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Ritual and Beyond: A Field Study of Black Pentecostalism

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Ritual and Beyond:
A Field Study of Black Pentecostalism

Senior Honors Thesis

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Oberlin College
April 25, 1985

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
ONE THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PENTECOSTALISM	10
The Holiness Movement	
A Glimpse at Early Black Christianity	
The Birth of Pentecostalism	
The Beginnings of a Sect	
TWO ELEMENTS OF THE RITUAL	25
The Service at Holiness Tabernacle	
Titles and Roles in the Ritual	
Major Ritualistic Elements	
THREE RITUAL AND REALITY	51
The Role of Socialization	
Moods and Motivations	
Ritual and World View	
FOUR THE ROLE OF THE HOLY GHOST	64
Chaos and the Holy Ghost	
Salvation and the Holy Ghost	
Beyond Ritual	
FIVE THE CHURCH AS WORLD APART	78
"But not of the world"	
Living a Life Apart	
Church as Community	
CONCLUSION	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	97

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is the Light, the Light of the world;
Oh, Jesus is the Light, the Light of the world;
Yes, Jesus is the Light, the Light of the world,
And He's shining, shining in my soul.

A typical Sunday morning worship service at Holiness Tabernacle opens with the above song, or with one very similar in style and content. Sister F. may begin this song, with the rest of the congregation joining in on the second line. Brother V. adds bass guitar, someone plays the drums, clapping grows louder, and women pick tambourines up off the pews. Church is underway.

This paper is the result of a field study of Holiness Tabernacle, a pseudonym for a local Black Pentecostal church. I conceived of the project as a way to combine my interest in both anthropology and religion and also to provide me with an introduction to anthropological fieldwork. The primary focus of my work, then, has been on fieldwork rather than on library research, although I have integrated both in this paper. Further, because of my emphasis on fieldwork I have chosen not to concentrate on the fact that this is a Black church, due to my lack of knowledge in the realm of Black Studies. While by no means ignoring that Holiness Tabernacle is a Black church, I have

focused instead on its Pentecostal identity.

My quest for a church amenable to study began with a search for area churches that would fit roughly under the category of "charismatic" - characterized by manifestations of the Holy Ghost, "emotionalism," and so forth. After visits to two churches, which included my first "testimony" and the only vehement lecture I ever received on the necessity of salvation, I attended Holiness Tabernacle. I settled on this church primarily because people were friendly, the congregation was small, the service was "led by the Holy Ghost," and there appeared to be an established visitor/non-member role. In other words, it seemed suitable for my participant observation.

I attended Holiness Tabernacle regularly from September 30 - December 9, 1984, and attended sporadically during January and February, 1985. The Sunday morning service was the primary setting for my participant observation. I also attended Sunday School, the Sunday evening service, and a revival service at various times and conducted limited interviewing. I found rapport fairly easy to establish, for the members seemed as eager to make me feel "at home" as I was anxious not to stick out as a White college student studying them. Sister F. arranged a ride for me whenever the weather was bad, kept track of school vacations, and called me up if I missed a Sunday. For several weeks I was acknowledged from the pulpit as "our college student" and asked to "have a word" during the time allotted to welcoming visitors. Later, I was referred to as "just a member of the family," and eventually I was not even noteworthy. At this point, the pastor

began greeting me as "Sister Word."

In order to establish my research intents, I verbalized my academic interest to those members with whom I spoke, and also chose not to be a full participant. I refrained from kneeling at the altar at any time, being especially leery of the altar call, when the presence of an unsaved person may be interpreted as a desire for baptism and salvation. Although I did "testify" when called upon to do so, I always rehearsed my testimony beforehand in order to ensure that it roughly fit the usual style without including any comments that would contradict my stated intent.

Besides the momentary egocentric panic I felt when Elder H. began the altar call with statements such as, "There is one among us who is in need of prayer...", I felt no overt pressure to convert. Members seemed, however, to have little understanding of what other Christian denominations believe. Although several people knew that I was raised in a minister's family, one member once asked if I knew of Jesus Christ and another later asked if I had heard of Christmas. Many people persisted in expressing a hope that "it will all sink in one day," and one sister, after explaining points of doctrine, would always ask, "Isn't that logical?" Thus, while I never felt pressure to seek salvation, I did experience unease at their inability or unwillingness to understand me as academically interested and their assumption that such clear, biblically-based beliefs would by their very nature have an effect on me.

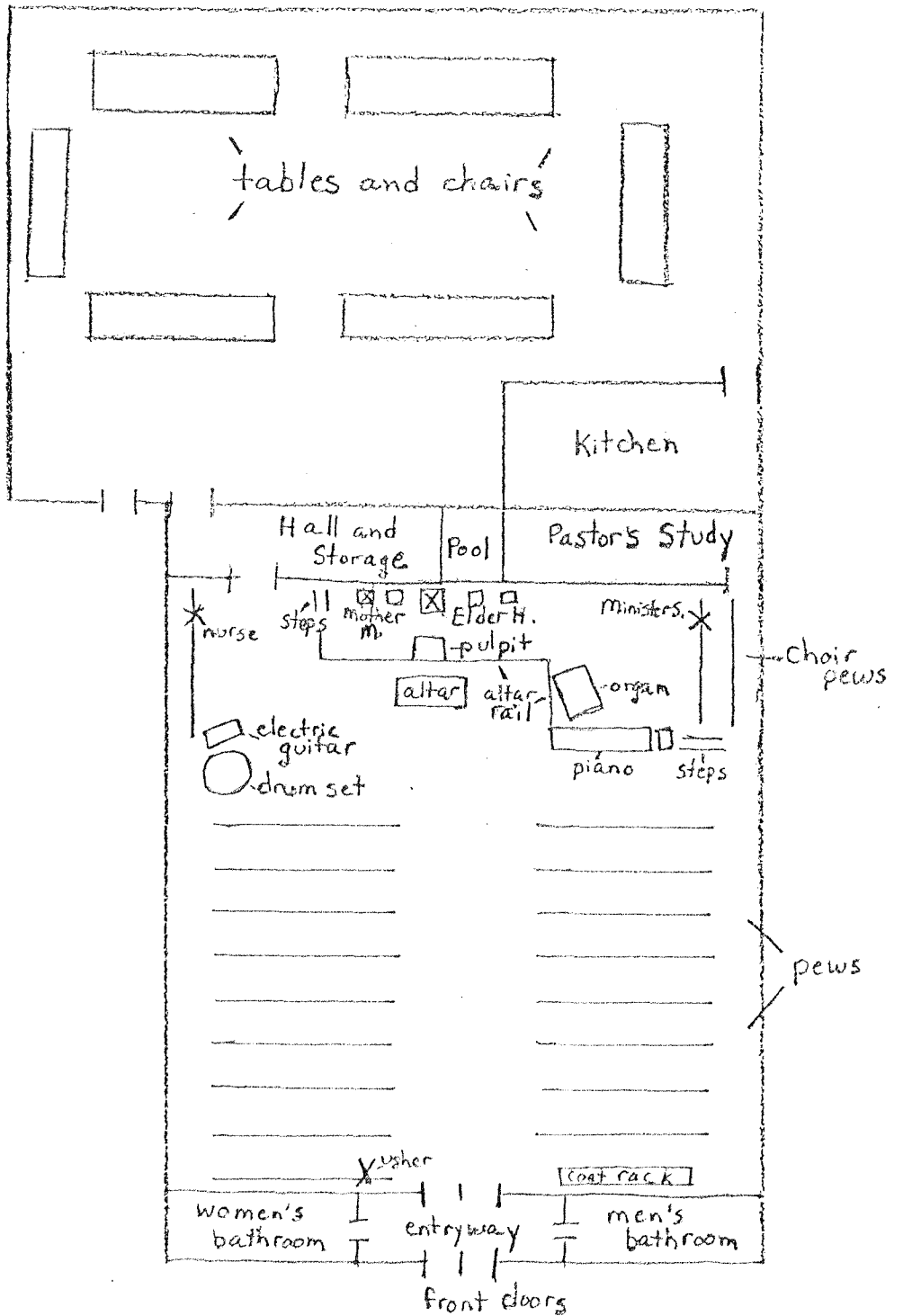
Holiness Tabernacle is housed in a small one-story building, a dilapidated sign on the lawn indicating the name of the church

and the times of the services. The original building consisted only of the sanctuary, with a dining room added later (see layout on following page). Approximately 25-30 adults attend each Sunday, the majority being women by a ratio of approximately 6:1. Most members are unrelated. All of the members are Black Americans, with the exception of one White man who is married to one of the church's ministers. The majority of members live in Oberlin and seem to be of middle to lower income, although there are exceptions to both of these generalizations. The pastor, Elder H., lives in Cleveland and works a night shift at the hospital. He is typical of this sect's pastors, in that he holds an outside job and is not seminary educated.

The focal point of the church week is the Sunday morning service. This is preceded by a Sunday School for all ages, and is followed in the evening by a second service. Bible class and the Missionaries auxiliaries meet each week, while the choir and the remaining auxiliaries meet only sporadically. The Sunday evening service is often cancelled in favor of "fellowship" - traveling to a sister church for a special service. Such a visit is usually in commemoration of a pastor's anniversary or is an annual event, to be followed by a return visit from that church. Holiness Tabernacle owns a van which is driven to these services by both women and men.

I was unsuccessful in locating the sect to which Holiness Tabernacle belongs in any listing of holiness or Pentecostal organizations. However, Holiness Tabernacle is one of 20-30 churches organized under the name of The Original Glorious Church of God in Christ. Headquarters of this sect are located in

Layout of Holiness Tabernacle



Parking Lot

Huntington, West Virginia, while the senior bishop resides in Columbus, Ohio. Directly under this bishop are junior bishops, also male, who apparently have limited administrative duties while also serving a parish and holding an outside job. Male and female pastors, who are appointed by the senior bishop, serve local parishes, often remaining at the same church for 10-15 years. Each of these churches also has ministers, laypersons who feel "called by the Spirit" to "preach the word of God." Although pastors and bishops are ordained, the entire system draws on the layperson, whose only qualifications need to be a call from God and God-given abilities to perform the task.

I have discovered, in the course of this project, that there are both advantages and disadvantages to fieldwork undertaken within one's own culture. One reason that I decided to study a charismatic church was that I wanted to remove myself from my own church experience, which I feared would blind me to many features of a mainline Protestant church. I did find my religious background useful in that I was able quickly to find order in apparent chaos and blend in to the service. However, it did not spare me the "culture shock" I felt after two hours at the first church that I visited: I was very glad to return to campus and my own familiar world. Throughout my field study, I found it very helpful to be able to work at my own pace, making contact with Holiness Tabernacle when and how I felt it to be most appropriate. Needless to say, I also did not have to contend with a language barrier or malaria.

My contact with these people, however, both in a church context and in their daily lives, was actually quite limited. I often had to turn down offers to travel to another church or attend Bible Study because of academic conflicts. I also was not able to immerse myself in these people's lives, to see if Sister H. really does say, "God bless you" when people anger her and to see how many people actually do go to Minister S.'s home for prayer each week: I was not able to gather the wealth of information that one could have gleaned from constant contact.

I did, however, have the cultural skills necessary to socialize with, talk to, interview, and joke with these people and thus was able to move quickly into a position of rapport and mutual respect. I also was able to focus on a sub-culture without first having to learn about an entirely new society. Although the advantages of immersion in an unfamiliar culture are many, study within one's own culture likewise affords several advantages, a major one being the vast cultural background already intact and the subsequent level at which observation and understanding can begin.

My primary interest throughout my research has been on questions of ritual. I have begun, however, with a chapter entitled, "The Historical Background of Pentecostalism." This chapter briefly traces the development of the Black Pentecostal/holiness tradition from its theological origins in the eighteenth century to the founding of Holiness Tabernacle's parent organization in 1921. This provides a social and historical context in which to place Holiness Tabernacle and its

ritual. The second chapter, "Elements of the Ritual," views a knowledge of the character of the ritual as essential for one to understand Holiness Tabernacle. The Sunday morning service is the focal point of the church week and, as such, defines the roles and ritualistic emphases that constitute the church. This section describes a typical service and then breaks the service down into roles and major ritualistic elements. Chapter three, "Ritual and Reality," further explores the role of ritual, focusing on the symbiotic relationship between the ritual and the church members. Ritual not only creates attitudes and emotions in the members, but the members also choose to attend a church that encourages the attitudes and emotions that they view as valid. This chapter looks at the moods, motivations, and world view supported and fostered by the ritual.

The fourth chapter, "The Role of the Holy Ghost," focuses on the purpose of ritual as not only worship, but also as facilitating an experience of God. The Holy Ghost, as the spirit manifestation of God, is not only central to the ritual, but also is incorporated into each saved person, thereby affecting members both within and outside of the ritual context. The final chapter, "The Church as World Apart," explores some ways in which the ritual affects daily life. Members conceive of themselves as set apart from the world and try to live a life pleasing to God. This section examines the extent to which members are "not of the world" and the ways in which the church supports this lifestyle.

This paper thus begins by setting out a context in which to understand Holiness Tabernacle and its ritual and ends by examining ways in which beliefs expressed in the ritual are acted

out in daily life. It presents a picture of a church that strives to maintain a close relationship with God, one that grows out of the ritual and then is carried into daily life. The value of such a study is not limited to an understanding of one small church in one small town, however. It enhances the understanding of a myraid of other small sects that, while differing on minor points, share the same Pentecostal/holiness orientation. It is, finally, a contribution to a topic of perennial interest to anthropology, that of humanity's age-old involvement in the realm of the religious.

CHAPTER ONE

The Historical Background of Pentecostalism

Tell me, whattaya know 'bout Jesus?
He's alright!
Tell me, whattaya know 'bout Jesus?
He's alright!
Tell me, whattaya know 'bout Jesus?
He's alright!
Alright, alright, alright.

