

The Fourth Gospel

(A Messianic Drama)

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Second Farewell Discourse, Pt 2 (15:1-16:33)

When the Counselor is Come (15:26-16:15)

In the first discourse, in the upper room, Jesus had introduced the topic of the coming of the *Paraclete*/Spirit of God (14:15-17 and 25-26). There he had spoken of him as "another Counselor" (Greek – *parakletos*) further identified as "the Spirit of truth," who would dwell within them (14:15-17). Then in vv 25-26 he tells them that this "Counselor," whom he further identifies as "the Holy Spirit," would inspire them and bring them revelation from God.

Such a concept was, no doubt, familiar to them. In the Hebrew Scriptures the Spirit of God (*Ruach Elohim*) was the power by which the prophets of God received revelation from God. Jesus, himself, was filled with the Spirit of God and manifested the presence and power of God in his life through the Spirit (cf. Luke 4:1, 14).

This *parakletos* figure, introduced in chapter 14, is developed upon rather extensively in chapters 15-16. In chapter 14 this *parakletos* is portrayed as a being through which these eleven men would become recipients of revelation ("he will teach you all things") and inspiration ("he will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you"). In chapter 15:26-27 they are told that this *parakletos* would be sent to them from the presence of God to bear witness of the risen Jesus and to aid them in their witness of him (i.e., eye-witnesses of his resurrection). Then in 16:7-15 they are told that this *parakletos* would convict the world concerning sin,

concerning justice (or injustice), and judgment/condemnation.

Our emphasis here is on the *parakletos* sayings of chapters 15-16. Four specific issues will concern us: (1) The meaning of this term *parakletos*, (2) the connection between the *parakletos* and the Spirit of Truth, (3) the connection between the *parakletos* and the Spirit of God (*Ruach Elohim*) or Holy Spirit (*Ruach HaKodesh*), (4) the connection between the *parakletos* and the Spirit of Jesus.

The Meaning of the Term *Parakletos*

This Greek term was previously introduced in the notes on the first farewell discourse (13:31-14:31), in the monologue on the promise of the Spirit (14:15-31). This term is of such significance to our understanding of Jesus' teaching here that a word study would be worth our effort. Our primary concern is to seek to understand this term (and the terms Jesus interchanges with it) as it would have been understood within first century Judaism.

The Greek term *parakletos* runs the gamut in meanings. It can be used of a person who gives counsel or advice, who provides instruction or guidance, one who gives comfort to the distressed or oppressed. It can be used of a person who encourages or one who pleads with or exhorts. In a forensic sense (i.e., of or pertaining lawyers, courts of law, etc.) it can be used of a prosecuting attorney (i.e., one who makes a case against), or a defense attorney/an advocate (i.e., one who pleads one's case). Curiously, the Hebrew term for intercessor or advocate is *peraqlyt* and is used in the *Mishnah* (*Perke Aboth* 4:11) for a defense attorney/advocate. It is, perhaps, a loan word, borrowed from the Greek term *parakletos*.

Literally, the Greek verb from which the noun *parakletos* is taken communicates something of a word picture; it is *para* (along side) and *kaleo* (I call), hence - to call along side (i.e., to call someone along side to counsel or advise, instruct or give guidance, to charge or defend, to comfort or encourage, or to empower).

How does one translate a term with such a diversity of meanings? The context usually provides the data necessary to making this determination. Here in John, however, the diversity of functions of the *parakletos* figure makes the translation of this very complex term difficult. We will simply

transliterate the Greek term "*parakletos*", then we will be using the term the original writers of the New Testament used in speaking of this figure.

The *Parakletos* and the Spirit of Truth

In 14:17, 15:26, and in 16:13 Jesus identified the *parakletos* with the Spirit of Truth. The expression was common in first century Judaism; in fact, the Spirit of Truth was a very dominant figure in the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran. The Spirit of Truth was set over against the Spirit of Error. In the Manual of Discipline 3:13-5:26, a major piece of theology is developed on this theme. It is remarkable how similar their teaching on the person and work of the Spirit of Truth was to John's record of Jesus' teaching on the *parakletos*.

