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"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii. 32

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THE MEANING OF PENTECOST

(This message was delivered by Rev. O. M. McAdams, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church of Saint Petersburg, Fla., May 6, 1930, to the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. The Alliance requested that this message be published as widely as possible.)

Text.—"And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?"—Acts 2:12.

Nineteen hundred years ago on June the 8th of this year (1930) a great experience came to pass in the Apostolic Church at Jerusalem. This great experience occurred on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Jewish Passover.

The name Pentecost is a colorless name and unlike Passover or Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles or Booths, it reveals nothing as to the nature of the festival itself. In motive and purpose Pentecost corresponds to our Thanksgiving Day. The name Pentecost does not occur in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament Pentecost is called the Feast of Weeks. Passover marked the beginning of harvest; Tabernacles celebrated the very crown and consummation of the year, when all fruits of the earth had at length been gathered in; but Pentecost was a brief period pause of joy and thankfulness for the close of harvest proper and the gathered store of bread that strengthened man's heart.

In course of time Pentecost was supplied with one notable historical association namely, it became the festival at which the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai was commemorated. The special lessons of the synagogue for Pentecost are all designed to glorify the law. Once the connection was made Talmudic methods of calculation, had no difficulty in proving that this indeed was the very time that the august event took place, Ex. 19:20.

The sound and fire from heaven on the day of Pentecost suggest the thunder and lightning that accompanied the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai.

On the day of Pentecost the members of the Apostolic Church are said to have spoken with other tongues, and the mixed national multitudes each is said to have heard in his own language. Here we are reminded of the Midrash, a Hebrew Scriptural exegesis made during a period of about fifteen hundred years after Exile, largely based upon tradition. The Midrash represents the voice that spoke on Mt. Sinai when the law was given to Moses as being heard in the language of all men. In all reference to Pentecost, stress was laid on its being a time when crowds were gathered together at Jerusalem. They were there to celebrate the first ingathering of the harvest, at which time two loaves from the first fruits of the harvest were laid upon the altar of God.

It is common to speak of Pentecost as the birthday of the Christian Church. But the facts of Church History will not sustain such an interpretation of Pentecost Birthday is an awkward term to use in such a connection and can only be accepted as a rough mode of indicating the beginning of the Christian community. But there was a church of a sort already existing. (Acts 1). In fact the movement or beginning of the first Christian Church did not lend itself easily to dates, and refused to be subjected to the precision and exactitude which marked the inauguration of merely human societies and institutions. This holy gift was

bestowed on a church already in existence.

And then, too, Pentecost does not mark the first appearance or beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit on this earth. The Holy Spirit brooded upon the primeval Chaos. When the earth was without form and void, when all was waste and desolation, the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of God, moved upon the face of the waters. The Holy Spirit spoke to the world through the prophets of God. Our Holy Bible was written by Holy men taught by the Holy Spirit.

The Virgin Birth is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit that sanctified the flesh which is united with the word. It is a mistake to think that the Holy Spirit left the sacred humanity which it had sanctified in the moment of conception; the childhood of Jesus was filled with strength and wisdom which were the marks of a special grace.

But in about Jesus' thirtieth year a stage was reached when a new illopp of the Spirit on the second Adam became necessary. The first illopp of the Spirit had sanctified his humanity the second illopp of the Spirit was to consecrate his official life. At his baptism the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove and his official life was consecrated. In connection with our study of the meaning of Pentecost we may note the progressive development of religion among men.

There are those who would divide the plan of redemption into three dispensations—the dispensation of the Father, the dispensation of the Son and the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. In speaking of dispensations the Theologian has in mind the distribution of good and evil by God to man, as the divine ordering of the affairs of creation. Dispensations represent God as giving out the plans of salvation in portions. With such an idea in mind theologians have given us seven dispensations as follows: the first is Innocency, Gen. 1:28-3; second, Conscience, Gen. 3:22-7:23; third, human government, Gen. 8:20-19; 4th, Promise, from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law; fifth, the law which extends to the cross; sixth, the Gospel; seventh, the Holy Spirit. These divisions represent the dispensation of the Father, the dispensation of the Son and the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. While Pentecost is not to be interpreted as the birthday of the Christian Church nor to mark the beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit on this earth. Pentecost does mark a new experience in the history of the Apostolic Church. The dispensation of the Spirit which began at Pentecost after the Crucifixion was so great an advance on all earlier manifestations that St. John does not hesitate to deny that there had been any gift of the Spirit before Pentecost. (John 7:39).

Pentecost must be ever thought of as a Day of Power, a day on which the Spirit of God manifested himself through the disciples as a power for converting others. On that day the Apostolic Church received the promised power which enabled it to bear witness for Christ and win others for his kingdom.

At the baptism of Christ and the consecration of the Apostles the descent of the Spirit was accompanied by external signs. The Dove did not reappear nor was the breath of Christ felt. But the sound of a great gale fell upon the ear, and tongues of flame darted hither and thither and finally resting on the heads of all appealed to the eye. The symbolism of the wind had been explained by our Lord. (John 3:26).

