

**“...and He  
Has A Name”**

Patricia Elaine Ash



## BIRTH OF A FELLOWSHIP

In the late 1960's a group of college students in Houston, Texas began meeting regularly for prayer, Bible study, and charismatic worship. Originally members of this informal group were predominantly from Church of Christ backgrounds, but soon the group included participants from virtually every Christian denomination. Within five years the meetings came to involve a number of people living both inside and outside the Houston area. In 1971 about 30 of these people formed the Fellowship of the Way of Christ. By 1975, the Fellowship had expanded beyond Texas to include members and congregations in several other areas of the United States.

The Fellowship is not a denomination in the historic institutional sense. Members are free to maintain whatever other church affiliations they may choose. Although the Fellowship has no official creed, there is a common theological perspective shared by most members. The Fellowship is explicitly Christian, acknowledging the salvation which came through God the Father in his son, Jesus Christ. The group is charismatic, recognizing the gifts and work of the Holy Spirit in the universe today. The Fellowship worships a living God who is unlimited by the constraints of human theology and who freely reveals himself directly to all men in every age.

The early history of the Fellowship of the Way of Christ is found in this book.

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DEDICATION

To the members of the Fellowship of the Way of Christ . . .

my sisters and brothers in the Lord.

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What I say here would be much more in line with the spirit of our times if I could speak to you about the experience of such novelists as Hemingway and Kafka and Gide and Camus, but all my own experience has been that of the writer who believes again in Pascal’s words, in the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and not of the philosophers and scholars.” This is an unlimited God and one who has revealed himself specifically. It is one who became man and rose from the dead. It is one who con founds the senses and sensibilities, one known early as a stumbling block. There is no way to gloss over this specification or to make it more acceptable to modern thought. This God is the object of ultimate concern *and he has a name*.

Flannery O’Connor  
Novelist and Believer  
from *Mystery and Manners*

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The original book design was by Linda Coy Parker.

The original cover photograph of Jim and Pat Ash was by Gary Henderson.

## PREFACE

This book contains a partial account of a group of people who over a period of approximately eleven years have shared a common experience of God. Some were part of the story from the beginning; others entered somewhere along the way. Some brought with them a life long belief in the reality and power of God; others initially doubted His very existence. Some came of their own accord, eagerly seeking the living God. Jehovah Himself pursued others and brought them home still struggling in His arms from the darkness in which they had been hiding. Each person you will read about has a unique story. Every one of us would testify, however, that this God with whom we have to do has a name. He is real; He is powerful. He is more real, in fact, than we would sometimes like Him to be, for He has insisted upon changing our lives in the most unexpected ways. From the beginning He has demanded all of each of us. He has offered us in exchange all of Himself. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is also the God of Harold, Veranne, and Jim. He delights to be known as our God and to be called by our names. We delight to be called by His. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. To Him be glory and honor always.

Amen.

## CHAPTER 1

In November, 1960, a Church of Christ preacher and missionary, near to suicide, bowed his head in a small motel room in Julesburg, Colorado, and cried out to a God he hardly knew. Burdened with debt, discouraged by the powerlessness of his ministry, Don Hurley had left the pulpit several years earlier, troubled with doubts about God Himself. At that point in his life, the God he preached and the one he knew by experience seemed to be related only by name.

“The God I preached was a great God of power, love, and grace,” Don would later say, “The God I knew through experience was weak, confusing, and wholly inadequate for the challenge of our day.” Where was the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Where was the power so sorely lacking in his ministry? Where were the faith and joy he should have felt? Because there was nothing else to do, Don prayed. He called upon a God whose name, at least, he knew.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Harold and Veranne Graham were asking some of the same questions. Like Don, they saw a discrepancy between the power of God described in Scripture and that which they had experienced in their own lives. Despite an active and rewarding involvement in the Church of Christ, they were unsatisfied. Each was looking for a deeper relationship with God—a relationship which would be just as alive as the one Abraham had with God, the kind of relationship which empowered the first apostles to proclaim the gospel to an unbelieving world.

The Grahams’ quest for answers had begun while Harold was in graduate school at Iowa State. There he and Veranne began a study of those passages in the Bible dealing with the *power* of God. In the New Testament, particularly in the book of Acts, they encountered many evidences of the power operative in the early church. Especially impressive to them was the apparent power in the preaching of the early disciples. These men seemed to have spoken with a conviction and a force which *compelled* men to believe.

On the day of Pentecost, for example, Peter had converted 3,000 people with a short, unspectacular sermon. Certainly the Grahams had never encountered that kind of preaching! From whence did this power to testify come? What was it that made Peter’s witnessing more powerful than their own? Was it possible, they asked each other, that God would provide the same power today?

The Grahams made another interesting discovery in the course of their Bible study. In Hebrews they read of the “elementary doctrines” which the apostle Paul referred to as the “first principles” of Christianity. The principles were repentance from dead works, faith toward God, instructions about baptisms (plural), the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:1–2). The list seemed fairly inclusive to the Grahams. However, Paul was urging the Hebrews to go from this foundation, from this “spiritual milk,” to the real meat of Christianity. If this was only milk, what then was spiritual meat? The Grahams sought an answer to that question.

During this period another young man also was being challenged with new ideas concerning God. Like Don Hurley and the Grahams, Jim Ash had grown up in the Church of Christ and he shared with them a belief in the central importance of the Bible to the individual believer and to the church. He was eager to conform his life to the standards set forth in the Bible and to see the modern church restored to the pattern of the first-century church of the apostles.

However, Jim was discovering that it simply did not lie within his power to live up to the ideals demanded of him as a Christian. Within certain limits he could succeed in appearing “good.” However,

this was not at all the same thing as really *being* good. In fact trying to appear good led to a kind of hypocrisy that was spiritually crippling. Jim was faced with a problem common to the whole church: how to live up to a faith professed but difficult to achieve. “By the time I went to college, I had just about given up.” Jim confessed. “I had almost resigned myself to hypocrisy as the only alternative for someone who wanted to be a Christian, but who nevertheless was still attracted to sin. I knew no way to change my heart, but I did want to be a Christian.”

As a student at Rice University in Houston, Texas, Jim continued to be active in his church, placing his membership in the Central Church of Christ. During his first months there he attended a class taught by the minister on the Holy Spirit, a subject rarely dealt with in the Church of Christ. One day the minister offered an observation which made a deep impression on Jim. “I am convinced,” he declared to his students, “that the Holy Spirit is the *key* to living the Christian life.”

This was a new concept to most of the class members. “I knew it was not within my own power to live as a Christian.” Jim recalled. “Was the Holy Spirit the answer?” Jim began to pray and to study the Scriptures about the role of the Holy Spirit in the activity of the early church.

There were many others throughout the world who were seeking answers to questions such as these. Some, like Don Hurley, asked out of a deep sense of their own need or of the need of others. Was there a God real enough, powerful enough, interested enough, they asked, to deal with the very real problems of people like themselves? Others, like Jim and the Grahams, simply looked at their own experience as Christians and asked themselves, “Is this all there is? Isn’t there something more to it than what we have known so far?”

Read with these questions in mind, the Bible itself seemed to answer “Yes.” The God spoken of in Scripture, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was very alive indeed. He was a God of love—passionate enough to woo His bride Israel, tender enough to care for the widow and orphan, serious enough in His love for the world to die for it. He was a God of war—mighty and victorious in battle, bold in righteous anger, jealous for His people. This was a powerful God, an omnipotent God, a God able to deliver those who called on His name, a God capable and worthy of redeeming the whole creation—and this God cared for man. He was an unlimited God, a demanding God, one whose ways were above the thoughts of man—and yet, He could be known by men. It was this God whom Don, Jim, and the Grahams were seeking and who would make Himself known to them. He would draw their lives together in a most remarkable way.

## CHAPTER 2

That November night in Julesburg, Don Hurley finally reached the end of his rope. The failure of his own strength; financial, emotional, and spiritual—drove him to his knees in prayer. Knowing things could not get much worse, he asked God to take over his life. In less than a year his life changed completely. Within three months, at a convention of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, he was baptized in the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands of an Episcopal priest, Dennis Bennett.

The baptism dramatically affected Don's ministry. With great freedom and boldness, he began to proclaim from his own experience the reality of the God whom before he had known only by hearsay. Now he had a message to preach—the word that God was alive in the land. Furthermore, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit his ministry began to take definite shape. "From the age of seven," Don explained, "I had felt called by God to a particular task. Now I knew that I was to be God's burning bush in the Churches of Christ."

From his home in Denver, Colorado, Don conducted "missionary journeys" to various parts of the country; he was led from place to place by the Spirit in the manner of the early apostles. Usually his journeys took him to gatherings of other Spirit-filled people who came together for fellowship and worship. Often he came into contact with members of his own denomination, the Church of Christ. His testimony about his personal experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit impressed many who, like him, had been taught that the Holy Spirit speaks today only through the pages of the Scripture and that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit had ceased with the death of the original apostles. Don could assure his brothers that many in the present age *were* being baptized in the Spirit and exercising gifts such as speaking in tongues and prophesying!

In 1964 Don made the first of several trips to Houston, Texas. God had carefully prepared him for his ministry there and stressed its importance. He showed Don a picture of himself scrubbing a large, black rock. After several futile efforts to clean it, the rock at last became white and light went out from it into all the world. Don believed the vision to be a parable of his relationship to the Church of Christ in Houston. He recognized that God was promising to bless the fruit of his labors there.

While in Houston in 1964, Don met a young parole officer who happened to be a deacon in the Central Church of Christ. Don prayed for the deacon and he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit as well as the gift of tongues. Soon after this initial experience, the deacon's wife was miraculously healed of a long standing illness. No wonder that this man was eager to spread the good news of his discoveries to other members of his church!

One of the people who heard the story of the deacon's experiences was Jim Ash, then a student minister at the Central Church. Because of Jim's interest the deacon arranged for Don Hurley to come back to Houston in the summer of 1965 for a private meeting with Jim, the minister of Central Church of Christ, and several others. For several hours this group questioned Don closely about the experiences he claimed as well as about the scriptural basis for a belief in the continuing supernatural manifestations of the Spirit.

"I know that Church of Christ doctrine holds that things like this don't happen anymore," Don began, "but I want you to know that they *have* happened to me and to many others in your denomination. I speak in tongues. I have prophesied and heard prophesying. I have seen God work miracles and healings such as those recorded in the New Testament."

“Have you ever seen anyone raised from the dead?” one of the boys asked skeptically.

“No, I haven’t,” Don immediately responded, “but I expect to someday. I certainly believe it is possible, and I am praying that God will be able to use me in that way!”

The boys fell silent. They were impressed not only with Don’s sincerity, but also with the straightforward manner in which he told his story and answered their challenges. When he could not answer their arguments he said so. He did not find it necessary to defend himself or God or to use the Bible in a sectarian manner. Instead he reminded his listeners of several scriptures often ignored by the Church of Christ.

“Remember the prophecy in the book of Joel?” Don asked. “God said that in the last days He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, and that your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams . . . !” He spoke also of the promise in Acts that the gift of the Holy Spirit “is to you and to your children and to all that are afar off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him.” Then he reviewed all the New Testament passages pertaining to the baptism in the Spirit and the activity of the Spirit in the early church. The scriptural references were much more numerous than his listeners had supposed. It seemed that here was an entire area of study that had been largely overlooked by the mainline churches.

“How do you think it is possible to restore the New Testament church,” Don concluded, “without the active guidance of the Holy Spirit and the active operation of the gifts of the Spirit? Can you have a New Testament church without these things?” Don left the group to ponder that question.

Jim Ash was impressed enough with Don’s witness to take the whole issue of spiritual gifts and Church of Christ teaching on the subject to his college class the following day. Class members spent several weeks studying the scriptures about miracles, healing, and speaking in tongues. Many came to the conclusion that Church of Christ teaching on these matters was unscriptural. Jim also was persuaded that there was a Biblical basis for Don’s experiences. Furthermore, it seemed to him that perhaps Don had found the “key” he himself had been looking for. Certainly Don had found something very interesting indeed.

Jim’s interest in the baptism of the Holy Spirit now had been kindled. Soon after Don’s visit, he met another person who testified to having had the same sort of experience. Sonny Waldron, a fellow Rice student, was from an entirely different kind of religious background. He had grown up in the Methodist Church and several years prior both he and his parents had been baptized in the Spirit. Jim spent many hours in conversation with Sonny. Bit by bit he became convinced that this baptism in the Holy Spirit was indeed from God and that through it an entirely new and very exciting relationship with God was possible. Increasingly he knew that this relationship was something he wanted for himself.

At last Jim asked Sonny to pray for him to receive the baptism in the Spirit. Sonny prayed, but, nothing seemed to happen. Jim was somewhat disappointed for he had expected an “experience” of some sort to accompany Sonny’s prayer. There was certainly no *evidence* that he had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, so he concluded that it probably hadn’t “worked”.

Nevertheless, Jim’s relationship with God began to change almost immediately. “I awoke several mornings later,” Jim said, “overwhelmed by a feeling of love for God. This feeling continued for many days. Although I had been Christian all my life, I had never felt this way about God before.” Jim’s whole spiritual life came alive. The Bible was like a new book—exciting, understandable, and relevant. When he prayed, he found himself speaking to a real person whom he felt was interested in



communicating with him also. God was suddenly real and knowing Him was a joy. Though at first Jim failed to connect these changes with Sonny's prayers, he later realized that in his life the baptism in the Spirit manifested itself first in a new-found love for God.

Several weeks after these changes in Jim's life had begun to occur, Sonny's parents arrived at Rice University for a visit. Jim spent an evening with them and related the awakening of his own spiritual life. He was hungry for even more of God and before he left their motel room, he asked the Waldrons to pray for him to receive the gift of tongues. As they prayed strange words began to form in his mind. When he returned to the campus, he let these words pour out of his mouth in a new language of praise to God. Jim had found that Don Hurley was right: the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit were still available to the Christian today.

Though in the beginning neither could have foreseen the full extent of the changes that would be wrought in their lives, both Don Hurley and Jim Ash knew immediately that they would never be the same again. They had found answers to a number of their most pressing personal questions. From their own experience they each drew one important conclusion: no matter what the question or need, God Himself was the answer, the only answer which could satisfy. They had come into an intimate and more open relationship with God through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They had begun to find out who He was, Through the baptism in the Holy Spirit they had also discovered a new power in their personal lives and in their ministries. Don had left the ministry because of his personal ineffectiveness. Now the life of God which was in him flowed out like living water to touch, heal, and deliver many hungry people such as Jim Ash. Jim played the same role in the lives of many others after he was baptized in the Spirit. Both of them were soon to become a part of Harold and Veranne Graham's story as well.

For several years Harold and Veranne had engaged in a search for a new dimension of power in the Lord. Until 1964 that search had been limited mainly to a study of the Scripture. Then in that year, Veranne ran across a condensed version of David Wilkerson's *The Cross and the Switchblade in Good Housekeeping*. Both she and Harold read the account of Wilkerson's ministry among the street gangs of New York. They agreed that here was a man whose ministry evidenced the same power of God they read of in the Bible. Their curiosity grew when they read in the newspaper that Wilkerson was then in town speaking at a local Assembly of God church. Of course, they attended and Harold remained for a brief conversation with Wilkerson afterwards. They were impressed with the man and intrigued with his testimony concerning the activity of God today. Still, they hesitated to accept the experience of someone who was not a member of the Church of Christ, whose background, theology, and ministry were so unlike their own. Nevertheless, they felt that another piece had been added to the puzzle.

Soon after meeting David Wilkerson, the Grahams moved to Houston with their three young daughters, Gayle, Linda, and Deanne. There they placed membership in the Southwest Church of Christ where Harold was later appointed a deacon. During their first year at Southwest, they heard the rumors circulating among the local Churches of Christ about a deacon at Central Church of Christ who claimed to speak in tongues. The story created something of a sensation since not only was "tongue-speaking" a rarity in the Church of Christ, but also definitely regarded as a heresy! The Grahams were not particularly interested in speaking in tongues or in any sort of "religious experience." However, they knew that David Wilkerson had associated the power of his ministry with the baptism in the Holy Spirit and they also knew that he spoke in tongues. They were no longer able to write off such men without further thought.

Veranne, in fact, was eager to talk with the deacon from Central. In the fall of 1965, Harold was designated to investigate the possibility of involving their congregation in welfare work with orphans. Veranne took the opportunity to suggest that he contact the deacon who, as both a juvenile parole

officer and a member of the Church of Christ, might be able to help. Harold decided to do so; little did he realize what a chain of circumstances God was weaving in order to work His will in their lives.

Harold took a day off from work to visit several local social agencies involved with orphans. Unfortunately he failed to realize that it was a government holiday and all such agencies would be closed! One of the first phone calls he made, however, was to the office of the parole officer from Central Church of Christ who just happened to be in doing some extra work. He agreed to see Harold right away.

Harold spent most of the day there, and questioned the parole officer at length, not about the proposed church project, but instead about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Harold wanted to go over every detail of the experience. What *exactly* happened to you when you were baptized in the Holy Spirit? How did you feel? Why did you believe it was from God? How did you know you were speaking in tongues and not just babbling nonsense syllables? He also wanted to discuss every scripture with any possible bearing on the subject of the Holy Spirit or on the continuance of miracles into the present age.

Again Harold was very impressed with what he saw and heard. This testimony rang true, and, since it came from a man with similar religious background, it was explained in the context of Scripture and dealt with all the arguments usually advanced by the Church of Christ against such direct experience of God. When he returned home in late afternoon, Harold was excited enough to call several of his closest friends and relatives, all members of the Church of Christ, to tell them what he had heard that day.

One week later, the parole officer invited the Grahams to his home to meet Don Hurley, who related his experiences with the Lord. Here were two members of the Church of Christ, both of whom spoke in tongues and both of whom evidenced in their lives the same knowledge of the reality and power of God that they had seen in David Wilkerson's life! The Grahams' search was leading them to an entirely unexpected conclusion: the power of God was available today through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The puzzle was nearing completion.

The Grahams wanted the deeper relationship with God that men such as Don Hurley and David Wilkerson seemed to have found. If the baptism in the Spirit was from God, they wanted that too. After the talk with Don, they were definitely open to receiving the gift from God if He meant it for them. Veranne in particular was actively praying for these blessings in her life. She was convinced that the baptism, tongue-speaking, and other spiritual gifts were from God and intended for every present-day believer.

Veranne was to be baptized in the Holy Spirit soon afterward while attending a charismatic service at a small, nondenominational church, Faith Memorial, where Don Hurley was ministering. Since Harold was out of town, Veranne attended with several friends, including her good friends Joe and Gretchen Boyd. It was to be a meeting which none of them would ever forget.

On the way to the church, Veranne asked the Lord to have someone speak in tongues at the service that evening. She had never attended a charismatic gathering and had never seen that gift of the Spirit exercised. She looked forward to seeing God at work in such a direct way in their midst. Joe Boyd, on the other hand, approached the evening's undertaking with considerably more skepticism. Unbeknownst even to his wife, Joe was having trouble believing in the existence of God, and so he was understandably reluctant to accept the validity of supernatural gifts such as these people claimed. His skepticism continued throughout most of the evening.

While Veranne became thoroughly involved in the worship and seemed to be having the time of her

life, Joe was analyzing and questioning everything that happened. At last, really wanting to know if these things could possibly be evidence of a living, active God, Joe prayed a silent prayer. He asked God to prove to him that He was real and that these “gifts” were from Him by having the man sitting in front of him speak in tongues. Immediately the man stood on his feet and began to speak loudly in a tongue. The interpretation of the tongue came through another member of the congregation. It was a word of faith and reassurance to Joe and dealt directly with his problems of faith!

After the service ended, Joe told his friends what had transpired. He left the church shaking his head and repeating, “I can’t believe it! I just can’t believe it!” Never before had he received such a direct and immediate answer to prayer. His faith in God had been considerably strengthened.

