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**Contending for the Faith of Historic Pentecostalism**  
by Donald C. Stamps

It is the judgement of this writer that historic Pentecostal theology and its standards of righteousness are undergoing a gradual process of erosion among its professed advocates. Assault toward the traditional beliefs of Pentecostalism at this present time is coming not so much from those without the movement, as from those within. The defense of the apostolic faith as defined by historic Pentecostals must now be directed towards particular groups who claim to believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience apart from conversion, yet at the same time are not firmly committed to fundamental Biblical truths. Those who would modify or reject the historic Pentecostal faith are many Charismatics both Catholic and Protestant, as well as an increasing number within the historic Pentecostal denominations themselves.

Historic or Classical Pentecostalism arose in the early 1900's. Among its advocates were the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Church of God in Christ, and the Assemblies of God. Their theology was committed to a firm belief in the full inspiration and authority of the Bible, the absolute importance of the fundamentals of the faith, N. T. apostolic doctrine, and speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they were committed to a life-style of separation from the world, sanctification unto God, and a witness of righteousness worthy of the name of Christ. However, in recent years

there have appeared alarming signs, that historic Pentecostalism is experiencing a lessening in commitment to its once strongly held faith and standards.

## **Signs of Change in Traditional Pentecostalism**

### **Moral Decline**

A recent indication of decline in loyalty to the historic Pentecostal faith is the distressing number of Pentecostal pastors and prominent leaders who have failed both spiritually and morally in their faithfulness to God, the church, and the faith they professed. These tragic events should alert us to the fact that there has occurred a serious drift from our adherence to historic Pentecostal faith and standards of righteousness.

### **Weakening of Commitment to Pentecostal Faith**

The abatement of commitment to the historic Pentecostal faith by some of its own advocates has been recently noted by Charismatics. This was made clear in a news report appearing in Christianity Today, November 21, 1986, entitled "Signs and Wonders in New Orleans", which enumerated many changes that have occurred within traditional Pentecostalism. The article points out certain doctrinal beliefs and ethical practices, which the writer, Julia Duin, states, are no longer of critical importance to historic Pentecostals.

The article implies that due to the weakening of beliefs and ethical practices once cherished by those of the Pentecostal denominations, there remains no longer any major obstacle to their unity with Charismatics, whether they are of the Protestant or of the Catholic faith. The article either implies or states that the following historic Pentecostal beliefs are in a process of disintegration within the movement itself.

### **A Rejection of Biblical Prophecy**

The Christianity Today article implies that Pentecostalism is beginning to reject the Biblical teaching that a widespread apostasy will occur within the professing church preceding the return of Christ. Some Pentecostals and Charismatics now maintain that it is quite possible that a "majority of the world" will be Christian "by the millennium." This is affirmed despite Christ's teaching in Matthew 24 concerning the last days before His return to earth. Christ clearly warns that among believers "many will fall away. . . and many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many . . . and that most people's love will grow cold" (Matt. 24:10-12).

This rejection of Biblical prophecy is gaining ground through the "Kingdom Now" theology, which teaches that soon Christians will be a majority in the world and that Satan and his

kingdom will cease to have major influence. This theology ignores not only the words of Christ, but also the constant warnings of the Holy Spirit concerning the predicted last day falling away from the faith (see I Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1,3-4). The apostle Paul explicitly warns concerning such teaching, "Let no one in any way deceive you" (2 Thess. 2:3), "the day of the Lord. . . will not come unless the apostasy comes first" (2 Thess. 2:2-3).

### **A Toleration Toward Alcohol and Tobacco**

It is stated in the article that the drinking of intoxicating beverages and the use of tobacco by professed Christians is no longer considered by Pentecostals to be as evil as they once thought. The article states "Pentecostals looked askance at Charismatics who drank wine or used tobacco." The "looked askance" is in the past tense and implies that some or many Pentecostals have abandoned their past moral convictions related to these evils.

