

Letters from an Ex-Pentecostal

By

J. P. Istre

February 2005

Release 1.0

© Copyright 2005
By J. P. Istre

INTRODUCTION.....	3
PENTECOSTAL SUBVERSION: BREAKING OLD SOCIAL BONDS	4
WHY PENTECOSTALS ARE SO SELF-DESTRUCTIVE?	6
BUILDING UPON THE RUINS: A LIFE I NEVER LIVED.....	7
EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION.....	8
WRITING THROUGH THE PAIN	10
EMOTIONAL CRASH & BURN.....	11
PENTECOSTALISM: WEST AFRICAN TRIBAL RELIGION	12
HOW TO LEAVE PENTECOSTALISM	13
THE AUDACITY TO CALL US "BITTER"	14
PROPER AUTHORITY, SUBMISSION: BALANCE OF POWER.....	15
AUTHORITY DEFINED	17
PROPER CHURCH PROCEDURE: WRITE IT DOWN	17
LAW AND GOSPEL: LEGISLATING THE GOSPEL?	18
MUSIC CAN BE DANGEROUS	19
PENTECOSTALISM IS A MENTAL PROBLEM	20
PENTECOSTALS' STUBBORN EVASION OF REALITY	21
ONENESS PENTECOSTAL CHURCH NOTES	22
MY COMMENTS ON PENTECOSTAL SERVICE NOTES	26
MUSIC, SELF-TORTURE, METALLICA, PENTECOSTAL MUSIC.....	29
UPC INCREASING FANATICISM OVER THE YEARS.....	30
NO EDUCATION: PENTECOSTAL IGNORANCE.....	31
ONENESS PENTECOSTAL RECRUITING PROCEDURE.....	31
LOCAL CHURCH CLAIMS OTHERS ARE ALL WRONG.....	32
PENTECOSTAL FRICTION.....	33
PENTECOSTAL DETOXIFICATION.....	34
ANOINTING: THE RING OF POWER, IN DARKNESS BINDS THEM.....	35
BOOK REVIEW: CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE CROSS, BY THOMAS FUDGE....	36
THE CROSS: WHY I BELIEVE.....	38

Introduction

I published these essays on several discussion boards, mostly in Internet support groups for Ex-Pentecostals. I was in Oneness Pentecostalism for over 20 years. I am now a Lutheran. Much of my criticism of Pentecostalism comes from my experience within the Oneness brand. However, in correspondence with people across the United States and the world, I find that the abuses of power and the intimidation of people exist among the several types of Pentecostalism, in addition to the Oneness sect. I observed that the Oneness brands suffer from more intense abuses, while the Trinitarian brands have similar abuses but to a lesser degree. The structure of Pentecostal systems in general allows for unchecked abuses. Many people in these systems are unaware of the abuses, not perceiving the abusive characteristics until after they separate themselves from the movement, and after much reflection and soul-searching. I do not assert that all of the abuses are deliberate, but that operating within such a system, the abuses happen as a natural consequence of the system structure, although there are some cases of deliberate abuse. Abuses within Pentecostalism are not isolated events, but prevalent in all areas of the country and around the world where the movement exists and thrives. Traditional and mainline churches generally have structural checks and balances that attenuate abuses of power, while the Pentecostal sects generally do not have recourse for victims of abuse; in many cases they do not wish to deal with the abuses nor remove abusive pastors. These essays are for the exiting Pentecostal, and the general reader interested in Pentecostalism. Many who are not familiar with Pentecostalism might think that the descriptions are exaggerated - and shocking. However, these descriptions are indeed accurate. I hope these essays help some, as they have helped me as I attempted to understand some of the sociological and psychological characteristics of the system.

A Pentecostal is one who believes in speaking in tongues – glossolalia – as evidence of the Holy Spirit, and one who believes in the emphatic demonstration of the Gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy or the interpretation of tongues. A Oneness Pentecostal is one who believes the above, but rejects the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, and believes in the literal baptismal formula “in the Name of Jesus” by immersion. The charismatic movement has its origins among Catholic and mainline Protestants attempting to import Pentecostal practices into their worship, attempting to stop the mass exodus of the membership to Pentecostal churches, although there are now ostensive charismatic churches, which are virtually indistinguishable from Pentecostal churches.

J. P. Istre
San Antonio, TX
February 2005

Pentecostal Subversion: Breaking Old Social Bonds

Breaking the traditional bonds of friends and family is the most subversive thing that Pentecostalism does. After all the love bombing and the “friendly” introductions when entering into a Pentecostal church, one will often find himself a bit estranged from one’s family. The problem is not the family, but one’s new methods of thinking and speaking. Gone are the old conversations that were easy-going and mutually understood by common custom. Gone are the instinctive gestures and nods that families and friends develop over years’ time. A new convert has such a wild, life changing hypnotic experience that it changes his outlook on things to the point that normal family and friends cannot understand. They can no longer communicate like before. The new convert wants to talk about religion all the time. He has new words that he uses like “Praise God!” or “I felt a check in the Holy Ghost about that person.” These new speech patterns appear foreign and bizarre to the old friends and family members. The new convert thinks that his experience felt so good that he pushes this new religion on his friends and family to the point where he makes himself a pest. He thinks that his friends and family should do as he has done and he is frustrated that they cannot “see the truth.” The problem gets worse, because the friends and family see these strange changes and want nothing to do with such religion; they fear that they would lose their mind and become strange themselves. So, for a time the friends and family may try to get the new convert to change his ways. The new convert is shocked by this seemingly audacious attempt to get him “away from God.” He cannot see through his new religious hypnosis that he is the strange one and not his friends and family. He will typically go back to his Pentecostal friends to discuss the problem. They tell him that he needs to preach the truth to his people and get them to come to church. Consequently, the rhetoric increases; he becomes shriller. He becomes even more of a pest to his friends and family. The family typically responds in kind: they will not under any circumstances become a part of that “crazy religion.” The new convert cannot comprehend the reactions, and begins to think that his family and friends have lost their mind, and cannot see that in fact *he* actually lost *his* mind. His mind may form images of Satan and God in a big fight over his family and friends. He initially thinks that he can rescue them from the devil and tries even harder to get them to come to the new church. He might delude himself into thinking that “the devil” has the minds of his friends and family.

After much effort, he thinks that “preaching the Truth” to his family is hopeless. His new church friends tell him that they rejected the “Truth” and there is nothing more that he can do. Why should he waste time on stubborn family and friends when there is a world filled with billions of people who want Jesus? So, tragically, the process of breaking the traditional social bonds begins. He separates from his family because the old things in common are no longer there. They are now strangers to each other. His former friends go their separate ways because they cannot understand his new life and they do not wish to change to such a strange new life. His new church friends tell him that he will have new friends “in the Lord” who will not lead him astray from God. He sees all these church people with smiling faces and thinks that he can start visiting them in their homes or start going out to eat with them. The problem, which he fails to see, is that the only thing that they have in common is this hypnotic religious experience; they likely would never form social bonds otherwise. Thus, his friends and family are now gone, in

effect. It feels good and refreshing to make new friends, replacing the old family and friends.

He jumps promiscuously into church friendships without reference to another's past or present. Are they former criminals? This does not matter since all their previous sins are "under the blood." Are they respectable people? This does not matter – they spoke in tongues, so they must be "changed and good people." He forms bonds with people that he otherwise would not have formed, and likely, they would otherwise not have cared much for him. These new social bonds are artificial. They are constructed on a fantasy that all these people are just like him because they "have the Holy Ghost."

Normally, friendship takes a lifetime or at least a long time. Family bonds form over a lifetime. The normal bonds of family and friends are what help us in life, and through serious life trials. We lean on them and they are always there, no matter what. But, to reject these bonds is to cut ourselves off from natural human structures of survival. New Pentecostals have to replace the old safety net structures of friends and family with the new church people, who are inherently unstable from the constant hypnotic emotional experiences. The new bonds are – in the most profound sense – **unstable**.

This new convert gets sucked into a system, breaks all serious bonds with friends and family and forms new artificial bonds based on a common hypnotic experience. This opens him up to abuse. Why? The pastor of such places has dictatorial authority over the church people. If this new member seeks to challenge the authority of the pastor, the pastor has enormous power over him by the threat of breaking these new social bonds by excommunication, slander, or gossip. Since these new "friends" are scared to death of the pastor, they will drop this new convert "friend" at the drop of the hat if the pastor tells them that he is rebellious or "of the devil." This gives the pastor total powers over the physical and emotional life of the new convert.

After the process of breaking the old social bonds and forming new ones is complete, the abuse and intimidation may start. He is an easy target for the pastor. Since such pastors are typically emotionally self-indulgent and hypersensitive, he thinks nothing of abusing these people to get them to do what he wants. If someone offends the pastor, he thinks nothing of retaliating against them by destroying these artificial social bonds since he is typically unstable, and will do anything he can to make himself feel better – after all, he has the Presumption to think of himself as the "man of God," the most important person in the congregation. If the pastor does indeed kick this member out of the congregation, the person will be devastated because he will be thrown into the world with no social support whatsoever. His friends and family cannot help him; the relations are soured and they will not understand in any case. His church friends are now gone. He is helpless, alone, and terrified. He has nobody to lean on and no one to speak with. This is where he can crash emotionally from all this sudden pressure of alienation and confusion. As he gets angry and emotionally hostile to this treatment, the church typically labels him with epithets such as "angry" or "bitter," not realizing that the church system is the cause of this phenomenon.

It takes years to recover from this type of abuse. It takes time to find new friends and it takes time to repair the damage from the old family fights. Many may even subconsciously see this before excommunication, and go along with the pastor because they lack the strength to go through the hurt and the pain. Thus, one has the outline of an unstable system based on fear and

emotional manipulation with the absolute power to destroy somebody.

+++

Why Pentecostals are So Self-Destructive?

Many may observe that Pentecostals are Self-Destructive. They go on for days – even weeks – as rational people in their normal lives, but inevitably, they will explode, lose their cool, and destroy something in their lives. This is because they are addicted to a Life Changing Transformation accompanied by an intense emotional ejaculation. The central experience of Pentecostals is speaking in other tongues under emotional hypnosis accompanied often by a violent emotional release. One may call “Receiving the Holy Ghost,” as modern Pentecostals experience it, a *psychosexual orgasm*.

This life changing experience is addictive in many ways. Like drug addicts, one feels such an intense high the first time, that he spends the rest of his life chasing after that first high, needing the drug in higher and higher doses to get the emotional high. The problem is that intense emotions tell a normal person that something is dangerous. Whether it is love, hate, or anger, normal people take intense feelings as something to control and monitor, not something to inflame to possible destructive ends. However, since a Pentecostal’s defining religious experience is an emotional explosion in speaking in tongues under hypnosis, he cannot admit that unbridled emotions are dangerous; he sees them as something to experience regularly - a Life Transforming experience is good, if accompanied by strong passions. A Pentecostal might not articulate it as such, but that is the basis of his actions. In some cases, people go through occasional life transformations, but to do this on a regular basis promotes instability and destruction because one cannot commit to a plan of action in life and is continuously searching for striking Gold with the next Life Transformation Experience. Taking this idea to addictive levels, the Pentecostal is bored *unless* he is blowing up emotionally on a regular basis. Where does this lead the Pentecostal? He can blow up in church in psychosexual emotional releases “at the altar.” Where else can he get these intense emotions? He might pursue sexual promiscuity with the accompanying risk, followed by an intense moment of “repenting at the altar.” Where else can he get this emotional high? He can self-destruct on a regular basis, promoting intense feelings of risk, failure, strife, or monetary damage(which in themselves produce strong emotions), followed by another trip to the altar to “get the victory over the devil attacking him with all these problems” as he shouts, dances, screams and yells in a victory march. What is another way to get these intense emotional ejaculations? He can instigate trouble at work, getting his boss angry to the point of putting his job in jeopardy. He can instigate fights among the people in church and cause a ruckus to get some excitement going.