For Veranne, too, it was an exceptional meeting. One of her clearest memories would be the great liberty in the Spirit she experienced. Another visitor at the services afterwards commented that he had supposed her to be the pastor’s wife because she had bustled all over the church as if she were quite at home and in command!

Veranne did feel at home. As the meeting began she had prayed that the Spirit would move freely in the service and that the Lord’s will would be done. This was a prayer she had said all her life, yet often she had felt as if she were the only one in the congregation with that prayer. This time she suddenly realized that everyone in the room was praying the same thing! Set free to move in the Spirit, Veranne actively entered into the service. She knew she was among brothers and sisters in the Lord. After the service was over, one of the men in the congregation prayed for Veranne with the laying on of hands. She was baptized in the Holy Spirit as he prayed. Immediately she became aware of a burning sensation in her hands, a physical manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in her body that was to continue for several days.

One other significant event occurred at Faith Memorial. As she left the meeting, Veranne was introduced to several other visitors. Among them was Jim Ash. The name was not unfamiliar to Veranne. In fact, she and Harold had been expecting the Lord to bring them together with this young man for some time. Though they had never met Jim, they had heard much about him from mutual friends. Jim had a reputation for being a dynamic leader among the young people at Central Church of Christ. Since the Grahams were interested in youth work, friends had urged them to make Jim’s acquaintance. Harold and Veranne felt God meant them to have a relationship with him, but they preferred to wait for God to bring them together in His own time and way.

Now as she heard Jim’s name, Veranne stepped back and prayed, “Lord, if this is your time for us to get in touch with Jim, I want it to happen, but I don’t want to run ahead of you.” When she looked up, Jim, ignoring the others present, was staring directly at her. With a strange expression on his face, he said, “Who *are* you?”

“I’m someone you’re supposed to know,” Veranne replied. “My husband and I have been expecting you!” They stepped away from the rest of the group to talk. Veranne gave Jim her address and phone number and an invitation to come to her home with his friends. The moment was an important one. Henceforth, Jim’s life and ministry would be closely entwined with the Grahams’, and God would bring many to Himself through their association.

Harold was very excited to learn of his wife’s experiences at Faith Memorial. Although he still had a few reservations concerning the value of some manifestations of the Spirit such as tongue-speaking, he had come to believe that this baptism in the Spirit was of God. If it was something God wanted him to have, he wanted it. Nevertheless, it was another two months before he was to receive the baptism.

When it did happen, it came about in the unusual, somewhat spectacular fashion that the Grahams were learning was normal for God. The occasion was a New Year's Eve party given by the Lord. The guests were those sent by the Lord to the Grahams' home on Mignon Street.

Sometime in late December Veranne realized that she and Harold had not been invited to a single New Year's party. Since this was quite unusual, she suspected the Lord might have something of His own in store for them. She told God that she would plan a party for Him for New Year's Eve. "But, Lord," she said, "You'll have to invite the guests. I'm not going to tell *anyone*." Although worried as the day approached with still no sign of guests, she held to her resolve.

The day before New Year's Eve, Veranne's phone rang. It was the deacon from Central Church of Christ. Two men from out-of-town had just arrived at his home saying the Lord had told them to come to Houston. They were not sure where they were supposed to go next and the deacon was wondering if the men could be included in Harold and Veranne's plans for New Year's Eve. "Certainly," Veranne said, "we've been expecting them."

On New Year's Eve day Harold received a phone call. A local official of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship had called to say hello. As the man talked, Harold realized that the man wanted something. He seemed to want to come to the Graham's home that evening! "Lord, you'll have to have him ask *me*," Harold prayed. "I'm not going to ask him." At length and with some embarrassment, the man explained that he knew it was New Year's Eve and that the Grahams probably had plans, but he felt God wanted him to come to their home that night. Also, if he could just bring a friend. . . "Obey the Lord," Harold said. "Come ahead."

When the Boyds called to find out what the Grahams were planning for New Year's Eve, another couple was added to the guest list. Veranne told Gretchen and Joe whom the Lord was sending to her home that night. "You can't have this without us," they informed Veranne. "We'll be over as soon as we can fulfill another obligation." Harold's sister and brother-in-law also made arrangements to be at the Lord's party.

The evening was a surprise to all concerned. In addition to those already known to the Grahams, the Lord sent a local official of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, a Baptist preacher, a Church of Christ minister who had first spoken in tongues in 1929, but had never told anyone, and a Jew who had been baptized in the Holy Spirit after converting to Christianity! The Lord's sense of humor was already at work: it was quite a motley crew.

The Lord's guests arrived ready to go into action. Accustomed to the more solemn and formal behavior of the traditional Protestant churches, Harold and Veranne initially were shocked by the strangers' more uninhibited and aggressive manner. As soon as the first man came through the door, he began his sermon, assuming, naturally, that God had sent him there to convert someone. Confronting Harold with Bible in hand he asked, "Brother, have you been saved?"

"Well yes, I have been saved," Harold replied, somewhat taken back at this onslaught from a guest he had never before met.

"Yes, but do you have a personal relationship with Jesus?" the preacher insisted.

"Yes, I do," Harold answered.

"Well, then, have you been baptized in the Holy Ghost and spoken in tongues?"

Harold hesitated a moment too long, and the preacher pounced. “Brother, are you ready for me to pray for you to receive now?”

For Harold it was a moment of real decision. Personally he found the manner of the man offensive. He still questioned the value of tongues which he also found offensive. Yet he knew all of these considerations were beside the point. The real question was “Is this the Lord?” If the answer was yes, he knew he must lay aside his own emotional reactions and his own desires and preconceptions, no matter how offensive and difficult to accept he found the situation or the people involved. If the baptism in the Holy Spirit and tongues were from God, Harold wanted them.

“Yes,” he said. “I’m ready.”

“Good.” The preacher turned away abruptly and left Harold standing alone in the middle of the room. “I’m going to pray for the others first!”

The visitor prayed for Harold’s sister and she was filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues. Then he laid hands on Veranne and asked God to give her the gift of tongues. At last he came to Harold. The prayer was the same—“Baptize this man in your Holy Spirit, Lord, and let him speak in tongues.” Nothing happened. Harold believed that if he asked God for bread, He would not give him a stone. On the same principle, he accepted by faith that the prayer was answered. Sure enough, the very next morning Harold began to pray aloud while taking a shower and found himself praying in another language!

All of this early praying broke the ice and the rest of the party was full of warm fellowship in the Lord. Despite their widely varying backgrounds and personalities, all had one thing in common—the Lord, and that was enough. They sang together and prayed, confessed their sins to one another, and finally shared communion. As the New Year came in, one of the men exclaimed, as he sat with tears streaming down his face, “I’ve been in the Pentecostal Church all my life, but I’ve never seen anything like this!”

Neither had Harold and Veranne. This certainly was the most unusual New Year’s Eve ever. Little did they realize that the Lord had many more surprises in store for them. New Year’s Eve, 1965, was the first of many parties the Lord would give at the Grahams’ home.

With their baptism in the Holy Spirit, Harold and Veranne began to come into that power of which they had read and for which they had searched for many years. And the baptism was only the beginning! With it they were initiated into a new dimension of spiritual reality and into a new relationship with their God. It was God Himself who had brought these things to pass. He was setting them apart for His own purposes, conceived and completed before the foundation of the world. Those purposes went far beyond anything the Grahams could have comprehended at the time. Nevertheless, in due season He had brought them forth, prepared and anointed for His service. He was appointing a pastor for His flock and consecrating a dwelling place for His people. He, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, had begun the creation of a new family through them. He looked upon the work of His own hands and called it good.

## CHAPTER 3

The Graham's home quickly became a center of activity for Church of Christ young people who were discovering that the Holy Spirit was still very much alive. Within one week after meeting Veranne at Faith Memorial, Jim and several friends from Rice University began to come to their home for Bible study. Although he had not yet received the baptism in the Spirit, Harold already had the understanding of its scriptural basis that the Rice students lacked. He provided the theology, the young men the experience.

Harold was an exciting, knowledgeable Bible teacher. He instructed his attentive listeners in the "first principles" of Hebrews, outlined the many different "judgments" referred to in the New Testament, and dwelt at length on the subject of grace. The young men were hungry and thirsty, and the Lord fed them. Never had the Bible seemed so real, so rich in meaning, and so relevant. Soon their study sessions with Harold were taking place almost every night of the week and lasting into the morning hours.

These young people, so recently introduced in such a direct way to God, were eager to share their joy with others. Only weeks before, many had been timid about speaking openly of their faith. Now it was almost impossible to restrain their enthusiasm. Anyone interested in the Holy Spirit was brought straightway to meet the Grahams. Soon, so that Harold could get a reasonable amount of sleep, the nightly Bible studies gave way to Saturday night meetings to which friends or other interested parties could be invited.

Among the first to hear the news about the Holy Spirit were Jim Ash's friends in the college class at Central Church of Christ. An uncommonly close fellowship, this group prayed as well as socialized together. The church sponsored a student center across Main Street from the Rice campus. In addition to meeting regularly on Sunday morning and evening, many of the college group were in the habit of gathering at the student center on other nights. On Monday and Tuesday, discussion usually centered around the Church of Christ, its present state, its future, and whether or not a group of committed young people could hope to influence its course. On Thursday night there was a worship and study session. Many of the young people were also involved in the visitation program and many with the church's social outreach program in the Drew Street area.

Even before the advent of the Holy Spirit, this had been an alive and exciting group of people. Together they had hoped to set in motion something of a "Young Turk" movement to reform the Church of Christ. The discovery that God was "really there," that He answered prayer, and that He was able to guide His church through the direct action of the Holy Spirit was "too good to be true." Many young people were to echo this sentiment in the days to come. Everything they were finding out about God was "too good to be true."

Some of these young people were hesitant about embracing the experience of the baptism in the Spirit of which Jim spoke. They felt they had a good thing going in the college group anyway. If the things Jim spoke of were true, if God were "really there" in such an intimate and powerful dimension, it meant giving up their "own thing" to do His. Some did not want it to be true. Some drew back from entering into a walk with God that, from the outside looking in, must sometimes have seemed strange and threatening. Many others, however, were powerfully drawn by what they saw. Within a few months most of the leaders among the youth were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The news about the Holy Spirit spread out from the Central Church. Since many were students at Rice University, friends there were bombarded with stories about what God could and would do if given the

chance. Many responded with new commitments to God, and many received the Holy Spirit themselves. Several Central students carried the word of their discovery of the reality and power of God to friends and relatives in Austin, San Antonio, and other parts of Texas. Others, turning their vacations into missionary journeys, witnessed to what they had seen of God's activity and prayed for a number of people from Nashville to Boston to be baptized in the Spirit.

One of the most fruitful ministries of witnessing took place at Abilene Christian College, a Church of Christ school located in Abilene, Texas. One of the brightest flowers in the bouquet of colleges of which the Church of Christ was justly proud, A.C.C. boasted of its talented student body, excellent teaching staff, and orthodox Christian atmosphere. In January, 1966, the Lord sent Jim there to complete his bachelor's degree. Although he was determined not to publicize his involvement with the charismatic movement, the word that Jim "spoke in tongues" preceded him and soon he was approached by many students who demanded the whole story. These people were hungry for a deeper relationship with God whom, until then, they had known only in an intellectual way. Like their peers at Central, they responded with great eagerness to the news of what God was doing. Within a short time several at A.C.C. were baptized in the Spirit.

This number grew rapidly and by the fall of 1966, the Spirit-filled students from A.C.C. were looking for a place in Abilene to hold off-campus prayer meetings. Several of them met together and prayed that God would provide a home like the Grahams' in which they would worship. The Lord answered their prayer through the Dodsons, a young couple new in town, who had only recently received the Holy Spirit themselves.

Barbara and Doyle Dodson had been in Abilene less than six months when they received an unusual telephone call. It was from one of the out-of-town ministers the Lord had sent to the Grahams' New Year's Eve party in Houston! He was in Abilene for a seminar at A.C.C. and called to ask if the Dodsons were acquainted with any of the Spirit-filled A.C.C. students. The Dodsons did not know the minister and were astonished to hear that *anyone* from A.C.C. would become involved with the Spirit. They accepted when he invited them to a meeting of the students at which he was speaking that evening.

Several A.C.C. students, including Jim Ash, also were present at this gathering. It was during the meeting the Lord told Barbara to open her home to the students. She gave them her address and phone number and invited them to visit. At the time, she had in mind something along the line of the "coke-socials" of her Baptist youth. Little did she realize the extent of what the Lord had in mind!

It was six weeks before Barbara heard from the students again. She was puzzled because they had seemed so overjoyed at her invitation. After several weeks, she began to doubt that it had been God who had directed her to make contact with them. Finally Jim Ash called to ask if he and some friends might come out. The young people whom she had met earlier appeared, along with several new faces. They talked and became better acquainted. Soon the young people were meeting regularly at the Dodsons' home.

The A.C.C. students found a real refuge in the Dodsons. They scheduled weekly meetings to which interested friends might come. The activities were similar to those at the Grahams' home in Houston: Bible study, singing, praying for each other, sharing communion together. Don Hurley occasionally came to minister to the group. The gifts of the Spirit operated freely. There were prophecies, tongues, and interpretation. In addition, "regulars" usually filtered over to the Dodsons' on their own during the week. Barbara's car became a shuttle bus between her home and the girls' dorm. From the beginning a strong relationship existed between the groups in Abilene and Houston. Almost every weekend a

caravan of students left A.C.C. for the Grahams' home.

The Holy Spirit was at work on the campuses of other Church of Christ schools as well. The Houston young people kept up with news not only from A.C.C., but also from David Lipscomb, Harding, York, and Pepperdine. They knew many of the Spirit-filled students from Lipscomb College in Nashville who met in the home of Dr. Ogle Hall, Veranne's brother. Spirit-filled friends from Pepperdine in California sent news concerning the many there who were discovering the Spirit.

In addition, groups from Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas, visited with the Grahams from time to time. There were charismatic meetings in Searcy also and much witnessing concerning the gifts of the Spirit. In May, 1968, Veranne wrote to the Abilene group concerning what the Lord was doing at Harding:

Harding has really become a Holy Spirit "hot spot." Harold and I visited there one Saturday night last month and thirty people showed up to study and talk. Four received the baptism and one came to grace. The gifts have begun to operate in power among several of the boys and girls. The Lord has begun to strengthen and encourage them to face trials and testify for Him. There are constant assurances of His love and His harvest as a result of pressure and persecution.

The advent of the Spirit at York College in Nebraska was just as eventful. A former York student, following his introduction to the Spirit at A.C.C., made several trips back to his old alma mater to witness to its students and faculty. The result was that many received the baptism. Shortly after his visits three faculty members were fired when the administration learned of their involvement in the charismatic movement. Even this action did not dampen the fire on campus. Enthusiastic students continued to come into the power of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, the Spirit was moving all over the land, renewing faith, imparting love and the knowledge of God, changing the direction of lives. He was bringing the Church to life, calling it together, bestowing upon it the intended gifts of God. Neither age nor position was a barrier to the movement of the Spirit. Ministers, elders, deacons, wives, and students were coming into closer relationships with God and being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Those who chose to give their lives to God in this new way did so for a number of reasons as different from one another as the needs, problems, and desires of the individuals were different. The stories of a few individuals will convey an idea of what it was that drew people and what it was they found.

In most cases it was the change in the life of a friend or relative that convinced someone that the baptism was real and from God. Many saw that there was something different about those who had received the baptism, and they came to want it too. Jim's father, for example, was astounded that his son could spend an entire Thanksgiving holiday reading the Bible and praying with friends. When Jim told his parents of his experiences, they believed and likewise were baptized in the Spirit despite the fact that Jim's father was an elder in the Church of Christ.

A friend, Brian Mustain, noticed the change in Jim's behavior in Sunday school class. Jim spoke less often, but when he did talk, he seemed to "know the right answer." Brian wondered where Jim had suddenly acquired all of this wisdom. Jim told him that he had a new communication with God and a new understanding of Scripture since receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jim's explanation interested Brian enough to cause him to pursue the matter further. Soon he, too, was baptized in the



Spirit.

Penny Dyer, who attended Southwest Church of Christ with the Grahams, also came into the baptism because of the witness of a friend's life. Penny had heard Harold's witness and had even read *The Cross and the Switchblade*. She and her husband had promised to visit the Grahams and talk with them further, but they made sure there never was a "convenient" time. Then Penny received a call from her friend Janie, who told her about the wonderful meetings of the Spirit-filled young people at the Grahams'. After Janie hung up, Penny walked into the kitchen and in a shocked tone told her husband, "Wade, that was Janie. She called to tell us what *Jesus* has done for her!"

This kind of talk was certainly unusual for Janie. It was enough of a change to convince Penny that she should arrange a visit with the Grahams for the next Sunday afternoon. During the week she meditated on the remarkable change that seemed to have taken place in Janie. "*Something* has happened to Janie," she would say as she washed dishes; "I've never known Janie like this," as she swept the floors. She had always been impressed with the joy and conviction she saw in Harold Graham and now Janie radiated the same quality. She knew that something supernatural had happened to her friend; no man could have indoctrinated Janie so quickly and so thoroughly! That Sunday after talking about these things with the Grahams, Penny herself came to a new acceptance of the living God and was baptized in His Holy Spirit.

Most of those who came into the baptism were, like Penny and the Ashes, Christians already. They experienced the Holy Spirit as a deeper union with God, a further "degree of glory." There were those, however, who discovered God for the first time when they were baptized in the Spirit. One of these was Danny Phillips, a student at Baylor University who considered himself an agnostic until he encountered in the life of a friend the evidence that God was real and active in the world.

Danny had grown up in the Baptist church in Baytown, Texas. His experience with the church left him with the conviction that the people who attended "were merely participating in a social game and their god was without voice or hearing." He drew what seemed an obvious conclusion: there was no God at all. During his high school years Danny had many philosophical discussions with Ron Morris, his closest friend. Despite Ron's arguments for the existence of God, Danny remained unconvinced. In fact, he enjoyed demonstrating the hollowness of some of his friend's positions and the inadequacy of Ron's religious faith.

These discussions continued by letter when the two boys went off to different colleges. Ron encouraged Danny to talk with Herschel Rosser, a mutual friend at Baylor. He did, and this led to many lengthy discussions about the existence of God. Herschel, a faithful member of the Assembly of God, found that Danny would not accept any statement he put forth unless it could be proved. Danny refused to believe in a God that he could not in some way experience for himself. They were at a stalemate.

Then in the fall of 1966, Herschel was invited to a weekend meeting at Jim Ash's home in Dallas. This meeting had a profound impact on a number of lives. Jim brought some of his friends from Abilene to meet the Grahams who were driving up from Houston. Several of the A.C.C. students were baptized in the Spirit before the weekend was over, and the Lord was present in great power also among those who had already received the baptism. Herschel had grown up in a church which preached the baptism and practiced speaking in tongues and prophesying in their services. All of these things he had taken for granted. Now he saw people who did not share his religious tradition discovering for themselves the supernatural, charismatic gifts of the Spirit. They believed not because they had been taught to believe, but because they had experienced the reality themselves. Herschel was so impressed with the power of God in evidence at the meeting that he exclaimed to those present, "I have been in the Pentecostal

church all my life, but I have never seen *anything* like this!”

When Herschel returned from Dallas, even Danny could see the difference. “He was fifty pounds lighter,” Danny recalled later. “For some reason, deep within myself I knew that Herschel had met God, though I did not consciously admit it.” Little did Danny know that God had begun to work on him, too! Immediately after Herschel’s return, Danny received a phone call from his high school buddy, Ron. Ron was one of the A.C.C. students who had just received the Holy Spirit at the Ashes’ home. Then he received a letter from another Spirit-filled A.C.C. student, testifying, as Ron had, to the glorious things God had done in Dallas. All of these people sounded different. *Something* clearly had happened to them over the weekend, something *real*. Danny was still not sure about this God idea, but he knew that his friends had found something he could not fault.

