

The Holy Ghost, Yours, Mine (and Theirs?)

October 28, 2012

The (Holy) Spirit in the Reformed Christian



From Papacy to Protestantism; an overview

<u>Roman Catholicism</u>	<u>Lutheranism</u>	<u>Protestant/Reformed</u>
Papacy/Tyranny	Word alone/Christ alone authority	Individual authority/Biblical disorder
Eck defends the Pope	Martin Luther and BOC	Carlstadt; Zwingli; Calvin; Wesley
Hierarchy in Charge/Living tradition	The Paper Pope/Christ in Scripture	Individual Experience/Feelings/Ideas
Visible Organization	Invisible faith/visible marks (united)	Unity is diversity/doctrine passe
Enthusiasm/Spirit in Papacy	Spirit in Word alone; mistrust others	Enthusiasm/Spirit in the Individual

In the radical Reformation, Luther had not gone far enough in Reforming the Church. While Luther had used the truth and literal interpretation of Scripture to diagnose the anti Christ in Romanism, and all the ‘Reformers’ were thus in agreement. But later, first Carlstadt, and then Zwingli, disordered the church by rightly affirming the dignity of all Christians as equals (in reaction to the papacy where some were given a higher standing), but then making all ‘opinions’ valid whether Scriptures would accommodate them or not.

In reaction to their inability to Scripturally maintain their opinions, Zwingli and others denigrated Scriptures as being a ‘dead letter’ and that people didn’t need the Word of God from Scriptures, but needed the Spirit to interpret what God said in the Word. Thus wrangling over the literal meaning of Scripture became a sign of being dead in the Spirit, but being of one mind over the meaning (even if this contradicted what the Word said) was being a part of the living Church, not through the dead letter, but through the living Spirit.

This way of interpretation gave way to the non literal interpretation of the Lord’s Words “This is my Body” and “This is my Blood” in the Sacrament. Thus the ‘spirit’ in them told them that Christ was not speaking literally (as the church had unanimously taught up to that time), but figuratively. So also, that Baptismal promises of a new birth were ‘figurative’ and thus the living spirit made the Words and promises of Christ in these regards ‘dead letters’ because faith in these things was destroyed by the spirit in them. As the objective means of grace, where God has promised to work in the Church, were denigrated by this spirit, Luther identified Zwingli as having a “different spirit.”

This stance of individualistic doctrinal interpretation, as opposed to strictly judging doctrine by the sense of Scripture, atomizes the church and destroys the possibility of unity within the Church, but insists on the right to agree to disagree, since Scripture is not allowed the final word, when opinions obtain against it. Thus every Christian becomes Pope and Scripture receives a wax nose that people can twist as they wish and remain uncorrected. Luther’s Scripturally irrefutable confessions and facts of church history are then consistently denigrated and silenced in the pursuit of individual freedom in matters of religion. This brand of enthusiasm has led to countless splits in the Church and the brand of Christianity that leads to religion based on emotionalism and Christian experience. It then pursues the slippery slope of denigrating the literal sense of Scripture that requires intelligence and scholarship to determine, to either using scholarship to overrule the supernatural content of Scripture that requires faith to believe (rationalism), or denigrating that scholarship altogether as being a waste of time and a mere arguing over words, while true Christianity is not found in the word at all, but in the feelings and experiences of the heart (experiential religion). This view destroys the (objective) visible marks of the Church (the Word and Sacraments), denies the power and sufficiency of the Word and causes the Church to be so invisible that it cannot be found; like the Churches we will examine in the next few weeks.