

God's Peculiar People

**Women's Voices
& Folk Tradition
in a Pentecostal
Church**

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CHAPTER ONE

The Field Situation

I don't know how you girls feel or whether you realize that or not, but see, you know all about my life and I don't know anything about yours.



LIMESTONE is at the heart of southern Indiana industry. Much of the land south of Bloomington is pock-marked with the unsightly rubble left by the quarry crews. Cavernous abandoned pits left by the bulldozers are filled now with filmy green water; bits and pieces of rusting machinery lie half buried in the piles of dirt and sand. The land will never be restored to its natural beauty. Crude barbed-wire fences serve little purpose but to accentuate an already ugly scene. Of course, other quarries in the region further to the north are actively being mined, but the gutted landscape here tells the story of generations of limestone laborers. This book is not about the laborers, however, or their labors in the limestone quarries. It is, rather, the story of many of their womenfolk and of the religion that predominates in this working-class region.

In 1978 I moved into a rural neighborhood south of Bloomington, near the heart of limestone country. Most of my neighbors' husbands worked the mines or the quarries to the south near Bedford and Heltonville. My first encounters with my women neighbors were at the mailboxes. As in many rural areas, our boxes sat primly side by side, all in a row, sometimes twenty to a plank, at the end of the gravel road. That's where I met Beula Estes.

Mrs. Estes, a large, plump woman with snow-white hair pulled back from her face into a full bun, stood near our mailboxes that morning and stunned me with her life's story at our very first meeting. She told me how tough life is for quarry folk, told me how she had raised her kids by herself, after her first husband died in the mines, until she remarried. She told with tears in her eyes how her very own daughter, whose car surely I'd seen, was suffering an identical fate. This study of Pentecostal quarry folk in southern Indiana began with this early morning mailbox conversation. In time, I learned much more about Beula Estes, her world view, and, ultimately, about her Pentecostal religion.

My husband was electrocuted, you know, in a quarry accident, been twenty-eight years ago in July. We was getting ready for one of them basket dinners at church, you know, and that morning I'd ataken him to work and then seemed like it weren't more than an hour later, they was there telling me that he was dead. The quarry had been without power, you know, and they couldn't figure out why and he was down there trying to figure out what was the matter and there was a big cable, you know, laying on a wire fence and he put his hand on that fence, you know, and it killed him instantly. They had to close the quarry for two or three days, the men was so shook up over that. There were three deaths right then, all in the space of a few weeks. Two weeks before my husband, a man was crushed to death between two large slabs of stone, just crushed to death. And my husband's best friend Benny was so shook up about my husband's death, he went home and told his wife, said, "I'll be the next one." And she said, "Benny, don't talk like that." But two weeks to the day Benny was standing

between two railway cars and when they were coupled he got crushed between them. Two weeks to the day. He knew, you see, he could feel that he'd be the next.

Beula learned that I was a newcomer to this area, that I knew only of the sand and the cotton in Missouri's booteel. She told me why quarry life was so difficult, explaining that the rock can only be worked in the warmth of the summer months. The rock has to be wet and then let dry in the sun. In the winter, she said, it gets hard and will break if you try to cut it out. So, in the winter, they all were forced to live on compensation and it was never enough. Quarry life was a tough life, she said more than once. All her life she had scrubbed the clothes of her father, of her brothers, of her husbands when they returned from the quarries. "I remember what my daddy and my first husband, and even Marvin, when we was first married, that was twenty-three years ago, would look like when they first got home. What a mess they'd be. You know, there's clean dirt and dirty dirt and this was the dirtiest dirt ever and we didn't have no washing machine only a scrub board and them clothes seemed like they'd never come clean."

When Beula's first husband died, they already had six children and they had recently taken in a niece and a nephew, whose parents had been killed. "It was real hard on me when my husband died. Someone else took the boy, you know, to lighten my load. But the girl stayed with us and she knows her history all right but she calls me Mom just like my own kids. But I had all them kids alone for nearly five years." Then Beula married Marvin. For a time Marvin also worked in the quarries as had his father and brothers before him. But Beula was relieved when he found work for the lumber company and worked there for years. "But my daddy, my daddy worked in the quarry since he was a strip of a boy, just a strip of a boy. He used to carry

water. That's how they all started then. Now, it seems a lot of the young folks have a choice and not so many want to go into quarry work cause it's a rough, dirty, dangerous business."

