

"Vintage Metro: My Eight Years With The Kansas City Prophets"

by Don Clasen

INTRODUCTION

*The following is a story about the phenomenon known as the Kansas City Prophets, a network of people whose name and ministries derived from the fact that most of them came to be resident in that city and working out of Kansas City Fellowship/Metro Christian Fellowship, Shiloh and IHOP. If you as a young believer want to understand what this movement is really about, you must avail yourself of a practice that is in much disdain in our day. It's called **theological education!** And I'm **not** just talking about **Bible study!** You desperately need to understand that the Bible itself needs to be accurately interpreted as to what it is saying and teaching. You need to understand that there are competing theological **paradigms** that people in church leadership will **not** educate you to, either because they don't understand them themselves, or because it's to their advantage to keep you ignorant of them, leading you around by the nose, perhaps for years, before you figure out what it's all about..*

*If you do **not** do this, you will **not** be able to appreciate the importance of what I and many others are trying to say to you. Instead, you will be brainwashed into "submission to authority" and other intimidating arguments in a way that is far removed from traditional Protestant philosophy. You will end up doing as **they** tell you, instead of what **Christ** your Head is telling you (1 Cor 11:3), even letting you study the Bible while not seeing the forest for the trees. The only way around this is to see the big picture.*

You can find numerous articles here by Mrs. Tillin, the founder and webmaster of this site, that represent the best research out there that I've found. I would begin by referring to those under the headings of "Sonship and Latter Rain" and "Dominion Teachings".¹ I would especially start with "Bread and Games", a history of the Charismatic Movement in Britain which shows how Restorationism came about. I myself in 1996 wrote a four-part series on the Latter Rain / Manifested Sons doctrines called "Last Days Leaven", (located under "Dominion Teachings"), that traces the origins and mentality of some of these ideas. And if you would like an even more thorough yet concise overview, read "Anointing or Apostasy: The Latter Rain Legacy", by Charles S. Graves. The following story in conjunction with these studies will help you understand why all this is important, and help you resist the pressure of those who would slander the work on this web site with pejorative charges like "negative", or "divisive".

-DRC (Romans 16:17,18)

From a Sunday to a Sunday--November 1, 1992 to May 7, 2000, exactly 17 years after the start of their famous 21-day fast--I was a member of Metro Christian Fellowship of Grandview, Missouri, USA, the church that became known as the home of "The Kansas City Prophets". I can say that I was a faithful member all that time, but I cannot say I was part of any inner circle. Certainly not on staff, and I was even shown by God in 1997, despite being mired in a momentary fit of guilt and self-accusation, that He didn't even want me to warm up to the leadership on a personal level, but to "remain aloof" as He put it! It quite astounded me at the time and kind of reminded me of the answer Winston Churchill once gave to a reporter who asked him if he supported the Church? "Yes, I support it. Like a flying buttress from the outside!"

It didn't start out that way. I had every intention when I first arrived there to give my heart and soul to that work. I really believed in its calling and still believe in it, whether they do or not, and whether they want to be the ones to carry

it out or not. I also believe they were given a great honor and a great opportunity by God--to be a desperately-needed prophetic voice to the Body of Christ at an hour when discernment of the Biblical, Pre-Millennial and Post-Tribulational vision of the end has never been needed more. But I am also convinced they *never really understood* this Divine purpose and if anything have done as much to promote the exact opposite cause--to help build the Global Church that will eventuate into the Great Whore of Revelation 17.

That these people, like all others in this ever-evolving ecumenical nightmare, would deny that their efforts are that misguided I do not doubt. But that is inconsequential to the reality of what is happening. As the old saying goes, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions". Or as Jesus put it, "A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (Jn 16:2 NIV). For as Church history has proved so many times, the persecutors of true Christians has often come as much from other professing believers as from those outside.

I believe they also used, innocently perhaps, their early miracles and the prophetic gifts associated with them as "goodwill capital" to put them "on the map" in the naive Charismatic world, which is neither naturally given to using discernment, nor is inclined to care much about doctrinal paradigms. As a result, they became the major reintroducers and popularizers of **Latter Rain, Manifested Sonship** and **Restoration/Dominion** ideas back into the Church world, whether they or anyone else understand what that means or not. As a result, they over time actually became part of a wide-spread and majority network of false prophets in the Body of Christ that continues to this hour.

If those seem like extravagant and wild accusations, I assure you of my sympathies. But I also assert I can prove their veracity and relevance if you have the willingness to just give me a hearing. And while I know I am not the final Judge of anyone, I nonetheless as all Christians, do have an obligation to **judge** people and doctrines as best and as fairly as I can (Ro 16:17; I Cor 6:2-5). For far from commanding us to suspend our judgment, the Bible teaches us to do just the opposite. Developing good judgment is a large part of God's whole purpose for His people (I Cor 2:15; 6:2-5; etc.). The only caveats deal with judging fairly (Jn 5:30; 8:15,16), unhyprocritically (Mt 7:2; Ro 2:21-24), and with a sense of proportion (Mt 7:3; 23:23,24).

In my opinion, on an intellectual level, I believe the doctrinal problems continually dogging these people are a result of the errors mentioned above. On a heart level, what I think led them astray is the desire for large crowds and the popularity and prestige that is routinely accorded those who are willing to tickle the ears of the people of God. And to be sure, the tickling of Christian ears in our day is a wholesale industry. Despite the plain warnings of Scripture that false prophets "make you vain" (Jer 23:16), and that the last days will be a time of "great deception" and persecution, there seems to be a never-ending supply of such ministers in this hour who regale the people of God with just the opposite--brash claims of great things to come and tall tales about the last days. And despite a great invitation by God to be His eyes and ears, the Kansas City Prophets are a case study in how to get the basic instructions *exactly backwards*.

I remember the first week I got to Metro Vineyard (as it was then called). It was November 2, 1992 and the time of the unveiling of a grand, sweeping plan for a comprehensive "Arts Ministry"--music, dance, drama, comedy, fine art, literature--the works. Although I had begun my newsletter about three years before in Tulsa, the epicenter of the Word of Faith movement, I decided to temporarily suspend it and develop some personal relationships in my new church home by signing up myself. At the founding organizational meeting, the first thing out of the mouth of its director David Ruis was, "**This is vintage Metro Vineyard.**"

It seemed to me at the time as if the Holy Ghost for some unknown reason, instantly and pointedly seized upon what Ruis said, as if God were trying to clue me in on something. I couldn't at the time figure out what that could be, but looking back now I can see it. Within a year the project was dropped. Abandoned. It's part of a running metaphor that typifies, not just the floundering and flailing of this particular church, but that of the entire Body of Christ in our generation. "**Vintage Metro**" refers in this article to this *lack of vision*, this lack of *doctrinal grounding*, to this

tendency to *drift*, to follow the same old fruitless patterns over and over again, to try anything that will "work", to leave the people in the dark as to what leadership is doing or teaching, or to themselves grope in the dark for some mysterious "key" ministry, teaching, or revelation that will make everything else "click", that will unlock the power of God on its body life.

Everything, that is, except its *real* calling--to have *real discernment*, and to be a *real prophetic voice* to the Body of Christ and to the end-times generation we live in. In retrospect, the memory of some guy, dressed up in a huge, pink, EverReady bunny costume on New Year's Eve a couple of months after this meeting, marching up and down the aisles beating on a drum, only reinforces my sense of God's sarcasm over what He has had to endure in this church's history.

The Problem

Unfortunately, I cannot say I was a part of **Kansas City Fellowship** at its beginning. If I had been, I could report on a first-hand basis what happened during its first ten years. As it turned out, I didn't arrive until late 1992 when it was already "under discipline", and into the Vineyard years of its history. I also use the term "Kansas City Fellowship" because that was the name they became famous for, the name they adopted in the mid-1980's, and the name that was their real identity in the Spirit as far as I am concerned, at least in the hopes and dreams of God. After a local Charismatic pastor named Ernie Gruen blew the whistle on them in 1990, the church joined the AVC (Association of Vineyard Churches) headed by its founder John Wimber, whose job was to act as an overseer to rein in their wayward ways. At that time, their name was changed to "Metro Vineyard Fellowship" (now "Metro Christian Fellowship", since their separation from the AVC).

But I see them in the Spirit as having that "genetic identity" as Kansas City Fellowship. During the 1980's they became known as the home of Grace Ministries and the "Kansas City Prophets," as *Charisma* magazine dubbed them. As I said, they became a major force in the popularizing of "Restoration", "Latter Rain" and "Manifested Sonship" ideas, although at the time I arrived I had hardly ever heard of the terms and couldn't have defined them if my life depended on it. What little I understood was that "restoration" to me, in my naivete, simply meant the restoration of the first century Church's simplicity and power. This included the role of the prophet, which I agreed, had been somewhat ignored, suppressed or underdeveloped over the centuries, and simply needed to be "restored" in a more deliberate and positive way during the last days.

But in time I came to realize that, to this church and the network of ministries around the world it relates to, it signified something far more--an *entire eschatology* that went far beyond this, with an ultimate goal of bringing the Kingdom of God on the earth *before* Christ's physical return, by the emergence of restored Apostles and Prophets who would rule over a world-wide Church that would be a radical redefinition of what it currently is. Most alarming was the idea of the supposed "restoration" of these two "offices"² to be *governing rulers* over the people of God through a pyramidal, world-wide, interlocking network of apostles and prophets, roles that *never existed* in the early Church. Through this, it is presumed, a final "Sonship/Bride" generation, a "Joel's Army" of the "Manifested Sons of God" (Ro 8:19), would come forth, so anointed and endowed with miracles as to be virtually invincible, subduing the nations.

Key people in this prophetic group may protest, of course, that they don't take things that far, or that such is a caricature of what they believe. And they may be right, relative to what leader you're talking about, what they believed, and when they believed it. But for reasons apparently common to all churches subject to the brow-beating of ecumenical logic in our day, a coherent and unified eschatology has never been much of a priority to this group either. "It's just too divisive" is the usual whiney and lame argument you hear made in church circles today. Or it's considered a "non-essential".

But I consider this to be utterly irrelevant if indeed *ours* is the generation in which these things will no longer be "academic"! But even if one wishes to cast it as an issue of academic freedom so to speak, the problem at MCF I saw

was that the only eschatological vision they seemed interested in was one of incredible end-time revival, a harvest of one or two billion souls, an invincible "Joel's Army" overwhelming everything in its path, 24 hour prayer and praise centers (in *every* city of the *world* mind you!), huge stadium meetings, unbelievable miracles, and non-stop glory. Yet it's a vision *not* born out of anything solidly derived from what Christ, Paul, John or Daniel plainly told us to watch out for, but based on the subjective experiences and exegetical speculations of "prophetic people".

As I will attempt to show in this article, I am not totally unsympathetic with some of these sentiments (of a great impact by the Church in the last days). The problem is, they are promoted to the exclusion (if not to the outright opposition) of the "more sure word of prophecy" of the Scriptures (II Pet 1:19) about conditions that we *have* been forewarned about. KCF leadership from the beginning, and in vintage Metro fashion, seems to have consistently had this bent toward such "new order" ideas, even when claiming to be Pre-Millennial. The fact that they may have corrected or outright jettisoned some of the most egregious extremes of these ideas from the 1980's does not change the fact that this same basic emphasis is still there. And it stands in contrast to what Premillennialism has always been built on, namely a literal, rather than an allegorical, reading of the Bible, and a Second Coming *after* a Great *Tribulation*, wherein the Church *spiritually* overcomes the Devil (Rev 2:17,26; 12:11), true, but is "defeated" *in the flesh* by the Antichrist (Dan 7:21,25; Rev 13:7; 12:11,17). Yet to this day (at Shiloh and IHOP), the preoccupation is with teachings, concepts and hermeneutical styles that either imply or outright proclaim Latter Rain / Manifested Sonship / Dominion thinking. At the very least it suggests confusion on their part if not outright self-deception, and certainly generates the same in the ears of those that hear them.

My Own Enlightenment

I myself did not see this bigger picture until about 1995. As I said, when I first got there, I had a simplistic assumption that "Restoration" was a good thing. But within a few years I was referred to the works of Tricia Tillin, Ed Tarkowski and Jewel van der Merwe especially, that helped me understand there was an *entire eschatology* involved here. What they helped me see was what I was suspecting by that time but could not quite put my finger on or articulate. The concepts being promoted by this church were all part of a vision of the end that clashed with what I believe *the Bible* really teaches about the same.

What I'm referring to here is the clash between Latter Rain, et.al., and traditional Pre-Millennial eschatology. And while I hate taking the risk of losing your interest here by going over a lot of theological definitions, I do not see how you can understand the real significance of this ministry without understanding these things.

The problem here is not just about occasional bad prophecies; it's about an *entirely wrong vision of the future*. **Latter Rain** is built on this vision of a last days outpouring *so* powerful as to ensure the Church's ultimate victory over all of mankind and mankind's institutions. It's the idea of the "early rain" (Pentecost) and the "latter rain" (Tabernacles) at the same time. This is based on an eschatological and metaphorical interpretation of Joel 2:23 in a way I basically agree with. But in Latter Rain theory, its *implications* are taken so far as to be totally unrealistic.

It also puts forth this idea that the Church is founded upon **modern-day** apostles and prophets³, and the belief the denominational system will be destroyed before the Second Coming and be replaced by a *whole new Church structure* governed over by these apostles and prophets. This, they claim, will bring about the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 for **complete unity** so that the world might believe God sent Christ.

But this is incredibly short-sighted and ignorant, and that for at least two reasons. One, some Christians who assent to this all-consuming priority on unity in our day will then fall for the siren song of Rome to "come back home" to "Mother Church". (And this in spite of the Vatican in our day actively working to unite the world's religions and rebuild the "Holy Roman Empire" in close cooperation with the evolving European Union). Or two, Latter Rainers will

at the least end up wasting our time and theirs with a pipe dream plan to make apostles and prophets "governing offices", as if that were some sort of a panacea bringing revival.

There are about 14 other distinctives that make up the Latter Rain theory but we don't have time here to go into them. For a more in-depth analysis of them, read parts two and three of my "Last Days Leaven" series. For now, let's look at two more of them, including **Restorationism**, which puts forth a myth about what the early Church was really like, then claims this mythical "apostolic" and "prophetic" governmental structure must be "restored" before God will really pour out His power on the Church. What it really becomes though is a rationale for going far beyond anything the early Church had or supposedly had, into a "Super Church" at the end like the world has never known, "nor can even conceive of at this point", blah, blah, blah. It also in some versions actually claims it will "restore" the whole earth from the curses put on it by God, just as soon as His people corporately learn and implement this "knowledge", blah, blah, blah. It also sanctions the use of zealous revenge on all of "God's enemies", inside and outside the Church, including those "Pharisees" (the "old order" Bible-oriented saints) who try to resist this juggernaut.

Another is **Manifested Sonship**, the idea that an elite core of the last generation will attain to a "fullness" of holiness, power and anointing that will lead the Church into a massive, overwhelming victory over all worldly forces currently arrayed against it. This is based on a faulty interpretation of Romans 8:19 which simply refers to the "manifestation" (or **presentation**, with Christ, and at His Second Coming) of the sons of God (i.e., the redeemed of the ages--Rev 19:14; Mt 24:30). MS transforms them though, into a generational company of people who experience immortality (or nearly so), perfection, victory over all enemies (disease, the devil, human enemies) and the like, depending on what version you hear. And all this *without* Christ *actually physically returning* to the earth, but rather, by effecting a mystical "Second Coming" *in* His people, the **Corporate Christ**.

These doctrines all relate to a larger context to consider, the idea of basic **Millennial templates**. There are four broad theories regarding how God is going to go about redeeming the future and "the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21 NAS), all revolving around a particular belief about the reference to a "thousand years" or "Millennium" (taken from Rev 20:4). The **Pre-Millennial** view basically sees Jesus Christ coming back to the earth "pre" or before a literal thousand year reign by Him on the throne of David out of Jerusalem wherein Israel will be exalted among the nations and God will begin a long process of redeeming the earth from the effect of the fall of man in Genesis 3. After that thousand year period, there will be New Heavens and a New Earth, the Day of Judgment and the eternal state. It generally interprets the Bible, including the prophecies, in a literal way, and sees the book of Revelation as being "futuristic"--that is, largely unfulfilled until the end. Furthermore, Pre-Millennialism is either "Classical" or "Dispensational", the significance of which (as far as we are concerned here) deals with where one places the timing of what's called the "Rapture" or translation of living believers into the resurrected state, relative to the Second Coming.

In competition to this, **Amillennialism** was developed by St. Augustine in the fifth century A.D., teaching that there either is no Millennium to come or that the Church Age is *itself* the Millennial reign of Christ right now *through* His people on the earth.⁴ It sees good and evil increasing side by side until at some unknown point Christ returns, has the Last Judgment, and inaugurates the eternal state. It claims the book of Revelation and the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24; Mk 13; Lu 21) were fulfilled in the first century and are *not* a futuristic description of the Last Days. It also sees the re-gathering of the nation of Israel and the events in the Middle East today as being fairly irrelevant, since the Church has replaced Israel in the plan of God and all the Old Testament prophecies about Israel in the last days are taken figuratively and spiritualized to refer to the Church. It is an eschatology developed by, and retained by, Rome, and by a number of Protestant denominations, especially the earliest ones.

In later centuries, the **Post-Millennial** theory was developed, putting forth the idea that the Church, through aggressive evangelism and the infiltration of mankind's institutions, will eventually achieve "Dominion" over the world. From that point on, Christ will "reign" from heaven *through His Church* on the earth for a thousand years or some specified period of time, after which comes the Second Coming, the Last Judgment, and the New Heavens and Earth. Like

Amillennialism, it too posits the idea that Revelation is not futuristic. *It is the natural harmony of these Latter Rain / Dominion concepts with these latter two theories (especially Post-Millennialism), that sets up the clash and controversy with Pre-Millennialism* (such as this web site champions).

As complex as this all may sound to you, I must point out two other factors that make it even worse, and contribute to the sort of confusion and "talking past one another" that so characterizes this debate. **Firstly**, there is one major similar sentiment between these two competing visions. Whereas Latter Rain et.al., look forward to a last days period of time of tremendous outpouring and miracles, Classical Pre-Millennialism itself also believes the same. Some versions of Classical Pre-Millennialism *do* allow for a latter rain outpouring based on Joel 2:23 during that 3 1/2 year time period called the Great Tribulation (Rev 11:2,3; 13:5; Dan 7:25). It is seen to be the time of a second "Christ ministry" of equal and greater miracles than the 3 1/2 years of His First Advent (Jn 14:12), this time from Heaven but through His people on earth. At least, that is the way this writer sees it.

It's just that the difference is a matter of form and degree. Latter Rain / Manifested Sonship *so* exaggerates the power of God during this period of time that they either imply or outright claim virtual invincibility by His people. So much so that they end up denying, in a *de facto* sense at least, that the Bible teaches it will be a period of great persecution and "defeat" as well (Mt 24:9; Rev 6:9-11; 20:4; Dan 7:21), or at the least conveniently ignoring such Scriptures to hype so-called "present-day 'truths'".

Secondly, some "Restorationists" seem to cloak their purposes under a banner I call a "technical Pre-Millennialism". That is, they will trumpet their vision of this invincible juggernaut sweeping the earth, and then say Christ will return for a thousand year Millennial reign immediately thereafter. That way they can say that they too, are "Pre-Millennial".

But such a definition does violence to the traditional meaning of what Pre-Millennialism is. The picture painted in the Olivet Discourse and elsewhere is of a much more dark and deceitful scenario (Mt 24:24; I Thess 5:3, etc.). In addition, the heart of Pre-Millennialism is defined by distinctives like Daniel's 70th Week, the Great Tribulation of a specific duration (3 1/2 or 7 years, depending on one's interpretation), world government and its Antichrist dictator, the significance of the rebirth of Israel, the invasion of Israel by the Arab nations (Eze 38, 39), Armageddon, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, etc, etc. Yet in all of this, the idea of a "second 3 1/2 year ministry of Christ from heaven" with great miracles, etc., is much more sketchy, is more speculative, and is certainly not central, even though it may bear some resemblance to the Latter Rain hope.

But if such people take this idea and build one vain fantasy after another upon it while ignoring the "meat and potatoes" mentioned above, they hardly deserve to be called "Pre-Millennial". It isn't an essentially honest and relevant portrayal of what the scenario will look like. And as far as I can tell, almost all the Kansas City Prophets see the thing playing out this way. Worse yet, some of their friends around the world may be even more bold for a full-blown Post-Millennial hope.

What Does It Mean?

All these theories entail a whole lot more than we have space to develop here. To get a more complete understanding, you have to *study* them to become familiar with them. That is why I suggested the articles I did in the very beginning. In them you'll find that these teachings vary a lot depending upon the individual teacher and how far they take them. You'll find, for instance, that a lot of the confusion around them stems from what exactly is meant by a "victorious end-times Church"? By "victorious" or "overcomers", does one mean "faithful unto death" if need be (Rev 12:11)? Or does it mean "bowl over all who stand in their way"? The first is valid, the second is not. But it's the second that is the sense which is most implied if not outright stated in these circles because it so plays to the gallery.

Latter Rain then usually becomes a subset of some sort of a Post-Millennial expectation. It thus finds itself in an uncomfortable "no man's land" regarding the question of whether the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24; Mk 13; Lu 21) is yet future or fulfilled in the first century. It claims that that latter day outpouring will be *so* powerful that the "Joel's Army" Church of that day will be unstoppable and invincible, with unbelievable miracles. Hence all the exaggeration, boasting and outdoing of one another in scenario-painting and wild predictions as the people of God flock to get their vain ears tickled. "But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings", Jeremiah said of the false prophets (Jer 23:22).

Regardless, the upshot of the controversy surrounding these ideas is the effect they have, and that in at least three ways. **One**, the **hyperbole** (exaggeration) of future glory to come is so extreme that it is irresponsible at the least and dangerous at the most. It makes the people of God vain and dull, and renders them unable to "instruct many" in those days (Dan 11:33), while it gives a false hope to the world at the very moment when it needs discernment the most to understand what is going on. **Two**, such unrealistic and vain expectations lead to **deception**. It sets people up to expect and look for miracles, not caring what their source is, as has been seen in the "Toronto Blessing" phenomena, in "Fatima" and other Catholic miracles, in the "angels" craze of our day, and such like (II Cor 11:14). This is alarming considering Christ Himself especially warned us about deception in the Last Days (Mt 24:11,24,38,48-51; Rev 3:17; 13:13-15; II Thess 2:9-11). **Three**, the emphasis on unity plays right into Catholic Amillennial eschatology, which seeks to bring "peace on earth", (especially as a broker for peace in the Middle East). But this sets people up for I Thessalonians 5:3--"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them..."

Since Rome sees herself as the "Mother Church", she is the one who is ultimately behind the ecumenical movement, seeking to bring the "separated brethren" back into the fold. She believes if she can convince all sects to reunite with her, she will be fulfilling John 17:21, and thus all the world will believe in Christ. At that point (so they believe), they will bring "peace on earth" (especially in the Middle East!) She's also in the forefront of inter-religion ecumenism as well. And while the Dominion / New Order camp may not be planning to totally align with her, their tactics nonetheless leave them and those who listen to them in a most precarious position. One, because they will not really have a logical rationale for resisting reunion with Rome (such as current Protestantism does). And two, because these people, so convinced are they of their ultimate victory, care not a whit about how they get there. If alliance with Rome swells their numbers and helps them accomplish their "dominion", then why not? If they have to stoop to the same devious tactics Rome uses herself, why not?

Either way, this all sets Christian people up for the ecumenical Great Harlot Church warned about in Revelation 17. It also sets them up to take any "signs and wonders" without having to worry a whole lot about their source (Rev 13:13-16). As John Arnott of Toronto Blessing fame has so often put it, "Some people have more faith in the Devil's ability to deceive than the Father's ability to bless." Thanks, but I think I'll take the Father's warning all the same (Mt 24:24).

What Went Wrong?

It seems to me that during the first couple of years of Kansas City Fellowship, from late 1982 when it officially was incorporated, until about 1985, God was doing an incredible work in their midst. Amazing miracles, "coincidences", and fulfilled prophecies, along with a supernatural gathering of key personnel characterized this time period. God it seems was trying to give it a good start in the Spirit. But, as best I can reconstruct it, this good start was lost with the continual percolation of these kinds of ideas, and the favor shown to those who championed them.

Nevertheless, in spite of these things, it seemed to me that God had still worked in the early 1980's to bring these kinds of "prophetic people" together to be a ministry that would alert the Body of Christ to the things happening around them in the last days. But it seems that every anointed vessel called to that place that had any real discernment or a realistic end-times understanding got booted out, while those who promulgated the most vain things were promoted.

Bob Jones was probably most to blame at the start, for regardless of where he picked them up, there is no doubt he was not shy to promote the most outlandish LR/MSOG doctrines, mixing them in with his own subjective experiences. The arrival of John Paul Jackson in 1985 only seemed to reinforce this trend, and in fact, may have introduced a demonic influence at times, or a mixture at best. From that point on, excessive control through the gift of personal prophecy made for a most oppressive setting. Other heresies such as his extreme "Jezebel Spirit" teaching along with the church's attitude problems almost totally neutralized that good beginning. The arrival of Paul Cain in 1987 only reinforced the dominance of Latter Rain / Manifested Sons influence.

By 1990, Gruen's expose brought all this to a grinding halt. The KC Prophets were featured in *Charisma* again during this time, but now as a ministry under the gun for these things. For the most part, what confessions made at the time seemed to revolve around general admissions of pride and high-handedness. But as far as I can tell, the real source, doctrinal error, was never dealt with, mostly because it was never recognized.

Transplanted

I believe I attended my first Kansas City Fellowship conference around 1989. I think it was in the fall and on "Spiritual Warfare". Over the next two or three years I attended their annual "Passion For Jesus" summer conference. At the time I had been living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the home of the "Word of Faith" movement. I had moved to Tulsa in 1984, having been sent there by God directly after two years spent in the Philippines working with a friend in the Assemblies of God.

To go there was no insignificant challenge to me. I virtually despised the Word of Faith Movement! I thought it was the rankest of heresies and was destroying the Charismatic Movement, and eight years in their midst only served to reinforce this belief. Nevertheless, I could not shake the sense God wanted me there, and the amazing confirmation miracles strewn in the path of my arriving there. All in all it proved to be a rancorous, contentious eight years there. I felt the burning jealousy of God upon me for His truth, although it degenerated into just my own flesh at times. But by the Spring of 1992 I was really burned out, and sensed God was preparing me for a change.

Thus it was that in June of 1992, I found myself at the week-long Metro Vineyard "Passion For Jesus" conference in Kansas City. On Saturday morning I awoke ready to get in my car, go back to Tulsa, and get back to work. But as I awoke, the Lord very clearly spoke to me.. He said, "I want you to stay for the Sunday services." It was so clear I said, "O.K." and made arrangements with my host family to do so.

That Saturday I read the book *Some Said It Thundered* by David Pytches. This book was a biography and history of the Kansas City Fellowship. I was aware that they had been involved in some controversies but hadn't paid a lot of attention to them. As far as I was concerned, the ministry of the prophet was not an easy one and deserved to get some slack cut toward it. I myself had been called by God to that kind of a ministry in 1981, and anyone who was at least trying to move in that gift was, in my mind, to be commended.

But what I learned from that book amazed me. It covered the events surrounding Mike Bickle's call from St. Louis back to his hometown of Kansas City to start this new work that would "touch the world" with the "message of the prophetic". I read about the early miracles that attended this decision, and about how people like Bob Jones, Noel Alexander and others had apparently been prepared by God to come together to be a part of this work. And I read about the famous 21-day fast beginning May 7, 1983 that they felt God call them to commit to.

This fast was itself quite amazing for at least two reasons. One, Bob Jones had predicted the appearance of a great comet in the sky that science would not be expecting and that it would be a sign that this fast was from God. And as it turned out, that's exactly what happened! On May 7, 1983, the media announced that a major comet had been discovered, surprising the scientific world, right when this little congregation was beginning their fast!

But as amazing as this miracle was, it was the second thing that really floored me! It referred to an event that took place about six months later, towards the end of 1983. According to Mike Bickle, at the end of the fast, instead of an immediate breakout of revival or a supernatural move by God as they were hoping for, Jones got up and announced that the entire region would experience a three-month drought (which turned out to be true), and that KCF itself would go through three years of humiliation. This proved to be very discouraging to the church and by the fall of 1983 a lot of doubt had set in. Thus it was that on November 7, Bob Jones called on Mike and told him that, "The Lord says that you are an unbelieving people...He says that He will give you yet one more sign!...straight from heaven...On November 15 the word of the Lord will come to you in such a way that you will not waver in unbelief again."⁵

Mike relates that he spent all of November 15 waiting on the Lord, yet nothing happened that seemed like a sign out of heaven. That night, a while before midnight, he decided to give up and go through some mail sent to him. In it he found a book by a Baptist named Howard O. Pittman who died in 1979 and went to heaven. Pittman relates how Jesus sent him back to earth with a message that included two things. One, this is the Laodicean Age, and Christ "could find hardly a pure thing in the Church today." And two, that He was going to begin to spew this lukewarm Laodicean Church world out of His mouth in a slow process beginning *May 7, 1983!*

In the book, Mike says that he found all this astounding to him. The comet, the fast, and now this message straight from Heaven given to Howard O. Pittman four years earlier, all revolving around May 7, 1983! I found it astounding too, because the plain implication was that *God* wanted very much for *KCF* to be in the forefront of this spewing process! Mike it seems "got it" too at that time, relating in the book that God seemed to speak plainly to him to, "Take this message to the world." Yet when I asked him about this incident during one of several long talks we had my first few years in Kansas City, he disavowed any special significance to it for Metro beyond it just "being a sign" for their encouragement, that "God would [indeed] send revival to KCF". **This lack of agreement as to the significance of this incident explains my basic lack of agreement with Mike and the other leaders, as to what God's purpose for this fellowship was meant to be all along.**

Feeling Led

Why do Mike and the others now feel this way, twenty years later? I don't know for sure, but my explanation for such a tepid response to God is two-fold. It is partly the "once bitten, twice shy" principle. And it's partly the oppressive influence of ecumenical logic in the Church world today. Having been exposed by Ernie Gruen in 1990 and it turning into such a nation-wide publicity nightmare for them, I have the distinct impression that KCF determined thereafter to avoid controversy as much as possible. Yet at the same time, it might be better to say they determined thereafter to avoid *certain kinds* of controversy, meaning, "anything that would jeopardize the ecumenical philosophy". To create outrageous controversy in the Body of Christ, such as their friends and spiritual progeny like the Toronto-ites have now championed, in seeking to bring civil war to the Church over what Christians are to think of their highly speculative "manifestations", apparently is not a problem as long as ecumenism is based on esoteric experiences and sentimentality. Neither is assuming that anything that catches on in the Charismatic world to become part of the "raging river" of the multi-stream, ever-evolving end-times Church a problem! Such contradictions are just vintage Metro (and for that matter, vintage Charismania).

The problem KCF had by 1990 though, was that the controversy they had stirred up was not for any righteousness on their own but for their folly. Mike told me that he and the staff felt that 90% of Gruen's expose of them was "of the devil." Yet to me it was *just the opposite!* After reading Gruen's 200-page "blue book" against KCF and checking the charges out, I felt he was 90% *right!* From 1985 to 1990, the Kansas City Prophets had really floundered. They had a lot of attitude problems that they freely admit to, true, but they never agreed with my contention that what was at the heart of a big part of those mistakes was some serious error regarding God's truth (in general) and vision for their church (in particular).

Nevertheless, getting back to that night in June of 1992, reading the *Some Said It Thundered* book about all the personalities and miracles associated with the fellowship, I was duly impressed at the time. But being very tired that night, I fell asleep around 8 P.M. and awoke Sunday at 3:30 A.M. As I did so God spoke again very clearly to me saying, "I want you to move up here and be a part of this church. It's a big part of My plan for your life." And then He said, "And make sure you don't run off but stay for the *evening* service."

Well, I was very willing to stay for the evening service, but to move up here was quite a decision to make! I prayed more about it but fortunately had quite an "open Heaven" that morning. And since it was so early I had plenty of time to do so and concluded that it "really was the Lord."⁶

That morning at Metro Vineyard, I went up to Mike Bickle to tell him of what I felt God had told me (less the part about the evening service). He was very happy to hear that and encouraged me to go ahead and do so. I had "known" Mike somewhat through my newsletter, having put him on my mailing list from its very beginning in 1989, after I read an article about him and thought my subject matter would be things he would be interested in. When I went out of my way at another conference in 1991, I believe, to introduce myself he was very flattering in his praise of my writings.

But what happened that night at the evening service was quite miraculous to me. Paul Cain preached, and after his sermon he began to give out what he is most famous for, his personal words. They were written on 3 by 5 cards with notes he had taken while in prayer that afternoon. One of them was for "a Don from Tulsa." He went on to describe both me, my ministry and the nature of my experiences in Tulsa with great accuracy. He then said God was moving me on to a "new group of people" in a way that would "entail a change of location", and that this was from the Lord and it would be a great blessing for me as I acted to obey it. He finished by saying that this was a "confirmation of what you already know." And he did all this without calling me out or asking me to identify myself.

Mike was sitting behind him on the stage at that point, grinning from ear to ear. Afterwards he came up to me and said, "Well, what'd ya think of *that*!? Did it bear witness?" I assured him it did. In fact I was quite impressed. Until then, I had watched as Cain gave out words, but as I did not usually know the people he was referring to, I didn't have much of an opinion as to how accurate his much vaunted gift was. But I can say I experienced it first-hand that night! I can also say that I did not and do not today believe the two of them collaborated in any way to manipulate me by that word. I believe Paul just gave out what he received in prayer that afternoon about me. Nevertheless, what enamourment I may have had of Paul Cain and Metro Vineyard that night did not last very long.

A Quick Education

Because of those experiences that day, I moved to Kansas City in late 1992 with a clear assurance that this was from God. At first I immersed myself in personal relationships and, after eight raucous years in Tulsa, was not inclined to want to find anything amiss here in Missouri. That is, until two events of the following year quickly began to shake my confidence in the discernment of the group I now felt so clearly called to.

The first took place within two months of my arrival. In January of 1993, Rick Joyner and Paul Cain published an article in the former's *MorningStar Prophetic Bulletin*. Bill Clinton had just been elected President (three days after I got there as a matter of fact), and this article claimed revelation from God that He wanted to "use Bill Clinton to bring blessing to America." It talked about how Clinton's incredible relativism and indecisiveness were supposed "strengths" and how God was going to come upon him and "turn him into another man" (I Sam 10:6), to "carry out God's policy with a depth of conviction that will surprise even his most vehement detractors." Furthermore, it warned God's people that the young President is "better than we deserve", and "represents a reprieve from the New World Order", while the Christian Right was characterized as a potential new Nazi movement!

I was utterly dumbstruck! I didn't know whether to laugh or cry! I just could not get over the naivete of all this. Bill Clinton would be *no* blessing on America, but a curse and a judgment and a test! I already "knew" people like Bill and Hillary very well, based on the fact I was just like them in college back in the Sixties, and based on what I already knew about their scandals that eventually emerged with time. So when I read this article in early 1993, I was speechless. Is Paul Cain, the man who practically read my mail the previous June, so gullible as to think that this man would bring *blessing* to America? And for him to liken the so-called "Christian Right" to the Nazi youth movement was just outrageous to me!

The second incident took place six months later in July of 1993. My ten-year roommate here, Jeremy Russell, a gift from God to me in an otherwise discouraging environment, is a wonderful man who grew up in what was then called Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). He was the church's Junior High youth pastor at the time and he asked me if I could help out at the annual "Rock The Nation" youth conference that year. I said I would, and it was held as always, at a small, denominational college campus in central Missouri.

But what amazed me the most about this conference was the attitude of the Metro Vineyard youth. They seemed incredibly rowdy, uncouth, unmanageable and disrespectful towards everyone all week. I was quite taken aback by this, especially since I assumed they would be more spiritual than most youth groups, coming from a church that was "on the cutting edge" of "what God is doing in the earth" in our day, yada yada yada.

The whole thing puzzled me a lot and I tried to contemplate it a bit while I was there. But it was encountering the campus coordinator on the morning we were about to leave and go home that really confounded me. I saw her at the McDonald's where we were having breakfast and went up to her to ask a question. I said, "Tell me frankly, what did you think about our group's behavior this past week?" She looked at me and said, "Do you want to know the truth?" I said, "Yes". She said, "Every year, consistently, your group is the worst of all those we host. We have inner city basketball camps here every summer which are better behaved than your kids."

I felt quite stunned by her words, and yet they dovetailed with my own gut-level impressions. They also seemed to dovetail with what I felt God had been saying to me earlier that week in calling me to, "Come apart now and spend more time with Me on a regular basis". It seemed He specifically was calling me to start spending at least one day a week, "Alone with Me in fasting and prayer."

I decided to make that day every Saturday. I'll never forget the first such Saturday after we got back. *As soon* as I hit my knees, God very clearly said to me, "Frankly, I'm disappointed it took you so long to see it"! This greatly depressed me, but I understood what the "it" was He was referring to. It was the sense that something was *deeply wrong* here at the home of the Kansas City Prophets. I could not at the time place my finger on "it". The behavior of the youth was only a symptom of "it".

You have to kind of understand where I was coming from about Metro. I had just spent eight years in Tulsa, feeling like I had been fighting the very beasts of Ephesus. I was weary and discouraged, and wrongly assumed that MVF, being a prophetic church, and recommended to me by some friends out of Keith Green's ministry in Lindale, Texas, were soul mates sharing the same burden. And maybe at its beginning they would have been. But as the prophecy given by Augustine Acala put it, from its very beginning, there would be a danger this movement would be hijacked by both a particular false prophet "there from the beginning", and by a general pressure by many to move in the wrong direction. In addition, as was said above, after the Ernie Gruen debacle, it seems a decision was made, consciously or not, to avoid certain kinds of "controversy", and join in with the "know-nothing" ecumenical spirit rather than cry out against it.

In doing so it underscores the typical pattern Metro seems to have fallen into ever since the Gruen crisis. Rather than seeing that their problem arose from false doctrines in the 1980's that were never corrected, the tendency has been to

assume that pride and elitism were at fault. This, I think, made them very susceptible to the brow-beating of the ecumenicists about being "divisive".

Getting Nowhere

At this point I was wondering why there seemed to be such little dwelling upon the traditional prophetic concerns here, and why were the youth so cynical? God in fact, seemed to be telling me that it wasn't the youth's fault so much as their parents! As I dug a little deeper I found out about the "Golden Seed Generation" teaching of Bob Jones in the 1980's, which put forth the idea that it was the children of the current KCF adults which were *so* chosen, and *so* destined, and *so* anointed for the "last great move" and the like. I concluded they must have also felt *so pressured* that they just rebelled against the whole thing altogether!

But all this led me to dig deeper. In the years that followed, God let me cross paths with sympathetic members and ex-members who filled me in on a lot of what had transpired during the 1980's. They told me about how the leadership always seemed to have a knack for rejecting words of correction and counsel, and for throwing out people that had been truly called by God to come here and be a part of this thing, from all over the country and beyond, throughout the years.

One brother I know personally was treated in a manner that I can only describe as vintage Metro. His name is **Steve Moore**, a godly intercessor and prophet. During my time there, Steve apparently had a powerful dream in which he was the church janitor. One day as he opened his janitor's locker, he saw a boy inside it, dead. He says he "just knew" by the Spirit that this boy represented Metro Vineyard. He also saw a sharp knife in there and "just knew" he should take that knife and open up the boy's head. When he did so he found a huge brain tumor! He then "just knew" he should cut out half of that tumor and that half would be left for someone else to cut out. But when he did so, he realized the boy was still alive, and that he hadn't been dead, just in a coma.

When I heard him tell me this story, it just spoke volumes to me! It was just perfect, because that was exactly *my* impression, that this "Kansas City Prophets" church's biggest problem was in its brain! They just would not use common sense! They seemed to pick "prophetic words" out of thin air but did not have much in the way of a prophetic *mindset* or *consciousness* of the meaning of things around them in the world. As is a trap for any of us who take God seriously, they had created a hermetically-sealed world of pseudo-spirituality, cut off from the real world where real people really lived.⁷ They seemed to keep reasoning in a highly-spiritualized language and understanding that became ingrown and took on a life of its own. They seemed to lack a sound Biblical foundation within which they could more safely prophesy and interpret their subjective impressions and experiences. And on and on.

When Steve did a tape for the church leadership about this experience, and peppered it with his observations regarding when and how alien spirits had come into their midst, the reaction of the staff was truly "vintage Metro." Like a stubborn miffed woman, they "just didn't bear witness." In fact, they told Steve all he could henceforth do was sit in his seat and say nothing about this to anyone! It wasn't but weeks until this stalwart pillar of the church, a man who could "pray people in and out of the work", someone there almost from the beginning, decided to leave and take his family elsewhere. The fact that people like John Wimber himself was succumbing to brain cancer during this time was like a *living sign*, in my opinion, that what Steve was saying was straight out of heaven.

Eras

One of the motifs often heard around Metro is that of a "gathering of eagles". And while that may take on applications that have been somewhat vain at times, there is no denying the fact that the founding and history of this church has been marked at times by an amazing gathering of gifted key people making up both its leadership and its members. Hundreds if not thousands of people could testify of God leading them to come to Kansas City. Many would not understand why. Others seemed to instinctively sense a great need for a ministry that would challenge and correct the

things in the Body of Christ that needed to be changed. This latter sentiment I think really reflects the original heart of God for this ministry.

The sad thing is that so many that were sent here have now left, feeling disillusioned, frustrated and disappointed. Some, it is true, left because they wanted to change the vision to their own fleshly liking and got rightly frustrated. Others though just languished on the vine, unused and unappreciated, and eventually left for greener pastures. And yet many others left because they were *forced* out, or were rejected when they *really were* in touch with God. This has been the great tragedy of the Kansas City Fellowship phenomenon, that, even when the leadership *wanted* in the *worst way* to do the will of God, ignorance at the very least, if not the temptations to fame and popularity, kept them from seeing what that will of God was. This, coupled with a wrong Biblical and doctrinal foundation, has kept them from realizing the purposes of God for them. At least that is the opinion of this observer.

I believe you could divide up the history of the Kansas City Fellowship into five eras. The first was **late 1982 to 1985**, the **Formative years**. The second was **1985 to 1990**, the **Hijacked years**. The third was **1990 to 1996**, the **Languishing years**. The fourth was **1996 to 2000**, the **"valiant-attempt-to-make-a-comeback-but-not-knowing-how-to-do-it"** years. The fifth are the **"IHOP-Shiloh"** years, **2000 to present**.

Era 1. The Formative Years

The reason I think Kansas City Fellowship was never just another ordinary "vision" some up-and-coming young pastor had for a church or ministry of his own is due to the circumstances surrounding its origins. There is no doubt its first and long-standing pastor **Mike Bickle** (1982 to 2000) has been the most central figure in this church's history. But according to his own words, he had no itch in his spirit to move back to his hometown of Kansas City to start a totally new work. At the time "it all started", he already was a young and budding pastor in his wife Diane's hometown of St. Louis, where they said they both were more than happy already. He was pastoring a "Covenant" church, part of a network of churches overseen by a British "apostle" named Bryn Jones. (Bryn Jones is to this day a prominent leader in British "Restorationism" circles).

Mike himself had come to the Lord in 1971 and had some early roots in both Catholicism and Presbyterianism. The son of a world champion boxer, Mike excelled in sports and academics. A naturally brilliant man, he had early plans to go to medical school, but gave it up because of a strong sense God was calling him to the ministry. Part of this had to be because he was such an avid student of the Word.

In fact, this is my explanation why he, not even that skilled at being a pastor, was apparently called by God to somehow steward the wild visionaries that eventually surrounded him. Far from being overawed by such prophetically-gifted people and dominated by them, it seems to me he was called to act as a skeptic and a restrainer, to filter out the worst of their excesses with his extensive knowledge of the Word of God. But he strikes me as having had a very eclectic approach to his understanding of the Word all the same, adopting interpretations or traditions that do not seem consistent one to another. I think too he has understandably struggled with fears of pride or presumption in the face of prophetic gifts that have been so awesome at times. He also seems to have had a hard time resisting the pressures of many of his other friends, probably due to his being such a "people person". An outgoing extrovert, Mike has had a hard time, it seems to me, saying no to people and accepting the rejection that naturally dogs the prophetic person.

While pastoring this Covenant church in St. Louis, a young man, a prophet named **Agustine Acala** sought him out one day in 1982 to give him a word from God, that God would soon be moving him back to his hometown of Kansas City to do something totally different. Mike was pretty skeptical of anyone who claimed to be a "prophet", but this first step was quickly followed by others, apparently arranged in the sovereign Providence of God. Soon thereafter Mike himself heard a powerful message from the Lord while praying in Cairo. He was told he was being invited to be "a part of a work that will reach to the ends of the earth", that this was something "very serious", and that many before him had

agreed to it but hadn't followed through on it. He was also told it would be built upon four principles of **day and night prayer, holiness of heart, unwavering faith** and **extravagant giving to the poor**. God also told him, "Guard your heart, for if you lose this vision it will be your brothers who have stolen it from you--it will not be the world that does that." The idea is that they would "reason away" these four standards and hijack God's purposes in one way or another unless Mike guarded it very closely. But if he did, it would "fulfill a purpose that will touch the ends of the earth."⁸

By September, 1982, Mike, Diane, brother-in-law Bob Scott and a few others made the move to Kansas City, and from the start, Kansas City Fellowship was attended by a number of amazing miracles of financial provision, healings, and fulfilled prophecies. God it seems was doing a lot of things to encourage these young people before the hard trials began to set in.

During this time, people apparently were walking around wide-eyed, as it seemed exciting things were happening all the time. In addition, Augustine showed up again, this time in Kansas City. He said God had told him to tell Mike that there were four important things Mike needed to "hide in his heart" if he wanted to see the new work become a success. **One**, multitudes of young people will rally to him. **Two**, a full manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit would be in evidence, but not before an appointed time. **Three**, there would be a false prophet in their midst from the beginning, but "if you will be patient and discerning, you will save the church great heartache. If you do not, you will suffer many, many problems."⁹ And **four**, there will be resistance and misunderstanding.

On False Prophets

At times I have tried to speculate as to who that "false prophet there from the beginning" could possibly be, and I have come to the conclusion that I do not have enough insight into this or first-hand experience of what happened to say for sure who it might have been. But in light of what has transpired in KCF's history, I think it good that we consider for a moment just what a false prophet is, because, according to a Biblical understanding, almost *all* of the prophets associated with this ministry over the years could qualify as "false".

I say this *not* because I necessarily think any of these guys do not live holy lives. *Nor* as if they were not prophetically gifted (for they most certainly are). *Nor* as if they were cynical, insincere wolves-in-sheep's-clothing types who want to fleece the people of God. I bring this up because of what *the Bible* has to say about false prophets. *In the Bible*, a false prophet was someone who either *led the people of God astray* to other gods (Deut 13:1-3), or led them astray into *vanity and foolishness* (Jer 23:9-40). A prophet was false when he did not have the *mentality* or *mindset* or *heart* of a true prophet. A true prophet was someone who knew the Lord and His ways well, and could instinctively and intuitively discern the spirits, both human, demonic and Divine involved in a situation, *whether or not* it involved a "vision", hearing a voice, or dreaming a dream.

In the Old Testament, false prophets were, ironically, a dime a dozen. Elijah ran into a ratio of 850 false prophets of Baal and the groves to only one of him (I Kings 18:19). Micaiah was similarly outnumbered (I Kings 22:6). But these were the ones that were easy to detect because they obviously were working on behalf of Baal (the Devil). It was the *other* prophets, the supposed "prophets of Jehovah" that were the real hidden reefs. An example of one Jeremiah went up against was Hananiah, who predicted a quick return from exile (Jer 28:3). Others spoke of endless prosperity, never preparing the people of God for the evil day to come (Isa 56:12; Eze 22:28; Amos 6:3, etc.). These are the ones all men will speak well of (Lu 6:26).

Here are some things the Bible has to say about the nature of false prophets:

- God said they were leaders who "make you vain", that is, they say things that are flattering ("You're going to be so anointed, so consecrated, so dripping with miracles and the wealth of the wicked", etc., etc.--Jer 23:16; Eze 13:6,7,8,9), rather than things that are truthful and deflating, though liberating (23:22).

- Whereas a true prophet would be willing to "hew away" at the people like a lumberjack if need be (Hos 6:5), to give words like a fire to wood if need be (Jer 5:14), and like a hammer that breaks the rock hard heart of a hardened generation if need be (23:29), the false prophets gave words that were "light" (23:32 KJV) and "smooth" (Isa 30:10).
- They would lead the people astray with their "reckless lies" (Jer 23:32 NIV).
- They were out for gain. If you didn't "put into their mouths" (i.e., give them money or at least endorse them), they would "even declare war on you" (Micah 3:5.11). But if you cooperate, they will prophesy prosperity over you (2:11). Plus, in doing so they often pervert justice in the process (Eze 13:19,22).

I cannot help but think of the money shakedown practices and the threats given toward their critics by the Benny Hinn-Paul Crouch-Word of Faith type preachers here¹⁰. Yet one time, Mike announced that he had had a dream wherein he saw himself ministering on a stage with Benny Hinn (one of the worst cynics in the Charismatic circuit, as far as I'm concerned). Mike though was all a ga-ga over this prospect, which indeed did come to pass in time.

- They are cunning, like the foxes that haunt a spiritual desert (Eze 13:4). They know how to "work a crowd", how to get your money, how to double back and cover up their tracks, etc. Consider the Rodney Howard-Browne/Copeland/Hinn types, (and I could give you all kinds of examples of their perfidy in these things).
- They prophesy things out of the vision and deceit of their own heart (Jer 23:16,26). That is, they *just make things up!* They "follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!", God said to Ezekiel (Eze 13:3). "I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the *delusions of their own minds*" (Jer 14:14 NIV). In other words, they just conjure things up in their own imaginations! Or when they *do* get something from the Lord, they so mangle the interpretation as to end up at times coming to the *exact opposite* conclusion they're supposed to!

This particular characteristic is ***absolutely rampant*** in Charismatic and Restoration circles. I once read an interview with Rick Joyner wherein he explained how he gets his visions. He said he just deliberately sits down and writes at will whatever he sees, whatever he gets! Yet in the Bible, when God gave a vision, the prophet did not initiate it.

- They "seduce My people", telling them "Peace, peace" when there is no peace in the offing (Eze 13:10; Jer 23:17).
- They tell you what you *want* to hear, not necessarily what you *need* to hear (Jer 13:12-14). Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah was so flattering in telling King Ahab what he wanted to hear about "going up and taking Ramoth-Gilead" that King Jehoshaphat asked, "Isn't there a prophet of the Lord here besides", to enquire of? Ahab said, yes, there's old Micaiah, "but I hate him, for he never prophesies good to me, but evil" (I Kings 22:6-8). Yet Ahab follows Zedekiah's counsel to his own death (22:37).
- In doing so, they heal the hurt of the people only slightly rather than completely (Jer 6:14; 8:11).
- Their own deception is sometimes from the Lord, in order to, in turn, deceive the people who have an idol in their hearts who come to receive from them (Eze 14:7-9; II Tim 4:3,4). Scary.
- They are like those who fail to build a hedge to protect the people in times of attack (Eze 13:5), and like those who build a "flimsy wall", and then "cover it with whitewash" (Eze 13:10 NIV).
- Their usual concern is more for ritual or an outward show of religious activity that serves as a way of avoiding the will of God or the very personal nature of His salvation process (Amos 5:21-24; Isa 1:11-15; Mt 23:5,14,23-31; I Sam 15:22).

- They lack a general discernment and consciousness of spiritual forces and principles at work. Isaiah 56:10,11 says, "His [Israel's] watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter".

I found it most ironic that a group of people that wanted so bad to be "prophetic" seemed to either manifest such characteristics themselves, or at the least, seemed content to stay silent or live in the presence of such in the Church world around them. Truly it seemed to me, they "lack a general discernment and consciousness of spiritual forces and principles at work" around them.

I'll give a few examples of either this lack of consciousness, lack of conviction, or lack of concern at Metro--little things, but illustrative all the same. One concerned Richard Wurmbrand's "Voice Of The Martyrs", probably the finest ministry I know of. About five years ago, VOM was making November a month to pray for the suffering Christians around the world. I suggested at the very least MCF make an announcement from the pulpit to endorse this, which to me was so obviously the kind of prophetic burden we in America ought to be taking up. But they said nothing! I think I was told to just leave some literature at the information booth, yawn. It's things like that that make me wonder, is this the effect of a Triumphalistic, Post-Millennialism paradigm? Were they not interested because "suffering Christians" is only a speedbump on the road to the inevitable victory of "Joel's Army"? I really can't say, since they were always and forever vague or all over the map.

A second and third example came out of a Sunday School class by **Sam Storms** I was taking, probably around 1999. Amazingly, it was practically the only adult Sunday class the church had at the time, probably because they were so afraid of bad teachings causing more problems for them. Sam is a friend of seminary professor **Jack Deere** and was first referred to KCF by him. Deere could be considered one of the KC prophets, even though he is more a teacher. But he is so known for his apologetics for LR / MSOG doctrine that I would include him as one of the non-resident principals.¹¹

Both Deere and Storms are Bible scholars and teachers in their own right. Sam is no longer at the ministry, having recently taken a teaching position at Wheaton College. In eschatology he is Amillennial, but the curious thing is that while he was here, he apparently served as something of a resident theologian, for Mike would always say that if anyone had a theological question, ask Sam. This was an arrangement I thought to be incredibly futile and escapist. How can any Christian, like it or not, avoid having theological opinions and standing by them?

Well, in this class I can recall two very memorable occasions when Sam made statements that revealed the consciousness of this ministry. On one of them, he mentioned a recent study that determined that the number one factor people have in picking a church nowadays is--would you believe--...*parking*! To be fair, Sam duly expressed his dismay at this, but I myself was flabbergasted! Undone! I mean like, this was really deep convictions in the Church in America! I took it as a sign of the effect of ecumenism, that what you believe is not really important, as long as you are "churched"! (Ugh! I *hate* that term!)

The second occasion was when Sam said that MCF was "not a church that believed in Triumphalism". I found that quite ironic, since so much of the tenor of these prophets and teachers seemed to suggest *exactly that*. The fact that Mike's penchant for allegorizing the Old Testament and speaking in the most positive and rosey of language regarding the glory and power of the Bride left me thinking that, even if he believes in something less than the total triumph of the Church before Christ returns, his words and emphasis still tend to leave that sort of an impression on the people all the same.

To be fair, I have been told by friends since I left the church almost two years ago now, that Mike has been preaching a whole lot more on tribulation, martyrdom, end-time plagues and the like recently. I am not heartened by this because

I'm "into" negative, apocalyptic things. Who in their right mind would be? I am heartened by this in the sense that at least this sort of subject matter is Biblically-based and more associated with the traditional Pre-Millennial template than Latter Rain speculations.

On the other hand, this could be what I mean by Mike being "technically Pre-Millennial" at the same time. Does he believe the Church triumphs over all opposition and then Christ returns? Is he responding to all the criticism he has received over the years and is now hiding his "positive" emphasis with a more Biblical scenario? Is he reacting to life since September 11, 2001? Or has he truly seen the light? I have not been there for almost two years now and cannot say for sure. All I know is that he is still quite taken with the Tabernacle of David theme, something very native to Latter Rain ideology. All I remember is hearing a steady stream of pretentious sentiments about "lovesickness" and passion for Jesus, about how the five foolish virgins of Matthew 25 would end up in heaven (despite verses 10 to 12), about how nice it would be if God would end up saving at least half of all the people who ever lived (in spite of Luke 13:23,24), etc., etc.

The Bob Jones Phenomenon

I summarize then. A person is *not* a false prophet just because they may be (1) very sincere and well-meaning, (2) may have an incredibly impressive prophetic gift at times, or (3) may even live a most godly life. A prophet becomes false when he ends up *leading people into idolatry, error, vanity* or a *false hope of the future*. This may be due to an ungodly life (Jude 4,11,16), to his giving out of false prophecies (e.g., Jer 28:1-9), or to a lack of sound doctrine and discernment, or all three. But the overall effect or "fruit" is the same (Mt 7:16). And this in spite of the fact that he may *in no way wish to do so!* But whether they are *aware* of their deceitfulness or not (Eph 4:14), God still holds them accountable, and confirms that the effect is still the same.

The problem I have with the type of prophets found in Kansas City, or those of the networks of people like Bill Hamon and the like, are not necessarily the first problem but the second two. Many of these men live very holy and sacrificial lives. But their problem, as Steve Moore's vision put it, is in their *minds*. It's their lack of understanding or discernment of truth, the future, world conditions and the like, where I feel they mess up. At what point such characteristics move down from the head to the heart is something only God can be the judge of.

In light of the characteristics above, the story of **Bob Jones** is a good case in point. To be sure, he came on like gang busters in a most impressive display of initial prophecies, and has continued at times to have the most uncanny accuracy. For example, the very night he predicted would be the end of that three-month drought after the 21-day fast, it not only rained, it poured! And in another story, John Wimber credits Jones for leading his son Sean back from a life of drugs and rebellion to the Lord. Jones did this by one day showing up at Wimber's door wanting to see the son. Wimber told him he didn't live with them anymore and wasn't expecting him back any time soon. Moments later though, Sean appears. (That's incredible timing!) Jones then proceeded to tell Sean some personal things from God that just broke him down and brought him back to the Lord. (That's incredible accuracy!) It was an experience Wimber never forgot and seemed to forever make him a believer in, and grateful for, the prophetic ministry.¹²

But by the same token, when Jones was off, he was *really* off! He would talk about how his intellect was in his hair and that the angel of the Lord was coming to him and to all of us to give us a hair cut (i.e., "offend our mind to reveal our heart", or some such non-sensical sentiment). He would say things like, "He's not even dealing with the Bride yet...My grandchildren, will be the Bride." But in the Bible, the "Bride" is both the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2), and the redeemed of all the ages, not just the very last generation! All this kind of stuff is pure Manifested Sons talk. He would talk about how the "Sons" of those days would just "breathe in the (very) breath and power of God" to make themselves impervious to arrest or imprisonment. ("I tell you, none of those that are His will be lost and none of you in this room will ever suffer from that son of perdition...")¹³

But what really got me is what he says God told him about Kansas City and the new fellowship he was a part of. These people would "never, ever reject you Bob", the Lord supposedly said. And, he was told *never* to leave the city, for this was where it "would all start from". Yet both things came to pass with time.

A typical "Restoration" type prophecy of Bob Jones in the 1980's was caught in a question and answer meeting between him and Mike Bickle. Jones spoke of a supposed raising up of 35 end-time apostles who would "reign and reveal to the world that they truly are the faithful and true leaders and the government that will be upon his single shoulder" [sic]. At the time, Mike responded, "I think there'll be 35 like unto Paul...The government rests on apostles and prophets."

Jones' comment about the government resting upon a "single shoulder" is a real stretch of an allusion to the Isaiah 9:6 verse about Christ and His Kingship. What exactly is he saying here? That the government of the Church in the last days will be headed by 35 super apostles? The apostle fulfills a *ministry* of church planting, not an *ecclesiastical office*. But Mike's allusion to Ephesians 2:20 makes no mistake as to how he took it--that the Church of the future, the "transformed expression of Christianity" that he has become famous for trumpeting, will be characterized by a government headed by modern-day apostles and prophets.¹⁴

Jones also gave Mike a word in 1986, I believe, regarding Song of Solomon 8:6. That verse simply reads, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." I take that as being a simple exhortation from God regarding the need for a committed "love unto death" if need be, in the last days. Yet Mike took this to be some sort of a word that the *entire book of the Song of Solomon* was meant to be like a hermeneutic or a "key" to opening up the meaning of the relationship of Christ to His Last Days Bride. This fits right in however, with the LR / MSOG idea of a special, last-days generation that would come along which would attain to levels of spirituality, anointing and power surpassing all others before it. The incredible pretentiousness of it all, especially in light of the extraordinary lives and the extraordinary suffering of saints that have gone before us, just floors me.

There were other little stories and prophetic parables Bob Jones gave at times for KCF that remain intriguing to this day. One of them was the "**White Horse**" vision. In this, KCF was likened to a great White Horse that was carrying a rider who was an invalid. That rider was said to be Pat Bickle, Mike's younger brother who had become a quadriplegic due to a football accident a decade earlier. In the vision, Jones saw the rider thrown off the horse, land in a few inches of water, and wind up instantly healed! He was also told that it would not be until this happens that "the [KCF] movement will [really] begin". I find this intriguing because in my prayer times, God has often seemed to allow me to "see" certain people represented as white horses, chess board-like knights symbolizing faithful and spiritually-minded servants of His.

He also said he had a **vision of the angels** of the 1946-era healing revival "having a reunion" here in Kansas City once again before the return of the Lord. This prophecy, coupled with Paul Cain's expectations of packed stadiums, has worked to generate a hope for a great outbreak of healings and others gifts, per the Augustine prophecy, one day. I find this intriguing, and do hope it comes to pass. But since I see this great outpouring to be in conjunction with the Great Tribulation (as I outlined at the very beginning), I'm having a hard time processing how this possibly could come to pass during a time of such obvious disruption of regular life and services (such as electricity, for example).

The Ten Year Captivity

As was said, from its beginning this ministry has been characterized by a gathering of certain key and gifted people. Some were not just prophets but intercessors as well. One was **Noel Alexander**. Bob Jones had made this announcement, "Noel is coming! Noel is coming!" This was very intriguing but baffling to everyone. What did it mean? Some sort of a reference to Christmas?

Yet before long, Mike met this guy named Noel Alexander at a city-wide prayer meeting. Noel was originally from South Africa but was studying for the ministry there in Kansas City at the Nazarene Church's main seminary. The two hit it off quite well due to their common burden for intercession, and before long Noel was one of the main leaders. A man given to holiness themes and a holy life, Noel eventually broke off to pastor a church on his own by the early 1990's. Why this was he won't say but I suspect it had to do with concern over the direction of the ministry. Around 1997, Noel was back though, planning IHOP with Mike on the side. For what it's worth, I once felt God tell me Noel had always been His choice to be the senior pastor.

But before we move on into the raucous period of 1985 to 1990, there are two prophecies Jones gave in 1984 that are important as regards the emergence of the "Toronto Blessing" ten years later and on into the future. These are the **Butler-Baker** vision and the **Civil War** prophecies.

In 1984, Bob Jones claimed he was given a word or a vision for the church based on the story in Genesis 40 where the patriarch Joseph landed in Pharaoh's prison. While there, the king's butler and baker were thrown in there with him. They both had a dream, and Joseph's interpretation of each turned out to be accurate. The butler (waiter, food taster) was restored to his job serving Pharaoh while the baker was executed.

Jones interpreted this to mean that there would be a ten year spiritual drought in the Body of Christ after which "the new wine (the butler ministry) would begin to be poured out". I feel this is tremendously important as regards the so-called Toronto Blessing. Ten years after 1984 was 1994, and it wasn't even the end of the first month of that year before the Toronto phenomenon descended upon the unsuspecting people of God.

Now I do not presume to be so omniscient as to say I can tell infallibly the source of every spiritual phenomenon found in this Toronto movement. I do not doubt that the things that happened in the TB covered every aspect of spiritual reality, from things from God, to things from the devil, to things from human flesh. The point is this. From my perspective, the combination of the incredibly flakey nature of the phenomenon manifested there coupled with people's knowledge in these circles of Jones' 1984 prophecy, coupled with people's desire for "revival," added up to one of three possible meanings. One, God initiated this, knowing it would introduce great confusion and strife into the Body of Christ at a time in history when He told us to beware of exactly these kinds of speculative things. Two, it was a demonically contrived and manipulated phenomenon. Or three, it was basically and mostly a humanly-contrived, engineered event. With any of these explanations, I do not see anything of a winner at work. And if I am wrong, then I'm glad to err on the side of prudence.

I will have more to say on this when we get to my encounter with John Arnott in 1995 shortly. But for now, the reader needs to know that many people *wanted* this "Butler/Baker" prophecy by Jones to happen and were willing to do all they could to see to it that it did.

But that's not the worst of it. During the 1980's Jones told of another vision or dream he had, this time of a **great Civil War** coming to the Body of Christ. Like the American Civil War of the 1860's, this would also involve the "Blues and the Grays", the former symbolizing those who were "fighting for unity" in the Body of Christ, and the latter those who wanted to keep the people of God enslaved, who were dominated by "gray matter" (that is, their own carnal minds or logic).

Now when the Toronto phenomenon came about, you have to understand that, according to new order thinking, the Church was not just to expect great things in the Last Days. We were to look for a *whole new paradigm* to define what Christianity *is*! Remember, according to Latter Rain dogma, *everything is evolving*. Therefore, (if you'll forgive the TB's feeble attempt at *logic* here), the Church ought to be open to *entirely new expressions* of spiritual manifestations now. Things that may have been considered demonic even just a few years ago, hey, they now just as well could be the

work of the Holy Spirit! Why not? After all, God is doing a "new thing" now, isn't He? Why throw it out just because you've never seen it before?

But the question to me is, why do we need to *accept* it? Yet that is exactly what the whole controversy eventually devolved down into. What really infuriates me is that these people had the *gall* to *pick a fight* with the people of God by insisting that **we** prove **our** loyalty to God, *not* on the basis of faith in Christ and His eternal and unchanging Word, oh no! But by their forcing us to come down one side or the other as to whether these incredibly flakey and speculative *experiences* were of God or not! And if you didn't agree, then you were using human logic (gray matter), and were blaspheming the Holy Ghost!

Well let me declare to you Civil War mongers right here and now. **You, not we**, have a big choice to make in the days ahead. *You* must decide which you are going to base your Christian faith on--the "once-and-for-all-delivered" Word of God (Jude 3), or your New Agey, esoteric experiences! Go ahead. Choose your paradigm, and get off our backs!

Era 2. The Hijacked Years.

When **John Paul Jackson** first walked through the doors of KCF, the thought that came to a friend of mine was, "Oh no. Here comes trouble!" Yet this was one of those prophecies that did come true!

John Paul Jackson or JPJ as he was often referred to, was the epitome of cool. A handsome man, always casually but impeccably dressed, he was charming, suave, articulate and smooth. And he had an amazing prophetic gift. I heard of one night where Jackson virtually "read the mail" of everyone in the room and gave words of personal prophecy that seemed "just right" to all.

Jackson however, I think must have been the second biggest factor in turning the young group in the wrong direction. From what I've heard (and heard directly from him the two times he visited while I was there), I get the impression that JPJ was especially enamoured of doctrines that lent "control" to those in leadership. He seemed to introduce the theme of "Dominion" a lot during those years. To this day, the grade school within MCF is called "Dominion Christian School".

Jackson also developed a curriculum known as the "Commitment Classes" that all members were required to take. Friends of mine testify that it had the effect of putting a sense of obligation on everyone almost to a point of creating a cult-like atmosphere. (Not that everything else wasn't encouraging the same!) He claimed in these classes to advocate a Pre-Mill, Post-Trib eschatology, but the thrust of his thinking seemed to support the "New Order" mentality of the ministry. I will say that he seemed more inclined to "apocalyptic" expectations of the future than others in the ministry. But, as I myself have done, he would often jump the gun on these things, or just get excessive about them.

Jackson also promoted his very extreme doctrine of "The Jezebel Spirit", the basic gist of which was that anyone, especially the women, who questioned the prophets of God were operating under the spirit of Jezebel who contended with the great prophet Elijah. That is mind-boggling to me, considering that Jezebel was *far worse* than a mere deceived Israelite prophet. She was a witch, and an *open enemy* of Jehovah. I was told that, because of this teaching, it got to where men would hardly look into the eyes of the women in the congregation, lest they be mesmerized by some Jezebel lurking out there!

This alone apparently created such wounds in the women that around the mid-1990's while JPJ was visiting, they held a special time of public apology for that doctrine. And yet, on his web site today, he's *still* promoting this same teaching!¹⁵ All this apparently did not deter the leadership though, from inviting JPJ back twice to speak in conferences during the time I was there. That too was Vintage Metro.

I have the impression Jackson brought with him more than just a lot of false doctrines. An alien spirit mimicking the Spirit of prophecy entered in with him. This is not to say it wasn't there before, nor that he never operated in the Holy Spirit. It's just to say there was a clear mixture at best, at work. I had heard that when Derek Prince came to the church in 1986 with a word for them, he preached on the "Spirit of Divination", but that they did not especially "bear witness" to it. Vintage Metro again.

Jackson had a big impact on the fellowship and I get the impression he almost took the whole show over at times. I wouldn't be surprised if his confidence and prophetic gift overwhelmed and intimidated Mike at times. I also get the impression Bob Jones was really irked by him, feeling pushed out of a place of central influence and favor because of him. In fact, during this five year period, it seems in subtle ways Jackson was doing his part to deftly to push out of leadership--and at times the entire fellowship--every Godly voice and influence. Some people feel that when Jones got into a sexual impropriety scandal and was forced to leave (and has yet to be let back in), it came about because it was his unconscious way of getting back at everyone for letting Jackson come in and take over. That's pretty deep but I guess anything's possible.

It was during this five-year time period that the following typical things happened. Bob Jones' dream or vision of KCF producing "35 apostles" out of its ranks leading a parade from the church down to Arrowhead Stadium for amazing city-wide revivals came about; Jones' "Golden Seed Generation" teaching (very "new order") landed on the youth; erroneous predictions of the future were given, including the fellowship one day having its own Boeing 747; the idea of one unified Church for the entire city was strongly pursued; charges that KCF was trying to "take over" other churches in the city were alledged, and other things that all led up to the whistle Ernie Gruen eventually blew.

And yet the church was growing a lot, to a point of having six locations around the city. It seems to me it was at this time that the strongest Restoration teachings took hold. I get the impression it was during this period that Mike solidified his beliefs in this area, perhaps due to the dominant influence of Jones and Jackson, and the foundation laid in his life by Bryn Jones. Also during this time, relationship with John Wimber and the Vineyard began to emerge, giving the mostly obscure band greater exposure to a world-wide stage.

1987 proved to be a significant year here. It was at this time that another prophet and current staffer, **Michael Sullivant** arrived. Michael seemed to identify with the "Toronto Blessing" movement a lot while I was there, although he once told me he agrees with my basic eschatological vision when I once described it to him. He has a beautiful family, and I generally agreed with a lot of his insights into life, although we disagreed on a lot else. Also during this same year, **Paul Cain** first showed up. (In 1997 he moved to Kansas City to make MCF his home church and to start "Shiloh Prophetic Retreat Center"). Paul Cain's prophetic gifting, humility and integrity certainly are exceptional. But there have been few people the ministry has produced with more radical Latter Rain, Manifested Sons concepts than he.

Cain had had an amazing life story already. It has been adequately chronicled in books like *Some Said It Thundered* and *The Quest For The Radical Middle*, and I don't want to take up the space here to go over it again. But he immediately began sharing his long-standing vision for a great "Joel's Army" moving in the combined power of the "early and latter rain" outpouring (Joel 2:23). Whereas Pentecostal evangelists in his younger days (1940s-50s) sought for the glory in a way that sickened him, he proclaimed the coming of a "new breed" now that would not be so corrupted. He predicted days to come wherein large stadiums would be packed with people. It would be a time of revival and unbelievable miracles taking place. Preachers would have open visions, standing motionless for 3 days at a time, etc. He spoke of an army that was invincible, overcoming all obstacles in its path, teleporting themselves around the world, realizing their "full sonship", etc. Yet the basic view of the last days as is laid out in Scripture he left dangling in vagueness at best.

Building The Bride

It was also during these years that Mike began to germinate the elementary seeds of his "Bride of Christ" teaching which, in typical fashion, he researched into the ground, trying to find the thread of this theme throughout as much of the Scriptures as he could. We have mentioned earlier how he got started on this. Mike says that one day in 1986, I believe, Bob Jones called him and told him that God spoke to him that Song of Solomon 8:6 would become an important Scripture for the last days. And since Jones said this right when Mike was meditating on this very Scripture, it was a strong confirmation to him that they both were on to something.

That verse says, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." To me, this verse was meant to convey the simple idea of being faithful unto death in the face of intense persecution. But to Mike, this was a sign that the *entire Song of Solomon*, one of the more minor books of the Bible, was a *whole hermeneutic* for unlocking the mystery of the Last Days through an allegory about Christ and His Bride. Thus its "secrets" must be discovered and its esoteric motif researched out to the "nth" degree and driven into the ground to a point where the last days generation *is* the Bride for all practical purposes, as opposed to the traditional understanding that the Bride is the collective redeemed of *all* the ages.

This idea is surely appealing to human vanity and thus guaranteed its becoming a popular teaching. Furthermore, it seemed it took one of the lesser motifs of the New Testament and made it the central one. The New Testament uses a number of motifs to describe the believer's relationship to Christ--e.g., Lord to subject, Master to servant, Savior to the redeemed, Father to a son, friend to a friend, brother to a brother, and the like. The Bridegroom / Bride teaching seemed to tend towards Manifested Sonship, a special last days, last generation Church that would be so devoted to Christ as to exceed all others.

This I felt was a very vain assumption to make, especially in light of the plain evidence all around us that the Church world of our day is just soaked in heresy, shallowness and corruption and ought to be the things that a "prophetic people" would be preoccupied with. The idea conveyed in the teachings and worship I witnessed went beyond the Biblical idea of a *collective* Church, to an implication that *each individual* believer is a "bride". As a man especially, I felt very embarrassed by such effeminate sentiments, in both the teaching and worship expressions.

There are two other "prophets" that deserve to be mentioned here that were involved during this time. Neither of them were resident in Kansas City but were such frequent guests and friends that they could be considered part of them. They are **Rick Joyner** and **Francis Frangipane**. Frangipane has an interesting background, having once been a pastor in the small association of churches that became known as "The Walk" and headed by the "Apostle of the End Times," John Paul Stevens. Stevens and his "Walk" have been almost universally considered to be a cult, in that Stevens saw himself to be the main apostle or prophet of the end-times, who spent a lot of his time trying to "break through to the heavenlies" to be the first of the "Manchild" company. Accordingly, his followers were urged to intercede for him until he accomplished this.

Today Frangipane is considered a major leader in the ecumenical movement. His great burden, he claims, is to bring all the churches in any city into unity, something that, as we've seen, is a two-edged sword at best. He also promotes the idea of the "Manifest Presence" of God dwelling on and resting in His corporate Body in the last days, part of the Manifested Sonship idea of a spiritual Second Coming of Christ into His corporate Church in the last days.¹⁶ It's a sentiment I basically agree with, that the Presence and anointing will grow stronger and stronger as the Second Coming approaches. But it's presented in such a context of ecumenism and excess that the circumstantial context of it all is left so vague at best.

But it's Joyner who is the most outrageous of the two of them. Rick Joyner, who some time back was made a Knight in the Catholic "Knights of Malta" order, is a highly regarded prophet in the Dominionist circles, probably because he is a master at couching his words in the most spiritual and Biblical of language without ever having to get specific as to

exactly what he's getting at. Yet what he's about is stone-cold Latter Rain / Restorationist Dominionism to the "nth" degree. Just a cursory read of his book, *The Harvest* has exploits even *God* hasn't thought of.

I remember being at the big 1997 "Passion For Jesus" summer conference where Joyner spoke. He told the story of a "Saint Claus", apparently a mystic centuries ago who didn't eat or drink for 20 years! When the leaders of seven cantons or city-states were preparing to go to war with one another, they apparently decided to consult St. Claus before they did anything. Whatever he said to them really must have worked, because instead of going to war they decided to start a country! Yes, this was the beginnings of *Switzerland*, now the piggy bank for the world's elites, where money talks and no one cares how you got it! (Just joking. It's really a great country with great people!)

The visibly-overweight Sir Joyner finished his sermon by declaring that, "This is the kind of commitment it's going to take to bring in the Kingdom in the last days." Immediately after that, Don Steadman got up to inform people about places to eat lunch nearby. I thought to myself, "Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You can't do that! Lunch has just been cancelled for the next 20 years!"

I'd really hate to be a baby Christian again and have to take people this spiritual seriously.

Era 3. The Vineyard Years.

The combination of the arrival of these personalities, the solidifying of Restorationist doctrine, their sudden notoriety, and now combined with the resultant attitudes this all created, brought Kansas City Fellowship to a place of unnecessary strife and controversy with other churches in the area by the last years of the 1980's. They of course saw their problem as being attitudinal, that is, pride and elitism. To me, it was more the product of their messed up thinking.

This trend was only helped along by the pressure put on them with the coming of the Ernie Gruen expose in January of 1990. It was at that time that Gruen gave his famous, "*Do We Keep Smiling and Say Nothing?*" sermon across town. He followed it up with the publication of his "blue book" documenting all that was being taught, prophesied, and taking place at KCF.¹⁷ This created a great public embarrassment for the group, and yet the publicity also put them further on the Charismatic map. It was at this point that John Wimber and the Vineyard stepped in.

The history of KCF and the Vineyard is a fascinating one and could make a subject all its own here. It started in 1979, believe it or not, years before any of the principals had even met one another. Bob Jones claims God spoke to him then "about a group located 40 miles southeast of Los Angeles that the Lord called 'worship and compassion'".¹⁸ God also told him the Kansas City group he would meet would be called, "prophetic and intercession", and that he (Jones) would cause these two groups to "cross-pollinate".

But the significant interaction between the two didn't begin until about January, 1988. A few months previously, Bob Jones told Mike that John Wimber would be calling him in January, and that is exactly what took place. John invited Mike to minister with him in England that Fall and Mike agreed.

During this period of time, both John Wimber personally, and the Vineyard movement as a whole, were going through some deep waters. Wimber was getting criticism about his churches almost on a daily basis by the end of the 1980s, largely kicked off by Dave Hunt's courageous 1986 book, *The Seduction of Christianity*, wherein Hunt rightly proved that large portions of the Charismatic movement were guilty of introducing truth based on subjective experiences, New Age concepts and various heresies. In addition, a significant number of Vineyard leaders were in sexual and other sin, Wimber's son Sean was in rebellion, and Wimber himself was struggling with sickness. His movement seemed stagnant, discouraged and directionless.

But his occasional encounterings of people like Mike, Paul Cain and Bob Jones he claims helped him very much, by getting from them revelation and other kinds of ministry. Mike had encouraged Wimber during their ministry trip to England in 1988. Jones' role in bringing Wimber's son Sean back to the Lord has already been mentioned. And in late 1988, John met Paul Cain for the first time, who predicted his coming to and going from meeting with Wimber would be confirmed by earthquakes (which did indeed happen). These things so impressed Wimber that it began a very intense two year-long ministry circuit partnership between himself and the Kansas City Prophets, starting about the summer of 1989, that eventuated into the making of KCF into an official Vineyard church in the middle of that two-year period.

This period was kicked off by the Vineyard's annual pastors' conference in Denver, that year. Various of the KC Prophets ministered words during that week that included things like,

- "God was going to raise up a faceless generation, a new breed, dread champions who would think only of righteousness and the glory of God on the earth.. They would cause the enemy to tremble."
- "The enemy had stolen the foundational ministries of apostle and prophet from the church, but God was now restoring them. We were seeing the emergence of the prophetic in the '80s, and they would come to maturity in the '90s. We would begin to see a new wave of apostolic men in the '90s who would come to maturity after the turn of the millennium."
- "God was raising up city churches that would relate governmentally to apostolic teams raised up for each city", etc.¹⁹

These things give you an idea of some of the LR ideas the Kansas City people were attempting to "cross-pollinate" into the Vineyard.

As was said, since Wimber received a lot of help from the ministry of these prophets in the late 1980's, by May of 1990 he was able to return the favor. At that point, a mini war was brewing in Kansas City between KCF and Ernie Gruen over the charges Gruen had made. Wimber stepped in at that point offering to quench the growing controversy by providing KCF oversight and membership in the Vineyard association, something Mike had enquired about a year earlier anyhow. This began something of a very close but stormy six-year "marriage" between the groups that was probably not quite what Bob Jones had in mind by "cross-pollination". Vineyard pastors began to complain that John's gratitude towards and co-laboring with these prophets was changing the priorities they felt were the core values of the Association. It seemed to them that, far from being under discipline, the Kansas City group was getting more of Wimber's favor and influence than they were.

Plus, the prophecies and events were bringing the Vineyard under the cloud of controversy themselves. One of the typical complaints involved a bold, "Thus saith the Lord" type prophecy Paul Cain made about a series of meetings they had planned for the fall of 1990 in England. Cain claims all he predicted to a group of host ministers in a planning session earlier that year was that they would see in October "revival, tokens of revival", but it is very evident that the way everyone took it was that he was expecting that the latter day outpouring would begin at that time. Yet as Vineyard pastor Happy Lehman described it, "The trip was not as many of us had expected it to be--one with awesome creative signs and wonders, spectacular revival, and unloosing of the Holy Spirit to the degree that we have never seen previously. Yet we all agreed it was a very powerful meeting."²⁰

And powerful I'm sure they were. Almost every meeting I have been in with Paul Cain has had a heavy anointing on it. But I think this is a good example of how a person's beliefs can interfere with the accurate functioning of his spiritual gift. Cain's eschatological expectations, coupled with his finding of the "new breed" in the Kansas City people,

coupled with his advancing years, probably convinced him "the time is now". But things like this embarrassed many in the Vineyard.

The effect of Vineyard affiliation on the Kansas City church probably was more positive in many ways. For one, Wimber moved John Paul Jackson from Kansas City to Anaheim where he could be better grounded in the Scriptures. His oversight also tended to keep the more extreme elements like Joyner and Frangipane away from Kansas City and in general, probably kept things more down to earth.

The down side to all this was that KCF (now Metro Vineyard Fellowship) became somewhat cut adrift. Their prophetic ministry was very damaging and heretical at times, but at least they were in the arena God had called them to. Now as a Vineyard they lost that edge, and seemed (to me at least) to be very gun shy of anything controversial. They also seemed to now become even more enamoured of the ecumenical mentality. This is why I also call these the **Languishing Years**, 1990 to 1996, during which Kansas City seemed to perennially *drift*, no longer having any clear purpose, while trying to pretend to be a Vineyard church.

The Train To Toronto

It was during these years that I got involved as I said, but no sooner did I start to get oriented to where things were at than that the Toronto Blessing controversy hit. I found this very disorienting at first, because it took quite a while before (1) I understood the Latter Rain eschatology behind it and, (2) I realized its connection to the 1984 Bob Jones prophecy about the Butler and the Baker.

We have mentioned this prophecy under the first era. In 1984, both Bob Jones and another member of KCF apparently claimed they "heard the audible voice of God" telling them that in 10 years the "new wine would be poured out" just like the butler (cupbearer) was restored to his position serving Pharaoh (Gen 40:13). This had set up in the Kansas City people, as well as elements of the Vineyard now that were affected by the Prophets, an expectation about 1994.

Well, in July of 1993, Randy Clark, a St. Louis Vineyard pastor had been so despondent about his life and ministry that he suffered a nervous breakdown and even began to contemplate suicide. In his desperation, he took the advice of a friend to visit a Rodney Howard-Browne meeting going on in Tulsa that he thought might rejuvenate him. Clark says he struggled with the idea because he, like I, considered Tulsa to be such a nest of heretics. But he claims God dealt with him about that, telling him that he was "prejudiced against a part of My Body" or some such self-accusation.

The antics of Rodney Howard-Browne are legendary and how anyone could want to receive ministry from someone as wacky as him, I will never know. If you would like my opinion of him, feel free to refer to part 4 of my "Last Days Leaven" series. But for now, while down there, Randy Clark kept going up to get prayed for and get knocked down by the power Howard-Browne was operating under (or supposedly operating under). This Clark took to be the anointing of God which he took back with him. Thereafter, wherever he was sent, he was replicating these same kinds of "manifestations"--slain in the Spirit, shakings, laughter, etc.--in people he prayed for too. But it was when he was invited to minister at John Arnott's Toronto Airport Vineyard church in January of 1994 that all heaven (or hell depending on how you look at it) broke loose.

The result was a two-month long stint by him there with meetings every night. Toronto eventually became a Mecca of sorts, for people all over the world to come to Canada to get "It", whatever "It" was. And while reams of copy have been written by people (yours truly included) on the TB phenomenon, the point I want to make here is that, this supposed "wine" did *not* get first poured out in 1994. It was *already* being "poured out" with Rodney Howard-Browne for some years at that point, and even before him in meetings in South America. And yet the general drift of the meaning being assigned to the TB was along the lines of it being the answer to the Bob Jones prediction of 1984.

As far as the Vineyard was concerned, it at first embraced the Blessing as a true work of God. Yet when more and more bizarre things began to surface there, such as the infamous animal sounds, the jerks and flopping, the New Age / Kundalini type manifestations and the like, the Vineyard leadership over a period of almost two years became more and more critical of what John Arnott and the Toronto people were doing. Metro for its part amazingly never seemed to wholeheartedly embrace this movement, although at the first almost all the staff claimed to have "gotten" the blessing, and to have benefited from it. But some still looked upon it with a bit of skepticism, including Mike and Sam Storms.

I'm not sure if my own opinion was influencing anyone against it or not at this time. I had started sending my newsletter to all the church leaders and a few other people--probably 50 altogether out of about 1500 in the church--starting in the summer or fall of 1993. In my articles, people could get the idea that I was not real enamoured of flakey things like this. The Kansas City church all the time I was there, always seemed to have a faction in it given over to more "hard-core" Latter Rain/Manifested Sons/general wierdness proclivities that I never resonated with at all. I remember them always for the most part sitting over towards the left and in the front. And when the TB came to infect the body there, it was most virulently championed by that particular faction.

Nevertheless, when it first started making waves in Kansas City in the winter of 1994 it really bothered me. What in the world were these people so excited about? They were complaining their spiritual lives were so "dry", and that they "needed refreshing". Myself, my prayer life was one continual happening every morning. I also found the truth of God--i.e., sound doctrine--to be incredibly exciting, as God brought these truths alive to me every day for two hours.

As the Toronto Blessing became an increasing controversy during the rest of 1994, I found myself at times telling people to stop screaming in my ear, and respect the order of the services the leadership had ordained. (And they would do so. Am I to conclude then that the Holy Ghost now takes orders from me?) I was working on some Whitewater type articles for most of that year, along with some basic theological subjects. But from late '94 through 1995, I began to realize that there was something far deeper involved in all this. This was when I was referred to the work of Tricia Tillin, Jewel van der Merwe and Ed Tarkowski in particular. This was when I began learning about the Latter Rain, the Manifested Sons and the like. Now it was all beginning to make sense, including the connection between Jones' 1984 prophecy about the butler and baker and the TB outbreak of 1994.

This all led up to an incident in the fall of 1995 with John Arnott, pastor of the Toronto Airport Vineyard. It was announced he would be coming to do a mini-conference at the church in October. I remember about two weeks before he arrived, I awoke one morning to the voice of the Lord Who said to me, "When John Arnott arrives, I'm going to arrange a confrontation between you and him." To my shame, I replied to God Almighty, "Over my dead body. I've worked hard the last three years here to establish good relationships with everyone, and I'm not about to jeopardize it all with something that'll go over like a lead balloon."

And indeed I had. Why, I had actually made it to being a deacon at Metro Vineyard Fellowship, fancy that! I, who had been called by God Almighty to be a teacher in 1975 and a prophet in 1981, had attained by 1994 to the privilege of being called of men, "Deacon, deacon!". Real progress.

So I just put it out of my head, didn't think twice about it, just assumed it had been a demon. Two weeks later the conference began on a Friday night. Arnott gave a sappy, syrupy sermon about the love of the Father, pabulum enough for impressionable children. It was adequate (barely) to set us all up to not be too judgmental, God forbid, but to just check out our brains and get ready to receive this liberating whatever-it-was the next day.

The next morning I was praying as I usually do, except this time from only 6 A.M. to 7, since I had a breakfast date with some friends of mine. Since about 1989 my 2-hour morning prayer time has been revolutionized by **visions** when I pray! It's less of a devotional time than an *outright happening*, as God reinterprets whatever I say to Him in a visual, symbolic kind of cartoon language that is educational, revelational, and almost always incredibly funny!

Well, as I prayed, a picture of the church sanctuary appeared before my eyes, and there was Arnott on stage, black from head to foot! I thought to myself, Well, he certainly doesn't seem to be faring too well so far now, is he? Also, it seemed as if that morning God "opened up a window in the Spirit" to allow *Arnott himself* to hear me praying, and it didn't sit well with him. (I experience this sort of thing on almost a daily basis, although I cannot prove that others can hear me or make out very well what I'm saying at least).

At some point in my praying, I mentioned a short scene I noticed from the movie *Jurassic Park* as I walked through the living room the day before. It was right at the beginning when the Sam Neill character was explaining to a young boy just how dangerous the "Raptorsaurus" with its six inch claws was. At that, I suddenly saw in the Spirit a scene of MVF sanctuary with Arnott up on the stage, with three *pure-white raptorsauruses* gleefully bounding down the aisle to pounce on him and eat him alive!

I found this all immensely amusing, but I did not have much time to ponder it, for some good friends were in town along with their pastor for the conference, and the four of us were scheduled to have breakfast before the morning session started. After a lovely breakfast, we all headed for the meeting in high spirits. Arnott began preaching again, but the attitude he was displaying seemed awfully arrogant to me. In fact, it seemed as if he knew this guy he heard praying that morning was out in the audience somewhere, and since he did not receive God's dealings in that thing, he was saying things that really seemed belligerent. In addition, he was saying inane things like, "God isn't always a gentleman", and "the Holy Spirit doesn't always do everything decently and in order," a sentiment which I could readily understand he would hold to, considering the chaos and pandemonium that is called the "Toronto Blessing".

Nevertheless, his spirit seemed very challenging, like he wanted to argue with God. Eventually God seemed to start talking to *me*, saying things like, "Are you going to take that? Get up there and prophesy to him!" He also seemed to suddenly remind me of my experience two weeks previously, which I had pushed out of my consciousness.

Nevertheless, I was very reluctant to do anything rash. In fact, I had to go off *twice* and pray in a room, lest I be tempted to act impulsively. After the second time, I came back determined to let it go, but as I walked toward my seat, he was being more brash than ever, and the Spirit was really "setting him up"! So I thought to myself, "Maybe he needs to have his sermon modeled for him. After all, they do believe in disorder, don't they?" At that, I walked down front, pointed my finger at him and began prophesying to him that he "wasn't stewarding" this phenomenon right, that he had to get off this wierd manifestations kick or God's judgment would soon fall on it, something polite like that.

This however, immediately kicked in one of Murphy's Laws. ("No good deed goes unpunished"). In other words, it went over like that proverbial lead balloon I had talked to God about. I was quickly grabbed by Don Steadman who was quite aghast and dragged me out of the building. Everyone else was dazed too that I would do something like that. But I figured I was just acting like any other TBer who wants to do whatever he feels like in this, the latest fad wind to come blowing through the Church of the Living God, which is sitting on the truth of the ages and is *bored* with it, would you believe? ("We're just so *dry*...We need *refreshing*...", whine, whine). As far as I was concerned, this meeting and this guy's *whole ministry* were a whole lot more "out of order" than I was!

Nevertheless, I was really depressed afterwards. My friends were embarrassed, my reputation was shot, and I ruined three years of relationship-building. But the next morning, I was stunned at just how strongly God backed me up when I prayed over the whole thing. (And I mean *really stunned!* God *really* bore witness to the rightness of what I did. Sometimes there are just exceptions to the rule).

This encouraged me to stand my ground when the staff sent me a letter giving what conditions I could return under. I thought to myself, Forget you, I'm right, and so I wrote up a letter of resignation. But the morning I planned on mailing it, as I awoke the Lord spoke to me (when else?) and said to me, "I want you to go back there and "play their game". [His words.] It's more important to Me for you to be there than for you to be right."

Do you get that, Church of the Prophets? God Almighty told me to "play your game". Vintage Metro.

As it turned out, it wasn't but six weeks or so before the Toronto Airport Vineyard was forced by John Wimber to resign from the Vineyard Association. For a denomination that had started out with plenty of wierd phenomena of its own, claiming it to be examples of the Holy Ghost, this thing was too much *even for them*. But the whole incident represents how much of a gulf of agreement there was between my view of MVF's calling and theirs.

As a postscript to all this, about two years later, John Arnott came to speak to the 1997 conference mentioned above. But I can tell you, he was a man of a changed attitude. The things he said seemed to speak to me that God had really dealt with him after that incident in 1995. In fact, the exact sense I got was that somehow God, in the weeks and months after that run-in with me, taught him that Kansas City is, as the city fathers coined it for whatever reason, "The Prophetic City", and no place to mess with. I like it that way.

"Getting Religion" On The Latter Rain

As was mentioned earlier, starting in January of 1996 I published the first of a four-part series on the Latter Rain/Sonship teachings called, "Last Days Leaven". By the time I got to the last of the four articles I was called on to the carpet by one of the associate pastors of the church, who said he *agreed* with what I said, but was upset with my *style* (basically of quoting from people--people like Pat Robertson, Bill Bright and our own Paul Cain).

I thought to myself, So style is more important than substance to you? I told him I did not like quoting from people either, but this was like a "Catch 22" in that if I *didn't* quote from people, my words would be so vague, people would not understand just how widespread and mainstream these sentiments were and who held them. Yet if I did, this is how it is greeted. I said public statements made by major Christian leaders should be publicly reviewed if needed. It didn't seem to be a problem to the Christians of past centuries who publicly disagreed over doctrine without it having all these dire implications about judging, being unloving and the like. Just read any commentary. After all, we're not supposed to be in this for our own reputations anyhow, are we? We're supposed to be finding the truth, right?

Nevertheless, according to him and the usual stock ecumenical apologetic, this was tantamount to embarrassing a brother in public. He said I should have gone to these people per Matthew 18 to resolve an offense. I told him this was not *about* a personal offence. I told him I agreed that, if the subject is so trivial it's not worth fighting over then it's like biting and devouring one another over nothing. But these issues were anything but. They had everything to do with being "prophetic" about the direction of God in the last days. The Matthew 18 argument is one of the lamest excuses I know of for cutting off much-needed debate in the Body of Christ.

I also had in the back of my mind how often such people simply don't level with you. Sometimes they will tell you what they think you want to hear just to get you off their back. Other times they won't even be honest with you. I remember one time Dave Hunt telling an audience of his experience with John Wimber, as a matter of fact, and Hunt's *Seduction of Christianity* book. But Hunt told us that one day he had tried repeatedly to call Wimber and ask him some questions. He was told he was not available but John would be sure to return his call. Hunt never received one. Yet he heard Wimber from his own lips just shortly thereafter publicly claim that Hunt had never tried to contact him!

Finally this staffer began to bear his real suspicions. He went so far as to accuse me of coming to MCF "to straighten everyone here out". I can't remember if I told him this or not but I certainly was thinking it, that I had come here with no such intention, but out of necessity it had indeed turned into that! I was not to blame if they were so uninformed as to need me to come along and point these things out to them.

I was also quite dismayed when he informed me that Metro didn't just *accept* Catholics, or that he himself was a *former* Catholic, but that he *was* a Catholic! On staff no less! And yet he said he agreed with me about the sentiments of what

I was saying (which came down squarely on the Protestant side!) I thought to myself, well, why then did *he* come to this church if he's a Catholic? Did he come like a Jesuit, to use stealth means to push the Vatican's agenda? Yet on the other hand, this was just the sort of ethic the whole church pursued, that it was perfectly alright to go anywhere and pretend your heart's with a particular group when it's really not. This is all done under the rubric of promoting "unity," with an end in mind of winning them over to your side (while they do the same to you). The contradiction and hypocrisy of it all just floored me.

Another thing I found ironic during this time period was the constant references to the movie *Braveheart* and little TBers running around yelling, "FREEDOM!" per the example of William Wallace at his execution. What got me though, was that this awesome movie, which chronicled the story of how disunity amongst the Scots kept them divided and conquered by the British for many years, was being used as a parable for the supposed divisiveness of Christians before the world. This was used against those who opposed or at least stayed neutral toward the Toronto Blessing, a most speculative phenomenon at best. Yet these "new order" types somehow turned this whole thing around to where it was the *traditional Christian Gospel* and its advocates who were somehow divisive and the sowers of discord among the brethren! The whole thing reminded me of a Clinton press conference.

Beyond that, my standing with the staff did not seem to be all that bad (believe it or not)! I never felt like I was being outright silenced or abused by them. I just felt constantly ignored and irrelevant. My relations with them were congenial enough though never very real or deep. The problem was that they simply seemed to not agree with me, even when they said they did or when they said they appreciated my input. I eventually came to expect a huge, baffling and inevitable wall of silence with the publication of each article, some of which were touching upon issues specific to MVF. This reaction may have been due to their being very busy men. But I had the impression that the real thing going on was that they were so undecided they didn't know what to say. At best, they were probably mentally shelving them.

But now it was mid-1996 and things at Metro Vineyard were changing. In June of that year (1996), Paul Cain gave a message on the last night of the annual "Passion For Jesus" conference. In it he said MVF had been guilty of a "divided heart" and needed to get back to its prophetic roots which it had abandoned due to insecurities arising from the controversies of 1990.

The response was amazing. Members of the leadership team seemed deeply convicted by this and went up front to kneel down and repent. I remember sitting there during the sermon thinking, "This message is *really* from the Lord!" I also thought to myself, "But it's all going to depend upon how they *interpret* what this word means."

My cynicism was not unfounded. Within two weeks, the leadership had decided that "getting back to their prophetic roots" meant that they had really abandoned the Toronto Airport church when the Vineyard wanted to limit what "the Spirit was doing there". Especially when Toronto was asked to leave the Association in late 1995, they felt they had compromised their prophetic responsibilities for not standing with the unpopular thing!

I thought to myself, "They couldn't have gotten it more backwards"! "Toronto" was far from being an "unpopular thing". It was plastered monthly all over Charisma and other publications. The Charismatic establishment was all behind it because it "worked" (i.e., it brought in the crowds). Yet "Toronto" was a part of the whole Latter Rain / Ecumenical mindset that could only lead to apostasy. The kind of crazy "manifestations" they were having there were indistinguishable from Kundalini Yoga phenomena and other demonic activity! A truly prophetic church would be able to see the "ancient path", to cause the people to stay on "the highway", not wander off onto "the bypaths" (Jer 18:15).

4. The MCF Years

As the church broke away I hoped at first that this could be a God send, an answer to the prayers of myself and many others over the years, not just for more of an independent status, but for a renewal of commitment to the original cause. I myself obviously, had definite ideas of where she ought to be headed relative to such issues. But as I said, whenever I would subtly touch upon such things in my newsletter or in conversations, it was like talking to a brick wall. In fact, the motif that continually kept coming to mind was that of a "Black Hole", as if all my comments were being constantly filed there.²¹

The church decided to rename itself once again, this time after some surveys and mulling of over of potential candidates, with Metro Christian Fellowship being eventually decided upon. During this time the leadership seemed to invite back a lot of the Latter Rain and Restoration ministers they had broken off with under Wimber's oversight. Yet on the whole, some improvement did take place. There seemed to be a more determined effort to get focused with God, to get back to our roots, to be prophetic again. But the idea that championing the Toronto Blessing was the first step back to fidelity was indicative to me of just how clueless everyone was. This is why I called these the "valiant-attempt-to-make-a-comeback-but-not-knowing-how-to-do-it" years.

One of the significant developments during this time was the arrival of Paul Cain in 1997. As was said before, Paul had first showed himself to this "new breed" of ministers, as he put it, ten years earlier. But now he told the church's leadership that the fear of God was upon him to actually make Kansas City his residence, to make MCF his new church home and base of operation, and to plant his long-standing dream for **Shiloh Prophetic Retreat Center** here. If I'm not mistaken, the vision behind Shiloh is to allow, not just pastors and ministers to come and find a place they can rest and get some prophetic ministry, but world leaders also. This would be a wonderful thing if they could persuade them to do so. But the idea I get from the Bible is that in the Last Days, the kingdoms of this world will be so compromised by the Antichrist spirit and system, that if such leaders ever show up and got a real word from the Lord, it would probably be the last time they ever visit.

Now, I don't want to limit God in something like that. I'm sure He will have His people here and there around the world. And there may be a real potential here for American political leaders before this is all over, (as I try to explain a bit at the end of this article). But that is the vision Shiloh has had from its beginning.

They once had an open house at Shiloh soon after the actual property was purchased. I went out there and got into a conversation with one of the principals involved with the new retreat center. He had said a few things in the '97 conference that prompted me to want to ask him a question--namely, "Are you Pre-Millennial?"--but he had been too busy before. So I did so this time, and he told me the professor who taught on eschatology in seminary was very learned in that subject and even he didn't have an opinion. Therefore, neither did he. He then added, "The fact of the matter is, You don't know when or how Jesus Christ is coming back and neither do I. All I know is that He's doing a great unity work among His people right now."

So I asked him, How do you not know that such an attitude falls right into the False Church / Mystery Babylon trap? At that he got a bit testy and shot back, "Well, that's just one opinion among many." I thought to myself, Neat. He considers eschatology to be a matter of different *opinions*. And yet *he knows* that I certainly do *not* know the timing or manner of the Second Coming, and yet *he knows* that *God* is doing this great unity work in our day! Not Rome. Not Latter Rain megalomaniacs. No, *God*. Real prophetic. Real verbal gymnastics. And real vintage Metro.

This experience sort of parallels one I had in June of 2000 at the big Catholic and Protestant Charismatics conference in St. Louis, Missouri, held every several years and hosted by the North American Renewal Service Committee, I believe. While there I went up to one of the top Protestant leaders on the general committee. When I asked him the same question--"How do we not know this is the fulfillment of Mystery Babylon?"--his answer was that as a Pentecostal, he believed in such, just as much as I did, but that "these Catholics are different. They're not loyal to the Vatican."

I found that quite an amazing assumption to make. Else, why would they remain being Catholics, since it's a denomination based on the idea that their particular priesthood alone are in the "apostolic succession" and by themselves constitute the essence of what "The Church" is? So I decided to interview some of the Catholic leaders there too. They told me, "Oh no, of course we're loyal to the Vatican." In fact, on the night after the last session, a group of four Catholic young men, most from back East but one from Jamaica I believe, invited me up to their room for some refreshments and some talk. They were quite impressive; they really knew their theology. And they asked me point blank, Why don't you Protestants just give it up and come on home to Mother Church?

To my shame, I was feeling too ecumenical myself after a week of all those "good vibes", and after meeting some really dear Catholic people, and being treated so warmly by these guys, to really get into the question of whether "The Church" is essentially visible (the Catholic position) or invisible (the Protestant position). Besides, they wouldn't let me get a word in edge-wise anyhow! But when I did get the chance, I asked them, "So what will happen when all the separated brethren come home?" They replied, "Why, John 17:21 would be fulfilled." ("That they may be one...", that the world may believe God sent Christ).

So I said to them, What will that do? Their reply--"Why, that would bring peace on earth, especially in the Middle East." The conversation moved on in its furious pace to other things. But inside I was thinking to myself, "Yeah, just like in First Thessalonians 5:3--"For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them..." A lot of the four-hour trip back to Kansas City the next day, I was weeping, shaking my head and telling God, "Lord, we have such a massive educational work to do!"

Trying Hard

In early 1997, one of the perceived "keys" to getting in the perfect flow of God was the Bill Bright 40-day fast fad that was sweeping the Body. This was the, "If-only-we-could-get-2-million-people-to-fast-for-40-days, we-might-be-able-to-break-God's-arm-enough-to-get-Him-to-send-revival" idea. I felt God remind me of Isaiah 58:2 and 3--

"Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?..." (Isa 58:2-3 KJV).

I kept wondering what good all their seeking did for them if it never brought them to the knowledge of the truth? I mean, fasting was intended by God largely to be a way to draw near to Him and more accurately receive things from Him. It was never meant to merely be a Pharisaical-type form to endlessly practice over and over again (even though it does discipline the appetite and have many health benefits).

Nevertheless, fasting, even for 40 days, is Biblical, and I do not mean to mock it, nor they who accomplish such. Back during the 1980s, I myself was a fasting animal. I had wanted to get to the very edge of death so I could see into the spiritual world, "get the anointing," do miracles and see angels. (I almost got my wish!) I became so obsessed with it that I began to question my very sanity. During that time I once did a 40 day fast in 60 days. (If you don't get the joke, email me.) I got down below 120 lbs. (at six feet tall), and was quite proud of what I had done. (These experiences may have made me overly down on the practice now. I still fast nowadays, but rarely for more than three days at a time).

Well, Mike tried to rally the church to participate in one of Bill Bright's forty dayers early in 1997. By the end only he seemed to finish it, but it did seem to have a rejuvenating effect on him. He seemed to get more focused, serious and sincere. Eventually this led him to decide pastoring had never been his strong suit and that he needed to get into full-time intercession ministry. This along with the encouragement of Paul Cain, led Mike to persuade Noel Alexander

(who had left some years ago, probably uncomfortable with the church's direction by the early 1990's) to form **IHOP** or the **International House of Prayer** with him.

The Broken Down Tabernacle

This move to IHOP I'm sure partly was due to God's charge given to Mike from the beginning, that this church was to be characterized by day and night prayer. I think the basic idea is a good one, but in the times I've been there, it just seemed there was too much emphasis on worship and music. Mike has even developed an extensive apologetic, based upon the model of David in the Tabernacle, about actually hiring musicians. Myself, I don't need music to get me in the mood. I believe if we're going to pray, then we ought to pray, although I understand that music serves as something of a cultural "glue", especially for young people.

IHOP also reflects some of the doctrinal ideas he had developed over the years. A ways back, I mentioned that Mike has a great teaching gift. I did not mean to imply that that makes him a great teacher necessarily. It's true that when he sets out to develop a teaching, his research will be exhaustive. Yet in my opinion, he has a tendency to take a subject and drive it into the ground, become obsessed with it, and emphasize it to the exclusion of more important concepts in the Bible.

His teachings hardly ever seemed to major on the majors of the Bible, especially the great truths of the New Testament first and foremost, but on a lot of fringe concepts that seemed to fit in quite naturally with the Latter Rain / Sonship vision. As was said, Old Testament promises given to Israel were applied to the Church. Minor books like the Song of Solomon supposedly held the key to the Last Days Church. Passages from Daniel, Revelation, the Olivet Discourse and the like were virtually ignored, while an emphasis on highly allegorized and spiritualized readings from less definite places in Isaiah, Song of Solomon, Malachi and the like were favored. He also hardly ever seemed preoccupied with the great markers of the Pre-Millennial hermeneutic. Instead, what we got was a steady diet of an ingrown and highly pretentious "romancing" of Jesus that supposedly passed for spiritual "passion". Yet Jesus didn't say if you love Me you'll swoon. He said, If you love Me you'll keep My commandments (Jn 14:15,21). Love for God in the Bible is an altruistic, "doing" kind of love called agape.

We also got an interpretation of "grace" that was so broad that he claimed the five foolish virgins of Matthew 25:10-12 were not even lost. All this fits in nicely with the broad way, ecumenical mentality that requires huge numbers of "Christians" in the last days, to pull off this great take-over of the earth, inspite of plain warnings like that of Jesus in Luke 18:8. Mike once mentioned that he "thought it reasonable" that God end up saving at least half of mankind in the end. Yeah, it sounds reasonable to me too. It just isn't Scriptural. I also remember him saying, "The Book of Revelation is not about the saints getting beat up; it's about God beating up the people of the world."²² All these sentiments scream "Restorationism" and "Amillennial allegorizing". It has little to do with Pre-Millennial thinking.

I also felt Mike had a tendency to fall for the novel. His latest emphasis on the **Tabernacle of David**, a teaching that I feel is lifted way out of its context and is made to refer to a grand scheme of extemporaneous worship, is something that doesn't even have a meaning true to the context of its mention in Acts 15:16. This phrase is a simple reference from Amos 9:11, it seems to me, of God's promise to rebuild the nation of Israel through the coming of the Messiah with his Gospel, and to extend that restoration to include the Gentiles. But to Charismatic Restorationists, it is interpreted as having reference to a worship style issue (David's as opposed to Moses') that seems incredibly irrelevant and forced to me given the context of what's going on in Acts 15. Mike it seems, ups the ante with hyperbole so typical of him, such as that "every city of the world will have 24 hour a day" prayer and worship centers by the time Christ returns.

That's *every city*, folks. Kabul, Teheran, and Pyongyang as well as others less prominent perhaps, but no less hostile to the Gospel. In light of what we *do* know about the future, including from the lips of Jesus Himself no less (Lu 18:8), it sounds to me more like Mike is promoting Restorationist "truths" than Pre-Millennial eschatology. As I stated right in

the beginning, it's an example of painting the basic scenario exactly backwards. "Let a man so account of us," Paul wrote, "as of the ministers of Christ, and *stewards* of the mysteries of God" (I Cor 4:1). That gives us every responsibility to be faithful *stewards* of the revelation *as it's written*. It gives us no right to make up our own teachings, especially in concepts that are really a stretch.

As far as intercessory prayer itself is concerned, I am the first one to admit it is perhaps the most enigmatic subject in the Kingdom of God to me. I know it "works" and that God ordains it. But I don't fully understand the logic of "prayer chains", incessantly pestering God, persuading Him to do things because "2 million have fasted and prayed", etc. Whatever happened to that Biblical principle, "One plus God makes a majority"? He does as seemeth good in His own sight, and doesn't need our permission, agreement or formal invitation to do *anything*, much less "legal" permission as is taught in Word of Faith and Restorationist cosmologies. In fact, He doesn't even "need" anyone to pray before He can act. He just would like us to.

I believe this principle is evident in the very passage intercessory prayer is most built upon. In Isaiah 59:14-18 we read,

Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for *truth* is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it *displeased* him that there **was no judgment**. And he saw that there was *no man*, and wondered that there was *no intercessor*...(Isa 59:14-16).

Despite the popular assumption that "intercessor" there means a prayer warrior, the word really refers to a political or spiritual leader who would step into the situation and *fix* it! You can almost hear God pleading, "Will somebody please **DO** something!" (about the injustices and abysmal state of "truth decay" in that day).

Furthermore, it goes on to say that because no one would act, God himself acted. The rest of the passage reads,

"...therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence."

I might be wrong, but the idea I get is that the biggest purpose of intercessory prayer is what it does for *us*, not God. It gives us a chance to draw near and get His heart and mind. Nevertheless, I do believe in it, I do believe it's a big mystery, and I do believe it is a big part of the Kansas City mandate. The thing that bothers me about IHOP is that it's not just a prayer ministry. It's something deliberately based upon Tabernacle of David ideology and again, shouts "Latter Rain / Restorationism" whether it intends to or not.

IHOP Culture

As IHOP stands today, they have taken over and are renovating a strip mall for their headquarters. The one project they have completed is a sophisticated bookstore / Starbucks-type coffee shop where everyone hangs out for fellowship, refreshments and reading when they're not praying. I'm sure Mike got the idea from his love for hanging out at Borders Book stores who adopted the same format. I think it's a great idea, one that I wouldn't mind copying myself. The one time I visited (to get a copy of *The Quest For The Radical Middle*) I didn't get much of a chance to peruse the titles available. I hear Mike is promoting Catholic mystics like St. Teresa Avila and St. John of the Cross, like that. He seems to be into the "contemplative life", minus the celibate, monastic dimension.

The make up of the people there is mostly young people between the ages of 18 to 25. In other words, the most impressionable and pliable of Christians. I don't mean to imply too much there because young people have a lot of energy and zeal and dedication. But what they don't have a lot of is experience and judgment. One of the "vintage

Metro" patterns has been that the older people usually end up leaving, while they're always replaced by fresh troops of the young and more gullible. There have also been complaints about a tendency to laziness, to not work with one's own hands (I Thess 4:11), but to just sit around and pray all day. Having hired people in my business here for that ministry, I have myself found that sort of a mentality in them. Yet they still flock here all the same, with new arrivals every day, to get in on something so spiritual and "cutting edge".

One interesting development is the building of a brand new IHOP restaurant here in Grandview in the past year or two. IHOP stands for "International House of Pancakes", and when Paul Cain got the idea for the prayer center, he got it from noticing an IHOP sign over one of their restaurants. He and Mike then changed the acronym to loosely refer to the original "Four Standards"--"Intercession, Holiness, Offerings (to the poor), and the Prophetic".

I don't know if many of the IHOP people hang out at or eat at this restaurant. Probably not since they are building up that strip mall several miles away. But recently one of my friends had a birthday and he wanted the guys to take him to this new House of Pancakes. The prices seemed reasonable, so for a main dish I ordered a "Chicken Caesar Salad" which, I lie not, consisted of *three whole ingredients*--chicken, romaine lettuce and dressing! A couple of the guys got the steak and eggs special which consisted of about that and that alone too. (In other words, all protein and fat). I thought to myself, is this another God sarcasm? That the menu here is as culinarily-unimaginative and nutritionally-imbalanced as the spiritual food available at IHOP? I just don't know for sure.

A Change At The Top

Era 5. This brings us to the fifth period, from **2000 to present**. During 1999, Floyd McClung, a former top leader in Youth With A Mission began to visit the church frequently as a guest speaker. Eventually Mike announced he was stepping down as pastor of MCF to give himself to full-time prayer and intercession, and that Floyd would be taking over as senior pastor. On January 1, 2000 this transfer officially took place. But during the previous year, when he would guest preach, Floyd had twice invited people to "come forward and bear their hearts" to church leadership, if they were so inclined. When I heard such things, my thought was, "Right! And get my head chopped off for it!" But when he mentioned it a third time after the New Year, I thought to myself, well maybe I ought to give it a chance.

I had also been encouraged in this by a dream a former employee of mine had related to me around this time. This guy was no great fan of my beliefs, but he told me that he had had this dream wherein he saw Floyd and me "gutting out the inside of MCF". "Gutting out" is a term used in the construction trades (of which I'm a part) that means to tear out the inside of a building to rebuild it, leaving pretty much only the frame. He also said he saw a friend of his from California showing up, correcting the people a lot and me standing back there agreeing with him.

Well, based on these invitations and this guy's dream (and perhaps my own impatience) I decided to do just that--Bear My Heart. My newsletters had been addressing issues Body-wide, but some of them touched upon some of the problems I saw right there at MCF. But now I decided was the time to come right out and tie things together with a direct statement.

I did not approach this project without some trepidation though. I particularly thought that Floyd, being so new to the scene, would not fully understand the context of what I wanted to say. In fact, my statement was directed towards the other six men on the board who had been there much longer. I had originally told Floyd that I would run my comments through him first and he could decide if he should pass them on to the others. But after writing the letter I decided to send seven copies to all of them directly, lest he misunderstand and not pass it on. This renegeing probably did not endear me a whole lot to Floyd, but I felt I needed to make sure I got to the others.

It took about a month to write and was about nine pages long, but by March, 2000 I sent it off. In it I reviewed the history of the church, where it was at present, where I felt its prophetic calling was, and how it was not being fulfilled.

I expressed to Floyd and the rest my whole-hearted support for a grand missions theme, but also my reservations that it could become a wasted effort if they did not realize that the ecumenical apostasy would leave a lot of that harvest rotting in the field. (To read the letter, click [here](#).)

By the end of March, I got a reply. It was an email from Floyd. I could not tell very clearly if the whole staff had asked him to say the things he did in it, or whether this was his own summary, or whether it was just mostly his own thoughts. But the long and short of it all was that they "just did not bear witness". No elaboration, no discussion, no invitation to meet, no cigar. Just, "we don't bear witness". It truly was vintage Metro, perhaps the purest form of it I had encountered thus far. Worse yet, Floyd said that, since the fellowship was not going in that direction, I might want to consider another church home.

I was speechless. A flood of emotions went over me. I felt set up, humiliated, and manipulated, as if I had been "flushed out". I felt like I had stuck my head out as requested, then had it handed to me on a platter.

They were at that time going through a process of repentance and reconciliation as they called it, wherein an amazing amount of people from the church's past came across their path and gave them an earful too. But for the most part, I felt the whole process was shallow at best, cynically manipulative at worst, because it all was couched in terms of psychology and supposed "personal conflicts and wounds" within the fellowship that needed to be healed. I felt it was almost a whitewash to cover over what amounted to a lack of vision and agreement. More vintage Metro.

At this point I prayed about what to do, and for six weeks I felt God suggest I not return. I had reached a dead end. But by the seventh week, it seemed in my prayer time He might have been leading me to try it one more time. So I went back, May 7, 2000, on the 17th anniversary of the start of the 1983 fast (if that has any significance). I felt strangely uncomfortable being there now, a church I had been a part of for eight years. I knew that only about 7 people in that church understood why I had not been there the previous 6 weeks. As for the rest, it seemed as if they had not even noticed my absence.

That Sunday, Mike happened to be preaching, Floyd was out of town. It seemed before he started he saw me over where I was sitting and started in with something he's quite good at--making between-the-lines innuendo. He went on about people who have such a problem with loneliness that they just can't get on with their lives, something like that. I thought to myself, "Yeah, right! Like I come here for the *fellowship!*" As he continued on with what seemed to me like snide remarks, I felt like I was being "beated by the pitcher" and wanted to "rush the mound".

Yet I put my rubbed-raw emotions aside and brushed it all off. But in his sermon he went on about his recent trip to Italy where he addressed 40,000 Catholic charismatics and gushed about being on the stage with the Pope's personal pastor, who "gave a profound address out of Isaiah" and who was "such a godly man", yada, yada, yada. At that point, I decided I could not take this any longer. I decided then and there I could no longer be a part of this work, that it was just too far gone, and I needed to leave today.

But before I left, I decided to say something. I thought maybe there were people sitting there wondering if they too were losing their minds, so I decided to encourage them. So I stood up and shouted, "Go ahead Mike, serve the Pope. Why not serve the Antichrist too?"

This of course did not go over well. The proverbial lead balloon again. Two of the seven men who had received my letter escorted me out. Once outside the door, one of them said to me, "Don, Mike only was trying to preach the Gospel to those people over in Italy." I said to him, "You've gotta be kidding me! You're trying to tell me that the impression he left on those 40,000 in Italy and the 1500 here today was *not* that he totally accepts who they are and what they're about?" I told them I didn't want to be a part of this anymore if these are the kind of tactics they're going to stoop to.

As It Stands

"The elite media is like the Mafia. The biggest sin you can commit with the Mafia is to break the code of silence."

Former CBS reporter Bernard Goldberg made this statement on *The 700 Club* on December 20, 2001. He was being interviewed about the publication of his book *Bias*, an expose of liberal bias in the mainstream media. And as I find so often in so many things nowadays, I see a direct parallel between things in our culture and things in the Church. The history of Kansas City Fellowship for example, is strewn with offences so egregious as to be scary. But the one unpardonable sin to commit is to "break the code of silence".

What I have just outlined above for you is a story that needed to be told. I know it will invariably be greeted by many as a treasonous act, as the one unpardonable sin that cannot be forgiven or committed without dire consequences. But I'm asking you to grant me a little space for passion. For the Church world of our day is a veritable side show of charlatans, heretics, hucksters, religious politicians, "celebrities," and just plain untaught leaders who have led the people of God down a primrose path of ignorance, vanity and abuse. Like the blind leading the blind, "comparing themselves amongst themselves" (II Cor 10:12), they have gotten their cues from the most daring amongst them to commercialize the Gospel, promote trendy fads that bring the masses in, exploit the people of God, take their money, suppress their questions, teach them to submit to men rather than to the Lord Jesus, and lead them into a discernment-lacking ecumenism that leaves them in danger of falling for the "Great Apostasy" foretold for the Last Days (I Thess 5:3; II Thess 2:3, 8-11, etc.).

Such leaders haven't exercised their prophetic responsibility to educate the people about the times we are obviously in and the array of different theories floating around out there so that the people can decide for themselves, be ready for it, and be discerning. Instead they've, amazingly, been *indifferent* to it!, even hiding it under the pretense of the false "unity" ethic conceived and promoted by the Catholic Church and other Christian leaders unwittingly abetting Rome's blind self-aggrandizement. They have not laid down a sound and sufficient foundation of doctrine in the people's lives so that they can recognize where any given voice is "coming from" (Mal 2:7; Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:8; I Cor 14:10). And whether they do these things out of a deliberate "cunning craftiness, lying in wait to deceive" (Eph 4:14), or just because they're so downright clueless themselves, it doesn't matter. The effect is still the same.

Into this treacherous minefield was born some twenty years ago this little fellowship that became in time the home of the Kansas City Prophets. This, I believe, was this church's mandate and unique privilege, to essentially *speak out* against this circus (not just commit a sin of omission by trying to "set a better example"), and to teach the people *sound doctrine*, especially as regards the mystery of the "Last Days". This was their prophetic mandate, but they trivialized it by limiting it to personal prophetic words, promoting Manifested Sons and Latter Rain distortions, allowing themselves to be blown off course by people with impressive gifts, and by letting themselves become overawed by the prominence of "successful" leaders in the Body of Christ.

In fact, I would get the impression at times that God *was* showing the Kansas City people the answers, but it seems they just could not receive them because of this last factor. I think part of it was that they may have thought, "If these are the true answers, why are they so obscure? Why aren't more 'prominent people' in the Body of Christ proclaiming them too? Why are only relative "nobodies" like Clasen and Moore coming up with these things?"

If these men are just naive themselves, I can in some ways sympathize. Doctrinal and theological problems can be complex, subtle and frustrating at times. But it's hard for me to believe that naivete is the Kansas City Prophets' problem. Any Christian ought to know that our doctrines are derived from *the Bible*, not from personal "revelations". If they had shown a greater respect for the Word of God, sound exegesis and sound hermeneutics, they would have

seen that an overall reading simply does not support the kind of vain, exaggerated claims and rosey scenarios they routinely suspend before the eyes of the people of God. And the fact that some of them like Paul Cain and Bob Jones are not particularly gifted to be teachers in the first place isn't really an excuse either, since others like Mike Bickle, Jack Deere and the like *do* have strong teaching abilities. At the least, they are all aware of their connection with the "hard-core" Restoration circles of England and elsewhere. At the worst, they know exactly what they are doing and are carrying out a plan to introduce these ideas to the Body of Christ piecemeal, bypassing any real detection, examination or debate.

I believe one of the promises God supposedly made to Mike was that He would surround him with "marvelous comrades". I wish I could say I had found *any* comrades amongst the leadership of Metro Christian Fellowship, marvelous or otherwise. The indifference my contributions were greeted with so grieved and confounded me that I often ended up spending hours sobbing in frustration and confusion, pouring out my heart towards God, especially towards the end of the 1990s. I think the effect of this (along with a two-week period of working in 100 degree weather) was to actually so damage my heart muscle that in 1999 I had a heart attack. It landed me in the hospital for five days, and during that time I did not have even one person from the church stop by to see me, except close personal friends. It made me wonder if people took what happened to be the judgment of God.

I would not want you to think I am wanting for good, close friends from MCF though, for I am not. To this day I have *a lot* of wonderful friendships in this city, most originating from this church. It's just that none of them come from those who are considered the most spiritual elements of Metro. My friends are great down-to-earth people, certainly Christians, and some very spiritually-minded. But I never did connect spiritually and deeply with the real pillars of the church.

I believe God has shown me why I received this treatment. From the staff's point of view, they knew how unhappy I was with how things were, and they were afraid that if they gave me any responsibility, any voice, any acknowledgement, that it could produce a haughty, out of control leader that could reproduce the problems like they had back in the 1980s. For all I know, they may be right. But I gave what I had. To what degree my insights were indicative of spiritual attainment on my part, God alone knows. But such was my experience of their rejection.

To be fair with Mike especially, friends have told me that he has modified a lot of his thinking about the future in the time since I've left. That may well be. I cannot see how 9-11 wouldn't change anyone's thinking. It certainly shook my own complacency up. But all I know is that what I've reported above is what I personally experienced first hand during my eight years there. I regret having to say all these "negative" things, but they need to be dealt with. I also trust you will recognize that I tried to be fair, even complimentary to the personalities involved, even as I've been rough with their ideas and behavior at times.

Yet inspite of all this, I still hold out hope that this ministry will yet come around! You may think me crazy for thinking that, but I have hope God will do something to bring us all together one day in greater agreement. In fact, lately in prayer, I've been getting the impression that we are not as far apart on things now as we once were. I am hopeful too for greater respect for one another, even as I do respect these people inspite of all I've said. They certainly have a zeal for God, and the history of this dysfunctional family has had its bright spots too. There once was a prophecy that after all the mistakes were said and done, God would still save the day with a "home run of grace".

There is another reason I have hope for this ministry, and this may be explained by my view of the unique situation the United States is in. Amongst the developed nations (in other words, those that can sustain a "Mark of the Beast" technology), the U.S. alone may end up in a condition that becomes so primitive that it may not be implementable here. I see a future for America that involves internal subversion by foreign terrorist agents and domestic leftist forces (campus and inner city), leading to coordinated terrorist attacks, followed by invasion by certain Communist nations, such as China, Russia, Cuba, and the like. This will happen simultaneously with the Ezekiel 38-39 attempt by the Arab

nations to destroy Israel, tripwiring the Revelation 6 scenario of the Four Horsemen and the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

This expectation is in accord with the visions experienced by Romanian pastor Dimitru Duduman, evangelist Henry Gruver, and many others, including even George Washington back in Valley Forge. While this is a horrible situation to contemplate, its one saving grace is that the U.S. will be in such a chaotic state as to not be able to function within the Antichrist network.

The situation in Europe will be far more difficult though, with much more pressure on the Church there. Europe is at the heart of the emerging Beast system. It's no surprise then that the Restorationist movement is most "hardcore" in England, because it puts forth an eschatology of such an earthly hope. The problem is that it tempts the Church to fall for the ecumenical siren song of the Vatican to disregard Pre-Millennial interpretations of the book of Revelation and take the mark. Therefore, the battle for eschatology will be most "torqued up" in Europe, because the price to pay to stay faithful and not take the mark will be martyrdom. In America, survival will be a big factor, but the pressure to accept a pipe dream eschatology will become a moot issue, especially as the ashes of it all lay about in such complete disarray.

I can see Kansas City having a strategic geographical and prophetic role to play in this future drama. Kansas City is called in its city charter, "The Prophetic City", for what reason I do not know. But what I do know is that it is smack dab in the middle of the United States, and may end up being at the heart of resistance to those invading armies.

Therefore, in a very strange way, I have an optimism about the spiritual future of America that perhaps my strident tone in this article obscures. I do expect a great purging of the wicked to come about here. But at the same time I see a revival of our national heritage emerging, and a warming up to the Gospel by many who wouldn't currently darken a church door if their lives depended on it. And considering the sorts of antics I've touched upon here in the Charismatic world especially, who can blame them? I think this work of the Spirit can be especially effective if the Church can successfully relate the principles of the faith to everyday life for ordinary people. In fact, I see this kind of a bridge building to be my own personal ministry emerging in the days ahead.

Whether God's hope for this church ever come to pass I don't know. I'm assuming that, even when God infallibly promises a certain outcome, we cannot always assume we know how He is going to get us there. People sometimes forget that the path may be blocked by the kinds of debate and strife such as I've raised here. But I cannot see any other way to get there. Sometimes the only way out is through.

¹ Found at <http://www.banner.org.uk/articles.html>.

² The concept of an "office" is not actually found in the New Testament, except in the case of elders and deacons. The governmental role of the apostle was limited to the time he was establishing a local church and acting as its temporary pastor. The five-fold ministries are just that--ministries (I Cor 12:5).

³ This reference is to Ephesians 2:20, where "the prophets" actually refer to those of the Old Testament, and the "apostles" to the Twelve (and Paul) of the New Testament. The "foundation" thus, we can safely infer, is the inspired writings of both.

⁴ This theory was developed by St. Augustine in the 5th century, and led to the "City of God" (on the earth) concept and was a big foundation for Roman Catholicism.

⁵ *Some Said It Thundered*, by David Pytches (Nashville:Oliver-Nelson), 1991, p. 93.

⁶ It was during that session too that I felt God tell me about the upcoming elections that year that He was going to allow Bill Clinton to win. I was quite dismayed at this but He seemed to tell me, "Why should I countenance this people which cast Me out of their courts, out of their schools, into the streets?" In other words, He was going to fix America's collective wagon real good.

⁷ This was largely accomplished by so "getting into the Scriptures" as to miss the plain, simple meaning and assume it must have a "deeper", more difficult meaning. It's similar to the effect of getting simple, easy test questions, assuming they must be "trick" questions, and thus getting them wrong.

⁸ *Some Said It Thundered*, by David Pytches, (Nashville: Oliver Nelson), 1991, pp. 57-62.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 64-65'

¹⁰ "In a sermon entitled 'Touch Not Mine Anointed', Benny proclaims his hatred for his critics, saved and unsaved alike: Hinn... told a story of an incident with a customs agent at a Chicago airport. Hinn said, 'Those people are mean up in Chicago, just because I am a preacher they gave me a hard time. I told that customs man, I want to see your supervisor! When I got to the supervisor's office he said to me, "You're just like [Jim] Baker." That made me so angry – if I could have killed him, I would have!'...Hinn continued: 'Now I'm going to tell you that God prophetically is showing us in the Psalms, that the body of Jesus Christ in America will sooner or later become militant, and say: 'We've had it! You touch us one more time and,

DROP DEAD BROTHER.'” *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, by G. Richard Fisher and M. Kurt Goedelman, pp. 208-9.

¹¹ For a while in the mid-1990's, Deere was apparently scheduled to take over Grace Training Center here at MCF, but circumstances never seemed to favor him doing so. According to his web site, he is currently involved with teaching the apostolic governmental paradigm in conjunction with C. Peter Wagner's Leadership Institute in Colorado Springs, and doing conferences with Cain, Bickle and Rick Joyner. See <http://www.efminc.org/about.htm>.

¹² *The Quest For The Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard*, by Bill Jackson, (Cape Town, SA: Vineyard International Publishing), 1999, p. 211.

¹³ Taped interview of Bob Jones with Mike Bickle, ca. 1988.

¹⁴ Mike today though, disavows that idea and says he now believes more in a unity of spirit than structure among city pastors. But I can't say for sure what he really believes about this.

¹⁵ Check out <http://www.streamsministries.com/>. Hit "Resources" at bottom of page.

¹⁶ This of course, is a concept fraught with a lot of contradictions. See part 3 of "Last Days Leaven", points 7 and 5.

¹⁷ "Documentation of Aberrant Practices and Teachings of KCF/GM", by Ernie Gruen and associates, 1990.

¹⁸ *Quest*, p. 198.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 206-207.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 225.

²¹ On the other hand, entitling one of my 1998 impeachment-era articles, "Living In Disneyland" probably didn't help, since the headquarters for the Vineyard was Anaheim, California, the home of Disneyland. But I tell you the truth, I had no such connection or sarcasm in mind at the time. For all I know, the title could have been inspired by God. It certainly seemed to keep popping up in my mind over and over again.

²² Sermon, Feb. 13, 1994.