All who serve Satan are under the influence of the Spirit of Error), all who serve God are under the influence of the Spirit of Truth. These same two spirits are found in the second century BC Jewish writing, the *Testament of Judah* (in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*), copies of which were discovered in the Dead Sea caves. Here the patriarch Judah, in his farewell speech to his children, says:

So understand, my children, that two spirits await an opportunity with humanity: the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. In between is the conscience of the mind which inclines as it will. The things of truth and the things of error are written in the affections of man, each one of whom the Lord knows . . . And the Spirit of Truth testifies to all things and brings all accusation . . . (*Testament of Judah* 20:1-5)

Of significance is the fact the Spirit of Truth "testifies" (bears witness) and "accuses" (convicts men of sin). In John 15:26, Jesus says that the *parakletos* (Spirit of Truth) will bear witness, and in 16:7-11, he says that the *parakletos* will convict the world of sin. It would appear that these concepts and the terminology used to convey them were common currency within the realm of ideas of first century Judaism.

Here in 16:7-11, the meaning of *parakletos* can hardly be missed. The forensic sense is obvious; he is functioning as a prosecuting attorney. He will put the world on trial and convict it with reference to sin, justice, and judgment. The meaning of this passage has given rise to much controversy. It's meaning, however, may not be that difficult. Jesus' had said that "his

hour" had arrived. His conflict with the powers of darkness had begun, which would culminate in his crucifixion. The whole world was under the power of sin, and because of its disbelief of the claims of Jesus, it put him to death. The conflict, however, did not culminate in his death; God raised him up, thereby vindicating his Messianic claims to be the Son of God. The resurrection was God's statement with reference to who this person Jesus of Nazareth really was.

The world's disbelief convicted it of sin (v 9 - He will convict the world concerning sin . . . because they do not believe in me). By means of the resurrection, their justice (not "righteousness") was declared a mockery (v 10 concerning justice, because I go to the Father). The resurrection, in effect, convicted the world's judgment and/or condemnation of Jesus, by destroying the Hadean power of Satan, whom the world followed in its rejection (judgment) of Jesus (v 11 - concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged). It was through the actual fact of the resurrection of Christ (in which the Spirit of God played a major role, cf. Rom 8:11) and the apostolic preaching of that event (in which the Spirit played a major role, cf. Acts 2 and throughout Acts [every apostolic sermon is a proclamation of the resurrection]) that the *parakletos* put the world on trial and convicted it, time and time again. The truth by which the Spirit of Truth condemns this unbelieving world (1 John 5:19) is Christological truth (i.e., the truth with reference to who the person Jesus of Nazareth is believed to be (cf. John 8:23-24, 31-38, 44-47)). It is to this truth that the Spirit of Truth and the apostles would "bear witness" (15:26-27).

The *Parakletos* and the Spirit of God

In 14:26, Jesus identifies the *parakletos* with the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God). This expression was used in the Hebrew Scriptures, almost exclusively, of the "prophetic spirit" which filled ancient men of God with supernatural power and supernatural illumination (i.e., inspiration or revelation). This is also the way Jesus uses the term here. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, the very presence and power of God at work in the world. As mentioned above, in 14:26 Jesus promised that when the *parakletos*, even the Holy Spirit, was come, he would teach them (the apostolic group) all things (i.e., make them recipients of new divine truths, revelation [as he also said in 16:12-15]), and he would bring all things to their remembrance that he had said to them (i.e., he would give them faithful and accurate recall of all that Jesus had taught them).

What we said under the previous heading about the message of the Spirit of Truth centering in Christology is further emphasized in 16:14~15, "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." The expression, "he will take what is mine," translated literally from the Greek, reads, "because out of me he will take," which is repeated in the last line of v 15. What does this mean? What the Spirit of God/Spirit of Truth would declare to them would center in issues concerning this person Jesus of Nazareth (i.e. who was he?). This is what is meant by, "out of the of me he will take." The message of the Spirit would be, in the absolute sense, the message of Christ.