But Beula knows that many of the young men in this area still turn to the quarries to make a living, especially those boys who do not finish high school and who marry young and start families. Her daughter's husband worked in a local quarry and had been killed only a few months before. Now, the girl is forced to support her three children, and she never finished high school either. Beula does a lot of babysitting for her daughter; she is glad to see her daughter and her children almost daily now. She enjoys being able to help take responsibility for her daughter's family. But it saddens her to see her daughter suffer the same fate that she had.

You know, after my husband got killed, we had a little white dog, and after my husband got killed that little dog would go to the end of the lane just like he done every day and sit and wait, at exactly the time when he would have come home, and then he'd begin to howl and that dog would howl and he'd howl when he knowed he wasn't coming home. And the only way I could make him shut up was to bring him into the house and then alst he'd do was sit in front of the back door and whine. So, now when I hear a dog howl it kindly bothers me on account of that little old white dog we had nearly thirty years ago.

Beula Estes knew right away she'd found a good listener, and Beula loved to talk. Soon she and I were spending long mornings over coffee as she told me of her life, her family, her hardships. She would drag out volumes and volumes of scrapbooks and albums to show me a pasted up, frag-

mented collage of her life. During my months of friendship with Beula, I learned of the cultural world to which she belonged. I recognized a traditional, even Puritan view, which syncretized notions of witches and devils with the Holy Ghost and a personalized Christ figure. Everything that happened in Beula's world had something to do with God's will or with Satan's wily intervention in her life, and, for me at least, it was largely indistinguishable which force was at work. If she lost something, it was the work of Satan; when she found it, it was because God showed her where it was. If difficulties became more than she thought she could bear, it was Satan tempting her and God testing her faith at the same time. If people died or suffered illness and misfortune, it was God's will.

I want to show you a piece out of Sunday's paper. This is about a witch named Aileen Davis. Now I knew her and she *was* a witch. She lived just down the road from me and we all knew she was a witch. Oh, yes, and we believed in them, too. Well, you know they are scripture. The Bible talks about witchery. They've got a contract with the devil, you know. My daddy used to tell us about witches. Back then, though, you knew who was witches and you knew what they did. I remember once during thrashing, the thrashers would help each other, twenty or thirty of them at one farm, and the women would gather and cook a big meal, spread big tables. When the men came in that day they said, "Well, the horse has been bewitched." They knew who it was, too. A woman had been there to borrow something. "Don't let her have anything," the men said. She had a teacup, wanted to borrow some sugar. But the women turned her down. She came three times, see. "Don't let her have it," they said,

"and it will break the spell." Well, that made her mad. She'd made that horse sick, see, but then the horse got well.

Beula told me many stories about witches, most of them traditional narratives, or stories replete with traditional motifs. Many of her stories associated witches with the dairy, a long-standing association. She told of a milkmaid her grandfather told about who could milk the fringe on a hand towel, "milk a full bucket of pure white milk." But when she did, the cow would get sick. So they fired her and told her to go far away, because they knew the cow would die. She recalled her mother telling her and her sisters how girls would become witches—that they would pray and pray to the devil until they were completely controlled by him. Her mother told her of a girlfriend of hers who had once visited a known witch who told her to "pray to the devil until it's black as night." Her friend did, and all kinds of demons appeared, the air was full of them. Her friend was terrified and cried out, "Oh, Lord, help me," and the air cleared immediately and she never missed church again in her life. Beula figured people wanted to become witches because they can cause things to happen, because they feel powerful. "At night around the fire my daddy used to tell us about witches, used to scare me to death, but that's what he wanted, wanted us to be afraid so that we would go to church and only trust in Jesus not to pray to the devil ever. He never told us any fairy stories. He would never tell anything untrue; he'd only tell us true stories."

At first this strange juxtaposition of devils and witches with strict religious inclinations baffled me, but in time I have come to understand more about this fundamentalist religion that recognizes a close association between the natural and the supernatural worlds. In fact, the most fundamental tenet of this Christian faith requires a mandatory experience of spirit possession by the Holy Ghost, accom-

panied by speaking in unknown tongues. Daily exposure to this realm of paranormal religious experience and a blanket rejection of all things of "this world" provide easy access to and acceptance of nonworldly experiences.

My visits with Beula Estes would always end with her trying to "witness" to me about her Pentecostal religion. She would tell me how good it is to go to church, how much better I'd feel if I would just go, how important religion is in her life. She'd be "right proud," she'd say, to take me to church with her. "I wish you'd come and go to church with us tonight. We're having what my mama used to call a protracted meeting, what they used to call a revival. But we're having this revival for three weeks. It's already been going for five nights and we've been having some powerful preaching and people getting real happy. I go every night. Wouldn't miss it for the world. Maybe Miss Sutton would like to go, too."

