

The Holy Spirit

“And in the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.”

The Holy Spirit bears the title of Lord with God the Father and Christ the Son. He is the Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ. He is eternal, uncreated, and divine; always existing with the Father and the Son; perpetually worshipped and glorified with them in the oneness of the Holy Trinity.

Just like the Son, there was no time when there was no Holy Spirit. The Spirit is before creation. He comes forth from God, as does the Son, in a timeless, eternal procession. "He proceeds from the Father," in eternity in a divinely instantaneous and perpetual movement (Jn 15.26).

Orthodox doctrine confesses that God the Father is the eternal origin and source of the Spirit, just as He is the source of the Son. Yet, the Church affirms as well that the manner of the Father's possession and production of the Spirit and the Son differ according to the difference between the Son being "born," and the Spirit "proceeding." There have been many attempts—by holy men inspired by God and with a genuine experience of His Trinitarian life to explain the distinction between the procession of the Spirit and the begetting or generation of the Son. For us it is enough to see that the difference between the two lies in the distinction between the divine persons and actions of the Son and the Spirit in relation to the Father, and so as well to each other and to the world. It is necessary to note further that all words and concepts about God and divinity, including those of "procession" and "generation" must give way before the mystical

vision of the actual Divine Reality which they express. God may somehow be grasped by men as He has chosen to reveal Himself. However, the essence of His Triune existence remains—and will always remain—essentially inconceivable and inexpressible to created minds and lips. This does not mean that words about God are meaningless. It only means that they are inadequate to the Reality which they seek to express.

At this point also it is necessary to note that the Roman and Protestant churches differ in their credal statement about God by adding that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father "and the Son" (filioque)—a doctrinal addition unacceptable to Orthodoxy since it is both unscriptural and inconsistent with the Orthodox vision of God.

With the affirmation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of worshipping and glorifying him with the Father and the Son, the Orthodox Church affirms that the Divine Reality, called also the Deity or the Godhead in the Orthodox Tradition, is the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is essentially one in his eternal existence with the Father and the Son; and so, in every action of God toward the world, the Holy Spirit is necessarily acting. Thus, in the Genesis account of creation it is written: "The Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Gen 1.2). It is this same Spirit who is the "breath of life" for all living

things and particularly for man, made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1.30; 2.7). Generally speaking the Spirit in Hebrew is called the "breath" or the "wind" of Yahweh. It is He who makes everything alive, the "Giver of life" Who upholds and sustains the universe in its existence and life (e.g. Ps 104.29; Job 33.4).

Theophany

The Holy Spirit is also he who inspires the saints to speak God's word and to do God's will. He anoints the prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament; and "in the fullness of time" it is this same Spirit who "descends and remains" on Jesus of Nazareth, making him the Messiah (anointed) of God and manifesting him as such to the world. Thus, in the New Testament at the first epiphany (which means literally showing forth or manifestation) of Christ as the Messiah—his baptism by John in the Jordan—the Holy Spirit is revealed as descending and resting upon him "as a dove from heaven" (Jn 1.32; Lk 3.22, see also Mt 3.16 and Mk 1.9). It is important to note, both here and in the account of the Spirit's coming on the Day of Pentecost, as well as in other places in the Scriptures, that the words "as" and "like" are used in order to avoid an incorrect "physical" interpretation of the events recorded where the Bible itself is literally speaking in quite a symbolical and metaphorical way.

Jesus begins His public work after His baptism, and immediately refers Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah directly to Himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me..." (Is 61.1; Lk 4.18).

All the days of his life Jesus is "full of the Holy Spirit"—preaching, teaching, healing, casting out devils and accomplishing every sign and wonder of his messiahship by the Spirit's power (Lk 4.11). It is written that even his self-offering to God on the cross is made "through the eternal Spirit" (Heb 9.14). And it is through the same divine Spirit that he and all men with him are risen from the dead (Ezek 37.1–4).

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples of Christ in the form of "tongues as of fire," with the sound "like that of a mighty rushing wind" (Acts 2.1–4). We note once more the use of "as" and "like." The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost is the final

fulfillment of Christ's earthly messianic mission, the beginning of the Christian Church. It is the fulfillment of the Old Testamental prophecy that in the time of the messiah-king, the Spirit of God will be "poured out on all flesh" (Joel 2.28; Acts 1.14). It is the condition of the age of the final and everlasting covenant of perfect mercy and peace (Ezek 34.37; Jer 31–33; Is 11.42, 44, 61).

The Christian Church lives by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit alone is the guarantee of God's Kingdom on earth. He is the sole guarantee that God's life and truth and love are with men. Only by the Holy Spirit can man and the world fulfill that for which they were created by God. All of God's actions toward man and the world—in creation, salvation and final glorification—are from the Father through the Son (Word) in the Holy Spirit; and all of man's capabilities of response to God are in the same Spirit, through the same Son to the same Father.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life.

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom 8.11).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

"When the Spirit of Truth comes he will guide you into all the Truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (Jn 16:13; see also Jn 14:25; Jn 15:26).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of divine sonship.

"For all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. For you did not receive the Spirit of slavery... but you received the Spirit of sonship. When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8.14; also Gal 4.6).

The Holy Spirit is the personal presence of the new and everlasting covenant between God and man, the seal and guarantee of the Kingdom of God, the power of the divine indwelling of God in man.

"...you are a letter from Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts... our sufficiency is from God who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in written code but in the Spirit, for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3.2–6).

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you... For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are" (1 Cor 3.16; also Rom 6.19).

"...through him [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows in a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2.18–22; also 1 Pet 2.4–9).

In the Holy Spirit men have the possibility of receiving every gift from God, of sharing His divine nature and life, of doing what Christ has done by fulfilling His "new commandment"

to love one another even as He has loved us, "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which He has given us" (Rom 5.5).

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit... he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (Gal 5.22–25; 6.8).