The fire would remind the apostles of the prediction of the Baptist, Matt. 3:11, etc. Every detail had its meaning. The sound of the rushing wind seemed to fill the hours for the new life is to permeate the whole world. The tongues of fire are self-distributing and none was left without his portion. For the Spirit divideth to every man as it wills. I Cor. 12:11. And all believers are made to drink of the same fountain.

To understand Pentecost our minds must go back to that eventful time and begin with Pentecost fifty days after Jesus of Saviour had conquered death and the grave, and move among the disciples who had been waiting around Jerusalem in obedience to the command of our Saviour who had charged them to tarry until they should receive power from on high, until they should be moved with the power of the Holy Spirit.

For fifty days 120 members of the Apostolic Church had tarried at Jerusalem. Ten days before Pentecost 120 Christians began to assemble themselves and pray for the promised power. They tarried in an upper room and while they tarried they prayed, prayed for the promise of the Father, prayed that they should receive spiritual power.

When the day of Pentecost had fully come, during the course of the day, the 120 Christians were all together when suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a violent blast of wind which filled the whole house where they were seated. They saw tongues like flames distributed and they were resting on the head of each and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in foreign tongues as the spirit enable them to express themselves. A great crowd had gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. Devout Jews were there from every nation under heaven, staying in Jerusalem. All were amazed and astonished at the way the 120 Christians acted when they received the power of the Holy Spirit. "What can it mean?" they said one to another. Finally a sneering fellow said, "They are brim full of new wine." Peter could no longer hold his peace. He stood up along with the Eleven and began to speak; "Men of Judea and residents of Jerusalem let every one of you understand this, attend to what I say. These men are not drunk as you imagine, why it is only nine o'clock in the morning; this is what was predicted by the prophet Joel. In the last days, says God, then will I pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, your sons and daughters shall see visions, your young men shall dream dreams. On my very slaves and slave girls will I pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy. And every one who invokes the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Thus starting at this prophecy of Joel, Peter preached Christ to the multitude. The Jews rejected Jesus as the Christ and Saviour of the world. They had consented to the crucifixion of their Lord and Savior. They had gotten wicked men to nail Him to the cross. But God raised Him up by checking the pangs of death. Death could not hold Him. He died upon the cross and was laid in a borrowed tomb. On the third day He rose with a mighty triumph over death and the grave. When they heard this it went straight to their hearts. They were convicted of sin and cried out to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Repent, said Peter. Let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The people were called upon to repent, to change their minds about Jesus. You once thought of Jesus as a criminal, cursed by God. You must now think of Him as the exalted Lord and Christ, the Saviour of the world. Repent of your sins and surrender your wills to Jesus, the Master of Mankind.

The second thing those who were under conviction were instructed to do was to be baptized. There was to be an outward water baptism. But to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ means more than having some water sprinkled upon you or being immersed in some water. Every soul that submits to baptism confesses by this very act that he is sinful and needs cleansing. With grief and hatred of his sins he turns from them unto God with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience. To be truly baptized means remission of sin. When there is real repentance and real baptism there will be remission of sins and there will be reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the birthright of every regenerated soul. Every soul that has been born of God and has faith in Jesus Christ is entitled to the Holy Spirit.

The gospel message by the Apostle on the day of Pentecost had a tremendous effect, for three thousand souls were saved as a result of this message. No such effect followed the preaching of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus had promised His disciples that they should do greater works than He did. This promise is literally fulfilled when three thousand persons joined the Jerusalem church in one day. These members added to the church was the climax of a ten days' prayer meeting. One hundred and twenty assembled in prayer for ten days set Jerusalem and the surrounding cities on spiritual fire. The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous have a powerful effect. There is power in the prayer of the righteous.

The new experience that occurred on the Day of Pentecost brought new life to the church. The people made an open confession of Jesus Christ and stood by their confession. There were four things to which they devoted themselves: the apostles' instruction; fellowship; prayer, and the unity of the Spirit based on Christian love.

They came together to worship and at their meetings the apostles told them about Jesus Christ. They showed the members of the Church how Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. The converts had to be taught the meaning of the death of Christ. So the apostles continued to unfold the mysteries of the gospel of the Son of God and the people continued to sit at their feet and learn of them.

The people not only devoted themselves to the instructions of the apostles; they also devoted themselves to the fellowship of the apostles. A secluded Christian or a Christian that is separated from the society of others cannot grow. These early Christians came together for mutual help. They were faithful to one another. There was the best of feeling among them.

Every member of the Christian Church should feel the curbs of the other members. In the Apostolic Church when one suffered they all suffered. They suffered together and shared everything they had in the way of earthly possessions with one another. And then there was no friction among them. They worked together without any desire except to help one another and to do the work of their Master. The apostles were the leaders and examples in this good fellowship.