### **A Questioning of the Fundamentals of the Faith**

The article maintains that Pentecostals are changing their basic position with regard to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as well as their thinking on the worship of Mary. The article implies that there has taken place a moderation in their belief in salvation solely through Jesus Christ, His atoning death and forgiving grace. Because of this some Pentecostals now believe that Catholics can achieve salvation and gain great spiritual benefits through the rosary, Catholic Mass, worship of Mary, and the authority of the Catholic Church. It states, "Pentecostals. . . were shocked at Catholics who claimed their baptism in the Spirit deepened their experience of the rosary, the Mass, and increased their devotion to Mary and the church." The article states, "were shocked", indicating that Pentecostals are no longer "shocked" at such beliefs and there indeed has taken place among Pentecostals a questioning of former beliefs with regard to the basic fundamentals of salvation in Christ, their affirmation that there is only one mediator between God and man, and their opposition to prayer and worship of the dead (i.e., Mary and Catholic saints).

### **Speaking in Tongues No Longer Vital**

The Christianity Today article affirms that Pentecostals are relaxing their position on the crucial importance of the doctrine of speaking in tongues as the essential evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The article states "Pentecostals generally maintained [again the verb is put in the past tense] that the baptism in the Spirit must be accompanied by tongues." The article states that belief in speaking in tongues as the evidence of the baptism in the Spirit is no longer thought to be so vital by Pentecostals as to stand in the way of organizational unity with many Charismatics who oppose the belief.

## **The Achilles Heel of Pentecostalism**

What has brought historic Pentecostalism to this tendency to accommodate its faith and doctrine? Although there are always several reasons for any movement's decline, I would like to suggest one very important reason for the impairing of our faith that if left unchallenged and uncorrected will result in the death of historic Pentecostalism. It has to do with what I call the Achilles heel of Pentecostalism. It is the inherent assumption of many that religious experience and spiritual manifestations are more important than N.T. apostolic doctrine for validating truth or determining God's will for His people.

## **Historic Pentecostalism and N. T. Truth**

Historic Pentecostalism began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with a doctrine and not with a religious experience. The early Pentecostals believed that in order to experience the fullness of God's kingdom they had to return to the apostolic faith of the N.T. They believed firmly in the fundamentals of the faith, Biblical standards of holiness and righteousness, and that the N. T. promised a Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. It was this belief and a return to the N.T. truth that led them into a Book of Acts experience.

## **The Beginning of Error**

However, as the movement gained momentum, some fell into the same error as the N. T. Pentecostals of the church at Corinth. There developed an unscriptural approach to religious experience, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and miracles (I Cor. 12-14). This led to a devaluation of the importance of love for truth and righteousness (I Cor. 13:4,6). In other words, religious experiences and spiritual manifestations began to take precedent over revealed Biblical truth and were considered, therefore, as valid for determining the will of God for His church as was apostolic teaching the New Testament.

Within Pentecostal, circles there arose a tendency to validate teaching, doctrine, new theologies, as well as the ministry of individuals not on the authoritative word of God, but based on professed religious experience or spiritual manifestations. Thus, prophecies, miracles, healings, speaking in tongues, a professed baptism in the Holy Spirit, inspirational preaching, ministerial success, and even church growth became the ultimate test of truth rather than authoritative Scripture. Many Pentecostals ignored the warnings of Christ and the apostles that certain religious experiences, spiritual manifestations, miracles, and successful ministries can and will be produced through powers other than God. We were told by God Himself to take heed lest we be deceived by various kinds of supernatural occurrences (Matt. 7:22; 24:5, 11,24). Christ and the apostles continually pointed to only one ultimate, final source of authority to validate both doctrine and experience – the inspired word of God (Matt. 4:4; John 15:7; I Tim. 3:15-16).

The tragic irony is that it was love for the word of God and N. T. truth that brought us into N. T. spiritual experience. Now it is our distorted love for spiritual experience that is leading us away from the same N. T. truth. A growing consequence of this error is a lack of respect for doctrine and theology, and, in particular, a little desire to defend, explain or even define the historic Pentecostal faith. The disastrous consequences of this failure to love the truth as we should has resulted in the following conditions:

- 1. Tolerance of False Doctrine.** There are those in the Pentecostal movement who feel no need to defend the Biblical faith as did the N. T. apostles. Rather, they glory in their tolerance for all kinds of doctrines so long as those doctrines are accompanied by a professed experience with the Holy Spirit. They are attracted to successful preachers who openly scorn the apostolic faith. They lack sympathy and affection for the true spirit of the Bible, which rebukes and reproves false teaching. They seem ready to accept without challenge or protest nearly anything for the cause of "unity" or the success of their own ministry. It is tragic that their inability to recognize that the distortion of the Pentecostal-Biblical faith will result in millions of souls being lost for eternity.
- 2. Man-Centered Theology.** A further result in emphasizing religious experience over N. T. doctrine has been the development within Pentecostal circles of a man-centered rather than a God-centered theology. The God-centered theology of Scripture emphasizes the truth that we were created and redeemed by God to serve Him for His glory and that in doing this we are to enjoy His fellowship and love for eternity. The man-centered theology advocated today stresses those things that we can get from God, and what He is to do for us upon this earth. Preaching is centered not so much on the cross, self-denial, sacrifice, and the forsaking of sin, but on health, wealth, prosperity, happiness, self-esteem, positive thinking, and the satisfaction of human and even carnal desires. I am not saying that all of these things are wrong, but that we have failed to first love God, His kingdom, and His righteousness above all else. We have turned the gospel into a means of selfish personal gain and claim to have now found the way to save our souls and at the same time gain the whole world.

Among the tragic consequences of this man-centered gospel is that some will no longer "endure sound doctrine" but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). The man of God who faithfully follows the ministry of the Holy Spirit and preaches sin, righteousness, and judgment finds himself rejected by some of the very Pentecostals he tries to serve.

- 3. Inability to Identify Biblical Christianity.** The lack of a sufficient understanding of N.T. apostolic spirit, attitude, and teaching led more than a few Pentecostals (even dedicated and sincere believers) into a tragic inability to discern when Biblical Christianity was being distorted. The classic example of recent days is the now discredited and fallen charismatic P.T.L. television program. There were those among both leaders and laymen alike who did not recognize that the program was in many ways not of the Spirit of Christ nor loyal to N.T. apostolic faith and Biblical standards of righteousness. The program portrayed permissiveness towards deviation from Scriptural truth and a conspicuous lack of concern for moral righteousness and holiness within the church. There was seen little manifestation of the Holy Spirit's ministry of conviction concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. Pentecostalism was reduced to soap opera

entertainment, and the fear of God and reverence for the sacred was destroyed in the process. The Pentecostal acceptance of the materialistic, worldly life-style of its leadership, as well as its tolerance of the unbiblical elements of this program, has resulted in shame, discredit, and untold harm to the Pentecostal cause around the world.

4. **Accommodation to Charismatic Theology.** A fourth consequence of the Pentecostal predisposition to value religious experience above N.T. doctrine resulted in its inability to sufficiently meet the challenge and need of the Charismatics in the 1960's and 70's. Many of them came into Pentecostal churches or established independent fellowships. They had received an experience with the Holy Spirit, but often fell short of a deep commitment to all the truth of Scripture, as well as a clear understanding of Christ's demand for a life of holiness. Due to Pentecostalism's lack of desire to adequately and forcefully define a Pentecostal apologetic based on Biblical revelation, it failed to guide the Charismatics into a more Biblical faith. Instead, historic Pentecostals themselves began to conform to the unscriptural theologies and lack of Biblical standards of some Charismatics. Consequently, old-fashioned Pentecostal theology, along with the Biblical cry against sin and worldliness commonly fell into disrepute. All types of theology, both old and new, which could not be validated by close examination of the Biblical text, entered Pentecostal fellowships.

### **What Can Pentecostals do Today?**

It is my conviction that God still has a primary place in His kingdom for the historic Pentecostal faith. What can we, who are yet committed to the beliefs of our forefathers and the apostolic Pentecostal faith, do to guard what has been committed to us?

1. **Acknowledge Spiritual Decline.** We need to admit and recognize that within the Pentecostal movement there is now occurring a slow process of departure from our unique, historic, theological heritage. Furthermore, we must see that we also, to some extent, have departed from a life based on Christlikeness and Biblical righteousness. If this process continues, it will be a matter of time until our place of election in the history of redemption will be in grave peril and God will take His kingdom and His glory from us and give it to those bearing fruit worthy of righteousness. The words of Paul in Romans 11:20-22 apply to Pentecostals as well, "You stand only by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you."

