

# Spiritual

## 1 Corinthians 2:10-13

### Dr. Pierre Cannings

Verses 10–16 ... make up his [Paul's] first sustained reflection on the Spirit," especially as the source of revelation. This section sets a framework for later material on the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12–14 as well as in the resurrection chapter (15:42–57; cf. 15:12–28, 38–41). In all these passages the work of the Spirit remains inseparable from the work of God as revealed in Christ. By contrast, a wedge was driven by some at Corinth between "spirituality" and Christ crucified.

The Stoic concept of πνεῦμα as a pervasive, animating, quasi-agent, quasi-substance which permeated everything had become widespread among thinking people of Paul's world. In this sense, it was a short step to conceive of "God" as a kind of animating world-soul or immanent **spirit of the world**

#### I. Searches v.10

- a. Us
  - i. But how does 2:10a relate back to what precedes, and to whom does the plural pronoun refer in context? Some Greek manuscripts include the adversative conjunction, implying a contrast between those who cannot fathom God's plan for his people (2:9) and those who now know God's plan for his people through the revelation of the Spirit (2:10a). Other manuscripts have an explanatory conjunction, stating the reason why others cannot understand God's plan, that is, God's wisdom is available only to those to whom he has revealed it. If the "us" is parallel with "we" in 2:6, then the more specific reference may be to the apostles and prophets. If "us" refers back to the more immediate "those who love him" in 2:9, then all believers are in view rather than an inner circle in the early church. The contrast is not so much between "us" and "them" as it is why they cannot know and we can
  - ii. If v. 10 embodies Paul's own thought, ἡμῖν, **to us**, refers back to **those who love him** in v. 9 and not to some inner esoteric circle of a privileged category within the church
- b. Through the Spirit
  - i. Spirit
    - 1. It is crucial to distinguish between πνεῦμα (**Spirit** or *spirit*) as a Pauline reference to the Holy Spirit or to the Spirit of God from Paul's references to the human spirit or to Stoic or gnostic uses of *spirit* and *spiritual*

2. This is the point of Paul's emphasis on the divine transcendence of the Spirit in v. 12 as τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, **the Spirit from God**, as against "spiritual capacities" in human beings. This becomes critical in 1 Corinthians 15, where *spiritual body* means the *total mode of existence governed by the Spirit* (15:44, σῶμα πνευματικόν).
3. The possibility of an unfortunate ambiguity goes back to Heb. רוּחַ (*ruach*), which πνεῦμα translates in the LXX. Since *ruach* can mean *breath*, the word has often been understood *immanently*, as within human persons. But the meaning of *ruach* as *wind* stresses the *transcendent*, powerful element which operates *upon* human persons and which they cannot control or even clearly predict, as Jesus emphasizes to Nicodemus in the wordplay of John 3:8: τὸ πνεῦμα blows where it wills ... so is everyone who has been born ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος. Of its OT context Snaith comments that through God's Spirit people can "do those things which of themselves and in their own strength they are incapable of doing." When the Spirit of God gives Israel "rest" in Isa 63:14, this means that his strong warrior-Spirit keeps their cattle secure from marauding bands.
4. The parallel thought occurs here. Human persons cannot search out the hidden things of God unaided, through their own limited resources of wisdom, knowledge, or stance. The verb ἀπεκάλυπεν is the aorist, not the perfect, of ἀποκαλύπτω, *I reveal, I disclose, I uncover*, and alludes to God's act of removing any barrier which keeps the content of his predetermined purpose secret (v. 9). The associated activity ascribed to God's Spirit by means of the verb ἐραυνάω (third present indicative ἐραυνᾷ, the Alexandrian spelling of the classical ἐρευνάω, ἐρευνᾷ) does not mean searching to discover here, but the activity of exploring God's purposes thoroughly in order to reveal them. Hence Barrett's translation **searches out** is better here than *searches* (NRSV, NIV). The NJB and REB *explores* is equally acceptable

## ii. God Revealed

1. of divine revelation of certain transcendent secrets
1. The aorist points to a definite time when the revelation took place, viz. to the entry of the Gospel into the world
2. The fact that God has revealed his plan to us through the Spirit once again strikes at any notion of boasting or self-sufficiency, which is critical to Paul's overall argument (recall 1:29–31). The Spirit is able to reveal these things because the Spirit "searches all things, even the deep things of God." In context, "all things" and the "deep things of God" correlate to God's hidden wisdom (2:7a),

to what God predestined before the ages (2:7b), and to what God has prepared for those who love him (2:9). Paul does not elaborate further here on the content of the revelation as he does elsewhere (Col 1:24–28; Eph 3:8–13) because this is not his intent in the present argument, which focuses more on the fact and the means of revelation rather than the content.

3. The blessings of salvation were prepared by the Father, carried out by the Son, and applied by the Spirit (Eph. 1:3–14) to all believers who as a result love God (1 John 4:19). The only way the Corinthians could know this was **by the Spirit**, who knows and reveals these **deep things of God** about salvation
4. Paul illustrated this by pointing out that nobody can fully fathom **the thoughts** of anyone else. How much more necessary, then, is the work of **the Spirit** if **the thoughts of God** are to be known.
5. Reason why we can utter things hidden from eye, ear, and mind of man: ‘Because to *us* God, through the Spirit, unveiled them

### iii. Searches All Things

#### 1. Searches

- a. **to make a careful or thorough effort to learn something, search, examine, investigate**
- b. The word does not here mean ‘searcheth in order to know,’ any more than it means this when it is said that God searches the heart of man (Rom. 8:27; Rev. 2:23; Ps. 139:1). It expresses “the activity of divine knowledge” (Edwards); or rather, it expresses the activity of the Spirit in throwing His light upon the deep things of God, for those in whom He dwells

#### 2. Depths of God

- a. **nonphysical perceived to be so remote that it is difficult to assess, *depth* depths of divine knowledge**
- b. Paul’s language of the “deep things” of God corresponds to his analogous exclamation in Rom 11:33
- c. In Eph 3:8 he speaks of preaching to the Gentiles “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and in 3:18 of the same letter he prays that believers might be able to grasp “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” Others note the possible Old Testament background of Dan 2:19–23 with its vocabulary relating to mystery, revelation, and the deep things of God
- d. Perhaps the most neutral and open way of capturing the point is to translate **the depths of God’s own self**. God’s amazing graciousness is but his very selfhood become

exposed to human view **to those who love him** (v. 9) **through his Spirit** (διά + genitive). Nothing lies beyond or beneath God's own selfhood: "**The depths of God** is a comprehensive concept for the ungroundedness (*Unergründliche*) of God," i.e., God is "grounded in" nothing beyond his own selfhood. Today we might speak of the Spirit's revealing *God's inmost heart*, which gives precisely the christological focus toward which Paul is working in 2:16.

## II. Knows v.11

### a. Spirit of the Man

#### i. Knows **-to grasp the meaning of something, understand, recognize, come to know, experience**

1. τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρ. τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ. The word πνεῦμα is here used, as in 5:5, 7:34; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 5:23, in the purely psychological sense, to denote an element in the natural constitution of every human being.
2. τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. The personal memories, reflexions, motives, etc., of any individual human being; all the thoughts of which he is conscious (4:4).

#### ii. Thoughts

1. Even a human being has within him secrets of his own, which no human being whatever can penetrate, but only his own spirit. How much more is this true of God! The language here recalls Prov. 20:27, φῶς Κυρίου πνοὴ ἀνθρώπων, ὃς ἐραυνᾷ ταμεῖα κοιλίας. Cf. Jer. 17:9, 10. The question does not mean that nothing about God can be known; it means that what is known is known through His Spirit (v. 10).

### b. Spirit of God

#### i. Knows

#### ii. Thoughts

## III. Speaks v.12-13

### a. Spirit of the World

- i. Spirit of the World It is human, not divine; but it is evil only in so far as 'the flesh' is sinful: *i.e.* it is not inherently evil, but only when ruled by sin, instead of being subjected to the Spirit. See Gifford's discussion of the subject Lightfoot, and others understand of the temper of the world, "the spirit of human wisdom, of the world as alienated from God

- b. Spirit from God - It was for that purpose, in part, that **the Spirit who is from God** came (John 16:13), not just to some Christians but to all (1 Cor. 12:13).
  - i. Know the things freely given to us by God
  - ii. Not in human wisdom
    - 1. Wisdom- **the capacity to understand and function accordingly, *wisdom***
    - 2. This is now the fourth time in the present argument that Paul has denied human wisdom as the source of his speech (1:17; 2:1, 4). Verse 13 is especially close to 2:4 where Paul claims that his preaching was not in persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit's power.
  - iii. Taught by the spirit
    - 1. It was this message of salvation which Paul proclaimed and now expounded further. It did not originate in man but in God and was **taught by the Spirit**. Paul then expressed these **spiritual truths** which were a message of wisdom (cf. v. 6). The Greek word *pneumatikois* may be neuter gender and so translated **spiritual words** as in the NIV ("expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words"). Or it may be masculine gender and translated "spiritual men" ("interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men," as in the NIV margin). Both senses are possible, but Paul's primary point in this passage was not how the message of wisdom was received but who received it, as suggested by the context: Paul spoke the message of wisdom to "the mature" (v. 6). Thus verse 13 parallels verse 6 and forms a kind of bracket, in keeping with well-written Greek style
  - iv. Spiritual thought
  - v. Spiritual words

# Word Studies

Revealed -of divine revelation of certain transcendent secrets<sup>1</sup>

Searches - **to make a careful or thorough effort to learn something, *search, examine, investigate***<sup>2</sup>

Depths- **nonphysical perceived to be so remote that it is difficult to assess, *depth depths of divine knowledge***<sup>3</sup>

In the NT it is used of this figurative depth only<sup>1</sup> in relation to God or the world. Thus in R. 11:33 God's depth of riches, wisdom and knowledge is distinguished first by His unsearchability to human judgment and then by His character as the God who meets us in hidden ways and judgments.<sup>3</sup> Similarly in 1 C. 2:10 the depth of the activity of God is concealed from the world in principle; it is accessible only to the πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ. The opposite is to be found in τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ (Rev. 2:24) which disclose themselves to libertine practice.<sup>4</sup> Analogies are to be found especially in Gnostic terminology: Tert.