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WORK IN FARMING AND RURAL LIFE

TO BE INCLUDED IN HARMON AWARDS PROGRAMS FOR 1930

Exceptional developments in farming and rural life are to be given recognition during 1930 through the William E. Harmon Awards for Distinguished Achievement Among Negroes. These awards, which are now in their fifth year are granted by the Harmon Foundation and administered through the Commission on Race Relations of the Federal Council of Churches.

As in previous years, the series covers the accomplishments of colored people in Art, Literature, Education, Religious Service, Music, Business, Science and Race Relations, and this new field offers opportunity for recognition in another line of endeavor in which the Negro is generally represented. Its scope includes work in farm ownership, productivity, improvement of home life as well as in the advancement of agricultural science and methods, and leadership in the cultivation and enrichment of rural life.

There has been a change in the number of awards for 1930. There is to be a gold medal, accompanied by five hundred dollars in each of the eight fields, instead of the previous program consisting of a gold medal and four hundred dollars and a bronze medal and one hundred dollars in each field. Since the biennial award of one thousand dollars in Race Relations was given in 1929, it was not included in the present year's schedule.

The administering organization states that information is now being received from all parts of the country regarding the creative work of colored men and women, and invites nominations from the general public, as awards are made only on the basis of materials submitted. These may be made until September 2, 1930. Full particulars may be obtained by writing to the Assistant for Harmon Awards, Commission on Race Relations, 105 East 22nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Five years ago the late William E. Harmon, who became interested in the economic difficulties with which the average colored worker was faced, organized the Awards in the hope that accomplishments which were worth while, yet probably little known, might be brought to light and given their place among other important developments of the time.

The public has already learned through this means something of the work of 54 Negroes. Among these recipients have been:

- Archibald J. Motley, Jr., Artist, Chicago.
- John Hope, President of Atlanta University, Atlanta.
- Eric Walrond, Writer, now abroad.
- Nathaniel R. Dett, Composer and Director of Music, Hampton.
- Claude McKay, Novelist and poet, now abroad.
- John Charles Claybrook, Lumberman, Arkansas.
- Virginia E. Randolph, District Supervisor Jeannes Fund, Virginia.
- C. C. Spaulding, President North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, of Durham.
- Arthur A. Schomburg, Collector of Negro Historical Documents, Brooklyn.
- A. A. Alexander, Contractor, Iowa City.
- Max Yergan, Missionary in Africa.
- Couste Cullen, Poet, Paris.
- Bishop John Hurst, Religious Service, Baltimore.

CATAWBA LEAGUE IN SPRING SESSION

By James C. Williams, Secretary

The Young People's League met at Brandon church in Charlotte, Saturday, May 10th. The delegation was not as large as some we have had, but a larger number of churches was represented than ever before. There were delegates from 18 churches. We hope next time to reach the 25 mark in the number of churches represented. Those present entered eagerly into all parts of the program and contributed to a successful meeting.

We were able to have our get-together and recreation hour in the open air on the spacious lots in the rear of Brandon church, a very good place for such activity. Here we played many games, sang pep songs, and tried ourselves at yelling the League yells.

From the recreation grounds we went into the church to take up the topic for discussion which was "Vocations From a Christian Viewpoint." Preceding the discussion we had two helpful papers that threw light upon the topic. One was by Miss Viola Graham, of Caldwell church, and the other was by Mr. Murray Kerns, of Mt. Olive. The discussion proved very beneficial to us as it was on a topic in which we all were interested.

Dinner was served in the spacious dining room of the church of God about a block and a half from Brandon. Everything had been nicely arranged, tables prepared and plates set on heavily laden. All the delegates had to do was to march in, take seats and eat. The fellowship at this hour was most enjoyable, every body was happy and entered right into the spirit of the occasion. When we finished dinner we sang again a number of our League songs, gave cheers for Mr. Torrence, Rev. Sanders, the ladies of the church and the Young People's Forum. This was followed by a few after dinner speeches.

We returned to the church, finished up our discussion and business and entered into the closing worship service. During the business session Rev. Prince presented the second issue of The Voice of Catawba Youth, the League Bulletin. The League voted to put the Bulletin on a subscription basis, so hereafter it will be 25 cents a year or 10 cents a copy.

The League received with joy the news of the appointment of our President, Mr. W. S. Brinkley, to attend the Youth Council in Toronto, Canada. The League voted to hold its next meeting at Cedar Grove church.

The worship service was very impressive. The message was delivered by Dr. C. N. Jenkins, a former pastor of Brandon, and several members of the League assisted in the service with the President presiding. The music at the worship service was the best we have ever had; not only was it suitable for the occasion but it was sung in a very impressive way.

The Young People's Forum of Brandon church, under the leadership of Mr. E. M. Torrence, certainly deserves our highest praise for the fine way in which it cared for us. We knew we were welcome long before we reached the church, because as we entered the community we saw placards posted on many homes with the words, "Welcome, Young People's League." No stone was left unturned to carry out the sentiment expressed on the posters. So we say, hats off to Mr. Torrence and the Young People's Forum of Brandon church! You certainly showed us how it ought

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