Latter Day Saints, where a husband in heaven must call his wife into heaven. The details of this Mormon doctrine are less important than the continuance of the concept within this influential denomination of Arian Christianity.

The circumcision faction had Scriptural authority for their teaching, and it is this authority that needs to be examined here, for the Apostle Paul appears to negate Scripture through a revelation (Gal 1:12 & 2:2). Paul doesn't say that he had a vision; rather, he says he had a revelation. Thus, the Aristotelian argument he writes to the Gentile converts in Galatia serves as the model, or as the case will prove, the shadow of how revelation should be presented to endtime Israel. It additionally reveals the temporary ineffectiveness of such a presentation, for he also writes that schisms within Israel must occur so that those disciples who are genuine will be recognized (1 Cor 11:19). Recognized by whom? The answer ironically is by Christ. Some disciples do not know if they hear the voice of the true Shepherd; they are double or triple or more minded. And if the disciple doesn't know if he or she hears Christ's voice, neither does Christ know. A doctrinal schism reveals to Christ whether the disciple hears His voice, and whether the disciple has love.

The basis for the circumcision faction's Scriptural authority is Genesis 17:1-14:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk with me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and

you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." [paragraph break in translation] And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken the covenant." (Emphasis has been added to portions of this long passage so that the basis for the circumcision faction's argument visually stands out).

First, let us help the circumcision faction: this covenant made between YHWH and Abram changes Abram's name through the inclusion of voiced breath in his and Sarai's names. This inclusion as "breath" reveals when Abram received the Breath of God; i.e., the Holy Spirit. So this covenant contains importance to disciples baptized by the Holy Spirit. This is a pivotal covenant that contains no out-clause. If a male isn't circumcised, he shall be cut off from Israel. The language of the covenant couldn't be more unambiguous.

In every argument Paul makes, he tries to ignore this covenant by which Abraham is made the father of many nations, and by which Abraham and his offspring are given the land of Canaan. It is the legal foundation of claims of ownership to the land by Abraham's offspring. As such, it is the legal basis for both modern Arab and Israeli claims to this ancient land of Canaan, for the circumcised descendents of Ishmael have kept covenant with YHWH at least as well as have the circumcised descendents of Isaac. Again, the promise of the covenant is that Abraham would be the father of many nations – and indeed, he has been.

So far, it doesn't look good for Paul even though he has had a revelation by an undisclosed means. Paul continues to want to link circumcision to the Sinai covenant, but this covenant made with Abram predates the Sinai covenant by (as Paul writes) by as much as 430 years (Gal 3:17). And circumcision is by this covenant. Paul's argument is just wrong.

But Paul had that revelation which he cannot really explain. So before proceeding to help Paul out, let us identify YHWH, the Elohim of circumcised Israel (Exod 20:2), who brought that nation out of physical bondage in Egypt – and who made that single nation holy (Exod 19:5-6) and no other nation. John's Gospel begins, "In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word was with God [Theon], and the Word was God [Theos]....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (vv. 1, 14). Jesus is unarguably the Logos about whom John says became the man Jesus of Nazareth. And

the first thing we notice is Theon [a neuter gender noun] being with Theos [a masculine gender noun] in the beginning. They are together as one, with Theos being the Spokesman or Logos for the two

Elohim is a Hebraic plural: it is deconstructed as /El/ + /ah/ times a multiple, or Eloah times a multiple. The /ah/ radical indicates breath or rough breathing. In Greek, breath or harsh breath is assigned the linguistic icon /pneuma/. So merging languages, Eloah is deconstructed as /El/ for God plus /ah/ for pneuma, or God plus His Breath, usually translated into English as God plus His Spirit. Elohim then is the plural of /God plus His Spirit/, which now allows us to deconstruct YHWH. And what we find is one deity with his breath /YH/ coupled tightly to another deity with his breath /WH/. The Apostle Paul adds to this by writing, "Anyone who does not have the Spirit [Pneuma] of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom 8:9) and "If the Spirit [Pneuma] of him who raised Jesus from the dead" (v. 11). Two Breaths or Spirits -- one that belongs to Christ, and one that belong to the Father -- are linguistically present in this passage. This, then, agrees with the structure of both the linguistic icon /Elohim/ and the icon /YHWH/, in which two Breaths are present. Thus, Theos, as the Word, as the man Jesus of Nazareth is now one /El/ of Elohim, and probably the /Y/ of the tetragrammaton YHWH. And the man Jesus said that Israel never knew about the other /El/ of Elohim and the /W/ of YHWH (John 17:25 -- Jesus identifies everyone not of His disciples as "the world" [v. 6, same chapter]).

