

THE JOURNEY OUT
Of the United Pentecostal Church

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To Peg, who made the journey with me

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PREFACE

For those who journey out of the United Pentecostal Church International, the process of leaving is multifaceted. Not everyone leaves by the same route or for the same reason. Some leave because the emotional stress becomes unbearable. Others leave because the intellectual gaps are intolerable. Still others leave, not so much because they are in fundamental conflict with the theology, but because they can no longer put up with the authoritarianism of the denominational organization. Whatever the reasons, this book is written especially for those whose spiritual pilgrimage leads them away from the United Pentecostal Church International. However, it has a larger purpose than that alone. The United Pentecostal Church has no monopoly on the abuses which cause Christians to leave it. The same obsession with power, hypocrisy in lifestyle and theological deviation from historic Christianity can be found in dozens of other groups, both small and large. Furthermore, some of these same sad abuses can and do exist within some groups who maintain their identity with the historic faith of the church.

Conversations with others who have journeyed out of an oppressive Christian group have led me to believe that, theological differences notwithstanding, the various journeys have many similarities. This story is the experience of one family who, although reared from infancy in the closed environment of the United Pentecostal Church, chose to leave in order to follow what they believed was the call of Christ. Admittedly, a single experience cannot fully capture all the factors that might lead other persons to leave. Still, a single experience can at least partially serve as a comparative benchmark for others who feel compelled to leave. Though the reasons for leaving will vary from person to person, common themes will also be found in the variety of individual experiences.

I am quite sure that some who read this work will be offended. For this, I am truly sorry. Others, however, may very well need to know that they are not alone in their frustration. In fact, it may be especially comforting for them to know that others, also, have made the journey out without sacrificing their Christianity. In fact, many have discovered the warmth of fellowship and common faith within the larger church

of our Lord, Jesus Christ. They have not only maintained their spiritual health, they have deepened their spiritual experience. They have come to discover the wonder and majesty of words like love, grace, compassion, forgiveness and hope.

May the God of peace go with you if you decide to make the journey out.

ON THE JOURNEY OUT

I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Romans 9:1-4a; 10:1-2

I think that I have some understanding of the way St. Paul must have felt concerning his own people, the Jews. When one grows up in a nurturing environment among people whom he loves dearly, it is extraordinarily painful to be compelled to break fellowship with them over faith and theology. Paul felt this acute alienation. All of the familial and social structures which he held dear were necessarily stripped away from him when he converted from Judaism to Christianity. To be sure, he still felt at home in the synagogue. According to Luke, he attended synagogue service with some regularity. Nevertheless, when the subject of Jesus of Nazareth came up, there was an abrupt parting of the ways. In the end, it was the accusations of his own people, and in particular, his former colleagues, that sent him to Caesarea and Rome as a prisoner of the state.

In all of this trauma, Paul never lost his heart-felt concern for his own people. He wrote to the Romans that he could even contemplate wishing himself cut off from Christ if it would mean their salvation. Yet, this contemplation was clearly a hyperbole. He knew of his people's zeal for God; it was unparalleled. Yet he also knew that their zeal was not based upon a sound knowledge of Holy Scripture. It was not that they were wrong on every count. Rather, it was that in their traditional theological structures, they prevented themselves from understanding the true nature of godly faith, and so while their piety was commendable, it was also misdirected.

A similar circumstance lies behind the writing of this book. I was never a Pharisee in Judaism, as was St. Paul, but I did grow up as a Oneness Pentecostal, born

in the womb of the United Pentecostal Church¹ and nurtured in this same movement until the age of thirty. Periodically, I had wondered about some of our denominational beliefs and practices, but it was not until I had reached my late twenties that these issues became critical. Until then, I had unconditionally accepted that our way was the right way, and our understanding of the nature of God and salvation was, in fact, "the truth," as we were accustomed to labeling it.

In my late twenties, however, I began the process of an unthinkable change. It did not come suddenly, but gradually. Unlike some who left the United Pentecostal Church for reasons of moral failure or frustration with the rigid lifestyle, I left because I concluded that what we had always called "the truth" did not square with the Bible. It was not that we had been wrong on every count, of course. We accepted the authority of the Bible, we believed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and we had committed ourselves to following Him. Nevertheless, I came to see that our central doctrines, the doctrine of God and the doctrine of salvation, were at serious variance with the New Testament.

¹The official name of the denomination is now the United Pentecostal Church International, though I will be using the shortened form, United Pentecostal Church, which was originally adopted when the organization began in 1945.

I had always known that, as far as these doctrines were concerned, we were at variance with the Christian church at large. Whereas the Christian church at large believed in the Trinity, we believed in what we called the "oneness of God," that is, we believed that the terms Father, Son and Holy Spirit were, more or less, interchangeable.² Whereas the Christian church at large believed that a person was saved by sincerely confessing faith in the work of Jesus on the cross, we believed that in order to be saved one must repent, be baptized by immersion with an exact formula "in the name of Jesus," and be filled with the Holy Ghost, exhibiting the required sign of this infilling, the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Our differences with Christians at large had always been discounted on the grounds that those "denominal Christians"³ were worldly, anyway, and they could not be trusted to read the Bible correctly, because they "did not have the Holy Ghost." Only those who had followed our own pathway could be trusted to understand "the truth." Of course, such an argument was circular, but its inadequacy did not dawn upon me until later in life. One naturally tends to accept the conclusions and values of familiar structures without questioning them.

In 1981, I officially left the United Pentecostal Church, which for ordained ministers meant that I had mailed to the denominational home office my prized "Fellowship Card." Spiritually and mentally, I had left some two years earlier. In leaving, I discovered that most of my friends were now cut off from me. Members of my family had difficulty with my decision. Rumors flew. My wife and I were reported to be divorced. I was reported to be mentally unbalanced. I was reported to have "gone charismatic" (which is not a compliment among members of the United Pentecostal Church). I was reported to have "lost my ministry." I was reported to have ballooned to over three hundred pounds in weight. I was reported to have become an evangelical. Only the last of these accusations was true. I had, indeed, joined the evangelicals, that mysterious group made up of Baptists and Brethren and Presbyterians and a host of other Christians whom we had always believed were unsaved. I had finally become what I had always been warned about.

This book is about that process of coming out. It is directed, primarily, toward those who are familiar with the United Pentecostal Church. Beyond that, it is directed

²For those who wish to examine in depth this theology of the nature of God, see G. Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

³The word "denominal" seems to be a coinage within the United Pentecostal Church. Strictly speaking, it is not a word at all, but rather, is a mixture of the words nominal, which means "in name," and denominational, which means "belonging to a denomination."

toward those who are contemplating coming out of other separatistic religious movements. I am not prepared to say, as did Paul, that I could wish myself accursed for the sake of those in the United Pentecostal Church. At the same time, I think that I have some inkling of Paul's emotional attachment to his former family, denomination and religious framework. It grieves me more than I can express that those with whom I was reared remain separated and antagonistic toward the larger church of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Just as Paul described his own people in Judaism, the members of the United Pentecostal Church are also filled with great zeal. Yet also like those in Judaism, their zeal is not knowledgeable.

In recent years, there has been what Reverend Dan Scott has called "a massive hemorrhage" among the constituents of the United Pentecostal Church. Successful pastors, scholars, evangelists, missionaries and other leaders, as well as lay persons, have been exiting in great numbers. Such transplantation has been agonizing and visceral, for many of these people have very deep roots in the Oneness Pentecostal movement.⁴ For those who leave, they face excruciating ostracism from their former compatriots. Even worse, many of them will face complete rejection from their own flesh and blood. My writing of this book is also directed toward them. Finally, I write also for those of other so-called "fringe groups" who are at odds with the historic faith of the church but are uncomfortable in this position. The United Pentecostal Church is only one among many such groups, and the challenge of "coming out" is equally difficult for all of them.

Is there life, Christian faith and spiritual peace after coming out of the United Pentecostal Church? Yes, there is, but I would be less than honest if I did not also warn that one will not find it either quickly or easily. There will be a period of time when the person coming out will be like the "man without a country." Life will be confusing, and one's spiritual comfort zone will be exceedingly strained. Will it be worth it? A thousand times, yes! Perhaps this book will help ease the strain and give food for thought as one makes the pilgrimage.

Coming out is no easy task, but it is possible. If you are one of those who are coming out, I wish to assure you that you can survive with your spirituality and faith intact. In the end, you will find a new love for the Lord Jesus, a new appreciation for his church, and a new compassion for those who have not yet understood his grace. There will be dangers, of course. Some are internal, such as the danger of bitterness. Others are external, such as the superficiality of much that comes under the guise of Christianity. Be patient with yourself. Trust in God. Remember, truth is more than a

⁴D. Scott, Jr., *Family Reunion* (Nashville, TN: Christ Church, 1986) 1.

set of doctrines. It is first of all a relationship with our Lord. Yet even in the doctrinal arena, truth has time on its side. It is error that is usually in a hurry.

WITHOUT A DOUBT

There was no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.

Charles Dickens

I was a deeply loyal Oneness Pentecostal....without a doubt. This fact must be clearly understood if anything wonderful is to come of my story. Had I been a marginal member of the United Pentecostal Church, sometimes in and sometimes out, then this story would not be particularly remarkable. However, I had full Oneness Pentecostal credentials, not altogether unlike those described by St. Paul when he recalled his life in Judaism.

Paul was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. He descended from the nation of the exodus, Israel, and he belonged to the clan which gave the nation its first king, Benjamin. He was a Hebrew-speaking Jew, a "Hebrew of Hebrews." As to his theological affiliations, he was a Pharisee, the group which he called "the strictest sect of our religion." His zeal in defending his traditional faith was unsurpassed, for as he also explains when Stephen, a young man of a different theological persuasion, had been put to death, "I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him." As for legalistic righteousness, Paul claimed to be without fault.

I, too, had great reason to put confidence in my religious heritage. My father had been a member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ before its merger with the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated to form the United Pentecostal Church in 1945. He had helped establish and had pastored the first United Pentecostal Church congregation in Billings, Montana. I was born there in 1950. Though my parents made several moves--from Montana to Washington to California--we were always faithful members to the local United Pentecostal Church wherever we lived. To my knowledge, from the time of my childhood until the baccalaureate service for my graduation from high school, I had never worshiped in a church which was not United Pentecostal. The pastors I remember best were Reverend Robert Lineberry of

Castroville, California (1960-62) and Reverends R. E. Nichols and Henry Moore, Jr., successive pastors in Salinas, California (1962-68). I attended the United Pentecostal Church youth camps each summer in Santa Cruz, California as well as the California District camp meetings. Sectional fellowship meetings and youth rallies were always the highlights of each month.

I suppose something should also be said about my earliest personal religious experiences as a Oneness Pentecostal. As a child, I had what was sometimes called "a tender heart," that is, I was easily moved by the emotional content of our worship services. In the summer of 1957, I gave my heart to Christ with the help of my mother. That summer was a strange one for a seven-year old boy. I had become firmly convinced that Jesus was coming back and that I was not ready to meet him. I refused to leave the house. My mother attempted to convince me to go outside to play, but I lingered near her. I suppose I had some conception that if she would go up in the rapture, I might be able to catch hold of her dress and so go with her. Inwardly, I was deeply troubled. Finally, my mother sat down with me to find out what was wrong, and all my fears came tumbling out. So, with godly wisdom, she took me into her room and helped me commit my life to Jesus Christ. The next year, during a revival at our church, I was baptized by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ on May 7, 1958.

It was not until two or three years later, however, that I "got the Holy Ghost," as we used to describe it. By that time, we had moved to California. I was by that time what we called a "chronic seeker." Every Sunday night, during revivals, and on many other nights as well, I prayed at length in the altar services as I tried to "get the Holy Ghost."⁵ I began to despair that I would never receive it at all. This terrified me, for I also knew, as did we all, that unless I received the Holy Ghost, my chances for salvation were seriously in danger if not cancelled altogether. I prayed harder. I wept and cried, often leaving puddles of tears on the altar bench. Finally, my moment came. I was ten years old at the time, and Evangelist Vaughn Morton was preaching a revival in our church in Castroville. On one night of the meetings, as I was continuing my desperate search, I came through speaking in other tongues. At last, I knew I was saved!

It is hard to describe the sense of overwhelming relief and complete satisfaction

⁵This expression "getting the Holy Ghost" may sound crude to the uninitiated, but it is the popular verbal expression in United Pentecostal Church circles. It is particularly descriptive of the intense, aggressive efforts on the part of seekers to experience speaking with tongues. Within the Oneness Pentecostal movement, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is more of an acquisition than a gift, at least insofar as the dynamics of prayer are concerned.

in the heart of a ten-year old boy when he knows that, at long last, he can live without the fear of going to hell. I had now been born again of both the water and the Spirit! I had completed the three critical steps to gain entrance into heaven: I had repented, I had been baptized by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of my sins, and I had received the gift of the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues. Now I truly belonged to the church. Now, I could truly love the Lord with all my heart and soul and mind and strength. Not that I did not love him before, of course, but now I was truly his. When the saints would begin to raise the old chorus, "I'm so glad that I can say I'm one of them," I could join in with uninhibited gusto, and I did! Of course, little did I realize that my fears of being lost were not entirely over. The rigid demands of the holiness code in the United Pentecostal Church leave a person perpetually on the edge of hell, even after being saved. But for the time being, at least, I was content.

A rather large portion of my adolescent memories have to do with church. Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening and Friday evening were our regular services. Of course, we also had periodic revivals with services every night except Monday. Since our church was in Section Six of the California District of the United Pentecostal Church, we also attended the various sectional rallies and meetings. Even when we were not in church, faith was very much a part of our home. My father and mother always started the day with devotions for the whole family, and during these daily times, we read aloud from the Bible and spent time on our knees in prayer. By the time I was eighteen and ready to leave home, we had read aloud through the entire Bible several times.

Our church in Salinas was a very spiritual one, even by United Pentecostal Church standards. We frequently had tongues and interpretation as well as prophecy. Prayers for healing accompanied by anointing with oil were weekly occurrences, and sometimes during revivals, prayers would be offered with authority and intensity for demons to be cast out. On many occasions, special prayer hours were scheduled for the saints, and I always participated, sometimes even committing to two hour prayer times per day. Our family always went early to Sunday night service to pray, and I participated earnestly in these times of intercession.

During high school, I maintained this spiritual vigor. Thursday was my day for fasting, and I spent the Thursday noon hour at the opposite end of the playing fields in prayer. In my World History course at North Salinas High School, upon being given the assignment to write a term thesis on some major idea in world history, I chose to write on the oneness of God.⁶ Many of my lunch hours were spent debating the

oneness of God and baptism in Jesus' name with trinitarians who had not seen "the truth." I participated in the United Pentecostal Church California Bible quizzing contest (this was before it became a national program).⁷ Finally, in my junior year of high school, I announced to my parents that I felt the call to preach and would be attending Bible college.

⁶I doubt that my World History teacher completely understood the issue. I suspect that he merely thought I was writing about the Judeo-Christian belief in monotheism.

⁷I placed as a runner-up in the finals. I had missed the first several questions in the state finals quiz, because my pastor, with whom I was riding, had missed the road to the location and we had lost our directions. By the time we arrived, the quiz finals were already underway. Nevertheless, the long hours of study paid off, and I managed to compete effectively.

My two older sisters had both attended Conquerors Bible College in Portland, Oregon. I suppose everyone assumed that I would go there as well. I was reluctant, however. One of the students from Western Apostolic Bible College had talked with me privately and explained that the Portland Bible college was "weak on the message."⁸ Thus, I determined to go to Western Apostolic Bible College, since it was reported to be on the cutting edge of Oneness Pentecostal theology. On a trip to Portland, Oregon to see one of my sisters, I remember talking with Edwin Judd, who was then the President of Conquerors Bible College. He naturally assumed that he would be seeing me as a new freshman the next fall, but I think I surprised him when I told him that I would probably go to Western Apostolic Bible College, since the Portland school was not sufficiently clear about the apostolic message. During my senior year of high school, I inwardly debated where I should go to Bible college. My high school counselor was thoroughly frustrated with me because I intended to go to what he called "a parochial school." He assured me that I could easily satisfy the requirements for scholarships to recognized institutions. When I told him that I would be declining these opportunities in order to attend an unaccredited Bible college, he came near to apoplexy. Nevertheless, my mind was made up. If God wanted me to be a preacher, a oneness Pentecostal Bible college was the place I needed to go. In the end, for reasons that are still somewhat vague in my memory, I finally consented to go to the Bible college in Portland, Oregon. I applied for and was awarded a Sheaves for Christ scholarship to Conquerors Bible College, where I graduated in 1971.

While at Conquerors Bible College, I preached my first sermon in chapel in 1968, a rousing success, at least judging by the vociferous response of the student body. It was entitled, "The Glory of Pentecost." I also served as a class officer, the secretary of the Student Ministerial Association, and I edited the yearbook one year. During the frequent evangelistic trips made by students, I was often called upon to be the preacher. I preached my first revival in Longview, Washington while in my junior

⁸This expression, "weak on the message," was a derogatory term for those within the United Pentecostal Church who held to a milder form of theology. Most of those who endured this label had roots in the Pentecostal Church Incorporated, which in the mid-40s had merged with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ to form the United Pentecostal Church. This milder version of Oneness Pentecostal theology tended to be more accepting of evangelicals. While the moderates embraced the theology of oneness Pentecostalism, both denying the validity of the doctrine of the Trinity and following the prescribed formula for salvation, including baptism according to Acts 2:38 and the doctrine that speaking in tongues was the initial evidence of the gift of the Spirit, they at the same time were unwilling to consign to hell all other Christians who disagreed with them.

year. During one summer, I traveled with a singing group through various states as far east as Tennessee, working with them as both a musician and a preacher. While at Conquerors Bible College, I met, courted and married my wife, Peggy Lynch, a Pentecostal Hoosier from the United Pentecostal Church in Bourbon, Indiana. At the Portland Bible college, I encountered a man who was to become one of the most influential people in my life, C. H. Yadon. His godly life, wise counsel, and earnest heart after truth are yet an inspiration to me. In his teachings, he spent a great deal of time describing the nature of truth and the importance of personal integrity as a minister. Although I did not know it then, many of the seeds he planted in my heart concerning truth and integrity would, a decade later, become an inner catalyst which would move me toward leaving the United Pentecostal Church. Two weeks after I graduated from Bible college, my wife and I set out for Idaho with all our belongings packed in a small Toyota Corolla to begin our career as full-time evangelists. Over the next couple of years, we preached revivals in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, California, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Arkansas. Like most young evangelists, we struggled to survive while trusting God to help us make ends meet.

When Larry Chambers, the son of the United Pentecostal Church General Superintendent, died unexpectedly in 1971, we were called from the Foreign Missions Department at United Pentecostal Church headquarters to replace him in the Bible college in Kingston, Jamaica. We spent a school year there, teaching in the Caribbean Bible Institute and preaching in the country churches around the island. When we returned stateside, we preached several more revivals and eventually accepted an Associate Pastorship at my wife's home church in Bourbon, Indiana. Here, our first child, James, was born.

In 1970, I had received my Local License to preach while still in Oregon, in 1971 my General License, and in 1973, I was ordained by the Indiana District of the United Pentecostal Church, where I was serving as Associate Pastor under Pastor Harry Shearer in Bourbon. Nathaniel A. Urshan served on my ordination board. In the earlier interviews for my local and general ministerial licenses, I was interviewed carefully and thoroughly by Reverends Orion B. Gleason and C. H. Yadon. At my ordination interview, the Indiana District Board only asked two questions, one to the District Secretary and one to me. The District Secretary was asked if I had paid my tithes regularly, and I was asked if I owned a television. When both questions were satisfactorily answered ("yes" to the first; "no" to the second), I was granted ordination.

In the Bourbon United Pentecostal Church, Harry Shearer was in the process of retiring, and I was offered the full pastorate. At the same time, my wife and I were

invited to go to South Africa with the Overseas Ministries Department of the Foreign Missions Division of the UPC in order to teach at South African Bible Institute. After much soul-searching, we decided to go overseas once again. For the next year, we worked in Pretoria and Durban, South Africa, with some side trips to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and a final trip to Nairobi, Kenya.

When we returned to the United States, we accepted an offer to teach at our alma mater in Portland, Oregon. Here, our second child, Travis, was born. While on the faculty at Conquerors Bible College, I taught various biblical and theological courses. After two years there, we were invited to consider becoming the Dean of Students at Jackson College of Ministries in Jackson, Mississippi, the Bible college which was under the direction of Pastor/President Thomas L. Craft. We accepted with great excitement! In Mississippi, our third child, Chadney, was born. During our five years in Jackson, I taught Bible college, preached in various churches, taught at camp meetings, preached at conferences, and wrote articles for United Pentecostal Church publications. Like Paul when he said, "I was advancing beyond many Jews my own age....[being] extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers," I, too, was rising through the ranks of my peers. By the time I was in my mid-twenties, I had preached a district youth conference and a city-wide crusade, served as the guest teacher at two large camp meetings, and had preached for some of the more important pastors in the United Pentecostal Church, such as, J. T. Pugh, Guy Roam, T. L. Craft and Murrell Ewing. This was exactly where I wanted to be in life. To the outsider, it is difficult to explain how the highest possible goals within the United Pentecostal Church are to be a preacher, and after that, to preach at conferences and camp meetings. Such meetings were literally the zeniths of life itself. The only thing that could be greater would be to preach at the General Conference, and while that had never been one of my opportunities, I, like any other young preacher, anticipated the day when it might happen.

Thus, when I say that I was a deeply loyal Oneness Pentecostal, I am only stating the truth. I was not a marginal soldier; I was a front line soldier who was committed for life to what we believed to be the "the truth." That I am not now a Oneness Pentecostal is a matter of record. In the next chapter, I will explain how this unthinkable change happened, but for now, it will be sufficient to say that I eventually arrived at a much different conclusion about Christianity and truth than I had been taught within the United Pentecostal Church. On October 7, 1981, I wrote a short personal letter to Nathaniel A. Urshan indicating my withdrawal from the United Pentecostal Church. With it was enclosed my Fellowship Card. Today, I am simply an evangelical Christian, neither Pentecostal nor oneness. I find great personal meaning

in St. Paul's intense affirmation concerning his departure from his own roots, a departure he made in spite of the advantages he had obtained in his religious heritage:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (KJV)

I have heard it said that one who leaves the United Pentecostal Church takes the "easy route." I beg to differ with that opinion. My departure from the United Pentecostal Church was the most wrenching experience in my life, comparable to the death of a spouse or a parent. It left my wife and me without any resources except God. My education was now worthless, my vocation as a college teacher could no longer be sustained, my reputation was frequently smeared, most of my friends abandoned me, and some members of my family were acutely uncomfortable with my new direction. I was religiously, sociologically, educationally, vocationally, and psychologically bereft. It would have been far easier to have remained within the womb of my mother church, where my future was secure. There, I could financially support my family. My friends would all accept me. To leave all of this for the sake of faith in Christ was truly to die. Yet, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran martyr during World War II, so powerfully stated, "When Jesus Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die," and later, "The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ."

It will be very difficult, of course, for one within the womb of the United Pentecostal Church to understand how I could feel compelled to leave this movement in order to follow Christ. It is axiomatic among United Pentecostal Church members that one must join their movement in order to truly follow Christ. So, my departure is an enigma to them. It would be far easier to understand my departure if I had become "worldly," that is, if I had merely wanted to indulge in some of the forbidden activities, such as, watching television, wearing my hair long, or allowing my wife to cut her hair and to wear make-up. While I had no moral compunctions about such activities, I still obeyed all these taboos set out for me by my mother denomination. But to leave because I had come to the conclusion that departure was necessary in order to follow Christ is almost inexplicable. It was not easy. In fact, it was terrifying. I saw myself becoming the person I had always been warned about--one of those "denominal" Christians. So, for the person who says that leaving is the "easy way out," I offer a

short poem by Stephen Crane.

*The wayfarer,
Perceiving the pathway to truth,
Was struck by astonishment.
It was thickly grown with weeds.
'Ha,' he said,
'I see that none has passed here
In a long time.'
Later he saw that each weed
Was a singular knife.
'Well,' he mumbled at last,
'Doubtless there are other roads.'*

WHAT HAPPENED IN JACKSON

I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the old inn door...his sea chest following behind him in a hand-barrow.

Robert Louis Stevenson

The move from Portland, Oregon to Jackson, Mississippi was long. It was 1976, and the highways into the deep South were sweltering. Crossing the Mississippi River at Vicksburg, along the Civil War trail of Ulysses S. Grant, made a strong impression upon me. I am not sure what I expected, but the transition from the flatland of Arkansas and Louisiana to the beautiful pine forests of Mississippi was exciting and full of hope. I had recently accepted the position of Dean of Students at Jackson College of Ministries, formerly the Pentecostal Bible Institute of Tupelo, Mississippi. Now, the college was associated with the First Pentecostal Church of Jackson, pastored by Thomas L. Craft. As my family moved south, I knew that we were moving toward the heartland of oneness Pentecostalism. Little did I realize that the next five years would bring sweeping religious changes to my family and that the college and the church in Jackson would become catalysts for this change. We arrived at Jackson College of Ministries as full-fledged, loyal oneness Pentecostals. Five years later, we would leave as non-Pentecostal evangelicals.

This fundamental change of religious perspective, which members in the United Pentecostal Church generally call "backsliding," did not occur suddenly. It was a gradual movement, almost imperceptible at first. Certainly I did not set out to change myself. I suppose that the imperceptibility of the change might be described as somewhat analogous to an experience related by C. S. Lewis. He was traveling to Whipsnade, and when he left, he did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, yet when he arrived, he did.

In retrospect, I believe that the first factor in this change was my assignment to teach courses on the Life of Jesus and the Pauline Letters in the New Testament. This interaction with the New Testament documents was, in many ways, fresh ground for me. To be sure, I had been reared with a strong biblical background. We read the Bible virtually every morning in family devotions, and of course, having attended church services on the average of four times per week for my entire life, a considerable amount of biblical knowledge was already at my disposal. Too, I had already taught

courses in the Life of Jesus in Jamaica, Africa and the Bible college in Portland, Oregon. Nevertheless, this was the first time in my life that I was compelled to confront Jesus and Paul on their own terms. In studying the Gospels and the Pauline Letters, I began to confront their contents outside the context of oneness Pentecostal conditioning. Since Pentecostal theology in general, and oneness Pentecostal theology in particular, is read almost entirely through the lens of Acts 2:38; 4:12; 8:16-17; 10:44-48 and 19:1-6, it was a new experience for me to attempt to come to grips with the teachings of Jesus and the theology of Paul without having those verses in Acts as a preface. For the first time, I was compelled to follow the logic and context of Jesus' teaching. For the first time, I was forced to follow the arguments from beginning to end in Galatians and Romans and Ephesians without stopping in the middle to recondition everything that Paul wrote according to the favored passages in Acts. To be sure, I did not intend to neglect the time-honored passages in Acts. It was just that in studying the Gospels and the Letters of Paul it became increasingly apparent to me that neither Jesus nor Paul taught as though those verses in Acts were the controlling ones for understanding God and salvation.