In all these cases, the desire for a Life Changing Transformation can be a *Destructive* Life Changing Transformation, when this end is pursued vigorously and recklessly, as the Pentecostal will do. This is why there are regular splits, fights, and breaks in friendship and cooperation among Pentecostals. It is similar to the **Death Wish** in that they hope for destruction because of the intense feelings and emotional outbursts it will cause. They are addicted to strong emotions on the psychosexual level of intensity. There are only so many things in life that can give a person this experience constructively. After exhausting the constructive emotional outlets, he

gets bored and wants more; after a time, all that is left are destructive pursuits of emotional ejaculation. One can think about a nasty car wreck where rubber-neckers look on; this is an “exciting” thing to see – body parts scattered about the highway. This is the morbid truth about seeking after intense emotional experiences.

I have rarely met a Pentecostal that is not self-destructive. If they are not, they are probably not practicing Pentecostalism. This is one reason why Pentecostals can be dangerous. Making friends with them can cause a ruckus because they are looking for emotional highs. When they exhaust the constructive emotions of friendship, all is left is the destructive outlets of emotional ejaculation. Like the rubber-necker that wishes to see body parts scattered all over the road in excitement, the Pentecostal destroys the things around him. He is addicted to a psychosexual orgasmic release. Intense emotions are the central part of his being, his religion, and his entire life.

+++

Building Upon the Ruins: A Life I Never Lived

I vividly remember life before my family converted to Pentecostalism. I was 8 years old when we converted in May of 1982. I can still see the images, remember the moments, and smell the smells in my mind of the life I once knew. I remember being part of a larger community where I grew up. I was *part* of my neighborhood and an integral *part* of my school. There was an ethos of custom that held us all together at school, in church, with the government, in the family, and everything else. There was a sense that some things were solid; we could depend on the institutions surrounding us as a point of reference. I went to school and I was *part* of the school. I was *part* of my circle of friends. I was *connected* to my community in a profound way. The family get-togethers were easy going. Everyone knew that it would last forever. We would sometimes have family gatherings at the beach, having a good time. Sometimes, we would go out toward the Louisiana swamps, to the levee, cut the grass on a short piece, and camp out for the day with the entire extended family. My grandfather was always full of wise old sayings; the mere presence of him gave us safety through his wise eyes. In school, I was not an outcast, but an integrated member of the order of things.

But all of this changed with Pentecost. The world and everything else then took on a different cast. I was disconnected and alienated from everything I had known. Slowly, I could no longer relate to other kids in school. I hung out with outcasts for the most part. There were fewer family gatherings where we would play music, ride horses, or motorcycles. My cousins slowly grew distant and alien to me – and I to them. We went to the beach, but it was no longer fun, because we wore strange clothes and we did not fit in. We camped out a few times, but all the fun was gone since fun might not be good. The conversations with the extended family became guarded - less easy. Those around us in the community did not know what to make of the religion, and thus avoided us. Family bonds forged before the Pentecostal conversions were broken into pieces in divorce after the corrosive effects of Pentecostal fire set in their irreversible course.

I was due to make my First Communion as part of the Roman Catholic Church. Ritual and Rites of Passage are integral to living an integrated, complete life. But before I could experience these Rites of Passage, I was thrown into the flaming fires of Pentecost. My friends had these compasses – these maps and bearings - to guide them through life. I was a wandering nomad with no map and no compass. Pentecostalism gives us nothing; we need no guidance because, you know, God will come tomorrow morning just before breakfast.

And thus, the damage is done. I married in Pentecostalism. As I woke up to reality, there were things that were done that could not be undone. I hoped that this break with Pentecostalism would not damage my marriage. I am fortunate to have an angel for a wife. She understands. At least I think she does. I have things that I did not do as I grew up that I could not go back and do. Some things are lost forever. All I can do is pick up the pieces that I can find, and build upon the ruins of a life I never lived.

And so, here I am, groping in the dim light, attempting to find my way. I find the Lutheran church a good map - or compass - at this stage in my life to renew my lost heritage of Sacramental Christianity that I was robbed of. I must take what I can find. I cannot become what I once was. Some things are irreversible. Some things are lost forever.

But I must move on. There is a life to live yet. I can begin anew today - everyday. I have a beautiful family – my nuclear family – that I love with all my heart. I am grateful for these gifts from God. I can start the world anew in the life of my little boy and hope to pass on something to the next generation that is Eternal. In this, I am hopeful.

+++

Emotional Manipulation

All Pentecostal and charismatic organizations use two things to influence people: sensory overload and expected response. When something comes at you quickly, like a machine gun, you have no time to think. Your instincts take over. When someone, such as a sales person, pitches you something in a high-pressure manner, they are overloading you with information, using things such as a loud sound from their voice or emphatic gestures. They overload your senses of hearing and seeing. The rational faculty usually cannot process all this information coming at a person at high speed. The rational faculty typically shuts down; the emotional response is all that is left. If one does not regain his rational faculty before the close of the deal, he might purchase something that he will later regret. Highly trained religious recruiters use this technique to an extreme. They sometimes approach the victim in a rapid-fire manner and say, “You are going to hell!” If they are well trained at presentation, they can hypnotize the person before he understands the subtle manipulation, and he might accept the doctrinal sales pitch. He is overloaded with information. He may feel that his rational faculty is working because he *hears* a doctrinal rationalization or explanation. Music is another way to create sensory overloading. Loud music with the proper chord progressions tends to force down the rational faculty. Charismatic and Pentecostal musicians are among the world’s most skilled artists. Why is this? Sensory overload using music has the effect of attacking the rational faculty for enough time to stimulate a person to high levels of emotion. They accept religious persuasion easier if

accompanied by such music. The resonance makes one feel the music, making it feel tangible, real, and powerful. Another technique of sensory overload is shouting over a loudspeaker. This amplifies the message, making it unavoidable to one's consciousness. It can be so intimidating that one cannot focus upon anything else while listening to someone shouting over a loudspeaker. As the person shouts over the loudspeaker, this high state of sensory focus and overload imprints the message in one's mind. During the emotional releases in such an environment, one does indeed feel *changed*. The problem is that this change is simply a state of hypnosis. One's rational faculty shuts down almost completely. For a moment, emotions soar to the highest levels, because they no longer have the anchor of the rational faculty. This feels *liberating*. Why? The rational faculty designed to protect us from physical or emotional injury is no longer controlling our emotional states. This is why one feels *changed* and *free*. The problem, however, is that civilization is the process of channeling our emotions to useful ends, not letting them get out of control. When sensory overload kills off the inhibitions controlling the emotions, of course, one will *feel* liberated. This is the state of emotional explosion and indulgence that feels good. Losing control, running around, shouting and speaking in tongues, climaxes in a state of ecstasy. The stern father of the rational mind shuts down and the childish barbarian emerges. The child hates the father's control, but he is not yet mature enough to understand that the father protects the child.

Once someone accepts this emotional state as evidence of some Truth, one is open to emotional manipulation and control. One can use fear to control a person because fear is an emotion similar in class to this initial "life changing experience." One can eventually become a slave to emotional manipulation. One accepts strangers as "brothers" because of this common "life changing" experience. This leads us to bypass the normal friend-making process, accepting strangers as "brothers" based not on rational trust but on emotional "brotherly love." Both are addicted to emotional indulgence. This acceptance of brotherly love further opens one to emotional manipulation. Once one accepts the initial emotional experience as a life defining moment, one lives by their emotions out of consistency. The acceptance of these new "friends" and "brothers" builds strictly emotional bonds usually void of rational trust. Thereafter, the leaders of the group can use these emotional bonds as a weapon against anyone who he wishes to control or destroy. Since the entire group is based on emotion, and emotional indulgence, the leadership seeks to exploit people by threatening to break these bonds when a member becomes troublesome or threatening. To leave the group is to be cut off from this "brotherly" bond of all one's "friends." The threat of kicking one out of the group threatens a person's circle of support in this mutual emotional indulgence. Separation from the group can be devastating to a member who must now conform, or join another emotionally indulgent group, or wake up and reactivate his rational faculty. No option is easy. To join another emotionally indulgent group requires making new bonds. Conforming robs the person of his conscience and possibly his mind. Returning to the rational life might be the most painful thing since this requires the recognition that one has wasted much time, effort, and money on a corrupt system. This requires purging one's mind of the wild emotional fantasies. The problem is that the process of reversal takes longer than the recruiting process. The rational faculty will not wake up with a reversal process at the same speed as the quick and easy conversion. The rational faculty wakes up only after intense exercise and forcing one's self to look at reality as it is, and not as one's former doctrines dictate. This takes much time and effort. Occasionally, the person's mind floats back into the former emotional mode of thinking, triggering fear and anxiety. The emotional mode sometimes takes over one's thinking temporarily, causing the person to question the decision to quit the

group. Since the emotional mode that the victim is accustomed to is easy compared to the exercise of the rational faculty, sometimes it just feels easier to give up. This can make the person an emotional *basket case*. Healing takes tremendous effort on the part of the victim.

These groups slowly condition people toward expected responses. Since one is subject to emotional indulgence as part of the group's activities, one is at the mercy of others' emotional feedback. The group expects particular emotional responses. Soon enough, one recognizes particular cues after which particular emotive reactions are required of the group member. This is all learned through the process of feedback to a response. The positive feedback and the negative feedback are not rational instructions, but emotional responses to one's actions. Sometimes there is childish glee, shouting, hugs, big smiles, and back patting for positive feedback, and frowns, strange stares, and social estrangement for the negative feedback. The particulars of the feedback can vary from place to place, but the power of such conditioning is enormous in Pentecostal churches. In many ways, the churches manipulate people using emotional feedback.

+++

Writing Through the Pain

After leaving Pentecostalism, there are strange emotions to deal with for years. Sometimes these emotions strike us at the strangest and most irritating times. It is usually painful to think about these things. After the emotion passes, we may not wish to deal with it because it is unpleasant.

I have found techniques that help to deal with these lingering emotions. I started writing a journal when I was around 18 years old. When I started questioning the Oneness Pentecostal doctrines, my journal was invaluable. I could argue with myself. I could curse, I could scream, and I could work things out on paper that otherwise would have been floating around in my emotional mind without confrontation. Some things can trigger emotions while we may not know the cause. While writing about the event in a private journal, we might be able to reconstruct the event, work our way backward, and see what triggered the emotion. After writing and struggling for a few paragraphs, we can usually find the root of the emotion. Often, a past event, or a series of teachings causes these emotional triggers. With our visual memory, we should return to these teachings and triggers, write them down, deconstruct them, explain them, and then connect them to the recent emotional trigger. Knowing the cause of a particular emotional problem is most of the battle. Knowledge makes the pain go away. Ignorance of the cause of these emotions is what usually produces fear – the feeling of helplessness that often haunts us. Once we write it on paper or on the screen, we can see it in plain. It makes it more real to us if it is printed; the written word makes things more real to us than mere speech or thought. Also, it is a historical archive to which we can return months or years hence with a better understanding after time allows us some reflection.

How does one write in a journal? There are two ways: one can write in a notebook or one can write using a word processor. The good thing about writing in a notebook is that you cannot delete it nor will it disappear in a computer crash. The good thing about writing in a word processor is that a large text file with several entries over a period of years is searchable by the

word search function in case one would want to look for a particular subject without reading the entire file. With a private journal, one should keep it protected. If it is on Microsoft Word, the file should be password protected. Each entry needs a date – always date the entries for future reference. Always save copies of the file regularly.