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 112.

<sup>2</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 389.

<sup>3</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 162.

NT New Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Apart from 2 C. 8:2, cf. Wnd., *ad loc.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Apc. Bar.; 14:8 (1 Cl., 40, 1).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the sacrament of the ἀπολύτρωσις ἢ εἰς τὸ βάθος κατάγουσα αὐτοῦς (Iren., 1, 21, 2).

Tert. Q. Septimius Tertullianus Florens, of Carthage (160–220 A.D.), ed. A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissowa. 1890 ff.

Val., 1; Iren., I, 21, 2; Hipp. Ref., V, 6, 4: ἐπεκάλεσαν ἑαυτοὺς γνωστικούς, φάσκοντες μόνοι τὰ βάθη γινώσκειν. Yet it should be noted that in Gnosticism God and His βάθος are understood in the sense of being. For this reason there is not merely reference to the βάθος of the πατήρ (Origin. Joh. II, 2, 18; Hipp. Ref., V, 9, 1), but God Himself can be βάθος (Act. Thom., 143; Hipp. Ref., VI, 30, 7). In the NT even the world as a hostile depth does not disclose its depth as a given quantity but as a power which withdraws and which thus threatens in virtue of its unfathomable nature. In R. 8:39 βάθος, is a κτίσις like δύναμις etc. The τόπος is known as a power, whereas in Gnosticism<sup>5</sup> the power (of

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Val. *Contra Valentinianos*.

Iren. Irenaeus, of Asia Minor, bishop of Lyons, martyred 202 A.D. during the persecution under Severus, ed. in MPG, 7, 1882.

Hipp. Hippolytus (c. 160–235 A.D.), disciple of Irenaeus. His main work *A Refutation of all Heresies* in 10 books is directed against Greek philosophy as the mother of all heresies, ed. by different scholars in *Die griech. christi. Schriftsteller der ersten 3 Jahrhunderte*, 1897 ff.

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Act. Thom. *Acts of Thomas*.

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Ref. *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*.

NT New Testament.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. C. Schmidt, “Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache,” TU, 8 (1892), 336, 358.

God) is understood as [V 1, p 518](#) τόπος.<sup>6</sup> In Eph. 3:18<sup>7</sup> βάθος stands in a series—πλάτος, μῆκος, ὕψος, βάθος—which denotes the heavenly κλήσις or κληρονομία. These first express the three dimensions, the third dividing into ὕψος/βάθος. The heavenly inheritance is thought of as a cube, like the heavenly Jerusalem in Rev. 21:16, b. BB, 75b and the heavenly ἐκκλησία in Herm. v., 3, 2, 5. They then denote the four quarters of the earth.<sup>8</sup> The inheritance is thus comprehensively indicated.<sup>4</sup>

Know- **to grasp the meaning of something, understand, recognize, come to know, experience**<sup>5</sup>

Wisdom - **the capacity to understand and function accordingly, wisdom**<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The depth of the world is always spoken of according to the understanding and access to it. In ψ 129:1 βάθη is an image for a difficult situation (== τὰ βάθη τῆς θαλάσσης in ψ 68:3). In Qoh. 7:24 (25) it is used ethically; in Porphy. Vit. Plot., 16 speculatively; in Mak. Homil., 8, 1 (MPG, 34, 528c) mystically.

<sup>7</sup> *Ad loc.* Dib. Gefbr.: A. Dieterich, Jbch. f. Phil., Suppl., XVI (1888), 766, 802; Reitzenstein Poim., 25 f.; E. Peterson, Εἷς Θεός (1926), 250, 3.

b. Babylonian Talmud when before tractates from the Mishnah.

BB *Baba Batra*, Mishnah-, Tosefta-, Talmud tractate *Last Gate* (Legal Questions, Immovables) (Strack, *Einl.*, 51).

Herm. *Pastor Hermae*.

v. *visiones*.

<sup>8</sup> J. Hehn, *Siebenzahl und Sabbath* (1907), 13 f., 76 f.; J. Lewy, OLZ, 26 (1923), 538 f.

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Schlier, “[Βάθος](#),” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 517–518.

<sup>5</sup> William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 694.

<sup>6</sup> William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 934.



## Commentary Studies

**10.** ἡμῖν γάρ. Reason why we can utter things hidden from eye, ear, and mind of man: ‘Because to *us* God, through the Spirit, unveiled them,’ or, ‘For to *us* they were revealed by God through the Spirit.’ The ἡμῖν follows hard upon and interprets τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν, just as ἡμῖν on τοῖς σωζόμενοις (1:18): cf. ἡμῖν in 1:30 and ἡμῶν in 2:7. The ἡμῖν is in emphatic contrast to ‘the rulers of this world’ who do not know (v. 8). God reveals His glory, through His Spirit, to those for whom it is prepared. See note on v. 7; also Eph. 1:14, 17; 2 Cor. 1:22.

If δέ be read instead of γάρ, we must either adopt the awkward construction of ὁ ὀφθαλμός κ.τ.λ. advocated by Evans and rejected above, or else, with Ellicott, make δέ introduce a second and supplementary contrast (co-ordinate with, but more general than, that introduced by ἀλλά in v. 9) to the ignorance of the ἄρχοντες in v. 8. On the whole, the “latent inferiority” of the reading δέ is fairly clear.

ἀπεκάλυπεν. The aorist points to a definite time when the revelation took place, viz. to the entry of the Gospel into the world.\* Compare the aorists in Col. 1:26; Eph. 3:5.

τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα. Explanatory of διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος. The σωζόμενοι and the ἀγαπῶντες τὸν Θεόν possess the Spirit, who has, and gives access to, the secrets of God.

ἐραυνᾷ. The Alexandrian form of ἐρευνᾷ (T.R.). The word does not here mean ‘searcheth in order to know,’ any more than it means this when it is said that God searches the heart of man (Rom. 8:27; Rev. 2:23; Ps. 139:1). It expresses “the activity of divine knowledge” (Edwards); or

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\* Is it true that “revelation is distinguished from ordinary spiritual influences by its *suddenness*”? May there not be a gradual unveiling? Revelation implies that, without special aid from God, the truth in question would not have been discovered. Human ability and research would not have sufficed.

rather, it expresses the activity of the Spirit in throwing His light upon the deep things of God, for those in whom He dwells. *Scrutatur omnia, non quia nescit, ut inveniatur, sed quia nihil relinquit quod nesciat* (Atto). For the form see Gregory, *Prolegomena* to Tisch., p. 81.

**11.** τίς γὰρ οἶδεν ἄνθρωπον. This verse, taken as a whole, confirms the second clause of v. 10, and thereby further explains the words διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, The words ἄνθρωπων and ἀνθρώπου, repeated, are emphatic, the argument being *a minori ad majus*. Even a human being has within him secrets of his own, which no human being whatever can penetrate, but only his own spirit. How much more is this true of God! The language here recalls Prov. 20:27, φῶς Κυρίου πνοὴ ἀνθρώπων, ὃς ἐραυνᾷ ταμεῖα κοιλίας. Cf. Jer. 17:9, 10. The question does not mean that nothing about God can be known; it means that what is known is known through His Spirit (v. 10).

τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. The personal memories, reflexions, motives, etc., of any individual human being; all the thoughts of which he is conscious (4:4).

τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ. The word πνεῦμα is here used, as in 5:5, 7:34; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 5:23, in the purely psychological sense, to denote an element in the natural constitution of every human being. This sense, if we carefully separate all passages where it may stand for the spirit of man as touched by the Spirit of God, is not very frequent in Paul. See below on v. 14 for the relation of πνεῦμα to ψυχή.

οὕτως καὶ κ.τ.λ. It is here that the whole weight of the statement lies.

ἔγνωκεν. This seems to be purposely substituted for the weaker and more general οἶδεν. For the contrast between the two see 2 Cor. 5:16; 1 John 2:29. "The ἔγνωκεν seems to place τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ a degree more out of reach than οἶδεν does τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου" (Lightfoot, whose note, with its illustrations from 1 John, should be consulted). This passage is a *locus classicus* for the Divinity, as Rom. 8:26, 27 is for the Personality, of the Holy Spirit.

εἰ μὴ. 'But only,' as in Gal. 1:7, and (probably) 1:19; cf. 2:16.

**12.** ἡμεῖς δέ. See on ἡμῖν in v. 10: 'we Christians.' οὐ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ... ἀλλά. An interjected negative clause, added to give more force to the positive statement that follows, as in Rom. 8:15. What does St Paul mean by 'the spirit of the world'?