Irene Sutton, our neighbor, was Pentecostal, too, but usually does not attend the same church as Beula Estes. A few years ago a group from Beula's congregation broke away and formed their own church congregation. They meet now in an abandoned building on Quarry Rock Lane, not more than three miles from the original church. This is typical in this region. Many of the back roads have several small Baptist and Pentecostal churches, most with small congregations—split on a minor theological point or a personality conflict. But during the revivals and camp meetings, nearly everyone in the area will attend the "protracted meetings."

Later that same week, I crossed the dirt road that led up a small hill to a rickety old house where "Miss" Irene Sutton lives. I found her huddled in the kitchen drinking tea from an old cracked cup, a thick white one like you get in country restaurants. She was dressed in a thin and faded cotton dress with men's work boots and socks and what appeared to be several jackets and a woolen scarf, very worn. The

room was cold, heated only by a small electric heater in the corner. Quilts and comforters were hanging over all the doorways leading in four directions from the kitchen. The light was poor as the day was gray and overcast. Irene Sutton is a widow. Her husband and father both worked in the quarries around Bedford for years. Her husband then opened the only sawmill in the area. They had ten children. He was killed at the mill when the youngest was seven years old. Several of her "boys" still live close by and stop at her house daily to check on her and to see if she needs anything. She told me she didn't know very much first-hand about the quarries. She just knew that quarry life was a tough life. Only once, she said, had she ever even gone to see the working quarry. She and another girl went to the quarry where their husbands worked and watched from the hill. She said she "just wanted to look at it."

What I knew about it was pretty much based on what my husband said when he got home, which wasn't much as my husband didn't talk much. I do recall him telling me about how my niece's husband got killed down there. He was smashed when a derrick hook holding a huge rock came down and killed him. The pity of it was he had two little kids, two little girls. My niece had to raise them by herself. I remember, too, when they found that woman who worked at the creamery floating around in the water that had collected, you know, in the quarry.

Already the stories seemed familiar. So many husbands and fathers maimed or killed; so many wives and mothers left alone to provide for the children. I was not prepared to hear stories that sounded so much like the stories we have come to expect from the mining areas in Appalachia, in

Kentucky and Tennessee. These quarry women were survivors and they were not sentimental about it. Collectively they began to tell the same story.

I remember trying to get the grease and the dirt out of my daddy's clothes, and my husband's, too. Used to put lard on it to get that dirt out. It was nasty work. Made my husband deaf, too, couldn't hear a thing I don't think. There was so much noise. He used to work on the machine siding, you know, which was so loud that it made him deaf. Lots of them go deaf. My Uncle Pete got killed in the quarry, not too long ago, must have been twenty, thirty, no maybe thirty-five years ago. There was another guy, too, who went to school with me who got killed in that same quarry. But he was a young man, not married. I can't hardly remember getting married, hah, just kindly got married to change my name, I guess.

As she talked, Irene began to fumble through drawers and shoe boxes gathering together what seemed to be millions of tiny pieces of bright fabric. "I'm fixing to piece a quilt, got all the pieces laid out in here on the bed. Would you like to see it? I'll show you a comfort I've got, too, that's sixty-five years old. My mother made it." Our quilt piece arranging was interrupted by the visit of one of Irene's sons, who had brought her a sack of drugs from the town pharmacy. She told him that he could just take them all back to town because she wasn't about to use any of them. She showed me, and him, what she preferred to use: garlic tablets and ginseng. She pulled away her scarf to reveal a pungent poultice she had mixed that morning for her sore throat: turpentine, coal oil, and lard. She spoke of "mullen tea" and told me to drink catnip tea for stomach problems.

Like Beula's, Irene's world is a traditional one of home

remedies and quilt-making. In 1978 she did not have, nor did she desire, a television set. Her table AM radio was her only link to a world beyond her own—except for church. Irene asked if her son could come back that evening around seven to take her to the protracted meeting they were having down the road. As he and I both left her house, Miss Sutton began energetically to beg me to come go with her to the revival meeting. Her eyes were bright as she told me how wonderful these meetings had been and about how much they meant to her. She *loved* going to church, she told me, it's what she looked forward to each day.

