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## Pentecost and Mission

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EUGEN ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY  
PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

### I.

When Adolf Harnack died, he asked that his tombstone be inscribed with the words of the ancient hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*. At Pentecost the faithful sing, "The Spirit of the Lord has filled all the lands of the earth." Yet Protestants, Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox remain apart, while the Israelites are uncertain of the coming of the Messiah. The Spirit of the Lord does not seem to unite them. How, then, do we reconcile past success and present failure of the Spirit?

At Pentecost we may rejoice because the Name above all names is worshipped by innumerable tribes and nations, and because His Gospel has been translated into many tongues. At Pentecost, however, we also must soberly admit that, insufficiently inspired, we have not the complete faith of those who can sing their triumphant songs alone. Others must help us. On Pentecost our own faith needs strengthening. Today, in this western hemisphere of timid minds, how can we in our pusillanimity experience the growing unanimity of the Spirit, a unanimity manifested once more in ever-widening circles?

Without the experience of further Pentecosts, the memory of the first Pentecost is mere despair. All life is so miraculously constructed that the next miracle is always needed to keep alive and effective the whole chain of miracles which has led to our own days. Just as a soul is never saved by previous virtue, but must remain alive to the end or lose all, so the celebration of Pentecost each year becomes a meaningless ritual unless the Pentecostal miracle is reinstituted in our midst.

The world, indeed, is not devoid of such miracles as these. I should like to speak of a new and miraculous unity revealed in Pentecost. To become aware of it means to become aware of an epochal change in the interpretation of Pentecost. We may perhaps recognize that Pentecost is not only a separate holiday, but that the Pentecostal element is present in any divine service where the faithful are gathered in His name. Thus Easter, Christmas and Pentecost are not mere days in the Church calendar, but fountainheads of trinitarian worship in the gathering of the faithful. In our quest of fundamentals, let us outline the relation of liturgy and mission.

## II. MASS AND MISSION

The elements of divine service, and the transformations within our souls, may be understood best by using the stem of the Latin verb *mittere* (to send) which is found in the word *mission*; it matters little whether we call the embodiment of the body of Christ "mass." The Church has grown by "mission," and has been kept alive by the "immission" of the Spirit. She keeps her identity by "omitting" and "pretermittting" all impurities. She is constituted by those who "admit" their shortcomings in comparison to our Lord. We now know that "missa (mass) est" was said when the "table had been set," and the catechumens who had not yet experienced regeneration were asked to leave.<sup>1</sup> *Ite, missa est* ("the table is set," "dinner is served" for those who are full-fledged members), the phrase which the Roman Church now uses at the end of the service, really drew attention to the fact that the "sending out," the "setting up," the "sending in," and the "sending away" were all of the essence of the *missa*. We should revindicate this four-fold *missa* in the Protestant service: then we would understand more forceably how our own liturgy, of necessity, involves four directions of sending, of *mittere*.

The Spirit is manifold, while Reason is only a one-way street. The term *mittere* strives against the confusion between the mere mind, which is the atrophied enslavement of the Spirit by our little selves, and the "message," the missionary power of the Spirit over us. Our mind, indeed, is not "sent," is not "on the way" of truth or life. The mind sits in judgment and argument, in rationalization and apologetics. But the Spirit ranges far and wide, gathering together and uniting scattered groups, while armchair philosophers, mere spectators of this stream of social formations, rub their eyes in astonishment.

Communion may be realized, first of all, if every man *ad-mit* that he has been separated, by his work and his worldly responsibilities, from the intimate union of the whole Body. The importance of "ad-mission" is obscured today by the weakened meaning of the term "sin." The sin of which every service of worship should free us, in the light of Pentecost, is not the weakness of moral perfection or of imperfection. It is rather the spiritual obtuseness which, incidentally, is preponderant in perfect, righteous, and responsible people. It is of no interest in the Kingdom of Heaven that a thief or a drunkard admits that he is a thief or a drunkard; this is of more interest to the police. Much more than this is needed to convene the Body of Christ. The responsible surgeon must come to admit that surgery, while a responsible business, can be overdone. He

<sup>1</sup> A. Mancini. *Atti della Accademia dei Lincei. Rendiconto Morali*, 1950, pp. 157-161.

has to admit that he must be more than a surgeon, that he should, in fact, operate as little as possible. Victors must pray to be more than victors in every field of human endeavor. Thus the successes of responsible people are sins which have to be admitted before we can ever become of one Spirit.