(1) Meyer, Evans, Edwards, and others understand it of Satan, or the spirit of Satan, the κόσμος being "a system of organized evil, with its own principles and its own laws" (Evans): see Eph. 2:2, 6:11; John 12:31; 1 John 4:3, 5:19; and possibly 2 Cor. 4:4. But this goes beyond the requirements of the passage: indeed, it seems to go beyond the analogy of N.T. language, in which κόσμος has not *per se* a bad sense. Nor is 'the wisdom of the world' Satanical. It is human, not divine; but it is evil only in so far as 'the flesh' is sinful: *i.e.* it is not inherently evil, but only when ruled by sin, instead of being subjected to the Spirit. See Gifford's discussion of the subject in his *Comm. on Romans*, viii. 15.

(2) Heinrici, Lightfoot, and others understand of the temper of the world, "the spirit of human wisdom, of the world as alienated from God": *non sumus instituti sapientia mundi* (Est.). On this view it is practically identical with the ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία of v. 13, and homogeneous with the φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός of Rom. 8:6, 7: indeed, it may be said to be identical with it in substance, though not in aspect. In both places in this verse, therefore, πνεῦμα would be impersonal, and *almost* attributive, as in Rom. 8:15; but there the absence of the article makes a difference.

Compare the πνεῦμα ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε in 2 Cor. 11:4. On the whole, this second explanation of ‘the spirit of the world’ seems to be the better.

ἐλάβομεν. Like ἀπεκάλυψεν (v. 10), this aorist refers to a definite time when the gift was received. “St Paul regards the gift as ideally summed up when he and they were ideally included in the Christian Church, though it is true that the Spirit is received constantly” (Lightfoot). Cf. 12:13.

τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ. The gift rather than the Person of the Spirit, although here, as not infrequently in Paul, the distinction between the Personal Spirit of God (v. 11), dwelling in man (Rom. 8:11), and the spirit (in the sense of the higher element of man’s nature), inhabited and quickened by the Holy Spirit, is subtle and difficult to fix with accuracy. The Person is in the gift, and the activity of the recipient is the work of the Divine Indweller.

ἵνα εἰδῶμεν. This is the result to which vv. 10–12 lead up. The words reproduce, under a different aspect, the thought in ἡμῖν ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ Θεός, and give the foundation for v. 13, ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν.

τὰ ... χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν. The same blessings appear successively as δόξαν ἡμῶν (v. 7), ὅσα ἡτοίμασεν κ.τ.λ. (v. 9), and τὰ Χαρισθέντα (v. 12). The last perhaps includes “a little more of present reference” (Ellicott). The connexion of thought in the passage may be shown by treating vv. 11 and 12 as expanding the thought of v. 10 into a kind of syllogism;—major premiss, None knows the things of God, but only the Spirit of God; minor premiss, We received the Spirit which is of God; conclusion, So that we know what is given us by God. The possession of the gift of the Spirit of God is a sort of middle term which enables the Apostle to claim the power to know, and to utter, the deep things of God.

After τοῦ κόσμον, D E F G, Vulg. Copt. Arm. add τούτου. ⲛ A B C L P, Syrr. Aeth. omit.

**13.** ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν. This is the dominant verb of the whole passage (vv. 6, 7: see notes on ἦν, v. 8, ἃ and ὅσα, v. 9). The καὶ emphasizes the justification, furnished by the preceding verses, for the claim made; 'Which are the very things that we do utter.' The present passage is the personal application of the foregoing, as vv. 1–5 are of 1:18–31.

διδασκτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας. 'Taught by man's wisdom.' We have similar genitives in John 6:45, διδασκοὶ Θεοῦ, and in Matt. 25:34, εὐλογημένοι τοῦ πατρὸς. In class. Grk. the construction is found only in poets; κείνης διδασκά (Soph. *Elect.* 343), διδασκταῖς ἀνθρώπων ἀρεταῖς (Pind. *Ol.* 9:152). Cf. 1:17.

διδασκτοῖς πνεύματος. See on v. 4, where, as here and 1 Thess. 1:5, πνεῦμα has no article. The Apostle is not claiming verbal inspiration; but *verba rem sequuntur* (Wetstein). Cf. Luke 21:15; Jer. 1:9. *Sapientia est scaturigo sermonum* (Beng.). Bentley, Kuenen, etc. conjecture ἐν ἀδιδάκτοις πνεύματος.

πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες. Two questions arise here, on the answer to which the interpretation of the words depends,—the gender of πνευματικοῖς, and the meaning of

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D (Sixth century.) Codex Claromontanus; now at Paris. A Graeco-Latin MS. 14:13 διὸ ὁ λαῶν—22 σημεῖον ἐστίν is supplied by a later but ancient hand. Many subsequent hands (sixth to ninth centuries) have corrected the MS. (See Gregory, *Prolegomena*, pp. 418–422).

E (Ninth century). At Petrograd. A copy of D, and unimportant

F (Late ninth century). Codex Augiensis (from Reichenau); now at Trin. Coll. Cambr. Probably a copy of G in any case, secondary to G, from which it very rarely varies (see Gregory, p. 429).

G (Late ninth century). Codex Boernerianus; at Dresden. Interlined with the Latin (in minuscules). Lacks 1 Cor. 3:8–16, 6:7–14 (F).

ⲛ (Fourth century.) The Sinaitic MS., now at St Petersburg, the only MS. containing the whole N.T.

A (Fifth century.) The Codex Alexandrinus; now at the British Museum.

B (Fourth century.) The Vatican MS.

C (Fifth century). The Codex Ephraem, a Palimpsest; now at Paris. Lacks 7:18 ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ—9:6 τοῦ μὴ ἐργάζεσθαι: 13:8 παύσονται—14:40 ἀλλὰ ἕτερα.

L (Ninth century). Codex Angelicus; At Rome.

P (Ninth century). Porfirianus Chiovensis. A palimpsest acquired in the East by Porphyrius Bishop of Kiew. Lacks 7:15 ὑμᾶς ὁ θεός—17 περιπάτει: 12:23 τοῦ σώματος—13:5 οὐ λογί-: 14:23 τὸ λαλεῖν μή. A good type of text in St Paul's Epistles.

συνκρίνειν. The latter is used by St Paul only here and 2 Cor. 10:12, where it means ‘to compare.’ This is a late use, frequent from Aristotle onwards, but out of place here, although adopted in both AV. and RV. text. Its classical meaning is ‘to join fitly,’ ‘compound,’ ‘combine’ (RV. marg.). In the LXX it has the meaning ‘to interpret,’ but only in the case of dreams (Gen. 40:8, 16, 22, 41:12, 15; Judg. 7:15; Dan. 5:12, 7:15, 16). We have, therefore, the following possibilities to consider:—

In favour of taking πνευματικοῖς as neuter may be urged the superior epigrammatic point of keeping the same gender for both terms, and the naturalness of πνευματικοῖς being brought into close relation with the συν- in συνκρίνοντες. These considerations are of weight, and the resultant sense is good and relevant, whether we adopt (α) or the third form of (β). As Theodore of Mopsuestia puts it, διὰ τῶν τοῦ πνεύματος ἀποδείξεων τὴν τοῦ πνεύματος διδακαλίαν πιστούμεθα.

On the other hand, in favour of taking πνευματικοῖς as masculine, there is its markedly emphatic position, as if to prepare the way for the contrast with ψυχικός which immediately follows, and which now becomes the Apostle’s main thought. This consideration perhaps turns the scale in favour of taking πνευματικοῖς as ‘spiritual *persons*.’ Of the two explanations under this head, one would unhesitatingly prefer (δ), were not the use of συνκρίνειν in the sense of ‘interpret’ confined elsewhere to the case of dreams. This objection is not fatal, but it is enough to leave us in doubt whether St Paul had this meaning in his mind. The other alternative (γ) has the advantage of being a little less remote from the Apostle’s only other use of the word. In either case, taking πν, as masculine, we have the Apostle coming back “full circle” to the thought of ν. 6, ἐν τοῖς τελείοις, which now receives its necessary justification.

Before concluding the discussion of the true wisdom, the Apostle glances at those who are, and those who are not, fitted to receive <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians\*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 1911), 43–48.

2:9–10. The blessings of salvation were prepared by the Father, carried out by the Son, and applied by the Spirit (Eph. 1:3–14) to all believers who as a result love God (1 John 4:19). The only way the Corinthians could know this was **by the Spirit**, who knows and reveals these **deep things of God** about salvation.

2:11. Paul illustrated this by pointing out that nobody can fully fathom **the thoughts** of anyone else. How much more necessary, then, is the work of **the Spirit** if **the thoughts of God** are to be known.

2:12. It was for that purpose, in part, that **the Spirit who is from God** came (John 16:13), not just to some Christians but to all (1 Cor. 12:13).

2:13. It was this message of salvation which Paul proclaimed and now expounded further. It did not originate in man but in God and was **taught by the Spirit**. Paul then expressed these **spiritual truths** which were a message of wisdom (cf. v. 6). The Greek word *pneumatikois* may be neuter gender and so translated **spiritual words** as in the NIV (“expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words”). Or it may be masculine gender and translated “spiritual men” (“interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men,” as in the NIV margin). Both senses are possible, but Paul’s primary point in this passage was not how the message of wisdom was received but who received it, as suggested by the context: Paul spoke the message of wisdom to “the mature” (v. 6). Thus verse 13 parallels verse 6 and forms a kind of bracket, in keeping with well-written Greek style.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> David K. Lowery, [“1 Corinthians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 510.