Fifteen miles down the road from Irene Sutton's is Johnson's Creek Church, the Pentecostal church featured in this book. Half a mile further, on the blacktop, is the home of Alice Benson. She lives in a modest home set back from the road with her three youngest children and her husband, Albert, who works in a quarry near Bedford. Alice's father is a Pentecostal preacher. She has gone to Pentecostal services all her life and thinks of herself first as a Pentecostal woman. Albert is not "saved" and refuses to go to church with her. This is, perhaps, the saddest part of Alice's life and has brought her years of anguish. Her parents warned her when she was an impressionable young girl of fifteen that Albert Benson was not the type ever to go to church. He worked and played too hard. He liked the bars too much. They were right. Albert has never listened to Alice's pleading to join the church. She is just thankful that he does not prevent her from going to church herself and from taking the boys. She knows there will come a day when the boys will no longer go with her and when they will join their dad. "My husband works at Bedford at Engle Stone Company. He's worked in stone for years and years. He worked at Bloomington for a long time. Seemed like, maybe fourteen or fifteen years, he worked there, then it shut down. Only other jobs he's had been working on the roads in Monroe County. But stone mills don't shut down as much

as the actual quarries. He's a planerman, now, he cuts." Alice talks, too, about quarry life. She still has to scrub her husband's grimy clothes, and in the winter she has to feed a family of five solely on what she has put by through the summer months. But Alice would rather talk about her religion, because it is her religion that keeps her going, that gives her joy in an otherwise depressing life. Her best memories were of large groups of family members going to church together. She recalls how one preacher got an automobile and would go around gathering up all the neighbors on Dutch Ridge Road.

When I was a kid, well, I remember we went to church a lot. And when we wasn't in school or church, we'd play church and my aunt that stayed with us, she'd get the guitar. She couldn't play it, but she'd play it, you know. She'd play church songs and we would sing. Back then they had prayer meetings in homes and they'd go to a different home every night. And I can remember Mom and Dad would just take the furniture out of the living room and they'd put just boards, on rocks or stumps, sticks of wood was what it was. And course the old house was pretty flimsy and Dad would get under it and brace it until the floor wouldn't give. Oh, we'd have a house full.

Alice especially enjoyed recalling the times when people would "get happy" at the various church gatherings—from prayer meetings to camp meetings and revivals. That's why, she said, her dad had to brace up the floor, because folks would get to dancing and stomping around so.

And I know one time a lady got happy with her accordion and she just shouted all over the house

with her accordion. What makes me remember that—one of the brothers was telling about it later and called it a piano. One night after that he got up and he testified about seeing this sister shout all over that house with a piano around her neck [laughs heartily]. He meant an accordion, you know. I mean that's just some of the kinds of memories that I have, mostly of being surrounded by lovely Christian people happy in the Lord. They'd do that maybe once a week. I mean we went to different houses and maybe it wasn't once a week, but I know ever so often it would come back home. Everybody would come to our house then and then the next time we'd go somewhere else. And there were so many people I knew that way, you know, all through church. In fact, some of the people that I go to church up here with, you know, I'd know them or their parents from those meetings in people's houses.

Alice can recall when the first Pentecostal preacher came to her church and preached a "Pennycost" message, sometime in the late twenties or early thirties. The man who came with this new religious message, Brother Goddard, stayed in the region for some time trying to convert people to this new religious experience and rebaptizing people "in the name of Jesus." Many of the rural churches changed during this time to Pentecostal assemblies of one kind or another. Alice and her entire family were eventually baptized into this new religion following several weeks of protracted meetings in a camp-meeting tabernacle that still stands not far from Alice's house. "It was just like an open barn. It was just a big building with a roof on it and it had some sides, but the windows were just cut out. And they had meetings in it and it had a sawdust floor. We called it Handy. . . . The old building is in a field kind of growed

up, with lots of trees. That's about all they ever used it for. The services in there were real old-fashioned. They had guitar music and people sang and if they felt like they wanted to get up and walk or shout or whatever they felt like the Lord wanted them to do, they did it."

Alice does not live very far from Johnson's Creek Church and she attends every service she possibly can. She does not drive well and her husband is reluctant to let her drive any farther than to the church and back. He makes her promise that she will begin her trip home immediately after the close of the service. Most of her neighbors are women who attend the same church and who have grown up in this same area. Many of their husbands join Alice's during the hours their wives are attending church. Alice recognizes that her life has been constricted. Our visits to her home to talk to her about her life and about her religion obviously became the high points in her weeks.