Remember that the journal is personal. One should write anything and everything without any self-censorship. If you feel hate, you may write, “I hate this!” If you are angry, scream on the page as if you were cursing someone out - or however you wish to do it. Here is one of my excerpts from a few years back:

“The sermon Sunday morning at Concord was a bit shocking. He was ranting and raving about people that should leave and that he would give them a good recommendation. He also ranted about people not calling him when they were to miss service. Call Dada and tell him you not comin’ to da house tonite! What a damn fool! How can this adult say such crap? I do not know what he is up to, I do not know what his vision or mission is, but I quit. I will not be a part of such nonsense any longer. It is funny how some people want so much control over the lives of others. I cannot understand such things I guess because I have no desire to control anyone.”

You can start by using word stems to begin the process. You can start, “I feel bad when I think about [fill in the blank].” “I hate my former pastor because he [fill in the blank].” Or: “That day in the pastor’s office when he looked at he with those eyes of hatred and anger, something died within me. My hands were sweating, I was dying inside, and I was sick after I got home. How could people do this to me!!!!”

Pouring out one’s soul on paper initially feels weird. Dealing with the pain is painful. But after one finishes up an entry with a particular problem, it feels better; it is like an emotional exhaust that was bottled up inside ready to explode. Write until it hurts, and then keep on writing until it feels better. Once you have written everything that you can write about a particular problem on paper, you will feel better. Write continually until you feel that you have broken through. It is like pouring out blood. You can also think of it as coughing up toxins and all the nasty phlegm from a chest cold. Coughing it up can be nasty, but it feels better once it all comes out.

I work through all my baggage in this manner and have found it therapeutic. It might save you a trip to an expensive shrink. But sometimes problems are so bad that we need a shrink to guide us. My journal is one of my most prized possessions. I can look at entries years ago and see how I worked through the pain.

+++

Emotional Crash & Burn

I heard many preachers say that they used to dance with the Devil, but now they dance with the Lord. This is a revealing thought. Church is their dope. This does not sound like God. People probably fall for the emotional trap Pentecostals set, trying to turn God into a Rock Star. Traditional Christianity teaches emotional restraint and self-control, not acting wild and crazy. Pentecostalism inverts Christianity: instead of controlling ourselves, we are encouraged to have

an emotional ejaculation.

Pentecostalism can be described in two words: Emotional Self-Indulgence. Emotional self-indulgence drains the soul of energy. To dwell in emotions endlessly just for excitement consumes huge amounts of energy. Think of it as the difference between setting a gallon of gasoline on fire and an internal combustion engine. Striking a match at a gas can wastes energy in a large explosion, whereas to put the same volume of gasoline inside the fuel tank of a car can push the car at least 20 miles. These wild displays of emotion waste energy. We could direct this energy into our families and into our careers. When we quit being emotionally self-indulgent, we release so much energy into our lives that the difference is blatantly noticeable.

I think that the "high" is the most dangerous thing about Pentecostalism. I was into the high playing music. I was a Pentecostal musician for 16 years. I lived for the sound. I liked to feel the music. I knew all the right chords and the right licks on the guitar to drive crowds into a "spiritual" frenzy. After I quit playing music, I was more emotionally stable. I had plenty of energy to focus on my personal studies. I could read books and understand more because my emotions were not so disoriented from musical highs, interfering with my mind thinking clearly. Through hard lessons, I learned that music should cultivate the passions, not inflame them. Liturgy should be treated the same way. Church should not be exciting. It should cultivate our passions to higher things, but *not* inflame them like an exploding can of gasoline. When I see preachers in front of an audience trying to get people to shout, scream, or run the aisles, I think: exploding can of gasoline! Up in smoke! Destruction! It is like driving a car: we can go 100 MPH, but we drive slower because we have an optimal level we can safely sustain without serious risk of killing ourselves.

+++

Pentecostalism: West African Tribal Religion

Pentecostalism began at Azusa Street where the white people's experiment from Parham in 1901 in Topeka, Kansas met up with African American folk customs together in one congregation in Los Angeles, California. After a period of melding of the white Caucasian experiment with generations of African American custom, the subsequent religion it produced exploded across the entire world. The African traditions and the white experiments alone could not survive, but the melding of the two made for a perfect recipe to start a new religion. William Seymour, the son of a slave was the genius to put together this new religion. In West African religion there is the religious belief of "the little me within the big me." This "little me" was another person inside - within a person - that was tuned to the spiritual world that "came out" during spiritual moments. This is likely where we get the term referring to African American's musical and spiritual customs as "soul." We know that deep-felt feeling in their music and in their religious customs. This "little me" in the West African tradition was the part of the person that got possessed with the spirit of animals, such as a bear. When the "little me" would get possessed with a particular animal, the person would act and become for a time like that animal.

Transferring these West African traditions into the American Christian context, they no longer became possessed by a bear or a tiger, but by *Jesus*. This is where Pentecostalism inherited the

African traditions at Azusa Street. Pentecostals “get the Holy Ghost,” or so they think, during a pagan ritual inherited from West Africa. One can observe this “little me” when Pentecostals go about their normal lives as normal people – or close to it. During times when the “anointing” comes upon them, they take on another personality and “speak under the authority of the Holy Ghost” as if they are a different person. This custom is the African inheritance where a God, which is now *Jesus* instead of, say, a tiger or a bear, possesses the “little me.”

One can see the great cultural inheritance of this African phenomenon in American music such as improvisation in Jazz and Rock where the person “just jams to the music” with another part of the musician just belching music from the depths of his soul – the African “little me.” It is as if another part of him plays the music without any notes or program. One can also see this cultural inheritance from African American entertainers when they just “break down” and become another person in their “groove” which makes them some of the finest entertainers in the world. Some white people can do this, but not many.

I learned of this because I grew up in a place where I could absorb elements of this culture by attending a predominantly black junior high school, playing in the band where I picked up these musical techniques that served me well as a Pentecostal musician. The religious phenomenon of the “little me within the big me” is the key element to all of this. It is strange that this is an inheritance of West African Tribal religion and custom. One can read about this in Harold Bloom’s book, “The American Religion.”

Without the grafting of African American culture joining up with Parham’s tongues experiment in Topeka, Kansas, there would be *no* Pentecostal movement. Remember that William Seymour, the African American Azusa genius, was a student of Parham’s for a time, and took it exponentially further at Azusa Street, Los Angeles in 1906 to begin another religion.

This is why one can see a shy little white woman “come under the power of God” and start screaming, yelling, and shouting her hair down. The “Holy Ghost” intoxicates the “little me” inside her. She is oblivious that she is practicing West African tribal religions customs repackaged as Christianity.

+++

How To Leave Pentecostalism

Once you make your decision to leave, there are many things to consider. If you are not married, it is likely to be easier. If you are married, there could be problems. If married, one must strengthen the marital bonds. Increase the number of talks, dates, and communications, avoiding too much talk about religion. Think back to before one was “in church,” if applicable. How was it like? What was different? Contact your old friends. Contact members of your family that you avoided since you got religion; more than likely, they will be supportive of your exit. Convince yourself in writing of your reasons and intentions for leaving. Debate with yourself. Analyze the entire situation. Write it down for the future in those times when you lose nerve. The exit will be hard, so you should plan, and write down a coping strategy beforehand, if you are able. Reach out to people that you avoided. Remember those people at work - the moments you did not reach

back to them when they attempted friendship – strike up a conversation with them. Learn how to talk to others in a casual, playful way. Talk about life in general, but do not focus too much on your religious hurt lest you alienate them. Build relationships; this will take longer because normal people do not jump into friendships as promiscuously as Pentecostals. The friendships will grow slower, but eventually they will be much stronger and stable. Restrain your emotions. Pentecostals and recently emancipated Ex-Pentecostals tend to be hypersensitive. Learn not to blow off your top at petty things, like Pentecostals are prone to do. Take life's worries in stride. Think about your response for a time before responding immediately. It is a good idea to respond to charged issues after your emotions are calmed.

In discussions of religion with Pentecostals, some of whom you were friends with, try to speak without any emotion whatsoever. If they become slightly emotional or agitated, stop the conversation; this is very important. They might not be ready to hear your ideas. Their hypersensitive responses can affect your emotional stability for days if the intensity of their response is sufficiently charged. Keep it civil. When you approach Pentecostal friends whom you know to be hypersensitive, do not speak of religion. If asked religious questions, keep your answers very short and go no further. Stall. Do not allow the conversation to proceed. Such conversations may get you upset and affect you for days. Maybe you can write down a standard response for those hypersensitive people. You might say, "I do not agree with many of the things that we did." Go no further with those who are emotional. Be persistent in changing the subject. Sometimes silence is the prudent response. Under no circumstances should you allow the conversation to become emotional. You must take care of yourself.

For those who were in extremist Apostolic churches, one must approach the process of change to a normal life with prudence. In changing your life, go slowly at a leisurely pace. Do not go to extremes like drinking a six-pack of beer. Start drinking very little - if you wish to drink. When changing your appearance, do it slowly. If you are a woman, do not cut your hair off completely, but maybe trim it a little. If a man, try out shorts around the house for a few months. Maybe try growing a beard. Try a few things, keeping the pace slow to prevent shocking others such as your coworkers. Slow is the rule. Dabble a little here and there to find what proportions of change is right for you. Keep notes on your progress as a guide to future changes.

When talking about religion to a loved one, proceed as long as the conversation does not become shocking and confrontational. If one gets defensive, save the conversation for another time. This can be painful. Do not offer too much advice. Allow the other to talk - to get things off their chests. Be a facilitator: enable them to talk of the hurt, the loss, and anything else. One can expect weeping at times. Allow them to weep. This is good so long as no one starts a fight. Ask gentle questions to bring things to the surface. Do not forget: no accusing, and no defensiveness. If a confrontation happens, stop and wait for another day. You will be at this for years, but the hardest part is the beginning; it gets easier with time.

+++

The Audacity to Call Us "Bitter"

Many Pentecostals think that those leaving their churches are "bitter" and "rebellious." I heard

this preached about “backsliders” from several dark corners of Oneness Pentecostalism. In their distorted thinking, there is no legitimate reason to leave their church; all that leave have some problem like being bitter or rebellious. Since the structure of these churches involves unquestioned obedience to the dictator (Sometimes called “pastor” or “man of God” or “preacher”), one can identify the origins of this way of thinking. If one disagrees with the dictator, this is called rebellion. In these strange churches, rebellion is never directly against God, but against some dictator in leadership who attempts to transfer rebellion against him as rebellion against God. This is the standard scam.

The other scam is the accusation of “bitterness.” I heard possibly hundreds of sermons on “Bitterness” when I was a Pentecostal. This points to something sinister. Since this accusation of “bitterness” is used against every person leaving these churches, this reveals a problem where the institution produces such an effect. For a healthy system or institution, one can come and go with healthy disagreements. One can leave with goodwill, with a good reputation untainted. Why do Pentecostals and Apostolics viciously attack those leaving with wild accusations? Why people cannot leave with goodwill? Why they cannot have a healthy disagreement without preachers damning them to hell? This points to a movement that is possibly illegitimate and subversive.

For each person that leaves, those remaining within the churches have to retro-justify themselves. They think that they have everything figured out in total knowledge, high presumption, and an almost psychotic arrogance. If someone legitimately leaves there could be an alternate way of living, but such thinking is not possible within such an institution. If they can conceive a legitimate, alternate way of living, then they have no reason for living the way that they do with all the high costs of social estrangement and emotional manipulation from the dictators. Therefore, when a person leaves, in the minds of those left inside, the “backslider” has no legitimate reason to leave. The backslider must have something wrong with *himself*. He must have some hidden rebellion, hatred, or bitterness against the church or the pastor. Ironically, sometimes the “backslider” has been hurt by the church and may indeed have bitterness – a legitimate response to abuse. The victim has a grudge against those who abused him, while his abusers have the audacity to call him bitter! How is that for psychotic moral self-righteousness and narcissism! This is like the traditional Jewish story of the kid who kills his parents and then asks the court for mercy because he is an orphan. This is usually called Chutzpah. We have such systems that call themselves Christian. We are not joking or making this up. This stuff is so outrageous that outsiders may think we are lying. That is why it is hard to get our message across. This wickedness is so preposterous and unbelievable.

