



Volume 8, Number 6

September/October 1997

"Bread & Games"
Reflections on the British Church
By Tricia Tillin

Part Two: The Birth and Death of the Renewal Movement

In Part One of "Bread & Games" I tried to show how the fundamental beliefs and practises of the Church have changed radically from the onset of the charismatic renewal of the 1960's. Naturally, there are historical reasons for this shift in understanding, and to properly treat the subject I would need to go back into earlier centuries to examine the slow development of thinking that produced these changes.

However, for the sake of brevity I intend to present a concise history of the Renewal Movement: from the 1950's onwards when events impacted our own lives and beliefs. (As an Englishwoman I will inevitably be focussing more on the UK than America, though the course of events was very similar both sides of the Atlantic.)

By the 1950's there were Pentecostal denominations functioning in Britain as well as the rest of the world, but they had made little impact on the Church as a whole. There was widespread ignorance and even a fear of Spiritual gifts. British people as a whole, and evangelicals in particular, were temperamentally unsuited to displays of "emotionalism" as it was called.

Being born again in the 1950's and 60's did not include being baptised in the Spirit - indeed, Christians knew nothing about it. Those who did have an experience of Baptism in the Spirit were usually asked to leave their- churches. Many therefore, who joined the early charismatic movement had come out of lifeless Anglican churches staid Baptist fellowships and Brethren Assemblies that had refused to countenance the operation of spiritual gifts in this day and age.

Fore-Runners of the Charismatic Movement

From the turn of the century, there had been various influential individuals who seeded the ground ahead of the full charismatic movement. One of these was Smith Wigglesworth, a British by-product of the Pentecostal Revival in the States, by way of AA Boddy and his wife, Mary. Their centre in Sunderland was one early manifestation of the growing desire for power in ministry. Behind Sunderland lay the experiences of the Welsh revival (1903-5) and of course the Keswick meetings (see below).

But by the 1960's there were three main strands of neo-pentecostalism in the British Isles, and these could be considered the forerunners of the Charismatic Movement, yet they were in many respects different from it. They were independent fellowships, not interested in unity with the traditional churches and very much running on their own tracks.

One group was centred in South Chard, Somerset. It drew its doctrine from old-style Pentecostalism and to some extent the Healing Revival and the Latter-Rain Revival in the States. South Chard's vision however, was broader than these two things and its focus was body-ministry in which the priestly caste of the Church of England and Rome was abolished and all Christians were equal before God.

Another group gathered around the ministry of Pastor G.W. (Wally) North. The North fellowships were also independent and shunned the traditional denominations. Their doctrines were largely those of old-time Wesleyanism with sanctification seen as the goal.

Another pre-Charismatic group met annually at Keswick, having been formed from the American Holiness Movement in the nineteenth century. (It is accepted by many that the Welsh Revival was born out of the Keswick Conventions). The Keswick preachers, while rejecting extremes such as "sinless perfection", emphasised the need for sanctification and "fullness of the Spirit" as a definite experience distinct from salvation. This "second blessing" brought victory over sin, and power for service.

It was my privilege to be present at both South Chard and Keswick meetings, and I testify to the way God used them in my early Christian life. Indeed, I was led to pray for the infilling of the Spirit after attending a Keswick Convention. Many

others in this country owe a debt of gratitude to the Chard, North and Keswick meetings. I mention this by way of contrast with what is to follow.

The influence of these pre-charismatic groups was important, but not long lasting, and they were eventually overtaken and to *some* extent swallowed up in the coming Charismatic Explosion.

Streams of Renewal

It was the dawn of the hippie era the 1960's and "the times they are a-changing. People were getting restless as they always do when Christianity becomes merely another religion. Born-again believers wanted the richness power and beauty of genuinely spiritual worship. They sought like-minded fellowship. They thirsted for meat not milk. They looked for the freedom to pray aloud in services to preach the gospel to their neighbours, to practise the gifts of the Spirit. All this was impossible in the traditional Church structures of the 1960's.

As more Christians - and especially the young and newly-saved - discovered the Chard way of worship, or met in lively house-groups during the week, a hunger for freedom from dead formalism developed and gained pace. Replacing the restrictive structures of the traditional Church was high on the wish-list of the new generation of Christians.

Many felt that informal house-groups and community lifestyles were the way to go, but as we shall see, a major row was brewing over the extent to which the clergy were prepared to let go of the infrastructure of the Church. Eventually, two streams of renewal emerged, diverging on this point of denominationalism and also ecumenism.

In Part Two, I will look at the stream called by some the Anglican Renewal Movement because it largely affected the traditional churches. Only then can we see how "restoration" took centre stage and became the leading charismatic force in the UK

Waking Up To Revival

Something of a national awakening to Christianity took place in Britain following the London Crusade of Billy Graham in 1954. Over a twelve-week period, many thousands of people came into contact for the first time with dynamic, informal and effective faith.

Buses and trains in London were full of happy people singing Crusade songs. Despite the scepticism of the established Church and the derisory tone of the national newspapers, a great bubble of post-war optimism rose to the surface of Britain and burst unexpectedly onto an unsuspecting and unprepared Church.

Billy Graham converts were looking to extend their new-found *freedom* to worship, unbounded by the fetters of ritualism. They had experienced a personal conversion that went beyond intellectual religion; they had witnessed the power of Spirit-filled praise and preaching and now they were seeking a fullness of faith that could not be found in the established churches. They were chafing at the bit.

So, despite the number of vibrant new converts, the traditional churches of Britain continued to suffer a decline. This was both puzzling and distressing for men like Martyn Lloyd-Jones of Westminster Chapel and John Stott of All Soul's, Langham Place, both at the leading edge of evangelical Christianity. These men were renowned for their expository preaching yet failed to improve on numbers in Church attendance.

Neither of these men was a lover of emotionalism, much less Pentecostalism. Lloyd Jones was a Puritan at heart, and Stott was a regular conservative evangelical Anglican, trying to force his faith into a traditional mould.

Oddly, however, it was Lloyd Jones who first showed interest in revival, having been challenged by the evangelical awakenings of the 19th Century. Between 1955 and 1958, therefore, he set about a systematic study of the Epistle to the Ephesians and concluded that a distinct experience of infilling of the Holy Spirit was needed alongside the experience of conversion.

This series of Sunday morning sermons was bound to excite wide interest. In addition, from the early 1950's Lloyd Jones set up an inter-denominational meeting for interested Pastors called the Westminster Fellowship, attended by such men as David Watson, David Pawson and Michael Harper who later took a central role in the Renewal. At the same time, John Stott was galvanising evangelical Anglicans by undertaking with his Church Staff a comprehensive study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.

"Nine O'clock in the Morning"

A timebomb was about to explode, and some believe it was set off by events on the other side of the Pond, in Van Nuys, California. Dennis Bennett was baptised in the Spirit in 1959 and the news spread like wildfire around the globe, reaching England via the "Trinity" magazine. The spectacle of Episcopalian ministers toying with Pentecostalism was news-worthy and a major article on the subject soon appeared in "The Churchman". Martyn Lloyd-Jones introduced the news at his Westminster Fellowship.

Following these events avidly was the Curate at John Stott's church in London, All Soul's, Langham Place. His name was Michael Harper, and he was to become the leader of the Anglican Renewal Movement. In 1962 he also had an experience of

infilling of the Spirit, but was not treated sympathetically by John Stott who had concluded that the "second blessing" was not scriptural.

Harper depended, in those early days, on advice from others who had experienced the Baptism in the Spirit. He accepted the counsel of an evangelical Anglican called Frank McGuire, Rector of the Church of the Holy Spirit, Monterey Park, California, the church where Dennis Bennett had been baptised in the Spirit.

It was McGuire who initially advised on the contacts between UK and American revivalists, and it was on McGuire's advice that Larry Christenson, a Lutheran Pastor from California, met with Harper in 1964 and was asked to speak to clergy and church workers. It was Christenson who encouraged Harper to speak in tongues.

At one of the very first public meetings to promote the new revival, David Du Plessis (the so-called "Mr. Pentecost", the Pentecostal minister most responsible for bringing Rome into the charismatic movement) was asked to speak. This took place at a Hotel in London in 1963, and was organised by Michael Harper. Later Harper and Du Plessis toured Scotland and England together, holding meetings to promote renewal within the Anglican Church. The road was set for Rome's involvement in the British Renewal from day one.

The Fountain Trust

Nonetheless, in February 1964 when Harper organised the first charismatic conference in Stoke Pages it embraced all kinds of revivalists and not just the Anglican contingent. Assemblies of God preacher, Arthur Wallis, would have been the main speaker if he had not been ill. His place was taken by Campbell McAlpine.

In June 1964, another conference at Stoke Poges brought together the dynamic Pentecostal Healing Evangelist. Harry Greenwood from South Chard, and Baptist Pastor, David Pawson. In this way links were forged and the renewal spread to many different denominations.

Also in June 1964, Harper left All Soul's to set up the Fountain Trust, the headquarters of the Renewal for many years.

Renewal was now fully under way. New ideas like healing, prophecy, tongues, community life-style and spontaneous prayer and praise hit the Church like a thunderbolt. Anglicans who had been seeking power in ministry and freedom in praise flocked to revival meetings throughout the country, many of them organised by the Fountain Trust.

Under the auspices of Michael Harper, Fountain Trust, and a group known as The Fisherfolk (Graham and Betty Pulkingham) huge cathedral meetings were held for

those who had come alive in the Spirit and the praise flowed free. For the first time, popular music was used extensively for worship, instruments other than the organ were used, and musicals like "Come Together" travelled from town to town.

The song-book jointly produced in 1974 by the Harpers and Pulkinghams was "Sounds of Living Waters" and it was a huge success. Many songs contained in this book have become the bedrock of charismatic praise today.

These were momentous events! Theologians on all sides rallied to discuss the "renewal". Conferences were held and meetings convened to discuss what was happening. Anglicans were speaking in tongues!

Dissent in the Camp

However, Pentecostals and other independent groups were suspicious, despite their initial enthusiasm. The Renewal Movement retained its allegiance to the Church of England and in the case of the Fisherfolk was almost Anglo-Catholic in doctrine. Liturgy was not abandoned but "renewed"; the Priesthood was not overthrown but became more user-friendly. Because of its association with the traditional denominations, this Renewal movement was rejected if not despised by independent charismatic groups, and many eventually refused to work with Harper.

Martyn Uoyd Jones was becoming increasingly alarmed at the ecumenism of the leaders of the Renewal, and he deplored the influence of Du Plessis. He viewed involvement with the World Council of Churches as dangerous, and even more so the growing sympathy of the Vatican towards the charismatic movement.

As early as 1965, this issue led to a major split. The Westminster Fellowship was divided on the subject, and came to an end in 1966. In the same year, the Evangelical Alliance - the national body that represented evangelical Christians and denominations - held a National Assembly, only the second since its foundation in 1896.

There, the rift between Lloyd Jones and John Stott erupted into a full-scale argument, dividing those who saw renewal as the uniting force for the historic churches, including Rome, from those who rejected Rome and believed renewal should, if necessary, overturn denominations and their traditions. No compromise was possible and the two sides parted company.

Roman Catholic interest was publicly acknowledged by 1967, and at the Fountain Trust conference held at High Leigh in 1969 there was significant participation by Anglo-Catholics. The next conference in 1969 had the theme "Catholic Pentecostalism".

The traditional clergy were alarmed at the influx of faddy new ideas through the Renewal movement, such as lay participation in communion services, folk masses, guitar liturgies, choruses and extempore prayer.

As well as this, there was disquiet at the strange theories being promoted by renewed Anglicans, often endorsed by the Fountain Trust. Popular at the time were the Sandford's inner healing, Frances McNutt's healing through deliverance, Frank Lake's clinical theology, and the Pulkingham's drive towards community lifestyle.

Meanwhile in the rank-and-file of the Renewal, dissent was also afoot. Christians who had at first heralded the Renewal as the answer to all their prayers began to suspect that it was not.

A few Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches threw themselves into the Renewal wholeheartedly and became charismatic through and through. This usually happened because the man in charge became baptised in the Spirit and was courageous enough to introduce the renewal to his entire church. These churches were the exception rather than the rule, because such things received official disapproval from the powers that be. (*Many such renewed churches later formed a foundation for the acceptance of the Toronto Blessing, and other errors. For example, St. Andrews, Chorley Wood - later the home of David Pytches - and David Watson's church in York came alive at the time of the renewal and then went on to stranger things.*)

However, the more common experience of renewed Christians within the traditional churches was one of frustration and misunderstanding if not outright opposition. Although in many churches there was tacit approval of spiritual experiences, there was also a desire to apply the brakes whenever things began to take off. Bishops breathed down the necks of any clergy who went too far along the charismatic route, and increasingly any genuine charismatic activity had to take place outside the church buildings. The real worship, prayer, prophecy and healing was taking place in house meetings during the week. On Sundays the services were as straight-laced as ever, and the clergy seemed anxious to maintain the status quo.

It was quickly perceived by those involved in the renewal that, as always, the structures and traditions of the Church were going to stifle revival. Men who wanted to retain their power and position, and church members opposed to the Holy Spirit's move, tried their hardest to quench the fires of revival. Everywhere, disappointed Christians were leaving their churches and looking to house meetings for fellowship. Others, who were baptised in the Spirit against their Pastor's wishes, were actually disfellowshipped and forced to leave.

But just as this move out of the historic churches was taking place, the Renewal movement faltered and lost its way and could not help its supporters.

Not with a roar, but a whimper

The Anglican Renewal movement that had seemed so full of promise was ultimately shipwrecked by its own leadership, and on the rocks of ecumenism,

“theology” and Church tradition. Harper et al misjudged the need for a “new wineskin”, and went too far in courting Rome.

The first international charismatic conference held in Guildford in 1971 was described by some as the "Coming of Age of The Renewal" yet it was attended by 40 Lutherans and 30 Roman Catholics and one of the main speakers was Kevin Ranaghan. "Mr. Pentecost" David Du Plessis was also there.

In 1972, Cardinal Suenens became intimately involved in the Renewal and introduced it to the Catholic Charismatic movement.

In the same year, Tom Smail (Presbyterian, with a classic reformed doctrine) joined the staff of Fountain Trust and began to introduce “a theological framework” for the renewal. By 1975 the oomph had gone out of the Renewal, innovation was being stamped out, meetings became tame, and interest was waning.

Michael Harper left the Directorship of Fountain Trust in 1975, and Tom Smail took over as Director. In 1980 the Fountain Trust closed down for ever.

This did not bring to an end the Renewal Movement as such, but it was a sign of its terminal decline. An alternative body sprang to life in 1980 as an attempt to keep up the impetus, but the Anglican Renewal Ministries today is a pale shadow of the glory that had been. Their magazine “Anglicans For Renewal” is the typical charismatic Anglican fudge, broadly supportive of Toronto, but also with Anglo-Catholic articles on the Celts and pilgrimage. It seems the Anglicans are ever travelling hopefully but never actually arriving anywhere of significance. It illustrates the parody hymn we used to sing (affectionately) to the tune of “Onward Christian Soldiers”:

"Onward Church of England, crawling out the door; with the Holy Synod going on before; Like a mighty tortoise moves the Church of God, forwards and then backwards, the way it's always trod..."

As an illustration of the extent to which Michael Harper adopted ecumenism as a personal belief, witness the meetings held in Brighton in 1991. There, Michael Harper along with his old stable-mate, Larry Christenson, plus Vinson Synan, Fr. Tom Forrest and others were to head the committee of the ecumenical “Brighton '91” meetings for global evangelism. The highest attendance was Catholics and suggested methods of evangelism included rituals, the sacraments, the Mass, and the Virgin Mary.

Obituary Notes

Frantic to keep in place the structures they had known and loved, the Anglican leadership refused to adopt a wider vision. Moving with slow steps, agonising over every new move, holding interminable theological debates and doing little to feed the hunger of the spiritually impoverished, the leadership lost the trust of ordinary

Christians, who were forced to find other outlets for their enthusiasm. Ultimately they turned to "restoration" fellowships as the only viable alternative.

Thus a priceless opportunity for revival was lost, and. Instead, the "restoration" movement was able to glean thousands of young souls dissatisfied with their churches and thirsty for something new. A vacuum was created by the failure of the traditional denominations to embrace renewal fully, and "restoration" rushed in to seal the gap.

The Preface to Joyce Thunnan's book "New Wineskins - a Study of the House Church Movement", written in 1982, wrote of the fast advance of the restoration fellowships, *"their ranks having been swelled by disillusioned members of churches who have become impatient waiting for the denominational structures to experience revival."*

These independent, non-denominational house meetings springing up all over the country were, indeed, passionately and ideologically opposed to the traditional structures. It was magnetically attractive to unchurched Christians longing for a new experience of worship and faith. But what these fresh-faced, hopeful and unsuspecting Christians did not immediately realise was that the doctrine of the restoration fellowships called for a different kind of Church unity - that of the One New Man of the Latter Rain!

Exposed in Part Three is the rise and rise of the Restoration fellowships, and how their doctrine, aims and early contacts owed more to the Latter Rain heresies than to true revivalism.

ENDNOTES

(1) "bread and circuses" [trans of Latin "panis et circenses", the only concerns of the Roman populace, according: to Roman satiric poet Juvenal 140AD)] it means: entertainment provided at public expense; also a palliative offered to avert potential discontent.

The Golden Altar of Incense:

An Analysis of Dick Reuben teaching at Brownsville Assembly of God

by Loren Jacobs, Messianic Rabbi

Congregation Shema Yisrael, Southfield. MI

Would you put trust in a Bible teacher who stated that God led the Jewish people to the bitter waters in the Sinai wilderness because we were full of parasites? Dick Reuben, one of the leaders of the "revival" going on at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, FL, states, "He (Moses) brought the nation of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. Three days into the wilderness the nation of Israel was dying of thirst. And all of a sudden, they came to the bitter waters, or bitter springs of Marah. What kind of God would bring a people dying of thirst to the bitter waters of Marah, instead of refreshing sweet waters? We've got to remember that these waters, as science has proven, these waters are about 92% calcium and magnesium. Calcium and magnesium are the basic ingredients for milk of magnesia. So when they drank this water, they got dysentery. What was God trying to do? He was leading them to the bitter waters of Marah, the springs of Marah, so that it would clean the parasites out of them. They had been through ten plagues in Egypt, full of parasites..."

Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the Word of God knows that the Jewish people who came out of Egypt never had parasites because we picked them up by going through the ten plagues. In point of fact, the sons of Israel were spared from the last six plagues. After the fourth plague, God set apart the land of Goshen, where the Jewish people were living, and spared us from further plagues. The Lord purposely put a division between the sons of Israel and Egypt. (Exodus 8:22-23)

Nor did the Jewish people get "dysentery" from drinking the waters. Exodus 15:23 specifically states that "when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." Contrary to Mr. Reuben's strange assertion, "science" does not know the specific location of the waters of Marah, let alone their exact chemical content. Anyway, whatever the chemical content of the waters were before we arrived at Marah 3,500 years ago, the waters became sweet after Moses threw a tree into them, so how could "science", 3,500 years later, be able to prove they were full of chemicals before they became sweet?

Then, after teaching on the golden altar of incense, Mr. Reuben had the wise people at Brownsville Assembly of God come up to his copy of the "golden altar of incense" with holy incense, and put a pinch on. Don't Mr. Reuben and the poor souls at the "Brownsville Revival" know that duplicating the holy furniture like the golden altar of incense, and burning incense on it, is strictly forbidden?

Despite the fact that he teaches on the special spices that made up the holy incense, Mr. Reuben ignores this clear warning found in the very same passage: "the incense which you shall make, you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the Lord. Whoever shall make any like to smell, shall be cut off from his people." (Exodus 30:37-38. my translation)

This kind of Levitical worship, using the golden altar of incense, and the holy incense, is only allowed in the Jerusalem Temple, and only when conducted by a

"cohen", a Levitical priest. Throughout the Bible, the Jewish people were constantly reprimanded for building altars and worshipping at any site other than the holy Temple at Jerusalem.

Finally, Mr. Reuben, in further contempt for God, calls the people up to his golden altar of incense, there to offer up the holy incense. And who does Mr. Reuben tell the "worshippers" to address at this solemn moment? God the Father? Messiah Yeshua, the Son of God? No. They are told to speak to the devil! "I want each of you to come up, and I want you to put a pinch of incense on these coals tonight". I want you to come up tonight and I want you to take a piece of incense and I want you to take that incense and say, 'devil, this is what you have tried to whip me with, but its gone up to the Father now. I don't have it anymore, devil, the Father's got it, it's sweet incense tonight... devil, tonight I'm putting it on the altar, and it's gone, it's consumed and it's a sweet incense unto my Father and Jesus, and I'm set free'... you can tell Satan, "I remember that night at Brownsville Assembly of God, it's on the altar, it's gone, it's consumed by the presence of God. I have it no more..." They are instructed to speak to the devil. How fitting!

Finally, in case the worshipping upon the golden altar by offering up the incense, and speaking to the devil isn't enough, there is another option. Mr. Reuben tells the people that they "may want to touch the horns of the altar. You see, the horns of the altar had tremendous power, if you could make it to the horns of the altar there was safety. Maybe some of you tonight need to just hold onto the horns of the altar." In point of fact, according to the Bible, it was the horns of the bronze altar that was outside the holy place that could be touched, not the horns of the golden altar of incense, which was inside the holy place, into which only the Levitical priests were allowed to enter.

Such contempt for God and His Word is not worship. Anyone who knows the Word of God knows that this goes by another name - blasphemy.