



## THOUGHTS FOR PENTECOST EVENING

31 MAY 2020

### *The Holy Ghost*

Acts 2:1-21, I Corinthians 12:3b-13, John 20:19-23

Once, on holiday in Germany, my friend Crispin and I stayed for a few nights in a quaint (*ie* the bedroom floor sloped!) hotel in the university city of Heidelberg, next door to the Holy Ghost church. I remember a lot about that brief stay, from an enormous pork chop in a student tavern, via delicious bilberry deserts in the Weinstube Scholss Heidelberg (up a funicular railway), to Crispin reading chapters from Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, particularly the chapter on our own dear Florence Nightingale, but most of all I remember the chiming of the church clock, and thinking that it was rather putting me off the Holy Ghost!

I have attended services in the charismatic tradition, where there has been speaking in tongues, and interpretation thereof, and 'resting in the spirit', which, whilst I have not doubted the sincerity of the people involved, nevertheless have left me unmoved. I have also been at ultramontane Church of England services on the grandest scale where, though the flummery has at first repelled me, I have found myself somehow won over and have begun to see how that sort of Anglo-Catholic worship could have impacted the otherwise cramped lives of folk in the labouring class districts where parish churches in that tradition had been established.

On this Feast of Pentecost we are reminded again of the coming of the Spirit on the first disciples, in the dramatic way described in the Acts of the Apostles, or in the quieter way described in John's Gospel, and we have the list of the variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit in S. Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. In that reading we are told that different people receive different gifts, but that all the gifts are activated by the same Spirit, so it should not surprise me that I respond more naturally to one form of worship than another, but I should not conclude from that that my preferred form is inherently right, or more godly, than others. More importantly, perhaps, I should not think that the Holy Spirit's work is primarily concerned in exciting the individual to worship, but rather that the Spirit animates all of life, perhaps, one might say, making all of life an act of worship.

So many these past weeks and months have been depending very much on the gift of caring, some for their very lives. Whence comes this power to give and give of oneself, even when exhausted and overheated in PPE, if not from the Spirit, whether the carer would say that or not?

The crisis is not yet over, and may be far from over, and the need for caring and loving will always be required, so it is right to pray today for the Holy Spirit to pour out his gifts on all engaged so vitally in that work. It is also essential that those in positions of authority, in the United Kingdom and across the world, who have the unenviable job of deciding what should be done, also are empowered with the gifts of wisdom and discernment, so pray today for the outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit on them. And, as we begin to think about what might come next, in the church, and the world, we pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be manifest in all our hearts and lives.

Clive Lemmon