**2:10–11** In 2:10 the plural pronoun translated “to us” is in the emphatic position in Greek, occurring first in the sentence. But how does 2:10a relate back to what precedes, and to whom does the plural pronoun refer in context? Some Greek manuscripts include the adversative conjunction,<sup>258</sup> implying a contrast between those who cannot fathom God’s plan for his people (2:9) and those who now know God’s plan for his people through the revelation of the Spirit (2:10a). Other manuscripts have an explanatory conjunction,<sup>259</sup> stating the reason why others cannot understand God’s plan, that is, God’s wisdom is available only to those to whom he has revealed it. If the “us” is parallel with “we” in 2:6, then the more specific reference may be to the apostles and prophets. If “us” refers back to the more immediate “those who love him” in 2:9, then all believers are in view rather than an inner circle in the early church.<sup>260</sup> The contrast is not so much between “us” and “them” as it is why they cannot know and we can.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Gk. ὁέ.

<sup>259</sup> Gk. γάρ. The NIV opts for the adversative, “but.” The TNIV has changed to the explanatory, “for.”

<sup>260</sup> So Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 255. Thiselton further notes that the “our” in 2:7b (our glory) and “we” (we received the Spirit of God) in 2:12 signify all Christians, without a doubt (229). However, a more specific reference for the dative pronoun “to us” in 2:10 does not mean that all believers are not privy to God’s mystery. Col 1:26 indicates a broader focus of revelation in that God’s mystery has been disclosed to “all the saints.” This revelation, however, comes through the mediation of the Spirit through God’s gifted servants that is now available to all through the written word of God.

<sup>261</sup> So Fee, *First Corinthians*, 109. Fee goes with the explanatory “for” as the correct reading. This does not, however, rule out the implied contrast between 2:9 and 2:10. There are some “in the know” and some who aren’t. The difference is the Spirit.

Spirit language dominates the remainder of the section through v. 15.<sup>262</sup> The fact that God has revealed his plan to us through the Spirit once again strikes at any notion of boasting or self-sufficiency, which is critical to Paul's overall argument (recall 1:29–31). The Spirit is able to reveal these things because the Spirit “searches all things, even the deep things of God.” In context, “all things” and the “deep things of God” correlate to God's hidden wisdom (2:7a), to what God predestined before the ages (2:7b), and to what God has prepared for those who love him (2:9). Paul does not elaborate further here on the content of the revelation as he does elsewhere (Col 1:24–28; Eph 3:8–13) because this is not his intent in the present argument, which focuses more on the fact and the means of revelation rather than the content. The context, however, supplies that Paul is speaking of God's plan of salvation in Christ crucified. Furthermore, what God has prepared for those who love him is “glory” (2:8; cf. also 15:20–28). Paul's language of the “deep things” of God corresponds to his analogous exclamation in Rom 11:33, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” In Eph 3:8 he speaks of preaching to the Gentiles “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and in 3:18 of the same letter he prays that believers might be able to grasp “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” Others note the possible Old Testament background of Dan 2:19–23 with its vocabulary relating to mystery, revelation, and the deep things of God.<sup>263</sup> Paul's own explanation of 2:10, which has to do with the fact of the Spirit's knowledge, appears in 2:11 and works off of the analogy of “like is known by like.”<sup>264</sup> Just as no one knows the inner thoughts of another, so only the Spirit of God knows the things of God. Paul's explanation “ascribes full deity to the Spirit.”<sup>265</sup>

**2:12** Once again, in 2:12, the emphatic structures of the sentence in Greek indicate Paul's stress on the recipients of God's revelation (“we”) and its source, that it is not the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God.<sup>266</sup> The “we” in 2:12 is parallel to the plural “us” in 2:10 and

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<sup>262</sup> The Greek word πνεῦμα occurs eight times in 2:10–16, used of both the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. The adjective πνευματικός (spiritual) occurs three times and the adverb πνευματικῶς (spiritually) occurs once.

<sup>263</sup> See Williams, *Wisdom of the Wise*, 168. Also Fee, *First Corinthians*, 111.

<sup>264</sup> See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 98.

<sup>265</sup> Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 57.

<sup>266</sup> Several matters of the Greek sentence structure are worth noting: (1) The personal pronoun ἡμεῖς (we), not required by the Greek, is included. (2) The phrase “not the spirit of the world” occurs next in the sentence before the main verb and is set in contrast to the “Spirit of God” by the emphatic contrasting conjunction, ἀλλά (but). (3) The phrase “the Spirit who is from God” is more emphatic than the phrase “spirit of the world” in the use of the definite article, literally, “the Spirit, the one who is from God.” The full Greek main clause reads, ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 181) takes the second occurrence of “spirit” to mean the



either refers to all believers or to a more specific group such as the apostles and prophets as the means of God's revelation by the Spirit (see discussion on 2:10 above). That all believers possess the Spirit of God is abundantly clear in the broader context of the letter.<sup>267</sup> In the immediate context (2:13–3:1) Paul introduces the term “spiritual person,” who is set in contrast to the “natural person.” The distinction is between those who have the Spirit and those who do not, although Paul may be addressing self-styled “spirituals” in the church at Corinth.<sup>268</sup>

**2:13** The phrase “This is what we speak” refers back to the scriptural citation in 2:9 to the things revealed by the Spirit, yet unseen and unknown by men.<sup>269</sup> The use of the first person plural continues (“we speak”) with the use of the same verb that occurred in 2:6–7.<sup>270</sup> What is spoken by Paul and others is the hidden wisdom of God (2:6–7) now revealed by the Spirit (2:10). As such Paul's teaching proceeds from the Spirit rather than from human wisdom.<sup>271</sup> This is now the fourth time in the present argument that Paul has denied human wisdom as the source of his speech (1:17; 2:1, 4). Verse 13 is especially close to 2:4 where Paul claims that his preaching was not in persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit's power.

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human “spirit” that we received from God as in Zech 12:1. The parallel is closer, however, to 2:10 where the Holy Spirit is clearly in view.

<sup>267</sup> See especially 6:19 and the full discussion of the work of the Spirit in chaps. 12–14.

<sup>268</sup> Note 14:37, “If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that what I am writing to you is the command of the Lord.” See also 7:40, “But I think I also have the Spirit of God.” In other words, Paul is targeting a certain group of individuals in the church at Corinth, those either self-designated as mature/wise/spiritual or perceived as such by the church.

<sup>269</sup> As the Greek neuter pronoun, ὃ, makes clear. The same form of the pronoun occurs twice in 2:9.

<sup>270</sup> Gk. λαλέω. The verb appears frequently in Paul's discussion of the Spirit in chaps. 12–14 (see 1 Cor 12:3, 30; 13:1, 11; 14:2–6, 9, 11, 13, 18–19, 21, 23, 27–29, 34–35, 39).

<sup>271</sup> A subjective genitive reading.

The phrase rendered by the NIV, “expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words,” is difficult to translate and interpret.<sup>272</sup> The more recent NIV2011 has “explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” The NASB translates, “combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words,” and the HCSB, “explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.”<sup>273</sup> All are possible renderings of the Greek, and it is difficult to decide between these options. Part of the difficulty resides in the fact that the first occurrence of the word “spiritual”<sup>274</sup> in the Greek text could be either masculine or neuter. Does the term refer to Spirit-taught words just mentioned in 2:13a, or does the word mean “spiritual people” in anticipation of 2:14–15? Furthermore, the meaning of the participle, translated “expressing” by the NIV,<sup>275</sup> is uncertain. Does it mean to “explain,” “combine,” or “compare”? The only other occurrence of the term in the New Testament is 2 Cor 10:12 with the meaning “to compare.” But the context here indicates something more along the lines of “explain” or “interpret,” as the word is used in the LXX.<sup>276</sup> Fee suggests, “explaining spiritual

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<sup>272</sup> Gk. πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες. Louw-Nida (33.154) render the verb συγκρίνω, “to explain, primarily by means of comparison,” and the phrase πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες, “we explain spiritual truths by means of spiritual matters.” They also note, however, that the expression is highly ambiguous and may mean, “we explain spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit” or “we explain spiritual truths with words given by the Spirit.”

#### NIV2011 New International Version

#### NASB New American Standard Bible

#### HCSB Holman Christian Standard Bible

<sup>273</sup> Similarly ESV, “interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”

<sup>274</sup> πνευματικοῖς. Meaning either “to spiritual persons” (masc.) or “with spiritual words” (neut.). The same ambiguity exists in 1 Cor 12:1, meaning either, “Now about spiritual persons” or “Now about spiritual things (gifts).”

#### NIV New International Version

<sup>275</sup> Gk. συγκρίνω.

#### LXX Septuagint

<sup>276</sup> Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 100) notes several LXX occurrences with the meaning “interpret” in the sense of unlocking truth revealed by God. See Gen 40:8, 22; 41:12; Judg 7:15; Dan 5:8, 12.

things by means of spiritual words taught us by the Spirit.”<sup>277</sup> The implication in this translation would be that “spiritual people” are the ones who receive the explanation of spiritual things (so the HCSB). Either way, the very next verse picks up the contrast between the *natural man* and the *spiritual man*, where there is no ambiguity in Greek on the gender of the adjective.<sup>9</sup>

**10** (1) The UBS *Greek New Testament* (4th ed.) reads δέ in v. 10 in spite of the fact that the early  $\text{P}^{46}$  and B, as well as Clement, read γάρ. Metzger argues that γάρ appears to represent a supposed “improvement” in Paul’s flow of argument introduced by early copyists, and Zuntz also prefers δέ.<sup>146</sup> The editors of the 4th ed. describe their reading as “almost certain” (i.e., B.). In the 3d ed., however, the editors both had evaluated the reading as B, “some degree of doubt,” and classified the reading as old “C,” i.e., “a considerable degree of doubt,” since δέ is supported by  $\text{P}^{46}$ , A, and C against  $\text{P}^{46}$  and B. Although in the end little of substance may turn on this difference, the variation may also indicate an original possibility of a Corinthian quotation which Paul anticipates, i.e., “But God has provided a revelation for us through the Spirit. For the Spirit

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<sup>277</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 115. So also Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 100.

