

# "THE WORD WAS WITH AND . . . WAS GOD"

Jn 1:1-4; I Jn 1:1-3; Heb 1:1-3

## I. "IN THE BEGINNING" (*en arche*)

- A. "Refers to the period before creation and is more qualitative than temporal" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek NT*)
- B. *Arche*—root word in: archaic; archaeology; archangel; archetype; architect *et. al*
- C. As Gn 1:1 key OT text so too Jn 1:1 & I Jn 1:1 ("that which was from the beginning) key NT texts—NB Basil de Pinto's assertion

## II. "WAS" (imperfect of *eimi*: "I am, exist")

- A. Indicates "continuous, timeless existence;" contrasted with *egeneto* ("came into existence") in v. 3
- B. N.B.: Jesus's dialogue in Jn 8:39-59, culminating in His startling assertion: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (v. 58)
- C. Inescapable conclusion: Jesus, the WORD, co-eternal (i.e. forever with Father God)

## III. "THE WORD" (*Logos*)—Import of the word

- A. Hebrew/Greek background—cf. George Beasley-Murray, Gilbert Murray, T.W. Manson
- B. Speech/Words primary key (verging on if not truly supernatural) to understanding human nature, God, cosmos
  - 1. Walker Percy re Helen Keller
  - 2. Thomas Wolfe re recent linguists' confession: truly mysterious
- C. Augustine ponders words conceived within, then spoken and heard

## IV. WAS WITH (*pros*) GOD (*Theon*)

- A. Preposition (*pros*/with): accompanied by another person or thing, as two men playing golf; possessing something, as a man with a scar on his face
- B. Word within (co-inhering) yet distinct from Father—just as my inner words are identifiable apart from my being
- C. Thus distinct from Father—singular Person/shared Nature distinction in Nicene & Chalcedonian creeds

## V. AND WAS GOD—Incarnate in Christ Jesus, the Messiah, fully God

- A. **Eternally One** with Father (1:1 reaffirmed repeatedly throughout John's Gospel)
- B. **Con-Substantial** with the Father (1:18; 8:58)
- C. **Jointly-Working** (5:17), creating, sustaining
- D. **Son of God** (20:38-30)
- E. **"Express Image of His Person/Nature"** (Heb 1:3)
  - 1. Goodness
  - 2. Truth
  - 3. Beauty
- F. Affirmations carefully combined in Nicene/Chalcedonian creeds

Percy, Walker. *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other* (McGraw Hill, c. 1979)

"Where does one start with a theory of man if the theory of man as an organism in an environment doesn't work and all the attributes of man which were accepted in the old modern age are now called into question: his soul, mind, freedom, will, Godlikeness?

"There is only one place to start: the place where man's singularity is there for all to see and cannot be called into question, even in a new age in which everything else is in dispute.

"That Singularity is language." (p. 7)

"Why is it that men speak and animals don't?  
.....

"Why is it that every normal man on earth speaks, that is, can utter an unlimited number of sentences in a complex language, and that not one single beast has ever uttered a word?

"Why are there not some 'higher' animals which have acquired a primitive language?

"Why are there not some 'lower' men who speak a crude, primitive language?

"Why is there no such thing as a primitive language?

"Why is there such a gap between nonspeaking animals and speaking man, when there is no other such gap in nature?

"How can a child learn to speak a language in three years without anyone taking trouble about it, that is, utter and understand an unlimited number of sentences, while a great time and trouble is required to teach a chimpanzee a few hand signals?

"Why is it that scientists, who know a great deal about the world, know less about language than about the back side of the moon, even though language is the one observable behavior which most clearly sets man apart from the beasts and the one activity in which all men, scientists included, engage more than in any other?" (pp. 7-8)

"Instead of marking him down at the outset as besouled creature or responding organism, why not look at him as he appears, not even as *Homo sapiens*, because attributing sapience already begs the question, but as *Homo loquens*, man the talker, or *Homo symbolicus*, man the symbol-monger? Instead of starting out with such large vexed subjects as soul, mind, ideas, consciousness, why not begin with language, which no one denies, and see how far it takes us toward the rest?" (p. 17)

"For a long time the conviction had been growing upon me that three short paragraphs in Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life* veiled a mystery, a profound secret, and that, of one could fathom it, one could also understand a great deal of what it meant to be *Homo loquens*, *Homo symbolicus*, man the speaking animal, man the symbol-monger." (p. 30)

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"We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten — a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that *mother*, *father*, *sister*, *teacher* were among them — words that were to make the world blossom for me, "like Aaron's rod, with flowers." It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.