Pentecostalism is often viewed as a sect on the fanatical fringe of Christianity. Many people's knowledge of this form of Christianity is limited to notions of excess emotionalism, images of people chattering in the gibberish of unknown tongues, and conceptions of the congregation shouting out "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" in chaotic fashion. Pentecostalism is not, however, a disorderly collection of ecstatic rituals. It has a history that precedes the founding of the United States and is intimately bound up in the great periods of American revivalism that swept this new country. An examination of Pentecostalism's history reveals that this denomination grew out of the mid-nineteenth century Holiness Movement, which was at the center of progressive, mainline Protestantism in this period. It also shows that Black Americans played a crucial role in Pentecostalism's birth, although the new denomination quickly

divided racially. A study of Pentecostalism's history thus helps to explain this movement as a logical and natural outgrowth of Christianity.

The history of Pentecostalism also provides a perspective for understanding Holiness Tabernacle. It allows one to see the intellectual currents and ideas from which it developed and to understand its origin as a synthesis of both Holiness and Pentecostal traditions. In this way it provides a valuable context in which to study Holiness Tabernacle, serving to extend and enrich one's knowledge of a specific Black Pentecostal church.

The Holiness Movement

The Holiness Movement originated in the mid-1700's in the theology of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Although the modern United Methodist Church has rejected Wesley's teaching of a "second blessing," this concept was a component of early Methodism and was retained by other Wesleyan-based churches that developed later. Wesley taught that a Christian should undergo two separate phases of religious experience. The first was conversion, or justification, referring to the forgiveness of past sins committed. The second experience would eradicate "inbred sin," incurred from the Fall in Eden. This personal encounter with the Holy Ghost resulted in a purity of motives and desires that would aid one in becoming victorious over sin. This second blessing was called Christian perfection, or sanctification (Synan 1971: 13-33).

Methodism was carried to the American colonies from Britain in the 1740's. Propelled by great periods of revivalism, this

new denomination quickly spread. The notion of Christian perfection, or sanctification, fell out of favor, however, and received little attention until its reemergence in the 1830's, when it was picked up by "the reformist and perfectionist currents of pre-Civil War America as the product of the interaction of Methodism and American revivalism" (Dayton and Dayton 1976: 67). The famous Revival of 1857-58, led in large part by Charles G. Finney, Oberlin College's second president, propelled these perfectionist ideas into wider acceptance: the Baptists, Presbyterians, Quakers, and others incorporated perfectionism into their theologies.

Post-Civil War America found itself embroiled in great social turmoil: among its many crises, 600,000 people had died, the southern economy was in shambles, and the White population was faced with the influx as free citizens of the entire former slave population. Many White Christians, however, perceived the churches to be lethargic and stagnating, and therefore of little guidance at this crucial time. In the North, this situation served as a catalyst for the concept of Christian perfection, which took the form of a "holiness crusade," acting as

a response to an urgent desire for some effective, counter-revolutionary, spiritual force which could enable the individual Christians, other Christians, and through them the Christian church to cope with the disturbing changes in society as a whole (Dieter 1980: 6).

The result was the formation of the National Campmeeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness and several other interdenominational organizations, the purpose of this movement being to reform the church as a whole. By 1870, the holiness

crusade had swept the nation, gaining strong support in the South, but remaining primarily a White concern. This movement may be seen as a protest against the austerities of Calvinism, stressing instead the jubilant message not only of an accessible salvation, but of the possibility of spiritual perfection in this life. The Holiness Movement emphasized sanctification as a definite experience, a belief in miracles, faith healing, and the second coming of Christ, along with a return to a rather puritanical attitude toward life, including strict rules against drinking, tobacco, dancing, low cut dresses, etc. (Bloch-Hoell 1964: 15-16; Johnson 1961: 310).

Although the Holiness Movement by now had gained wide support, several groups of Methodists, beginning in the 1870's, began to feel that the established Methodist churches were not giving sanctification the emphasis it merited. At the same time, Methodist leadership began to question the validity of a "second blessing" theology. By the mid-1890's, groups had begun to splinter off and form their own denominations. "Thus, what began as a unification drive soon led to new religious bodies as internal schisms began" (Stark and Bainbridge 1981: 142). By the end of the nineteenth century, this splintering of holiness adherents had led to scores of new publications, the appearance of new evangelistic and mission movements, and the formation of many new denominations, the largest being the Church of the Nazarene and the Pilgrim Holiness Church (Dayton and Dayton 1976: 67).

One of the first holiness sects to emerge was founded by two Black men. Black Americans, however, had remained primarily on

the periphery of the revivals of the mid-1800's. Several authors have used this fact to argue that the "emotionalism" that is so frequently equated with Black worship first broke out among Whites and was characteristic of the whole period of American revivalism.

Emotional spasms, treeing the devil, jerks, trances, prophecies, speaking in tongues, and all the undisciplined religious expressions which are considered the black man's special province, these extravagances were first taught by whites and only later by Blacks (Washington 1974: 197).

How, then, did Black Americans become prominent in the Holiness Movement and come to play a crucial role in the origin of Pentecostalism? In order to understand the relationship between Black Americans and Christianity, one must turn briefly to a history of Black Christianity.

A Glimpse at Early Black Christianity

One of the earliest Black churches in the U.S. is said to have been founded by a Mr. Palmer at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, some time between 1773 and 1775. A liberal master was the patron of the congregation, allowing slaves to serve as pastors. This master eventually freed one of the church's first pastors, George Liele, so that he could preach without interference. Thus, freedom within the context of church life had an early beginning, for a Black preacher could sometimes achieve freedom "through his own initiative and sympathetic encouragement from White people and his own flock" (Mays and Nicholson 1969: 3,5).

Despite this early beginning, it was not until the early 1800's that this "invisible institution" began to spread widely

among the slave population. Many masters allowed slaves to hold their own meetings unbothered by Whites, a slave with a minimal education acting as preacher. Other plantations employed White ministers, who would then prepare special sermons and scripture passages that encouraged obedience and passivity (Simpson 1978: 231, 310). After the early nineteenth century, slave holders generally viewed religion as sustaining rather than threatening slavery, for they perceived pious slaves to be better workers and easier to control. For the slaves, one function of Christianity was to provide a meaningful element to a life that held no hope for family or future. "In the church, with their own kind, amid songs of redemption and the promises of Paradise, a lifeline could be thrown into the future (Wade 1971: 63,65). However, although virtually all American slaves had received some Christian religious instruction by the mid-nineteenth century, only a minority attended church regularly; overall, the White masters greatly neglected the slaves' religious instruction (Simpson 1978: 216-17).

Christianity was not confined to plantation life, however. In the cities, Black people often attended church with White people, usually Methodists or Baptists. However, these White churches did not welcome Black Americans as equal participants in church life, so "...the 'black sheep' of Christ's flock began to 'fold by themselves'" in the years following the Revolutionary War. One critical schism occurred in 1787. Two prominent Philadelphia Black men, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, led a group of Black Christians who worshipped at St. George's Methodist Church. One Sunday the White leadership ordered them

to move and take seats around the wall, later ordering them to the gallery. When a trustee attempted to pull Jones to his feet during prayer, the Black Americans marched out in a body. With the help of some Quakers they formed the Free African Society, which folded in 1791 when Jones and Allen pulled out, Jones to lead the Negro Episcopal Church in America and Allen to help form the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, still a major Black denomination today (Jordan 1971: 49-50).

By the mid-1790's, Black Americans had founded several racially separate churches in northern cities, as well as in some slave states. This was not by any means to the exclusion of interracial congregations, but the increasing number of exclusively Black churches could not be denied. Often these were not independent churches but were within an established denomination. Whites frequently helped Black worshippers build their own church buildings: White and Black members of the same denomination then held their own services (Jordan 1971: 51; Wade 1971: 71). However, many authors have pointed out that the Whites' willingness to give Black people their own churches was not an affirmation of Black worth or culture.

The splintering of the churches along racial lines was not simply a matter of Negroes recognizing that they would be more welcome elsewhere. It symbolized an increasingly clear-cut and pervasive separation. It meant that the one institution which was at all prepared to accept the Negro as an equal was shattered... (Jordan 1971: 52).

In the pre-Civil War epoch, Whites increasingly proscribed Black religiosity. Black insurrectionary movements like that of Nat Turner made it unpopular to teach Black Americans to read and

write, and meetings could be held only under watchful White eyes. The aftermath of the Civil War, however, gave new hope and life to Black enterprises. The South was now opened to northern churches: AME and AME Zion churches moved in and grew rapidly until only 35% of former Black members of predominantly White denominations remained in those churches (Simpson 1978: 232). Also, many new churches were founded as Black Americans schismed from White churches, migrated north, or became involved in the missions of established churches, as individuals and groups took the initiative, and as racial consciousness began to grow (Mays and Nicholson 1969: 29,14). The emergence of the first Black holiness sect was part of this transformation.

Elders C.H. Mason and C.P. Jones, two Black ministers from a Mississippi Baptist church, are credited with founding not only the first Black holiness sect, but also one of the first holiness sects to emerge from the Holiness Movement. In 1895 they began to preach the doctrine of entire sanctification, claiming the experience for themselves. Their church quickly banned them from the church for these teachings; thus, in 1897, Mason and Jones held a holiness revival of their own, marking the inception of what was to become today's largest Black Pentecostal denomination, the Church of God in Christ (Synan 1971: 77-80).

Mason's church was the first Southern holiness denomination to be legally chartered, thus enabling Mason to ordain many Black ministers. White ministers also sought ordination in Mason's church, and his organization soon became interracial. Now sects, missions, and Bible schools began rapidly to appear in the South. One of these schools was to become the catalyst for the

Pentecostal movement.

The Birth of Pentecostalism

The Rev. Charles Fox Parham opened the Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas in 1900. Forty students gathered to learn the major tenets of holiness. One night, after having studied the Biblical account of Pentecost, a student prayed for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, to be evidenced by speaking in tongues. Soon, the school was aflame with these strange tongues, every student caught up in the ecstasy. News of this incredible behavior reached the press, and soon Parham left his school to begin a tour of revivals. During this tour, Parham's teaching caught the attention of W.J. Seymour, a Black Baptist minister. Seymour began to attend Parham's classes, where he met Neely Terry, a Black woman from Los Angeles. When she returned home, she helped organize a small Black holiness mission, which then invited Seymour to come as its pastor. His first sermon, claiming speaking in tongues as the necessary initial evidence of the spirit baptism, was perceived by the church's leader to be contrary to holiness doctrine; the next night she locked Seymour out of the church. Undaunted, he began to hold services in a friend's house. One night, Seymour and seven others fell to the floor in religious ecstasy, all speaking in tongues. News of this spread throughout Los Angeles, and huge crowds flocked to see what was happening. When the porch collapsed under the pressure of the crowd, Seymour decided to look for larger quarters.

Seymour soon found an abandoned Methodist church, located at

312 Azusa Street. This site is usually regarded as the birthplace of Pentecostalism. As Seymour began preaching, people flooded in from all over the country, and a huge revival began. Scores of people spoke in tongues, while others shouted, wept, danced, and fell into trances. This continued day and night for three years. The revival ended in 1909, and, subsequently, all the White people pulled out, leaving the Azusa Street Mission to function as an independent Black church. Students of Pentecostalism have been unable to identify what precipitated this particular division or the rapid and complete split that followed. However, Black and White sects began to form deparately, while interracial sects began to schism. Racial divisions continued for five more years, until this new denomination was almost completely divided by race. What had been an interracial beginning had now led again to a split along racial lines (Synan 1971: 95-116).

Some former holiness groups, such as Mason's Church of God in Christ, became Pentecostal churches in the early 1900's. They retained the doctrine of Wesleyan perfectionism, but accepted the Pentecostal experience, thereby continuing as Pentecostal perfectionist groups (Kendrick 1961: 177).

This association occurred because the Pentecostals represented everything the nineteenth century Holiness movement had advocated. They were revivalistic fundamen- who acknowledged the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life and were puritanical in their rejection of tobacco, alcohol, the theater, and cosmetics (Simpson 1978: 255).

It is clear, then, that many aspects of holiness and Pentecostal beliefs are exceedingly similar and thus easily

compatible. This has led not to the formation of one large denomination, but instead to "the existence of a veritable spate of small groups" which lack much distinction in belief or style and which appear and disappear, unite and separate with great frequency (Nichol 1966: 136-37). One result of this lack of distinction has been the creation of very striking names: The Fire-Baptized Holiness Church of God of the Americas; The Latter House of the Lord for All People and the Church on the Mountain, Apostolic Faith; and Triumph the Church and the Kingdom of God in Christ, to name but three (Washington 1974: 202). All of these sects sprang from the same tradition, necessarily sharing much in "ethos, hymnody and social/cultural experience" (Dayton 1979: 786).

Among Black Americans, this new Pentecostalism established itself primarily as a southern, rural phenomenon. However, as Black Americans began to migrate north, they brought their Pentecostalism with them. Thus, Pentecostalism moved into urban areas, where it was able to undergo yet another stage of synthesis.

It was only in the urban milieu that one could put together Holiness dogma, Pentecostal answers, black music, and the deepest depression into a whole shape and sound limited neither by tradition nor fears of being put down by wise fools or foolish wisemen (Washington 1972: 80).

It was in such a context that the parent organization of Holiness Tabernacle was born.

The Beginnings of a Sect

In 1919, Lulu Phillips was called "in the beauty of holiness" to Huntington, West Virginia. She began preaching under a large tree, and subsequently became affiliated with the Triumph Church Kingdom of God in Christ. One distinctive tenet of this sect, which was apparently out of the holiness/Pentecostal tradition, was that no one would die before "the rapture" - before Jesus will come again and take all the saints up to heaven. Soon after Lulu Phillips arrived, however, the founder of the sect died, and the church quickly disbanded.

Brother Stokes, a former member of the Triumph Church, began his own mission. While working in the mines one day, he had a vision in which God told him that God wanted a "Glorious Church," so Brother Stokes named his mission the Glorious Church of God in Christ. When the members of the now-defunct Triumph Church met to discuss organizing their own church, Brother Stokes testified to his vision, and the group decided to adopt the name "The Original Glorious Church of God in Christ, Inc., Apostolic Faith." The newly-formed church elected Mother Phillips as pastor and quickly began construction of a church building in Huntington, with Mother Phillips as well as other women "pounding in nails along with the men." The building was completed later that year, in 1921.