2. **Rededication to Apostolic Pentecostal Faith.** There must be a renewed and deeper devotion to all the truth of God's word and to a life of Biblical righteousness by those who claim the name of Pentecostal. The Pentecostal faith and movement cannot endure unless it is based on the foundational pillars of truth and righteousness. The "truth" involved commitment to the fundamentals of the faith, i.e., complete inerrancy of Scripture, salvation of faith in Christ and His blood atonement, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the Scriptural, doctrine of sin, the return of Christ for His church, etc. The "righteousness" involves a clear separation from the ways of the world and a seeking for godliness in all our ways. We must see again, as did the first Pentecostals of this century, that the Holy Spirit who fills us with His presence is first and foremost a "Spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4) who leads us into "all the truth" (John 16:13).

3. **Love for Historic Pentecostalism.** We must glory in the worth, value, and truth of historic Pentecostal faith committed to us by the Holy Spirit. We must feel as did

the apostle Paul when he declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). Concerning these words of Paul, it is my firm conviction that the historic Pentecostal faith represents the true apostolic gospel of which he spoke. This gospel was committed to our fathers and to us. We have been brought into God's kingdom and baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to be preachers and witnesses to the world concerning the faith and promises of this N. T. gospel. I consider it the highest honor to be allowed to proclaim its faith. I believe it is still God's message to this lost world.

As a foreign missionary with the Assemblies of God serving Christ and my church, I have seen what God's power can do through the simple old-fashioned Pentecostal message. Around the world missions have been saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit and brought to a life of Christlikeness because of this message. In Brazil alone, the country in which I serve, more than 10 million Pentecostals have been born into God's kingdom through the preaching of the truth of historic Pentecostalism based on apostolic revelation. I believe no other message can do as much to cast back the forces of evil, and bring men and women into Christ's kingdom as this Pentecostal message when proclaimed in love, from a pure heart, and sincere faith.

4. **Contend Earnestly for the Faith.** We must understand that contending for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints is not an option, but a matter of life and death (Jude 3). The eternal destiny of the souls of many will be determined by our devotion or lack of devotion to the Pentecostal faith committed to us.

We must see that we are under a solemn obligation to remain loyal to Christ and His word and apostolic doctrine. This means taking a direct stand against all those who would weaken the authority of God's word and accommodate our message to the shifting new theologies of today, or the prevailing spirit of this evil age. We must pray for the same spirit and heart of the apostle Paul who defined his life by the words, "I am appointed for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:16). Paul was talking about the very same gospel that has been committed to us. May it be that we, too, might love and cherish the like precious faith entrusted to us?

In these last days, Satan will seek to do his worst and some in the church will abandon the apostolic faith. Yet, I am convinced that there will always be those who have the courage to believe and act in the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon the truth of our message. Their allegiance will be to Christ, the full N. T. faith and its Pentecostal teaching. It is these faithful who will never abandon its message by either accommodating its truth or compromising its standards of righteousness. (This author, an Assemblies of God missionary, died in November 1991).

## Truth or Consequences

By Orrel Steinkamp

*In our market-driven spiritual economy "truth" too often is redefined as what seems to work, fills pews, sells books and enhances anointed celebrities. If you dare to blow the whistle of biblical integrity you will not win any popularity contests.*

Whether it be recognized or not, there is a huge integrity problem in the church today regarding who speaks for God. Charles Colson, who authored a book with the appropriate title, WHO SPEAKS FOR GOD, apparently feels that the Roman Catholic Pontiff speaks (ex cathedra) for God today, for he has advocated that the whole of the Christian church should return to home sweet Rome. Others who announce that God has restored apostles and prophets to the end time church, boldly acclaim that these prophetic and apostolic offices of NT times are once again receiving "present truth" (in addition to biblical truth) to guide the church into its triumphant and glorious establishment of God's rule and kingdom upon planet earth. Although he is not quoted much these days, Bishop (also prophet) Earl Paulk has stated this claim with unmistakable clarity.

"Holy men of old were moved upon by the Holy Spirit and the revelation given to them is God's Word in the Holy Scriptures. Is God speaking any less today through holy men called of God to bring a message through revelation to this generation? ... We wave our Bibles and cry, 'This is the Word of God.' Indeed, it is God's Word, but the Holy Spirit yet brings revelation to this generation today that is no less God's Word... The prophet is not a method that God uses; but in fact is the only method he uses to speak to this generation."