At the same time that I was teaching from the Gospels and the Pauline Letters, I was also assigned to teach a course in eschatology called "Prophecy and Today's World." Though I had been reared with a dispensational perspective, and at that time still embraced it, it became apparent to me that some eschatological issues were far from clear. The issue of correct interpretation kept dogging my mind. The more I tried to push it back, the more it seemed to force its way to the surface. It was like trying to force an air mattress under the water. I could submerge part of it, but the other end would pop up. If I redirected my attention to the new challenge, the former end would pop up.

Dispensationalism, at least in its traditional form, is an interpretive system which attempts to answer all questions, which is why we were so comfortable with it. It is a be-all, end-all system. Questions are not open-ended, and the right answer can always (theoretically) be found. Now, for the first time, it became apparent to me that some questions should indeed be left open. A conclusive answer to every question could not always be found which did justice to biblical and intellectual integrity. At the time, since the subject of eschatology was secondary, at best, I did not realize how important this change was in my perspective. Only later did it dawn upon me that if questions are entertained and left open in eschatology, questions might also have to be left open or at least reexamined in other areas of theology.

Given this new personal openness to questions, I listened with great interest as Nathaniel A. Urshan, the General Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church,

initiated a Young Minister's Quest Meeting at the denomination's General Conference at Salt Lake City in 1979. A questionnaire was developed to collect ideas, feelings and objectives from young ministers in the United Pentecostal Church. The heart of this spiritual quest was to simply answer two questions: "What is the reason for our being, that is, what is the purpose of the United Pentecostal Church in the light of Scripture?" and "How should we evangelize the world?" I was deeply appreciative of the opportunity to give input on these vital questions, and in my response letter, I heartily expressed "....appreciation for the opportunity you have provided for young ministers in our Oneness Pentecostal movement to give feedback concerning issues which are vital." I concluded my response with the statement, "I love the United Pentecostal Church International, and my first desire is to see it in perfect alignment with God's eternal purpose."

My answers to the questions in this quest actually turned out to be quite critical. As I reread my responses, I see that already I had developed a great discomfort with the United Pentecostal Church's isolationism from the rest of Christianity. Also, I was bothered by the anti-intellectualism which seemed to pervade the movement. The doctrinaire character of the movement's theology, the elevation of the Book of Acts over the rest of the New Testament, and the emotional and response-oriented character of worship all came in for their share of criticism in my response to this quest toward self-identity. In the end, nothing noteworthy ever came of this quest within the United Pentecostal Church, as far as I know. After a brief time, it was apparently dropped. Yet for me, it had opened a Pandora's box of disturbing questions. If the denomination did not intend to pursue them, I determined to do so, at least on a personal level.

About this time, I was approached by Skip Paynter, the Assistant Editor of the college newspaper, *The Agape*, to contribute a short article. I wrote this article out of my own growing sense of the importance of questions and the need for self-criticism in theological positions. It was not lengthy, but it created a storm of reaction. Here it is in full.

FAITH WITH A QUESTION MARK

To some people questions are disturbing! For them life is a logically consistent, systematic closed activity which can be defined in precise propositions. Questions are unnerving. Worse, questions without immediate answers are unthinkable and to be avoided at all costs. What cannot be rationally treated with finality is to be brushed off or ignored. Probing is regarded with suspicion. Options are nonexistent. Anything less than blind assent is labeled as dissent or even rebellion. Yet, is not such an approach to life, especially Christian life, somewhat naive and overly simplistic? Does not such an attitude portray insecurity rather than

strength? Ultimately, does not this position describe uncertainty rather than faith? The man who is afraid of questions is usually a man who is fearful of his position!

It is my conviction that genuine faith must be a questioning faith! It must be an attitude toward God of seeking for truth and a contentedness in spite of unanswered questions. Faith cannot be founded only on empirical evidence, for what can be conclusively proven does not require faith. For this reason, God Himself must be approached on the level of faith. As the transcendent God, He must be pursued. He reveals himself, true, but He always remains far enough beyond our comprehension to beckon us onward in our quest for Him.

Some of the greatest luminaries in God's assembly of saints were questioners. Job, David, Habakkuk, and others asked discerning and pointed questions, not only of their peers, but of God. Does God enjoy my suffering? If a man dies, will he again live? Is God righteous? How can YHWH use a people less righteous than Israel to judge his own people? In the case of Job, it was the trio with the ready answers who found error, while the sufferer with the unanswered questions found truth. One of the finest ways of discerning the depth of Jesus' teaching is to observe the questions which he asked, answered, or in some cases left unanswered. Jesus never avoided sincere questions that were motivated by truth-seeking. Questions were not an embarrassment to Him.

In the New Testament, one confronts both "faith" and "the faith." "Faith" is what is believed because of genuine encounter with God. "The faith" is what is received because of traditional and doctrinal correctness. Both are important! However, we live in a generation which feels comfortable in accepting "the faith" without necessarily having "faith." A doctrinal heritage can be adopted and defended without a genuine encounter with Christ. "The faith" without "faith" is worth little. One of the prime reasons for such a bland form of Christianity is a reluctance or fear of asking questions. "The faith" can be blindly followed without questions. But real "faith" comes as God reveals Himself, and He reveals Himself to the searcher.

Occasionally, one's approach to the Bible takes the following naive, omniscient form, as related by Bernard Ramm. "Dear Friends, I have read no man's book. I have consulted no man-made commentaries. I have gone right to the Bible to see what it had to say for itself." Yet, as Ramm further points out, although this may sound very spiritual, it is in reality a veiled egotism.

Faith presumes a transcendent God. He is not wholly transcendent, or we could never know him. On the other hand, he is not wholly within our grasp, else he would cease to be God for us. Faith is the first prerequisite for coming to God, yet it also leaves us with unanswered areas, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." In this life, "We see but a poor reflection" (NIV, 2 Co. 13:12). "We have this treasure in a fragile vase of clay..." (Weymouth, 2 Co. 4:7). We are constantly aware of our finitude and of God's all-sufficiency. We are called to trust Him in the unanswered questions of life and eternity. If our faith is healthy and properly focused, unanswered questions are not an embarrassment but

an incentive to continue our pursuit of Christ! As we struggle with a sensitive conscience in making ethical decisions, as we look inwardly in godly self-examination, as we view the needs of the world in light of the gospel, we have faith with a question mark! In the words of Jim Bishop, "I had wanted proof, something for my eyes or ears or hands. He wanted me to believe without it. Faith was what He required of me. And He never rested till I found it."

When this article was published, the phones began to ring! Ministers called the President and the Vice-President of the college to inquire why we tolerated a Bible teacher who so blatantly advocated that we might have some unanswered questions in the United Pentecostal Church. Some of the calls came to me personally to object to my brashness. I remember one call, in particular, from a pastor and popular camp meeting preacher. He indicated to me that to leave questions unanswered was dangerous to our oneness Pentecostal doctrine. He said that he had spent his own years of ministry making certain that the saints in his congregations had no unanswered questions, and he was particularly disturbed that I was undermining his work, especially since he had students from his church attending our Bible college. He wanted to know just what my unanswered questions were? What did I believe about salvation and speaking with tongues and the baptismal formula? Did I believe that there was a clear difference between the forgiveness of sins and the remission of sins?⁹ The interrogation went on for some time with no resolution. In response to these contacts, the president of the college, Reverend T. L. Craft, asked me repeatedly if I believed in speaking in tongues and in baptizing converts in Jesus' name. I honestly replied that I did believe these things. Of course, he would have done better to have asked if I believed one must speak in tongues to be saved or be baptized with the Acts 2:38 formula to be saved. I would not have been able to answer him with much confidence. But for the time being, at least, his questions were general enough so that I was not compelled to face an immediate crisis.

⁹A popular position among many in the United Pentecostal Church was that there was a clear difference between forgiveness of sins and the remission of sins. This distinction corresponded to the difference between repentance and water baptism. Repentance was for the forgiveness of sins, but those same sins were not remitted until one had been baptized. Of course, since the only valid form of baptism was that practiced by the United Pentecostal Church, other so-called Christians who may have repented were still under the damnation of sin, forgiveness notwithstanding, because their sins had not yet been remitted.

When I pointed out to this pastor that in the Greek New Testament the English translations "forgiveness" and "remission" both came from the same Greek word *aphesis*, he simply retorted, "I thought you'd say something like that."

Some of my growing uneasiness with the denomination of my upbringing had little to do with the critical issues of salvation or the distinctive doctrines of the movement. In a more general way, there seemed to be a pervasive anti-intellectualism about the movement that was profoundly unsettling. Simple mistakes in biblical interpretation regularly appeared in publications.¹⁰ Other evidences of anti-intellectualism were apparent in the treatment of non-biblical subjects.¹¹ When an article by Daniel Seagraves appeared in *The Pentecostal Herald* (Dec. 1980) advocating the exclusive use of the King James Version of the Bible, it only added to my discomfort.¹² Once I was asked to review the manuscript of a forthcoming book by missionary Loretta Bernard and her son David to be published concerning the United Pentecostal Church's approach to personal holiness and lifestyle, a book which was originally entitled *Rapture Ready: Practical Holiness for Today*.¹³ My dismay in

¹⁰For instance, one of the popular pulpiteers of the UPC, J. T. Pugh, had written a book *For Preachers Only*. In this book, he had confused the Genesis accounts of Enoch, the faithful (cf. Ge. 5:18-24), with Enoch, the son of Cain (cf. Ge. 4:17-18), claiming that the son of evil Cain had become a hero of faith. Though the mistake was inconsequential as far as oneness Pentecostal theology was concerned, I wrote to J. T. Pugh to point out this problem, because it seemed like a symbol of the general carelessness with which the Bible was approached in the movement. To his credit, J. T. Pugh gave a humble response, attributing his error to having written under stress.

¹¹In March of 1980, in an article in *The Pentecostal Herald* by Reverend Nathaniel Wilson, reference was made to the two philosophers, "Dicard and Higall." I guessed that the author might have been referring to Descartes and Hegel, and in fact, I wrote to Calvin Rigdon, the editor, to find out if this was so. He verified that it was. The issue of misspelling, of course, was insignificant, but the growing conviction that the movement was beset with widespread ignorance was alarming.

¹²The article contained such phrases as, "...the plethora of versions and paraphrases is enough to make your head swim," and "Where is the Word of God to be found in all this heap of genuine leather covers, paperback varieties, bluejean backs and who knows what else?", and "I take my stand firmly and unequivocally on the side of the King James Version." I wrote a twenty page response to the article and sent it to Seagraves as well as to the editor of *The Pentecostal Herald*. I received no response from the editor, but Dan Seagraves corresponded with me and included my response and his rebuttal in his book, *The Search for the Word of God: A Defense of the King James Version* (1982), though he changed my name to Allen White to avoid offense.

¹³This book was, in fact, published, but at my advice, they changed the title from *Rapture*

reading the manuscript was not simply that the legalism, tendentious exegesis, absence of Christian liberty, and misuse of Scripture was appalling, but that such was typical. All of these things and others kept gradually undermining my confidence in the legitimacy of the denomination in which I had been reared.

In retrospect, I know that I could point to several moments of crisis in my pilgrimage away from oneness theology and Pentecostalism. Nothing happened suddenly, but there were some critical junctures which, when taken cumulatively, ultimately led to the crumbling of the theological bulwarks which I had inherited from my childhood. One of these occurred during a class in 1979. I was lecturing in my Pauline Letters course and teaching through the Epistle to the Galatians. I had just begun exegeting the passage in Ga. 2:17-21, which reads:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (KJV)

As I explained Paul's climactic words, something happened in my mind and my heart. In a powerful and overwhelming way, it burst upon me that I was doing exactly what Paul had said he refused to do. In my oneness Pentecostal theology, with its rigid formula of baptism and its demand for speaking in tongues as a validation of the gift of the Spirit, I was indeed "frustrating" the grace of God. Suddenly, the tears began to flow while I was still at the lectern. I could not go on. I was compelled to dismiss the class abruptly.

On that morning, it was as though someone had suddenly kicked out the keystone of my whole theological structure. I would never be the same again. At the time, I was only marginally aware of Martin Luther's experience at Wittenberg or of John Wesley's at Aldersgate, but I think that in some small way my experience was comparable to theirs. I did know that in a new way I could empathize with the shock of Saul of Tarsus when he cried out to the heavenly voice, "Who are you?" and the voice spoke back, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting!" It was as though my heart cried out, "What is the true way?", and God had responded, "It is in the evangelical gospel!"

Now, the writings of St. Paul became exceedingly alive. No longer was the Book of Romans an embarrassment and a puzzle to me, but the truth of justification by faith seemed to leap from its pages. At the time, I was privately reading the Letter to

the Romans in the Weymouth Version, and the opening lines of Chapter 5 shouted at my heart like a thousand voices.

Standing then acquitted as the result of faith, let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also, as the result of faith, we have obtained an introduction into that state of favor with God in which we stand, and we exult in hope of some day sharing in God's glory.

I remember sitting on the altar steps of the First Pentecostal Church in Jackson on a Sunday night after service, reading this passage aloud to a senior Bible college student, knowing that if he simply heard it, his heart, too, would be warmed. When I had finished, he simply looked at me with the quizzical expression that seemed to symbolize oneness Pentecostalism as it faced the teachings of St. Paul. "So?", he said.

This senior notwithstanding, I had discovered a truth that would not be denied. A few weeks later, Pastor Craft asked me to preach in the Sunday evening service. I chose my text from Galatians 2:20-21, and my sermon was on the cross of our Lord. I suppose that the general response of the congregation was similar to that of the senior student's, "So?" But in a few hearts, two of them being April Purtell and James Wilkins, there was a sense that something had changed. They since have told me that on that night they knew we were on the threshold of a new future. We were!

During this same period, the traditional hymns of the church suddenly became deeply meaningful. Though I had sung some of them in my childhood years, in Jackson it was a decided rarity to sing a hymn. Most music was in the form of Pentecostal praise choruses. However, at a private level, I began to play some of these old hymns on my guitar and sing them to myself. The lyrics from "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" and "The Solid Rock" and "Rock of Ages" rang with the biblical truth of justification by faith and the compassion of the grace of God. At the same time, I became increasingly disenchanted with the typical musical fare at our own church services. The songs seemed shallow and biblically superficial.

In the fall of 1979, Jackson College of Ministries moved to another campus. This campus had originally been built as a private, segregationist school a decade or so earlier when the United States government began to enforce integration and bussing in the South. The facility had become available, and it made an admirable campus for a small college. A new dormitory and cafeteria were erected, and the twenty or so existing buildings were remodeled and modified. The move to the new campus had little impact upon my spiritual pilgrimage, but two events associated with this move were important. One was the hiring of a new Bible and Theology instructor, Joseph Howell. The other was my assignment to begin teaching Systematic Theology in the

curriculum.

Joseph Howell was an intellectual such as I had not met before. He had already begun mining the rich gems of evangelical scholarship, and through him, I was introduced to many Christian authors and theologians whom I never previously knew existed, authors such as George Ladd, Millard Erickson, Robert Webber, Ralph Martin, Leon Morris, R. K. Harrison, I. Howard Marshall, Archibald Hunter and William Barclay. I had already begun to read scholars like F. F. Bruce and John Bright on my own, and now with this new wealth of material, I began to consume as much theology as possible. I read widely, including works from Martin Luther and John Calvin of the Reformation, the Ante-Nicene and Apostolic Fathers from the early church, and the modern scholars, too. In addition to introducing me to a whole new realm of Christian thought, Joseph Howell was a wonderful friend with whom I felt completely at ease in discussing my theological frustrations and misgivings. In a closed system like the United Pentecostal Church, such a friend is valuable indeed--one whom you know can be trusted not to use such information in a destructive way.

During the summer of 1979, a small core of faculty spent large amounts of time revising the college curriculum, particularly the department of Bible and Theology. Our goal was to produce a course of study which was in line with evangelical distinctives while not sacrificing our Pentecostal heritage. At this point, none of us wished to jump ship. We only wanted to work for change within our mother denomination, a change that would allow us to become part of the Christian church at large from which we had been isolated and ostracized for so many years. In producing the new catalogue for this curriculum, Joseph Howell wrote a preface which rang with the clarity of a bell. It could be considered as nothing less than a call for reform, and during the next two years, he and I and a small group of others, which included James Wilkins and Mark Roberts, set out to see whether or not Oneness Pentecostalism could discover and live out a compatibility with Christian evangelicalism. The preface to the catalogue went like this:

THE REASONING BEHIND THE REASONING

Theology is serious business, not to be taken lightly or in any haphazard form. The "right spirit" cannot make up for obvious shortcomings in our academic approaches. Our attitudes toward theological studies should be as serious as are our attitudes toward the questions of ultimate significance which theology entertains. Liberal Protestants have lowered the levels of theology to deified social concerns, while the conservatives have often altogether ignored the questions of Biblical scholarship and social responsibility. Neither of these extremes will fit the needs of

twentieth century evangelicalism.

Education, as we all know, is not the filling of an empty vessel with facts, but rather, the training of an individual to think for himself. In the past, conservative Christian education has produced the "prepackaged" Christian minister. But the status quo success of "pat answers" and "how to" courses has not and will never meet the needs of a dynamic changing world. We need to help Christians see, not merely a defensive group of doctrines, but rather, the positive power of the Gospel with its ramifications for all modern communities, social and intellectual.

The responsibility of the Christian educator is to produce students capable of self-criticism, both on individual and corporate levels: the individual level resulting in the call to costly discipleship and the corporate level in the call to relevance--the discrimination between cultural baggage and the lifting up of biblical principle. The offense of Christianity is the cross, not our offensive attitudes or defenses. The twentieth century Christian should be capable of taking theological stands without alienating unbelievers, and do so through the true common ground of the church and the human dilemma.

The chief need of today's Christian student is the blessing of maturity. The immature Christian may wish to secure himself in the anti-intellectualism of unquestionable beliefs. But today it is essential that we know not only what we believe, but also why we believe it. The immature Christian might be quaint to hide behind his piety in the four walls of a church. But heavenly-mindedness never has changed the bleak and dismal picture of the world condition to which maturity calls us to social concern and action. The immature Christian most certainly will enjoy the sanctity of elitist and aristocratic claims, calmly ignoring all other voices of challenge. But maturity reaches out to understand itself and, through itself, the world. It calls for a clear understanding of theological absolutes, yet at the same time demanding the toleration of interpretive differences. The challenge of the Christian educator is to point the student to the path of the "examined life," and in turn, to the path of world mission and evangelical commitment.

If Joseph Howell was the academic mind behind this new approach, the Vice-President, Donald W. Fisher, was the facilitator. The president of the college, Thomas L. Craft, was not an active working part in the day-to-day life of the college. In fact, as time went on, a terrific power-struggle emerged between the president and the vice-president, once it became clear that a number of things were being changed. In any case, Don Fisher cleared the way for Joseph Howell and me. Our work was most notably to be seen in the way we handled certain courses. Joseph Howell's contributions were primarily in his classes on the History of Christian Thought and the Book of Romans. Mine were in Systematic Theology and Biblical Introduction and Interpretation, and of course, Pauline Literature. To be sure, we both taught other courses as well, but these were the ones that, in the end, created a juggernaut of crisis

proportions.

The course in Systematic Theology was divided into two semesters, the first one addressing Pentecostal theology and the second addressing evangelical theology. In the section on Pentecostal theology, I managed to raise as many questions as I answered. I demonstrated how Pentecostal theology evolved historically from the trends in the late 19th century American holiness movement through a series of theological shifts. This approach was certainly novel in the circles of the United Pentecostal Church, since the common approach was to teach that the doctrines of oneness Pentecostalism had been given to us by divine revelation. Also, I pointed out the differences between the theological opinions of many of the earliest oneness Pentecostal leaders, such as, Howard Goss (the first General Superintendent of the UPC) and A. D. Gurley (another first generation leader), from the present state of oneness Pentecostal theological evolution. When pointed questions were asked regarding the central claims of United Pentecostal Church doctrine, questions like, "My grandmother is a Methodist; can she be saved?", or "Must one use the Acts 2:38 formula in baptism in order to be saved?", I hedged. It was not that I intentionally wished to confuse the students, but when it came down to the basic nature of oneness Pentecostal thought, I was compelled to hedge because I no longer believed it. I was careful not to openly state my disagreements, and I never tried to refute United Pentecostal Church doctrine publicly. It was only that my silence on certain issues, especially in the presence of these rather leading questions, was even more profound than spoken words.

In preparing for my lectures on Pentecostal Theology, I came across the doctoral dissertation of David Reed at Boston University. Dr. Reed, formerly a member of the United Pentecostal Church and now an Episcopal clergyman, had produced a work with tremendous insight into the history and ethos of our own movement. His dissertation, entitled *Origins and Development of the Theology of Oneness Pentecostalism in the United States*, was scholarly, penetrating, constructive and enlightening. I also corresponded with Dr. Reed, and following is an excerpt from my July 1980 letter to him.

I think you might be interested, due to your associations and contacts with the United Pentecostal Church International, that the college here in Jackson is attempting to break with the traditional isolationism and, at times, obscurant approaches which have plagued us as a movement. We are encouraging theological dialogue and discouraging anti-intellectualism. We wish to take a more tolerant view of Christians of different persuasions and to soften the offensive dogmatism surrounding the baptismal controversy and the godhead issue. Obviously, in the present milieu of our denomination, such steps are apt to be slow and tentative. At

the same time, from my vantage point at least, it appears that such a direction is welcome by more of our constituency than might be expected.

[In one course]...I have been able to present the doctrine of the trinity in juxtaposition with the oneness view without necessarily any negative overtones, treating them both as alternative attempts to solve the godhead dialectic.

As a text for the second section of Systematic Theology, I chose the two recently released volumes of *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* by Donald Bloesch of the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. In the classes on evangelical theology, the primary realities of grace and faith and the triune character of God stood out in bold relief, both because the textbook made them clear and because I declined to disagree with the evangelical author.¹⁴ In fact, during this period I corresponded with Dr. Bloesch, both to offer thanks for his work and to attempt to explain what we were doing in Jackson. An excerpt from my letter to him in February 1980 is noteworthy:

It may seem surprising that a college associated with classical, oneness Pentecostalism is attempting to break with its traditional position of isolationism, but that is exactly for what we are striving.

In the interest of such a goal, Essentials of Evangelical Theology is playing a vital role. Its message of genuine faith, the attitude toward finding truth as well as preserving it, [and] the discernment with which vital issues are distinguished from peripheral ones...has been a boon to me personally as well as to others in the Department of Theology. We are striving to avoid the anti-intellectualism, separatism, fanaticism, and defensiveness which characterizes many of our peers, while at the same time creating an atmosphere of tolerance among them, first at the student level and eventually beyond. In this regard your writings are especially significant.

I closed the letter with this telling statement: "It is our conviction that we might best serve the people whom we love from within rather than by withdrawal. To this end we solicit your prayers and again express appreciation for your writings."

¹⁴Evangelical textbooks had been used previously in United Pentecostal Church Bible colleges, but only with careful excisions at critical points. For instance, in Edwin Judd's classes on the Life of Christ at Conquerors Bible College, the text *The Christ of the Gospels* by J. W. Shepard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) was used. However, various sentences, particularly those treating John 1:1-2, were to be marked out because they conflicted with the doctrinal position of the United Pentecostal Church. I still have a copy of this textbook with various sentences blocked out and notations added, such as, "We do not believe in the eternal Son," and "We do not believe in the term 'God the Son.'"

Dr. Bloesch graciously acknowledged my letter and even offered some advice in our project. Later, he would include as a footnote in one of his works:

Evangelicalism has a greater range and depth than many of its adherents have been willing to acknowledge. An evangelical contingent is even present in...the United Pentecostal Church. My two-volume work Essentials of Evangelical Theology (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982, 3rd printing) has been used as a text at a Pentecostal Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, though the professor responsible, Dan Lewis, has since left because of his growing reservations with the doctrinal stance of that denomination.¹⁵

It was during 1980 that several of us decided to begin writing a theological journal as an avenue through which to express our ideas and make them available to our oneness Pentecostal constituency. We intended to call it *Dialogue VI*, since each issue would contain six essays. We wrote the first set of essays, and submitted them to Don Fisher, the Vice-President, for his approval. Fisher, however, was wise enough to know that such a publication must first of all have the seal of approval from the college president, so he arranged for T. L. Craft to have a copy of the drafts and called for a meeting of writers and administrators.

The meeting was strained. Pastor Craft confronted us with concern. The nature of the essays, several of which called for open examination of oneness Pentecostal distinctives, had raised questions in his mind about the project. One of the essays, he said, had eighty-six questions and no answers! *Dialogue VI* died before it had ever lived. Thus, we turned our attention elsewhere, this time to producing a book on holiness.

The impetus for this book came as the result of a resolution passed at the United Pentecostal Church General Conference. The month of April 1981 was to be designated "Holiness Month." Joseph Howell, Mark Roberts, James Wilkins and myself responded by writing a book entitled *A Call to Holiness*. We treated the subject of holiness from an evangelical perspective, calling attention to the need for sincere commitment to Christ, the need for care in living out the Christian life in service and purity, and the need to recognize the principles of Christian liberty. Don Fisher sent a letter to James Hall, the editor of Word Aflame publications at the United Pentecostal Church headquarters in Hazelwood, Missouri. The response from Editor Hall was disheartening. We were disappointed, but it was not so much that the manuscript was

¹⁵D. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Garden City: NY: Doubleday, 1983) 157.

rejected for publication that bothered us, since such rejections are commonplace. Rather, it was the reasoning behind the rejection that was discouraging. In his comments about the manuscript, Hall wrote the following:

Holiness standards [in this manuscript] are regarded as cultural in many areas of life.

This approach does not help our pastors answer the problem of women having uncut hair, or men wearing their hair short.

The manuscript offers few concrete guidelines for our fellowship in matters of holiness. For example, it does not deal with the subject of women's hair as a covering. It gives no practical approach to wearing jewelry or women using make-up.

The manuscript gives no further answer on the matter of how a person receives the holy nature of God except 'grace by faith' (pages 32, 72, 81, 136). The following quotes from page 81 are examples: 'God's solution of salvation by grace through faith....God's remedy--justification by faith....faith alone is sufficient for justification.' What about the new birth experience of repentance, water baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost?

The manuscript uses the quotes and opinions of several non-Pentecostal writers. Jerry Bridge's book is called a 'must...' John Murray...John Peter Lange...George Eldon Ladd... Martin Luther is referred to as an authority on holiness (pages 62 and 68) and John Wesley is called a 'godly man' (page 89). Does not this kind of acclaim denote approval of the spiritual life [sic] of these men?

From the review which was sent back to us, we now understood better than ever that the United Pentecostal Church was never going to accept the larger Christian church as valid. It was one thing to reject any number of evangelical scholars, but it was quite another to reject Martin Luther and John Wesley as though it were not permissible to even think of them as godly leaders or approve of their spiritual lives.

The school year of 1980-81 began on a very troubled note. President Craft attended the staff meetings in preparation for the new year. Not only did he attend, he delivered a speech of his own, directed toward the faculty. From my own handwritten notes of that meeting, here is what he said. The college was an extension of the local church, under the church's authority, and therefore, under his own authority as the pastor. All leaders must be subordinate to him, and they all must have convictions in agreement to the ultimate leader, that is, to himself. There could only be one ultimate leader. All teachers must be in total agreement with the theological convictions of the

president. The standard of holiness between the church and the college must be in total agreement. Free thinking was dangerous, and all teachers must be careful not to become too broad-minded. Some things must be 'nailed down' whether or not they are to be found in the Bible. If a matter comes up which creates conflict between the church and the college, any personal feelings and convictions must be put aside for the sake of unity. Criticism of the worship style of the church would not be tolerated. Furthermore, since the church expects participation, when there is a call to raise one's hands in worship, every faculty member is required to do so. As to the Bible and theology classes, new ideas must not be tried out on the students. The students' pastors have trusted us to school them in "the truth" [by which he meant, of course, the doctrines of the United Pentecostal Church]. We must take care not to undercut the local United Pentecostal Church pastor who has sent his students to our college.

