

Contemporary Worship: The Malady of the Church and the Issue of Israel

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One cannot help but notice an increasing and sweaty insistence on parts of the Church to affect the sense of God's Presence. However desirable that may be, Oswald Chambers reminds us (*My Utmost for His Highest*, April 25) "Those times are the gift of God entirely. You cannot give them to yourself when you choose." Not only you "cannot," you *should not*! Whatever is self-initiated, however well-meaning the motive, is not of God. He alone is the Creator-King who disposes *from the Throne* what He wills when He wills. As Chambers adds, "We are in God's presence by God's act." Our priestly waiting upon Him is that profound respect and acknowledgment which is the very heart foundation of ourselves as the Church. And, *here, every Sunday, the whole game is won or lost!*

The very matrix of the Church that desires to see itself as *Apostolic* rests upon the root meaning of that word as *sent*. If we forfeit that reality by fabricating ourselves what must only come down to us from above as given, *sent*, we lay the axe, as it were, to the apostolic root itself. For what comes to us as *sent* is equally a *mercy*—that which is *given* from Above entirely independent of any deserving. It is by that *mercy* extended by the Church to Israel that they might be saved that Paul speaks in Romans 11:30-32. But how shall we *extend* mercy if we are not conscious that we have received it and indeed are conducting ourselves in such a way, Sunday by Sunday, as to insure by our own self-effort that we will not? Is it not because we are "ignorant of the mystery" of which the Apostle speaks that we are so cavalier in our disregard of what comes down to us from Above as a mercy that is *sent*? How shall we commend a Kingdom which is "at hand" when we have lost the sense of its locus as the Throne of Heaven from which alone every good and perfect thing comes that is *sent*? A very great issue is every Sunday being propounded and we know it not! While we ostensibly honor the title and are frequent to cite it, we forfeit our apostolic credential by our very platform conduct.

After all, something vibrant and uplifting must be given to the Sunday congregant whose week-long condescension to the world and spiritual and moral laxity assures that he cannot provide it for himself! He needs as it were "a Sunday fix." An enthusiasm of a certain kind can certainly be affected by the musicality of the "worship team" who can as readily move from the upbeat to the tear-inducing, carried away, as they evidently are, in realms of rapturous ecstasy as is visible in their eye-closed countenances! But what if they are no more worshippers than those dulled worldlings before them? Their week has been no better, but, knowing that the success of the service is at stake, give it their best not knowing, and never having been instructed by the apostolic authority in the Church, that "Those times are the *gift of God entirely*. You *cannot* give them to yourself when you choose."

To forfeit that reality is to forfeit *reality* itself! That however much it is enjoyed, we are rendered by it to be unfitted as witness for the world as we ought. How then shall we move *Israel* to jealousy? Our own sense of God *as God* is diminished, for the Giver is known by His gifts. As Charles Spurgeon says, "the manner of His giving is as precious as the boon itself...He dips our morsel in his own dish." To receive such beneficence is to be *transformed* by it—made expansive ourselves, made gracious by the receiving of Grace! Can you see that what is *apostolic* is therefore rooted in the jealous respect for what is alone divinely given as *sent*? If the Lord is overrun, He steps aside compelling us to be more frenzied in providing ourselves a substitute. Our souls might be responsive and may be satisfied, but our spirit is denied and impoverished, and withers away in the process! We have substituted our own 'in-house' enjoyment for the fulfillment of the mystery to which we are enjoined by Paul as being

to “the glory of God forever” (Romans 11:36). The powers of the air see it and can continue to mock us with, “Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you?” That we should be known and feared by these Powers as formidable is more to be desired than Sunday enjoyment, and the very constituent element of apostolic reality itself!

The root of our problem is immaturity, carnality and shallowness. This needs to be addressed rather than accommodated. No ‘class act’ which is religious performance can alter that, but rather reinforce it. If we will not respect and wait for what is *sent*, how shall we become sent ones ourselves? How shall “faith come by hearing” in the Word of the Lord that is “preached by those who are sent” (Romans 10:14-15)? The fact of the matter is that we have not taken the mandate to Israel to heart and it shows! The mystery about whose ignorance Paul warned is unknown to us, absent from our consciousness, even the root cause of all our malady, for the issue of the Jew is the issue of the Church! Had we been occupied with it as we ought (concerned apostolically by definition with whatever pertains to the glory of God), it would precipitate that deep contemplative prayer life which is the very matrix of God’s desired presence, for what shall *we* be required to conjure up in its absence?

Here the whole issue of the Church is being contested, upheld or lost! Bless that remnant of Zion within the larger Church who know this and agonize over it, knowing that worship is only worship that has its own sake as its end, and ceases to be worship when it serves the purpose of Man and degenerates to manipulation, performance and control. We should shrink from the faintest such affinity, knowing that God will lead us through every barrier into the inner-chamber of the knowledge of Himself if we relinquish the other. It will be a no-man’s-land of testing before the real comes and our flesh will cry out and crave the leaks and garlics of Egypt. What is at stake is Israel’s redemption, which can only come to it out of the ‘Zion’ that God intends the Church to be—Apostolic and glorious. Its first test may be the receiving of this word as coming to it as *sent—and the messenger as a sent one!*

If we balk here, dismiss the word as only issuing out of the speaker’s ethnic identity with his own kin and not having its origin from the Throne, we can go no further. Jesus is the High Priest as well as the Apostle of our confession. Unless we ourselves restore priestly waiting in jealous insistence for that alone which is sent, we forsake any possible fulfillment of our own apostolicity. May we repent for being satisfied with less and restore the respect, nay the reverence, for the word *sent* which will again be tested this very Sunday.

Website : http://www.benisrael.org/articles/contemp_worship.htm

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