+++

Proper Authority, Submission: Balance of Power

The idea that a church should be like an army with a commander at the top, complete with lieutenants and colonels is a dangerous concept. In such a system, one gets the idea that whatever one says higher up the “chain of command,” those lower on the chain of command can never question. Asking questions is “rebellion” or a breach in the “chain of command.” If a board member asks a pastor to quit teaching on certain things or taking scripture out of context,

this would be rebellion against someone higher than him in a mystical chain of command against the “established leadership” of the church.

Scripture does not support a military structure for a church. One might find a peculiar scripture, rip it out of context from the Bible, and make it sound as if it supported army structures of church, but the general theme of the epistles does not grant “command” over a church to a pastor or anyone else.

The problem with interpreting such ideas like, “Obey them that have the rule over you” in such an extreme militaristic way is because Man has something within him that we all must consider regarding any institution: *sin*. Identifying the concept of submission only for the general membership to obey the pastor is to deny the existence of sin in all of us. One must consider that we are to submit ourselves “one to another” which is indeed opposite of the militaristic interpretation of a pastor as the Commander-In-Chief. This concept of submission “one to another,” interpreted in context of the other scriptures on obedience, puts things in proper perspective. To understand the evil nature of men is to understand why nobody is to have absolute authority over anybody in any institution, with the obvious exceptions of the military and law enforcement. Given that the military is under the watchful eye of the civilian authority, and that most law enforcement is under local civilian control, one understands that men are prone to sin and cannot be trusted with absolute authority without the existence of a check – a counterbalance.

When a pastor refuses to submit to the proper authorities in his own congregation, this is itself a form of rebellion against established authority. Some think that they are not prone to sin or failure and should not be limited with checks and balances within churches. Consider the scriptural example of Paul confronting Peter. By what authority? The Christian concept of submitting one to another. Did Paul rebel against the one who supposedly has *the keys*? Some might respond that they were both Apostles and had the privilege of challenging each other. Indeed, they had the authority to challenge each other. Paul had authority because of his knowledge, experience, and position. Furthermore, Jesus set the example that leaders must submit to those they follow by washing the feet of his followers. There is no better example against the militaristic concept of church structure than Jesus, the Son of God, washing the feet of his disciples. If anyone thinks one cannot challenge even the highest of the apostles, one must consider that Paul challenged Peter to his face. They submitted themselves one to another. Was Peter so presumptuous to tell Paul that he was in rebellion against his “authority” because he was granted the *keys* to the kingdom? It is obvious that he recognized human nature: we all sin, fail, and thus, we all need to be checked by each other. Others look after our blind spots. There are times when we ignore the voice of the Holy Spirit and go our own way; then, we need our brothers in Christ to confront us, and, if necessary, depose us if we are in a position of honor and authority. When church board members refuse to confront an abusive pastor, this is a breach of their duty. Duty sometimes requires us to do dirty work, so to speak, and confront those with whom we have great respect, because we all sin and we all have blind spots. If a pastor is abusive, and the leaders within the church do not depose him, they are in part responsible for his behavior.

It is very dangerous to interpret scriptures on authority in a militaristic concept of pastor as Commander-in Chief. It is a denial of man’s sinful nature, and a denial of the command of all of

us to submit to proper authority: one to another, with proper checks and balances.

+++

Authority Defined

The term “authority” suggests an author, as in, what did he write? This assumes a learned person who has studied and written an exit paper from a learned institution demonstrating his knowledge, i.e., his authority. Since graduates of serious colleges require written papers before granting a degree, inquiries into the legitimacy of pastoral authority should be “What has he written to demonstrate he is a scholar?” and “From what institution does he derive his authority?” Most religious bodies require serious study before granting ordination of certain offices – sometimes from four to eight years in seminary. The paper submitted for degree is proof that the author has “authority” in the subject by defending his thesis or paper before a review board of scholars.

Many Pentecostal sects do not require anything serious in qualification, and thus, the concept of “rebellion against authority” is an artificial hedge against church members who are less than supportive of a pastor from his lack of wisdom and knowledge.

Full institutional credentials might not be necessary for pastoral duties, but every pastor should submit at least a small book, or paper completely demonstrating competence, knowledge, and the ability to articulate a body of knowledge, defended before a board of scholars before any consideration of ordination. Anything less, or not as serious, demonstrates that such “clerics” have no *authority* in the serious sense of the term.

+++

Proper Church Procedure: Write it Down

If a pastor is abusive in any way, he must be removed. There should be little tolerance for nonsense from people in a leadership position violating basic ethics. Before attending any church, I would request to know the constitutional, written procedure by which office holders are held to discipline. If any member of the body feels abuse need be exposed, he should be required to submit this to the church board – or whatever governing body – in written form, with formal charges stated, written, and signed by the accuser. This should be official, written procedure, accessible in the church archives by request from any member. If a pastor transfers to another church, the governing board should be able to request such files within the organization to see if this pastor is a troublemaker among the churches in which he served.

A pastor must be bound to a written, constitutional procedure by which he can enforce church discipline when disorder needs to be addressed. This should be the same procedure that any other member can use: bring forth written charges to the church board signed by the accuser. After a member brings forth formal charges, there should be a constitutionally sound hearing or trial by which all parties may enter their side of the story to the written record – again, written archives available under procedure by request to any member of the congregation. The outcome

of such proceedings must be written and placed in the written archives for reference.

This prevents gossip among the leadership. It keeps everyone ethical. No pastor could kick a member out if he just has a grudge against such persons.

I ask anyone with trouble within a church – serious trouble – do you know the constitutional procedure by which to address such issues in writing? *Is there a procedure?* If a church has no such procedure, is this not a sign of danger? If charges against members in dispute are not written down, what does this say about the seriousness of the organization?

Everything must be done in order. In our society, this means written procedure, and formal, defined processes. This keeps everyone honest, ethical and prevents gossip and slander. It also prevents pastors from slandering members in secret, since they would not dare enter such into a written record. Submitting ourselves one to another means that we are all accountable to each other: lay members, board members, and pastor. No one should be above procedures of discipline.

+++

Law and Gospel: Legislating the Gospel?

A dear family member of mine, who happens to be Oneness Pentecostal, told me something recently that disturbed me, although I do not know why I continue to be shocked by Pentecostal preachers.

He told me that his pastor recently legislated that people in his church could not have DVD players in their homes, even on their computers. The pastor required a signature on a document whereby the member agreed to these terms. I am not sure if this signature is required of all members or if it is required only of the church leaders. In any case, this is an example of a serious problem, and a serious misunderstanding of Christianity.

Traditional Christianity always worked from the soul – the inside – and it was assumed that this inside order would be reflected by external order. In the above case, the Christian concept is inverted by imposing external order, hoping that this will produce internal order. Christianity has traditionally taught the Ten Commandments, and many other things, instructing people how to order one's soul. With internal order in the soul, a cleric need not legislate Law. Law is what Christ sought to fulfill, improve, and make perfect, with dispensing with rules and regulations, and imposing internal order within the soul.

When instructed in internal order, one knows that murder and adultery are wrong. Seeing these things on television – or DVD - would remind one of the Ten Commandments, and thus one would see this as wrong, even if seen on television. Thus, Shakespeare can be used as a moral lesson even though there is killing and adultery in his works, because the Christian sees such things as wrong, and sees the plays as a lesson in morality, demonstrating that internal disorder in the soul produces external disorder, and makes a mess of things.

Legislating that TV or DVD is morally wrong produces serious side effects that many are unaware of. If one legislates a specific rule or regulation as Morality itself, then this introduces an anti-Christian concept into religion, and is more akin to Islam, properly speaking. When one sees an application Regulation as Morality itself, this confuses the intent of Christ, making things worse. Those who would have TV and DVD within the church become objects of gossip and backbiting. This produces its own sin, and thus is worse than if there were no Regulation as Morality, and simply internal controls on the soul to produce the desired external effects.

This is the classic discussion of the proper measure and uses of Law and Gospel. The Law is a particular application of the universal desired effect of Order. However, this application is imperfect as all applications are. Christ gave us the Gospel – Love God, and Love your neighbor – the intent and purpose of the Law. Law is simply the demonstration – an instance - of the desired End. It is no longer the End itself, as Christ has fulfilled the Law with the summary of the Law: Love God, Love your neighbor.

So, to legislate the prohibition of DVD, television, or any specific, mundane thing to prevent adultery, killing, and any other such thing is the wrong way to approach Christianity. Pastors have the responsibility to instruct people on Order within the Soul that would produce external order. If a pastor is unable to do this, I recommend he get another profession.

+++

Music Can Be Dangerous

Music is an important art form, but it can be dangerous. I was a musician since I was 10 years old. I played the trumpet, French horn, drums, bass guitar, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, and light chording on the keyboard/piano. I have a home recording studio, wrote over 25 songs in my life, and I have recorded probably two-dozen songs on my studio. As a musician, I studied and learned how to manipulate moods. My fellow musicians and I could manipulate a crowd to do whatever we wanted, usually. I mesmerized women with music, to get them into the appropriate moods, when I was single. I was an emotional magician.

Music induces altered states of consciousness. This is the purpose of music. It calms the nerves of lovers taking risks. It strengthens the soldier's resolve to walk in front of a machine gun. It drives Pentecostals into a state of emotional ecstasy. It makes the adolescent angry - prepared to rebel against his parents. It puts us in the mood to do things we would not be prepared to do otherwise. It appears to our non-rational, animal side. It is the barbarian within.

However, if we know its power, we can use it to our own ends. We can cultivate and tame the barbarian within with love songs that stimulate desire into useful ends, or any other wholesome use of the music. Thus, when Pentecostal church music raises emotions to an extremely high level, we cannot conclude, "God is there."

For those who are addicted to music, I often recommend performing an experiment, going for an entire week without listening to music, then observing the effects. I have done this; strange things happen. I was addicted to music during my Pentecostal years. When I listen to music on

an occasional basis, my creative mind has more “space” to cultivate ideas. Another part of my brain opens up and I can think better spatially, creatively, and with vision. (I think these are the so-called “right brain” characteristics.) Before, with all the music in my head, it pressed down and repressed a side of my mind. A side effect is that when a tune does indeed strike within my memory, I can hear it clearly in my mind - much better and distinct - but sometimes I cannot get the tune out of my head without strong effort, whereas before, while listening to a thousand songs, no particular tune could lodge in my head in a repeating loop.

This fascinating subject could use more scholarly study.

+++

Pentecostalism IS a Mental Problem

When confronting a Pentecostal, remember that they are stuck in a mental thinking loop that prevents them from thinking normally about anything relating to religion. They have an enormous list of code words designed to trigger their strange thinking patterns. One can think of it as a computer program or a computer virus. The words “reprobate” or “backslider” or any other code words, are designed to trigger a particular thought pattern. Another phrase is “touch not mine anointed!” The last one triggers thoughts of incapacitating terror at the thought of questioning the pastor about anything. There are also particular gestures that trigger certain thoughts, like the tightening and closing of the eyes followed by something like “Woo, I feel something in this place, let’s pray for that guy right now!”

It is hard to speak about religion with Pentecostals stuck in the mental traps because the minute one tries to question them, those code words and gestures come into their imaginations without even them hearing them or seeing them, short-circuiting the mental processes so that they cannot hear the words you are saying. Their mind is stuck; it has something like a computer virus.