Several weeks later, Danny had his own encounter with God. He had been taken to a meeting at the Grahams’ home in Houston, but because he disliked “religious gatherings,” he spent most of the night outside by himself, walking around the neighborhood. It was there that God simply introduced Himself to Danny in a direct way. “Mainly He was telling me who He was and how *neat* He was,” Danny said. “He gave me the grace bit, everything at once.” This was almost too much for an avowed agnostic to take. At one point he had a vision of a chalice and heard a voice saying “This is my blood.” In the early hours of the morning, he asked the group inside to pray for him. During the prayers he saw another vision, this one of Christ, His arms outstretched to him. Danny said that it was at that point that “I bought the whole thing—God, Jesus, everything.”

Once he had made the plunge, Danny was determined to go all the way. Back at Baylor University he began to seek the baptism in the Spirit very seriously. One evening God led Danny and Herschel to Trinity Church in Waco where a visiting minister preached on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Before the preacher was able to finish the altar call, Danny was halfway down the aisle. “If anyone was ever ripe for the baptism, I was,” Danny later laughed. Kneeling at the altar, he began to praise God for the baptism he was about to receive. He had spoken only a sentence or two in English before he changed languages. “It was like someone flipped the switch,” he said. He was really talking to God! His memory of the experience was that it was “like being born,” Danny was oblivious to the others present. He knelt at the altar and prayed in tongues. He stood up, walked around the church, and shouted in tongues. Soon the Spirit fell on the entire congregation of fifty, to, sixty people, and they began to praise God too. “It just has to be one of the most Pentecostal things that has ever happened,” Danny said. Danny had gone up before the Lord and all the world rejoiced.

There were others who, like Danny, wasted no time once they had determined that the baptism was for real. Sometimes they even had difficulty persuading Spirit-filled believers to proceed with the proper speed! A case in point is Guy Hunter, a Church of Christ student who received the baptism while attending the University of Texas.

Guy had been on the fringes of the youth group at Central Church of Christ while in high school, but he was away at college when the Holy Spirit controversy began to brew. Since he was back in Houston only on holidays when most of the other college people were gone, he did not get much information about what was happening until the following year. When he heard, he was immediately interested. Then he met a Spirit-filled University of Texas student, Dan Alexander, at a Church of Christ prayer meeting in Austin. That particular night, Dan was struck by some of Guy’s comments during a discussion on “spiritual fruit.” He suggested that he and Guy get together sometime and talk further. Guy was very willing; he wanted to know how to “get” the Spirit. He dragged a hesitant Dan away with him for a long talk that very evening.

Dan attempted to be very cautious in explaining the workings of the Spirit to Guy. Guy would have none of it. “How do I *get* the Holy Spirit?” he asked. Dan launched into a long account of the examples of conversion in the book of Acts. “Sometimes the Spirit came at baptism, sometimes before, and sometimes well after,” he explained. “How about *me*?” Guy wanted to know. Dan then proceeded to an investigation of Old Testament Scriptures concerning the laying on of hands. Guy liked the sound of that, so he asked his question again. That prompted a long personal witness from Dan. Guy was determined not to give up. “How do I get it?” he repeated. This time Dan suggested that perhaps they could go someplace and pray. Guy was ecstatic: after two hours he had finally brought Dan to the point! Out in Guy’s car Dan laid hands on Guy and prayed that Jesus would baptize him in the Holy Spirit. Guy did not feel anything at the time, but the next morning he awoke completely exhilarated. The Holy Spirit had really renewed his life.

All of these people came to God in different ways and for different reasons. Yet they had one thing in common: each had come to believe that God Himself was the answer to his deepest problems and innermost longings. Consequently, each sought a closer walk with God, a walk which the Holy Spirit seemed to offer. Sunny and Wendy Rhodes wanted the Holy Spirit for the same reasons. More than most, they came into the baptism from deeply troubled personal lives.

Neither Wendy nor Sunny had ever had an individual, close relationship with God. Wendy was very active in the youth group at Central, yet she was living what she herself considered “a very hypocritical life.” Her sister Sunny thought that religion had to do with the “moral life.” Since she failed to meet her own moral standards in any respect, she was torn with self-hatred and felt too guilty to attend church on a regular basis. She had turned instead to a career in show business and hoped to find there what she so desperately needed to ease her misery with herself. Sunny and Wendy had read *The Cross and the Switchblade* and because of it knew that somewhere, somehow, there was an answer for their problems. They had been seeking more of the Lord for months when Wendy met Harold and Veranne at the Church of Christ student center near Rice.

The morning of the day he met Wendy, Harold awoke knowing that God had someone for him to talk to. He took the day off, prayed, browsed through bookstores, waited for the telephone to ring. He and Veranne had accepted a special invitation to attend a meeting at the Rice student center. When they arrived, Harold still did not know with whom he was supposed to talk. When Wendy walked through the door, Harold told Veranne, “That’s the one.”

As soon as the meeting was over, Wendy headed straight for the Grahams. She had been moved by their contributions to the discussion and felt she must talk with them. A short conversation left her feeling that she had known these people all her life. “Please, won’t you come with me to my sister’s apartment?” she asked. “She needs you.”

Harold and Veranne went that same evening to see Sunny. When they prayed with the girls before leaving, Wendy felt as if the Grahams were talking to a God they knew personally. “I had never heard anyone pray like that before,” she remembered later. “They asked Jesus to come in to the room and be with us. I’d heard people pray that all my life, but this time He came! Sunny and I both knew that Jesus was there with us in an almost physical way and we both began to cry.”

Wendy did not discuss the Holy Spirit with the Grahams, and as yet she was unaware that anyone at her church had experienced an outpouring of the Spirit. When she heard that members of a church in San Antonio had received the baptism, she immediately set out for there. Not knowing where to begin, she drove for hours in San Antonio without reaching her destination. At last she headed back to Houston and on the way, exhausted, pulled to the side of the road and fell asleep. She had a dream in which she

heard a voice say, “Jim Ash has five times more power than he did.” When she awoke, she remembered something Jim had recently said to her and realized that this power of which the dream spoke was the power of the Holy Spirit. She found Jim as soon as she returned and asked Him to pray for her that she might be baptized in the Spirit as he had been.

Sunny continued to pursue her singing career after meeting the Grahams. One weekend, after making arrangements to move to Dallas to form a new nightclub act, she realized that this show business dream of hers was not going to fulfill her needs as she had hoped. She felt God was telling her, “This is not what I have for you, but something else that is truly wonderful lies just ahead.” Sunny believed so firmly that God was speaking to her that she decided to give up her plans to move from Houston. The very next day Wendy called to tell her that she had found what they had been looking for. Like Wendy, Sunny was baptized in the Spirit, and from that point on, her life and singing were dedicated to the glory of God.

In each of these instances, God tailor-made His ministry to fit the needs of the particular person involved. Each person was at a different point spiritually, and God met him there. The story of Jerry Fine’s introduction to the Holy Spirit was a good example of the kind of “adjustments” God made in order to open an individual’s life to Himself.

Jerry came to Central Church of Christ in the fall of 1966 as a Rice freshman. By then many in the college class had received the baptism and had also spoken in tongues. Since he was completely unready to accept the validity of present day spiritual gifts, God literally shut Jerry’s ears for a time to any mention of such things. He attended many meetings at the Grahams’ and also at the home of another Spirit-filled couple from the Central college group. In his presence, there were many discussions about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and many cases in which individuals spoke in tongues and gave interpretations and prophecies. Jerry was completely oblivious to them all. Once he even commented to someone, “I wouldn’t be at all surprised if *one day* some of these people actually spoke in tongues!”

In the meantime God was breaking down Jerry’s personal barriers, spiritual and intellectual, to the baptism and to spiritual gifts. Alone in his dorm room one night, Jerry spoke in tongues while praying. At the time he thought that he was perhaps one of only two or three people in the whole world who had experienced this gift! He was shocked when he learned that some of his closest friends had spoken in tongues for at least a year!

God dealt with different people in different ways. When He poured out His blessings into a person’s life, they were peculiar to that person. When Sunny drew close to God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, she found a love and acceptance she desperately needed. On Don Hurley was bestowed the power to fulfill the ministry to which he had been called. Jim Ash rejoiced in a reborn love for God. Often the results of the baptism were quite personal—a blessing of such a special and private nature that God alone could have conceived it. Tim Ashton’s experience illustrated the uniqueness and intimacy of God’s ministry to each person He filled with His Spirit.

One of the boys at Central Church of Christ told Tim about the baptism while he was still in high school. “I just believed him; I don’t know why,” Tim said later. “Until that moment I had never heard of speaking in tongues.” He asked for prayer so that he could receive the baptism. After the prayer, Tim’s most immediate impression was of an immense burden lifted from his shoulders. “I knew I didn’t have to prove my manhood on the football field anymore,” he explained. “I could still play football, but I didn’t *have to*.”

There were dozens of others like Tim who were touched in some deep, inner way by the Holy Spirit. They responded by committing their whole lives to God and thus set out on an exciting new adventure with Him and with each other. The young people mentioned in this story became close friends and brothers during the years they met together at the Grahams' home. This particular fellowship really began with Don Hurley whose ministry was influential in leading Jim Ash, Harold and Veranne Graham, and, through them, many others into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Lord's ministry through this group of people was to spread out in many directions in the years to come just as He had promised Don in the beginning. Of Houston He then had said:

Go in my name and I shall provide abundantly for you. It is one of my principal cities on the earth. From this city shall I cause my light to go forth even as in the early days of my gospel, as it went forth from the city of Jerusalem.

Surely, the light had begun to shine.

## CHAPTER 4

Jesus, speaking to Nicodemus, said:

Herein lies the test: the light has come into the world, but men preferred darkness to light because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19–20)

Whenever God has moved in great power in the world, there has been opposition. From the beginning the young people as well as the Grahams came into conflict with those frightened of or opposed to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Many of the young people had an especially hard time with their parents. In fact, a few parents became so irate upon hearing of their children's involvement with the Holy Spirit that they threatened physical harm to those responsible. Acting upon accusations from parents, the Houston police several times secretly investigated meetings at the Grahams' home for evidence of drug parties, sex orgies, or other types of illegal activity that could account for the young people's interest in going there.

The Grahams received reports that, unknown to them, plainclothes agents had actually attended a few of their Saturday night meetings. They also learned from one of the young women that at some point her mother had even hired a private detective to follow Harold and look for evidence that her daughter was having an affair with him. The mother could account for her daughter's visits to the Grahams' home only by imagining that she was infatuated with Harold. As Harold commented, the detective's report must have been one of the dullest ever written!

There was also a great deal of hostility directed at the young people from within the Church of Christ community. The growing interest in the charismatic movement at Central Church of Christ caused its elders grave concern. They were frightened of what they felt would be a divisive issue in their congregation and among other Churches of Christ. The doctrines they felt they must defend held that the need for the miraculous gifts of the Spirit had ceased with the completion of the Biblical canon which was by itself the sufficient, full, and final revelation of God to man. Miraculous gifts conjured up in their minds the specter of "further revelation," a threat, they felt, to the authority of the Bible. Since they believed such gifts were not given by *God* to any one today, they concluded that they were either from Satan or emotionally induced. As elders their responsibility was to guard the flock entrusted by the church to their care.

The Holy Spirit controversy at Central came to a head in December of 1965 when two of the elders decided to attend a meeting in the Ewing Street apartment of some of the Rice students. Don Hurley had planned a seminar on the Holy Spirit, and forty to fifty people gathered in the apartment to hear the testimony of a former Church of Christ minister who had received the baptism. Most of the Central youth fellowship were present, along with a number of adults who either had received the baptism or were interested. Following discussion of the ex-minister's talk, Harold Graham's brother-in-law, Harold Hearn, very much aglow from his recent baptism in the Holy Spirit, rose to testify to miraculous healing of a long-standing problem with ulcers.

The meeting had not gone well. One of the visiting elders was becoming visibly upset, both with the testimonies and with the audience. His comments and questions had elicited only further support for the speakers from listeners who were obviously receptive and committed to God. Jim Ash and two of his friends, fearing a breach with the Central elders, left the room to pray. They earnestly hoped to prevent

any sort of trouble with the elders whom they respected and loved. Together they prayed and asked God to move in the meeting.

In the next room someone suddenly rose and began to speak very forcefully in a tongue. The three young men praying in the adjacent room were horrified. This was exactly what they had wished to avoid, but they knew God had answered their prayer in His own way. As offensive as the tongue was, even to them, they could not deny that it was an act of God.

In the silence that followed the tongue, Don Hurley frantically began to ask God for the interpretation. "I'm the only one here who has the gift of interpretation, Lord," he said. "Where's the interpretation? What will these men think?" The Lord spoke to him saying, "I don't *have* to use you, Don." Then Harold Hearn began to interpret the tongue. When he finished, he sank weakly against the podium and said, "You'll have to excuse me. That's the first time I've ever done anything like that!" The elders left the meeting distraught and convinced that they must reassert their authority if they were to rescue their young people from the charismatic movement.

The action that the elders contemplated was the disfellowshipping of the deacon who had originally told Jim Ash about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This man had been speaking openly of his experiences and had even attempted to get the elders to study the Scriptures with him concerning the Holy Spirit. They had refused to do so and sought to silence his witnessing among their congregation. They were even more set against the deacon following the Ewing Street meeting because it had been he who had stood and given the tongue in public! Furthermore, news came to them that the deacon had prayed for the healing of a baby in the congregation. The mother was creating quite a stir by claiming that the baby had actually been healed! Clearly this had gone beyond a private practice and conviction on the deacon's part.

In December the elders issued a public letter disfellowshipping the deacon from the Central Church of Christ. When the Rice students returned from Christmas holidays, several of them were asked to meet with the elders and they were told that henceforth they would not be allowed to teach classes, serve communion, or lead public prayer. The elders hoped by this action to cause the young people to reflect on the seriousness of what they had become involved in. Perhaps some of them could yet be persuaded to reconsider their position. The elders' hope proved to be in vain. Through Jim Ash and his friends, many other young people came into the baptism. Even after the original group had left, interest in the Holy Spirit continued. Sometimes the elders rekindled the spark themselves in their anxiety to prevent incoming Rice students from becoming involved. Young people who knew little or nothing about the earlier trouble were treated to a full account of the kinds of Christian experience their predecessors had claimed! Tension was still brewing two years later when one of the most orthodox students Central had seen in a long time was converted to the Holy Spirit.

Oressa Wise, a new Rice student, had always been very conservative, even for the Church of Christ. She had openly opposed the Holy Spirit movement in class and seemed adamant in her unflinching allegiance to traditional church doctrine. Then God touched her heart through the testimonies of two Spirit-filled friends and she too was baptized in the Spirit. She and another Rice student were also rebaptized in water at the same time.

Oressa's defection was a disheartening blow to the Central elders because she, more than any of the others, had seemed such an unlikely candidate for the baptism. Despite their best efforts, their college students had continued to be filled with the Holy Spirit. After Oressa's change of heart, one of the elders held several meetings with the young people in his home. His genuine concern and love for them touched the young people. However, they had found something much fuller and more promising than

anything they had known in the Church of Christ and they had no desire at that point to turn back. After several threats of disfellowship, the attempt to dissuade them finally stopped.

The conflict between the Grahams and the elders of Southwest Church of Christ did not end so happily, however. Though they made no effort to proselytize among the congregation, the Grahams were known to be somewhat unorthodox in their views on the Holy Spirit. In addition, Harold, when asked to speak to the Southwest Church of Christ teachers group, had presented a lesson on demons and evil spirits. The elders were not eager to have Harold's views on that subject associated with their church! They were also getting pressure from parents and other congregations because of the young people who were meeting in the Grahams' home. As elders of Harold's church, they were expected to curb him!

Early in 1966 the Southwest Church bulletin contained a brief notice to the members that Harold Graham had been removed as a deacon and both he and his wife suspended from the approved list of Bible School teachers. The action had been taken because "the Grahams teach and practice religious philosophies which the elders believe to be contrary to the scriptures."

After several conferences failed to reconcile differences on the matter of the work of the Holy Spirit in this age, the elders voted to withdraw congregational fellowship from the Grahams. In the withdrawal statement which was read from the pulpit in February, 1967, the elders cited particular objection to the Grahams' belief that people today were empowered by the Spirit to prophesy, speak in tongues, heal the sick, and cast out demons. The elders stated their own conviction that the Bible taught that these gifts ceased around the close of the first century. Then they continued, "We believe the experiences claimed by the Grahams are typical emotional and psychological phenomena characteristic of the tongue-speaking sects of recent years . . . . In our opinion, these manifestations are generated by wishful thinking, self delusion and psychological pressures from the intense emotionalism which generally accompanies the experience. We believe these experiences originate with the human mind, the human emotions, the human ego, the human subconscious. They are completely unrelated to the Holy Spirit."

The elders were concerned that the Grahams' open avowal of their unorthodox beliefs was spreading false ideas, "thus placing the soundness of doctrine of this congregation in question among our brethren and before the public." The elders also had taken into consideration the fact that the Grahams' home had become a haven for college age boys and girls, "giving sanction and encouragement to the young and curious in these psychological exercises."

For Harold and Veranne, the disfellowshipping meant at least a formal severance from a church and a heritage which they loved and in which they had spent their whole lives. It was a blow, though not unexpected, lessened only by a knowledge of how much more they had found. The breaking of their spiritual bondage to the Church of Christ as a religious system was of great moment in their lives. They retained many close friends in the Church of Christ, but henceforth there was nothing to bind them to the past.

Church of Christ colleges also resisted the spread of the Holy Spirit on their campuses. In their case, financial pressure from local churches and conservative alumni joined hands with doctrinaire, authoritarian attitudes toward Scripture to produce a repressive approach in dealing with Spirit-filled students and faculty. Just as congregations had disfellowshipped brethren and fired preachers who had been baptized in the Spirit, so Christian colleges threatened students with expulsion and dismissed faculty members for involvement in charismatic beliefs. Three faculty members at York College lost their positions as soon as administrators learned that they spoke in tongues. At Harding College prayer meetings in the dorms were forbidden for fear of Holy Spirit activity and close watch was kept for violators. Many who were not in personal sympathy with the charismatic movement were dismayed by



such tactics and humiliated by the apparent insecurity of these colleges.

Perhaps the most violent reaction against Spirit-filled students occurred at Abilene Christian College. Interest in the baptism in the Spirit was growing in the Church of Christ, and it was perhaps stronger at A.C.C. than on any of the other college campuses. After his arrival there, Jim Ash was to become the focal point for A.C.C.'s own controversy over the Holy Spirit.

A.C.C., located on the dry plains of West Texas, was usually considered the most liberal of the Church of Christ colleges, a reputation that caused its officials considerable trouble with their more conservative supporters. Some saw it as a spiritual "Antioch," free and more inclusive in comparison with the hard-line "Jerusalem" orientation of the older colleges such as Freed-Hardeman and David Lipscomb. As the editor of a Church of Christ journal wrote, "if anything significant ever happened among us in terms of ideas, we would expect it to be at Abilene."

New ideas, perhaps not what the editor had in mind, were flourishing at A.C.C. by the fall of 1967. At the center of the stage was a growing controversy over the Holy Spirit. Had Church of Christ teaching overlooked the relevance and importance of the Spirit? Did the Spirit still operate in a miraculous fashion? Was God Himself active today beyond the pages of the Bible? More and more of the young people at A.C.C. were convinced that He was and that they, in fact, were evidence that He continued to be present and to work in the lives of men in exactly the same way as in the New Testament church.

