

## Pentecost (Neo-Marcionism)

“the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.”

1. Early in the Church there lived a man named Marcion of Sinope. By some accounts and logical deduction, it seems fairly certain he was a bishop. He is primarily remembered for spreading very serious errors, the main one being this: “Marcion saw an irreconcilable contrast between the just and punitive God of the Old Testament and the benevolent and merciful God of the New Testament, and therefore, he concluded that there must be two Gods” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 48). To put in another way, the Marcionists believed that the wrathful Hebrew God was a separate and lower entity than the all-forgiving, all merciful God of the New Testament.
2. Not surprisingly, in order to make his system work, he re-wrote the Psalms, excluded many verses and even whole books, including three of the Gospels, from the New Testament... all in an effort to distance the Christian religion from the God of the Old Testament. With such arrogance, it should not surprise us that according to St. Irenaeus, Marcion said of himself that he was more truthful... more worthy of belief than the Apostles.
3. When Marcion arrived in Rome, sometime in 142, Pope St. Hyginus had just died. The chair of Peter was vacant. Not surprisingly, Marcion thought he should be made the bishop of Rome, but Pope St. Pius I was elected... the very pope who would later excommunicate Marcion. Finally, around that time, it is said he proclaimed out loud: “I will divide your Church and cause within her a division which will last forever” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*).
4. St. Justin Martyr, in his first Apology (written about 150), describes Marcion’s heresy as having spread everywhere. When St. Polycarp met the same heretic in Rome (probably in 154), he said to him “I recognize you as the first born of Satan” (Jurgens, vol I, p. 90). Tertullian said Marcion had a pumpkin in place of a brain. Irenaeus numbered him among those of “malignant mind... inventors of perversity.”
5. The Church responded to his false doctrine not only through Her saints like Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Ephrem... but also through Her Pontiffs

(as we just heard, Pope St. Pius I excommunicated Marcion). Later, Pope St. Denis (259-268) condemned Marcionism, calling his ideas "blasphemous... foolish... diabolical" (Dz 48). Some historical studies point to the Apostles Creed, the one we pray at the beginning of the Rosary, as originally formulated to counter this heresy.

6. Why talk of this heretic and his heresy on Pentecost? Because, sad to say, Marcion's erroneous doctrine has made a subtle comeback in our times and is causing divisions as he himself predicted. Just as it was quite attractive in its first manifestation... so too now... in these politically correct days. Dare I say, most have the disease! Who today likes to think of God's wrath? God's just punishments upon a sinful and rebellious world? Priests have been censured, exiled and shunned for talking about it. No, today we seem only to consider God's Goodness, Mercy and Love... leaving off thoughts of His Justice... and that final judgment where the sheep will be separated from the goats... something Marcion had to reject. This is one of the proof texts of the Scriptures (i.e., Matt ch. 25) because it is the same God Who punishes and rewards at the final judgment.
7. Pentecost is a fitting time to speak of this matter because God the Holy Ghost gives the lie to this heresy, most especially in its present form. More on that in a moment.
8. For now let's ponder a few ways this error has resurfaced. As we have heard, for Marcion there was a sort of *before* and *after* in God, a certain opposition of the God of past times with the God of the present times. For Marcion, instead of continuity and harmony in God's Divine Plan, there is dissonance/dualism (later adopted by the dualistic Manicheans). As for its modern manifestations, the French Revolution easily comes to mind. This late 18<sup>th</sup> Century diabolical revolt tried to change the thinking of the people... saying "Day one is now and the past is over. There was no going back... not looking back... no connecting to the past." Can we not see the Marcionistic way of thinking in this?? It is a dividing of the past from the present... a setting in opposition of different times to each other. No wonder Marcion called his largest work (which as been lost) *Antithesis*.
9. In our times, the Scriptures have been re-written in various ways, most obviously with inclusive and politically correct language. In the new

breviary, various verses and whole psalms are not prayed, most notably those that are too hard for modern ears to hear. Is this not a subtle Marcionistic move? In general, we see this same tendency repeated over and over in almost every category. In other words, that which has been held to be true, good and just in ages past suddenly is overturned and held to be suspect and shunned... to be legalistic, small or narrow minded, disciplinarian, or triumphalistic. The opposite is true as well: that which was considered dangerous, bad, immoral in ages past, is now suddenly reversed and considered as having positive elements that can help man and society.