It's real hard to make friends out here. We live so far from anything and it's mostly church folks that I ever get to see. I had one friend, one friend that wasn't in the church. She lived over the hill, right over here past our horse field. Lived all by herself, she did, with her kids. And folks weren't real friendly to her or nothing, cause she didn't go to church and nobody knew who her husband was or if she was married. Made them kindly nervous about her, I guess. But, sometimes, when there wasn't nobody here I'd kind of sneak across the field and go up there to visit her. And we'd just sit kind of quiet like on her front steps and talk. And I really enjoyed that. I knew it was wrong, but I really liked having her as a friend. But then my husband found out about it and he really told me to stop going up there. So, I did. And, see, like I don't know how you girls feel or

whether you realize it or not, but see, you know all about my life but I don't know a thing about yours.

When we asked Alice about her church, about what her religion meant to her, it was as though she could never make us understand just how critical it was to her life, to her survival.

Church is just something, it gives me something to live on, see? I don't know of anything else that I could get to fulfill my life, fill that spot that—I mean, I don't *do* anything else. I don't know what I'd do, if something would happen to this little church up here, I don't know where I'd go or what I'd do, really. I would just hate awful bad for something to happen and our little church, you know, go down. You just begin to love these people. Just like they're part of your family.

There's a real closeness there. Like two "sisters" in the church can be just as close as two sisters. People in Pentecost churches don't go out and find entertainment outside, they find it in the church.

The world of Beula Estes, Irene Sutton, and Alice Benson is a traditional one. They have grown up with the oral, traditional stories and religion of their families and of this southern Indiana region. They trust their illnesses to the natural herbs and poultices their mothers and grandmothers taught them—and to God. They hold tight to a strong belief in the supernatural world. Beula believes in ghosts because members of her family still relate to her their own late-night supernormal experiences in the bogs and deep woods near Brown County. She knows there are witches because when a cow gets sick or dies it is because a strange

neighbor woman has spelled it. Belief in both witches and herb medicines is possible because of a strong belief in Satan as a living reality, a daily and constant threat to health and well-being. Almost all of them have grown up near the quarries. Quarry work has fed their mothers' families, their own families, and continues to feed many of their daughters' and sons' families. Often, their stories are uncannily similar; the daughters' lives seem but a mirror image of the mothers'. Waiting out the long winters when there is no work, raising children alone with no father in the home, finding work and learning to cope become the main components of their lives.

Beula, Irene and Alice are all Pentecostal women. Their faith demands that each one have a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. This encounter with a supernatural spirit will be manifested by a public exhibition of tongue-speaking. They are at ease with dancing in the church, swooning "in the spirit," and watching their sisters "fall out" onto the floor in a trance. For them, the supernormal, the supernatural and the normal worlds cross often. Church is not a Sunday-only obligation; it is often a seven-night-a-week ecstatic experience. The tongue-speaking, the trances, the shouting are all put into perspective during the service through the communicative mode of the testimonies. Here, the members tell of their experiences, interpret them, and in so doing, guide their brother and sister members toward a greater understanding of their own experiences and of the world in which they live.

Pentecostalism, as a new religious denomination, did not emerge overnight. The various components recognized today as standard Pentecostal attributes—such as trance and charismatic behaviors, tongue-speaking, and shouting in the spirit—developed piecemeal over nearly a hundred years. The enthusiastic worshipping style that characterizes Pentecostal church services today is reminiscent of early

nineteenth-century Methodist revivals and camp meetings.¹ The strict fundamentalist taboos and regulations imposed upon Pentecostal believers stem largely from the strong "Holiness" tradition, which was itself an outgrowth of John Wesley's Methodist notions of sanctification.² But the belief that salvation and sanctification could be had in a single experience of possession by the Holy Ghost and tongue-speaking is uniquely Pentecostal; it combined ideas that had prevailed in Christian tradition for decades.

Methodism and the Holiness movement preceded Pentecostalism historically and anticipated its doctrines; both, of course, continue to exist as religious movements today. Among these overlapping histories it is difficult to pinpoint a definite time and place for the birth of the Pentecostal denomination. Much of the confusion arises from the indiscriminate use of the words "Pentecostal" and "Holiness" by lay people and scholars, as well as the striking number of churches that are Pentecostal but whose names may not so indicate.³ Confusion also arises because "Pentecostal" is often linked merely with emotional church behavior or, more often, with tongue-speaking.