Benny Hinn prophesied to his congregation in Orlando Christian Center in 1989 regarding what God had to say in regard to the 90's: "The Lord tells me to tell you in the mid 90's about 94-95 no later than that God will destroy the homosexual community of America. He will destroy it with fire." "The Spirit tells me, an earthquake will hit the East Coast of America and destroy much in the 90's."

After twenty minutes of many more prophecies, Hinn appeared to be "drunk in the Spirit". When he came to his senses he said: "I'd like to know what I said, I was totally gone."

Other wannabe prophets, too numerous to mention, give unending revelations of what the Spirit has told them.

The integrity problem is that these people who speak claiming the mantle of the prophets of old are never totally accurate or even mostly accurate. When Bob Jones, the Kansas City prophet, (who was temporarily sidelined for using prophecy for sexual advantage) and others, can only boast of being 30% accurate, doesn't this suggest that there is an integrity problem? The famed South Korean Pastor David Cho, prophesied, while in Pensacola, that the Brownsville Revival would continue until Jesus returns. The current

fact is that the Brownsville Outpouring is presently imploding with staff firings, recriminations and two rival schools of revival.

We berate politicians when they make promises they choose not to keep. Remember, "Read my lips?" But when someone, with no hesitation, announces the supposed very words of God, which fail totally, we don't make a murmur or bat an eye. Isn't this an integrity problem? Moreover, don't you suppose that the Holy One who never lies or changes, has some problems with all the inaccurate words He supposedly uttered? Do we really think that God, in the wideness of His mercy, simply sees these prophets as immature trainees? Can we really believe that God is absolutely thrilled that some of His mouthpieces have actually arrived at 30% accuracy? This assumes that God's conception of truth is, after all, quite flexible and more akin to a postmodern understanding of truth.

The further question concerns the status of those who prophesy falsely. How do we regard them in the church? Do we give them an "A" for effort and hope they will do better next time? Here is the rub. These prophets have much in common with us. They believe Jesus is the Savior, that He died and rose again etc. In fact, they could all endorse the Apostles Creed. How many in the current environment of the church would dare call someone a false

prophet? But what else should we call them? If they aren't false prophets, what are they? They call themselves prophets and they utter falsehoods claiming to speak God's very words. Indeed, some of us have differing views of the interpretation of certain scripture (for example the timing of the Lord's return). There is some room for differing understandings as long as we claim the truthfulness of God's inspired Word and are always seeking to find that truth. But what about those "the Spirit told me" statements in which the authority is not derived from Scripture or an attempt to understand God's written word? Rather the authority is stated to be that these are the very spoken words of God. When a prophecy fails who has the integrity problem? Even on the human level, how many of us would be happy if someone quoted us as saying something, we never said? We get irate when someone quotes us out of context! Does the God who is truth by definition and prides Himself on being the source of all truth feel any different? Is God really pleased with his church when it seems unconcerned about this integrity problem? Does He smile when we refuse to make those who presume to speak for Him accountable? Just how concerned is God about truth claims offered in His name? Are His statements about truth flexible after all?

Wayne Grudem, a renowned professor of theology and Vineyard church member, has come to the rescue of those who prophesy falsely. In his book, *THE GIFT OF PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND TODAY*, he has offered a theory about NT prophecy that seems to get those "missing it" in prophecy off the hook. Grudem is biblically and theologically trained and his writings reflect

that. Ms proposal is that NT prophecy was of a lower grade than OT prophecy. People spoke what they thought God was telling them. The prophecy could contain elements truly from God and other elements that were not. He wrote his book to put forward the above understanding. His arguments hinge on his understanding of one Greek word, *diakrino*. The context is I Cor, 14:29, "Let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge."

(NKJV) The word "judge" is the Greek word *diakrino*. Grudem admits that this word can have a wide range of meaning but he chooses a minor meaning of the word, which means to "sift out." He concludes that the "others" of this verse are not the other prophets but the whole congregation. He suggests that the words spoken in prophecy are to be sifted so that what is "of God" can be distinguished from that which is "not of God." It is not the prophet himself who is judged but only the words spoken by the prophet. In this way, no one has to be concerned with gaining the title of false prophet. Grudem admits that Paul in I Cor. 12:10 uses *diakrino* to distinguish between "spirits" not as sifting out but judging what in totality is from God. He admits that in Matt. 7:15-20 Jesus warns of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing and I John 4:1-6 warns about false prophets and gives a test for determining who is a false prophet. He also alludes to the "Didache" a first century Christian writing that gives specific tests to determine a true prophet from a false one. But then he simply announces that we must not take this meaning into the first Corinthian 14 passage but we must see it here as a sifting of the elements of prophecy, not judging true or false prophets. He states it this way:

"The whole congregation would listen and evaluate what was said by the prophet, forming opinions about it and some would perhaps discuss it publicly. Each prophecy might have both true and false elements in it and some would perhaps discuss it publicly. Each prophecy might have both true and false elements in it, and those would be sifted and evaluated for what they were." (page 78)

He dismisses the idea that the discernment was about the truth or falseness of the prophet by saying "would it be by some kind of vote that a prophet would be declared either a true or a false prophet?" But, on the other hand, given Grudem's view, stated above, could you imagine the whole

Congregations publicly sifting a prophetic utterance to figure out what parts were true or false, which was of God and that which was not? Can't you just see Demetrius, a Christian slave raising his hand and saying I accept this part from God and the rest as false only to have his Christian master respond to him with a different sifting of the same prophecy? It could have taken hours to arrive at a proper decision and in some cases; they would have to agree to disagree. Grudem's only defense for his view is that a local church would hardly threaten some of its own people with being false prophets. This has some merit. But, he fails to mention that we already know that the NT prophetic office was primarily an itinerant ministry. It seems thus that when itinerant prophets arrived, the local approved prophets would judge first their words and if false, they judged them as false prophets. It's the only way the church could escape a confusing smorgasbord of supposed authentic prophetic utterances with no apparent way to reach a consensus as to what elements were from God and what was not from God.

The fact that false prophets also believed in Jesus, His cross and resurrection, was not sufficient to absolve them of their prophetic inaccuracy. That some of what they prophesied met apostolic muster could not sanction them, as spokesmen for God when in that same utterance there were elements that were clearly false. Let's illustrate. Snake venom is 90% pure protein but the 10% that is toxic can be deadly. Consequently, snake venom is not a good source of protein. The apostle Paul did not hesitate to vote up or down on those who promoted false truth claims. In Galatia, he announced that those who

added to his gospel of grace are accursed. He was even ready to pronounce a divine curse upon a supposed angel from heaven that got the gospel of grace wrong. These Judaizers in Galatia had a lot in common with other believers. They were believers in Jesus, the cross and the resurrection. But to misrepresent the truth of God was a preeminently serious matter. Paul was even willing to go nose to nose with Peter on this. Putting forward a united front in a pagan world did not cause Paul to look the other way. Why was this so all fired important to Paul? Was he just trying to show off his apostolic authority? Hardly. The truth of God was at stake. He could not hide behind the verse "keeping the bond of peace" in this case. This went right to the integrity of the truth of God.

We have all read about the "whistle blowers" who, as in the instance of the tobacco industry, blew the whistle of integrity. Were they loved for it? Did they win the esteem of their work friends? Hardly! They were accused of betrayal and many were summarily fired for their efforts. How many NFL referees are loved for making the call that someone was out of bounds. Can you imagine a football game in which there were no rules or boundaries?

Everyone just made up the rules as they went along. Who would prevail? The famous, the most powerful and most persuasive would end up making all the judgment calls. It's somewhat like that in the church today. We play without biblical boundaries. We expand the out of bound markers all the time by saying that God Himself said we should do it. Then, all too rarely, along comes a "whistle blower." He declares something out of bounds of the Word of God. Is he loved and esteemed? Hardly! He is put down as a "word bound legalist" who isn't flowing with God's present truth. But the only reason we need "whistle blowers" is because the church seems unable to muster the courage to judge itself. I Corinthians 11:31, "If we judged (diakrino) ourselves rightly we would not be judged." The only reason we need building inspectors is because some of the contractors are often cutting comers. If we make every effort to do it right, do we need fear an inspection? Our anger at inspectors is perhaps because we aren't sure of our actions. Plumblines are meant to be a "whistle blower" ministry. We aren't overly concerned with the evaluation of the heavy hitters and the famous, rather when we are aware of something that appears to be out of bounds biblically, we will make the call and leave it to those who love truth to evaluate it. Do we thus claim perfection? Hardly, but, when someone presumes to speak God's actual words and they prove false, it hardly takes a prophet to blow that whistle.

