

The "Truth" of the Holy Spirit

On Pentecost, we celebrate the birthday of the Christian Church. On this day a group of Jesus' followers were filled with the Holy Spirit and by this action became the very first members of the Body of Christ which from that point in time has been called The Church.

In obedience to their Lord's command on the very day of His Ascension, the Apostles did not depart Jerusalem but waited there in hiding for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. The day of His coming was most appropriate since it was the Feast of Pentecost, the Jewish celebration of the light of God's Law given to Moses. On this day, however, the light of God was shed on His New Revelation - the revelation not just of His Law, but of Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ.

For three years the Master had walked and talked with His Apostles teaching them the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. But their hearing had been dull and their hearts confused and without full understanding. And so Jesus had promised them, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth....and He shall testify of me." The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would testify of Christ to the Apostles. "And ye shall bear witness because ye have been with Me from the beginning."

The Apostles, those who had been with Him from the beginning of His earthly ministry, would have their minds enlightened, so that the meaning of all He had said and done, the meaning of His life, would become crystal clear to them. For what purpose would the Apostles be enlightened? The Holy Spirit would testify of Christ to the Apostles, that they might bear True witness to Jesus Christ before the world.

And so it happened at Pentecost that the Holy Spirit descended with the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and "There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." And thus the words were fulfilled of St. John Baptist concerning Jesus, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ሃይማኖትና ሥርዓት
The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Faith and Order
www.ethiopianorthodox.org

On that very morning, when their own minds had been enlightened by the Light of God, the Apostles stopped hiding and went out among their brethren to share with them the true knowledge of the person and work of Jesus Christ. "And that same day there were added unto them about 3000 souls."

Here is what we Christians today must consider. If all these 3000 converts, who were baptized received the same Spirit as the Apostles, were they all given the same degree of understanding as the Apostles? Obviously not! The Apostles were called, consecrated, set apart, and specially commissioned to teach all nations, to bear witness to Jesus Christ before the entire world. For this purpose, Jesus had chosen them from among the multitudes for *special training*, for private and intensive training. Would He have commissioned them to teach others, if these others would receive the fullness of revelation from the Holy Spirit? No! The Holy Spirit did not come to reveal anything, but only to shed light on what Jesus had already revealed to His Apostles. "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you!"

This particular point is of crucial importance today, when all sorts of changes and innovations are being seduced into Christianity and attributed to the "New Light" of the Holy Spirit. New truths about Ordinations, about sexual morality, about any doctrine or theology not contained in Holy Scripture or unknown in the Tradition of the early Church Fathers we may confidently deny! While all who have been rightfully baptized have the Holy Spirit, His light is shed only upon the teachings of Christ as handed down from the Apostles.

Perhaps we should look at this through a more critical and questioning eye. Maybe Jesus didn't teach the Apostles everything. Maybe they weren't ready because of the cultural prejudices of the time. Maybe He left some things to be taught later by the Holy Spirit. I can assure you that this is precisely what a spirit is telling Christians today. But this spirit is not the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to the Apostles, "When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall guide you into all Truth: for He shall speak not of Himself; for He shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you." To Christians, Truth is a Person not a principle or philosophy.

There are two things we must note here. First, the Spirit of Truth would guide the Apostles into all Truth. Nothing was to be left out. Nothing awaiting the 21st Century or the Second Millennium to be revealed. Second, the Spirit would speak not of Himself, nothing on His own personal initiative, but would show them

የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ሃይማኖትና ሥርዓት
The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Faith and Order
www.ethiopianorthodox.org

what He received from Christ. Or, in the words of Jesus, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The Epistle of St. Jude tells us clearly that the Faith was once delivered by Christ to the Apostles for all times. Nothing was to be added and nothing taken away from His Truth.

The Holy Spirit did not come to bring new truth, but to shed light on the Truth already given to the Apostles. They had it all by the time of our Lord's Ascension. They had it all; the problem was, they simply did not understand it. It's as if they came to worship in a Church that was completely dark and without light. The pews are there, the Altar, the candles. It is completely decorated and furnished. The Apostles could not see very well everything that was in the Church. Then came the Holy Spirit and turned on the lights. Now the Apostles could finally see and understand all that their Master had given them in the years of their training. The Holy Spirit, this Spirit of Truth brought no new Truth, the Church had already been fully furnished by Jesus, but the Holy Spirit shed His light on the Truth already given to them.

Do not misunderstand that the Church has not profited from this Light of Truth in new ways over the centuries. Slavery was finally abolished in Christendom as being inconsistent with the teachings of Christ. Yet there was no new doctrine added to the "Faith Once Delivered" to the Apostles, but rather a much more consistent working out of what the Church has always believed - that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and that we are to love our neighbor as our self.

The principle of equality applies equally as well among men and women. But, when this principle is misapplied and we hear that god the mother should be given equal status with God the Father, or replace Him altogether, then we know, for certain, this is not of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the spirit that pushes this sort of agenda is not holy at all. Something is very wrong here. While every Christian knows well that God the Father is not a man, still scripture, the primary revelation by which we know anything at all about God, insists on using male imagery. If we take this away we have a different God than the one whom Jesus called "Father," and who has been worshipped as Father since the time of Christ. Instead, we get something like the Great Earth Mother, or the popular, Sophia, reducing God to the worship of nature which is paganism. If we take away the imagery of either

የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ሃይማኖትና ሥርዓት
The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Faith and Order
www.ethiopianorthodox.org

gender, we end up with the great "It" - some kind of impersonal force or energy such as we find in New Ageism. If, according to the words of Jesus, the Holy Spirit did not come to reveal anything in addition to Christ's teachings, much less did He come to reveal anything in contradiction to them.

So let the Church honor Him, this Spirit of Truth, in the way He would wish to be honored. Not by ascribing to Him what He doesn't do, namely reveal new truths, but by clinging to the old truth, the original truth, that He came to shed light on, the Truth "Once delivered by Christ to the Apostles" - that Truth that will last into eternity.

Father Michael