We left this staff meeting in subdued silence. At one time, we had assumed that the direction we were trying to take the college had the President's imprimatur. Now, we clearly understood that the things we had done had been allowed only because he was not aware of them. He was aware now, and it was clear that he wanted it stopped! The power struggle between Vice-President Don Fisher and President T. L. Craft seemed to sharpen daily. Fisher secretly wanted to separate the college from the church, while Craft was determined to regain control of his runaway wagon. Something of the personality of the two men also entered into the picture. Both were strong leaders, but in different ways. Don Fisher was an innovative and aggressive leader, intellectual, progressive, efficient and sometimes abrasive. T. L. Craft was a conservative Pentecostal, often tenderhearted, and he won loyalty from his church members because he truly cared for them. His concept of leadership was benevolent, if autocratic, and the present conditions seemed to undermine his leadership. So, the faculty members were to some degree stuck in the middle. There were things they liked about both men as well as things with which they were uncomfortable.

By Christmas time, the tension had reached a breaking point. Part of it was my own fault, since I had transgressed one of the holiness codes of Pastor Craft. My family and I had gone to visit relatives out of state during the Thanksgiving Holiday. Since we were out of state, my wife and I decided to wear our wedding rings, something that had been forbidden in Jackson, since wedding rings were considered by Pastor Craft to be worldly. We fully intended to remove them when we were back in Jackson, for we knew the rules. Our thinking, however, was that the rule against wedding rings was not our own conviction, it was Pastor Craft's. Since we would not be in his jurisdiction for a few days, we could revert to our former practice of wearing them, a practice which we had done until we moved to Mississippi. We made one

mistake. When we returned to Jackson, my wife forgot to remove her wedding ring for a day, and someone in the church saw her. Word came to Pastor Craft. Even worse, Mark and Carol Roberts, another faculty couple, had decided to openly wear their wedding rings, since Carol was pregnant with their first child.

I still vividly recall Don Fisher's words to us as we sat in the President's office where we had been summoned, waiting for Pastor Craft. "The pastor is not happy," was Fisher's charged understatement. He certainly was not! He proceeded to tell us, in no uncertain terms, that wearing rings was a sign of blatant rebellion against him and the church, and therefore, against God. Our explanations were feeble in the presence of his anger, and when we attempted to address the issue of jewelry from a biblical standpoint, we were abruptly cut off with the rebuttal that the Bible supported pastoral authority, thus making our personal opinions and interpretations out of order. It was during this meeting that I came to the realization that I must leave the college and, more than likely, the denomination as well.

The Spring semester of 1981 was, for me, a period of incredible stress. My growing conviction that the denomination of my childhood was in serious theological error made life miserable. The issues of behavioral codes were minor compared with the much greater issues of the gospel and the way of salvation. I continued teaching my classes, but I was less guarded in my language. I recall expressing my disillusionment to Mark Roberts one Spring morning as we stood outside the faculty office complex. The sun was already bright and hot in central Mississippi, but inwardly, I was dark and cold. I told Mark, "The whole issue of baptismal formula and the godhead which was raised by our oneness Pentecostal forebears was a terrible mistake. They were uneducated, simple people who meant well, but they did not have the capacity to do serious biblical study." Mark seemed surprised at my vehemence, but he had the courtesy to let the matter lie.

During that same Spring, the theology faculty became more bold. We sponsored the showing of the newly-released film on the life of Jan Hus, the Bohemian martyr who had lived a century or so before the time of Luther. The film created a veritable furor. The parallel of unassailable church officials who tried to silence a simple priest with the Word of God was all too apparent. The next day, President Craft expressed his displeasure, because in this showing Jan Hus had been treated as though he were a genuine Christian. Even worse, some of the students had begun comparing the members of the Council of Constance, who burned Hus, to the college president himself.

Several other things happened during that fateful Spring. During the National Music Ministry Conference, sponsored by the Music Department of the college, Bill

Gaither had been invited by Lanny Wolfe, the Music Department Chairman, to speak in one of the sessions. Gaither, who is an evangelical and not a Pentecostal, may not have known what he was getting himself into when he consented to speak to a group of oneness Pentecostals. At any rate, at the end of his speech, someone asked Gaither if he would allow himself to be prayed for. He could hardly refuse prayer, of course, but then several eager souls surrounded him, laid hands upon his head, and began to pray that he would receive the Holy Ghost. Someone gave a "message in tongues," and someone else gave an interpretation.

A similar incident occurred at a retreat sponsored by the college for young adults from United Pentecostal congregations in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. During that retreat, a film, *Mountain of Light*, was shown concerning the missionary work of Marilyn Lazlo, a Wycliffe Bible translator in Paupua, New Guinea. At the end of the film, Joseph Howell led in prayer for Marilyn's ministry, calling her his "sister in Christ." Such language, in an exclusivistic culture such as the United Pentecostal Church, was volatile. Joe was severely criticized, and when I attempted to defend him, I was compelled to spend the next two hours or so in animated conversation with two ministers, one from United Pentecostal Church headquarters, who happened to be in Jackson for the day. They wanted to know how we could have a faculty member who so openly regarded an evangelical as a "sister in Christ," and I, for my part, wanted to know how they could refuse her.

To top everything else, Pastor Craft invited an evangelist named Richard Heard to conduct revival services at First Pentecostal Church. Evangelist Heard had been at the church in Jackson a year or so earlier, and the theology faculty was acutely uncomfortable with his preaching. In our opinion, it was a mixture of fear tactics, crowd psychology, and exhibitionism. It did not help that the church advertized these special meetings with full page ads in the Clarion-Ledger, the Jackson newspaper, as well as with massive spotlights, such as are used at malls and car dealerships, beaming across the skies in front of the church. All faculty members were required to attend, of course.

In one sermon, where Evangelist Heard graphically described a young man being burned to death as a warning to the hell-bound, the narrative was so shocking that my eight-year old son was literally shaking with fear. I gathered my family and walked out. I determined not to make my wife or sons attend another session of such outrageous psychological abuse, and while I sometimes went to church alone, to satisfy the requirement that I attend, I made sure that my wife and children were never again exposed to such brutal mind games. How any group of people could condemn the evils of television and at the same time allow such an emotional wrecking ball into

their very pulpits defied imagination. It seemed to me to be as godless as anything I could conceive.¹⁶

The end was near. We could all feel it. As an effort to sort out my own thoughts, I began writing an essay entitled *Escape from History* (reproduced in full in a later chapter). While it was not intended to be circulated, photocopies of it were made by several students and secretly passed around. In early Spring of 1981, Don Fisher announced that he would not sign his contract as the Vice-President for the coming year. When this news was released, it put me in a very awkward position. I, too, had determined not to sign my contract for the next year, and I had already composed a letter to that effect. I had no idea that Don Fisher also would be leaving. If I announced my own departure, would it be perceived as a conspiracy? Nevertheless, I refused to renew my contract. Joseph Howell, who was under serious theological suspicion by President Craft, was offered a partial contract for the next year, but its conditions so restricted his teaching load that it was untenable, and Joe refused to sign it. Mark Roberts determined to weather the storm, if possible, and decided to stay on the faculty. He lasted less than a semester before he was fired. In all, the heart of the theology department declined to sign their new teaching contracts.

During the final week at school, a group of students decided to use one of the lunch hours in the cafeteria to show their appreciation for the departing teachers, since no official vehicle was open to them. One student, Robin Wentworth, boldly stood and read the preface to the college catalogue which Joseph Howell had written two years earlier. President Craft looked obviously displeased, but there was not much he could do without making a face-losing scene.

¹⁶Recently, I had the unexpected opportunity to once again meet Richard Heard and to speak to him about this meeting. He explained to me that he had been given a job to do in Jackson, and he did it to the best of his ability. However, he also said that he has since gone through a substantial change in thinking. Even at the time he was in Jackson, he said he had begun preaching in Baptist churches (something that would have been totally unacceptable to the United Pentecostal Church constituency). Since then he has distanced himself from the United Pentecostal Church, he interacts regularly with Christians of other denominations and persuasions, and the church he currently pastors in Texas conducts a ministry of housing and help to the aids community.

At commencement, T. F. Tenney, a popular preacher and a member of the college's Board of Directors, even managed to work into his public prayer some words about the tragedy of "liberal" teachers who had departed from the sacred truths of the oneness Pentecostal movement. It did not take a very vigorous imagination to decipher where these words were aimed.¹⁷ The semester ended with the atmosphere of a funeral.

A year after I had left Jackson, Dr. Bloesch, the theologian from the University of Dubuque, called me to verify some information which he intended to use in a forthcoming book. After speaking with him briefly by phone, I decided to share more fully the situation as it had developed in Jackson. Following, except for a couple of minor omissions which are irrelevant to this chapter, is the letter I wrote to him.

Dear Dr. Bloesch:

After your courteous call this past week, I thought perhaps I might share with you more fully the situation within the United Pentecostal Church as it developed over the past couple of years. As you know from my previous letter, the Department of Theology at Jackson College of Ministries was attempting to stimulate an attitude of ecumenism, dialogue and tolerance toward the greater body of evangelicalism. We, of course, were willing to accept the risk that there might be some opposition, but at the time I corresponded with you, it appeared that we were making progress.

However, about a year and a half ago, we encountered a solid wave of resistance. It was made clear to us that our overtones toward evangelicalism were interpreted as disloyalty. Furthermore, we were advised to recant our acceptance of any form of trinitarianism, no matter how mild, and to lay aside our emphases of the Reformation truths of salvation by grace and faith alone. We were to prefer in their place the oneness Pentecostal distinctives of the Jesus' name baptismal formula and the experience of tongues, without which, we were told, grace and faith were insufficient.

To shorten a long story, several faculty members resigned at the close of the 1981 Spring Semester. Personally, I felt that I could not affirm the theological position toward which we were being called. To give lip service to it would have been hypocritical, and resignation seemed the only ethical alternative. The Department of Theology was emptied of all its full-time teachers except one. This one, who taught some of his courses in the area of Christian Education, attempted to stay on and

¹⁷In fairness, his prayer notwithstanding, Tenney was usually a moderate voice within the United Pentecostal Church. My prayer is that he will himself take the courage to "come out" as has his own son, who is also a minister.

maintain a low profile on the issue, but to no avail. After putting him through a heresy examination of sorts, he was fired in December 1981 for disloyalty and false doctrine.

On the brighter side, I am confident that the cause for which we strove was not altogether fruitless. There are a substantial number of graduates from the past five years who have seen the futility of obscurantism and exclusivism. I was delighted when the Senior Class of 1981 voted unanimously to extend to you a personal invitation to be the 1981 Commencement speaker. This request was rejected by the college administration, so of course,¹⁸ you never knew of it, but I assure you that the desire of these Seniors indicates the level at which your writings have affected them for the good. I am happy to say that a good many of them have gone on to pursue their education in a variety of evangelical colleges (several at Wheaton).

As for myself, I forfeited my credentials with the United Pentecostal Church shortly after I resigned from Jackson College of Ministries. I am currently pastoring a nondenominational evangelical church (which also has a Pentecostal background) and further pursuing my education in the Detroit area. I am making new evangelical friends and trying to find my place in the wider evangelical community.

In closing, thank you again for your consideration and interest. I almost wrote to you a year ago about the whole thing, not because I knew you well but because I felt that in some way you might understand. Some decisions for Christ can be very lonely! It would be an honor someday to meet you in person!

Your friend in Christ,

Dan Lewis

The aftermath of the Spring of 1981 was considerable. The disenfranchised faculty members went in various directions. Don Fisher went to Oregon to assume the presidency of the smaller (and less rigid) United Pentecostal Church Bible College in Portland, Oregon. It is my opinion that he felt that a more evangelical Bible college would be accepted in the Northwest. In earlier decades, the leadership of this area of

¹⁸It was traditional for the Senior Class at Jackson College of Ministries to select its own commencement speaker. In the past, all speakers were from the pool of well-known oneness Pentecostal pulpiteers within the United Pentecostal Church. That the Senior Class unanimously asked for Dr. Donald Bloesch was quite a surprise! When I reviewed it with Vice-President Donald Fisher, he simply cringed and said that it would be unwise to even broach the subject to President Craft. In the end, President Craft chose the commencement speaker.

the United Pentecostal Church had been theologically mild, if anything, and Fisher probably hoped that this older influence would still be dominant. In fact, the California District of the United Pentecostal Church had for some time been exporting ministers northward in the hopes of bringing the Pacific Northwest back on line theologically with the more radical mainstream. As it turned out, Fisher's hopes were not justified, and the college, which was already in serious financial straits, went defunct.

As to the other faculty who left Jackson College of Ministries, James Wilkins applied as a missionary furlough replacement for the United Pentecostal Church. While he had some difficulty with the Missions Board, due to suspicions concerning how much he may have been influenced by the events in the Jackson debacle, he was finally approved. He went to France, and later, the French West Indies. For the next few years, he struggled with the theology of the United Pentecostal Church, and eventually, he left the movement also. He finished an M.A. and Ph.D. at the Ohio State University and became a member of the Christian Reformed Church. As of this writing, he serves as an associate professor in the French Department at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mark Roberts, after being fired from Jackson College of Ministries, moved to Ohio, where he continued for a time to attend a United Pentecostal Church pastored by James Stewart in Columbus. He finished an M.A. in rhetoric at the Ohio State University, and eventually he also left the United Pentecostal Church to become an evangelical. Joe Howell, after finishing his M.A. at Mississippi College, went to Florida State University, where he completed a Ph.D.¹⁹ My family and I survived the summer and finally accepted a pastorate in Troy, Michigan. This congregation in Troy had originally been chartered as Oak Park Christian Chapel, an independent community church in a suburb of Detroit. However, it had temporarily merged with a United Pentecostal Church, during which time it had split twice. What was left was a small and disheartened group without a pastor and no place to turn. I accepted this pastorate with the understanding that I would be moving them away from their past and toward evangelicalism.²⁰ While in Troy, I finished a B.R.E. at William

¹⁹Joe Howell's doctoral dissertation in the Department of Humanities is important, for it also addresses the United Pentecostal Church among other oneness Pentecostal denominations. Entitled *The People of the Name: Oneness Pentecostalism in the United States*, his work investigates the life and development of oneness Pentecostalism as a religious and social movement, particularly with respect to the milieu out of which it emerged in the era 1914-1916. He also addresses the character of the movement in the context of the larger American society.

²⁰Actually, I had been contacted about this congregation in the Spring of 1981. I had made tentative arrangements to visit and preach there during Easter break, but William Starr, the

Tyndale College and completed an M.A. at the University of Detroit.

A number of students who attended Jackson College of Ministries during the tumultuous era of 1976-81 went on to complete degrees. Among them were Stephen Graham, who completed a B.A. and M.A. at Wheaton College and a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Steve is now a professor of church history at North Park Seminary in Chicago. Also going to Wheaton was Larry Snyder, where he completed a B.A. and M.A. He finished his Ph.D. at Chapel Hill, North Carolina and now serves as a professor of American religious history at Western Kentucky University. Chris Klug finished a B.A. at Wheaton and an M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Skip Paynter completed a B.A. and M.A. at Warner Pacific College in Oregon. Robin Wentworth completed a B.A. and B.S. at John Brown University and an M.A. and Ph.D. at Mississippi State University. Stan Blevins completed a B.A. and M.A. at the Ohio State University. Kathy (Hoover) Scattaglini completed a B.A. and M.Th. at Fuller Theological Seminary. Rod Fitzgerald completed a B.S., B.A., and two M.A.s, Lynette Hoover a B.S.W., and Sandra Blevins a B.A. at the Ohio State University and is presently attending the Indiana School of Law. None of these people remained in the United Pentecostal Church. They relocated into the Methodist Church, the Christian & Missionary Alliance Church, the Evangelical Covenant Church, the Evangelical Free Church and/or other Christian groups.

The fact that this kind of continuing education happened at all is remarkable. Within the United Pentecostal Church, college degrees (other than United Pentecostal college diplomas and degrees, none of which are accredited) are rare indeed. To have this many academic degrees emerge from largely a single matrix is virtually unheard of! The important thing is that these people continued as Christians. Traditionally, those who leave the United Pentecostal Church rarely find their way into another Christian denomination or group. They usually live spiritually fragmented lives, unwilling to find new Christian allegiances and unable to go back to the United Pentecostal Church.

On the other hand, the aftermath at Jackson College of Ministries during the 1981-82 school year was difficult for those who remained. The next Senior Class struggled through the year. Those who might have been sympathetic to the departed faculty were treated with suspicion. Some of them dropped out quickly and others

District Superintendent of the Michigan District, told me that if I so much as set foot in that church, he would press charges against me through the United Pentecostal Church judicial procedure, since the church in Troy was "under question." Since I wanted to at least finish out the semester at Jackson College of Ministries, I did not visit them at that time, but waited until summer.

persevered in the midst of difficulty. It must have been equally difficult for the new incoming faculty. They were charged with the task of putting the college back on course in full allegiance to the traditions of the United Pentecostal Church.

This tension between the past and the present was evident in a brief conversation between David Bernard and me. David was coming in as my replacement in the Dean's Office, and as I was vacating my office, he was moving in. As we worked together, carrying boxes in (his) and out (mine), I paused at one point and asked him point blank, "Do you really believe that a person will go to hell if he has not spoken in tongues?" I think the abruptness of the question took him back somewhat, for it is a question that members of the United Pentecostal Church are loathe to answer. Their theology inevitably drives them to this conclusion, but it is an uncomfortable conclusion, even for them. David simply said, "Yes, I think that they do, but I say so in a non-judgmental way." Here is the tension at its keenest. Can anyone condemn another person to hell in a non-judgmental way?

Some years later, I heard about a conversation overheard between the college president, T. L. Craft, and a parent of the one of the Jackson College of Ministries students, a student who had left the United Pentecostal Church for evangelicalism. It was reported that he sadly shook his head as he spoke to this mother and said, "It was the lost generation of Pentecost." So we were.

THE EXODUS

History is forever springing surprises even on the most perspicacious of us. We could not foresee what it would be like: how for no visible compelling reason the earth would shudder and give, how the gates of the abyss would briefly, grudgingly part so that two or three birds of truth would fly out before they slammed to, to stay shut for a long time to come.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Earlier, I said that departing from the United Pentecostal Church was a more difficult path than staying within it. Primarily, I intended this statement in a sociological context. Theologically, departure was the only avenue open if I wished to maintain personal integrity. To be free to serve the Lord Jesus Christ out of thankfulness for his grace rather than from the compulsion of a denominational taskmaster was like coming out of Egypt. Still, as with the ancient Israelites, it was one thing to take the people out of Egypt and quite another to take Egypt out of the people. It was one thing to leave the United Pentecostal Church in order to be joined to the biblical and historic faith of the church, but it was quite another to sort through all the emotional and sociological factors that attend such a decision. I would be remiss if I implied that this road was an easy one. Thus, I wish to reflect upon what happens after one leaves the United Pentecostal Church. This, too, is an experience which one can survive. However, it will be a stressful process, often several years long. Its length will probably be in direct proportion to one's original loyalty to and tenure within the United Pentecostal Church. It will be the most difficult for those reared from childhood in the denomination, since their entire sociological structure is bound up there.

In the first place, the person who leaves the circle of the United Pentecostal Church finds that he or she is now in a sociological no man's land. This disenfranchised state, more often than not, has immediate repercussions within one's family. I suppose that I was more fortunate than some in that my father empathized with my struggle. I had no inkling that he had ever considered some of the issues that

had been troubling me for the past several years--the theological issues revolving around salvation, the nature of God, biblical interpretation and the history of the Oneness Pentecostal movement. I wondered how I might be able to explain my exodus to him. After all, he had been a member of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ before its merger with the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated in 1945, which resulted in the United Pentecostal Church. Now, almost thirty-five years later, I was leaving the denomination of which he had been a part for most of his Christian life.

Ironically, when I finally broached the subject to him, he startled me by admitting that many of the issues with which I had struggled were issues with which he also had wrestled for many years. I had no idea that this was so! While it would be too much to say that he necessarily agreed with all my decisions, he at least understood the issues and never withdrew his support and affection. Furthermore, my father-in-law, also, was very supportive. Such responses are truly events for which to be thankful, for often, such kindness is missing. Many people when they left the United Pentecostal Church have been completely ostracized by their own family. Others have been disowned by their parents. More than once I have heard old-timers testify about how difficult it was for them when they left their former denominations to join the Oneness Pentecostals in the early days of the Pentecostal movement. Now that the exchange is the other way, with many leaving the United Pentecostal Church and finding their way back to the historic Christian faith, this same rejection is expressed, only in reverse. Friends, parents and other family members do not understand, and the only way some of them seem to know to respond is to ostracize the offending individual. Those who leave are bereft of sociological support structures. Added to this is the judgmentalism of friends or family members who telephone periodically to inform the one who has left that they are fasting and praying for his or her salvation. Oneness Pentecostals generally are no better than any other sub-cultural group in offering unconditional love.

If making this transition is difficult in the context of the extended family, it may not be any easier in the context of the immediate family. A spouse may or may not be willing to go with you if you decide to leave the denomination. Since people leaving the United Pentecostal Church are considered to be leaving Christ himself, the Scripture from 1 Corinthians 7:15 is sometimes invoked, "If the unbeliever leaves, let him do so." Marriages have been destroyed over one partner leaving the United Pentecostal Church. Ironically, marital rupture is more likely to occur if one leaves the denomination in order to go to another Christian church than if one merely "backslides." There is hope for the backslider, but not much hope for someone who is considered to be apostate.

I made the mistake of working through my theological transition without fully informing my own wife of what was taking place. This was a serious error in judgement, and it was an injustice to her. I did not know for sure where I was going--only where I was *not* going. This made me reluctant to fully disclose the various stages of the transition as they were occurring. Eventually, I became an evangelical almost before I had ever met one. When I finally withdrew from the United Pentecostal Church, my wife had considerable catching up to do, and it was not easy for her. To her credit, she made rapid progress, but if I had it to do over, I would surely do it differently. I would try to make the transition together with her. Here are some of her own feelings during this "catching-up" time.

This subject is very hard for me to put down on paper. I've thought about it often, but to put my finger on my reactions and how this transition affected my life is not easy. It's really a mishmash of emotions. If I had to reduce my response to one word, it would be fear....fear of the unknown, fear of my future with God, fear that I had wasted my life up to this point, fear of what my parents would say (we always want to please them), and fear that if I did change and it was wrong, then I would be leading my children down the wrong path. We had always known that what we believed up to this point was right, and we always knew that everyone else was wrong. I told people, endless people, that they were wrong and that what I had was right. I was proud--proud of my religion, proud that God loved me enough to save me and my family above my neighbors, and proud of my long hair. Ain't that a scream?

This "coming out" was an extremely humbling experience for me. I cried a lot. I cried because everything I had known up to this point might not mean anything, cried because of this confusion in my mind about God and the Trinity (Boy, was that a dirty word!), cried because my husband had not communicated his feelings and thoughts to me. He was taking me and the boys down a road that I didn't know. I could have shot him, but I can't very well shoot the father of my boys, now can I?

I cannot say that I never had questions about my religion while in the UPC. I did. I always questioned the unfairness of sending women to hell because of short hair or makeup, especially women who loved God, went to church faithfully, supported the ministry and lived a wholesome life. This sort of thing always bothered me, even as a little girl. Another thing that bothered me was the thought that only a few of those who

claimed to be Christians would be saved--that generations and generations of people would go to hell because they didn't speak in tongues. I tried not to think too much on these things, because it seemed so unfair of God, but at least I was saved, and that's what counted most! So, I made sure that others knew that they were wrong. To now face the fact that it was we, and not they, who were wrong is very hard for us ex-UPC people to take. It hurts our pride, and we were a very proud people. In coming out I had to face the fact that I had hurt a lot of people with my arrogance, that I had been their judge and put myself up as someone special. Don't think I didn't start early with this judgmentalism, either. I once told an aunt that she was going to hell for wearing red fingernail polish on her toes, and at the time I was at the ripe old age of five!

With all these thoughts going through my head, after two years of ups and downs and a lot of crying, I had come to the conclusion that I was a sinner just like everyone else in the world and that I had to humble myself before God and ask for his forgiveness. I couldn't just speak in tongues on Sunday night and everything else would be alright. I couldn't just put a Band-aid on my life and let the infection continue. That was really how I had lived my life up to this point. My sin or whatever other hang-ups I had were really never resolved. They didn't have to be. I had the assurance that my spiritual life was in order.

So, was there fear? Yes, lots of fear! There was fear that what I had been living was a lie, that I had been deceitful to myself and to God and to countless Christians around me. After the fear and the crying were done, then I had to contend with the pain of rejection from my family and friends. No one who has not been through it can understand the pain of rejection by a parent. Apparently unconditional love didn't hold water anymore. Now that I had left the UPC, I was going to hell. "How could you turn away from the truth? How could you disgrace your parents this way? How could you do this to your children?" Pain? Yes, lots of pain. For me this was the most painful side effect from coming out. It made you question whether leaving was really worth it. It would have been much easier to stay right where we were.

So, coming out is not easy. It's the hardest thing you will ever do. But if you do decide to come out and realize that the fear, anger and rejection are only temporary, you will make a marvelous discovery about yourself and about God. You will realize that God is the same, that He

has healed you, and that you are not alone out there. There is a whole new world of Christians who love Him just as you do. You won't feel the need to judge them, and you can accept them as God does.

I have grown stronger because of all this. When I look at myself today, I see a much more spiritually stable person. I am secure in my faith, I do not judge others about aspects of theirs lives. (What's right for them might not be right for me, within a biblical context, of course). I find that my life is a testimony in itself. I have witnessed of Christ more since being out than I ever did as a UPCer. And for the first time I am having fun. Christians can have fun, and the fact that they can says more to the outsider than one might suspect. I now have a workable relationship with my family. I have apologized to countless people for my judgmentalism and have asked for their forgiveness. I am now healthy and strong. It was worth it!

Fortunately, our children were young enough that the transition had minimal impact. Of our three sons, only the oldest, James, remembers anything substantial about our former lives in the United Pentecostal Church, and even for him, the memories are somewhat vague. To be sure, there are events which he can recall. He can recall the terrorism of some of the sermons which, to a six year old boy, must have been horrifying. He might even recall being urged to speak in tongues by well-meaning people who accosted him at the close of Sunday evening services, situations which we tried to avoid, though not altogether successfully. Our younger sons, on the other hand, know only the evangelical church. It is now thirteen years since I came to the traumatic decision that we must leave the United Pentecostal Church, and I am pleased that virtually all of my extended family has now left as well, including my parents and my sisters.