HCSB Holman Christian Standard Bible

<sup>9</sup> Mark Taylor, [1 Corinthians](#), ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 28, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 91–94.

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<sup>146</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary* (2d ed. 1994), 481; and Zuntz, *Text*, 205.

searches all things, even ‘the deep things’ of God.” On the other hand, γάρ makes the language clearly Paul’s own (unless v. 9 is also part of a longer quotation).<sup>147</sup> The safest course for the translator is to follow the NRSV in offering no English equivalent, as against (i) *but* (NIV, AV/KJV, Luther) or (ii) *for* (NEB) or *and* (REB). NJB, *to us, though*, is a good second choice. (2) The variant readings which include αὐτοῦ, *his*, after πνεύματος, *Spirit*, cause less difficulty. The UBS 4th ed. is right to omit αὐτοῦ from the text, since it does not appear in ℣<sup>46</sup>, ⚭ (first hand), A, B, C, and a probable reading of 33. In a later corrector of ⚭ the Old Latin and most miniscules, the addition of αὐτοῦ was clarification. Had the word *his* been original, it is difficult to understand both its lack of early support and why it should have been omitted.

If v. 10 embodies Paul’s own thought, ἡμῖν, **to us**, refers back to **those who love him** in v. 9 and not to some inner esoteric circle of a privileged category within the church.<sup>148</sup> If the verse reflects thought at Corinth, the ἡμῖν (**to us**) comes first in word order as an emphatic claim: “But it is *to us* that God has revealed ... the deepest secrets....” If Paul speaks for himself, or if he puts his own construction on a favorite Corinthian theme, the pronoun remains emphatic, but is so because of awe and wonder at God’s free choice to bestow such favor. Hence we have tried to capture a degree of emphasis by postponing the pronoun to the end of the clause: **God has revealed these things through his Spirit to us!**

Paul has already referred to **the Spirit** (πνεῦμα) in 2:4 in conjunction with *power* (ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως). The word now dominates the thought of our passage (vv. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14), introducing πνευματικός, the adjective *appertaining to the Spirit*, usually ambiguously translated *spiritual* in vv. 13 and 15, with the adverbial form πνευματικῶς (*in a way that relates to the Spirit*, or *spiritually*) additionally in v. 14. As a noun or adjective it occurs in every verse up to the christological definition or qualification of πνεῦμα in v. 16. It is crucial to distinguish between πνεῦμα (**Spirit** or *spirit*) as a Pauline reference to the Holy Spirit or to the Spirit of God from Paul’s references to the human spirit or to Stoic or gnostic uses of *spirit* and *spiritual*.<sup>149</sup> This is the point of Paul’s emphasis on the divine transcendence of the Spirit in v. 12 as τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, **the Spirit from God**, as against “spiritual capacities” in human beings.<sup>150</sup> This

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<sup>147</sup> See discussion by Frid, “The Enigmatic ἀλλά in 1 Cor 2:9,” 603–11 (discussed above under v. 9), of which this subsequent decision forms part.

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<sup>148</sup> Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 256.

<sup>149</sup> Hoyle, *The Holy Spirit in St. Paul*, 182; cf. Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man*, 128–29; J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (1970), 103; Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the NT*, 169–223; Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 1–21, 223–45; E. Schweizer, “πνεῦμα,” *TDNT*, 6:415–37 (also translated as *Spirit of God*, 54–87); and many other comparable works.

<sup>150</sup> Variations in Paul’s own uses and exegetical difficulties abound. Does τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες (Rom 12:11) mean “fervent in spirit” (AV/KJV) or “be aglow with the spirit?” (RSV,

becomes critical in 1 Corinthians 15, where *spiritual body* means the *total mode of existence governed by the Spirit* (15:44, σῶμα πνευματικόν).

“Verses 10–16 ... make up his [Paul’s] first sustained reflection on the Spirit,” especially as the source of revelation.<sup>151</sup> This section sets a framework for later material on the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12–14 as well as in the resurrection chapter (15:42–57; cf. 15:12–28, 38–41). In all these passages the work of the Spirit remains inseparable from the work of God as revealed in Christ. By contrast, a wedge was driven by some at Corinth between “spirituality” and Christ crucified. Bultmann convincingly concludes that when he uses πνεῦμα in its most characteristic Pauline sense, Paul always means “divine power that stands in contrast to all that is human,” not “spirit” (Germ. *Geist*) in the sense of the inner self of Platonic dualism.<sup>152</sup> Likewise for Schweizer, to be “spiritual” is to appropriate God’s saving work through Christ by God’s Spirit.<sup>153</sup>

The possibility of an unfortunate ambiguity goes back to Heb. רוּחַ (*ruach*), which πνεῦμα translates in the LXX. Since *ruach* can mean *breath*, the word has often been understood *immanently*, as within human persons. But the meaning of *ruach* as *wind* stresses the *transcendent*, powerful element which operates *upon* human persons and which they cannot control or even clearly predict, as Jesus emphasizes to Nicodemus in the wordplay of John 3:8: τὸ πνεῦμα blows where it wills ... so is everyone who has been born ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος. Of its OT context Snaith comments that through God’s Spirit people can “do those things which of themselves and in their own strength they are incapable of doing.”<sup>154</sup> When the Spirit of God gives Israel “rest” in Isa 63:14, this means that his strong warrior-Spirit keeps their cattle secure from marauding bands.

The parallel thought occurs here. Human persons cannot search out the hidden things of God unaided, through their own limited resources of wisdom, knowledge, or stance. The verb ἀπεκάλυψεν is the aorist, not the perfect, of ἀποκαλύπτω, *I reveal, I disclose, I uncover*, and alludes to God’s act of removing any barrier which keeps the content of his predetermined purpose secret (v. 9). The associated activity ascribed to God’s Spirit by means of the verb ἐραυνάω (third present indicative ἐραυνᾷ, the Alexandrian spelling of the classical ἐρευνάω,

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NEB), as is far more likely. Another problematic set of passages concerns the so-called psychological uses of πνεῦμα in, e.g., “spirit of bondage” (Rom 8:13), although “Spirit of holiness” (Rom 1:4) and “Spirit of adoption” (Rom 8:15) probably refer to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes Paul uses “be with your spirit” to mean no more than “be with you” (Phil 4:23; Philem 25). Weiss rightly sees 1 Cor 2:12 as representing a deliberate distancing by Paul of his own use of πνεῦμα from that of the stoics.

<sup>151</sup> Collins, *First Cor*, 132; similarly, Wolff, *Der erste Brief*, 58–59.

<sup>152</sup> Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, 1:153.

<sup>153</sup> Schweizer, “πνεῦμα,” *TDNT*, 6:436–37 (also *Spirit of God*, 87).

<sup>154</sup> N. Snaith, V. Taylor, et al., *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (London: Epworth, 1937), 11. Cf. also C. H. Powell, *Biblical Concept of Power*, 26.

ἐρευνᾷ) does not mean searching to discover here, but the activity of exploring God's purposes thoroughly in order to reveal them.<sup>155</sup> Hence Barrett's translation **searches out** is better here than *searches* (NRSV, NIV). The NJB and REB *explores* is equally acceptable.

The term τὰ βάθη has also invited various translations. The traditional rendering *the deep things* (retained by NIV) depends on taking the neuter plural overliterally. Most English VSS render the word **the depths** (NRSV, NJB, REB, TEV). However, TEV continues further by adding to the genitive τοῦ Θεοῦ, **depths of God's purposes**; and REV and NEB, **depths of God's own nature**; while NJB, NRSV, and NIV reflect the Greek structure and vocabulary with *of God*. The translation **depths of God** cannot be wrong, but v. 11 suggests an analogy that turns on knowledge *of the self*. The REB probably therefore construes Paul's sense as v. 11 explicates it, but the phrase *God's own nature* may suggest metaphysical attributes more akin to Western tradition than to Paul. Perhaps the most neutral and open way of capturing the point is to translate **the depths of God's own self**. God's amazing graciousness is but his very selfhood become exposed to human view **to those who love him** (v. 9) **through his Spirit** (διὰ + genitive). Nothing lies beyond or beneath God's own selfhood: "**The depths of God** is a comprehensive concept for the ungroundedness (*Unergründliche*) of God," i.e., God is "grounded in" nothing beyond his own selfhood.<sup>156</sup> Today we might speak of the Spirit's revealing *God's inmost heart*, which gives precisely the christological focus toward which Paul is working in 2:16.

**11** A superficial reading out of context would suggest that Paul adopts two uncharacteristic standpoints: (i) that he accepts a dualist-Platonic view of human nature as spirit within a human body, or, as Gilbert Ryle dubbed the dualist view, "the ghost in the machine"; and (ii) that he argues on the basis of a natural correspondence between human spirit/human person, and divine Spirit/God, as if **spirit**, πνεῦμα, embodied a natural continuity between the two instantiations of the term.<sup>157</sup> If such a reading were valid, then this would strengthen the argument that the verse represents either a quotation from a piece of Corinthian theology or a post-Pauline editorial interpolation. However, on closer inspection the verse need not, and almost certainly should not, be interpreted in this way.

Admittedly the structure of the Greek word order suggests the translation *For who of human persons* (the fourth word ἀνθρώπων, *of human persons*, must be construed with τίς, *who*) *knows* (strictly a perfect tense meaning *has come to know*, i.e., *now knows*) *the things* (τά, *the affairs*) *of the human being* (genitive singular) *except the spirit of the human person that is within* (τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ, *the within-the-self one*)? But Paul uses spatial language of the human person to indicate

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<sup>155</sup> See Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1:257–58.