It takes a tremendous effort to break these people from this state of self-hypnosis. It may take a dramatic event for them to begin to question the system. Sometimes the pastor betrays them so deeply, that they go through terror and depression so unbearable that they must question the system to retain their sanity.

The church services are designed to nurture and maintain these thought systems and mental traps that they cannot break out of. The emotionalism during church services - from excitement to terror, to grieving, to any extreme emotion - all this contributes to the deadening of the mind to thinking outside of the particular mindset.

Their minds are stuck, but they do not know it. You can even tell them this, but they do not understand because their thoughts are stuck in a short circuit. We may spend months or years trying to figure out a way to break through a particular person’s mind-bind to break it out of the shorted loop. Each of us has a lot of work to do in this attempt. Each case is different. I suspect that there is a particular *key* to each person’s mind to break him out of the mind-bind. It just might take time to find the *key* to break the code and delete the infinite control loop of their mind’s software programming, in a manner of speaking.

Do not be surprised when you cannot communicate with Pentecostals. It is part of the design of the system to keep them trapped in the mental control loops triggered by words, gestures, music, or whatever the preacher can design. The pastor does not do this deliberately as in, “How can I design a system to keep them trapped,” but he does it by trial and error in Darwinian fashion finding what works with a particular person or congregation and what does not. Whatever system of controls survives this experimentation is what survives in the same way as animal species survive in the process of natural selection in the Survival of the Fittest. The better the system design, the harder it will be to release them from of the mental loops.

+++

Pentecostals' Stubborn Evasion of Reality

There is a phenomenon in Pentecostalism that might be called **Reprogramming to Fit the Experience**. We hear the rants from many Apostolics (Oneness Pentecostals) that “some, but not all” churches are abusive and teach things not in the Bible, or according to established Christianity. The ideals they cling to - speaking in tongues, emotional ejaculations and abreactions - are the things they will refuse to give up. When one presents contrary evidence to them revealing these things to be either inventions of the past 100 years, or emotional nonsense, they either ignore the evidence, or they attempt to obfuscate our experiences, trying to say it is “not the same thing” or that it was “fake.” *Their* experiences are the real thing, while all the apostolic and Pentecostal experiences *we* had in the past, were possibly in bad churches, or that it was not the *real* Holy Ghost, or we had one of those bad pastors, but not all are like that. There actions are encapsulated in one word: Evasion. Evasion is the refusal to recognize the facts of reality in front of one’s face. In order to evade the facts and stubbornly keep the evil lust after an emotional high, which they call “God” or the “Holy Spirit,” they have to reprogram their minds in some contorted way to accommodate the facts in their own minds, when in fact they are simply making up something to justify the fantasy. Their minds, like computer code, must reprogram itself to accomplish the task of assimilating information to conform to their lusts: tongues, emotionalism, etc, while evading the facts.

When we demonstrate that tongues have been analyzed by experts who find no evidence that it has any elements of language, that it is simply simple sounds stringed together with a few common sounds like “shun-da,” they say, of course it sounds like gibberish to someone who has not experienced it. This is straightforward evasion.

When we say that we have been in Pentecostalism for decades, knowing the doctrines and the practices intimately, subsequently rejecting them, they say that we never experienced the “real thing” or that we faked it for all those years. This is another case of pure Evasion, and the stubborn refusal to recognize that Pentecostalism cannot survive serious scrutiny. We linked the phenomenon to West African tribal religion repackaged under Christianity after Azusa Street. We went to churches, transcribed speaking in tongues, and have shown that tongues are stringed together sounds with no meaning. We have shown that “receiving the Holy Ghost with tongues” as they practice it is fully explainable Self-Hypnosis. We have shown how Pentecostalism isolates people from their cultural roots like friends, family, and community. We have shown

that Pentecostals tend to be less moral than traditional Christians. We have shown that there are extremely high levels of sexual promiscuity among Pentecostals from extreme emotionalism making the people vulnerable to sexual con games. We have shown that many preachers will cause divorces if one partner in a marriage refuses to become Pentecostal.

They take all this evidence and blank-out their minds upon hearing it. Tongues are fake? Blank out! Preachers abuse people's money? Blank out! People practice Pentecostalism, and then reject it because it makes no sense? Blank out! Reprogram the computer code! Does not compute! We cannot have the mental software code work without tongues, hell fire, holiness, and running around the church shouting! We have to have it! We cannot live without that "tingling feeling within our bellies" that we call the "spirit of the Lord!" We have to have it!

They cannot accept the facts. The entire movement is a fraud draining the life out of people, families, and communities. Children go to bed at night crying because they are not allowed to live life. Kids are beaten because they are "rebellious" or because they do not live up to some standard of holiness. Women are taken from their natural inclinations to dress like a woman or wear their hair like a woman, to being an empty person drained of will, spirit, and natural freedom to live life. Men become cruel, emotionally manipulative, and prone to angry explosions from the bottled up frustration.

But, some will go on, read this, and still refuse to accept the Truth about Pentecostalism. It does not compute - it cannot be - according to their minds. They will make up anything in their imaginations to make the Truth away.

These people desperately need our prayers.

+++

Oneness Pentecostal Church Notes

I took these notes during a Oneness Pentecostal (Apostolic) church service:

February 1, 2004

Church: [deleted]

City: [deleted]

Pastor: [deleted]

My notes are in brackets, e.g., "[Notes...]."

7:03 PM. Singers start a slow ballad, "At Your Feet." People stand, sing along, and raise their hands. The lead singer attempts to get the crowd in worship mode.

7:07 PM. Song ends. Worship leader says, "Let's clap our hands," etc.

7:08 PM. The worship leader calls everyone to the front of the church – around the “altar.” They linger and “entertain the presence of God.” The leader manipulates the emotions of the crowd with speech and chord progressions from the musicians. They try to pump up the crowd. The leader says, “Grab someone by the hands and pray.”

7:14 PM. Everyone is still in the front near the “altar” – maybe 95% of those present. New song begins: “Falling in love with Jesus,” slow ballad style.

7:18 PM. New song: “[deleted].” Singers return to the previous song for this song’s ending.

7:23 PM. The people go back to the pews.

7:24 PM. The music leader pumps up the crowd, and builds them up to an emotional high. There are some people running in the aisles.

7:25 PM. Music with a fast beat begins – very fast with no singing for some time. There is vigorous clapping to this fast beat.

7:26 PM. Still, there are no words to the music yet. Some people are jumping up and down to the beat. Music – melody and harmony - kicks in at 7:27 PM. Sometimes there is just the beat; sometimes the bass and keyboard accompany the beat.

7:27 PM. The music stops briefly, then the fast beat then starts again. Some are jumping up and down to the beat.

7:28 PM. A song begins: “Dance All Night.” It is a very fast song with strong beat. There is speaking synchronous with the singing. Some are jumping up and down and possibly a few abreactions, or paroxysms.

7:31 PM. The song starts again. The song ends at 7:31 PM. A fast rhythm starts again with fast bass drum.

7:33 PM. A new rhythm begins – a classic rock and roll beat in 6/8 time akin to “Kansas City” style.

7:34 PM. The music ends, and the pastor is introduced. The worship leader says, “Thank God for our Pastor!” The pastor calls a man forward to testify. The man had six types of tumors, went to the doctor, and to the hospital. A week after the hospital and doctor visits, he was back to normal. Upon hearing this report, the people shout, run in the aisles, reach emotional paroxysms, and things get quite wild.

7:37 PM. The people settle down. The pastor speaks about bags stolen from him and other preachers. Someone recovered the bags in a dumpster. He praises God about this. He speaks about children, an altar worker’s seminar, [trained manipulators?] and other things. The pastor praises a few people for working long hours for the church. He speaks of plans for a tent revival. He says that this is “revival time,” and that “we” can fill up a local convention center. He calls for painters to help paint something – possibly a local church. He speaks of grand plans and

“making lots of noise” for revival.

The pastor calls a speaker for Kid’s Church. This speaker calls several kids to the front of the church. He tells stories of kids “praying each other through.” He read an essay written by one of the kids about a hero. There were cheers for the kids. He played some recording, while the kids in the front of the platform sang along, and acted with strange movements of their hands and arms to the music.

7:55 PM. The kids return to the pews. Speaker talks more about Kid’s Church, and that they are bringing them to heaven.

7:56. The pastor returns to the pulpit. There is even more talk about spending money on new buildings for Kid’s Church. Again, he continues to speak about Kid’s Church, revival, and a few other things.

7:59 PM. The pastor says, “Let’s sing!” Song: “I Stand in awe of You my Lord.” Song ends.

8:01 PM. Pastor speaks and says something about “Thank God for our assistant pastor.” [Note: the assistant pastor is the pastor’s son recently relocated to this church.]

8:04 PM. Someone calls for the offering. The choir is called up. Someone speaks about “Prayer and Fast Day.” For the fast, people should only drink water for three days. [Deleted – very popular UPC preacher] is involved in this program. The ensemble sings: “Lord you are good and mercy endureth forever” and “We worship you for who you are.” People then stand, then a strong beat starts along with the bass guitar.

There is an abrupt stop with a guy from the audience requesting permission to speak. He says he will give \$1,000 to Kid’s Church. He calls on others to “pledge to give.” The pastor then calls for \$1,000 donors to come up front, or raise their hands. At least \$5,000 was pledged. [Note: Possibly \$7,000 – maybe, no count was given from pulpit.]. After pledges, there are cheers from the crowd.

8:11 PM. The choir sings with young girl soloist. The song has a slow ballad style. The song ends at 8:16 PM.

The pastor returns and says, “God has his hand on this church.” He speaks of the final push and the final thrust before the rapture. The pastor then introduces visiting minister, [Name deleted].

8:20 PM. The people stand as the visiting minister approaches the pulpit.

8:21 PM. The visiting preacher takes the pulpit. The preacher speaks about a revival among “backsliders.” The scripture text is Mark 5:22. He speaks of the story of Jarius and the woman with the issue of blood. The focus is verse: 36, “Be not afraid, only believe.”

8:25 PM. There is a prayer, the sermon begins, and then everyone then sits. He tells of 24 people who “got the Holy Ghost” since last Sunday. He says that people will spend money one way or another; it might as well be spent on God. He rambles on about “\$50 Million.” He asks, “How

many children's churches can we build with that?" [This sounds strange.]. He then speaks of the assistant pastor. He asks for "those without the Holy Ghost" to raise their hand. He then asks, "Everybody is saved tonight?" He then says that he wants to "stir you up about backsliders." He asks, "Can I stir you up?"

8:35 PM. He says that he wants to "bring the prodigals home." He returns to the story about the woman with the issue of blood. He says that the disease was gone, but the scars remained until Jesus said, "to be whole." Jarius supposedly watched all this with the woman with the issue of blood. He says again "Be not afraid; only believe." He says that there will be field trips, distractions, and one will get frustrated with God, and also there will be deadlines. Jarius responded: "Just Hurry!" Preacher claims that the paid weepers were hired before girl died. He said that Jarius was in the corner "talking to Sister Jarius." [!!] He then tells "Sister Jarius" about the woman with the issue of blood. [?] He then goes to a story about people dropping \$200 into the offering plate and then getting a job offer the next day. [???!!!!] He talks of people walking out of wheelchairs for apostolic revival. The crowd then cheers.

He tells his stories of preaching in the sticks. He (preacher) had hepatitis B at one time. The doctor told him that it was an incurable, terminal disease. A doctor infected him from a previous surgery from a cut on the doctor's hand. The doctor told him he would die. [Deleted – famous UPC preacher] heard about this and prayed for him at the [State deleted] Campmeeting.

9:03 PM. The preacher told the devil, "You're gonna regret this!" He made plans to preach.