In addition to the trauma of family tension, leaving the United Pentecostal Church will also fracture friendships. Members of the United Pentecostal Church are discouraged from having close friendships with people outside the denomination, particularly Christians from other churches. Since the one who leaves is usually considered to be apostate (they have "rejected the truth"), the former warm ties of fellowship are no longer possible. In fairness, the United Pentecostal Church does not formally forbid relationships between its members and non-members (though some local congregations might). Nevertheless, relationships become so awkward and strained that they cannot easily be maintained.

One encounters added stress when attempting to find new friends. Previously,

while in the United Pentecostal Church, one could travel almost anywhere in the United States and find immediate friends within a local United Pentecostal Church. If you were one of the tribe, any other member anywhere would be delighted to know you, and if need be, to help you. Friendships outside of the circle of the United Pentecostal Church were frowned upon, however. Thus, while one might make acquaintances at work or at school, such relationships were developed only with the goal in mind of converting these people to the United Pentecostal Church. As such, the development of friendships with people who might not be just like oneself was rarely experienced. Once out, however, one must learn to meet people at a different level. To work toward levels of deeper friendship is particularly difficult, not only because one has had no prior experience, but also because outsiders are not apt to understand the complex emotions of one who has long been saturated with United Pentecostal Church culture. Rather common theological expressions, like "Trinity," "Three Persons," the triad of "the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," "decisions for Christ," and so forth, have an emotionally negative character that has been so inbred that it tends to linger, even when one is no longer associated with Oneness Pentecostalism. Too, it is hard to speak about one's past life in the United Pentecostal Church, since to most other people, it is as strange as a foreign culture.

Besides the sociological factor, there is a very critical economic factor, especially if one is a minister. Where does one go as a professional minister after leaving the United Pentecostal Church? First, since the denomination is in opposition to the historic Christian church, other Christian denominations are not apt to feel very comfortable with a former United Pentecostal Church minister in their midst. Even if they do, there will almost certainly be a rather intensive theological examination. None of the United Pentecostal Church Bible colleges are accredited, so even if one has such a college diploma, it is worthless anywhere but in the United Pentecostal Church. If one is a pastor of a United Pentecostal Church, he must consider whether or not his congregation will leave with him if he departs from the denomination. The pastor may have embraced the historic faith of the church, but that does not mean his congregational members, who have longstanding United Pentecostal Church loyalties, will do the same. For those churches which are officially affiliated with the denomination, even if the congregation also decides to leave, the church property will not be released by the denomination. Ordination is another problem. In some states, if a minister has ever been ordained, his ordination is considered intact, regardless of his denominational affiliation. In others, however, ordination must be sought again through other avenues. All these factors mean that economic survival after leaving the United Pentecostal Church is precarious. It may entail the pastor leaving his vocation,

either temporarily or permanently.

In my own case, I had a wife and three children to support when I contemplated leaving the denomination. Job opportunities for a used United Pentecostal Church Bible college teacher are nonexistent. I had almost made up my mind to simply locate in a town near a university so that I could work part-time for a few years, while going back and completing my education at an accredited institution. When my wife and I accepted the call to pastor in Troy, Michigan, I responded only after I was assured that I would be free to go back to college. Fortunately for us, this church needed us about as badly as we needed them.

Along quite another line, I think that it may be in order to offer a word of caution about the dangers of excess when one leaves Oneness Pentecostalism. My observation is that people who have lived for substantial lengths of time in the United Pentecostal Church do not know how to handle Christian freedom. They have never had the chance. While in the United Pentecostal Church, they lived by a legislated conscience. Sins were clearly spelled out in the behavioral codes, and one did not need to make personal ethical decisions very often. Ethics were handed down from the powers that be, either from the denomination itself or from the local pastor. When one breaks free from this ecclesiastical bondage and enters the realm of Christian freedom, there is often a lack of reserve. No longer is there anyone to tell you where to go, what activities are permissible, and what behaviors are allowed. Women can now wear lipstick, display jewelry, use mascara and cut their hair. Men can go bowling, grow a beard or even go swimming in the public pool. Either men or women can take in a movie, buy a television or go to the beach. Such activities may seem to be quite ordinary to normal Christians, but all these things were serious transgressions in the United Pentecostal Church. Within the Oneness Pentecostal movement, the approach to personal holiness is almost always a clear-cut "yes" or "no." The one who leaves the United Pentecostal Church is now confronted with the biblical call for moderation and self-control. The idea that permissible behaviors should be controlled by motives of glorifying God and showing love to others is a relatively new one. Consequently, behaviors can become excessive. It is extremely difficult for the person from the United Pentecostal Church to get used to the idea that if one can do something at all, he or she should still exercise the power of ethical restraint and good judgment. In moving from an "all-or-nothing" culture, ethical choices are new and confusing. Sometimes behaviors may be outrageously funny, but at other times they are sad.

The one who leaves the United Pentecostal Church will also find a bewildering assortment of theologies and ideas among other Christians. Besides the emotional discomfort of expressions like "Trinity" and "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," which is

not easily dismissed, there is an irrational prejudice against virtually any expression which one has not encountered previously. One must not only learn Christian theology all over again, he or she must also unlearn the distortions from the past. The biggest theological issues, of course, will be the godhead, the baptismal formula, the significance of speaking in tongues, and the various holiness codes. However, there will be other issues, too, depending upon what kind of contact one makes with the various streams of Christian thinking. I know of former Oneness Pentecostals who are now Episcopal, Greek Orthodox, Reformed, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Assembly of God, independent charismatic, Christian Missionary Alliance, Evangelical Covenant and Evangelical Free, among others. Any of these streams of Christian thinking have distinctive emphases and doctrines, though all of them stand within the historic faith of Christianity over against the United Pentecostal Church. Sorting through the theological maze of primary and secondary issues will take considerable time.

Furthermore, one can expect to encounter new ideas about spirituality. One will discover that there are many Christians in other denominations who truly love Jesus Christ but have never spoken in tongues nor do they seek to. When they pray, they do not try to engage God by either volume or ecstasy--yet they pray effectively. Sometimes the one who has just left the United Pentecostal Church finds it difficult to distinguish between the emotional and the spiritual, particularly since these spheres are not generally distinguished within Oneness Pentecostalism. Emotionalism is often equated with spirituality in the United Pentecostal Church, and the one who leaves must sort out these differences. The old definitions of spirituality have been left behind, but if so, one must find out what is true spirituality.

Then, unless one is a minister and still seeking to continue in professional ministry, one must find a church in which to worship. This, too, is often a difficult business. The worship patterns of other churches seem strange and uncomfortable. The people may be hard to get acquainted with. When they find out that you were formerly Oneness Pentecostal, they may be altogether unfamiliar with the category. Other Christians may view the United Pentecostal Church as a marginal Christian cult, somewhat on the order of the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Thus, they might respond with either fascination or repugnance.

Several years ago I was asked to be the guest on a syndicated Christian radio broadcast about my past life in the United Pentecostal Church. One caller asked me on the air what I felt like when I accepted the doctrine of the Trinity and became saved. For this caller, I was hell-bound as a Oneness Pentecostal. On another occasion, a Christian apologist tried to force me to admit that all people in the United Pentecostal

Church would be lost, because they denied the central doctrines of Christianity. Such questions are awkward, for they presuppose a great deal about one's former association and associates, and even though you may have left the United Pentecostal Church, you may not always agree with those presuppositions. It is also usually true that even after one leaves, he or she is to some degree still in transition. Many times people leave the United Pentecostal Church via a gradual spiritual pilgrimage, rather than a metamorphosis. Thus, the problem of finding a new community of faith with which to worship can be particularly stressful. As one continues the spiritual pilgrimage, it is not unusual to visit a considerable number of congregations before you find the "right fit." No one understands you, since no one has had the past you have had. I compare it to the camaraderie of the Vietnam War veterans. It is hard to talk about the jungles of Southeast Asia with someone who was never there.

My counsel in finding a new church home is to take your time. Visit several churches with different worship forms. You probably have been curious about how other Christians worship, so enjoy the opportunity you now have to observe them. Visit a Lutheran church, a Methodist church, a Presbyterian church, a Baptist church, an Orthodox Church or a Roman Catholic church. Try to decide what theological issues you feel you must die for and which ones can be passed over. Sit down and write out for yourself what you think are the central issues of the Christian faith and the Christian life. Continue to examine these issues, for even here you may need to adjust your perspective as you grow further. Talk to the leaders and members of the churches you visit. Ask if they have a written statement of faith. If they do, get a copy and read it. Pay attention to what it says as well as to what it does not say.

Finally, and this may be the most important thing of all, find other persons who have also left the UPC with whom you can communicate. The common ground between you will astonish you. Such communication and sharing is therapeutic and healing. For me, it was primarily the communication with two friends, Rod Loudermilk and Dan Scott, Jr., that preserved my sanity. We carried on a considerable written correspondence, not to mention phone calls, and these exchanges were priceless! Sometimes you may find other avenues for communication. For instance, in the Pacific Northwest a small congregation of former United Pentecostals began a publication called *In Touch*, by which to establish a vehicle for communication. Its contributors and readers were all largely former members of the United Pentecostal Church, and its articles were of interest to such people. Quite a number of former faculty and students from Jackson College of Ministries organized a KIT Retreat (Keeping in Touch). These retreats occur every couple of years or so, and they bring together old friends from as far apart as California to Maryland and Michigan to

Alabama, all who went through the Jackson experience in 1976-81. I should also add that the writings of other Christians can be very edifying and helpful. Read Chuck Colson, Corrie ten Boom, C. S. Lewis and Charles Swindoll. In time, you will feel less and less uncomfortable and more and more "at home" in the wonderful, wide world of the church of Jesus Christ.

ROADS LESS TRAVELED

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

Then took the other...

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Robert Frost

Hundreds if not thousands of men and women have left the United Pentecostal Church over the past decade. Following are vignettes from a few of them who spiritually survived. Their stories follow different patterns, but in their own words they describe the transition, what it meant and what it means to make the journey out. Some of these stories will be heart-breaking. Others will be poignant. All of them will be reflective. Together, they offer a unique perspective on this strange yet exhilarating journey.

DONNA FISHER, Vancouver, Washington

[Donna Fisher was the wife of the Vice-President of Jackson College of Ministries. She and her husband, Donald, came to Jackson from the headquarters of the United Pentecostal Church, where they worked for a dozen years or so in the Youth Department, the Foreign Missions Department, and Word Aflame Publications. After leaving Jackson in 1981, they went to Portland, Oregon to accept the presidency of Conquerors Bible College, another United Pentecostal Church Bible college. Eventually, they left the United Pentecostal Church altogether. Donna now

lives in Vancouver, Washington, where she works as an editor for an evangelical home schooling publishing company.]

On the journey out. I'll have to admit that up to now it's a subject I've boxed up and set aside, for the most part. Perhaps it's time to open the box and examine the contents. We have all traveled along unique trails to the present. Even though we may seem to be together in the present, we had to travel our own routes to get here.

In looking back, I can see that the journey out began a long time ago. We moved to St. Louis, to UPC "headquarters,"²¹ as a young family. We came from the Pacific Northwest, where a variety of theological positions was allowed and accommodated. We were introduced into a circle that, likewise, embraced a variety of positions. Our goals were to unite for the common cause of furthering the Kingdom.

It was obvious that the element of self, against which the Holy Spirit does battle, was present in this quest. It was evidenced in a struggle for power and control over others. It was there only as a small germ, perhaps--like a virus. It seemed that rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to have dominion in and among us, some found it necessary to control His property for Him. Someone had to decide what we stood for, what we could and could not do, what was our personal code of holy living, and so forth.

The balance between living in harmony and unity, and not compromising truth is a hard one to achieve. And so the virus found a place to survive. It's a strange thing....

The loud voices were the ones which, more and more, garnered support. They were not necessarily those of leaders at headquarters--but the leaders needed to keep their positions intact; they needed support for their programs. That seemed to mean showing support for the vocal ones. I had a hard time accepting such ideas, ideas that an area of the United States or the world had yet to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ only because we hadn't taken it there. I saw clamps put on those of us who made gestures of fellowship to others outside our own organization. Missionaries could and did get away with some amount of such Christian fellowship overseas, but not at home!

Control can't be kept in that way. So, the virus spread. We had the whole truth? No place for growth! We alone had the whole truth? The whole of Christendom was in heresy (excluding the UPC).

The virus became stronger, since it seemed that the majority of us gave assent

²¹The central offices of the denomination are colloquially called "headquarters," a word that conjures up military images but which has been so used for many decades by members of the UPC [Ed.].

and place to the radical force in the fellowship. This force found that it is possible to gain control by being persistent and forceful. The rest of us allowed it to happen. Perhaps we weren't wise enough to see where that path was leading. We didn't agree, but we let them have their say--and that convinced them that they were leaders in power. (In truth, we gave it to them.) This fed their appetite for control and power, all in the name of defending the truth and holiness, of course. The virus spread.

I have seen this desire for control, this quest for power over others, at work on every level. Small churches felt it from their pastors. Congregations of every size, as well as sectional, district, and national leaders, were prey to this virus. Personally, I think this self-enthroned virus was the force that drove us out, more than specific theological positions. However, I realize that those two forces are not separable. What one believes is what one lives. All other ideas must be opposed as error.

I don't know how much influence all of this had in our decision to go to Jackson College of Ministries in Mississippi. It seemed to be where the Holy Spirit was directing us to go. I do know we had an underlying belief that educating youth to think and study was the way to strengthen the Kingdom, rather than in the implementation of denominational programs. It also seemed to be a way to combat the spread of the virus--to keep the Kingdom as a work of the Spirit, rather than a carnal effort. Also, it seemed to be necessary to be going toward a goal; walking away from something was not enough. Initially when we went to Jackson, it seemed to be working.

However, the need for control was already at Jackson, too. In time, it became evident that the virus was alive and at work in the educational effort. There, it took the form of seeing education as indoctrination, not learning. We could see that if we stayed, we must play the game by their rules. We left.

Then, we met the same kind of power in our beloved Pacific Northwest. We saw that the same kinds of capitulation had taken place there, also. My husband repeatedly was called before District Boards to answer and satisfy petty questions, and the inquisition grew very tiring.²² Though the questions were always answered, we seemed to remain on the list of suspicious characters. "They" were always looking for something over which to accuse us, rather than seeking ways in which we could have fellowship. We realized that if we were to continue to grow personally, we had to move toward the light God had given us.

We made the journey out. Actually, we didn't come out, we were compelled to

²²It is hard to escape the impression that officials in the UPC Districts of Oregon and Washington were "out to get" Don Fisher. It seems he was repeatedly called upon to defend his views about petty holiness standards and theological issues before these District Officials [Ed.].

leave. We did attempt to turn in our fellowship card [ordination credential], but it was rejected. "They" preferred, rather, to put us out "under question." That way, we were not welcome among them. It was another power and control ploy. It seemed that our goals at the Bible college in Portland were doomed all too quickly.

We didn't come out unscathed, I regret to say. I wish I could say that we immediately walked away from all that into a new, clear day. But the infection--the virus of power and control with which we could not live--unfortunately had found a seedbed in our own family. I think in our family, the symptom was one of feeling that one had within him/herself the ability to "pull this out," to "make it work." None of us is immune to spiritual attack, even those of us who seem to be strong and balanced. The virus can cover over the fact that spiritual warfare is never fought successfully with fleshly weapons. Strength is so easily converted to pride. Forgetting the real source of spiritual strength prepares the breeding ground for the virus. It can spread from one body organ to another, or from one body system to another. It did.

Our coming out was accompanied by such supreme personal cost to me that I have difficulty sorting it all out, even yet. I have ceased trying to take apart the strands. It seems to be an exercise in futility, and I can't change what has happened. Still, I have discovered that the infection finds no lines or boundaries. Leaving the UPC does not mean a full escape from all those who are infected. The desire for control and power finds a fertile seedbed in many places, and the UPC is only one of them. So, it is necessary to be on guard, even after one has made the journey out. The journey is not a panacea for all ills.

Another thing I've observed is that the journey out is equally difficult for those people who are not in ministry. I've met many lay people who have left in order to avoid the infection. They were exhausted with being a pawn to the power seekers. They, too, have suffered and gone through the withdrawal struggle. They need to be heard. They, too, sometimes have succumbed to the disease.

My counsel is to give yourself time. Be certain you're for something, not only against something. You will eventually realize that you have indeed entered into a new, clear day. Your vision will clear progressively. However, deprogramming is probably a necessary part of any person's trek back to the mainstream. Christ will continue to reveal to you what you should keep and what you should discard. He will help you to avoid "throwing out the baby with the bath water." Even when your mind and spirit have been enlightened, your system will still lean toward tenets to which you've been loyal in the past. Give yourself time.

Something else....there are many sincere believers who have not walked as far along the trail as you have. They are still our brothers and sisters in Christ. They may

not extend the same courtesy to you as you do to them....but the fact of our membership in Christ is nevertheless true--just as true for them as for anyone in any organization with which one does not agree. They deserve your love, your prayers, and your concern. You are responsible, before God, to give them that courtesy.

JEFFREY H. GILL, Topsfield, Massachusetts

[Jeffrey Gill was a member of the UPC for about six years. However, he was reared in the Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ, another Oneness Pentecostal denomination, for most of his life. His grandfather was a minister in the UPC as were many of his relatives. To his knowledge, his extended family still holds the record for the number of family members who attended Apostolic Bible Institute, a UPC Bible school in St. Paul, Minnesota. Indiana, where he served as an assistant pastor in Bloomington, was his home District prior to leaving the denomination, though originally he was granted his ministerial license in the Minnesota District of the UPC.

Jeff holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Indiana University and a Master of Divinity degree from The Divinity School at Harvard University. He is an ordained minister in The Episcopal Church, Diocese of Massachusetts, and serves as rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Andover, Massachusetts.]

Why would a fourth generation Oneness Pentecostal--a graduate of the Apostolic Bible Institute, son and grandson of Pentecostal ministers--become an Episcopal priest? How is it that a young couple, only a year out of ABI, recently married, UPC General License in hand, on their way to Japan to be missionary associates, would walk into the chapel of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (an Episcopal seminary in Berkeley, California), smell the faint aroma of incense, see the lighted candles, hear the hush of its empty spaces--and suddenly feel that they had found their spiritual home?

That first encounter with the Episcopal Church was in 1977. In 1989 I was ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church after years of diligent searching and discernment, painful isolation from friends who did not understand, and a reluctant but ultimately successful coming-to-terms with our changes by our families. None of this was simple. There were other stops along the way, too--first in conservative evangelicalism and later in liberal Protestantism, neither of which was spiritually satisfying to us. There were also many more years of formal education, beginning with four years at Indiana University, earning a degree in Religious Studies and East Asian Languages and Cultures, and then three more years at Harvard Divinity School

earning a Master of Divinity degree. It involved long periods of spiritual deadness, when I had no idea what I believed or why I should even want to be a Christian. There were times when the only thing I knew for certain was what I didn't believe--and that included much, if not most, of what I had learned at ABI.

But back to the question of why an appropriately pedigreed, young, licensed UPC minister would ultimately find his spiritual home in the Episcopal Church. It seems like (and is in many ways) such an enormous leap. If I had to boil it down to five things (and that's hard to do!), they would be these:

- 1) The search for roots (and its corresponding rejection of Pentecostal sectarianism);*
- 2) The meaningfulness of the liturgy and sacraments (and their corresponding rejection of Pentecostal subjectivism);*
- 3) An embracing of mystery (and the corresponding rejection of certainty and absolutism);*
- 4) The value of tradition, reason and experience as sources of authority (and the corresponding rejection of biblical rationalism and anti-intellectualism); and*
- 5) The importance of the social dimensions of the gospel (and the corresponding rejection of an otherworldly eschatology).*

Each of these deserves an explanation that cannot be given here in this short space. Suffice it to say that every one of the differences in doctrine and practice was a hard fought battle for this heart and mind.

Sometimes I forget how confusing those years were when I was so uncertain about my Christian identity. Having settled into a new church for several years now, I have many, many new friendships (and have recovered a few of my former ones, too!). I have an active life and vital ministry in a church whose worship I love and whose ministry in the world I respect. Life outside the UPC is not the abyss it once seemed. Our marriage did not break up, as many predicted it surely would over such dramatic changes in our lives. Long ago I got beyond the self-doubt that haunts one who first contemplates making the journey out of the UPC.

Has it been worth it? I can only answer for myself. There has been a huge price to pay in some ways, but the rewards far outnumber the disadvantages. I have absolutely no regrets about the journey I have made. The dangers for many, however, are that they will either become cynical and give up on the church altogether, or they will not invest the necessary spiritual and intellectual energy in their quest and end up in an equally tenuous, sectarian situation. Either of these options, I believe, is too big

a price to pay for the loss of one's spiritual roots. It takes a lot of work, a lot of prayer, a lot of relearning of things you thought you knew, and the learning of things that you didn't know were there in order to leave the UPC and enter the larger life of the Church universal. I rarely felt any support for what I was doing, except from my wife (Carolyn Shilling Gill) who made this journey with me. I was fortunate, however, while I was still a second-year divinity student at Harvard and still in a great deal of uncertainty about my future, to host a gathering of people who were on similar journeys to mine. It meant a great deal to me to know that I was not alone.

The Episcopal Church is not the perfect expression of Christ's body on earth. I don't know where we are to find that. But what I love so very much is its rich spiritual tradition that binds me to Christians of every time and culture. It is a church that is both catholic and reformed. Its liturgical life keeps it from straying from its apostolic roots, while the value it places on reason and experience keep it open to perpetual reformation through the movement of the Holy Spirit in our own time. And yes, my Pentecostal roots have given me the ability to offer a unique gift where I am. It is just a small example of how God is at work using whatever we offer in the service of the kingdom of God.

ROBIN WENTWORTH, Birmingham, Alabama

[Robin Wentworth was a member of the UPC for four years in the Mississippi District. He attended Jackson College of Ministries during the tumultuous years described earlier in this work, and when he left, he went on to complete his education elsewhere. He earned both a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology at John Brown University (1984). He was granted the Master of Arts degree in Psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi (1989), and he went on to complete his Ph.D. in Psychology at the same institution (1990). Presently, he works in Birmingham as a Management Consultant.]

Joining the UPC was no small task. My religious experience was Southern Baptist, and my religious heritage was primarily the same. The summer before my junior year in high school, I embraced Pentecostalism in search for a more focused personal experience and Christian fellowship. This was a radical departure from my upbringing, family wishes and social milieu, and it resulted in some ostracism and isolation from my prior "world." On the other hand, it brought adventure and discovery in a world to which I had been oblivious.

I struggled with certain aspects of Pentecostalism from the beginning. "Tongues" and related personal manifestations of worship in the Spirit never flowed

easily from me as they did for long-time Pentecostals. I could not comprehend apparent discrepancies in personal morality and "shouting," e.g., how a singer and worship leader in the church could shout on Sunday while engaging in adultery on Monday. It seemed suspect that an evangelist's wife would speak in tongues and he would interpret a message that so conveniently confirmed his sermon or plea to the congregation. The Almighty's interest in the length of my hair and shirt sleeves struck me as a preoccupation with triviality compared to the prevalent issues of rape, war and hunger. Lastly, the preeminence of ministers struck me as uncomfortably similar to the imposition of a priest between Christ and the people.

Thus, I left the UPC over time with pain and trauma surpassing that of my entry into it. I often wondered if I was becoming what I had preached against for four years.

Was I drawing nigh to God or sliding back into my pre-Pentecostal "heathenism?" Fortunately for me, reentry into mainstream Christendom was made easier by friends concurrently leaving the UPC and by family and childhood friends affirming my departure.

Pentecostals taught me much. I now more greatly appreciate a personal experience of God, the importance of personal standards of holiness, and common values that define the human race. Perhaps most importantly, I experienced the presence of God through many children of God. It continues to be a great honor and pleasure to be called "friend" by some true saints of God.

I weep with those whose departure from Oneness Pentecostalism is so costly. It was difficult to isolate myself from friends and family to join the UPC. It must be much worse to be labeled "sinner" and "backslider" by those whom one has cherished since birth as friend and family.

JERRY PEDEN, Stockton, California

[Jerry Peden was reared in the United Pentecostal Church from a very young age. His home districts were Arkansas and Idaho. He attended Conquerors Bible College, the UPC school in Portland, Oregon. He has since served as a pastor and church-planter for the UPC as well as an official at his alma mater in Oregon.]

To open my mind to the past days in the United Pentecostal Church is like pulling a scab off of a wound to see if healing has taken place. It appears that there will be a permanent scar, but thank God the wound is closing.

I was born in northwest Arkansas. Milton Peden, my great-grandfather, accepted the oneness Pentecostal message at an old-fashioned brush arbor meeting,

and he later became an advocate of the "oneliness of God" indoctrination.²³ By contrast, my mother's parents attended the Assembly of God church, and even though they were also Pentecostal, I will always remember how strange it felt when we were constantly told that they were in error and could not go to heaven. In my childish mind, it seemed that they were godly people, and in fact, they were more consistent in their Christian walk than were my father's people who belonged to the UPC.

If the term 'Arkansas Traveler' fits anyone, it was absolutely a true picture of my family. We began a series of moves between Arkansas and Idaho that was to be repeated every two to three years. In Idaho, the whole flavor of the UPC was more moderate and less judgmental.

What a cultural shock to move from the Idaho District back to Section 7 of the Arkansas District!²⁴ Some of the ministers were malicious and full of condemnation. The moderates were openly ridiculed, and some were even "disfellowshipped."²⁵ To be disfellowshipped came to be the most dreaded thing that could happen within the framework of the UPC. Not only was there fear of alienation from the church, some taught that anyone who was put out would burn forever in the lake of fire.

We were taught that UPC ministers were called of God, and this calling was so high that whatever they preached or taught was of God and could not be questioned. This teaching was further pounded into our heads at home by parents. The fear of speaking out against God's anointed leader would later result in the most devastating event of my life. I was thirteen years old at the time, and my family had returned from Idaho to Arkansas on one of our moves, where we attended a small country church. The pastor of the church hired me to mow lawns for him on Saturdays.

²³The "oneliness of God" is rural jargon for the "oneness of God" [Ed.].

²⁴The government of the United Pentecostal Church divides the United States up into Districts, usually comprising a single state. Below that, each state is divided up into sections. Each district has a superintendent, while each section has a sectional presbyter [Ed.].

²⁵The term "disfellowship" is a legal word in UPC government which approximates excommunication. It means that one is now expelled from the true church. Other people within the UPC are forbidden to have contact with "disfellowshipped" churches or people [Ed.].

During this time, a fiery evangelist came to our church to hold a two or three week revival meeting. On the first Friday night of the meeting, my Dad came to me after the service and told me that I was to spend the night at the pastor's home, so he would not have to come after me the following morning for work. My sleeping arrangements for the night were to be with the evangelist who, incidentally, preyed on young boys. (He did believe, however, that both men and women must wear long sleeves.) I was raped and traumatized by this man. My fear of my Dad and the fear of telling on the "man of God" were so great that these acts were to be repeated again before the revival fires finally waned.²⁶

When I was fifteen, my parents separated, and my mother moved once more with all the kids back to Idaho. The bitterness over the family situation and the confusion caused by the evangelist threw me into a downward spiral that led to gross spiritual darkness during my high school years. Into that blackness came the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ!

