The GOSPEL TRUTH

Power From On High

or

The Two Hundredth Anniversary

of

The Great Moravian Revival

1727-1927

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CHAPTER I

A MODERN PENTECOST

"Lord God, the Holy Ghost,

In this accepted hour,

As on the day of Pentecost,

Descend in all Thy power.

We meet with one accord,

In our appointed place,

And wait the promise of our Lord,

The Spirit of all grace.

The young, the old inspire

With wisdom from above;

And give us hearts and tongues of fire,

To pray, and praise, and love."

THUS sang the Scotch Moravian poet and hymnwriter, James Montgomery, more than a hundred years ago. His prayer for another Pentecost was undoubtedly inspired by the experiences of his spiritual fathers on August 13, 1727 in Herrnhut, Germany. We are now celebrating the Bi-Centennial of what our Moravian Text Book calls the "Signal outpouring of the Holy Spirit experienced by the congregation of Herrnhut." We do well to join in Montgomery's earnest prayer for another Pentecost in our own day. D.L. Moody in one of his last sermons in Boston, his spiritual birthplace, spoke thus of the Holy Spirit:

"See how He came on the day of Pentecost! It is not carnal to pray that He may come again and that the place may be shaken. I believe Pentecost was but a specimen day. I think the Church has made this woeful mistake that Pentecost was a miracle never to be repeated. I have thought too that Pentecost was a miracle that is not to be repeated. I believe now if we looked on Pentecost as a specimen day and began to pray, we should have the old Pentecostal fire here in Boston."

A Moravian historian writes in a similar vein as follows: God says; "It shall come to pass I will pour." This was His promise through the prophet Joel. The first fulfillment of this promise was on the day of Pentecost. There is nothing in the New Testament to indicate that this was to be the one and only fulfillment of this promise. On the contrary we read in the book of Acts of many outpourings of the Holy Spirit, as in Samaria (8:14-17) as in Ephesus (19:1-7) and even in the case of the Gentiles (10:44-46). Church History also abounds in records of special outpourings of the Holy Ghost, and verily the thirteenth of August 1727 was a day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We saw the hand of God and His wonders, and we were all under the cloud of our fathers baptized with their Spirit. The Holy Ghost came upon us and in those days great signs and wonders took place in our midst. From that time scarcely a day passed but what we beheld His almighty workings amongst us. A great hunger after the Word of God took possession of us so that we had to have three services every day, viz, 5:00 and 7:30 A. M. and 9:00 P.M. Everyone desired above everything else that

the Holy Spirit might have full control. Self-love and self-will as well as all disobedience disappeared and an overwhelming flood of grace swept us all out into the great ocean of Divine Love."

Exactly what happened that Wednesday fore-noon, August 13th, 1727 in the specially called Communion service at Berthelsdorf, none of the participants could fully describe. They left the house of God that noon "hardly knowing whether they belonged to earth or had already gone to Heaven." Count Zinzendorf gave the following account of it a number of years afterwards to a British audience.

"We needed to come to the communion with a sense of the loving nearness of the Savior. This was the great comfort which has made this day a generation ago to be a festival, because on this day twenty-seven years ago the Congregation of Herrnhut, assembled for communion (at the Berthelsdorf church) were all dissatisfied with themselves. They had quit judging each other because they had become convinced, each one, of his lack of worth in the sight of God and each felt himself at this communion to be in view of the noble countenance of the Saviour.

"O head so full of bruises, So full of pain and scorn."

In this view of the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, their hearts told them that He would be their patron and their priest who was at once changing their tears into oil of gladness and their misery into happiness. This firm confidence changed them in a single moment into a happy people which they are to this day and into their happiness they have since led many thousands of others through the memory and the help which the heavenly grace once given to themselves, so many thousand times confirmed to them since then."

The following summary is by our beloved Bishop Edward Rondthaler:

"Zinzendorf, who gives us the deepest and most vivid account of this wonderful occurrence, says it was "a sense of the nearness of Christ" bestowed, in a single moment, upon all the members that were present; and it was so unanimous that two members, at work twenty miles away, unaware that the meeting was being held, became at the same time, deeply conscious of the same blessing."

"These members were all laity, though at a later time, ministers and missionaries, deacons, presbyters and bishops arose out of the wonderfully blessed assemblage. They were all lay people, in the experience of Christ which they made, and yet in another sense they were all ministers of Christ, "A holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." I Peter 2:5.

"It was a young congregation which received the 13th of August blessing. Zinzendorf, the human leader, was just twenty-seven years old, and if a census had been taken, it would have been found that his own age was approximately the average of the whole company. Throughout the story of the early labors of the Renewed Church we are impressed with the comparative youth of the men and women who made such wonderful ventures of faith for Jesus Christ."

Verily the history of the Moravian Church confirms the doctrine of the great American Evangelist as to the need and possibility of the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The spiritual experiences of the Moravian Brethren two centuries ago bear a striking resemblance to the Pentecostal power and results in the days of the Apostles. The company of believers both at Jerusalem and Herrnhut numbered less than three hundred souls. Both congregations were humanly speaking totally devoid of worldly influence, wisdom, power and wealth. Their enemies called them "unlearned and ignorant." Their best friend described them in the following language:

"Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." 1. Cor. 1:26-28.

