



## A CHRONICLE of the TORONTO BLESSING and OTHER RELATED EVENTS

David Hilborn

*Taken from 'Toronto' in Perspective ed. David Hilborn, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001.*

*What follows is a synthesis of news reports from the Evangelical Alliance's extensive press archive, from the various books and articles mentioned in the Bibliography, and from pertinent sound and video recordings.*

1954 – On the basis of a vision which will later be detailed in his autobiography, *Ploughboy to Preacher*, Strict Baptist pastor David Obbard implies that revival might break out in the year 1994. Obbard has been studying Ezekiel 37, and, as he will go on to recall, 'It came to me I this way; that as bone came to bone, so there would be a revival of interest in the doctrines of grace, which are surely the framework of the true church, but this would not bring revival itself. Also, as the the sinews and flesh came upon them, so there would follow a revival of true biblical order and experimental spiritual life, but neither would these things bring revival. Following this there would be a mighty movement of the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, and the church would be raised from its lifeless state to that of an exceeding great army.'

Obbard will go on to reflect that as this conviction came upon him, 'there was presented to my mind the figure of twenty-year periods; twenty years for the bones to come together, twenty years during which Bible-based churches of born-again believers would be established on a world-wide scale, and some time during the next twenty years [ie. 1994 onwards] a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.'

Looking back on all this in the early 1990s, Obbard suggests that the ministry of the great Welsh evangelical preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones might be construed as evidence for the first period of recovery in the doctrines of grace. He moves on to propose that the second predicted wave of renewed spiritual life [1974-94] could be related to the rise of the charismatic movement. He then looks to the period from 1994 as one in which true revival will arise.

As what will come to be called the 'Toronto Blessing' takes shape in June 1994, journalist Dave Roberts will re-present Obbard's words as a prophesy which might well have come to pass (→).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Rumours of Revival', *Alpha*, July 1994, p.46. The article in question is unattributed in the magazine itself, but Roberts, the editor of *Alpha*, later reveals himself to have written it: Roberts, Dave, *The Toronto Blessing*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994, pp.27-8.

**1966-68** – Toronto-born John Arnott attends Ontario Bible College, but leaves in the final year without graduating.<sup>2</sup>

**Late 1960s and early 1970s** – Now running a travel agency and dealing in property<sup>3</sup>, Arnott attends several meetings in his home city led by the healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman.<sup>4</sup> These meetings make a profound impression on Arnott,<sup>5</sup> and anticipate significant features in his own later ministry. From modest beginnings in the mid-West, Kuhlman has developed a prominent radio and TV ministry thanks to a contract with the CBS network. She is known not only for pinpointing specific ailments among members of her audience, but also for the fact that as she prays with them, many people fall to the floor or 'go under the power' – a phenomenon more usually referred to in classical Pentecostalism as 'being slain in the Spirit'.<sup>6</sup>

**1974 onwards** – Israeli-born Benny Hinn develops a self-styled 'anointed' ministry based in the Ontario area. Pentecostal in approach, Hinn nonetheless claims to offer more power (or anointing) to those already baptised in the Spirit and speaking in tongues.<sup>7</sup> This emphasis, coupled with Hinn's flamboyant style, will attract growing controversy through the next two decades (→). Arnott, however, attends a number of Hinn's increasingly well supported meetings and, as with Kuhlman, he is deeply moved.<sup>8</sup> Hinn himself has been strongly affected by Kuhlman and, following her death (→), will pay regular visits to her graveside, and that of another leading female evangelist, the Ontario-born Aimee Semple McPherson.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, Arnott and Hinn form a close friendship during this period.<sup>10</sup>

**1976** – Kathryn Kuhlman dies, just short of her seventieth birthday. She and Benny Hinn have been dominant exemplars in Arnott's spiritual development. Recalling their impact on Arnott during this period, Arnott's future Co-Pastor Guy Chevreau will later confirm that 'in significant ways they laid an imprint for the future direction and conduct of [Arnott's] ministry.'<sup>11</sup>

**1979** – Arnott marries fellow Ontarian Carol. Both are divorcees, having experienced the break-up of their respective first marriages during the previous few years. Arnott will later reflect that Carol 'literally loved me back to life.'<sup>12</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Oropeza, 21; Fitzgibbon, Andy & Jane, "'God, Do What You Want to Do'", *Renewal*, August 1995, p.15.

<sup>3</sup> Oropeza, 21; Hough, Robert, 'God is alive and well and saving souls on Dixon Road', *Toronto Life*, Feb 1995, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Chevreau, 21

<sup>5</sup> Chevreau, 21

<sup>6</sup> J.L. Sandidge, 'Kathryn Kuhlman' in Stanley M. Burgess & Gary B. McGee, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, pp.529-30.

<sup>7</sup> Hinn, Benny, *The Anointing*, (7<sup>th</sup> ed.), Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993, pp.23-7.

<sup>8</sup> Chevreau, p.21.

<sup>9</sup> Hinn, Benny, *Double Portion Anointing 3(Audio) & Praise the Lord (TV programme)*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Chevreau, p.22

<sup>11</sup> Chevreau, p. 21

<sup>12</sup> Roberts, Dave, *The 'Toronto' Blessing*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994; Fitzgibbon, Andy & Jane, "'God, Do What You Want to Do'", *Renewal*, August 1995, p.15.

**July 1979** – Eighteen year-old South African Rodney Howard-Browne attends a prayer meeting, hungry for a personal touch from God. Raised in Port Elizabeth by devout Pentecostal parents, Howard-Browne will later testify to having been born again at the age of five, and to having been filled with the Holy Spirit when as young as eight.<sup>13</sup> Eager to move on in his faith, Howard-Browne will recollect in 1992 the words he shouted out to God at this 1979 prayer meeting: "God, tonight is my night! Lord, either you come down here and touch me, or I'm going to die and come up there and touch you."<sup>14</sup> After some time, he begins to sense what he has been seeking: 'it felt like liquid fire – like someone had poured gasoline over me and set me on fire. My whole body was tingling. The best way I can describe it is that it was as shocking as if I had unscrewed a light bulb from a lamp and put my finger in the socket. I *knew* it was God. When it hit me in the belly, I began to laugh uncontrollably ...Your head says, "What are you laughing at?" Your head says, "Shut up!" It bubbles. It was so overwhelming, I couldn't stop it, and I didn't want to stop it. It was joy unspeakable and full of glory ... The next minute, I was weeping for no reason. I got drunk in the Spirit, like the people on the Day of Pentecost.'<sup>15</sup> Howard-Browne remains in this condition for four days.<sup>16</sup>

**1980** – John and Carol Arnott go to Indonesia on a business trip. Opportunities to preach and minister while there prompt them to consider leaving their business commitments to embark on full time ministry.<sup>17</sup> Soon after returning, they are called to plant an independent congregation in Carol's home town of Stratford, Ontario.<sup>18</sup>

Rodney Howard-Browne begins a public ministry with Youth for Christ. As this develops, it is marked by various 'slayings in the Spirit'.<sup>19</sup>

**1981** – The Arnotts co-found the Stratford Church. Full time work there quickly becomes a reality thanks to the growth of the congregation.<sup>20</sup>

**October 1981** – Rodney Howard-Browne marries Adonica. Shortly afterwards, he enrolls Rhema Bible Training Centre in Johannesburg, and begins to serve as an associate of Ray McCauley at the massive Johannesburg Rhema Church. The 'Rhema' network is part of the so-called 'Word of Faith' movement pioneered by the Southern American preacher Kenneth Hagin, and now promulgated most notably by his proteges, the televangelists Kenneth and Gloria Copeland (→). 'Word of Faith' (or 'WordFaith') teaching draws heavily on the writings of William Essek Kenyon (1867-1948), and at the very least appears to draw influences from 'New Thought Metaphysics' – the sectarian New England Transcendentalism which, among other movements, spawned Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Scientists and Horatio Dresser's Church of the Higher Life.<sup>21</sup> Word of Faith teaching is distinguished by five key tenets. First, it promotes 'positive confession',

<sup>13</sup> Howard-Browne, Rodney, *Manifesting the Holy Ghost*, Louisville, Ky., R.H.B.E.A, 1992, p.5.

<sup>14</sup> Howard-Browne, Rodney, *Manifesting the Holy Ghost*, Louisville, Ky., R.H.B.E.A, 1992, pp.13-14.

<sup>15</sup> <sup>15</sup> Howard-Browne, Rodney, *Manifesting the Holy Ghost*, Louisville, Ky., R.H.B.E.A, 1992, pp.16-17.

<sup>16</sup> Oropeza, p.20; Roberts, p.84.

<sup>17</sup> Chevreau, p.21;

<sup>18</sup> Chevreau, p.21

<sup>19</sup> Roberts, p.84.

<sup>20</sup> Chevreau, p.21

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed account of these connections see McConnell, Dan R., *The Promise of Health and Wealth: a Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990.

the belief that the very act of uttering a desire, blessing or word of healing in true faith constitutes the basis on which the desire, blessing or healing in question will come to pass. The causal 'guarantee' implied by this approach has led to its being disparagingly labelled 'name it and claim it' theology. Second, and closely related to positive confession, WordFaith typically regards sickness and suffering as inimical to God's plan for human beings; as such, it posits a direct correlation between faith and healing. Third, it teaches that prosperity in its various forms – and not least material prosperity – is a definitive characteristic of the fulfilled Christian life. As with healing, it perceives a strong correspondence between prosperity and faith, often expressed in terms of 'reaping' and 'sowing'. The interrelationship between these second and third points accounts for the fact that WordFaith teachers are often described as promoting a 'health and wealth' gospel. Fourth, WordFaith teachers frequently espouse a 'little gods' doctrine which suggests that, because humans are uniquely made in God's image to have 'dominion' over the earth, they have a divine capacity to shape reality by their powerful words – a capacity related to God's verbal declaration, 'Let there be ...'. Fifth, the Word of Faith movement has been significantly influenced by the view that Jesus' atonement was not completed on Calvary, but depended instead on his very literally 'becoming sin' for us in such a way that he died spiritually as well as physically, thus enduring the flames of hell and even taking on the nature of Satan, thereby becoming 'born again' in preparation for his resurrection and ascension to glory.<sup>22</sup>

Over the next few years, Rodney Howard-Browne will publish a number of writings which bear out his formation within 'Word of Faith' circles.<sup>23</sup> All the same, he will operate a common sense, plain speaking approach which somewhat mitigates the worst excesses of positive confession, unlimited prosperity and 'on demand' healing.<sup>24</sup> Like Benny Hinn (←→), he will stress the centrality of 'the anointing', which he will go on to define as 'the power of God manifested' – that is, something 'tangible' and capable of transmission through the laying on of hands, as well as through such means as blowing [after John 20:22] and touching a sanctified handkerchief [after Acts 19:12].<sup>25</sup>

**1986** – John and Carol Arnott attend a conferences in Vancouver and Ohio led by the head of the Vineyard church network, John Wimber.<sup>26</sup> Along with the Arnotts, Wimber will become a central figure in the development of the Toronto Blessing.

---

<sup>22</sup> For more detail on these and other characteristics of Word of Faith see McConnell, Dan R., *The Promise of Health and Wealth: a Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990; Brandon, Andrew, *Health and Wealth*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1987. Jackson, Robert, 'Prosperity Theology and the Faith Movement', *Themelios*, October 1989 (Vol. 1), pp.16-23.

<sup>23</sup> It must be said, however, that Howard-Browne's stance on 'little gods' and 'Jesus died Spiritually' teaching is unclear.

<sup>24</sup> This assessment is made – fairly in my opinion – by Oropeza, who remains highly critical of Howard-Browne's methods and theology, but who, unlike many of the South African's critics, has read extensively in Howard-Browne's own writings, and cites several disavowals of absolutist WordFaith teaching, as well as general commendations of Hagin, the Croplands and the basic Rhema ethos. Oropeza, B.J., *A Time to Laugh: The Holy Laughter Phenomenon Examined*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1995, pp.30-50.

<sup>25</sup> Howard-Browne, Rodney, *The Touch of God: A Practical Workbook*, nd; *The Anointing*, Louisville, Ky.: R.H.B.E.A, 1992, pp.3-4.

<sup>26</sup> Chevreau, p.21

A former rock musician and producer from California, Wimber and his Roman Catholic wife Carol were converted in 1963, whereupon they joined a Quaker congregation at Yoruba Linda. From 1970-73, John took a degree in Biblical Studies at Azusa Pacific College while co-pastoring at the same church. In 1975, the couple moved from Yoruba Linda to Pasadena, where John enrolled on a church growth course at Fuller Seminary. This course was taught by Prof. Peter Wagner, who would become a close friend. Wagner's 1973 study, *Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming!* had a major influence on Wimber at this time.<sup>27</sup> He had previously held to a cessationist understanding of the New Testament charismata, but Wagner's work led him into a significant exploration of spiritual gifts. This also included study of work by the English Pentecostal Donald Gee and the Episcopalian charismatic Morton Kelsey. As a result of all this, Wimber became convinced that effective preaching and evangelism depended as much on demonstration as declaration. In the Gospels, he concluded, Jesus consistently matched his words with works of power such as healing, exorcism, resurrection and feeding the hungry; indeed, Wimber came to hold that the two ministries were inextricably linked. He concluded from further reading in missiology and anthropology that that this emphasis on 'signs and wonders' was still evident in many vibrant Third World church settings, but had been lost in the modern West. Sensing that a recovery of such 'power evangelism' and 'power healing' could transform American Christianity, Wimber sought to put his ideas into practice with a new fellowship, which started to meet in his home in 1977 and which linked with Chuck Smith's group of Calvary Chapels. By 1981, the congregation had already grown impressively when a young man who had given testimony prayed the simple invocation, 'Come, Holy Spirit'. At this, hundreds fell to the floor, weeping, wailing and speaking in tongues. There then followed a period of even more rapid growth before Wimber moved his church's affiliation in 1982 to a small network of congregations formed in 1974, overseen by Ken Gulliksen and called the Vineyards.<sup>28</sup>

Also in 1982, Wimber was invited back to Fuller to teach a course entitled 'The Miraculous and Church Growth'. Listed in the Fuller School of World Mission Catalogue as MC 510, this course ran on Monday evenings and started with around 130 students. By 1985, when it was discontinued amidst theological dispute in the seminary, it had become the most popular course in Fuller's history. Peter Wagner became one of its most enthusiastic supporters and, contributed personally as a teacher on the course.<sup>29</sup> During the three years in which the course ran, Wagner developed the theory that it, and Wimber's church, were modelling a 'Third Wave' of modern renewal, which was dependent on, but distinct from, the first two 'waves' of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. In contrast to the classical Pentecostalism developed from the Azusa Street revival of 1906-9, Wagner wrote that the Third Wave defined baptism in the Holy Spirit as coincident with conversion, rather than with a 'second blessing'. He also stressed, over against Pentecostalism that the Third Wave saw speaking in tongues as neither particularly important, nor as 'initial evidence' of Spirit baptism. Furthermore, whereas the Charismatic Renewal movement which had sought to adopt Pentecostal spirituality into historic denominations from the 1950s could be prone to create friction with established structures and practices, Wagner followed Wimber in defining the new

---

<sup>27</sup> Wagner, Peter, *Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming!*, Carol Streams: Creation House, 1973.

<sup>28</sup> For a helpful biography and analysis of Wimber see Scotland, Nigel, *Charismatics and the New Millennium*, Guildford: Eagle, 2000 [1995], pp.200-18.

<sup>29</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics*, pp.203-6.

movement as dedicatedly assimilationist and ready to compromise on such things as tongues, raising hands in worship and methods of prayer, in order to maintain harmony. Moreover, Wagner underlined that the Third Wave was thoroughly committed to a corporate, 'every member' style of ministry – one which diverged markedly from the more individualistic, 'anointed man' model of Pentecostal leadership.<sup>30</sup>

By now, in 1986, Wimber's church has accumulated around 5,000 members and has taken up residence in a large warehouse building in Anaheim. Wimber himself has been groomed by Ken Gulliksen to take over leadership of the Vineyard, and has developed an extensive itinerant ministry through the specially-formed organisation, Vineyard Ministries International (VMI). Crucially, he has already made his first main tour the UK (in October 1984), at the invitation of David Watson. As Vicar of the leading charismatic Anglican church, St. Michael le Belfrey in York, Watson has been in touch with Wimber since 1981, and has helped him make major impact on other Anglican congregations. These have included St. Andrew's Chorleywood (→), whose Vicar, David Pytches, was formerly Bishop of Chile, Bolivia and Peru, St. Thomas Crookes in Sheffield, St. John's Harborne in Birmingham and Holy Trinity, Brompton, in London.<sup>31</sup> The last of these centres will become especially significant in the development of the Toronto Blessing a decade hence (→).

As they catch up with his latest tour in Vancouver and Ohio, the Arnotts are deeply impressed by Wimber's character and methods, and are especially drawn to his emphasis on empowering every believer for ministry. As a result, shortly afterwards, they and their Stratford congregation begin informally relating to the Vineyard.

**August 1986** – Wimber speaks at a 'Signs, Wonders and Church Growth' conference in Auckland, New Zealand. Murray Robertson, Senior Pastor of Spraydon Baptist Church, Christ Church, is present.<sup>32</sup> Two years later, Robertson will recall in a book written by Wimber's associate Kevin Springer, that an unusual form of 'holy laughter' broke out in this meeting, and that he himself laughed and rolled around on the floor for 'four and a half hours'.<sup>33</sup> This laughing phenomenon will become the subject of intense debate in the context of the Toronto Blessing from 1994 onwards (→). It is not, however, entirely without precedent. In the Eighteenth century, both John Wesley and Charles Chauncy had reported it occurring in revival meetings, although both had ascribed it to the work of the devil. Others, however, had witnessed it and had taken a more favourable view.<sup>34</sup> In the early 1970s, the Church of God evangelists Charles and Frances Hunter (the 'Happy Hunters') are known to have presided over meetings at which 'holy laughter' sometimes emerged, while A.L. Gill, a missionary from California, will later claim to have seen it in his meetings from 1983.<sup>35</sup> As noted above, Rodney Howard-Browne has already experienced it for himself in a dramatic way in 1979 (←); he will begin more actively to cultivate it in his own public ministry from 1989 (→).

<sup>30</sup> Wagner, C.P.: 'A Third Wave?' *Pastoral Renewal* (July-August 1983), 1-5; idem, 'The Third Wave', *Christian Life* (September 1984), 90; 'Third Wave', in Stanley M. Burgess & Gary B. McGee (eds.), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, pp.843-44.

<sup>31</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics*, p.302.

<sup>32</sup> Oropeza, p.17

<sup>33</sup> Robertson, Murray, 'A Power Encounter Worth Laughing About', in Springer, Kevin (ed.), *Power Encounters among Christians in the Western World*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988, pp.149-57.

<sup>34</sup> For a helpful account of the relevant sources here, see Oropeza, pp.145ff.

<sup>35</sup> Oropeza, pp.15-16.

**1987** – The Arnotts' Stratford church officially joins the Vineyard network.<sup>36</sup> Arnott will in time become Vineyard Area Pastoral Co-Ordinator of the Southern Ontario region.<sup>37</sup> The Stratford congregation continues to grow, and the Arnotts sense a call from God to plant a new fellowship back in John's home area of west Toronto. As a first step, they convene a 'kinship house group' there along with Jeremy and Connie Sinnott. This, too, begins to flourish. For the next four years or so, the Arnotts commute between their two fellowships in Stratford and Toronto.<sup>38</sup>

Also in this year, the British House Church network New Frontiers invite John Wimber to lead a four-day conference at the Brighton Pavilion. This attracts large numbers from a wide range of denominations, with a particularly large proportion of Baptist pastors being affected by events during the conference itself, or by gleaning its ministry model from friends and colleagues who have attended.<sup>39</sup>

**Summer 1987** – By now leading the 7,000 member Orlando Christian Centre in Florida, Benny Hinn speaks at the first Eurofire Conference – a Pentecostal celebration held in Frankfurt, West Germany. The increasingly high-profile evangelist Reinhard Bonkke is also due to appear, and it is he that Ken Gott, an Assemblies of God pastor from Sunderland, has primarily come to hear. It is Hinn, however, whose ministry affects Gott most profoundly. As Gott will later recall, 'I was standing at the back, as far from the platform as I could possibly be, when at some point during the prayer I found myself flat on my back on the floor. I had never been 'slain in the Spirit' before and was the only one in my section of the crowd to fall.' On the last evening of the conference, Hinn calls all the English pastors to the platform. As Gott will remember it, 'In that moment I decided I was going for prayer, whether or not I liked this man's style of ministry, and I literally ran to the front, jumping over seats to get there ... I [then] experienced one of the most unusual manifestations of the presence of God I have ever known! I can only describe it as like walking through a force field about one metre high. As he put his hands on me I crashed to the floor and became totally immersed in what felt like liquid anointing, and I felt myself shaking and vibrating ... From a distance I heard Benny's voice say, "Pick him up!" and I was hauled back to my feet. He prayed and blew on me, and once again I fell ... I heard him say, and this time he looked right into my eyes and said, "Young man, from this moment you will never be the same again!" And I wasn't! I received a mighty impartation of the Holy Spirit that night. My preaching was different, I was excited and alive. I was filled with the joy of the Lord. My heart was enlarged, and I discovered a new, unqualified faith in God my Father. It was no longer a struggle for words when I met with my people. A power dimension had been added to the church. We were about to scale new heights of effectiveness ... ' The church in question is Sunderland Christian Centre, which Gott is in the process of establishing with his

---

<sup>36</sup> Chevreau, p.21, Roberts, p.63.

<sup>37</sup> Roberts, p.63.

<sup>38</sup> Chevreau, p.22

<sup>39</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics*, pp. 205-6; *Mainstream* (Baptist Charismatic Magazine), No. 26, September 1987.

wife, Lois. From 1994 onwards, it will become one of the key British sites of the Toronto Blessing.<sup>40</sup>

**September 1987** – The first British Vineyard congregation is founded in Putney, South West London.

**December 1987** – Rodney Howard-Browne moves his wife and children from South Africa to Orlando, Florida. He is stirred by reading about past North American revivals, and believes that there may be a role for him in the next one. As he will recall in 1991, his emigration is organised 'to fulfil what the Lord [has] told [me]. As America has sown missionaries over the last 200 years, the Lord [is] going to raise up people from other nations to come to the USA, and [is] sending a mighty revival to America.' Arriving with just \$300 and a month's worth of engagements, Howard-Browne spends the next two years building an itinerant preaching ministry, but enjoys only moderate success.

**3<sup>rd</sup> December 1988** – At his Vineyard offices in Anaheim, California, John Wimber meets the increasingly high-profile 'Kansas City Prophet', Paul Cain. The meeting has been brokered by Jack Deere, a fellow-leader with Cain at the Kansas City Fellowship (KCF).<sup>41</sup> It will prove to be a significant and controversial moment in the pre-history and provenance of the Toronto Blessing.

KCF has been running for five years, having been planted in 1982 by a 27-year old former Roman Catholic, Mike Bickle. It has since experienced considerable growth. The swelling numbers have, to a large extent, been attracted by the ministry of a team of prophets who began to gather around Bickle and KCF in 1983. As well as Deere, this team includes Bob Jones (not the southern fundamentalist leader), John Paul Jackson, and Cain, who joined in mid-1987.<sup>42</sup>

Cain's mother Anna fell pregnant with him in the 1920s, when aged 44 and dying of tuberculosis. According to Cain, during her pregnancy an angel visited her and said that she would be healed. She was apparently told to name her son 'Paul' because his ministry would reflect that of the apostle to the Gentiles. She was also told that she would subsequently live to an unusually old age. She died 60 years later at 104.<sup>43</sup>

As a young man in the 1950s, Cain toured the country with William Branham, the Pentecostal pioneer of the so-called Post-War Healing Revival – a movement also associated with Oral Roberts (→) and Gordon Lindsay. Branham's ministry was characterised by angelic visions, prophecies and 'words of knowledge' about specific individual healings and life-circumstances. Although aligned to the 'Oneness' tradition of Pentecostalism, which disavowed the trinity and insisted on baptism in the name of Jesus only, Branham appealed to a wider range of Pentecostals thanks to his support for the 'prosperity' teaching of Kenneth Hagin (→), and to backing from the influential Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship.

---

<sup>40</sup> Gott, Ken and Lois, *The Sunderland Refreshing: How the Holy Spirit Invaded One British Town*. Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995, 52-6.

<sup>41</sup> Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.53; Wright, *Strange Fire*, pp.260-1.

<sup>42</sup> Pytches, David, *Some Said It Thundered: A Personal Encounter with the 'Kansas City Prophets'*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990.

<sup>43</sup> Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.53.



Despite his popular profile, Branham went on to promote more controversial doctrines, which came to be regarded by many as heretical. These included the teaching that Eve's sin involved sexual relations with the serpent in Eden, so that those descended from this 'serpent's seed' were predestined for hell, while others, who had benefited from Branham's ministry, were those predestined to become the bride of Christ. In this scenario, Branham allowed that certain others might through their own freewill be saved out of denominational churches, but that they would have to pass through the Great Tribulation. Denominationalism itself, however, was the 'mark of the beast' (Rev. 13:17). Branham also declared himself to be the angel of Revelation 3:14 and 10:7, and predicted that by 1977 all denominations would be assumed into a World Council of Churches controlled by Rome.<sup>44</sup>

While working with Branham, Cain became especially known for his own ability to pinpoint the names, ailments and problems of particular people in a congregation without having ever met them. This also led him to perceive, when engaged to be married, that his fiancée had done something which would displease him. In response, Cain vowed to God that he would break off the engagement and stay celibate for the rest of his life, as long as God took away his sexual desire. Cain duly remained celibate from then onwards.<sup>45</sup>

In 1958, Cain grew disillusioned with the healing movement, some of whose leaders had by then been damaged by allegations of pride, competition and immorality.<sup>46</sup> He believed that God had already told him in 1956 that a 'new breed' of Christians would arise who would not be prone to such failings. This 'faceless generation' would modestly ensure that all glory went to God. They would, according to Cain, be known as 'Joel's Army' and would be devoid of 'superstars'. Until this new breed arose, however, Cain would be 'taken aside' into the 'desert'. He duly withdrew and adopted a lower profile, pastoring various small churches until eventually resuming more public ministry with KCF.<sup>47</sup> Having met Mike Bickle at a prophecy conference in Birmingham, Alabama in April 1987, he visited Kansas on 10th-12th May, became convinced he should stay, and formerly committed himself to the fellowship a short while later.<sup>48</sup>

With Cain now added to the team, the 'Kansas City Prophets' have been attracting growing attention. Cain's 1956 vision of 'Joel's Army' seems vividly to have complemented Bob Jones' own 1973 prophecy of an 'elect seed' whom God would raise up to create a mega-church 'ten thousand times greater than the church in the Book of Acts'.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, both men have now begun to prophesy that KCF will become the headquarters for a group of Christian pioneers who will together spearhead preparations for the end-time harvest of souls and the return of Christ.<sup>50</sup> Jones has been claiming to have had mystical visions in which he has journeyed to heaven and hell, and has been recognised by the apostle Paul as an end-time prophet.<sup>51</sup> Bickle has augmented

---

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, D.J., Branham, William Marrion', in Stanley M. Burgess & Gary McGee (eds), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, pp.95-7.

<sup>45</sup> Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.53-4.

<sup>46</sup> Thigpen, Paul, 'How is God Speaking Today?', *Charisma*, Sept. 1989, p.52.

<sup>47</sup> Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.53-4.

<sup>48</sup> Pytches, *Some Said It Thundered*, pp.130-32.

<sup>49</sup> Beverley, James A., *Holy Laughter and the Toronto Blessing*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995, p.123.

<sup>50</sup> Beverley, *Holy Laughter*, p.123

<sup>51</sup> Beverley, *Holy Laughter*, p.123

these predictions of an imminent pure end-time church by saying that it 'will take dominion over the Earth for ultimate presentation to Christ at his second coming'.<sup>52</sup>

In time, commentators will make comparisons and connections between such statements and those issued in 1948 by the 'Latter Rain' movement, sometimes also referred to as Restorationism.<sup>53</sup> This controversial variation of Pentecostalism emerged from the Sharon Orphanage and Schools in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada in February 1948. It was driven by an interpretation of Joel 2:23 which took the 'former rain' of the text to denote the Day of Pentecost described in Acts 2, and the 'latter rain' to refer to an end-time revival, which Pentecostal leaders like George and Ern Hatwin, Herrick Holt and Milford Kirkpatrick believed had begun with a dramatic surge of spiritual activity in the town. Against this strongly eschatological background, 'Latter Rain' teachers like George Warnock and J. Preston Eby identified a band of new 'apostles', called 'Overcoming Sons of God' or 'Manifest Sons of God', whose task it would be to 'restore' the Church to a state of purity, and thereby fit it as a 'spotless bride' for the return of her husband, the Messiah.<sup>54</sup> One key facet of this envisaged restoration was the recovery of the signs and wonders experienced by the early church – signs and wonders which, in Restorationist historiography, had declined sharply after the first apostolic age and needed to be fully reinstated as a prelude to the *parousia*. It seems hardly coincidental that such teachings developed after members of the Sharon staff had visited one of William Branham's healing rallies in Vancouver just three weeks prior to the North Battleford outpouring.<sup>55</sup>

Sanctioned by the General Council of the Assemblies of God in 1949 on various grounds including potential elitism and an 'overemphasis on imparting spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands and prophecy', Latter Rain teaching has nonetheless influenced key figures in the British 'House Church' movement of the 1970s and 80s– figures such as Bryn Jones, Gerald Coates and Terry Virgo. Importantly, all of these men will become prominent in the Toronto Blessing from 1994 onwards (→).<sup>56</sup>

Bringing all these background influences with him to California, Cain has already conveyed through Jack Deere that his arrival at Vineyard Headquarters would be marked by an earthquake. Deere has also told Wimber that Cain expects another quake to occur when he leaves. On cue, Anaheim feels the San Andreas fault tremor alarmingly just as Cain turns up.

Cain carries with him a warning for Wimber and the Vineyard. The essence of his message is that Wimber must give greater priority to holiness within the movement. For some time, the Vineyard has been struggling with internal organisation and discipline,

---

<sup>52</sup> Christian Research Institute, *Transcripts*, p.10, cit, Wright, *Stange Fire?*, p.162 n.34 (p.342)

<sup>53</sup> E.g., Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, pp. 58-65; Tillin Tricia, 'But Is It A Blessing?' *Christian Herald*, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1994, p.8; Forbes, David, 'From North Battleford to Toronto', *Prophecy Today*, Vol 12, No. 1, Jan-Feb 1996, pp.14-15.

<sup>54</sup> For a survey of Latter Rain teaching, see Riss, R.M., 'Latter Rain Movement', in Stanley M. Burgess, Guy McGee and Patrick M. Alexander (eds.), *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988, pp.532-4. See also Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, pp. 58-65.

<sup>55</sup> Forbes, David, 'From North Battleford to Toronto', *Prophecy Today*, Vol 12, No. 1, Jan-Feb 1996, pp.15.

<sup>56</sup> For documentation on this link, see Wright, Nigel, 'Restoration and the 'House Church Movement'', *Themelios* 16, No. 2 (Jan-Feb 1991), 4-8; and Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, pp.58-65.

so Wimber takes this a word from God, and decides from now on to forge a close association with KCF.<sup>57</sup>

**7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> December 1988** – As Paul Cain leaves California following his meeting with John Wimber, his prediction of an earthquake when he departs appears to be borne out by a devastating shock in Armenia.<sup>58</sup>

**April 1989** – At a series of meetings in Albany, New York, Rodney Howard-Browne begins to see his ministry gain a significantly greater impact. Later, he will recall this period as one in which 'many people began to fall out of their seats. It looked like someone was shooting them and in some places whole rows at a time would go down. They were laughing and crying and falling all over the place and looked like drunken people.' He will add that he tried to preach above the noise of all this, but could not do so: 'the glory of the Lord fell in such a wonderful way. Some were healed in their seats. The Lord then said to me, 'I will move all the time if you will allow me to.'<sup>59</sup> Over the next five years, these occurrences will become increasingly common at Howard-Browne's meetings, and will have a profound effect on several of those who will go on to pioneer the Toronto Blessing (→).

**1990** – John Arnott finds rented accommodation for his and Carol's burgeoning Toronto congregation. It is the end block of a warehouse/office complex near the airport, by the intersection of Derry and Dixon roads. Hence a new name: the Toronto Airport Vineyard (hereafter TAV).<sup>60</sup>

**May 1990** – Ernie Gruen, Pastor of a large Pentecostal church in Kansas, issues a severe 233-page critique of KCF under the title 'Do We Keep Smiling and Say Nothing?'. This accuses Mike Bickle's church of false prophecy and misconduct. Among many other charges, Gruen attacks Bob Jones for reporting five-to-ten 'bizarre visions' per night, and upbraids Bickle for promoting elitism through Jones and Paul Cain's 'elect seed' and 'new order' teachings (← cf. 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1988). Writing about all this some time later, B.J. Oropeza will suggest that at best, Jones achieves no more than a 65% 'success rate' in his prophecies during this period.<sup>61</sup>

Shortly after Gruen's text is published, John Wimber seeks to mediate in the dispute which it inevitably causes. Jack Deere has already penned a defensive reply for the Vineyard magazine *Equipping the Saints*,<sup>62</sup> but Wimber adopts a rather more conciliatory tone. His intervention leads Mike Bickle to place KCF more directly under the auspices of the Vineyard network, and to re-name itself Metro Vineyard.<sup>63</sup>

**September 1990** – On the basis of a Paul Cain prophecy that revival would break out in the UK this autumn, John Wimber flies his team and family to London for a series of

---

<sup>57</sup> Wimber's own account of this meeting with Cain is printed in the Vineyard publication *Equipping the Saints*, Fall, 1989. Also see Pytches, *Some Said It Thundered*, pp.135-36; Maudlin, Michael, 'Seers in the Heartland', *Christianity Today*, 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1991, p.21, and Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.53.

<sup>58</sup> Pytches, *Some Said It Thundered*, p.135; Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.53.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Roberts, p.85

<sup>60</sup> Chevreau, p.22; Roberts p.62; Oropeza, p.21

<sup>61</sup> Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.56.

<sup>62</sup> Cit. Beverley, *Holy Laughter*, p.132.

<sup>63</sup> Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.261.

meetings at the Docklands Arena. Although the level of anticipation is high, the predicted outpouring does not appear to ensue. Initially, Wimber seeks to account for this by explaining that revival comes in stages, and that the earliest 'tokens' of it, in the form of a deepened emphasis on signs and wonders, have in fact been evident. His Kansas City Prophet colleagues also receive backing at this time in a signed statement from leading British charismatics including Gerald Coates (Pioneer), Graham Cray (St. Michael-le-Belfry), Roger Forster (Ichthus), Sandy Millar (Holy Trinity, Brompton), David Pytches (St. Andrew's, Chorleywood) and Terry Virgo (New Frontiers). Jones, Cain, Bickle et al are described in the statement as 'true servants of God, men of sound character and evident humility [with a] radical comitment to the Word of God.' The signatories add they they 'have no doubt about the validity of their ministry'.<sup>64</sup>

Despite all this, over the course of the next year, Wimber will be forced to re-evaluate his relationship with the Kansas group. By the summer of 1991, he will find himself on another London platform, apologising with Mike Bickle for their errors and excesses, while seeking to recover the original Vineyard emphasis on equipping and empowering church members for evangelism.<sup>65</sup> By Spring 1992, Bob Jones will have been expelled from his ministry because of 'serious sin', including allegations of sexual impropriety, manipulation, slander and divisiveness.<sup>66</sup>

By 1993, Mike Bickle will be admitting that 'God used the critique of Ernie Gruen to bring a deeper level of legitimate caution about prophecy to Kansas City'. He will also sign a declaration of peace with Gruen.<sup>67</sup> Also by this point, Jack Deere will have returned to his home base in Texas to develop an international teaching ministry.<sup>68</sup> Cain, meanwhile, will find himself controversially relating to Westminster Chapel, London, and its minister, R.T. Kendall, who will embark with him on a new initiative to recover a balance between the Word and the Spirit. Both Kendall and his church are noted for their Reformed reticence about charismatic ministry, and when the Toronto Blessing begins to affect the UK in mid-1994, Kendall will be initially sceptical. In time, however, he will prove to be one of its most influential supporters (→ see 6<sup>th</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> October 1994). Indeed, the rise of the Toronto Blessing will maintain at least some traces of the 1988-91 period of KCF-Vineyard co-operation (→).

**Spring 1992** – Benny Hinn is visited at his church in Florida by Claudio Freidzon, the head of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Argentina.<sup>69</sup> In the five years since he so affected Ken Gott at Eurofire '87 (←) Hinn has gained equal measures of fame and opprobrium within and beyond the evangelical world, both for personal claims to extraordinary feats such as causing people to be hurled several feet when approaching him,<sup>70</sup> and for idiosyncratic doctrinal pronouncements such as the declaration that

---

<sup>64</sup> Scotland, *Charismatics*, pp.163-4, 221-22; Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.55; Wright, Nigel, 'An Assessment', *Themelios*, 17 no. 1 (Oct/Nov 1991), 20; Wimber, John, 'Revival Fire', *Equipping the Saints*, Winter 1991, 10-13, 21.

<sup>65</sup> *Renewal*, August 1991, p.21.

<sup>66</sup> *Renewal*, March 1992; Moriarty, Michael, *The New Charismatics*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, p.102.

<sup>67</sup> Beverley, *Holy Laughter*, p.133.

<sup>68</sup> Wright, *Stange Fire?*, pp.262-63; Beverley, *Holy Laughter*, p.133.

<sup>69</sup> Oropeza, pp.17-18

<sup>70</sup> Hinn, Benny, *The Anointing*, (7<sup>th</sup> ed.), Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993, p.26

Adam could fly through space<sup>71</sup> and the claim (subsequently retracted) that there are nine in the Trinity.<sup>72</sup> His strongly autobiographical books *The Anointing* and *Good Morning, Holy Spirit* have become best sellers, but have also been criticised for their theology. In the face of these criticisms, Hinn has recently moderated some of his views. In particular, he has sought to distance himself from the so-called 'Word of Faith' movement, the health-and-wealth constituency pioneered by Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts and Frederick Price, and now led by Texas-based televangelist Kenneth Copeland. Although influenced to a large degree by this movement, Hinn has told Randy Frame in the preceding October's edition of *Christianity Today*, 'I no longer believe the faith message'. All the same, there are those who doubt the genuineness and extent of this disavowal, citing apparent contradictions of it made only weeks subsequently.<sup>73</sup>

Notwithstanding all this, Carlos Freidzon has come to Hinn, seeking a new anointing for what has become a notable ministry. Along with Carlos Annaconda, Ed Silvano (brother-in-law of evangelist Luis Palau), Omar Cabrera, Hector Gimenez and others, Freidzon has emerged as a leading figure in a remarkable period of church growth in his country since the mid-eighties. Reports of this 'Argentinean Revival' recount miracles which include the raising of the dead, the replacement of removed bodily organs and the restoration of dental fillings (→). They also record outbreaks of 'holy laughter' at Freidzon's King of Kings church since 1987.<sup>74</sup> Although the King of Kings congregation has grown from modest numbers to some 2,000 in a relatively short time, Freidzon senses that much more is possible. Hinn prophesies over Freidzon, who returns to see his church rapidly double in size, with the laughter becoming more prominent and large numbers 'falling under the power'.<sup>75</sup>

**May 1992** – Marc Dupont, a pastoral team member at TAV, has a detailed vision. He sees a mountain landscape in which a large amount of water is cascading onto a huge, heavy rock. He understands God to be telling him that 'Toronto shall be a place where much living water will be flowing with great power, even though at the present time both the church and the city are like big rocks, cold and hard against God's love and his Spirit.' The vision also implies, for Dupont, that this 'water of revival' will overflow the plains of Canada and extend much further afield.<sup>76</sup> Dupont will share a second vision with the TAV leadership in July 1993, which develop the themes introduced here. Later still, John Wimber will later testify to having had a very similar picture (see July 1994 →).

**Summer 1992** – Work at TAV reaches the point at which both John Arnott and Jeremy Sinnott feel called to commit themselves there full time. Oversight of the Stratford congregation is duly passed to Jerry Steingrad, who had been one of the associate pastors there. The Arnotts move from Stratford and settle in Toronto. At this major

<sup>71</sup> *Praise the Lord*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 26<sup>th</sup> December 1991.

<sup>72</sup> *Benny Hinn (TV programme)*, Trinity Broadcasting Network, 3<sup>rd</sup> / 13th October 1990: 'Each one of them is a triune being by Himself... there's nine of them.' This was later acknowledged by Hinn in an interview with the magazine *Christianity Today* to have been 'a very dumb statement' ('Frame, Randy, 'Best-selling Author Admits Mistakes, Vows Changes', *Christianity Today*, 28<sup>th</sup> October 1991, p.44). Even so, Hank Hanegraff, among others, still doubts the orthodoxy of Hinn's view of the Trinity (*Christianity in Crisis*, Eugene: Harvest House, p.344.

<sup>73</sup> For sources on this see Hanegraff, Hank, *Christianity in Crisis*, Eugene: Harvest House, 1993.pp.343-4

<sup>74</sup> Oropeza, p.17

<sup>75</sup> Oropeza, pp.17-18

<sup>76</sup> For more detail see Chevreaux pp.28ff.; Roberts p.16

crossroads in their life and ministry, the couple are keen to seek fresh empowerment from God.<sup>77</sup>

**September 1992** – Benny Hinn holds a series of meetings in Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens.<sup>78</sup> His good friends John and Carol Arnott attend, seeking fresh 'anointing' for their ministry at the Airport Vineyard. John will later reflect on this quest, saying 'I knew that it took the anointing to really set people free. We'd seen it in Kathryn Kuhlman's ministry and that totally ruined it for us for settling for more traditional ministry models'.<sup>79</sup> They are greatly enthused by Hinn's approach, and are moved to see 1,000 or so make commitments to Christ. They will later tell Guy Chevreau that they left the arena certain that 'Yes, we do have a mighty God. He is able to reach the city of Toronto. He can do it in power and might.'<sup>80</sup>

**April 1993** – Karl Strader, a pastor in the Assemblies of God, invites Rodney Howard-Browne to hold revival meetings at Carpenter's Home Church in Lakeland, Florida. The church can seat 10,000, but at this point the congregation numbers less than 2,000. Strader arranges broadcasts of the meetings on radio and TV, and within a month, nightly services are attracting an average 8,000 people. Some such services last until 2.00am. By the end of Howard-Browne's visit, it is estimated that 100,000 people have attended from a wide range of countries in Africa, South America and Europe. As a result of the meetings, some 2,260 will go on to be baptised.<sup>81</sup>

As with the 'Happy Hunters' and John Wimber in the previous decade, while conducting the Lakeland meetings, Howard-Browne presides over notable outbreaks of 'holy laughter'. Indeed, this phenomenon not only featured in his own call to ministry in 1979 (←); it has been a prominent aspect of his public meetings since 1989 (←).<sup>82</sup> Following his stint at Lakeland, the laughter spreads, as those who have attended return to their own congregations. Among those radically affected are Paul and Mona Johnian's Boston-based Christian Teaching and Worship Centre; the Episcopal Church of Christ the King in Lakeland itself; Oral Roberts University and Rhema Bible College – both in Tulsa, Oklahoma.<sup>83</sup> The last of these institutions is especially significant given Howard Browne's spiritual formation within the Word of Faith constituency.

**June 1993** – During a trip to see John's daughters in Texas, the Arnotts attend their first Rodney Howard-Browne meeting. Held at Fort Worth, this gathering sees 248 people 'fall under the power'. John Arnott is impressed, but remains on his feet, as he has done previously at Benny Hinn events and on other such occasions. He takes this to be indicative of a block in his relationship with God: as Guy Chevreau will later describe it, 'repeatedly, [John] would wonder, 'Lord, what's the issue of my heart?''<sup>84</sup> A year on from here, Arnott will tell journalist Dave Roberts, 'My mind on these occasions slips into analysis and control.'<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Chevreau, p.22; Roberts, pp.63-4

<sup>78</sup> Chevreau, p.22

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Roberts, p.63.

<sup>80</sup> Chevreau, p.22

<sup>81</sup> Roberts p.88

<sup>82</sup> Oropeza, p.76

<sup>83</sup> Roberts, pp.89-90.

<sup>84</sup> Chevreau, p.23.

<sup>85</sup> Roberts, p.64

**July 1993** – While visiting Vancouver, TAV leader Marc Dupont is struck by a 'sense of urgency'. He envisions a new power and authority coming to the Toronto churches by virtue of a dramatic move of the Holy Spirit. On his return to Toronto, Dupont shares the details with his fellow team members. There will, he says, be two stages: the first will be related to Ezekiel's vision of dry bones receiving flesh (Ezek. 37). This will be 'a prophetic stage, where the Church and the leaders begin to seek the Father and cry out to Him for grace'. The second will be 'an apostolic stage', and will 'include powerful signs and wonders, such as in the early days of the Church in Jerusalem'. It will, he says, be trans-denominational, but will be conditional on prior operation of the full five-fold ministry specified in Ephesians 4:11.<sup>86</sup>

**August 1993** – Close to a nervous breakdown having pursued a tough but relatively unfruitful ministry at Vineyard Christian Fellowship in St. Louis, Missouri, Randy Clark attends a Rodney Howard-Browne meeting at Kenneth Hagin's Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He is initially sceptical of both the laughter and the falling which characterise the event. He is also seriously troubled by the WordFaith context. Despite this, Clark senses God rebuking him and telling him, "You have a denominational spirit. How badly do you want to be touched afresh?"<sup>87</sup> Clark soon ends up on the floor laughing. In a subsequent meeting at Lakeland, Florida, Howard-Browne ministers to Clark, who feels tremendous power come into his hands. The South African evangelist tells Clark, "This is the fire of God in your hands – go home and pray for everybody in your church." Clark duly does as Howard-Browne has instructed on his return to St. Louis, and, according to his own testimony, some 95% of his congregation 'fall under the power'.<sup>88</sup>

**4<sup>th</sup> October 1993** – Marc Dupont meets for prayer and fellowship with the Arnotts, with fellow TAV team members Wes and Stacey Campbell, and with other Toronto area Vineyard leaders. Those present are reminded of Dupont's earlier prophecies about a great outpouring of God's presence from Toronto (←). TAV is at this point around 350-strong.

**October 1993** – At a regional meeting of Midwestern Vineyard churches held at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, area overseer Happy Leman asks Randy Clark to share his recent experiences of renewal in St. Louis. The meeting duly turns into a ministry time, with many being powerfully affected. Among these is Bill Jackson, Pastor of the Champaign Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Urbana, Illinois. The following Sunday, a number of people in Jackson's congregation are touched as he has been.<sup>89</sup>

By April-May 1994, Jackson and Champaign will have emerged as the first to define and publish formal teaching and practical guidelines on the new movement (→).<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Chevreau, p.32-35.

<sup>87</sup> 'Rumours of Revival', *Alpha*, July 1994, p.46.

<sup>88</sup> Oropeza, p.22, citing Riss, Richard, 'History of the Revival, 1993-1995', unpublished paper (7<sup>th</sup> ed., Jan. 17, 1995)

<sup>89</sup> Jackson, Bill, 'What in the World is Happening to Us?', Vineyard Champaign, Urbana, Ill., May 1994, in Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995 (Revsd. Edn.) [1994], p.303.

<sup>90</sup> Jackson, Bill, 'What in the World is Happening to Us?', Vineyard Champaign, Urbana, Ill., May 1994, in Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995 (Revsd. Edn.) [1994], p.303; Jackson,

**October/November 1993** – At a pastors' conference in Argentina led by Ed Silvano, Claudio Freidzon prays over John and Carol Arnott and a ministry team from TAV.<sup>91</sup> A year later, Guy Chevreau will write of this encounter: '[Claudio] had gone to Benny Hinn meeting [see Spring 1992, above] and came home powerfully anointed, something that John had been longing to do. Claudio was ministering to the Hispanics in Argentina, but [now] he prayed for all the visitors first. John and Carol went up, and as John puts it, "Carol went flying". He himself fell down, but instantly began to analyse things: "Lord, was this really You, or did I just go with it because I want You so badly? What am I supposed to do? I don't know if I am supposed to stand, fall, roll or forget it.'" After John got up off the floor, Claudio came over to him. John was standing with his hands up, posturing his openness to the Lord, and Claudio looked at him and said, "Do you want it?" he said, "Yes. I really want it.' Then Claudio said, "Then take it!' and he slapped John on both of his hands. John fell again."<sup>92</sup>

Also present at this conference is Roger Mitchell, of the London-based Ichthus network, which has been led for the past twenty years by Roger and Faith Forster. Mitchell carries news of the Argentine 'refreshment' back to the Ichthus community, which begins to experience some of the phenomena he had witnessed when with Silvano, Freidzon and the Arnotts.<sup>93</sup>

**November 1993** – On his way back from Argentina, Arnott attends the annual board meeting of the Association of Vineyard Churches in Palm Springs. Regional overseer Happy Leman reports on the transformation of Randy Clark's ministry and congregation which has been wrought through Rodney Howard-Browne, and which has been demonstrated at the previous month's meeting of mid-Western Vineyards (←). Arnott swiftly contacts Clark and asks him to visit TAV in the coming January (→).

**November 1993** – In the UK, reports of the North American 'holy laughter' movement begin to spread as tourists and business travellers return home from trips across the Atlantic. Church services in Penzance have been overwhelmed with laughing. Others in the South of England are beginning to 'fall under the power'. Still others have apparently been struck dumb for days.<sup>94</sup>

**5<sup>th</sup> December 1993** – John Wimber senses God prompting him to 'stir up the gifts of the Spirit that our people may have a greater hunger for the giver, Jesus'. Wimber's Vineyard at Anaheim devotes its Sunday evening service to this theme. He tells them to 'prepare their hearts' for God.<sup>95</sup>

**December 1993** – John Arnott is visited by a stranger in the TAV church office. The stranger tells him that he's been running with the footmen, but that he will soon be riding with the horsemen.