Therefore, when YHWH made the covenant with Abraham (notice the addition of breath /ah/ in Abram's name; this is when he received the Holy Spirit), it is the Logos who spells out the terms -- a check of the Hebrew will disclose the difference between what has been translated as God Almighty and how the tetragrammaton YHWH, translated as God, has been used. It was the Logos who said, So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. The covenant ratified by circumcision was a covenant made in the flesh, which is not everlasting. The corruptible shall put on incorruptibility when glorified. So everlasting has an age-ending limit, which is not present in English but is in Hebrew and in Greek. What the circumcision faction didn't recognize was that an age ended at Calvary. Circumcised Israel, the holy nation of God, murdered the Covenantor of the covenant that made them the holy nation. They abolished the covenant (Eph 2:15). They ended what it was that set them apart from the world.

Israel as the woman of Revelation chapter 12 continued on without an interruption: the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob were replaced by the twelve Apostles prior to Calvary. And what we see is the physical precedes the spiritual in all things -- the visible things of the world reveals the invisible things of God. The visible history of circumcised Israel reveals the invisible history of spiritual Israel.

We see circumcised Israel replaced by uncircumcised Israel in the wilderness of Sin. Circumcised Israel would not enter the promised land when the chance was offered to them (Num 14:1-4; Deu 1:26), so all of that nation except for Joshua and Caleb died in the wilderness, never entering the promised land. Their uncircumcised children crossed the Jordan into the promised land (Jos 5:2-7).

The reality of all things is Christ. The visible shadow of circumcised Israel has added to the invisible shadow of spiritual or uncircumcised Israel to together form the shadow of the single holy nation of God that was initially promised to Abram (Gen 12:2). It is this single holy nation of Israel that crosses the Jordan to receive glorification upon Christ's return – and here is a mystery of God that requires spiritual understanding: God's focus has been from before the foundations of the universe were snapped taut the endtime harvests of humanity, both the harvest of firstfruits upon Christ's return, and the later main harvest in the great White Throne Judgment. When the kingdom of the world (Rev 11:15) becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Messiah (linguistically, two entities), all of humanity will receive the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28). All of humanity will become the holy nation Israel, both physically (by being the property of Father and Son) and spiritually (by having received the Holy Spirit). And this endtime single nation of Israel is the single nation promised to Abram (Gen 12:2), and is the single offspring of Christ, and by extension, of Abram.

In the wilderness of Sin, the uncircumcised children of the Israelites who left Egypt lived as their parents did, for good and for bad. And they form a shadow of the Church leaving the wilderness of Sin. It is to these uncircumcised Israelites that Moses give the second covenant (Deu 29:1), which has these uncircumcised Israelites keeping everything written in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deu 30:10), with this book being placed beside the ark of the covenant as a witness against them (31:26). And as a condition of this second covenant, Israel would receive circumcised hearts and minds upon obedience...when the mediator of this covenant changed from Moses to Christ, the better promises added included receiving the Breath of the Father and of the Son prior to obedience, not after.

Typology shows that the second covenant is made with uncircumcised Israelites who live as Judeans lived, which is what Peter taught Gentile converts (Gal 2:14). Paul doesn't chide Peter for what he taught these converts. Rather, he chides Peter for hypocrisy – for resurrecting the separation of circumcised Israel from the world mandated by the Sinai covenant, which made Israel the holy nation of YHWH. And that is the key to unlock the circumcision faction's argument. YHWH no longer exists in this relationship, or configuration. Once the Logos entered His creation as His son, His only (John 3:16), YHWH became God the Father [/WH/] and the physical man Jesus of Nazareth, not two deities with their individual breaths that functioned as one entity. The Logos gave up all glory to come as a flesh and breath [soma and psuche] human being. To say otherwise makes one into an antichrist. And Jesus needed the Breath of the Father (Matt 3:16) to receive His former glory (John 1:14), revealed to his disciples.

Today, disciples need the Breath of the Father to draw them from the world. Our model for being glorified is in the visible example of the Apostles who were foreknown and predestined by the Father (John 17:6, 9), then justified by the glorified Christ when they received His Breath/Pneuma (John 20:22). They will be glorified upon His return (John 17:2 & 1 Cor 4:5). Disciples will become (and already are in the spiritual realm) the many brothers of the firstborn Jesus of Nazareth.