Soon after the church opened, fifty new members joined those from the old Triumph church. Mother Phillips led this new church with great energy and charisma, winning the admiration and respect of the young congregation. Many anecdotes referring to Mother Phillips' immense weight are still laughingly related, as

well as respectful accounts of her ability to "dance in the Lord with amazing lightness." She was also known for her healing: crutches and canes from those she had healed hung on the walls. Everyone was equal in her eyes; old members affectionately recall that she called every person "Baby Child."

Several other churches were soon started under the auspices of the Glorious Church of God in Christ, many of them in West Virginia and Ohio. Mother Phillips often travelled to these churches, lending support, guidance, and enthusiasm. Many people, including some present members of Holiness Tabernacle, remember the last Bible class she taught before her death, for her presentation was exceedingly emotional and inspiring. She died later in the week of a heart attack. The organization appointed another woman in Mother Phillips' place, the year being 1939. This woman pastored and carried on in Mother Phillips' capacity until she died in the early 1940's. This was to be the last time a woman headed this organization. A man subsequently was appointed and was given the title of bishop, an office which women cannot hold.

Some members from the Huntington church founded Holiness Tabernacle in the late forties or early fifties. A city development project forced the church to move from its original building in the late fifties; the congregation immediately built a new building, which they dedicated in August of 1958. This building is the one in use today. The designations "holiness," "Pentecostal," and "Apostolic" appear to be synonymous for this congregation, which places much emphasis on sanctification and

holiness while calling itself Pentecostal. Thus, Holiness Tabernacle and its parent organization are a current manifestation of the synthesis of holiness and Pentecostal traditions that originated with the work of John Wesley in England in the 16th century.

Conclusion

White and Black American Christian traditions share the same historic roots, as well as often sharing much of today's theology and practice. Many denominations are interracial, as are individual sects and churches. Those denominations that have schismed racially usually remain theologically united and may continue using the same doctrine, rituals, and church organization.

However, as Henry Mitchell states, "It is important to remember again that there is a distinct Black religious experience today because there was and is a distinct Black experience in America..." (1970: 57). The Christianity of Black Americans grew not out of the Pilgrim tradition and European theologies, but out of the shared experience of slavery, suffering, and racial oppression. While adopting this White, Western religion, Black Americans have also adapted it to their needs and their culture, combining such elements as spirituals and a distinctive preaching style with a belief in Jesus and a faith in the Bible. Holiness Tabernacle has grown out of this process. Joseph Washington concludes:

So it happened that the indifference of established white Christianity [during slavery] to the religious needs of the very blacks they convinced themselves of having rescued from an intolerable paganism in Africa left the door open for these blacks to work out their own religious response to their peculiar experience in America. How well or how poorly they managed is written in large part in the record of the black cults and sects (1972: 35).

CHAPTER TWO

Elements of the Ritual

"...I like bein' in a church where no one looks at me funny for praisin' the Lord. It's fine that some folks can sit in one place, but that ain't the way the Lord made me."

(paraphrase of Elder H.)

The Sunday morning church service at Holiness Tabernacle is the highpoint of the church week. It is the service by which visitors are introduced to the church; it is the largest gathering of the church community; it is a time when people share their personal experiences of God, when emotions run high, and when praising God is a collective effort. Members who attend only erratically or who do not take part in other church events attend this service. This public ritual defines this church as a social reality in the secular world, in the judgment of other churches, and in the minds of the Holiness Tabernacle members themselves. This common experience provides the basis for the creation of additional church activities, for the sense of being a church community. Because the church service plays such a crucial role in self-definition, it is essential to examine closely the ritual of Holiness Tabernacle in order to gain an

understanding of the role that church plays in the members' lives.

Anthropologists frequently discuss ritual without stating any formal definition of the word. Most of the definitions that do exist identify ritual as a stylized, repetitive pattern of behavior based upon established rules. Jack Goody offers a definition that allows one more fully to understand ritual in a religious context:

[Ritual is] a category of standardized behavior in which the relationship between the means and the end is not "intrinsic", i.e. is either irrational or non-rational (1961: 159).

Thus, religious ritual is not only repetitive behavior but is also behavior that relies on the sacred for efficacy. Ritual also serves to define ceremony: one could easily tell from the events performed whether one had walked into a church service or a funeral, a baptism or a wedding. Churches differ radically in the degree to which their ritual is formalized. Catholicism advocates a highly regularized ritual form, filled with many acts of symbolic importance and containing creeds and prayers that must be repeated verbatim. Pentecostal churches fall at the other end of the scale. An established order of service certainly exists, but the length of each element as well as the actual events that comprise that element are variable. Adherents scorn formal creeds and prayers in favor of guidance by the Holy Ghost. To the uninitiated, such a service often appears rather chaotic and disorganized while, in fact, all the participants consciously know the ritual order, which is repeated at each service.

The Service at Holiness Tabernacle

For the most active members of Holiness Tabernacle, church begins at about 10:00 a.m. with Sunday School and ends around 8:00 p.m. at the close of the evening service. Times are rather fluid here, with everyone from the Sunday School teachers to the pianist to the minister arriving throughout the course of the morning. The Sunday School actually keeps two different tallies of attendance, one of total attendance and the other of those who were on time.

The morning worship service is the most formal event of the church week. Behavior is regularized and very predictable, although it might seem random and irrational to an outside observer. I have identified the order of events within the ritual as follows:

- 1- { 1. Opening song(s)
2. Scripture reading
3. Prayer requests
4. Prayer
5. Praise service
- 2- { 6. Consecrational song
7. Offering
8. Choir selection(s)
9. Pastor's song
10. Sermon
11. Altar call
- 3- { 12. Announcements
13. Benediction

Prayer and praise characterize the first segment. The second segment, marked by a distinct break in the flow of events, contains a shift of attention to the pastor. The third segment concerns events that one may classify as business matters.

The service is scheduled to begin at 11:45 a.m. People from Sunday School, however, have been having snacks in the dining room for the last twenty minutes and are difficult to stir. Someone from the waiting congregation must retrieve these people at the last minute, or the leader may begin without them, leaving them to wander in when they hear that the service has started. The service begins with two people (virtually always women) standing behind the altar in the role of devotional leaders. The particular Sunday of the month determines who these leaders are. The first Sunday of the month is Young People's Sunday. The "president of the young people" is therefore responsible for opening and conducting the first segment of the service or for choosing someone else to do so. The second Sunday is designated Missionaries, the third is Pastor's day, the fourth is Building Fund, and the fifth is Brotherhood.

After everyone has quieted down, one of the leaders usually requests a song, asking, "Does anyone have a song?" The active, leading women in the church are the same people always to begin the songs, although the leader always addresses this and subsequent requests to the whole congregation. Thus, character and habit rather than rule seem to dictate this pattern. The congregation sings all of the songs from memory, with one person singing out the first line of the song and the rest of the congregation joining in on the second line. The most common songs are very simple, not being composed of verses, but instead consisting of the same verse repeated many times. One common song is "Oh, how I love Jesus;/ Oh, how I love Jesus;/ Oh, how I love Jesus/ Because He first loved me." The congregation often

repeats such a verse for two or three minutes. The person who begins it functions as the leader, singing above everyone else and embellishing the line with harmonies and alternate figures. After four or five times through, this person often recedes as another picks up the lead. Frequently a new leader revives the song just before it dies out, singing very spiritedly and thereby prolonging the song for two or three additional minutes.

Musicians drift in throughout the service, sometimes arriving as late as the choir anthem. Brother F., who is in his seventies and now fairly disabled, is always in place beside the piano, his old guitar connected to an amplification system. Unfortunately for anyone with a musical ear, some mornings his volume is turned up quite high, with what he is playing frequently bearing little resemblance to what is being sung. Deacon V. plays the electric guitar and Deacon H. usually functions as the pianist, although Minister V. may fill in if he does not arrive. Occasionally a male organist also attends. All of these musicians play by ear and accompany every song, including the choir selection. The drum set is open to whomever wishes to play, often changing hands several times throughout a service: such a range of people as an elderly woman, a young mother holding her crying infant, and a boy of 8 or 9 may play it at various times. No one ever seems perturbed when a musician has difficulty picking up the song or experiments while someone is speaking.

As the first song of the service trails off, someone may be moved to begin another song, following the pattern described

above. The same person never begins two consecutive songs. The scripture reading follows the initial songs. The assistant devotional leader, who has not yet spoken, reads the scripture. This person chooses the passage and may read it in its entirety or by alternating verses, the first read by the leader, the second by the congregation, and so forth. After a verse people respond with "Umhum," or "That's right," although vocal response is generally limited here. The leader may conclude the scripture with a formula such as, "May the Lord bless His already blessed word," to which everyone responds "Amen."

The primary devotional leader then asks, "Will everyone please stand with your prayer requests." Active participation in this event differs dramatically from service to service. Usually five or six people stand immediately, speaking simultaneously as they begin to walk toward the altar. Occasionally one person can be heard above the others, saying something similar to "Pray for my family...pray for the pastor...pray for those absent...pray for the sick and infirm..." Speech is rapid and in a low tone, and it is unclear to whom these requests are aimed. Someone begins a song, which is usually short and subdued. People sing this as they begin to rise from their pews and follow those with prayer requests to the altar. Sometimes only eight or nine people kneel at the altar rail, while at other times virtually everyone crowds around, with only the very old and those holding infants remaining seated.

After the song dies out, everyone at the altar rail begins to pray aloud simultaneously. Each person seems to have developed his/her own praying style. Minister H. sings such

phrases as "Thank you, Jesus" and "Oh, yea" repeatedly. Minister V. speaks exceedingly rapidly, punctuating every phrase with two brisk claps. Some clap constantly as they pray, others shout out "Hallelujah!" periodically, and all speak quickly, using these techniques to "get Jesus on your mind." Throughout this, Mother M. or a minister prays at the pulpit. After approximately five to seven minutes, this person's prayer begins to rise above everyone else's. This prayer apparently is a continuation of the leader's prayer, although certain themes - safe travel, health, etc. - are frequently reiterated. The leader often ends the prayer with a formula repeated by line by the congregation. Mother M. always uses, "May the words of my mouth/ and the meditations of my heart/ Be acceptable in your sight,/ Oh, Lord/ Our strength/ And our Redeemer./ In Jesus' name,/ Amen."

Everyone then rises and walks back to her/his seat. Someone usually begins a short song here that continues only until everyone gets settled. At this time the primary devotional leader regains his/her position behind the altar. This may involve returning the altar to its original location, for anyone may push it aside if many people come forward for prayer. The leader now opens the "praise service" by asking for people to share a song, a Bible verse, or a "burning testimony." Most leaders ask, "Who will be first?", while Minister H., the pastor's wife, usually speaks for four or five minutes utilizing a rhetorical style that employs the repetition of key phrases, fairly rapid intonation, and a very wide range of volume and pitch. Other leading members use these same techniques when they

address the congregation and are very effective in raising the level of emotion.

This portion of the service is quite varied in character from week to week. It may be dominated by songs, Bible verses, or testimony, although Sister F. advises that long testimonies are better left for the evening service. People remain seated when they begin a song, although some stand as the song gets going, feeling the need to give physical expression to their feelings. People offering verses or testimonies stand. Verses are short, spoken rapidly, and are often repeated, with certain words heavily stressed: "The Lord is my shepard; I shall not want. The Lord is my shepard; I shall not want." People respond with "Amen!" Testimonies are concerned with thanking God and then testifying to God's greatness and efficacy. Some testimonies are very general: Deacon H. often praises God for getting him up this morning, giving him yet another day, getting him safely across the highways, etc. Others testify to the direct influence of God in their lives, such as when Sister L. testified that God had woken her up when she had fallen asleep while cooking. The house was black with smoke and she could have died from asphyxiation, but God was watching over her and awakened her.

When no one else wishes to contribute, the devotional leader turns the service over to the deacons, saying, "The service is now in the hands of the deacons." This may not be as easy to accomplish as it sounds, for some individuals may still be moved from the songs and testimonies and may continue singing or may be shouting "Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus!" Deacon V. and Deacon A.

are regular attenders and are the ones who "stand for the offering." Deacon A. asks everyone to "stand for the consecrational song." This is exceedingly different in character from the usual singing, being a very slow and solemn rendering of the traditional white Christian hymn, "My Faith Looks Up to Thee." While everyone remains standing, a minister or Mother M. says a prayer over the offering from the pulpit. As everyone sits, one of the deacons explains the offerings. (There are usually three.) Deacon V. then turns the service "into the hands of the usher." The usher for the week carries out a formal procedure by which each section of the room is able to walk to the offering plates on the altar and give their offerings without interfering with the next group. Sister I. is a particularly militant usher, blocking anyone who attempts to proceed out of turn. Someone often starts a song while the offering is being taken. The usher and the nurse are the last to give, marching together up the aisle from the back of the church. Deacon V. then picks up the offering plates, saying, "Can the church say 'Amen'?" to which is responded, "Amen." "Say 'Amen'." "Amen."

Deacon V. turns the service "into the hands of the choir director," who asks the choir members to rise. All of the young to middle aged women and one or two older women comprise the choir. They wear their robes throughout the service, but only move to the "choir loft" for the anthem. The choir has a repertoire of four or five anthems that they choose from each Sunday. One person, usually Minister H. or Deacon H., sings the lead from the pulpit microphone, while the choir sings the chorus

or repeated lines as they sway from one foot to the other. A favorite is "Jesus is Gonna Make Everything Alright," with the choir joining in on this repeated line while Minister H. sings the verses. All the musicians play along, and members of the congregation may clap or sing also. Both Minister and Elder H. have vibrant, flexible singing and speaking voices, which often visibly raise the level of excitement in the room.