---

Bill and the Champaign Vineyard Christian Fellowship, 'Vineyard Champaign Suggested Ministry Tips', in Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995 (Revsd. Edn.), [1994], pp.327-29.

<sup>91</sup> Chevreau, p.23; Oropeza, p.22; Roberts, p.18

<sup>92</sup> Chevreau, p.23-4.

<sup>93</sup> Roberts, p.31

<sup>94</sup> Roberts. P.18

<sup>95</sup> Goodman, Paul, 'The Evangelist Who is Refreshing Religion', *Sunday Telegraph*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1994, p.22.



A visiting speaker, Larry Randolph, tells TAV that a great anointing is imminent.

John Arnott will later reflect that these prophetic words are vital in 'catalysing my own faith'. Arnott and his wife Carol also begin to view Marc Dupont' earlier two-part testimony (←) in more immediate terms.<sup>96</sup>

**16<sup>th</sup> January 1994** – Wimber believes that God is giving him the word 'Pentecost'. During an evening meeting at the Anaheim Vineyard, he has a vision of 'young people in a certain set and order'. He duly invites the younger members of the fellowship to come forward. Later, he will recall this moment as one in which 'the Lord came, consuming them in a beautiful and powerful way', and which precipitated 'a significant increase of the outflowing of power'.<sup>97</sup>

**20<sup>th</sup> January 1994** – Randy Clark begins a series of four evening meetings at TAV, having been invited to do so by John Arnott in November (←). This is a Thursday, and has been designated as a family night. Friday is set for a children's meeting, Saturday for youth and adults, and Sunday for the regular Vineyard worship service. At the end of this first meeting, Clark invites people forward for prayer. Virtually the whole congregation responds. This results in their exhibiting a range of manifestations including laughter, falling, prostration, and various apparent weakenings of bodily control, which will soon collectively be dubbed 'drunkenness in the Spirit' (→)). Several of the 80% or so of those who find themselves on the carpet report seeing visions and undergoing intense conviction and spiritual transformation. Deeply impressed by all this, Arnott persuades Clark to stay on, and he continues to lead what become daily meetings through to mid-March, when he is obliged to return to his home church in St. Louis. During this period, testimonies to conversions and healings among family and friends of the TAV congregation become commonplace.<sup>98</sup>

**February 1994** – The Arnotts travel from Toronto to an out-of-town healing conference. As they begin to share what has been happening at TAV, people start laughing and manifesting phenomena similar to those which have been seen in the Arnotts' home church.

At the end of the month, the Arnotts fly to minister in Hungary, and see TAV-style phenomena break out there.<sup>99</sup>

**March–April 1994** – Following Randy Clark's return home to St. Louis, TAV develops a pattern of daily ministry which will soon become standard for churches operating in the same vein. Guest preachers including Larry Randolph, and a team of Vineyard pastors comprising Mike Turrigiano, Happy Leman, Wes Campbell, Ralph Kucera and Ron Allen, join with the Arnotts and a specially-trained prayer team of around thirty men and women. This leadership group works out a modus operandi which includes encouraging people to receive repeatedly from God, catching them carefully when they fall, urging

---

<sup>96</sup> Roberts, p.20

<sup>97</sup> Roberts, p.20

<sup>98</sup> Roberts, p.21, Hurst, Lynda, 'Laughing all the way to heaven', *Toronto Star*, 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1994,

Wright, p.31.

<sup>99</sup> Chevreau, p.26

them to stay on the floor and 'rest in the Spirit' if they have gone to the carpet, interceding enthusiastically for those who are manifesting the activities associated with the new movement and, where appropriate, explaining the spiritual significance of what is going on to those present.<sup>100</sup> This team leadership approach marks a significant departure from the classic Pentecostal 'anointed man' method promulgated by Rodney Howard-Browne, in which the minister prays for people one-by-one in a line. Although Howard-Browne has had a major impact on the Arnotts and Randy Clark (←), they are in this respect truer to the 'body ministry' ethos of the Vineyard and John Wimber.

As well as laughter and falling down, certain other phenomena are emerging as significant at the TAV meetings. Physical convulsions such as jerking and twitching, pogoing, bouncing and running on the spot appear regularly, along with shouting, weeping and roaring. In addition, prophetic words and pictures are commonly being 'acted out' in mimetic fashion by those who receive them.<sup>101</sup>

Principles and codes of practice to deal with these phenomena are also being developed at this time by Champaign Vineyard, Urbana, Illinois. Pastor Bill Jackson and his congregation first witnessed an outbreak of dramatic manifestations following the Vineyard Midwestern Regional meeting in October (←). However, their intensity grows markedly following an event led by Randy Clark at Marion, Illinois on 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> March – an event which several Champaign members attend.<sup>102</sup>

Back at TAV, attendance at meetings swells to 1000, a four-fold increase in just four months – and this with a considerably greater frequency of meetings than before. Also in this period, TAV sees the beginnings of what will become a mass 'pilgrimage' from far beyond the shores of North America. By the end of April, for example, the number of British visitors has increased from a handful to twenty or thirty per week.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, although only seven actual Vineyard fellowships have taken root in Britain up to this point, high-profile visits to the UK by John Wimber in the 1980s have ensured that many more congregations in a range of denominations have been strongly influenced by the Vineyard approach.<sup>104</sup>

**April-May 1994** – Having so profoundly impacted Randy Clark the previous autumn (←), Rodney Howard-Browne spends a month leading meetings in Clark's home city of St. Louis, Missouri. These are at least as dramatic as those which have characterised his ministry for the past few years. Among the 2,000 or so who attend each day are dozens from a church in Columbia currently being overseen by the Briton Terry Virgo, leader and self-professed 'apostle' of the New Frontiers International network. Ironically, Virgo has been on a ministry trip to Durban, in Howard-Browne's native South Africa. On arriving back in the USA, Virgo's wife Wendy tells him what has been happening, and Virgo goes straight from the airport to see Howard-Browne in action. As a prominent charismatic leader, Virgo has seen many of the manifestations on display before, but is somewhat disconcerted by the extent of 'holy laughter'. However, when he returns to his church, several in the congregation tell him of significant changes in their

---

<sup>100</sup> Chevreau, p.27

<sup>101</sup> Chevreau, p.27.

<sup>102</sup> Jackson, Bill, 'What in the World is Happening to Us?', Vineyard Champaign, May 1995, in Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995 (Revsd. Edn.) [1994], p.304.

<sup>103</sup> Roberts p. 21

<sup>104</sup> Roberts, pp.21-2

relationship with God, which they attribute to the anointing they have received at Howard-Browne's meetings.

A fortnight on, Virgo presides over a special church weekend marked by what he will later describe as 'paroxysms of joy and hilarious laughter'. Most of those attending fall to the floor, which leads to the abandonment of preaching. A number of men and women have to be carried home 'quite incapable of walking unaided and apparently totally 'drunk''.<sup>105</sup>

Virgo then flies back to the UK, where Alan Preston, an elder at his home church in Brighton, tells him of a recent trip to TAV. Preston has returned to the South Coast from Toronto full of enthusiasm for the new movement, and this enthusiasm has been infectious, with many in the congregation manifesting Toronto-style phenomena. News of what is happening in Brighton spreads quickly to other parts of the New Frontiers network, and a 250-strong leaders' meeting is duly overwhelmed by falling, laughter and apparent 'spiritual drunkenness'. Brighton NFI pastor John Hosier reports these developments with great enthusiasm, and will soon be quoted on what is happening: 'We are hearing many testimonies ... of a sense of encounter with God, an increase in prayer and Bible reading, a boldness in witnessing. We've seen our congregation double.'<sup>106</sup> Resisting the urge to define all this as 'revival', Hosier makes a suggestion which is beginning to characterise TAV teaching on the new movement: 'I would describe it more in terms of days of refreshing from the hand of the Lord [after Acts 3:19]'.<sup>107</sup>

This description of the new movement is most influentially applied in a 'Vineyard Position Paper' written at the beginning of May by the Champaign Vineyard pastor Bill Jackson. Entitled 'What in the World is Happening to Us?', the paper recounts the evolution of the current wave of spiritual activity from Randy Clark's encounter with Rodney Howard-Browne in August 1993 (←), through his report to the Midwestern Vineyard regional meeting in October (←), to his visits to TAV in January (←) and Champaign in March (←). It then proceeds to discuss the biblical basis of what has been occurring.<sup>108</sup>

Jackson begins by admitting that in Scripture 'there are no primary texts that clearly state that Christians are to fall down, shake or look drunk during seasons of divine visitation.' All the same, he avers, there are 'a number of secondary ... texts that illustrate that these were some of the responses people had during moments of divine visitation.' Where falling or 'resting in the Spirit' is concerned, Jackson suggests precedents in Abraham's deep sleep at Gen. 15:12; Saul's prone prophesying at 1 Sam. 19; the temple priests' immobilization at 2 Chron. 5:13-14; Ezekiel's prostration at Ezek. 1:28 and 3:23, and Daniel's at Dan. 8:17 and 10:9; the disciples' grounding in Matt. 17:6, the soldiers' felling in Gethsemane at Jn. 18:6, and the reaction of the guards to the angel at the empty tomb in Matt. 28:46. He also cites Paul's being knocked down in Acts 9:22-6, Peter's 'falling into a trance' at Acts 10:10, and John's lying 'as though dead' at the foot of God's messenger in Rev. 1:17. Jackson adds that such responses

<sup>105</sup> Virgo, Terry, *A People Prepared*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1996, pp.13-14.

<sup>106</sup> Cited in Roberts, *The Toronto Blessing*, p.23

<sup>107</sup> Roberts, *The Toronto Blessing*, p.23.

<sup>108</sup> Jackson, Bill, 'What in the World is Happening to Us?', Champaign Vineyard, May 1994, in Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995 (Revsd. Edn.) [1994], pp. 303-26.

were recorded in the early 1740s at revival meetings in Northampton, Massachusetts by the great New England theologian and preacher Jonathan Edwards (1725–1760), and a century or so later by the evangelist Charles Finney (1792–1875). Recognising that these biblical and historical references are largely concerned with falling forwards rather than backwards, Jackson nonetheless suggests that the current wave of 'resting in the Spirit' bears an affinity with past instances of God's putting people to sleep 'for the purpose of divine intervention, rest and healing rather than contrition'. He also quotes Francis MacNutt's 1984 study *Overcome By the Spirit*, which interprets falling backwards as a response to the heaviness (*kabod*: weight) of God's glory.<sup>109</sup>

As for shaking and trembling, Jackson finds corroboration in the reaction of Daniel's companions in Dan.10:7, and in the earth's response to God's majesty at Ps. 114:7 and Jer. 5:22. Jeremiah's physical prophetic experience at Jer. 23:9 is adduced, as is Habbakuk's (Hab. 3:16). The guards at the empty tomb are mentioned again (Matt. 28:4), and the shaking of the gaol in Acts 4:31 and the trembling of the devils are also brought into play. From church history, Jackson points to the example of George Fox and the Quakers.

'Drunkenness' in the Spirit is found, writes Jackson, at Jer. 23:9 and, most famously, on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:31ff.). Here, he argues, the 120 'would not be accused of being drunk because they were speaking in other languages. They would have been accused of such because they were acting like drunks, i.e., laughing, falling, slurred speech by some, boldness through lack of restraint, etc. The analogy of the gift of the Spirit being 'new wine' would lend itself to the connection.' Jackson goes on to quote Eph. 5:8: 'Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.' While conceding that Paul is making a contrast at this point, Jackson contends that the present continuous tense of the Greek verb implies 'an analogy as well'. Being filled with God's Spirit, he infers, 'is similar to being drunk on wine. The difference is that the former is holy while the other is sinful.'

For crying, Jackson highlights God's approval of contrite weeping in 2 Chron. 34:27; the Israelites' reaction to the reading of the law in Neh. 8:9, and the conviction of the crowd at Acts 2:37. He also quotes from John Wesley's Journal for 17<sup>th</sup> April 1739, which recounts a meeting in Bristol at which several 'cried out aloud, with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death.'

Laughter is found by Jackson in Sarah's reaction to the news that she is to have a child in old age (Gen. 18:12), in the very name of Isaac himself ('he laughs'), in Psalm 126:2, in Ecc. 3:4, and in Jesus' promise of a 'full joy' in John 17:13. He also underlines Jonathan Edwards' description of those affected by the Northampton revival as people 'ready to break forth into laughter'. Laughter, concludes Jackson, 'fits within the general flow of Scripture. Christians can be so filled with the joy of the Lord that they are given over to fits of laughter.'

All these phenomena are said by Jackson to have a discernible purpose. First, he says, they are 'signs of the Lord's presence'. Although God promises that his Presence will go

---

<sup>109</sup> Jackson, Bill, 'What in the World is Happening to Us?', Champaign Vineyard, May 1994, in Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995 (Revsd. Edn.) [1994], p. 309; MacNutt, Francis, *Overcome by the Spirit*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984.

before Moses in Ex. 33:14-16, and although this presence abides continually in the Christian believer through the Holy Spirit (John 14:17), Jackson nonetheless states that there are particular times when God 'allows us to see his presence to build our faith and show us where he is working.' Using familiar Vineyard parlance, he refers to this category of divine self-disclosure as the 'manifest presence' of God. Backing for this distinction is suggested in 2 Kings 6:17, when Elisha's servant is allowed to view heavenly horses and chariots of fire surrounding his master. As far as Jackson is concerned, the new movement is mediating the manifest presence of God as a 'a wake up call' to the churches, that they may be better able to realise their responsibility. Although some of the current manifestations might appear foolish, Jackson favourably quotes the 'Kansas City Prophet' Paul Cain (←): 'God offends the mind to reveal the heart'. The issue, he continues, 'is one of control. God wants to know who among his people will be willing to play the fool for his glory.'

A second key purpose of the present outpouring, writes Jackson, is to confirm the need for anointing. Again, the Champaign pastor follows Vineyard understanding in relating this, through Eph. 5:18 and 2 Tim. 1:6, to the ongoing need to experience the power of the Holy Spirit. There is, however, a caveat, and it is that the outward activities themselves can be no *guarantee* of anointing: 'When the Holy Spirit comes in power, he comes to make us like Jesus, to heal us and to empower us for our particular roles in the mission. The results are what he's after, not the phenomena.' Jonathan Edwards is again seen as instructive: Jackson quotes his advice that 'neither a negative nor a positive judgment should be based on the manifestation alone because the scripture gives us no such rule.'<sup>110</sup>

Jackson next anticipates possible objections to the new movement, and seeks to provide biblically-based answers.

To the charge that the new movement may owe more to demonic deception than divine blessing, Jackson responds by citing Luke 11:9-12 and Mark 3:24. God, he argues would not allow one who sincerely asks him to answer prayer to be misled by Satan. Neither can a person whose prayers glorify Jesus be touched by the devil rather than the Holy Spirit: 'the devil wants to slander Jesus' name, not exalt it'.

Lest some think that the unsettling and even frightening nature of certain manifestations should rule them out, Jackson retorts that 'visitations [of God] produce fear throughout the Bible.' For evidence, he turns to lightning, thunder and smoke on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19), Daniel's awe struck pallor (Dan. 10), the fact that Gabriel had to assure people not to be afraid because of his glory, and the fear which seized the whole church after the death of Annanias and Sapphira (Acts 5).

As for the potential divisiveness of the current wave, Jackson contends that 'when the kingdom of light clashes with the kingdom of darkness, it causes godly division. Jesus said that he had not come to bring peace but a sword [and that] 'A man's enemies will be the members of his own household (Matt. 10:36).' Adding that the inclusion of the Gentiles caused division (Acts 15), Jackson insists that 'Godly division is thoroughly historical.'

---

<sup>110</sup> Jackson, Bill, 'What in the World is Happening to Us?', Champaign Vineyard, May 1994, in Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995 (Revised Edn.) [1994], p. 316-17.

Jackson also realises that some will object to the more dramatic phenomena on the grounds that they override natural human faculties. He represents this view as being predicated on the assumption that 'God is always a gentleman and would never force anything upon us.' Jackson suggests, however, that the Bible says otherwise: 'God is God and he does what he wants. In Isaiah, God says, 'I say my purpose will stand and I will do that I please' (46:11). God overrode Balaam in Numbers 23 and caused Balaam to prophesy against his will. God overrode Saul and his men in 1 Samuel 19 and caused them to prophesy instead of killing David. Jesus blinded Paul on the road to Damascus against his will...' By the same token, writes Jackson, God allows his people to express 'a full range of emotion' in various ways: David danced, wept, fought. Jesus wept, was joyful, angry. Peter wept, rejoiced, felt convicted. God is emotional because we are. We have been created in his image.' Yet again, Jonathan Edwards is brought to bear: 'Nothing of religious significance ever took place in the human heart if it wasn't deeply affected by the emotions.'

Jackson admits that in any movement like the present one, there is a danger of narcissism and egotism. He is also adamant that good standards of discernment are essential. Even so, he urges on the basis of Matt. 12:33 and Gal. 5:22 that what is happening be judged according to its fruit, and not according to 'our personalities', or the prejudices which might stem from them.

In conclusion, Jackson says 'it is clear from what we are seeing and hearing from all over the United States and Canada, that we are in a sovereign move of the Holy Spirit.' He defines this as a 'time of refreshment' after Acts 3:19 – a time in which the Church is 'learning to party in God again because the Spirit of the Lord has come among us'. He notes that many of those involved are reporting 'a return to our first love' [cf. Rev. 2:4]. Christians, he writes, 'are falling in love with Jesus in a whole new way, about a new love for the Bible, about being taken up into heaven in the form of visions and dreams.' There are also reports 'too numerous to count' of 'physical healings, deliverance from demonic influence and deep emotional wounds being touched.'

On a more restrained note, Jackson states that while there have been 'numerous salvations', they are 'not enough to characterize this as a genuine revival'. He does, however, confirm that 'those who have been on the vanguard of this move of the Spirit believe that its purpose is to refresh the church and to prepare it for the mighty and genuine revival that is on the horizon.'<sup>111</sup>

Alongside Jackson's biblical and historical survey, the Champaign Vineyard also publishes 'Suggested Ministry Tips' for those involved in the new movement. This document urges leaders to encourage public testimonies from people who have been touched by the new movement. 'There seems to be a special grace for these people to receive another 'drink' of the new wine when they are up front giving testimonies', it notes. At the start of the ministry time, leaders are also prompted to focus on 'those who are most obviously anointed', as indicated by 'manifestations such as crying, shaking, laughing, etc.' In due course, however, the text emphasises that all those who

---

<sup>111</sup> Jackson, Bill, 'What in the World is Happening to Us?', Champaign Vineyard, May 1994, in Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1995 (Revised Edn.) [1994], p. 316-26.

wish to should receive prayer, with those who do not 'manifest' being assured that 'God works differently in different people.' Children are said to be often afraid until they see their parents 'receive', but the clear implication is that the current movement is for them, too.

The 'Ministry Tips' text goes on to ask that leaders refer 'these manifestations' as 'times of refreshing' after Acts 3:19, or as 'renewal', but not as 'revival'. 'Revival', it states, 'has the connotation of touching the larger community.' In addition, the term 'resting in the Spirit' is preferred to the description 'slain in the Spirit'.

To provide assurance for those who might fall, the guidelines suggest that a 'catcher' or 'catchers' be positioned behind them, and that prayer should continue to be offered for them once they have gone to the ground. Short, biblically-derived phrases are recommended for this purpose, including 'more, Lord', which the text relates to John 5:19 – that is, 'blessing what the Father is doing'.

*[The Full Text of the 'Champaign Ministry Tips' is given in Part III]*

**7<sup>th</sup> May 1994** – After the Sunday evening service at Queen's Road Baptist Church in Wimbledon, London, a young woman remains on her knees in the sanctuary, deep in penitential prayer. The Pastor, Norman Moss, sees her and talks with her. He and his wife Margaret have themselves just returned from a visit to TAV, where they have 'spent more time on the floor than upright', and where Moss has developed a 'strange twitching in he stomach' whenever he has felt the Spirit moving.<sup>112</sup> The penitent woman explains that she has had a vision of the whole Queen's Road congregation kneeling in deep repentance. Moss relays this to those now drinking coffee in the lobby of the church, and many return to the sanctuary to ask God for forgiveness. They later join hands and pray around the building, and close by celebrating communion together. The unscheduled supplementary meeting ends just before 11.00pm.

This same Sunday, Gerald Coates, leader of the Pioneer People network of 'new' churches, speaks at the South West London Vineyard church in Putney. The church is led by John and Eleanor Mumford, but Eleanor is currently away on a visit – to TAV. After Coates has finished speaking, several in the congregation break out in laughter; others begin to shake, while some fall to the floor. Coates has been travelling extensively in the last few weeks, and has seen similar phenomena beginning to feature at meetings in Geneva, Dublin and Orebro in Sweden.<sup>113</sup>

**14<sup>th</sup> May 1994** – The Queen's Road congregation convene once more after the evening service. Worship leader Malcolm Kyte soon falls to the floor and does not get up again for a further hour and twenty minutes. Laughter, crying and shaking spread through the body. Within the next few months, Queen's Road will emerge as one of the key centres for the promulgation of the new movement sweeping in from across the Atlantic (→).

From the end of May, the new movement develops so rapidly in the UK that it becomes necessary to chart it virtually on a day-by-day basis.

<sup>112</sup> Warner, Rob, *Prepare for Revival*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, pp.2-3.

<sup>113</sup> Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994, p.19.

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1994** – Rob Warner, Minister of Herne Hill Baptist Church and a popular evangelical speaker, attends a meeting of the Younger Leaders Forum at the Evangelical Alliance in Kennington, London. After the meeting, he speaks to Peter Linne, Director of Training for the Christian charity Oasis. Linne tells Warner that he has just been to visit one of his placement students at Queen's Road Baptist Church in Wimbledon. While there, he says, he was prayed for and spent the subsequent ninety minutes 'resting in the Spirit' on the floor. Warner is deeply affected by this testimony, and on arriving home, attempts to contact Queen's Road Pastor Norman Moss, whom he knows well. He is unsuccessful, but leaves a message explaining that he wants to learn more about recent developments at Wimbledon. Warner himself has been experiencing an increased vigour and urgency in his preaching since the New Year, and believes that Moss may help to put into perspective what Warner and the Herne Hill congregation have discerned to be a 'promise that God would make us like well-watered gardens'.<sup>114</sup>

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 1994** – This proves to be as pivotal a day for the new movement in Britain as 20<sup>th</sup> January had been in North America. It unfolds as follows:

**11.30am** – Having visited TAV earlier in the month along with a growing number of British Christians, Eleanor ('Elli') Mumford of the South West London Vineyard recounts her trip at a meeting of church leaders held at her and her husband John's house in Kingston-upon-Thames. Among those present are Nicky Gumbel, curate of Holy Trinity, Brompton (HTB), and his wife Pippa. Gumbel has become well known as co-ordinator of the increasingly popular Alpha course – a thirteen week introduction to Christianity which will go on to be used by tens of thousands of churches world-wide (→).

When Elli Mumford prays for everyone to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the characteristic 'Toronto' manifestations take hold and a dramatic session continues uninterrupted through lunchtime.

**2.00pm** – Nicky Gumbel realises that he is supposed to have been present at a staff meeting back at HTB. He arrives just as the meeting is breaking up, apologises and gives a brief account of what has happened at the Mumfords'. With everyone keen to move on to other tasks, it is suggested that Gumbel say a closing prayer. As he does this, he invites the Holy Spirit to fill those present, and again, this has a powerful effect, with several falling to the ground. Others working at the church become aware of what is happening, and join in.

At one point, a staff member crawls on her hands and knees to telephone HTB Vicar Sandy Millar, who is away in a meeting at the Evangelical Alliance offices in Kennington. The Staff member in question is Glenda, Millar's Secretary. Millar is taken aback when told what is going on, but remains calm and returns to his meeting, at which various key church leaders are present, including the Alliance's General Director, Clive Calver. At the earliest convenient juncture,

---

<sup>114</sup> Warner, Rob, *Prepare for Revival*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, pp.1-7.



Millar leaves the meeting and returns to HTB. There he finds people still 'resting in the Spirit' past 5.00pm.<sup>115</sup>

After consultation with Gumbel, Millar decides that HTB should invite Elli Mumford to preach on the coming Sunday. She accepts the invitation.

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 1994** – Rob Warner manages to speak on the telephone with Norman Moss. Moss recounts what happened at TAV when he visited, and what is now happening at Queen's Road Baptist Church (←). Although naturally cautious about new trends, Warner's only response on this occasion is "When can I receive?" He will reflect later that at this time he 'felt as if God had been warming us up, preparing us for a fresh visitation of the Holy Spirit'.<sup>116</sup>

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May 1994** – Peter Linne tells a joint elders and deacons meeting at Herne Hill Baptist Church what he told Rob Warner three days previously at the Evangelical Alliance (see Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> (←)). As he speaks, his right hand twitches in an unusual way. When he offers to pray for those present, Warner is first to accept. After a short while, he falls to the floor. This is the first time such a thing has ever happened to Warner, despite many years of charismatic church and ministry experience. A year on, he will recall being rendered quite unable to minister to others as a result of what takes place: 'Like many who spend a lot of time giving out to others, I need to learn more about receiving. That evening God took me right out of the action, rested his glory upon me, and obliged me to receive, not just for a minute or two, but for what seemed like hours.'<sup>117</sup>

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May 1994** – This is the day that the TAV-based movement 'goes public' in Britain:

**11am** – In her sermon at HTB, Elli Mumford describes what she has seen at TAV as 'the power of God poured out in incredible measure'. In particular, she tells of 'many very weary pastors who turned up with their even wearier wives', and of how they were 'so anointed by the Lord'. She continues: 'God is sending us his joy and refreshing our spirits, just because he loves us. It's about his nearness to me and my dearness to him. It's contagious.' She then recalls having visited a Christian school in Clapham some days earlier: 'I talked to the children about the Lord, and I prayed for them. The Holy Spirit fell on those five-year-olds and they were laughing and weeping and crying out to the Lord. The teachers were affected, the parents were rolling around. I thought, "God, this is a glorious thing you are doing. This is fantastic."' Mumford also reflects on the ecumenical implications of what has been occurring: 'Jesus is breaking down the barriers of his church. We have been meeting with Baptist pastors, New Frontiers pastors, Anglicans, and God is pouring his Spirit out on all of us. God is moving across London and England in a fantastic way. I cannot get over the excitement of being alive now, at this time in history ... I was brought up during the last war. I

---

<sup>115</sup> Roberts, p.25; 'A Day By Day Diary of What We Have Seen', *HTB in Focus*, June 12<sup>th</sup> 1994, p.3; Fearon, *A Breath of Fresh Air*, pp.115-6.

<sup>116</sup> Warner, Rob, p.4.

<sup>117</sup> Warner, p.9.

always had what I needed, but I never had sweets or party dresses. I never knew joy. Jesus has given me joy in the last week which has made up for all my childhood ... The Prodigal Son went to look for parties but he discovered that the best party was in his father's house. Isn't that the truth?'<sup>118</sup>

At first, Mumford's words prompt a time of silence. Gradually, however, some of those present begin to cry, while others start to laugh. Mumford invites people to come forward for prayer, and many do so. As she and members of the HTB ministry team minister, scores of worshippers fall to the floor. The children return from their Junior Church meetings, and begin praying for one another. Ministry is still taking place in the sanctuary past 1.30pm.<sup>119</sup>

Similar scenes unfold at Rob Warner's Herne Hill Baptist Church, with ministry continuing past 2.00pm.<sup>120</sup>

**6.30pm** – Elli Mumford speaks at the HTB evening service, again recounting her experiences in Toronto. As she asks the Holy Spirit to come, scenes similar to those which have occurred in the morning take place. About 100 visitors to the church are prayed for. By 9.30pm, many rows of chairs have been removed to accommodate the large number of bodies lying on the sanctuary floor. In view of the dramatic events which have unfolded, Sandy Millar resolves to visit TAV as soon as possible.<sup>121</sup>

At Herne Hill Baptists, Toronto-type manifestations and fervent prayer continue until 10.30pm.<sup>122</sup>

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 1994** – The HTB office begins to receive reports of several churches in London which have begun to experience phenomena similar to those witnessed at HTB on Sunday.<sup>123</sup>

Sandy Millar flies out to Toronto with Pastoral Director Jeremy Jennings and Staff member Emmy Watson. In the evening, they attend the daily meeting at TAV and view the sorts of scenes they have witnessed just two days before.<sup>124</sup>

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 1994** – The regular staff prayer meeting at HTB sees many deeply affected by Toronto-style manifestations.

Over at TAV, Sandy Millar and Jeremy Jennings attend a meeting for overseas pastors, and are profoundly moved.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> Mumford, Eleanor, 'Spreading Like Wildfire', in Boulton, Wallace (ed.), *The Impact of Toronto*, Crowborough: Monarch, 1995, pp.17-19. For a fuller transcript, see 'A Mighty Wind from Toronto', *HTB in Focus*, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994, pp.4-5.

<sup>119</sup> A Mighty Wind from Toronto', *HTB in Focus*, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994, pp.3.

<sup>120</sup> Warner, p.9.

<sup>121</sup> A Mighty Wind from Toronto', *HTB in Focus*, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994, pp.3.

<sup>122</sup> Warner, p.9.

<sup>123</sup> Roberts, pp.31-3.

<sup>124</sup> A Mighty Wind from Toronto', *HTB in Focus*, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994, pp.3.

<sup>125</sup> A Mighty Wind from Toronto', *HTB in Focus*, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994, pp.3.

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1994** – Millar and Jennings fly back to London. Jennings goes on to lead the church's 'Alpha Weekend' – a concentrated section of the course intended to encourage reception and filling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>126</sup>

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 1994**

**11 am** – Leading morning worship at HTB, Sandy Millar invites Nicky Gumbel and various staff and church members to share testimonies of how they have been touched by the new wave of spiritual phenomena. Soon, many are falling, laughing and crying – to such an extent, in fact, that the Communion planned for the service does not take place.

**6.30pm** – HTB is completely full, with 1,200 or so in attendance. Testimonies again follow one after another; ministry is offered, and so many fall to the floor that the chairs are removed and ministry continues until after 10pm.<sup>127</sup>

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – Having obtained a copy of Elli Mumford's HTB sermon (←), Revd Ian McFarlane of Bookham Baptist Church, Surrey, begins to shake while gardening. He resolves to play the Mumford tape to his congregation on the coming Sunday.<sup>128</sup>

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – Elli Mumford's tape is played over the PA at the 200-strong Bookham Baptist Church. The pastor, Ian McFarlane, is 'slain in the Spirit' for twenty minutes. Others around him shake, laugh, cry and pray for one another.

Roger Forster of the Ichthus Fellowship preaches at Herne Hill Baptist Church. He reports that he has recently spoken at conferences in several countries where the Spirit has been moving in greater power, bringing 'repentance and conversions, joy and laughter, and ... an increased level of healings'.<sup>129</sup>

By now, Elli Mumford's HTB sermon of 29<sup>th</sup> May (←) has reached a considerable number of churches, and reports of Toronto-style phenomena are arising from, to name but a few, HTB's sister congregation at St. Paul's, Onslow Square, St. George's, Ashted, South St. Baptist Church in Greenwich, Gerald Coates' Pioneer People network, Bryn Jones' Covenant Ministries constituency, King's Church, Loughborough, Loughborough Elim Pentecostal Church, NFI's Sidcup Community Church, Highdown Church, Worthing, and parts of the Salvation Army.<sup>130</sup> Coates and Jones have been influenced not only by the Elli Mumford tape, but by a visit they have just paid to the UK's 'second city', Birmingham, where Rodney Howard-Browne has been leading a series of meetings.

Meanwhile, back at HTB, the in-house newspaper *HTB in Focus* details the remarkable events of the preceding two and a half weeks (←). In his Vicar's column, Sandy Millar

<sup>126</sup> 'A Mighty Wind from Toronto', *HTB in Focus*, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994, pp.3.

<sup>127</sup> 'A Mighty Wind from Toronto', *HTB in Focus*, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994, pp.3.

<sup>128</sup> Fearon, p.16

<sup>129</sup> Warner, p.10.

<sup>130</sup> Roberts, pp.30-37.

seeks to contextualise what has been happening by suggesting precedents in Scripture. Quoting the King James Version's rendering of Acts 2:16 – 'This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel' – he argues that what has been happening at Brompton and elsewhere constitutes a re-evocation of the Day of Pentecost. Just as the disciples were mistakenly perceived as having drunk too much wine (2:13), so Millar contends that the 'extraordinary manifestations' of this new movement 'carry with them many of the symptoms of drunkenness'. Although he is quick to point out that Scripture finally *contrasts* the two states in Ephesians 5:18-20, he comments that 'you don't get accused of being drunk just because you speak in tongues'.

Extending his 'this is that' theme, Millar goes on to draw explicit comparisons between the current events and the experience of great revivalists in the past. Quoting from the renowned American evangelists Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney, and the Scottish preacher Alexander Webster, he suggests that they sometimes witnessed scenes similar in intensity and strangeness to those now taking place, and that they either approved or allowed manifestations at least as unusual as those presently on display. As Toronto-style phenomena increase across the UK, such comparisons with the past will become a major bone of contention (→). Perhaps anticipating this, Millar sounds a more modest note when he states that for the time being, the movement is 'primarily towards God's people. Naturally we expect it to flow out and over into a movement that will affect the rest of the world but for the moment it's God's deep desire to minister to His church – to refresh, empower and prepare them for a wider work of His Spirit that will affect the world to which the church is sent.'<sup>131</sup>

Unsurprisingly, from this point onwards news about what is happening begins to filter through to the media.<sup>132</sup> Stories start appearing in the local papers, and these are soon picked up by the national press (→).

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – St Andrew's Chorleywood, a prominent Anglican charismatic church, hosts a day conference on working in the community. This theme is followed in the morning, but in the afternoon, the Vicar of the church, former South American Bishop David Pytches, relates details of a visit he and his wife, Mary, have just paid to TAV. Included in his testimony is an account of his having roared like a lion – something his wife will later interpret with respect to Hosea 11:10-11: 'They will follow the LORD; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west. They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria. I will settle them in their homes, declares the LORD.'<sup>133</sup> The press soon latch on to the image of a Church of England Bishop writhing on the floor while making animal noises (→).

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – The British Christian monthly magazine *Alpha* publishes a lead article in its July edition under the title 'Rumours of Revival'. It is written by the magazine's editor, Dave Roberts. After supportive quotes from John Hosier of NFI's Christ the King Church in Brighton, Malcolm Kyte of Queen's Road Baptist Church and Gerald Coates of Pioneer People, Roberts traces the roots of the new movement in the Argentine revival, Benny Hinn and Rodney Howard-Browne (←). Like Sandy Millar, he

<sup>131</sup> *HTB in Focus*, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1994, p.2

<sup>132</sup> Fearon, p.16; Roberts, p.31

<sup>133</sup> Nodding, Peter, 'The Holy Spirit in Our Midst', in Boulton, Wallace (ed.), *The Impact of Toronto*, Crowborough: Monarch, 1995, p.32; Fearon, *A Breath of Fresh Air*, pp.98-9.

also suggests parallels between what is happening now and what occurred in various historic revivals, including the Great Awakening of 1740–43 associated with Jonathan Edwards, the 1859 Ulster revival, and the 1804 Kentucky revival.

In the same article, Roberts makes much of the twenty year 'cycles of renewal' envisaged by Strict Baptist pastor David Obbard in 1954 (←). Since Obbard had implied that a radical new outpouring of the Holy Spirit would occur in 1994, Roberts suggests that he may have foreseen what is now happening at TAV, HTB and elsewhere.<sup>134</sup>

This same day, the *Church of England Newspaper* carries a front-page article by James Lindsay headed 'Revival Breaks Out in London Churches'. Recounting the key events described above (←), Lindsay relies heavily on HTB's own record of what has happened, as published in its newsletter on 12<sup>th</sup> June (←). Towards the end of the article, Sandy Millar is quoted as sounding a warning which many will come to regard as prescient: 'At times of great excitement like this, the enemy can get in and start everyone fighting each other.'<sup>135</sup>

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1994** – First reports of the new movement appear in the national British secular press.

In the *Daily Telegraph*, Damien Thompson focuses on events at HTB, quoting extensively from the church's own literature and interviewing a worshipper called Ronald Travis, who tells him, "The first time I went down, I felt all the anger go and after that I felt that the Spirit was on me for the rest of the evening." Thompson also reports that all this has led to 'speculation about a world-wide miraculous revival'.<sup>136</sup>

In *The Times*, Religious Affairs correspondent Ruth Gledhill adopts a decidedly more circumspect tone, referring to a 'religious craze' marked by 'mass fainting' which has 'crossed the Atlantic to cause concern in the Church of England'. Again highlighting HTB, and the apparent incongruity of 'MPs and young, wealthy people from the Chelsea and Fulham areas' laughing, shaking and falling to the floor in an Anglican church, Gledhill nonetheless points out that 'former topless model Samantha Fox is a recent convert'. She then quotes 'an insider' as worrying that 'there seems to be no control, with everyone doing their own thing'. She also cites Dr Laurence Brown of the Alister Hardy centre for research into religious experience in Oxford: "There is nothing mysterious about this", he says, "The problem is how to understand it." Beyond all this, however, Gledhill's piece will be remembered as the first to report that the new movement is being popularly referred to as 'The Toronto Blessing', after its 'city of origin'.<sup>137</sup> From now on, this sobriquet will occasionally be disavowed as misleading (either because, as we have seen, Toronto is not its sole geographical source (←), or because it is regarded as *God's* blessing (→)). Overwhelmingly, however, it becomes the definitive term by which the movement is known [hereafter referred to as 'TTB'].

<sup>134</sup> Roberts, 'Rumours of Revival', p.46.

<sup>135</sup> Lindsay, James, 'Revival Breaks Out in London Churches', *CEN*, Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June 1994, p.1.

<sup>136</sup> Thompson, Damian, 'Evangelical Congregation Shows Signs of the Spirit', *Daily Telegraph*, Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 1994.

<sup>137</sup> Gledhill, Ruth, 'Spread of Hysteria Fad Worries Church', *The Times*, Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 1994, p.12.

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – *The Sunday Telegraph* carries two reports on TTB. Fred Langan and Paul Goodman's extensively-researched article begins with words that will be much-quoted in subsequent months: 'British Airways flight number 092 took off from Toronto Airport on Thursday evening just as the Holy Spirit was landing on a small building a hundred yards from the end of the runway.' Their assessment of TAV is that 'in the world of charismatic evangelicalism, this is *the* place to be'. Alongside descriptions of laughter, falling and weeping, and of Bishop David Pytches roaring from the floor like a lion (←), Langan and Goodman quote Ewen Huffman, a British Baptist visitor from Carshalton in Surrey: "I don't know why it's happening here in this grotty little church", he says; "I've never seen anything like this." Jeremy Sinott of the TAV staff adds, 'We don't know why God picked our dumb little church among so many others.'

Langan and Goodman also chart events at HTB, referring to it as 'a cathedral of charismatic churchmanship'. They relay 'rising speculation ... that what may be happening is more than a renewal, more even than a revival'. They add: 'The world, it is said, may in fact be on the brink of a fully-fledged awakening – something on the scale of the great Wesleyan movement that swept England during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century [sic].' Sandy Millar, however, is quoted as stating that such talk is 'premature', even though he 'obviously' has 'hopes'.

At the end of their piece, Langan and Goodman print extracts from an interview they have conducted with the General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, Clive Calver. He is broadly encouraging, but suggests that TTB must develop in relation to church unity and social transformation:

"I think that many British Christians want to enter deeper into their relationship with God, and make it a reality in their daily lives. This is [a] very internal and personal process – and will, obviously, be seen as an emotional one if accompanied by these phenomena, and viewed from outside. What is important is that this internal transformation is accompanied by a new commitment to social action – such as care for the poor and homeless. If this happens, it's nothing but good news."

Pointing to the World-wide March for Jesus scheduled for the coming Saturday (June 25<sup>th</sup>), Calver continues:

"There will be lots of people on the march in Britain who've been deeply affected by what seems to have started in Toronto, and there will be lots of people who haven't."<sup>138</sup>

In the second, shorter *Sunday Telegraph* report, Nicholas Monson comments on a visit he has paid to HTB the previous Sunday (10<sup>th</sup> June). Veering between genuine perplexity and sarcasm, he compares the mass falling, laughing, shaking and shrieking he has witnessed to 'an episode of *The Twilight Zone* where everyone else in town is being taken over by aliens while you alone are evading them'. He recalls, though, that he eventually allowed a member of the ministry team to pray for him, and that this caused him to start giggling. His laughter was soon interrupted, however, by the screams a

---

<sup>138</sup> Langan, Fred and Goodman, Paul, 'Faithful Fall for Power of the Spirit', *Sunday Telegraph*, Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 1994, p.5

woman undergoing deliverance from occult involvement. As the children returned to the sanctuary from their classes, Monson writes that he wondered at the time what they would have made 'of their parents lying on the floor, comatose', but then reflects that he was 'too dazed to discover'. His article concludes by commenting on the fact that 'while bedlam continued around us', a curate tried to persuade him to join one of HTB's Alpha courses.<sup>139</sup>

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – Tony Halpin reports on TTB in the *Daily Mail* under the headline 'Rolling in the Aisles at Church of Laughter'. As with all national, London-based press reports so far, his piece majors on HTB. Describing worshippers there as 'apparently possessed' and in 'religious ecstasies', he then quotes members of the congregation as stressing that 'they are neither fanatics nor prone to hysteria'. HTB regular Deirdre Hurst is cited as comparing the atmosphere to "the huge wall of warmth that hits you when you go somewhere like Florida". Curate Tom Gillum is also interviewed: "We are fairly typical English people", he says, "we probably don't expect things like this to happen to us, [but] it is rather pleasant when they do."<sup>140</sup>

In one of its humorous columns, the *Daily Telegraph* mocks the TTB: 'There is nothing new about fainting in church. Convent girls have always done it, although usually in ones and twos, seldom *en masse* ...It would be a sad thing if, after generations of declining religious faith, we all decided that the whole basis of religion was so unlikely as to be preposterous, and burst into hysterical laughter every time we thought of it.'<sup>141</sup>

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 1994** – In a feature headed 'John Wesley Had Similar Experiences', *The Independent* publishes an analysis of TTB by its Religious Affairs Correspondent, Andrew Brown. This is distinguished by the fact that he has visited not HTB, but St. Paul's Onslow Square in Kensington – although the latter is a 'church plant' from the former. Brown reports 'heavy thuds as congregants fainted and then sudden rapid drummings ... when people began to shake uncontrollably and beat their feet against the floor.' St Paul's leader Rev. Nicky Lee is quoted as teaching that the current period is "a season when God is refreshing his church [by] pouring out his spirit". Brown also hears Lee tell the congregation that TTB has clear precedents in the revivals spearheaded by John Wesley and George Whitefield in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. "This sort of ministry should become more and more part of the regular ministry of the church," adds Lee, "I hope that it will go on and on until the Lord returns." Despite his studiously neutral stance, Brown remarks of the St. Paul's service that 'there is nothing of the hucksterish atmosphere of a Morris Cerullo or Reinhard Bonnke rally'.<sup>142</sup>

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1994** – Letters columns begin to carry responses to the various articles on TTB published at the weekend (←). *The Daily Mail* presents one correspondent 'for' and two 'against'. Keith Munday of Rushden claims that Toronto-style phenomena are biblical and 'have been happening in charismatic churches in this country for years'. S.C. Levy of Billingham, however, objects to the ostentation of the new movement, while Dorothy Flan of Edgware compares the current 'mass physical and

<sup>139</sup> 'Monson, Nicholas, 'Congregation Rolling in the Aisle', *Sunday Telegraph*, Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 1994.

<sup>140</sup> Halpin, Tony, 'Rolling in the Aisles at Church of Laughter', *Daily Mail*, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1994.

<sup>141</sup> 'What's So Funny?', *Daily Telegraph*, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1994.

<sup>142</sup> Brown, Andrew, "'John Wesley Had Similar Experiences'", *Independent*, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1994, pp.2-3.

mental turmoil' at HTB to the soothing and worshipful' atmosphere she enjoyed there as a youngster in the 1940s.

Writing to *The Times*, Colin Symes, an elder at Edinburgh City Fellowship, insists that 'anyone with a knowledge of church history will realise that such phenomena have been previously experienced in the Great American Awakening of 1740, the Wesleyan revival in this nation around the same period, as well as in the early days of the Salvation Army.' He goes on to suggest biblical precedents for 'falling under the power' in the fact that people were 'unable to stand in the awesome presence of God [at] the dedication of Solomon's Temple' [1 Kings 8:11?], and in the fact that 'St John in Revelation' fell on his feet before the glorified Christ [Rev. 1:17].

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1994 – Anglican weekly the *Church Times* summarises recent accounts of events at HTB and St. Paul's, Onslow Square (←). Reporter Betty Saunders also includes fresh quotes from HTB's Director of Resources and Communications, Mark Elsdon-Dew. He has asked her to emphasise that "this is not so bizarre or outrageous that sensible people won't want anything to do with it. We try to show common sense and order, but if it is God it would be awful not to have all that he offers."<sup>143</sup>

Monthly periodical *Evangelism Today* publishes the first articles by British evangelicals opposed to TTB. July's front page carries two articles on the new wave from Canada – one an editorial and the other by an anonymous recent visitor to TAV. The editorial quotes neutrally from Rick Oldland, a member of Queen's Road, Wimbledon (←), who implies that events there are signs of revival. It also re-presents enthusiastic comments made by Nicky Gumbel in *HTB Focus* on 12<sup>th</sup> June (←). Then, however, the piece takes a more critical turn: 'What seems certain is that such manifestations will create a hunger to run hither and thither, and increase the trans-Atlantic traffic as some find their curiosity gets the better of them.' Commenting on the comparisons which have begun to be made with past revivals, the leader concludes that such parallels 'seem hardly fitting'. The manifestations associated with George Whitefield's ministry, it says, 'followed the preaching of the Word', whereas the current manifestations 'seem to follow little more than a very shallow summary of 'what we saw in Toronto'.

The second, unsigned article is more directly negative. The writer is identified only as 'a beloved colleague, highly respected for his own ministry and an active member of a local charismatic church'. He reports that from the start of a meeting which he attended at TAV on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 'a number of women ... were arm and/or hand-waving and/or shaking, rapidly, even violently, and continuously'. He comments that 'this looked very much self-induced and did not seem to be for any purpose'. Then, as people were invited forward for prayer, he adds that 'we were treated to a performance of uncontrollable laughing, jerking and shaking. Each [person] was interviewed but little was said that I could describe as glorifying the Lord – indeed, some were unable to speak intelligibly due to the jerking, shaking and laughing.' The article continues in the same aggrieved vein: 'What we witnessed was described by the leaders as being "drunk in the Spirit" and despite the fact that they have stated that this is renewal not revival, they, on this evening, used the word "revival", stating "the soft, gentle and sweet approach is not going to work", but "God is going to hit the world in the face".' The writer is particularly upset by 'men roaring in a great voice like lions' – a phenomenon

<sup>143</sup> Saunders, Betty, 'Spirit Wind Perceived at London Churches', *Church Times*, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1994



which he says lacked any explanation – and by the fact that laughter continued all through a reading of the solemn text Isaiah 55. He concludes: 'I wish I were wrong, but I have to say I don't think I witnessed renewal or revival on 18<sup>th</sup> June.'

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – The London gathering of the World-wide March for Jesus offers charismatics a chance to exchange news about what has been happening in TTB. Many talk enthusiastically of their 'refreshment' from God, and there are signs of 'holy laughter' along the route of the march.

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – *The Sunday Telegraph* reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, has turned down the chance to visit TAV while on an official trip to Toronto. Carey has been in the Canadian city since Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June, but a Lambeth palace spokesman is quoted as saying that he has "a very full programme" and cannot "drop everything" to call in on the Vineyard. "The Archbishop does not want to downplay what is going on but there are many ways that God's Spirit manifests itself", adds the spokesman; "he has to be careful about identifying himself with one form of charismatic manifestation". Although Dr. Carey is said 'privately' to be delighted by the possibility of revival, Canon Michael Green, a leading Anglican charismatic who has co-directed the Archbishop's Springboard programme for the Decade of Evangelism, says "it would be very helpful and significant if he went along".

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June 1994** – *Baptist Times* reporter David Dewey tells readers that it is not only HTB and St. Paul's, Onslow Square which have felt the impact of TTB. Detailing the experiences of Norman Moss and his congregation at Queen's Road, Wimbledon (←), Dewey goes on to discuss dramatic 'times of refreshing' at Herne Hill and Bookham, Surrey (←). He also quotes Mike Wood, Minister of Lewin Baptist Church in Streatham, South London, who tells him, "It is as though God wants to redevelop the people as well as the building [here] ... This is not revival, but we hope it is preparation for one ...the test will be in the fruit – whether this leads to conversions and whether the church is renewed." Rob Warner of Herne Hill concurs: "I have never experienced such a profound outpouring", he tells Dewey, "but this is not yet a revival ... the acid test will be whether it leads to conversions." Dewey ends by quoting from an interview he has conducted with Revd Dr Nigel Wright, lecturer in theology at Spurgeon's College, London and a respected scholar of the charismatic movement. Wright accepts that this is a genuine "time of refreshing" after the pattern of Acts 3:19, and adds that what is currently happening should not be despised. Neither, however, does he think that it should be "overvalued". He expresses concern that TTB might be too much associated with "certain church networks", and that those outside such networks might feel alienated or unduly confused. He concludes that TTB is best seen as a "wave" and adds that by their nature, such waves "pass". The point, he says, is to look beyond the outward phenomena to 'the deeper thrust of what God is seeking to do'.<sup>144</sup>

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July 1994** – The *Church of England Newspaper* reports that Rev Alan Morrison, Pastor of Crich Baptist Church in Derbyshire, has just published a leaflet denouncing TTB. Entitled *We All Fall Down*, some 33,000 copies of the leaflet will be distributed over the next three months. Morrison co-ordinates *Diakrisis*, a ministry established in 1990 'to acquaint believers with the importance of Christian apologetics,

<sup>144</sup> Dewey, David, "'Toronto Blessing' Hits Baptist Churches in London', *Baptist Times*, June 30<sup>th</sup> 1994, p.2.

to provide commentary on topical, doctrinal and pastoral issues, and to hold out a hand of rescue to those who are caught up in psychological and spiritual bondage in the religious scene'. In the leaflet, Morrison casts TTB as a pagan New Age cult in disguise, and draws parallels between the manifestations associated with it and the practises of mesmerism and spiritism. He concludes that 'there is no biblical support for this experience as normative for the Christian believer ... its true origins lie either in the realms of suggestion and hypnosis, as proffered by Western psychotherapy, or in the Possession-Trance of ancient Shamanism ... The spirit by which these people are being 'slain' is not the Holy Spirit of God but some other spirit, for 'God is not the author of confusion but of peace' (1 Cor 14:33). The churches which practise this phenomenon are being swept up into a supernatural tide of evil, where they become shipwrecked on the rocks of ignorance – ignorance of church history, ignorance of Scripture, and ignorance of the true work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'

As TTB develops, Morrison will step up his campaign of opposition with further tracts, teaching videos, conference addresses and meetings at his church (→).