It is important to note that the Pentecostal movement in the United States and the religion that came to be recognized as Pentecostalism began when the experience of tongue-speaking was accepted as evidence of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and when a small group of believers began to equate salvation with just such an experience of tongue-speaking. The entire story of the development of the Pentecostal movement and the various Assemblies of God that emerged from roots in Methodism and the Holiness movement need not be recounted here. The following discussion is presented primarily to aid in understanding the Pentecostals with whom this study is concerned and to chart their pilgrimage to southern Indiana.

John Wesley's eighteenth-century conception of Methodism caught on in the United States and has been one of

the strongest religious traditions in this country. Wesley preached salvation by the "first blessing," which was instant sanctification, or perfection attainable in this life. A sanctified believer, according to Wesley, could achieve "perfect love toward God and man." The eighty-one-page manifesto, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection as Believed and Taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*, issued in 1739, served Methodist and perfectionist groups for two centuries. Early Methodism was largely a reaction against the extreme Calvinism that had dominated English social, religious, and political life during the seventeenth century. According to Vinson Synan, a scholar and a believer, the "creedal rigidity, liturgical strictness, and ironclad institutionalism that had depersonalized religion had rendered it incapable of serving the needs of the individual believer."⁴ Methodism allowed any man, woman, or child the saving experience, rejecting the notion of the elected few. Methodists sought the personal experiences of conversion and sanctification. According to John Nichol, another believer, "sanctification or the 'second blessing' was seen as an experience subsequent and distinct from justification or conversion. Its effect is the eradication of natural depravity or inbred sin."⁵

As often happens in religious movements as they become more official and standardized, some of Wesley's followers came to find his Methodism staid and restricting. Eventually, many of his followers thought Wesley's leadership had lost sight of the importance of the search for sanctification or holiness. Thus, the Holiness movement was born, composed primarily of disenchanted Methodists. In an effort to restore some of the enthusiasm of early Methodism, leaders of the schism called the first "National Camp Meeting Association for the promotion of Christian Holiness" and urged anyone sympathetic toward the search for "holiness" to attend, regardless of denominational ties. "Come, brothers and sisters of the various denominations, and let us, in this forest meeting, as in other meetings for the promotion

of holiness, furnish an illustration of evangelical union, and make common supplication for the descent of the Spirit upon ourselves, the church, the nation, and the world."⁶ Intended for the sole purpose of seeking the state of holiness, this camp meeting was held in Vineland, New Jersey, on July 17, 1867. This was just the beginning; Vineland was an unqualified success, and its fame spread quickly. Holiness camp meetings sprang up all over the country.

Camp meetings were largely characterized by what appeared to outsiders as wild evangelizing and came to be referred to as representative of the "old-time religion." The instigators of this break with Methodism claimed that the Holiness movement adhered more closely to the basic tenets of Methodism than did Methodism itself, especially in its rigid compliance with doctrines of Christian perfection. Wesley's strict admonitions against all alcoholic drinking, dancing, theater-going, card-playing, and swearing, and his restrictions on women's dress were embraced fully and further elaborated by Holiness groups to prohibit, in time, Coca-Cola, chewing gum, rings, bracelets, earbobs, and neckties. The emphasis of the Holiness doctrine, which would later serve as the core of Pentecostalism, included the seeking of a blessing, which ought to be received subsequent to and distinct from conversion; a submission to the Spirit in all affairs of life; a lifetime effort to win converts and rejuvenate the spiritual lives of the faithful; a vibrant hope in the imminent return of Christ; and abandonment of the world and all manifestations of "worldliness."

In time, the rural South and the Middle West emerged as the predominant areas of the Holiness movement, embracing the doctrines wholeheartedly. Traveling evangelists brought the Holiness message to the most isolated communities in these regions, and here the message took root. These preachers laid great emphasis on dress and denial of "worldly amusements," as well as on denunciations of the coldness and formality of the Methodist church. In an at-

tempt to understand why Holiness caught on in the rural South and Midwest, some scholars have suggested that rather than trying to reform society, which they knew they could not do, rural folk rejected it. Within Holiness the greatest "social sins" were not poverty, inequality, or unequal distribution of the wealth, but rather the effects of the theater, ball games, dancing, lipstick, cigarettes, and liquor. The appeal of Holiness was inherent in the optimistic promise of attainable perfection for everyone. The Holiness Movement emphasized the warmth, feeling, emotional religious experience, and morality that began in Methodism and soon came to be known as "heart religion."