After the anthem, one of the ministers goes to the pulpit and asks for a hand for the choir. Minister S., who sits up on the platform in the choir pews for the entire service, often does this. She appears to be the head minister, although this apparently is not an official capacity. She is the most highly emotional member and has a very rousing style of speech. She may speak here for several minutes, picking up themes from the anthem or talking about things for which the saints should be grateful. She ends by announcing that it is time for "the best part of the service" and introduces the speaker, who is usually Elder H., asking the congregation to stand and saying, "Congregation, this is Elder H. Elder H., congregation."

Elder and Minister H. often do not arrive until after the service has begun. Elder H. always remains in his study for the beginning of the service, generally coming out sometime between the praise service and the choir anthem. After he is introduced, everyone stands as he approaches the pulpit and begins a song. Following the song, he welcomes people who have not attended for a while, recognizes visitors who he then asks to "have a word," speaks of those who are sick, and then begins a "warm-up" for the sermon itself. Every phrase he follows immediately with a

rapid "Amen," as if it were part of the sentence: "You gotta be prepared Amen...for the comin' of the Lord Amen..." This continues for seven or eight minutes. He then reads the scripture lesson that will serve as the basis of his sermon. Most people follow along in their own Bibles or in the rather tattered, incomplete Bibles in every pew.

Elder H. then begins the actual sermon, usually continuing in the previous style. After anywhere from five to fifteen minutes, he breaks into a chanting style, singing each phrase on a single note. He now follows each phrase not by "Amen" but by a guttural "huh" that occurs coincidentally with a stomp of his foot and a hand clap. Throughout the sermon people are drawn into participation both of their own volition - shouting "Amen! or "That's right!" - and in response to Elder H., who uses such techniques as asking, "Ain't I right about it?" and saying, "You don't have to say 'Amen'," to which everyone shouts, "Amen!" in unison. He also may ask, "Who feels the Holy Ghost today? Raise your hand if you feel the Holy Ghost," and quote scripture, leaving out the last words - "And people will weep and wail and gnash...", to which everyone shouts, "their teeth!"

Elder H. may ignore the order of events within the sermon if he feels particularly moved, for he says that "I gotta preach when the Holy Ghost is in me!" In this case, the chanting begins immediately. Such instances support my observation that the pastor and the saints alike will sacrifice formality, both in the form of physical objects and order of service, in favor of needs brought on by the Holy Ghost. After a particularly intense and

exhausting portion of his sermon, Elder H. may switch instantly to a quiet, conversational style that lasts for three or four minutes. After he has caught his breath and people have relaxed, he just as quickly jumps back into his previous chanting style. He frequently walks down onto the floor while preaching, pointing at people and using their names in his illustrations: "Brother F. - he's probably like the rest of us. We all know more about what's in Ebony and Jet than we do about what's in God's word." Such illustrations are the occasion of much laughter in the congregation.

Elder H. winds down his sermon by gradually moving into a soft, speaking style. He may end by saying, "We thank God this morning for His word. We're gonna stop now and ask Minister S. to come forward..." The appointed leader invites anyone who is "in need of prayer" to come to the altar. Again, participation varies. Often at least two-thirds of the congregation kneels and stands around the altar rail. Mother M. or the acting minister for the service usually anoints each person with oil rubbed on her/his forehead in the shape of the cross. Elder H. then begins at the left side of the railing. He places his hands on the person's head, this person raising her/his arms, palms facing forward. The minister puts her hand on Elder H.'s back and Mother M. puts her hand on the minister's back. All three pray aloud. People frequently become very emotional here, their bodies convulsing, followed by weeping. This appears to occur only in women. Both sexes weep, however. A nurse stands nearby, handing out tissues and protecting those who engage in what members call the "Holy Dance." This occurs during rousing songs

and during the altar call, often beginning while a person heads back to her seat. (Again, I have observed this only in women.) This ecstatic dance is a possession by the Holy Ghost. The person, standing, begins to convulse, perhaps better explained as jerking. This person seems to have no control over her body, so anyone nearby springs to her aid to catch glasses, hold her up, and keep her from banging into things. No one else pays much attention to all this, and the next segment of the service may begin while someone is still "possessed."

After the three leaders have prayed over each person, Elder H. often prays over Mother M. and Minister S. Minister S. always becomes very emotional, frequently shouting and shaking long after Elder H. has returned to his seat. She may also speak in tongues, being the only person whom I have heard do so.

The transition to announcements is often made amid some residual shouting. Elder H. may ask the secretary to give the announcements, or she may initiate them herself if Elder H. is kneeling in front of his chair in prayer after a particularly charged and exhausting altar call. Minister V. tells how much the offerings were and announces up-coming events. Others may also stand and give announcements.

Elder H. may again mention visitors, speak for a couple of minutes, and then ask Mother M. and Minister S. to speak, if they haven't already done so during the service. Both usually give a short testimony. One of these three then gives the benediction. Everyone stands and "raises a hand for the blessing." The leader recites a formulaic benediction, with the congregation repeating

each phrase. People mill around for ten or fifteen minutes, greeting each other with a handshake and "Praise the Lord," to which the other person responds in kind. There is much joviality, teasing, and exchanging of bits of news.

Since Elder and Minister H. live in Cleveland, one woman prepares dinner for them each week, inviting over the others who provide the same service. This occurs after the service, which ends around 2:30. These people remain at the hostess's house until the 6:00 p.m. service, when most of them return to the church. This service follows the order of the morning service, although there is no choir and testimonies dominate the praise service. Attendance is often very small (8-12).

This exuberant and vibrant ritual is the center of church life. Members seem to lay aside worldly concerns here and give full attention to God as they can at no other time. Sister V. emphasizes that "you only get out of it what you put in: you can't just go to church." The ritual recharges and strengthens members for the next week, much of which they must live out with people who do not share their faith or their lifestyle. This ritual fosters an affirming, supportive community that comprises the core of Holiness Tabernacle.

Titles and Roles in the Ritual

The Holiness Tabernacle service includes everyone, from the pastor to the visitor, in some way. Each person has an opportunity to participate actively and many take leading roles within the service. Each person holds at least one title that has meaning only within the church community. The most basic

designation is that of "saint." This term refers to any saved member of the congregation and is used as an inclusive rather than an exclusive term: there is no comparable term for a non-saint and leaders address the congregation collectively as "saints." Members use the term primarily in the context of the ritual, often employing it at the end of a testimony in the phrase, "Pray for me, saints."

Every saint is referred to as a "brother" or a "sister." These function as terms of address with the addition of the person's last name, although some women are occasionally referred to by "Sister" followed by their first names. Thus, people who have known each other for many years and are close friends address each other as "Sister Jones" or "Brother Brown" rather than by first names. Again, these terms theoretically designate saved members but are in practice applied to anyone who is perceived of as part of the church family. Thus, Elder H. began addressing me as Sister Word, despite my very un-saved status. Members use these terms inclusivistically, fostering a sense of community, belonging, and equality. Outside of the church context usage varies. While interviewing an informant, I heard her speak on the phone to a member whom she addressed as "Brother F.," while she later spoke to me of another member whom she referred to as "Mrs. I." Another informant, however, always referred to members as "Brother" and "Sister." Generally, it appears that these terms are used consistently between members as long as non-members are not present. As the situation becomes more secular, these titles are more likely to be dropped.

During the service the role of the saints as sisters and

brothers is one of both support and participation, for they are "both creator and consumer of the ritual performance (Paris 1982: 71). People in the congregation begin songs, offer Bible verses and testimonies, give vocal responses, clap and shout, and become possessed by the Holy Ghost. They also fill the roles of devotional leader, choir director, nurse, usher, and musician, roles integral to the smooth flow and efficacy of the service.

The older, respected, and faithful women of the church are ordained as "mothers." This is both a title of respect and a designation of a specific role. Mothers are charged with "keeping peace between the saints" and should be prepared to settle grievances, watch over all the saints, and teach wives how to treat their husbands, clean their houses, and generally run their households. Mother M. is the oldest mother in the church and is called "the church mother." No one ever refers to her as "Sister." The other women who have been ordained mothers are frequently referred to as sisters, but either term is acceptable. The church mother sits on the platform with the pastor and is often called on to lead prayers, give a special testimony, or pray over people. Her position is very respected and is one of guidance for the saints.

A "faithful" man of any age may be ordained a deacon. His job is to take care of financial matters, including the collecting and counting of the offering, to clean the church, maintain the building, and watch over the pastor. Women may be deaconettes, but Holiness Tabernacle largely neglects this official capacity. Even Minister S. was

not able to identify any woman as a deaconette with certainty. The oldest deacon at Holiness Tabernacle (who is only in his mid-thirties) is always referred to as Deacon A., while the others may be called Deacon or Brother.

At least four women in the church have been ordained as ministers. Ministers are members who feel called by the Holy Ghost to preach God's word. Ministers need no specific education, although they do study the Bible individually. Each church has several ministers at one time, who may be either male or female. These ministers may speak at their own church upon occasion and may also be invited to preach at sister churches. Minister S. is the head minister at Holiness Tabernacle, sitting every Sunday up on the platform with Elder H. and Mother M., but on the side. She is often called on to lead prayers and pray over others. She is almost always referred to by the title "Minister," while the other ministers are often called Sister. As with the titles Mother and Deacon, that person who is seen as best representing the attributes of one in such a position is always referred to by this special designation, while usage varies for others in the category.

The pastor is the most venerated member of the church. While all others are perceived as equal. The pastor is seen as a special person and is given the further title of respect of "Elder." The pastor's sermon is virtually always introduced as "the best part of the service" and is seen as the focus of the service. A pastor may be male or female, having his/her beginnings as a particularly effective minister. Elder H. is seen as the head of the church and is responsible for the

religious development of each member as well as having responsibility for the operation of the church as an institution. He is referred to exclusively as Elder H.

These titles, then, signal both to the congregation and to the individual the role that each person is to play and his/her level of involvement in and commitment to the church. The pastor, church mother, and head minister are highly visible throughout the service and are looked to for guidance and support. Although these titles extend outside of the ritualistic setting to other church activities and to life outside of the church, it is within the context of ritual that these terms are given meaning.

Major Ritualistic Elements

Another way to examine the Holiness Tabernacle ritual is to break it down into four elements - music, prayer, testimony, and preaching. These comprise the essence of the service. These ritualistic elements provide the primary modes of expression and communication, eliciting the attitudes and intense emotions that characterize this style of worship.

One of the most pervasive and essential elements of the Holiness Tabernacle service is music. It occurs throughout the service, often being used as a means of transition to the next event. There is certainly never a silent point in the service, for someone will invariably fill it with a song. One person always begins a song, unsolicited, as the congregation goes forward with its offering and as people walk to the front for the altar call. A song also marks the transition to the pastor's

sermon. If the organist is present, he weaves various chords and melodies into the end of the sermon, continuing into the altar call. Music can also become a very emotional part of the service, providing a means by which people can really "feel the Spirit" and express their growing sense of joy and exuberance. In this case, music is not used as an unobtrusive transition technique but is instead the focus of attention. The songs offered during the praise service frequently lead people to jump to their feet, while others wave their hands in front of them. Some may also become possessed by the Holy Ghost, engaging in ecstatic dance.

Most people become physically involved in the music beyond the simple singing of the song. Clapping is considered an integral part of the singing. At least one person claps in every song, no matter how small the congregation. Straight clapping is embellished by others clapping subdivisions and syncopation, especially at the end of a line. Tambourines are also used to enliven the song. Three or four tambourines lie in the pews; anyone may use them, although they are usually played by young to middle-aged women. Virtually everyone is actively involved in the song, including very small children whose parents encourage them as infants to clap on the beat.

Music, then, is essential in this ritual, and it has several functions. It includes everyone present, thereby reinforcing a sense of community. It has a didactic function, with most songs centering on the greatness of Jesus. It also appeals to one's less rational, emotional side and thus may both strongly imprint

the message of the song upon one's mind and also generate high levels of emotion. People often "get happy" during these songs and are able to feel the presence of the Holy Ghost very strongly. Indeed, one of the primary roles of music is in the channeling and generating of emotions.

Prayer is also often a time of high emotions. No standard prayers are read but, instead, prayer is always an outgrowth of each person's current concerns and needs. Prayer is individual but is engaged in collectively: when people come forward with prayer requests, each person kneels at the altar and prays his/her own prayer, often aloud, while one person stands at the mike and "leads" the prayer. During the altar call, people pray individually but simultaneously, while the pastor also prays over each person by his "laying on of hands" and accompanying prayer. Both men and women often leave the altar rail weeping, while other women become possessed by the Holy Ghost. One Sunday Sister J. began the Holy Dance as she started down the aisle to her seat. She danced to the back, where Elder H. and Minister S. were praying over a woman, and she joined in the laying on of hands. She then began to walk back and forth briskly in the aisle, shouting, "Hallelujah!" and "Thank you, Jesus!" She stopped to pray over a mentally retarded woman and repeated over and over "It's in your hands, Lord" and "My soul says yes, Lord." She knelt at the altar rail while the service continued and eventually moved back to her seat. Prayer is thus another medium by which people's emotions become highly charged and by which people may experience the presence of God.

Testimonies are important in witnessing to the role of God

in people's lives and are an excellent indicator of how the saints perceive God's work. They are important because they reinforce the idea that God is indeed active in each individual's life. They also allow people to share what is necessarily a very private experience. The whole process of becoming "sanctified" - achieving Christian holiness and perfection - is internal, between God and the individual. Thus, one indicator of a person's spiritual growth and experiences is the testimony. This personal experience is related in a highly affirmative environment, for people respond throughout the testimony with "That's right" and "That's o.k.," with everyone proclaiming "Amen!" at its conclusion. Testimony transforms one's personal relationship with God into a community event that affirms and encourages the faith of the speaker and of all the saints.