In our market driven spiritual economy, where truth too often is what seems to work, fill pews, sells books, often enhancing anointed celebrities, if you dare to blow the whistle of biblical integrity you will not win any popularity contests. Paul seems to have been one of those peace-breaking censorious "whistle blowing" heresy hunters. Why he even went so far as to pronounce the anathema on those who had a different view of circumcision. But, he wasn't building an empire or selling a book. He was determined that if pleasing God meant being discredited by man (the Corinthian church) he would gladly bear that burden.

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## Out of Chaos

. . . About six years ago, I was in an Assembly of God church. News of the revival in Pensacola had made its way to Tulsa. We began hearing many sermons about being hungry and thirsty for "more" of God. I felt that perhaps I "needed more of God too" and decided to visit a fellowship that had received the "blessing" and was having revival meetings. I went a few times and observed many strange things. I recall being prayed for by one of the prayer team. The lady put her hands in front of my face but did not touch me. After she started praying she had a terrible look on her face and looked at her hands and began shaking them. It appeared that she was feeling intense heat on her hands that was uncomfortable. She soon left me and someone came by with "canned" revival thoughts. I felt nothing during the time her hands burned, but thought perhaps God was doing something in me that I couldn't see. I remember seeing people acting drunk and saying how wonderful it was, testimonies of healings of band childhood memories and the like, also manifestations of "tics" on people who stood on the platform such as twitching of a head. During these couple of weeks, I would go to my AG church on Saturday evenings for prayer service. I would feel all a "twitter" inside from having been "touched" at the revival services. One night in particular as I came to the alter to pray, a powerful force came over me and I began to weep uncontrollably. I also began to feel as though I was in childbirth labor without the pains. One or two people came over and acted like they knew what this was or meant, but I sure didn't. No one said anything to me as we left. I wrote a letter to the pastor and asked him about the revival and this experience. He didn't seem to have the time to respond and weeks later I got an article from a magazine he sent about the revival. It didn't say one way or other if this revival was of God. I was quite disappointed in him and confused about the whole thing. I spent the next couple months reading a lot of books that were critical of charismatics in general. I also left that church and holed up in a small Southern Baptist church. The worship was different from the exuberant style I had just left and after about two years I became restless and felt that, this church was dead. I felt perhaps I had been too critical and thrown the baby out with the bathwater. This church did not believe at all in any of the spiritual gifts and taught against them.

Another church in town was becoming popular with the revival so I decided to visit there. It was a lively church and the music was upbeat – composed of rock band type musicians and very loud. The people were genuinely friendly and caring. I got involved with a group of ladies in a weekly Bible study. It was a study of the Song of Solomon by Mike Bickel. It was very spiritualized and intense. The lady that led it was supposedly very gifted in the prophetic and usually shook her head and said "Oh or HO" a lot. She told of vision of Jesus where he looked more like a movie actor from her description. Most of the ladies would get a "word" or see a "picture" in the spirit when they prayed. I was impressed, but also curious. There was one lady who used bad language during the study. I looked around to see how others reacted and they all thought it was all right.

I began to notice that when I would go church, play the new worship songs on the CD or pray and read my Bible, my abdomen would begin to shake. Since I had seen so many people at this church doing that, I thought this must be the "anointing" they talk about. I never saw or heard anything in particular when this happened. As I got more involved in the church, I also went to "Intercessory Prayer" nights. These were quite intense and this was a "new way of praying". Many times when the pastors were present, someone would prophesy over them and they would just be laying on the floor "soaking". People falling and laying on the floor and groaning was a common practice during the worship service. The lady who officiated the prayer time would want you to go "deeper" into intercession. Sometimes the prayer was in English and other times in tongues. I decided to take the class offered for those who wanted to be on the prayer team. They gave us a list of rules such as you couldn't pray for someone unless there was a "catcher". You were not supposed to ask them what they wanted prayer for. They told me that you were supposed to rely on the Holy Spirit to tell you what their problem was, if not just say "more, Lord, etc." This didn't sound right to me. They gave us a tape of Pastor Linda's experience in Toronto that started the revival in this church. It was titled, "How OBF Got Her Groove". IT was entertaining to hear how she was touched in the service and her husband had to carry her around for the three days they were there. She couldn't stand up or sleep. She thought this was wonderful. Every time someone would say something revival-like to her she would fall to the floor and laugh and shake. She encouraged people to seek the Lord for visions, dreams, prophetic gifts, healing gifts. Finally, I heard a warning go off in my head. I read a testimony on the internet from someone about their experience with the revival and how God had brought them out of it, exposing the counterfeit plan of Satan. Somehow, it hit me that what I had experienced was not God at all, but Satan and that I had let my guard down and once again had been deceived by Christians who I thought knew more than me.