A.C.C. administrators were well aware that many students were learning about the Holy Spirit from Jim Ash. They also were aware of the weekly prayer meetings held off-campus in the Dodsons' home. Those closely associated with the fellowship at the Dodsons' found themselves in varying degrees of hot water with the A.C.C. administration. Dorm mothers could not believe stories about meetings that lasted late into the night, and they decidedly did not approve of weekend trips to Houston in the same car with young men! Could young, college-age men and women possibly have anything good in mind by such antics? Prayer meetings? Nonsense! The girls received many lectures and were often called to the office of the Dean of Women. The young men received stern looks from dorm mothers. Parents received alarming telephone calls from school officials. No amount of explanation sufficed. Few parents believed *their* sons or daughters could be held in such rapt attention by *God!* If they believed it, it was worse: even fewer wanted their sons or daughters to be "religious fanatics."

The administration tried to keep a close eye on what was going on at the Dodsons'. They felt a responsibility not only to oversee the spiritual welfare of the students involved, but also to reassure concerned ministers and financial backers that A.C.C. was still "pure" in doctrine and practice. It was true that there were a few skeletons in the Church of Christ closet. Some of the fathers of the Restoration Movement which gave birth to the Church of Christ had been actively involved in nineteenth century charismatic revivals, such as the one at Cane Ridge in the Kentucky hill country. In the twentieth century however, "emotionalism" was definitely a bad label to have attached to one's church or school. One high official described Jim Ash as "the most dangerous person we've ever had on the A.C.C. campus." Increasingly the administration felt pressured to stop "the Holy Spirit thing."

When Jim Ash and several friends returned to Abilene from the meeting at his home in Dallas in the fall of 1966, they were immediately confronted by suspicious administrators. The Dean of Students heard reports that there had been tongue-speaking in Dallas and concluded that it must have been induced by an LSD experience. He launched an investigation into that and similar charges against the Spirit-filled students. The investigation was halted when the rumors were proved to be groundless. The Dean of Women called in two of the girls to quiz them about the Dallas meeting. They were still so full of joy from their recent introduction to the Holy Spirit that they indeed must have seemed a little

“unearthly” to her. She questioned them at length about the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, the trip to Dallas, and their own moral standards. At length, suspicious of the bubbling excitement and unrelenting enthusiasm, she asked if they had ever taken “stimulants.” The girls could think of nothing to reply except that they did drink coffee!

The administration continued to monitor the activities of its Spirit-filled students. Jim was personally questioned by the Dean of Students on several occasions. He was apparently unable to calm their apprehension, for he received periodic reports that the administration wanted him to leave. Then in February, 1968, the administration decided to act. The Dean of Students summoned to his office Jim Ash, Philip Woods, and BryAnn Culpepper, students regarded as leaders among the “Holy Spirit people.” An account of the meeting was reported in the March, 1968, issue of *Restoration Review*, a publication written and subscribed to by members of the Church of Christ. Editor Leroy Garrett reviewed the salient points: the students were summarily instructed to cease immediately from all meetings at the Dodsons’ home or be expelled from A.C.C.; these students were not “hippies, or rioters, or demonstrators,” but “as fine a young people as you would find in anybody’s college”; no college rules had been violated nor was there any claim of such violation; the students were in fact threatened with expulsion “because of their religious views and practices!”

Garrett also reported that the Administration had been aware of the Holy Spirit gatherings for some time, but had taken action at a time when it was too late for the students to enroll at another college. The two young men were faced with being drafted since they could not enter school elsewhere. It was Jim Ash’s senior year at A.C.C., his last semester on campus. Expulsion meant that he would not be given an A.C.C. degree. Many of those who heard about the incident felt the timing was dictated by the upcoming college lectureship, an annual event that brought Church of Christ preachers, elders, and leaders to the campus from all over the state. Perhaps the administration was “trying to clean out all the heterodoxy before the constituency arrived.” Garrett concluded, “This is surely a ‘first’ in the history of American education—for students to be threatened with expulsion for praying together!”

The young people were given the weekend to consider the situation; an answer was expected on Monday. Jim’s father flew in from Dallas and engaged a local attorney to represent his son. That move in itself was rather unusual and apparently unexpected by the A.C.C. administration. The attorney suggested to the Dean that the ultimatum was a violation of the civil and religious rights guaranteed to citizens under the U.S. Constitution and also of the equal rights clauses of several federal grants given to A.C.C. for its building program. The concerned federal agencies would be notified and appropriate court action filed if Jim were expelled from school. The Dean dismissed the meeting and said that he would consult with higher officials and school attorneys before notifying the students of the action that would be taken against them. The students heard nothing more from the administration.

Despite the anxiety which it caused, the attempt to halt the spread of the Holy Spirit had little effect. Of equally little effect was the departure at the end of the year of Jim Ash whom the administration at A.C.C. considered to be the main source of their trouble. Despite Jim’s absence, meetings at the Dodsons’ continued throughout the next year with many students receiving the baptism or otherwise coming to the Lord.

## CHAPTER 5

Saturday night meetings at the Grahams' home continued unabated throughout this period. It was Harold and Veranne's practice never to invite anyone to these meetings. Instead they trusted God to send those who were supposed to come and to keep away anyone who was not. Hundreds of people a year from all parts of the world passed through their home. Everyone brought his friends and strangers, who had heard of the Grahams' ministry by all sorts of coincidences, arrived unannounced.

Veranne fed dozens of extra people each week. Family finances often hung in precarious balance while money was spent for the needed groceries. Somehow the Lord always seemed to provide. More than once a large donation arrived in the mail the very day a bill or note fell due.

In addition, there were often one or more of the young people living with the Grahams. Those who were fortunate enough to experience living in this remarkable household claimed they were changed for life! It was never certain what the next crisis would be, only that there would be one. Someone would call for prayer or advice, or an out-of-town traveler would stop to share his own discovery of a deeper relationship with God. It was also quite an education to watch Harold and Veranne discipline their children according to the Lord's direction. Sometimes their decisions violated every current "rule" concerning parent-child relationships, but most of the young people noted that what they did seemed to work!

Having extra "brothers" or "sisters" was an education also for the Graham girls; Gayle, Linda, and Deeanne. They enjoyed the excitement and had the benefit of watching and learning from the successes and the failures of a large number of young people. They often surprised teachers with references to their large family. Once an instructor asked Gayle how many brothers and sisters she had. Gayle spent a moment counting on her fingers and then announced, "I have nine today!" The girls' only objection to having so many guests seemed to be an occasional desire for more privacy. As Deeanne, the youngest, once remarked, "Happiness is sleeping in your own bed!"

For almost everyone, the first year in the spirit was a real honeymoon, a "first love" experience with the Lord. All the young people were getting to know the reality of God as a person. He had suddenly acquired an identity for them; He had a name. They learned that He knew their names, too. They began to distinguish His hand in their daily lives, in the blessing of their schoolwork, in the choosing of a roommate for them, in the healing of their sicknesses. They grew attentive to the leading of the Spirit, to witness or not to witness, to go or to stay. They enjoyed the Spirit's revelation of Scripture and His teachings through many other channels as well. They discovered that Jesus was indeed the head of the body, the Church, and that He was completely capable of ordering and directing the body Himself. He did something different with them every Saturday night; no one ever knew what to expect. He gave the teaching that was needed; He appointed those who were to minister. It was His meeting. They learned not to say, "The Lord doesn't do things that way." He was likely to prove them wrong!

Most important of all, they were beginning to recognize His voice as it came to each one of them individually. To communicate directly and personally with God—this was what it was all about. To enter into the walk with God that Jesus had, they needed to be able to hear what the Father was saying and to see what He was doing. Being able to hear God themselves was the major result for most of them of the baptism in the Spirit.

God spoke to each in a different way, so they all learned not to be upset or distracted when their brother had a walk with the Lord that was different from theirs. They experienced something of the "Paul and

Barnabas' ministry alluded to in Acts 15:36–40. They found that it was perfectly valid for Paul to have one kind of attitude toward Mark and Barnabas an entirely different one. God had simply given them each a different type of ministry to Mark. He needed both the fatherly love of Barnabas and the discipline Paul provided. The Lord was trying to teach them to trust Him about the apparent contradictions in their ministries and to seek Him for true unity in the Spirit. Unity did not always mean agreement!

These young people realized very quickly that God was not interested in playing the “prayer-group game” with them. They knew He did not desire simply a change in moral codes, intellectual beliefs, or outward behavior on their part. Christianity was not to be just another life-style chosen for the thrills or personal fulfillments it had to offer. What He did ask was that they give up their own lives completely to Him to do with as He chose.

Some of them were immediately tested in their commitment. They had come to God originally because they wanted healing, cleansing, or a changed life. To some, however, the Lord said, “If I never change or heal you, am I enough?” They began to face what they truly wanted in their hearts. Was it what God could do for them or was it God Himself? The Lord did not guarantee the fulfillment of their needs or dreams: He did not say that if they came to Him He would make them into the kind of people *they* wanted to be or thought they should be. He offered no perpetual honeymoon, no walk of constant joy and peace. What He had to give was Himself, and that He offered freely. Was that enough? Would they give themselves to Him in return?

The Lord told them that if they did follow Him in this way, they would have to move into the unknown, to leave behind their own concepts concerning how things were supposed to operate, their own images of what love, or truth, or reality were. *God* was Love. Truth was a Person. Reality was defined by Jehovah Himself. They would be provided no definitions. They were only to follow Him and to be prepared for the unexpected. Like the children in C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, they would need to remember that “Aslan was not a tame lion.” If they would simply “accept the adventure that Aslan sends,” He would lead them safely through many strange places.

The adventure began with the young people's introduction to the reality of the spiritual world and of non-human spiritual beings. For most of them, the baptism in the Holy Spirit brought an end to skepticism concerning the real existence of Satan. They became aware that Satan, as well as God, was active in the world and in their own lives. Just as they had come to accept that God actually spoke to them personally and had learned to recognize His voice and guidance, so they came to realize that Satan and his messengers spoke and sought to influence them. They began to understand that both God and Satan spoke daily in many different ways to the world at large through newspapers, television, films, and books, as well as through more conventional “religious” sources. God impressed upon them the importance of being able to distinguish exactly who was speaking!

Many of the young people also discovered that there existed spiritual beings other than God and Satan. Their eyes were opened to a spiritual realm long concealed by their own unbelief. They found that in many important ways their world was no different from the world of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and the apostles. Miracles still occurred. Seraphim and cherubim really existed. Angels appeared. Demons and evil spirits inhabited the earth.

Some of their first direct experiences were with angels, those ministering spirits sent out to serve the saints (Hebrews 1:14). Several of the young people either saw angels or heard them singing after being baptized in the Spirit, so they had little doubt concerning their reality. One student literally ran into an angel on the Rice campus one evening. The angel was very large and carried a weapon. In addition, he

was wingless, just like the angels described in Scripture. Another vividly recalled her first experience with angels. It was fairly typical of the kind of experience others were having: “Ron and I had been singing ‘I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light,’” she later remembered, “and after we had finished, they kept on doing the chorus!”

This growing awareness of the spiritual nature of the world had more than novelty appeal. Its real importance lay in the fact that it brought a new understanding of the roots of problems, of the causes behind world events, of the fundamental forces moving mankind. With understanding came also a knowledge of the need for spiritual resources to combat the forces of darkness. If Satan’s works were so evident, if darkness was so prevalent among men, did not God provide the necessary weapons and power to confront them? This was the question Harold and Veranne had asked in the beginning. Now they began to experience God’s answers.

The reality of the spiritual realm was not a new discovery for the Grahams. Because of their grounding in Scripture, they had always accepted that beings such as angels, demons, and evil spirits existed. They knew that in New Testament times demons were regarded as the spirits of evil dead men. They knew also that Jesus and His disciples had the power and authority to cast out such evil presences. Furthermore, they were aware that even in recent times some Christians had continued to believe that demons were active in the world. For example, Harold drew much of his scholarly knowledge of demonology from the writings of Alexander Campbell, one of the founders of the Restoration movement and himself a believer in the literal accuracy of Scripture on the subject of demons and evil spirits. These things Harold and Veranne knew and believed by faith.

It was not until after their baptism in the Spirit, however, that the Grahams actually had an experiential basis for their belief in the present-day existence of demons and evil spirits. In the summer of 1966, Harold and Veranne happened to attend several meetings at which the subject of “deliverance” was discussed. In fact, it seemed that everywhere they went, whether Grace Chapel, Church of the Redeemer, Faith Memorial, or St. John the Divine Episcopal Church, someone spoke of his own personal experience with demons or spirits. For the first time they encountered Spirit-filled men and women who claimed to have experienced or participated in Christian exorcisms. They heard one speaker after another describe how they had sought prayer for deliverance from a variety of spirits and demons. What they heard coincided with the stories in the New Testament concerning exorcism.

The speakers reported that the demons or spirits, when cast out, often gave physical manifestations of their presence. Sometimes they came out with loud screams or cursing. In other cases the evidence was violent twisting, writhing, or other physical resistance of the body possessed. Usually these symptoms began to occur at the mention of the name of Jesus or at the sight of a cross. At times there would be a change in the voice of the one possessed as the spirit or demon spoke, often profanely. Every speaker witnessed to the authority and power of the name of Jesus. Demons and spirits were subject to that name and could be compelled to come out, like it or not. The speakers also stressed an important point—it was not just unbelievers who were possessed or harassed by spiritual beings.

After hearing one such talk on exorcism, Veranne returned home to do some serious reflection on her own life. She compiled a list of bad “attitudes” or problems she recognized in her self. She also listed the names of many people against whom she held resentment or jealousy. Next she went down her list, item by item, prayed for deliverance from each problem, and forgave each individual named. By the time she had gotten half-way through her list, she was no longer calling her problems “bad attitudes”, but was addressing them as spirits or demons.

Veranne realized that at some point in her life she had entered into communication with spirits such as

anger, resentment, and jealousy, and had invited them into her life. Gradually they had come to control many areas of her personality and had affected her marriage, her view of herself, her relationships with other people. Despite the fact that she was a Christian, she had harbored these spirits, called them “negative attitudes” or “problems,” and thus deceived herself about their true seriousness. Even when she experienced the destructiveness of resentment or of jealousy, she knew of no way to rid herself of it. The result had been hopelessness and despair. Now, however, she knew there was an answer. In the name of Jesus, she began to command the spirits of resentment, anger, and self-hatred to depart. When she finished, she felt physically lighter and knew the spirits had left her body.

There were several items on Veranne’s list which were unaffected by her prayers, however. After a time, she realized that these particular spirits were so deep-rooted that more than one person was needed to deal with them. When Harold came home, she asked him to pray with her for deliverance. As the Grahams entered into intercession for each other, they began to understand that they actually were involved in a very serious type of spiritual warfare. When they found certain spirits to be too strong for them alone, they sought out friends to pray with them. The deliverance they experienced was real and powerful.

For two or three months Harold and Veranne received an intensive training course in deliverance. They listened over and over again to Derek Prince’s tapes on deliverance. The tapes were so powerful that during Prince’s prayer at the end of one of them, Harold experienced the Lord’s deliverance sitting in his own living room. During this period they also had their first experience with violent deliverance when they were summoned late one night to pray for a man on the verge of suicide. At the urgent request of the man’s wife Harold and Veranne went to the man’s home in order to pray for him with the laying on of hands. In the name of Jesus they commanded the spirit of suicide to depart, and it left the man’s body with a loud, piercing shriek. At hearing the name of Jesus, the spirit threw the man from the chair in which he was sitting and he lay limp on the floor for a few minutes before reviving. It was not a pretty scene, but the spirit was gone and the man was no longer troubled with thoughts of suicide.

The Grahams shared everything that they were learning with the group of young people meeting in their home. Harold also made a full presentation on the subject of deliverance and spiritual warfare at a meeting in Dallas in October of 1966. A number of young people from Houston, Austin, and Abilene gathered there in the home of Jim Ash’s parents to hear Harold speak on the familiar, but often ignored, passage from Ephesians 6:

For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Harold began by saying that he believed that Ephesians stated a literally true fact concerning human existence. Human history was part of the life and death struggle going on between the two great powers of the universe, God and Satan. The individual was inevitably caught up in this spiritual struggle and forced to join battle on one side or the other. In their daily lives, human beings were serving either God or Satan whether they were aware of it or not. Nations also reacted to and participated in spiritual forces beyond themselves. Spiritual warfare was an intimate part of human life from which no one could escape.

Harold then explained that in Ephesians Paul described part of the spiritual hierarchy of Satan’s army and kingdom. “Principalities,” “powers,” “world rulers,” and “spiritual hosts”—each had an identity and a level of activity, power, and authority of their own. Demons and evil spirits were also a part of

this hierarchy and were active in spiritual warfare. The Christian was called to contend with these spiritual forces by actively entering into God's war against Satan's kingdom.

Harold went on to explain that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was part of the preparation for spiritual warfare. With it the individual acquired many gifts, such as the discernment of spirits, which were essential. The baptism of the Spirit also bestowed upon the believer a new power and authority in the spiritual realm. Harold then described the way in which he and Veranne had begun to battle demons and evil spirits since receiving the baptism.

Several of those present had not received the baptism in the Spirit and most had not heard of deliverance. They all wanted to accept God's invitation to enter into these experiences with Him. One of the first to ask for prayer was Herschel Rosser, who echoed what was becoming a familiar refrain: "I've been in the Assembly of God church all my life, but I've never seen anything like this!" The group prayed with Herschel for deliverance from several particularly troubling spirits which he now wished to renounce.

Another of the young men confessed his deep resentment of his sister. As he was prayed for, he felt the spirit of resentment go up his spine and out of his body. Afterwards, he was baptized in the Spirit.

One of the girls also asked to be prayed for to receive the baptism. She was very frightened and first had to be prayed for deliverance from fear. With that obstacle removed, the girl then was able to receive God's filling of the Holy Spirit.

Before the evening was over, a number of young people had been baptized in the Spirit and almost everyone had asked for deliverance prayer. It was a busy evening. Mrs. Ash was to recall afterwards, with some amusement, that she had even found people in her utility closet, standing in laundry baskets for lack of space, but engaged in fervent prayer for each other nonetheless!

The Dallas meeting had a far-reaching impact. It was this assembly which precipitated trouble at Abilene Christian College when several A.C.C. students returned to tell of the miraculous deeds of God. Also through the meeting a number of young people were added to the fellowship in Houston. In addition, this meeting marked the beginning of a full-fledged deliverance ministry for the Grahams!

For over a year, the meetings at the Grahams' home centered almost entirely on deliverance. The fellowship began to pray for each other for deliverance on a regular basis. Almost every Saturday night someone pulled a chair out into the middle of the room and said, "I need prayer." The "hot seat" became the chief point of blessing for the group and often everyone in the room was prayed for before the evening was over. During that time many people came to the house on Mignon Street who were in need of deliverance. Some stayed in contact with the group for only a short time while others were to be a close part of the fellowship throughout the following years.

Gary Henderson was one of those who stayed, although his introduction to God was enough to have scared off many less courageous people. Gary, a Rice student, first came to the Grahams' home in the fall of 1966 when his date to the Texas-Rice game insisted they go to the prayer meeting instead of a post-game dance. Gary spent most of the evening in a front room sleeping, but he did meet another Rice student, Frank Brandon. Months later, at a time of personal crisis, Gary turned to Frank. When Gary arrived on Frank's doorstep requesting help, Frank suggested they retreat to the privacy of the empty football stadium to pray. Frank intended to pray for Gary to be baptized in the Spirit and to speak in tongues, but what came out was a prayer for deliverance. The deliverance was violent, to the consternation not only of both boys, but also of the campus patrolman who kept circling the area. The

patrolman, though very puzzled by Gary's thrashing about, decided to permit it to continue after being assured they were really Rice students!

Frank planted his foot firmly on Gary's chest and prayed fervently in tongues until the thrashing ceased. His relief turned to fear when Gary began to pray, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." He thought Gary was about to die! It was 3:00 a.m. before a frightened Frank led an exhausted Gary across Main Street to a phone booth and woke Harold Graham from a good night's sleep. "Help," Frank said. Harold picked them up at Rice and they spent the rest of the night and the following day in the shelter of the Grahams' home. Within several weeks, Gary was baptized in the Spirit and spoke in tongues.