On both these small and weak congregations God poured out His Holy Spirit and endued them with power from on high. At once these believers, naturally timid and fearful, were transformed into flaming evangelists. Supernatural knowledge and power seemed to posses them. "Mouth and wisdom" were given them which "none of their adversaries were able to gainsay or resist." Opposition and persecution scattered the Jerusalem congregation but could not silence their testimony, for we are told: "Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." Acts 8:4. Similar experiences were the lot of the Moravian Brethren. Sprung from the labors and martyr-death of the great Bohemian Reformer, John Huss, "the Brethren" had passed through centuries of persecution. Many had sealed their testimony with their blood. Imprisonment, torture and banishment had caused them to forsake the homes of their fathers and flee for refuge to Germany where a young Christian nobleman, Count Zinzendorf, offered them an asylum on his estates in Saxony. They named their new home Herrnhut, the Lord's Watch, and from this place after their baptism with the Holy Spirit, they became the world's evangelists and missionaries. Their new leader, Count Zinzendorf could truly sing of them:

"Everywhere with shoutings loud,

Shouts that shake the gates of Hell,

Thy anointed witness-cloud

Of Thy great Redemption tell."

Of the Apostolic Church at Jerusalem a certain writer has said: "Before thirty years had elapsed from the death of Christ, His followers had spread from Palestine throughout Syria; through almost all the numerous districts of Asia Minor; through Greece and the Islands of the Aegean Sea, the coast of Africa, and even into Italy and Rome." And at the close of the first century Justin Martyr could truly testify: "There is not a nation either Greek or Barbarian or of any other name, even those who wander in tribes or live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the Universe in the name of the Crucified Jesus."

Similar testimony may be borne to the labors of the Moravian brethren. During the first three decades after their spiritual Pentecost they carried the Gospel of salvation by the blood of the Lamb not only to nearly every country in Europe but also to many pagan races in America, North and South, Asia and Africa. Their first mission was to the Negroes in the West Indies, five years after the outpouring of the Spirit. The following year they sent out missionaries to Greenland, which Cowper has immortalized in the well known lines on Hope:

"See Germany send forth Her sons to pour it on the farthest North;

Fired with a zeal peculiar they defy The rage and rigor of a polar sky,

And plant successfully sweet Sharon's Rose On icy plains and in eternal snows."

Fifty years before the beginning of modern Foreign Missions by William Carey, the Moravian Church had led the way into pagan countries both by precept and example. Their English Missionary Magazine "Periodical Accounts" inspired Dr. Carey and in a meeting of his Baptist brethren he threw a copy of the paper on a table with these memorable and historic words:

"See what the Moravians have done! Cannot we follow their example and in obedience to our Heavenly Master go out into the world, and preach the Gospel to the heathen?"

So generally has the leadership of the Moravian Church in Foreign Missions been recognized that the well-known German historian of "Protestant Missions" Dr. Warneck testifies:

"This small Church in twenty years called into being more Missions than the whole Evangelical Church has done in two centuries."

A hundred years pass by since that marvelous baptism with the Holy Spirit--years of almost continuous revival and blessed missionary service. So numerous are their missionary stations that it may truly be said the sun never sets on them. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, Scotland's greatest preacher and leader, bears this eloquent testimony to Moravian Missionaries:

"It is now a century since they have had intercourse with men in the infancy of civilization. During that time they have been laboring in all the different quarters of the world, and have succeeded in reclaiming many a wild region to Christianity. One of their principles in carrying on the business of missions, is, not to interfere with other men's labors; and thus it is that one so often meets with them among the outskirts of the species, making glad some solitary place, and raising a sweet vineyard in some remote and unfrequented wilderness. Oh, when one looks at the number and greatness of their achievements, when he thinks of the change they have made on materials so coarse and unpromising; when he eyes the villages they have formed and he witnesses the love and listens to the piety of reclaimed savages who would not long to be in possession of the charm by which they have wrought this wondrous transformation? Who would not willingly exchange for it all the parade of human eloquence and all the confidence of human argument?"

We have entitled this chapter "A Modern Pentecost" and would close it with the words of the sainted Moravian Bishop, Evelyn Hasse:

"Just as the Infant Church in Jerusalem in apostolic days had its Pentecost, from which its members went forth to be Christ's witnesses "both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth," so had this church also its own experiences of the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, when in 1727 He came upon its members gathered at the table of the Lord, and baptized them all into one body, and filled them with a strong, unquenchable passion to execute the Saviour's great Commission, and to let all mankind know of His Cross and of His salvation."

"Urged by love, to every nation Of the fallen human race

We will publish Christ's salvation, And declare His blood-bought grace;

To display Him, and portray Him, In His dying form and beauty,

Be our aim and joyful duty."--Zinzendorf.

Such then was the thirteenth of August seventeen hundred and twenty-seven. Count Zinzendorf, the one outstanding human leader and spokesman, called it "the day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation,"--"its Pentecost." Again he described it as follows: "The Saviour permitted to come upon us a Spirit of whom we had hitherto not had any experience or knowledge." "Hitherto WE had been the leaders and helpers. Now the Holy Spirit Himself took full control of everything and everybody."

Therefore also he prayed to Jesus:

'Lord, our High-Priest and Saviour,

'Pour fire and Spirit's fervour

On all our priestly bands;

When we are interceding

And for Thy people pleading,

Give incense, and hold up our hands.'