<sup>156</sup> Wolff, *Der erste Brief*, 58. It is possible that "the depths of Satan" (Rev 2:24) denotes not esoteric satanic knowledge, but a belief in Satan's ontological independence of God, hence a dualist metaphysical system.

<sup>157</sup> Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949; Penguin ed. 1963), ch. 1 and throughout.

*modes or aspects of being.*<sup>158</sup> The spirit is within not in the sense of location, but in the sense of partly hidden stances of which an outsider or another human person may be unaware unless the person concerned chooses to reveal them by word, gesture, or action. The point of analogy does not turn on human spirit within/divine spirit within, but on the possession of an exclusive initiative to reveal one's thoughts, counsels, stance, attitudes, intentions, or whatever else is "within" in the sense of hidden from the public domain, not in the sense of location.

To insist upon this, as indeed we do, is not to impose modern psychology onto Paul. Indeed, it is the very reverse. It rescues our understanding of Paul from an uncritical embeddedness in a Graeco-Roman tradition which was alien to Paul's OT roots and worldview. As numerous writers over the last fifty years have rightly urged, the largely nineteenth-century idealist view of Lüdemann and others that "human spirit" was a central anthropological category for Paul is simply false.<sup>159</sup> The human spirit is not a "God-related principle of selfconsciousness within man which could be directed by the divine spirit to moral activity in opposition to the flesh."<sup>160</sup> Jewett comments: "This conception so dominated exegesis in the latter part of the last century that even scholars who stood in opposition to the liberal theology accepted it.... 'Spirit' was not a philosophic category providing continuity between God and man."<sup>161</sup>

In a different tradition from Athanasius to Barth this verse has been understood, rightly, as indicating that, in Barth's words, the issue "God is known through God alone."<sup>162</sup> Athanasius

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<sup>158</sup> See the detailed discussion of Paul's avoidance of a dualism of inner and outer "parts" of the human person, and the to-and-fro of the history of research into Paul's view of the human constitution or personhood in Robert Jewett's masterly work *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings*, esp. 167–97 (on πνεῦμα, *spirit*) and 391–401 (on ἔσω/ἔξω ἄνθρωπος, "inner"/"outer man"). See further Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, 1:153–64, 190–226, and 330–40; Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul*, 31–44; cf. 126–28; Robinson, *The Body*, 7–33; and esp. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 356–93.

<sup>159</sup> See H. Lüdemann, *Die Anthropologie des Apostels Paulus und ihre Stellung innerhalb seiner Heilslehre* (Kiel: University Press, 1872), 49. With Lüdemann we may also compare the idealist-dualist interpretations of Otto Pfleiderer, *Paulinism* (Germ., 1873; Eng. trans.; 2 vols., London, 1877); Willibald Beyschlag, *NT Theology* (Germ., vol. 2, Halle, 1896; Eng. trans., 2 vols., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark); and H. J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Tübingen, n.d.). For an overview cf. Jewett, "History of Research," in *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, and A. Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters* (Eng. trans., London: Black, 1912 and 1956), "From Baur to Holtzmann," 22–99.

<sup>160</sup> Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms*, 167.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 168. See further Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 2:258–59; Merklein, *Der erste Brief 1–4*, 236–37.

<sup>162</sup> Barth, *CD*, 2/1, sect. 27, 179.

explicitly quotes 1 Cor 2:11–12 and comments, “What kinship could there be, judging by the above [i.e., vv. 11 and 12], between **the Spirit** and the creatures?... God is Being (ὧν ἐστίν) and the Spirit is from him (ἐξ οὗ). That which is from God (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) could not be from *that which is not* (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος).”<sup>163</sup> The logic of Paul’s thought is that if, by analogy, one person cannot know the least accessible aspects of another human being unless that person is willing to place them in the public domain, even so we cannot expect that God’s own thought’s, God’s own purposes, God’s own qualities, or God’s own self could be open to scrutiny unless his spirit makes them accessible by an act of unveiling them. Athanasius makes this still clearer when he expounds ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, **from God**, in v. 12.<sup>164</sup>

Given this theological context, how are we to translate and to understand τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, variously translated *the things of God* (AV/KJV); *the thoughts of God* (Moffatt, NIV); the hidden depths of God’s purposes (TEV); “*what is truly God’s*” (NRSV); *what God is* (REB); and *the qualities of God* (NJB). We have tried to avoid offering a translation which makes the English more specific and narrow than the Greek, while avoiding rendering the neuter plural of the definite article by the banal *things* or *affairs*. In this context *what pertains to God* points toward the REB or the NJB meaning (which is probable but not explicit) of that which makes God what he is, i.e., his character or Godhood, but also leaving open room for *purposes*, *thoughts*, and *depths*, none of which can be excluded. The corresponding term of the analogy then becomes **what pertains to the human person in view**, noting that the term is a singular noun made specific by the definite article (in the genitive). In order to convey the positive nuances of πνεῦμα, *spirit*, as *that which is within* carefully defined above, but without the baggage of dualist idealism, we have translated **except that person’s innermost self** for εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ (articular genitive singular with explicative adjectival phrase).<sup>165</sup>

The task of translation here takes us beyond linguistics, lexicography, and grammar to judgments of theology, hermeneutics, and rhetorical-historical reconstruction, without which there would *be* no “text” to be discussed “in its own right.” We cannot avoid asking: Is this a piece of Corinthian theology, or is it Paul’s, or is Paul trying to borrow back their terminology in order to redefine it, as Pearson convincingly argues? Answers to these questions will largely determine

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<sup>163</sup> Athanasius, *Letter to Serapion*, 1:22 (also Migne, *PG*, 26:581). For a recent account of exegetical issues relating to knowledge cf. Gaffin, “Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Cor 2:6–16,” 103–24, esp. 112–13 on vv. 11–14.

<sup>164</sup> A constructive explanatory exposition of Athanasius’s thought on 1 Cor 2:11–12, can be found in Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century*, VCSup 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 77–83.

<sup>165</sup> The complexity of what is at issue in attempting to capture the varied social, communicative, psychological, history-of-religions, and theological dimensions of the language can be judged from Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*, 343–93, where some fifty pages concern these issues.



translation, in addition to a hermeneutical sensitivity toward diverse understandings of *spirit* in Hebrew-Pauline, Platonic-hellenistic, modern Western, and quasi-postmodern anti-metaphysical traditions.

Yet *provisionally* Paul's language can be expressed relatively simply. All this talk of "wisdom," "secrets," and "being spiritual," he says, amounts to little or nothing—*unless you are open to reappropriate the message of the cross in your innermost being*. Here lies the key to the "secret" of God's being and "wisdom," which can be apprehended *only* as his Holy Spirit shows you Christ (2:16–3:3). That gives you the kind of "secret" which makes status-seeking out of place and draws you anew to the cross. Theissen astutely traces the parallel recapitulation of 1:18–25, on the *proclamation of the cross* as a life-changing reality *for all*, and 2:1–16 on the *wisdom of the cross* as a life-changing reality among those who have already perceived its effects but now need "not ... new contents, but ... a more profound consciousness 'to' emancipate themselves consciously from the compulsive standards of the world."<sup>166</sup> Theissen's *Psychological Aspects* deserves careful study (see below, esp. on chs. 12–14). Meanwhile one of Funk's early essays makes the point well: "Paul is labouring to hear the word [of the cross] anew for himself and for the Corinthians. [Their] *sophia* does not consist ... of knowledge of the counsels of God.... Even the cross can become σοφία if it is divorced from its ground.... [Paul seeks] to establish a 'world' in which the Crucified reigns as Lord."<sup>167</sup> The theological presupposition, which Merklein emphasizes more than Funk, however, is the discontinuity between humankind and the transcendence of God which necessitates the active help of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:16)."<sup>168</sup>

**12** The Stoic concept of πνεῦμα as a pervasive, animating, quasi-agent, quasi-substance which permeated everything had become widespread among thinking people of Paul's world. Hoyle suggests the modern analogy of the penetrating capacity of X rays. In this sense, it was a short step to conceive of "God" as a kind of animating world-soul or immanent **spirit of the world**.<sup>169</sup> This belief lay behind Stoic comparisons between πνεῦμα, *spirit*, and fire as that which could pass into whatever it willed and assimilated other entities into itself. We should note, *however*, that the point of the analogy for Stoic thought has become the very opposite of that which the same analogy suggests in the OT and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here the notion of God as "a consuming fire" indicates God's transcendence, otherness, and holiness, in contradistinction from "the world" (Heb 12:29, cf. Exod 3:2; 19:18; Isa 66:15; Jer 5:14; Ezek 1:4, 27; Mal 3:2; Heb 12:18; Rev 1:14; 2:18).

Against this background Weiss adds a second basic point. He declares: "This is the essential difference between the Stoa and Paul. The former thinks of an innate and inborn divine nature; the latter, of a divine, supernatural equipment given.... He who processes the Spirit of God can

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>167</sup> Funk, "Word and Word in 1 Cor 2:6–16," in *Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God*, 276, 280 and 284.

<sup>168</sup> Merklein, *Der erste Brief 1–4*, 237.

