

## **The Word and The Spirit**

*By Metropolitan George Khodr of Mount Lebanon*

**The distinctiveness of the Holy Spirit is absent among many, because they only know Him through His role and deeds. They know Him as a "Power of sanctification"; but rarely did they know Him, as Holy or King (as we call upon Him in our prominent prayer: "O Heavenly King, O comforter..."). All this could be because, popularly, Christians were attracted to the persona of Christ from the point of His incarnation and did not pay attention to Christ's continuation within and through the Holy Spirit in the times of humanity.**

**They read the Master's promise: "*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" (Matt 28:20) but never did they questioned themselves how? How is it that the ascended and "hidden" Master is among and within us? This is what the evangelists have premeditated upon, and then clarified, that the everyday coming of Christ unto us is possible through His Spirit.**

**Jesus the Nazarene did not leave us a book. He left us love, death and victory over this death. He used to express His love in words, some of which were documented. His followers depicted His image in some books containing a magnitude of His words and also many of their own words. And when the followers of the followers received these books they discerned that the Holy Spirit enabled His apostles to write these "divine" words—the same way as the Master's words were divine—because it was the same Holy Spirit who spoke through Him and through them. And if it said in the current translations that: "*this Book is entirely inspired by God*", what originally appeared in the Greek original was: "*this Book contains inspirations of God.*"— In a way that this relation becomes organic — between the Word that precipitated in the text, and the Spirit that inspired it to the writer. The Spirit instructs the author — not in the understanding of dictating — but in the meaning that He abides in the writer. And the reader, if he was filled with the Spirit, will discover that that what he read is**

coming from above. The Word will not abide in the heart, unless transported by the Spirit.

We never abandoned the interpretation, which we have filled with, thousands and thousands of tomes. We analysed the ancient languages, employed the explication in the preaching, elaborated upon the "first-words" thousands of letters of theology, and we came up with dictionaries containing every single idiom of the Book analysed and conjugated. We believed that some interpretations were within the straightness of faith, or what we call in Greek the Orthodoxy of faith, and some other interpretations were off the point. Also, that within the Orthodoxy we have distinctiveness but never convergence. We preached that the interpretation is never a strict linguistic effort, but that in addition to it, is a continuation of the Tradition that the Spirit had pronounced throughout the ages giving witness to Himself through numerous mouths or pens, which He Himself contrasted to enrich the variety of gifts. The great interpreter is him whom the Spirit of God had descended upon and, on the other hand, the purified reader is him who was filled with the Spirit of God.

The interpreters are not the prime important keys for they may be indulged with this world's spirit. Only the Church—as a whole—in that which it decides upon in conjunction with its transmitted heritage of "ancient Words" [*i.e. Holy Tradition*], is the standard of Orthodoxy. The Church looks for the Spirit of God in the words that were said after Christ, the Spirit that guides her towards Himself, enables her to accept one interpretation and reject another and builds upon the good words through the process of inspection and purification at the same time. This is why we tend to accept those interpreters whom we knew through their pure conduct. Still, this isn't a blind trail, because we always put to work together the spirits of assessment and obedience. You might feel yourself—after getting armed with the modern techniques of critique and historical study—on a level of understanding that might be more precise, in some of its aspects, than the understanding of the ancient fathers. But we are still unified with them through the one Spirit. This diversified union is what happened on Pentecost upon the descent of the Holy Spirit, on each of the disciples, in the form of fiery tongues. The fire is one, but one

**apostle's way of expression is different from the other apostle's. Christianity is a group of voices and not a single voice. Christianity is the harmony of the united diversity.**

**If the Spirit is one in the different texts of the gospels, then these gospels are one epistle. Here's Matthew—the Spirit upon him—coming with a book that reveals that Jesus of Nazareth is the long-awaited Messiah. Matthew directs his gospel to the Jews of Palestine and to those who were Christianised of them. Then comes Luke the Antiochian, with his Greek heritage, to demonstrate that Him who appeared in Palestine is the Saviour of the world, as John similarly proclaims that this same Man is the Word eternally proceeding from the Father.**

**Each of the evangelists was charismatic in his human nature because each preached to peoples from their own cultural frame. Their gospel comes from God and man together, on the type of Christ who was from God and man together. This is the foundation of the canonical authority for the historical-background study of these books' origination. The humanity of the Bible doesn't counteract its divinity, and its divinity respects its humanity exactly how it happened in the person of Christ. The Christian God, incarnates His Son, incarnates His Words in such a way that, you always need to connect to a co-ordinate of history and geography in order to comprehend it.**

**God's language, in its expressionism, is not different from the language of humans. God adopted the human language in order to reach unto us. You can only attain His reason, through expressions that the humans understood once it was said unto them. It is the human language in itself but inspired. The words of God had their rationale both in Him and in the humans: as they were in a respective era. The epochs are the result of the human expression of feelings and beliefs. Yes, the divine reason descends upon the author but it never violates him. From the era of the author, you ascend to the divine reason. From the age of the author you attain the eternity of God.**

**Not that you might add a single letter as cautioned by the author of the book of Revelation when talking about his book: "If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book."(22:18). You don't come up with something new, but you are renewed through the eternal and stable past, which you assimilate through the Spirit. You then appear to those who were sanctified as a new book transcribed by the Spirit.**

**The whole issue lies in two principles: First, Christ is "*the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.*" (Rev 22:13). Second, you may never enter the kingdom of God unless you were born from the Spirit. The great importance of the Holy Spirit is that He takes from the living and victorious Christ who sits at the right-hand of the Father and lays Him today as a personal food for you. The question is that, how God becomes your God today, in the distinctiveness of your personality in such a way that you will not vanish in His all-global Word (when this Word truly abides within you: in your human formulation, your character and language, in a way that the gospel will not remain a book, but that you will become a gospel)? You can't put the Book aside, otherwise you will become a prey of your own delusions, which may inspire you your own religion. This is the necessity of the established word. But the necessity of the Spirit is that the word starts originating through you.**

**There are then two concerns: The caution of that you may worship the Holy Bible as an idol and therefore become frozen spiritually. Or that you may surrender to an emotional approximation of God without any reasoning or understanding. Surely the greatest danger is that you abandon the Holy Bible and, instead of referring to it you start coming up with your own words, from your flesh, blood and the traditions of humans. The first danger transforms you to a playback tape because you avoid your personality and become strangled with the divine words because you live outside your time and outside its problems and consequently you do not testify. The second danger is that you worship your own words and tastes, and become your own self-idol.**

**If you did not receive your freedom from God to be able to say your word, God becomes then your defiant. And if God did not receive from you your freedom to be contented with it, He will never be your Father. If you did not realise that God converses with you through His eternal words, you will feel that He abandoned you and if you did not converse with Him through the words of your heart you will fail to see His Fatherhood. The secret of His Fatherhood is that He sets you a son of His using His words for you to live by them.**

**His Spirit then, will embrace your human spirit, as you both were one. God acquired a human face to enable you to understand how great His love is for you.**