The two largest Holiness denominations that resulted from the national Holiness movement were the Church of the Nazarene and the Pilgrim Holiness Church. Although many early Nazarene churches included the word "pentecostal" in their names, they later dropped that word to publicly disassociate themselves from the Pentecostal movement of the 1900s, when they concluded that emotionalism and tongue-speaking had become more important in that movement than sanctification. The Pilgrim Holiness group was the forerunner of modern-day Pentecostalism, and the most important church in this regard was one that emerged in Iowa around 1894, called the "Fire-Baptized Holiness Church." Its leader, John Fletcher, previously a Baptist minister who had been sanctified, began to call for a "third blessing" (to complement the first blessing of conversion and the second blessing of sanctification), which he called "the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire" or simply "The Fire." His revivals in the Midwest gave rise once again to the emotional fervor of the early Methodist revivals; those receiving the fire would "shout, scream, speak in tongues, fall into trances, and even get the jerks." Fletcher's new interpretation caused much concern and frequent rejection by many within the Holiness movement because the Holiness advocates had always associated the second blessing, of sanctification (holiness)

with a baptism by the Holy Ghost and considered both to be aspects of the same experience. Note that no connection was being made at this time between the baptism of the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues. Both were occurring in the camp meetings; the baptism of the Holy Ghost was sought, and some people who "got into the spirit" often spoke in tongues, but there was no hint that this baptism and/or tongue-speaking were necessary prerequisites to salvation. The most radical of the preachers of this fire-baptized movement became more and more obsessed with the notion of repeated emotional experiences; the meetings became prolonged as members sought for yet another ecstatic encounter. Eventually, preachers were calling for not only a third blessing, but a fourth, a fifth, and even a sixth. One preacher praised God for the blood that cleans up, the Holy Ghost that fills up, the fire that burns up, and the dynamite that blows up!⁷

By the late 1890s, several Holiness preachers had experienced tongue-speaking in Holiness churches and camp meetings and were beginning to search for this ecstatic third blessing. The early practice of tongue-speaking in American religious contexts received a great deal of attention, not all of it sympathetic. Revivals in Tennessee, where "praying through" was often accompanied by tongue-speaking, caused great excitement, and many nonbelievers blasted the tongue-speakers as practicing "heresy." As more people experienced "the tongues" (including children), opposition became serious. Perhaps the opposition served to fire the spirit of the believers.

Although tongue-speaking among Holiness believers had occurred long before 1900, it was not linked to salvation until a group of religious students at Bethel College in Topeka, Kansas, found evidence for the connection in their Bibles. Directed by their teacher, Charles F. Parham, to seek the answer to the question, "What is the Bible evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost?" this group of thirty to forty women and

men sought the answer for days. Using only their Bibles as a guide, the students came up with the answer that the evidence of the Holy Ghost was speaking in tongues.⁸ The scriptural basis for their answer comes largely from the Book of Acts, although there are other biblical references that link tongue-speaking with the infilling of the Holy Ghost. The primary scripture that convinced them was Acts 2:1-4, which describes the descent of the Holy Ghost upon 120 believers who were in the Upper Room praying and fasting: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Parham's students sought to replicate this experience. In time, several of the students did receive the baptism and spoke in tongues; then the group received the baptism en masse. Practicing Pentecostals claim this as the birth of Pentecostalism because it most closely parallels the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the biblical Upper Room as described in the New Testament. This is the account they give for the adoption of the name "Pentecost" as well, because the biblical episode occurred during Pentecost.

From Kansas the Pentecostal message spread all over the country. The single most important doctrinal issue that distinguished it from the Holiness movement was the belief that speaking in tongues was the evidence of the possession of the Holy Ghost and that this experience was as necessary for salvation as conversion and sanctification. Although tongue-speaking had occurred time and again in revivals and camp meetings, it had never before become the center of attention. With Pentecostalism came a unified effort to seek and experience this proof of the Holy Ghost in the converted.

Pentecostal preachers began to preach what they called the

"full gospel," a term still used today to identify a legitimate Pentecostal group. The full gospel is a combination of old doctrines and new emphases: the biblical emphasis on salvation and justification by faith; the stress on divine healing; the doctrine of the premillennial return of Christ; belief in a Holy Spirit whose baptism empowers a Christian to live victoriously and to witness effectively and enables the believer to perform the supernatural.⁹ According to Nichol, the Pentecostals were "almost rabid in their assertion that glossolalia always accompany an 'infilling of the Holy Ghost.' "¹⁰

