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The Church: 1971

Pentecostalism Filling a Gap

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



In her book, "Belief, Magic, and Anomie," the late social anthropologist Anne Parsons has two extremely interesting essays on Italian Pentecostals in New York. This group is not part of the new wave of Catholic Pentecostalism, but is a separate denomination, avowedly Protestant in its orientation.

Dr. Parsons' analysis shows how Pentecostalism serves as a bridge between the old country Catholic culture and the new world Protestant culture for those who choose to try to adjust to the New World in a fashion different from that followed by most immigrants.

The Italian Pentecostals combine in their services the strong emotionalism of South Italian culture with the staid sober respectability of lower middle class and working class American Protestantism. According to Miss Parsons, Pentecostalism has traditionally been a religion of culture change; she even notes that Corinth in the time of St. Paul was an unstable and changing city.

If this model of Pentecostalism as a transitional religion in the midst of severe culture change has any utility, what can it tell us about the current popularity of Pentecostalism in the American Catholic Church?

It should be noted that in the absence of any empirical data, the best that can be offered in the way of answer to such a question is tentative hypothesis, derived more from general theory than from empirical research.

The culture that is collapsing is "Catholic culture" or, to use words which may have more value connotation than one would wish, the culture of the immigrant ghetto. Catholic intellectuals and journalists have flailed away merrily at the culture of the immigrant ghetto, assuming that since it had very little meaning in their lives, it had no relevance to the lives of anyone. Yet the stable certainties, the sense of a firm contact with religious reality, the firm organizational structure, the brisk and confident leadership of the clergy all provided a system of meaning and belonging — or, if one wishes, of faith and community — which

played an extremely important role in the lives of millions of people. If Catholic culture is collapsing it is not so much because the vast majority of Catholics find it irrelevant — an increasing number do — but because the leadership groups in the Church, particularly priests and religious, no longer have any confidence in it.

The new culture that is emerging is still very vague. It emphasizes the personalist, the free-wheeling, the flexible, the emotional; it may or may not be an improvement on its predecessor, but it is certainly different. More importantly for the Pentecostal phenomenon, the new culture is still very uncertain. Something new is aborning, but what it will be and whether it will respond to the religious needs of large segments of the Catholic population remains to be seen.

Pentecostalism is, at the unconscious level, a way some people can hedge their bets. The personal, the emotional, the informal can be combined with the certainties and the support which the old Catholic culture provided. Indeed, one can claim a contact with the supernatural which few in the old culture would have claimed unless they were part of the "private revelation" milieu. At the same time, one can also be confident that one is part of the avant garde, that one has found a "new way" for American Catholicism. Pentecostalism appeals, in other words, because it combines the old and the new and eases for some people the crisis of transition.

Is it authentic religion? A sociologist would have a hard time answering such a question. It does respond to certain extremely important religious and personal needs and undoubtedly represents a powerful religious orientation. The social scientist would, like the ecclesiastical leader, view skeptically the Pentecostal claim of direct access to the supernatural. But his most pertinent observation on Catholic Pentecostalism would be his hunch that it is a transitional phenomenon and will last no longer than the transition does. Like most other sect-like groups the Pentecostals will probably be a one generation phenomenon.

On The Right Side

Kookery In The Church

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Frequently I join Fathers MacNamara and Delmonte and Cohocton Father Sturmer for Saturday supper at St. Ann's, Hornell. Father Sturmer told this story:

"The Schwartzes were touring France, and were moving from one hotel to their next. Their luggage had been sent on ahead without their having tagged it. With some anxiety they came to L'Hotel Nouveau and were informed by the clerk: 'Your luggage is in your room'. 'But how did you know it was ours?' 'Oh,' said the clerk confidently, 'your name was on it.' The Schwartzes entered the room and read on the luggage in neat French script: 'M. et Mme. Genuine Cowhide.'"

The story has relevance regarding some religion teachers who are stronger in self-confidence than they are in authentic Catholic teaching.

I often hear troubled people say: "Father, everything has so changed. We hear such contradictory teachings." They have a right to be disturbed. Frank Sheed in his book, *Is It the Same Church?* (Pflaum Press) wrote:

"There are conservatives who thought Pope John a catastrophe; there are liberals who thought Pope Paul a catastrophe. In all the excitement he (puzzled layman) does not realize how much agreement there is between conservatives and liberals upon the great mass of Catholic doctrine. The Council did not feel called upon to treat: Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, Grace, the

World to Come. However, as in every other movement, there is a fringe of enthusiasts pushing their own special views as though the Church had already adopted them. There is hardly a doctrine or practice of the Church I have not heard attacked by a priest." (xiii sq.)