The summer after my senior year of high school, God really began to convict me of sin, and a great hunger for Him began to grow in me once more. At a Youth Camp in Idaho, I was welcomed and shown great kindness. Finally, the convicting power of Jesus warmed my heart, and I knelt in deep repentance at an old pine stump and repented of my sins. Many people encouraged me to attend Bible college in Portland, Oregon. In the fall of 1965, I applied and was accepted. Events too numerous to mention led me back to Arkansas, where in 1972, I started a church in Berryville. In my youthful optimism, I thought I could become a positive influence in my Section. Because I had graduated from Bible college, however, I was considered to be an outsider and was told by the Sectional Presbyter (now deceased) that I needed to sit under him or one of the other strong pastors in the area, pay tithes, and get "properly grounded." I remember the harshness of our bi-monthly fellowship meetings. It seemed that each meeting became more like a contest to see which preacher could convince the others that they were the most holy. My father-in-law said it reminded him of quail hunting: "Everything that tried to get going got shot down by the mob."

My wife has naturally curly hair (they said she cut it), and it is naturally auburn with no grey (they said she dyed it). We were constantly condemned for wearing wedding rings, and our church was considered worldly, because women who attended wore facial make-up and had short hair. Finally in 1981, I was invited to join the staff

²⁶This story is not intended to suggest that such abuses are typical within the UPC. However, in any totalitarian structure where unquestioned authority exists, the susceptibility to abuse is heightened. [Ed.]

at Conquerors Bible College in Oregon. This seemed right, and I thought I would be returning to the moderate Pacific Northwest which I had known a decade ago. Little did I realize that great changes had taken place there. Theological questions were raised, and Don Fisher, the new president, was compelled to meet the District Board so often that it bordered on the ridiculous. Nathaniel Urshan, the General Superintendent, was asked to intervene on our behalf. Our belief was that, since we were in good standing with the denomination and since the college was endorsed by the UPC's Department of Education, such antagonistic behavior would not be tolerated. No help came.

Eventually, the District Superintendent of Washington smugly handed me a letter directing me to meet with the District Board. No mention of any charges were made in the letter, so from a legal standpoint, there was no way the Board could take any ecclesiastical action against me. However, I had already seen what this same board had done with innuendo and conjecture to Don Fisher, and I knew that I did not have the stamina to face such a "meat grinder."

If to remain in the UPC meant that I had to fight the rest of my life, I determined to have no further part of it. To me, the future of my family's spiritual well-being was of much more importance than remaining in a religious system and trying to change it. We made the decision to leave. When my Fellowship Card was cancelled, I received a form letter from UPC headquarters telling me that it was hoped I would not lose out with God, and the next day I received an identical letter from the same source. I wondered, "Were so many leaving that a form letter was needed to keep up?"

ESTHER PEDEN, Stockton, California

[Esther Peden is the wife of Jerry Peden, whose reflections on the journey out you have just read. She was reared in the UPC in Montana and California before meeting Jerry while attending the Bible college in Portland, Oregon. Her reflections, following that of her husband's, are equally insightful.]

When the pain of staying the same becomes more intense than the pain of change, change is inevitable. Such a myriad of thoughts pass across the horizon of memory, and some memories, like an insidious crabgrass root, must be forced aside or they will spring to life, sullyng our souls with bitterness. These tentacles of the past seem to have a reproductive system of their own. Just about the time one feels free of the past, another tentacle entrenches itself in one's spirit with a stranglehold that demands a renewed fight for freedom.

Having grown up within the framework of the United Pentecostal Church, it never occurred to me to question the teachings and regulations with which we had been indoctrinated. Some of this oblivion can be attributed to our fear of parental censure, and in a greater degree, to our fear of divine censure. It never seemed an option to do other than attend an endorsed UPC Bible college. I still marvel that we spent a whole term studying Romans and an entire year exploring the other epistles without understanding the gospel of justification by faith and the grace of God. We were cautioned to leave the interpretation of the "difficult passages" to those whom God had given greater enlightenment. We held the doctrines, as they were interpreted for us, to be self-evident.

One of the most difficult thought patterns with which we dealt was that in order to be anything other than a second-class citizen (translated "layperson"), it was necessary to either aspire to the ministry, or for girls, to marry into the ministry. The desire for recognition, the struggle to "be someone," permeated the fabric of our lives.

We hovered on the fringe of that exalted state, hoping for a break that would allow us to slip into a position of pseudo-importance. All the while, we enlarged the pedestal of those whom we hoped to emulate, so that it was ever higher and more unattainable. We struggled and hoped and strived on an endless treadmill of great expectations.

In northern Arkansas, Jerry and I tenaciously labored at our project of planting a church in the midst of heavy criticism. The beginning of the end came slowly and without a conscious understanding of where we were headed. Two things contributed to and helped to finalize our thinking. One was our discovery of the Book of Romans. In spite of our Bible college brainwashing, we found that we were able to comprehend the "difficult passages." The other thing, and it was related to the first, was our discovery of the New International Version of the Bible. This was a very daring endeavor, since we had always been coached, "If the King James Version was good enough for Paul, it was certainly good enough for us."

After much soul-searching and study of the Scripture, Jerry was prepared to make a break from our entrapment. However, at about that same time, we were invited to go to Portland, Oregon and work on staff at the Bible college with Don Fisher, the new president. Hindsight is better than foresight, but we decided to delay the momentous break until later. Later, it was taken out of our hands.

Because we were never really part of the "in crowd," it never occurred to us that a vendetta would be waged against us that was vicious and personal. We immediately were confronted with a well organized and unethical opposition. Vindictiveness was directed at us because we happened to be related to those already branded as heretics, Don Fisher and Dan Lewis. The next months were some of the most stressful and

heartbreaking of our entire lives. It was like the scent of blood had aroused the hue and cry. As Jerry attended meeting after meeting with Don Fisher and watched the inquisition, he determined that he would never allow himself to be subjected to such torture. Heresy charges were made but unsubstantiated. To make matters worse, the college was in deep financial trouble due to the warring factions in the controlling districts²⁷ and the many years of poor financial judgments on the part of the administrators. When we traveled to represent the college for student recruitment, our "sins" had gone before us. We were refused access to camp meetings in some states. In other areas, we were deliberately not recognized though other Bible colleges were recognized. Insinuation and innuendo followed our recruitment efforts.

Long months of struggle finally brought peace and healing. Still, the past is only a thought away. Yet every memory causes us to thank God and to depend upon his grace.

MARK AND BEVERLY ROBERTS, Baltimore, Maryland

[Mark and Beverly Roberts were both reared in Indianapolis, Indiana. Mark's home church was one of the premier congregations in the UPC, Calvary Tabernacle, for many years pastored by Nathaniel Urshan, the current General Superintendent of the UPC. Beverly was reared in a non-UPC oneness Pentecostal church associated with the Apostolic Ministers' Fellowship. Mark and Beverly are both graduates of Indiana University (both with a B.S.), and Beverly also graduated from Indiana Central University (A.S.). They currently are members of Pleasant Hill Chapel, a nondenominational evangelical congregation in the Baltimore area. While Mark did not attend a UPC Bible college, Beverly attended Jackson College of Ministries during the tumultuous years described earlier.]

While many of those who are making the journey out experience a theological evolution which slowly encompasses other issues, my journey, as a layperson, began with the observation of practices which eventually led to a questioning of theology. For Beverly, some of the practical issues were also the impetus to question theological issues more closely.

I was reared in a strictly UPC background. However, my mother, instead of trying to mold me into the strict UPC line, taught me that dedication to God, not

²⁷The Bible college in Portland, Oregon was at this time under the jurisdiction of the Oregon, Washington and Idaho Districts of the UPC [Ed.].

dedication to the church, was most important. She spent her own life trying to surpass the holiness of others, and because of this, she taught me that I really should try to please God and find my own way. Since leaving the UPC, I have tried to explain to her that much of my transition is largely a result of her teaching, which as might be expected, is very disconcerting to her. Years ago, she never expected that by telling me to be sure I was right with God, I might travel a different path than the faith and experience she herself had found. When Beverly and I were in the UPC, we tried to live by the rules, for we felt that the Lord would reward us for being faithful and submissive. When we felt that we could no longer be faithful to these strictures, we decided to leave rather than be hypocrites.

Some of the seeds for my journey away from the UPC are probably that I was always somewhat of a loner. Most of my friends at church attended Calvary Christian School (the church school of our church), but I attended public school. I was sort of excluded and in a no man's land, not fully accepted at church and not fully accepted at public school either. At church, my hair was too long; at public school, I did not participate in any extra-curricular activities. Consequently, I learned to solve most of youth's dilemmas on my own, and eventually this was how I came to solve most of my theological dilemmas.

The first dilemma I needed to solve began when I was a sophomore in high school. There seemed to be a great gulf between the universe as it was explained to me in the Sunday night sermons and everything else that I saw around me. The universe I saw at church was simple and understandable, but in the outside world, it did not fit. I saw Christians whom I was told were not really Christians because they were not the right "brand;" I met sinners who were just like Christians.

The second dilemma centered around the notion of good versus evil. The problem arose when I went to church and asked various youth leaders, Bible school students and pastors to explain the various "problems" of the universe, such as, "Why does evil exist?" We had no baseline against which to judge evil or the questions philosophers had been asking for ages. Years later, I discovered that Christians and theologians had struggled with these problems centuries ago. The UPC ministers with whom I attempted to discuss them, however, were blissfully unaware.

The next pivotal event occurred after I went to college. I encountered many Christians of different stripes. It puzzled me that we were not allowed to associate with groups like Jews for Jesus, Campus Crusade for Christ, Billy Graham crusades, and so forth. A liberal arts education dramatically expanded my horizon and world view. One particular night I met several UPC Bible school students and budding evangelists from Apostolic Bible Institute and Jackson College of Ministries. I asked

them how they explained the geologic theory of evolution to non-Christians, and what explanation they gave for the layers of fossil strata that can be found in sedimentary rock. They looked at me blankly and responded that they hadn't studied these issues at all. Rather, they had learned about day/age theories. All these things were factors in my eventual transition out of the UPC.

The actual transition began some three or four years after marriage, when I realized that my relationship with my wife was supposed to be similar to the relationship of Christ with the church. As my love grew for my wife, I began to slowly develop an understanding of what God's love might actually be like. At the time, we remained within the UPC, believing that we were mature enough to separate the wheat from the chaff. We also felt that the UPC was still possibly the best fellowship we could have, even though it was imperfect. However, we freely discussed the issues.

When parenthood brought the mantle of responsibility upon me, the disconnections I had experienced earlier began to concern me. Children cannot make the intellectual and spiritual discernments of adults, and the risk of spiritual loss for our child was something neither of us was willing to take. Combined with this concern was questionable youth leadership in our church, along with questionable moral convictions and weak family values.

Thus, our theological evolution began with the observation of Pentecostal practice. Our conclusion was that Pentecostal culture fostered a lack of educational achievement and a low level of Christian maturity. Decision-making and spiritual growth was hindered because of an overdependence on the dictates of leadership. There was a lack of deep biblical teaching. Our own personal Bible studies were more meaty than what we received from leaders at church; consequently, church leaders viewed us as rebellious and difficult to deal with. There was minimal concern for basic Christianity. Lying, gossiping, unethical business transactions, cheating on taxes, both among laypersons as well as in leadership, eventually combined to undermine the theology of the movement. Pentecostalism as an ideal and Pentecostalism in practice were two very different things. This, in turn, led to questions regarding doctrinal issues, such as, the infilling of the Holy Spirit and its effects on real life. How could people speak in tongues and yet be sexually promiscuous? Was it possible for people to speak in tongues and yet not be filled with the Spirit? Was it possible for people to be filled with the Spirit and yet not speak in tongues? These questions led me to much study. I bought books, consulted commentaries, and talked to dozens of people in trying to find my way through Scripture. I concluded that some Christians speak in tongues as evidence that they have the gift of the Spirit and some don't. It is difficult for anyone to judge who does

or does not have the Spirit regardless of whether they speak in tongues. Fruit of the Spirit is the best evidence. With the UPC's basic tenet about the Holy Spirit now undermined, the whole theological structure began to crumble, leaving me with a doctrinal pile of blocks that had to be reassembled from the foundation up.

Slowly I began to study church history, and Beverly introduced me to Dan Lewis, who was an enormous help in guiding me through the labyrinth of theological church history. We began looking for a new church about this time, because we concluded that we could no longer stay within the confines of the Pentecostal faith. We found an excellent Evangelical Free Church congregation, which had roots somewhat similar to Pentecostalism, so we felt very comfortable. This church further enhanced my understanding of church history, and I came to understand Christianity as more than just an experience. Church history has come alive to me and affected me in many ways. It led me to question the oneness Pentecostal doctrine of water baptism, which became the last of the big building blocks to fall.

After much study, I arrived at some understanding of the Trinity. I progressed through an odyssey of doctrinal challenges to an actual change in my theology. The epistles of Paul opened up to me salvation by grace through faith and the nature of the Godhead in an amazing and colorful way. This flowering of truth and the biblical injunctions like "be honest with all men" became calls to genuine holiness! Ironically, I now had the freedom to watch television whenever I wanted to,²⁸ while at the same time the responsibility to turn it off when necessary. At this point, I felt I finally understood God. My relationship with him became an extremely rewarding experience! Now the cross is much more significant, and I am more humble and broken because of my understanding of his cost.

MARK ROBERTS, Nashville, Tennessee

[Mark Roberts, not to be confused with the previous contributor by the same name, grew up in a UPC church in southern California. He came to Jackson College of

²⁸Watching television is disapproved in the UPC, and until recently was quite strictly enforced. In recent years, however, a loophole has been found in that many members of the UPC now have video monitors on which they can watch video tapes (and movies). While television is still officially taboo, the widespread use of VCRs indicates that the letter of the law, more than the spirit of it, has become the norm. Unfortunately, this sort of ethical waffling is to be seen in many areas. The official codes are obeyed as imposed by leaders, but a double standard is not uncommon [Ed.].

Ministries in the late 1970s as a student, and eventually joined the staff there. While there, he married Carol Crosser, another student at JCM. Mark attempted to remain at the college after other faculty had left in 1981, but when he refused to renounce his friendship with some who had left, he was fired. He completed his Bachelor of Arts degree at Mississippi College, his Master of Arts in rhetoric at The Ohio State University, and is near completion of a doctoral program in New Testament studies at Vanderbilt University. He currently works as an editor for the Thomas Nelson Publishing Company in Nashville.]

It has been ten years since I let my General License lapse with the UPC and made the journey out. I did not leave the UPC because it did not preach the gospel or because people did not experience the grace of God in its churches. Rather, I left because the gospel was increasingly supplemented by out-of-balance emphases and demands, most of which were deduced from overvaluing the role of human effort in pleasing God--the old problem of works-merited righteousness. It is the same as the Galatian error in the New Testament: the grace of God is frustrated by zeal that is truly religious, but finally fleshly, and huge portions of the body of Christ are not "discerned" (cf. 1 Co. 11:29). Their true identity is denied, because, in the judgment of the UPC, these folks have not fully obeyed the gospel. At the same time, many wonderful, godly people belong to the UPC, and many others continue to meet Christ in life-changing ways within its churches. Perhaps the tension between all these realities helps account for the mixed emotions I experienced and the tentative steps I took in leaving that denomination. It is not the case that everything is wrong with the UPC; however, what is wrong with it is fundamental, and once I concluded that what was wrong was systematically so, and not likely to be corrected, I knew it was time to leave.

Exactly when I began the journey out is hard to say. I remember various incidents from my youth that chipped away at the foundations of the core beliefs, such as, discussions with Trinitarian believers on topics of the Godhead and water baptism. In these discussions, I took the position that I was talking with persons who needed to come to salvation in Christ. Yet the more we talked, the more I began to realize that I was fellowshiping with other genuine believers. If I was able to hear anything the Spirit said to me, I heard his witness that these people, also, were among those adopted within the Beloved. To have insisted that Trinitarian friends needed to be rebaptized would have been nothing more than the childish demand that "you do it my way." They, too, believed fully in Christ's deity and acknowledged that only through him does God forgive and pour out his Spirit. They practiced "calling on the name of the Lord" as part of their daily life of faith. Could I insist, with conviction, that God counted such faith in Christ for nothing unless it was expressed precisely through one

baptismal formula? Did new covenant grace and faith boil down to a linguistic exactitude?

In retrospect, such discussions were within the larger church, not between the true church and heretics. The discussion was between different parts of the church, and ironically, we were fulfilling part of the UPC statement of fundamental doctrine: we were "keeping the unity of the Spirit while coming to the unity of the faith." At the same time, it seemed to me that the UPC core distinctives could not be proved exclusively true from any consistent approach to interpreting the Scripture. They were defensible as one way in which faith in Christ could be expressed, but they could not discredit all other expressions of faith.

While Carol's and my exit from the UPC over the gospel occurred several years later, the mainspring that would eventually launch us into a new orbit was already being wound. Many later encounters with trinitarian believers, wrestlings with Scripture, the Spirit, related studies, and interactions as a student and faculty member at Bible college each would wind the spring a click tighter.

The journey out was not easy for us. Identifying and rejecting the schismatic, anti-grace character of the UPC system was easy enough, at least in retrospect, but transforming that conclusion into a spiritual decision and then into action has been neither easy nor smooth, and in fact, it is still ongoing. Emotionally, Carol and I have swung between exhilaration and anguish, delight and depression. Initially, there were the rude jolts of being fired from JCM and the feeling of becoming persona non grata within the UPC in Mississippi. There followed the somewhat hard scrabble existence of a new baby, minimum wage jobs, long hours to finish a B.A., the expected but still painful distancing of local UPC friends and acquaintances (with some outstanding exceptions), and the acrid taste, for the first time in my life, of The Fog--depression, dull, lingering, smothering. Yet, there was hope and grace sufficient, for what else prodded us onward and pointed us forward?

Only recently have I been able to map the twisted landscape in which I then lived. I have been envious, frankly, of the way others came out about the same time we did, but apparently without the intense and seemingly unresolvable internal struggle we experienced. It was easy enough to mentally affirm that my direction was right, but my guts screamed their opposition and drilled me with a constant litany of condemnation: "You're deceived. You think you're really learning something, studying Greek and all that; but you're just trying to find an easy way apart from the straight and narrow, apart from the truth. Face it, you're deeply flawed with evil that has finally come out in rebellion. You've left the TRUTH and know exactly what lies ahead for all who do that. After all, just who are you to think that you could know

about the Gospel and truth any better than these leaders?"

For all those whose experience has been similar, you know that amidst such internal conflict, no new biblical or theological information in and of itself is helpful. Your mind already assents to information that contradicts what your guts grumble to you. You are in bondage, needing some kind of intervention to liberate you. Part of your bondage includes not being able to trust your own judgment in matters of significance. You wish to affirm your spiritual-intellectual judgment and carry it out, but the riot from your emotional chambers below disables you. Perhaps not too far from what Paul meant, you cry out, "O wretched man that I am!"

For me, deliverance from that bondage has come through naming it and exposing it for what it is, a writhing, serpentine knot of falsehoods about who I am. It has also come with recognizing that I had a false identity for God. It was some years later, in the spiritually healing community of the evangelical charismatic church, that liberation first came. We were blessed with a warm relational climate in this church. I was serving on staff there, and in a staff meeting, as I was sharing my internal struggle, two colleagues, a man and a woman, handed me the key to my freedom when they introduced me to my jailer, Shame.

I had not known that my sense of being deeply flawed was an almost textbook descriptor of shame, nor had I known that shame also produces internal division with deep feelings of unavoidable failure, unworthiness and false guilt. Shame rejects one's own best judgment. Additionally, shame produces unstable relationships with authority figures. Due to one's deep sense of unworthiness, authorities represent danger because one fears their ability to harm. Either one seeks intense approval and affection by enmeshing oneself with the authority or one resorts to primal fight or flight. There is little middle ground for healthy dialogue and no room for both genuine agreement and respectful disagreement.

It would be wrong to blame the UPC for my basic experience of shame; its source lies elsewhere. However, I cannot overlook how the beliefs and practices of this movement often colluded with my damaged emotions. Shaming was regularly used in the UPC as a motivator. (Who can forget the twelve-week revival in which the evangelist constantly belittled, berated, and threatened the Jackson congregation in order to create the mass emotion he wanted, apparently with the pastor's blessing. Carol and I have never felt more publicly violated than during that time of mandatory attendance for all JCM staff and students.) Grace was twisted into performance-based acceptance. Leaders discouraged the development of laypersons' own spiritual judgment, insisting that they only depend on and obey "God's man" in matters of almost every level of significance or triviality. The emotional and the spiritual were

equated, resulting in amazing capacities for intense emotion on cue. Looking good was so important, both in matters of dress and observable behavior, that honesty about one's opinions, feelings, affections and struggles was not only lonely, but dangerous.

I do not think I could have found the help I needed within the UPC. My damaged emotions mixed easily with toxic faith to produce a spiritual and emotional epoxy that cemented me in my internal conflict for years, even after I had left. Today, however, after months of spiritual healing that helped me truly believe and appropriate the truth of who I am in Christ, I experience more joy of living than I can remember in years. This effect is not lost on my family or service in ministry. To God be the glory!

The chief other challenge of the journey out has been that of finding a new church home--not so much a local church home, but a denominational one. With the convictions and preferences we carried with us, I have not felt free to pursue ministerial credentials with the denominations we have so far considered. Lately, however, we have joined Global Christian Ministries, a somewhat informal association of ministers and ministries, among whom are many former UPC folks. While GCM is not a full-fledged church or denomination, it is working hard to provide various ministry resources and opportunities for fellowship, all of which we appreciate. Perhaps we are finding a new home. But this part of the journey out is costly. We lose the family of our spiritual birth, and that is a loss hard to put into words. I wish we had never had to come out, but we felt we had to in order to freely celebrate the gospel of grace and rightly discern the Lord's body, which we believe is not and has never been limited to oneness, tongues-speaking believers. Today we remain part of the Spirit-renewal movement, contending for the one faith of the church, expressed diversely in all her catholic, evangelical and pentecostal glory. We have become aware that we are pilgrims, looking for and journeying toward the city of God, from which we shall never want to come out.

JAMES D. WILKINS, Grand Rapids, Michigan

[James Wilkins served as a professor in the Schools of Missions and Theology at Jackson College of Ministries. He left Jackson in that same tumultuous Spring of 1981 described earlier. After serving in the Foreign Missions Division of the UPC in both France and the West Indies, he withdrew from the denomination. He completed his Masters and Doctoral degrees at The Ohio State University, and currently he is a member of the Christian Reformed Church, serving as an Assistant Professor of French at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.]

Leaving a lifetime religious affiliation is probably one of the loneliest decisions

one can make. I remember the day that I wrote my letter of resignation, walked it to the post office, and dropped it in the outgoing mail slot. Those few minutes prior to releasing the envelope seemed endless. I knew that once the contents left my hand, it was finished. There was no turning back. I released it....and returned home. When the resignation was received by the Missions Director, he called immediately wanting to fly down to visit with me and discuss my decision to leave the UPC and the mission field. We finally agreed that I would meet with members of the Missions Board in Hazelwood, Missouri, the location of the denominational building.

My time spent in consultation with my superiors was intense. I sat in the Director's office as one-by-one concerned members of the Missions Board came in to try to reason me out of my decision. Each person was sincere, some extremely emotional. I also met with the General Superintendent the day before returning to Martinique. I returned to my island assignment, agreeing to "sleep on it" for a while and make a decision at a later date. To no avail...I eventually admitted to myself that my original decision was the right one. I should add that all discussions and correspondence with personnel of the UPCI were extremely warm and loving. Still, I could no longer teach something I did not believe was based in Scripture, especially to new converts who themselves struggled with the same issues.

After returning to the United States, I immediately enrolled in graduate school at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. There I continued to attend a UPC church for a time. Then, sensing the difficulty of attending a church that taught a set of doctrines I felt were unbiblical, I embarked on a search for a new church home. I visited Brethren churches, Assembly of God churches, among others. Finally, on the advice of a friend, I attended a Christian Reformed Church, and there found a spiritual oasis. Five years had elapsed.

The most difficult thing for me and for many others was the separation from life-long friends. They are truly brothers and sisters....in a very real sense. These are the people I had grown up with. I knew them, I spoke their language, I moved in their social circles, I taught their children, I had respect for their officials, and I preached in their pulpits. When the social consequences of my decision became apparent to me, I was deeply depressed. I retained the same strong sense of attachment to them, but I knew (having been one of them) that they could no longer feel the same about me. I was now a backslider, a reprobate....I had turned my back on "the truth."

In Spring of 1988, just prior to my joining the Christian Reformed Church, I was in France teaching a group of Ohio State students on a semester abroad program. I made contact with the people and churches I had previously pastored for a short time in the early 1980's as a furlough replacement for the UPC missionaries there. The

missionaries and the Christians in France remained close friends. They have shown nothing but genuine love for me, a love I, too, have for them. We do not agree, but we still love. At the time, I was still very depressed over my loss of friends and "roots" at home, a feeling that was made more poignant by my missionary friends, who were encouraging me to finish my doctorate and then come to work with them in France as an instructor in their newly-founded Bible school. No one will ever know how tempting that offer was! I would have liked nothing more than to abandon plans to teach at a university Stateside and spend the rest of my life teaching and working in France, especially with the people I had worked with earlier. I was on the verge of recanting and returning to the UPC.

When I returned home, some very dear friends (who also had left the UPC at about the same time as I) contacted me. I told them what I was considering. Their advice (and some tears) flowed. I was being torn in two very different directions. I now had a very close network of friends in the UPC and out of the UPC (former members). What convinced me to stand by my earlier decision was an analogy given me by a friend I had known for years. She compared the decision to separate from the UPC to a divorce. "After the divorce" she said, "one feels the pain more and more keenly, to the point where doubts cause you to think that perhaps you should not have divorced. You still have feelings of affection for the other party, and perhaps you should have tried harder to keep things together. Perhaps it would work if you tried again. But, it does not work." I still had tremendous love for the people, but because of the gospel, we could not remain "married." That analogy satisfied me then, and it does so to this day.

The pastor of the Christian Reformed Church urged me to come to church and to give my mind and spirit a rest from the battles it had been fighting. He said, "Jim, you need a spiritual and mental vacation." He was right. I began attending church to get to know Christ again, not to light theological fires. This is the point I want to convey to those who are now leaving the UPC. Find a place of worship where Christ and the cross are central in singing, preaching, praying and fellowship. Rejoice in the simplicity and wonder of the gospel of grace. Cease to dwell on the pain or anger associated with your decision to "divorce." That is not an easy task, but it is doable. Soon you will find yourself a part of another church family, one that loves God, His Word, and you--and one that you can love in return. Resist efforts by family and friends still in the UPC to make you feel guilty. You belong to Christ....He is your Lord, not another. Reread the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, from beginning to end. You will find a deeper appreciation for the words of Christ and the apostles. "Difficult" passages will no longer seem difficult. Finally, in the trying,

lonely moments, know that you are not alone. Others, especially those who have separated previously, are interceding for you. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men" (Romans 14:17-18 NIV).

DANIEL L. SCOTT, JR., Nashville, Tennessee

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Every West Virginian will understand when I say that being born in that state marks one for life. Perhaps that is true for people born anywhere, that all places brand their children. In a certain sense, I know it must be true, but with the possible exception of Texas, no other state in this country claims the life-long loyalty of its children in a way that is so eerie, so irrational, and so completely without justification as does West Virginia.