Various speakers came to that church. One was Bobby Connors who was a "prophetic" teacher that had the ability to read people's minds and see into their bodies. Another was Jim Goll. He prophesied over me and supposedly broke a generational curse of anxiety attacks and nightmares --the truth is I didn't have any until after I left this church! Frank Sizer was a former Catholic priest who lost his opportunity to have Benny Hinn's job and now blows the Holy Spirit on people. He also told about paying \$10,000 to a ministry to receive healing for his son, which didn't happen. Cindy Jacobs (one of God's "generals") came and said that God wanted to visit Tulsa in a supernatural way with signs and wonders and healings. There were several people who had visions of a literal devastating flood that was going to hit Tulsa. Many came and talked about the great endtime harvest and how God is raising them up to be so "anointed" and nothing will be able to stand in their way. Through all of this, I was diligent in reading and studying my Bible and could not find anyplace where these things were going to happen. In fact, the Bible said the opposite.

As I looked back over all the teachings - the truth was that "deceiving spirits" were behind all of this. As soon as I questioned and renounced my belief in all of this the abdominal shaking "anointing" left me. I felt like I was back in my sound mind again. My mother noticed the change in my personality. She said I was arrogant when I believed in this "revival" stuff. You don't know you are deceived until you have been delivered out of it. Part of me wanted to believe that it was true that people would automatically be healed

when I prayed for them, that demons would obey and people would be delivered. The attraction was the power and authority that came with it. You can change the world and bring in the kingdom! Without the King, even! No reason to wait for Him – He has given it all to us here and now. Same old lie. Jesus told the twelve that they should rejoice because their names were written in heaven.

The Lord has taught me many things. Tulsa is the capital of the "Word of Faith" movement. When I was at Oral Roberts University, Kenneth Hagin's ministry was getting started. His teachings were considered fanatical and not allowed in our chapel services. ORU has changed since then as the Board of Directors are all Word of Faith teachers. Richard Roberts invited Rodney Howard Browne and said it was the best service ORU ever had. When I attended ORU, I worked for the Art Director who used to put together Oral's advertising campaigns. He admitted how you always had to have new things for people to give money to. I was there when the City of Faith was being built and the money that went into the school was suddenly funneled into the hospital. Most of the students were opposed to it – but it was Oral's. I also did freelance artwork for a former ORU administrator. He had me paste up letters that he sent to people and sold them a necklace with a star on it – supposedly, if they bought it, they would prosper. There is so much more.

We have huge charismatic churches here. Most I have attended for short periods – or at least visited. They are well attended because they teach what the people want to hear. They focus on being prosperous – they buy expensive cars for each Hagin birthday. In Willie George's church, you get health on Sunday and wealth on Wednesday. No Sunday school. Carlton Pearson's predominantly black church is located in the richer white area, etc. All of these churches, some with commendable outreaches into the community, are preaching a selfish and worldly gospel. Their focus is on this life and all of our physical needs to be catered to.

In reading Detrich Bonhoeffer's book one gets such a different perspective of the Christian disciple. He talks about the sermon on the mount, the Beatitudes, the fact that the disciples were poor, but blessed, treated unfairly, yet did not demand their rights. Identified with the outcasts and downtrodden and were persecuted for their beliefs. They gave up everything – their vocations, livelihoods, security and even families.

I appreciate your interest and so much appreciate the Lord leading me to your website. It helped to know that there was someone else out there who had also struggled through this yet came out of it. God also sent a new friend into my life last year who had been delivered out of the New Age movement in California. We compared notes and found many similarities between the New Age and New Wine. Same deception. I pray for God to use you to bring the truth to others just as I pray for those I left in deception. Only God's grace can pull somebody out of it and enable them to see the truth. C. Oxford (Tulsa, OK)

Discernment Ministries Inc. PO Box 254 High Bridge, NJ 08829 - 0254