10. Examples are not wanting. Once upon a time it was dangerous to read certain books and authors, now we can read them openly without any qualm (e.g., Victor Hugo, Alexander Dumas). Even so-called "orthodox" and "traditional" Catholic high schools and colleges put on plays based on some of these forbidden works, thereby promoting their dangerous themes and messages.
11. Once upon a time, the lifestyle of Sodom and Gomorrah was held to be an intrinsic evil ... a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance. Now we hear how it has positive elements to be appreciated and respected. Once upon a time, we held those in an invalid marriage... of whatever kind... may not go to Holy Communion without adding sin upon sin. Now, it seems, they can... for certain "pastoral reasons" ... go to Holy Communion. Once upon a time, the Mercy of God was given to those who fear Him and show true sorry for their sins. This is seen at work in the lives of many different Magdalen's and other converts down through time... namely, how they converted by God's grace, confessed all their sins in kind and number ...and performed heroic acts of penance and reparation. The Prophet Jeremias puts it like this: *"Convert me, and I shall be converted, for thou art the Lord my God. For after thou didst convert me, I did penance... I am confounded and ashamed, because I have borne the reproach of my youth"* (31:18-19). Now, however, Mercy has been reduced, it seems, to a sort of pity or sympathy for sinners. Instead of eliciting sorrow and firm purpose of amendment for sins committed, we learn to accept and work with and around another's bad disposition. Reparation, restitution and penance are almost forbidden words today. Once upon a time, we used to do penance on Fridays, make Holy Hours of Reparation to the Sacred

Heart. Now we need not worry about eating meat on Friday because God will understand. And what of reparation??

12. We could go on and on with many examples, but I think you see the point. What was once condemned or considered dangerous, bad and immoral is now being approved at least by silent consent or crafty wording of documents. And what was once considered good, holy, and safe is more and more looked upon with a certain disdain or even ridicule as being harsh, burdensome, verging on fundamentalism, medieval, and so on... as if the Church of the past is not the same as the Church of today. Can we not see the Marcionistic error in this opposition of what was before to what is present... A sort of communistic Thesis—Antithesis opposition? Hmmm. This smells... smacks of Marcion!
13. How should we respond this neo-Marcionism? The Holy Ghost comes to our aid. As we heard His Majesty say in the Gospel today: "*the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.*" He teaches what has been given to us in the PAST through the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ, the King. He does not bring NEW things to mind, but whatsoever the Word spoke to us of old. We are not in for any surprises with the Holy Ghost! He is totally Christo-Centric and self-effacing. What is more, we heard Our Lord teach a few Sundays ago how this same Holy Ghost "*will convince the world of sin and of justice and of judgment*" (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter). S. Bernardine of Siena (*in parvis serm. 21*) says, "The Holy Ghost reproves the world of sin, because it [the world] dissembles; of justice, which it [the world] does not order rightly, while it [the world] gives it [justice] to itself and not to God; of judgment, which it usurps, in rashly judging both of itself and others." Sounds a little harsh, no? Narrow minded... triumphalistic? It seems to me, with this mission of the Holy Ghost to reveal all things hidden, we are not safe in taking the neo-Marcionistic position... which claims all is well in our relationship to the all-merciful and loving God.
14. To see this in another way, we can turn to sound Ecclesiology. In the Creed, every Sunday, we profess the Church to be Apostolic. This mark of the Church means that the Holy Catholic Church always retains and teaches the very same doctrine which it received from the Apostles, often

called the Deposit of the Faith. What is more, Apostolicity means the Church ... as a whole... remains numerically one and the same visible body as that which existed during the days of the Apostles. The hierarchy ... the bishops collectively form one and the same juridical person with the apostolic college. Finally, we know the soul of the Church is the Holy Ghost. Although individual members, including bishops and popes, come and go ... the Church remains the same... apostolic. This means we cannot validly oppose one time of the Church to another time like our own. We cannot safely say, therefore, that this or that doctrine need no longer be believed or practiced... that this or that previously approved and long tested discipline was wrong. In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI indicated something of this in his letter accompanying *Summorum Pontificum*, saying: "What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful" (Letter July 7, 2007).

15. Same Church, same doctrine... same hierarchy... the same Divine Soul, the Holy Ghost, uniting it all and keeping it from failing... making it perpetually indefectible down the ages even to the end of time. Marcion was wrong. His ideas were wrong then and they are wrong now. No wonder he had to consider himself holier and wiser than the apostles!
16. What does say about anyone today trying to promote Marcionistic like ideas? Are they not making themselves more than an apostle? Will not the Holy Ghost convict these poor souls if they do not repent and do penance? How popular it is today to take a dim view of the practices of old... such as courting between those considering marriage, dressing modestly, wearing of chapel veils, avoiding all immoral dancing and music. This is a sort of neo-Marcionism at work. Do not go along with this! Do not ridicule or belittle the practices of old!
17. In order to keep this disease out of our life and souls, let us be vigilant lest we too be convicted by the Holy Ghost of lying to ourselves about what the all merciful and perfectly just God demands of us... lest we be convicted of going along with the world in not embracing what He approves of and considers good. Let us be vigilant lest we consider only the skewed justice of fallen man in seeing only what serves our needs and not God's... lest we judge only in ways that favor our cause, forgetting God's. Let us be sure to hold in esteem what God has entrusted

to His Church... goods that have been safeguarded by the Holy Ghost and proven effective through long practice.

18. Our attitude ought to be that of the humble St. Bernadette. After an apparition at the Grotto, she was asked: "why were you sometimes happy and sometimes sad?" Bernadette responded: "I am sad when She is sad, and I smile when She smiles." That should be our disposition toward all the Church has given us down through time... we accept and embrace what She has always given us...and shun that which She has always shunned. WE smile upon what She has always smiled upon...and are sad at what has always made Her sad...