

Foothills Congregational Church
United church of Christ
461 Orange Ave., Los Altos, CA 94022

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REMEMBERING MLK, JR.

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

The Holy Spirit Understood as The Consciousness of God

Homer Simpson, going off a waterfall, (puts praying hands together) prays and says, *“I don’t know if you exist, and I don’t know if what they say about you is true... but Superman if you’re there save me!”*

And such is the problem with most theology and approaches to theism; that is, much of what passes for theology is some *limited and confined anthropocentric* notion of the nature of “God”.

Reducing God to a super being requires fixed equations of mortal qualifications. God viewed and described as a super being often mirrors the biases and personal presuppositions of the one describing God. Approaching God as a presence is not void of relational desire; one can relate to divine presence in personal and breathtakingly intimate ways without the hubris and absurdity of making God into a bigger version of a human being.

Theology

- Words we say about God: words are symbolic— meaningful castings of our imaginations are projected onto symbols.
- (Theology= words/thoughts/conceptual descriptions of “god... doctrines, theologies... Theism: types of beliefs in the concept of God)

Foothills Covenant (Not a creed or propositional faith statement)

“We covenant with you, O God, and with one another, and do bind ourselves in your presence, to walk together in all your ways, according as you are pleased to reveal yourself to us.”

John the Baptist speaking about the coming Messiah (Jesus in the Gospel accounts), says: s

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

Evolution Of The Holy Spirit

The evolution of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology likely stems from the *hypostasis* (an intermediate essence and interactive participant between the divine and creation) of *wisdom* (*Sophia* personifies divine wisdom) in Hebrew Scriptures (i.e. wisdom in Proverbs 8). In Hebrew thought, the hypostasis of Sophia is an intermediate between God and humanity whereby divine wisdom is received. And, perhaps “Sophia” (wisdom personified in Hebrew

scripture) was an adaptation of Athena (the goddess of wisdom and war— without the war component though) in Greek mythology. There's a reasonable case to be made that wisdom, Sophia in Hebrew theology, morphed generally into the doctrine of Trinity and specifically into the theology of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology).

Sophia (as mentioned in the Greek Septuagint of the Hebrew Scriptures, i.e., Proverbs 8) exists in the space of all the cosmos, she serenades, "I have been established from everlasting," and "from the beginning, before there was ever an earth" (8.23). When God created, "I was beside [God] as a master [artisan]; and I was daily [God's] delight, rejoicing always before [God]" (8.30).

The thought is that God is too transcendent to approach without the aid of intermediate spaces and mediums of revelation. The Spirit of God is a dynamic and a lively presence that we enter into and that enters into us.

- **The Holy Spirit as the consciousness of God (Dr. Rev. Jimmy Watson, UCC Clergy)**

What is consciousness? Is it explained by reductionism or is it a metaphysical mystery? It's also part self awareness, and part the act of an observer (quantum physics).

- **We are a way of the cosmos/universe to know and express itself (Carl Sagan)**
- **Collective consciousness (Carl Jung, interconnectedness)**

Spirit is synonymous with "fire"

In our focus scripture today, Luke 3:16b, **The Holy Spirit** is grammatically linked by a conjunction ("and") to **"fire"**.

What are we to make of the reference to fire? Of course, it's metaphorical in describing the refining and transformative power of the Holy Spirit— aka, God's Holy Consciousness.

In "Proverbs of Ashes" Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker evoke poignant language that stirs my imagination of perceiving God as a **holy presence and as a lively fire**:

"We have felt a fire in the heart of things, intimated in moments of surprise, a power which guards, judges, and continually recreates life. Echoing the biblical poets, **we call this fire 'spirit,' this power 'presence.'** We have seen how those who glimpse this fire reverence life. We have sensed what Wordsworth called 'a presence that disturbs me with ... joy ... something far more deeply interfused.'" (Proverbs of Ashes, 9)

"Fire" as a purging:

Peter Rollins said it this way *"We must not be afraid to burn our sacred temples in order to discover what, if anything remains. Indeed, perhaps it is not what remains after the fire has*

died that is true, but rather the fire itself." (Insurrection, from the introduction)

**Holy Spirit as the Mind of Christ, Paul was someone baptized in the consciousness of God:
Philippians 2:5, Philippians 3:10**

Examples of way Paul was baptized in the consciousness of God:

- *"Let the same mind [consciousness] be in you that was in Christ Jesus"*
- *"I want to know [conscious in the way of] Christ and the power of his [transformative love] and the sharing of his sufferings [empathy for the for God's marginalized creation]..."*