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 1994** – The regular 'London Leaders' meeting for key evangelicals in the capital convenes at Westminster Chapel. London Leaders is co-ordinated by Evangelical Alliance UK Director Joel Edwards and the Director of the evangelical charity CARE, Lyndon Bowring. The meeting focuses on TTB. Rob Warner reviews the events of the past few weeks and then invites Norman and Margaret Moss to recount their experiences at Queen's Road Baptist Church (←). Norman Moss concludes by praying for and laying hands on his wife, who soon starts shaking and falls to the floor with a sigh. Sandy Millar then tells of what has been happening at HTB (←).<sup>145</sup>

Realising that some will be disturbed by what they have just seen and heard, Edwards and Bowring announce a 'comfort break', to allow those who wish to do so to leave. Some duly depart, but the majority remain for further prayer and ministry. Writing a year later, Rob Warner will recall the rest of the meeting as follows:

'[It] may well prove to have been the most significant prayer meeting in London for several decades.

The Spirit came upon the room in great waves of power. Brethren and Pentecostal, Anglicans, New Church and churches of every other stripe of evangelicalism were represented, and upon leader after leader the Spirit brought the awesome presence of God. It is always difficult to estimate such things, but it looked to me as if about two thirds of those present ended up on the floor at some stage. As Norman Moss moved around the room, Roger Forster caught his attention and asked for prayer. Norman promptly fell to his knees saying he would rather Roger prayed for him. Roger began to pray but as he did so, the Spirit fell not on Norman but on Roger, who stumbled forward into Norman's arms. Norman laid him out on the carpet and continued to pray for him. At one stage I was talking with Gerald Coates and R.T. Kendall. Gerald spoke about the immense impact this new wave was already having in Pioneer. RT stated his clear conviction that this was a genuine work of God and that the outward signs could be recognised as the hallmarks of previous times of refreshing and revival. Some

<sup>145</sup> Warner, *Prepare for Revival*, pp.13-14.

leaders who had always been very wary of charismatic renewal began to receive from the Spirit of God that morning...

... As for me, at first I felt a little detached from the ministry time, then the Spirit of God began to come upon me. It was like the rising tide, wave upon wave of the warmth of divine love. Nicky Gumbel prayed for me: "The Spirit of God is upon you, Rob." As I rested on the floor there was a twin focus to what God was doing in my life, pouring out his love into my heart and anointing me with joy. Once again God was granting richly undeserved blessing. However, I could not help but notice how much less comfortable it is to fall on an uncarpeted floor.

Once back on my feet, I joined the coffee queue. Even there we were not immune to the overwhelming presence of God. One man had just reached the front of the queue when, without warning or receiving prayer from anyone else, he collapsed on the floor and rested there in peace. Sipping my coffee I marvelled at the astonishing power of God breaking out upon London leaders. Not just in one church or stream, but right across the board. God was turning up the heat. I believe this amazing prayer meeting demonstrated that God is beginning to do things beyond anything seen in our land for generations. Oh, Lord that we might see you come in revival power!

When Lyndon Bowring pulled himself together sufficiently to set off for his next appointment he left me a message. "Isn't it wonderful! Tell Joel I am leaving him in full charge," he said, beaming. Joel Edwards, meanwhile, was lying flat on his back, his face tranquil, his attention fixed not on earthly things but on peace in the heavenlies.<sup>146</sup>

**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1994** – The *Church of England Newspaper* publishes three views of TTB from three prominent Anglican evangelicals.

Decade of Evangelism Officer Robert Warren is positive. On the question of whether TTB is of God, he says "'Yes' ... Or rather, 'Yes, thank You', and 'Yes, please'". He explains: 'The capacity to laugh and relax is at the heart of being truly human.' While warning against the temptation to use it as 'a fad or the latest technique for getting your church to grow', he insists that 'if such an experience comes our way we are to receive it with thanksgiving and integrate it into our whole experience of life. God's gifts come both to draw us to Christ, and to make us more Christlike.'

David Prior, Vicar of St. Michael's, Chester Square, is similarly supportive of the new movement. The joy and laughter associated with TTB are, he writes, 'a gift and activity of God himself'. When confronted with even a foretaste of God's glory, he remarks that it is quite understandable that 'our physical bodies cannot cope. Many fall down under its weight and tremble, many look drunk and are filled with laughter.' Convinced that the present phenomena represent "times of refreshing from the Lord", Prior nonetheless counsels on the basis of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 that all spiritual manifestations are to be tested. This, however, is to be a testing based on 'involvement, not detachment; presence, not hearsay; sensing as it happens, not deciding in advance'.

---

<sup>146</sup> Warner, Rob, *Prepare for Revival*, pp.17-18.

Demurring from all this, General Synod Board of Education member Professor Arthur Pollard condemns TTB for its 'mass emotionalism', 'mindless laughter' and 'exhibitionism'. Stressing that John Wesley actually discouraged the overvaluing of 'feelings and inward impressions', Pollard laments the 'debasement' of 'the intellectual dimension' in charismatic circles. Approving Alan Morrison's sharp critique of the new wave (←), he pleads for a return to the 'order, decorum and dignity' of Anglican liturgy as prescribed in the *Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>147</sup>

On this same day, the Cor Lumen Christi group holds a rally for Roman Catholic charismatics in Guildford, Surrey. Around 350 attend. Some of those present are aware that Toronto-style manifestations have been witnessed at the Hillsborough Bible Week in Northern Ireland, held over the preceding few days. As the Holy Spirit is invoked, many shake, weep and laugh.<sup>148</sup>

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July 1994** – The Evangelical Alliance's UK Director Joel Edwards drafts a six paragraph position statement on TTB. This is approved by his fellow Senior Managers and defines EA policy on the new movement for the time being. The statement confirms that the Alliance has 'attempted to keep abreast' of TTB and begins by urging that '*all* spiritual phenomena' should be measured 'by biblical criteria' and by the extent to which they issue in 'holiness, prayer and witness'. The statement goes on to recognise that 'the current phenomenon is not new', drawing parallels with events which occurred during the ministries of Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitefield and the early Pentecostal pioneer Stephen Jeffreys. Also, however, the text concedes that such events attracted their share of 'controversy and blessings'. The Alliance is said to 'rejoice with those who testify to a deeper level of commitment and joy', but equally, urges them 'to avoid excessive behaviour which may discredit the gospel' and to refrain from 'indiscriminate enthusiasm'. At the same time, the statement warns against 'condemnatory behaviour which dismisses all unusual events out of hand'. The text then advocates the 'Gamaliel Principle', namely, 'If the phenomenon is genuinely of God it will certainly bear lasting fruit'. In conclusion, the Alliance expresses its 'hope and sincere prayer' that evangelicals 'will not allow the issue to polarise and divide our witness at a time when it is most acutely needed'. [The full text of the Statement is reproduced at Appendix...].

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July 1994** – Dr Andrew Walker, a sociologist of religion at King's College, London and author of *Restoring the Kingdom*, the definitive history of the house church movement in Britain, comments on TTB in an article for the weekly *Christian Herald*. He wonders whether this new movement is not simply one more wave of pre-millennial expectation, and whether it might not eventually leave only 'tremors of disappointed excitement'. Having taken a straw poll of charismatic postgraduates at King's, he reports them as having 'mixed feelings about the present situation'. He adds: 'Two American missionaries, both studying for their doctorates, felt both positive and blessed by recent 'laughing' experiences at a London conference; but another student who visited Holy Trinity, Brompton, during a Toronto 'fall out' was untouched by the whole affair and could not wait to get home. A Bible-based Baptist was worried that the recent waves of excitement seem to have stemmed not initially from Toronto but from theologically

<sup>147</sup> 'Testing Toronto', *Church of England Newspaper*, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1994, p.7.

<sup>148</sup> Roberts, pp.38-9.

dubious 'health and wealth' sources. None of these students assumes that the recent excitement heralds a world revival.'

Ultimately, Walker tends toward the view that the spectacular physical phenomena associated with TTB 'may have no spiritual significance' one way or the other. 'Christians', he writes, 'are not immune from fashion, crowd hysteria, auto-suggestion, or simply being plain daft.' Even so, he adds that such phenomena 'should not be ruled out of court simply because they are odd'. If they are genuinely signs of a coming revival, he concludes, they will lead soon enough to 'conviction of sin, tears of repentance and love of neighbour'.<sup>149</sup>

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July 1994** – Rob Warner and his wife Claire attend an evening meeting at Queen's Road Baptist Church, Wimbledon. It is the day of the World Cup final, but the meeting attracts over 200 people. Warner will later describe his experience thus: 'when my turn came for prayer I felt instantaneously drunk. I staggered a couple of steps, and fell to the ground. My hands began to twitch and shake, and then my whole body trembled as if I had been linked up to a high voltage cable. I heard the voice of God saying to me, "This is a revelation of my power. Not all of it, but as much as you can take right now."<sup>150</sup>

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July 1994** – The letters page of the *Baptist Times* for this week shows a generally hostile response to TTB from correspondents. Catherine Shephard of Abergeveny is given the most space for her complaint that the new movement is as likely to scare off non-believers as attract converts or genuinely refresh existing Christians.

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 1994** – *The Times* carries a letter from Peter Howarth of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He assures readers of the newspaper that those who had wondered whether weeping or sustained laughing in services would be exclusively confined to evangelical churches 'need not worry':

'The well-known fundamentalist Erasmus described such a service in his *On the Amiable Concord of the Church*: 'Sometimes the spirit of Christ can be seen to be present in the hearers. Some sigh; some burst into tears; the faces of some grow happy. In short, you would say that they had all been transfigured.'

**Friday 29<sup>th</sup> July 1994** – *Alpha* magazine follows its July issue's report on TTB (←) with an August leader advising that it cannot yet legitimately be described as 'revival', but that it may well be 'preparation for revival', after the model of 2 Chronicles 7:14. If so, writes editor Dave Roberts, there ought to be an increased emphasis in the coming weeks and months on repentance. 'Another mark of every great revival', says Roberts, 'has been its effect on the whole community. It is too early, of course ... to see this distinctive feature. A comment, however, from one of those closely involved is, "If, in six months time, we don't see the fruits, this isn't revival."' The leader closes by urging readers to 'learn the lessons and heed the warnings', calling them to be 'open to whatever the Holy Spirit would do in us and through us.'<sup>151</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Walker, Andrew, '...But is it Revival?', *Christian Herald*, 16<sup>th</sup> July, p.3.

<sup>150</sup> Warner, Bob, *Prepare for Revival*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>151</sup> Roberts, Dave, 'From the Editor: When the Holy Spirit Comes', *Alpha*, August 1994, pp.10-11.

Roberts contributes two further articles on TTB to this month's edition. The first offers a summary of what has happened thus far, with fresh quotes from a number of key figures. Many of these quotes emphasise ways in which the new movement is bearing tangible evangelistic fruit. Various conversion stories from Bryn Jones' Covenant network are followed by Gerald Coates reporting that 25 people have come to salvation at a recent Pioneer meeting, and by Malcolm Kyte of Queen's Road Baptist Church stating that since May, 30 have come forward in response to the preaching of the gospel – either to make re-commitments, or to declare faith in Christ for the first-time. Roberts also quotes Steve Long of TAV saying that an average of two people are giving their lives to Christ at each of the daily meetings now being held there.

Roberts also refers in this first feature article to a 14-page document written by Bill Jackson of Champaign Vineyard Church in Urbana, Illinois, which seeks to demonstrate biblical precedents for the Toronto phenomena, and which has quickly gained the status of a 'handbook for understanding'.<sup>152</sup>

In his second feature, Roberts takes up the comparison now being made by a number of spokespeople, between TTB and great revival experienced in New England under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards between 1740 and 1742. Referring particularly to Edwards' text *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, Roberts underlines the great theologian's openness to emotional expressions of faith and commitment. While making clear Edwards' insistence on the primacy of Scripture, Roberts quotes him as stating that 'what the church has been used to is not a rule by which we are to judge.' Roberts goes on to show Edwards as a preacher for whom Pentecost-type scenes were only to be expected as God pours out His Spirit 'in the latter ages of the world'. Edwards, we are told, did not suppose that there was a need to 'express scripture for every external, accidental manifestation of the inward motion of the mind', but that he nonetheless found biblical parallels for the manifestations he had seen at Northampton in the falling and trembling of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:29), and the crying out of the disciples during the storm (Matt. 14:26). Furthermore, although Roberts finds Edwards clear about the importance of discerning the fruit of believers' experiences and the general 'root and course' of their life, he cites his dictum that 'A thousand imprudences will not prove a work to be not of the Spirit of God'.

Roberts characterises Edwards' writing on revival as having been driven by a 'militant pursuit of balance'. He then concludes by quoting Edwards summary of the five main 'positive fruits' to be looked for in any spiritual experience:

- An honouring of Jesus
- A detachment from selfish pleasure or gain
- A hunger for the Scriptures
- A dwelling on truth
- A deepening of mutual love

Roberts also derives from Edwards various 'practical warnings and encouragements':

---

<sup>152</sup> Roberts, Dave, 'Revival Call', *Alpha*, August 1994, pp.14-17.

- The need for wise leadership
- Caution before criticism

Gleaned by Roberts from Edwards' promotion of the 'Gamaliel Principle' – i.e., the idea that an apparent work of God is best assessed according to whether or not it thrives in the long run

- Get off the fence

Inferred by Roberts from Edwards' suggestion that silent, unengaged carping at spiritual outpourings was 'a kind of secret opposition'

- Stay humble
- Care in censuring of others

Rebuke is seen as legitimate, says Roberts of Edwards, but should be confined to the specific matter in hand, and not extended to wholesale denunciations of others' character. Roberts also find it helpful that Edwards warned 'friends of revival' not to treat their less enthusiastic critics with 'angry zeal'.<sup>153</sup>

These criteria and guidelines will be much-repeated and much-debated over the next weeks and months, as will the more general relevance of Edwards to TTB (→).

The same issue of *Alpha* also carries Terry Virgo's reflections on what has been happening in his NFI churches (←), and a reprinted version of Sandy Millar's testimony from the June 12<sup>th</sup> edition of *HTB in Focus* (←).

Also on this day, *Evangelicals Now* editor John Benton publishes a feature on TTB in which he states that 'the jury is still out for us'. Benton quotes George Whitefield writing to John Wesley with concern that the 'convulsions' seen at some of Wesley's meetings might 'take people from the written Word' and make them more dependent on experience than 'the gospel'. Citing a friend, Benton concludes that Christian experience 'can be likened to a road which leads to God':

Running along one side of the road is the hedge of biblical beliefs. Along the other side is the hedge of biblical behaviour. Any experience which takes us through the hedge and off the road is spurious. But any experience which keeps us between the hedges, and propels us to love God more, and more zealously walk the road to him, can be taken as from the Lord.<sup>154</sup>

*The Evangelical Times*, which will prove to be one of TTB's severest detractors (→), prints a summary of Alan Morrison's broadside, 'We All Fall Down' (←). Morrison's parallels with mesmerism are given special attention.

<sup>153</sup> Roberts, Dave, 'The Finger of God', *Alpha*, August 1994, pp.32-4.

<sup>154</sup> Benton, John ('JEB'), 'Laughter at Toronto', *Evangelicals Now*, August 1994, p.18.

**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July 1994** – The *Christian Herald* publishes Gerald Coates' response to its previous week's article on TTB by Andrew Walker (←). As leader of the Pioneer People network, Coates declares, 'I have never seen so many confessions of sin, letters of apology and witnessed acts of reconciliation as I have in the last few months.' Challenging Walker's non-committal stance, Coates expresses surprise that the sociologist failed to see strong comparisons with earlier evangelical revivals, such as the Northampton revival of 1740-42 associated with Jonathan Edwards, and the Everton revival of 1758-59 spurred by the ministry of John Wesley. He also applies the late Conservative Evangelical preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones' words on these and other revivals to the TTB: 'Why should the devil suddenly start doing this kind of thing? Here is the church in a period of dryness and drought; why should the devil suddenly do something which draws attention to religion and Jesus Christ? If this is the work of the devil, well then, the devil is an unutterable fool. He is dividing his own kingdom; he is increasing the kingdom of God.' Coates concludes by expressing his belief that 'we are on the edge of what could be the greatest thing to hit our nation this century.'<sup>155</sup>

**Late July 1994** – Having been prompted to do so by his friend Wesley Richards of the King's Church, Slough (←), Ken Gott of Sunderland Christian Centre (←) flies down from the North East at short notice for a leaders' meeting at HTB. Initially unsettled by the Anglican ornamentation of the sanctuary, and by the upper middle class ethos of the church, Gott is prayed for by guest speaker Bishop David Pytches (←). Along with Richards and others from the King's Church, Gott is struck by what, in his own words, 'seemed to be a divine thunderbolt', and falls to the floor. Then he and his companions start to laugh: 'I was rolling first one way and then the other, holding my sides, which were aching with laughter. I had rolled under the baptismal font and every time I looked up and saw it I laughed even louder. Infant baptism was not part of my tradition, yet nothing seemed to matter.'<sup>156</sup> Gott relays all this to an evening meeting at his home church the next Sunday, and as he will later recall, 'hilarious laughter broke out, affecting some of the most unlikely people – one woman, a magistrate, was almost under her chair laughing. Many people were deeply touched.'<sup>157</sup>

Across the Atlantic around this time, writing in the in-house journal *Vineyard Reflections*, John Wimber recalls experiencing a vision very similar to that shared by Marc Dupont in May 1992 (←). Fresh water runs down a mountainside into a plain of vineyards below, where labourers dig irrigation channels. 'I got the clear impression of a co-labouring', writes Wimber. 'God was pouring out his blessing. But if we don't dig the channels, if we don't go out into the highways and by-ways, if we don't put evangelism forward, if we didn't do the things God calls us to do, revival won't spread ... In other words let's begin organizing ourselves to give this blessing away.'<sup>158</sup>

Again in the last days of July, the main New Frontiers International Bible Week at Stoneleigh sees around 14,000 people from 30 countries experience or witness TTB on a larger scale. NFI leader Terry Virgo will later recall this as an event at which 'the power

<sup>155</sup> Coates, Gerald, 'A Mighty Convulsion', *Christian Herald* 30<sup>th</sup> July 1994, p.9

<sup>156</sup> Gott, Ken and Lois, *The Sunderland Refreshing: How the Holy Spirit Invaded One British Town*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, pp.81-5

<sup>157</sup> Gott & Gott, *The Sunderland Refreshing*, pp.85-6.

<sup>158</sup> *Vineyard Reflections*, July/Aug 1994, 7.



of God came flooding in. Literally thousands of stories can be told of lives touched and transformed, people saved, bodies healed, and people falling in love with God in a way that they had never known before.<sup>159</sup>

During the last week of July, some 4000 young people gather for the music and teaching event 'Soul Survivor'. Linked to the Anglican charismatic 'New Wine' festival, which will take place a short time later (→), this gathering shows clear evidence of the impact to TTB, with the characteristic manifestations on display.<sup>160</sup>

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – *The Daily Mail* reports that 'at least 40 of the 100 worshippers' St. James, an evangelical Anglican church in Bream, Gloucestershire, 'have collapsed writhing, weeping or giggling in services during the past month.'<sup>161</sup>

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – HTB and its church plants hold their annual holiday and study conference, 'Focus '94', at Morecambe Bay in Lancashire. Not surprisingly, TTB is the dominant theme, although the United Reformed Church theologian and retired Church of South India Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin also speaks on 'The Gospel as Public Truth', and evangelist J. John teaches on 'Confidence'.

Two vicars in the HTB network, John Irvine of St. Barnabas, Kensington and Jeremy Crossley of St. James-the-Less, Pimlico, bear enthusiastic witness to the effect of TTB on their congregations. At this stage, however, Irvine cautions that it is better to talk in terms of 'a time of refreshing' than of 'revival': "'Time of refreshing" is a good biblical term', he says, referring to Acts 3:19; 'let the historians later call it revival or awakening if that's what happens.' Meanwhile, HTB Churchwarden Ken Costa recounts how his initial scepticism turned to acceptance when trying to teach from Ephesians and finding himself unable to do so because of uncontrollable laughter. Soon this experience, he says, he visited TAV and found himself 'bouncing up and down like a pogo-stick'. Costa relates all this to C.S. Lewis' description of having been 'surprised by joy'.<sup>162</sup>

In the Sunday evening main session, Evangelical Alliance General Director Clive Calver shares his latest thinking on TTB with the Focus audience. As when he spoke to the *Sunday Telegraph* on 19<sup>th</sup> June (←), he is keen to stress the imperative of social transformation:

'Today, if we are seeing a move of God it will not rest easily with the religious establishment. God always rocks the boat. He rarely does what I say he is going to do. That's why he is so uncomfortable.'

When you look around today, something is happening. Just after this move of God started I was in a set of churches and they said, "Is this an awakening?" And I said "No". An awakening is what God does in the world when he turns society around as he did in the 18<sup>th</sup> century." They said, "Is this a revival?" I said, "I don't think so. Revival is what God does when he brings the world into the church."

---

<sup>159</sup> Virgo, pp.14-16.

<sup>160</sup> 'Lots of lots laughter' Heard at a Westcountry Worship Holiday', *Church Times*, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1994, p.3.

<sup>161</sup> 'Blessed are the fallen at St James', *Daily Mail*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1994, p.7.

<sup>162</sup> *HTB in Focus*, August 14<sup>th</sup> 1994, pp.9-12.

They said, "Is it a renewal?" I said, "Yes, definitely. It's as important as this: you have never had an awakening in history that hasn't started in renewal and revival." Now I want to see an awakening. I want to see God touch our nation and to see God turn our society upside down and inside out. But he won't start in society. He'll start with the people of God.

If this is an end in itself, I've got to confess to being slightly disappointed, because I've spent the last 20 years waiting for God to turn society round. This is the beginning. God is after a people broken before Him. God forgive those who've condemned this as a work of the Enemy. I believe that God starts with us. But we don't want it to finish here, do we? I like laughing, but I'd like our world to laugh too...

... God wants a people who will offer themselves so totally and completely that he can blow by his spirit in a way that we have never seen. This is just a beginning – and as God gets surrendered lives, he wants to take us out to make a difference. It's a call to repentance. It's a call to follow Jesus. It's a call to surrender ourselves. When we do that we'll stop waiting for God and find that God's waiting for us. And when He's found us, I believe he's going to use us to change this nation in a way we haven't seen since Wesley and Whitefield.<sup>163</sup>

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – Ken and Lois Gott begin a week-long visit to TAV. Their trip has been funded by a special offering collected by their congregation in Sunderland. As worship takes place, they are prayed for by John Arnott. As they will later record, Lois begins 'bobbing up and down and shaking from head to foot', eventually falling to the floor. Ken bends forwards with arms and legs outstretched and fists clenched: 'it seemed like my insides were growing and growing and trying to burst out.' Some time later, he will reflect that the early Pentecostal leader Smith Wigglesworth 'described such an experience himself, saying he felt about ten times bigger on the inside than on the outside'. While all this is going on, Gott sees a vision of revival fires being lit all over the North of England. This is his first such vision, and leads him to shout out "I can see it, I can see it".<sup>164</sup>

Under the heading 'Are We in Revival?', the prominent prayer leader Brian Mills writes in today's *Christian Herald* that although 'many of us hoped we would be in a state of revival by now', this has not yet occurred. While some are seeing genuine marks of revival their fellowships and immediate communities, he says, this trend is 'not general – it is still very local'. Hoping for an increase in the present momentum, he calls people to the sort of corporate prayer which is currently being fostered by the Evangelical Alliance-backed Quarterly Prayer Initiative (QPI).<sup>165</sup>

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – Ken Gott tells the TAV morning meeting about the history of revival in Sunderland, focussing especially on the ministry of Alexander Boddy, the Anglican Rector whose explorations of revival in Wales, Norway and elsewhere led All Saints Parish Church, Sunderland, to become a key site of Pentecostal renewal in the

<sup>163</sup> *HTB in Focus*, August 14<sup>th</sup> 1994, p.10.

<sup>164</sup> Gott & Gott, *The Sunderland Refreshing*, pp.93-5.

<sup>165</sup> Mills, Brian, 'Are We in Revival?', *Christian Herald*, p.7.

early twentieth century. Gott concludes: 'Just as Alexander Boddy travelled to Wales to see revival and brought it back to Sunderland, I am in Toronto to taste revival and refreshing and take it back with me.'<sup>166</sup>

The Gotts experience the remainder of the week as a time of 'soaking in the Spirit', marked by 'laughter, weeping, shakes and jerks', but most of all by 'deep repentance'.<sup>167</sup>

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – The annual 'New Wine' week takes place at the Royal Bath and West Showground in Shepton Mallett. Originally a church weekend away for the congregation of St. Andrew's, Chorleywood (←), New Wine has expanded into a large-scale, mainly Anglican charismatic festival which also attracts members of other denominations, including Roman Catholics.

Against the background of TTB, this year's New Wine highlights the subject of 'ministering in the Spirit'. Speakers include Sandy Millar and David Pytches (←). Event co-ordinator Joyce Wills tells the *Church Times*, 'A great many people have been touched by the Holy Spirit here. Some have been going out in the Spirit and having a wonderful, real experience of the presence of Jesus. There has been some exaggerated physical movement and lots and lots of laughter. Not everybody has been able to understand it, but David [Pytches] is marvellous at putting it in its biblical context. People are certainly hungry to learn about it.'

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – The annual 'Scotland Aflame' festival in Blair Atholl sees hundreds affected by Toronto-style manifestations. The Covenant Life Church in Glasgow, who have organised the event, tell the London *Independent* that this is part of a global movement which may be set to emulate the Wesleyan revival. The *Independent* itself reports that 'more than 250,000 people, including many Europeans' have visited TAV since January.<sup>168</sup>

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – Best-selling Christian writer Joyce Huggett reflects on TTB in an article for *The Church of England Newspaper*. Now domiciled in Cyprus, she has yet personally to experience the distinctive phenomena associated with the new movement. Even so, word of what has been happening has, she writes, led her to re-examine her own devotional life and to discover a fresh sense of God's assurance. As for the phenomena themselves, she urges concentration on their fruit, which, she says, 'is often best examined by asking a series of searching questions like: Are those who are claiming a fresh touch being reminded of the things Jesus said and did? Is our love for the written Word and the Living Word being rekindled? Are our prayer lives being transformed? Are our lives changed? As we enjoy more intimacy with God, do we find ourselves filled with self-sacrificing compassion for the poor and the marginalised? Do we have a heart for mission?'<sup>169</sup>

In the *Daily Telegraph's* 'Sacred and Profane' column, Clifford Longley suggests that TTB might well be explicable on purely socio-psychological grounds. He thinks it significant

<sup>166</sup> Roberts, pp. 54-5; Gott &Gott, pp. 97-103.

<sup>167</sup> Gott & Gott, p.102.

<sup>168</sup> Price, John, 'Airport Church Lands Converts', *Independent*, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1994, p.6.

<sup>169</sup> Huggett, Joyce, 'Have You Had a Fresh Touch of the Spirit Recently?', *Church of England Newspaper*, p.13.

in this regard that the Toronto phenomena have been affecting agnostic journalists as well as dedicated charismatics, and he then draws parallels with similar manifestations in other religious traditions. 'Just how infectious emotional seizures can be in a religious setting', he writes, 'is well documented from earlier centuries, from Eastern religions and even from the infamous Sun Dance which had such a destructive effect on the morale of American Indian tribes 100 years ago.'

Longley notes that TTB could be regarded as one more outworking of the well-developed 'appetite for experiences, particularly new ones' which has marked evangelicalism in the post-war period: 'In the 1960s, speaking in tongues became the fashion; in the 1970s, exorcisms and ritual healings; in the 1980s ... a more communal sense of joy; since earlier this year, it seems, the 1990s are set to become the decade of spiritual laughter.' Longley goes on to set these trends in a wider cultural context: 'The demand for signs and wonders is all part of a world where the deferment of gratification, whether for moral or spiritual purposes, has given way to the demand for instant satisfaction.' Furthermore, challenging the widely-promoted test according to 'fruits' (←), Longley writes that 'increased devotion and dedication, the reform of life and renewed commitment to one's fellow men' can be just as readily apparent after 'conversion to Buddhism or Scientology'. Such things, he says, 'prove nothing about the thing committed to, or the cause of the increase'.

Despite all this, Longley concludes on a somewhat more open note, based on a decisive commitment to truth as the final criterion of authenticity: 'When faced with the claim that gales of involuntary laughter in church are a sign of a special visitation of God and a special sign of his favour and purpose, it still matters whether that is or is not in fact the case. If it is, we should all join in. And if it is not, then it is indeed a form of madness and should be seen as such.'<sup>170</sup>

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – On their return to Sunderland Christian Centre from Toronto (←), Ken and Lois Gott tell the congregation about their experiences at TAV. Ken struggles to remain on his feet while preaching and, on praying for people at the end of the service, sees many Toronto-style manifestations take place.

Following the service, it is decided that Sunderland Christian Centre will adopt a TAV-type schedule of daily meetings, at least for the ensuing fortnight. This pattern in fact continues through to October, when the programme shifts to four nights per week with a monthly rally. Attendances at these daily meetings will range between 150 and 400.<sup>171</sup>

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – The conservative Protestant newsletter *English Churchman and St. James's Chronicle* refers dismissively to TTB as 'an outbreak of psychic phenomena in the London area in places of worship', and recommends Alan Morrison's critical leaflet *We All Fall Down* (←) to its readers.<sup>172</sup>

---

<sup>170</sup> Longley, Clifford, 'Once Upon a Time We Were Told Not to Laugh in Church', *Daily Telegraph*, August 12<sup>th</sup> 1994, p.17.

<sup>171</sup> Roberts p.55.

<sup>172</sup> 'Slain in the Spirit', *English Churchman and St James' Chronicle*, 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> August 1994, p.4.

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1994** – The *Daily Telegraph* reports that various Roman Catholic groups have begun to experience TTB. As well as Cor Lumen Christi, who saw 300 or so affected at a meeting in Guildford, Surrey on 8<sup>th</sup> July (←), Religious Affairs Correspondent Damian Thompson also mentions The Upper Room, a Catholic community in St. Albans, Hertfordshire, who 'first experienced the Toronto Blessing three weeks ago after a visit by a pastor in the Vineyard Fellowship', and which has witnessed the characteristic manifestations on each occasion it has met since.<sup>173</sup>

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – The Comment column of the *Evangelical Times* offers a denunciation of TTB which typifies its avowedly anti-charismatic stance:

'There is a real sense of *déjà vu* every time we hear of some new charismatic experience which someone has received. In the past we have had speaking in the spirit, slain in the spirit [sic] and even breathing the spirit, but giggling, this will be new to many readers. This sense of 'already seen' is however not restricted to the actual manifestations. The whole process is so well trodden that one can almost anticipate what the next marvellous revelation will be before it happens. Fairly regularly over the past twenty-five years ... the charismatic movement has been indulging itself with claims of supernatural phenomena which just happen to occur in the last place anyone would ever imagine, and spread like wildfire among those churches which one would least expect ... We do not doubt that there is an attraction about this kind of sensual activity. People in the world pay good money for a buzz or a trip or a high. Couple the sensationalism with some tweaking of the emotions and a sensitive seasoning of superior spirituality and the cocktail becomes quite intoxicating ... There is a peace that passes understanding [but] it is not found in lurching from the last amazing experience to the next. There is a joy which runs higher than giggling in the spirit. Possessing the righteousness of Christ brings peace with God and eternal happiness in the company of our Saviour. It also has its consolations for the here and now.'<sup>174</sup>

In the same issue of *Evangelical Times*, John Legg presents a reading of Jonathan Edwards which contrasts markedly with that offered by Dave Roberts in the August issue of *Alpha* on 29<sup>th</sup> July (←). Insisting that Edwards is being 'wrongly quoted' in defence of TTB, Legg argues that far from endorsing physical and emotional responses to the gospel such as those experienced in Northampton in 1734-5 and 1740-3, Edwards in fact disapproved of them, and held merely that they could not, in and of themselves, be taken to rule out an underlying work of God. Thus, 'Edwards's argument was that the mere occurrence of physical effects proves nothing one way or the other ... While [he] would probably say that current events do not of themselves deny that the Spirit is truly at work, he would also say that they do not prove that he is.' I am sure he would categorize the things themselves as 'wildfire', to be discouraged not relied upon.' Legg concludes by suggesting that Edwards would have asked 'very serious questions about the positive content' of the meetings associated with TTB: 'Falling down because of bodily weakness under a great awareness of sin in the presence of a holy, sin-hating

<sup>173</sup> Thompson, Damian, 'Roman Catholics Affected by Toronto Blessing', *Daily Telegraph*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1994.

<sup>174</sup> 'Comment', *Evangelical Times*, September 1994, p.2.

God is one thing; collapsing and being 'slain' by just the touch of a mere man is another.<sup>175</sup>

On a milder note, Peter Anderson and Derek Cleave urge readers of the September edition of *Evangelism Today* to grasp the authentic marks of revival before applying the term too hastily to TTB. 'Revival always leads to the overwhelming success of the Gospel in the community', they write. 'It always produces a heightened awareness of sin. It certainly produces serious-minded Christians. What is important to notice is that revival comes out of the powerful preaching of the Word of God and an increased thirst on the part of the hearers to hear more. It certainly cannot be reproduced automatically and exactly the same in any part of the country as in the current manifestations, for revivals have never been uniform or predictable.'<sup>176</sup>

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> August 1994** – In the September–October edition of the magazine *Prophecy Today*, editor Clifford Hill voices profound concerns about TTB. Contrasting the 'hysterical and even maniacal' laughter recounted by various sources with true 'joy in the Lord', he adds that 'throughout the Bible, the great majority of references to laughter are associated with scorn, derision or evil.' Hill is disturbed by the animal noises he has heard about, and by the 'heavy beat music', triumphalism and lack of biblical focus at a meeting in Brighton which a 'Pentecostal pastor' has reported to him. He also objects to the 'pilgrimage' aspect of TTB, with so many now travelling to TAV in order to 'catch the blessing and take it back with them'. Echoing Alan Morrison (←), Hill likens the effect of 'resting in the Spirit' to 'the Hindu practice of using group laughter as a means of control to bring worshipers under the power of the guru'. Despite all this, Hill concludes by accepting that 'there are a few details given in Acts of the manifestations accompanying the outpouring of the Holy Spirit'. Therefore, he says, 'It would be unwise ... to rule out any manifestation unless it was blasphemous, destructive or sinful ... There are good things happening as well as bizarre.'<sup>177</sup>

**Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> August 1994** – The *Daily Telegraph* reports that children 'claim to have seen Satan' during the New Wine festival held earlier in the month (←). Religious Affairs Correspondent Damian Thompson quotes Rev. David Gardner of Burwell Baptist Church in Cambridgeshire as saying that during the event a nine-year old boy fell to floor and had visions of 'heaven, angels, Jesus and "Satan in a cage"'. Gardner in fact recalls that many of the 1,000 or so children in attendance fell to the floor, rested in the Spirit, and, while doing so, "heard the voice of Jesus and saw pictures and visions".

Thompson goes on to record that the Bishop of Coventry, Simon Barrington-Ward, has just approved a new book called *And For Your Children*, written by Styvechale vicar Rev John Leach with his wife, Chris. It suggests that children should be taught to receive charismatic gifts from a young age, on the grounds that they are prone to Satanic attack from infancy. Leach will go on to apply this approach explicitly and enthusiastically to TTB (see 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1994 →). By contrast, Thompson quotes the reaction of the well-known radical Anglican priest, Rev Donald Reeves of St James's,

<sup>175</sup> Legg, John, 'What Would Jonathan Edwards Say', *Evangelical Times*, September 1994, p.12.

<sup>176</sup> Anderson, Peter and Clark, Derek, 'Laughter in Church', *Evangelism Today*, September 1994, p.11.

<sup>177</sup> Hill, Clifford, 'Toronto Blessing – True or False?', *Prophecy Today* Vol. 10 No. 5 (September–October 1994), p.10–11.

Piccadilly, who says that it is 'quite irresponsible to attempt to manipulate the emotions of people at that age.'<sup>178</sup>

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September 1994** – John Wimber convenes a meeting of the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC) to review TTB. John Arnott, Randy Clark and Wes Campbell attend. It is agreed that AVC should urge restraint in the promotion of the phenomena associated with the new movement, whilst recognising that the movement itself is an authentic work of the Holy Spirit. A memorandum to this effect is drafted, to be issued on 14<sup>th</sup> September (→).<sup>179</sup>

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September 1994** – *The Observer* carries a report on TTB by Martin Wroe. He has just visited Queen's Road Baptist Church (←), and writes that the congregation there have been 'rolling and weeping and laughing and sometimes just lying there, moaning, wailing but in no pain'. Although he did not witness animal noises on this occasion, he recounts that elsewhere Christians are 'occasionally barking, crowing like cockerels, mooing like cows, pawing the ground like bulls and, more commonly, roaring like lions'. Bishop David Pytches (←) is quoted: "The Book of Micah talks of 'howling like a jackal and moaning like an owl'. What God is doing is shaking people physically and shocking people mentally, drawing attention to himself, like a parent shaking a child which wants to run across a busy road."

Wroe goes on to write Sunday attendances at HTB now stand at 'more than 2,000', with 'queues of 500 outside by 5.30' for the 6.30pm evening service. For all this enthusiasm, however, he suggests that the TTB may owe a great deal to 'pre-millennial tension or mass hysteria'. Even so, for balance he quotes Dr Simon Wessley, senior lecturer at King's College School of Medicine: "This religious experience appears to be cathartic. The people feel rather good about it and appear to go for the purpose of group ecstatic experience. It is not mass hysteria or any form of mental disorder – it may be rather un-English, but there is nothing sinister about it at all."<sup>180</sup>

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September 1994** – The *Western Mail* quotes Barry Napier, head of the Swansea-based Christian Research Ministries, as saying that TTB is 'a cancer in the Church'. A 'qualified psychologist and psychiatrist', Napier complains that the Blessing is 'going through the Church of England like a dose of salts and [is] now hitting churches and chapels in Wales'. Napier's colleague, James Wadell dismisses the Toronto phenomena as 'familiar sights in hypnotism stage acts' and expresses sadness that those affected include 'intelligent, professional medical people whom I respect'. In a 12-page paper, Christian Research Ministries are reported to have called TTB 'demonic with a covering of human psychological hysteria'.<sup>181</sup>

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September 1994** –The prominent charismatic pioneer Michael Harper offers his assessment of TTB in the Evangelical-Catholic magazine, *Directions*. Once an Anglican but now a Bishop in the Antiochian Orthodox Church, Harper confesses to

<sup>178</sup> Thompson, Damian, 'Children See Vision of Satan after the 'Toronto Blessing'', *Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> August 1994, p.10.

<sup>179</sup> Cit. Wright, Eric. E, *Strange Fire*, Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1996, p.28

<sup>180</sup> Wroe, Martin, 'A Drop of the Holy Spirit Has Them Rolling in the Aisles', *The Observer*, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1994.

<sup>181</sup> Dube, Steve, 'Holy Spirit 'Blessing' Dismissed as Demonic', *Western Mail*, September 5<sup>th</sup> 1994.

having first been 'a little sceptical' about early reports of the Blessing. On visiting TAV for himself, however, he reports that 'from the moment I stepped inside the door I knew God was there, and the rest didn't really matter'. Despite remaining unimpressed by the music and feeling that the preacher 'went on far too long', Harper says it was clear to him that 'something extraordinary was happening [which] was due not to the human factors, but to the divine presence and power.' Praising the 'complete absence of "hype"' at the meeting, Harper goes on to reflect that God's choice of 'an unknown "storefront" church' as the key conduit of the new movement bears out His biblical tendency to choose the weak to confound the strong.

Harper continues to wonder in his piece whether the more intrusive bouts of laughter and the 'grotesque' animal noises, are doing more harm than good. He also questions why people have to fall backwards rather than forwards, as is 'more normal in the Scriptures'. Such things, he writes, only point up the need for thorough explanation and interpretation, so that ordinary Christians can understand 'what God is saying' through TTB. In the end, however, he commends the Blessing as 'a sign of hope, when there is not much else to cheer about'.<sup>182</sup>

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September 1994** – *The Times* reports that HTB is now attracting so many visitors to its services that it is set to issue tickets 'for worshippers who want to ensure they get a seat for Sunday services.'<sup>183</sup>

**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September** – AVC issues a memorandum stating that TTB constitutes a genuine move of the Spirit, but that restraint should be shown in the promotion of the phenomena associated with it.<sup>184</sup> Seeking to offer guidelines on the pastoral administration of the physical phenomena associated with TTB, the AVC Board urge that such things should generally be allowed to happen, but should not enjoy any special 'stimulation' or 'endorsement'. While some are acknowledged to bear biblical precedent (e.g. in Dan 8:16-18, 27; 10:8-10; Mt. 17:6-7; Rev. 1:17), the statement insists that others should not be 'explained' by 'inappropriate proof-texting'. In particular, the Board underlines that 'Biblical metaphors (similar to those concerning a lion or a dove, etc.) do not justify or provide a proof-text for animal behaviour.'

On the search for historical validation, the Board notes that 'people like Jonathan Edwards are helpful in that they give us examples of how godly men, who submitted themselves to the Scriptures as their final authority, sorted our similar issues.' Even so, they go on, 'in fairness to them, we don't know exactly what they would say about the current phenomena.'

Beyond such detail, the Board stresses the need to focus on 'the main/plain issues of Scripture', which it defines as 'witnessing, healing, demon expulsion, ministering to the poor and widows, etc.' Neither is it keen on 'theologizing' on the basis of manifestations themselves.

Moving on to eschatology, the Board guidelines disavow 'linking the present work of the Spirit to any precise eschatological scenario (e.g. Hal Lindsey<sup>185</sup> or the Latter Rain

<sup>182</sup> Harper, Michael, 'What is Happening in Toronto?', *Directions*, Issue 17, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1994, pp. 1-2.

<sup>183</sup> 'Ticket to Worship', *The Times*, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1994.

<sup>184</sup> Wright, Eric E., *Strange Fire*, Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1996, p.28.

<sup>185</sup> Hal Lindsey's 1970 book *The Late, Great Planet Earth* became the biggest-selling Christian paperback in the USA, with 15 million copies in print by 1992. Reflecting a premillennial eschatology, it



Movement, etc.)' (← cf. 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1988). Rather, it suggests that it would probably be 'wiser' to 'maintain the loose pre-millennial views held by the vast majority, but not all – namely, that we have been in "the last days" since Pentecost and we don't know when the precise last moments of time are.' Consequently, it advises, 'we don't know if this current renewal is "the last big one" or not.'

Reiterating established Vineyard 'key values', the statement encourages proponents of TTb to inculcate a passion for evangelism, to maintain simplicity, to do nothing for effect's sake (i.e. to hype or manipulate), to equip the saints, and to respect individual privacy and dignity. It also points to 1 Corinthians 14 as the 'main guideline' for the conduct of meetings, and highlight's Paul's concern there for clear explication of spiritual phenomena and the edification of the whole body. In conclusion, the Board state that they 'desire to embrace all that is good about this renewal while correcting that which is excessive, long-term hurtful or contrary to biblical mandates.' In particular, they point out that they are 'committed to "poer evangelism" not just "power"', and to "'signs and wonders and church growth", not just "signs and wonders".'<sup>186</sup>

*[The full text of the AVC Guidelines is given in Section III]*

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 1994** – TAV Associate Pastor Marc Dupont, on a visit to the UK, addresses a meeting of 300 or so at John and Elli Mumford's Putney Vineyard church (←). He speaks of having recently witnessed the Blessing at work in India and mainland Europe, as well as in Britain and North America. 'When transition hits, and the Spirit begins to move', he says, 'sometimes people are taken by surprise'. He warns that those on the cutting edge of God's activity can be prone to spiritual pride, and urges humility and generosity among those who are spearheading the work of the new movement. Later, journalist and author Mike Fearon will recall that during the ministry time at this meeting, around fifty people end up on the floor and many others manifest the by now common phenomena of shaking and weeping. Fearon will also report this as his own first experience of 'the notorious lion noises', which emanate from those called forward to receive an anointing for prophecy.<sup>187</sup>

Writing in this week's edition of the *Baptist Times*, mental health chaplain Nigel Copey presents a psychological analysis of TTb. Declaring himself from the outset to be 'very sympathetic' to the Blessing, he suggests that it offers 'a holistic experience of God [which] is to be welcomed'. For many, he goes on, it has also provided a chance to discover 'the healthy "child within" which has either been lost for many years or has never been experienced before because of a damaged childhood'. On the other hand, he warns that the greatest possible danger from the psychological viewpoint is the potential for 'hypnotic induction', which can be fostered by the 'use of music, relaxation of the body, tone of voice [and] atmosphere'. Seeking to recommend a pastorally and

---

linked various apocalyptic prophecies in Scripture to contemporary events, notably the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948, the growing dominance of the USSR, which Lindsey cast as the 'Gog' of Ezekiel 38, and the rise of the European Community, which he associated with the Fourth Kingdom of Daniel 7. Lindsey, Hal, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, New York: Harper, 1970.

<sup>186</sup> Association of Vineyard Churches, 'Board Report: Sept/Oct 1994': Summary Report on the Current Renewal and the Phenomena Surrounding It'. Published on TAV website, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1994, and again as part of material relating to the eventual disengagement of TAV from AVC, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1995.

<sup>187</sup> Fearon, p.15.

theologically balanced model of ministry for TTB, Copsey proposes the following guidelines:

- a) Repeated reinforcement of certain suggestions should be avoided.
- b) Meetings should not be "hyped up", but instead there should be a real openness to God's Spirit.
- c) As well as spontaneous prayer for one another, there should be available mature Christians who are experienced in spending time ministering to people.
- d) There should be clear teaching beforehand on the movement of the Holy Spirit, covering the full range of experiences, e.g. silence as well as laughter, standing as well as falling.

Copsey proceeds to warn against the potential for 'in group' behaviour arising from TTB, whereby those who have 'received from God' define themselves over against the rest, and thus risk dividing the body. He encourages responsible and sensitive pastoral care for 'those who are not touched', noting that as things stand, the Blessing is still largely associated 'with a particular network of charismatic churches' and will appear to many in 'mainstream' or 'mixed' denominations to be a quite exotic form of devotional response.<sup>188</sup>

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 1994** – Picking up *The Times's* report of 12<sup>th</sup> September on HTB now being 'ticket only' (←), *The Church of England Newspaper* quotes vicar Sandy Millar as warning that the Toronto-style phenomena are 'not intended to be part of some spectacular in which they're observed, analysed, dissected and become the subject of instant judgement at a boo/hurrah sort of level'.<sup>189</sup>

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1994** – In a widely researched review of TTB, *Church Times* reporter Colin Moreton interviews and cites various leading figures on how things have been developing.

Disavowing the term 'revival', Sandy Millar tells Moreton that 'all we're safe to say is that God is refreshing his Church.' The manifestations, Millar reflects, have mostly been seen before, but are now 'more vivid'. Echoing what other key figures have said about the background and motivation of many who have been affected, he continues: 'the body of believers has been discouraged, and in many cases is totally weak. These manifestations are restoring us to the intimacy with God for which we cried out when we first became Christians.'

While agreeing that the Toronto phenomena have re-ignited a passion for reconciliation and generosity within his 100-church Pioneer group, and within the wider New Church network he helps to represent, Gerald Coates sounds a cautionary note: 'If these are meant to be times of refreshment', he asks, 'how come many of the leaders I have spoken to are already exhausted? Something must be wrong. Also, we must be careful not to become a ministry of manifestations, otherwise it's not long before you're judging the value of meetings by whether people are laughing or crying, roaring or bellowing, or on the floor.'

<sup>188</sup> Copsey, Nigel, 'Touched by the Spirit', *Baptist Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1994, p.8.

<sup>189</sup> 'London Church is Now Ticket-Only', *Church of England Newspaper*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1994, p.3.

Moreton goes on to report that John Wimber has arrived in London for a series of meetings at Wembley Conference Centre, which are being publicised under the banner 'Let Your Fire Fall'. Wimber is said by Moreton to have corrected the TAV leadership for giving 'inappropriate interpretations' of the TB phenomena, and his quoted comments certainly seem somewhat restrained:

'What we have is a birthing process. The Holy Spirit has chosen to visit and revitalise the Church, and with that there are all kinds of noises and activities that would be best done behind closed doors. I'm a little puzzled myself by some of the things that God chooses to reveal publicly. But I love the after-effects. I've talked to hundreds of people now, and they tell me they love the Lord more, they read the Bible more, they're giving more and praying for the sick more, and they're operating in new gifts. Frankly, if someone's got to make an animal noise to do that, I don't care.'

