

The Holy Spirit and its diverse ways of activity

(Additional remarks on doctrinal statement of January 24, 2006)

In the position papers on Holy Baptism and Sealing as well as in the comments concerning "exclusiveness" as published by our Church on January 24, 2006, statements were made concerning the Holy Spirit.

The basic text on Holy Sealing declares the following:

1. The Sacrament of Holy Sealing is the dispensing of Holy Spirit. By this act the faithful is filled with Holy Spirit as a strength of God. It comes about through prayer and laying on of hands of an apostle on souls baptized with water.
2. The Holy Baptism with Water and the Holy Sealing conjointly constitute the rebirth out of Water and Spirit; by this the childhood in God is attained.

Explanation 18 (re no. 1.): **Dispensing of Holy Spirit** – this formulation without the definite article "the" emphasizes the conveyed gift of God, unlike the Holy Spirit as person of the Trinity.

In the definition concerning "exclusiveness" the following is said:

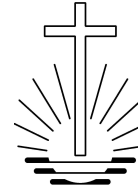
- 2.1 Our belief that the apostle ministry is indispensable for the preparation of the bridal congregation does not rule out that outside the New Apostolic Church there are manifold elements of truth in other religious denominations which truthfully profess their faith in Christ. In this respect, the Holy Spirit is also active outside the New Apostolic Church.

The question has been raised, with reference to these statements, of whether they do not constitute a contradiction: on the one hand, dispensing of Holy Spirit is bound to apostleship while, on the other, it is stated that the Holy Spirit can also be active in other religious denominations which truthfully profess Christ.

The two statements are not contradictory.

The Holy Spirit, the third person of Trinity, is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient. He lives and reigns with the Father and the Son in inseparable unity. Therefore He is active at all times and everywhere, i.e. universally. The Holy Spirit's universal activity manifests itself in diverse ways, through e.g.:

- A. Activity of the Holy Spirit through prophecy (presage), revelation, comfort, support, instruction and teaching, and especially keeping awake the message of Christ's sacrificial death, resurrection, and return
- B. His presence at the forgiveness of sins, at the dispensing of Sacraments and at acts of blessing,
- C. The gift and strength of God conveyed through the Sacrament of Holy Sealing.



Universal activity of the Holy Spirit

Although indivisible in its Trinitarian essence, the Trinity comprises three parts (also called persons): God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three persons are alike in essence and are active as a unity. As a person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is present and active everywhere and at all times. Already in the old covenant, He inspired human beings, thereby using them as instruments of God's will, without them being - in the sacramental sense - bearers of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was present and active after the death of the early apostles as well.

The Holy Spirit provided for the essential parts of the gospel of Jesus Christ having been recorded in the Holy Scriptures and, in the time without apostles, for the fundamentals of the Christian doctrine being formulated by the church fathers as well as in the first councils. These include e.g. the doctrine of Trinity, of Jesus Christ's person and nature (true man and true God), as well as the understanding of the decisive importance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice and resurrection for the salvation and redemption of mankind.

The formulation concerning "exclusiveness" refers to these fundamental points, among others, which in our Church are too acknowledged as contents of our faith - namely that there are also manifold elements of truth in other religious denominations which truthfully profess their faith in Christ.

Furthermore, we must also attribute to the Holy Spirit's activity through the centuries the fact that Christian faith was able to spread in a prudent, godly manner and that - albeit in diverse forms - Christian characteristics of piety and serious endeavour in living according to the gospel and traditional Christian values have remained alive up to our time.

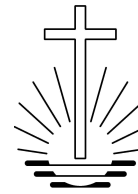
Individual activity of the Holy Spirit

- A. Activity of the Holy Spirit through prophecy (presage), revelation, comfort, support, instruction and teaching, and especially keeping awake the message of Christ's sacrificial death, resurrection, and return

While this enumeration of the Holy Spirit's activities is not comprehensive, it does point up their variety.

The following provides a list of some exemplary instances out of the New Testament. These categories of the Holy Spirit's activity are of course interwoven.

- **Prophecy** (presage)
Luke 2: 26; Acts 1: 16; 21: 11, Hebrews 9: 8
- **Revelation**
Mark 13: 11; John 16: 13; 1 Corinthians 2: 10; Ephesians 1: 17; 1 Peter 1: 12
- **Comfort**
John 14: 26; 16: 7
- **Support**
Philippians 1: 19; Acts 9: 31
- **Instruction**
Acts 1: 2; 13: 2; 16: 6; 20: 28



- **Teaching**

Luke 12: 12; John 14: 26; Hebrews 3: 7; 10: 15

- **Keeping awake the message of Christ's sacrificial death, resurrection, and return**

John 15: 26; 1 John 5: 6; Revelation 22: 17

More such references can be taken out of the Old Testament.

