

Ten After Ten Session 37: God's Spirit and Word in the Time of the Promises

702 From the beginning until “the fullness of time,” the joint mission of the Father’s Word and Spirit remains hidden, but it is at work. God’s Spirit prepares for the time of the Messiah. Neither is fully revealed but both are already promised, to be watched for and welcomed at their manifestation. So, for this reason, when the Church reads the Old Testament, she searches there for what the Spirit, “who has spoken through the prophets,” wants to tell us about Christ.

In creation

703 The Word of God and his Breath are at the origin of the being and life of every creature: It belongs to the Holy Spirit to rule, sanctify, and animate creation, for he is God, consubstantial with the Father and the Son.... Power over life pertains to the Spirit, for being God he preserves creation in the Father through the Son.

704 “God fashioned man with his own hands [that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit] and impressed his own form on the flesh he had fashioned, in such a way that even what was visible might bear the divine form.”

The Spirit of the promise

705 Disfigured by sin and death, man remains “in the image of God,” in the image of the Son, but is deprived of the glory of God,...the Son himself will assume that “image” and restore it in the Father’s likeness by giving it again its Glory, the Spirit who is “the giver of life.”

706 Against all human hope, God promises descendants to Abraham, as the fruit of faith and of the power of the Holy Spirit. In Abraham’s progeny all the nations of the earth will be blessed. This progeny will be Christ himself, in whom the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will “gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

In Theophanies and the Law

707 Theophanies (manifestations of God) light up the way of the promise, from the patriarchs to Moses and from Joshua to the visions that inaugurated the missions of the great prophets. Christian tradition has always recognized that God’s Word allowed himself to be seen and heard in these theophanies, in which the cloud of the Holy Spirit both revealed him and concealed him in its shadow.

708 This divine pedagogy appears especially in the gift of the Law. God gave the Law as a “pedagogue” to lead his people towards Christ. But the Law’s powerlessness to save man deprived of the divine “likeness,” along with the growing awareness of sin that it imparts, enkindles a desire for the Holy Spirit.

In the Kingdom and the Exile

709 The Law, the sign of God’s promise and covenant, ought to have governed the hearts and institutions of that people to whom Abraham’s faith gave birth. “If you will obey my voice and keep my

covenant,... you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” But after David, Israel gave in to the temptation of becoming a kingdom like other nations. The Kingdom, however, the object of the promise made to David, would be the work of the Holy Spirit.

710 The forgetting of the Law and the infidelity to the covenant end in death: it is the Exile, apparently the failure of the promises, which is in fact the mysterious fidelity of the Savior God and the beginning of a promised restoration, but according to the Spirit. The People of God had to suffer this purification. In God’s plan, the Exile already stands in the shadow of the Cross, and the Remnant of the poor that returns from the Exile is one of the most transparent prefigurations of the Church.

Expectation of the Messiah and his Spirit

711 Two prophetic lines were to develop, one leading to the expectation of the Messiah, the other pointing to the announcement of a new Spirit. They converge in the small Remnant, the people of the poor, who await in hope the “consolation of Israel” and “the redemption of Jerusalem.”

712 The characteristics of the awaited Messiah begin to appear in the first two verses of Isaiah 11:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

713 The Messiah’s characteristics are revealed above all in the “Servant songs.” These songs proclaim the meaning of Jesus’ Passion and show how he will pour out the Holy Spirit to give life to the many: not as an outsider, but by embracing our “form as slave.”

714 This is why Christ inaugurates the proclamation of the Good News by making his own the following passage from Isaiah:

The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor.

715 According to these promises, at the “end time” the Lord’s Spirit will renew the hearts of men, engraving a new law in them. He will gather and reconcile the scattered and divided peoples; he will transform the first creation, and God will dwell there with men in peace.

716 The People of the “poor”—those who, humble and meek, rely solely on their God’s mysterious plans, who await the justice, not of men but of the Messiah—are in the end the great achievement of the Holy Spirit’s hidden mission during the time of the promises that prepare for Christ’s coming.