The *Parakletos* and the Spirit of Jesus

It is curious that in 14:16 Jesus refers to "another *parakletos*". The implication is that he, himself, was a *parakletos* sent from God. In fact, in 1 John 2:1, Jesus is called a *parakletos*. In this text his function as a *parakletos* is that of an advocate (i.e., one who pleads another's cause).

There is another, and deeper, question which confronts us here concerning the connection between the *parakletos* figure and Jesus, or, more correctly, the Spirit of Jesus. Raymond Brown (John, *Anchor Bible Commentary*, 2:1139-41) suggests that in the thinking of John, the *parakletos* figure is none other than the Spirit of Jesus, who has returned to dwell with the apostles after his ascension to the Father - an "alter ego" of Jesus, who is their invisible companion, "Lo, I am with you always" (Matt 28:20).

This idea derives from Jesus' promise to return to the disciples after his death. "It is no accident," argues Brown, "that the first passage containing Jesus' promise of the *paraclete* (14:16-17) is followed immediately by the verse which says, 'I am coming back to you.'"

The case for this develops as follows: in 14:18 Jesus says, "I will not leave you abandoned; I will come to you." In v 21 he promises, "he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." Then, in v 23 he says, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make ourselves to abide/dwell with him." Again, in v 28, he promises them, "I will come to you." Later, on the way to the garden (16:16), he says to them, "A

little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me." Then, in v 22, he says, "Now you have sorrow, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." Now, what does all this mean?

The student familiar with the theology of Paul will not find these statements startling at all. In fact, Paul speaks of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus almost interchangeably. In Romans 8:9-10, he says:

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness.

In 1 Cor 15:45, Paul refers to Christ, the second Adam, as "a live-giving spirit." In 2 Cor 3:17 he says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." In Gal 4:6 he says, "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" Then, in Phil 1:19, he says, "Yes, and I shall rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance." Add to this the NT references to Christ dwelling in us (cf. John 6:56; 15:4, 5; 17:23, 26; Rom 8:10; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 2:20; 4:19; Eph 3:17; Phil 1:20; Col 1:27; and 3:11) and one is confronted with a strong case for Brown's suggestion.

It is a mistake, however, to carry this discussion too far. When thinking in terms of the trinity, we are dealing with a revelation of God couched in wonder and deeply rooted in mystery. God has revealed himself to us in distinctive personalities: he is God, his Holy Spirit is God, in his incarnate revelation of himself he is God. The Father is one with his Spirit, just as he is one with the incarnate expression of himself in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In all of this we must be careful not to press the oneness of God so far that the distinctive personalities of the Godhead disappear, and at the same time be careful not to press the distinctiveness of the personalities of the Godhead so far that the oneness of God disappears.

When we pray to God, whether we envision ourselves before the Father, the Son, or the Spirit, we are praying "to God" and that is what is important. The fact that we find it easier to communicate with one specific personality of God more than another is of significance and consequence

only to us. With us we can think or speak of the Son as distinct from the Spirit; with God, however, they are one.

A similar line of thought may be pursued with the issue of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the NT, we are told that God in us (2 Cor 6:16; Eph 4:6; 1 John 3:24; 4:4, 12-26); we are told that Christ in us (John 15:4-5; 17:23, 26; Rom 8:10; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17; Col 1:27); and we are told that the Holy Spirit in us (Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim 1:14). What God is saying to us in all these Scriptures is that he is with us; he is present in our lives. So also with Jesus' promise to these eleven disciples, who later, by means of the great commission, became his apostles. He is telling them that they wouldn't have to worry; God's presence and his power would be there for them. That's what they needed to know.

The drama of salvation was moving along according to schedule. Jesus' role in the drama was soon to change; the "mantel" was soon to be passed along to another *parakletos*. Jesus' sojourn as a son of Adam was soon to end; but he would not be gone, only with them in a different way - in the Spirit rather than in the flesh. Whose Spirit? His Spirit, the Spirit of God!