—Keller, Helen. *The Story of My Life* (Dover Thrift Editions, Kindle) (pp. 14-15).

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"Undoubtedly there were three elements somehow involved in the event—Helen, the water, and the word *water*. But how? . . . What is the nature of the mysterious event in which one perceives that *this* (stuff) 'is' *water*? What is . . . signified by the simplest yet most opaque of all symbols, the little copula 'is'? (Percy, p. 40)

## Origin of the LOGOS Concept

“For Heraclitus the Logos is ‘the omnipresent wisdom by which all things are steered’; it is the divine word received by the prophet, which becomes almost equivalent to God. . . . For the Stoics, the Logos is the common law of nature, immanent in the universe and maintaining its unity, the divine fire, the soul of the universe. Philo of Alexandria exploited the concept in a striking fashion. He was the Logos as *the agent of creation*, distinguishing between the Logos as a *thought* in the mind of God, his eternal wisdom, and its *expression* unmaking formless matter a universe. The Logos is the *medium of divine government of the world*; it is ‘the captain and pilot of the universe.’ The Logos is the *means by which man may know God*, for God is unknowable by the mass of mankind; they can know him only in and through the Logos: ‘The Logos is the God of us imperfect men, but the primal God is the God of the wise and perfect’; accordingly the Logos is viewed as the High Priest through whom come to God, and Advocate (*paracletos*) for the forgiveness of sins. And the Logos is identified with the *Perfect Man*, the man of Gen 1, made in the image of God, his ‘Firstborn.’ These contacts of Philonic thought with the Fourth Gospel are the more significant in view of the independence of the two authors, for they clearly reflect related traditions and modes of thinking.

—George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary, v. 36), p. 6

“Their history stretches beyond the confines of Greek culture. The opening words of the prologue give the clue: “In the beginning was the Word. . . .” The statement recalls the first word of the Hebrew Bible (*beresit*), rendered in the LXX, as in the Gospel, *en arche*. The association was the more evident to the Jews, since they referred to books of the bible by their opening words, and so “In the beginning” was the Jewish name for “Genesis.” In that beginning God spoke, and the universe was created (Gen 1:3).

—George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. 7

“The conception of Logos, word or speech, had . . . a peculiarly distinguished history among the Greeks. It was the word spoken: it was the power of language; it was the word which implies reason, persuasion, interpretation, and which settles differences instead of the armed hand; it was thus the word which mediates between the soul of man and man, or, in theological language, between man and God; to the philosopher it was the silent but eternal word upon the lips of Nature, the speech by which the Cosmos expressed its inborn reason.”

—Gilbert Murray, *the Rise of the Greek Epic*, p. 92

“In the later Greek philosophy it is, to borrow words from M. Aurelius (iv. 46) . . . ‘the reason that governs the universe.’”

“This Stoic logos stands in the same relation to the world as the human soul does to the body. It is the soul of the world, the generative and ordering principle of all that exists in the cosmos. It is thus a metaphysical principle.”

—T.W. Manson, “*The Johannine Jesus as Logos*” in *A Companion to John’s Gospel*, p. 36

“The opening lines of John’s Gospel (1:1-18) are not only a solemn introduction, they are also a summary, an epitome of the whole history of salvation, the entire plan of God for man whom He has created and destined to share in the glory of His inner life.”

“But the most characteristic expression of the Prologue, the one which has always been indissolubly associated with it, and even sometimes unduly stressed, is the Word. It is here that John shows his dependence upon the Old Testament and this leaves the reader with no doubt that he is in strict continuity with the thought of the children of Israel and the sacred writings which had nourished their hopes throughout all the trials and vicissitudes of their existence. The first word of the fourth gospel is the same as the first word of Genesis: ‘In the beginning.’ One cannot stress too much the significance of this association.”

