

Editorials

WHO HAS THE LAST LAUGH? DIVISION IN THE VINEYARD

More than ever, Christians must distinguish whether a move in the Church is of God or not. The Apostle John warned believers: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1, NASV).

What about those who base their confidence on mere emotions and assert possession of "power evangelism" because of signs and wonders? If something is unexplainable and lacks real biblical support, can it really be a move from God? What if some practice creates chaos and frenzy, should it not be condemned on the basis of 1 Corinthians 12-14? Jesus Himself exhorted us: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24, NASV).

In 1983, John Wimber broke ranks with the fellowship of Calvary Chapel to align himself with six other churches. A few years later, in 1987, they formed officially as the Association of Vineyard Churches. (See further, *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2.) Wimber serves as Founder and International Director of the Association.

Wimber's sect has grown worldwide to nearly 550 congregations. In recent months its most noteworthy gathering has been the Toronto Airport Vineyard. Its purported "spiritual renewal," manifested in laughing and

the utterance of animal noises, has gained the attention of Christian and secular media.

These demonstrations of "God's Spirit" have caused much controversy, so much so that last Dec. 5, the American Vineyard Board and Council ousted the Toronto Airport Vineyard at a meeting in Toronto. At the gathering, Wimber announced the decision to Airport's senior pastor, John Arnott. Among those at the meeting were Robert Fulton and Todd Hunter, American colleagues; and Gary Best, the Canadian Vineyard coordinator. The ouster became official Jan. 20.

An "open letter" for general distribution from John Arnott states that the decision came as a surprise and that "we were offered no opportunity for discussion. We were removed without due process." He indicated, however, that they "will be parting on friendly terms." Growing universal concern of "The Toronto Blessing" is said to be the reason for disengagement.

According to the February 1996 issue of *Charisma* magazine,

"The issue centers in part on the unusual animal-like behavior — such as roaring or barking — that is sometimes manifested during renewal meetings at the Toronto church. Wimber said Arnott and his staff repeatedly were warned not to promote, encourage or theologize the animal behavior and the accompanying sounds" (pg. 12).

The Charismatic periodical also noted "members of the
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PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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teachings that would far outdo any possibility thinker or Word-Faith proponent. Under the title "The Nine Holy Miracles" we find this:

"1. The miracle that transforms things:

You can change anything if you accept it with thanksgiving.

2. The miracle that opens all doors:

You can make anyone receptive if you serve them.

3. The miracle that makes all your wishes come true:

You can obtain anything if you have the right motive.

4. The miracle that supplies everything you need:

You can meet any need if you share all that you have.

5. The miracle that calms all tempests of hate:

You can destroy every wrong if you forgive it.

6. The miracle that takes you anywhere:

You can get anywhere if you risk everything.

7. The miracle that makes you invulnerable:

You can make anything harmless if you make friends with it.

8. The miracle that withers up falsities:

You can destroy falsities if you waken love for the truth.

9. The miracle that delivers from evil influence:

You can open any hell if you share it."

This mystical mishmash can mean anything someone wants it to and hence means nothing at all.

Another strange suggestion on pages 44-45 is that the miracles of Jesus, along with truth, direction and instruction can be found in fairy tales and fables. Along the way, the Apostles instruct Othniel in "Jack and the Beanstalk," "King Midas," "The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg," "Ali Baba," and "Beauty and the Beast."

In *Wayfarers in the Land*, Hurnard claims she has gone all over Israel throughout the year making a great spiritual impact. In this writer's many trips to the Holy Land, not one Church leader was found who had heard of her.

Hurnard's Befuddled End

In 1988, Harper and Row, released another biographical attempt by Hurnard, *Thou Shalt Remember — Lessons of a Lifetime*. In this volume, she "let's it all hang out." She blatantly expresses favor for such things as aura reading (pg. 148), and out-of-body experiences (pg. 180). These things are the stock in trade of spiritism and occultism, yet they sit on the shelves of Christian bookstores.

She also objects to the Old Testament sacrifices, saying that God hated them (pg. 157). This view was first put forth by the heretic Marcion in the second century and recently was revived by Carl Austin. This view, dubbed "theological anti-Semitism" by F.F. Bruce, radically reinterprets Judaism and undermines the integrity of Scripture. Jesus fully accepted and endorsed the Old Testament system with all its sacrifices, calling it God's unalterable Word (Matthew 5:17-18; John 10:34-36; Luke 24:27, 44, 45).


Hurnard reveals that after the doors of

the evangelical world closed to her she began association with what can only be called a mystical, metaphysical fringe group known as "Camps Farthest Out" (pp. 136-142). Eventually Hurnard "camped" so "far out" that even they disowned her. One sticking point was her radical vegetarianism.

Spiritually speaking, a Christian Science reading room or a Christian bookstore with a heavy emphasis on Word-Faith literature would be a dangerous place. We expect them to be. Unfortunately, the least-expected places can be dangerous nowadays. Tread with extreme caution and discernment in your local Christian bookstore. It is really hard to believe but universalism, gnosticism, relationalism, pantheism, self-atonement, defective Christology and skewed bibliology are all available at your Christian bookstore.

A major aspect of the problem is that bookstore managers are unaware of the later content in Hurnard's books, assuming all the later writings follow the line of *Hinds' Feet in High Places*. The subtle problem is that in endorsing Hurnard, one endorses all she offers.

We must stay in the highlands of our Bible. We must stay in the heights of sound theology and proper discernment. What a tragedy that one woman could start so high and end so low and influence so many so negatively.

Samson started in the "high places" of the rolling hillsides of the Shephalah but tragically ended in the lowlands of the Philistines. The sacrifices he made, bit by bit, robbed him of God's blessing and leading. Those "sad ending" stories do parallel the tragedy of any who start well but do not finish that way. 

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board, however, [thought that] the decision to release the Toronto church was not a rash one. In September 1994, the denomination's position on the renewal was hashed out in an emergency session of the board and distributed to all Vineyard pastors. Over a 14-month period, Wimber said, the Toronto leaders repeatedly violated the guidelines contained in the position report. The 20-member board voted unanimously to release Toronto from the denomination."

With the controversial (holy laughter) "renewal" taking place in Canada, Wimber apparently has had difficulty explaining to the media this "current move of God." He became apprehensive about the manifestations of animal noises that are a part of the "blessings" in Toronto. Arnott's open letter further stated that Wimber "felt he could no longer answer questions, including innuendoes and rumours regarding the renewal services. Rather than ask us to revamp the renewal meetings, they released us to continue as we believe God is leading us. ... [Wimber] feels the AVC Board is not called to shepherd something outside the ministry model God has given them."

Although reports have circulated that other Vineyard fellowships, including ones in Pasadena and St. Louis, have resigned, it is not expected to cause a major split.

These “blessings” or “renewals” began in North America through the influence of South African evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne (see *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4). Howard-Browne, who calls himself a “Holy Ghost bartender,” fosters a laughing revival wherever he preaches.

In 1993, Howard-Browne led a series of meetings at Kenneth Hagin’s church in Tulsa, Okla., which St. Louis Vineyard pastor Randy Clarke attended. Clarke, through a series of subsequent encounters with other Vineyard pastors, later imparted the laughing revival to the Toronto church in 1994. As a result, well over 50,000 people had visited the Airport Vineyard Church that year. These people are to bring the “blessing” back to their home church for “times of refreshing” there. In Canada, the “blessing” has become a buzzword; those who have experienced it are considered elite.

What have these events proven? What are the fruits of this movement? How are people growing in Christ? Does the Vineyard church base their confidence on merely emotions, signs and wonders or on balanced teaching and biblical truth?

In spite of ties being severed by the AVC, it is odd that John Wimber stated in the Jan. 8, 1996, issue of *Christianity Today*: “I believe that there has been an authentic visitation of the Spirit there. However, I am unable because of my own scriptural and theological convictions to any longer give an answer for, or defend the way, this particular move is being pastored and/or explained” (pg. 66).

Equally odd is Wimber’s endorsement of Arnott’s book, *The Father’s Blessing*, an autobiographical account of the “Toronto Blessing,” and other works sympathetic to the purported “renewal.”

Then there’s the National Coordinator of Vineyard Churches, Todd Hunter, who told *Christianity Today*: “Wimber’s own statements had made it clear that board members wanted the renewal in Toronto to move toward greater scriptural emphasis.”

Hunter himself, at an October 1994 service at the Vineyard Fellowship in Mission Viejo, Calif., had members of the congregation shrieking and bellowing (one woman even squealing like a pig) while he said: “This is normal Christianity!”

It is the duty of Church authority to expose heresy as it manifests itself in the name of Christianity. Unhealthy spiritual consequences, including shipwrecked faith, will nearly always follow the rise of false teachings. Doctrine and theology should be tried and confirmed by the Word of God; our faith and trust is in Him alone. And in His unerring Word.

Despite Wimber’s proclamations, what are the roots of the Vineyard movement? Does Wimber and the Vineyard church wish to embrace sound doctrine? “Holding fast the

faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9).

In the October 1982 issue of *Christian Life* magazine, Wimber demonstrated his indifference to sound doctrine. On page 10 a question he posed to Peter Wagner (his associate from Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth) is quoted: “Would you object if I started a Bible class in my home based on what the Bible says and then attempted to demonstrate it by doing what first century Christians did... **no theology** – just Biblical study and application?” (emphasis added).

Does the bottom line indicate that the Vineyard church wishes to promote biblical interpretation? In a church-planting seminar in 1981, Wimber said: “Calvaryites [Calvary Chapel attendees] are sometimes a little too heavily oriented to the written Word. I know that sounds a little dangerous, but frankly they’re very Pharisaical in their allegiance to the Bible. They have very little life, and growth and spontaneity in their innards. Sometimes they’re very rigid and can’t receive much of the things of the Lord.”

Does Wimber deviate from God’s Word because of an extra-biblical mind-set? Do his teachings reveal discord with that of the Bible in his theology and methodology?

Consider his words from the Vineyard ‘83 Leadership Conference, “The Five Year Plan”: “All that is in the Bible is true but not all truth is in the Bible. We integrate all truth, both Biblical and other, into our experience of living.” Also, from his 1981 Church Planting Seminar, he stated, “God is greater than His word.”

Additionally, Vineyard churches have repeatedly confirmed their fixation on experience and outward manifestations. In a paper dated April 20, 1994, and “written to help teach the Champaign [Ill.] Vineyard church body good techniques for enhancing times of ministry” with “some helpful hints” we find these “Tips for Facilitating Ministry as a Leader”:

“3. If you don’t notice any outward manifestations of the Holy Spirit, ask those who sense a strong anointing within them to come for ministry. This might manifest as a burning, tingling, or ‘knowing,’ etc.”

and

“8. Some children have even been reported as being fearful of some of the manifestations they have experienced such as being pinned to the floor.”

In the section, “Tips for Praying for People” we read:

“7a. Help them to deal with a tendency to rationalize, with their fears, or with a loss of control.”

Further, in the last section titled, “Tips for Receiving Ministry” it states:

“2. Experience it before trying to analyze it. It is something like worshipping God, which has no rational explanation. Others have likened it to kissing,

which is more emotional than analytical.”

The above statements contradict Paul’s exhortations to learn and follow sound doctrine. As a result, one is faced with confusion and disorder riding the emotional waves of the aberrant teachings of the Vineyard movement.

Indeed, Wimber and his associates, with their emotional guidance system, have created a “monster” that they now find hard to control. Wimber’s own life-threatening battle with cancer is a forceful illustration to the deficiency of his “power evangelism.” One should not place trust in subjective and supernatural encounters. Such encounters are so often of the flesh or the devil. The Word of God is our final authority and the foundation for our walk with Him. Caution is a prerequisite when dealing with those who claim to represent Christ.

—AMG

News Updates

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Jan. 25, 1996 *Metro/State* newspaper, the psychiatrist’s therapy with Carlson sought “to recover repressed memories of participation in Satanic rituals and of sexual abuse by their families.”

Among those testifying for Carlson were doctors, nurses, former patients and family members. The doctors felt that Humenansky should not be practicing medicine due to her method of treatment, which, they felt, did not meet accepted professional standards. Within her therapy, the psychiatrist suggested to patients that they had repressed memories of killing babies while involved with a cult.

At least eight other malpractice suits involving induced “memories” from other patients are pending against Humenansky.

—AMG

VERDICT AGAINST CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS UPHELD

The United States Supreme Court in January upheld a \$1.5 million award against four Christian Scientists. The judgment stemmed from a lawsuit against the church members whose treatment of an 11-year-old diabetic boy consisted of prayer with no conventional medical care. The child, Ian Lundmann, died in May 1989 from complications of the diabetes, including intense vomiting and prolonged urination.

The wrongful-death lawsuit first was filed in 1991 by the boy’s father, Douglass G. Lundmann. The four members of the Boston-based church named in the suit included Kathleen and William McKown, the boy’s mother and her husband, and Mario Tosto and Quinna Lamb, Christian

Science officials. The boy’s father also sought a \$9 million judgment against the church, but a Minnesota state appeals court had earlier thrown out the award. While upholding compensatory award, the federal justices refused to reinstate the larger judgment for punitive damages against the church.

The church members charged that as a consequence of the settlement they are being punished and forced to monetarily pay for religious thought and for practicing their religion. James Kaster, Lundmann’s attorney, noted that the verdict says the clear understanding “that exclusive reliance on prayer treatment instead of medical care for a seriously ill child can give rise to ... liability.”

In April 1990, the McKowns and Tosto had manslaughter charges against them dropped by a Minnesota court. The judge concluded that “no criminal proceedings would be brought regardless of result as long as they practiced their religion in good faith” and claimed that the state prosecutors had misread the law in bringing the charges. (See further, *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 3, 14.)

—MKG

HOWARD-BROWNE PROMOTES A LENDING LIBRARY

A 16-page full-color insert in the January 1996 issue of *Charisma* magazine promotes the ministry of “Dr.” Rodney M. Howard-Browne. The full-page supplement promotes the “laughing evangelist’s” books and tapes, his upcoming winter and summer Campmeetings, and his “School of the Spirit,” a five-week session of “intensive training.”

Under product listings, he promotes his “Video Lending Library,” the inspiration for which, he says, came from God.

“Early in 1995 the Lord spoke to me and instructed me to put together the Revival Ministries International ‘Video Lending Library,’” Howard-Browne says in the ad. The “Library” is a set of 50 videotapes from his various Campmeetings and revivals “that have not been released to the public at large.”

Howard-Browne has set a goal to place 100 libraries in every country of the world. How effective will his tapes be in non-English speaking countries? Howard-Browne says he has received “many first-hand reports of the Revival breaking out among groups of people who were watching an English version of the videos who did not understand a single word that was being spoken.” As a result, he says, “The anointing knows no language barriers.”

Howard-Browne is soliciting financial help for his project. A \$350 gift will put a copy of his tapes in a foreign country of the donor’s choice, or Howard-Browne’s if the donor has no preference. Stateside, The Video Lending Library is available for \$1,000.00 per set, the advertisement states.

—MKG