9:07 PM. He told the doctors that there would be no virus or antibodies for the next tests. The crowd then gets rowdy at this story. The blood tests come back a week later and the white blood count was normal, and the doctors could not find the disease. It was as if he never had the disease. The crowd gets rowdy again. The doctors want more blood tests. The preacher asks for documentation and letter of healing if they take another blood test. A week later, he gets the letter of healing. The crowd goes wild. The preacher shouts, "He is a healer!"

9:11 PM. The crowd is wild. People lift up their hands, and after a while calm down a little in reverent fashion.

9:12 PM. He tells more stories. The preacher shouts, "There is a miracle in this house!" People lift their hands and worship. I can hear some people speaking in tongues.

9:14 PM. The preacher asks for those with "pain in your body" to stand in the aisles. He says if you don't get in the aisles, you won't get healed. [??] He shouts, "Somebody is going to get healed!" He then mentions, "with this anointing." The organ gets loud. People are speaking in tongues and I can hear shouts of "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" Here is a partial tongues transcription: "Sanda la da dada mah siah" [I transcribed it as best as possible from listening.] The preacher says that God will heal someone with lumps. He prays for those in the aisles that have pain. He prays some more, "I rebuke ever pain, infirmity, physical discomfort...I curse it in Jesus name...command it to disappear by the authority of the Word of God..."

9:18 PM. The preacher then speaks in tongues, "ee la dee ma ta so la da mo high." The preacher calls those who were healed to the front. He asks those whose pain is gone to "wave your

hands.” Some cheer and clap. He says he is looking for someone with a tumor. A woman comes up front. He asks, “Is it gone?” She says she has huge hernia, etc, and will trust in the Lord. There are cheers from the crowd.

I left the church at 9:22 PM.

+++

My Comments on Pentecostal Service Notes

These are comments on the previous section on the Pentecostal church service notes. I was somewhat agitated while writing and commenting on this nonsense.

There are constant attempts to excite the crowd into a frenzy both before and during preaching. The music was designed to get the people running and jumping. The minute the pastor took the pulpit, he got someone to testify to make the crowd go wild again. Stories of healings are designed to get the crowd shouting and running in a frenzy. “The Lord does great things!” Anything is used for excitement – really do we need to hear of bags stolen, and then someone finds them in a trashcan????!! Praise the Lord for that!

Notice many references to the “Pastor.” They speak of him like a God. There is a lot of praise for the pastor’s family – in this case the Assistant Pastor. Both the pastor and the evangelist praise the assistant pastor. I found this a bit strange.

What is this altar worker’s seminar? Maybe they can send them to a hypnosis school since speaking in tongues comes under self-hypnosis. Help the victim lose their mind, so they start to tremble, lose all sense of time and space, fall on the floor, and talk in tongues.

He praised people for working long hours at the church. Hello? These people give 10% in cold cash, come to church for over 2 hours on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday mid-week. In addition, there are meetings, prayer meetings, seminars, choir practice, and classes. Top all this off when one has to spend hours taking baths, getting ready for church, driving carloads of kids to church. And they have the audacity to make people work long hours for the church????!!!! Who are these people!????

As far as the tent revival idea, have not these people figured out that the public thinks tent revival = crazy rednecks???? Do they wish to damage their reputation even further? Also, how do you think that these people can fill up a local convention center? This was tried at the Cow Palace in San Francisco a few years back. They spent \$20,000 renting it. It was an embarrassment. It was called Bay Fire. When will these people learn that the days of revival are over? People are *sick* of that crap. It is **old** and **stupid**. All this stuff about “making noise” for revival is outdated. People figured out what they were up to.

Every few months, to keep things exciting, there has to be some “new” idea to keep interest in the religious circus. In this case, it is Kid’s Church. Wow! We can build a church just for the kids! We can screw over another generation of youth and make them emotional wrecks by the

time they are teenagers! Let's destroy their lives early! But, are they cute?!! Mommies and daddies can be so proud of their smiley kids up front talking in tongues and "praying each other through," and emotionally wounding them for life. Yeah, we can bring our kids to heaven too!!! Do it for the kids! Even if you are a wreck in your personal life, give your life to the church for the children's sake! We can screw you over and your kids too!

Oh, and did you hear about "Prayer and Fast Day?" All those fat Pentecostals fasting for three days on only water????!! Now, is that healthy or what? Those teenagers doing this "fast" will mess up their metabolism and never recover. They will have weight problems for the rest of their lives. Also, how many will pass out and vomit from lack of eating? Will this be in testimony service? "Brother, I vomited my guts, but praise God, I made it through three days without any food!" I think that drinking a 12-pack of beer is healthier than this type of religious nonsense.

Study the part about the guy interrupting the song and making a \$1,000 pledge to the Kid's Church. Does it look like he was a plant? Could someone have put him up to this? Pay attention to the pastor intimidating people, asking for pledges on the spot for \$1,000 and making people come forward, raising their hands - this is an abomination. Who will spend this money? How much you want to bet that this Kid's Church is *never* built, but somehow there will be new furniture and new cars in the leaders' parking lots??? Think of the children whose parents gave \$1,000. Will they go without toys or school clothes "for the work of the Lord?" Will they have to work longer hours to get themselves through college because Mommy and Daddy could not put away money for their college fund? Or better yet, did they raid little Johnny's college fund to "give to Jesus?" Notice that after the pledges, the crowd cheers again.

What is this "final push and final thrust" before the rapture? "We take 10% already and you are about to go bankrupt, so we will milk you all we can until you are dead!"

Do you remember how people stand when a visiting preacher is introduced? Well, do they worship this guy? Who is he who comes in the name of the Lord to take thy money?

The preacher said that he wanted a revival among backsliders. Does he think that we really want to come back? We could just purchase a bullwhip and beat our own selves on the back for free! We could also go jump off a cliff - we might survive the fall.

His text is about Jarius and the Woman with the issue of blood. Hello??? This is not about backsliders! He mentions that 24 people got the Holy Ghost last week, and in the next sentence, mentions that people will spend money one way or another and that they should spend it on God. Hello????!!!! This is not making any sense!! What does spending money have to do with this sermon? Oh yeah, we all know.... He then asks how many Kid's Churches we could build with \$50 million. Where in the heck did that come from??? Can this guy get his mind off money for one minute? Later on, he mentions money again, strangely.

Then he has the audacity to ask those without the Holy Ghost to raise their hands. What kind of low-class, rude question is this??? "Uh, preacher, I am a child of Satan, yes I am!" "Help me talk in the 'Mo siah da da da high' dialect, will ya?"

He then says again that he wants to “stir you up about backsliders.” Well, if you read the sermon notes, the sermon had nothing to do with backsliders. Is the guy a lunatic? Can he prepare a decent speech, or is he just making it up as he goes? Discipline anyone? He says he “wants to bring the prodigals home,” but then gives the story about the woman with the issue of blood. See what I mean about taking things out of context and playing the Bible like Tarot Cards????

Does the Bible say that the disease was gone but the scars remained until Jesus spoke? Did Jarius tell Jesus “Just Hurry!”? How can the preacher say that Jarius paid the weepers before the girl died? Does he have proof? Sources???? Where does he get this story about Jarius talking in the corner with “Sister Jarius????” Where did that come from??? Does the Bible say Jarius told “sister Jarius” about the woman with the issue of blood?? Is he making this all up as he goes???? I did not check out the story yet, but it sounds like a pile of BS.

Then in the middle of nowhere, he talks about someone dropping \$200 in an offering plate and then getting a job offer the next day. Again, where did that come from? And, why is this guy obsessed with talking about money?

Are there documented cases of *anyone* jumping out of a wheelchair legitimately? Why is this necessary for “apostolic revival?”

Does anyone know if Hepatitis B is actually incurable and terminal? I want to know this one for sure. Why did he tell the devil “Your gonna regret this?” when in fact it was a stupid doctor? The devil is innocent here. Poor Satan. I wonder if he really has that letter of healing. Something smells funny about this whole story. Maybe someone in nursing can help with this one.

Of course, the crowd goes wild and there are cheers and people go nuts at the healing in this story. Stories for cheers?

Then he asks for those with pain in their bodies to get in the aisles. It is funny that he says if they *do not* come out into the aisle, they *will not* be healed. This was a very strange thing to say. Notice that he says that someone with “lumps” will get healed. Well, did not the guy with the testimony have this same story with six tumors? He is slipping in his memory. Furthermore, how many lumps are terminal and how many are removable with surgery? I bet nobody asked him that one. I bet all these tumor “healings” was just the doctors cutting them out. Anyone smell suspicion here too?

Of course, he curses the sickness and rebukes it. People talk in tongues. Those with the pain gone are to raise their hands. Big deal. Who cares? Also, he asks for the person with the tumor to come up and some dumb woman comes up who has a hernia. No one took much notice of this strange thing. But the crowd cheers!!!!

Notice the dialect of tongues. Mo siah, Mo high, and da da da la la. You also hear the universal tongue-talkers word “sandah” There are variations like sahndae, shahdae, etc.

I wonder what heavenly word this is. For all I know it might be voodoo for “Praise Satan!”

These notes have a lot of potential for a good study.

+++

Music, Self-Torture, Metallica, Pentecostal Music...

This is from my journal. There are notes on music and its connection to self-torture, giving credence to the old saying, “You have to suffer to sing the blues.” Maybe there is a connection.

+++

I also recorded the MTV Icon program on Metallica. When Jason Newstead left the band in 2000, it shocked everyone. James Hetfield was drinking to the point where he was hurting his family relationships. He entered rehabilitation and stayed there for nine months if I remember correctly. Members said that when he came out, he was a more sober version of James. I saw him and he definitely looked healthy. His eyes were more alive and gone were those extremely piercing intimidating looks that he always sported. A lot of this alcohol abuse was from his past experiences. He grew up in a Christian Science church. His mother died of cancer because she refused treatment. He was bitter ever since toward this and possibly drowned his sorrow in beer. These demons were possibly an impetus to all the dark music. It produced one of the greatest heavy metal bands ever. Many of their songs have an undercurrent of religion in them. Hetfield was a tortured soul.

I wonder if all musicians are tortured souls in some way. Pentecostals make some of the finest musicians in the world and Pentecostalism is inherently torturous. Indeed, I was a tortured soul to some extent and became a dexterous musician. I am not sure how much this torture produced this state, but I am sure that it had some effect. Pentecostalism tends to produce soul wrenching music. It is indeed among the finest music. However, its impetus is self-torture, and torture from the leadership. This music does not have its roots in the unavoidable human condition, but in the avoidable condition of abusive groups. It is said that to sing the blues, one has to suffer. I say that to become a good Pentecostal musician, you have to have a direct experience of suffering and self-immolation. This is a subject for further study into human nature.

It is also a study into my own nature. I had a strong desire during my entire youth for hard guitar music. This – at the time, I thought – was the sound of industry. A power chord sounds like a machine cutting wood or metal. It also sounds like an accelerating motorcycle. Could it be that this is the music of tortured souls? Could it be that Pentecostals either like country music or hard rock for a reason? Or is it the focus upon music itself that suggests this? What other religions make music such a large part of their identity? All the backstabbing, the bitterness, the gossip, the hurt, and the betrayal – the music ministers to the hurt and the pain. Without this music, would the people go insane? Without all of the emotional indulgence in the churches, would these people be able to cope with life – without escape?

+++

UPC Increasing Fanaticism Over the Years

I was going through my journals. I wrote this after reading from a section of Thomas Fudge's book "Christianity Without the Cross." Some coming out of Oneness Pentecostalism might find this very intriguing.