A year ago a Rochester mother said: "My daughter is a student at X High. Last week she came home and said: 'Sister says it isn't a sin to skip Mass. If I walk in the woods communing with nature, it could be even better than Mass.' 'And how did Eva take this great gospel?' The mother laughed: 'She said that Sister always has been kind of a kook and shrugged her shoulders. However, some of Eva's classmates are impressed and have dropped Mass.' I suspect that Sister is one of those compulsive ultra-personalities who will not countenance rules or stability.

Six months ago a woman wrote: "Our pastor preaches one thing and the assistant teaches something different, and the school is a catechetical babel. I wonder if I will have any faith left." I replied: "You have my sympathy. A Rochester mother told me about her daughter who had a kookie religion teacher whose self-confidence far outran her judgment.

I think your own religious education is sound enough to sort out what is Catholic teaching and what is kook. Get hold of Frank Sheed's *Is It the Same Church*, and Hugh O'Connell's *Keeping Your Balance in the Modern Church*. They give a

background for the present uproar, and also an honest presentation to vindicate some of the 'new' teachings, which really are perfectly valid. Please don't go overboard against everything that seems different from the days of your youth."

On January 5, Our Holy Father released a 4,600-word letter to the College of Bishops reminding them of their "grave and urgent duty to proclaim the faith." He said: "We must beware in particular, lest an arbitrary selection should reduce God's design and restrict the proclaiming of His Word to what our ears like to hear. However necessary the function of theologians, it is not to be learned that God has confided the duty of authentically interpreting the faith of the Church. That faith is borne by the life of the people whose bishops are responsible for them before God. It is for the bishops to tell the people what God asks them to believe . . ."

Quoting St. Paul, the Pope wrote: "Even from your own ranks there will be men coming forward with travesty of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow them." Those who speak in this way are often convinced of doing so in the name of God, deluding themselves. . ."

The confident legend: "M. et Mme. Genuine Cowhide," was well intentioned but unauthentic. Fidelity to Christ's revelation through the teaching Church is the mark of the authentic Catholic.

A Seminary Prof's View of ...the Vietnam War

By FATHER PATRICK LOGAN, Professor of Theology, St. Bernard's Seminary

This will not be the year for peace in Vietnam. Despite—or is it because of—the cutbacks in private and public spending here at home, we will be pouring approximately \$1 million per day into Vietnam. Can one refuse to ask whether it is morally allowable to pay taxes which contribute to this cause?

Despite the combined opposition of both the silent majority and the vociferous minority to this war, more men are being drafted this month than any of the preceding eight months, meaning that thousands more of Americans and thousands more of Vietnamese will kill and be killed by people they really do not hate or even know! Can one in good conscience encourage young men to cooperate with their draft boards in such a situation?

Can the facts presented above be interpreted in any other way than that for all our negotiating the Vietnamese conflict is still being settled not across the conference table but across the battlefield?

While theoretically perhaps all of us would respectfully accept the teaching of the Catholic Bishops of our country back in 1968(!) that " . . . there are moral lessons to be learned in Vietnam. . . One might be that military power and tech-

nology do not suffice, even with the strongest resolve to restore order or accomplish peace," are we following this teaching in practice?

Granted that we prefer that our terms be accepted at the negotiating table, in the final analysis we are saying that violence will carry the day, that only if our terms are accepted will we call a halt to the slaughter. This is not to say we have not been sincere in our efforts to achieve a negotiated peace, or that we have not adjusted our terms. But it does say that we are ready and intent to continue to use violence.

How can we justify this? We recall that the Catholic Church teaches that violence may be justifiable under certain conditions. But is it not time to take another look at those conditions?

The Church teaches that violence may be used; it does not say that might makes right, or in other words that violence is to be the fundamental and overriding power by which we act. The Church says that the use of violence must be limited, that there must be some proportion between the amount of violence employed and the good to be gained. It is surely time to ask if the limits of proportionality have not long since been exceeded!

Again back in 1968 our American Catholic Bishops said it was time to ask precisely this



FATHER PATRICK LOGAN

question: "In assessing our country's involvement in Vietnam we must ask: Have we already reached or passed the point where the principle of proportionality becomes decisive? How much more of our resources in men and money should we commit to this struggle, assuming an acceptable cause or intention? Has the conflict in Vietnam provoked inhuman dimensions of suffering? Would not an untimely withdrawal be equally disastrous?"

Can we, not in 1971 give a quite clear answer to this question? Consider: we have dropped 4 million tons of bombs on Vietnam — we have participated in a struggle that has cost 1 million lives! The just-war theory does not justify this! Where do we draw the line? Where do you draw the line?