One may also view the testimony as an ordered speech act that follows rules or patterns. The first rule is that a testimony is always given standing. Once the person has stood and no one else is speaking, she/he may begin. Testimonies may be divided roughly into two categories, those dealing with a specific event in daily life and those that address more spiritual concerns. Both often begin with something similar to: "I thank the Lord for waking me up this morning, for bringing me safely across the highway, and for giving me a chance to be in His house just one more time! He didn't have to do that, but..." A testimony may continue in this way, affirming in rather abstract terms the power and love of God or Jesus. Kroll-Smith, in his study of testimonies as performance, was able to record

many testimonies. The excerpts from the one that follows are an excellent example of this style of testifying:

"...I'm thanking the Lord for being here tonight. I'm thanking the Lord for my life, health, and strength. Most of all I thank the Lord how he saved me, sanctified me, and filled me with His precious Holy Ghost. I'm thankin' the Lord tonight how God has gave me favors. Thank God that He gave to the people the faith to believe that prayer is the key. Hallelujah!

There is something mighty sweet about the Lord. You know that song, 'Lord I Thank You'? I thank God. I thank God that He sent me here. I just can't thank Him enough. I could thank Him for ten thousand days and still not thank Him enough.

...And I want you to pray my strength in the Lord that I keep on keepin' on. Hey! Thank you Jesus! Keep on keepin' on in God's work! 'Cause He said that your work would make room for ya (room in Heaven). I'm thankin' God for it!

Those of you know the Holy Ghost, who know the strength of prayer, please pray my strength in the Lord" (1980: 20).

The second style of testifying usually begins as stated above but switches into a personal account of how God has recently worked in this person's life. Testimonies often relate how God has directly intervened to save a person from harm. People are very aware of the dangers of the road, and testimonies during the winter often recount narrow escapes on the highway. One Sunday, Minister H. testified that she had been driving over an icy road, when suddenly the back of her car swung around. She was about to smash into a telephone pole but somehow bounced off the curb, and she was able to regain control. This she attributed directly to the work of God. God may also order the course of events, requiring a person to put his/her "trust in the Lord." Deacon A. testified that he had been recommended for a promotion and was waiting to be interviewed. He hoped that he would get the job, but he was praying for the strength to put his

future in God's hands, for "if God closes a door, another will be opened."

One person may employ both styles over the course of several weeks, with the second being the most frequent. People testify only if they feel moved to do so, and no one testifies every week, except Mother M., who is asked to do so. The speaker usually signals the end of a testimony by a request for prayer - "Pray for me, saints" or "Pray my strength in the Lord." Testimonies are thus also an appeal for concern on the part of the church for one's spiritual state.

The pastor's sermon is viewed as the most important element in the church service. Elder H. often is introduced in this way, and people frequently inquire of visitors what they thought of "the message." Preaching, then, plays a central role in the ritual. Elder H.'s style, described above as involving chanting, repetition, and audience participation, is characteristic of the traditional Black preaching style. Judged by academic standards, such sermons are ill-prepared and difficult to follow, resembling a stream of consciousness more than a prepared sermon. The concept of preparation differs, however, from that required for a planned speech. The speaker studies the Bible and, with God's guidance, chooses a scripture, which she/he then uses as the basis of the sermon. Pastors may then write out notes or an outline, but what is actually said in the sermon is through the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Minister V. related how she is always nervous before she preaches, but when she prays and trusts in the Holy Ghost to guide her, words simply come out of her

mouth. Prayer thus also comprises a large portion of preparation time.

A good sermon, then, is not judged on its logical point-by-point coverage, but is instead judged by the resonance the theme has for the congregation. Most sermons focus on Jesus or on faith - "Jesus can do anything for you," "Fix your heart on Jesus," or "Lord, touch me one more time" - with the speaker repeating the key phrase frequently throughout the sermon. In one sermon, Elder H. repeated the theme phrase, "If a man dies, will he live again?" many times. In between these repetitions, he made statements that he would then explicate or embellish. Several of these statements were as follows: "You're either gonna be with Jesus or with the demon down in Hell;" "Be ye not conformed to this world;" "The way you live is the way you die;" "You gotta prepare for Jesus." People respond vocally to those points which are meaningful for them, saying "That's right," "Amen!", etc.

Elder H. often becomes very animated, "runnin' all around up there," as Sister F. says. He occasionally does not adhere to the structure of his presentation as a whole, omitting his introduction and scripture reading if he feels particularly moved by the Holy Ghost. As Henry Mitchell notes:

Black preaching has always assumed that preaching must be an experience, not merely a clever idea. It involves the totality of a person and is, consciously or not, concerned to organize feeling tones around the text (1974: 73).

Members of the congregation do not, however, become actively possessed during the sermon; rather, they participate verbally and through techniques employed by Elder H. One indicator of the

efficacy of the sermon is the level of participation in the altar call, which follows immediately: after a particularly meaningful and well-preached sermon, most of the congregation comes forward to the altar with little encouragement. The laying on of hands is then frequently very emotional, with people weeping, shouting, and engaging in ecstatic dance.

These four elements are the essential contributors to the character of the Holiness Tabernacle service. They work together to create a smoothly-flowing ritual that engenders concentrated attention on a praise of and communion with God. They embody the primary modes of expression and communication utilized in the ritual and thereby contribute heavily to the church's self-understanding.

Conclusion

One must remember that Holiness Tabernacle is primarily a place of joy and praise. A church service is not a solemn occasion that becomes onerous to attend, but is rather a welcome opportunity to worship, praise, and talk with God.

The time spent in worship is not forced. It is enjoyed. It is an avenue of highly satisfying self-expression. Who needs to go home? Perhaps more importantly, on the Black agenda: what could possibly take preeminence over this duty to God which is at the same time so enjoyable to the worshipper? (Mitchell 1970: 109).

An archetypal description of this Sunday morning service not only answers one's curiosity about what these people do for two and a half hours each week, but it also reveals the roles that comprise the church community and the elements that this community considers necessary to worship God. These findings, however, are

not unique to Holiness Tabernacle, for other churches from this same Pentecostal/holiness tradition share similar features and ritualistic patterns. An understanding of Holiness Tabernacle's ritual thus furthers one's understanding of all churches that claim this history.

CHAPTER THREE

Ritual and Reality

City called Heaven
City called Heaven
City called Heaven someday.
Oh, I'm gonna make it
Help me to make it
City called Heaven someday.

When members of Holiness Tabernacle were asked why they attend this church, they gave a variety of answers. Brother V. values his "personal relationship with God" that is sustained through the church. Minister V. mentioned the emphasis placed on leading a righteous, holy life. Sister I. appreciates the fundamentalist understanding of the Bible, saying, "Some preachers don't follow the real word of God, [in order] to suit the peoples." All of these answers reflect emphases in the Holiness Tabernacle ritual - contact with God, living holy, relying on the Bible. What, then, are the attitudes and emotions fostered by the ritual and why they are real and meaningful?

The Role of Socialization

Socialization plays a large role both in attitudes and emotions and in the reality of religious experience. Socialization seems to figure largely in people's reasons for

attending a holiness/Pentecostal church. Minister V. was brought up in a fundamentalist church and began attending Holiness Tabernacle while still a child. Minister S.'s father was an AME (African Methodist Episcopal) church pastor in the holiness tradition, and she was brought up to lead a "close" life. Sister I. likewise was raised within the AME tradition, while Sister J. has identified herself as "being holiness" all her life.

Many of these people who were raised in this tradition left the church as they grew older. Minister S., who was baptized at age 12, left the church after she was grown because she had been under so many restrictions as a child. She found, however, that "the world" was not what she had expected, and she soon returned to the church. After moving to her present home she began to attend a local AME church, but she found it to be more Episcopalian than holiness and she "could never understand it." When a friend began taking her to Holiness Tabernacle's sister church, the service immediately reminded her of the church in which she was raised. She could understand and identify with this style of worship and this experience of God and soon became a church member.

Another illustration of the importance of socialization comes from a very different situation. Brother V. was brought up in a staunchly Catholic family. As he grew older, he felt that he was not getting much out of the Mass. A friend took him to a Catholic charismatic prayer group, but this struck him as very disorganized and chaotic. When a woman at work (his future wife) invited him to Holiness Tabernacle, he agreed to go. At the first service he was exceedingly nervous and sat on the edge of

his seat throughout the morning. He very much enjoyed the music, however, and soon began bringing his bass guitar. Although he quickly found a niche for himself and felt very loved and accepted, he still found it "hard to relate to why people were feeling so happy" and he did not feel a part of the service. Thus, although he desperately wanted the same relationship with God that he perceived these people to have, placing himself in such an environment was not sufficient to allow him to experience God in this emotional, charismatic way. Only after counseling with Elder H., prolonged attendance and participation, repeated coachings during the altar call surrounded by all the church mothers, and, very importantly, total acceptance of and commitment to church doctrine and practice did Brother V. have the desired experience of the Holy Ghost.

These two examples are a good illustration of the fact that the ways in which one experiences God are socialized. People are socialized into getting a certain emotion or experience out of an event, just as their response to that emotion is socialized. Coming from a very White, mainline, middle class Protestant church, I never felt the desire to jump to my feet during a song. This, however, has become an automatic reaction for any member at Holiness Tabernacle who feels excited or "gets happy" while singing. Likewise, when someone at this church becomes possessed by the Holy Ghost, itself a socialized response, she/he does not bark or pirouette around the room, as some did during the period of American revivalism, but instead engages in speaking in tongues or, more likely, ecstatic dance. Ninian Smart notes:

It is too simple to suppose that men [sic], having had an experience of the Holy, then create rituals to express and re-create the awe which they felt. Rather, the very guise under which the experience presents itself owes something to the ritual milieu (1979: 19).

Ritual must be seen not as an abstract entity that by its own effort creates certain moods and motivations in people, but rather as a repeated pattern of behavior that was conceived of and carried out by people who believe in this ritual's ability to foster specific attitudes and behaviors. As Clifford Geertz points out, "...he who would know must first believe" (1966: 26).

Moods and Motivations

Geertz, in his article "Religion as a Cultural System," has formulated the following definition of religion:

[Religion is] (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [sic] by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (1966: 4).

His concept of moods and motivations and their development into reality offers an avenue for examining the attitudes and actions that the ritual encourages and the way in which these reinforce and define a world view. For, as Geertz notes:

It is in some sort of ceremonial form...that the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men [sic] and the general conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for men meet and reinforce one another (1966: 28).

Using this framework of "moods and motivations" to examine the ritual, one can identify attitudes and actions that are essential to a believer. Six are readily observable: emotionalism, worship and praise, prayer, contact with God, "living holy," and

community.

Emotionalism is a major feature of this style of worship. Shouting, clapping, speaking in tongues, ecstatic dance, quaking, "getting happy" and expressions of joy are all manifestations of this mood. By dividing the ritual into the four major elements identified in the previous chapter - music, prayer, testimony, and preaching - one can recognize music and prayer as encouraging and containing the primary occurrences of this emotionalism.

The style of music sung in Holiness Tabernacle speaks to the irrational, emotional side of human nature. This gospel, spiritual style lends itself to exuberant singing; even the most staid observer would have difficulty keeping his/her foot from tapping. The songs are also optimistic in content, frequently dealing with one's love for Jesus, the "great day" of the rapture, Jesus' power to set all things aright.

Music also the primary mode for "getting happy." This is a feeling of joy and exuberance brought on by the knowledge of being "saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost" and a feeling of closeness to God. People who "get happy" do just that, smiling, clapping, perhaps leading a song, jumping to their feet or swaying from side to side. Spirit possession also occurs during singing, usually in the form of ecstatic dance. This is emotionalism at its height, for the possessed person may shake, shout, weep, and lose control of her body.

The altar call also encourages emotionalism. This is the time when the pastor invites anyone who is "in need of prayer" to come forward, so the participants are often already in an

expectant, open state. Three people pray aloud simultaneously over each person, while the pastor "lays hands" on that person's head. This is often a very intense, emotional experience, characterized by shouting, weeping, and often spirit possession. Thus, the ethos of the altar call and music provide environments in which one can become free from worldly concerns, abandoning oneself to experiencing God.

Worship and praise are both a mood and a motivation. A worshipful mood is perpetuated each week, through testimonies, songs, and sermons. These elements continually stress the power, love, and efficacy of God, creating attitudes of awe, of thankfulness, of obedience. These moods easily result in motivation, in the desire not just to feel thankful and worshipful but actually to worship and praise. This is a very major and basic motivation that works throughout the ritual. One acts on these motivations in a way acceptable to the church, testifying to God's role in one's life, singing songs to the glory of God, believing and following God's word as contained in the Bible and in the sermon. In this way worship and praise, as both mood and motivation, continually fosters and reinforces itself.

Prayer also functions as mood and motivation. Like worship it involves praise, while also including thanks and petition or supplication. This attitude of praise and thanks grows out of a much different mood from that of songs or testimonies, however. When prayer occurs in the ritual, the mood it emphasizes is one of humility. The congregation sings in a very subdued manner as they approach the altar rail, no one clapping loudly or playing

tambourines. Each person then kneels at the altar rail, in a physical posture of humility and supplication. Once familiar with this pattern, the expectation of impending prayer and the participation in the subdued singing induces a prayerful mood. The desire to act upon this mood transforms it into the action of prayer.

The desire for contact with God is an enormously important motivation in this ritual, and will be dealt with at greater length in the following chapter. However, it can be examined here in terms of the moods and motivations model. The motivation to encounter God grows partially out of the preceding moods - emotionalism, worship, and prayer. The ritual encourages it by utilizing rousing, emotional music, by making the altar call a very intense experience, and by supporting those who do become possessed. The congregation, then, views this personal contact as the ideal state to attain. This motivation encourages people to become emotionally involved in the singing, to "get happy," to become intensely involved in prayer. Actual spirit possession is usually manifest in ecstatic dance, which, while generally ignored by the congregation while it occurs, is tacitly supported by the intense levels of many events and the aid rendered by those nearby.

The ritual also fosters the motivation to "live holy." The humility of prayer creates the desire to conform to God's wishes. Testimonies witness to the positive benefits of a holy life. The pastor's sermon preaches doctrine couched in understandable, everyday examples and terms that emphasize the need to live by

the Bible and to be obedient to God. Such elements constantly reinforce holiness, while not discussing a worldly life or showing it to be in direct violation of God's commandments. Members carry this motivation out of the ritual and incorporate it into daily life.