+++

One thing that I found interesting in the Fudge book was that around 1994 or so, a directive went out to the UPC Western district – which is California and Nevada – telling all ministers that there would be no toleration for anyone who did not accept the 3-step plan of salvation of Acts 2:38 as interpreted by UPC, nor would they allow advocating that anyone not partaking of this 3-step ceremony was going to heaven. The meant to solidify the heresy that all who do not follow the three-step plan are going to hell. It is either baptism in Jesus' name and speaking in tongues or hell. This was once considered a fanatical view among many in the UPC. However, over the years the fanatics took control of the hierarchy of the organization and pushed this view until they codified it in the articles of faith of the organization. The problem was that the first UPC superintendent was a man from the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated section of the 1945 merger. He did not subscribe to the 3-step plan or hell doctrine. Many others also did not, but were eventually driven out by fanaticism of the others from the former Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ organization. The merger was supposed to accommodate both views, but it looks like through slight of hand over the years and with intense propaganda, the fanatics took over the organization and drove the others out. The main sections of the country that held the less fanatical views were the Pacific Northwest, Eastern Canada, and Tennessee. However, I read the section where he explains where the fanatics from California mounted a campaign to send "missionaries" to the Pacific Northwest to convert the area to the Water and Spirit heresy. There was much bitterness over this effort. There was also a story of the bible college in Stockton where one of the leaders said that students should not be taught history and their heritage of the PCI because that was all behind us. Many pioneering ministers shocked the students when they explained their own doctrines that they held their entire lives! Of course, after a few 'conversions' of the students, the leadership of the college drove out these pioneers because they would not subscribe to the Water and Spirit heresy.

It looks like this solidification of the fanatical faction had many repercussions. Almost all the time one hears some UPC person talking, he mentions the three step magical formula and the supposed Oneness of the Godhead, damning all who do not believe this nor practice this to hell. This is the essence of the Oneness position today. All they believe is Acts 2:38, Oneness and Holiness. Anything else has almost nothing to do with their theology or thought process. They have no importance for the Cross. They often only take the sacrament of communion once per year – if at all. In their fanaticism, they crystallized this thinking into stone and that is all they can think of. That is their ticket to heaven and all those who do not perform this three-step trick go to hell!

+++

No Education: Pentecostal Ignorance

Thomas Fudge, in his book "Christianity Without the Cross," surveys 27 early Pentecostal leaders. Only one, Eudorous N. Bell graduated from college – an institution of higher learning. "Formal education was unnecessary when one had access to the Holy Spirit." (Fudge, 51) Fudge reports, "... [t]he overwhelming majority of early Pentecostal leaders were either uneducated or poorly educated." (Fudge, 50)

One might notice that some who claim to have attended Bible "colleges" are often just as inept at rigor as your local street corner preacher screaming and yelling. They might spice up their language with big words like "hermeneutics" or something similar, but ultimately, they have no idea what they are talking about. Once you scratch a little below the surface, they have little learning, but many memorized slogans with big words sprinkled here and there. The big words are only a facade to keep the image of learning without the substance. Ask them simple analytical questions, and they fall apart. Using probity and asking, "What are you talking about?" at every turn and explanation, and you will come to a point where they cannot go any further and they give up with some throwaway statement like, "You have to have the holy ghost to understand this." Or, "You cannot reason it out." Or they get angry and say, "I am the pastor and this is what it means – because I said so!"

+++

Oneness Pentecostal Recruiting Procedure

Standard Operating Procedure

Revision 1913

1.0 Recruiting Sinners into Church

1.1 Identify the victim.

1.2 If the victim expresses interest in God, express false compassion and attempt to be "Christian Like" to the victim.

1.2.1 Use terms like, "We are all here to help you," or "You have heard we were mean and bitter, but those `blanket statements' are not true for all of us."

1.2.2 Express compassion for the victim's abuse in other Pentecostal churches.

1.2.3 Tell the victim that not all Pentecostal churches are the same, and use the standard scam, "We are different; our pastor is not abusive like those you have heard."

1.2.4 Tell the victim that the most important thing is a "relationship with the Lord." Never define the term "relationship."

1.3 If victim has lots of money, make stage 1.2 last longer than for average people or for poor people.

1.4 After victim is thoroughly ambushed into friendliness from section 1.2, move in for the kill.

1.4.1 Tell the victim that Acts 2:38 is the only way to avoid hell fire.

1.4.2 Tell the victim that Holiness Standards are the only way to avoid hell fire.

1.4.3 Tell the victim that the pastor is the "man of God" and must be obeyed in all things to avoid hell fire.

1.4.4 Tell the victim that 10% of his salary belongs to the pastor.

1.5 If the victim rejects strategy in 1.4, repeat until the victim either (1) accepts our precious truth or (2) rejects God.

1.6 If the victim accepts the Truth after section 1.4, enroll him into indoctrination sessions like "Search for Truth," or "Exploring God's Word."

1.7 If the victim rejects the truth after section 1.4, they are hereafter called "Rejecters of Truth." They have rejected God.

1.7.1 Tell victim that "the blood is no longer on our hands" for their soul. They rejected God and it is no longer our problem.

1.7.2 You are free to abuse victim once one gets to section 1.7. Any form of hatred, intimidation, bitterness, and terror is acceptable to get back at the victim for "rejecting this precious truth." Use terms like "reprobate," "godless," "backslider," "god-hater" or similar abusive terminology to make the victim feel as bad as possible. We are no longer responsible for their rejection of truth and they are fair game for anything.

+++

Local Church Claims Others are all Wrong

A local church reports that Christianity as a whole has it all wrong. The Reverend Billy Gooseneck of the local Apostolic Beacon church just outside the city limits informs this newspaper that church should not be "dead, dull and boring" but lively like a football game. He mentioned that some scripture speaks of having life "more abundantly." Supposedly, this "abundant life" means a wild church service complete with screaming by the pastor and some of the congregants. Some members – in fact, most members – "run the aisles" in the midst of fast paced music, screaming like wild hogs, reports Jim Robinson, who lives three houses from the church. Other visitors report strange, occult-like practices like ecstatic speech bursting forth from the mouths of congregants, usually called "speaking in tongues," although no one knows what language they are speaking. This reporter could not recover any records of this Rev. Gooseneck having any college diploma from any accredited, known university.

The Rev. Gooseneck claims that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is all wrong. He says that there are not three Gods in heaven, but one. Asked to explain which churches teach that there are three Gods, Gooseneck replied that most churches do, with the exception of Apostolic Beacon. This reporter interviewed over 30 pastors in this city and could not find any who claims that there are three gods. Furthermore, Gooseneck said that Jesus is the name of the Father. Asked for proof, he replied that Jesus once said, "I and my Father are one." Pressed for a direct answer and an explanation from the Bible, Gooseneck simply responded, "You cannot understand because you do not have the Holy Ghost." This reporter asked about this "Holy Ghost." Gooseneck said that this is the spirit of God that "falls" on people and the person talks in tongues when it happens. Asked for the basis of this idea, Gooseneck responded that the Bible says so, although he could only point to certain scriptures where foreign languages were spoken, but not the ecstatic mumbling that goes on at Apostolic Beacon. Asked what language this causes people to speak, Gooseneck responded that it was a "heavenly language." Asked for the basis of this idea, Gooseneck responded that those with the Holy Ghost just "know" these things. Asked why people ran around screaming and shouting during church, Gooseneck could only point to the

scriptures where during the Day of Pentecost people thought those in the upper room were drunk. Asked for specifics from the New Testament about running around, shouting, dancing, screaming, moaning, Gooseneck could not respond and just said this was the way the early church did it. This reporter could not find anywhere in the New Testament where churches acted so strangely.

Gooseneck then said that unless one was baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost and talking in tongues, one would go straight to hell. Again, Gooseneck could not show this with scripture. Asked why his women only wore dresses, Gooseneck said that pants were men's clothes. Asked about women's pants, Gooseneck somehow thinks that this is men's apparel. Others who know church members report that these people are strange. The women are pale-faced and have long hair. The young people do not go out to dances and do not make friends with other people. The people appear to be scared of Gooseneck and would only speak about him in terms that he is the "best Pastor" and the "greatest pastor on Earth." Occasionally, people would go around harassing people in some ritual called "Door knocking." These people would explain that Acts 2:38 was a "Plan of Salvation." Traditional churches in the area deny that there is such thing as a *plan* of salvation.

This reporter will keep an eye on these strange people. They tend to be somewhat at the lower end of the economic scale and are always broke. The pastor demands 10% of people's paycheck. The regional IRS was asked if this was legal; he responded that it sounded strange, but appears legal – in most cases. Former members of the church were interviewed; they hate everyone and everything about Gooseneck's church. Church members spread hatred and slander against them after they left. Many went to drug use to cope with the pain inflicted on them. In conclusion, the people of this church are indeed a strange bunch.

Filed by you local newspaper.

+++

Pentecostal Friction

Explaining the story of our personal struggles may benefit some. The things that some of us have learned might help accelerate the process of recovery for others, perhaps preventing them from repeating some of our mistakes.

I was in Oneness Pentecostalism for about 20 years. I was in strict churches and "loose" churches. In every congregation, there was emotional abuse and intimidation to some degree. For the congregations that I thought were benign, thinking back to those times, I can recognize the subtle abuse – which might be more dangerous than blatant abuse. The abuse is usually the drivel that the pastor makes up. You must obey his words or you are in rebellion; rebellion will send you to hell (Yeah, right). One must never "speak against" the pastor or one is in rebellion and becomes a target for curses sent down from the pulpit about "Touch not mine anointed." All the holiness standards produce friction among the members. Eventually, there are standards "sergeants" in every church watching others to see how close they obey the standards code. This leads to gossip about who is obeying what, causing serious friction and hatred when the tattle tail

tells the pastor who is disobedient. One can be called into the office of the pastor and given the drill: obey or go to hell. They will not usually say this, but that is what they mean. Do not believe those who say that standards keep people holy. It causes friction, backbiting and betrayal between friends who wish to cozy up to the pastor and snitch on their friends. This is the source of the emotional strain within such mad houses. Do not think for one moment that these preachers are holy. They gossip among themselves and will tell all of your secrets to another preacher. In responsible religions, things told to a minister require strict confidentiality in ethics. This is not the case among Pentecostal preachers. They think that "saints" cannot speak about anyone, but that anyone in the "ministry" can say anything they want to each other. Usually, they think that the pastor's wives can get in on the juicy stories. Since the pastor's wives are not bound by confidentiality, they mouth off every things said in confidence to their lady friends. This is the way that anything one tells a Pentecostal preacher gets among everyone in the congregation. Ironically, the more confidential things *must* be, the juicier the gossip, thus making very private things get out even *faster* than ordinary things.

This is why there is so much strife in Pentecostal churches. The system is sick.

+++

Pentecostal Detoxification

On an online forum, a woman is trying to help her husband deal with residual Pentecostal guilt:

To deal effectively with this nonsense, you must develop a strategy. What do you hope to accomplish? Answer that, and then proceed from there.

As for answering letters from the Pentecostals, you have two options. You can ignore them or you can answer them. This depends on how sensitive your situation is. If you ignore them, you could either make them think that you have no answers, or this could tell them that you are suffering no ill effects from their efforts. If you think it prudent to answer them, you might write a polite letter answering every point with a counterpoint. Remember to be firm with Pentecostals. If they sense that they can intimidate you, they will; when you push back politely and say "no" in a civilized manner, but holding your ground, they will usually back off.

The guilt is a residue from all the nonsensical messages pounded into his brain over many years. It will take time to work through this stuff. I suggest that he begin writing in a journal. He can write down all his struggles therein, and try to explain them to himself. He can work through anger, hurt, or frustration, pouring it out onto the page, so to speak. He can return to the journal in a few days or weeks and make follow-up comments after reflection. Such writing will help in the detoxification process. It is like coughing up all the poisons from one's heart onto paper. In such journals, the writer should withhold nothing. Write until it hurts, then write more until it feels better. Things written in a journal will sometimes be shocking. But, never erase it; never get rid of it because it will become part of a historical healing record. Date all the entries in the journal. One will come back later, look at the progress, and maybe help others using one's own experience as a model.