An even more dramatic example of personal deliverance involved a young man named Gene who was possessed by several familiar spirits and many demons. Wendy Rhodes met him while walking her dog and he began to tell her of his life which according to his own testimony, was one of "sin, drinking, fighting, lying, stealing, whoring, and general rebellion. Wendy told him that Jesus could change an individual's nature, that a person was like a jar, the contents of the jar being the person's habits, characteristics, sins. Sometimes the contents corroded the jar, and then the jar had to be emptied out, cleaned, and refilled. She talked with him about demons and Jesus' power to deliver people from them. She asked Gene if he would like to be rid of his demons. When Gene said yes, she took him to see Harold and Veranne.

Once there, Gene began to confess his sins to the people present. He said that for some time he had been in communication with several spirits that talked to him, forced him to behave against his will, and completely dominated his life. He knew their names and a good deal about the former lives of each. One claimed to have been a German cult prostitute in the fourteenth century. She had led him into a life of immorality similar to her own.

The group laid hands on Gene and began to command the demons to come out. At first nothing happened. Harold, who had been sleeping, joined the group and commanded the demons to identify themselves. The demons began to do so using Gene's mouth and vocal chords, but their own distinct voices. A woman's voice challenged Harold, "I've been in this house for years and I'm not going to leave! This is my home and I have a right to be here!" Harold continued to pray in English and in tongues, commanding the demons to come forth. He found that his prayers in tongues were more effective than his English prayers. For the first time, the real power associated with the gift of tongues was evident. In Gene's own words, exactly as he wrote them, the following began to happen:

The chair fell backwards, and by the time I was on the floor the chair was gone. The people were still praying. I could here [*sic*] in the name of Jesus come out, or by the power of Jesus, leave this body. I was aware of a growl coming [*sic*] from deep inside of me. My (mouth) tightly closed, and a lot of heat. Someone was sitting on my back saying I come you [*sic*] in the name of Jesus to come out of this man. I got sick turn on my side and had the dry heaves. I were tired when it was all over. I could not even get up off the floor.

The demons gave Gene superhuman strength: it took five people to hold him down so that he would not injure himself. Gene later remembered five demons that came out of him; others in the group remembered dozens. Again in Gene's words, "The power of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, was manifested [*sic*] on the night of November 8, 1966. Believe me he lives, and cares."



The entry into a deliverance ministry was eye-opening for many of the young people. The existence of Satan and the power of God became very real and personal to them. They began to realize they were involved with something quite serious. It was not only nice, but essential to belong to God and to be equipped to deal with spiritual warfare involving demons and evil spirits.

There were some mixed feelings about deliverance, however. Sometimes the young people were reluctant to admit that people were not “all good” or that “love” alone was not sufficient cure for man’s ills. Some were frankly frightened or offended at the casting out of demons. They favored the end result of deliverance, but preferred not to participate in the process. A few young people drifted away from the group after deliverance began and looked for a place of fellowship where the ministry was not quite so disagreeable to their tastes.

Visitors to the Saturday night meetings also had varying reactions as they were exposed to the ministry at the Grahams’ during that period. Some recognized the love and the power of God at work in deliverance; others were only upset by the mention or evidence of demons. Paul Fink was one of those who was sorely tried by his first experience with deliverance. A member of the armed forces, Paul was passing through Houston with extra time on his hands before having to report back to camp. He decided to look up an old friend from Nashville, Julie Huddleston, who then was living with the Grahams. Julie invited him out for the evening, and, expecting a pleasant visit with a girl he had not seen in some time, Paul came. As soon as he arrived Julie began to shock him with news of her personal experiences with the Lord. Paul was quite taken back for he had no idea that Julie was involved with the Holy Spirit movement. He did not know what to think, and the situation only got worse.

Since it was Saturday, people began to arrive around 8:00 p.m. for the regular meeting. Paul had not expected to spend Saturday night at a prayer meeting, but he decided to make the best of it. At worst, it could only be a boring evening. He braced himself for a long devotional, some praying, and maybe a little singing. Things did not go according to his plan. As soon as the meeting began, one of the young people pulled a chair out into the middle of the room, sat down, and said, “I need you to pray for me.” The group arose, gathered around the chair, and, with the laying on of hands, began to pray for him in tongues. As soon as that young man got up, another took his place in the chair, and then another, and another. After an hour or so of watching this activity, Paul decided he needed to get outside for some fresh air. He took a long walk and thought the praying would surely be finished by the time he returned. Much to his dismay, he found that it was still going strong. Paul went for several long walks that night; each time he came back to the same scene.

Paul did not know until much later that the deliverance prayers which were so offensive to him ceased almost immediately whenever he left the room. In his absence, the meeting resumed its customary course. Although there was always a time of prayer in which deliverance was involved, the meetings on Saturday night usually consisted of a period of singing and sharing with each other, a Bible study, a break for refreshments, and then prayer and communion. That particular night, however, an unusual amount of time was spent in prayer for deliverance. Just a few moments before Paul would reappear from one of his walks, someone else would suddenly pull out the chair again and ask for prayer. Paul thought that what he saw was the normal routine. As far as he knew, the group had been engaged in casting out demons for almost six hours, from 8:00 until the meeting broke up at 2:00 a.m.!

In his own words, Paul was completely “grossed out.” He objected not only to the length of the meeting, the volume and bluntness of the prayers, but most of all to the emphasis on demons. If this kind of thing were from God, then God made him decidedly uncomfortable. Later he realized God had

been dealing with him personally through the activities of the young people at the Grahams'. In making him face the fact that demons existed and needed to be dealt with, God was forcing Paul to look at a part of reality he did not like to acknowledge. He was also giving Paul a choice about whether or not to leave the comfort and security of the kind of religion he had known for the actuality of a real relationship with a *living* God. Paul could not forget what he had seen at the Grahams'. "If it had been a typical prayer meeting," he said later, "I probably wouldn't have thought twice about it." Instead, he came back, and soon he was baptized in the Spirit.

Paul was one of those who did return; there were many who did not. During the years of their deliverance ministry, the young people rejoiced over many who came to God and were set free. They also saw many turn away without deliverance, healing, or faith, "grossed out" as Paul had been. Through these experiences they came to recognize the great appeal that Satan's darkness holds for man. Even in themselves, despite their choice to belong to God, they saw deep rebellion against God's work in their lives. The deliverance ministry acquainted them with the depth of evil and rebellion in all men. They learned that sometimes men actually preferred darkness and bondage to the light and freedom that God offered.

The most troubling of such instances involved one of the original members of the group, a young man who became convinced that God was offering him the key to all knowledge. None of the group had before encountered this spirit of antichrist. They were forced to contend with it now as it touched the life of one of their own brothers. M.R. was approached in a vision by a spirit which apparently offered him the key with which to unlock all of philosophy, his chosen field of study. He was caught up in the revelation which he believed to be from the Lord and excitedly tried to communicate his new ideas to others in the fellowship. While most of them did not understand what was happening with M.R. they did sense that *something* was wrong with the things he was saying.

One night M.R. summoned together a number of the group and explained that the Lord had revealed to him that He was returning that very night. The group questioned him very closely concerning what he was expecting. It finally became clear that M.R. believed the Lord was actually present in the flesh already. There was some suggestion that he thought he himself was Jesus come again. Finally, however, he indicated that it had been revealed to him that Harold was Jesus.

Harold had been disturbed by M.R.'s revelations from the beginning and had earnestly sought the Lord concerning them. After much prayer, he was convinced that M.R. was deceived in thinking these revelations, including the promise of all knowledge, were from God. Now M.R. was claiming a new revelation concerning the person of Jesus. As with all words of prophesy or revelation, that word had to be judged. Harold asked the Lord about what M.R. was saying. It was his judgment after talking with the Lord that in this last revelation, as in the others, M.R. was deceived. Harold's discernment was that these proclamations concerning the return of Jesus were actually inspired by the spirit of antichrist. Those in the group who were not totally bewildered agreed in this discernment.

Faced with this judgment, M.R. agreed to allow his friends to pray for his deliverance from the spirits troubling him. The spirits left and for a time M.R. was himself again. Later, however, he confided to a friend that he had only pretended that the spirits were gone because the group had been unable to accept his word. He still believed his revelations and the spirit that had given them to him were from the Lord. He wanted the gift of knowledge offered to him and he intended to pursue it. He had immediately accepted back the spirits from which he had been delivered. A few days later the Houston police picked M.R. up wandering around a local college campus. He did not know who he was and was in a near-psychotic state. Although over the next several months he began to come back from the edge of insanity, he withdrew more and more into himself and finally withdrew from the group altogether

apparently unwilling or unable to resume a relationship with God.

Another disturbing event, similar in nature, occurred within the group the following year. A young woman, a freshman at Rice, began to attend the Saturday meetings at the Grahams'. She talked with several of the young people about her recurring frustrations with school and her bouts with despair and suicide. In a highly dramatic fashion she painted a convincing picture of her own desperation and desire to be free from these things. She was a Christian and at first readily accepted their witness about the reality of demons and the power of Jesus to completely rescue her from the power of the darkness which was ruining her life. She was a lovely girl and several people quickly became involved with her on a spiritual level. One of the boys fell in love with her and fought desperately for her deliverance.

The girl came several times for deliverance prayer. Each time there was an extended period of dealing with the demons in her life, and each time she immediately chose to accept them back. Possessed also by a dramatic spirit, she preferred to hold on to spirits such as depression, despair, and suicide because they were her avenue to attention. It became clear that despite her contrary protestations, the girl had no intention of accepting deliverance. When she grew tired of the game she thought she was playing, she cut her ties with all involved and disappeared.

It was no game, however. Their involvement with this girl whom they loved wounded several of the young people who had tried to help her. She herself remained severely crippled spiritually. When she left, she was the same troubled person she had always been. For many of the young people it was the dawn of an understanding that there was a darkness which God hated and fought against and that people did get involved in the battle. They also learned that every individual has a choice which he must make about whether to stand with God or against Him. They could not *force* anyone to accept God or His deliverance no matter how hard they prayed about it or how much they cared. In the end it was only God Himself who made anyone able to stand in the light. Even they were capable of choosing the darkness. They had to trust both themselves and these ones they loved to the grace of God.

As if to underscore these lessons, God, in the summer of 1967, brought to the group another girl who had been bound to the darkness. Her name was Pat and only that spring she had graduated from Rice University. After listening to her tell of her deep despair, Jim Ash took her to talk with Veranne. A bitter agnostic, Pat refused even to talk in terms of God and Satan. "That sort of vocabulary communicates nothing to me," she told Veranne. "You'll have to use other words if you want to talk with me."

They finally settled on the terms "light" and "darkness". Pat knew that the darkness was real; she experienced its palpable presence every day of her life. She recognized that in Veranne she had discovered a person who also knew the reality of the darkness. She listened carefully, but without visible response, as Veranne told her that there was a light that was more real than the darkness—that, in fact, the light was stronger than the darkness.

Veranne was shaken by what she saw in Pat's heart. She herself had known the darkness, but Pat loved it in a way that she never had. Knowing the power the darkness possessed, Veranne felt there was no hope for this girl. "If a person didn't *want* the light, then I thought there was no answer," she explained later. "I couldn't conceive of a power that could overcome that". When Pat left, Veranne sank down on her knees in her bedroom and told God, "Lord, I don't think there is any way you can reach this one." God demonstrated to Veranne that, in truth, the light is stronger than the darkness.

Jim exacted from Pat a promise that each day for a period of two weeks she would pray the following prayer: "God, if there is a God, reveal yourself to me in a way that I can accept. This she did and at the end of the two weeks, she found that she did believe there was a God. She told later how upsetting this

realization was: “*WHY* did I believe then, when I didn’t before? There was no reason. It was very embarrassing. What was I to do with my mind since it still thought exactly the same as always? What would I tell my friends?”

Reading the Bible some time later, she understood what had happened to her: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast.” She had quite literally been given faith as a gift. It was now up to her whether or not to accept it. At a clear crossroads in her life, she simply chose to believe. Despite the desire of her heart for the darkness, she *chose* the light.

Seeking now a real relationship with God, Pat began to pray for the baptism in the Spirit and the gift of tongues. “If these things happen to me, then I’ll really believe,” she told God. One night as she was storming heaven with this refrain, the Lord spoke to her: “Don’t seek the experience, seek Me!” Realizing what she had been doing, Pat laid aside her quest for experience and waited for God to bestow His gifts in her life in His own time. Shortly afterwards she was baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

God called many to Himself in those days. Some chose to come; some did not. In those who came, He began a work which was to abound to His glory. He was calling out a people for Himself to be His own possession. His purpose was the deliverance and salvation of the world.

## CHAPTER 6

The Lord began His work of deliverance in His people almost as soon as they had been baptized in the Spirit. The young members of the fellowship immediately felt the benefits in their own personal lives. Old resentments, petty jealousies, fears, and doubts were brought to the surface, dealt with, then washed away. The Holy Spirit relentlessly exposed sin that God's people might be healed. Deliverance also had a profound impact on the worship and ministry of the body. Within two months of the time they started to pray for deliverance, the gifts of the Spirit began to operate in the group freely and in power. It became a truly charismatic fellowship. They understood later that the period of deliverance had to occur before the Spirit could operate among them in freedom, fullness, and purity.

Tongues, interpretation, and prophecy were the gifts of the Spirit most often in evidence in group meetings. Through them God was able to speak directly to His people. In those early days it was so exciting and overwhelming to realize that God Himself was speaking that many times no one paid any attention to what He was saying. Gradually, however, the group began to understand that whenever God spoke, He did so, not to demonstrate the availability of miraculous gifts today, but rather to communicate something of importance to His people. Tape recorders and pens started to appear, and much of what took place in the Saturday night meetings was recorded.

Almost from the beginning the Lord spoke to the group about the ministry to which they had been called. At the same time He warned them to beware of pride:

The Lord did not choose you because you were greater or better than someone else, but because you need him more. "Yea, my strength is perfected in your weakness," so walk in me, that I may walk in you. There is no darkness in my light; turn away from the darkness of your heart and come to the true light. I am the light of the world. You shall be lit as lamps and placed on my candle stand that the world may see you and know that I live in you. . .

This theme, a call both to repentance and to ministry, was constant through all the years the fellowship met. At the same time He spoke of His desire to send this group out into all the world, the Lord expressed His grief at their unbelief and limited vision. Continually He had to reassure them of His presence and purpose in calling them together:

My little children, you have not accepted all I have given you. Oh, children, accept all I have given you, even a little now, and I will give you more later. Open your hearts to me, my children. Prepare your tools that I may use you to speak to the world, for the harvest is ripened and near. Oh, children of little faith, I do in fact stand among you. You may see me, you who are like Thomas. Open your eyes, look and see me; but, oh, that you had faith, for faith is greater than sight itself.

The Lord taught the fellowship through experience many lessons concerning ministry. Like their

private walks with Him, their public ministry was to be an example of strength made perfect in weakness. He desired them to be aware of their powerlessness and complete dependence on Him. The young people came to expect to minister often in the areas of their own deepest need or sin. For example, they were given a deliverance ministry at the same time they were earnestly seeking deliverance for themselves. Often, just at the time they were experiencing a certain problem, God would send to them for counseling or prayer someone with exactly the same problem—and minister through them the answer and the victory. Sometimes it was the shyest person or poorest public speaker who was called upon to witness, while the most gifted in the flesh were given a private role of intercessory prayer. The Lord was persistent in hammering home a basic truth: it was He, not they, who performed the work of ministry.

It was difficult for the young people to really grasp that truth, for in most of the churches they had come from, God was basically irrelevant. They had been taught that if church members did not witness, those outside the fold would not be brought to Christ. They thought that a minister could not effectively deal with people's problems unless he had an understanding of psychology or training in pastoral counseling. They had absorbed the general, if unspoken, idea that even if God did act, the vessel was essential. Now they learned that it was not their job to bring others to Jesus; that was the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Though sometimes He used them, often He bypassed human agents altogether. The Holy Spirit also provided discernment and wisdom to deal with personal problems. These were gifts of the Spirit, available to educated and uneducated alike, and not the product of human effort. God might send a man to a seminary to learn, but He was just as likely to put him to work driving taxicabs. In a word, God did not *need* them. His purposes in earth, as in heaven, were going to be accomplished, with or without them. It was His blessing that He invited them to participate in what He was doing. It was His plan and earnest desire that they should do so.

In addition to freeing them to operate in the gifts of the Spirit, deliverance also freed the group to accept their personal callings in Christ Jesus. Scripture spoke clearly of the gifts of Christ to men, “that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. . . .” (Ephesians 4:11–12). The Lord began to set many of them into these offices in the body.

Harold was perhaps the first to be set apart for a specific ministry. Even before the young people began to meet in his home, he had been called to be a shepherd, or pastor through a prophet sent to him by God. Furthermore, the Lord told Harold that he was not to seek out a flock, but rather was to wait for God to send the sheep. Although Harold told no one of his call, many of the young people began to list him as their pastor on applications and references. When they came to him with the discovery that he was their pastor, Harold told them of the earlier prophecy. It was a blessing to them all that “the sheep know the shepherd's voice” and that God, rather than man, had established this relationship between them.

Harold's most consistent word as pastor and teacher to this flock was “Do what *God* tells *you* to do.” Far from insisting on authority for himself, he sought to bring home to the young people the importance of establishing their own direct communication with God. He wanted them to be free to do whatever they felt the Lord was telling them to do whether he or anyone else agreed with it.

Sometimes Harold didn't agree. Once, in the fall of 1966, he came home to find tacked to his front door a note saying that two of the boys had just quit school because God had told them to. They were at that very moment on their way to tell their parents the news. In subsequent months some others also dropped out of college because they felt it was the Lord's will. Harold was disturbed at these reports and prayed earnestly about the matter. However, he did not feel compelled to “set them straight.” He

felt that the young people, like his wife, had independent relationships with God which he should respect. As a husband he had an authority over his wife, but that fact gave him no right to force on her what *he* felt the Lord was saying. The same principle applied to his relationship as shepherd to the sheep. Sometimes other Spirit-filled groups became agitated by the freedom Harold allowed his wife and the young people. To concerned inquirers Harold replied, "We must obey God rather than men." He expected the young people to make mistakes, as he did, but also to mature and to be instructed by such a walk with the Lord.

The young people meeting in his home benefitted from Harold's ministry, but he also had a pastoral relationship to many outside the fellowship. Many of the men who worked under Harold in the research lab came to him with their personal problems. People he knew only casually called him long-distance for spiritual counsel. Since his job carried him all over the world, he spoke to religious gatherings in several different countries.

One time Harold was even the pastor of a Merchant Marine ship! He met two sailors from the ship through his cousin Bill Jackson. Bill had arrived at a Billy Graham crusade too late to find a seat and outside the stadium met another man who was in the same situation. The man was upset because he had hoped to find someone at the meeting to help him with his charges—two young Latin Americans on shore leave from their Merchant Marine vessel. They just accepted Jesus and now wanted to be baptized. Bill spoke enough Spanish to communicate with the sailors. When they assured him of their desire to be baptized, Bill took all three to a nearby church for the baptisms. Afterward he offered to take them to the Grahams' home. The man had been apprehensive about leaving the young men on their own, so he readily agreed. The young Latins were eager to go anywhere that they could learn more about Jesus.

Harold had a very definite pastoral relationship to the two sailors from the first. He provided food and lodging for them for several days and much spiritual nourishment as well. By the time they returned to their ship they were baptized in the Holy Spirit and anxious to convert everyone else on board! A number of their fellow crewmen were convicted of the reality of God and their personal need for a relationship with His son Jesus through the glowing witness of these two young men. They kept in touch with Harold for some time and sent him enthusiastic reports from all over the world about what God was doing aboard the ship. Harold held his two friends and the other sailors up to God in prayer continually.