Finally, this ritual creates the mood and motivation of community. The stress on collective activity, which extends from singing in unison to simultaneous prayer, the use of titles that have a reality only for the group, the sharing of testimonies that reveal personal experiences of God as well as ask for prayer - all these ritualistic aspects foster a sense of community. The motivation for community grows out of the motivation to "live holy" and the accompanying knowledge that such a lifestyle is not supported by society. This, then, forces the group to recognize its unity and to desire to maintain this support system.

These six moods and motivations are central attitudes and actions that comprise the worship experience for the members. They are indeed "powerful, pervasive, and longlasting," for they inform people's expectations and behaviors both in and out of the church context, often causing people to undergo the transformation of salvation or to commit their lives to the church. They carry a unique reality in the members' understanding, for they form a reciprocal system. These moods and motivations seem real because they fit socialized expectations. They are then proven to be real because they are efficacious: the ritual does facilitate spirit possession for these people. This then reinforces the original socialized acceptance. Thus, these moods and motivations are "uniquely

realistic."

Ritual and World View

The notion of socialization is also relevant in an examination of reality as formulated by one's world view. Ritual is meaningful only if it can be set in a cosmological scheme. Ritual must either define or reinforce a particular world view. The major role that socialization plays in the acceptance of beliefs and practices would seem also to indicate that Holiness Tabernacle's members came to that church with a compatible world view, rather than having that conception of reality developed for them by ritual and doctrine. A person who had no belief in an afterlife would be very unlikely to be attracted to a church like Holiness Tabernacle, where the concept of salvation is a fundamental belief. Smart states:

The ritual, cultic aspect of religion, then, furnishes in part the concepts through which experience is interpreted, and the context therefore in which religious encounters make sense (1979: 20).

Thus, ritual plays most importantly a reinforcing role in the development of one's world view.

The Holiness Tabernacle ritual supports a distinct conception of God. Doctrine posits three manifestations of one God - God the Father (Creator), Son (Savior), and Holy Ghost (indwelling spirit). Ritual emphasizes the latter two, Jesus and the Holy Ghost. Verbal events stress the primacy that Jesus should hold in each person's life. He is the subject of most songs - "Jesus Is the Light," "My Soul Loves Jesus" - and is petitioned in prayer, which must be preceded by "getting your

mind on Jesus." Elder H. counsels people who are upset to "give it to Jesus." Sermons often concern the power of Jesus - "Fix your heart on Jesus," "Jesus will comfort you" - and baptism is valid only if administered "in the name of Jesus only." Experiential events prove the role of the Holy Ghost. "Getting happy" and spirit possession prove that the Holy Ghost is the indwelling spirit of God. The different character and length of the service from week to week demonstrates the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Ritual, then, emphasizes distinct roles for Jesus and the Holy Ghost. These are a part of the members' world view, and they thereby incorporate them into daily life. Sister J. calls on "the blood of Jesus" whenever she is faced with a difficult or trying situation, and Minister S. believes that the Holy Ghost guides her in all aspects of life: "He can come to you in the grocery store or tell you to change direction."

This ritual also supports a distinct view of heaven and hell. The emphasis on salvation illustrates this most clearly. One must be "saved" in order to go to heaven upon dying; otherwise, one will be sent to "the lake of fire." Furthermore, only the saved will be "raptured up" when Jesus comes again. The unsaved will be left on earth in the "tribulation," where the devil shall reign. The necessity of salvation is emphatically preached from the pulpit, although Elder H. does not engage in "fire and brimstone" sermons. Songs again reinforce this message, as the congregation sings "City Called Heaven" and "My Lord's Getting Us Ready for that Great Day." Membership status hinges on the condition of being saved, for only those who are

saved have the ability to encounter God directly during the ritual through spirit possession and "getting happy." Thus, this ritual reinforces a classical understanding of heaven, hell, and afterlife that is drawn from a literal reading of the Bible.

These understandings of God and heaven that are propounded in doctrine and acted upon in ritual must necessarily have ramifications for daily life. Ethics is one area in which this is easily seen. People who are "saved and sanctified" must lead a holy life consonant with the life of Jesus. The Bible teaches, "Be ye holy," and one who is saved must strive to obey God's word. Thus, the church teaches that members may not drink, smoke - "We can't imagine God smokin' an ol' cigar or cigarette" - "carouse," dance, "cuss," attend movies, go bowling, or go to sports events. Saints must avoid these "worldly" activities, for the saved person is already living in the Kingdom of God. A member may "backslide" and be lured back into the things of the world by the devil. Minister S. said that she used to think that the devil was a "horned beast," but now she knows that he is a spirit. "He's busy" and can "get in you." He sets up "jobs," which his millions of imps then carry out. "Prayer unceasing" is the way to combat the power of the devil and continue to live a holy life dedicated to God. Thus, this system of right and wrong grows directly out of views of God, of salvation, of heaven and hell, and of Jesus that are propounded and reinforced within the context of ritual. This ethical system, of which these proscriptions are a part, requires a lifestyle that is markedly different from that of mainstream America. Ritual, while encouraging this lifestyle, also offers a context in which it can

be reaffirmed and strengthened each week, in which the "rightness" of such a lifestyle is affirmed again and again.

Conclusion

For both world view and moods and motivations, the relationship between acceptance and reinforcement is circular. Members with a specific world view are presented with a ritual and accompanying belief system that seems uniquely adapted to the world view that they hold. As they adopt the lifestyle required by their religious beliefs, they discover that the way they experience the world fits the world view presented in ritual. In this way, one who believes that she/he can encounter God through spirit possession becomes possessed, which then proves to her/him that God does indeed work in this way, a process that Peter Berger terms, "the inherently dialectic character of the societal phenomenon (1967: 3-4).

Thus, ritual is an integral part of the process that makes the moods and motivations and world view uniquely real in these people's lives, for it works to propound, reinforce, and prove them. Geertz notes:

Where for "visitors" religious performances can, in the nature of the case, only be presentations of a particular religious perspective, and thus aesthetically appreciated or scientifically dissected, for participants they are in addition enactments, materializations, realizations of it - not only models of what they believe, but also models for the believing of it. In these plastic dramas men attain their faith as they portray it (1966: 29).

In this way, the attitudes, emotions, and actions that are

fostered in ritual are given reality and are incorporated into one's lifestyle.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Role of the Holy Ghost

He's sweet I know;
He's sweet I know.
Dark clouds may rise;
Stormy winds may blow.
I'll tell the world
Everywhere I go
I've found the Savior,
And He's sweet I know.

The designation "worship service," widely applied to any Sunday morning church service, indicates that church goers consider the worship and praise of God to be primary in their ritual. This applies also to Holiness Tabernacle, of which Brother V. commented that the service is "obviously given to praising God." However, the purpose of ritual "is not simply to provide a vehicle for worship but also to enable the believer to 'approach (closely) the throne of grace' and even to encounter the Almighty directly" (Paris 1982: 45-6). Thus, the ritual also facilitates contact with God. Saints experience this presence of God through the Holy Ghost, which is considered to be the spirit manifestation of God. The influence of the Holy Ghost extends far beyond the ritual setting, however. The Holy Ghost dwells in each saved person, who then views the Holy Ghost as the guiding principle in both religious and daily life. Thus, the concept of

the Holy Ghost is central to belief, ritual, and everyday life, a point that sets Pentecostalism off from other Christian denominations.

Chaos and the Holy Ghost

One striking characteristic of a Pentecostal service, and particularly a Black Pentecostal service, is that it initially appears to an outside observer to be rather chaotic and unordered. People shout out "Amen!", "That's right!", and "Thank you, Jesus" throughout much of the service, each element of the service is of a different length and character each week, and often two or three events occur simultaneously: Elder H., Minister S., and Mother M. may be praying over Brother V. while Minister H. sings from the pulpit and Sister J. "dances" up and down the center aisle. Even after one has perceived the rational and stable order within these seemingly chaotic events, the service still seems very casual and informal. What then delineates order from chaos, formal from informal?

The Holy Ghost is the organizing principle behind the ritual. The appearance of chaos results from the conviction expressed by Minister S. that, although an order of service may be set, the length of each element and the response of the congregation must be left to the presence of the Spirit. Thus, the events of the service are not due to each person doing whatever she/he wishes or feels like doing, but are instead a direct result of the guidance of and an experience of the Holy Ghost.

Underneath these overt exercizes of freedom is the assumption that, no matter how thoroughly one prepares for worship, the final structuring of the agenda is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. God alone decides who shall take what part and how long the service shall take (Mitchell 1970: 47).

Henry Mitchell further cites the treatment of music as characteristic of the inspired freedom valued in ritual. "Thus Black worship frowns on the meticulous adherence to the printed melodic line...the soloist freely improvises as he [sic] is moved during the rendition" (1970: 47).

It thus appears that the external order, imposed by humans, is the least important aspect of the ritual. The ritual would remain valid, although perhaps less effective, if the altar call were placed before, rather than after, the sermon. The experiences of the members, and the freedom to have such experiences, are of highest priority; the order and style of the ritual must be flexible enough to allow this. This often does create a very informal air during the service. People laugh during the sermon, pass babies back and forth, and send notes to each other via the usher. There are, of course, tacit rules of behavior, but these rules are not rigid, for human need is more important than formality. The treatment of the altar is a good example of this. While no one would sit on it or let their baby play on it, it is rather unceremoniously pushed aside when it is in the way. While many churches view the altar as sacred and therefore give it great respect and deference, here the altar, while not seen as simply a table, must not take precedence over the need of the congregation to crowd around the altar rail and pray.

If one may term the external, the order of service, informal, that which is internal may in a sense be labeled formal. The external is important only insofar as it enables one to feel that presence of God. One's experience of God during the service is of primary concern. This by its very nature is internal and personal. This experience is the result of the working of the Holy Ghost within one. Thus, being sensitive and receptive to the Holy Ghost is a primary goal of the ritual.

Given that encountering God is of primary importance, it is not surprising that ritual facilitates this. Many of the ways in which this occurs have been discussed in previous sections, but will be examined further here. One very basic way in which ritual facilitates contact with God is through its reliance on the Holy Ghost as the organizing principle. This tells people that the Holy Ghost will indeed be active throughout the service, thereby encouraging them to be open and receptive to its workings. Perhaps this process may better be explained as one of facilitating an interpretation of experience as contact with God. As the movement of the ritual is entrusted to the power of the Holy Ghost, people live up to this expectation by explaining their emotions and responses in these terms. This view of the Holy Ghost as organizing principle fosters contact with the Holy Ghost by creating a framework in which one then interprets individual experience.

Members who succeed in encountering God do so in ways termed "emotionalism." This category includes a range of responses from "getting happy" to ecstatic dance, and is often used in stereotyping Pentecostalism as a fanatical sect. Early studies

of this phenomenon seem now to smack of racism, as does this quote from E.T. Krueger:

The Negro is not greatly concerned with his own moral life nor in intellectual aspects of dogma and tenets of faith. He prefers in religious expression to submerge himself in the engulfing waves of ecstatic feeling produced in the religious crowd (1935: 25).

Emotionalism is not, however, an escapist technique but a legitimate experience of the Holy Ghost. A more modern theory suggests:

Ritual does not offer a means of escape but a representation, in metaphors of bodily control, of how life is actually lived. Social experience, expressed first in ritual, is thus interpreted again in the light of ritual....Pentecostals do not simply abandon themselves in their worship services. Instead, there is controlled disorder: rituals in which the idea of total loss of self-control is introduced and dealt with (Wilson and Clow 1981:249).

Emotionalism is strongly encouraged, especially in music and prayer. Many people feel the presence of God when they are "under the anointing" during the altar call. This refers to the time when each person is anointed with oil on his/her forehead in the shape of a cross and then prayed over simultaneously by Elder H., Mother M., and a minister. This obviously can become an exceedingly intense experience. Jokes are sometimes made about other churches that fan people who begin to get excited, carrying them out of the service to a cot: "if you get to shoutin', they hold you." At Holiness Tabernacle, however, the altar call is deliberately very emotional and intense, and the feeling that is generated is given a ritualized outlet.

This outlet is in the form of speaking in tongues - glossolalia - and ecstatic dance. People often associate glossolalia with Pentecostalism, and rightly so, for the experience of tongues first occurred at Pentecost, from which the name "Pentecostal" comes. However, in four months of field work at Holiness Tabernacle I discovered only one person who speaks in tongues during the service. This may be due to the fact that Holiness Tabernacle is a synthesis of both Pentecostal and holiness traditions. One major point of divergence between these two groups is that the "distinctly 'Holiness' churches do not speak in tongues; they are among the sharpest critics of the practice" (Dayton 1979: 786). The synthesis of these two elements seems to have produced in Holiness Tabernacle an attitude of acceptance of glossolalia but not active encouragement.

However, Sister F. explained that glossolalia is required as evidence of being saved. Salvation has not occurred until the individual has manifested the "infilling of the Holy Ghost" in this way. Some people, however, will never speak in tongues again or will only speak occasionally, "as the Spirit gives utterance." Others, such as Minister S., have "the gift of tongues": "whenever they set their minds on God, tongues flow out like a river, or like joy." Minister S. often speaks in tongues, usually after Elder H. has prayed over her at the end of the altar call. She may rock back and forth or quake in her seat and utter a string of unintelligible syllables for one or two minutes, followed by shouts of "Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus!" No one ever interprets her glossolalia and the secretary

may begin announcements while she is still thus possessed.

Ecstatic dance, called the "Holy Dance," occurs with much greater frequency and in a much wider range of women. While its basic form has been explained, there is some individual variation. Sister K. never leaves her pew, but "dances" in place, bent at the waist and jerking violently. Sister M. primarily moves only her upper body and head, again in a violent, jerking pattern. These two women engage in the Holy Dance with the greatest frequency. Sister J. and Sister M.S. march up and down the aisles with great urgency, eyes closed, while they shout. Sister J. interrupts her walk with a period of violent jerking. I have observed neither the very young nor very old women engaged in the Holy Dance.

