

The Spirit of the Lord Fills Our World

PART IV

Of all the dangers of the Pentecostal Movement, I consider the danger of spiritual pride the most insidious, since pride becomes more camouflaged when it infiltrates the areas of prayer and good works. With the gifts come the natural admiration of those who possess them. What person would not want to possess the powers of healing? Although St. Paul said it was a good thing to desire the gifts, he devoted a whole chapter of an epistle (Chapter 13) to tell the Corinthians that spiritual gifts mean nothing if the love of God is absent.



Healing, for instance, is a gift promised to those who believe, yet that belief is not something prompted by a desire to see God's power but as a desire to channel God's mercy.

The devil could do no better than to tempt people to throw themselves from a temple top or to change stone into bread merely to show the power of God. It not only shows the power of God but likewise renders glory to those who were the instruments of such power. In the Acts, Simon wanted to buy this power from the apostles for that reason. Psychology has shown that we have unconscious reasons for doing things, and motives for asking miracles must be scrutinized carefully.

The same must be said about spiritual smugness and complacency for any group so taken up with spiritual gifts and supernatural intervention. The wisdom of St. Philip Neri — "There but for the grace of God go I" — must be a constant theme lest the groups become cliques and groups within groups become the "elect". Pride will soon show itself in gifts that are just the opposite of the gifts of the Spirit — quarreling and disunity.

I sincerely believe that the Movement offers new hope for a Church whose structures have been mercilessly criticized by its own

members. Vatican II foresaw more than structural changes; the renewal was aimed at its members, at changing the lives of Catholics and putting Christ at the center of Church life. The almost masochistic furor over Church structures, producing good and evil effects alike, has overshadowed the greater need for sanctity among Church members, and the Pentecostals are interested precisely in that. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the safeguards, it could be the dawning of a new age of the Spirit as envisioned by Pope John who inaugurated the II Vatican Council.

Whether we get involved in the new Movement or not is not essential. To fail to feel attracted to it is not indicative of personal illness. For all of us, however, devotion to the Holy Spirit (the forgotten Person of the Most Blessed Trinity) is important to our spiritual vitality. For the Holy Spirit was missioned by God the Father and God the Son to renew the face of this earth and joined to our spirit to bring us to the fullness of our human potential.

Guest Columnist

On Taxing Church Properties

By Father Charles A. Bennett

A June news release to the Gannett papers informed us of Mayor Stephen May's new Advisory Committee on Tax-exempt Property.



In its present composition it consists of 13 Rochesterians, most of whom were chosen by the mayor. There are a few vacancies to be filled. The purpose of the committee is to look for violations of the property tax exemption privilege and advise appropriate action.

I commend the mayor for the goal and ask him to make sure the committee's operation is restricted to that purpose.

A few weeks ago, as pastor of a church within the city, I received a letter from our city manager, Kermit E. Hill. It was clear

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that the burden of meeting the demands of the people has left the city coffers quite low. He clearly stated that he respected the tax exempt status of the churches. However, he sought a fair donation as the church's contribution to the woes of the city.

The last few years have been punctuated with the cries of citizens here and there to eliminate the tax exemption. There are many phases of this to which I could address myself, but what is implied by their stand I find most alarming.

They have come a long way from the philosophy that founded America and made it a great nation. The founding fathers believed

that the freedom to worship and instruction in "God Centered" living were most important to society.

In his farewell address, George Washington said, "of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

Generations of Americans have looked upon the Church as necessary for a free society; as contributing necessary services to the community.

Imperiling the functions and existences of churches by taxation implies, at least, that they contribute little or nothing to our society. This principle is basic only to governments unfriendly to religion. Unless we are watchful and strong we will lay a new cornerstone for future society in America.

Editorial

Write to President on Nonpublic School Aid

It seems those in favor of government aid to nonpublic schools have a friend in President Nixon. And when you have a friend who lives out of town, you should write to him.

With the President's Commission on School Finance recommending tax credits for the parents of children attending nonpublic schools, he will need to hear from you more than ever.

The battle in Congress should be significant and with the issue being so new it's difficult to predict whether such legislation could be passed. Because of the President's support of such aid it is possible that the matter could become mired in politics.

Then, too, between such proposals and actual money in the till for beleaguered

nonpublic schools stands, or sits, the Supreme Court. It will be interesting to see if the executive branch can influence the judicial and if, indeed, the high court itself can backtrack from its position of June.

The fact that those opposed to such aid were quick to take umbrage at the President's remarks is an indicator that they, at least, take the chief executive and/or the influence of his statement seriously.

Among the newspapers criticizing Mr. Nixon's speech are the New York Times, which seems consistently to wind up on the opposite side of the fence with the Church; the Washington Post and the Washington Star which frankly hit the nail on the head when it said, "it's difficult to ascertain on what constitutional ground

the President offers to plump for parochial education."

The plain fact that the President pledged his support to the drive for nonpublic school aid is encouraging. Add to the nuance that he obviously was enjoying saying so, that he put it on the agenda for a following-day chat with Gov. Rockefeller and there is more reason for enthusiasm.

But the fact remains that words do not pay bills.

You can bet that the President will be receiving organized advice from those who do not agree with any aid to private schools. His friends, therefore, must reassure him in his convictions. Drop him a line; he lives at the White House, Washington, D.C.