Between 1901 and 1906, the fervor for the "Pentecostal experience" centered largely in Houston, Texas, where Charles Parham and other leaders had congregated to spread the message. By 1906, the Pentecostal movement took root in Los Angeles, where outpourings of the "Latter Rain," or "The Fire," occurred with regularity in meetings in Bonnie Brae Street, and then for three years was manifested in the now-famous church on Azusa Street.¹¹ Although the location of the church in a poor black community created a standard stereotype that the movement was predominantly embraced by black Christians, the church on Azusa Street, as well as others that sprang up during these formative years, drew its congregation from both the black and the white communities. Once the press noticed all the noise over on Azusa Street, their negative and somewhat derisive illustrated accounts often served as advertisement and swelled the crowds even more. Block-Hoell notes that it was in the Seattle papers that the Pentecostals were first referred to as "Holy Rollers" and that their Methodist forerunners had been referred to as "Holy Jumpers." He also notes that non-Pentecostals referred to the movement as the "Tongues Movement." By September, 1906, the Pentecostal movement claims to have had 13,000 followers in the United States and by the end of the year Pentecostalism had reached Europe and Asia.¹²

Again, preachers traveled the countryside preaching the Pentecostal message in Baptist and Methodist churches.

Often, one segment of the congregation would respond favorably to this new message and split off from the denominational church to form a separate group and call themselves "Pentecostals" or "Pennycosts." From the beginning, Pentecostals have been inclined to refer to this new faith as the "Pentecostal experience," rejecting such labels as Pentecostal religion, church, or denomination. In a fairly short time, minute differences about doctrine began to plague the new Pentecostals. Black Pentecostals formed their own official church, the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee); white Pentecostals called for a "General Council of the Assemblies of God" in 1914 to formalize the doctrine that conversion and sanctification could be experienced at the same time and managed to alienate Holiness Pentecostals for good. Although Pentecostals talk about the "holiness" aspects of their religion, a clear distinction developed between Holiness sects and Pentecostal sects.

Another even more radical idea split the Pentecostals into two main camps—the trinitarian and the Jesus Only or Oneness Pentecostals. In 1913, at a Pentecostal camp meeting in Los Angeles, evangelist R.E. McAlister declared from the pulpit that the biblical apostles only baptized their converts once in the name of "Jesus" and that the words "Father, Son and Holy Ghost were never used in early Christian baptism."¹³ According to Synan, "unknowingly, Evangelist McCalister had fired a shot that would resound throughout the Movement for a year."

The idea caught on in some quarters. Adherents to this new doctrine were rebaptised in Jesus' name and an effort was made to convince and rebaptize the entire Pentecostal movement. But the response was not unanimously positive. The General Council of the Assemblies of God became alarmed by this development and at the meeting in October, 1916, denounced the "Oneness" sects as heretical and established the Assemblies of God as a trinitarian body. While the unitarian point of view is unacceptable to many Pentecostals,

it still attracts large numbers of believers. The largest recognized unitarian Pentecostal denomination in the United States today is the United Pentecostal Church, which was created by the merger of several independent unitarian Pentecostal groups. There are, however, literally thousands of Oneness Pentecostal churches in the Midwest that have no affiliation with any major, recognized organization. Contrary to the notion that Jesus Only or Oneness Pentecostals constitute an insignificant proportion of the Pentecostal population, in southern Indiana there are nearly three Oneness churches for every Pentecostal trinitarian church. Oneness believers are staunch about their "Jesus Only" views but are understandably cautious about flaunting their peculiar beliefs. For Oneness Pentecostals to assert that Jesus *is* God strikes many other Christians as heretical and blasphemous. Many Oneness Pentecostals in southern Indiana relate stories of ostracism and persecution arising from their antitrinitarian beliefs.

Rather than being a religion based on official tenets determined by knowledgeable officials, Pentecostalism is based on things that happen to people. And the essence of the experiences, as well as their interpretation, must be communicated to the other members of the group. It is on that foundation that all doctrine rests. Pentecostalism is an oral religion. All members learn to speak a special religious language. It is within the context of the church service that the tenets of the faith are conveyed, interpreted, and stabilized. Stories passed down from grandparents about the early days of traveling preachers who brought the Pentecostal message lay a firm historical foundation for the beliefs of the modern church. A testimony about how someone received the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues proves to the listeners that this experience can happen and elaborates a model for their own conversion experience.

The Oneness Pentecostals of this study are a tightly knit group of believers who live in a small rural community and depend largely upon one another for their spiritual and social

existence. Their radical beliefs set them apart and define their existence as a group. What they believe about their faith and themselves is conveyed by their lifestyles and by what they say when they are together in their community and in their homes, as well as what they say in the context of their church services.