More than any other single person, Harold was responsible for the growth of the fellowship. As pastor of God's flock, he set forth the nourishment God provided for the sheep. No better summation of Harold's ministry could be given than the Lord's own description, given in prophecy in November, 1967:

You are a peach tree in an orchard. There are many weeds, and you are enclosed by a broken fence. One looks and sees signs of decay, mildew, lack of care, death. But for those who will not be so shallow in sight, they are invited to come feast, for the peaches are most sweet and juicy and nourishing. (It is I who invite, says the Lord, and no one can come eat unless I say to him, "Come and eat, oh hungry traveler," and I waste no time, no call, on those who have no hunger. Let no one send invitations! It is I alone who invite and say, "Come and eat.") And once a traveler tastes, I promise to him that he may eat as much as he desires and delight himself in fatness.

And should he desire, I say he may gather extra fruit in his hiking pack to refresh him on his journey . . . Heed what I say, for I am the great giver. I am!

Many did come to eat from this tree.

Veranne also was given authority in a specific office within the body. A few months after she was baptized in the Spirit in October, 1965, Veranne was confronted with the prophetic call of the Lord in her own life. It was a call similar to that of Isaiah and John the Baptist: “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” Even the idea of being a prophet was traumatic to a woman who all her life had been taught that women were forbidden by God to assume a public role in the worship of the church. In the Church of Christ, women customarily did not lead prayer in public assembly, serve as deaconesses, or teach mixed adult Sunday School classes. After their baptism in the Spirit, she and Harold came to believe that Scripture taught that women were permitted much more freedom than they had supposed, specifically to pray and prophesy. However, it was still their feeling that in most cases a woman was to remain silent, especially when a man was present to minister.

In October of 1966, Veranne expressed her views in a letter of instruction to Abilene:

Should a public prophecy be *not* the Spirit of the Lord and one of you is convicted that it is not, if possible wait and pray with those concerned after the service is over. However, if it needs to be dealt with right then and correction or even, reproof made, a woman is never to publicly make the correction, tho’ she may have been asked her spiritual opinion. A woman is never to initiate public action during the service toward a man’s prophecy either. She is to register her doubts, *etc.*, privately, to those with authority in the Lord to deal with her and the man’s prophecy.

When she believed the Lord was calling her to the office of prophet, Veranne felt out a man whom she knew to be a prophet of the Lord for his reaction. Though he accepted that the gift of prophecy could operate through a woman, as through any member of the body, he did not believe that a woman could be called as one of the “five-fold ministry” of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. This was a doctrine common to most Spirit-filled circles. Troubled by this lack of acceptance, Veranne laid aside what she believed God had said to her. She was afraid she was wrong and she was afraid to face the opposition of both men and women in other Spirit-filled groups. Later she was to confess that for almost a year she virtually withdrew from the Lord. Telling God that He was demanding too much, too fast, she retreated into a state of passivity. She remained active with the young people who came to her home, but was in personal darkness in her own spiritual life. Finally her willingness to submit to the deliverance of God brought an end to the passivity. Her relationship with the Lord and the validity of her prophetic call began to come again into focus.

One of the first significant steps Veranne took toward accepting a ministry as a prophet was to wear a veil as an act of public obedience to the Lord. She and Harold discussed one evening the passage in I Corinthians 2 in which Paul said “. . . but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head. . .” Neither was sure what it meant, and Veranne began to pray about it. The next morning the Lord gave her a scripture to read: I Chronicles 1:38. It was part of a long genealogy of “all



Israel” in the time of David. She was struck by the fact that she had been given this passage once before and had ignored it because it seemed to have no significance for her personally. Now she remembered her father teaching that Hebrew names often had important spiritual meanings. With the help of a reference work, she translated the first few names in the genealogy. The meanings of the names were striking:

Seir — rough Lotan — covering; a veil

Shobal — overflowing (to flow as a lady’s train trailing after her)

Anah — an answer; *i.e.*, pay attention, respond

In the following days Veranne undertook a thorough research into the root meanings of the Hebrew words. When she finished, she felt she had not only an admonition from the Lord to wear a veil, but also a description of the particular veil He meant her to have. It was to be of a rough texture, “variegated,” long and flowing, red in color with gold threads intermingled. She asked the Lord to provide her with the veil since she did not know where to find one of its kind. In the meantime, in token of her willingness to wear it for Him, she simply covered her head with a scarf whenever she prayed publicly in the meetings. It was several months before Veranne received the promised veil. During the Christmas holidays a visiting friend asked her to explain why she had begun to cover her head. Veranne told her the whole story and described in detail the veil she pictured in her mind. The friend gasped, “I have had that very veil packed away in a trunk for twelve years!” Upon returning home, she sent Veranne the veil, which had been purchased in the Philippines some years before. Veranne wore it for almost two years, until it was falling apart and she felt the Lord told her to lay it aside.

Later God showed Harold why a woman was to cover her head, whether physically or only spiritually. The purpose was to obscure her “head,” the husband, in order to stand in direct relationship to God as her “head.” When she was ministering, the woman was to stand, as the man did, in direct relationship to God and under God’s authority rather than under the authority of her husband. When she moved, instead, in the marriage relationship, her husband was her “head,” and then they were to be subject to each other out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21).

As she and Harold were thrown into a very active ministry of deliverance, Veranne grew bolder in serving as a minister of the Lord. Her ministry became a demonstration of the truth that “in Christ there is neither male nor female.” Her liberty in this area blessed the lives of many and was a strength to her husband. It was also an important forerunning in the wilderness for the women who would come after her.

Soon after deliverance began, individuals from the group began to come to Harold and Veranne with stories of their own calls to ministry. When this got to be almost an epidemic, Veranne went to the Lord in great haste to find out what was going on. She feared a wave of “suggestibility” had overtaken them. The Lord calmed her fears. He told her that He was doing the appointing and she should enjoy her “school of prophets.” The Lord called and anointed not only prophets but also apostles, evangelists, and pastors. Their fellowship, as one of the young people observed, was getting to be one of “all chiefs and no Indians.”

Together, sometimes by a “hit and miss” process, the young people learned about the various offices. Apostles, they discovered, were given to know “the secrets of the Kingdom,” evangelists to deal with the problems in the lives of men. The prophet, on the other hand, was to know the *hearts* of men and

the heart of God. In ministering, a prophet might find himself responding not to an individual's words, but rather to the unspoken thought and intent of his heart.

They also learned that all prophecy or ministry through any human agent was imperfect, tempered and shaped in form by the personality of the minister, sometimes by his hang-ups and preconceptions. Sometimes a minister was able to verbalize only a small portion of what God was actually communicating to him. The ministers of God were not "supermen," but simply men who were willing to deliver His word faithfully to the capacity of their faith to receive it.

The limitations of man meant, however, that it was always necessary to judge the "word of God" or the teaching received through any minister. It was essential to take the ministered word back to God for confirmation and interpretation. They saw that however valuable and true prophecy might be, one must follow God rather than the prophecy.

Experience also taught that not all ministers had the same type of ministry simply because they were called to the same office. It was easier to accept the call to be a prophet than to accept the particularity of that call. Veranne was called and anointed a prophet. Both her call and her ministry were different, however, from those of David Broadus, one of the young men whom God also called as a prophet. David was given the call of Jeremiah. He knew the "darkness of the pit" from personal experience and often he ministered to others in similar spiritual or emotional condition. He was sent specifically to that remnant of the house of Israel that dwelled in the pit of rebellion and bitterness against God.

Barbara Dodson had yet another type of prophetic ministry. She began her walk as a prophet thinking that to be a prophet meant to be like Veranne, the only prophet with whom she was closely acquainted. Such a walk was impossible for her, but as "a point of good faith," she decided to at least obey God's voice to her in small things. As she began to pray privately for those whose names God gave her or to enter into particular relationships He pointed out to her, the light began to shine. She understood that her walk as a prophet lay in this direction and that no two prophets are alike. Veranne's ministry was more public, more directed to the group. Barbara's was to be a more hidden and personal ministry.

Once, for example, the Lord had Barbara pray for a girl whom she did not know. All the Lord gave her was the girl's name—Mary Yates. Although she never met Mary, Barbara grew in time to feel she knew her very well. After some months she happened to see a picture of Mary Yates in a local newspaper. The girl had just been married. This was the first confirmation Barbara had that Mary Yates really existed! Another time she was sent to minister privately to a young couple she had just met. Only she knew of these occasions. Other times Barbara did nothing overt at all. It was enough that God showed her His heart and the hearts of those for whom she was to intercede before His throne.

Finally, the young people were introduced to the "offensiveness" of God. The Lord accepted them completely, but at times they found it very hard to accept Him. Such had always been the case; God's people usually had found Him and His servants offensive. They had persecuted and stoned His prophets while receiving and applauding the false prophets whose words were more to their liking. There would come a time when persecution was the young people's lot also. However, in the beginning, it was easier to face the idea of future martyrdom than the idea of being offensive today in the sight of one's own peers.

Speaking in tongues might be offensive to one's family or church, wearing a veil looked pretentious, prophesying strange words one did not understand seemed foolish. Believing in the existence of demons, rebuking rather than comforting a seemingly distraught sister—these were hard things to do if one were concerned with what others thought. Yet the Lord had them do such things.

If one were to be God's servant, the idol of the "Christian image" had to be torn down. God's minister had to receive and speak the word God gave him however and whenever it came. Did not Isaiah prophesy naked in the streets of Jerusalem? Did not Jonah prophesy what later seemed a "lie" to Nineveh? Did not Jesus Himself go secretly up to the feast after telling his disciples He was not going? The young people also had to obey God's command no matter how bad or foolish it made them look. Accepting that the prophets and apostles of the Bible were men like themselves gave them courage to enter into their own ministries with the Lord.

In 1968 several of those whom God had appointed were ordained in public recognition of their ministries. At Believers' Chapel in Houston, Texas, on May 12, 1968, Don Hurley, Jim Blackmon, and David Mays laid hands on Harold and ordained him as a pastor. At the last moment, the Lord told Don Hurley to ordain Veranne also, although only Harold's ordination had been scheduled. Though it violated his theology to ordain a woman, Don responded to God. The three men ordained Veranne a prophet.

In August, 1968, Don Hurley and Harold Graham ordained Barbara and Doyle Dodson and David Broadus at Believers' Chapel. Others were ordained privately at other times according to the Spirit's leading. The period of training was nearing an end. It was time to go forth in power.

## CHAPTER 7

Jehovah had called His people to go forth. Many, gladly accepting the summons to service, expected a ministry of great public miracles or spectacular healings. Most looked forward to more witnessing and many conversions. However, God called this particular group of people to a hidden ministry, a ministry of intercession before the throne of God Himself. He made it clear that in order to follow Him, they had to give up utterly the idea of performing “mighty works” for God. In prophecy, He spoke to them of what He desired:

I have chosen you, my children, to a greater ministry in my body—the ministry of stillness, peace, and listening. Those who can only be perfected by working in order to lose their frustrations do not have time or training to be still and know my whole and complete will. So I set you as lights in my body, as salt in my earth, and as strength to these weaker ones who will think they are the stronger for the mighty power that I shall express through them. . . . Take care you do not envy or question or let the accuser accuse you. You have already entered into the better part, without which the physical manifestations of my power would not be possible. Leave these things to those called to minister them and come walk with me in power, that these little ones who come after you may walk in glory.

The Lord also warned them that few would be aware of their quiet and hidden ministry before Him and that even fewer would receive them. “Do not expect your ministry to be either welcomed or accepted,” God told them. “Consider my servant Moses.” The sheep Moses was called to shepherd were like all sheep—unaware of danger, stubborn and ignorant, helpless, undiscerning, unconcerned about anything except their own needs. Moses went forth at first in his own timing and understanding and slew an Egyptian. His action was misunderstood even by his own people, who did not at all welcome him as a deliverer. Moses met with disaster because he had mistaken both the mind of God and the nature of his flock. He was forced to flee to the wilderness, there to learn to be God’s shepherd.

The Lord told them that they must learn like Moses to give up “being a success.” All desires of ambition, acceptance, or public recognition must go, for the shepherd caught up in his own personal needs and desires would become only a taskmaster to his sheep. They, like Moses, were to, accept the training and discipline of the Lord. They were to learn to use the rod and staff to protect the sheep rather than to manipulate them.

The Lord was harsh in His judgment of “worthless shepherds.” A worthless shepherd desired a flock in order that he might exercise authority over it, that he might rule and dominate the sheep. He sought to use the flock to fulfill his own needs and goals. He was not concerned primarily with the well-being of the sheep, but rather with himself, his own position and his own authority.

The Lord instructed this group of shepherds that they must never look to the sheep for fulfillment of their spiritual needs as well as the physical. “Am I not enough?” He said.

I solemnly-charge you, you shall not be worthless, but you shall serve. You shall not afflict; you shall be afflicted. You shall not direct; you shall be directed.

Leave off your “image,” these fantasies of your mind concerning what you will do or what the flock will “accomplish.” Give up your idols and images of glory and miracles and great movements. That is for the Master to do, not the sheep, or the shepherd. . . My healing goes forth that I may have a healthy, strong flock unto the day I come to claim my own—and to say to the suffering servant, “Well done.”

This was the walk and ministry to which Jesus Himself had been called upon the earth. They were called now to enter the suffering of Jesus.

The Lord revealed also another aspect of what He was calling the group to. In saying “Go forth,” He was calling them to come out of “Egypt” and to enter the promised land. This was the same call that had come to the children of Israel held in cruel bondage and servitude in Egypt through the prophet Moses. However, the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness instead of entering immediately into Canaan as God had intended. When they had at last arrived at their promised land, they only partially obeyed God’s commandment to drive out all foreigners lest they themselves be enticed by the idols of the pagan nations. As a result, the Israelites fell away from Jehovah and failed to obtain the Sabbath rest of God which He had promised.

The young people studied the book of Hebrews concerning both the rebellion of the Israelites in the wilderness and God’s continuing word that there remains a “Sabbath rest” for the people of God, a rest associated with entering the promised land. They knew that in calling them to leave Egypt, God once again was offering the chance to enter the promised land. As they did so, they could expect to enter a new level of warfare, for they would have to go up against the giants in the land and fight to rid it of the idols with which the enemy had polluted it. The Sabbath rest was not to be a passive state whatever else it might prove to be!

The Lord immediately began to deal with the young people concerning the idols in their own lives. This round of deliverance was the most serious yet. If they were to stand in the spiritual warfare against idols and the spiritual powers of darkness behind them, they first must face and renounce the idols they themselves served. The Lord called them to a deeper level of deliverance.

Much of the Lord’s teaching and dealing concerning idolatry took place through a series of church lessons taught by Veranne in the fall of 1967 at Faith Memorial, a nondenominational congregation which she and Harold attended for a short period after being disfellowshipped by the Church of Christ. Many of the young people came to Veranne’s Sunday morning classes on idolatry. Through her the Lord spoke concerning the nature and seriousness of idolatry both within the Christian churches and in the world. This teaching was meant as preparation for the ministry and warfare they were to enter, as well as an opportunity for them to seek God personally for their own deliverance.

The Lord spoke to them of the creation and fall of man. The sin of Adam and Eve meant a world that was ruined and degraded from its original beauty, a world ruled over by a rebellious prince, Satan, in whom the gifts and call of God were irrevocable though Satan himself had abandoned God. Because of that rebellion in the beginning, all inhabitants of the world are born into warfare and are forced to make choices from the moment of birth. The difficulty lies not in man’s desire to be like God, for God desired that man should become like Him. The difficulty is that Satan offers the same thing. God’s path demands that a person forsake himself utterly, that he give up his sin, his righteousness, his plans and purposes, his self, in return for the life of God’s Son which He wills to give freely as a gift.

Satan offers his gift without the sacrifice, a resurrection without the cross. To men's minds and hearts he whispers, "You do not really have to give up yourself, your life. That is unreasonable, unrealistic, and a violation of your essential being. Come, follow me, and I will show you how to find pleasure, power, and victory without sacrifice. I will show you how to achieve your heart's desire." Death lies at the end of the road Satan described for it is death that he wants for man, the creation and beloved of God—death and to be himself the god man worships. So men choose—to be like God. The path they take and the fruit they bear reveal which "god" they have really chosen.

Satan has many devices to entice men to follow him. Instead of revealing himself directly, he offers idols to worship instead of God. Men may mistake the idols for God Himself or they may believe the idols to be harmless, painted images with which to amuse themselves. However, the worship of idols, according to some passages of Scripture, is the worship of demons, the servants of Satan.

The young people were asked to consider the idols in their own lives. What standard or measure did they use to judge themselves and their actions? Were their lives governed by what other people said or thought? Were they dependent in any way on the approval of church, parents, friends, or other Spirit-filled Christians? If so, the need to be approved, to belong, to be dependent, was an "idol" to them. It was that idol that they served and obeyed by their concern for the commendation of others.

What standard did they use to measure their standing before God? Were they proud of their faithfulness, of their devotion to their church, of the fervency of their commitment to God? Did they believe that the works that they performed earned them special favor in God's eyes? Or was their measure simply their own spiritual purity? These concerns were evidence of the idol of self-righteousness, a particularly dangerous idol to serve. Worship of this idol made it almost impossible for one to accept the very heart of the gospel—the righteousness provided by Christ Jesus.

Another common idol was "happy circumstances." Many people seek to determine if they are following God by whether or not they are being "blessed." The Lord reminded the young people that Abraham had obeyed the Lord in leaving his home for a place which would be shown him. When he finally got to Canaan, Abraham found famine. When they experienced famine in their own lives, what was their response? Did they trust God despite the circumstances, or did they look to Egypt for security and comfort? The answer to that question would tell them whom they were really following.

The young people learned from a study of the Old Testament that idolatry usually fell into one of three categories:

1. Demon worship or spiritism
2. Stubbornness or rebellion
3. Covetousness

The Lord indicated that the most prevalent form of idolatry among their generation was the first, demon worship and that the activity of Satan's ministers was the most overt in this category. Many of those involved in current occult activities are ministering in Satanic offices like the priests of the foreign nations around Israel. The Lord's word concerning their activities was plain:

There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or daughter as an offering, anyone who practices

divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. . . .  
(Deut. 18:9–14)

The Lord showed them some modern equivalents of each of these offenses. For example, parents who offer up their children on the altar of success, ambition, education, or who use their children for their own fulfillment are in God's eyes doing the same thing as the pagan idolaters who committed their sons and daughters to Moloch's priests for burning. God is concerned with the intent of the heart rather than with the outward appearance of the deed.

Similarly there are present-day practitioners of divination. Often these diviners are known popularly as "prophets." Sometimes they even attribute their gifts, dreams, or prophecies to Almighty God and acknowledge Jesus Christ as His son. In this they are not unlike Balaam who spoke out of both sides of his mouth and who, Scripture says, "taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality" (Revelation 2:14) Like Balaam, modern diviners led many astray from the true God and taught them to entertain doctrines such as reincarnation.

Such diviners are moved to prophesy not by the Spirit of God, but by unclean spirits. They are among the "false prophets" mentioned by the apostle Peter and classed by him with those "bold and willful ones" who are "not afraid to revile the glorious ones" and whose end is destruction. Diviners still exercise their craft in the land. The visions and predictions of several popular "prophets" are examples of modern day divination.

The "soothsayers" described in the Old Testament are "observers of the times." Today they deal in astrology and the reading of horoscopes. "Augurs" are enchanters. The root word from which "augur" came means "to hiss (as a snake); to whisper a magic spell; to prognosticate, divine." These definitions suggest modern voodoo practices and snake worship.

The root word for "sorcerer" signifies to "enchant, practice magic, cast spells." In Galatians 5:20, the word used for "sorcery," the Greek *pharmakeia*, indicates "medication, magic, witchcraft." A spell-inducing potion such as LSD or a spell-binding practice such as hypnotism might fall into the category of sorcery.