Like multitudes of West Virginians, I am an expatriate. For twenty-four years, I have lived in other places. Perhaps my exile is the very reason for my attachment. When a fresh snow covers a field of discarded tires and horse manure, it is the visitor, not the native, who looks over the winter serenity from the safety of his lodge on the hill and sighs. The people who must deal with the stuff do not sigh. In the same way, it is much easier to cover the geography of the past with a nostalgic and romantic longing when one does not have to face the harsh reality of what really exists. Those who still live in my home state live in a real place, not a state of mind covered by a dreamy haze. So, a cynic is justified if he asks, "If it is so great a place, then why don't you still live there?"

I suppose the best response is that in a real sense West Virginians always live there, wherever their physical bodies may dwell. Now as to the question, "Why is this so?", I am not sure I have a real answer. The search for one has been something of a reward in itself and has molded many of the opinions I have about life and meaning.

I was not only born a West Virginian, however. I was also born a Pentecostal, and a oneness Pentecostal at that. Pentecostalism, particularly that brand of it, is

tenacious. It never lets go. It drives its claim into one's soul, and twists one's personality into its own image. So these two identifying marks, one related to my nationality and ethnicity, the other to my spirituality and religious sub-culture, are deep ones. They are probably beyond human ability to erase from my psyche, should I ever wish to do so.

The plot thickens. I was raised without a television. This singular deprivation, if deprivation it is, was due to my Pentecostal church. It seems that in the late 1950's, some dear brother from Texas, or maybe it was Louisiana, decided that UPC ministers should not have televisions in their homes. Most people in our parts concluded that not having a television "in your home" was not quite the same as not having a television at all. Some built a hut behind their house where they kept their television. Others hid one in the hollow housing of the old air conditioning units that used to stick out of the windows. Still others rented motel rooms to watch a favorite program. In the sort of logic peculiar to legalistic religious folk, these solutions satisfied the law under which UPCers had consented to place themselves. But those solutions did not occur to my Dad, who was an honest man. They also did not occur to some other ministers in West Virginia, though I don't mean that they all complied with the "no TV" rule. Dad complied. Those West Virginians who decided not comply needed no excuse; they just put their televisions in their living rooms and dared anybody to do anything about it. The descendants of people who defied the English crown in Scotland, Ireland, and then again in the mountains of the English Dominion of Virginia, were not about to surrender their spiritual independence to a church manual. (Montani Semper Libre!) So I leaped into the world a West Virginian, a Pentecostal, sans television, the most important socializing agent of our times. Perhaps by now you will understand why I often ask myself if I even belong to the twentieth century.

The Kanawaha River runs through southern West Virginia and empties into the Ohio. I lived the early part of my life on its banks. Our home and church were on that gentle rise we called flatland between the river and the mountains. On either bank of the Kanawaha, the flatland quickly gives way to the Alleghenies, the foothills of the Appalachian mountains. Mysterious, dark, wonderful, drastic and irresistible, the Appalachian mountains, more than any other part of the geography I call home, is the source of its enchantment. At the hour of death, if I have time to reflect, I am sure one of my last thoughts will be of those purple giants lifting their heads above the clouds, watching from above the mere mortals beneath who come and go, generation after generation--Mound Builders, Cherokee, Scotch-Irishmen, Germans and Africans; living, loving and dying beneath their beneficent shade. I have always thought that the "Holy hills of heaven," the hills that an Appalachian poet by the name of Dottie Rambo

wrote about, would look something like ours. I still think so.

The mountains of West Virginia breed a fiercely independent folk. They speak their own dialect of English and care little about contact with others. For three hundred years, the five hundred families of Scotch-Irishmen who crossed the Atlantic in so-called "coffin boats," and walked across the Blue Ridge, have lived there in relative obscurity and isolation from the rest of the nation. That is changing. Wide highways have been cut into the face of the mountains in my own lifetime. Now, one can travel in a couple of hours into a very different environment. Airplanes take off for far away places from an airstrip designed in Hell and constructed on the side of a hill overlooking Charleston. Satellite dishes litter every village in the state. So, southern West Virginia is no longer isolated, and neither are its people. The old way of life is disappearing. The isolationism traditional to our once isolated valley has become impossible to maintain.

I was born in that isolated valley. Since then, I have learned to speak new languages, so that I can communicate with people from France, Spain and Ohio. I have enjoyed broadening my formal education as well, and have met believers and unbelievers from a wide spectrum of human culture. For good or ill, I have joined the twentieth century, (though I have planted my roots deep into that alternative civilization which St. Augustine called the City of God).

A similar thing happened to me in regard to oneness Pentecostalism. I have not so much repudiated it as I have enveloped it within a much wider context. I found out that our group had misrepresented other Christians: they did not believe in three gods after all. I found out that other Christians have existed in many nations and in every century since Christ. I found out that they have died for Him, that they have written wonderful books, poems and hymns in his honor, and that they have, in his name, undertaken missionary work through terrible sacrifice. I also found out that they faced faith-denying heresies in the early ages, and that in defense of the gospel, developed little poetic statements called creeds to define orthodox Christian faith. I found out that these poetical statements contained nothing contrary to what I believed, even as a oneness Pentecostal. The truth is, they wonderfully sum up what my fathers in the Lord taught me that Christian faith was all about. I had to face the fact that my little valley, hidden away as it was from everyone else, and precious in its own way, was simply cut off from a much larger Christian world. I heard that larger world calling to me.

There were several questions that finally broke down my resistance, and which provided a pathway for me out of my isolation. Among the questions were these:

1. *Do I accept the canon of Holy Scripture as contained in the Old and New Testaments, that is, those writings which the Christian Church officially declares to be Holy Scripture? Why?*
2. *How, when, and by whom was this canon of Scripture decided?*
3. *If the people who made the decisions concerning the canon had the mind of the Holy Spirit, was that either the first or the last time they demonstrated that authority and spiritual sensitivity? Had they decided anything else of importance?*
4. *What are the implications of the fact that believers recited the Apostles' Creed as a standard of faith before the Church decided which writings would make up the New Testament? For example, could I, with intellectual and spiritual integrity, reject the creeds and still retain my faith in the authority of the New Testament?*
5. *On what basis does authority rest in the Christian Church?*
6. *Were the Protestant Reformers guilty of rebellion, or were they justified in leaving a movement they believed to be out of sorts with the Word of God? If they were justified, then on what basis could any person or group of persons resist their denominational authority? Do the same rules apply to the members of all movements, including ours?*
7. *Was I willing to live by the implications of the answers I gave to these questions?*

Questions like these were the roads that took me out of my isolated group. I had, and have, no intentions of de-Christianizing my heritage. I have come across more heresy, even down right apostasy, in America's mainline churches than I ever found in oneness Pentecostalism. Nonetheless, I have chosen to live in contact with the saints of all times and with their spiritual descendants. I claim as elders in the Lord, Wesley, Luther, Polycarp, St. Francis, and Billy Graham as well as Bishop Haywood, Howard Goss and R. J. Cook. (These last three brothers are in heaven, and they agree with me now!) So while I am glad to honor its gifts to me, I will never again be confined to the sectarian religious heritage of my youth. I will visit it in memory and bless those who choose to remain in it, because it was there I met Christ. But I will no longer be confined there, just as I will no longer be confined within the borders of my beloved, but isolated native land.

I faced many lonely days because of my decision to live in the broader Christian world. Some of my old friends and colleagues would not allow me to do that and remain in fellowship with them. That was their loss as well as mine, because I would have enjoyed making this journey of faith in their company. My relationship with

Christ has deepened however, and so has my appreciation of the breadth of the Holy Spirit's work on the earth. I still sing Bishop Haywood's songs at tender moments, but I also sing Luther's, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." I still enjoy moving my feet to the sound of a Hammond organ, but I also enjoy preparing for communion from the Book of Common Prayer. I still appreciate the missionaries in the UPC who lived godly lives before me, and I will carry with me to the grave the lessons they taught me. They knew and loved Jesus. But they were wrong about one thing: we are not alone, and we cannot remain unaccountable to the whole Christian Church, past and present. The journey out was painful, but not nearly as painful as remaining isolated (and perpetuating that isolation for my children). So I cannot conclude this vignette without saying that, thanks be to God, the pain is soon swallowed up in the unspeakable joy that comes from living in the undivided company of the communion of saints.

SKIP PAYNTER, Portland, Oregon

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My Oneness Pentecostal journey began under the pew of Calvary Apostolic Church in Columbus, Ohio. Yes, "under." Some of my earliest recollections as a child were Sunday night services with my family during which I occupied myself with what most children my age did at around six or seven years of age. I played with toys and read books and slept under the pew, much like my six-year old daughter has done during our own church services. I must have been about eight years old when my mother told me on the way to church one Sunday evening that she thought I was old enough to begin paying attention to the preaching during the service instead of "checking out" after song service. According to the best of my recollection at this point, it seems that almost instantly I began to feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit in my heart, maybe even that very night. I remember going to the altar of that old, converted armory auditorium to repent of my sins and to ask God to "fill me with the Holy Ghost." I was taught that the only way to be saved was to repent of my sins, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ by immersion and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost speaking in other tongues.

I also remember "seeking" for the Holy Ghost for what seemed like a long time.

One night, while we were leaving the church after a particularly long altar service, one of the men of the church asked my parents whether I had received the Holy Ghost. My mother responded that I had experienced "stammering lips" and that I was close to getting the experience. This report is significant, because I recall the tremendous effort I put into "getting the baptism." After her comment I thought how hard it was going to be to receive the Holy Ghost, and even after everyone else claimed that I had the genuine article, I often doubted whether I really did receive it or whether I had lost it. This brings to mind the lack of emphasis on faith for salvation and the enormous stress put on experience, particularly the tongues experience. Such an emphasis played a big part in my faith for a long time.

I was a faithful young person, very dedicated to the church and to the Lord. I have never doubted that the one constant factor in my life through all the changes, theologically and otherwise, has been the presence of the Lord. He has never changed, though my own understanding of Him has gone through quite a metamorphosis. I always felt as though Christ was very close to me. I grew up getting involved in the normal things in which any dedicated UPC young person would be involved: youth camp, Bible quizzing, youth services, sectional youth rallies, and so forth. One day a friend of mine tried to convince me that I should attend Bible college. I was eighteen years old at the time and was becoming ensconced in the world of work, making money, dating and just having a good time with life. I remember him telling me that if I didn't go now, at this stage in my life, I might never go at all. As I reflect on that conversation, I believe that the Lord used him to help me realize what my life was all about: living for God's glory and preparing myself for lifelong ministry.

When my friend spoke to me, he was trying to get me to attend the Apostolic Bible Institute, a school known for cranking out ministers of the gospel. (This was also the school that my mother had attended. I have always wondered if she had a hand in having him talk to me.) At the time, I felt that God wanted me to be in music ministry, so it was only natural that I attend the school of our denomination which was known for its tremendous music program, Jackson College of Ministries. So, I prepared to attend Jackson College of Ministries.

I was only at JCM a short time when I began to realize that God had his hand on my life for another purpose. I soon felt strongly that he wanted me to be in the ministry of teaching and preaching his Word. There were so many things that seemed to happen quickly in that first year of Bible college. But, among them all was a strong hunger to understand the Word. And, along with that hungering, I began to hear, over the next three years, concepts like "being open to the Holy Spirit" and allowing God to speak to me about truth and its nature. I began to see that it was possible that the

United Pentecostal Church was not the only bearer of truth to the world, that God was doing things in and through other denominations and Christian groups. I started to see that there were other ways to approach truth and that what I had thought was being educated in my faith was really no more than indoctrination into a denomination.

The real turning point came as a senior at Jackson when I began to study the book of Romans along with my classmates in an exegesis class taught by Joseph Howell. I remember discovering from Romans that "the just shall live by faith" and that salvation was not by works but by grace through faith. One day in the dorm room I was talking with my roommate, Phil Yadon, and some other friends about these issues. I distinctly remember saying that "If what the book of Romans says is true about salvation, then what about what we have been taught about repentance, water baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost speaking in other tongues?" It was almost as if I had a vision at that moment, for I remember getting the feeling that the ground dropped out from under my doctrinal foundation right in front of me. I felt as though I had to make a "leap of faith" from where I was over the huge chasm of UPC doctrine to the truth of genuine faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. I suddenly realized that nothing I did could add to what Christ had already done. He had paid the price for my sin, and I had but to accept by faith what He alone did on the cross. Yes, baptism and the infilling of the Holy Spirit were parts of the Christian life, but they were just that—parts of the Christian life, things subsequent to salvation, not things done to be saved.

The real break from the UPC came during my first ministry out of Bible college. Susan, my new wife, and I moved to Lancaster, Ohio, to take a youth pastorate. As we continued to study the new-found truths we had discovered while in college, we found ourselves more and more at odds with the denomination. The church in which we served was going through some re-examining of old truths and traditions, mostly questions about the old standards of dress. But, we found it increasingly difficult teaching the young people without openly undermining the "tried and true" doctrines and having kids approach us with questions about such things.

The issue that was the catalyst for our exit was the issue of authority. We diligently studied the Scripture and sought answers to what we were experiencing through our relationship to the pastor under whom we served. As we studied the Scripture I saw that no one stood between the Christian and God. Yet, there were pastors who acted as though they, rather than the Word of God, were the supreme authority in the life of the Christian. This was the issue that gave me reason to leave the church at which I was working and, ultimately, the denomination which supported

this authoritarian approach to leadership.

Since I left over ten years ago, I have discovered the wider body of Christ. I have had the opportunity to rub shoulders with and fellowship with many members of the body of Christ who have not experienced some of the things the oneness folk say are essential to salvation. These are believers who have obeyed the scripture in believing on Christ and following in Christian baptism. These are people whose lives clearly evidence the fruit of the Spirit. These are people who are faithful to a local assembly where they hear the Word of God preached and taught. These are people who love Jesus with all their hearts and who seek to please Him only. These are faithful Christians who long for the coming of our Lord and who faithfully proclaim the gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to a lost and dying world. I have seen their faith, their commitment, their love and their compassion. Many of them outstrip some of the people I was reared with in the United Pentecostal Church in terms of their Christian testimony and clean, holy living. I am so happy that I can declare them my brothers and sisters in Christ.

ESCAPE FROM HISTORY

Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it.

*George Santayana,
on the banner at the pavilion
Jonestown, Guyana*

It has been well over a dozen years since I wrote the following essay. It was written out of the agony of self-analysis. I had reached a crisis of monumental proportions. The religious denomination of my upbringing had become a theological millstone around my neck, and I felt that I was spiritually drowning. I did not write this essay for publication, but rather, I wanted to put down on paper some of my own thoughts in the critical process of self-evaluation. At the time I wrote I was still a card-carrying member of the United Pentecostal Church, and for safety's sake, I did not write under my own name. Rather, I wrote under the pseudonym of Joseph D. Siwell (Joseph is my middle name, and Siwell is a form of Lewis spelled backwards). At that time, I still had not come to a final decision to leave the United Pentecostal Church. It was only a few weeks, however, before I knew that I must withdraw for the sake of Christ and the Christian gospel. Other than my original decision for faith in Christ and my marriage, it is the best and most important decision I have ever made.

Ironically, copies of the following essay leaked out, and within weeks of its composition, dozens of them were being passed around the country among those who might be most interested. When I moved to Metro Detroit, I received a call from a lady who asked if I had written this essay. When I responded in the affirmative, she said she had about two hundred copies left from all the ones she had reprinted and sent to various people.

Were I to rewrite this essay today, I would doubtless change some things. Furthermore, there are almost certainly some comments that are seriously dated. However, I have left the essay substantially as I wrote it thirteen years ago. Perhaps in this way the reader will appreciate the depth of discomfort I felt when I discovered that the denomination of my childhood was shot through with multitudinous theological and historical errors and with no hope of self-correction.

THE PRESENT DILEMMA

It may seem as obvious as a toothache that those who attempt to escape history are only exercising themselves in absurdity. One may not like history, one may choose

to ignore history, one may even try to overcome the mistakes of history, but to act as though history is irrelevant, or worse, to act as though it is nonexistent seems the height of irrationality. Unfortunately, such is apparently the case within the thinking of some voices within modern Oneness Pentecostalism. I do not here intend to be pejorative. My purpose is not scandalous. My own religious roots are to be found in this same movement, and my closest friends are there, too. My ministerial affiliation is there. However, for the past several years, I have been increasingly disturbed by a wholesale bypassing of history, and in some cases a reconstruction of history which seems favorable to the Oneness movement but not completely honest with the facts. In the interests of integrity and truth-seeking, an exploration of this dilemma is compelling.

Particularism:

To understand what I have labeled as an escape from history, it is initially to be observed that such an escape is not just an abstraction, such as might arise out of some eccentric bypath of existentialism or philosophy. It arises as a defense of particularism. Were it not for the desire to see Oneness Pentecostalism as the only true church of Jesus Christ, were it not for the conviction that Oneness Pentecostalism, and it alone, holds the true keys to salvation, such an approach to history would be unnecessary. But given the idea that all other forms of Christendom are at best deficient (at worst apostate), then church history must either be interpreted so as to conform to this ideal, or else if not, it must be bypassed altogether.

The idea of particularism or exclusivism within Christianity is certainly not a new one. Indeed, one may find the roots of such thought within the New Testament as Paul, John, Peter, Jude and others fought early encroaching heresies which threatened to distort the gospel. Inevitably, with the rise of different theological concepts in the eras of the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, there also arose disputes as to which of these concepts represented the true way. It must be remembered, however, that division in the church was not a light matter. Sectarianism was considered to be sin, as Robert Webber has correctly observed in his recent book *Common Roots*.²⁶ After the Medieval Period, the Protestant Reformation produced a schism within Christendom in which the opposing sides often considered each other to be a company of heretics. Such feelings are not yet dead in modern history, in spite of a resurgent ecumenism. For instance, a characteristic of Darbyism (early dispensationalism) in the

²⁶R. Webber, *Common Roots* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 55-71.

early and middle 1800s was a profound distrust in all other ecclesiastical systems. If others did not agree with Darby's interpretations, "...they were characterized as 'not understanding the divine plan of the ages,' and therefore as somewhat 'apostate'".²⁷ In more recent times, a strong theological stance was adopted by the fundamentalists in the modernist-fundamentalist controversy, a stance which indicated that "all established denominations had become apostate, and true Christians, therefore, would do well to separate themselves from those inclusive ecclesiastical bodies."²⁸ E. Glenn Hinson has pointed out a number of similar attitudes to be found in church history ranging from the Donatists of North Africa in the early Christian centuries to the Baptists of Tennessee in the mid-19th century. These latter, under the name Landmarkism, claimed that they and they alone were the only true church. Non-Baptist ministers and churches were simply not "gospel churches."²⁹ Thus, the idea of particularism is quite old.

The particularism in modern Oneness Pentecostalism may be observed in a variety of ways. Such oft-repeated phrases as "full gospel," "full salvation," the "whole gospel" and the "apostolic truth" are simply alternative ways of saying that Oneness Pentecostals alone have the sufficient level of truth for salvation. In fact, the oft-repeated phrase, "we have *the* truth," has become one of the hallmarks of the movement. Although theoretically it may sometimes be admitted that Christians outside Oneness Pentecostalism may be saved, in a practical way it is almost always denied. In fact, from the words of a prominent Oneness Pentecostal leader, it appears that anyone outside the exclusive Oneness ranks is little better than a deceiver or a heretic, for he says:

It is impossible for the man without the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost to teach another the spiritual truths of God's Word.

[Such a person] is blinded; he is off the track. He cannot know nor understand spiritual things. He is a blind leader of the blind. [It should be noted that the 'baptism of the Holy Ghost' as here referred to would only be considered valid if it is received according to the Oneness Pentecostal ideal. If one has not spoken in tongues, he has absolutely no

²⁷C. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960) 46-47.

²⁸R. Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 8.

²⁹E. Hinson, *The Integrity of the Church* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1978) 25-27.

claim to the indwelling of the Spirit.]

The simplest, most ignorant one with the Holy Ghost is more qualified than they [ones without the Holy Ghost], no matter the amount of education they may have received.

Steer clear of everything and everyone that is not proven to be fully and completely apostolic, and in harmony with our brethren in the United Pentecostal Church.³⁰

Denominationalism in general is commonly rejected as something other than true Christianity. Another leader of the United Pentecostal Church International writes that denominationalism is from where God has brought the true church and to where she will eventually regress if not very careful. He continues:

And so, after two years, five years, twenty years; there you are back in the old man-made denomination, sitting, trying to feel good, trying to rationalize, trying to make yourself believe that you are alright and even far ahead spiritually. Can't you see you have been deceived?³¹

³⁰D. Gray, "How to Keep from Being Deceived," *The Pentecostal Herald*, (October 1980) 4-7.

³¹E. McClintock, "The Spirit of Deception," *The Pentecostal Herald* (December 1980) 9-11.

A popular evangelistic tract among Oneness Pentecostals is entitled, "Pentecost Is Not a Denomination--It Is An Experience." When one denounces denominationalism, it naturally becomes important not to appear as a denomination yourself. However, although Pentecost *per se* may not be a denomination, the United Pentecostal Church International is. Her particularism is so pronounced as to incite a former member of the United Pentecostal Church, a Christian psychologist, to write an expose of what he calls a fundamentalist "web of tradition."³² Nor are such attacks reserved only for non-Pentecostals. This writer has on numerous occasions heard other Pentecostal bodies (i.e., Assemblies of God) bitterly denounced publicly. In 1978, at the United Pentecostal Church General Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, one of the evening speakers portrayed Charismatics as "canoe-ismatics," that is, folk who were not in the true ark of God and whose "canoes" would not be sufficient to save them from the deluge of God's judgment while the United Pentecostal Church remained in the boat of safety. The rousing, vocal response was evidence of the popularity of such thinking. Even if this were true, the response of the audience should have been grief for people in a lost condition rather than an exhibition of personal triumph and vindictiveness (an attitude which was encouraged).

From these kinds of comments, it may be seen that Oneness Pentecostals not only endorse particularism, but endorse it with a vengeance. Nor is this to say that there should never be any doctrinal discrimination within the church. Certainly one would not want to revert to Medieval, pre-Reformation problems. Yet the church is the church! One cannot deny her entity simply because she has had periods of weakness. Did Israel in the Old Testament deny herself because on many occasions she fell short? For that matter, did God deny her? Paul did not seem to think so (Romans 11:1-5, 26-29)! We must concur that Scripture is the final authority for faith and practice and that some teachings must be whole-heartedly rejected on that basis. Even God's recognition of Israel was in terms of a true "remnant." Nor would it be instant utopia if all denominations suddenly lost their distinctions and joined hands in a mighty flood of conformity. However, it would equally be a mistake to assume that there can never be diversity within the church of the Lord Jesus, that unity may only be attained through a total conformity on every point.

The Search for the Early Church:

³²D. Marler, *Imprisoned in the Brotherhood* (Jericho, New York: Exposition Press, 1973).

In addition to the philosophy of particularism, a "back to the early church movement" has played a significant role in Oneness Pentecostalism's escape from history. Various groups within fundamentalism have for many years entertained the idea of searching for and implementing the right keys to apostolicity. William McBirnie, when examining this phenomenon, points out that such idealism has been seen in various restoration efforts, each attempting an imitation of some special doctrine or practice which was held to be the key to true apostolic practice.³³ For the Quakers, it was being led by the Spirit in worship; for the Baptists, it was believer's baptism; for the Christian (Disciples) Church, it was a rational faith in the spirit of unity; for pietists within many groups, it was deeper spiritual experience; for the Presbyterians, it was church government. To these may be added the Holiness groups who emphasized personal piety and sanctification, the Pentecostals who emphasized the Baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by other tongues and the Charismatics who emphasized the gifts of the Spirit and a reduced institutionalism. Some Charismatic Renewal groups have even attempted to return to communal life, paralleling what occurred in the Jerusalem church (Acts 4:32-37).

Within Oneness Pentecostalism, the return to the early church (or the key to apostolicity) is usually seen to be in special doctrines, especially the Jesus' name formula for water baptism, the phenomenon of tongues as the initial evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, a rejection of classical trinitarianism in favor of Christomonism, and a rigorous holiness standard. Since these identifying marks are thought to qualify the true church, attempts have been made to find an unbroken chain of these doctrines through church history so as to affirm an uncontaminated apostolic continuum. Some writers have broadly sketched in this continuity with general references to persons or groups in the Patristic Period, the Medieval Period and revivals of the past two centuries.³⁴ Such an approach is more a suggestion of continuity than bonafide substantial proof. Ironically, none of the groups cited as "proofs" carried a full package of the alleged essential truths, so even if they did affirm one or more of them, they could not be considered accurate representatives of apostolicity, at least by Oneness advocate's standards. A more concerted effort to establish this continuity is to be found in Marvin Arnold's *History of the Christian*

³³W. McBirnie, *The Search for the Early Church* (Wheaton, Il.: Tyndale House, 1978) 99-25.

³⁴F. Foster, *Think It Not Strange* (St. Louis: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1965) 20-23; T. Tenney, *Pentecost--What's That?* (Hazelwood, MO.: Word Aflame Press, 1975) 74-79.

Church,³⁵ but the glaring historical inaccuracies, poor grammar and theological gobbledygook are singularly unimpressive. Nevertheless, the idea remains popular that there has always been a true people of God who upheld Oneness Pentecostal beliefs from the first century until the present without a break.

The Visible and Invisible Church:

When one speaks of the church visible and invisible, two models may be considered. The traditional one seeks to establish a unity between those living in Christ and those deceased in Christ. The visible church, as such, is the corporate body of living believers in the world today. The invisible church is the body of God's people who reside in the intermediate state between death and resurrection. The second model is radically different. Rather than seeking a unity between the terms visible church and invisible church, it seeks a separation. In this model, the visible church corresponds to the professing church (Christendom) which may not necessarily be the true church at all. The invisible church corresponds to the true church within the visible church. It is this second model which, on occasion, contributes to an escape from history.

Abuses of this second model may be found among the various groups in church history who have held adamantly to particularism. The invisible church or the true church within the professing church becomes the tool by which unwanted Christians are castigated. On a denominational level, this occurs when a group defines the minimum requirements of membership in Christ's church by their own denominational distinctives. It might even be tacitly admitted that one need not belong to their denominational affiliation to be in the true church, but in a practical way, it always works out that way inasmuch as the essentials for entrance are their own denominational bylines.

³⁵M. Arnold, *History of the Christian Church* (Memphis: Apostolic Publishing House, 1979) 214-273.

Such a stance is at the heart of Oneness Pentecostalism's ecclesiology. That God could accept Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans and so forth is almost unthinkable. True, there might just be a few people saved in these groups, but the chances are very slim. "Denominal"³⁶ church members are little better than outright sinners, because they do not have the "truth." If by chance one is associated with the Assemblies of God (who allegedly rejected the truth in the days of the new issue--more on this later), he is probably worse than an outright sinner. Confession of the Lordship of Christ and a consistent Christian lifestyle are little more than worthless. Faith is insufficient. The fact that most denominational distinctives are debatable is not to be considered. In the words of one Oneness Pentecostal official, one ought to believe the Oneness Pentecostal denominational byline

³⁶The word "denominal" is a popular coinage among Oneness Pentecostals. Although it is not a standard word, it is most likely a combination of the words "nominal" and "denominational." Generally, it is used to designate Christians in the mainline denominations who are thought to be apostate.

