

EXTRACT FROM *FIRE OVER THE WATERS*

A Day of Good News?

(2 Kings, 7:9)

Lest we should imagine that this strong, theologically polarising debate among evangelicals was robbing the renewal of its first fervour, we need to retrace our steps to 1965 and the significant visit of the American Pentecostal businessmen in the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, founded in 1952 by a Texan millionaire, Demos Shakarian. On the wider scene their coming was significant for a further reason. The infant fountain Trust had decided to take the considerable risk of launching a bi-monthly magazine entitled *Renewal*, which has continued in circulation without interruption ever since. The first edition was in January 1966, and the main news item it carried was that of the impact of the visit of the Full Gospel team to London. The work of the Fountain Trust continued to thrive as the magazine gradually built up its circulation. By 1967 Michael Harper was able to express the most confident predictions in its pages:

The overwhelming evidence of the last few years points to the fact that the day of world revival has dawned. In spite of the persistent opposition of some, and the excesses of others, there are ample grounds for much rejoicing. God is pouring out HIS Spirit on the worldwide Church on a scale hitherto unknown. Careful though we must be concerning the dangers of the counterfeit, and sensitive to the guidance of the Spirit, we would be grieving God if we suggested that what is happening is anything less than the firstfruits of world revival.

Regular conferences were now being held such as the one for ministers and Christian workers at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, 12-15 June 1967. The subject was the Holy Spirit and the Church, and the speakers were J.D. Pawson, John Collins of St Mark's, Gillingham, and Pastor Arnold Bittlinger of the Lutheran Church, who was to go on to help found an ecumenical charismatic centre in Schloss Craheim, and later to serve on the staff of the World Council of Churches. Among the participants were Jim Baker from North Hanwell, David Betts from Slough, Roger Gandy from Chiswick, Johnny Johnson of Woodstock Road, Oxford, D.S. Lock from Brockley, C.N. Mobbs from Bristol Baptist College, Ron Park from Muswell Hill, Michael Pusey from Farnborough, Walter Wands from Glasgow and myself from Wishaw. In fact, it was through Michael Harper's generosity that four of us from Scotland travelled together for this occasion. Tom Smail, then Presbyterian, and Ken McDougall, at that time Methodist, completed the Scottish quartet who took advantage of the kind offer.

While J.D. Pawson's expositions from Romans 9-11 were memorable, Arnold Bittlinger's treatment of the Gifts of the Spirit from 1 Corinthians 12 was unique in that he combined spiritual perceptiveness and critical scholarship. This was no traditional evangelical conference, nor was it in any way a typical Pentecostal gathering. For all the informality of the occasion and the warmth of the fellowship, it felt like the beginning stages of a movement of massive significance especially since the greater proportion of those attending were in their early years of ministry.

Another participant at the High Leigh conference was Morgan Derham, who was seeking to recover a mediating position in interdenominational evangelicalism after the show-down at

Westminster Central Hall in 1966. The Evangelical Alliance could not have been led by a more diplomatic general secretary for the critical needs they faced. While not identifying himself with the renewal, he was prepared to give support for the reason for its growth, in what he described as 'the spiritual barrenness, formality and dullness of much that passed for "sound" Christianity'. He went on to state, 'The kind of Spirit-controlled, joy-saturated, dynamic Christian living described [in the New Testament] was not very often experienced among us.

All of this indicates that charismatic growth was largely at the grass roots level of local church life. As led by the Fountain Trust, it was also positive in its approach to ecumenical issues. When Douglas Ross of Motherwell visited the Fountain Trust conference in June 1968 he commented:

There were Baptists there - one from Scotland and quite a number from England. But there was a strong contingent of Anglo-Catholics and there were some members of the Brethren. The Church of Scotland was there, one or two Pentecostals, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Salvation Army, an Irish Presbyterian, two members of the Anglican Community of the Resurrection - and one day there was even a Roman Catholic, a university chaplain.