As long as all the successful people insist upon having their own minds, the first miracle without which no divine service can proceed is lacking. We have to *dis-miss* our proudest equipment, our mentality, our very best will itself. Without this miraculous *dis-missal* of our own will, no *mass* is possible. To repeat, this is quite generally obscured today because "sin" to most minds is merely the weaker part of the will, some vice. But the only sin which excludes God's presence from the Church is that which is our own most perfect, most professional, or most personal will, our virtue. *Dis-miss* your strongest will, or the message goes unheard!

The second act, the *im-mission* of the Spirit into "two or three," is obscured in many minds by the vision of a consecrated building of stone with countless churchgoers flocking to it. But "two or three" have as much difficulty, if not more, in becoming of one Spirit than do a multitude. The central element in the miracle of receiving a new mind, on the wings of the Spirit, seems as little understood as the analogous miracle of sex. In this latter miracle we recognize a new relation to our sex organs when we realize that while they are placed within our bodies, they are not of our bodies. Entering through the channel of sex, the life of the whole race pulses through the loved one. Thus we cease to be mere individuals and come to embody the whole species in ourselves. Similarly, the new mind which I receive is still "mind." But it has ceased to be interpreted by myself as "my mind." Man does not have a mind for himself. Selves as such could neither think nor speak. The mind is placed within us so that each of us may contribute to the spiritual concert. This "immission," then, is the second element. Formerly individuals, we are now specimens and spokesmen of the entire species.

The third aspect of the Pentecostal message leads to *o-missions*. *Omission* and *pretermission* serve to exclude the blinding and deafening energies of the world. Some piece of the world, a fashion, a noise, a prejudice must be excommunicated before communion is possible. The secularist illusion that the whole world may attend the service as it is, is as ill-conceived as the limitation of "sin" to our vices. The world is full of irresistible temptations, though these may differ for each individual. Some form of asceticism is essential to divine service, though every one must "omit" something different in accordance with his particular temptation.

These three approaches, then, *admission*, *immission*, and *omission* characterize any group that is able to receive the Spirit. And for the average churchgoer, this static, legalistic approach seems a sufficient formative principle of the Body of Christ. He can point to the asceticism of Lent as organized *omission*, to the confession of sins as legalized *admission*, and to baptism as formalized *immission*, as expressions of the three elements in any lawful service. Alas, the law never justifies anyone! Pentecost stresses the fruits of the spirit: *mission*.

Most Church-goers return home after the service and sit down to dinner. Our services in most cases remain in the realm of law. However, whenever two or three have met, despite the multitudes, something is bound to happen. We may even say that unless some *mission* ensues, the two or three have not gathered in His name. In that case, His name has been invoked in vain, though even with reverence. There can be no doubt in my mind that our greatest sin is the fruitless though reverent invocation of God. *Mission* alone justifies *admission*, *immission* and *pretermision*. It transforms law into grace. May we then discover the element of Pentecost, of *mission*, that is at hand and may be prayed for even in the ordinary service of a typical suburban church at any time of the Church year? Where may the *readmission* of the miracle of Pentecost take place when we, and as long as we, believe that we are already of one spirit merely because we are Church-goers?

Through *mission* alone we are *re-admitted* into the process of remoulding the face of the earth. Without this experience, we shall never acquire the potency and the virility to celebrate any service of worship in its fulness. The Spirit must be so sent out from us *that He will return* upon us with great force, a force that will make us talk differently henceforth. Unless the Spirit within us returns upon us from the brother gained by our *mission*, the life of the Spirit is not complete. Light is reflected—or it is not light. The Spirit must return upon us!

### III. POLYGLOT

A static and compartmentalized thinking has associated *mission* with the heathen abroad, and *liturgy* with the home front. Consequently, liturgy has become law, while missions become medicine or education or social welfare.