*...the most when it crosses your reason and your desires. Believe it when you don't understand it. Believe it when it is argued against with convincing arguments. Believe it--believe it all. Cling to it without wavering, or you will be lost.*³⁷

Such a position misunderstands even the meaning of the word church. To the apostles, the word church (*ekklesia*) simply indicated a congregation. The concept of a universal church, as found in the Apostles' Creed and the later creeds, is a development.³⁸ The idea of a church within the church is foreign to the New Testament. Even when there were problems, indeed serious moral problems (take Corinth, for example), the church was still the church! With all its strengths and weaknesses, it never ceased to be the church which was sanctified and called in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 Co. 1:2). John Bright aptly states,

*Let us understand it quite clearly: the church, for all her variform changes, has changed not one little bit. We are still the New Testament church--or we are no church!*³⁹

True, not every one who says "Lord, Lord" will enter into the kingdom of God (Matthew 7:21-23). At the same time, we may not set ourselves up as judges in the gray areas of theology. To pronounce condemnation upon one who "follows not with us" but who nevertheless follows Christ is an invitation to divine displeasure (cf. Mark 9:38-40; Matthew 7:1-5).

THE MYTHICAL BIRTH AND CONTINUITY OF ONENESS PENTECOSTALISM

Having discussed the dilemma caused by particularism, the search for the early church, and the invisible church within the visible church, we may now see how these elements combine to produce an escape from history. If indeed Oneness Pentecostals

³⁷Gray, 7.

³⁸McBirnle, 11.

³⁹J. Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953) 245.

are the true church in particular, if indeed they have found the key to apostolicity, and if indeed they are the true church within the professing church, then the majority of Christian churches and Christian church history must be nothing more than some sort of apostasy, a posture which many Oneness Pentecostals adopt. If other professing Christians are to be so categorized, Oneness Pentecostals cannot afford to be identified with them. To admit that Oneness Pentecostalism's religious roots are in other Christian movements, to concede that much of Oneness Pentecostal theology is adopted from them, in short, to make allowance that the Oneness Pentecostal mentality is the product of heredity and environment is an embarrassment. Others may look back and see John Wesley, John Calvin and Martin Luther, but Oneness Pentecostals see only themselves stretching in a mystical but unbroken chain to the day of Pentecost. The Oneness version of the godhead must have been Paul's. The exclusivism of the Jesus' name baptismal formula must have been Peter's greatest emphasis. The holiness standards of the UPC were doubtless the same as those in the New Testament. From Pentecost until the present, the real church of Jesus has believed just like Oneness Pentecostals believe. If Oneness Pentecostals shout, dance and run the church aisles in worship, the early church must have. If they preach "speak in tongues or go to hell," the early church must have. Their hermeneutics are unquestionably those of the early church. Their emphases the same. *Ultimately, Oneness Pentecostals conclude by using themselves to define the early church rather than the other way around!*

As mentioned earlier, attempts have been made to substantiate this unbroken chain of "true apostolicity." In this attempt, Oneness Pentecostals have not only created a mythical birth of their movement, but a mythical continuity of it. In reality, such a continuity simply cannot be substantiated, yet in the effort to make it real, the history and heroes of the "true way" (or, in some cases, the antagonists) become distorted. Rather than an unbroken continuity, the rise of Pentecostalism in general and the Oneness movement in particular is a series of theological shifts. Following is a brief insight into how it really happened.

From the Reformation to the 19th Century:

Twentieth century Christianity appears in three basic camps: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy (an 11th century separation from Romanism), and Protestantism (a 16th century separation from Romanism).⁴⁰ As part of the general category of Protestantism, Pentecostals find their earliest roots in the 16th century

⁴⁰L. Rosten, ed., *Religions in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) 154.

Reformation. In opposition to the authoritarian claims of Rome, the Protestants (protestant, meaning to profess or to bear witness) proclaimed their doctrines in terms of *solus Christus*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*, that is, salvation by Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone and authority in Scripture alone.⁴¹ Over the ensuing years, the living doctrines of the reformers were systematized and put into rational categories.⁴² During the 17th and 18th centuries (a period known as Protestant Scholasticism) such a crystallization caused them to lose much of their passion and power. The rise of philosophical rationalism under Rousseau, Descartes, Voltaire, Hume, Locke, Bacon, Franklin and Jefferson swept Europe, Britain and North America. In its path, it engulfed much of the already deficient Protestant doctrinal structure in what has come to be known as Deism. From such a milieu arose 19th century Protestant liberalism.

Against the liberalizing shifts of Protestant theology there appeared strong conservative reactions, and it is here that we again find early roots of Pentecostalism. In Germany this reaction is known as Pietism; in Britain it may be seen in Methodism; in America it is called the Great Awakening. Revivalists such as John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, D. L. Moody and others attempted to reassert the role of faith and feeling in Christianity. An offshoot of this sort of revivalism can be observed in the 19th century holiness movements, and it is there that we come to the immediate predecessors of Pentecostalism.

The 19th Century Holiness Movements:⁴³

The holiness movements may be traced backward to John Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection, that is, the belief that sanctification is experiential and subsequent to conversion. The sanctification process, called the second blessing, was thought to bring to the believer new spiritual power for overcoming sin as well as a new fullness

⁴¹D. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978) I.62, 164, 181, 228.

⁴²The following discussion may be found in any scholarly source of modern church history, i.e.: E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954); J. Dillenberger and C. Welch, *Protestant Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954); J. Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), III; etc.

⁴³To avoid extensive footnoting, note that this section follows the essays found in: V. Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1975).

in the Holy Spirit. Wesley's own concept of sanctification was in terms of progressive action and a developing spiritual maturity. Although the teaching and propagation of this holiness message was believed by Wesley to be the distinctive mission of the Methodist Church, the heirs of Methodism did not actively pursue such a course. It was left to the holiness splinter groups to do so.

In time, Wesley's doctrine of progressive sanctification underwent some modifications in the holiness groups. The most significant shift was a de-emphasis of the progressive nature of sanctification and a new emphasis on sanctification as a crisis experience. As such, sanctification was to be viewed as an instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit. This second blessing occurred subsequent to conversion, and at that time, the "old man" or "old nature" was instantly and miraculously removed, enabling the believer to live completely above sin. In fact, even one's desire for sin was removed.⁴⁴ This second blessing was understood largely in terms of external holiness. Such teaching gave rise to an expression which one still occasionally hears in Pentecostal circles, that is, being "saved and sanctified."

A further shift may be noted toward the end of the 19th century. This shift was not so much a change in concept as change in terminology. The early holiness movements had discussed their views of sanctification under the designation Christian perfection. However, given the idea that sanctification was instantaneous rather than progressive, leaders such as Charles Finney, Asa Mahan and Phoebe Palmer began to speak of the crisis experience of sanctification as the baptism in the Holy Ghost. As yet, the emphasis was primarily on the power of such an experience. If indeed this experience was one of power, then the recipient ought to expect some sort of concrete assurance that the experience had occurred. A conscious effect and even physical thrills began to be sought as confirmation of the baptism in the Holy Ghost. Those who advocated sanctification as the baptism in the Holy Ghost were naturally drawn to such passages as Act 2, 10 and 19. This milieu set the stage for the birth of 20th century Pentecostalism.

The Birth of the Tongues Movement:

⁴⁴A form of this teaching still exists in the Church of the Nazarene's doctrine of a "second definite work of grace."

Carl Brumback described the birth of Pentecostalism as being "Suddenly...from Heaven" in the title of his book which chronicles the birth of the Pentecostal movement and the Assemblies of God.⁴⁵ Be that as it may, there was a strong earthly character to the birth also, inasmuch as the contributing elements arose from the 19th century holiness movements. It must not be thought that the Pentecostal ideals just dropped out of heaven on the heads of unsuspecting believers. The Pentecostal ideals were hammered out on the anvil of history!

Charles Parham, a holiness lay preacher originally associated with the Congregational Church and later the Methodists, had withdrawn to the holiness movement in the belief that the complacent formalism of the denominations needed an endowment of the Holy Spirit. In 1900, he opened a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas. Versed in the popular thinking about sanctification as the baptism of the Holy Spirit and believing in the need for an experiential witness or assurance of such a phenomenon, he left his students in December, 1900 with the instructions to study the Bible and see if there could be found in Scripture a clearly defined special sign that a person had been baptized with the Holy Ghost.⁴⁶

⁴⁵C. Brumback, *Suddenly...from Heaven* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971).

⁴⁶S. Parham, *The Life of Charles H. Parham* (Joplin, MO) 39, as quoted in Foster, 27.

After returning from Kansas City, he was astonished and delighted to find that the students had all arrived at the same conclusion: "...while there were different things which occurred when the Pentecostal blessing fell, the indisputable proof on each occasion was that they spoke with other tongues."⁴⁷ Shortly after, students began experiencing the phenomenon of tongues as they sought for this assurance in daily and nightly services. As Fred Foster has correctly pointed out, "The unusual significance concerning the Topeka outpouring is not that it was the first time in the modern age people had spoken in tongues, but that it was the first known experience of people's seeking for the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the expectation of speaking in tongues."⁴⁸ From Topeka, the tongues movement spread to neighboring Kansas towns, Missouri, Texas, Ohio, Los Angeles, the Pacific Northwest, Arkansas, Chicago and New York City.⁴⁹ Tongues as the evidence of the baptism in the Spirit became firmly entrenched in the holiness movements which accepted it as such. Pentecostalism was born!

At this point, two observations are in order which Oneness Pentecostals sometimes are loath to admit in their escape from history. First, one cannot posit an unbroken chain of Pentecostalism from the early church to the present. Rather, the Pentecostal movement gradually evolved through a series of theological shifts, particularly in the holiness movements of the 19th century. Second, the early pioneers of the tongues movement did not see tongues and the baptism in the Holy Ghost as strictly salvational. Their understanding of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was that it comprised a post-salvational work of the Holy Spirit, that is, the crisis experience of sanctification.

A Further Theological Shift:

After tongues became standardized as the outward evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the fledgling Pentecostals were left with what might be labeled three works of grace. First, there was conversion or salvation. Next, there was sanctification as a crisis experience. Finally, there was the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. When the crisis experience of sanctification

⁴⁷J. Nichol, *Pentecostalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 26-27.

⁴⁸Foster, 28.

⁴⁹Foster, 29-40; Nichol, 29-39.

became expressly identified with the phenomenon of tongues, members of the traditional holiness groups were left with a dilemma. Many of them had already experienced what they felt was sanctification, yet had not spoken in tongues. Either they must reject tongues as the initial and sole evidence of sanctification (which many did),⁵⁰ or they must admit that as yet they had not been sanctified (which others did). A third option was to accept tongues as an endowment of power but to distinguish it from sanctification as a crisis experience (which yet others did). From this third position comes a phrase which is still found in some Pentecostal circles, that is, being "saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost." According to Foster, the majority of the Pentecostal movement fell into this third category.⁵¹

⁵⁰Some not only rejected tongues as evidence of sanctification, but rejected tongues as a valid spiritual phenomenon of divine origin altogether. Prominent among these were members of the Church of the Nazarene.

⁵¹Foster, 42.

It was William Durham who in 1910 began preaching what amounted to a reduction of this three-fold work of grace teaching. Arguing that sanctification was initiated in salvation and continued throughout the Christian life, Durham rejected the idea of sanctification as an added work of grace different from conversion. In so doing, he returned full circle to an orthodoxy which the holiness movement had not seen since before the days of John Wesley. Although rejected by the organizations of the Church of God, Pentecostal Holiness Church, and Apostolic Faith, Durham's message eventually won the day with a majority of Pentecostals.⁵² Today, most Pentecostals still advocate sanctification as an integral part of conversion.

Birth of the New Issue:

If Durham's preaching created a debate, it was only the prelude to an issue that was to split the Pentecostal movement wide open.

A forerunner of this issue began in the Jesus-centrism of 19th century revivalism. David Reed, in his recent doctoral thesis, has pointed out a theology of the name of God which arose among pietistic trinitarians during this period. It was characterized by two foci. First, it defended the deity of Christ and his oneness with God, although admittedly at this point there was no rejection of the orthodox trinity. Second, it engaged in study of the various titles and names of God in the Old and New Testaments with the conclusion that there was one name of supreme revelation and salvation, which name was Jesus. This Jesus-centrism became an integral part of the young Pentecostal movement of the early 20th century.⁵³

To this climate was added a sense of expectancy among the Pentecostals that God was on the verge of doing something new. In fact, according to Howard Goss:

*A preacher, who did not dig up some new slant on a Scripture, or get some new revelation to his own heart every so often...was considered slow, stupid, unspiritual.*⁵⁴

⁵²Brumback, 98-106.

⁵³D. Reed, *Origins and Development of the Theology of Oneness Pentecostalism in the United States* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1978) 27-45.

⁵⁴E. Goss, *The Winds of God--The Story of the Early Pentecostal Days (1901-1914)* (New York: Comet Press Books, 1958) 155, as quoted in Reed, 141.

The spark which ignited the new thing was kindled at a baptismal service in Arroyo Seco, California at a Pentecostal camp meeting baptismal service in April, 1913. R. E. McAlister publicly advocated using the shorter baptismal formula "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" rather than the traditional one "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." His statements aroused a great deal of discussion and so affected one minister, John G. Scheppe, that he spent the night in prayer. Toward morning, Scheppe leaped to his feet and ran shouting through the camp that God had given him a special illumination of the power of the name of Jesus in baptism.⁵⁵

After the camp meeting, McAlister shared his insights regarding the name of Jesus with Frank Ewart, formerly an Australian Baptist missionary, now successor to the late William Durham's church in Los Angeles. According to McAlister, the phrase "Lord, Jesus, Christ" was a direct counterpart to "Father, Son, Holy Ghost." Ewart, after hearing this, became a catalyst for the new message. One year later, after withdrawing from Durham's church, Ewart preached his first sermon on Acts 2:38, and the new issue had begun. The message spread rapidly nationwide through the Pentecostal movement. By 1915, what came to be called the new issue had reached monumental proportions and was discussed everywhere.⁵⁶

Theological Implications of the New Issue:

The new issue, as it developed, was not merely the idea of baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in spite of the fact that this is where it began. In fact, the shorter baptismal formula had on occasion been used prior to McAlister's sermon in 1913. These early practices, however, had simply been attempts to conform to apostolic practice in the Book of Acts.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Brumback, 191; Foster, 51-52; Reed, 97-100.

⁵⁶Reed, 99-100.

⁵⁷Reed, 104, 148.

The real crux of the issue evolved along two theological lines. One was a functional adoption of baptismal regeneration. I say functional, because even though baptismal regeneration was denied by some, the idea that the new birth (Jn. 3:3-5) was at least partly accomplished in the act of baptism became prominent.⁵⁸ The other idea was that unless one was baptized in Jesus' name he, in effect, had not been baptized properly at all, had not been born again, and his salvation was in question.⁵⁹ This second aspect was exemplified in the demand for re-baptism of those formerly baptized in the trinitarian formula. Re-baptisms occurred by the scores.⁶⁰ Salvation was now contingent, not upon faith in the person and work of Christ, but upon a technicality of wording in the baptismal formula. The new issue polarized the entire Pentecostal movement, for certainly one could not stand undecided on so central an issue as being saved!

The Rise of Oneness Theology:

The Oneness theology of Christomonism, that is, the belief in only one person in the godhead who is Father, Son and Holy Ghost and whose name is Jesus, became popular in conjunction with and as a defense of the new issue concerning baptismal formula. In reaction to a form of trinitarianism which verged on tri-theism, the oneness advocates rejected the doctrine of the trinity outright. The fullest account of the development of the Oneness brethren's godhead theology may be found in the previously mentioned *Origins and Development of the Theology of Oneness Pentecostalism in the United States* by David Reed. Suffice it to say, the bottom line of the issue remained baptismal formula in the early days. The full spectrum of a oneness godhead theology continued to evolve and develop even after the split of 1916, to which we now turn.

The Split Over the New Issue:

Among Pentecostals, the history of the split over baptismal formula is well known ground. O. F. Fauss prefers to see the new issue brethren as being "cast out"

⁵⁸Brumback, 192.

⁵⁹Brumback, 192; O. Fauss, *What God Hath Wrought* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1976) 70-81; Reed, 111, 170-174.

⁶⁰Brumback, 196-202.

because:

*...they (we) contended that the New Testament church taught and practiced baptism in the name of Jesus...*⁶¹

However, the situation was certainly more involved than this statement might make it appear. It was not just that the Jesus' name formula was being advocated. It was that one could not be saved any other way, and it was compulsory for all who had been baptized any other way to be re-baptized. To be forced to admit that one's baptism was inadequate due to a technicality of wording, in spite of faith in the person and work of Christ, was too much for most Pentecostals. In 1916, the Assemblies of God (a Pentecostal organization less than two years old) adopted a statement of basic beliefs which took a trinitarian stance, or as Fred Foster puts it, they "rejected the oneness message."⁶² One hundred and fifty-six ministers out of five hundred eighty-five withdrew from the Assemblies of God fellowship. Due to fragmented leadership, the Oneness brethren did not present a united front for many years. Several small Oneness organizations existed independently, and among these there were several racial divisions and mergers until at last two of the resulting larger groups, the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, merged in 1945 to form the United Pentecostal Church.⁶³

The Effect of the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy on Pentecostalism:

In the United States in the 1920s and 30s, a sharp debate came to a head in Protestant Christianity resulting in a major schism.⁶⁴ The background for this conflict originated in the intellectual change of climate following the Civil War. The fresh psychological and sociological studies of William Sumner and William James prepared the way for a change of thinking. Studies in comparative religions raised questions about the uniqueness of Christianity. Darwinian biology contradicted the traditional

⁶¹O. Fauss, *Buy the Truth and Sell It Not* (St. Louis: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1965) 34.

⁶²Brumback, 191-210; O. Fauss, *Buy the Truth*, 34; Foster, 65-68; Reed, 109-137.

⁶³A full history of these divisions and mergings may be found in : A. Clanton, *United We Stand* (Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1970).

⁶⁴The following discussion largely follows the comments of Quebedeaux in *The Young Evangelicals*, 5-17, 19-25.

ideas of creationism. New critical approaches to the Bible evolved which reflected the philosophical probings of Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Ritschl and 19th century German idealism. The upshot of all this led to Protestant liberalism and the following conclusions. The Bible was thought of primarily as an ethical guidebook by human authors to be judged by the same standards as any other literary work. Religion was seen to be the product of philosophical evolution. Supernaturalism was rejected in favor of literary myth and natural explanations. The mentality of the liberals was intellectual and aggressive.

The orthodox reaction to such liberalism was strong, but unfortunately, rather than meeting the liberals on their own intellectual ground, the conservatives retreated, often simply denying or ignoring the findings of liberal theology and scientific study. Major denominations conducted heresy trials for liberals. A stifling anti-intellectualism swept many of the conservative ranks, and the resulting mentality was often apologetic, defensive and separatistic. Because a number of orthodox doctrines had been undermined by the new liberal theology, basic tenets were drawn up and published by the conservatives as the essentials of the Christian faith, among which were five "fundamentals."⁶⁵ These were a belief in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection of Christ and the impending, personal and visible second advent of Christ.

The Pentecostals were largely observers in this controversy, for they had already withdrawn from the Protestant denominations long before. The Oneness Pentecostals were even further removed, since they had withdrawn from their fellow Pentecostals in the new issue debate. Nevertheless, the modernist-fundamentalist controversy did seem to have an effect on the Pentecostals, though perhaps not in the direct way it did on the major denominations. Lacking the formal education of many major denominational ministers, the Pentecostal preachers did not often understand the points made by the liberals, nor did they much care. They could still, however, appreciate the conservative, orthodox nature of the fundamentalist polemic. The "fundamentals of the faith" were incorporated into their Pentecostal statements of faith. The defensive, anti-intellectual and separatist mentality, which Pentecostals had already espoused, became even more firmly entrenched.

Other Influences on the Pentecostal Movement:

⁶⁵The term "fundamentalist" has its origins in these treatises which in 1910 appeared in ten small volumes entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*.

Two other influences are worthy of note at this point as contributing factors to the modern Oneness Pentecostal ethos.

The first is dispensationalism, a movement of relatively recent origin in church history.⁶⁶ Although the word dispensation was used in a theological way as far back as the first three centuries of the Christian church, the real developer of dispensationalism as a modern theological thought form was John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). Withdrawing from the Church of England and joining the Plymouth Brethren movement, the Irishman Darby soon came to the forefront because of his leadership capabilities. A prolific writer, he pioneered the hermeneutical approach which today is called dispensationalism.

Especially significant in the spread of dispensationalism in America was the Scofield Reference Bible. C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) offered one of the few available annotated Bibles of the times which featured a variety of helps, an outline within the text and accompanying exegetical notes at the foot of each page. Because Scofield was thoroughly committed to the new dispensational theology and because his combined text and commentary appealed to the less educated clergy of conservative and fundamentalist circles, the dispensational approach became widespread, so much so that by the mid-1900s some fundamentalists were not even aware that there were any other approaches, at least within the "true" church, not to mention that dispensationalism itself was a newcomer to the theological scene. As a result, dispensationalism became the dominant eschatological hermeneutic in Pentecostal circles.

⁶⁶The following discussion largely rests on three sources, the previously mentioned *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism* by Bass; M. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977) 109-124; G. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 35-60.

Basic to this system were such cardinal propositions as follows. Redemptive history may be divided into a series of periods, each of which are characterized by unique requirements for human salvation. This aspect especially appealed to the Oneness Pentecostal idea of Acts 2:38 as a unique plan of salvation for the church age. Also, there was to be maintained a strict dichotomy between Israel and the church resulting in two distinct peoples of God, Israel as God's earthly people and the New Testament church as God's heavenly people. To maintain such a separation, dispensationalists proposed a rapture of the church before the tribulation to accommodate an end-time revival among the Jews just before the close of the age. Since God could not deal with Israel and the church simultaneously, the church had to exit before God could return to his Jewish people. Furthermore, dispensationalists adopted an apostate view of Christendom, as was mentioned earlier in connection with particularism. A popular interpretive approach among dispensationalists was typology, and among Pentecostals, typology came into its own! Pentecostal typology has been so rigorously pursued that, as one person exaggerated in a caricature, the foreshadowings of Pentecostal theology are to be found under nearly every rock and bush in the Old Testament.⁶⁷ These are a few of the dispensational characteristics one may find thriving in modern Oneness Pentecostalism.

A second influence that made itself felt in Pentecostalism was the Bible school movement. Because liberalism had made encroaching inroads into the established Protestant universities, colleges and seminaries, many fundamentalists withdrew and started their own conservative Bible colleges. At first, many of these were unaccredited institutes which later undertook the necessary steps toward formal accreditation. A well-known survivor of this movement is Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

⁶⁷A prime example of this kind of typology may be seen in F. Curts, *The Tabernacle in the Wilderness* (St. Louis: Pentecostal Publishing House, n.d.).

In keeping with the separatist stance of those in the Protestant Bible school movement, Pentecostals followed in due course. The Assemblies of God established several unaccredited Bible colleges, of which the most well-known is Evangel College in Springfield, Missouri (this has since become accredited). The Oneness faction began with several small training centers, one operated by Harry Morse in Oakland, California, one operated by C. P. and Mary Williams in Tulsa, Oklahoma and one operated by D. C. O. Opperman in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. All of these are long since defunct. However, Bible colleges which have survived are Pentecostal Bible Institute (now Jackson College of Ministries) established in 1945 in Tupelo, Mississippi (now moved to Jackson, Mississippi) and Conquerors Bible College established in 1953 in Portland, Oregon [now defunct also]. Since these earlier ones, several others have been established, the most recent being Indiana Bible College in Seymour, Indiana (1981).⁶⁸ None of these are currently accredited by the Association of Theological Schools or any other agency which has passed the scrutiny of the Council on Post-Secondary Education of the U. S. Department of Education or any of the six recognized regional accrediting agencies.⁶⁹

Both dispensationalism and the Bible school movement have been significant contributors to the modern character of Pentecostalism in both its trinitarian and oneness versions.

Summary of the Myth of Oneness Pentecostal Birth and Continuity:

At this point, it becomes all too clear that Oneness Pentecostalism has not had an unbroken continuity from the day of Pentecost. It is worth reiterating that it is the product of early 20th century theological shifting and movement as it affected the Pentecostals from within and without.

Of a more serious nature is the dilemma it leaves with regard to the vast majority of Christians throughout church history, not to mention in modern times. Are they

⁶⁸Other Bible colleges are Apostolic Missionary Institute, London, Ontario, Canada; Christian Life College, Stockton, California (formerly Western Apostolic Bible College); Gateway College of Evangelism, Florissant, Missouri; Kent Christian College, Dover, Delaware; Texas Bible College, Houston, Texas; United Pentecostal Bible Institute, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.

⁶⁹Unfortunately, some of these Bible colleges purport to offer bonafide degrees. For more information about bogus theological degrees, see: T. Minnery, "Short-cut Graduate Degrees Shortchange Everybody," *Christianity Today* (May 29, 1981) 26-29.

indeed to be considered Christians at all? Should they be related to as Christians? Are they saved or lost? Most Oneness Pentecostals today would say that they are lost, or at least, their salvation is highly questionable. Over and over, this author has heard the denunciations of "denominal" Christians by Oneness Pentecostals in general and the Assemblies of God in particular. Much bitterness on both sides remains from the new issue controversy of the early 1900s. Yet it is in these same historical movements that Oneness Pentecostals find their roots. In the truest sense of the word, they would like to escape history. They would wish to affirm that they have no roots except in the church of the Book of Acts. They would wish to bypass two thousand years of Christian history as though it were not there.

What a tragedy--for an escape from history is nothing less than an escape from reality!

AN EVALUATION OF THE PRESENT

History is not just a thing of the past, for today is tomorrow's history. Not only do Pentecostals attempt to escape the past, but in many ways they attempt to escape the present as well.

The Myth of Doctrinal Conformity:

Apart from the myth of the birth and continuity of Oneness Pentecostalism, there also exists a myth of doctrinal conformity. A common misconception among Oneness Pentecostals is that they all believe and have believed alike. All carry common theological and philosophical attitudes. To be sure, they are to a great degree united in regard to the Articles of Faith as stated in the *Manual* of the United Pentecostal Church.⁷⁰ However, in the emphasis and interpretation of these articles, there is considerable diversity.⁷¹ With no claim to completeness, we may point out a few of the more outstanding differences.

Perhaps the most significant (though rarely recognized) fact in this regard is the

⁷⁰*Manual: United Pentecostal Church International (Incorporated)* (Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1981) 18-25.

⁷¹Due to the peculiar situation that these diversities cannot be openly written about by members of the United Pentecostal Church without fear of censure, this discussion cannot be fully documented from other written sources. It reflects to some degree the personal observation and interpretation of one who has grown up in and is currently ministering in the UPCI fellowship. One must read the following in light of such a position.

continued theological shifting that has characterized Oneness Pentecostal theology since its inception in the early 1900s. Ironically, there is a good deal of nostalgia for the early days of Pentecostalism without any clear idea of what such a return might entail. A favorite text which is expounded frequently is Deuteronomy 19:14, that warns Israel against removing the ancient landmarks. Symbolically, this is used as a call to preserve intact the Oneness Pentecostal heritage. However, if one were really to return to some of the old ideas, he might be branded as a heretic!