One should also make a timeline map of one's life. Remember major events far back as possible, the good times, and the bad. Comment on these major events in the journal. He will find that significant events in the past triggered the emotions that he now feels. He can talk with old friends or siblings about past events, reconstructing the things that are still affecting him. The historical record is a powerful tool. If he can analyze this historical process after about a year of reflection, he should be able to confront any argument from his parents. Uncovering the past will blast a hole in the confidence of his parents because they cannot argue with the facts of the written record. This may encourage them to question the events, possibly breaking their confidence in the system after they can see it on paper.

When the emotional withdrawals affect him, you are there to help him cough up the poisons, so to speak. Do not push too hard. Ask questions gently as to why he is feeling the way he does. Do not condemn. Think of it as trying to peel back the layers of the onion slowly. He may need assistance from you to focus upon the problem because he might not have the strength to do it alone. After a time of questions and discussion, it might become exhausting to him, and then you should stop and wait for some other time. He must deal with the pain and the tears for a healthy recovery. Some of the things he reveals will shock you, but your purpose is to assist him to see things clearly. Things are not clear in his mind, so you have to help him clarify the fuzzy images, organize them, and try to make sense of them. It will take months to break down the barriers. After the initial barriers are broken, the process becomes easier.

Do not lose Hope. Keep the End in mind. Pay attention to where you are going - not where you are right now.

+++

Anointing: The Ring of Power, In Darkness Binds them...

J. R. R. Tolkien's poem in the "Lord of the Rings" sent shivers down my spine when I saw that it could provide an analogy to what Pentecostals call "the anointing."

Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

Even Gandalf did not wish to keep the Ring. He told Frodo not to tempt him with the magic Ring of Power. The Hobbit did not want the Ring and wished to destroy it. Only those who do not want power are the only ones we can trust with it.

This brings analogies to Pentecostalism. "One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them." Pentecostalism seeks after power as if it were God. They seek after the gifts of the spirit

as in the scripture, "You shall receive Power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The Gifts of the Spirit are powers that they can use for their own ends – or so they think. This power - or *anointing* as they sometimes call it - is power over things and over others. They fool themselves into thinking that they have such power, but it is all in the mind. But, the power is real to *them*. This power, as Tolkien's Ring of Power, slowly corrodes their souls until they cannot control themselves and are drawn to the source of that power – the dark Lord who forged it. These gifts – the anointing – eventually cause Pentecostals to lose their morality, their sense of proportion, becoming megalomaniacs who think they can control others and things through this anointing – like the Ring. It eats at them eventually – slowly, but surely. When the preacher declares in shrillness, "Touch not mine anointed! Do my prophets no harm!" he is under the spell of power. It has gotten to him, just like the Ring got to Sméagol or Gollum. Gollum was once as a Hobbit, but the Ring turned him into a nasty, beastly creature like the Anointing turns Pentecostals into beasts full of spite, revenge, hatred, and intrigue. When Pentecostals use those power curses, "I bind you in the Name of Jesus," they are under the influence of the Ring.

I call on all Pentecostals to take this Ring of Power – this anointing – and cast it in to the furnace from whence it came before it destroys you and turns you into a beast.

For some of us coming out, we were like Sméagol, but are now in the process of redeeming ourselves and hopefully regaining our humanity in the process. We have come out from under the spell of the Gifts of the Spirit and the Anointing – we escaped from the Land of Mordor where darkness rules and Shadows lie. We let go of this Ring and cast in into the crater from whence it was forged. This Ring of Power – the anointing no longer corrupts us. We were free when we let go of the power that almost destroyed us.

+++

Book Review: Christianity Without the Cross, by Thomas Fudge

When people think of the UPC, they immediately think of Holiness Standards, Jesus Name baptism, and Oneness theology. However, it has not always been this easy to describe Oneness people. The United Pentecostal Church (UPC) formed in 1945 with the merger of two organizations: the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated (PCI) and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ (PAJC). The major difference between the two organizations was the interpretation of the New Birth. Both organizations subscribed to Repentance, baptism by immersion in Jesus' Name and receiving the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) by glossolalia (speaking in tongues, or babbling incoherently). The largest faction of PAJC believed this three-step formula was required to enter heaven and avoid hell fire, whereas the PCI largely believed that one was justified at repentance and that water baptism and spirit filled glossolalia were not necessary to avoid hell fire. The merger language was very carefully chosen to bring these two groups together to agree on the fundamental doctrine. The phrase "full salvation" was the magic term that the PAJC interpreted to mean that the three steps were necessary, whereas the PCI position could interpret "full" to mean something more than mere "salvation" which to them was achieved at repentance. "Full salvation" to a PCI was indeed the three-step formula, but not defining for one's eternal destiny. Such was the agreement at the merger that ministers would not contend

over this issue to the destruction of the new body called UPC. The problem appears to be that official publications of the UPC do not wish for many people to know about the PCI tradition within the organization.

However, there was much contending for their own views, in rebellion against the merger agreement, through the years by those whose views were the three-step Acts 2:38 formula or hell fire. Eventually, the former PAJC faction became increasingly fanatical in their position and began to shove PCI ministers out of leadership positions. The PAJC ministers began an effective propaganda campaign to convert the PCI strongholds of the Pacific Northwest, the North Atlantic, and Tennessee. By the beginning of the 1980's, the PCI position of moderation on the New Birth was effectively destroyed. The fanatics took over the organization and presided over several organizational purges that reached a climax in 1992 with the Westberg Resolution aimed to kick out ministers that were "weak on the doctrine," a code word for those of the PCI persuasion. Several distinguished men left the organization like Robert Sabin and C. H. Yadon. The official word from the organization was that the 1992 resolution did not affect many people. However, other sources reveal that several thousands of ministers left the organization over this resolution. Fudge shows that this resolution was passed without proper notice beforehand and without proper parliamentary procedure according to the UPC constitution.

The UPC might be called a relatively secretive organization; this book is sure to ruffle the feathers of a few who wish that this information would remain private. Dr. Fudge is a researcher that they must take seriously. The book has tons of footnotes and tons of referenced interviews with current and former members. Current leaders of the UPC cannot leave this book in silence. One disturbing thing is that the UPC headquarters banned Fudge from doing research in their Historical Center in July 2000 unless he turned over his manuscript, the list of all people he contacted for interviews, and his interview tapes. Fudge declined this ridiculous demand and plowed forward with research from other sources.

Fudge also shows that the current interpretation of "Holiness Standards" is a relatively recent development in the organization: the practice of women wearing only dresses, women with uncut hair, and the prohibition of jewelry. Early leaders of the organization had wives with cut hair, jewelry and wore slacks because it was not an issue until around the 1950's.

The organization is now obsessed with a narrow ideology: (1) "Jesus" is the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit in addition to the name of the Son of God, (2) Jesus Name baptism and evidence of the Holy "Ghost" with speaking in tongues (glossolalia, or babbling under emotional ecstasy) are necessary to avoid hell fire, and (3) Holiness Standards are increasingly necessary to remain saved from hell fire. The first is a heresy in Christianity and in some quarters defines this group outside of the definition of "Christian." The second and third are strange developments, although not unique in Christianity, but make this group appear as fringe fanatics and largely ineffective. The title of the book comes from evidence that the organization is interested primarily in dunking people under water in Jesus Name baptism, getting them to talk in tongues, and then to move on to the next convert without ever introducing people to the message of the Cross. Their message, for the most part and in most cases, is not the gospel, but a misinterpretation Acts 2:38 plus a few things here and there.

This book is a godsend to those of us who might have been part of UPC. It explains many of the

strange things that happened over the years, the details of which the leadership wished to keep secret. It is as if Fudge looked at his research material and said to the UPC, "Thou hast been weighed in the balances and have been found wanting." Then he wrote this book as the prophetic balance to all the propaganda. Anyone thinking of joining the UPC, or anyone who might be new to the UPC should read this book to determine if this is a fellowship that a Christian should associate with and then make a determination on the merits. Those already UPC might also find this book useful for similar reasons.

+++

The Cross: Why I believe

Why I believe?

I studied many things since leaving Pentecostalism. While I was trapped in Pentecostalism, I dabbled in Deism, agnosticism, and atheism - although, my atheist fling was only a few weeks at most. I took the rational approach. Since I was an engineer, and a trained mathematician, the logical/mathematical approach appealed to my thought processes. Belief in God to me at one time was irrational, but I held out hope that some day I would find justification of such an idea. I eventually found that justification, but for a long time I was just not sure and was properly an agnostic. I was going to leave Christianity until I went to a church near my hometown that resurrected my idea that there was some good in Christianity, although I was not sure that there was a God. After the experience with that particular church – an oddity within Pentecostalism - I was convinced that there was something good about God, Church, and maybe Pentecostalism. I soon found out that Pentecostalism in general was the problem and that particular church was a mild type in Pentecostalism trying to improve its image within the community.

How can I be a Traditional Christian now with all the philosophical things I studied that tried their best to disprove God? I read Thomas Sowell's book "Knowledge and Decisions." He asserted that all the knowledge that any individual holds is severely limited. We know very little about the world individually. All the people alive right now have a very small stock of knowledge of how things are. However, through the ages we have worked things out through trial and error. The experiments throughout history that have survived the test of time, encapsulated and transferred to subsequent generations in the form of custom and tradition. Custom and tradition are forms of inherited knowledge that our ancestors pass on to us through parents, institutions, gestures, habits, custom, and many other things. Every period in history affects those living therein in profound ways. They transfer this encapsulated knowledge about certain events through tradition. Often, we have no idea of the origin of many traditions and customs we have. If one of our ancestors were lied to and hurt severely, he might pass on the custom to his descendants that all liars are to be hated and avoided at all costs. Later generations will naturally pass on this tradition to their offspring. [This tradition was passed on to me from my father, but I have no idea of its origin.] Things are passed onto us in encapsulated forms that refer to lessons learned over the years that our ancestors pass on to us implicitly. There are common themes in human nature from one society to the next: suffering, redemption, sin, atonement, community, ethics, codes of honor, etc. Many of these things are passed on through stories and rituals. However, religion provides sacred rituals that encapsulate many of these

universal human aspects. The focus of Christianity is the Cross. The entire story perfectly encapsulates the human condition. Pilate shows the dilemma of innocence against a mob, Judas is the friend who was bought off with money; Peter was the closest person who denied Christ, but redeemed himself in the end, John was the faithful servant who never left Jesus' side, Magdalene was imperfect, but still supportive of the best in the world – the Son of God - and so on in each part of the story of the Cross. This is the human condition encapsulated in a religion. This is why we call it *Truth*. It reveals humanity and his relationship with God in all of its variations and shades of meaning.

The ritual of Communion, the Communion of Saints, is where we are mystically transferred to the foot of the Cross. We are mystically standing there with Saint John and Mary, the mother of Jesus. We are partaking in the corporate Body of Christ with everyone past present, future, who ever lived, is living, and who will ever live. The Sacrament of Communion is the moment of time where all people, past present and future, are standing at the Cross partaking of God himself, in a giant, almost infinite Community of Saints. This is *my* Christianity. This is my *Truth*. This is what Christ means to *me*. As I take the Sacrament, I am mystically standing there with my Grandfather who is dead and my sister who passed on long ago; I am also taking the Sacrament with Joan of Arc along with Peter, John, and Mary. This is a frozen, mystical moment in time where by we share true community with mankind and God himself – Holy Communion.

The story defies logic. But, as explained earlier, our minds cannot know even a small portion of knowledge; religion is encapsulation of inherited knowledge. Our ancestors handed it down to us and I shall take the baton and run with it. I want my little boy to know Christ and the story of the Cross in all its beauty.

This is why I believe, and why I am a Christian in the most profound sense that I can understand the term.