—Basil de Pinto, *John’s Jesus*, in *A Companion to John’s Gospel*, p. 59

# THE KINGDOM OF SPEECH

For five decades the late Tom Wolfe has remained a fixture atop the nation's literary world—helping establish the “new journalism,” publishing essays and novels, credibly claiming to discern the pulse and diagnose the condition of America. His final work, *The Kingdom of Speech* (2016), found him entering (with his customary wit) the somewhat arcane worlds of biological evolution and linguistics, finding therein much to question and pillory while educating us in the process. He was prompted to research the subject when he read of a recent scholarly conference where “eight heavyweight Evolutionists—linguists, biologists, anthropologists, and computer scientists” had given up trying to answer “the question of where speech—language—comes from and how it works.” It’s “as mysterious as ever” they declared! Amazingly, one of the eight luminaries was Noam Chomsky, for 50 years the brightest star in the linguistics’ firmament! Now for academics such as Chomsky this is no small admission, for: “Speech is not one of man’s several unique attributes—speech is the attribute of all attributes.” When the regnant Neo-Darwinian theory of evolution fails to explain language it fails to explain virtually all that matters!

To put everything in historical context, Wolfe guides us through some fascinating developments in evolutionary theory, including deft portraits of Alfred Wallace and Charles Darwin (who maneuvered to co-opt Wallace as the singular architect of the theory of biological *evolution of species through natural selection*). While styling himself an empirical scientist, Darwin subtly propounded a *cosmogony* that closely resembles the creation stories of many American Indians. In fact, Darwin’s story, with its “four or five cells floating in a warm pool somewhere” developing into a world teeming with remarkable creatures was, rightly understood, a “dead ringer” for that of the Navajos! “All cosmologies, whether the Apaches’ or Charles Darwin’s faced the same problem. They were histories, or, better said, stories of things that had occurred in a primordial past, long before there existed anyone capable of recording them. The Apaches’ scorpion and Darwin’s cells in that warm pool were somewhere were by definition educated guesses.” They were all “sincere, but sheer, literature.”

While telling his story, however, Darwin recognized that speech “set humans far apart from any animal ancestors.” Other traits he might passably explain, but he utterly failed to show how “human speech evolved from animals.” “Proving that speech evolved from sounds uttered by lower animals became Darwin’s obsession. After all, his was a Theory of Everything.” Critiquing this theory was England’s most prestigious linguist, Max Muller, who insisted there is radical difference in kind between man and beast—and that difference is language. “Language was the crux of it all. If language sealed off man from animal, then the Theory of Evolution applied only to animal studies and reached no higher than the hairy apes. Muller was eminent and arrogant—and made fun of him.” And then, just when Darwin mustered up the nerve to publish *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, declaring apes and monkeys evolved into human beings, the pesky Alfred Wallace (who had been busily writing trenchant biological treatises) wrote an article, “The Limits of Natural Selection as Applied to Man,” pointing out certain uniquely human traits, including language, impossible to explain through natural selection. “No said Wallace, ‘the agency of some other power’ was required. He calls it ‘a superior intelligence,’ ‘a controlling intelligence.’ Only such a power, ‘a new power of definite character,’ can account for ‘ever-advancing’ man.” But this Darwin could not allow! All must be the result of purely material, natural processes! “He had no evidence,” Wolfe says, but he told a good “just so” story that captured much of the public mind. Yet his followers, for 70 years, gave up trying to explain the origin of language and turned to simpler evolutionary matters, upholding the Darwinian standard and insisting, with Theodosius Dobzhansky: “Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution.” But not even Dobzhansky ventured to suggest precisely how speech evolved!

Then came Noam Chomsky, who (as a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania) set forth a revolutionary theory of linguistics, a “radically new theory of language. Language was not something you learned. You were born with a built-in ‘language organ.’” Along with your heart and liver, you’re given it—a biological “language acquisition device” (routinely referred to as the LAD in the “science” of linguistics). Chomsky summed it all up in his 1957 *Syntactic Structures* and thereby became “the biggest name in the 150-year history of linguistics.” But what, precisely was this LAD? Was it a free-standing organ or an organ within the brain? Like all else in the evolutionary scheme, it had to be something material. But where could it be found? Take it by faith, Chomsky said—in time empirical scientists would find it!

But it’s not been found! In a recent article he confessed: ““The evolution of the faculty of language largely remains an enigma.”” An enigma, no less! Fifty years of feigning The Answer! (It seems Chomsky knows less than Aristotle, who concluded that humans have a “rational soul” enabling them to function in uniquely human ways.) And to Tom Wolfe, this at least became crystal clear: “There is a cardinal distinction between man and animal, a sheerly dividing line as abrupt and immovable as a cliff: namely, speech.” In addition to the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds, there is “*regnum loquax*, the kingdom of speech, inhabited solely by *Homo Loquax*.”