"Seeing God face to face" is not limited to these very intense, visible forms of possession, however. Weeping and shouting are in fact the most common manifestations of the Holy Ghost; these phenomena occur in both men and women. Like tongues and ecstatic dance, however, these manifestations are never verbally encouraged in the ritual context. In fact, they often appear to be ignored, for the order of service may progress while someone is still shouting. However, tacit encouragement is very strong. One woman takes the role of nurse every Sunday, sitting in the front on the side and wearing a nurse's uniform. One of her major roles is to watch over people who become possessed in some form, offering tissues, holding them up, or helping them back to their seats. In this way the church encourages and supports physical manifestations of the Holy

Ghost. Such an attitude is exceedingly different from those of churches that rush a possessed person out of the service.

Ritual thus facilitates emotionalism. It allows people to throw off their normal behavior and reserve and open themselves up to God. It allows them to interpret their feelings of intense joy, repentance, or release as the work of the Holy Ghost and then to manifest these in very physical, visible ways, thereby reinforcing others' expectations. Permitting emotionalism thus strengthens belief in the power of the Holy Ghost and thereby perpetuates emotionalism.

Salvation and the Holy Ghost

One reason that a direct encounter with God is so important ritually is because such an experience is a prerequisite for full membership. One cannot be born into this sect or confirmed as a child but must undergo a distinct, transforming experience that usually occurs no earlier than a person's mid-teens. Such an experience is in no way age-restricted, however, and it is not unusual for middle-aged persons to undergo baptism and become members. Sister V. was saved rather early, at age 16, while Minister S. did not become a member until her early forties.

To become a member, one must be "saved." As discussed previously, salvation is necessary for one to go to Heaven: the unsaved must suffer eternal damnation. Thus, one is "saved" from Hell and for God and eternal life. Salvation is not, however, an isolated event that then automatically ensures one access to Heaven. Salvation also involves dedicating one's life "to Christ." In fact, there are three stages to salvation, as

explained by Sister F. The first is repentance. This refers to being sorry for one's sins and resolving never to sin again. A neophyte need not itemize past sins and repeat them to the pastor or congregation; instead, repentance is seen as putting oneself in right relation with God by being "sorrowful" about one's past and promising to live in a way pleasing to God. This is thus a very personal event, which may occur as a crisis experience. Brother V. recalls being overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and shame during a service. After repenting, he asked to be baptized.

Baptism is the second step that follows this repentance and commitment. Baptism must be by full immersion and said "in the name of Jesus only" for it to be valid. The one to be baptized is given white "pajama-like" clothing to wear, the color white symbolizing purity. Each church owns a "pool" in which the head deacon totally immerses the person. Sister V. explained this as symbolizing one's spiritual death, in which the old, sinful self remains down in the water.

At this point, one is "ready to start to get saved." Although one's "spirit baptism" may occur immediately after or even, in rare cases, before one is water baptized, most people must "tarry for the Spirit" for one to two weeks. After Sister J. was baptized the minister asked her if she wished to "tarry" - pray at the altar for the Holy Ghost. She, however, had "had enough for one night." A few days later she was "filled with the Holy Ghost." Brother V. tarried for two weeks before he received the Holy Ghost. He thought he "had it" twice, but "each time the mothers said, 'See you next time!'" The evidence for the

infilling of the Holy Ghost is that one so affected will immediately speak in tongues. This conceivably can come to a person in her/his seat, for it occurs whenever a person is truly ready. However, it usually occurs while one is tarrying at the altar during the altar call. This experience is by all accounts a deeply transforming event that alters the course of one's life: one truly feels "born again" (see following chapter). One is now officially saved.

Not only have these members repented of their sins and received new life, but now the Holy Ghost dwells within.

Pentecostals take seriously and personally the challenge by Peter on the Day of Pentecost: "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and your children... (Acts 2:38-39, in Nichol 1966: 1).

One is now "saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost" (sanctification referring to the commitment to lead a holy life). This indwelling Spirit of God becomes a part of each person's daily existence, part of that person.

Beyond Ritual

Since the Holy Ghost is an indwelling spirit, it is always present with and in each saved person. One of its primary roles is thus guidance. Such an experience of the Holy Ghost is not one of possession, as when one encounters God in a very intense, emotional, ritualized way, but is rather one of receiving a message. It may be in the form of a voice or a vision. Minister S. told how she was in bed one night and thought that she heard her husband speak. She asked him what he had said, but he denied

having spoken and teased her about hearing things. She then realized that it was God speaking to her. God told her again in words and also gave her a vision, calling her to be a minister and even telling her what to preach on and what Bible passage to use.

Sister J. knows that God is "in" her, for she says, "I live for Him. When I wake up in the morning, I thank him for taking care of me, and I do the same thing at night." She explained that the Holy Ghost is there "to lead and guide you," but sometimes people let themselves "get in front of the Holy Ghost." When this happens, God may "put something on you." This is very serious and may have profound ramifications for a person's life. Sister J. and Minister S. both have undergone major afflictions and subsequent healings because of their initial refusal to listen to what the Holy Ghost was telling them to do.

In the late 1970's, Sister J. was aware of the Holy Ghost calling her to prophesy, one of the "gifts of the Spirit" mentioned in conjunction with speaking in tongues. She ignored this call, however. One day she discovered that she could not walk or use her hands. She could do nothing but lie on her couch, and someone had to care for her and carry her around. She went to several different doctors, but no one could find an explanation for her paralysis. This continued for a month. When the Holy Spirit again told her that she had to prophesy, she accepted. "I didn't want to do it, but you have to let the Spirit guide you." God removed her affliction immediately and she since has had no recurrence of this paralysis.

Minister S.'s story is even more dramatic. God called her three times to become a minister, using both words and visions and even telling her what to preach on. She, however, did not want to have to be a minister and she did not do as the Spirit directed. Because of her disobedience, God caused her to have a car accident. Someone had had an accident in the exact place a year before and all the passengers had been killed. God spared her life, but one leg was severely damaged. Doctors told her that she would never walk without crutches again. For seven years she underwent extensive knee surgery, including the removal of her right knee cap. She had crutches and wore a knee brace, but it was exceedingly difficult and painful for her to get around. She only left the house to go to the doctor's and to church, and she had to have someone else do the housework and take care of her.

On June 12, 1977, Minister S. went to a revival at Holiness Tabernacle, where she had been a member for about ten years. She felt worse that day than she ever had, although she was on strong pain killers. After the service, Elder H. came down to her pew and asked how she was feeling. He began to pray over her, when suddenly she felt something like electricity in her leg. Sister I. reported that her leg jumped three times. Minister S. threw down her crutches, ripped off her brace, and began running all around the church. She has since had no trouble with her knee, claims that her knee cap has regenerated, and walks without any trace of a limp. An article about this appeared in a local paper and her story was told on "The 700 Club," a nationally-televised Christian program. It was not until September of that year that

she finally decided to devote herself to being a minister. She is now the head minister at Holiness Tabernacle and frequently preaches in other related churches.

The Holy Ghost also has the power to heal illness and injuries that were not "put on" someone by God. Mother M., who is probably in her eighties, thanked everyone one Sunday for prayer that was held in her house while she was sick. She said that she hadn't been to see a doctor in two years and that she didn't need to, for "God will provide." Minister S. testified during

a subsequent service that the doctor had told her that she would have to have an operation (apparently due to a heart condition). When she went back, the problem was gone. He then told her that she would have to "be on the machine" for several weeks. She had, however, preached last Sunday and hadn't been "on the machine" all week.

The guidance of the Holy Ghost is not always directed at issues of such consequence. As mentioned before, the Holy Ghost may guide people throughout the day, telling one to change direction or coming to one in the grocery store, as Minister S. explained. In this way, God, manifested in spirit form, is with each saved person every day.

Conclusion

The Holy Ghost is thus a primary aspect of belief, ritual, and daily life. In all three instances, the Holy Ghost is experienced, sometimes radically and physically, as when one is saved, and sometimes very quietly and internally, as when the

Holy Ghost guides a leader to the choice of a scripture reading for the next service. This is always a very personal experience, however, for it is something that is experienced and felt within as that person is in direct contact with God. This conception of the Holy Ghost fits well with Wilson and Clow's description of Pentecostalism:

Pentecostal worship thus focuses upon and is designed to emphasize feeling rather than thought or contemplation. Its dominant symbols are those which have to do with states of dissociation between body and mind. For the Pentecostal, God is not so much seen as heard - and not so much heard as felt. It is a religion of 'inner feeling' which is made manifest in bodily states. By learning the rhetoric of sin and repentance, by undergoing water baptism and by speaking in tongues, the Pentecostal confronts the possibility of loss of self - and finds self located within a cosmological scheme in which abandonment of control is part of the redemptive process (1981: 245).

CHAPTER FIVE

The Church as World Apart

"Some of my relatives just go to church on Sunday and are all staunch and sing the same hymns and say the same prayers, and then they smoke and drink and cuss for the rest of the week. But you can't be religious just one day a week." (paraphrase of Sister V.)

Holiness Tabernacle provides a religious life for its members. These people do not confine religion to church on Sunday, but instead use it to order their lives, as Sister V. suggests in the quote above. Ritual creates moods and motivations and provides a framework for the acting out of beliefs, but it does not confine these emotions, actions, and beliefs to a ritual context. Instead, ritual encourages the incorporation of religion into daily life through the use of the testimony, emphasis on a familiarity with the Bible, and the necessity of undergoing conversion and experiencing God as an indwelling Spirit.

Such religious emphases, however, are not those of the majority of Christian denominations nor are they the values of wider American society. Holiness Tabernacle members are fully aware of this and self-consciously strive to live a life apart, a life in accordance with the wishes of God and their understanding

of the dictates of the Bible. The church then becomes a community, a sort of world apart, where specific values, experiences, and world views are given a reality and reinforced.

"But not of the world"

Holiness Tabernacle and its parent organization, the Original Glorious Church of God in Christ, fall into the classification of sect, rather than that of church. Authors have variously defined these two words. A major definition, first proposed by Ernst Troeltsch and later used by others, classifies the church as supporting the secular world. Membership is universal and children may be born into the church; the church is thus rather flexible and adaptive, accepting many of the behaviors found in society. Much emphasis falls on creed and sacrament. A sect, however, is a form of protest against both the established church and society. It appeals to Primitive Christianity and a literal interpretation of the Gospel while accusing the established Church of ignoring this ideal. Membership is voluntary and emphasis is on right behavior rather than on highly formalized ritual.

Thus, by being part of a sect, Holiness Tabernacle by definition rejects the world as it is. It also rejects the Church's sacramental approach to salvation in favor of "redemption through complete faith in and reliance upon the Word" (Schwartz 1970: 57-8). Members achieve salvation through a profound, personal transformation that is a shedding of one's past sinful life - a worldly life - followed by the dedication of one's life to Christian perfection - a life pleasing to God.

This is in line with the doctrine of holiness that extends back to eighteenth century Methodist theology and is now a part of Holiness Tabernacle's three-stage journey to salvation. When one repents, one also makes a commitment to lead a holy life, "fashioning it after God and the life of Jesus," as Sister F. says. Minister S. feels that this makes a holiness church "deeper" than a "substitute" church: "in other churches, as long as you tithe on Sundays, you can lead your old life all week long." Sister I. has always felt that "a Christian's life should be different." When she decided that she wanted to lead a worldly life, she "come out," leaving the church because she felt that a Christian life demanded separation from the world. Christians must try to "live like Jesus Christ every day" by not "partaking of what worldly people do."

Members frequently sum up this understanding of the Christian life in the phrase "in the world, but not of the world." Sister J. explains this by saying that holiness people must live in this earthly world, but they do not have to engage in the same "earthly activities": "we are a peculiar people, set aside." Many activities are proscribed, such as movies, dancing, bowling, gambling, cards, ball games, secret organizations, and "unholy conversations." However, there is not a list of prohibited activities set down that each person must carefully memorize in order not to sin, although my question about proscribed activities elicited a similar list from each informant. Most informants stressed that the desire to do such things simply falls away upon being saved. Sister I. told of how

she used to like to go dancing and attend parties, but since she was "made a new creature" over thirty years ago when she was saved, she never has wanted to do these worldly things.

The life of a holiness adherent is far from plain and austere, however. Most members dress well, own at least one car, and have homes that in no way differ in appearance from other homes in the neighborhood. Everyone seems to own a television, often a large one that rather dominates the living room, and Deacon A. trades video cassette tapes of boxing matches with Sister L.'s husband. Such socialized materialism would seem to be directly contradictory to the motto "in the world but not of the world," especially since members not only own these worldly items, but use such items as their televisions to watch sporting events and movies - activities that several informants listed as prohibited.

Members seem to view materialism as qualitatively different from worldly activities. Saints no longer wish to indulge in movie-going, but everyone owns a t.v. How, then, do the saints view money? Sister V. feels that money itself is not evil, but the Bible says that the love of money is. Since the saints are still "in the world," they need money to survive, and God gives people skills and abilities so that they can earn money. Minister S. says that money is evil only if it is "used in the wrong perspective." God said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God...and the rest will be added." She feels that God wants "health and prosperity" for holiness people: "He don't want us to be raggily [ragged?]. If you put God first and tithe, God will take care of the rest."

The church requires all members to tithe ten percent of their income, in order to "give it back to the Lord," as Sister I. explains. By tithing, members share the money that they have obtained through their faith in God and their God-given abilities. This money then pays for the worldly needs of the church as an institution, covering the pastor's salary, maintenance of the building, and so forth - what Sister V. terms "the upkeep of the church and the working of the ministry." Sister J. has found that when she tithes, "money just stretches." Even when it seems that she cannot pay her bills, somehow the needed money simply appears. Sometimes when money is really tight, someone will shake her hand after church and slip her some money, even though she has not mentioned her situation to anyone. Sister V. cites Evangelist T., the woman who led their recent revival, as one who has the faith to depend totally on God. She travels around the country preaching and so does not hold a steady job, but receives her income from "love offerings." She and her husband are now buying a house, trusting in God to find a way to provide the money they will need.