After two world catastrophes, there are not many prospective heathen. But the tremendous field of nominal Christianity within our own churches comes to view. Pentecostal experience or power is now dependent on the Christianization of "Christians," Roman Catholic or Protestant. Dur-

ing World War II, the Pope admitted Protestants and Jews to the Vatican without requesting or expecting their "conversion." By this he demonstrated that he must be a Christian, and not merely a Roman Catholic. This was a miracle, a truly Pentecostal miracle, suggestive of the first Pentecost. For at the first Pentecost no heathen were converted, no foreign missions instituted. We must, therefore, now admit that the original Pentecost was not a phenomenon of conversion but of polyglot manifestation. The multiformity of the true Spirit became manifest. *Septiformis*, sevenfold, speaks the Holy Ghost. The age of nuclear physics must become aware of this miracle. In physics, everybody must use the same formulae. This is not true in the septiform realm of the Spirit. The one Spirit may move the members of any denomination, and of various denominations as members of a whole, and even believers and unbelievers as members of the universe, to a polyglot expression of that one Spirit, an expression that imposes no uniform nomenclature or vocabulary on old and young, on men and women, on learned and unlearned.

Let us begin with an example of misplaced Biblical criticism which, for a whole century, impressed mathematical minds that could not understand the polyglot ways of the Spirit. In the Apocalypse the third person of the Trinity is described as seven spirits around the throne of the Father and of the Lamb. The fulness of the Spirit may be conveyed in no other way to him who would experience it than as a light refracted into seven colors, a spirit uttered in the seven forms of our inspiration. The superficial superiority complex of the modern mind has forced the critics to sneer at this vision. This demonstrates how the "intellectuals" have lost access to Pentecost. Mind went blind, and the liberals actually foresaw the day when we would all say the same things, think the same thoughts, use the same correct scientific formulae all over the globe. As long as this "monism" of scientific jargon is considered the goal of our race, Pentecost is unnecessary. I believe that this train of thought is the reason why the meaning of Pentecost is so often limited to the command at the end of Matthew's Gospel: "Go ye into all the world. . . ." Actually, this command and Pentecost have little to do with each other. *Mission* in the sense of Pentecost demands from the missionary himself a change of his own mind, a price. In foreign missions, this price is paid in the form of poverty, physical suffering, hardships of danger and isolation. But in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost, the price paid was of a different nature.

This same price was paid in a Pentecostal experience—A.D. 1951-52. For a decade the old Swiss city of Basel saw a controversy raging within

her walls between the Protestant theological genius, Karl Barth, and the Father Confessor of Roman Catholic students, Hans Urs von Balthasar. Conversions of leading patricians to Rome did not decrease the friction.

The student of theology knows that in this period Barth published his many volumes on dogma which re-established the unity between Calvin and the Fathers of the ancient Church. Von Balthasar felt the reciprocal need of reconnecting his own faith with Barth's insights. This seemed virtually impossible since Barth had called Rome's attitude "anti-Christian." The scholastic desire to prove as much as possible in theology without reference to Christ, to give the world and human nature some kind of good standing with God apart from the coming of perfect man and perfect God, was Barth's central enemy. Barth would say, "They give Christ some place in the world, yes! But they think that the world already makes sense before Him and without Him." Von Balthasar was a member of the Society of Jesus, an order in which members advance rather slowly. The highest rank was still before him. He did not know whether he could remain free to pursue the conversation across the Basel Campus if he remained a Jesuit, but this conversation had become the command of his existence. The greatest mission of his whole career seemed to lie in his turning about and facing this Calvinist who so wonderfully joined minds with the Fathers of the first four centuries. We must remember that the mission on which we are sent at Pentecost demands a price. We cannot become of one Spirit without giving up our mentality. Von Balthasar left his order; he ceased to be a Jesuit; he forsook the protection and strength of the phalanx of Rome's bodyguard. Unarmed, disarmed at the demand of the septiform Spirit, he omitted or "pretermitted" his worldly individuality of a fighting monk, and wrote his 419 pages on the theology of Karl Barth.<sup>2</sup> In this book, the Roman Catholic priest (while he has left his order, he still remains a secular priest of the Roman Church) does not try to refute the Protestant Barth. Rather, he shows that any good Roman Catholic can, nay should, accept Barth's position. Balthasar goes to great pains in showing that Catholics do not give too much emphasis to the *analogia entis*, to the natural goodness of the creature. Roman Catholics do not say that Christ is just an addition to the world. Von Balthasar asks if there is no common expression in which both Barth and Roman Catholics might glory. In materially accepting Barth's powerful reinstatement of Christ as the center, von Balthasar proposes the common formula: *the whole world in Christ*.