The verb form of the word "charmer" means not only "to cast spells," but specifically to "join by means of spells, to fascinate, have fellowship with, to join oneself together with." A related noun signifies "a society," as well as "a spell." Charmers often exercise their powers to hold together societies, perhaps meditation cults. Yoga, for example, might come under this heading.

The "medium" is another highly publicized figure in contemporary culture. The particular power of mediums is to consult with familiar spirits, to act as spiritual channels for communication with the world of the dead. The art of the "necromancer" is to conjure up demons and to call up the dead in order to work magic or divine the future. They have always been familiar figures in witchcraft circles as they are today. The "wizard" is "a knowing one: a conjurer." Fortune tellers are the modern equivalent of this ancient office.

Some of these ministries are clearly Satanic. Others, especially if called by innocuous names, are close counterfeits of the gifts and ministries of God so that Satan can deceive many. Eccentricity or unusual behavior is not necessarily the mark of Satan since God's own prophets had been rather unorthodox.

How, then, can one judge a true from a false prophet, a minister of God from one of Satan?

There are no automatic rules by which to decide. Those who claimed prophetic gifts today may be from God or they may be from Satan, and it is obviously important to know which. As in any situation, the first line of defense against being deceived is one's own contact with God. It is essential to communicate personally with Him. God Himself will reveal in and by what authority a man speaks and acts. It is better to make an honest misreading of what God is saying to one personally than simply to submit to what other men believe to be true.

No one has the right to summarily conclude that a person is not a minister of God simply from outward manifestations. However, if certain signs are there, one should be alert enough to seek God earnestly about the person's ministry. The believer should beware particularly if the "minister" uses the trappings of magic or the occult such as crystal balls, ouija boards, hypnotism, trances, astrological charts, zodiac signs, palmistry, or clairvoyance. God's "messengers" are angels, not demonic spirits or spirits of the dead.

A more covert form of idolatry is rebellion. The Scripture said that "rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (I Samuel 15:23). At the root of rebellion is that most grievous of sins, unbelief. It was unbelief which lies at the root of the labor, toil, struggling, and unrest of the present-day people of God just as many centuries ago it gave rise to the murmuring of the Israelites in the wilderness. Because of their unbelief, they had been unable to enter the land of promise.

The way that unbelief works is easy to see. The children of Israel, bound in Egyptian chains, cried out in their misery. Jehovah God heard their cries and through a savior, Moses, led them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea with great display of His wondrous power. Many obeyed Him, accepted in faith that the blood of a lamb on a doorpost was sufficient to save them from the angel of death, and followed Moses into the waters that parted. What was the result in their lives of this acceptance of God? What they experienced most immediately was increased suffering and oppression. Not only did their lot not improve, it actually worsened. Here lay the seed later to flower as unbelief and mature into the fruit of rebellion and stubbornness. The Israelites looked on the circumstances of their life, not on the promises and heritage of God.

The mighty hand of God had delivered them once, but many doubted He could do so again; perhaps He had only brought them out into the wilderness to die. Even if they survived this or deal of the wilderness, was the promised land worth the trouble? Was it not better to have remained in Egypt? Many of them wanted to go back to bondage. At best, they were "believers after the fact," and fainthearted grumblers before.

For the Israelites in the wilderness to walk by faith would have been to believe God was true though every circumstance or every man was a liar. To have faith would have been to trust that God

- loved them
- heard them
- led them
- fought for them
- provided for them
- corrected and disciplined them
- saved them
- blessed them.



To trust God would have meant to fly to Him for protection, to take Him as a refuge in time of trouble rather than to look back to Egypt. To live by faith, then as now, meant to live seeing the unseen, not the seen, for “faith perceives as fact what is not revealed to the senses” (Hebrews 11:1).

Such a walk of faith does not eliminate suffering or trial. It is no guarantee against making mistakes or being deceived. The only circumstantial difference that faith made is in the heart. The promise of God to those who believed is that they will enter His rest and be established in their own land in the midst of their enemies.

The Lord warned the young people to beware of judging the Israelites for in so doing they were judging themselves. How did they feel about God the last time they were up against a wall spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, or physically? Were they facing a desert experience? If so, how were they facing it? This was the critical point in God’s relationship with Israel, this testing of God’s love by circumstances.

Collectively the people of God have always rejected God’s promise to lead them to the land of rest. God’s people have wandered and lay dead or dying in the wilderness. Now this generation is facing its Meribah. Would the young people trust that the Lord would provide water for them where there was only barren desert? Or would they, like their fathers, refuse to believe God’s promise because of circumstances?

The classes on idolatry ended with that question. It was God’s challenge to this group of young people. Would they follow Him all the way, or would they, like their fathers, rebel against God in the wilderness and perish? Veranne ended the classes with a statement concerning what lay ahead. “I believe,” she said, “that the march into Canaan, the possession of the earthly inheritance of the saints is imminent.” “But,” she warned them:

. . . it means war, It means war against giants. It means taking orders from God—every time. It means that God is forging an army. He’s doing it by the fire of purification, and those not willing to pass through that flame are going to die in that wilderness. Wherever God moves in a great act of salvation, He is simultaneously moving in a great act of judgment. The only difference lies in which side you are on. . . . The battle is being joined. You are in it and you are going to stay in it because you have no choice. You can choose sides. But if you choose God’s side, you are going to have to go all the way because He is purifying and purging His people as a tool and sword fit—for His hand. He is “ruthless” in this. He spares no one and every sin is dealt with.

The purification would be painful, but the Lord desired that it not be a harsh discipline. For those willing to heed Him, who entered with gladness into what He was doing, it would be a blessing, a sweet communion and fellowship with their God.

## CHAPTER 8

“Redemption is meaningless unless there is cause for it in the actual lives we live, and for the last few centuries there has been operating in our culture the secular belief that there is no such cause.”

Flannery O’Connor

“Novelist and Believer”

The Lord had spent much time preparing the young people for the battle. He had warned them very pointedly of the danger of idolatry and indicated that they were still in need of personal deliverance from the idols in their lives. Moreover, He had expressly likened their situation to that of the Israelites at the time of the exodus. This moment in their history held the opportunity either for great victory and blessing if they responded to God or great disaster if they failed to heed. It was, in short, a time for testing the hearts of the people to see if they had a will to follow Jehovah.

In the spring of 1968, God spoke to one of his prophets concerning the condition of His people. His words clearly revealed what the response of the young people was:

Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

For He has visited and redeemed His people.

He has bought their shame and wickedness, and taken it to Himself, and carried it to the grave.

And do you come to Me? says the Lord. Do you come to Me that I might heal you, and make you clean?

Have you not heard the words of My mouth, the plea of My lips, the call of My heart?

Have you not heard Me calling to you, pleading with you, to come to My arms and let Me give you rest?

Have you not heard Me? cries the Lord. Sorrow is Mine, cries the Lord, because you have not heard Me.

Have you not felt My hand at your shoulder? Have you not seen MY hand in your life, in everything you have done or been?

Have you not known Me? cries the Lord.

No, you have not known Me. You have not inclined your ears to My voice; you have not opened your heart to My call.

And are you My people? I say that you are, and that I have bought you to be My own. I have paid the price of My Life, and have I not earned your love?

Turn, turn, and be My people! Turn, and live in the sight of your God! I have no joy that you should stumble, says the Lord. I have no peace when you cry, when you weep for your dead and suffering! Will you not turn to Me and live? says the Lord!

On the whole the young people had been completely indifferent to the Lord's teaching on idolatry. They did not feel "in bondage" and hence failed to relate what was said about the worship of idols to their own behavior. In His first dealings concerning deliverance, God had, for the most part, delivered them from things they had long wanted to be free of—fear, depression, jealousy, perhaps. Now, however, He was beginning to touch on areas they desired to keep to themselves. Few wanted to give up being popular or "good." Few wanted to be faced with their own rebellion or unbelief or to be revealed to each other as the sinners they secretly were.

Furthermore, it was simply difficult for them to believe that God was talking about *them* in the lessons. After all, they had given *their* lives to Him. They had been through deliverance, had prophesied, and had cast out demons in His name. Perhaps God was talking about the Church of Christ! Whomever He meant, it had nothing to do with them. They tuned Him out when it came to idolatry.

Such indifference was a disturbing sign and manifested deep-rooted problems beneath the surface calm. One of the problems was a growing dependence on "the group" and on the Grahams instead of on God. It was easier to be ministered to than to minister, simpler to let someone hear God for them, than to struggle with discerning the Lord's voice themselves. This problem began to evidence itself when the Grahams decided that the young people meeting in their home needed to take a more active role in providing refreshments and in housekeeping than had been their custom previously. From the time they began to come to her home for meetings, Veranne had prepared refreshments and often dinner for the young people. She enjoyed waiting on them and providing for them. In 1968 she was convicted that God meant her to curtail this kind of activity and to insist that the young people themselves do the work.

This change was not well received. Many resented Veranne's direction, or "bossing," as much as they did the fact that she was no longer feeding them. Veranne herself had difficulty in standing in the role of disciplinarian. The Lord moved in strange and mysterious ways. That spring there were many times when Veranne was unable to wait on her guests because of sickness. Sometimes she felt completely well as long as she remained in bed but was ill the moment she attempted to get up. Even when she was sick, the young people followed her back to her bedroom to get her to do something in the kitchen or to receive her instruction or counseling.

Then in the summer of 1968 the group received a real shock when Harold was transferred by his company to Tia Juana, Venezuela, on an eighteen to twenty-one month temporary overseas assignment. The meetings and ministry at the house on Mignon Street came to an end. In the Grahams' absence, the young people would function on their own. No longer could they depend on the Grahams' financial support of the meetings, or on Harold to have the weekly Bible lesson, or on Veranne's counsel. They would have to minister to each other and hear God for themselves. Any dependence on the Grahams would now be revealed. How would they respond? After the Grahams moved, would the young people

turn to God and grow to maturity, or would they seek out another man on whom to depend?

Shortly before the Grahams left Houston, one of the girls in the group had a disturbing dream in which some of those who had met with the Grahams were looking for a new group to join. They visited a prayer meeting in, the apartment of a tall, dark young man. The major form of worship in this group was passing around the circle of young people a large black widow spider which was placed on the breast, forehead or some other portion of the body. This exercise seemingly induced a state of great ecstasy or bliss which was attributed to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The people at the meeting claimed to be worshipping Jehovah God.

The dream had little meaning at the time. Later, however, many realized that the Lord had been warning them that not everything was automatically from Him just because it made them feel good emotionally. His presence was not to be judged by the senses nor were they to pursue Him for emotional fulfillment. Even the “love” and “fellowship” they enjoyed so much with each other could become self-indulgence, the lust for an emotional or “spiritual” high. The Lord was saying that such worship was unacceptable to Him; that, in fact, such things were not a participation in His Spirit, but a worship of demons.

It was this sort of group experience that many of the young people were in quest of, however. When Harold and Veranne left, the Lord spoke to a number of the young people saying that He wished to do “a new thing” with them now. Despite this word, many of the group set about trying to duplicate the meetings at the Grahams’. They sought a group to lean upon, an experience of “Christian love,” an “elder” to direct their worship. As they fumbled together to keep going the experience of God they had with the Grahams, they fell into just the sort of self-indulgence God had warned them against in the “spider dream.” As one of the group remembered later, “At that time we were ‘petting’ each other. We were interested in feeling good. We indulged and perverted every liberty God gave us.” A spirit of harlotry enticed them, and they left their God and played the whore spiritually.

Some of the young people knew something was beginning to go wrong in the group’s relationship to the Lord. A few grew dissatisfied enough with the meetings to leave the group entirely. They felt things were becoming too “social” and even cliquish. They did not want another “church,” but rather the excitement of an unlimited walk with God. Instead of voicing their feelings or seeking the Lord about what they were to do, these people simply withdrew the from the rest of the group into their own private lives. This failure to be open and honest was bad for both sides.

Those who continued to attend the weekly gatherings and yet were disturbed by the self-indulgence were unsure what to do when it occurred. Their discernment was so undeveloped and their communication with God so limited that they did not know how to distinguish between the “clean” and the “unclean.” Used to depending on others to hear the Lord for them, to set the pace, and to provide spiritual nourishment, they drifted with the tide. Superficially, all continued to go well; beneath the surface, the rot and decay of rebellion and unbelief was setting in. In a few individual cases the ultimate manifestations of these problems were drug involvement and sexual immorality.

The Lord in no way abandoned them to the darkness of their own idolatry. He remained steadfastly faithful despite their unfaithfulness; He did not take His presence from them. During that period visitors to the meetings returned repeatedly because of the witness of the reality and presence of God within the group. The calling and the gifts of God remained in the group, and God Himself was still there for all who had eyes to see.

The heart of the Lord was sorely grieved by the rebellion of His children. However, He was faithful

though every man be false. He did not choose to give His people up and He did not cease dealing with them in order that they might come into the fullness of the relationship He had for them. His word to them had been that they must turn from their other gods to Him, to serve and depend on Him alone. Although they had rejected the word, He continued to deal with them to turn from their idolatry.

But the Lord was angry with His people. They were without justification or excuse before Him. He had prepared them to continue with Him without the constant support of the Grahams. He had offered them the closest possible relationship with Him. They had preferred their idols to Jehovah God. Still, though His wrath grew hot, He remembered Israel whom He loved, Ephraim whom He would not destroy. "I will not execute my fierce anger," He said, "for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy." What He, in His grace, would do was the unexpected:

They shall go after the Lord,  
    He will roar like a Lion;  
Yea, He will roar,  
    and His sons shall come  
    trembling from the west;  
They shall come trembling  
    like birds from Egypt,  
    and I will return them to  
    their homes, says the Lord.

(Hosea 11:10-11)

Deliverance is by the hand of the Lord, and apart from Him there is no salvation.

## CHAPTER 9

The Grahams were soon established in Venezuela. Harold and Veranne were helped immeasurably by the Berlitz course they took in Houston, but language still remained something of a barrier. There were readjustments in other areas too. Veranne quickly learned to think nothing of paying four times the American price for a quart of mayonnaise or a can of string beans. Beef, on the other hand, was superb and inexpensive, and premium gasoline cost only 8 cents a gallon. The girls, Gayle, Linda, and Deeanne, were enrolled in school with no difficulty. The family discovered that a small community church met in the school house only a block from their home. Soon Harold was asked to teach the Adult Bible Class there and he began to minister actively to the Americans in Venezuela. The situation was not unusual for him. In the course of his business travels, he had ministered all over the world in places as disparate as London and Libya.

The move did disorient Veranne, however. The Lord had spoken a great deal to Harold concerning his ministry in Venezuela, but He had said nothing to Veranne concerning what He had for her. She maintained an active exchange of news, encouragement, and exhortation with the young people back in the States; distance had not weakened the bonds between them and the Grahams. In the meantime she continued to seek God concerning her ministry.

In October the Lord finally spoke to Veranne and renewed her call as a prophet. It was the same call He had given her the year before:

Go, get you to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. *For you are not sent to a people of foreign and speech and a hard language but to the house of Israel—not to many people of foreign speech and a hard language whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. But the house of Israel will not listen to you; for they are not willing to listen to me because all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart . . . fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.*

Then she understood why God had not bothered to speak sooner: her call and ministry had not been affected by the move to Venezuela. She was not sent to the people of that foreign land; she was expected to go to the household of God's young people whom she had known for years. They had not heeded the word of God before and He was plainly warning now that they were still a rebellious people.

In the next few weeks Veranne received much instruction concerning what her ministry was to be. She learned that she had been made a watchman for the house of Israel to speak to them whatever word she heard from the mouth of the Lord. If she failed to sound the warning, their blood would be upon *her* head. She was not to fear their opposition, for though they were of a hard forehead, the Lord said, "Behold, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. Like adamant harder than flint have I made your forehead." Neither was she to be deceived by the smooth words of the people. Although they came saying "prophesy to us the word of the Lord,"

they went away and forgot what was said, and lies and flattery were upon their lips. It was tempting to accept the words of the people at face value. Veranne had no direct knowledge about what was going on back home and the letters the young people wrote were encouraging. Everything was going well, they said. The Lord was teaching them many lessons and they were growing in many directions. The word of the Lord to her, however, continued to be that they were a rebellious house:

Hear this foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but see not, who have ears but hear not. Do you not fear Me? says the Lord; do you not tremble before Me . . . But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away.

(Jer. 5:21–23)

The word that the Lord meant her eventually to speak was not yet clear, nor were the specific ways in which the people had gone astray. In November, however, the Lord had Veranne write a general letter to the young people in which she reviewed the “wilderness” lessons. The letter contained a strong exhortation to cease grumbling and “get down to battle with unbelief.” There was also an urgent plea for them to accept the instruction and discipline of the Lord concerning the difference between liberty and license. Harold also wrote and urged the young people not to be content “with mists and vapors,” but rather to set their feet “upon the solid rock of reality.” He warned them to beware of the counterfeit which the flesh would offer. “The flesh finds its opportunity only as it overcomes the Spirit. We are never perfected in the flesh or by the flesh—only in and by the Spirit,” he wrote.

The letter was circulated enthusiastically among the young people. They thought the Grahams wrote wonderful epistles, perhaps as inspired as those of Paul. They began to joke about the scholars who would discover them sooner or later and attempt to canonize them. Would Paul have paid a little more attention to his grammar if he had known what would be done with his letters in the future? The seriousness of the letter and of what God had to say largely escaped the readers.

As December approached, the young people began to discuss plans for a New Year’s retreat. In the past there had always been a retreat at that time in the Grahams’ home. Many out-of-towners came and bedded down in every square inch of available floor space for several days together of spontaneous singing, prayer, and Bible study. All of the young people looked forward to the retreat and so decided to continue the tradition despite the Grahams’ absence.

Jim Ash agreed to handle plans for the retreat. He decided to hold it in Dallas where he was living, and he secured the use of a local building, Wynnewood Christian Chapel, for the meetings. The retreat was to begin on Saturday, December 28, 1968, and run through New Year’s Eve on Tuesday. Notice of the retreat and special invitations to attend were mailed not only to the young people who had met together at the Grahams’, but to Spirit-filled Christians in other parts of the country as well. Most of those who came were young people, and many were from out of state.

Some came from as far away as New York, California, and Nebraska. Though there was a predominance of students there were also a number of college faculty members, former Church of Christ ministers and elders, and several seminarians. Most of those who attended the retreat were from the Church of Christ, but there were also Baptists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians. In all, participants numbered 75–100.

Although they were invited and encouraged to come, Harold and Veranne had little hope of being able

to return from Venezuela for the retreat. They told the young people to pray for a “Red Sea miracle”, that they might come; they then waited to see what God would do. The day after Christmas, after much prayer they decided that Veranne should fly to Dallas for the retreat. Not sure whether or not it was the Lord’s will, Veranne went, chiefly because she so deeply longed to see her family and friends. It was not until she arrived that she knew she had done what the Lord wanted her to do. He told her then that it did not matter what her motives were; she was where she was supposed to be, and He had something for her to do.

Saturday afternoon the visitors began to arrive in Dallas for the retreat and were dispersed to their housing assignments with various Dallas families. That evening everyone convened at Wynnewood Chapel to hear Forrest Wells from West Islip, New York, formerly an elder in the Church of Christ, tell of his baptism in the Holy Spirit. The JesuSingers, a Houston folk trio consisting of Wendy Rhodes, Sunny Phillips, and Doug Coppock, contributed their own rousing concert. Their appearance at the New Year’s retreat was traditional, and as usual, they were enthusiastically received.