The members of Holiness Tabernacle represent a wide range of incomes and educations. Members are neither opulent nor poor, but they also do not reflect middle class America. Those with the lowest incomes are apparently those women who are both elderly and widowed. These women characteristically did not attend college and held a variety of cooking or housekeeping positions. Sister I. worked on and off doing housework, while her husband was the "neighbor junk man." Sister F. also did

housekeeping, while her husband worked first at a shoe factory and then as a custodian. These two women are in their early seventies. Sister J. and Minister S., who are in their late fifties, both had education beyond high school. Sister J. went to college and worked as a cook and a housekeeper after getting married. Minister S. worked as a practical nurse for many years, later studying to become a certified medical assistant. Her husband works for U.S. Steel. Some of the younger members, in their thirties, seem to hold office and cashier jobs. Virtually all of the women who are able hold at least a part-time job. Sister and Brother V., who are in their late twenties, are fairly affluent. Their home was previously owned by a doctor and is in what appears to be a middle to upper-middle class neighborhood. Both work full-time, he as an optician and she as a production manager for a local company. The younger members are more likely to be better educated and hold better paying jobs, dispelling the stereotype that Pentecostal and especially holiness adherents are drawn exclusively from the lower, impoverished class. Even in a church as small as Holiness Tabernacle, several younger members have gone on to advance their educations and their careers while remaining strongly within the church. Sister F.'s daughter, who grew up in Holiness Tabernacle, is working on her Ph.D. at a major university and remains a staunch and active believer. Sister V.'s sister, who is an air traffic controller, has achieved distinction as the only woman, Black or White, ever to hold her current position. She is an evangelist in the sect.

This excursion into the educational and work backgrounds of several members helps provide an understanding of the role and

importance of money in these people's lives. While observers have often stereotyped holiness as a religion of the uneducated and unemployed, this background shows that such a view is not valid, although the majority of members are working class. This background also shows that these people are in one sense very much "of the world," for they subscribe to the secular educational system, hold "worldly" jobs, and save for the future.

The dichotomy between what is worldly and what one can do within the context of a holy and righteous life seems to fall between activities that are "fleshly" and the ownership of material possessions. Activities that cause association with a wide assortment of worldly people, that are purely self-indulgent, that may in some way be vaguely sexual - going to the movies, drinking, going to parties - are worldly and thus not in accordance with a Christ-like life. Material possessions, however, are the result of hard work and of developing God-given skills and abilities. Members may own cars, clothes, and televisions, which are both the result of hard, honest work that every person must do in order to survive and also objects of utility, rather than simply self-indulgent activities.

Such an understanding of an other-worldly life is very different from that of other religious groups that also consider themselves to be in this world but not of it. John Wilson has created various categories of sects, two of these being introversionist and utopian. The Amish fall under the first category, for they perceive the world to be evil and react by withdrawing and gaining strength from a separate community for sustaining a holy life. While shunning such modern conveniences

as electricity, cars, telephones, and even buttons, they live spread throughout various areas rather than as a closed community and frequently go into town for various necessities. The Hutterities are a utopian sect. They also perceive the world as evil, but they feel that salvation can be achieved only by returning to a strictly Scripturally-based life. The Kingdom of God thus is established on earth by proper human action. They also avoid all modern conveniences but, unlike the Amish, live in a very strict, isolated community with very restricted contact with outsiders.

Both of these religious groups lead very simple, plain lives, far removed from the values and lifestyles of Western culture. The Amish participate very little, and the Hutterites even less, in what most westerners would define as "the world." Such a group as Holiness Tabernacle is, in comparison, very much within mainstream America. They do not envision a holy life as one that requires great isolation or well-defined separation from larger society. Their understanding of a life apart is one that allows for participation in virtually all aspects of modern life. Gary Schwartz notes, "These sects, then, are other-worldly only in a very qualified sense and remain well within the basic Protestant orientation to the world" (1970: 88).

Living a Life Apart

Although Holiness Tabernacle does not advocate a life of radical separation from this world, members nonetheless have a sense of being very different from their neighbors. While an outside observer might perceive the daily life of a member to be

no different from that of the stereotypical American, the experience of being set apart is very real for these people. In day to day activities, members differ from larger society not in what the do, but in what they do not do, in their avoidance of certain rather commonplace activities - movie-going, dancing, drinking - because they are sinful. The difference in lifestyle extends beyond a list of prohibited activities, however. The experience of salvation and the empirical confirmation of being different also contribute to the church's self-understanding as a group set apart.

Being saved is a major event in the life of a member. It marks a dramatic break in one's condition, a movement from a worldly, sinful life where one is doomed to eternal damnation, to rebirth into a life committed to God and holding the joyful promise of heaven. It is a process of aligning one's life with the ideals of this religious community. Informants frequently discussed the transformation wrought by being saved. Sister J. feels that being saved made a profound change in her life, even though she was raised in a holiness church. Before she was saved, she used to be "very hot tempered and rowdy," and she loved to go out "carousing." She used to carry a knife at all times so that she would be prepared if anyone tried to "abuse" her. If someone said something to her that made her angry, she would pull her knife on them. Everyone noticed a change in her after she was saved. She is now much humbler and no longer goes out partying. She has lost her hot temper: when people "say things" to her, it usually does not bother her at all, but if it

does, she simply says, "God bless you." Sister I. likewise describes her salvation experience as one that effected a loss of worldly desires. She used to love to "go dancing and go to parties and shows," but now she no longer ever has even the desire to do these things. She explains this by saying that God made her a "new creature."

Brother V. describes a radical change that transformed his outlook on life. He says that when he went to the altar rail during the service in which he was saved, he knew that he wanted to "yield" himself "to God's spirit." He feels that this is the emotional and spiritual zenith of one's life. The feeling, however, lasts for weeks, perhaps even remaining for a full year. One constantly feels "zealous" and "on fire for God." This intense experience even transformed the events of daily life for him. Suddenly, nature overwhelmed him when he went outside, for he saw God's hand in all of creation. Even learning was a new experience. In his following two years of college, he received only one B, while previously his grades had been quite average. "Every small desire was intensified."

Salvation thus signals entry into a new life. Not only is the experience of being saved itself a very intense, emotional event, but it also marks the shedding of an old way of life. Members view salvation as a distinct event that forever marks them, and they continue to speak of their lives as divided by this experience. Members have experienced life both before and after being saved, and the discrepancy between the two proves to them the reality of a profound, transformative salvation experience. Thus, members feel that they lead lives very

and roles, first discussed in chapter one. The titles "mother" and "deacon" have validity and meaning only for those who subscribe to this system. Both an outside observer and a member can refer to someone as "Mother," but only for the member will such a designation call to mind the host of connotations, emotions, and roles that have a reality within the church world. Likewise, being the church mother affords one great visibility and respect, but only within the church. The ritual context first establishes these titles and roles, which then identify people in all aspects of church activities. Thus, each member has a title, and often also a role, that is meaningful only to the group, thereby working to define this collection of people as a separate community.

The church also builds community by providing support, for the church constitutes a body of like-minded believers. Members here experience a sharing of beliefs, emotions, and attitudes, expressed in testimony, song, prayer, and participation. All around them are people who are also "getting happy," who are also fervently praying, who also profess an indwelling of the Spirit. The discrepancy between this experience and the experience of living daily life with worldly people also serves to support a sense of community, a haven where those who share specific values and lifestyles can gather.

Because the church is a collection of like-minded believers, it acts to reinforce these beliefs and strengthen the members for the days ahead. Ritual is especially effective in this capacity, as discussed in chapter three. As everyone prays, sings, and

testifies in the same manner, expressing the same moods and motivations, each individual finds her/his matching attitudes and actions affirmed and reinforced. By affirming each saint's lifestyle and belief system, the ritual also acts to strengthen that person for the week during which he/she must live according to the church's teachings but without the direct support of the gathered community.

Holiness Tabernacle thus has a reality for its members as a separate community, through, among other things, the use of special titles, its existence as a body of like-minded believers, and the role of ritual as affirming and reinforcing belief. The church also functions to provide a community where individuals can gain prestige and pride that would not be available to them in larger society. It is crucial to note here that many of the most respected and active members are older women with little or no advanced education - women who spent much of their lives raising a family and working part-time as housekeepers.

Women have always held prominent roles in holiness churches and also in Pentecostal churches, although the literature indicates that women are holding fewer positions of importance as churches become more formalized and routinized. Women first were prominent in the holiness movement, which was born into the pre-Civil War perfectionist, reformist current. They later were instrumental in both the organization and the growth of Pentecostalism. The first person to speak in tongues at Rev. Charles Parham's school was a woman, and women subsequently founded denominations and served as ministers, missionaries, healers, and so forth (Dayton and Dayton 1976: 91; Barfoot and

Sheppard 1980: 2). The Original Glorious Church of God in Christ itself was founded by a woman. Her successor was also a woman, but no woman has held that position since the early 1940's. Indeed, women can not be bishops, the highest position attainable. No one was able to explain to me why this is so. Sister F. said that she had never thought about it before. The Bible says that in Christ there is "neither male nor female," but it also does not say anything about women bishops. She finally said that there are many women ministers, but she just does not "agree with women bishops."

Although many sects now deny high positions of organization-wide power to women, women still are very active on the local level, where the sense of community is strongest. Several authors have suggested that the notion of a "calling" and the universal availability of salvation have allowed for relative equality in local churches. Holiness Tabernacle is predominantly female, for there are characteristically five men present in a congregation of thirty adults. Sister V. was very interested in my question about the sex differential, saying that she had given this some thought. (She seems more interested in such issues than other women members. Her mother told me that she used to claim that she would never get married but would instead pursue a career. She since has married and has an infant, but she and her husband both work full-time and share equally the care of their child.) She first said that women are more emotional, while men are "too tied up in being macho to let down their pride and humble themselves." She then said that church also gives these

women "a chance to be somebody," because "everybody is somebody in church" and everyone is treated equally. She noted that church gives women chances that they do not have in society.

Thus, an essential function of the church as community is its ability to affirm each member's worth. This is especially noticeable in the active participation of so many women, but it also applies to the men, who do not suffer the oppression of sexism but still must combat the effects of racism and classism. This aspect of community is summed up in the following quote:

The opportunity found in the Negro church to be recognized, and to be "somebody," has stimulated the pride and preserved the self-respect of many Negroes who would have been entirely beaten by life, and possibly completely submerged. Everyone wants to receive recognition and feel that he is appreciated. The Negro church has supplied this need (Mays and Nicholson 1971: 289).

Conclusion

The teachings of the Pentecostal/holiness tradition demand a life lived "in the world but not of the world." This is not a life of radical withdrawal from society, but it is a way to live in the world without participating in those activities that are "fleshly" and purely self-indulgent, and therefore worldly and sinful. Members not only gain a sense of separateness through this restriction on their lifestyles, but they also feel set apart because of the transformation that salvation works in their lives. Members often describe this profound experience as a rebirth, highly contrasted to their previous, unsaved existence. These experiences of being different from larger society lead the members to turn in to the church for support and reinforcement, creating a distinct community that then provides respect,

esteem, and prominence for the members, especially for women. Thus, as members strive to live a life of holiness, set apart from society, they simultaneously create a church community, a vision of the church as a world apart.

CONCLUSION

One now can see that Pentecostal ritual is indeed much more than a chaotic collection of shouting, clapping, tongues-speaking, and uncontrolled emotionalism. It is a movement that grew out of leading intellectual, social, and religious currents of the mid-nineteenth century, creating an explosion of sects and independent churches that spoke to needs ignored by the major Protestant bodies. It continues to teach "the great essentials of the Christian religion," while relying on the written word of the Bible with "an unreflecting fundamentalism" (Bloch-Hoell 1964:95,97). The service each week follows a prescribed order, although the length of individual elements varies, and behavior follows a predictable pattern: people do not shout during the consecrational song or engage in ecstatic dance during the sermon, but submit to this emotionalism only at specific points in the ritual. Such an understanding of Pentecostalism "retriev[e]s] it from the realm of the exotic or the bizarre" (Paris 1982: vi).

The emotionalism and reliance on the Holy Ghost within the Pentecostal/holiness tradition does set the Pentecostal church off from most Christian denominations, however. Further, Holiness Tabernacle members strive to live a life "set aside," a

life that reflects Christian ideals and the goal of Christian perfection. Johnson Benton claims that the holiness tradition actually has the opposite effect, socializing lower class groups in the dominant, middle class values of society by stressing "mastery and self-direction" (1961: 309,315). Virtually all members of Holiness Tabernacle do subscribe to institutionalized attitudes toward materialism, job performance, and so forth, but they also strongly reject some aspects of middle class society. By refraining from such activities as drinking and going to the movies, members set themselves off from mainstream America. Thus, these people live on two planes, remaining very much "in the world" while striving to be "not of the world."

This concept of living on a plane removed from the world contains an understanding of an ever-present God that one can encounter directly. The ritual fosters this understanding by encouraging spirit possession, during which one can "see God face to face." Members then carry this experience outside of the ritual context into their daily lives, where they are aware of God's constant care and guidance. This sense that members are actively living their religion, that their experiences of God are very immediate and transforming, gives the ritual an aura of dynamism and excitement that is largely missing from many Protestant churches of today.

This constant exchange between ritual and daily life has, in a broader sense, further ramifications for the Black church. The church was probably the first public organization over which Black Americans could hold control and even ownership. As such, it offered its members a chance to participate in an organized

group, to develop a sense of achievement and self-worth, to attain prestige and influence in a context separate from an oppressive society that claimed that Black people were not fully human. The church still functions in this way today, especially for women. Women who have spent much of their lives raising a family and working as housekeepers, confronting racist, sexist, and classist attitudes, have opportunities within the church community that have not been available to them in society at large. Here people look to them with respect and admiration as they direct the choir, preach the sermon, and lead the service. As Sister V. noted, "Everybody is somebody in church."

Such a study as this, constrained by many factors, is necessarily limited in focus and depth. I have been able, however, to come to an understanding of some of the ways in which ritual acts in these people's lives, both in the ritual setting itself and in the days that follow church attendance. I have explored an area that is poorly documented in the literature and thus have in some way contributed to an understanding of Pentecostalism and human religious behavior.

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