Moreton has also spoken to Eric Shegog, head of communications at Church House, who says that the Church of England has no official policy on TTB: 'People's reaction to it will vary ... but there has been no formulated response.' Shegog then quotes the Bishop of Newcastle, Rt Revd Alec Graham, who chairs the Church of England's Doctrine Commission, which reported on the Holy Spirit in 1991:

'There has been a history of spiritual manifestations in every century since the New Testament. It is very appropriate that these should be received in a low-key manner, not sensationalised ... A lot of people have particular revelations in their prayers, and so it is not entirely surprising if these things are corporate from time to time. One has to ask the traditional questions: Do they build up the Church? Do they show the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace and all that? Are they edifying and upbuilding, or selfish and destructive? By their fruits shall ye know them.'<sup>190</sup>

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September 1994** – In the October issue of *Evangelical Times*, Alan Morrison's Diakrisis organisation advertises an audio tape he has produced on comparisons between the handling of physical manifestations during the Great Awakenings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and their treatment by proponents of TTB. The tapes expand the arguments presented in Morrison's previously published Diakrisis pamphlet, *We All Fall Down* (←), and his soon-to-be issued critique, *Falling for the Lie* (→ see next entry).

**Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September 1994** – The *Evangelical Times* prints extracts from Rev Alan Morrison's new critique of TTB. Entitled *Falling for the Lie*, this is a follow-up to his widely-distributed leaflet, *We All Fall Down*, published in late June/early July (←). Continuing in the combative vein of the earlier paper, Morrison attacks TTB for its 'frivolity', its misappropriation of 'drunkenness' imagery in Acts 2 and Ephesians 5:18, its likeness to occult ritualism, and its 'deceptive' parallels with historic revivals:

---

<sup>190</sup> Moreton, Colin, "'Restoring the Intimacy with God We Cried Out For'", *Church Times*, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1994, p.7.

'...when any phenomena occurred in the revivals of earlier eras – such as the Evangelical Awakenings in the UK and the US in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – they always took place as a result of powerful preaching of the cross from the Bible, an overwhelming sense of one's foulness in the face of an infinitely holy God, the shocking realisation of the impending reality of eternal punishment in hell, and a desperate desire to be free from the scorching blaze of God's wrath. In genuine revivals, any 'falling down' which occurred was the result of a sense of horror at one's sin and grief at the offence caused to an omnipotent God – certainly not an experience one would want to be repeated. In complete contrast to this, the current phenomena that we are seeing in churches today are completely unconnected to any of these contexts and are, at best, the outworkings of a childish and hysterical mimicry; at worst, they are the result of something far more sinister.'

Morrison concludes that those who are promoting TTB are siding with a 'false church' which is threatening the true body of believers through its emphasis on 'personal revelations, fashionable ideas, and subjective experiences'.<sup>191</sup> In today's edition of *Evangelicals Now*, Morrison's Diakrisis ministry also markets a new 2-hour taped talk he has done entitled 'The Hallmarks of Genuine Revival; How These Phenomena Were Handled in the Great Awakenings; The True Origins of the 'Toronto Blessing'.

On this day also, the October edition of *Alpha* magazine carries an article by Gerald Coates in which he defends TTB against 'the Pharisees' who have begun to attack it. In stark contrast to Morrison, Coates draws a number of positive parallels with previous revivals, from the Wesley-Whitefield movement of the 1730s and 40s, through David Brainerd's remarkable work among the Delaware Indians in 1745-6, to the Ulster revival of 1859. He also enlists Martyn Lloyd-Jones for support, quoting his observation that 'it comes near to being the rule that in revival phenomena begin to manifest themselves' – an observation which defines such phenomena as including fainting, falling to the ground, physical convulsions and trances. In conclusion, Coates issues a dramatic challenge: 'should we be privileged, as I believe we could be, to live through a time of sustained revival, we need to put this moment into perspective. It will shape our eternal destiny.'<sup>192</sup>

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October 1994** – In the charismatic *Renewal* magazine, Wallace Boulton interviews R.T. Kendall, the Reformed minister of London's Westminster Chapel, and successor to Martyn Lloyd-Jones (←). Although Kendall has for some time been promoting co-operation between conservative evangelicals and charismatics, he admits to deep initial scepticism about TTB: "If you had put me on a lie detector when I first heard about it, and asked me if I thought this was of God, I would have said no." Despite this, he now tells Boulton that he has since had to make a "public climbdown". Kendall explains his reasons:

"I saw one of my closest friends, who wasn't all that open to it, fall flat on his face for 10 or 15 minutes when he was prayed for in my vestry. The man who prayed for my friend had come to pray for me, which he did. But my friend said he would allow himself to be prayed for, not expecting anything to happen. He

<sup>191</sup> Morrison, Alan, 'Falling for the Lie (Extracts)', *Evangelical Times*, October 1994, p.15.

<sup>192</sup> Coates, Gerald, 'Revival and the Status Quo', *Alpha*, October 1994, pp.8-9.

had only heard of Toronto that morning from me. He was the one who fell flat on the floor, not me. That impressed me."

Kendall recalls that the next day he had lunch with HTB warden Ken Costa (←), and became convinced by Costa's testimony that TTB "had to be of God". This has led him, he says, to do something he "never thought" he would have to do: "I have publicly affirmed what is happening at Holy Trinity, Brompton." Having given this endorsement from the pulpit of Westminster Chapel, Kendall tells how he then invited Sandy Millar and other HTB staff to minister to his family, his deacons and their wives: "My wife joined us as they were praying for me. After about two minutes she was on the floor. I had never seen such a radiant smile on her face. She wept, she laughed, and she said to me later that if this was what being slain in the Spirit was, she could see why people wanted it." Kendall himself was less immediately touched, but goes on in the interview to describe how, in time, he was also strongly affected: "...my mind became so relaxed. The nearest I can think of to describe it was when I had sodium penathol years ago when I had major surgery. Yet I wasn't unconscious. I felt myself falling forward ... For me it was so humbling. I think God was wanting to teach me to be humbled, to look stupid and to be a fool. There I was on the floor in front of all my deacons and their wives."<sup>193</sup>

In the same issue of *Renewal*, Gerald Coates, 'with help from Bryn Jones, Sandy Millar, David Pytches and Vineyard USA', publishes a 750-word set of Guidelines on how to minister in TTB. [*The full text of these Guidelines is published here in Appendix ...*] The joint document begins by defining four key principles:

- Make a swift response to the work of the Spirit, even if it means changing structures, programmes and agendas.
- Respond with humility and faith (cf. Matt. 7:9-10).
- Take responsibility for what is happening, giving due account of what is occurring.
- Ensure proper oversight and administration of what is going on, especially with regard to fostering an evangelistic, rather than an introspective, ethos.

The Guidelines then more specifically warn against developing 'a ministry of manifestations', and urge 'expectancy' rather than 'hype'. Children are encouraged to take part in meetings on the basis that most 'believe this to be a little like heaven and are much more responsive than some adults'. It is deemed acceptable to arrange special 'catchers' for those who fall over, and to create floor space in advance for the same purpose, 'even if it means moving chairs'. Extended cross-gender ministering is discouraged, however, as is 'manipulation' of the Holy Spirit through such activities as 'pushing people over, or saying things that amount to triumphalism or pure fantasy'.

A good deal of the text is devoted to handling criticism. Holding that 'there has never been a move of God which hasn't faced serious opposition', the authors go on to acknowledge that when journalists or other Christians go on the attack, 'it is easy to be

---

<sup>193</sup> Boulton, Wallace, 'Humbled by the Holy Spirit', *Renewal*, October 1994, p.13.

reactionary, cynical, dismissive or superior'. Even so, they say, it is important to 'remain calm, rational and reasonable', and 'to disagree without being disagreeable'.<sup>194</sup>

In its October–November issue, *Aware* magazine carries an interview with HTB Communications Director Mark Elson–Dew, in which he reflects on the dramatic changes in the Knightsbridge church over the past few months: "For years, at the end of services, we've been inviting the Holy Spirit to come – and he has – though not necessarily in a way that would be obvious! What's happening now is new in the sense that you can't miss it!" Elson–Dew emphasises that the church's commitment to sound teaching is still paramount, but notes that "the programme's gone out of the window! Instead of preaching on the subjects planned – perfectly good and important subjects, by the way – we're deciding week by week what needs to happen next." Elson–Dew confirms that HTB's close relationship with John Wimber and the Vineyard network, which goes back to the early 1980s, meant that to some extent a way had already been smoothed for reception of the Blessing. He also stresses that HTB is hardly the only church to have been affected. Even so, he tries to explain why it, above all other congregations in Britain, has become synonymous with 'Toronto': '... we're a large Anglican church, and the press – including the national press – is known to me, and to the church. We're seen as a large church, so people watch what we do in a way that other churches aren't watched.'<sup>195</sup>

The weekly *Christian Herald* carries prayer leader Brian Mills' latest reflections on TTB. He reports that Kensington Temple, an Elim Pentecostal fellowship and 'Britain's largest church', cancelled all 'normal' activities during the month of September 'in order to seek God'. He also notes that his own church 'put on a regular, mid-week meeting during August and found an unprecedented 200 plus turning up to seek God and to worship him'. Despite this, Mills refrains from designating TTB as a 'revival' on the basis that it has yet to develop a sufficiently profound or thoroughgoing dynamic of repentance, holiness and prayer.<sup>196</sup>

*Christian Herald* also reports today on a new critique of TTB which has just been published by a Derbyshire housewife, Tricia Tillin. Distributed by Banner Ministries, Tillin's study, *Looking Beyond Toronto: The Source and Goal of Pentecost*, alleges that TTB is dangerously rooted in the 'heretical' Canadian 'Latter Rain' movement (← cf. December 1988). Tillin goes on to echo criticisms already levelled by Alan Morrison and others (←) as she questions the 'pilgrimage' mentality of the many who have flocked to Toronto, the shrine-like status of TAV, the apparently coercive nature of ministry offered, the prevention of preaching by laughter, and the abandonment of worshippers to physical sensations which might 'unwittingly fulfil the conditions of demonic activity'. With respect to the epicletic character of much TB prayer, she adds 'There is no warrant for calling upon the Holy Spirit or praying to Him; our relationship is with the Father in Christ Jesus.'<sup>197</sup> Significantly, Dr Andrew Walker, a scholar of the charismatic movement who voiced tentative concerns about TTB in *Christian Herald* on

<sup>194</sup> Coates, Gerald et al, 'What Should Leaders Do When the Holy Spirit Comes?', *Renewal*, October 1994, pp.14-15.

<sup>195</sup> 'We're Just Going to Keep on Going', *Aware*, October–November 1994, pp.16-17.

<sup>196</sup> Mills, Brian, 'Revival – the Missing Elements!', *Christian Herald*, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1994, p.7.

<sup>197</sup> 'Toronto: Links with 'False Movements' Alleged', *Christian Herald*, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1994.

16<sup>th</sup> July (←), is now quoted as saying that while some of Tillin's analysis is speculative, "it is at least 70% accurate".

Around this time, the anti-cult organisation Reachout Trust publishes its Winter newsletter. Director Doug Harris reports that in the past few months he has received 'a full postbag concerning the Toronto Blessing, and that if Reachout were to believe everything they have read they would by now be 'schizophrenic':

The morning post brings a clear presentation that everything is of the Devil. The next post shows equally clearly that this is of God. This situation is a cameo of the division and confusion that are found within the Church in Britain at this time. Reading many of the articles received, speaking to people involved and observing various activities I feel it's clear that there is a mixture manifesting itself in the country. Mixture can be detected by the fact that sometimes God has clearly moved and changed the lives of his people. Alternatively there have been manifestations that do not bring any glory to God at all either at the time or in the life of the person afterwards. In summary we feel that there is both a genuine move of God and a counterfeit. The copy has emerged where the flesh has been stirred up and is manifested instead of the Holy Spirit of God. Of course, this leads to a dilemma where we have to decide which is genuine and which is not. This is not just a useless mental exercise because in all our work we need to be able to discern what is truly of God.<sup>198</sup>

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1994** – The *Sunday Telegraph*, prints an interview with John Wimber, conducted by Paul Goodman. Touring Britain to observe and encourage churches involved in TTB, Wimber appears more upbeat about the new movement than in previous interviews (←). He tells Goodman, "This recent happening ... is as intense as anything we've seen, but much more pervasive and rapid. I see it as a quickening – an awakening in the heart of the Church." Although careful not to claim undue credit for what has been happening, Wimber recalls that whilst recovering from cancer in late 1993, God communicated to him that 'a season of new beginnings was about to start', which his Vineyard colleagues understood to be 'a refreshing'. Describing how the Holy Spirit fell 'sovereignly and powerfully' on his own congregation at Anaheim on 16th January (←), Wimber reflects that the rapid spread of the movement since then owes a great deal to 'the network of relationships' he and other Vineyard leaders have built up over '16 years on the road'.

Wimber is clear that the TTB cannot yet be defined as revival, but is hopeful that it might be 'the initiation of what can become a revival.' A key condition of this, he concludes, would be 'a *deepening* ...a heartfelt and wholesale repentance in the church'.<sup>199</sup>

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 1994** – The *Church of England Newspaper* reports that Gerald Coates' Pioneer network has had such great success with its Toronto-oriented 'Event in a Tent' meetings in Cobham, Surrey, that they have extended the run until Christmas. A total of more than 2,500 are said to have attended, with 850 present on a single night

<sup>198</sup> 'Toronto Blessing', *A Time for Discernment*, Winter 1994, p.2.

<sup>199</sup> Goodman, Paul, 'The Evangelist Who Is Refreshing Religion', *Sunday Telegraph*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1994, p.22.

for a visit by John Wimber (←). Wimber himself is said to have been 'puzzled' by the manifestations, but is quoted as taking a relatively neutral, matter-of-fact line: "I don't see much difference between [them] and soccer fans making all the strange and exotic noises they make when they get excited", he says; "Nor do I see [them] as something that ought to be endorsed, embraced, affirmed or accepted by the Church." His overriding hope is that TTB will lead to "a major revitalisation of the Church", with hundreds of thousands converted.

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October** – TAV hosts a special four-day conference for church leaders, designed to help the, 'experience the fire of God and then take it home'. Speakers include John Arnott, Randy Clark, William DeArtega, Wes Campbell, Jeremy Sinnott, David Ruis, Richard Riss and Guy Chevreau.

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October 1994** – London publisher Marshall Pickering launch TAV pastor Guy Chevreau's new book *Catch the Fire*. This has been rush-printed and enjoys the distinction of being the first title from a mainline Christian publisher about the TTB. Many others will soon follow (→).

Written as it is by an 'insider', *Catch the Fire* is predictably positive about TTB. It begins with an account of the 'pre-history' of the Blessing, focussing particularly on the influences which shaped John and Carol Arnott's ministry (←). It then moves on to offer a biblical apologetic for the new movement. Falling to the ground, says Chevreau, finds precedents in the spiritual experiences of Abraham, King Saul, Ezekiel, and the apostles Paul and John (Gen.15:12; 1 Sam. 19:24; Ezek. 3:23; Acts 9:4; Rev. 1:17).<sup>200</sup> While Chevreau accepts that none of these examples can necessarily be treated as prescriptions for responding to God today, he argues that Daniel's flat-out, trembling trance (Dan. 10:4ff.) constitutes 'probably the fullest description detailed in the Scriptures, of 'God showing up', a favourite Vineyard expression'.<sup>201</sup> Holy laughter is set in the context of the 'unfettered enthusiasm and joy' of the early church, as recorded in texts like Acts 2:46, Philippians 4:4 and 1 Peter 1: 6,8.<sup>202</sup> Citing James Dunn and Johannes Weiss on the diverse nature of spiritual experience in the Christian communities of the New Testament period, Chevreau defends TTB as an outworking of this diversity in the present day. While it might seem 'messy' to some, he argues that such apparent messiness represents more often than not a challenge to expand our 'operative theologies' and re-examine the 'status quo' of tradition.<sup>203</sup> In the final major section of the book, Chevreau draws extended parallels with the experience and reflection of Jonathan Edwards, on whom he has been conducting post-graduate research. Chevreau argues that appreciation of Edwards' work reveals TTB to be a reiteration of much of what happened in the Great Awakening, rather than an unprecedented deviation from evangelical faith and experience.<sup>204</sup>

Chevreau's biblical interpretations are paralleled in a piece published today by Gerald Coates in November's *Alpha*. Under the headline "'Toronto' and Scripture", Coates asserts that 'there is plenty of biblical material covering these manifestations of the Holy Spirit

<sup>200</sup> Chevreau, Guy, *Catch the Fire*, pp.45-6.

<sup>201</sup> Chevreau, Guy, *Catch the Fire*, pp.46-7

<sup>202</sup> Chevreau, Guy, *Catch the Fire*, p.61.

<sup>203</sup> Chevreau, Guy, *Catch the Fire*, pp.58-69.

<sup>204</sup> Chevreau, Guy, *Catch the Fire*, pp.70-144.



and reactions to his presence.' Insisting that 'the bible is not a text book but a test book', he stresses that 'between those things [God] specifically approves of, and others he specifically disapproves of, we are given liberty to develop a wide range of activities broadly to reflect things he approves of.' The same liberty, says Coates, applies to 'manifestations of the Holy Spirit's presence'. Hence trembling or shaking is lent 'more than sufficient evidence and endorsement' by its mention in Psalms 2:11 and 119:20, and by Paul's reference to it in 1 Cor. 2:3 and Phil. 2:12. Its periodic development into a loss of bodily strength is then related to the effects wrought by divine visitations in Ex. 19:16, Dan 10:11 and Acts 10:10. Weeping can be justified, according to Coates, from texts such as Ez. 10:1, Neh. 8:9, Jer. 31:9 and Joel 2:12. Drunk-like states and 'trances' are validated by the appearance of Hannah at 1 Sam. 1:13, and by Luke's Pentecost narrative at Acts 2:13 and 15. The holy laughter associated with the Blessing finds precursors, writes Coates, in Pss. 2:4, 37:13 and 126:1-3. It is also a natural corollary of the 'overflowing joy' of 2 Cor. 7:4 and the 'inexpressible joy' of 1 Pet. 1:8.

While Alan Morrison has already criticised this sort of exegesis in his leaflets *We All Fall Down* and *Falling for the Lie*, (←), it is also questioned around this time by David Forbes, in the November/December issue of *Prophecy Today*. Echoing various sceptical correspondents to the Christian weeklies, such as Tony Haynes in the *Baptist Times*<sup>205</sup>, and Geoff Chapman in *Christian Herald*,<sup>206</sup> Forbes argues that the sometimes dramatic physical manifestations described in Scripture occur spontaneously in reaction to preaching of the gospel and deep conviction of sin, and as such, bear little connection to 'what is currently happening to Christians when a time of ministry is scheduled specifically so that the manifestations might appear'. Forbes' doubts are reinforced by his unease at the provenance of the Blessing, which he sees stemming in part from the controversial Pentecostal Latter Rain movement of the late 1940s (see 1<sup>st</sup> October ←).

At this juncture, too, the leading American Evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* reviews the development of TTB. Noting that the Blessing's advocates range 'from dispensationalists to Presbyterians to Roman Catholics', it reports that 'Ontarian exports of spiritual outpouring' have impacted churches in 'Atlanta, Anaheim, Saint Louis, several Canadian sites, Cambodia, and Albania'. Moreover, so many Britons, it says, are now flocking to TAV that 'direct flights from London to Toronto are sometimes sold out for days'. John Wimber is quoted: "Nearly everything we've seen", he suggests, "falling, weeping, laughing, shaking – has been seen before, not only in our own memory, but in revivals all over the world". *CT* has also spoken to John Stackhouse, Associate Professor of Modern Christianity at the University of Manitoba. He is generally approving: "It seems to me", he says, "that people are enthusiastic about Jesus, are happy to be Christians, and there doesn't seem to be an oversupply of that in North American Christianity today. If you don't like the idea of holy laughter that breaks out in a church service, then what kind of laughter do you believe in?"

Canadian Vineyard member John White, a psychologist who has written several best-selling books about sexual mores, and who in 1988 published a major apologetic for John Wimber's 'signs and wonders' ministry called *When the Spirit Comes with Power*,<sup>207</sup>

<sup>205</sup> 'Biblical Falling Was in Abject Terror', *Baptist Times* October 13<sup>th</sup> 1994, p.12

<sup>206</sup> 'Lewis on 'Toronto'', *Christian Herald*, October 26<sup>th</sup> 1994, p.15.

<sup>207</sup> White, John, *When the Spirit Comes with Power: Signs and Wonders among God's People*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992 (originally published 1988).

is depicted in the same article as "enthusiastic yet cautious". His main concern is the potential for self-indulgence: "Certainly one of the by-products of Toronto is extreme pride in some at having had *the* experience." The tendency of some people to focus on "my physical state, how I'm making it" is liable to detract, says White, from "the sanctifying grace of God and our declared righteousness". John Arnott himself appears to concur with this warning as he tells *CT*, "I'm always on the lookout for someone who would have a 'we-have-it-and-you-don't attitude'".

The *CT* piece concludes by reporting that a new interdenominational group has formed in Toronto as a result of events at the Airport Vineyard. Even so, Peter Moore, Rector of downtown Toronto's Little Trinity Anglican Church, observes that "there is more talk about the Airport Vineyard in England than here."<sup>208</sup>

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 1994** – Having flown to Britain for a brief visit, John Arnott speaks to a packed leaders' conference hosted by Sunderland Christian Centre (←). *Joy* magazine journalist Charles Gardner will later describe the scenes following Arnott's address as 'extraordinary'. All over the auditorium, 'people were spontaneously breaking out into bursts of rip-roaring laughter, which appeared to come on them in waves, rising and receding ... There were shouts, shrieks, women prophesying, people shaking, some tearful and other jerking or flailing their arms about like a windmill ... Hundreds, meanwhile, were falling own after prayer until the floor was virtually covered with bodies.'<sup>209</sup>

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1994** - Continuing his prolific output on TTB, *Alpha* Editor Dave Roberts warns in the November issue of his magazine against various forms of 'intolerance and impatience' which appear to be arising in relation to the new movement. Specifically, he cites four cardinal faults:

- Snap judgements derived from wariness about the past record of key participants. 'Dismissing something on the basis of old history', says Roberts, 'makes no allowance for change and process [sic] ... Would we leave the Corinthian church, the wild men of their day, to their heretical devices, or like Paul, acknowledge their fervour and seek to bring gentle reproof.
- Unresearched judgements, arrived at through misconstrual or distortion of primary sources
- Unrighteous judgements, which proceed without recourse to those vilified and refuse to engage pastorally with them
- Legalistic and illogical judgements predicated on 'theological perfectionism' and 'guilt by association'

Roberts also contributes a distinctly personal reflection of TTB, citing his interwoven experiences in 'the Reformed heartlands of Leicester' and the New Church movement as formative in his current desire to 'bless what God is blessing and ... root out that which

<sup>208</sup> 'Is Laughing for the Lord Holy?', *Christianity Today*, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1994, p.78-9.

<sup>209</sup> Gardner, Charles, 'Tears of *Joy* in Sunderland', *Joy*, January 1995, pp.26-7.

undermines and destroys'. This 'middle line' is, however, something which Roberts is finding it increasingly difficult to sustain: 'It is no easy task', he reflects, 'being open, thoughtful, biblical, spiritually sensitive, open to the supernatural and God's disruption of or normal patterns, all at the same time.'<sup>210</sup>

The news pages of *Alpha* today also report that Gerald Coates' Cobham-based Pioneer People network met every night for a fortnight the latter part of September, with over 5,500 attending. What is more, Sunderland Christian Centre 'has met every night except Mondays since mid-August ... with crowds in excess of 600 attending every night, and as many as 30-50% being newcomers.'<sup>211</sup> In addition, Kensington Temple has recently been seeing 'over 800 a night pack the church'. 'KT' Pastor Colin Dye is quoted as commending TTB as something which can 'lead us closer to the Lord', and in an article for the coming month's *Direction* magazine, he expands on this as he draws parallels with Isaiah 35. Just as Israel is promised revival after a period of spiritual dryness, so Dye sees the Blessing as an opportunity to reverse the systematic removal of 'God and His values from almost every level of society' over 'the past 50 years'.<sup>212</sup>

On a busy day for coverage of TTB, *The Church of England Newspaper* carries a profile of TAV's Guy Chevreau, who is in Britain to promote his book, *Catch the Fire* (← see 24<sup>th</sup> October). In the profile, Andrew Carey explains that Chevreau is a Baptist pastor, but that he was driven out of his last church in Oakville, Ontario, because of 'opposition to his commitment to the unchurched': "I experienced open accusation, malice and gross distortion", says Chevreau. "I was accused of spending too much of my time in frontline evangelism." Despite this background, Chevreau sees no reason why TTB should be viewed as intrinsically divisive. To those who are wary of the new movement, he says, "Get your very legitimate questions answered as best you can. Figure out what it is you expect to happen. Don't target any particular manifestation – just show up. Allow God to bless you."

Disarmingly, Chevreau admits that TTB may be no more than a fad. But, he quickly adds, there may be another possibility: "This may be building on the renewal of worship, on the healing ministries that have arisen in recent years. If that's true, we're trying not to screw it up." Like many others at the forefront of the Blessing, he is cautious about labelling it a revival at this stage: "If what you mean by revival is mass conversions of whole towns, we're not seeing that ... yet. At the moment it is the revival of churches. Many Christians have had a hard time living out their faith. They have had a hard dry time spiritually. The Toronto blessing brings a new vibrancy."<sup>213</sup>

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October 1994** – The Territorial Commander of the Salvation Army in Britain writes on TTB in his regular column for *The Salvationist*. He begins by advocating 'the Gamaliel principle' as derived from Acts 5:38: 'If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought, but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it'. This fruits-based test leads him in turn to write that in his view 'a human or diabolical origin could not explain the positive spiritual benefits that occur'. Urging his readers to talk to those

<sup>210</sup> Roberts, Dave, 'Renewal: What God Desires', *Alpha*, November 1994, pp.2-5.

<sup>211</sup> 'Churches Meet Nightly', *Alpha*, November 1994.

<sup>212</sup> Dye, Colin, 'After the Rain', *Direction*, November 1994.

<sup>213</sup> Carey, Andrew, 'The Toronto Experience: Blessing or Baloney?', *Church of England Newspaper*, 28<sup>th</sup> October 1994, p.13.

who have experienced the Blessing, he notes that such people 'are certain that God's Holy Spirit has come to hem, even though they are often mystified as to why they and not the person next to them have been singled out'. What most worries the Commander about the new movement is not so much pneumatological as ecclesiological: his chief concern, he writes, 'is about the danger of division and diversion'. As he explains it, 'I would not want to embrace anything that divides the Army. Neither can there be any place for elite spiritual cliques ... God is the Spirit of unity. I cannot countenance anything that diverts this Army of ours – raised up by God for a world-wide mission to the unconverted – from its basic purpose.' Even so, the Commander is more than willing to trace parallels between the manifestations associated with TTB and events reported by the renowned Victorian Salvationist Bramwell Booth in his book *Echoes and Memories*. Booth is recalled as describing a prayer meeting at which 'here and there among the audience people would be observed to fall to the ground'. In Harold Begbie's classic biography of Army founder William Booth, Bramwell is also quoted as reporting that during meetings in London led by his father, 'men and women would suddenly fall upon the ground, and remain in a swoon or trance for many hours, rising at last so transformed by joy but that they could do nothing but shout and sing in an ecstasy of bliss.'<sup>214</sup>

Also published today, the generally pro-TTB *Renewal* magazine prints a report from St James', Bream, an Anglican church in rural Gloucestershire. During the past five weeks, writes Helen Terry, the vicar Alistair Kendall and his congregation has seen 'a massive change of scale with anything up to 40 being affected simultaneously' by the distinctive manifestations of the new movement. Toronto-style ministry is now being offered at every service, and has attracted the attention of both local and national media. Elsewhere in the same magazine, Mike Breen, the new rector of St. Thomas Church, Crookes, Sheffield, finds that biblical light is shed on the Blessing by Ezekiel's vision of a rising river flowing through the Jerusalem Temple and eastwards into the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47:1-12). 'To follow the renewing life of God's Spirit', writes Breen, 'means getting into deeper and deeper water until our feet are off the bottom and he is fully in control'. This text will soon become a favourite reference-point for those teaching on the significance of TTB (cf. 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1994; 10<sup>th</sup> July 1995→).<sup>215</sup>

In the same issue of *Renewal*, Jane Grayshon, a popular author best known for her *Confessions of a Vicar's Wife*, writes of the need for sensitivity towards those who cannot or do not feel able to participate in Toronto-style experiences.<sup>216</sup>

On a much harsher note, the November edition of *Evangelical Times* today launches another damning blast against TTB, this time in its editorial column. Identifying the proponents of the new movement as 'impostors' who have 'stolen the clothes, the language and the structures of the old evangelical Christianity', the article goes on to suggest sardonically that such people should be re-named 'Wavangelicals', on the basis that they are 'pseudo-evangelicals who look for waves – new waves, third, fourth and fifth waves, arm waves, airwaves and waves of emotion'. The piece concludes by accusing these 'Wavangelicals' of presenting 'a false Christ to the unbelieving world', after the manner of the deceivers mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:24.

<sup>214</sup> Showers are 'Strong Meat', *Salvationist*, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1994.

<sup>215</sup> Breen, Mike, 'Flow, River, Flow', *Renewal*, November 1994, pp.18-21.

<sup>216</sup> Grayshon, Jane, 'What About Those Who Feel Left Out?' *Renewal*, November 1994, pp.22-3

Seeking a somewhat more even-handed approach, the new edition of *Evangelicals Now* carries two features, one expressing a generally positive view of TTb and the other a strongly critical assessment. The first takes the form of an interview with Epsom Downs Baptist minister Roger Welch, who recounts that after feeling increasingly tired out by church activities, he went, 'almost in desperation', to the after-service meetings which Queen's Road Baptist Church had begun to hold in May (←). He then travelled to TAV and came back sure that 'time of refreshing' was at hand. While wary of some of the names associated with the early formation of the Blessing, and while 'neutral' on the phenomena after what he sees is the model presented by Jonathan Edwards (←), Welch nonetheless sees 'greater depth' coming to the movement, 'especially in repentance, obedience and righteousness'. All this, he says, 'stirs my heart, my mind and my spirit to go on seeking God for a mighty outpouring of his Spirit in revival that will touch us all'.<sup>217</sup>

By contrast, the second article sees in the origins of TTb, and particularly in its links with the Word of Faith movement (←), the operation 'not ... of the Holy Spirit, but some other spirit'. The piece is written by Stephen Sizer, Vicar of St. John's Church, near Guildford in Surrey. [Sizer's updated reflections on Toronto appear in Part II of this book]. Rehearsing the development of TTb through Rodney Howard-Browne and Benny Hinn to the Vineyard (←), Sizer sees this as a 'false' and 'heretical' lineage which is enough, in itself, to condemn the Blessing as something which might well 'open ... believers to demonic deception'.<sup>218</sup>

Alongside the Welch and Sizer features, the letters page of *Evangelicals Now* sees Evangelical Alliance UK Director Joel Edwards respond to N. Murray of Woodford Green. Mr Murray suggested in the October issue of *EN* that the London Leaders meeting convened by Edwards and CARE Director Lyndon Bowring on 6<sup>th</sup> July (←) had, by its inclusion of Toronto-style ministry, confirmed a 'charismatic take-over' of the Alliance. Edwards writes that those who planned the meeting were seeking to recognise 'the significant impact that the 'Toronto Blessing' is having on many churches in the Capital'. He continues:

After careful reflection we felt it appropriate to make room during the latter part of the meeting for leaders who felt comfortable to participate in a time of ministry, as well as those who were not fully persuaded but who wished to take part.

Evangelicals should make every effort to measure all spiritual phenomena by biblical criteria. The devotional hallmarks of holiness, prayer and witness provide reliable indicators of authentic moves of God. I respect the accounts of those who testify to a deeper level of commitment and joy as a result of their experience. But equally I would urge them to avoid excessive behaviour which may discredit the gospel or distance those who genuinely seek an encounter with God. Indiscriminate enthusiasm can alienate, but so can condemnatory reactions which dismiss all unusual events out of hand.

<sup>217</sup> 'Positively Toronto', *Evangelicals Now*, November 1994, p.8.

<sup>218</sup> Sizer, Stephen, 'Toronto – Cautions', *Evangelicals Now*, November 1994, p.9.

Mr Murray asks about the danger of a charismatic 'take-over' of the Evangelical Alliance. The Alliance remains committed to reflecting the broad spectrum of its membership across its varied ministry. The noticeable presence of charismatic streams within EA should not detract from this on-going commitment. Phenomenon [sic] like the 'Toronto Blessing' present a potential cause of division. They should not eclipse the goal of evangelical unity across denominational and theological boundaries.<sup>219</sup>

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November** – Kingsway publish *Alpha* editor Dave Roberts' book, *The Toronto Blessing*. Collecting and supplementing his numerous articles of the past few months (←), the book takes a largely supportive view of the new movement, but suggests that it still has some way to go before it can genuinely be compared to the socially-transformative evangelical revivals of the past.

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 1994** – Eagle publish journalist Mike Fearon's 258-page survey of TTb. Entitled *A Breath of Fresh Air*, this is based substantially on interviews with a wide spread of evangelical Christian leaders, ranging from keen Toronto advocates like Gerald Coates, Sandy Millar and David Pytches, through more cautious observers like Andrew Walker, Tom Smail and Dave Tomlinson. While Fearon generally lets his interviewees speak for themselves, it is not hard to detect more sympathy for those who are 'risking' involvement with TTb, than with those who have already dismissed it out of hand. Indeed, he describes himself as 'personally convinced' that TTb is authentically of God, even while being 'deeply suspicious of some of the teaching associated with it'. 'Perhaps', he concludes 'in the next century, people will re-read these words from the vantage-point of a major Awakening, and wonder with amusement why so many Christian leaders were so cautious at the beginning of a revival!'<sup>220</sup>

Also published this week, and promoted in the Christian press today, is Pioneer People leader Patrick Dixon's analysis of the Blessing. Entitled *Signs of Revival*, it is more comprehensive than the books written by Chevreau, Roberts or Fearon (←), containing as it does a detailed history of the present movement, and extensive comparison of it with historic revivals and outpourings of 'emotional faith'.<sup>221</sup> Dixon highlights the 'Everton revival' presided over by John Wesley, the Ulster revival of 1859, the London meetings addressed by William Booth around 1878 and the proto-Pentecostal Azusa Street meetings of 1906 (←) as times when intense physical manifestations of spiritual activity were numerous, with falling, shaking laughter, roaring and convulsions similar in appearance to those now associated with TTb.

Most significantly and distinctively, however, Dixon's professional work as a medical doctor prompts him to assess the new movement in terms of 'altered states of consciousness' or 'ASCs'. Rejecting the suggestion made by Alan Morrison and others that the Blessing mediates mass hysteria, mesmerism and auto-suggestion (←), Dixon defines ASCs within an essentially neutral category of human experience – one which may be quite compatible with biblical faith and authentic theological anthropology. ASCs, says Dixon, can help to explain Isaiah's vivid vision in Isa. 6, Peter's trance in Acts 10, Paul's description of one caught up into 'the third heaven' in 2 Cor. 12:2, and the

<sup>219</sup> Edwards, Joel, 'EA Charismatic Take-over?', *Evangelicals Now*, November 1994, p.17.

<sup>220</sup> Fearon, *A Breath of Fresh Air*, Guildford: Eagle, 1994, p.253.

<sup>221</sup> Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994

revelations given to St John the Divine. They are marked by shifts in patterns of thinking, changed notions of time, some relinquishing of control, fresh emotional expression, new body image perceptions, a sense of the ineffable and feelings of rejuvenation. None of these, argues Dixon, are necessarily suspect from a Christian point of view, although ASCs can certainly also predispose people to more dubious conditions of hypersuggestibility. In the end, however, he argues that Christians not only voluntarily open themselves to ASCs through special disciplines like fasting, but may also experience ASCs in the course of relatively routine Christian activities:

Many Christians would agree that all ASCs are likely to open doors, but the question is, open them to what? An ASC in the middle of a séance or during a voodoo ceremony could be highly dangerous. However, an ASC during an act of Christian worship could be a helpful and healing experience which is life changing and long lasting in its beneficial effect on body, mind and spirit. Some may find this whole discussion uncomfortable, denying that they have ever had an ASC. But who has not knelt at the communion rail and felt something outside themselves? Who has not sat in a place like King's College, Cambridge and not been transported to a sublime height with the soaring ethereal notes of the choir? Who has not for a moment imagined they have caught a glimpse of heavenly glory itself in a fading sunset, or been aware of the presence of God in the instant between sleep and wakefulness?<sup>222</sup>

Dixon summarises his book in an article for *The Church of England Newspaper*, which also generates a front page story from his warning that those affected by TTB should not drive cars while under its influence.<sup>223</sup> This story is repeated in tomorrow's *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>224</sup>

[Patrick Dixon's updated reflections on TTB are presented in Section II of this book].

In the same issue of *CEN*, Mike Fearon's interview with Graham Cray is extracted from *A Breath of Fresh Air* (←), with new, unpublished material added. Cray is now Principal of the evangelical Anglican theological college Ridley Hall, Cambridge, but was previously Vicar of St. Michael le Belfrey, York – the Anglican church from which David Watson did so much to promote charismatic renewal in the 1970s. Cray readily admits to having experienced Toronto-style manifestations at the August New Wine festival (←): "I found myself swaying", he recalls, "and I don't remember starting". After a while I began to laugh from the depths of my gut." All the same, Cray emphasises that he never felt that his sense of self-control was being overridden: "I always felt that what was happening had not been initiated by myself, and that I could have stopped it had I wished, but I could find no reason to stop. There was a deep sense of personal liberation." Subsequently, Cray says, tears have also followed as he has been led into a deeper understanding of the world's brokenness. He is well aware of the potential of TTB to fall prey to the power of suggestion, but, he adds, "even taking that as the worst-case scenario, what is the difference between someone saying, "Come, Holy Spirit" and it actually happening, and someone using the power of suggestion? The Spirit of God has

<sup>222</sup> Dixon, Patrick, *Signs of Revival*, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1994, p.227.

<sup>223</sup> Dixon, Patrick, 'Revival: The Church' Secret Service', *Church of England Newspaper*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1994, p.7; 'Toronto' Drivers Warned', *Church of England Newspaper*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1994, p.1.

<sup>224</sup> Thompson, Damian, 'The Blessed Shall Not Drive Cars', *Daily Telegraph*, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1994.

to come along the same path. There's such a fine line. I think "it can be of God" even if the people up the front are not very wise."

During the course of the interview, Fearon notes that beyond his own assessment that 2,000 churches have now experienced TTb, Gerald Coates has recently put the figure closer to 4,000.<sup>225</sup>

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November 1994** – John Horner reviews Guy Chevreau's *Catch the Fire* in the *Methodist Recorder*. Although he praises Chevreau for making 'valuable points' about revival phenomena, the personal dynamics of renewal and the possible relation of the manifestations to God's sovereignty, Horner remains suspicious: 'It seems to me', he concludes, 'that if God wants to prove his presence in this world, he would do much better to raise up a host of latter-day Elijahs to work miracles with cruses of oil and barrels of meal in countries where people are starving, than to promote all this carrying-on in Toronto, Brompton and elsewhere.'<sup>226</sup>

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November** – The December issue of *Alpha* extracts Dave Roberts' chapter on Rodney Howard-Browne from his book *The Toronto Blessing* (←). While documenting Howard-Browne's controversial links with the WordFaith movement (←), Roberts argues that the Pentecostal evangelist has nonetheless displayed a commendable 'independence of mind' in giving short shrift to associated teachings on heavy shepherding, tongues fanaticism and extreme spiritual warfare. 'Dismissal of him as a Word of Faith extremist', is, says Roberts, 'not adequate'.<sup>227</sup>

The same issue of *Alpha* also reproduces Patrick Dixon's analysis of past revivals from *Signs of Revival* (←).<sup>228</sup>

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1994** – In a major feature for the *Daily Telegraph* Saturday magazine, Mick Brown reports on a visit to TAV's recent 'Catch the Fire' conference. Along with 2,500 others, Brown recalls having heard Randy Clark expound on TTb and having watched 'drips of laughter ...become a torrent'. Soon, recalls Brown, a ministry team 'moved among the laughing, the tearful and the merely stunned, laying on hands, causing them to fall backwards to the ground, as if struck with electric cattle prods'. After an account of the history of the Blessing to date and its possible precursors in historic revivals, Brown returns to the scene at TAV. Despite being an agnostic, Brown testifies to a startling experience of the Blessing: 'I found myself beside John Arnott', he writes, 'I didn't even see his hand coming towards me as it arced through the air and touched me gently – hardly at all – on the forehead. "And bless this one, Lord..." I could feel a palpable shock running through me, then I was falling backwards, as if my legs had been kicked away from underneath me. I hit the floor – I swear this is the truth – laughing like a drain.'<sup>229</sup>

<sup>225</sup> Fearon, Mike, 'Principal of Laughter', *Church of England Newspaper*, November 11<sup>th</sup> 1994, p.8.

<sup>226</sup> Horner, John, 'The Day I went to Brompton', *Methodist Recorder*, November 17<sup>th</sup> 1994, p.17.

<sup>227</sup> Roberts, Dave, 'Rodney Howard-Browne: The Joyful Power Evangelist', *Alpha*, December 1994, pp.5-7.

<sup>228</sup> Dixon, Patrick, 'Signs of Revival', *Alpha*, December 1994, pp.2-5.

<sup>229</sup> Brown, Mick, 'Unzipper Heaven, Lord; Ha Ha, Ho Ho, Hee Hee...', *Daily Telegraph (Magazine)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1994, pp.26-30.



Also today, Trisha Tillin reviews Chevreau, Fearon, Roberts and Dixon's books for *Christian Herald*. Concluding that they are 'in varying degrees useful and readable accounts of an emerging phenomenon', she nevertheless says that none of them offers adequate biblical and theological analysis of how to test spirits, exegete key 'Toronto' texts like Joel 2 and Ezekiel 47, assess the practice of 'calling down the Spirit', deal with biblical warnings against deception on the one hand and quenching God's work on the other, and offer pastoral advice to those hurt by what has been going on.<sup>230</sup>

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 1994** – The Canadian newspaper *Christian Week* reports that because of the extraordinary attendances at TAV, the church will soon be moving to what has been known as the Asia Trade Exchange, 'a cavernous conference and exhibition centre on Atwell Drive – still near the airport'. Respected evangelical historian George Rawlyk comments in the same article that it is intriguing that the Blessing has occurred where it has: 'certainly', he reflects, 'if you want to affect the Christian church throughout the world, you want it by an international airport.' While recognising from his professional academic perspective that very little in TTb is really new, Rawlyk still warns that 'the real danger in this whole business is if experience becomes paramount and the head isn't part of the religious experience at all.'<sup>231</sup>

On a brief tour of the UK, Rodney Howard-Browne leads a meeting tonight at the Wembley Conference Centre (→ see also 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January 1995).

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December 1994** – The Evangelical Alliance convenes a meeting of 23 key evangelical leaders at the Ibis Hotel in Euston, London, to discuss TTb. The attendees are as follows: Clive Calver and Joel Edwards, respectively General Director and UK Director of the Alliance, Dave Cave (then Convenor of ACUTE), David Abernethie (Above Bar Church, Southampton), Robert Amess (Richmond Baptist Church), Matthew Ashmolowo (Kingsway International Christian Centre, Hackney), Tony Baker (Bishop Hannington, Hove), John Butcher, Gerald Coates (Pioneer), David Enoch (a psychiatrist), Faith Forster (Ichthus), Alan Gibson (British Evangelical Council), Philip Hacking, Phil Hill, Gordon Hills (Assemblies of God), Professor Tudur Jones, R.T. Kendall (Westminster Chapel), Bryn Jones (Harvest Time), Philip Mohabir (Alliance of Asian Christians), Paul Perkin (St Mark's, Battersea Rise), Stephen Sizer (St. John's, Guildford), Derek Tidball (London Bible College) and Rob Warner (Herne Hill Baptist Church).

The meeting begins with three short talks on revival. R.T. Kendall expounds Acts 2 as the cardinal text on this matter. Tudur Jones then speaks of revival in church history, and Derek Tidball continues with a reflection on the tensions which have often challenged the Church at such times. There is then a period of open response and discussion before the meeting divides into four groups, each of which expresses a variety of view on TTb.

Later on the first day, Stephen Sizer and Rob Warner are asked jointly to draft a statement which might reflect the theological consensus, mood, hopes and fears of those present. They work on this into the early hours of the next day, and eventually present a 12 paragraph, 800 word text to the meeting. Under the guidance of Clive Calver, this is adopted by the great majority of those present. Indeed, only one person declines to endorse it.

<sup>230</sup> Tillin Tricia, 'But Is It A Blessing?' *Christian Herald*, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1994, p.8.

<sup>231</sup> Koop, Doug, 'Airport Vineyard Still Flying High', *Christian Week*, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1994.

The statement itself begins by stressing the need 'not only to evaluate' TTB, but 'also to make to make clear distinctions between primary and secondary convictions among us as evangelicals, even though we differ in our initial interpretations of these experiences.' It proceeds to define agreed primary convictions as the authority and divine inspiration of Scripture, the atoning work of Christ, the 'vital need' for personal conversion, and the prerogative of active witness and service in the world. It then rejoices that God has poured out his Spirit in revivals, and that these are 'intrinsic to the evangelical heritage we share'.

The text moves on to emphasise the need for a unity of Word and Spirit in evangelical life and action. With particular concern for the outworking of this unity in the evangelical context, it acknowledges that in the past, evangelicals have sometimes failed adequately to listen to one another, and 'to denigrate and caricature those with whom we disagree'. In the Euston consultation, the statement declares, 'we have sought to ask questions of ourselves and one another, without compromising the integrity of our consciously held differences.'

Dealing particularly with the manifestations related to revivals, the statement notes that they must be seen as 'secondary'. In and of themselves, it explains, 'they cannot ... prove that a movement is or is not a work of God.' The final test must be 'the lasting, biblical fruit'. Acknowledging that the Toronto experience 'is not yet integrated with theological reflection', clause 7 rejoices with those who have known 'genuine life changing encounters' as a result of it, while regretting that 'some have neglected the discipline of biblical preaching in the face of current manifestations'.

Warning against the dual dangers of imbibing 'the existentialist spirit of our age' along with TTB, and dismissing it out of sheer 'enlightenment rationalism', the text urges that the 'absolute truth of the gospel' be guarded 'without compromise'.

The Euston statement closes by deducing that the church in the UK is not presently experiencing revival, but accepts that many during recent months have known significant 'enrichment', and that this encourages 'hope that we may be in a period of preparation for revival'. Concluding that any evaluation of the present phenomena can only be 'provisional' since it is 'too early for definitive judgements', the text calls for a group within the Evangelical Alliance 'to continue to provide evaluation and theological reflection on these developments within the church'. It suggests that this group should report back one year hence, and encourages it and other assessments of TTB to apply Jonathan Edwards' classic tests for a genuine work of God: exaltation of Christ in people's understanding; undermining of Satan's purposes; a fostering of greater regard for Scripture and truth; a cultivation of seriousness about the things of God, and of greater love for God, fellow Christians and the world as a whole.

The meeting and statement are not officially publicised until 12<sup>th</sup> January, after which they receive extensive press coverage (→).

*[The full text of the Euston Statement is reproduced in Section III here]*

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1994** – *The Church of England Newspaper* reports Coventry Vicar John Leach keenly applying the principles of his book on charismatic ministry among children to TTB (cf. 31<sup>st</sup> August 1994 ←). "As children have seen and heard bizarre sights and sounds", he says, "there has not been a hint of fear". Rather, he adds, they "are having fun in the church in ways which just wouldn't have been their experience a few months ago." In opposition to this view, Rev David Streater of the Church Society warns against regarding children as any less prone to the influence of sin and deception in the new movement than adults.<sup>232</sup>

**Friday 30<sup>th</sup> December 1994** – Ron Davies, Director of the Post-Graduate Centre at All Nations Christian College in Ware, writes on Jonathan Edwards for the January issue of *Renewal*. Suggesting that one of those most profoundly affected by the weakening, falling, weeping and joy of the New England revival was Edwards' own wife, Sarah, Davies argues that the Northampton theologian would have encouraged those debating TTB today 'not to dismiss a movement out of hand because there are unusual and often inexplicable physical manifestations accompanying it. Nor, on the other hand, should we focus on or encourage the extreme and bizarre accompaniments. Rather, we should emphasise and seek fellowship with the Lord, a closeness to him and the practical outworking in holiness and love.'<sup>233</sup>

This last week of December also sees the Evangelical Alliance send out the January-March edition of its members' magazine *Idea*. One of its main features is on TTB, and is written by UK Director (later to become General Director), Joel Edwards. As in the initial Alliance statement on the new movement which he drafted on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1994 (←), Edwards expresses deep concern for the preservation of evangelical unity. Acknowledging that 'Toronto' has great potential for destructiveness as well as for blessing, he quotes John 17:23 to underline the need to 'do everything possible to resist and evangelical Cold War'. Hopefully, he goes on, 'we will be able to disagree without becoming disagreeable', even if 'our evident disagreements will undoubtedly be tested in the months ahead'.

Perhaps conscious of the predominantly 'neutral' view on physical manifestations taken by Jonathan Edwards (no relation!), he writes, 'you can argue either way about [their] appropriateness ... but it's very hard to prove whether or not they are from God. Even if you conclude that they are surplus to biblical requirements, does that make them unbiblical?' Responsible testing will be vital, he implies, as evangelicals approach TTB with 'open Bibles, hearts and minds'. But this must all be done, concludes Edwards, with a clear understanding that there is a common enemy, the devil, 'whose commitment is to kill, steal and destroy.'<sup>234</sup>

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January 1995** – Baptist Union General Secretary David Coffey writes on TTB in the *Baptist Times*. He begins by focussing on practical outcomes. 'Whatever Baptists may personally feel, and whatever questions they may want to ask', he says, 'the evidence is that there are many Christians in local churches who have been touched by this blessing.' Coffey has observed situations in which, since TTB has emerged,

---

<sup>232</sup> '“Toronto’ Put to the Children Test Proves Genuine’, *Church of England Newspaper*, 23<sup>rd</sup> / 30<sup>th</sup> December 1994.

<sup>233</sup> Davies, Ron, 'Physical Manifestations in Revival', *Renewal*, January 1995, pp.28-30.

<sup>234</sup> Edwards, Joel, 'Peace, Not War', *Idea*, January-March 1995, pp.16-17.

'repentance and reconciliation has transformed the life of a fellowship', in which ministers have discovered 'a new dimension to their pastoring and preaching', and in which local churches have rekindled their concern for evangelism. Despite all this, he acknowledges that the movement has also caused 'disturbance and concern', not least over its biblical validity, its potential for division and the place of children within it.

Seeking a way through the debate, Coffey presents guidelines which he hopes will be heeded by Baptists and others as the movement develops:

- '1. We may disagree on the "Toronto" phenomenon but Scripture is plain that we should be very careful not to judge other groups of Christians without searching our own hearts. Luke 6:37-44 and Luke 9:49-50 have something to say to all of us.
2. We should respect the integrity of those Baptist leaders whose churches are experiencing the "Toronto" blessing and in return expect that their claims and expectations will be in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 12-14.
3. All of us need to be aware of the danger of claiming that there is something ultimate and complete about our current religious experience or discovery. There is constantly more light and truth to break forth from God's Word.
4. We need time to assess what is happening and what God may be saying to us. We need to recall that the current manifestations were not unknown in those revivals which all of us now regard as hallowed memories...
5. Those who believe they have experienced a "time of refreshing from the Lord" (Acts 3:19) will no doubt bear witness to a repetition of the Acts experience of deepened fellowship in the local church, open-hearted generosity and a greater awareness of their spiritual inheritance. But they will surely be asking "Where now?". For the Acts experience also included open-air preaching with conversions and baptisms, miracles in the "market square", imprisonment as a penalty for preferring to obey God and daring to oppose the state, the least likely people in the community confessing Jesus as Lord, fresh insights for the church into the new paradigm for God's missionary activity.
6. ... [The] societal dimension has not been the major feature of the various streams of the renewal movement during the past few years but it could be a major fruit this time.

Coffey goes on to suggest that there 'lessons from history which may speak to our present situation'. Citing Graham Tomlin on the Wesley-Whitefield revival of the 1730s and 40s, he sees significance in the fact that that movement met people on neutral ground, i.e. in fields and town squares rather than simply in churches; that it took lay leadership seriously; that it recovered the experience of intimacy and assurance as central in the Christian life; and that it saw a return to theological roots, most especially the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith. Coffey ends by hoping that TTB might lead on to a similar transformation – once which marries spiritual with intellectual

refreshment, and which recognises that 'when God blesses his Church he speaks to the world'.<sup>235</sup>

**7<sup>th</sup> January 1995** – *Christian Herald* editor Bruce Hardy warns his readers that TTb could entrench divisions between charismatics and 'traditional evangelicals'. Siding with the traditional view, he writes: 'The events of 1994 have made a rapprochement less likely. I am not surprised, because thoroughgoing, extreme charismatic, Toronto-prone believers are sure traditional evangelicals are *wrong* and desire no accommodation.'

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January 1995** – The Evangelical Alliance issues a press release on the consultation it hosted on TTb at Euston on 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December (←). The press release concentrates on the statement produced by those who attended, but also quotes EA UK Director Joel Edwards: 'The "Toronto Blessing", he says, 'has provoked less division than could have been the case. So it is crucial that we build on the unity we have by listening and understanding one another.'

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January 1995** – In his regular column for *Christian Herald*, the prominent Anglican evangelical Tony Higton reviews a Rodney Howard-Browne meeting he and his wife have recently attended at Wembley Conference Centre. Higton is less than impressed. 'After an eight-minute talk on 1 Kings 17 to introduce the collection (the only Bible teaching)', he writes, Rodney Howard-Browne sang 'a long, repetitive solo to a jazz rhythm. "I'm drunk, I'm drunk. Every day of my life I'm drunk. I've been drinking down at Joel's place. Every time and every day, I' drunk with new wine.'" Higton is alarmed at Howard-Browne's encouragement of the audience to 'get out of your heads and into your spirits', and is clearly disturbed by the pogoing, the 'frantic disco dancing', the 'loud, hysterical-sounding laughter' and the corporate singing in tongues in a loud monotone', which he likens to a Hindu Om chant. Howard-Browne's practice of patting people on the forehead and shouting "Fill" before they (mostly) fall to the floor reminds Higton of 'those hypnotists on TV who quickly wave their hands near people's foreheads, sending them into a hypnotic trance'. The Anglican Rector is offended by Howard-Browne's labelling of those who leave the meeting early as 'religious dead-heads', and says that he is worried by 'the over-defensive, angry response of some pro-Toronto Christians to their critics.'

Higton's concluding remarks strike a somewhat softer note, but he is still plainly upset by what he and his wife saw: 'It seems that the event encouraged people to be open to God and to expect blessing (two laudable attitudes) and so God blessed them. He regularly blesses despite our spiritual state or circumstances. And he only has imperfect leaders and techniques to use. But that does not justify the excesses we saw that night.'<sup>236</sup>

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 1995** – The Centre for Contemporary Ministry at Bawtry Hall, South Yorkshire, hosts a special consultation on the Toronto Blessing. Bawtry Hall is base for the ministry of Clifford Hill and the magazine *Prophecy Today*. Both Hill and *PT* have been critical of TTb over the past few months, and the 35 leaders assembled for this meeting mainly comprise charismatics who have expressed serious concerns about the new movement.

<sup>235</sup> 'Coffey, David, 'When the Spirit Comes', *Baptist Times*, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1995, pp.5,14.

<sup>236</sup> Higton, Tony, 'Opinion: Toronto Revisited', *Christian Herald*, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1994, p.3.

The results of the discussions which take place over these four days will soon be edited and published in an 18-page report entitled *Charismatic Crossroads*.<sup>237</sup> This report records the consultation as concluding that TTB is giving rise to a 'mixture' of spiritual phenomena. It acknowledges that there have been 'many beautiful testimonies among believers of lives changed', but adds that alongside the work of the Holy Spirit, 'there are some very worrying signs of counterfeit which are confusing the situation.' The document confirms that much of the conference is taken up with reviewing the past 25 years of charismatic renewal, and assessing how and why it has led to TTB. Links are traced back from TTB, through the Restorationist theology of the House Church streams which emerged in the 1970s, to the 'heretical' Latter Rain movement which spread from Canada in the late 1940s, and which in turn influenced several of those now at the forefront of TTB in Britain, including Gerald Coates, Bryn Jones, Terry Virgo, Roger Forster and Roger Mitchell (← cf. 1<sup>st</sup> October 1994). The Bawtry report is concerned by these links and sees them as largely responsible for a misguided 'triumphalism', and for the stoking up of false expectations within the charismatic constituency:

In Britain the House Church movement in the 1970s began to embrace 'restorationism', which taught that the church will do most of the work of the Kingdom before the second coming of Christ. The church will conquer the nations, controlling all [their] major institutions, and the 'sons of God' will be manifested and take the land[s] for Jesus. This was in reaction to extreme dispensationalism. This triumphalism is reflected in many charismatic songs but it is false teaching, based upon false biblical exegesis. It is not centred upon the Cross. Sin and repentance, persecution, failure, trials and tribulations and suffering are all absent or minimised because the elect will be triumphant and will enjoy health, wealth and prosperity. This teaching has been given at Bible weeks and celebrations for the past 25 years, causing great excitement, with ... promises of extraordinary power ... and authority over the nations, [which] have put increasing pressure upon leaders to deliver. Fresh promises and fresh waves of excitement have therefore had to be generated in order to stem the tide of disillusionment and avoid mass desertions. The Toronto Blessing is the latest in these waves of excitement and promises of extraordinary power. It is being accompanied by the teaching that we should not use our minds to question anything that is happening, we should simply receive any of the spiritual power that is on offer. This is highly dangerous teaching and leaves believers open to deception.<sup>238</sup>

The conference expresses concern that trends such as these might show 'sections of the charismatic movement drifting towards cultism, and suggests that TTB might well accelerate this drift. Rodney Howard-Browne is singled out for particular concern. After watching video clips of the South African with Kenneth Copeland, 'clowning on stage using a strange tongue' and allowing children to 'fall under the power', the conference expresses 'unanimous agreement' that he 'does not appear to be ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit'.

---

<sup>237</sup> Centre for Contemporary Ministry, *Charismatic Crossroads: The Report of a Leadership Consultation on the Current Situation in the Charismatic Churches*, Bawtry Hall: Centre for Contemporary Ministry, 1995.

<sup>238</sup> Centre for Contemporary Ministry, *Charismatic Crossroads*, pp. 7-8.

More generally lamenting a loss of 'sound biblical teaching' to 'spiritual pragmatism', the conference concludes that 'the present crisis in the charismatic movement [is] at least as great and possibly a greater threat to the future of evangelicalism than was ever mounted by the impact of modernist or liberal teachings.' Internal corruption, it suggests, is 'always a more potent force for the disintegration of a movement than external attack.'

Finally, the Bawtry meeting resolves to urge the Evangelical Alliance 'and all charismatic leadership bodies' to recognise the 'seriousness of the present situation', and to realise the need for 'urgent consideration' of its analysis.

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 1995** – Hodder and Stoughton publish Rob Warner's book on TTB, *Prepare for Revival*. In the Foreword to the book, HTB Vicar Sandy Millar commends Warner for an 'extraordinarily helpful and well researched' account, and presents the Blessing as one of a number of 'new shoots springing up' which promise to reinvigorate the Church. As part of the re-engagement of laity in ministry, the recovery of charismatic gifts and the move away from denominationalism, TTB represents for Millar 'a new and real hunger for God'.

Warner's analysis begins with a history of Blessing seen particularly through his own eyes and those of close friends and colleagues. He then draws parallels between what people have experienced in the new movement and various 'power-encounters' recorded in Scripture, e.g. Saul's promised meeting with the ecstatic prophet band in 1 Sam 10:5ff., David's supernatural protection from Saul's assassins in 1 Sam 19, Isaiah's vision in Isa. 6:1-10, the weeping of the Israelites at the reading of the Law in Neh. 8, and their public confession of sin in Neh. 9, the Jews' transformation at Pentecost and the subsequent fervour of the early Church, and Cornelius' and his household's extraordinary response to Peter's preaching in Acts 10. Following this, Warner reviews the history of revival, and notes that its greatest proponents and practitioners have been remarkably alike in having gained the impetus for their work in intense 'crisis' experiences of God's inbreaking power. As for manifestations, Warner notes that Edwards' preaching occasioned tears, trembling, groans and loss of strength, that Whitefield and Wesley prompted and condoned profuse weeping, crying out and (despite initial reservations from Whitefield) fainting. The pioneering Welsh revival preacher Howel Harris, notes Warner, described himself in 1735 as 'acting like a drunk man' under the influence of the Spirit.

Warner goes on to recount his own dramatic visit to TAV the previous summer. Although wary of jumping on fashionable spiritual bandwagons, Warner points out that 'visiting the place of an outpouring to learn and receive is not new'. Jonathan Edwards, he points out, wrote in *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions* of 'men visiting Northampton, Massachusetts on business who ended up taking revival home with them.' Hindered by broken teeth, eye infections, car-hire stress and lost luggage, Warner and his wife are nevertheless profoundly affected by their time at the Airport Vineyard. As well as resting in the Spirit, Warner recalls being prayed for by one of the ministry team as an experience 'countless times greater' in force than an electric shock he had

received as a teenager. 'It seemed that the scales were falling from my eyes and the Spirit was restoring my first zeal for Christ', he writes.

*Prepare for Revival* proceeds in more detail to investigate the phenomena associated the TTB, mounting sustained biblical and historical defences of the tears, joy, laughter, falling and shaking. He is alive to the dangers of manipulation, mass hysteria, deliberate imitation and Satanic counterfeit, but assigns them to the sinful intent of their perpetrators in any specific instance, and neither confines nor connects them in any necessary sense to the phenomena associated with 'Toronto'. Indeed, he is particularly dismissive of critics who make an undifferentiated causal link between the manifestations and the deceptions of Satan. Such people, writes Warner, are 'ignorant of both the Bible and the history of revivals'.

As the title of his book suggests, Warner is not ready to define TTB as 'revival', but expresses great hope that it may pave the way: 'we praise God for the times of refreshing we have been enjoying, but our plea must be that they are no more than a prelude. We long to see the glory and power of the living God sweeping across the face of the earth as never before. A global revival to prepare the world for Christ. Send revival, Lord, and send it in our day!'<sup>239</sup>

Also today, the *Baptist Times* and the *Methodist Recorder* both pick up the Evangelical Alliance's announcement of its Euston Consultation and Statement of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December (←).

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January 1995** – One year on from the 'start' of TTB at TAV (←), the *Church Times* reports on the Evangelical Alliance's Euston Consultation and Statement (←).

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January 1995** – Under the front-page headline 'Toronto: Call to Keep the Peace', *Christian Herald* informs readers of the Evangelical Alliance Euston Consultation (←).

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1995** – Chris Robeson, a student at Howard Payne University in Texas, publicly confesses his sins to the congregation of nearby Brownwood Baptist Church. This prompts many there to stream down the aisles to pray, repent and restore relationships. Subsequent services at Brownwood extend to 3 hours or more and are characterised by similar scenes.

There is another consequence back at Howard Payne, as a series of meetings led by Southern Baptist pastor Henry Blackby prompts 35-40 students to confess sins of lust, and 200 in the campus church congregation to make commitments or rededicate their lives to Christ.

None of these events are marked by distinctive TB phenomena, but they will be soon be connected to the Toronto movement by those seeking to trace a pattern of world-wide revival.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>239</sup> Warner, Rob, *Prepare for Revival*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995.

<sup>240</sup> Roberts, Dave, 'Victory on Our Knees', *Alpha*, June 1995, pp.4-6.



**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January 1995** – A very Toronto-heavy day in both the Christian and the secular press.

The *Independent's* Religious Affairs Correspondent, Andrew Brown, reports that a 'bitter row' has broken out over TTB in the Church of England. In his preface to the new *Church of England Yearbook*, The Dean of Worcester, Very Rev Robert Jeffrey has, writes Brown, denounced the new movement as 'an expression of hysteria' which could lead to 'a ghetto mentality, and the undermining of an intellectually respectable expression of faith'. The article goes on to quote the response of HTB's Sandy Millar. "For the Dean of Worcester to make these sort of blanket comments is mischievous", says the Knightsbridge Vicar. "Our experience of the so-called Toronto Blessing is that it is a work of the Holy Spirit, bringing many hundreds of people to renewed faith in Jesus Christ, a greater depth of repentance, and a fresh desire to pray and read the Bible." Millar then commends the Evangelical Alliance for conducting "a detailed study of the TB recently" and for publishing "a clear response" to it.

Importantly, Brown's piece also reveals the first signs that the pace of TTB may be slowing somewhat. An unnamed spokesman for HTB is quoted as acknowledging that the outward manifestations of the Blessing are now dimishing "after their peak in the summer and autumn". The spokesman adds, "we are not interested in the outward manifestations in the slightest, because what matters to us is the change in people's lives."<sup>241</sup>

This weekend also, the February editions of *Evangelism Today*, *Evangelicals Now* reproduce the Evangelical Alliance's Euston Statement in full (←). By contrast, with a minimalism and negativity which bears out its hostile view of TTB, and its often critical stance towards the Alliance, *Evangelical Times* devotes just seven lines to the Euston Consultation (←) in its 'News in Brief' column. 'Leaders of charismatic and other churches throughout the UK', it says, 'remain divided as to the value of the phenomenon of laughing, weeping and falling over known as the Toronto Blessing. A two-page report issued by members of various groups attempts to explain irreconcilable differences by splitting them into 'primary' and 'secondary' beliefs.'<sup>242</sup>

The February issue of *Evangelicals Now* carries an intriguing interview with agnostic *Telegraph* journalist Mick Brown, whose review of TTB on 3<sup>rd</sup> December (←) had included details of his 'falling under the power' when ministered to at TAV. Conducted by Mike Taylor, the interview sees Brown still unwilling to endorse evangelical Christianity, despite his experiences in Toronto, and despite the fact that he appreciated the warmth and friendliness of those he met at the Vineyard. "There are aspects of [it] which I don't buy into, and don't particularly like', he says, 'for instance ... the idea that knowledge of God is somehow the exclusive prerogative of the Christian religion ... I don't believe that myself. I think that every culture and every religion expresses an understanding of God or the divine, in their own particular way, and the divine does not discriminate between different cultures, between different religions." Taylor concludes his feature by posing a question: 'Could it be that we are witnessing what in the

<sup>241</sup> Brown, Andrew, 'Church at Odds Over 'Waves of Faith'', *Independent*, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1995, p.2. The story is picked up by *The Church of England Newspaper* on February 3<sup>rd</sup>: "'Toronto' is Only Hysteria, says Dean', p.3.

<sup>242</sup> *Evangelical Times*, February 1995, p.3.

majority of cases is an essentially non-Christian experience, which some Christians are trying their best to assimilate into their view of the Christian life? If so, this could be a very significant turning-point in the history of our current evangelicalism.<sup>243</sup>

In the same newspaper, Tim Thornborough recounts a recent visit he has made to TAV. Although he is concerned that some of the biblical apologetic offered for TTB lacks coherence, and suggests that group expectations are prone to manipulation in such a context, he is happy to accept that TTB's rock-style worship band, together with its encouragement of immediate experience and overt emotional expression, 'are all things that echo resoundingly with the life experiences of the age group it seems principally to address.' He is also dismayed by the jibes of a pastor who seems only to have come to snipe at the whole event. Despite this, Thornborough goes to wonder whether TTB is not 'more akin to revivalism than revival' – a modern form of 'Pentecostalism, with better marketing'.<sup>244</sup>

*Renewal* magazine carries a strongly autobiographical piece on TTB by Gerald Coates. A new story emerges here concerning the impact of TTB on London Bible College, one of the leading evangelical training centres in the UK. Coates recounts that he was recently invited to address two prayer meetings at the college, which each attracted more students than expected. 'After sensitive worship I spoke for twenty minutes', he writes, 'and the Holy Spirit then came upon the gathering in power. Chairs were hastily moved as the scene began to resemble a battlefield. There was the crying of repentance and the laughing of release.' One student, says Coates, had been writing a dissertation sharply criticising the new movement, but subsequently re-wrote it from favourable perspective. Coates also recalls a Salvation Army evangelists' conference in July, at which officers manifested a wide range of 'Toronto' phenomena.<sup>245</sup>

*Renewal* this month also surveys the spread of TTB in Scotland. Churches which have featured prominently include King's Centre, Motherwell, City Church, Aberdeen, Riverside Church, Banff, King's Fellowship, Inverness and Fort William Christian Fellowship. It is also important to note that this article focuses at least as much on the growth of Alpha courses in these and other Scottish churches. Alpha is the 'Introduction to Christianity' course developed at HTB, and is now being used in an increasing number of congregations, both in the UK and abroad. Arguably, it will go on to eclipse even TTB in global impact (→).<sup>246</sup>

*Evangelicals Now* prints a detailed dissection by Mike Taylor of the Rodney Howard-Browne meeting held last December 13<sup>th</sup> at Wembley Conference Centre (←). From the outset, Taylor writes, he objected to the verbal control Howard-Browne appeared to exert over the audience, as he ordered them by turns to sit, stand, raise their hands, chant repetitively after him and, in Taylor's terms, to 'obey his voice'. As far as Taylor is concerned, this amounted to 'manipulative behaviour ... typical of many American churches, whether they are Fundamental, Pentecostal or Charismatic'. Similar techniques were in play, suggest Taylor, when the evangelist later repeated 'trigger words' such as 'this is that' to emphasise his message.

<sup>243</sup> Taylor, Mike, 'What Happened Next?', *Evangelicals Now*, February 1995, pp.1-2.

<sup>244</sup> Thornborough, Tim, 'An Evening at the Airport', *Evangelicals Now*, February 1995, pp.6-7.

<sup>245</sup> Coates, Gerald, 'On the Crest of the Spirit's Wave', *Renewal*, February 1995, pp.18-20.

<sup>246</sup> Galbraith, Antoinette, 'Soaking' in the Spirit in Scotland', *Renewal*, February, 1995, pp.28-30.

Taylor reports that Colin Dye, Pastor of the large West London Elim church Kensington Temple, was present at the Wembley meeting, and soon fell face downwards. Gerald Coates was also on the platform, and, according to Taylor, told the crowd "This is perhaps the greatest outpouring of God in our land ever."

Taylor recalls that after an offering, Howard-Browne preached a sermon 'entirely concerned with outward manifestations', taking as his text 2 Chronicles 5:13-14. Following the address, lines of people came forward to be 'anointed' by the South African, who 'started at his left, working his way round, saying in a loud voice, "Fill!" and touching each person in the mid-chest'. Catchers had been put in place ready to break the fall of those overpowered by all this. Taylor cannot help remarking, however, that 'only certain people, for whom it was expedient to do so, actually fell over. For instance, RHB never fell. The cameramen and staff never fell.' Taylor concludes by asserting that the meeting was 'clearly' designed to 'bypass the mind' by majoring on 'sub-rational phenomena'. He had gone to the event expecting some kind of spiritual atmosphere, he writes, 'but there was nothing at all – it was neither of God nor demonic; it was totally flat. The entire thing was most similar to stage hypnotism. Indeed, I was actually surprised by my extreme boredom.'

**Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January** – The *Guardian* follows Saturday's *Independent* with a piece on the Dean of Worcester's denunciation of TTB, and Sandy Millar's response (←). In addition to comments quoted in the earlier article, journalist Owen Boycott has Millar claiming that TTB is "bringing many hundreds of people to renewed faith in Jesus Christ, a greater depth of repentance and a fresh desire to pray and read the Bible". He also poses a question: "How can the church in its current state afford to disapprove of movements for God at this time? This a a movement of the Spirit designed to help us as a church."<sup>247</sup>

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1995** – *The Church of England Newspaper* prints articles on TTB by two leading British evangelical Anglicans – Canons Tom Smail and David Atkinson.

Smail, who was Director of the key interdenominational charismatic body The Fountain Trust in the 1970s, begins by comparing his task as a committed Christian theologian with that of Gamaliel in Acts 5. 'We both are trying to reach conclusions on the same sort of question', writes Smail: 'he about whether the new Christian movement is of God, I about whether and how far the recent so-called "Toronto Blessing" can be recognised as an authentic movement of the Holy Spirit for our own time.' Beyond this, however, Smail perceives significant differences. Gamaliel, he argues, 'does not believe in the gospel he is trying to assess, whereas I write as a believer in Jesus Christ who, although he has not been touched by "Toronto", appeals for a verdict both to the New Testament scriptures and to my own experience of the Holy Spirit working in his charismatic mode.' In addition, Gamaliel's criterion of mere durability – "If it lasts God must be in it" – would, says Smail, 'authenticate Buddhism and Hinduism even more than the gospel because they have lasted longer'. Rather, he suggests, the new movement must be tested against the witness of the New Testament gospel as a whole.

---

<sup>247</sup> Boycott, Owen, 'Toronto Blessing' Has Believers Fainting in the Aisles', *Guardian*, Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January 1995.

Smail notes that 'asking theological questions does not come easily to charismatic enthusiasts, who want to rejoice in what God has done for them and get on with witnessing about it to others'. Such urgent pragmatism has also tended, in Smail's view, to make proponents of TTB 'impatient with those who insist on raising awkward issues'. All the same, he writes, 'they need to remember that discernment is one of the gifts of the Spirit that is most needed and most neglected'.

With these preliminary points established, Smail proceeds to raise three areas of questioning for his "'Toronto" friends'. The first concerns the fruit of the Blessing; the second has to do with the noise it generates, and the third is about the physical manifestations associated with it.

Firstly, in terms of fruit, Smail acknowledges that TTB is offering 'considerable and impressive' results. Even so, he is concerned to distinguish 'a temporary holiness that has its basis in strongly roused emotion, from a covenant holiness that involves the commitment of the whole person, mind, will and heart, to God and his cause'. In defence of this distinction, he cites Jesus' calling his disciples in John 15:6 to bear fruit *that will last*. What matters, urges Smail, 'is not what happens in the glorious meetings or in the months which immediately follow when the glow is still upon us, but on how faithful we shall be when the great moment has passed, when the feelings have dulled and when the Spirit shows himself not in our passionate praise but in our dogged endurance.'

As for the 'noise' of the Blessing, Smail feels to be compelled to plead for less emphasis on 'endless singing, roaring lions, uncontrollable laughter and Hallelujahs all over the place', and more on the Lord 'who is not in the wind, the fire or the earthquake, but speaks in a still small voice'. Holding that some, including himself, have had more than their fill of 'that kind of frantic religion', Smail writes of the need for "Toronto" advocates to realise that 'the same sense of God's presence, speaking and power can be given in a silent eight day retreat'.

Thirdly, Smail wonders how apparently 'regressive' phenomena like shaking, leaping, falling and laughing square with God's desire that we should 'attain ... to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ' (Eph. 4:13). It could be, he reflects, that God's healing operations 'sometimes require some anaesthesia for their performance'. Very soon, however, the Spirit 'will want us off the carpet and into action: "Son of man, *stand on your feet* and I will speak to you." [Ezek. 2:1]'

In conclusion, Smail says 'I stick to what I have long thought about ... many other Christian movements besides – they are about two-thirds phoney and one third God, *but a third, with God in it, is a lot!*'<sup>248</sup>

As Chancellor of Southwark Cathedral and a leading evangelical pastoral theologian, David Atkinson not surprisingly focuses on the lessons to be learned from Jonathan Edwards (←). Stressing the New England pastor's concern for good fruit, Atkinson points out that Edwards saw this demonstrated by a profound increase in soberness, church commitment and repentance. Atkinson also finds particular resonance for

---

<sup>248</sup> Smail, Tom, 'Why my Middle Name is Certainly Not Gamaliel', *Church of England Newspaper*, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1995, p.8.

contemporary evangelical debates on TTB in Edwards' insistence that revival should produce an aversion to judging other professing Christians of good standing in the visible church, and should stimulate a heightened sense of social responsibility. All this, says Atkinson, offers 'a good place from which to start evaluating Toronto'.<sup>249</sup>

Also today the *Church Times* prints a letter on TTB from the highly-respected misiologist, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin has been teaching at HTB on John's gospel for some time, and is upset at the Dean of Worcester's dismissal of the Blessing (← see 28<sup>th</sup> January), calling it 'mistaken'. Newbigin continues: 'it is, of course, true that for those (like myself) shaped by the pliant conformity of the mainline churches to the prevailing culture, some of the manifestations of the movement seem odd. John Wesley's contemporaries had the same problem. But one still has to ask two questions: is the genuine fruit of the Spirit present? And second, do those involved remain at the stage of mere emotional excitement? The answer to the first of these questions is yes, and to the second, no.' Newbigin writes that TTB induces 'the feeling that one gets when the monsoon breaks after a very dry summer'. It would be a shame, he adds, 'if the response of churchmen were to be to shut the doors and windows'.

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February 1995** – *English Churchman* reports that the Chairman of the German Evangelical Alliance, Rev Rolf Hille of Tübingen, has denounced TTB. Rejecting the idea that the manifestations associated with the Blessing have a biblical foundation, he adds, 'religious madness was never propagated in the Scriptures.' While not going so far as to call the new movement anti-Christian, Hille is quoted as calling it 'a longing for which there [is] no biblical promise'. Hille is, notes the report, a member of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship.

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 1995** – The March edition of *Alpha* magazine reports on the Evangelical Alliance Euston Consultation and Statement (← 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December)

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February 1995** – Evangelical anti-cult group Reachout Trust updates its readers on TTB. Reachout worker Mike Thomas reflects on attending a Rodney Howard-Browne meeting held in Swansea last November. Stressing that 'RHB' could not be taken as representing the Toronto movement as a whole, and repudiating those who, 'in a personal crusade against all things charismatic have, through ignorance or mischief, misrepresented ... the Toronto Blessing group and their leaders', Thomas is nevertheless very sceptical about the provenance of Howard-Browne's ministry: '[He] believes what he is teaching, I have no doubt ... He is personable in his own way ... I believe, however, that he is wrong.' The key error, for Thomas, lies in Howard-Browne's development within the Faith Movement, exemplified by the two years he spent as an Associate Pastor at Rhema Church, Johannesburg (←). Thomas claims to have detected plenty of residual WordFaith teaching at the Swansea meeting, including a , characteristic use of 2 Cor. 8:9 to justify the pursuit of wealth, and the notion that Job's suffering was due primarily to his own 'negative confession' in Job 3:25. On these grounds, Thomas is at least prepared to raise the possibility that Howard-Browne might be a heretic.<sup>250</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Atkinson, David, 'Why my Middle Name is Certainly Not Gamaliel', *Church of England Newspaper*, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1995, p.17.

<sup>250</sup> Thomas, Mike, 'Signs Mike Wonders About', *Reachout*, Spring 1995, p.3-5.

In today's March issue of *Evangelism Today*, Dr Tony Sargent of Worthing Tabernacle considers how Jonathan Edwards and the great twentieth century evangelical expositor Martyn Lloyd-Jones might have dealt with TTB. Regretting what he perceives to be the often 'irrational' nature of the Blessing, Sargent writes that 'the practices of some of [its] proponents are not just a long throw from Edwards, they are utterly unrelated'. Sargent goes on: 'any similarity is at a *phenomenal* not a *theological* level and only partially the former. Neither Edwards nor Lloyd-Jones subscribed to the suspension of critical faculties; quite the contrary. Certainly, DR Martyn Lloyd-Jones conceded that there are experiences that surpass the mind. But surpassing and bypassing are not the same thing either!'

Sargent adds, in a clear reference to Rodney Howard-Browne, that 'thought of dispensing the Spirit as though he were akin to a bartender's liquor would be totally unacceptable.' Edwards' ministry, he writes, was free from 'catchers, drugging music and (thankfully) [the] microphone.' As for Lloyd-Jones, 'even though his London pulpit knew great blessing, neither spontaneity in worship nor phenomena were its hallmark. The main point in Sargent's critique, however, concerns the likely ephemerality of TTB. 'Few', he suggests, 'would doubt that we are living in days when an extraordinary phenomenon has swept over thousands of churches. But this is in the wake of several other emphases which have come and gone – Spiritual warfare and Exorcism; Signs and Wonders; Terrestrial Spirits and Spiritual Mapping; the Kansas City Prophets and theatrical displays of the Word of Knowledge ... Is this the latest craze? More kindly, is it yet another tendency of evangelicals to zoom in on one aspect of biblical teaching and distort it through overemphasis...?'

In closing, Sargent contends that there is a vital deficit in TTB which prevents it from qualifying seriously as 'revival', and that is 'a wide-scale evangelistic push'. For the Church to be looking inward while forgetting its mandate to go out and win disciples of all nations, says Sargent, 'might suggest at best a failure in priorities or at worst a malevolent strategy causing Christendom to fiddle while a lost world burns.'<sup>251</sup>

A very similar version of Sargent's article will also appear in the April issue of *Renewal* magazine.<sup>252</sup>

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 1995** – John Avent, Pastor of Brownwood Baptist Church near Howard Payne University, speaks at South Western Baptist Seminary on the dramatic events which have taken place in his congregation, and on the campus, since 22<sup>nd</sup> January (←). His address initiates seven hours of confession and prayer by students and staff. Further lengthy meetings follow at the seminary.<sup>253</sup>

**Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1995** – The Pierce Chapel of Wheaton College, Illinois, hosts the weekly campus service of the World Christian Fellowship. Famed as the college which trained international evangelist Billy Graham, Wheaton is one of the leading centres of evangelical higher education in the USA. The weeks preceding this meeting have seen a significant stirring of spiritual life among individuals and groups. This does not,

<sup>251</sup> Sargent, Tony, 'Physical Phenomena and Revival', *Evangelism Today*, March 1995.

<sup>252</sup> 'Lloyd-Jones. Edwards and Toronto', *Renewal*, April 1995, pp.28-31.

<sup>253</sup> Roberts, Dave, 'Victory on Your Knees', *Alpha*, June 1995, p.4.

however, appear to owe much to TTB: Wheaton is a relatively conservative college not known for a particularly charismatic outlook.

As students, staff and others gather for worship at 7.30pm, the programme includes testimony from two visitors – James Hahn and Brandi Maguire. Hahn and Maguire have come to describe a recent 'revival' which has been taking place among their own student body at Howard Payne University in Texas. After they finish speaking, the microphones are left open for the congregation to share their burdens and confess their sins.

There follows an outpouring of repentance so intense that the meeting does not eventually adjourn until 6.00am the following morning. Chaplain Stephen Kellough will later describe a stream of public admissions to 'pride, lust, sexual immorality, cheating, dishonesty, materialism, addictions and self-destructive behaviour.' This all issues in 'tears', 'smiles', 'singing' and 'healing'. He will reflect: 'It was biblical. It was Christian. It was orderly. It was sincere. And it honoured our Lord.'

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 1995** – Following the remarkable events of the night before (←), 900 Wheaton students convene in the Pierce Chapel for prayer and worship. 400 are still present when the last confession is made, and even then, there are still many waiting for their turn at the microphone.

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March 1995** – In order to honour scheduled events in Pierce Chapel, a new venue, College Church, is pressed into use for another Wheaton campus 'revival' meeting. By 9.30pm, 1,350 people have arrived. By 2.00am, the lines waiting at microphones for the confession of sin are still long, and another session is arranged for the following evening.

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1995** – A capacity crowd of 1,500 gathers in College Church. By this point, the Wheaton College staff have decided that the new campus movement is significant enough that they should give guidance and teaching on it to the student body. The meeting is duly addressed by Professors Litfin, Dorsett and Beougher.

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1995** – More faculty, staff and members of the local community join students at College Church for an evening of praise and testimony. Teaching focuses on the wider challenges presented by what has been happening at Wheaton during the past few days. Those present are urged to move on to new levels of commitment in their love and service of God. The closing section of the meeting includes an invitation for those sensing a call to Christian ministry to go forward for a prayer of dedication. Many kneel at the front of the sanctuary to dedicate themselves to pastoral and missionary leadership.

It is decided that this will be the last of the 'plenary' sessions for the new outpouring. Instead of maintaining a schedule of large nightly meetings, the community is encouraged to direct their new sense of commitment and fellowship into evangelism and practical social action.<sup>254</sup>

---

<sup>254</sup> Kellough, Stephen, 'If You Missed 'Toronto' You Could Now Be 'Wheatoned'', *Church of England Newspaper*, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1995, p.7.

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March** – In the April–May issue of its magazine *Idea*, the Evangelical Alliance prints the full text of the Euston Statement (←). In addition, three of those who attended the Ibis Hotel meeting are quoted. London Bible College Principal Derek Tidball says: 'we need to overcome misunderstanding, to destroy rumours, to increase our appreciation of how God works and above all to find that, whatever our differences, we have a common commitment to the Lord, his gospel and the authoritative Word'. Anglican Reform leader Philip Hacking also reflects positively: 'I appreciated the value of the consultation because of its prayerfulness and its openness. It is vital for Christians who differ to meet in honest debate. I am even more concerned today that we do not paper over the cracks to suggest a unity that is not real.' Gerald Coates adds that 'fellowship mellows judgement', while lack of it creates caricatures. Many such caricatures were, however, broken down at the Euston meeting, he says: 'we heard and understood one another to a greater degree than previously'.<sup>255</sup>

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March** – In the April edition of *Healing and Wholeness*, former Cliff College Principal William Davies surveys instances of ecstatic manifestations which occurred during the revival ministry of John Wesley, and compares Wesley's approach with that which has come to distinguish TTB. While not actively encouraging them, Davies shows that Wesley witnessed and largely tolerated falling down, trembling and even roaring in his meetings. Laughter, however, appears to have been a different matter, and, when uncontrolled in the public context, was assigned by Wesley to the devil. In such cases, writes Davies, it was seen as something which required deliverance.<sup>256</sup>

The Pentecostal periodical *Joy* reports that 4,000 British churches have now been affected by TTB. Former Kensington Temple Pastor Wynne Lewis writes, 'I believe we could be in the early stages of revival if we handle it right. I am convinced that this move glorifies God and exalts Jesus. It can only be of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>257</sup>

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> April 1995** – Wheaton College chaplain Stephen Kellogg reflects on the extraordinary events which have been taking place on the Illinois campus since 19<sup>th</sup> March (←). 'The personal sharing within the body of Christ here', he says 'has been spiritually sensitive and biblically grounded. The depth and breadth of the confession, repentance, and reconciliation point to a divine initiative. Every factor seems to confirm that we are experiencing an authentic work of the Sovereign Lord who has chosen to visit us in a powerful way.'<sup>258</sup>

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April – Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April** – The annual Spring Harvest festival at Minehead and Skegness in the UK sees TTB in evidence at a number of worship sessions and workshops. Special 'receiving' meetings are held for teaching and ministry related to the new movement.<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> 'Blessedor Not Blessed?' *Idea*, April-May 1995, pp.12-13.

<sup>256</sup> Davies, William, 'John Wesley: Healing and the Toronto Blessing', *Healing and Wholeness*, April 1995, pp.16-19.

<sup>257</sup> Gardner, Charles, 'Catching a Glimpse of God's Glory', *Joy*, March 1995, pp.17-18.

<sup>258</sup> Kellogg

<sup>259</sup> 'Fresh Encouragements at This Year's Spring Harvest', *Renewal*, July 1995, p.5.



**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> April 1995** – *Christian Herald* reports on a recent three-day consultation on TTB which has just been held at the Centre for Contemporary Ministry, Bawtry Hall, in South Yorkshire. This was a follow-up to the earlier conference held there between 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> January (←). Speakers included Peter Fenwick, Clifford Hill, David Noakes and the popular Bible teacher and author, David Pawson. Those attending included the Evangelical Alliance's UK Director Joel Edwards. As in January, the consultation has issued a unanimous statement calling for caution, renewed study of Scripture and consultation. It states that those gathered at Bawtry Hall 'are not convinced that we are currently seeing the beginning of the longed-for revival', and urges that all experiences be tested against Scripture 'in order to avoid deceptions that distort the purposes of God, and may divert the Church from its calling'. The conference also expresses concern at 'the possibility of unnecessary division within the Boy', and calls for 'urgent dialogue among leaders holding different views of contemporary developments'.

[The full text of the Second Bawtry Hall Statement is given in Part III].

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 1995** – The *Baptist Times* reports on events at Wheaton College over the past month (←). Chaplain Stephen Kellough is quoted as saying that he would prefer to define the campus movement as a 'spiritual awakening' rather than a 'revival'. The article points out that similar college and seminary 'awakenings' have taken place before: 'one in the 1950s led to one student, Jim Elliot, sensing a call to an unreached tribe in Ecuador at whose hands he was martyred.'<sup>260</sup>

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 1995** – Canadian Christian periodical *Faith Today* reports that the recent 'Wheaton Awakening' (←) is now being mirrored on campuses in Texas, Illinois, Alabama, Massachusetts and Kentucky. 'At Olivet Nazarene University in Illinois', says the article, 'a video clip on the 1970 Asbury Collge (Kentucky) revival turned into seven hours of praying, sharing, singing and exhorting one another to live holy lives.'

Also today, *Alpha* magazine prints a major feature which seeks to answer the question 'Has the Toronto Blessing Run Dry?' Despite suggesting that more than 4,000 churches, or 'almost ten per cent of all churches from virtually every stream nationwide', have received TTB, it is concerned to ask, 'Where do we go from here?'

In order to address the issue, Clive Price canvasses opinions from Gerald Coates, Rob Warner, Sandy Millar, Ken Gott and Bryn Jones. Recognising that these men have been key supporters of, and apologists for, the Blessing, he also summarises the views of those who have been more sceptical, e.g. the Bawtry Hall Conferences (←), Doug Harris and the Reachout Trust (←), and Tony Highton (←).

Gerald Coates tells Price that two central questions have emerged in respect of TTB. They are, he says, the same questions that were asked on the Day of Pentecost: 'What does this mean?' and 'What should we do?' Coates sees a coherent response emerging as affected churches turn to 'intercession for the nation' and evangelism: there is, he says, 'a trickle of reports of people coming to faith'. He adds, 'it's time for God's people to be together in true Christian fellowship – and we want to give birth to something. You can call it revival or a great awakening.' Terminology aside, he stresses that such a move of

---

<sup>260</sup> 'Wheaton Awakening Brings Hundreds of Students to their Knees', *Baptist Times*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1995, p.4.

God will be marked by tears, acknowledgement of inadequacies and 'a fresh humility with our Lord'.

For his part, Rob Warner reports on recent dramatic demonstrations of TTB at conferences run by Mainstream and GEAR – the renewal organisations associated with the Baptist Union and United Reformed Church respectively. He also reflects on the wider social significance of TTB. 'Our culture has been rationalistic', he says, 'so that everything has operated within the confines of scientific understanding'. Now, though, says Warner, this paradigm has begun to break down – something evidenced by the growth of New Age beliefs. More positively, he also argues that prevailing cultural rationalism has been challenged by the charismatic movement, with its openness to 'overwhelming encounters with the presence of God'. This has helped many realise, says Warner, that 'God refuses to be domesticated' and 'is restoring to us an understanding of his awesomeness and his might'.

Considering whether there might be more than one 'time of refreshing' for the churches, Warner says that this is quite possible: 'prior to the Great Awakening, in Jonathan Edwards' church there were several periods of mini-revival. It was rather like the tide coming in. A series of waves came and things seemed to recede a bit, came and then receded, until eventually the full flood of high tide came crashing in. We can't say God must work in that way, but we certainly say from history [that] God can well work that way.'

From his vantage-point as Vicar of HTB, Sandy Millar expresses some weariness with the media 'hype' which has attended TTB, and with the 'megaphone hurling of almost snap judgements' by some of the new movement's detractors. 'Those of us on the ground have to live from day to day', he says, 'but there's no doubt at all ... that we are in an unusually wonderful move of God's Spirit.' Many hundreds, he notes, have a renewed Christian faith, a greater depth of repentance and a fresh desire to pray and read Scripture. He accepts, however, that the next step involve a major impact on the world. 'I think that's happening', he states, 'but it's early days'.

Ken Gott is still overseeing meetings at Sunderland Christian Centre six nights a week. Indeed, Price writes that SCC has come to be regarded as the "Toronto" of England'. 'The hallmark of what we're seeing up here', says Gott, 'is more of the manifest presence of God ... You're just aware that the place is saturated with the presence of God.' In seeking to develop the Blessing, Gott reports that SCC has been considering how to reach the inner-city district in which the church is situated: 'we're looking to release some mercy projects and just be glad to do that because of the way God has touched our hearts.' Gott and his wife Lois will soon write up their experiences more fully in a Hodder paperback called *The Sunderland Refreshing*. This will be published later in the year, on 16<sup>th</sup> November (→).<sup>261</sup>

Bryn Jones tells Price that he is trying to stress that the benefits of the Blessing need not be location-specific, and rather than encouraging his congregations to visit Toronto, has been keen to see them 'drinking constantly' with God as their source. 'We've seen people "going down", he recalls, 'and as they've done so, their shouts alone have indicated where they were unchurched! When they've got up they've been terrifically

<sup>261</sup> Gott, Ken & Lois, *The Sunderland Refreshing*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995.

saved. And they're going on with God, too.' Jones' Covenant Ministries network has reported a range of 'Toronto' phenomena, along with more unusual manifestations such as oil flowing from hands during worship, a sweet fragrance filling the air, and nearly 40 people seeing a cloud fill a worship-space. Despite all this, Jones insists that if things are handled in a godly way, 'the external manifestations will quickly assume their proper place behind the far more important issue – and that's the purpose of God for our time.' As for the critics of TTB, Price quotes from the Bawtry Hall Conference's *Charismatic Crossroads* statement, and from Reachout Trust's newsletter (←). He also speaks to Tony Higton, who tells him that he believes God is at work in the new movement, and that 'there is a baby with the bathwater, and the baby mustn't be thrown out.' Even so, he says that he has 'quite strongly-held cautions about the whole thing', not least the animal noises, the over-defensive attitude of some Toronto advocates, and the 'absolutely dreadful' techniques employed by Rodney Howard-Browne in the Wembley meeting which Higton attended in December and reviewed in *Christian Herald* on 14<sup>th</sup> January (←).<sup>262</sup>

The end of April also sees the launch by Monarch Books of *The Impact of Toronto* – a collection of articles from *Renewal* magazine edited by Wallace Boulton. Contributors include Eleanor Mumford, Nicky Gumbel, Terry Virgo, R.T. Kendall and Gerald Coates (←). In his preface, Boulton writes: 'God's Spirit is moving among us, with refreshing and releasing power. Momentous though this is, it is not, however, the longed-for revival which would shake and change the nation. It could be a preliminary, a preparation. We are at a critical stage.'<sup>263</sup>

**Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May 1995** – *Christian Herald* picks up on the 'campus awakenings' which have begun to take place in the wake of events at Howard Payne University in Texas and, most notably, Wheaton College, Illinois (← see 19<sup>th</sup> March). At Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, Massachusetts, President Kent Hill is quoted as saying, 'it's almost blasphemous to convey in words the power sensed in the remarkable openness of the students. There is nothing voyeuristic about it.' Hill adds that they 'were talking about the most important issues in their lives, the things they're ashamed of, afraid of, or struggling with.' College chaplains and deans, says the report, 'are forming accountability and Bible study groups and making themselves increasingly available for counselling'. John Woodbridge, Professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, is also quoted: 'Students are glowing over the experience and the mood of anticipation fills the campus. My hope is that pastors all over the country will invite students into their churches to let them speak about reconciliation. Lack of reconciliation holds back the evangelical church. These young people are leading the way.'<sup>264</sup>

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May 1995** – Around 90 New Zealand Christians from various denominations attend a screening in Dunedin of a new video on TTB fronted by Alan Morrison (←). Entitled *A Different Gospel: The Origin and Purpose of the Toronto*

<sup>262</sup> Price, Clive, 'Surfing the Toronto Wave', *Alpha*, May 1995, pp.6-9.

<sup>263</sup> Boulton, Wallace, 'Preface', *The Impact of Toronto*, ed. Wallace Boulton, Crowborough: Monarch, 1995, pp.9-10.

<sup>264</sup> 'Thousands More Undergo 'Revival'', *Christian Herald*, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1995.

*Blessing*,<sup>265</sup> the 150-minute film includes footage of a lecture given by Morrison in his home congregation, Crich Baptist Church, on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1994, and is illustrated with clips from meetings led by Kenneth Copeland and Rodney Howard-Browne in the United States (←).

Morrison states at the beginning of his lecture that he desires to see true revival, but that purported moves of God's Spirit must be tested in accordance with 1 John 4:1. The key criteria to be applied in such testing are, he says, whether what occurs bears out the teaching of Christ and the apostles, and whether it displays the reverence due to a holy God. Outlining the origins of TTB in the ministry of Rodney Howard-Browne and, by extension, the Faith movement with which he has been associated (←), Morrison shows a 30-minute video segment from a meeting led by Howard-Browne and Kenneth Copeland at Fort Worth, Texas. Both men quote Acts 3:19 in suggesting that the church is beginning to experience 'times of refreshing'. Copeland refers to Joel's prophecy of the 'former and latter rain' (Joel 2:28), and applies it to the current movement. For some time, both men address one another on the platform not in English, but in tongues. Towards the end of the clip, Howard-Browne the meeting moves into a time of ministry. Amidst a good deal of laughter, Howard-Browne can be heard voicing phrases such as "Fill 'em up, Jesus", "Let the bubble out of your belly" and "Go get 'em, Lord". Eventually, Howard-Browne himself is ministered to by Copeland, and falls to the floor.

After the clip is finished, Morrison explains that the sort of teaching and ministry represented on the tape constitutes an important root of TTB. He also relates this to other strands of charismatic activity, such as the ministry of Kathryn Kuhlman, William Branham and E.W. Kenyon (←), and questions its pedigree as a result. He also draws parallels with New Age and occult practises like Mesmerism, Shamanism, New Thought and Gnosticism.

The Crich pastor then shows a second extract on video, this time from a Rodney Howard-Browne meeting. Here, three pastors are interviewed about their experience of TTB, but are unable to articulate their experience, either shifting into tongues or being struck dumb. Howard-Browne is shown describing such phenomena as 'signs' and 'wonders'. Morrison is predictably scathing about this closing of preachers' mouths, suggesting that it cannot be God's desire to block the preaching of his Word.

Morrison concludes that TTB threatens the Church on at least eight fronts: by distorting Scripture to justify false manifestations; by eradicating the centrality of doctrine; by undermining the importance of evangelism; by ostracising those who would not participate; by offering a 'higher form of salvation'; by confusing pietism with true spirituality; by mediating occult-style practises, and by exhibiting the hallmarks of the great end-time deception of the saints prophesied in Scripture.

Despite all this, the video ends with Morrison hoping that TTB might spur biblical Christians into greater vigilance, and to diligence in their biblical study, the better to sift the true from the false.

---

<sup>265</sup> Morrison, Alan, *A Different Gospel: The Origin and Purpose of the Toronto Blessing*. Diakrisis/Crich Baptist Church, 1995 (Video).

**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 1995** – Writing in *The Church of England Newspaper*, Charlotte Hails surveys developments in a number of key evangelical Anglican churches, and in certain prisons. At St. Mark's Battersea Rise, a church plant from Holy Trinity, Brompton, vicar Paul Perkin tells Hails that since TTB arrived, his congregation has "a greater awareness of the vital importance of evangelism, a stronger desire to meet in prayer together and a heightened expectation of God's ability to do whatever he likes – a heightened awareness of the surprising intervention of God." Meanwhile, Rev Sue Hope of St. Margaret and St. Thomas, Sheffield, comments that "people are more in love with the Lord ... In Toronto I had the experience of roaring like a lion [and] I hear that [other] people have had extraordinary long-term experiences relating to the 'lion'. For me, inwardly this was a profound and prophetic experience ... [it] helps me to preach and teach more effectively and to pray more."

David Betts, Rector of the high-profile charismatic church St. Nicholas, Nottingham, speaks of wide-ranging fruit: "There is a greater spiritual love for God and awareness of him. There is renewed zeal and commitment to Christ and a love of prayer and worship." In church meetings, he says, "there is a deeper intensity and the interest in prayer and Bible study has increased."

At Exeter Prison, Rev. Bill Birdwood, a Chaplain, says that after a series of Bible studies in Mark's gospel, 'we prayed for about 15 of the 18 there and about 10-12 were on the floor.'" This has combined with an Alpha course to bring about a powerful upsurge in evangelism, he says. Likewise, at Lewes Prison, Rev. David Powe has seen 261 become Christians since he arrived in April 1994, with the keynote being repentance.

The past week has also seen some 25 ministries within the charismatic movement joining forces to issue a 500-word statement welcoming 'the current work of the Holy Spirit' and calling attention to 'the beneficial changes that have taken place', including numerical growth and the resolution of longstanding conflicts. Among those approving the statement are Pioneer, Salt and Light, Ichthus, Cornerstone and New Frontiers International. The text laments 'certain extreme statements that have been made in books and articles about the Toronto Blessing and these Times of Refreshing.' Most such critiques, it continues, 'have been made without any serious investigation', and have been 'based on hearsay'. The statement concludes with a pledge to accept God's further and future blessing 'so that the heart of the nation will be touched once more with the Good News of Jesus Christ.' It also applauds the work of the Evangelical Alliance in bringing together charismatics and non-charismatics to debate TTB, and calls for 'further conferences for those who are having difficulty with what is taking place as well as those who are at the centre of what they regard to be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.'

This statement will subsequently be published in *Evangelism Today*.<sup>266</sup> [*It is reproduced here in Section III*]

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May 1995** – The June issue of *Alpha* magazine updates readers on the 'college revival' which has emerged over the past two months in the USA (←). Reportedly, at the Wheaton plenary meetings, students filled five bin-bags with bottles

<sup>266</sup> *Evangelism Today*, August 1995, p.8.

of alcohol, pornography and secular music. Chaplain Barbara Woodburn confirms that counselling has been arranged for those affected: "There are students", she says, "who needed help in unravelling some very personal things that had complicated their lives."

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May 1995** – Writing in the May-June edition of *Prophecy Today*, Johannes Facius reports on a recent visit he has made to TAV. His assessment is that 'while some people seemed to have a kind of physical experience of great peace and joy, others appeared dominated by demonic manifestations.' He adds that 'there were those who were simply putting on a show and trying to fake a spiritual experience.' Facius does not believe that anything got seriously out of hand, but stresses that he is not impressed by what occurred.

In an article for *Renewal*, charismatic Anglican theologian Mark Stibbe warns of the potential 'pitfalls' of TTB. One of the greatest dangers, he writes, is that churches might neglect their 'outward-directed, mission focus' and seek 'blessings for their own sakes'. We need constantly to remind ourselves, he adds, that 'the power of the Holy Spirit is given in order that we may be Christ's witnesses (Ac 1:8).' Furthermore, says Stibbe, 'demonstrations of the Spirit's power are mainly to accompany the proclamation of Christ crucified' (1 Cor. 2:1-4). Signs and wonders attend and accredit the preaching of the gospel to the unsaved.' Rather than preaching on manifestations themselves, asserts Stibbe, Wesley, Whitefield and Edwards 'declared the life-changing truths of the gospel in public places, and the phenomena which we are witnessing today attended and followed that preaching'. Stibbe then wonders how many churches affected by TTB are viewing revival phenomena like falling, crying and laughing in the context of preaching the gospel to the unchurched. 'Manifestation without mission', warns Stibbe, is unacceptable.

Stibbe goes on to present a thesis which is expounded more fully in his soon-to-be-published book on Toronto, *Times of Refreshing* – a book for which this article serves as a 'trailer'. Defining contemporary Western society as 'addictive', he argues that in such a context, 'there is always a danger of quick-fix spiritualities – of people going to religious meetings in order to get high on experience'. Comparing this current situation with the ethos of the early British charismatic movement of the 1960s, Stibbe remarks that whereas emotionalism and outward display were then handled with great caution and reticence, there is now a real danger of people becoming 'addicted to ecstatic experiences of the Holy Spirit', thereby overlooking God's priorities of repentance, holiness, healing and renewal. Noting that despite their dramatic effect at the time, both the Welsh Revival of 1904 and the Asuza Street outpouring of 1906 faded for lack of focussed Bible teaching, Stibbe worries that the same fate may befall TTB.<sup>267</sup>

On this day also, *Evangelicals Now* prints an 3,000 word analysis of TTB by the highly respected conservative evangelical preacher Roy Clements. This thoroughly researched piece is informed by a visit Clements has paid to TAV earlier in the year. Having described the structure and content of a typical evening meeting at Toronto, Clements declares, 'I find myself both less hostile and less euphoric than some whose opinions on the 'Toronto' phenomenon I have read and heard.' It is 'quite irrefutable', he writes, that people 'are being helped in ways that seem spiritually positive as a result of 'Toronto'-style meetings. He perceives that the number of direct converts at TAV meetings is small,

<sup>267</sup> Stibbe, Mark, 'Revival Phenomena: Beware of Pitfalls', *Renewal*, June 1995, pp.33-4.

but admits that ministers whose churches have been affected by TTB 'often report extraordinary rates of church growth and greatly-increased evangelistic zeal among church members.'

Perhaps surprisingly, Clements states that the meetings he observed in Toronto were 'theologically orthodox' and conducted in a 'reasonably responsible fashion'. No serious error was being taught, he stresses. He reports that he did not detect 'undue psychological pressure or emotional manipulation from the leadership.' The atmosphere of expectation was, if anything, 'being generated from within the congregation', he adds. Comparing the Toronto manifestations with those experienced in the revivals associated with Wesley, Whitefield and Edwards, Clements accepts that what is happening in TTB is 'not new'. He notes similarities with various kinds of non-Christian mysticism, from Hindu cults and New Age spiritualities to mesmerism. He also comments that 'infectious hysteria' is common in varieties of psychotherapy which practise 'body work', including primal therapy, psychodrama, bio-energetics and Ericksonian hypnotherapy. Despite such parallels, however, Clements underlines that the presence of such manifestations does not, in and of itself, prove anything. Citing Edwards, he takes the view that they cannot intrinsically confirm 'either positive or negative' assessments of a spiritual experience. The key, Clements implies, must lie in the motivations and intentions of those who manifest the phenomena in question. 'Are they laughing out of delirious relief at being saved?', he asks, 'Or is the emotion much less focussed than that? Is it simply the release of pent-up feelings arising from a general sense of inner tension and unresolved frustration?'

All in all, Clements suspects that the Toronto experience is 'a very mixed affair'. Some, he accepts, may have come to the meetings with many years of Christian understanding and biblical background behind them, and may well have related such knowledge constructively to what they found in the Blessing. Clements fears, however, that others with less maturity might simply have seized on TTB as 'a permissive context for "letting go" of repressed emotions', without finding that their devotional life or appreciation of Scripture has been advanced as a result. Within this much vaguer set of emotional reactions, Clements expresses concern about the 'sexually suggestive' nature of the 'physical shaking and gyrating' he has witnessed. In the end, however, he strikes a neutral note which again takes its cue from Edwards: 'It is important', he writes, 'that the *diversity* of what is going on spiritually and psychologically at these meetings should be acknowledged. The manifestations observed are common to the whole range of human experience. Laughter can be a healthy and appropriate expression of intense feelings. But it can also be unhealthy, hysterical or even demonic.'

Outlining practical responses to TTB, Clements suggests a need for better counselling, given that some who manifest intensely may be *acting out* a trauma rather than *working it through*, and better teaching, since the Toronto meetings he has attended do not seem to be providing the sort of 'thorough and wide-ranging' exposition that is really demanded. Reflecting on the place of TTB within evangelicalism, Clements looks back thirty years to gain perspective, and to sound a warning:

In many respects the Toronto blessing poses the same questions for us as did the wave of enthusiasm for the gift of tongues when the neo-charismatic movement began in the 1960s. Then, too, debate raged about whether this

manifestation of spiritual renewal was a supernatural work of God, a demonic counterfeit or a self-manufactured psychological state of ecstasy. The same dangers are evident in the two movements also: mindless subjectivism; self-indulgent introversion; most of all, there is the peril of division among evangelical Christians. Ironically, the Toronto blessing is currently proving divisive within the charismatic constituency, as well as among those who have always been cautious about such manifestations of enthusiasm.

In conclusion, Clements personally finds 'no reason to oppose' TTB. Neither, however, will he 'shed any tears' if it 'fades into oblivion, like so many other fads that have ephemerally obsessed the neo-charismatic movement'. Moreover, he writes, 'whether I speak in tongues or fall on the floor in delirious laughter is a matter of very little consequence to me indeed.'<sup>268</sup>

**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May–Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> June 1995** – Alan Morrison's Diakrisis organisation coordinates a conference on TTB at High Leigh, Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire. Entitled 'Strange Fire?', the event attracts over 100 and is addressed by Peter Fenwick, minister of Central House Church in Sheffield, Stanley Jebb, pastor of New Covenant Baptist Church, Dunstable, Brian Edwards, President of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, church historian Nick Needham, and Morrison himself.

As he did at the Bawtry Hall consultation on 15<sup>th</sup> April (←), Fenwick insists that TTB has neither warrant nor precedent in Scripture. In a stinging critique, he asserts that twenty-five years of 'unfulfilled prophecies', a growing acceptance of Wimberite 'power evangelism' and of 'kingdom now' teaching, together with a 'dangerous pride', have left the charismatic movement in general, and its restorationist wing in particular, 'wide open to every new thing'.

Jebb argues that over a number of years the charismatic movement has exhibited a range of dubious traits which have now made it susceptible to the distortions of Toronto. These traits are identified as: raised expectations, the elevation of questionable experiences, frequent exposure to such experiences at large meetings, preaching with little biblical or doctrinal content, crediting pictures as divine revelation, and excusing the misapplication of scriptural truth.

Needham for his part objects to what he sees as a misappropriation of Jonathan Edwards by those seeking an apologetic for TTB. Stressing that Edwards regarded physical manifestations as incidental details of revival which cannot, in themselves, either validate or invalidate spiritual experience, Needham contends that whereas for Edwards bodily effects were secondary to the effect of the Holy Spirit upon the mind, in TTB, 'the power operates directly on the body'.

Brian Edwards bases his critique of TTB on Isaiah 62. The Blessing, he says, has defaced the image of God in humanity, and has actually discouraged prayer for revival. Indeed, he is convinced that one of the greatest hindrances to genuine revival is the charismatic movement as a whole.

---

<sup>268</sup> Clements, Roy, 'Toronto: A Personal Appraisal', *Evangelicals Now*, June 1995, pp.16-17.



Morrison repeats many of the points made in his Diakrisis broadsides, *We All Fall Down* and *Falling for the Lie* (←). As well as exhibiting numerous occult and New Age characteristics, TTB is seen by Morrison as doctrinally defective with respect to its models of revelation, pneumatology, sanctification and eschatology.

The High Leigh conference also gives several of those attending the chance to tell of their alienation and ostracisation from churches where TTB has come to the fore.

The conference is subsequently reported in the *Baptist Times*,<sup>269</sup> *Christian Herald*,<sup>270</sup> *Evangelicals Now*,<sup>271</sup> *Evangelism Today*<sup>272</sup> and *Evangelical Times*.<sup>273</sup>

**Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1995** – The Evangelical Alliance hosts a second major consultation on TTB, following up its Euston Conference of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December 1994 (←). This meeting is held at the Alliance's offices in Kennington, South London, and attracts some 60 leaders. Speakers on the day are Baptist Union General Secretary David Coffey, Marlow Christian Fellowship lay leader David Noakes, Ichthus Fellowship founder Roger Forster, Westminster Chapel minister R.T. Kendall and Dr. Andrew Walker of King's College, London.

Setting the scene for the consultation, Andrew Walker traces the provenance of TTB in Britain through 'four main entry-points': the South-West London Vineyard and HTB, Queen's Road Baptist Church, Terry Virgo's New Frontiers network and Rodney Howard-Browne's visits to the UK in June and December 1994 (←). Walker is particularly keen to highlight the difference between the 'Howard-Browne' version of the new movement, which he associates with the 'pump it up', classical Pentecostal tradition of his own childhood, and the more 'Wimberite' version which has spread mainly through HTB. 'There is clearly potential here for conflicts of style and social class', he remarks; 'Perhaps more significantly, there is also potential for conflicts over theology.' Walker adds that he thinks TTB is moving, on analogy (though only on analogy) from an 'Acts 2' phase to an 'Acts 15' phase – 'from the first phase of blessing to the church council phase of reflection'. The Alliance Consultation, he implies, represents an important development in this respect.

David Noakes then proceeds to present TTB as a severe challenge to the charismatic movement. Suggesting that charismatics, of which he is one, have now 'lost our way somewhat', Noakes recounts a visit he has recently paid to Toronto. Disturbed by the 'deafening' music and 'rock concert' atmosphere, he describes the scene as one in which 'anyone prone to easy hypnosis might have ended up in a trance.' In addition, he detects many of the manifestations as being 'demonic', with several women 'unmistakably in a state of high sexual excitement'. Reporting that he heard instruction being given in Toronto that 'discernment was unnecessary, that God was totally in control and Satan could not get a look-in because the power of God was so great', Noakes comments that he 'cannot imagine a more deadly piece of advice'. Having examined the biblical arguments in favour of TTB, the Noakes rejects their exegetical foundation, and

<sup>269</sup> 'Toronto Blessing: 'A Great Deception'', 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1995, p.4.

<sup>270</sup> 'Toronto 'Defaces the Image of God'', *Christian Herald*, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1995, p.20.

<sup>271</sup> 'Strange Fire', *Evangelicals Now*, July 1995, p.24.

<sup>272</sup> 'The Toronto Blessing: The Serious Debate Begins', *Evangelism Today*, July, 1995, p.8.

<sup>273</sup> 'Toronto Gets 'Rigorous Assessment' at Conference', *Evangelical Times*, July 1995.

concludes that 'the boundaries of safety which Scripture establishes are being torn down in order to justify the acceptance of new experience. This spells utmost danger for God's people.'

Roger Forster suggests that the new movement is not yet worthy of the term 'revival', but that it can legitimately be seen as a 'time of refreshing'. He believes that most of the manifestations can be shown to have biblical precedent, and points out that Scripture can at times appear even more radical in this sphere than what has been occurring – e.g. in the levitation of Ezekiel. He concedes that animal noises are usually signs of demonic activity, but even here he urges that critics 'wait to judge, without being too quick to jump'. He can, he says, countenance the idea that 'the occasional roar or two ... might sound like God roaring from heaven'. Through it all, however, Forster is clear that the phenomena should be interpreted and explained, lest the movement fall foul of mystical obfuscation. He accepts that there has been a degree of anti-intellectualism, libertinism, manipulation and self-indulgence. All the same, he is content to regard TTB as a sign of preparation for 'the end time', and pleads that the Church does not throw away a 'God-given opportunity for world evangelism' before the end finally arrives.

R.T. Kendall surprises some by testifying that although he had been initially hostile to TTB, the personal transformations of his wife and son while sitting under the ministry of Rodney Howard-Browne have forced him to revise his opinion. 'It just so happens', he says, 'that I believe Rodney is a man of God. God uses crude men who are not so literate ... and who stick their foot in it.' Recognising the use which is being made of Jonathan Edwards on both sides of the Toronto debate, Kendall points out that in his sermon 'True Grace as Distinguished from the Doctrines of Devils', the New England theologian showed that the one thing the devil cannot do is to produce a true love for the glory of God. Kendall is ready, he says, to affirm that such love and such glory are present in the new movement. One aspect of the manifestation of God's glory which is evident in TTB, says Kendall, is that 'God may choose to turn up in a way that offends the mind ... If I were forced to choose one verse as a theological rationale for what we are talking about it would be 'God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise' (1 Cor. 1:27).

Summing up, David Coffey appeals to Matthew 18 as he calls both for a deeper examination of the theological issues at stake in TTB, and a strengthened commitment to evangelical unity. The latter prerogative is vital, he says, at a time when political and social commentators are offering no clear solutions to society's loss of confidence.

The consultation ends with a request from those present that the Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (ACUTE) undertake more thoroughgoing biblical and theological analysis of TTB. ACUTE Co-ordinator Dave Cave agrees to take this forward.<sup>274</sup>

Also today, in an article for *The Church of England Newspaper*, Charlotte Hails questions whether anything approaching a 'theology of Toronto' has begun to emerge. The keynote of Hails's piece is struck in a quotation from Mark Stibbe (←). She has asked him whether, as a post-biblical phenomenon, TTB is generating 'a new theology of the

<sup>274</sup> Quotations from the consultation are taken from transcripts of the talks given. These transcripts have been published on the Evangelical Alliance website: [www.eauk.org](http://www.eauk.org)

Holy Spirit'. He answers: 'The question implies that there is an old theology of the Holy Spirit that we all agree to. I don't think this is so. People have only started to create one in recent years. The danger is that our experience might dictate our theology, but there has got to be a circle in which experience and biblical theology go together.'<sup>275</sup>

In a corresponding article, East London University Chaplain John Richardson argues that experience is still running far too far ahead of theology where TTB is concerned. As such, it is, he charges, being constructed on sand rather than solid ground. The new movement does not, contends Richardson, derive from the message of 'Christ crucified', nor does it develop that message: 'What is preached are the phenomena. It is a "Gospel of the Spirit" where Christians are focused on what is claimed to be the Spirit's work, instead of having the Spirit focus them on Jesus' work.' Richardson goes on to assert that 'there is nothing whatsoever in the New Testament that would suggest we should expect or seek any of the phenomena currently accompanying the 'Toronto Blessing'. Furthermore, 'Attempts to justify them from isolated incidents in the Old Testament are totally unsatisfactory since, unlike the Biblical examples quoted, the experiences of the 'Toronto Blessing' are usually detached from any corresponding cause. People laugh when there is nothing funny. They fall down when there is no manifestation of God.'<sup>276</sup>

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June 1995** – The Evangelical Alliance issues a press release on the 'Toronto' consultation held last Friday (←). The text summarises the contributions made by speakers at the event, and adds that delegates 'requested the Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth (ACUTE) ... to look at how the Bible should be interpreted in the light of the 'Toronto Blessing''. ACUTE Co-ordinator Dave Cave, who organised the event with other Alliance staff, is quoted: "There has been some theological firing from the hip over the 'Toronto Blessing'. We hope to produce an in-depth response to some of the issues being raised. Our aim is to preserve unity without sacrificing truth."

The consultation, and its call for further research, are duly reported in this week's *Baptist Times* and *Church of England Newspaper*, and in the July issue of *Evangelical Times*.<sup>277</sup>

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 1995** – New Zealand's leading Christian newspaper, *Challenge Weekly*, devotes this week's issue to a number of articles from various perspectives on TTB. In global terms, New Zealand churches have been among the most receptive to TTB since it emerged. In a leader, Publisher and Chief Editor Henk Kamsteeg urges readers to observe five principles as they come to terms with the new movement: 1) Beware the sensationalism of the media; 2) Test everything; 3) Avoid the prejudice which dismisses anything new; 4) Learn afresh about discernment, and 5) Toronto or no Toronto, seek greater holiness and devotion to Scripture.<sup>278</sup>

<sup>275</sup> Hails, Charlotte, 'Do the Experience and the Biblical Theology Match Up?', *Church of England Newspaper*, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1995, p.9.

<sup>276</sup> Richardson, John, 'Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus', *Church of England Newspaper*, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1995, p.8.

<sup>277</sup> 'Call for More Theological Research on the Toronto Blessing', *Baptist Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1995, p.3; 'Toronto Splits Evangelicals', *Church of England Newspaper*, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1995; 'EA Toronto Consultation 'A Confusion'', *Evangelical Times*, July 1995.

<sup>278</sup> Kamsteeg, Henk, 'Toronto Blessing Pro and Contra', *Challenge Weekly*, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1995, p.1.

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1995 – Canon Michael Green, a leading Anglican charismatic now co-ordinating the Springboard evangelistic initiative, writes on TTB for *The Church of England Newspaper*. He is favourably disposed towards the 'Gamaliel Principle' of testing the Blessing by its longer-term fruit and durability (←), and rejects a number of arguments which, he feels, have 'muddied the water' in respect of the new movement. First, he writes, although Rodney Howard-Browne's links with Rhema and WordFaith are cause for concern, they need not in themselves detract from the validity of TTB. As Green sees it, 'An enormous amount of 'the blessing' is taking place among all sorts of people who have never heard of Howard-Browne, been to Toronto, or had anything to do with Holy Trinity Brompton. It can be and often is a spontaneous happening, quite unsought.'

The second 'misapprehension' noted by Green relates to the hotly-disputed issue of manipulation. In response to those who accuse Toronto proponents of this, Green retorts: 'I challenge any clergy to get large numbers of a typically Anglican congregation to lie upon the ground of their church. I have not infrequently been praying for people myself and have been surprised when I looked round to find they had fallen to the ground.'

A third 'canard' singled out by Green is the Vineyard origin of the new movement. He accepts that this is a significant factor, but insists that the Vineyard is only one among several 'streams by which this phenomenon [has] hit Britain'.

Fourthly, Green questions the argument, mooted by Mark Stibbe and others (←), that TTB is a response to the addictive, experientialist culture of the postmodern West. Whilst conceding that we do indeed live in an experience-oriented age, Green's own observations lead him to submit that those most helped by the Blessing 'have not constantly returned for another dose, but have demonstrated a new love for Christ which they date to the profound experience of God they received while semi-conscious on the floor, or as laughter or tears broke through the inhibitions which had crippled their emotional life for years.' Sociologically, however, he is prepared to interpret TTB as reflective of a more general shift of worldview:

In an age which is beginning to rediscover the right side of the brain, and reacting against Enlightenment rationalism, there is an understandable cult of experience. You see it in the addiction to music, the TV etc. But experience is what the church has been very short of. Plenty of talk about God, but not a lot of life-changing encounter with God. Is it so reprehensible, then, if God should determine in this day and age to offer a powerful experience of his presence and his power? Surely not.

Turning to Scripture, Green finds ample corroboration of 'Toronto'-style manifestations in the Old and New Testaments. On falling down, he cites Gen. 15:12, Ezek. 3:23, Dan. 8:17, 10:9; Acts 9:26 and Rev. 1:17. On shaking, he draws attention to Dan. 10:7, Ps. 99:1, Hab 3:16 and Acts 4:31. On 'drunkenness', which he interprets as 'being so full of the Spirit that the limbs are uncoordinated', he finds parallels in Jer. 23:9, Acts 2:13 and Eph. 5:8. Crying and laughing are present, says Green, at Neh. 8:9, 2 Chron.34:27, Acts 2:37, Psalm 126, Eccl. 3:4 and Jn. 17:13. All these phenomena are thus biblical, Green avers, and he can see 'no *a priori* reason why they should not happen today as they did in

Bible times'. Furthermore, he defends them as signs of God's presence, rebukes to the this-worldliness of much of the Church, and potential challenges to the 'rationalism that has dogged much of our theology for 200 years.'

Green follows Jonathan Edwards and the contemporary author John White in emphasising that the manifestations cannot intrinsically guarantee anything and should not be 'hunted' for. Even so, he is more than prepared to view them as spurs to 'greater Christlikeness of life and community'.<sup>279</sup>

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1995** – The July edition of *Evangelical Times* publishes a letter written in late May by Diakrisis Director Alan Morrison to the Evangelical Alliance, explaining why he would not be attending the Alliance's special consultation on TTB on 2<sup>nd</sup> June (←). 'You are holding a meeting purportedly to uphold unity among evangelical churches', he says, 'However, it is the people who have promoted the so-called 'Toronto Blessing' itself who have brought division, deception and damaging practices into the church. I cannot possibly involve myself in an alliance with those responsible for this.' Quoting the favourite separatist text Romans 16:17-18, Morrison justifies his absence on the grounds that Toronto is a dangerous departure from apostolic doctrine. Among its faults, he repeats the core accusations made in his address to the 'Strange Fire?' consultation at the beginning of the month – namely, that TTB promotes extra-biblical revelation, false salvation, arrogant leadership claims, theological double-talk, defective Christology, erroneous pneumatology, unjustified scriptural proof-texting, vicious denunciation of detractors, and syncretism. Dismissing the now familiar 'argument from fruits', Morrison asserts that the same results as claimed by Toronto proponents could be achieved 'from attendance at Erhard Seminars Training, a course in Silva Mind Control or becoming a sanyassin in the society for Krishna consciousness.' Morrison confirms that he is himself 'a veteran of the New Age movement and Eastern mystical sects', and that prior to his conversion, he would have seen TTB as just 'one more of the many cults that I experienced in over twenty years of spiritual searching'. Cults must not be negotiated with, he suggests, but must be rejected as deceptions. Hence, to the Alliance's UK Director Joel Edwards he writes: 'I regard your meetings on this subject as one more pitiful episode in the downgrade which has so characterized professing evangelicals churches in the last decades of the twentieth century.'<sup>280</sup>

In an editorial comment following Morrison's letter, *ET* remarks that 'of course, those involved know that anything short of unqualified rejection of the 'Toronto phenomenon' will be construed as a vindication of the whole sorry mess.' The Alliance's efforts at reconciliation in this matter are thus seen as merely perpetuating the root problem, rather than solving it. EA's call for more theological work is written off as 'just a fudge', while the Whitefield House Consultation's stated intent to 'look at how the Bible is to be interpreted in the light of the 'Toronto Blessing' is dismissed as 'the theology of liberalism, not of evangelicals'. By contrast, the comment concludes, 'The Toronto issue must be interpreted in the light of the Bible, no the other way around.'<sup>281</sup> Joel Edwards and Dave Cave will reply to all this in the August copy of *ET* (→ 29<sup>th</sup> July 1995). Morrison will respond in his turn in September (→).

<sup>279</sup> Green, Michael, 'The Blessing? It's All in the Bible!', *Church of England Newspaper*, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1995, p.9.

<sup>280</sup> 'EA Toronto Consultation 'A Confusion'', *Evangelical Times*, July 1995, p.10.

<sup>281</sup> 'EA Toronto Consultation 'A Confusion'', *Evangelical Times*, July 1995, p.10.

Also at the end of June, Kensington Temple Pastor Colin Dye writes in *Joy* magazine that 'this fresh move of the Spirit threatens the powerless and backslidden body of Christ represented by Saul [cf. 1 Sam. 15].' By the same token, he suggests, the movement can also be viewed in terms of the anointing which passed from Saul to David. As with the humble shepherd-king, writes Dye, 'today it will be the insignificant, unnoticed people who will do the greatest exploits for God.'<sup>282</sup>

The same July issue of *Joy* carries an interview with Mary Audrey Raycroft, Ministry Team Trainer at TAV. She emphasises the central place given to accountability at the Airport Vineyard: all team members wear badges and directional prophecy is discouraged. There is a pool of around 150-170 trained team members, from whom she says she draws between 12 and 50, depending on the attendance.<sup>283</sup>

This late-June period also sees the publication of two critiques of TTB from Day One – the theological books arm of the Lord's Day Observance Society and a platform for largely conservative evangelical authors who are sceptical about the charismatic movement. Leigh Belcham's *Toronto: The Baby or the Bathwater* claims to be the work of 'an ordinary Christian' from a charismatic background who is concerned that TTB might be more negative than positive for the Church. Over thirteen brief chapters, he argues that advocates and proponents of the movement have thus far failed to present adequate evidence that it is truly of God.

Jebb's study is more detailed, and is based partly on the author's personal visits to some of the major British 'centres' of the Blessing. All the same, he reaches similar conclusions to Belcham. While prepared to accept that TTB covers a 'mixture' of experiences, Jebb argues that those who have been positively blessed may simply have been touched by God *in spite* of Toronto, 'because they are hungry', and because God's grace can bypass the kinds of 'deception' which he believes are being mediated through the new movement.<sup>284</sup>

Both titles sell out within the first month of publication and are reprinted in August.

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June 1995** – The annual Methodist Conference, meeting this year in Bristol, considers a motion on TTB proposed by Rev Paul Newman of Darlington and seconded by Rev Christopher Mabb of North Wales. It asks conference, 'in the light of the worldwide move of God sometimes referred to as the Toronto "blessing", to welcome 'welcome every genuine work of the Holt Spirit, holding to the words of Scripture: "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything." Christopher Mabb indicates that the purpose of the motion is threefold: to legitimise those who feel called to minister in such things, to give a positive directive to those who have only heard the critical side of the debate, and to encourage others to feel able to minister in the mode of TTB.

---

<sup>282</sup> Dye, Colin, 'Ready to Face the Giants', *Joy*, July 1995.

<sup>283</sup> Butler, Dot, 'Training the Toronto Team (Interview with Mary Audrey Raycroft)', *Joy*, July 1995.

<sup>284</sup> Belcham, Leigh, *Toronto: The Baby or the Bathwater*, Bromley: Day One, 1995; Jebb, Stanley, *No Laughing Matter: The 'Toronto' Phenomenon and its Implications*, Bromley: Day One, 1995.

In the ensuing debate on the motion, Rev John Cooke urges that while Methodism is a religion of the heart, new charismatic movements such as TTB can veer into triumphalism, and should therefore be approached with caution. Rev Neil Dixon, Secretary to the Faith and Order Committee acknowledges that the motion is carefully worded, but says that it seems to have done its testing already, and found a congenial answer – that TTB is clearly 'a world wide move of God'. He does not believe that it is appropriate, he adds, for the Methodist Church either formally to welcome, or formally to reject, TTB. On this basis, he proposes that a vote on the motion be not put. This proposal is defeated, however, and the debate moves forward when Revds Martin Turner and Paul Smith present an amended notice of motion which deletes the phrase 'world wide move of God' and adds a clause calling on the Faith and Order Committee to prepare for next year's Conference a report on the Blessing which will incorporate responses from ministers and members of local churches. Conference duly accepts this revised notice of motion.<sup>285</sup>

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July 1995** – Marshall Pickering launch a major new assessment of TTB by the charismatic Anglican theologian Mark Stibbe. Entitled *Times of Refreshing*, the book is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1 seeks to set TTB within its historical context. Stibbe proposes that the Blessing carries with it the 'first hints' of a 'fourth wave' of modern Holy Spirit renewal. Taking his cue from a taxonomy first proposed by Peter Wagner in the mid-1980s (← 1986), he identifies the 'first wave' of this renewal with the development of Pentecostalism, from the Asuza Street revival in Los Angeles in 1906 to its current presence in over 200 countries among some 200 million people. The 'second wave' is defined as the outflow of Pentecostal spirituality into the historic mainline denominations – a process which began in the early years of the century but which gained serious momentum in North America in the late 1950s, spreading to Britain and Europe in the early Sixties. The 'Third Wave' is associated with the 'signs and wonders' emphasis of John Wimber and the Vineyard (see 1986 ←). Now, suggests Stibbe, 'Toronto' can be regarded as the 'sea fret' of a new swell of divine activity – activity which he predicts will lead on to nothing less than 'global revival'. Citing a famous prophecy given by the Pentecostal pioneer Smith Wigglesworth in 1947, Stibbe anticipates that this revival will stem from a profound re-integration of emphases on the Word and the Spirit.

What especially distinguishes Stibbe's analysis here is his relation of this historical schema to the vision of Ezekiel in Ezek. 47:1-12. This is the passage in which the prophet pictures four 'waves of blessing' flowing from Temple and going on to heal and restore the land. As Stibbe recognises, it has become a 'favourite passage' for proponents of TTB (cf. 29<sup>th</sup> October 1994; 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1994 ←). For his part, he acknowledges Sheffield Rector Mike Breen as the one who first alerted him to the potential of the text for understanding the different phases of 20<sup>th</sup> century renewal. As a reputable New Testament scholar, Stibbe readily admits the problems which go with using Scripture in such a way. He acknowledges that many Old Testament experts would regard any direct application of this ancient Hebrew document to 20th century church history as at best anachronistic and at worst downright misleading. 'Both liberals and conservatives', he notes, 'would argue that interpretation is a matter of discovering the

<sup>285</sup> 'Toronto 'Blessing'', *Methodist Recorder*, Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 1995, p.16.

objective meaning of a text using the scientific methods associated with historical criticism. Both would agree that Mike Breen's kind of exegesis is extremely subjective... Despite this, Stibbe insists that such historical critics need to appreciate that people affected by Pentecostal spirituality have 'a different approach to hermeneutics.'

The approach in question is dubbed by Stibbe the 'This is That' model of interpretation. The phrase is taken from the Authorised Version of Acts 2:16, in which Peter preaches to the crowd on the Day of Pentecost and says of the dramatic scene unfolding around him, '*This is That* which was spoken by the prophet Joel' [Joel 2:28-32]. Just as with Peter on this occasion, so with Pentecostals and charismatics today, Stibbe asserts, 'The primary task of exegesis involves perceiving what the Father is doing right now amongst us (like Jesus in John 5:19) and then allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us to Bible texts that elucidate that work.' He adds: 'the important thing is 'contextualized exegesis' – understanding our own communal story in the light of the overarching story of Scripture.' Contending that this approach is in fact closer to the use made of the Old Testament by the New, and is thus in significant ways more 'biblical' than historical-critical methods focussed on the original intent of the author, Stibbe nonetheless urges that prophetic interpretations like Mike Breen's need to be tested. Even here, however, the most appropriate milieu for such testing is seen to be the church community. Interpretative validity thereby becomes substantially a matter of corroboration. Or as Stibbe himself puts it, "Is the same thing being said by others?" Since many are gaining insight at this time from Ezekiel 47, and since the 'four waves' analogy appears to be widespread, he infers that it is likely to be from God.

Beyond the broad historical patterns he infers from the text, Stibbe also finds in Ezekiel 47 eight 'marks' of revival which he expects will characterise the coming 'forth wave' of the Holy Spirit. These are: great sacrifice (vv.1-2); profound spirituality (5), Biblical integration (7), supernatural signs (8), massive growth ((5), extraordinary variety among converts (10), practical compassion (7) and divine judgement (11).

In Chapter 2, Stibbe elaborates on these 'tests' for true revival by suggesting further criteria by which authentic movements of God's Spirit can be discerned. Most fundamentally of all, he highlights three essential checks which must be invoked. Quoting 1 John 4:1, he defines the first of these as the Test of Christology – that is, whether a spiritual manifestation serves to exalt Christ. The second, after 1 John 3:23, is entitled the Test of Character, and concerns whether a purported work of the Spirit binds believers together more closely in love. The third test is called by Stibbe the Test of Consequence, and is derived from Jesus' advice in 7:15-16 that prophets should be known by their fruit.

In applying these and other criteria to TTB, Stibbe is persuaded that it is well on the way to qualifying as a genuine revival. It is, he says, 'not a planned event but an unplanned, sovereign work of God' – one which has majored on the centrality of Christ and which has fostered reconciliation between churches and individuals. There is already much good fruit, he suggests, although he cautions that 'what we are now seeing at this stage is [the] centrifugal, evangelistic character of [previous] revivals.' In connection with this, he also concedes that deep levels of mass repentance have yet to be witnessed. Returning to Ezekiel 47, he concludes that 'the river of the Spirit is still confined to the Temple courts – that is, to the churches.' If the present movement is to develop into a



revival, he writes, 'we must allow the Spirit to burst out of the closed doors of our churches and to carry us out into a world lost in the darkness of the Arabah.'

Chapter 3 of *Times of Refreshing* propounds another provocative theory in relation to the Blessing. Here, Stibbe attempts to account for the new movement in sociological terms. He suggests that in this instance, as throughout history, God is adapting his purposes to 'the needs of the hour'. Where TTB is concerned, says Stibbe, God can be seen to have provided a sanctified means of sublimating of the 'addictive culture' that is the postmodern West. Following the psychologist of religion Howard Clinebell, Stibbe argues that as they face the stresses and confusions of the post-industrial world, increasing numbers of people are turning to 'ecstatic, mood-altering and escapist activities' in order to 'blot out the realities of life'. Whether through drugs, food, shopping or sex, they are seeking tangible experiences which are, in effect, serving as substitutes for direct, mystical, numinous encounters with God. By allowing itself to become 'pale and anaemic' in capitulation to Enlightenment rationalism, Stibbe submits that the Church has lost much of its capacity to attract such people. TTB is therefore God's way of meeting this deficit; it is the 'divine alternative' to ephemeral intoxication, an explanation for which Stibbe finds clear warrant in Ephesians 5:15-20.

In Chapter 4, Stibbe offers biblical and historical backing for the laughter associated with TTB. While generally sanguine about its validity, he accepts that some of the laughter mentioned in Scripture is mocking rather than truly joyful. He also writes that ecstatic expressions of laughter can be 'a potentially addictive experience.' Like eating, he says, 'it releases natural pain-killers (endorphins) in the structure of the brain, creating a temporary anaesthesia and even euphoria. As such, this experience can, if we are not very careful, become an end in itself.' All the same, he urges that this should not be viewed as a reason to suppress it outright, and wars against the twin dangers of cultural captivity and controlling leadership for those who are inclined to impose a blanket ban on it.

In his final chapter, Stibbe is bluntly honest about the fact that many Christians have embraced TTB as an antidote to exhaustion and disillusionment with the Church. Indeed, he writes that prior to visiting TAV on the advice of David Pytches (←), he was himself 'desperate' – caught up in a cycle of 'performance rather than reality'. Having encountered God afresh through the Blessing, he has, he says, been led through a 'desert experience' which has challenged him about the need to overcome charismatic egoism, exhibitionism and escapism. If it is to progress to revival, Stibbe stresses that the Church as a whole must follow the same wilderness path. As it does so, like Jesus himself (Matt. 4:1-11), it must, he says, steep itself once more in the Word of God.<sup>286</sup>

In early 1998, Stibbe's book will be subjected to sustained critique by four of his colleagues in the Sheffield University Department of Biblical Studies (see 16<sup>th</sup> January 1998).

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July 1995** – Following the Methodist Conference's call for a report on TTB, Faith and Order Secretary Neil Dixon advertises in the *Methodist Recorder* for

---

<sup>286</sup> Stibbe, Mark, *Times of Refreshing: A Practical Theology of Revival for Today*. London: Marshall Pickering, 1995.

submissions on the new movement, and for nominations to the working party which will be set up to write the text.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July 1995** – The Wirral-based prayer ministry Intercessors for Britain hosts a meeting attended by around 500 people at Westminster Chapel, London. A four-point declaration is presented, which denies that TTB is a genuine move of the Holy Spirit, deplores the widespread search for experience in preference to self-denial, and calls on churches to 'restore reality [in place of] excessive triumphalism'. Several of those attending have either actively opposed TTB, or have felt obliged to leave their congregations as a result of it. On the platform alongside Intercessors for Britain leaders are Peter Fenwick, who addressed both the second Bawtry Hall consultation and the Diakrisis conference at High Leigh at the end of June (see 15<sup>th</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> June respectively ←). Also present is Jo Gardner of Adullam Register – a network which has been established for those who have departed from their fellowships over the Toronto issue.<sup>287</sup>

Also in today's *Christian Herald*, Peter Glover lambasts TTB as one more example of 'power' religion to be placed alongside recent evangelical trends like 'the obsession with spectacular gifts, power healing, the healing of memories, power evangelism, words of knowledge' and 'rampant, unaccountable prophecy'. He goes on to plead that evangelicals learn to sift the wheat from the chaff, and reject such emphases as distractions from true revival. 'I am sure', he adds, 'if the apostle Paul were here, he would hold his head in his hands in exasperation after all of the warnings from him and other New Testament writers about the end-times.' Citing Matthew 24, he stresses that these last days will be marked by 'a great apostasy from the faith', which will arise from 'within [the church's] own walls'. Glover's implication is clear: TTB may be part of this coming attack.

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 1995** – Darton, Longman and Todd publish a collaborative academic study of TTB entitled *The Toronto Blessing – Or Is It?* The book is edited by Stanley E. Porter, Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at the Roehampton Institute, and by Philip Richter, a lecturer in sociology of religion who also works at Roehampton.<sup>288</sup> As well as contributions from these two, it also features chapters written by John Kent, Emeritus Professor of Theology at the University of Bristol, Royse Murphy, a general medical practitioner with an interest in psychiatry and psychotherapy, and Wendy Porter, a professional musician.

Richter's opening essay draws on the work of French sociologist Daniele Hervieu-Lèger to propose that TTB is a largely middle-class phenomenon whose participants have found in it a way of responding to the increasing marginalisation of religious discourse in contemporary western culture. 'If intellectual middle-class Evangelicals are finding that the Gospel does not seem to be 'speaking the same language' any more', he writes, 'one solution is to adopt the inarticulate meta-language of glossolalia, another is to embrace the non-verbal Toronto Blessing.' Both solutions, according to Richter, 'avoid head-on engagement with the language of modernity'. In this way, he concludes, 'the Blessing can be seen as helping to mediate the acute contradiction between [the middle

<sup>287</sup> 'New Call for True Holiness', *Christian Herald*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1995. P.20.

<sup>288</sup> Porter, Stanley E., *The Toronto Blessing – Or Is It?* London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995.

classes'] religious 'cultural capital' and the day-to-day realities of living and working in the 1990s.<sup>289</sup>

The next contribution is by Porter, and examines the claims to biblical precedent and warrant made by proponents of TTB. Emphasising that there is a significant difference between something being 'in the Bible' and something being 'biblical', he works through the key texts which have been adduced in favour of the new movement in general, and its associated manifestations in particular. The use of the phrase 'times of refreshing' to describe the Blessing is criticised on the grounds that in Acts 3:19 it most probably refers to the season of Christ's future return, and then more distinctly to the relief from trials and tribulations which this will bring to penitent Israel. Hence, in Porter's terms, 'To take it as a reference to one of several periodic times of renewal in the Church is a misapplication of the passage.' He adds that if such 'a crucial conceptual passage' has been wrongly applied, 'perhaps other passages have been misconstrued as well.' In analysing these 'other passages', he is no less sharp in his critique.

In Acts 2:13-15, says Porter, there is no positive parallel with drunkenness; rather, the text presents a radical *contrast* between alcoholic inebriation and the experience of the disciples at Pentecost. 'The apostles were doing something phenomenal which some *misattributed* to drunkenness', he writes. 'However, Peter quickly refuted this, instead of encouraging it.' Likewise, Porter avers that Ephesians 5:18 must be read alongside clear prohibitions on drunken behaviour in Romans 13:13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8: 'It simply does not follow that a clear denial of a practice, because it is recounted in the Bible, becomes a scriptural basis for it.'

Neither is Porter especially impressed with the apologetics so far offered by Bill Jackson, Gerald Coates and others, for 'uncontrollable laughter'. Firstly, he contends, to construe this particular form of laughter from general references to joy and/or gladness is overly speculative and thus 'inadequate to make a case'. Second, even if it could be shown that Jesus' disciples broke out in spontaneous and possibly uncontrollable laughter (which Porter believes it cannot), this would not necessarily mean that what they did should be normative for the Church today, nor that the laughter associated with TTB is necessarily of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, Porter points out that James 1:2-3, together with 2 Corinthians 7:4-7, Philippians 2:17-18 and 1 Peter 1:8 confirm 'an uncomfortable equation of Christian joy with adversity, not with uproarious laughter.'

On trembling and convulsion, Porter dismisses passages like Jeremiah 5:22, Daniel 10:8-10, Psalms 2:1, 99:1 and 114:7, Habakkuk 3:16 and Acts 4:31 and 7:32 as 'completely irrelevant for establishing a precedent for bodily shaking as an indication of reception of the Holy Spirit by a person.' Likewise the references most often used to defend 'resting in the Spirit', which are dismissed either on the basis of being 'pre-Pentecostal', on the grounds that they speak of prostration rather than falling backwards, or because Paul's experience is 'anything but representative of normative Christianity'.

Animal noises are given even shorter shrift by Porter. Hosea's reference to a lion's roar (Hos 11:10-11) is, he says, descriptive of a divine rather than a human action. From the context, which compares the timid response of the Israelites to the might of God, Porter suggests that 'if anything, they should be like birds and doves [and yet] this does not

<sup>289</sup> Richter, Philip J., "'God Is Not a Gentleman!'", in Porter & Richter, *The Toronto Blessing*, p.34

mean that cooing is commended, but that they should be like animals before an awesome beast.'

Porter ends by hoping that the Vineyard's avowed openness to biblical correction will be heeded in the light of exegesis such as that which he has offered.<sup>290</sup>

Royse Murphy's contribution to the book explores the psychology of the Blessing. Stressing that it is 'inappropriate' to regard distinctions between psychology and spirituality as clear-cut and exclusive, he draws on the work of William James, Alister Hardy and Gerald Priestland to show that many more people claim religious experiences than are adherents of particular religious groups, and that the majority of such people are relatively balanced and healthy in psychological terms. This has two main consequences from Murphy's point of view. On the one hand, it means that it is most unlikely that all those who have experienced TTB are subject to mass neurosis; on the other hand, it means that the ecstatic phenomena associated with the new movement need not always bear an authentic Christian provenance.

Murphy accepts that many who have received TTB have reported 'improvements in their lives', but wonders whether this is not at least partly down to predispositions of personality. Invoking the Jungian Myers-Briggs model – now often used in Christian circles – Murphy suggests that 'ecstatic experience [such as that associated with TTB] may be the preferred means of relating to God for those who have an extraverted, feeling and sensation-based psychology, whereas for thinkers the rational approach is preferred, and for introverted intuitives meditation and reflection may be of greatest benefit.' But Murphy then adds a caveat, based on Jung's analysis of the religious significance of the 'shadow' side of people's personalities – namely that 'the lesser used spiritual expression may hold the greatest power for crisis.' Thus, 'an introverted thinker (while rejecting absolutely the subjective) may, through deeper spiritual need, have an unexpected ecstatic experience which may be of a deeply converting nature.'

The 'deeper spiritual need' which may have led many otherwise sober, reflective people into TTB could, writes Murphy, have a socio-cultural dimension. Echoing Hervieu-Leger, Richter and Stibbe (←), he suggests that like many charismatic waves in the past, the Blessing has arisen 'at a time when levels of individual and social stress, and a disillusionment with society, have affected large numbers of people.' He explains: 'When the accepted social language and values exclude religious belief in favour of technology and self-promotion, the only way in which people can explore their spiritual needs may be within the context of disinhibition and emotional outpouring.'

Again paralleling Stibbe, Murphy suggests that this ecstatic reaction to postmodern ambivalence can be either constructive or destructive: 'The 'rave' experience', he submits, 'is a real disinhibition without foundation in reality and with no lasting benefit. On the other hand, participants may be finding a safe place emotionally to discharge accumulated anxiety and trauma in a cathartic way and therefore be open to real insight and spiritual growth.'

---

<sup>290</sup> Porter, Stanley, 'Shaking the Biblical Foundations', in Stanley E. Porter & Philip J. Richter (eds), *The Toronto Blessing*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995, pp.38-65.

Less positively, Murphy remains concerned about the potential in TTB meetings for manipulation of the 'group effect' – the tendency for suggestibility and authoritarian leadership techniques to increase in proportion to the size of an audience or congregation. He is also wary of the fact that the Champaign Vineyard's 'Ministry Tips' document (←) appears to prioritise those who are most clearly 'anointed' – that is, those who are manifesting outwardly – and that this could foster 'us and them' divisions within the church community, with the physical phenomena themselves becoming badges of 'true membership'. Murphy also warns that some who believe that they have been healed in a single meeting because of a significant outward release of emotion may still, in fact, need long-term psychotherapeutic help.<sup>291</sup>

John Kent's essay offers a church historical perspective on the Blessing. He remarks that the phenomena associated with it, and the claims made for its orthodoxy and importance, 'look familiar to the historian who has done work on Protestant revivalism and similar movements in other contexts.' Present attempts to subsume TTB under the evangelical understanding of revival fit, says Kent, into a characteristically 'quasi-Hegelian theory of human history, in which the sinfulness of humanity is opposed by the activity of the divine Spirit.' Furthermore, although for Kent it is arguable that the Spirit thus perceived has made 'little observable progress, especially in the twentieth century', there remains in this evangelical scenario 'the comfort of the assurance that at the End of History the Spirit will prove to have overcome Sin in such a way that contemplation of the whole process will reconcile the redeemed to the past history of creation.' By contrast, Kent himself doubts whether the most commonly cited example of this model – the supposed sublimation of violent revolution in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain by the Wesley-Whitefield revival – can actually stand up to close scrutiny. 'No doubt', he writes, 'the Revival ... played a vital part in a Protestant recovery which itself proved vital to the healthy survival of Christianity, but the shift of political and economic power, and the self-confidence which this gave to the ruling elites in Britain right down to 1945, did more for that Protestant renewal than the growth of Evangelicalism ...'

In addition, Kent resists making strong parallels between the events surrounding TTB and the British Revival of the 1730s and 40s, because while one can 're-enact past events and rituals ... one cannot recreate them'. In the case of Wesleyanism in particular, Kent argues that 'one is often dealing with the virtually unknown citizens of eighteenth century Britain.' As for Wesley himself, although authors like Dave Roberts and Patrick Dixon have been quoting passages from his *Journals* which seem at least to condone certain physical phenomena (←), Kent insists that Wesley was essentially ambivalent about such things, and that they, and revival itself, were for him 'a means and not an end' – a means, that is, to thoroughgoing reform of church and society. Thus, 'The energy which was generated in Wesleyanism owed little to visions or more physical reactions to religious and personal pressures ... the influence on the public of physical phenomena, similar in kind though different in context to those which have distinguished the 'Toronto Blessing', seems to have been slight. They were regarded as ambiguous, rather than decisive.'<sup>292</sup>

<sup>291</sup> Murphy, Royse, 'Risen with Healing in His Wings: An Exploration of the Psychology of the Toronto Blessing', in Stanley. E. Porter & Philip J. Richter (eds.), *The Toronto Blessing – Or Is It?*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995, pp.66-85.

<sup>292</sup> Kent, John, 'Have We Been Here Before: A Historian Looks at the 'Toronto Blessing'', in Stanley. E. Porter & Philip J. Richter (eds.), *The Toronto Blessing – Or Is It?*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995, pp. 86-103.

The closing essay by Wendy Porter examines the worship of TTB and presents a sharp indictment of it. Contending that it has downgraded essential elements in the liturgical traditions of baptistic, charismatic, evangelical and sacramental traditions alike, she upbraids it for a general lack of Christ-centredness and an unhealthy egocentrism. Specifically, she suggests that whereas Baptist worship has been oriented towards winning converts and leading them to baptism, churches caught up in TTB are now focussed on offering believers another dose of 'ministry time'. Whereas Pentecostals and neo-pentecostals have traditionally looked to tongues or other biblical charismata as evidence of being Spirit-filled, Porter alleges that TTB is now making its characteristic manifestations the key test. Whereas evangelical churches have made the preaching of the Word the central plank of the service, says Porter, 'Toronto'-style worship reaches its climax in the mediation of 'outward emotive manifestations'. And whereas sacramental traditions have helped congregations remember the core events of the gospel narrative through the celebration of the Lord's Supper, she maintains that the Blessing has superseded this in importance in many of the churches where it is being cultivated.<sup>293</sup>

Reviewing *The Toronto Blessing – Or Is It?* For *Christian Herald* shortly after publication, Toronto detractor Stanley Jebb (←) writes that it 'stands out from the crowd of Toronto blessing literature' and praises it for its 'objective description and restrained, but highly effective, criticism.' By contrast, the December edition of *Renewal* will carry a review by Mark Stibbe, in which he chides the authors for taking little or no account of testimonies from those who have actually been affected by the new movement. He also wonders whether any of the five contributors have been to TAV, and argues that the picture of Toronto-style worship presented in the book is distorted and unfair. Although Stibbe acknowledges some 'timely cautions' in the study, he complains that it offers no constructive or decisive conclusion.<sup>294</sup>

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July 1995** – Pentecostal magazine joy reports on R.T. Kendall's recent 'climb down' over TTB (cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> June ←).<sup>295</sup>

The August edition of *Charisma* notes that TTB has led several churches in Florida to work more closely together than ever before. In the Melbourne area on the Space Coast, charismatics have joined more traditional Presbyterians, United Methodists and Southern Baptists for nightly interdenominational prayer meetings at the 1,000-seat Tabernacle Church – meetings whose fervour is leading many to speak of revival.<sup>296</sup>

Meanwhile, the August edition of *Woman Alive* magazine announces in a major article that since 'the snow has melted and the wind died down', it is 'time to balance opinion on 'the Blessing'.' Three assessments are duly printed from divergent perspectives.

Patricia Higton's comments echo those already made by her husband, Tony, who has expressed concern about the movement in his regular column for *Christian Herald* and elsewhere (← see 14<sup>th</sup> January and 28<sup>th</sup> April 1995). Referring to the Rodney Howard-

<sup>293</sup> Porter, Wendy, 'The Worship of the Toronto Blessing?', in Stanley. E. Porter & Philip J. Richter (eds.), *The Toronto Blessing – Or Is It?*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995, pp.104-30.

<sup>294</sup> Stibbe, Mark, 'A Question Left Hanging', *Renewal*, December 1995, p.46.

<sup>295</sup> 'Major Figure Climbs Down over Toronto', *Joy*, August 1995, p.9.

<sup>296</sup> Elkins, Rita, 'Renewal Movement Unites Florida Churches', *Charisma*, August 1995, pp.18-19.

Browne meeting which they both attended at Wembley in December 1994 (←), she reflects on 'two hours of crazy crowd behaviour and ministry unworthy of the description 'Christian''. She also describes the 'cackles, roaring, screeches and groans' on a tape of a Toronto-style meeting she has acquired as sounding 'like something from the pit of hell!'

Regretting an insufficient balance between Word and Spirit in recent charismatic developments like the Third Wave and the Kansas City Prophets (←), she concludes that 'while we should seek the Lord with all our hearts, we should determine to be scriptural rather than gullible.'<sup>297</sup>

More positively, Rev Sue Watterson of the Isle of Man recalls a visit to TAV as a time of healing and anointing which has inspired in her 'a fresh hunger to read and study the Bible'. The worship sessions there, she writes, 'seemed to come together in a beautiful way', with Word, praise and ministry maintained in a dynamic balance. She concludes: 'Often, people who have only experienced the manifestations inappropriately, as spectators – particularly on video – will express distaste. But with such a movement of the Spirit, it seems appropriate to heed the counsel of the Pharisee Gamaliel: 'If it is from God you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God (Acts 5:39)'<sup>298</sup>

The final piece in the feature is written by an anonymous 'theological educator', who recounts a series of bitter disputes and divisions in his/her local fellowship over TTb. 'The manifestations themselves became the important part of the meetings', s/he writes; 'love for the brethren and the unsaved was almost non-existent'. A once 'thriving' church has, s/he complains, been split in two by the new movement, which 'divided families too; wives happy with it but husbands not, and five teenagers now refusing to go to fellowship meetings.' A breakaway group has now joined with a sister church which has resisted the Blessing, and has, according to the writer, been able as a result to recover an emphasis on love for God and care for others.<sup>299</sup>

Also today, *Evangelical Times* publishes a response to Alan Morrison's attack on the Evangelical Alliance in last month's edition of the paper (← 24<sup>th</sup> June 1995). This is jointly written by EA's UK Director Joel Edwards and the co-ordinator of the Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (ACUTE), Dave Cave. It reads as follows:

We were surprised to learn that the headline: 'EA Toronto consultation "a confusion" (July *ET*) was based on the opinions of Alan Morrison, who did not even attend the event! May we offer some clarification in response to Mr. Morrison's published letter?

It is regrettable that Mr. Morrison feels that he 'cannot possibly involve myself in an alliance' with leaders who promote the Toronto Blessing. We can assure him that the consultation was not seeking alliances, but rather brought together leaders who fiercely disagree about the phenomenon to speak without

<sup>297</sup> Higton, Patricia, 'Toronto Truths', *Woman Alive*, August 1995, pp.6-7.

<sup>298</sup> Watterson, Sue, 'I Went with an Open Mind', *Woman Alive*, August 1995, pp.7-8.

<sup>299</sup> Theological Educator, 'Blessed' and Broken', *Woman Alive*, August 1995, p.8.

compromise face to face, in a spirit of humility. Many of the concerns about the 'Toronto Blessing' which so worry Mr. Morrison were, in fact, aired at the meeting.

Mr. Morrison's contention that the 'Toronto Experience' is a cult has serious implications. It poses the question: Is the gospel so delicate that a significant proportion of Christians, who prior to 'Toronto' were considered to be orthodox, can become cultic overnight? Certainly we did not sense that we were dealing with members of a cult during our day of discussion and debate.

The Evangelical Alliance is committed to working for unity among evangelicals, but not at the expense of biblical truth. On this point we are happy to confirm that EA's original news release did contain an error and that the Toronto Blessing must be scrutinized in the light of the Bible and not vice versa! But it is sad that Mr. Morrison missed an opportunity to put his views directly to those he criticizes by declining to attend the consultation.<sup>300</sup>

The August edition of *Alpha* magazine, launched today, reprints a major assessment of the Blessing by John Wimber. Originally published in Wimber's leadership letter, *Vineyard Reflections*, this 4-page piece essays biblical, theological and historical consideration of the new movement. Reiterating the core Vineyard emphasis to which he returned after the Kansas City Prophets episode in 1988-91 (←), Wimber stresses that his chief concern with respect to TTB is 'whether [it] will contribute to or hinder our ability to achieve our goals of evangelism through church planting.' The making of new converts must, says the Vineyard leader, be the 'measuring rod' and 'destination' of any renewal activity. On this basis, he adds that if the renewal in question is 'merely a flashy explosion in the sky, or if it causes a change in the trajectory of the rocket', he must, out of obedience to God, 'bring correction to it so we do not go off course'.

Addressing the physical phenomena associated with TTB, Wimber insists that they have occurred in most revivals since the time of Wesley, and thus cannot be deemed, in and of themselves, to invalidate the Blessing. Even so, he adds, they must not become the 'main focus', but must be viewed as 'signs' pointing to the ongoing mission of God, and 'marching orders' from Him as to how that mission must be fulfilled by his people on earth. Wimber goes on to deny that TTB can yet be described as 'revival'. This, he says, is characterised by mass conversions, sanctified lives, measurable social impact and the inculcation among believers of a 'Great Commission conscience', or 'power for service'. Such things, writes Wimber, have yet to flow clearly from the Blessing. Similarly, whereas Wimber underlines that 'the phenomena are not central to church life', he defines the essential marks of an authentic Christian community as teaching from the Word of God, administration of the sacraments, committed pastoral care, solid discipling, godly worship and evangelism. Lest this set of priorities is not clear, Wimber continues with a warning: 'In my opinion, any Vineyard pastor who neglects the above to pursue or give too great a place to phenomena long-term is making a potentially fatal mistake, as far as that local congregation is concerned.'

On the relevance of Jonathan Edwards for TTB, Wimber again highlights the evangelistic prerogative: 'Edwards would say we cannot discern what is really happening to someone

---

<sup>300</sup> Edwards, Joel and Cave, Dave, 'Toronto Surprise', *Evangelical Times*, August 1995, p.19.



based solely on what is happening to their body. This being the case, bodily reactions were not the end or the goal for Edwards; conversions were ... Conversion was the most important manifestation to Jonathan Edwards!

Citing 1 Thessalonians 5:19 on 'not putting out the Spirit's fire', Wimber suggests that this is most probably an injunction not to cease the ongoing imperatives to which he has been referring. The same text also prompts him to reflect on the negative impact of his relationship with the Kansas City Prophets (← 1988-91), and the dangers of a similar distraction occurring as a result of the current movement. 'Here in the Vineyard', he writes, 'many of us have had some negative experiences with prophecy and various manifestations of the Holy Spirit. These disappointments can easily result in 'putting out the Spirit's fire'. With all that is within us, we leaders will strive not to make that mistake. But neither will we let the Spirit's fire be used in destructive ways. Following all the relevant biblical mandates will help us 'keep the fire in the fireplace', where it is productive, and not on the carpet, where it could spread and burn down the house!'

Wimber closes by commending the example of John Wesley, who, he says, combined an admirable maintenance of spiritual fervour with an unswerving commitment to evangelism and cultural transformation. 'By his death at 83', recalls Wimber, 'Wesley had founded over 12,000 new groups/churches and had been a true social reformer. God changed the face of England through this determined, Spirit-filled man, who was brilliant as organisation. Wesley was 'ignitable' and found a way to keep the Spirit's fire burning hot in very biblical and productive ways. My prayer is that historians will be able to say similar things about us when our lives are over.'<sup>301</sup>

Although it may not be immediately apparent, Wimber's rallying-call to re-focus on evangelism will be seen, in hindsight, as a warning to TAV and TAV-influenced Vineyards to move away from their current models of ministry (→ cf. 13<sup>th</sup> December 1995 ff.)

Wimber's concerns about TTB also feature today in an interview which Andy and Jane Fitz-Gibbon have conducted with John Arnott for the August edition of *Renewal* magazine. After reflecting on the rapid rise in TAV's profile over the past 18 months, Arnott admits that despite his more general support, "John Wimber wasn't too thrilled at first about the idea of catchers." Even so, Arnott claims that "Nine out of ten Vineyard churches are doing the same as we are."<sup>302</sup>

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August 1995** – The Evangelical Fellowship of New Zealand convenes a national forum on TTB at the Greenlane Christian Centre.<sup>303</sup>

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> August** – The Evangelical Alliance UK makes available to its members an annotated book list on TTB. This includes titles already published by Mike Fearon, Patrick Dixon, Dave Roberts, Guy Chevreau, Rob Warner, Stanley Jebb, Wallace Boulton, Mona Johnian and Stanley Porter et al.

The list also includes a recently-released video on the Blessing. Produced by Nelson Word Ltd. and presented by Gerald Coates, this is a 90-minute examination of TTB which

<sup>301</sup> Wimber, John, 'For the Sake of the Lost', *Alpha*, August 1995, pp.4-7.

<sup>302</sup> Fitz-Gibbon, Andy & Jane, "'God, Do What You Want to Do!'", *Renewal*, August 1995, pp.14-16.

<sup>303</sup> 'What on Earth is Going On?', *Challenge Weekly*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1995, pp.8-9.

features proponents such as John Arnott, Paul Cain, R.T. Kendall and Terry Virgo, 'cautious but open' figures like Clive Calver and James Jones (Bishop of Hull), and declared sceptics like Stephen Sizer, Brian Edwards and Stanley Jebb. It also includes interviews with various local church members who have been positively touched by TTB.

Coates begins the film by stating that around 4000 churches in the UK have now been affected by the Blessing. Subsequently, he confirms that the tape has been edited down from '15 to 20 hours of footage' comprising many more testimonies and analyses than appear in the final version. After film of testimonies from a Rodney Howard-Browne meeting in the US, comments are offered by a wide range of key evangelical leaders.

Advocacy of TTB is led by John Arnott, who claims that TAV has seen 'over 5000 make decisions for Christ' since the Blessing began. Most of these, he admits, are re-commitments, but he nonetheless places what is happening in continuity with historic Christian revivals as he declares later on the tape, "When you look into church history, all this stuff happened." Rodney Howard-Browne also emphasises the evangelistic potential of the movement: "I really believe", he avers, "that God is going to bring in millions of backsliders ... This is only the beginning." Howard-Browne is in turn described by Covenant Ministries overseer Bryn Jones as a man whose ministry he initially questioned, but whom he in time came to view as marked by 'integrity, sincerity and purity'. Ken and Lois Gott of Sunderland Christian Centre report that ministry at their church has 'exploded'. Ken Gott adds, "It *has* to go to revival. [We are] daring to believe that this could be the last move of God before revival." Wendy Virgo takes a similar view: "We could", she says, "be on the outskirts of a great harvest."

As General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, Clive Calver expresses concern about the capacity the current movement might have to divide evangelicals at the very time when they have achieved greater unity and influence than for some while. Even so, he says, "We could be on the brink ... of seeing revival in this country." James Jones suggests that TTB may be a means by which God has managed to "open people's eyes" to his Kingdom, and adds that whenever the Holy Spirit is truly at work, there will be elements of unpredictability and "adventure".

More negatively, Stephen Sizer comments that although individuals do seem to be having genuine encounters with God through TTB, it also bears certain characteristics of psychological conditioning and "epidemic hysteria". He goes on to voice concern about elements of "heresy" which are present in some circles, and warns that these might open doors to demonic influence. Stanley Jebb agrees, observing that while some may well have been blessed, the conduct of TTB has been such that "the devil is muddying the waters". He is also disappointed that the new movement has been so apparently lacking in the dimension of repentance. Quoting John 16:8, he emphasises that this will be central in any genuine move of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Brian Edwards bemoans what he regards as a dearth of holiness in the Blessing.

Predictably, much of the debate featured in the film concerns the physical manifestations associated with TTB. There is a general consensus among those interviewed that while certain physical phenomena will occur in renewal and revival, they should not become the centre of attention. Terry Virgo insists that the current Blessing is not about outward displays, but "about lives changed dramatically". Paul Cain suggests that rather than dwelling on manifestations, those who experience them

should move swiftly into prayer and fasting. Tony Sargent reiterates Jonathan Edwards' teaching that phenomena in themselves prove nothing. Beyond such general agreement, however, there is considerable dispute about how to view the specific phenomena associated with Toronto.

Gerald Coates quotes from Patrick Dixon's *Signs of Revival* to argue that the current manifestations are in continuity with those seen in previous revivals. The evangelist Don Double recalls that such things occurred readily 40 years previously in rallies led by the Pentecostal pioneer Stephen Jeffreys, even if the present wave of activity is "more intense". Repeating arguments already published in his various written articles on the Blessing, Coates also suggests a number of biblical precedents for what has been happening. By contrast, Brian Edwards contends that the characteristic Toronto phenomena are "neither biblical nor historic in relation to revival". Stanley Jebb submits that those who are presently falling to the floor are experiencing "nothing to do with what John went through on Patmos". Aware of such objections within his own Reformed constituency, R.T. Kendall calls critics to bear in mind that whereas many regard intense emotional and physical phenomena as intrinsically occultic, the occult is, in fact, a *counterfeit* of genuine Christian experience. Thus the point, he adds, is not so much the manifestations themselves, as their source and application. They may, in fact, be indications of God's sovereign work and majesty: "Evangelicals should never be threatened by the glory of God ...[and] should not dictate the manner in which he chooses to show up."

In conclusion, Gerald Coates declares that although TTB appears to have made a great impact already, there is a good deal more still to be achieved: "We have sown much", he says, "but we have reaped so little". The extent of the harvest, he suggests, depends on the continuing faithfulness of those who have received the Blessing during the past year. Bob Cheeseman agrees: "The thought of this fading out is awful", he remarks, "But I believe this is the start of something profound".<sup>304</sup>

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August 1995** – Tony Higton appears publicly to have softened his stance on TTB. In his column for *Christian Herald*, he rehearses the more dubious provenance of the Blessing from the Latter Rain and WordFaith movements through the ministry network of Benny Hinn (←). Even so, he suggests that a fair proportion of the statements made by those associated with these movements may result from a lack of formal theological education rather than malicious heresy. Besides, he adds, 'I have no evidence that any 'Toronto' leaders hold to any of these wrong views'. Hinn, he says, has apologised for some of his earlier doctrinal errors, while Rodney Howard-Browne 'has distanced himself from the views of the Faith teachers (though not from the people themselves)'.<sup>304</sup>

In discerning the validity or otherwise of TTB, Higton reflects that it is vital to distinguish the 'roots' of the movement from its fruit. Quoting Matthew 7:15-27, he argues that Jesus' picture of a bad tree relates to 'the ministry of an individual prophet, not a school of thought.' Furthermore, 'The picture concerns the heart and ministry of that individual or his overt identification with a heretical movement. Scripture makes clear that we are to judge the roots by the fruit, *not* the fruit by the root. The question is whether the person is a doer of the Word – imperfections in a ministry do not

---

<sup>304</sup> *Rumours of Revival* (Video), Milton Keynes: Nelson Word, 1995.

invalidate the ministry. But a lifestyle or teaching that extensively contradicts the Word does.' As for demonic or occult influence, Higton appeals to 1 Corinthians 10:25-27 for confirmation that this cannot be passed on simply by contact.

In conclusion, Higton appears more sympathetic than in his previous pronouncements on the new movement: 'When I see that, whatever the fleshly imperfections, the Holy Spirit is using the 'Toronto blessing' to bring about deep repentance, renewed love for and intimacy with God, renewed power in ministry, renewed love for others, I dare not dismiss it as a temporary fad.'<sup>305</sup>

In an exclusive interview with the Assemblies of God monthly *Joy*, Rodney Howard-Browne tells Charles Gardner his life-story, and recounts the events in his ministry which have led up to TTB (←). Addressing the situation in Britain, he says: "I believe the general sweep of the move of God here is going to be preserved and will lead to something totally glorious."<sup>306</sup>

September's *Evangelical Times*, out today, grants Alan Morrison an opportunity to respond to Joel Edwards' and Dave Cave's reply to his letter declining their invitation to attend the Whitefield House Consultation held on 2<sup>nd</sup> June (← 24<sup>th</sup> June, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1995). Morrison's central accusation is that the Consultation, like the Alliance in general, was run by and for charismatics, rather than for the benefit of 'genuine evangelicalism'. As such, he says, it was concerned only with 'skilfully-crafted damage limitation' on behalf of a constituency which he regards as 'scandalous', having long been characterised by 'bogus words of knowledge, false prophesies and the pagan power-pat known as being 'slain in the Spirit". The real reason for the meeting, alleges Morrison, was 'the fact that the TB has caused great division in the charismatic movement and thus could hinder the progress of their so-called 'Renewal'. Claiming that the Alliance has been 'virtually taken over by those pursuing a charismatic agenda', Morrison insists that all this was obvious to him as soon as he saw the agenda for the Whitefield House event, and that its 'blatantly tendentious' ethos was not one with which he could possibly have associated himself. 'One simply cannot have Christian unity', he writes, 'with those who are pro-TB and those who are against it. It is naïve in the extreme to think otherwise.'<sup>307</sup>

The Comment column of the same issue of *Evangelical Times* goes further even than Morrison, and seeks to implicate TTB in a Romish threat to evangelical Protestantism. 'It might seem a long way from London's Westminster Cathedral to Toronto', runs the editorial; 'In fact it is not so far at all. The continuing enthusiasm for the so-called Toronto Blessing is lamentable. Essentially the charismatic with his open view of prophesy and ongoing revelation of the Divine is searching for the same thing as the Romeward-bound Anglican. Once again, for them, final authority seems elusive. Ask not 'What does the Bible say?' but 'What does the Bible say to me?'"<sup>308</sup>

Also critical of TTB is Clifford Hill. In an editorial for his Centre for Contemporary Ministry's magazine *Prophecy Today*, he states his belief that 'the time has come to recognise that what we are seeing is not a major move of God leading either to the

<sup>305</sup> Higton, Tony, 'Affirming Toronto', *Christian Herald*, 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1995, p.3.

<sup>306</sup> Gardner, Charles, 'Evangelist Under Fire for Bringing Joy to the Church', *Joy*, September 1995.

<sup>307</sup> Morrison, Alan, 'No Great Surprise', *Evangelical Times* (Letters), September 1995, p.18.

<sup>308</sup> 'Comment', *Evangelical Times*, September 1995, p.2.

renewing of the church or to widespread revival.' Rather, he writes, 'This kind of experience, however sincere the desire for a 'move of God' among the participants, can only lead to disappointment.' Although Hill reflects that he has attended several meetings and consultations with leaders across the spectrum of opinion on the Blessing, it would be better to look for signs of hope in the 'college revival' which has gathered pace in the USA since mid-March (←).<sup>309</sup> In an accompanying piece later in the magazine, Hill contemplates the future:

The Toronto experience is already fading away in many churches, although others are still highly involved, but will another wave come along in two or three years time? We have had the healing wave, the spiritual warfare wave, the prophecy wave. Now that we have had the laughter and animal noises wave, what will it be next? Will it be 'out-of-body' experiences, or levitation, perhaps? Or will there be a maturing of those who believe in the presence, power and activity of the Holy spirit in the church today within evangelicalism? It is not only the future of the church that is in the balance, but the future of the western nations in which the forces of decay and moral corruption are already far advanced. Only an evangelical revival can save the nation. Revival, however, is a sovereign act of God. It cannot be engineered by human beings, however spiritually sincere and enthusiastic.<sup>310</sup>

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September 1995** – Declaring 'dismay' at Tony Higton's softened attitude towards TTb (← 26<sup>th</sup> August 1995), Sheffield Central House Church leader Peter Fenwick accuses him of having questioned the 'more peripheral objections' to the new movement whilst avoiding 'the real issues which [it] has raised.' Writing in today's *Christian Herald*, Fenwick stresses that doctrinal truth and divine mercy must always be held together, and contends that Higton's article played down the crucial matter of testing. 'It may well be', he writes, 'that dubious roots do not of themselves invalidate [T]TB, but where are the positive arguments that validate it? From the proposition 'quality X does not invalidate movement A' we cannot leap directly to the conclusion that 'movement A' is therefore fully validated.' Fenwick also criticises Higton for failing to produce adequate evidence for his assertion that the Holy Spirit is using the Blessing to bring about repentance, love and authentic power in ministry.<sup>311</sup>

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 1995** – The American periodical *Christianity Today* takes stock of TTb. Confirming that there are still '500 to 1,000' attending TAV meetings on a nightly basis, James A. Beverley, quotes John Arnott giving a by now well-known retort to his critics: "We need to have more faith in God's ability to bless us than Satan's ability to deceive us." He also notes that Arnott has had 'significant interactions with leading pastors in many denominations, including the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches.' These interactions, writes Beverley, have revealed 'disagreements', but 'not about the central claims of the gospel'. Beverley goes on to quote Canadian academic Clark Pinnock and televangelist David Mainse as broadly supportive of TAV, and of TTb in general.

<sup>309</sup> Hill, Clifford, 'Editorial: Love and Unity', *Prophecy Today*, Vol 11, No. 5 (September-October 1995), pp.4-5.

<sup>310</sup> Hill, Clifford, 'Assessing Toronto', *Prophecy Today*, Vol 11, No.5 (September-October 1995), pp.14-15.

<sup>311</sup> Fenwick, Peter, 'The Case is Not Made', *Christian Herald*, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1995.

By contrast, however, Beverley goes on to cite recent pronouncements by Steve and Cheryl Thompson, two former members of TAV who have begun to suggest that TTB can mediate demonic possession. He also draws attention to the work of Hank Hanegraff and the Christian Research Institute, whose 1993 book *Christianity in Crisis* presented a fierce condemnation of the Word of Faith movement. Although the book did not mention Rodney Howard-Browne, Hanegraff is now quoted as stating that the South African evangelists' links with prosperity teaching, and his subsequent influence on Vineyard pastors in general, and on TAV in particular, could represent "something extremely dangerous that could be a road to the occult". Beverley also reports that the high-profile Reformed preacher John MacArthur has attacked TTB in his most recent book, *Reckless Faith*, and that Warren Smith of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project has submitted that the Blessing might, in fact, be a "strong delusion" from Satan.

Ominously in view of what will unfold from December 13<sup>th</sup> onwards (→), Beverley also notes that the wider Vineyard network itself is less than entirely convinced about what has been occurring at TAV:

While John Wimber, international director of the Association of Vineyard Churches, has endorsed the Blessing, he has done so with some reserve. A year ago he called a special board meeting at the Vineyard's headquarters in Anaheim to address problematic issues about personal prophecy, and the making of animal sounds in worship. This past January he sent two advisers to Toronto to monitor the renewal and give some strong guidance to local Vineyard leaders about perceived weaknesses.

One of these advisers, Vineyard national coordinator Todd Hunter, is then quoted: "The human reason so many Christians have gone to Toronto", he says, "is because of the enormous trust they have in the leadership of Wimber." Even so, he adds that "if John thought the Airport Vineyard were hurting the body of Christ, he would shut things down in a second."<sup>312</sup>

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September 1995** – St. Andrew's Baptist Church in Cambridge hosts a day conference entitled 'Toronto Blessing? It's OK to Ask Questions!' Speakers for the event are Martyn Percy, Chaplain of Christ's College, Cambridge and author of a detailed critique of Vineyard theology and practice which will be published next year as *Word, Wonders and Power*<sup>313</sup>; East London University Chaplain John Richardson; David Armstrong and Philip Foster, both Vicars in Cambridge, and Chris Hand, formerly Pastoral Assistant at Queen's Road Baptist Church (←), but now sceptical about TTB and linked to more conservative Reformed networks.

**Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 1995** – Although the Vineyard effectively dissolved its three-year connection with the Kansas City Prophets in mid-1991 (←), the October edition of the TAV magazine *Spread the Fire* confirms that one of the Prophets, Paul Cain, is still to be regarded as someone who 'functions in the office of a prophet' and who, as such, 'not only receives prophetic revelation, but ... has a divine level of authority.' Even so,

<sup>312</sup> Beverley, James A., 'Toronto's Mixed Blessing', *Christianity Today*, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1995, pp.23-26.

<sup>313</sup> Percy, Martyn, *Words, Wonders and Power: Understanding Contemporary Christian Fundamentalism and Revivalism*, London: SPCK, 1996.

the same issue carries a declaration that TAV is 'adamantly against words of "direction, correction, dates or mates".<sup>314</sup>

**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September 1995** – Writing in the October edition of *Evangelicals Now*, Tony Payne contends that the theology of TTB has been too much influenced by dualism. Whereas advocates of the Blessing have often appeared to privilege the realm of supernatural feelings, emotional epiphanies and extraordinary prophecies, Payne argues that God in fact operates in these spheres no more significantly than in the 'gritty and grubby realities' of life, and that he has confirmed this supremely through the incarnation and the cross. 'It is not as if [God] is 'upstairs' and our problem is being stuck 'downstairs', writes Payne, 'Nor is our problem a lack of spiritual feeling ... Our real problem is the separation in relationship from God because of *sin*. The difficulty facing us is not breaking through or rising above the normal stuff of creation so as to experience the Spirit. The difficulty is our rebellion.' As we overcome such sin, Payne avers, it is necessary to realise that if God works in all aspects of creation and not especially in the realm of feelings, and if this work includes Christ's work of atonement on Calvary, 'then this too will be the work of the Spirit'. Indeed, 'It is not as if the Spirit is separate or tangential to all this. The Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). He is active in the world, working in and through the creation to achieve his purposes.' As a result of this Payne suggests, quoting Galatians 5:22-23 and 2 Tim. 1:7-8, that 'self-control, rather than self-abandon or loss of control' will mark the Spirit's presence and work.<sup>315</sup>

In somewhat similar vein, the renowned evangelical statesman John Stott gives his first public comments on TTB as part of an interview with Roy McCloughry for *Third Way* magazine. Commenting on the place of emotional experience in general, Stott attests that he has often undergone "profound" encounters with God, involving tears and intense appreciation of the glorified Christ. Even so, he disassociates these from "traditional charismatic experience", and in particular, from speaking in tongues. Moreover, he says, "They have not been dissociated from the mind. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul is all the time saying, 'You mustn't let these experiences bypass your mind'. The mind is involved, though the experience goes beyond it. But I know what Paul meant in Romans 5 about the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts. I also know what he meant in Romans 8 about the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

On Toronto itself, Stott insists that he would never want to criticise anything which people claim "has been a blessing to them in terms of a greater awareness of the reality of God, or a profounder joy, or an overwhelming love for him and for others, or a fresh zeal in evangelism." Despite all this, however, he goes on to raise three "major questions" in respect of the Blessing. First, he says, "it is a self-consciously anti-intellectual movement." In relation to a tape on which a TTB advocate has said "Don't analyse, don't ask questions; simply receive", Stott comments: "I think that is both foolish and dangerous. We must never forget that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth."

Secondly, Stott declares that he "cannot possibly come to terms with those animal noises". It grieves him very much, he adds, that "as far as I know, no charismatic leaders have publicly disassociated themselves from them." The whole Bible confirms, he

<sup>314</sup> *Spread the Fire*, October 1995, p.10.

<sup>315</sup> Payne, Tony, 'Toronto at a Tangent', *Evangelicals Now*, October 1995, p.16.

stresses, that "we are different from the animal creation; it rebukes us when we behave like animals and calls us to be distinct."

Thirdly, Stott is troubled by "all the falling". Even charismatic leaders have acknowledged, he states, that "on the few occasions in the Bible when people [fall] over, they ... all [fall] forwards on their faces and [do] so *after* they have been granted a vision of the majesty, the holiness and the glory of God." By contrast, in the Toronto experience "people fall backwards, without any previous experience of God."<sup>316</sup>

**Monday 2nd October 1995** – Monarch publish Andy and Jane Fitz-Gibbon's account of the impact of TTB on Sunderland Christian Centre, *Something Extraordinary is Happening*. The narrative of the book is close to that of Ken and Lois Gott's *The Sunderland Refreshing*, which will be published just one month hence, on 16<sup>th</sup> November (→). The Fitz-Gibbons make much of the fact Sunderland was the focus of one of the first Pentecostal-style renewals in the UK, under Alexander Boddy at All Saints Parish Church in 1907. Otherwise, their account presents and reflects on the more recent events at SCC, which we have reported above (← see Late July 1994, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 14th August 1994, 26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> October 1994, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1995 and 6<sup>th</sup> August 1995).<sup>317</sup>

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October 1995** – ACUTE co-ordinator Dave Cave places an advertisement in *The War Cry* and various other Christian newspapers, asking for material and comment on TTB to assist in the research he has been asked to conduct on behalf of the Evangelical Alliance, and those who attended the Alliance's Whitefield House Consultation on 2<sup>nd</sup> June (←):

If any readers have relevant first-hand experiences (positive or negative), I would be grateful to receive them. I would also like to hear of any biblical/theological analysis which would help take the debate forward.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1995** – As a follow-up to the Greenlane meeting it hosted on 5<sup>th</sup> August, the Evangelical Fellowship of New Zealand (EFNZ) convenes a forum on TTB at the Takapuna Assembly of God in Auckland. Dirk van Garderen of Avondale Reformed Church and Pastor Geoff Smith of Auckland Bible Church speak against the movement, while the Ven. Max Scott of St. Margaret's Anglican Church, Hillsborough and Pastor Hamish Divett of Christian City Church speak in its favour. Theological comment is offered by Dr. Stephen May of the College of St. John the Evangelist, and the event is chaired by Pastor Brian Hathaway of Te Atatu Bible Chapel.

As a means of facilitating discussion and debate at the meeting, the EFNZ distribute a revised version of the UK Alliance's Euston Statement, incorporating certain 'refinements' which the EFNZ leadership have made as they have assessed the impact of the Blessing in New Zealand. The Trinity and the Second Coming are added to the list of 'classic evangelical convictions' at the beginning of the Statement. There is more explication of the meaning and outworking of revival, and of the dynamic interaction and authority of the Word and the Spirit. Detail is also added in respect of physical and emotional phenomena, with greater stress being placed on their neutral status *vis a vis* the validation or refutation of a spiritual movement. There is also an added warning

<sup>316</sup> McCloghry, Roy, 'High Profile: Interview with John Stott', *Third Way*, October 1995, pp.21-23.

<sup>317</sup> Fitz-Gibbon, Andy & Jane, *Something Extraordinary is Happening*, Crowborough: Monarch, 1995.



about the danger of manipulation: 'The power of God is always ministered *for* people', it says, 'and never *over* them, so that none are to be abused, coerced or dominated by any spiritual authority. Divine power invites, human power pushes.'<sup>318</sup>

*[The full text of the EFNZ version of the Euston Statement is reproduced in Section III.]*

Also today, the November issue of *Charisma* devotes a number of articles to the current state of TTB. Although some of the reports remain overwhelmingly positive, there are significant indications of discontent in certain charismatic and Pentecostal quarters.

The magazine's special *Eurocharisma* insert carries a front-page story which quotes John Wimber as having conveyed his 'reservations' about the modus operandi of TAV to the church's leadership. These reservations bear out comments made by Wimber in his recent Vineyard newsletter and re-published in the August issue of *Alpha* (← 29<sup>th</sup> July 1995). Although Wimber is "thrilled" by what the Holy Spirit is doing, he reports having warned the TAV team against a "Come and get it" approach which might detract from the full message of the gospel. He also recounts having said that TAV model of ministry could be "injurious to equipping", specifically in relation to dealing with those who fall to the floor: "God didn't call everyone to be a 'catcher'. It is all right to catch somebody if they are falling, but let's get people praying for those that fall. I don't care if you need to move the chairs back, but it's not valid to designate a group as 'catchers' while you are the divine instrument, walking through and touching everybody."

Wimber is also deeply concerned about the potential for division according to degrees of 'anointing'. He is reported as having told the TAV staff: "We are making first and second class citizens. We are saying this person [the one doing the praying] is more anointed than others. So here's what I want you to do: I want you to strengthen the message. I want you to ask people to come and get and give it. So take them out on the streets. Let them feed the hungry, visit the aged, go minister to the lost, go into the streets and witness. Do whatever is necessary but get them out so that when they go home they can say 'Yes, I quacked like a duck for three days, but I went and visited this 84 year-old who was straving and we filled her pantry, prayed for her and her rheumatic condition has improved, and we led her to the Lord.'"<sup>319</sup>

In addition to all this, the same magazine carries a report by J. Lee Grady on the recent 17th World Pentecostal Conference in Jerusalem, which reports that several leading Pentecostals are uneasy with the Blessing. Ray Hughes of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.) expressed from the Chair a concern with "those who have left the mainstream of the purpose of Pentecost and have focused on the spectacular." David Yonggi Cho of Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea emphasised that if God can grant holy laughter, the devil can counterfeit it. German Pentecostal Reinhold Ulonska tells Grady that the Vineyard is "not Pentecostal" because it downplays speaking in tongues as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Australasian representatives are, however, somewhat more sanguine. Grady notes that TTB has been promoted there especially by the Assemblies of God. R. Wayne Hughes of New Zealand confirms that he has invited John Arnott to preach at his Auckland Assembly, while top Australian AG official

<sup>318</sup> 'Commitment to Evangelical Unity Affirmed Despite Differences', *Challenge Weekly*, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1995, p.9.

<sup>319</sup> 'Get It to Give It', *Charisma* ('Eurocharisma' Insert), November 1995, p.1.

Andrew Evans happily recounts having introduced his denomination to the ministry of Rodney Howard-Browne during its biannual conference in Brisbane. "There are some things about [his] style that people don't like", says Evans of Howard-Browne, "and some older Pentecostal people have had a hard time with it." Even so, he adds, some 600 people have been converted in his local church since Howard-Browne's visit. "I'm not a wild Pentecostal who just grabs the next thing that comes along", reflects Evans. "But I'm determined not to be a Pharisee."<sup>320</sup>

*Charisma* also carries a more thoroughly positive article by Daina Doucet, who reports that TTB has now spread to Indonesia, Russia and remote villages in South America. Furthermore, writes Doucet, 'In June, 300 Korean Christian leaders "soaked" in God's presence at the Toronto Vineyard [and] more than 500 Japanese church leaders have visited Toronto, as well.' Meanwhile, at Sunderland, "the number of stolen cars has decreased by 44 per cent" and "local police call Sunderland Christian Centre for prayer."<sup>321</sup> Also in the UK, Clive Price presents a survey of the Blessing which puts the number of congregations now affected by it at 5,500. His piece includes interviews with Ken and Lois Gott of Sunderland Christian Centre, Terry Virgo of New Frontiers International, Gerald Coates of Pioneer and Sandy Millar of Holy Trinity, Brompton (←). The Gott's declare that the last year has been "the best year of our lives", although sheer exhaustion has led them to cut the number of evening meetings per week from six to three, and the need for more support has drawn help from members of local Baptist, Pentecostal, Anglican and Methodist congregations. Virgo tells Price that "Expectation is rising, and with it, an ever-increasing passion to pray and intercede." Millar states that the development and flowering of TTB during the past five years is "quite the most remarkable work of God in this country since the 18<sup>th</sup> century". Meanwhile, the high-profile apologist Ravi Zacharias has apparently told Gerald Coates, "If you go on like this, you'll change the nation."<sup>322</sup>

As for Coates himself, he has just visited TAV for the first time, and reports on his 10-day visit for the November edition of *Alpha* magazine. Coates commends the measured and responsible way in which the leaders conducted meetings: "The last thing you could accuse them of is showmanship", he writes. He also refutes the widely-levelled accusation that teaching and preaching have been neglected. "The Scriptures were opened every night", he insists, and of a John Arnott sermon he comments: "it was so straight-down-the-line evangelical, you wonder how on earth this man could be remotely called a 'controversial figure'." Coates also takes up the 'animal noises' debate: "I didn't see any dogs, lions or chickens. Neither did I hear anyone mimicking them either. Yet stories would have one believe that every dog in North America, every chicken in the pens of Arkansa and Tennessee had passed through. Not while I was there."

Elsewhere, *Evangelism Today* prints an interview with the radical American evangelical Tony Campolo. Well known in the UK for his appearances at Spring Harvest, Campolo says that his first visits to the festival in the 1980s had given him great hope that revival might be imminent, and that this might cross the Atlantic. Latterly, however, he

---

<sup>320</sup> Grady, J. Lee, 'Classical Pentecostals Wary of the 'Toronto Blessing'', *Charisma*, November 1995, pp.41-42.

<sup>321</sup> Doucet, Daina, 'The 'Blessing' Sweeps the Globe', *Charisma*, November 1995, p.63.

<sup>322</sup> Price, Clive, 'A Revival Without Walls', *Charisma*, November 1995, pp.55-58.

confesses that his enthusiasm has waned, and that this is partly down to TTB. "What I fear ... is that the British community is getting sidetracked and becoming preoccupied with signs and wonders, the Kansas City Prophets, the Toronto Blessing and whatever comes next. It's no wonder that Jesus, in nine cases out of ten, told those he healed to keep quiet about it because he feared people would miss the point, that they would get fascinated by signs and wonders. Of course they draw the crowds and we can put on great seminars. But signs and wonders are just a sideshow."

Even more skeptical about TTB is Chris Hand, who questions the movement in an article for the November–December edition of *Prophecy Today*. His critique is of special interest because until November 1994, he was an elder and Pastoral Assistant at Queen's Road Baptist Church, Wimbledon – one of the centres of the Blessing in Britain from its earliest days (←). Although Hand is generous in acknowledging that Queen's Road did maintain biblical preaching and other 'normal' ministry once TTB had been introduced, he adds that his five months amidst the Blessing 'left me unconvinced that I was witnessing an authentic move of the Holy Spirit'. He goes on: 'What I was seeing and hearing, including the many testimonies I heard, left me unsatisfied when I compared accounts of historic revivals and the words and warnings of Scripture.' Indeed, he alleges that '80% of testimonies could be subsumed under [the] categories of 'empty' or 'contentless' experience'. As a result, he says, he left the fellowship after 'much soul-searching' and prayer: 'Concluding sadly that the situation more closely approximated a church in deception than revival I decided to withdraw.' Stressing that 'it is not 'blasphemy against the Spirit' to examine and test things', Hand assures readers that 'there is no shortage of churches, Charismatic and non-Charismatic, which have not embraced the 'Toronto Blessing', that are able to offer safe sanctuary and good counsel, and where there is plenty of good fruit and 'love for Jesus'.<sup>323</sup>

*Prophecy Today* also carries an article by Jewish Christian teacher Jacob Prasch, repudiating the way in which TTB has appropriated the language of 'anointing' and the practise of laying on hands. While admitting that Mark 10:16 provides an isolated linkage of laying on hands with blessing, he nonetheless maintains that 'there are no biblical grounds to connect the action with the transmission of a 'mantle', 'calling', or 'anointing' from one person to another, let alone undefined experiences.' Rather, he writes, the primary means by which God blesses people is through his Word – that is, verbally. In consequence, Prasch concludes, 'The real issue is whether or not there is a biblical basis for the Toronto 'blessing', since neither the bible's teaching on anointing nor the scriptural principle of laying on of hands can validate it.'<sup>324</sup>

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1995** – Hodder & Stoughton publish David Pawson's much-anticipated analysis of TTB, *Is the Blessing Biblical?*<sup>325</sup> Although he admits that he has neither been to Toronto nor even 'as far as the floor', Pawson says that the book has demanded to be written because so many have sought his advice on the movement, and because the Blessing has spread so widely and so quickly that it has become 'impossible to ignore'.

<sup>323</sup> Hand, Chris, 'Examining the fruit', *Prophecy Today*, Vol. 11, No. 6 (November–December 1995), pp.13-14.

<sup>324</sup> Prasch, Jacob, 'Is the 'Toronto Blessing' a Hands-On Experience?', *Prophecy Today*, Vol. 11 No. 6, pp.27-29.

<sup>325</sup> Pawson, David, *Is the Blessing Biblical?* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995.

Over ten closely-argued chapters, Pawson very deliberately concentrates on biblical exegesis and interpretation, consigning a brief historical review of revivals to an appendix so as to demonstrate that Scripture must always take first place in such matters. Indeed, he comments that it is unlikely that so many would be discussing Jonathan Edwards if a biblical rationale for TTB had been convincingly demonstrated.<sup>326</sup>

Decrying the existential spirit of much contemporary Christianity, Pawson disavows the notion one cannot critique a movement like TTB without having personally experienced it. This idea, he writes, 'is as old as the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve fell for it, though they already had God's Word telling them all they needed to know.' Furthermore, if this were the case, 'I was wrong to write a book about heaven and hell, since I've never been to either'.<sup>327</sup> Whilst accepting that many may have had very 'real' experiences as a result of TTB, Pawson counsels that these need not thereby be defined as divine in origin: 'They may be genuinely from God', he writes, but they may alternatively be 'a fleshly substitute from man or a subtle counterfeit from Satan'. Moreover, while emphasising that such experiences must be discerned and tested, Pawson questions the common idea that such assessment must be confined to the 'fruit' rather than the 'root'. Despite often being quoted to defend this distinction, Pawson argues that Matthew 7:20 is about 'discerning false prophets, not experiences', and cannot therefore be applied directly to TTB. Insofar as the true roots of any legitimate move of God will be found in Scripture, Pawson encourages readers to interrogate the 'roots' along with the fruit, lest a purely pragmatic approach be allowed to obscure their analysis.<sup>328</sup>

Like Jacob Prasch (← 28<sup>th</sup> November 1995), Pawson stresses that the usual means by which God and human beings bless one another in Scripture is not through the Toronto-style person-to-person 'ministry', but through 'word of mouth'.<sup>329</sup>

The central part of Pawson's study examines the manifestations associated with TBB. Falling, he says, certainly occurs in Scripture, but whether in the case of Ezekiel, Paul, John or 'many others', is 'invariably an involuntary response to an overwhelming and awesome 'manifestation' of the first or second person of the Trinity in visible and/or audible form.' Furthermore, writes Pawson, 'It is never associated with the Spirit and is never interpreted as his work.' Indeed, he adds, citing Ezekiel 1:28 and 2:1, there is more direct warrant for levitation as a manifestation of the Spirit than for falling. Trembling, likewise, not 'ever attributed to the Holy Spirit', and is 'never associated with blessing', contends Pawson. It is, rather, a 'reaction of the nervous system to shock or stress, at its simplest a sign of nervous tension (as seems to be the case with Paul in Corinth; 1 Cor. 1:3)'.<sup>330</sup>

In a detailed biblical taxonomy of laughter, Pawson suggests that Scripture countenances humorous, happy and haughty laughing, but that it does not refer to 'hysterical' laughter. Furthermore, he submits, 'we notice no justification for using such a phrase as 'laughing in the Spirit''. Thus, while the Bible indicates that there is often 'good reason to laugh[,] ... helpless laughter without an adequate or appropriate cause is

<sup>326</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, p.99.

<sup>327</sup> Pawson is referring here to his earlier study *The Road to Hell*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992.

<sup>328</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, p.12.

<sup>329</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, p.27.

<sup>330</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, pp.34-36.

not found.<sup>331</sup> By contrast, writes Pawson, weeping is 'far more common', even if it should not be taken as a manifestation of the Spirit *per se*, but rather as a possible 'response of the human spirit to his work'.<sup>332</sup> Meanwhile, animal noises are noted as occurring in Scripture, 'but only in judgement, never in blessing'. Besides, animal behaviour is generally 'far more likely to be of demonic than of divine origin, as everyone involved in exorcism knows'.<sup>333</sup> As for 'drunkenness in the Spirit', Pawson advises that 'in view of the fact that loss of self-control is the prime result of drunkenness, it would be astonishing if the Spirit were to lead us into a simulation of this'.<sup>334</sup>

Moving on to the practical matter of ministering in the midst of manifestations, Pawson emphasises that they should not be seen in any way as the focus of corporate Christian experience. Defining guidelines for leaders, he urges in regard to physical phenomena that they should neither be forbidden, highlighted, encouraged, publicised, exclusivised, misinterpreted, homogenised nor sought.<sup>335</sup>

Unusually among those who have written on TTB so far, Pawson questions the implied eschatology of TTB – that is, whether the association of 'times of refreshing' or 'revival' with the end-times is actually a valid understanding of Scripture. Rejecting such a view as prone to postmillennial triumphalism, Pawson maintains instead that the Last Days will find the Church 'in Big Trouble' because of the Great Tribulation. He explains: 'Far from enjoying enormous growth, much less taking over the world, the Church is more likely to be reduced as 'many will turn away from the faith and ... the love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:10-12. The call is for endurance, to be faithful even to the point of death.' Like Stanley Porter (← 17<sup>th</sup> July 1995), Pawson argues that the 'times of refreshing' cited in Acts 3:19 have nothing to do with this future period, but apply instead to the impact of the incarnate Messiah, Jesus, upon the Jews of his own time.

In conclusion, Pawson gives a 'yellow' light to TTB rather than an unequivocal red for 'stop' or a green for 'go'. Toronto, he suggests, has thus far, represented a 'mixed blessing'. It is necessary to proceed with caution, avoiding 'uncritical enthusiasm' on the one hand and undifferentiated 'negative criticism' on the other. As an avowed charismatic who has long sought to urge a biblical balance of Word and Spirit, his deepest fear, he writes, is that tension over TTB may inflict 'great damage ... to the unity of the body of Christ.' It would be a 'tragedy', he suggests, 'if division took place over something with debatable, if not questionable, basis in Scripture'.<sup>336</sup>

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1995** – Massachusetts-based publisher Hendrickson launch a detailed assessment of TTB in general, and holy laughter in particular, by W.J. Oropeza. Currently working at Durham University, Oropeza presents a careful examination of the roots of the Blessing in Latter Rain Pentecostalism, the Kansas City Prophets, the Argentinian Revival and the Wimberite Third Wave. He also devotes a chapter to Rodney Howard-Browne, which charts his development within Pentecostalism, traces his links to Word of Faith teaching and demonstrates the impact he has had on the Vineyard

---

<sup>331</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, p.37.

<sup>332</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, p.38.

<sup>333</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, p.39.

<sup>334</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, p.49.

<sup>335</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, pp.89-93.

<sup>336</sup> Pawson, *Blessing*, p.97.

through Randy Clark and others (←). Oropeza then moves on to assess the Blessing in relation to Scripture, and concludes by comparing and contrasting it with past evangelical revivals.<sup>337</sup> Although the TAV connection to Howard-Browne is clearly demonstrated by Oropeza, he is less convinced by those who have tried to tar the South African evangelist wholly with the WordFaith brush. Through careful scrutiny of Howard-Browne's own books and public statements, Oropeza concedes that the self-styled 'Holy Ghost Bartender' has latterly 'distanced himself from Word Faith teachers, and even pokes fun at the "Word of Faith or Teaching movement" that refuses to make negative confessions.<sup>338</sup>

Rather than attacking TTB as a mesmeric, shamanistic or gnostic cult, Oropeza is far more concerned that it has succumbed to the introspection, individualism and superficiality of the postmodern West. It is primarily on this basis that he dismisses claims that it can be defined as revival:

Revival? Until the church once again takes the driver's seat and makes the social-political impacts it did through people like Edwards and Finney – until the church once again produces evangelists like Wesley, reformers like Luther, artists like Bach, scientists like Mendel, inventors like Bell, thinkers like Pascal, and writers like Bunyan – don't make me laugh!<sup>339</sup>

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 1995** – The Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF) host a day conference on TTB at London University's Institute of Historical Research. The title is 'The Toronto Blessing in Historical Perspective'. Speakers include Drs Nelson Kraybill, Bruce Hindmarsh and Richard Massey, each of whom assesses the current movement in the light of past Christian revivals.

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November 1995** – Hodder publish Ken and Lois Gott's *The Sunderland Refreshing*. As with Andy and Jane Fitz-Gibbon's recently-launched *Something Extraordinary is Happening*, (← 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1995), the book traces links between the Pentecostal-Anglican interactions at Alexander Boddy's All Saints Parish Church in 1907, and the TTB-inspired cross-fertilization between Holy Trinity, Brompton and the Gott's Assemblies of God congregation (← Late July 1994). The Gotts also recall the earlier impact on their ministry of Benny Hinn (← Summer 1987), and write enthusiastically of their ongoing relationship with John Arnott and TAV. 'Toronto Airport Vineyard', they declare, 'have a unique task and calling to cause fire to be ignited in hearts and spread throughout the world. That fire once received is imbibed into the genetics of our own churches.' They continue: 'In simple terms, all of us in our individual situations, having received the blessing, work out the fruit with a unique flavour of our own. As all the different streams and denominations have come together, we have not lost the glorious individuality of the local church.' For Sunderland Christian Centre, the 'working out of the fruit' has, say the Gotts, come about in the planting of two churches, and in plans to

---

<sup>337</sup> Oropeza, W.J., *A Time to Laugh: The Holy Laughter Phenomenon Examined*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995.

<sup>338</sup> Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p.38.

<sup>339</sup> Oropeza, W.J., *A Time to Laugh*, p.190.

move the original congregation into a larger, warehouse-style building which will accommodate its fast-swelling numbers.<sup>340</sup>

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November 1995** – Eagle Press publishes *Blessing the Church?* – a sharp critique of TTB by Clifford Hill, Peter Fenwick, David Forbes and David Noakes. Hill's and Forbes' articles for *Prophecy Today* over the past fifteen months have consistently questioned the Blessing (←). Fenwick attacked it at the Bawtry Hall conferences held earlier this year, and at the subsequent Diakrisis consultation at High Leigh (16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> January, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 30<sup>th</sup> May-1<sup>st</sup> June 1995). Noakes spoke against it at the Evangelical Alliance forum on 2<sup>nd</sup> June (←). This new analysis shows that they have clearly not toned down their views of the movement.

Hill's contribution asserts that the charismatic movement was adversely affected by the fact that it arose in the permissive era of the 1960s and thereby imbibed an unhelpful spirit of individualism. This individualism, he adds, has lately been intensified under the influence of 1990s 'rave' culture. As they have sought to deepen their experience of God against this backdrop, charismatics have, argues Hill, been prone to an excessive sensualism which has, in turn, eroded their commitment to the centrality of Scripture. Unafraid to name names, Hill accuses Gerald Coates, Graham Cray, Sandy Millar and David Pytches of contributing to this drift, and wonders whether they and others have mistaken genuine renewal and revival for human frustration at the failure and lethargy of the British Church. He also sounds severe warnings about the influence of the Kansas City Prophets on such leaders, on the Vineyard, and on TAV in particular.<sup>341</sup>

Noakes underlines the importance of discernment and reminds readers that even highly-regarded Christian leaders can be wrong. As he has done before, Fenwick rails against what he believes to be faulty exegesis and doctrinal misconception within the Toronto movement. Forbes construes the provenance of TTB through Latter Rain Pentecostalism, the Kansas City Prophets and Word of Faith teaching, implying a heretical dimension of which Christians should beware.<sup>342</sup>

Reviewing the book some weeks hence, Andrew Barton will complain that its oppositional tenor often detracts from its claims to sober assessment. In particular, he suggests that the other side of the argument has been inadequately represented. As an alternative, he suggests that 'perhaps a volume like the excellent series *When Christians Disagree* would have been better, and allowed a clearer discernment for all.'<sup>343</sup> The IVP venture to which Barton refers has brought together authors with competing perspectives to debate issues of evangelical concern. Although now discontinued, its format will be cited by Evangelical Alliance Theological Adviser David Hilborn as a model for Part I of this book (see Introduction).

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1995** – The Charismatic leaders' network Beulah convenes a day conference on TTB at Regent Hall in central London. The speakers are Clifford Hill,

<sup>340</sup> Gott, Ken & Gott, Lois, *The Sunderland Refreshing: How the Holy Spirit Invaded One British Town*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995.

<sup>341</sup> Hill, Clifford, in *Blessing the Church?*, Guildford: Eagle, p.204ff.

<sup>342</sup> Hill, Clifford, Fenwick, Peter, Forbes, David and Noakes, David, *Blessing the Church?* Guildford: Eagle, 1995. See also the adaptation by Forbes of his own chapter in the January-February issue of *Prophecy Today*: 'From North Battleford to Toronto', pp.14-17 (→ 30<sup>th</sup> December 1995).

<sup>343</sup> Barton, Andrew, 'Warnings on Renewal', *Church of England Newspaper*, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1996, p.14.

David Pawson and Rob Warner. Consistent with their previous pronouncements on the Blessing (←), they show themselves to be, respectively, concerned, open but cautious, and convinced.

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November 1995** – The *Christian Irishman* publishes 'Practical Guidelines' on TTB. These have been approved by the General Board of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland at its October meeting, and constitute the first official statement on the Blessing from a mainline UK denomination.

A preamble to the Guidelines acknowledges the 'considerable publicity' which TTB has attracted, and the divisions which are opening up between Christians on the subject. Underlining that its advice is 'provisional', it trusts that it will be 'helpful in the present situation'.

First, the General Board's text encourages ministers to ensure that 'sufficient attention' is given to the Holy Spirit in their regular teaching and preaching. The conduct of public worship is their responsibility, it goes on, but 'any radical innovations should only be introduced after due consultation and preparation.' Furthermore, it states, 'sensational phenomena are to be strongly discouraged when they are the product of false emotionalism and any hint of audience manipulation.' Rather, spiritual movements are to be tested according to their fruit as defined by Galatians 5:22-3. Special care is urged when dealing with young people and 'other vulnerable groups', and if tensions emerge within a congregation, ministers and elders are advised to approach the Presbytery at an early stage.

*[The Full text of the P.C.I Statement appears in Section III]*

**Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 1995** – Writing on the Ecunet 'New Wine' Bulletin Board, University of Akron sociologist Margaret Poloma responds to John Wimber's recent questioning of certain TAV ministry models (←). In an open letter to Wimber, she explains that she is conducting research on the Blessing with the consent of John Arnott. She is also, she writes, 'a born-again, Spirit-filled believer, who as best as she can discern, was led by the Spirit to TAV.' She continues: 'After reviewing scores of conference tapes, interviewing with staff at TAV, and participating in the renewal services and conferences, I judge the renewal to be in its "charismatic moment". More importantly, I found few examples of the cautionary concerns that you have raised in your articles. There are always going to be weeds mixed with the wheat, but I have been very impressed with the leadership's ability to allow the wheat to grow undisturbed without nurturing the weeds.'<sup>344</sup> Poloma goes to publish the first fruits of her research. Her findings and analysis will be expanded and refined through a number of articles over the next five years, up to and including the paper published in this book in Section I.

---

<sup>344</sup> 'Letter of Margaret Poloma to John Wimber', Ecunet 'New Wine' bulletin board, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1995. Also, 'Comments on "Vineyard Reflections: The Toronto Blessing"' on the same site. Poloma's published work on the Blessing prior to the paper which appears here is as follows: *The Toronto Report*. Bradford-upon-Avon: Terra Nova, 1996; 'The Toronto Blessing: Charisma, Institutionalization and Revival', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36, 257-71; 'The 'Toronto Blessing' in Postmodern Society: Manifestations, Metaphor and Myth', in Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (eds.), *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, Carlisle: Regnum, 1999, pp.363-85.



**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – Rodney Howard-Browne leads five days of meetings at Earls Court, London. Publicity for the meeting carries endorsements from Colin Dye, Terry Virgo, Gerald Coates, Wynne Lewis (General Superintendent of Elim), Bryn Jones, R.T. Kendall and Lyndon Bowring (Executive Chairman of Christian Action, Research and Education (CARE)). R.T. Kendall appears on stage with his wife, and tells the 1500 crowd, 'I unashamedly endorse the ministry this man.' Having related how she has been healed through Howard-Browne, Kendall brings his wife forward to speak, but after a few sentences she is struck dumb and returns to her seat.<sup>345</sup>

The meetings also attract a picket from a group of 20 led by Mark Haville, a former Word of Faith teacher and 'signs and wonders' minister who now spends time opposing such things. The group, which also includes Rev Philip Foster of Cambridge and former Queen's Road Baptist Church staff member Chris Hand, distributes a pamphlet entitled *Think Before You Drink* – reference to Howard-Browne's characteristic injunction to get 'drunk in the Spirit'.<sup>346</sup>

Subsequent reports of the Earls Court meetings in *The Church of England Newspaper*, *Evangelical Times* and *Evangelicals Now* quote Howard-Browne as having stated that in the current movement God was emphasising his desire to save people through displays of power, rather than through reason and preaching: "It's not great preaching or teaching that's going to bring revival. God has revealed to me that he is going to save every man, woman and child with his power."<sup>347</sup>

One of Howard-Browne's meetings is subsequently reviewed by Andrew Brown, Religious Affairs Correspondent of *The Independent*. Brown concentrates sardonically on the South African's fund-raising techniques: 'Wastepaper baskets were passed around the crowd as he told stories of his poverty-stricken time in South Africa, when he could only afford a broken-down Mercedes ... "My God will liberally supply your every need. It worked for me, it can work for you."' <sup>348</sup>

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – A critical day in the short history of TTB. John Wimber joins with AVC Board members Todd Hunter, Bob Fulton and Gary Best, to inform John Arnott and senior TAV staff that the Vineyard Association can no longer endorse the Toronto Airport Church and its ministry. The meeting lasts nearly three hours and ends with a request that the Airport Vineyard leaders review the Association's decision, meet with Best in his capacity as Canadian Vineyard Co-ordinator, and respond to the Board representatives the next day. Arnott and his colleagues are deeply shocked, but and after two further hours, Arnott writes a brief letter confirming that TAV have agreed to accept the Board's decision.<sup>349</sup>

<sup>345</sup> 'Toronto Meeting is Picketed By Evangelicals', *Church of England Newspaper*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1995, p.3; Glover, Peter, 'Signs and Wonders Meeting Picketed', *Evangelical Times*, January 1996, p.9; Glover, Peter, 'Not By Preaching – But By 'Power'', *Evangelicals Now*, January 1996, p.24.

<sup>346</sup> 'Toronto Meeting is Picketed by Evangelicals', *Church of England Newspaper*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1995, p.3.

<sup>347</sup> 'Toronto Meeting is Picketed by Evangelicals', *Church of England Newspaper*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1995, p.3; Glover, Peter, 'Signs and Wonders Meeting Picketed', *Evangelical Times*, January 1996, p. 9; Glover, Peter, 'Not by Preaching and Teaching – but by 'Power'', *Evangelicals Now*, January 1996, p.24.

<sup>348</sup> Brown, Andrew, 'Praying All the Way to the Bank', *Independent*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1995.

<sup>349</sup> Beverley, James A., 'Vineyard Severs Ties with 'Toronto Blessing' Church', *Christianity Today*, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1996, p.66; Wright, *Stange Fire*, p.29.

Arnott's letter is later published on the TAV web site. It expresses thanks to Wimber 'for taking so much "heat" and criticism' on behalf of the Toronto congregation. Arnott then apologises to him 'for the stress and hurt we have caused you'. Furthermore, Arnott accepts on behalf of TAV that 'some of what is happening in Toronto is outside the Vineyard model.' He also agrees that Wimber and the Vineyard movement 'should not have to continue answering for the move of God's Spirit in Toronto.' Arnott assures Wimber, 'We are doing our best to be faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us, as are you.' He ends by asking Wimber to let TAV leave AVC with his blessing, in order 'to minimize serious hurtful repercussions in the body of Christ.'<sup>350</sup>

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – John Arnott e-mails news of the split from AVC to four key supporters, saying that the previous day's meeting "was conducted very well, no anger or tension". He adds, "All our senior staff pastors were present. We parted on reasonably good terms and are at present sensing a great peace from God." One of the recipients of Arnott's message is St Louis Vineyard pastor and early TB advocate Randy Clark (←); another is Drew University church historian Richard Riss, who has devoted a good deal of his academic career to chronicling the Third Wave.<sup>351</sup> Riss openly forwards the TAV leader's note to others, and adds his own personal commentary on what has occurred. In this commentary, Riss criticises John Wimber for a "precipitous separation of the sheep from the goats" and warns that he is "putting himself in the position of Saul" over against TAV's "David". Looking to the future, he also remarks: "I see this as a good thing in which there will be greater liberty for the Spirit of God to move unhindered."<sup>352</sup>

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – An open letter from John Arnott is posted on the Ecunet 'New Wine' bulletin board. It reports the 5<sup>th</sup> December meeting with the AVC Board, and explains the subsequent disengagement of TAV from AVC. Arnott states that despite the Board's past endorsement of TTB as a move of the Holy Spirit (← 14<sup>th</sup> September 1994), John Wimber and his colleagues no longer felt that Airport Vineyard services were 'mirroring the Vineyard model', and saw themselves unable to shepherd something which fell outside that model.

Arnott confirms that TAV staff were 'surprised at the finality of [the Board's] decision'. He adds:

We had hoped to have some input into the process. We thought the Board was not getting an accurate picture of what was taking place at the renewal meetings and that any issues could be explained and resolved. The Board, we were told, thought otherwise and we were offered no opportunity for discussion. We were removed without due process.

<sup>350</sup> Arnott, John 'Letter to John Wimber', 5<sup>th</sup> December 1995, published on TAV web site, 12<sup>th</sup> december 1995.

<sup>351</sup> 'Vineyard Excommunicates Toronto Christians', *Church of England Newspaper*, December 15<sup>th</sup> 1995, p.3; <sup>351</sup> Beverley, James A., 'Vineyard Severs Ties with 'Toronto Blessing' Church', *Christianity Today*, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1996, p.66.

<sup>352</sup> 'Toronto Vineyard Exclusion: Leaders React', *Christian Herald*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1995.

Confirming that the AVC Board have accepted the apology he conveyed to them in his letter of 5<sup>th</sup> December (←), Arnott adds, 'We will be parting on friendly terms. We still have the same Saviour and the same enemy. We realize that God is Sovereign over everything, including any mistakes his children might make.' He then expresses his thanks to Wimber and the Vineyard for their 'love, faith, courage and patience'. He continues: 'This current move of God's Spirit would not have achieved its worldwide reach and impact without them. They have modelled Christ to us; they have been ministers of healing to us – we cannot thank them enough. We are not saying goodbye. We simply recognise that the sovereign Lord is moving this stream of the Holy Spirit along a new tributary.'

Arnott also announces that TAV has asked 'several senior leaders from around the world' to form a new 'International Renewal Network', through which TAV will chart a more independent course while remaining on good terms with AVC. This will, he says, 'act as a temporary leadership covering for our church until such time as new alliances are formed.' In addition, he confirms that TAV will officially break with AVC on 20<sup>th</sup> January, when it will also announce its new name. He notes that this will mark 'the second anniversary celebration of the outpouring of God's Spirit at the Toronto Airport Vineyard' (← cf. 20<sup>th</sup> January 1994).<sup>353</sup>

Also today, news of the AVC-TAV split reaches the British press. Fred Langan in the *Daily Telegraph* reports that 'the Association of Vineyard Fellowships in Anaheim, California, which has 200,000 members in 600 congregations worldwide, said it would give a full statement later in the week on why it asked the Airport Vineyard Fellowship to leave.'<sup>354</sup>

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – Taking their cue from Anaheim (←), the UK Association of Vineyard Churches, now numbering some 23 congregations, issues a press statement on the expulsion of TAV. The statement acknowledges that TTB 'has reintroduced a vitality into many churches and has been a blessing to those who have received it.' Even so, it goes on to state that over the past year, 'the association has expressed concern to the leadership of the Toronto church that it cannot endorse, encourage, offer theological justification or biblical proof-texting for practices or manifestations which are not to be found in the Bible.' Furthermore,

The Association does not accept that such practices can be presented as criteria for true spirituality or a mark of true renewal. Although appreciating that the power of God may cause unusual phenomena it is the Association's conviction that these manifestations should be promoted, placed on stage, nor used as a basis for theologising that leads to new teaching.

In light of the Association's position and the fact that the leadership of the Toronto church had chosen not to minister within the framework of values and ministry style of the Association and considered themselves no longer representative of, accountable to, or under the authority of the Association the Board resolved to withdraw its endorsement from the leadership of the Toronto church.

<sup>353</sup> Wright, *Strange Fire?*, p.29.

<sup>354</sup> Langan, Fred, 'Evangelicals Expelled By Their Church', *Daily Telegraph*, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 1995.

Recounting the events of the AVC Board meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December (←), the statement reports that on that occasion 'the [Toronto] leadership apologised for misreading the Board's concerns and that apology was accepted. The leadership accepted that they should be released from oversight by the Association to pursue the ministry that God has called them to at this time.' It adds: 'The decision to release the Toronto church was an amicable one.'

The press release then quotes John Arnott's message of thanks to John Wimber and the Vineyard from the open letter he published yesterday on the TAV web site (←).

John Wimber is also quoted: "We love [the leaders of the Toronto Airport Vineyard] and desire only the best for them as they pursue what they believe to be God's intent for their lives. We simply have recognised that during the last two years that we are not their leaders and that the stream called the Toronto Blessing is moving along a tributary different than ours."<sup>355</sup>

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – Victoria Coombe writes in *The Times* of the fissure between AVC and TAV. She says that as a consequence of what has happened, church leaders are urging 'caution' in regard to TTB. She then quotes Evangelical Alliance UK Director Joel Edwards as calling on churches to maintain perspective while they seek to "re-evaluate" the movement in the light of recent events. "The pursuit of manifestations as an end in themselves", says Edwards, "is wrong". He adds that Christians should balance concern for supernatural experience with work in the community among the poor and the old.

Coombe also quotes Holy Trinity Brompton's Press Officer, Mark Elsdon-Dew: "I want to stress we have always said what happens here is not a Toronto blessing but a blessing of the Holy Spirit. What has happened in Toronto this week will make no difference to the way we conduct our services."<sup>356</sup> In a similar statement given to Cole Moreton of the *Church Times*, Elsdon-Dew concedes that although the Toronto split will not radically alter HTB's approach, 'it is yet another warning that we must continue to take care about what we do.'<sup>357</sup>

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – *The Church of England Newspaper* recounts the detachment of TAV from AVC on 5<sup>th</sup> December (←).<sup>358</sup> Its report includes news of the e-mail sent by John Arnott to four colleagues on 6<sup>th</sup> December and 'leaked' by Richard Riss (←). It transpires that TAV staff have now forced Riss to make an apology for the leak, and for his accompanying 'pejorative' remarks about AVC. In forcing Riss to do this, the TAV leadership have warned him that he and they must "give an account for every word spoken".<sup>359</sup>

<sup>355</sup> Association of Vineyard Churches (UK), 'Press Statement', 13<sup>th</sup> December 1995.

<sup>356</sup> Coombe, Victoria, "'Toronto Blessing Warning to Church', *Daily Telegraph*, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1995.

<sup>357</sup> Moreton, Cole, 'Toronto Cut from Vineyard', *Church Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1995.

<sup>358</sup> 'Vineyard Excommunicates Toronto Christians', *Church of England Newspaper*, December 15<sup>th</sup> 1995, p.3.

<sup>359</sup> 'Vineyard Excommunicates Toronto Christians', *Church of England Newspaper*, December 15<sup>th</sup> 1995, p.3.

In addition to the official reasons already given for the split by John Wimber (← 13<sup>th</sup> December), *CEN* suggests that he and the AVC have expelled TAV because of 'his illness and exhaustion, leading him to the point that he felt "unable to field questions about the Toronto Blessing".' The 'illness' to which the report refers here is a legacy of the cancer from which Wimber recovered in 1993, and a stroke he has suffered earlier this year, in September-October.<sup>360</sup>

The *CEN* report goes on to suggest that key British church leaders have known 'for some time' of tensions between Wimber's approach and TAV's emphasis on 'interpreting the 'manifestations', singling out people at the front for prayer to encourage manifestations, and John Arnott's more 'hands-on' style of ministry'. One such unnamed leader tells *CEN*: "The Toronto church would never have become as well-known if it didn't have the Vineyard stamp of authority", and in the light of this, *CEN* wonders what effect the break might have 'on the many thousands of Christians who have visited Toronto and have great loyalty to it.'<sup>361</sup>

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – *Christian Herald* garners reaction from British church leaders to the parting between the Vineyard Association and the Toronto Airport church. Gerald Coates tells the paper: "John Wimber has been under constant pressure from a minority of the Vineyard churches regarding Toronto. Given the manifestation and response to the Spirit's presence in his conferences, this is an astonishing decision." On a more phlegmatic note, Roger Forster of Ichthus says, "Diverse ministries are essential for true Christian unity. It is not only not surprising but necessary that two streams of blessing should pursue their own channels in love." Peter Fenwick, the Sheffield House Church leader who has been at the forefront of opposition to TTB, takes a predictably sharper view: "Things wouldn't have come to this without a serious difference of opinion. They would naturally do all in their power to bridge the gulf, so the rift must be very big." *Christian Herald* itself reports some commentators as also having suggested that 'John Wimber was playing safe, reserving a future position for himself in case the Toronto movement were to founder.'<sup>362</sup>

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – The *Sunday Telegraph* reports that 'recriminations are already beginning to fly' about what it calls the 'excommunication' of TAV from AVC. Gerald Coates tells Religious Correspondent Jonathan Petre: "Some are saying that John Wimber's real motives are jealousy or competitiveness. It is difficult to see into someone's heart, but I am very disappointed by the lack of discussion about his differences with John Arnott." Mark Elsdon-Dew of Holy Trinity, Brompton, however, maintains the caution of his earlier remarks on the split: "We are not taking sides. Something happened and continues to happen. We are not looking for the Spirit of Toronto or of any other place.' Petre also reports that Arnott will be travelling to the UK in February to lead meeting in Telford and Bournemouth (→).<sup>363</sup>

---

<sup>360</sup> These illnesses are mentioned in Wimber's obituary when he dies of a brain haemorrhage in November 1997 – 'Vineyard Founder Wimber Dies', *Christianity Today*, November 1997.

<sup>361</sup> 'Vineyard Excommunicates Toronto Christians', *Church of England Newspaper*, December 15<sup>th</sup> 1995, p.3.

<sup>362</sup> 'Toronto Vineyard Exclusion: Leaders React', *Christian Herald*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1995.

<sup>363</sup> Petre, Jonathan, 'Religious Roadshow Set to Roll in Britain', *Sunday Telegraph*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1995. P.9.

In the same newspaper, Fred Lagan reports from Toronto that despite the disengagement, it is 'business as usual' at TAV, with the congregation 'still rolling around in a state of holy laughter'. He has also spoken with John Arnott about the split: "It has opened up a whole new horizon", says the TAV leader, "Now we can give renewal to churches around the world." Clearly, however, Arnott is still very upset with the AVC: "They've done a very foolish thing. We pleaded with them to give us time. We had already implemented changes they asked for." He adds that they have made "a mountain out of a molehill". In response, Todd Hunter of the AVC Board tells Lagan why the expulsion has occurred: "Crowds can be manipulated by suggestions and emotions. Examples are use of tape on the floor and assigning of catchers to each person being prayed for."<sup>364</sup>

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 1995** – John Capon reports on the Toronto split in the *Baptist Times*, and adds that a Southern Baptist missionary couple in Singapore have had their service terminated for advocating TTB. On appeal to the Southern Baptist denomination's Foreign Missions Board in Memphis, Tennessee, Charles and Sharon Carroll are told that they have moved 'outside of generally accepted practices for Southern Baptists.'<sup>365</sup>

**Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1995** – In the *Church of England Newspaper*, Andrew Carey reviews recent events at Toronto. He also quotes from an additional letter written by John Wimber, which has been distributed to Vineyard pastors and posted on the internet. Wimber writes in more detail about the reasons why TAV has been disengaged from AVC. 'The AVC Board has taken a stand that these manifestations are not to be encouraged, spotlighted, explained, defended or prayed for. We do not believe that they are an essential part of renewal or of the work of the Holy Spirit', he says. Despite this, Wimber argues that Arnott and TAV have continued to 'encourage, spotlight and defend these manifestations', and have 'attempted to give [them] prophetic and eschatological meanings, which we also do not accept as valid.' Furthermore, he stresses, they have failed 'publicly and pastorally [to] test the spirits or manifestations or to sort out the good from the bad.' He goes on to decry as manipulative TAV's featuring of manifestations in testimonies, their use of tape on the floor to mark areas for falling, and their deployment of 'catchers' for individual people.

Andrew Carey comments that Wimber's 'unprecedented action in cutting off the most successful of his churches ... is either authoritarian audacity or an expression of amazing courage – depending on your viewpoint.' He suggests that 'it is bizarre to an Anglican that churches can split so freely and yet still throw around words like 'the body of Christ''. Moreover, 'It may prove to have been a fundamental ecclesiological mistake, by Wimber, to refer to his group of churches as an 'association' rather than a 'union'.' Nonetheless, concludes Carey, 'if there are indeed major problems with manipulation and crowd control then church leaders need to sit up and take notice. They may need to reject the Toronto practices completely in order to have more healthy, spirit-filled worship.'<sup>366</sup>

<sup>364</sup> Lagan, Fred, 'Rebel Pastor Defies Ban on Church', *Sunday Telegraph*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1995, p.9.

<sup>365</sup> Capon, John, 'Toronto Blessing: Parting of the Ways?', *Baptist Times*, 21<sup>st</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> December 1995, p.4

<sup>366</sup> Carey, Andrew, 'Why Wimber Excommunicated Toronto', *Church of England Newspaper*, December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1995, p.7.

In a similar review to Carey's, *The Church Times*' Cole Moreton produces an extra quote, this time from Bob Fulton of the AVC Board: "Catchers, lines of tape on the floor, and endless prayer for someone until they fall down put the idea into people's minds that falling down is the issue."<sup>367</sup>

**Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> December 1995** – The Toronto split is reported in the January editions of *Evangelicals Now*,<sup>368</sup> *Evangelism Today*,<sup>369</sup> and *Evangelical Times*.<sup>370</sup> Characteristically, the *Evangelical Times* comments that now 'the whole issue of the validity of the Toronto Blessing experience must be called into question.' Also characteristically, they call upon Alan Morrison of Diakrisis Ministries for an opinion (←). Morrison has apparently been 'aware that the regional Vineyard leaders were becoming increasingly unhappy about the Rodney Howard-Browne and Benny Hinn dimension within the organisation.'

Also on the Toronto controversy, *Pioneer Update*, the newsletter of Gerald Coates' New Church network, carries a short account of developments. Coates himself is quoted: "We are obviously very saddened that John Wimber does not feel that what is happening can come under his mandate", he says. "But I respect the pressures he has been under, particularly from those within the Vineyard Network of churches who are most unhappy with what is happening in Toronto. We are in full support of John and Carol Arnott and I am looking forward to having them with us in March at our "After the Rain" conference."

Meanwhile, the January issue of *Renewal* magazine reprints an article by Sandy Millar, originally published in *HTB in Focus*. The article appears to have been written prior to the TAV-AVC breach, since Millar does not even allude to this. He does, however, address the question of TTB's roots, and their much-debated effect on the TAV approach to ministry. "Certainly", he admits, "some of the models are different from ours. But I think we ought to be very careful indeed before we suggest that some of those named, like Rodney Howard-Browne and Randy Clark (whom I haven't met but whom a number of people whose views I greatly respect value among their close friends) are other than servants of God trying to be obedient to the call of God on their lives." Also, despite their disavowal by John Wimber in 1991 (←), Millar defends the Kansas City Prophets: "We watched them at close quarters when they were here and saw them demonstrating a degree of prophetic anointing that in my view we have yet to see in this country, even – or should I say especially? – among some who might criticise them.' In any event, he adds, 'This current move of the Holy Spirit is now totally remote from its origins... We ask the *Holy Spirit* to come – not the Spirit of x or y. We have been asking the Spirit to come for the past nearly twenty years to my certain knowledge – and he comes. He was there before, of course, but he comes with different manifestations and in a different sense – to those who are hungry for him.'

As for the fruit of the Blessing, Millar is upbeat: "There is a new love for Jesus, the Bible and fellow Christians. There is new hope and boldness, fresh faith and a new desire for

<sup>367</sup> Moreton, Cole, 'Toronto Fell Down Over Hype', *Church Times*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1995.

<sup>368</sup> 'Toronto Airport Vineyard Flies the Coop', *Evangelicals Now*, January 1996; 'John Wimber Carpets 'Toronto Blessing' Church', *Evangelism Today*, January 1996.

<sup>369</sup> 'John Wimber Carpets 'Toronto Blessing' Church', *Evangelism Today*, January 1996.

<sup>370</sup> 'Toronto Withers on the Vine', *Evangelical Times*, January 1996, pp.1, 24.

freedom in prayer. We are hearing testimony after testimony of this and of many new Christians coming to faith through the Alpha courses and elsewhere too.<sup>371</sup>

In relation to the Rodney Howard-Browne meetings held at Olympia on 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> December (←), and to the criticism they have received, *Evangelicals Now* print a letter by R.T. Kendall of Westminster Chapel. Acknowledging that 'there are godly people who read *EN* who are baffled by our acceptance of people like Rodney and Paul Cain', he writes as follows:

Rodney is a rough diamond. His Pentecostal and cultural trappings put many off. I understand this. His 40-minute sermon at Westminster Chapel was flawless, but I died a thousand deaths at Olympia. It taught me to be patient and not judgmental toward those who can't abide his style. But this one thing I know: when he prayed for my wife, Louise, she was instantly healed; her life was further transformed by his ministry in Florida one year ago. She had been seriously depressed and homesick for over five years. She has often said that, had she not been so desperate, she would have walked out in ten minutes. There is nothing wrong with being desperate; but it was God's way of getting our attention. Also, our son came back to Christ under Rodney's ministry. Rodney is only 34. God isn't finished with him yet. And he is beginning to listen to me, showing far more openness than some of us who are Reformed. What if, as I believe, we are on the brink of a great awakening this century – and that God sovereignly chose his ministry as the embryonic phase of it? I had to climb down (I didn't like it because it didn't start with me) after speaking against it. I chose to make this statement through *Evangelicals Now*. You are my 'stable'. I have not deserted you, and I never meant to let you down.<sup>372</sup>

At this time also, John Arnott tells the religion writer of the *Los Angeles Times*, Larry B. Stammer, that on 5<sup>th</sup> December (←), AVC declared TAV to have gone "over the edge" by encouraging manifestations as part of testimony and worship. "We weren't asked to leave", he adds, "We were told we were out."<sup>373</sup>

In the midst of all the controversy, the January-February edition of *Ministries Today* prints an extract from John Arnott's newly-published book, *The Father's Blessing*.<sup>374</sup> 'At times', writes Arnott, 'the intensity of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in our meetings has been shocking. Occasionally we have found ourselves having to speak over the noise of people laughing and groaning or crying out, though things usually are quieter during the preaching of the Word. When all of this started happening in our church, we were greatly tempted to try to keep things tidy. I wondered how the shaking, collapsing, laughing and other things fit in with 1 Corinthians 14:40, which says that things should be done decently and in order.' Through his contemplation of this 'decency and order' issue, however, Arnott has concluded that Paul's phrase must finally be interpreted from God's point of view, rather than from any culturally-conditioned human perspective: 'The Holy Spirit reserves the right to do things none of us have ever seen before, such as falling upon people during the preaching of the Word

<sup>371</sup> Millar, Sandy, 'We ask the Holy Spirit to Come – and He Does', *Renewal*, January 1996, pp.14-15.

<sup>372</sup> Kendall, R.T., 'R.T. responds', *Evangelicals Now*, January 1996, p.24.

<sup>373</sup> Wooding, Dan, 'Toronto Group Ousted in 'Spiritual Split'', *Challenge Weekly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1996.

<sup>374</sup> Arnott, John, *The Father's Blessing*, Orlando, Fl.: Creation House, 1995.



in Cornelius' house (Acts 10:44) ... [T]he question is, Whose understanding of "decently and in order" should we use – yours, ours or God's?' In seeking to address this question, Arnott deals with four 'false assumptions' I regard to the work of the Spirit.

First, Arnott argues, it is erroneous to presume that all acts of God have to be understandable in order to be valid. God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22) and Jesus' use of spittle and mud to heal the man born blind (John 9) are cited as apparently 'bewildering' incidents which have nonetheless been accepted in retrospect. Likewise, he avers, 'this new move of God is in line with the Word and with church history. It produces good fruit, and Jesus is glorified. Given all that, it seems less important that our minds can't grasp all the ways God chooses to move by His Spirit.'

Secondly, Arnott suggests that we are mistaken if we think that "the Holy Spirit will never do anything against my will". This, he contends, is to deny God's sovereignty. As well as maintaining that God may well cause people to shake or fall involuntarily if that is his purpose, he refers in particular to the slaying of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:11: 'Was this move of the Spirit against their wills? Yes. But was it God? Indeed, it was.'

Thirdly, Arnott criticises the notion that if something is from God, it cannot possibly evoke fear in those who experience it. Instancing Daniel 10 and Exodus 20:19, he comments that 'feeling afraid might actually be a sign that you are in God's presence.' He also advises: 'Recognize that God is awesome. Don't be surprised if his power overwhelms you.'

Finally, Arnott dissents from the view that God must always be 'tidy and proper'. Jesus' ministry, he notes, was often marked by conflict, noise and apparent chaos, e.g. in the deliverance of the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5 and Luke 8. 'Suppose such a thing happened at your church?', he suggests. 'You would need to have a country church with some pigs nearby. How would your parishoners and the neighbours react to a naked, screaming demoniac and thousands of suddenly insane pigs? People would wonder: *How could this be God? It's so loud and perplexing...* Yet if you asked the mother or father of that man if they thought this was God's work, what do you think they would have said?. And if you asked the man himself if he was blessed in spite of the disorderly scene, what do you think he would have said? Would he have questioned whether it was all done "decently and in order"? No, he was simply grateful and wanted to follow Jesus.'<sup>375</sup>

Also in the same issue of *Ministries Today*, Arnott reflects on the recent split from AVC. He tells the magazine: "We have a lot of very satisfied people who have come and been refreshed ... Our heart is to work it out and be friends."<sup>376</sup>

Although he does not mention the immediate crisis in Toronto, David Forbes reflects in the January-February edition of *Prophecy Today* on the apparent line of continuity from the Latter Rain movement, through the 'elect seed' teaching of Kansas City Prophets, to TAV (cf. 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1988, 1<sup>st</sup> October, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1994, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1995). The article is adapted from his contribution to *Blessing the Church?*, which has been co-

<sup>375</sup> Arnott, John, 'Why Renewal Isn't Tidy', *Ministries Today*, January/February 1996, pp.45-48.

<sup>376</sup> 'Toronto Update', *Ministries Today*, January/February 1996, pp.47.

written with Clifford Hill, Peter Fenwick and David Noakes and published by Eagle on 17<sup>th</sup> November (←). Forbes submits that TB proponent Randy Clark has confirmed that 'the 'prophetic foundation for what is happening [was] clearly prophesied over ten years ago by Paul Cain and the Kansas City prophets.' Moreover, he writes, 'Rodney Howard-Browne, another of the leading exponents of the 'blessing' has given Latter Rain style prophcies and Mark Dupont, who has a prophetic ministry in the Toronto Vineyard church, has written that "this move of the Spirit in 1994 is not just a charismatic and Pentecostal experience, concerning power of gifting. It is one thing to be clothed with power; it is another thing to be indwelt with the person of God.'" Comparing the rise of such teachings with the historic propensity of heresies to 'sprout out by huddles and clusters', Forbes concludes that 'the Charismatic movement might do well to pay heed.'<sup>377</sup>

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 1996** – Reporting on the breach between AVC and TAV for *Christianity Today*, James Beverley quotes Tom Stipe, a former Vineyard pastor from Denver: "John Wimber has helped true biblical renewal by this decision. It's unfortunate that the airport Vineyard leaders didn't really hear his concerns."

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> January 1996** – In its last issue before re-launching as *New Christian Herald*, *Christian Herald* reports that Mark Haville, who led the protests against Rodney Howard-Browne at Olympia on 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> December, has challenged leading Toronto advocates Gerald Coates, R.T. Kendall and Nicky Gumbel of Holy Trinity, Brompton, to take part in a public debate on the Blessing with their detractors. He suggests a date of 3<sup>rd</sup> February at a London venue capable of holding 500, and says that the event would be recorded on video so as to reach a wider audience. It is subsequently reported that some of those challenged have declined Haville's invitation on the grounds that the Evangelical Alliance is conducting ongoing research and consultation on the matter.<sup>378</sup>

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January 1996** – John Arnott and the Toronto Airport church celebrate the second anniversary of TTB. They also formally disengage from AVC and re-name themselves the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship [TACF].

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 1996** – The February edition of *Alpha* magazine lends extensive coverage to the disengagement of the Toronto church from the Vineyard network. As well as the information cited above (←), the magazine's record of what has happened includes comment from TACF pastor Marc Dupont, who urges the church's supporters "not to get hurt [and] not to get embittered" about what has happened. From the Vineyard side, member Todd Hunter reiterates the objections made by the AVC Board on 5<sup>th</sup> December (←), but adds, 'Our action does not mean that we have rejected the current renewal. Many of our churches have benefited greatly ... and have incorportaed it into their church life, within the healthy and biblical guidelines published over the last two years.'<sup>379</sup>

Elsewhere in the magazine, editor Dave Roberts scrutinises negative reaction to TTB. While accepting the need for doctrinal discernment, Roberts suggests that some

<sup>377</sup> Forbes, David, 'From North Battleford to Toronto', *Prophecy Today*, January-February 1996, pp.14-17.

<sup>378</sup> 'Evangelical Unity Urged', *New Christian Herald*, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1996.

<sup>379</sup> 'Toronto Airport Church No Longer a Vineyard', *Alpha*, February 1996, pp.4-8.

criticism of the movement over the past year and a half has been 'tainted by generalisations, misrepresentations, faulty logic and a confrontational attitude.' For illustration, he singles out comments published by Wendy Porter, Alan Morrison and Clifford Hill.

Porter's attack on the lack of Christology exhibited by Toronto-style hymns and songs in her chapter for *The Toronto Blessing - Or Is It?*<sup>380</sup> is, says Roberts, both subjective and ignorant of evidence from recent recordings made pro-Blessing musicians. Indeed, Roberts argues that lyrics written in the past year or so by Paul Oakley, Martin Smith and Matt Redman 'suggest just the opposite'.

As for Morrison's charge, made in his *A Different Gospel* video and elsewhere,<sup>381</sup> that TTB attempts 'to destroy the work of biblical evangelism', Roberts insists that 'the facts are quite clear'. Rodney Howard-Browne, he states, 'has seen thousands make a profession of faith since 1993.' Moreover, 'The Toronto Vineyard record between five and 30 conversions nightly', and 'The Sunderland Christian Centre, who meet nightly, have seen high profile local criminals and their families coming to Christ in renewal meetings.' If the point is definition of the word 'biblical', suggests Roberts, then Morrison and his supporters should heed John Arnott's response to the AVC Board on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1995 [←], when he wrote: "We too want to focus on preaching the Cross of Christ to all who come for refreshing." Likewise, Roberts cites an Airport Vineyard leaflet on discernment which underlines the need to 'test all prophecies by the Spirit and the Word, since "we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9)'. In addition, Roberts points to the growing success of Holy Trinity Brompton's Alpha course. This, he says, 'combines C.S. Lewis-style apologetics, resolute evangelical orthodoxy and charismatic spirituality', and 'is currently in use in as many as 2,000 churches.' Furthermore, 'It places a strong premium on freindship evangelism, a process of evangelism and the involement of the whole person, including the mind, in the salvation process.' Morrison's allegation, writes Roberts, 'is all the more damaging because it is wrong.'

Whereas Clifford Hill has described TTB as 'a floodtide of deception'<sup>382</sup>, Roberts argues that this in itself is a 'subjective perception', with little clear warrant in the 'plain and main' witness of Scripture.<sup>383</sup>

Also around this time, *Direction* magazine reports that two other Vineyard churches, in Pasadena and Missouri, have asked to leave the Vineyard network because of AVC's treatment of the Toronto Airport church.<sup>384</sup>

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1996** – Victoria Coombe reports in the *Daily Telegraph* on John Arnott's recent arrival in Britain, and on the 'Catch the Fire Conference' he has been leading in Telford. She comments that the Blessing has here 'apparently started to take on a new shape.' Instead of erupting in 'holy laughter', she writes, 'two thirds of the

<sup>380</sup> Porter, Wendy, 'The Worship of the Toronto Blessing?' in Stanley E. Porter & Philip J. Richter (eds.) *The Toronto Blessing – Or Is It?* London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995, pp.104-30.

<sup>381</sup> Morrison, *A Different Gospel: The Origin and Purpose of the Toronto Blessing*, Diakrisis Video, 1995. See 17<sup>th</sup> May 1995 (←) and Bibliography. A similar accusation is made in Morrison's pamphlet *Falling for the Lie*. See Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September 1994 (←) and Bibliogrphay.

<sup>382</sup> In *Blessing the Church*, Guildford: Eagle, 1995. See 17<sup>th</sup> November 1995 (←) and Bibliogrphay.

<sup>383</sup> Roberts, Dave, 'The Toronto Divide', *Alpha* February 1996, pp.4-6.

<sup>384</sup> 'Toronto Blessing' Group is Ousted', *Direction*, February 1996, pp.40-41.

congregation simultaneously burst into tears and fell to their knees.' According to Gerald Coates, who has been touring with Arnott, says this indicates that that the Blessing has now changed its "genetic code".<sup>385</sup>

Today also, *New Christian Herald* reports that celebrations in Wales and Scotland to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Evangelical Alliance have sought to strike a note of reconciliation in respect of TTB. In South Wales, Toronto supporter R.T. Kendall has preached from Matthew 22:29 on the need to maintain unity between those concerned to uphold biblical authority and those seeking to emphasise the power of God. He has added that he longs to see the day when "those who come to church to see will hear, and those who come to hear will see!". Striking a similar note, Alliance Director General Clive Calver has told audiences in Llandudno and Glasgow that Christ is coming back to marry his bride, the Church, as a whole – "not an arm, a leg, then a torso."<sup>386</sup>

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February 1996** – From the Bournemouth International Centre, London *Evening Standard* reporter Tom Hayes describes the latest leg of John Arnott's British tour. The Bournemouth meetings are being conducted under the title 'Waves of the Spirit', and as well as Arnott, are being addressed by David and Mary Pytches, Terry Virgo, Gerald Coates, Wes Campbell and Rob Warner. 2-3000 have paid £60 a head to attend.<sup>387</sup> Hayes recounts that he has fallen to the floor after being prayed for by Arnott and his wife Carol:

Inexplicably, while under the influence of [Arnott's] insistent words, my resolve melted. I could feel my legs slowly weakening under me. Five times they wobbled and five times I resisted until eventually I couldn't be bothered to hold out any more and collapsed gratefully into the arms of a helper ... Frankly, it was pretty disturbing but my legs were completely immobile so I lay back and thought of England. In truth, I had little choice. A strange sensation had filled my legs which rendered them completely useless. Mentally, I was alert but no matter how hard I told myself to move my legs, it didn't happen. Approximately half-an-hour later I stumbled to my feet, feeling no better and no worse than I had done earlier.

Despite all this, Hayes calls TTB 'an extreme branch of the charismatic movement' and writes that it reduces 'seemingly sensible people' to 'gibbering wrecks'. In conclusion, however, he resumes a more equivocal tone: 'apart from being a little worrying, it was actually quite pleasurable', he writes.<sup>388</sup>

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February 1996** – Also reporting from Bournemouth, Cole Moreton tells readers of the *Church Times* that one of the organisers of the 'Waves of the Spirit' conference, Revd Peter Lawrence of Canford Magna in Dorset, has issued a statement defending Arnott's presence in the wake of his recent split from AVC. The statement says that John Arnott has left the Vineyard not 'because of immorality, or because the

---

<sup>385</sup> Coombe, Victoria, 'Telford Blessing 'Ends in Tears'', *Daily Telegraph*, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1996.

<sup>386</sup> 'Evangelical Unity Urged', *New Christian Herald*, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1995.

<sup>387</sup> 'Toronto Preacher Wins Widespread Support', *Church of England Newspaper*, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1996, p.2.

<sup>388</sup> Hayes, Tom, 'Legless for Jesus? Now I'm a Believer', *Evening Standard*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1996.

Vineyard leaders feel the present move is not of God, but [because of] a difference of opinion in administering the renewal and handling its consequences.'

By contrast, Moreton confirms that Holy Trinity, Brompton has 'taken pains to stress its closeness to John Wimber and the Vineyard Association, and to distance itself from Toronto.' A spokesman for the London church is quoted as emphasising that while John Arnott "as a man" would be "enormously welcome", he is unlikely to be invited to speak because so many other people wish to do so.

Moreton also reports that the controversial former Bishop of Durham, Rt Rev David Jenkins, has denounced TTB as "pure psychological violence". Recording the first of a new BBC Radio 5 Live series called *For God's Sake*, Jenkins has told presenter Ted Harrison that the Blessing is "a form of manipulation ... which reinforces the superstitious side of religion." He has added that it is "increasingly clear this cannot be the work of the Holy Spirit, who is the vehicle of God in Jesus who loves us and treats us with respect."<sup>389</sup>

Also today, the *Church of England Newspaper* claims that attendances at the recent 10-day tour of Britain by John Arnott (←) have not been as high as expected. In a review of the two conferences which have comprised the tour – the 'Catch the Fire' event in Telford and the 'Waves of the Spirit' gathering in Bournemouth – *CEN* states that 'despite numbers that most church groups would be more than happy with, organisers still said they believed the split with Vineyard had affected numbers.' Arnott himself is quoted on the divide: "It was a real blow to what we were about", he reflects. "The whole thrust of Vineyard was about grace and mercy, yet here we are with this split in our own backyard." Whereas disagreement on the manifestations had been "on the scale" for TAV, he suggests, it had turned out to be "10 on the scale" as far as Wimber and the AVC Board were concerned: "We did everything to try to negotiate, but it went nowhere."

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February 1996** – Andrew Boyd reports for *New Christian Herald* on the recent 'Waves of the Spirit' conference at Bournemouth. John Arnott is quoted as having told the 2,000 or so delegates present: "I believe we are heading for the greatest harvest the world has ever seen." Conference host Peter Lawrence added: "I would love to see this as a beginning of turning our godless country around. I believe it will lead to something if Christians receive it. If they don't, it will fade and go away."

The fading of the Blessing is, however, something which Clifford Hill suggests is happening now. He tells Boyd, "the phenomena is [sic] dying out". Even so, Hill strikes a somewhat more conciliatory note than in his previous public pronouncements on the issue: "We are all brothers and sisters who love the Lord", he

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February 1996** – David Jenkins' denunciation of TTB as "pure psychological violence" (recorded on 9<sup>th</sup> February ←) is broadcast at 8pm on the BBC Radio 5 Live programme *For God's Sake*.

---

<sup>389</sup> Moreton, Cole, 'Toronto Pastor is Still Laughing', *Church Times*, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1996, p.5. The comments by David Jenkins were actually broadcast on BBC Radio 5 Live at 8pm on 18<sup>th</sup> February (→).

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 1996** – The Darlington-based Evangelical Press publish an extensive critique of TTB by the Canadian Grace Baptist Eric E. Wright. Entitled *Strange Fire?*, Wright's book can claim to be the lengthiest and most thoroughly documented study of the movement published so far. For all its detail, however, its analysis is unashamedly driven by Wright's cessationism, which predisposes him to a decidedly unsympathetic view, not only of TTB as such, but of the charismatic movement in general.

**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November 1996** – New Frontiers leader Terry Virgo publishes *A People Prepared*, his reflection on TTB and its implications.

**Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1997** – MacMillan publish TAV pastor Guy Chevreau's sequel to his 1994 study *Catch the Fire*. Entitled *Share the Fire*, the new book seeks to define a model of 'grace-based evangelism' which is complementary to TTB.

Around this time also, the Eastbourne-based publisher Day One launch *The Signs and Wonders Movement – Exposed*. Edited by Peter Glover, this contains various essays by different contributors. The book as a whole stands as a wide-ranging attack on Third Wave and Faith-style ministries, but contains an article by former Queen's Road Baptist Church pastor Chris Hand.

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August 1997** – Mowbray publish Roland Howard's *Charismania*, an exposé of the Charismatic movement which includes a brief chapter on TTB. Howard authored the definitive study of the infamous 'Nine O'Clock Service' scandal of August 1995, and here attempts a similar kind of investigative religious journalism.

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November 1997** – John Wimber dies, aged 63, from a brain haemorrhage following a fall.<sup>390</sup>

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 1998** – Paternoster Press publishes a self-styled 'Charismatic Critique of the Toronto Blessing'. Edited by Lloyd Pietersen, this collects together essays by four scholars associated with the Department of Biblical Studies at Sheffield University. The specific concern of the contributors is the work on TTB and revival published by their Sheffield colleague, Mark Stibbe, in his book *Times of Refreshing* (← 7<sup>th</sup> July 1995).

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1999** – As part of his newly-published textbook *Psychology and Religion*, Michael Argyle offers a 3-page account of TTB.

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2000** – Eagle issue an extensively revised edition of Nigel Scotland's authoritative study *Charismatics and the New Millennium*. The original version of the book, published in 1995 by Hodder & Stoughton, could not deal in depth with TTB. The intervening period has, however, afforded Scotland the opportunity to assess the new movement, and here he devotes some 30 pages to it.

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2000** – The Evangelical Alliance makes selected sections of this book available on its website, as a prelude to its paperback publication by Paternoster Press in early Spring 2001.

---

<sup>390</sup> 'Vineyard Founder Wimber Dies', *Christianity Today*, November 1997.