Most of the people who had come for the retreat attended the regular Sunday worship services at Wynnewood Chapel the next morning. Dr. Leroy Garrett of Bishop College sermonized on both the dangers and the significance of “the Holy Spirit movement,” especially within the Church of Christ. Although not himself a participant in the “movement,” Garrett stated his belief that “it is the most significant development in our history as a brotherhood.” He applauded the sincerity, fervency, and brotherly love evident among Spirit-filled people. However, he expressed concern about three dangers: the danger of the movement becoming a sect, of its oversimplifying personal problems, and of its members presuming a special status with God because of having had certain spiritual experiences. He welcomed the participants in the retreat on behalf of Wynnewood Chapel and stated that despite some reservations he approved of the direction of the movement as a whole.

Dr. Garrett was to attend most of the nightly sessions of the retreat, and later he was to express his by then less than enthusiastic feelings in an article in *Restoration Review* entitled “The Underground Church of Christ”. After praising the portion of the underground represented in the Campus Evangelism seminar held in Dallas simultaneously with the retreat, Garrett revealed his growing distress with and disapproval of the Holy Spirit gathering. Labeling it “the *dangerous underground*,” he shared his fear that “this element among us” would ignite its “terrible explosives,” its great power “blowing up in our faces.” That it was capable of great power, he himself testified. What he witnessed was powerful and significant enough for him to declare

What happened is surely the beginning of a new chapter in our history, and how that chapter ends will depend on how we all react to what is going on.

On subsequent days those at the retreat heard other speakers. Ben Franklin, a former Church of Christ minister from California, told how he came to a belief that the gifts of the Spirit were for today in the course of a research project on the Holy Spirit undertaken to disprove that very point. When he reported the results of his study to his elders, he was relieved of his pulpit and had to turn to secular work to support his family. One day as he was singing and pouring himself a cup of coffee, he discovered that he was singing in tongues! Ben displayed several large hanging sheets on which he had drawn extensive charts pertaining to the historical manifestations of the Spirit as described in the Bible. In the middle of the sheets was a great dividing line signifying the Red Sea crossing.

At another meeting Dr. J. Rodman Williams, Professor of Theology at the Austin Presbyterian Seminary, gave his personal testimony concerning the working of the Holy Spirit in his life. Dr. Bill



Epperson, formerly of York College and at that time on the faculty at Oral Roberts University, added his witness in another session. Every afternoon, discussion groups were held at Wynnewood Chapel, many of them led by Don Hurley. Classrooms available for private prayer, counseling, or communion were in constant use. The Lord's table was prepared daily for any who wished to partake of the bread and wine alone or in groups. On Monday morning many had their first experience with foot-washing. As they allowed a brother or a sister to wash their feet, many were healed of deep spiritual wounds. In the service the following morning, several experienced physical healing as well.

Throughout the retreat the Lord had been preparing Veranne for the ministry He had for her. Because He led her by the hand every step of the way, the experience was the most direct one she had ever had with God. He told her that He had sent her to Dallas as a prophet with a word to a rebellious house. She was to assemble the people that they might hear the word of the Lord. In the presence of God, she was to declare to the people their sin and the displeasure of God Almighty. He intended to deal with the sexual sins engaged in by a few of the young people who believed themselves free to indulge in adultery, fornication, and other types of sexual promiscuity in the name of love and grace. Some of them were covering their own behavior by openly avowing that "to the pure, all things are pure." God would have them know that they were *not* pure, that His anger burned hot because of their rebellion, and that they would be destroyed if they did not repent and turn again to Him for healing and cleansing. It was this face which the young people had never been willing to show Veranne. They had hidden these things from her. Nevertheless, God Himself revealed to her the hearts of His people and even named some of those who were involved in these sins.

The Lord made it clear that He was concerned as much with the sin of the heart as with the sin of the flesh. Most of those at the retreat had not indulged themselves openly or in a physical way in sexual sins. However, God meant to deal also with the lust of the heart, with spiritual immorality. For everyone this retreat was meant to be an exodus from the bondage and sin of Egypt and a crossing of the Red Sea. He intended to deliver His people from the hands of their enemies despite their stubbornness and rebellion.

Veranne was scheduled to speak to the gathering on New Year's Eve, the last night of the retreat. The Lord even gave her instructions as to what she was to wear: a long, flowing, golden caftan given to her by a Venezuelan friend with the words, "Wear this on New Year's Eve." It was customary in the group to come in costumes or fancy garb for the New Year's Eve party, but Veranne knew she would open herself to criticism if she were to minister dressed in such a manner. She resisted the Lord for some time about her clothing. However, He insisted she was to be robed before the people as priest and prophet, and at last she yielded to His command.

On the morning of the appointed day God dealt with Veranne's remaining reluctance to speak for Him. During the communion service in the Chapel, she went forward and knelt at the altar to pray. Close beside her were two of the young men whom she considered dearly beloved sons in the Lord. As they knelt together at the altar, God spoke to Veranne and told her that one of these sons was Abel, the other Cain. If she did not speak the words He gave her that His people might be delivered from their sins, Cain would again kill Abel. In tears Veranne committed herself completely to the Lord that His will might be accomplished that night.

That particular day there was a very lively discussion session among the young people. The subject was "the fear of the Lord." "Had any one ever experienced the fear of the Lord?" someone asked. Everyone had comments on the topic or scriptures to quote. Several thought it had to do with "awe," "reverence," or "respect." The consensus, as one of the participants wryly commented later, was that "the fear of the Lord" had to do with anything *except* fear. They were to learn that same day what it meant to "fear" the

Lord their God.

Shortly before the evening meeting was to begin, another group of young people met for supper. Several of them were concerned about the blocks and barriers that had been apparent throughout the retreat. There had been many instances of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and just plain disagreement among the participants. There was also a feeling that the same situation existed between the group and God. The Lord showed them that the barriers were like the walls of Jericho. If their small group would march around Wynnewood Chapel seven times as the Israelites had around Jericho, He would cause the barriers to tumble down and a great victory would be won. The group did so, walking in silence the first six times as the Israelites had. The seventh time they were to blow trumpets; but since they could not locate a single trumpet, they substituted a couple of kazoos that happened to be on hand. They felt the Lord had wrought a victory over the enemy by His own power, a victory that would be manifested in the meeting that night.

New Year's Eve began with a short introduction by Jim Ash. He said that he believed that God had serious business in mind for the evening and that anyone not serious about God had better consider leaving. Then he introduced Veranne Graham, the main speaker of the meeting. Everyone enjoyed Veranne's witness. She told how it all began, how she and Harold had come to grace, then to the baptism, then to deliverance. Their walk had been progressive, from one degree of glory to another, and it was unlimited since God Himself was unlimited. Commenting briefly on her robe, she explained its origin and its significance to her. She and her talk were well-received. When she concluded, the meeting recessed for a period of refreshment.

In a short while the group reassembled. Jim Ash explained briefly that he believed the Lord had something more for the evening; then he sat down. The people sat quietly waiting for the Spirit to move. The stillness suddenly was shattered. In a powerful, booming voice from the back of the Chapel, David Broadus, in response to a command from God that he did not understand stood and read from Ezekiel the following scripture:

And He said to me, "Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you." And when He spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me. And He said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me to this very day. The people also are impudent and stubborn; I send you to them; and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that there has been a prophet among them."  
(Ezek. 2:1-5)

It was the word of the Lord to His prophet Veranne. The prophet stood up and said to the rebellious people, "And you had better listen." The fear of the Lord fell upon the house, and it was fear indeed.

Veranne read from I Corinthians 10 the passages concerning the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and their subsequent rebellion in the wilderness:

Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The

people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance.” We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come.

(I Corinthians 10: 7–11)

Then Veranne told those assembled that there was immorality among them and that she had been commissioned to declare it at an end. She told of her experience earlier at the altar. That Cain might repent of his iniquity and Abel of his unrighteousness, she was willing even to call the names the Lord had given her of those who were committing immorality either in the flesh or in the secret of their own heart. The Lord desired, however, that this not be a public exposure, but rather that each would come of his own accord to repent and be cleansed of his sin.

As she fell silent, one of the men in the congregation rose and slowly walked to the front of the church. It was no coincidence, he told the group, that the carpeting at the altar was red. God intended to work before their eyes a miracle as powerful as the one He did in parting the waters of the Red Sea in front of the fleeing Israelites. The Lord intended this night to be their Red Sea. He meant to bring them out of spiritual darkness and captivity, out of the bondage of Egypt. Would they come? Would they leave Egypt behind? If they would come, God would part the waters of the Red Sea that they might go through with safety.

Before the man had finished speaking, the people had begun to come. David Broadus remembered an urge to go forward so overpowering that it physically pushed him down the aisle. Oressa Wise, sitting near the front of the church, got up from her seat immediately, but was unable to move because the aisles were so full of people.

Almost everyone in the building came forward to kneel on the red carpet around the altar. Most of those who did not come were ministering to others out in the congregation. At the front of the church brother was ministering to brother, sister to sister. Some were experiencing deliverance from self-will, from pride, from unbelief. Others were being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Many were joined in silent prayers of repentance to their God. Together in one accord they turned and sought the Lord their God Who alone was able to deliver them. Speedily He came in majesty and power to redeem His people. They stayed there together praying until a new year was born, until at last, weary in body, but renewed in spirit, they departed to their separate homes.

So it happened. They came, God’s own people, out of Egypt into the wilderness. Far from believing themselves special because of their experiences, these people now knew themselves as what they were: the fellowship of the rebellious. That fact about themselves was hard to accept, even then when they were humbled, spirit, soul, and body, before their God. Many times in the wilderness they would forget. Yet it was so. They were not a movement, nor a sect. They were but a remnant of God’s people, preserved by His grace. It was His faithfulness, not their own, that saved them.

Praise be to Jehovah God,

Who has a name.

Thus began the wilderness years.

## POSTSCRIPT

That is why I am going to lure her and lead her out into the wilderness and speak to her heart.

I am going to give her back her vineyards,

And make the Valley of Achor (Misfortune) a gateway of hope.

There she will respond to me as she did when she was young,  
as she did when she came out of the land of Egypt.

The years since 1969 have been primarily ones of judgment, both personal and collective. Judgment began in Dallas on January 1, 1969. That night the Lord moved in a great act of deliverance and led His people through what was literally a modern-day Red Sea. The crossing of the Sea and exodus from Egypt were not merely symbolic acts, for in the following weeks all who had participated found that spiritually they were in a new place. This fact did not mean that the circumstances of their personal lives, or their hearts, or their problems had changed. They did, however, enter into a new relationship and walk with God.

In crossing the Red Sea, these modern “Israelites” committed themselves individually and collectively to accept God’s dealing, judgment, and deliverance. In addition, the company in Dallas chose to walk in a “face to face” relationship with God as a people. They accepted God’s call to be a nation of priests, holy unto Him. This commitment meant they could not depend upon a man such as Aaron or Moses to seek and hear God for them. Each would have to hear God himself; every man would relate to God “face to face.”

The “wilderness years” were marked by a relative isolation from other religious bodies. In leaving Egypt, the young people, however unconsciously, “came out from among the peoples.” In this case, judgment set them apart not only from “unbelievers,” but from many other Christians as well. Many Spirit-filled groups thought judgment too demanding and unbending. It was often unacceptable because it could not be reconciled with commonly held concepts of Christian love. Judgment was not always “nice.” It usually made observers as well as principals uncomfortable. Those who expected love to make one “feel good” could not grasp judgment as an act of God’s love for man and concluded that it was not from God. This particular group of young people received judgment as from the Lord and this fact alone set them apart.

The Lord was not doing with many others what He was doing with them. There was no other group or human source to which they could turn for understanding or guidance. Very few wanted to follow them into this “wilderness.” They were alone with God in a way they had never been before. He had led them into the wilderness in order to have them to Himself. He hoped to get their attention at last and to meet them face to face.

The Lord dealt with this people in the wilderness for several years. They were stiff-necked and reluctant to completely renounce their idols to follow God only. At the Dallas retreat they were judged and chose to accept God’s deliverance from their sins. Nevertheless, throughout the next year some continued to indulge in the same activities they had been warned against. At the next annual Christmas retreat, the Lord confronted them once more. He called upon the priests and prophets in the group to reveal and deal publicly with the sins and idols of the persons present. This time there was no general call to repentance and no opportunity to confess sin collectively. Instead, each individual stood alone as God spoke to him personally and publicly of his sins and rebellion. At the Dallas retreat, the group chose to meet God “face to face.” In Houston the following year, they actually did so.

Clearly the time for playing games with God had ceased, Once again He was forcing a choice. Was it worth it to follow Him all the way? Was He enough? Would they walk face to face with God knowing that in such an intimate relationship every sin would continually be revealed by His brightness? If they decided to go on, there would be no hiding behind a Christian facade. As they faced God, each other, and the world, what and who they were would be clear for all to see.

The experience of judgment brought clearly in to focus exactly what kind of people they really were. Like their fathers before them, they were shown to be stubborn and idolatrous, in love with themselves rather than with God. They were, truly, the fellowship of the rebellious.

Judgment also left no doubt as to who God was. He was revealed as the Holy One. His heart was pure in its hatred of sin and darkness and He was unswerving in His resolution to cleanse His people and the whole creation. He was also the God of true love, for His love for mankind was so deep and strong that it would allow no one to cling to sin, the ultimate end of which could only be bondage and death.

Through judgment the young people learned of the faithfulness of their God. Though they repeatedly turned against Him, especially as He pressed this cleansing upon them, He never abandoned them. He remained faithful despite their unfaithfulness. Like Hosea, God forever stood ready to redeem the harlot, and not only to redeem her, but actually to make her His wife! They came to know in what their hope lay: not in who they were or might become, but in who He was.

This period of judgment was a distressing time for the group. The Lord broke that He might heal. The healing was real, when they submitted, but so was the initial breaking. At times they were disoriented and fell into despair and unbelief about God's ability to deliver them from their sins. Gradually, however, they came to regard judgment as one of the greatest blessings they had ever received from God. They began to actively seek to stand in His light in order to have the darkness within them revealed that they might be purged in God's consuming fire. Furthermore, they were persuaded that they were experiencing what John the Baptist had prophesied: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the granary, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11). In the judgment they experienced the baptism in fire. They learned that it was yet another "degree of glory" and that it was a gift of God which was just as vital to His ministers today as the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

As they came out of their personal disorientation over judgment, God was able to reveal much to them concerning what He was doing and soon would do in the world. As He had declared long ago in Scripture, judgment *begins* with the household of God. Those closest to God, those of His household, and those called by His name would be the first to stand in judgment. Then His judgment and purging would extend throughout the earth. Jehovah was coming to wage war against sin. His intent was the ultimate salvation of the entire world.

The Lord had led the young people into judgment not solely for their personal benefit. Even more He desired a people set apart and prepared to stand with Him in what He was doing in the earth. He wanted kings and priests trained to rule and minister, taught to recognize and deal with sin. He wanted men willing to remain standing in the fire of judgment themselves. He chose to use this group not because they were better than others, but because He willed to work His purposes through the weak and foolish in order to confound the pride of the wise. His power would be revealed in their weakness. He would manifest His grace and redemption in the midst of their darkness.

The Lord talked with the group about their role in what He was doing. He showed them first that whether or not they followed Him in their day to-day personal lives had a great effect on the world whether they realized it or not. The sin of one man, Adam, affected the rest of creation. The faith of Abraham, whose physical life and influence took place in quite a limited sphere, influenced the lives of countless others in every subsequent age. The importance of these men lay not only in their example. Even more importantly, their lives had changed something in the Spiritual realm, deepening or lessening the bondage in which all creation groans.

The Lord explained to them that the life of each man was just as important as the life of Adam or Abraham. Each of them struggled privately with certain problems and spirits, some of which had plagued mankind since the Fall. If they responded to God in their own lives, they could break the hold of spiritual powers that had long ruled man. The deliverance would not only be personal, but also universal, available for anyone who chose to go free. Jesus had lived and walked as “the last Adam.” Because of his obedience to God, even unto death, the power of death and of sin had been broken once and for all for all men. Similarly, they might walk as “the last Cain” or “the last Esau” and stand in areas in which Cain and Esau had not stood and in which the victory had not yet been manifested. It was to that end that He had brought them into judgment. If they chose to stand in the light of judgment, to be revealed, purged, and disciplined as individuals, the blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit would enable them to withstand the enemy and prevail in this battle. The Lord showed each person areas in which he had been called to stand in his own personal life.

God also spoke to the group about the battles that needed to be fought on national and international levels. He began to reveal the ways in which spiritual forces operated in politics, economics, and other “secular” areas of life. He showed them specific situations about which to pray and certain spirits, operating on a world-wide level, against which to stand. The group entered into a new dimension of warfare, an involvement in God’s activity in the world which continues today.

In the summer of 1972, the Lord reminded the young people that they need not remain in the wilderness any longer than they themselves chose. If they would come, He was ready to take them into “the promised land.” By faith, the group accepted that there really was such a land of Sabbath rest for God’s people today and that God was able to bring them into this spiritual place. As He had told them long before, the “promised land” was not a state of eternal bliss and passivity devoid of all problems and warfare. On the contrary, they entered upon a period of intensified warfare. Like the ancient Israelites, they found that there were many enemies in the land. God’s promise to them, as it has been to men of faith in all ages, was that He would surely establish them in the *midst* of their enemies. There, in the eye of the storm, building the walls of the city with one hand and carrying weapons in the other (Nehemiah 4), they began to reclaim the land God had kept as a special heritage for His people.

Throughout these years of judgment and warfare, the young people continued to meet regularly as a group. Harold and Veranne returned to Houston from Venezuela and meetings resumed in their new home. The group became as closely knit as a family and the Lord taught them to function together as a body. In the summer of 1971, He had them formalize their relationship by incorporating under Texas laws as a church. Since then several local congregations of the church, The Fellowship of the Way of Christ, have come into existence in various parts of the United States.

The members of the fellowship expect there always to be new ministries and experiences with the Lord, God is unlimited and so is life in the Spirit. Recently the Lord has given the group a parable concerning their relationship to Him:

The man of God in this age is like the mountain climber. After much toil and many days, he reaches the slope of a rocky mountain, only to see a still steeper, more dangerous slope ahead. His heart does not falter, for his job is to climb mountains. His goal is not to rest at the top, but to scale a yet more formidable peak, and then another and another. His heart rejoices that God continues to give him new mountains, for in being a mountain climber, he finds his calling and comes to know the Creator of the Universe.

The man of God in this hour is also a soldier, for the battle still goes on. The young people in this history have no guarantee that the battle will be won in their lifetime or their children's lifetime. They do not know how the battle will affect them personally. They believe, however, that the victory *is* the Lord's. From their own experience they can testify that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is more powerful than the darkness, stronger than unbelief, and able to overcome man's every defense against Him. They have committed themselves to this God and to the battle going on today.

At this hour the hand of Satan can be seen moving widely in the world in a most overt fashion. Occultism, Satanism, drug abuse, sexual license, and lawlessness are common. "Angels of light," ministering in the spirit of the antichrist, hold forth from pulpits of power not only in mainline churches and Spirit-filled groups, but also in politics, in business and in the fields of communication and entertainment. In many places around the globe, the light has all but gone out through either voluntary cooperation with the enemy or because of passive non-resistance. Even in America, with whom God is striving daily, the powers of darkness rage in an unparalleled effort to gain control.

The trumpet sounds in this hour for anyone who is willing to become involved. Those who are content to remain locked in their little kingdoms of self, afraid of change or of anything that might upset their precarious balance, will be of no use to God or man in the coming time of trouble. Fearful ones are not to be condemned for their passivity. They will merely be passed by as unimportant to anyone, for no one can look to them for answers or turn to them for help in an hour of desperate need.

To those willing to give their lives, however, God calls. This call, now as always, is for each person to be a mountain climber, whatever mountains he may be given to face. It is for each man to enter the battle, some as foot soldiers, others as commanders, in whatever way and place God Himself indicates. God has a place for each person to stand and He is perfectly capable of revealing Himself and communicating with any person who desires to know Him face to face.

In this hour God's church is moving like a mighty army. May His purposes be accomplished on earth as well as in heaven in our time. May He exult in His people and they in Him throughout all eternity.