The reader will understand that I am not concerned with the formula

<sup>2</sup> H. U. von Balthasar. *Karl Barth*. Olten, Hegner, 1951.



itself at the moment, but rather with the way in which it came about, the Pentecostal way of disarmament. Christians do not re-arm; they dis-arm. Pretermission of worldly impediments of garb and appearance is followed by the power to listen to the truth of the alleged foe, and a new word is spoken that binds both, Protestant and Roman Catholic. This is *mission*. The table is set for the common meal. *Ite, missa est.*

#### IV. SPIRIT BREAKS MENTALITIES

Tired of controversialists who merely refute one another, we see here a new style of theology. In any true fellowship, as in marriage, the relationship of different points of view is not handled controversially. But how then is it handled? It is strange that while everybody knows how, textbooks on logic are silent on this profound method. The logic of an argument between husband and wife consists in the husband defending the wife's interest, and the wife, that of the husband. I am infinitely more fruitful, more resourceful, more reasonable in upholding my wife's case than my own. True partnership puts my mind at the service of my partner, and his mind at my service. *Our minds work much better for our partners than for ourselves.* The Spirit was not given to man for himself. Self-reliance is an abuse of the greatest gift of the Spirit, of our reason.

This, it hardly needs saying, is the Christian use of "mind." It is the Pentecostal element of turning our private tongues into gifts of the seven-fold Spirit which re-enters us now as true Reason, because the mind is free from self-enslavement. By an "excess of the mind," we may place our mind at the disposal of the Holy One. A and B exchange swords, and A may now defend B's position; B may uphold A's view. Both thereby learn to encompass the other member's "form of spirit." Discussion gives way to correspondence.

Something like this took place some years ago during the first World War between an Israelite and a Christian. The Christian had aroused a living faith in the living God in his hitherto agnostic friend of Jewish descent. The Christian therefore expected that this newly kindled flame of faith would lead his correspondent straight into the Christian Church. However, his friend became instead the greatest religious genius of modern Judaism. After an intense and belligerent correspondence, the outcome was described by the newly inspired Israelite to a third person. "Why my correspondent suddenly recognized that our positions were not inimical

but mutually complementary, I cannot tell."<sup>3</sup> This, I think, is the best description of the Pentecostal miracle in any modern tongue. God's ways are not our ways. While our ways are defined and calculated, God's are incalculable and undefined.

This new freedom will be the law of liberty, of mission inside the Christianized world. Future mission may not predict what form the kindled faith will take.<sup>4</sup> Only thus can it remain potent as mission. Modern man has developed the awful faculty of partitioning his ideas of the divine, of the miraculous, and of the sacramental into some ecclesiastical remoteness. Indeed, the skin of our rituals must not be worn without the flesh of our experiences. And the foremost experience remains that man is a miracle to his fellow man, and should remain such. It is a miracle whenever controversialists turn into correspondents, for then it seems that they have chosen to be "more than conquerors."