<sup>169</sup> Hoyle, *The Holy Spirit in St Paul*, 219.

really and truly know God....”<sup>170</sup> Weiss compares Paul’s thought in 1 Cor 2:12–16 with that of Epictetus: “Our souls are joined together with God as parts and fragments of him.”<sup>171</sup> Paul’s near contemporary Seneca writes, “Reason is nothing else than a part of the divine spirit sunk in a human body.”<sup>172</sup> Marcus Aurelius declares, “The soul is a part, an outflow, a fragment, of God.”<sup>173</sup> This mode of thought gained more than a foothold in speculative Jewish thought of Paul’s day. Thus Philo speaks of the human soul as “a divine breath that migrated hither from that blissful and happy existence ... the part that is invisible.”<sup>174</sup>

To speak of the influence of Stoic terms and ideas in the popular mind does not imply the mistake of imagining that most Greeks were “philosophers.”<sup>175</sup> Further, the early Stoicism of Zeno and Cleanthes must be distinguished from the Middle Stoic thought of the first century BC (which influenced, e.g., Cicero) and the Roman Stoicism of which the very three writers from whom we have just quoted, namely, Epictetus (c. AD 55–135), Seneca (c. AD 1–65), and Marcus Aurelius (121–80) constitute major representations.<sup>176</sup> In all strands the world is conceived of as an organic whole, animated by a rational force called πνεῦμα or *spiritus*. A thing’s qualities are constituted by its πνεῦμα, which appears in plants under the mode of nature (φύσις), in animals under the mode of life (ψυχή), and in human persons directly as spirit (πνεῦμα). Thus at death, Epictetus observes, a person passes back “into what is friendly and akin” (εἰς τὰ φίλα καὶ συγγενῆ), whatever is of fire into fire, whatever is of earth into earth, whatever is of spirit into spirit” (ὅσον πνευματίου εἰς πνεύματιον) (Epictetus, *Dissertations* 3.13.15). Weiss calls attention to this background.<sup>177</sup>

Paul’s use of the phrase τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, **the Spirit who issues from God** thus stands in semantic opposition or contrast to **the spirit of the world** and conveys more than a simple genitive without ἐκ (from, out of). H. B. Swete compares the parallel notion of the Spirit’s “going forth from” (ἐκπορεύεται ἐκ) God in John 15:26–27.<sup>178</sup> John uses παρὰ as well as ἐκ, as in *from the Father* (παρὰ τοῦ πατρός, 16:27; also of Christ, John 1:14; 6:46; 7:29; 17:8). Swete glosses 1 Cor 2:12 as “issuing forth from God” (cf. Lightfoot’s *cometh from*; more dynamic than

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<sup>170</sup> Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 2.512.

<sup>171</sup> Epictetus, *Discourse* 1.14.6.

<sup>172</sup> Seneca, *Letters* 62.12; cf. further 41.2; 31.11.

<sup>173</sup> Marcus Aurelius, 5.27.

<sup>174</sup> Philo, *Opificio Mundi* 135; cf. 69.

<sup>175</sup> J. B. Skemp, *The Greeks and the Gospel* (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1964), 1–10, 45–68, and 95–100.

<sup>176</sup> In addition to the references above, cf. Cicero, *De Divinitate* 1.30:64.

<sup>177</sup> Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 62–70, and *Earliest Christianity*, 2:511–13.

<sup>178</sup> Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the NT*, 155; cf. 178–79, 265, and 284–85.

Collins, *that is from*), and our translation takes up his phrase.<sup>179</sup> This contrast between what is drawn from the world and what has come forth as a freely given gift from God is intensified by the emphatic place of ἡμεῖς as first in the word order of the verse; hence we have translated it **as for us**.... We have then preserved the syntagmatic sequence of οὐ τὸ πνεῦμα (**not the spirit**) and the aorist form of λαμβάνω (ἐλάβομεν, second aorist, **we received**) by translating in a contrastive mode, **it is not the spirit of the world that we received, but the spirit who issues from God**.<sup>180</sup> Especially in view of Conzelmann's claim that Paul risks moving from a more historical gospel perspective to the more "timeless" categories of proto-gnostic thought, it is best to retain the dynamic-action aspect of aorists where possible, as against the more stative nuances of a perfect. The aorist recalls the moment when they heard the gospel by faith on the basis of God.<sup>181</sup>

We may now consider Theissen's more speculative but nevertheless constructive exposition of the contrast between **the spirit of the world** and the Holy **Spirit** whom **God** gives from beyond as Other. He convincingly perceives a parallel between **the rulers of this present world order** (2:6) and **the spirit of the world** (2:12). Both stand in contrast to the tradition of **the wisdom of God** as that which escapes the powerful, the influential, and the experts of the world order who shape the world to be what it is: "wisdom is withdrawn from the 'wise and understanding' (Matt. 11:25), from the 'educated, powerful and well-born' (1 Cor. 1:26).... It is scarcely a coincidence that wisdom and antiwisdom are confronted ... in the Epistle of James. The community ... behind James also counts itself among the poor (James 2:5–7); in 3:15–17 it also opposes ... 'wisdom which is earthly, unspiritual, devilish ... where jealousy and selfish ambition exist ... disorder.... But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason....' "<sup>182</sup>

The divine Spirit comes from "beyond" to impart a disclosure of God's own "wisdom." But here Theissen advances a convincing observation about the relation between 2:12–14 and modern learning theory. The church at Corinth has already drawn its new life from the proclamation of the cross (1:18–2:5). But now all this has to be more deeply appropriated (2:6–3:23). Both sections trace the themes of divine wisdom as "unrecognizable" (1:18–21 and 2:6–8) and "foolish" (1:22–25 and 2:9–16) when placed within the wrong frame of reference (Jews and Gentiles, 1:22–25; the "unspiritual"; 2:9–16). Both advance to consider the social dimensions of the context of learning (1:26–30, the modest social status of the church: 3:1–4, the immaturity of the church). Hence, just as an appropriation of the message of the cross meant a reorientation of outlook, so a deeper, reflective, embracing of the lifestyle which the cross brings entails steady disengagement from the values and traditions imposed by **the rulers of this present world order** and by **the spirit of the world**. Just as Theissen rightly rejected the alternative "historical or demonic" with reference to **the rulers** or **archons**, so the reorientation to be open to **the Spirit**

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<sup>179</sup> Swete, *Holy Spirit*, 285, cf. 178; Lightfoot, *Notes*, 180; Collins, *First Cor*, 121–34; against AV/KJV, "of God."

<sup>180</sup> Schrage emphasizes this aspect of *receiving* as a *gift* (*Der erste Brief*, 1:259–60).

<sup>181</sup> Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 158.

<sup>182</sup> Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*, 360 and 361.

**who issues from God** and to disengage from **the spirit of the world** involves a *relearning process of structural and sociocosmic dimensions* which, in turn, invites a learning environment **among the mature**.<sup>183</sup> Too many commentators reduce the substantive content of **spirit of the world** to a merely negative term of contrast to Spirit of God.<sup>184</sup>

This “wisdom” of 2:6–16, however, is *not* a matter of “new contents” (as *against* a *gnostic* rereading 1:18–25 against 2:6–16), but a deeper grasp of realities which “emancipate [them] ... from the compulsive standards of this world.”<sup>185</sup> Theissen concludes: “In speaking of ‘this world’, Paul presupposes the existence of a new world. Prior to all ‘worlds’, God had a plan that leads beyond ‘this world’. This plan was realized in Christ. But since Christ did not fit into this world—he was rejected by it—he can be ordered into a meaningful context only as the beginning of a new world.”<sup>186</sup> A contradiction appears which demands reorientation in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. “It then appears as no meaningless contradiction but rather opens a more comprehensive horizon of meaning.”<sup>187</sup> This happy phrase “a more comprehensive horizon” sheds further light on the meaning content of τέλειος, **mature**. **Maturity** entails integration of character and a long-term stance toward responsibility and hope.

This coheres wonderfully with the concluding clause of the verse. The revelation by the Spirit unveils **the things that were freely given to us by God**. The neuter plural aorist passive participle of the deponent form χαρίζομαι (as BAGD observe, here in the genuinely passive sense, as in Phil 1:29 and Acts 3:14), *I freely give*, or *I bestow as an undeserved favor*, occurs with the neuter plural definite article to signify what God has chosen to give by grace (χάρις) alone (cf. 1:7 above).<sup>188</sup> Thus it is to enter the “new world” (see on Funk above and on 2:6–9), which is neither of human

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 378; cf. 379–86.

<sup>184</sup> For example, Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 70. Barrett holds a middle position. He comments, “Paul does not explain what he means by the spirit of the world.... The Qumran parallels are of limited importance, but it is evident that Paul did believe in a spiritual force opposed to God, and connected it with this world (2 Cor. 4:4) ... hardly ... distinguished from the wisdom of this age (v. 6) ... a man-centred planning” (*First Epistle*, 75). Meyer calls this spirit “the spirit proceeding forth from the devil” (*First Epistle*, 1:69).

<sup>185</sup> Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, 385.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

BAGD Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*

<sup>188</sup> BAGD, 876–79, where the connection with χάρισμα, *a free gift*, or more technically in ecclesial contexts, *a free gift for a specific task*. But this latter connection is less certain than that of χάρις, *grace* or *free gift*.

creation nor governed by “powers” or “rulers” hostile or indifferent to God. Its generous largeness and transformative power are defined by the cross of Christ. This “new world” which God has freely bestowed is not merely an object of speculation or a human projection. **The Spirit who issues from God** was also “given” (the correlate of ἐλάβομεν, **we received**) for the purpose (purposive ἵνα, **in order that**) of our **knowing** it (εἰδωμεν, subjunctive mood of εἰδέναι, from the perfect stem οἶδα, used with present meaning).