One kind of shifting that has occurred is in the area of holiness standards. In the early days of Pentecostalism, a certain ecumenism can be found because of the fact that many folk joined the Pentecostal ranks from mainline denominations with little or no background in the more severe holiness approaches. Thus, one reads things such as:

We did not wear uniforms (this evidently in contrast to the street workers of the Salvation Army). The lady workers dressed in the current fashions of the day...silk...satins...jewels or whatever they happened to possess. They were very smartly turned out, so that they made an impressive appearance on the streets where a large part of our work was conducted in the early years.

It was not until long after, when former holiness preachers had become part of us, that strict plainness of dress began to be taught.

Although Entire Sanctification was preached at the beginning of the Movement, it was from a Wesleyan viewpoint, and had in it very little of the later Holiness Movement characteristics. Nothing was ever said about apparel, for everyone was so taken up with the Lord that mode of dress seemingly never occurred to any of us.⁷²

This kind of thinking could not last long without some compromise. Legislation of holiness standards has continued through the years as a safeguard for the morals of the saints until, in modern times, the following taboos have become tests of fellowship:

...theaters, dances, mixed bathing, women cutting their hair, make up, any apparel that immodestly exposes the body, all worldly sports and amusements, unwholesome radio programs and music...television...⁷³

⁷²E. Goss, *The Winds of God--The Story of the Early Pentecostal Days* (1901-1914), revised (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1977) 67.

⁷³*Manual*, 23.

The interpretation of these codes in local situations often include strictures on rodeos, circuses, fairs, carnivals, ball games, participation in Physical Education activities in the public schools, rings of any sort (including wedding bands), anything shorter than elbow-length sleeves in either men's or women's clothes, colored dress shirts (for ministers), sideburns for men below the middle of the ear, the wearing of red for women (it is thought to be the harlot color), women wearing pants or culottes or divided skirts, eating in restaurants where alcoholic beverages are served, men wearing facial hair such as mustaches or beards, men wearing their hair long enough to touch their collars, women shaving their legs, women wearing hose without seams (this was in the earlier days), women wearing hose with seams (the modern approach), women wearing their hair down, and so forth.

Another kind of shifting may be seen in the approach to the name of Jesus. As mentioned earlier, one of the initial ways of harmonizing Matthew 28:19 with Acts 2:38 as a baptismal formula was the concept that "Lord, Jesus, Christ" was a direct counterpart to "Father, Son, Holy Ghost." Such a position was held by early pioneers such as R. E. McAlister and Frank Ewart.⁷⁴ However, as the discussion continued, the focus shifted to the name of Jesus alone.⁷⁵ Today, one rarely, if ever, hears such an approach as that "Lord, Jesus, Christ" is a direct counterpart to "Father, Son, Holy Ghost." The shift has been to the concept that Jesus is the single name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.⁷⁶ In fact, although "Lord" and "Christ" are considered important in the baptismal formula, they are by no means indispensable.⁷⁷ It is the "saving" name of Jesus that is crucial.

A further sort of shifting may be seen in the study of the godhead. In earlier times, one may note two different approaches to the godhead whose common ground, ironically enough, was not in what was affirmed but in what was denied. Both positions rejected trinitarianism, but the one took a stance which tended toward Arianism while the other tended toward modalism. The more Arian-oriented position came under increasing censure.⁷⁸ Another interesting slant may be seen in the writings

⁷⁴Reed, 99-100.

⁷⁵Fauss, *What God Hath Wrought*, 76; Reed, 149.

⁷⁶D. Campbell, *All the Fullness* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1975) 77-138.

⁷⁷Reed, 149.

⁷⁸C. Yadon edited and reprinted an older work, R. Weeks, *Jehovah-Jesus--the Supreme God:*

of A. D. Urshan who, while opposing an extreme trinitarianism which verged on tri-theism, did not speak in radical oneness terms. In fact, he was in favor of a word such as "tri-unity" to describe the godhead.⁷⁹ He wrote:

*I personally cannot refrain from believing that there is a plurality in God's mysterious Being, and that this plurality is shown as a three-ness, not three separate, distinct Beings or Persons of God, but a mysterious, inexplicable, incomprehensible three-ness.*⁸⁰

Such a position today would alarm few informed trinitarians but would likely horrify the Oneness constituency! In these days, the Oneness movement is almost exclusively modalistic and radically oneness in its godhead approach. Any tendency toward other lines is frowned upon.

Son of God, Son of Man (Twin Falls, ID: By the Editor, 304 5th Avenue East, 1952). This book, because it departs from the mainline Oneness thought and because its publication was later discouraged, has not been re-issued. See also, Reed, 59-61, 294-298.

⁷⁹A. Urshan, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and Divinity of Jesus Christ," *Pentecostal Witness* 3 (December 1, 1926) 1-2, as quoted by Reed, 244.

⁸⁰A. Urshan, *The Almighty God in the Lord Jesus Christ* (Los Angeles: By the Author, 1919; reprinted ed., Portland, OR: Apostolic Book Corner, n.d.) 77, as quoted by Reed, 246.

Yet another shift may be seen in an ever-increasing rigidity regarding salvation and the Acts 2:38 message. Among a number of early Oneness pioneers, a certain tolerance may be found which, although never going so far as to include denominational Christians in the true church, nevertheless proposed certain possibilities by which they might not be irrevocably damned. Andrew Urshan, for instance, drew a distinction between being "begotten" and being "born." To him, the term "begotten" was analogous to conception or impregnation while the term "born" indicated the actual birth process. Thus, Christians who had been "begotten" by the Word of God (converted), but not "born of the Spirit" (the baptism in the Holy Ghost with tongues as evidence) were children of God in a sense, but "the difference is not in the relationship but in the fullness of life, or in the development of the Spiritual condition." In fact, if these Christians continued faithfully in their knowledge of Christ, they would possibly receive the baptism in the Holy Ghost with tongues at the resurrection itself, "...shouting glory in the Heavenly language!" At the same time, their status would be akin to that of Old Testament saints, not the New Testament church.⁸¹ (This last idea shows the inroads of dispensational theology.)

⁸¹A. Urshan, "The New Birth and the Kingdom of God," *Witness of God*, 2, September 1921, 1, as quoted by Reed, 175.

G. T. Haywood, in a similar manner, separated along purely dispensational lines those who had obeyed the Acts 2:38 message from Christians who had not. Only the Spirit-filled believers (with tongues) and those baptized in Jesus' name could participate in the pre-tribulation rapture, which he called the first resurrection. Other denominational Christians were relegated to a post-tribulation resurrection which included "all the righteous men of all ages who walked in all the light they were given," including pagans, Jews and Christians of earlier times.⁸² Howard Goss, the first General Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church, did not unequivocally demand that a person speak in tongues before considering him to have received the Holy Spirit.⁸³

Today, such a possibility for denominational Christians is never heard. The plain statement of the absolute essentiality of tongues and the Jesus' name formula for baptism alone are given as sufficient. Any Christians lacking these requirements are usually considered to be lost.

A variety of other doctrinal differences exist which are too lengthy to discuss here but may at least be suggested. There are differences concerning Christology with regard to classical problems such as apollinarianism, adoptionism, docetism, monophysitism, patripassianism, subordinationism, and so forth, though certainly such classical terminology and historical awareness is usually beyond the ken of most Oneness preachers. There are differences on the new birth passage in St. John 3:3-5, especially over interpreting the word "water." Holiness standards and worship forms vary from north to south and east to west. Some areas of the Deep South see the quintessence of worship in shouting, dancing, running the church aisles, leaping and similar demonstrative forms, while others in different areas of the country are more restrained. From Apostolic Bible Institute in St. Paul, Minnesota there comes a denial of the office and function of modern day apostles and prophets, which position is not generally shared in the United Pentecostal Church fellowship, and a peculiar teaching

⁸²G. Haywood, *The Birth of the Spirit and the Mystery of the Godhead* (Indianapolis: The Voice in the Wilderness, n.d.), 12; "Editorial," *Christian Outlook* 2 (April 1924) 325; "First and Second Resurrections," *Christian Outlook* 1 (April 1923) 4, as quoted in Reed, 174-176. A carry over of this kind of teaching which still exists may be found in the doctrine of S. Norris of Apostolic Bible Institute, St. Paul, Minnesota, regarding the "righteous" and the "holy" (Revelation 22:11).

⁸³My own father, an ordained minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ before the merger, testified as a first-hand witness to Goss' position. Apparently, however, Goss later received much criticism along this line.

of a fourteen-year tribulation period at the end of the age. (This latter teaching is primarily based on an extreme typological application of Israel's festal year.) Some areas of Canada are favorable toward a doctrine of eternal security, although reaction against this teaching has caused many to withdraw either their teaching or their fellowship. In any case, there is diversity in the teachings of Oneness Pentecostals, even on some of the most central distinctions. The most cohesive element among them remains the Acts 2:38 message which has crystallized as the only way to be saved. Although there is a myth of doctrinal conformity, most Oneness Pentecostals agree that without the technicality of the Jesus' name baptismal formula and the phenomenon of tongues, one has little chance of being saved.

Categories in Oneness Pentecostal Thinking:

Categories, at best, are somewhat artificial, and it is probably true that no individual fits neatly into any given slot. Nevertheless, recognizing categories sometimes aids in seeing philosophical differences, and it is for this purpose that I point to four different stances within Oneness Pentecostalism. All Pentecostals are right-wing conservatives, at least from the religious perspective. Oneness Pentecostals might accuse certain of their members as being liberal, but they are not speaking in the terms of normative Christendom. What is liberal to a Oneness Pentecostal is usually quite conservative to a non-Pentecostal. Thus, in avoiding the ambiguity of liberal and conservative designations, one may better see the shades of difference in Oneness Pentecostal thinking by describing them, from right to left, as Fanatical, Reactionary, Moderate and the Vanishing Left.

The Fanatics are, thankfully, a minority. Their one interest is to be further to the right than anyone else. They may preach holiness standards so strict that they condemn sleeveless undershirts for men or pass judgment on deodorant and soap.⁸⁴ They may say publicly such things as, "I only need two verses in the entire Bible to preach from, Acts 2:38 and a verse on pastoral authority. The rest is not necessary."⁸⁵ So narrow is the gate that, as I heard one preacher say, "not only are the denominal [sic] Christians

⁸⁴Both these extremes have occurred in real situations. In fact, the "undershirt with sleeves" is a requisite for voting members and is posted in the church vestibule of a certain UPC mountain assembly in northern Arkansas.

⁸⁵This is a substantial paraphrase of what one minister shared with fellow ministers in 1979. It was told to me by an honorary member of the General Board of the United Pentecostal Church who was present and heard the statement.

not going to be saved, many of us aren't going to be saved either." The general constituency of Oneness Pentecostals, while not favorable toward this extremism, nevertheless tolerates it if those involved remain supportive of the Acts 2:38 message. Regardless of the fanaticism, Acts 2:38 remains the criteria for "having the truth."

The highly vocal Reactionaries form the majority sector of Oneness Pentecostalism. Their basic mentality is a defense of the Oneness interpretations of the new birth, tongues, the godhead, baptismal formula, the gifts of the Spirit and holiness standards. They view non-Oneness Pentecostals as unsaved, who although perhaps having some legitimacy to their Christianity because of their faith in Christ, do not have "the truth" and, therefore, do not have a sufficient experience to "make the rapture of the church." Oneness Pentecostals have a basic distrust of all religious education that is not Oneness Pentecostal. They welcome medical doctors, lawyers and various professional people into their midst, but are highly suspicious of a formally educated theologian unless he just happened to accept all their theological preconceptions, which is not likely. Their final court of appeal in matters of authority is the local pastor and the hierarchy of denominational officials above him. Lip-service might be given to the authority of the Bible, but its use is highly selective and focuses on those areas that can be bent to suit Oneness purposes.

The Moderates are often labeled as liberals by their Oneness brethren. These, too, are a minority. They attempt to maintain a less extreme position than their colleagues. Generally, they avoid questions of judgment about the salvation of non-Oneness Pentecostals while at the same time hold to Acts 2:38 as the normative pattern for New Testament salvation. Although upholding strict holiness codes themselves, they are less apt to consider all the minor infractions as tests of fellowship, which in turn earns them the label of "compromiser." They are more objective in their approach to the Bible and usually uphold a more balanced approach to biblical interpretation. Although in the minority, their numbers are growing. If a major polarization does not force them out, they may eventually win the day.

Lacking a better title, I have named the last group the Vanishing Left because of the fact that as soon as an individual reaches this stage, he usually parts company with the Oneness movement and moves out into the mainstream of conservative evangelicalism. This category is composed of the thinkers who are pro-educational and reckless enough to not keep their mouths shut when they encounter Oneness inconsistencies. One thing the Oneness movement will not tolerate is a dissenting voice. These individuals may join other evangelical denominations, opt for a non-denominational and/or charismatic stance, or pursue further theological education. (I personally am aware of one who now has a Ph.D., another who should attain a Ph.D.

this year, yet another working on a Masters degree and a number of others doing undergraduate work.) Their biggest fault, in the eyes of their more right-wing brethren, is their recognition of a broader base of Christianity than just Oneness Pentecostalism.

Contributing to this diversity of thinking is the carry-over of two different mentalities from the 1945 merger. The Pentecostal Church Incorporated, while larger in numbers and more moderate in philosophy and theology, gradually yielded to the harsher Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, which although smaller, contributed strong leadership and a vocal constituency, especially from the Deep South (Mississippi, Louisiana and East Texas). Eventually, the hard-line approach of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ became dominant.⁸⁶ While these categories I have coined may not be generally recognized, they are real entities.

Current Attitudes Toward Theology:

In keeping with the reactionary attitude of most Oneness Pentecostals, the Oneness approach to theology is severely truncated. Primarily, it is a theology of Acts and thus a theology of experience. Because the greatest emphasis is a defense of the Acts 2:38 message as the full and only plan of salvation, the gospels and the epistles receive the most serious study in those areas which relate directly to repentance, water baptism and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of tongues. Aside from these areas, passages which can be used to buttress experiential religion (i.e., demonstrative gifts of the Spirit, worship forms, etc.), holiness standards and pastoral authority are given regular attention. Scriptures such as Romans 10:9, "...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," are denigrated as "Baptist Scriptures." Subjects which are only infrequently examined are grace, faith, the rich salvific concepts of the New Testament such as reconciliation, justification and redemption, Christian development and maturity, and the nature of the sacraments. The subject of atonement, shockingly enough, is not even to be found in the Articles of Faith of the United Pentecostal Church! Not that they do not believe it, of course, but in a works-oriented religion, it is not central. The definition of grace in these same Articles of Faith is so poorly constructed that, in effect, it reverses the very meaning of the word. The United Pentecostal Church *Manual* reads:

⁸⁶Again, I appeal to my own father as a witness to such a shift.

A Christian, to keep saved, must walk with God and keep himself in the love of God (Jude 21) and in the grace of God. The word "grace" means "favor." When a person transgresses and sins against God, he loses his favor. If he continues to commit sin and does not repent, he will eventually be lost and cast into the lake of fire.⁸⁷

Far from meaning unmerited favor, this definition of grace makes it the exact opposite--favor by merit--and leaves the believer hopelessly under a system of works-righteousness, the very thing Paul in Galatians and Romans sought to forestall.

⁸⁷Manual, 23.

Possibly the most detrimental factor in Oneness Pentecostalism's approach to theology is its practice of interpretation by revelation. Bypassing the normal disciplines of sound exegesis, Oneness preachers often get their interpretations "directly from the Holy Ghost." To be sure, Protestant Christianity has always affirmed the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit in interpretation.⁸⁸ However, it is one thing to believe in the aid of the Holy Spirit and quite another to believe that the Holy Spirit provides ready-made exegesis without any serious exegetical effort. In this latter view, the exegete, conveniently enough, can never be accused of being wrong, else his accuser is indicting the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, then, becomes an excuse for infallibility and shoddy interpretative methods. It has earlier been pointed out that the new issue question itself was enhanced by a "revelation" to John Scheppe. In like manner, an understanding of the Oneness approach to the godhead is usually termed a "revelation." The frightening part is that all too often these kinds of interpretive revelations come first and only later are followed by the attempt to support them exegetically. Thus, Scripture becomes, not the origin and final authority for doctrine, but a source of authoritative apologetics by which one defends his preconceptions, or worse, his misconceptions.

When it comes to historical theology, some efforts verge on the ludicrous. A quite common statement by Oneness Pentecostals is that at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., the Roman Catholic Church changed the church's godhead doctrine from oneness to trinitarian. Also, at this same council, the Catholics allegedly changed the formula for water baptism from Jesus' name to the trinitarian formula. Aside from the more obvious fact that the Roman Catholic Church, as we know it today, did not even exist in 325 A.D., any informed student of church history is only too acutely aware of the often bitter philosophical debates about God and the question of "natures" that raged many long years before the Nicene Council ever convened. In fact, the council itself was only one of several that met to try to find a resolution in view of the controversy. As early as the end of the second century, Tertullian (c. 150-225 A.D.) had used the phrase, "three persons in one substance," although it must be granted that his understanding of the word person was not what is sometimes thought of today.⁸⁹ Far from being introduced and "forced" upon the church, as is sometimes projected, the

⁸⁸B. Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970) 53, 93-95.

⁸⁹V. Harvey, "Trinity," *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: Macmillan, 1964) 245.

trinitarian formula for baptism is the earliest that can be found in any non-canonical writings. In *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (c. 100-120 A.D.), it states:

*And concerning baptism, thus baptize ye: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if thou have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, in warm. But if thou have not either, pour our water thrice upon the head into the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.*⁹⁰

In *The First Apology of Justin* (c. 150-155 A.D.), Justin Martyr writes:

*As many as are persuaded...are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water.*⁹¹

It does no good to attempt to pass off these writings as obscurities, for they are among the most trusted and respected early non-canonical writings in existence. In fact, Clement of Alexandria and Athanasius went so far as to include the *Didache* (*Teaching of the Twelve*) with the sacred writings of Scripture, and even though the full testimony of the early church did not ascribe to them such a place, they were held in the highest esteem by all.⁹² Whatever one believes about the formula for baptism, he cannot maintain that the trinitarian formula began with the Nicene Council!

An almost laughable historical reconstruction is posed by Marvin Arnold, a licensed minister in the United Pentecostal Church, when he affirms:

What did he [Luther] think of the original Peterine [sic] ecclesiology which was sent from heaven on the Day of Pentecost? ...both Carlstadt and Erasmus actually pressed Luther to inject monotheistic

⁹⁰A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) I.183.

⁹¹Roberts and Donaldson, VII.379.

⁹²Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1968) 203.

Christian Pentecostalism into his Lutheranism! They pleaded, 'Restore the pattern and even the constitution of the Primitive Church!' That is, Luther put Pentecostalism into your emerging Lutheranism.

Let there be no mistake, Martin Luther knew all about Oneness Apostolic Pentecostalism, its Jesus' Name baptism, its Holy Ghost, and the ancient practice of glossolalic rhetoric. In relation, it was the sixteenth century, Luther's hey-day as his Lutheranism spread and there were Zwinglians as well as Calvinists. But, oh there were whole organizations of Separatists, Independents, non-conformists, anti-trinitarians. Simultaneously, profusely among these were pious, innumerable Oneness Apostolic organizations.⁹³

Such theological and historical naivete is not only an escape from history, but wholesale deception! It is hardly worth wasting the time to refute.

The bottom line of all this theological discussion is the question that many Oneness Pentecostals have been blind to for years, that is, "What is the gospel?" In the concerted efforts to establish the primacy of Acts 2:38, the gospel, the good news of the person and work of Christ, the preaching of the cross, and the unique New Testament proclamation of salvation by grace through faith has somehow been lost. For members of the United Pentecostal Church, salvation is not grounded in what Christ has done, but in what we can do. Paul's plea with a first century congregation on this same count is so appropriate today:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

The Problems of Escaping History:

The resulting problems in attempting to escape history are staggering. Following are four of them for consideration.

⁹³Arnold, 226-227, 239.

First, an escape from history is an escape from the Bible. One cannot divorce himself from the history of the Christian church and at the same time accept a Bible that this same church has canonized and preserved. If the church was supposedly apostate from the emergence of the trinitarian godhead concept or the trinitarian baptismal formula (which would be early in the second century), her recognition of the canonical writings certainly cannot be trusted. It is no good saying that these writings were apostolic and needed no verification from the church, because it is only on the basis of the church's testimony that we consider them apostolic in the first place. If, as David Gray advocated, we should reject anything offered by a non-Oneness Pentecostal, education notwithstanding, the whole question of a legitimate Bible translation is thrown open. Even the much-loved King James Version, which was defended at all costs in a recent issue of the United Pentecostal Church's official publication,⁹⁴ was not translated by scholars even remotely resembling a modern Oneness Pentecostal.

Second, an escape from history throws open the question of the mission of the church. If Oneness Pentecostals do not know who they are or where they have come from, it is a fairly safe conclusion that they do not know where they are going. Such appears to be the case. In the past three years, there has been a "Quest Program" issuing from the United Pentecostal Church's General Superintendent to find the "true purpose of the United Pentecostal Church," and the "lost key...to world evangelism."⁹⁵ The basis for such a quest is the erroneous belief that the church of Paul's generation "evangelized the world," and we should be able to do it again. Not to minimize the efforts of Paul's generation, at best such a statement is an over-generalization. Other problems with the church's mission emerge, such as, how can a church have a world mission at all if its foundation is isolationism? It is almost like the story told about the "Jesus Only" sign in front of a Oneness church. When the wind blew the first three letters off, they were left with "us Only."

Third, an escape from history is an escape from truth. To escape truth, ultimately, is to escape Jesus Christ.

⁹⁴D. Seagraves, "Why I Use the King James Version," *The Pentecostal Herald*, December, 1980.

⁹⁵*The Quest for the Apostolic Key* (Secret for World Evangelism) (n.p.; n.d.) 4-6.

Fourth, and very alarming, an escape from history is a major trend toward cultism. When unity can only be seen in terms of absolute conformity, when radical particularism becomes the basic mentality, when any group says "we only are the true church, we only have true apostolicity, we only have the truth, we only have the historic doctrines of the New Testament, and we only can be saved," something is surely seriously wrong! The total absence of self-criticism and self-evaluation leads directly to the conclusion, "We are right because we exist!" Although Dave Breese did not have the United Pentecostal Church in mind when he wrote *Know the Marks of Cults*, he might well have!⁹⁶ A great many of the qualifying factors have been met!

As a call for tolerance and ecumenism, perhaps no better statement could be made than the words of Robin Winks in the introduction to his study of Western Civilization:

The face of our age must never be based on fantasy. In any nation, those who remain children--exposed to the simple solutions of tyrants, to the panaceas of childhood, to the nightmare monsters of the extreme Right and Left--do not understand how to think in historical terms. Yet the central task of life is to learn to decode the environment around us so that we may move safely within it, contribute to it, draw from it, and pass it on in altered form to the next generation. To decode an environment is difficult if one is ignorant of how that environment came to take the shape it has. To understand society, we must understand social history. History and its study provide a means, if not entirely sufficient perhaps the best means nonetheless, to understand our environment and hence ourselves.⁹⁷

God help us not have as our epitaphs the inscription on the sign that hung over the pavilion's platform at the Jonestown, Guyana massacre: "Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it!"

⁹⁶D. Breese, *Know the Marks of Cults* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1979).

⁹⁷R. Winks, *Western Civilization: A Brief History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1979) 3.

EPILOGUE

By the grace of God, I am what I am.

St. Paul

Someone has said that every major reformation in the Christian church has been, in one sense or another, a rediscovery of Paul. That sentiment may be overstated, but I must confess that it was the writings of Paul which shook the very roots of my inherited religion in the United Pentecostal Church. From there, it was a short step to discover that the gospel of the grace of God, which was central to Paul, was no less central to the teachings of the Lord Jesus. How much theology did the thief on the cross know, anyway? In Jesus' parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee, the simplicity of the one who prayed, "God have mercy upon me, a sinner," starkly contrasts with the self-importance and spiritual bigotry of the other. Only one of them went home justified. As Paul aptly said, there is, indeed, "a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." In the end, it was the gospel of the grace of God that finally led me on the journey out from the United Pentecostal Church.

I should hasten to say, however, that I am pronouncing no eternal judgment on those who are still in that denomination. Paul also said, "The Lord knows who are his," and any presumptions by me on that score are worth little. If salvation is by the grace of God through faith, then it isn't by theological impeccability. (The early church long ago solved the challenge that salvation was by knowledge when it confronted Gnosticism in the second and third centuries.) Since becoming an evangelical, I have encountered those who wish to categorically exclude oneness Pentecostals from the body of Christ on the grounds of their non-trinitarianism and their tendency to describe salvation as a product of works-righteousness via baptism and speaking in tongues. While I heartily disagree with the oneness Pentecostal position on both counts, I am not prepared to make such a judgment. "Judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes," Paul advises us, and I think it is advice worth following. On at least two occasions, one on a radio talk show and the other in a discussion with a researcher of the cults, I have been challenged by other

evangelicals to dismiss oneness Pentecostals from the Christian faith. This I cannot do. How much heresy can a person have and still be a Christian? I do not know, but I suspect we shall all one day discover that our own theology is not as precise as we might have imagined. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," Jesus said.

I wish that this same reluctance toward judgmentalism could be shown by those of my mother denomination toward the great body of Christians around the world who are in other denominations. Alas, they seem to feel that the possibility of others besides themselves being saved, or worse, the possibility that they themselves might be wrong, must be adamantly resisted. This Maginot Line mentality cripples any effort toward objectivity and self-assessment. Sometimes I feel like shouting to them, as Oliver Cromwell once did to the rigid Scots of his day:

I beseech you by the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken!

Recently, as a result of a committee examination of one of their own Bible colleges, the superintendent of the Western District of the United Pentecostal Church (California) wrote to all the ministers summarizing their typical intransigence in the following four curt points which were to be enforced by the faculty:

- 1) *No salvation doctrine other than Acts 2:38 will be tolerated or taught at Christian Life College.*
- 2) *The teaching of grace shall be strictly as given in the Articles of Faith of the United Pentecostal Church International.⁹⁸*
- 3) *The Holiness standards of the United Pentecostal Church International shall be upheld fully as given in the Articles of Faith and the Manual of the United Pentecostal Church International.*
- 4) *Speculative teaching concerning non-oneness people being eventually saved shall not be taught at Christian Life College.⁹⁹*

⁹⁸Ironically, the statement in the Articles of Faith concerning the grace of God is rather limited. It consists of the quotation of three passages (Tit. 2:11-12; Jn. 1:17; Ep. 2:8) and the statement which appears in the quotation on Page 114. A more tendentious statement about grace could hardly be constructed!

⁹⁹From Reverend Paul Price in a letter to "All Ministers," dated March 7, 1994.

Nevertheless, as deeply as such statements grieve me and as antithetic as they are to the gospel of the New Testament, I must still extend to my former colleagues and friends the gift of forgiveness and the prayer for God's mercy. If God has freely forgiven me my great debt of sin, then I cannot shut up my heart of compassion and refuse to show to them the same unconditional love which God has shown toward me. And so, in the words of the Psalmist which have been repeated for centuries from the pages of the Book of Common Prayer, I, too, pray, "Lord, have mercy."