This may shed new light on our approach to foreign missions. The African chieftian cannot be asked to be converted unless he is recognized as a responsible person, a loving soul who has used his mind in the right spirit for other people long before the Holy Spirit is invoked upon him. It may be that his secret panther society has to be converted into a public one. Still, he does not constitute a semantic blank inside. He must not be required to shed his panther skin unless his missionary sheds his skin, in some manner, also.<sup>5</sup>

The separation of the Church at home and missions abroad has gone too far. In our own midst, many men entertain all the superstitions of the heathen. We say of the latter, "They cannot count up to three." This we consider the lowest mentality of stone-age savages. However, any controversialist is of the same primitive mentality. Anybody in our midst who boasts that he is a liberal or a conservative obviously cannot count up to three. Surely no Christian can make such statements which restrict the life of his mind. Nobody can be anything but a liberal-conservative or a progressive-reactionary. All the secular slogans of partisanship will simply have to disappear in the great readmission of Pentecost, for this is a lesson in the true meaning of Reason. He only has transformed the tool of his brain into the transmission of spirit who

<sup>3</sup> Franz Rosenzweig. *Briefe*, Berlin, Schocken, 1935. About to appear in English this year, and also accessible in the *Journal of Religion*, 1945, in an article by Professor Emmet.

<sup>4</sup> This task is more fully developed in my book, *The Christian Future, or the Modern Mind Outrun*, New York, Scribners, 1946.

<sup>5</sup> This position is eloquently explored in the weekly, *L'Afrique et le Monde*, published by African negroes in Brussels. This very inexpensive publication should be widely read by American theologians.



represents inside himself his greatest opponent's mind as well. He is the male who represents the female, the capitalist who represents labor, the banker who represents the priest. It is for this transmission that the tool of the brain was planted in his body.

The analogy with the organs of sex is obvious. Nobody is anything but obsessed by sex who treats sex as his own property. Sex is in our body but not of our body, since it waits to be taken over by the sacred union in which it is meant to transmit life. Yet, most rational people are so unreasonable as to destroy themselves by associating sex solely with their individual bodies. But the Holy Spirit claims our reason despite our selfish rationalizations.

Where two or three are gathered in His name, the difference and the distance between the New England village and the mission in Central Africa disappears. Mission and Sunday service require miracles of the same order. Mission is an indispensable element of your and my specific acts of worship.

This is the great re-admission required lest the divine service remain under mere law, devoid of grace. In Pentecost the tongues which have grown apart are readmitted into the soil of one Spirit. The circumscribed mentalities of our theologians show perhaps most sharply the contour lines of such tongues.

*Burst forth, O Spirit unforetold  
Infringe our minds' marmorean mould.*

Four Wells,  
Norwich, Vermont

## The Archives of the Hartford Seminary Foundation

MISS E. DEW. ROOT  
ARCHIVIST

The Archives of the Hartford Seminary Foundation had its beginning back in the early days of the Theological Institute of Connecticut when it was in East Windsor Hill. Bennet Tyler, its first President, had written a life of Asahel Nettleton (1783-1844), the great Connecticut evangelist and hymn writer, and one of the founders of the Theological Institute of Connecticut, and presumably had gathered all the sermons and letters of Asahel Nettleton to help him in this biography.

Through the years a much wider collection of manuscript materials has gradually been amassed. As a result, among the "infinite riches in a little room" one finds original documents of considerable value for the ecclesiastical and secular history of New England and Connecticut. Of value in the study of the New England theology are the papers of Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790) given to the Hartford Theological Seminary in 1892 by Mrs. Elizabeth Bellamy Loomis, his great-granddaughter. Dr. Tyler, in his inaugural address said: "The Seminary stands for the doctrines which have been held in New England by Edwards, and Bellamy and Dwight. . ." In this collection are his sermons and letters from 1737-1788. Many of these letters pertain to his call to the Presbyterian Church in New York from 1753-1788.

Of particular interest is the collection, almost complete, of the sermons preached by Jonathan Edwards, Jr., (1745-1801) covering his entire career. The Rev. Benjamin A. Dean (through whom the sermons came from Eugene Edwards, grandson of Jonathan, Jr., in 1898) says of him: "And if this latter set (of patriotic discourses) were laid with the whole series of sermons running through 33 years, whoever looks them over with historic, or theologic, or political and patriotic interest in them will be equipped for intelligent work; needing in addition only the two vols. of his published works. . ." Among the other papers in this collection are two drafts of the "Remarks on the improvements made in Theology by his father, President Edwards" (Senior), showing its development before attaining final form in his works. The Edwards papers were the basis of a doctoral thesis submitted by Wesley C. Ewert, now pastor of the First Congregational Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.