Fee is probably right to call this “the central issue in the whole paragraph” and on this basis to render the connecting link with the previous verse (δέ, *and* or *but*) as a “resumptive” link, which is best translated by the logical connective **Now**.<sup>189</sup> Héring describes this theme, with its central statements in vv. 12–16, as “the great charter for Christian theologians.”<sup>190</sup> This verse alone will hardly support a fully articulate doctrine of “the procession of the Holy Spirit.” However, Edwards argues that “though ἐκ does not here express the truth of the Spirit’s procession (as Theod. explains) yet it implies it.”<sup>191</sup> (On the use of this passage by Origen, Athanasius, and Basil, see the section “Posthistory, Influence, and Reception of 2:10–16.”)

**13** The dative plural *adjective* πνευματικοῖς, which can strictly be rendered either as a masculine plural, **to people of the Spirit**, or as a neuter plural (*with things of the Spirit*) is read as an *adverb* (πνευματικῶς, *spiritually*) by the important uncial B and by 33. But it is generally agreed that this is likely to reflect an assimilation to the adverbial form in v. 14; the overwhelming MS support favors the UBS 4th ed. reading.

A number of lexicographical and grammatical issues have made this a standard passage for comment. In short, (a) συγκρίνοντες (nominative masculine plural present participle active of συγκρίνω) can have at least three possible different meanings on the basis of lexicography: (i) **interpreting** (above, with NRSV, REB, Moffatt, Luther, NIV mg.); or *explaining* (TEV); or (ii) *comparing* (AV/KJV); or (iii) *bringing together* either in the sense of *matching* or *fitting* (NJB) spiritual things or language to spiritual people, or in the sense of *expressing* (NIV) or *teaching* (JB) them.<sup>192</sup> On top of this, (b) the dative plural adjective πνευματικοῖς can in terms of grammar alone be either (i) *masculine, to spiritual people*, or (as we have translated it in view of the context of argument) **to people of the Spirit**; or (ii) *neuter, with* (or *to* or *by*) *spiritual things*, which may invite a further range of meanings, e.g., *spiritual subject matter*, *spiritual language*, or *spiritual*

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<sup>189</sup> Fee, *First Epistle*, 112 and 112, n. 61.

<sup>190</sup> Héring, *First Epistle*, 19.

<sup>191</sup> Edwards, *First Epistle*, 60.

UBS United Bible Societies

<sup>192</sup> BAGD, 774–75; MM, 610; LSJ, 1450. The classical connotation stresses *combining* into a compound; the hellenistic and NT era contains the whole range; the papyri tend toward the meaning *compare*. Lightfoot favors *combining*, but then takes the net force to mean “applying spiritual methods to *explain* spiritual truths” (*Notes*, 180, my italics).

*truths*. (c) Given that the accusative neuter plural adjective πνευματικά may already mean either **spiritual things** in a general, unspecified sense (as virtually all translations render it) or something more specific (spiritual truths, spiritual revelations, spiritual mysteries ...), the final *combination* of *possible* renderings of so many variables remains very wide. Schrage warns his readers that the interpretation “is certainly of the greatest difficulty” and yields at least four distinct possibilities.<sup>193</sup>

Robertson and Plummer (in some measure anticipating Schrage) succinctly sum up what they see as the main candidates, as follows.<sup>194</sup>

- (i) *If we take πνευματικοῖς as neuter*, we may render:
  - a. Combining spiritual things (words) with spiritual things (subject matter)
  - b. Interpreting (explaining) spiritual things by spiritual things, meaning:
    - (1) interpreting OT types by NT themes
    - (2) interpreting spiritual truths by spiritual language
    - (3) interpreting spiritual truths by spiritual faculties
- (ii) *If we take πνευματικοῖς as masculine* we may render:
  - a. Suiting (matching, fitting) spiritual matters to spiritual hearers
  - b. Interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual hearers

The range of possible meanings, then, according to Robertson and Plummer, amounts to not less than six on the basis of lexicography and grammar. Everything, then, depends on judgments about the contextual flow of the argument, the situation at Corinth which shapes how Paul would consider his language to be perceived and received, and not least on Paul’s own theology of revelation and communication and of the Holy Spirit. Collins, for example, follows (i) (b) and (ii) (b): *interpreting* what God has revealed “for the benefit of *spiritual persons*.”<sup>195</sup>

First and foremost, in the previous verse Paul has underlined the transcendence and otherness of God’s Spirit as **issuing from God** (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ). We believe that this is a decisive indication that Paul wishes the adjectival form πνευματικός to be understood as meaning **of the Spirit** (of God), and not as the more bland *spiritual*, which allows for the very misunderstandings which Paul wishes to exclude. (This applies later to πνευματικόν σῶμα as *the resurrection mode of existence characterized by the Spirit* in 15:44, as well as to *free gifts of the Holy Spirit* in 12:1–14:40.)

The initial καί after ἄ has the consecutive sense of carrying *further* the logic of v. 12 from “knowledge (*connaissance*) of God’s work as a gift of the Spirit” (Senft) to the character of its “announcement” as equally a “Spiritual,” not a merely human, matter.<sup>196</sup> Hence we have followed Barrett in translating καί here as **further**. Clearly λαλοῦμεν takes up 2:6, and since Paul

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<sup>193</sup> Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1:261.

<sup>194</sup> Robertson and Plummer. *First Epistle*, 47. See also Merklein, *Der erste Brief 1–4*, 240; and Collins, *First Cor*, 135.

<sup>195</sup> Collins, *First Corinthians*, 135.

<sup>196</sup> Senft, *La Première Épître*, 53; cf. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 67 and 67, n. 109.

turns to issues of a *mode* of discourse as well as its *content* we have taken up his redundant indicator (in the technical sense of *useful* “redundancy” in linguistics), namely, λαλοῦμεν ... ἐν διδακτοῖς ... λόγοις by rendering *we speak* or **we communicate ... in speech taught**.... This now permits us to retain Paul’s use of *the genitive of origin* for ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας: **not in speech taught out of mere human cleverness**. It is not *from* (**out of**) human cleverness (our earlier rendering of σοφία), but *derives from* the Holy Spirit of God.

Although σοφία does indeed point back to the instrumental and illusory “wisdom” discussed in 1:18–31 and 2:1–5, it goes well beyond the text to follow NJB’s *human philosophy*. As we argued earlier, Paul’s concern for *truth* stood closer to the best traditions of “philosophy” as against his more immediate target of the stances promoted by popular schools of *rhetoric*.<sup>197</sup>

Héring includes an unusually lengthy discussion of the syntax of διδακτοῖς ... λόγοις ... which concludes by offering support for the rendering *learned discourse*, with the particular meaning of “learned discourses in philosophy.”<sup>198</sup> He translates “amongst people instructed in human philosophy” as a counterpart to “among the mature.” But two rejoinders are invited. First, research into rhetorical schools in first-century cities such as Corinth reveals that “learned discourses” occur as models in schools of *rhetoric* with more regularity and more explicit evidence (e.g., cf. Quintilian and Cicero) than in schools of philosophy (see the extensive discussion above). Second, Héring is almost alone in making such heavy weather of an unusual but by no means difficult construction. Héring has to follow Blass in deleting λογοῖς and treats διδακτοῖς as a masculine noun. Lightfoot discusses “the genitive with verbal adjectives of passive force.”<sup>199</sup> In the end, Héring’s reconstruction makes little difference for exegesis, and should not unduly detain us. Edwards observes, “σοφίας [**cleverness**] and πνεύματος [**of the Spirit**] are genitives, as Erasmus saw, not after λόγοις but after διδακτοῖς as in Jn. 6:45.”<sup>200</sup>

In the light of the above, the majority rendering of συγκρίνοντες as *explaining* or *interpreting* (with Collins, Fee, Merklein, and others) seems naturally to unfold Paul’s argument.<sup>201</sup> The entailments of the divine wisdom of the cross are ever-more-deeply appropriated by Christian openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. Since **interpreting** may entail opening the understanding through *life experience* (Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Ricoeur) and *stance* (Wolterstorff) as well as simply intellectual *explanation* (TEV), **interpret** is preferable to *explain*. At the same time we need not exclude the possibility that Paul consciously utilizes the wordplay of semantic duality with *matching* and *fitting*. For the flow of argument from 2:6 to 3:4 also

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<sup>197</sup> Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, 99–172, 197–214, and elsewhere.

<sup>198</sup> Héring, *First Epistle*, 20.

<sup>199</sup> Lightfoot, *Notes*, 180.

<sup>200</sup> Edwards, *1 Corinthians*, 61. He adds that διδακτός is especially apt to take the genitive (cf. Sophocles, *Electra* 344). Moreover, other words which govern the genitive have the same construction (2 Pet 2:14; Matt 25:34), sect. 8.

<sup>201</sup> Fee, *First Epistle*, 115; Collins, *First Cor*, 135; Merklein, *Der erste Brief* 1–4, 241; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 75–76; also Bengel, *Gnomon*, 615, *interpretantes*.

includes the notion of *readiness* to understand what the Spirit reveals. Paul not only *interprets* whatever the Holy Spirit of God has revealed to those in whose lives **the Spirit** is co-working in applying the revelation; Paul *also matches* “what they are ready to take,” or “words which they can hear without misconstrual” to their state of readiness (cf. Calvin, *aptantes, aptare, to adjust or to adapt*).<sup>202</sup> Every pastor knows the crucial importance of *pastoral timing* (not only *what* to say but also *when* to say it) and matching a mode of discourse to the situation (not just *what* to say, but also *how* to say it).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Calvin, *First Epistle*, 60.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, [\*The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text\*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 254–267.