If the visible second covenant is made with uncircumcised Israelites, and is ratified by obedience causing these Israelites to receive circumcised hearts and minds, the invisible second covenant is also made with uncircumcised Israelites who receive circumcised

hearts and minds prior to obedience. Thus, no penises are necessary. Only hearts and minds. And both Jew and Greek, free and slave, male and female (Gal 3:28) have hearts and minds. No additional physical body parts are needful, so eyes, ears, toes, fingers, feet, hands, etc. can be missing. The body suffers without these parts, but still has life.

The penis should be the most hidden part of the body. When the covenant by which Israel became the holy nation of God was visible, the sign of its ratification was hidden as well as physically possible. Clothing was the covering. When the covenant by which Israel has been made holy becomes invisible, the evidence of ratification is in the minds and hearts of disciples. Christ is the coverings (the two goats of Yom Kipporin), and the evidence of ratification is manifest in love toward even one's enemies. And here is where the circumcision faction becomes the visible shadow of endtime born-from-above disciples: the sons of God are neither male nor female. They are baptized disciples who have put on Christ (Gal 3:27) as their covering. But many born anew disciples point to their penises and say, This little guy allows me to speak in the Church. These disciples are, indeed, newly born. They are spiritual infants. And because of their infancy, they are novices and barred from holding offices In the endtime Church, they represent the circumcision faction. They are the ones who will go out from spiritual Jerusalem prohibiting women from speaking in services and from being ministers. And they have just as much Scripture to support their position as the circumcision faction had to support its mingling of old and new covenants. They are just as doubly accursed in the spiritual realm.

Any disciple who takes the person's identity from his or her biological plumbing is a novice, and has no right to hold an office in the Church. This disciple should be quiet while growing in grace and knowledge.

Does this position of The Philadelphia Church need additional explication? If you first identify yourself as a man, or as a woman, you are to be silent and to grow in grace and knowledge. If you speak as a man, or as a woman, you need to shut up. When you put Christ on as a garment, you cease being male or female. You become a son of God. The Bride of Christ is composed of many sons of God. And all sons of God are free to speak in the Church. Truly, no restriction can be place upon a son of God, for a son has all the authority necessary to disciple newly born spiritual infants.

Notice carefully, though, a disciple is not a son of God until the disciple has put on Christ, thereby no longer self-identifying himself or herself as male or female. Yes, the biology remains, and should be recognized. Unisex styles and behavior are denials of a reality that will exist until the disciple is glorified. Disciples are to live in the world, but not be of it – and so it is with being a son of God. A man lives in a male body, but that body is of the old man that he has crucified. The new creature is still in that same male body which resists change. The new creature reigns over the heart and mind, which should by extension reign over all of the flesh. That wasn't the case for Paul, and it hasn't been the case for any disciple since. But when speaking in Church, it is the heart and mind that gives utterances, not the body of the old man. However, shoes fit on the feet of the old man, so do all articles of apparel.

Again, the visible shadow of invisible spiritual Israel is the uncircumcised children of the Israelites who left Egypt receiving the second covenant of Moses at Moab. These uncircumcised children were keeping the Sabbath, eating holy food, living by the laws of God [well, they were supposed to be]. This is how spiritual Israelites are to live outwardly today. They are not to outwardly remain Gentiles while inwardly trying to be Israelites. They are the holy nation of God, whose hearts and minds have been circumcised instead of their foreskins. They live as Israelites! with love in their hearts and minds.

Now, back to Paul's fight with the circumcision faction: the entirety of Paul's negation of physical circumcision being necessary comes from a revelation, which he doesn't tell us how he received. Everything else Paul argues stems from him attempting to justify his revelation, using Scripture however he can. He knows he is correct. He knows what I have just written about Christ being the Logos, but he doesn't yet have John's Gospel to use as textual support. His own authority is no greater if as great as those who come from Jerusalem, bringing with them their doubly accursed gospel. They are Church leaders messing with his congregations, which aren't really his, but Christ's. And he doesn't have the acknowledged spiritual weight necessary to squelch their nonsense. After all, they were important enough that Peter separated himself from his converts to eat with them. So all he can do is maintain his running battle, shooting strong epistles at those who misuse the law. And in doing so, he himself practices equivocation.

Today, revelation comes through realization, comes from the Holy Spirit at work in a disciple's mind. Pastor McDonnell of the Dallas-Ft. Worth Church of God had a revelation – and she, like Paul, has tried to create arguments to support her revelation. Some of her arguments are better than others. All of her arguments come back to the basic realization that excluding half of the population from speaking within the Church is not a position of love. And based upon what the circumcision faction foreshadows, the battle to let women speak will be long-running. But when the earth has been harvested, her revelation will be the one remembered.

* * * * *

"Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved."