



Adult Forum
Loving the Questions
Who is God the Spirit?

St. Mary's Church
Stone Harbor, New Jersey

We Welcome You to Join Us
For the Adult Forum and
Worship

All Year Long (well, almost)!

Sunday May 20, 2018



To start our discussions, here are a few terms we find in the chapter "Who Is God the Spirit?" -

Pneumatology (p.55) - branch of theology concerned with the study of the Holy Spirit.

Anabaptists (p.56) - those who believe that baptism should only be administered to adults; ca.1520/1530.

Ruach (p.57) - Hebrew for breath, wind, spirit.

Pneuma (p.57) - Greek for spirit, breath.

Paraclete (p.58) - Holy Spirit as advocate or counselor.

Montanism (p.59) - a.k.a. New Prophecy called for a reliance on the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit and a more conservative personal ethic. Parallels have been drawn between Montanism and modern-day movements such as Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement.

John Macquarrie (pp. 60,61) - 1919-2007 Anglican philosopher, priest who was one of the most distinguished systematic theologians of our time.

Filioque (p.60) - "and from the Son" phrase that appears in the later forms of the Nicene Creed.

Neo-Pentecostals (p.63) - movement that emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit...can be identified with Pentecostals and some evangelicals.

Pneumatomachians (p.64) - a.k.a. Macedonians, an anti-Nicene sect that denied the Spirit's deity.

Sanctification (p.65) - the process of making holy.

With recent Scripture translations, "Spirit" has replaced "Ghost" in most instances. Some of this came about because words don't always hold their meanings. (pp.56-57) The real issue is that both "Holy Ghost" and "Holy Spirit" refer to the Third Person of the Trinity, who is coequal and, as theologians say, "consubstantial" with the Father and the Son. The Hebrew word for spirit, *ruach* is feminine, but the New Testament Greek equivalent *pneuma* is neuter.

Question: Spirit/Ghost and male/female. Which are you most comfortable with?

If the Bible is to be believed, the Holy Spirit does not work through Christians alone. "The Spirit bloweth where it will," the Scriptures say, but when Christians reduce his/her work to personal and ecstatic experiences, they ignore the vast and comprehensive scope of God's action everywhere. Micks says that the Spirit, known as one who counselors and advocates, is the one who motivates "...people who speak up or speak out for someone else." (p.58) When we recognize the fullness of the Holy Spirit's power, we discover that the same Spirit who inspires our worship services also empowers movements such as Black Lives Matter. And the same Spirit who responds to our private prayers is the same one who spurs on those who fight for clean water and the one who pursues an end to sexual abuse in many forms.

Question: Is that the understanding you have of the Holy Spirit?

This next passage underlines the message of Pentecost and the Spirit today.
“We need a Pentecost” by *Keri L. Day* in *The Christian Century* May 3, 2018
(an excerpt) -

“In our social and political moment, we need Pentecost. Division, hatred, and pain mark our nation. Hearts must be transformed and attuned to practices of divine love. Even more painful, hostility and bigotry characterize Christian churches, which have more of a tribal ethos, often ignoring or demonizing those who are different from them. Such tribal perspectives fuel a culture of doubt and fear. And people feel a sense of helplessness. Such churches tend to embody Babel rather than Pentecost. Will we allow our voices to speak a language of good news that can be heard by all people, especially those who are as vulnerable as the Jews of the diaspora were under the Roman imperial order and as countless people are under the American empire today? Will we be open to this joy of Pentecost, the impossible gift of community now made possible through the work of the Spirit?”

Even the “enormous seriousness of our ecological crisis” is subject to the work of the Spirit. Marianne Micks refers to that in the World Council of Churches’ Report (pp.56-58). The Council’s report says, “Creation protests its treatment by human beings.” The Council concludes that the present crisis foreshadows massive suffering. (p.58) The connection of the crisis and the Spirit is highlighted by St. Paul’s writing in Romans (cf. p. 57). Though Micks does not refer to it, Pentecostals (Spirit-filled believers) are known to have joined the ranks of the so-called “climate skeptics.” They perceive modern science to be a threat to an inordinately literalistic reading of Scripture. And their conclusion - even if the global environmental crisis is not an entirely dubious construction of the scientific imagination, there is no pressing need to respond to it in light of the impending peril predestined for earth and its (ungodly?) inhabitants.

Question: How can an understanding of the Spirit’s working help us to be hopeful in such a dreadful climatic situation?



Marianne Micks discusses the Pentecostal movement saying, “The idea of spiritual gifts has, alas, caused almost as much divisiveness in the church as it has created unity.” (p.63) She refers to the Neo-Pentecostal movement in the 1960s impinging on the Episcopal Church. That happened in Van Nuys, California. On Passion Sunday in 1960, The Reverend Dennis Bennett, Rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, which had 2,500 people on its rolls, was accused of “speaking in tongues”--making utterances that most mainline churches equated with overheated Pentecostalism. Episcopal Bishop Francis Bloy of Los Angeles quickly forbade group meetings "under any semblance of parish auspices to be held where speaking in tongues is encouraged or actually engaged in." This generated such opposition to Fr. Bennett that he resigned from the parish. Later that year, he became the vicar of St. Luke's Church, Seattle, Washington, which was about to close. Under his leadership it grew to over 2,000 members. Bennett is credited to be the "Father of charismatic renewal in the Episcopal Church."

Questions: Using Marianne Mick’s word, what do you think is “divisive” about the Neo-Pentecostal movement sometimes referred to as the charismatic movement? On the other hand, what can be some of its virtues?