The Holy Spirit in Early Charismatic Movements

There is a critical point concerning the interpretation and application of this material that should be discussed here. Jesus' promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit to these disciples (who later became his apostles) has been taken by numerous religious thinkers as a promise to the church in general (i.e., ancient and modern church alike). In fact, a number of major sectarian groups have developed up around this interpretation of these chapters of John.

The charismatic movement didn't begin in the later centuries of the reign of the Catholic Church or with the Protestant Movement, even though charismatic movements then present. The temptation to take the promises of the supernatural presence and power of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles by Jesus as promises which were applicable to all Christians began as early as the second century AD; especially, within the growing Gnostic movement about which Irenaeus writes in *Against Heresies* written around 170-80 AD. Elaine Pagels, in her book on the early Gnostic movement in the second century gives an abbreviated account of some of these movements and their

connection to the promises of Jesus to the apostles concerning the *paraklete*.

. . . this movement of charismatic Christians had arisen about ten years before (160's) in rural towns of his [Irenaeus] native Asia Minor, when the prophets Montanus, Maximilla, and Priscilla, popularly called "the three," began traveling from one rural church to another claiming to communicate directly with the holy spirit. Wherever they went, the three shared their visions, spoke in ecstasy, and urged others to fast and pray so that they too could receive visions and revelations. From Asia Minor the movement swept through churches all across the empire, to Africa, Rome, and Greece, and even to remote provinces like Gaul, arousing enthusiasm – and opposition. (Elanie Pagels, *Beyond Belief*, p 84).

The authority for the presence of this gift was Jesus' instructions in his farewell addresses of John 14-17. Numerous charismatic leaders sprang up such as Valentinus and his student Marcus, who had large followings within the Christian community of the late second century. These groups were, in fact, the ones responsible for many of the Gnostic writings that were considered given by inspiration after the close of the apostolic age. For the most part, the proof texts cited for this gift of the Holy Spirit were drawn from the farewell discourses of John's Gospel.

If one gives serious consideration to certain basic rules of biblical exegesis, such an interpretation or application will not stand. In considering any writing (ancient or modern), the interpreter must ascertain who the recipients of the writing (or any given piece of instruction within that writing) are and whether that instruction is given uniquely to them or whether it is applicable to others beyond the original recipients of the writing in question. For example, writings (teachings/instructions, etc.) addressed to the church are applicable to "the church," whether ancient and modern, unless the instruction addresses a unique situation of a specific congregation of the first century and, by its very nature, is applicable to them and only them.

There are also in the Gospels teachings given by Jesus, which, by their very nature, are universally applicable to the whole of mankind. There are certain teachings, which, by their nature, are applicable only to certain persons. Such is the case with much of the teaching of Jesus given to these eleven disciples, whom he later appointed as his apostles.

Much of the material of John 13-17 falls into this category. Especially is this the case with Jesus' promise to these eleven disciples concerning the promise of the *parakletos* (Holy Spirit/Spirit of Truth), and the special powers he would effect in their lives in order to equip them for their role of apostles of Christ. If anyone in the early church, other than apostles, were recipients of such promises of supernatural power as we find here in John 13-16, their means of receiving that power (and the Scriptural authority for such activity) must be found elsewhere than in John 13-14.

Teaching given specifically to the apostles is applicable only to the apostles, unless they passed that teaching on to others (the church, certain Christians within the church, etc). An excellent example of this is the Lord's Supper, which was given to the twelve, but was later passed on to other Christians by the apostles (cf. I Cor 11:23ff) as well as the command of baptism, which was observed in every instance of conversion to Christ in the New Testament. If this principle of interpretation is not observed, we will find ourselves trying to follow teaching or instruction not intended for us, or enjoining upon the church beliefs and practices never intended for them. One can hardly imagine how much erroneous belief and practice has resulted within Christianity, down through the centuries, as a result of this type of faulty exegesis of Scripture.

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