B. The presence of the Holy Spirit at the dispensing of Sacraments, at acts of blessing, and at the forgiveness of sins

The Triune God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - is the source of all Sacraments and blessings. Therefore the Holy Spirit is present at acts of blessing, and above all at the dispensing of Sacraments.

Explanation 1 of the basic text concerning Holy Baptism with water should also be understood in this sense:

Basic text no. 1

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism with Water is the first and fundamental act of grace of our Triune God bestowed on a human being who believes in Christ.

Explanation 1: **first and fundamental act of grace of the Triune God:** "Act of grace of the Triune God expresses the fact that it is God who acts. Whenever He is active, the Holy Spirit participates as a person of Trinity. In this way, the Holy Spirit is essentially active at Holy Baptism with water.

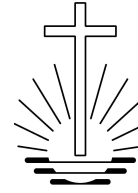
The commission to forgive sins which the risen Lord gave the apostles according to John 20: 22-23¹ is, at the same time, a commission from the Father and the Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Trinity are the source of forgiveness.

C. The Holy Spirit as a gift and strength of God conveyed through Holy Sealing

With the Sacrament of Holy Sealing the faithful, following Holy Baptism with water, is filled with Holy Spirit as a strength of God through prayer and laying on of hands of an apostle (cf. Luke 24: 49, Acts 1: 8, Romans 15: 13). The Sacraments of Holy Baptism with Water together with the Holy Sealing conjointly form the Rebirth out of Water and Spirit. By this the childhood in God is conveyed to the faithful; the reborn is entitled to become an heir to the future glory. Further effects of the dispensing of Holy Spirit are stated in the published basic text concerning Holy Sealing.

The basic text expressly formulates that the Sacrament of Holy Sealing conveys Holy Spirit. The definite article "the" Holy Spirit has been intentionally avoided. Here the language usage in the Greek text of the New Testament is not consistent. Sometimes the definite article is omitted (e.g. Acts 8: 17); sometimes it is used (e.g. Acts 10: 44; 19: 6). In Acts 11: 15-16 we can find both forms directly juxtaposed.

¹ What is meant by the words of Jesus as recorded in John 20: 22: "Receive the Holy Spirit" has to be concluded in future. In the contemporary edition of *Questions and Answers*, Question 124 it says: "In this manner Jesus gave his disciples that measure of the Spirit which was necessary and therewith the authority to remit sins."



Since Holy Scripture does not enable any final conclusions as to the use of the definite article, the chosen formulation without the definite article has been based on factual grounds. The intention is to clearly distinguish between the giver of the gift and the gift itself, between the source and the recipient of the Sacrament. Thereby it becomes clear that the reception of Holy Spirit by the Sacrament of Holy Sealing does not abolish the difference between God and man, and that the Holy Spirit, as a person of Trinity, does not, as it were, become the "property" of man. Rather, the Spirit of God now dwells in man; in this sense, man "has" Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3; 16: *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"*, cf. also Romans 8: 9).

In Acts 2: 38; 10: 45, we can read that the gift of the Holy Spirit is conveyed. The term "gift" clearly indicates that this can not refer to the *person* of the Trinity.

Of primary importance here is how the gift of the Holy Spirit affects man. On Pentecost "... *they were all filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*" (Acts 2: 4 – quoted according to the Greek basic text).

By the gift of Holy Spirit the strength of God also becomes manifest. Apostle Paul mentions this in Romans 15: 13: *"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

Summary

A distinction should be drawn between *the* Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity and Holy Spirit as a gift and strength of God, which is dispensed to man through the Sacrament of Holy Sealing.

In the first sense, the Holy Spirit is active everywhere, i.e. also outside the New Apostolic Church.

The sacramental dispensation of Holy Spirit as a gift and strength of God is administered by apostles, as is unequivocally witnessed in Acts 8: 4-19 and 19 et sqq. Those who have been sealed can say with Romans 5: 5: *"... because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit ..."*

The fact that dispensing the Sacrament of Holy Sealing is reserved to apostleship, is inseparably linked with the essential task given to apostleship: to gather and prepare Christ's bride for the return of her Lord. In doing so, the apostles' activity corresponds to the Holy Spirit's activity, which is focussed on the completion of God's work: *"And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"* (Revelation 22, from verse 17).

Zurich, 19.10.2006