Coming to the boil

Nevertheless, the onward growth of the renewal among Baptists could not fail to be affected by the atmosphere of growing crisis that permeated the life of the denomination. The publication of *Baptists and Unity* led to two further booklets being circulated. The first was entitled *Baptists for Unity*, which represented the convictions of the ecumenical enthusiasts who were almost to a man among the theological liberals. They advocated immediate negotiation for organic integration with other denominations. In the absence of these negotiations, they threatened unilateral local action by individual churches joining with other local denominations. The opposite view was espoused by David Kingdon, the youthful principal of the Irish Baptist College and a member of the BRF. His booklet, *Baptists at the Crossroads*, produced by the BRF brought forth a stormy response. For him there were three ways through the crisis: inaction; reformation, leading to the clear enunciation of our biblical understanding for fellowship; or secession. There was little doubt which of these he favoured. J.D. Pawson was asked to comment on this for *The Christian* newspaper, and characteristically proposed not three possible responses at the crossroads, but five. One, to stop where we were; two, to retrace our steps to the good old days; three, to turn left and go for absorption with a larger group though with appropriate safeguards for baptism; four, to turn right and go for a closer set of links with others generally regarded as outside the normal ecumenical field; five, to move forward into a Baptist Union whose extreme wings had left for other pastures, seeking both reformation according to the Word of God and revival by the Spirit of God for the future.

The Assembly of the Baptist Union in 1969 decided the matter of our continued involvement in the ecumenical bodies whose thinking was behind the covenanting proposals. It must have been a considerable relief to the leadership that in fact the Assembly agreed with the recommendation of our continuance in both the BCC and the WCC by a vote of 1125 in favour and 356 against the proposition. This was in spite of much campaigning by the BRF to

oppose membership of both bodies. Hence the BRF set up their own subcommittee to explore the possibilities for those evangelical Baptists who could not work with a denomination which had a link with the WCC. This was with the deep regret of G.R. King but the reasoning behind it was expressed in a letter from the BRF chairman Theo Bamber that appeared in the *Baptist Times* on 15 January 1970: 'For my part, I am reluctant to leave the Baptist Union. It is a lifelong association but what is one to do? If one thinks it is going to rain, must one be condemned for buying an umbrella?'

The storm breaks

Events in the Union underlined the sense of gathering gloom. Dr Ernest Payne's service as general secretary came to an end in July 1967. He was widely acknowledged as an immensely able administrator and greatly respected for the integrity of his service to the work not only of the Baptist Union but also of the ecumenical movement, serving as chairman on a number of significant committees, and also as one of the British presidents of the World Council of Churches. This major commitment was not universally popular, for obvious reasons. It is a fair estimate to say that Dr Payne's service was better appreciated by the wider Church and the overseas Church than by the denomination from which he came.

He was replaced by Dr David Russell. Almost as soon as he was appointed, the committee set up in 1967 to examine the causes of dissension reported back that there were three. They were uncertainty about the ecumenical commitment of the Union, unhappiness with the Declaration of Principle, and fear of centralising tendencies militating against the independence of the local church. To these causes the Baptist Union soon added a fourth cause for profound dismay. It took the form of a report from a specially convened commission on the subject of the realistic possibilities for full-time pastoral ministry in Baptist churches. It was entitled *The Ministry Tomorrow* and was completed and released in 1969. As a report it had several positive suggestions to offer on a range of ministerial issues, but particularly concerning the training and deployment of a new category of supplementary ministers. They were those called to a secular occupation but able to give part of their time to ministerial service. They would be fully trained and accredited. Yet the report could not have been less helpful in terms of its overall message to the denomination, with its morale rattled by all the other factors that were around at this time. As Dr George Beasley-Murray, then principal at Spurgeon's College, commented, it advocated a policy of general retrenchment which could not be justified in the light of the Great Commission. It lacked any sense of a strategy for mission. In short, together with the devastating graph it produced indicating the virtual extinction of the Baptists by about the year 2000, it promoted little more than the idea of a seemingly denominational funeral. What had happened to the bright dawn of the first Denominational Conference of 1961 marking the terjubilée celebrations? At that time it was thought that the advance of the Baptists was such that they would never look back, yet the report predicted that within 10 years no more than about 400 full-time ministers would be required to serve the churches. With this prediction it seemed as if hope for the future was being effectively extinguished. The general superintendent of the metropolitan area at the time was Geoffrey Haden. The forebodings that *The Ministry Tomorrow* produced were well illustrated by his comments addressed to ministers on this matter in his annual report in the London Baptist Association directory for 1970:

It has been assumed wrongly ... that there might be some plan to reduce the number of full-time ministers to 400. Let them be reassured that if they have been called and are now ministers of churches, that the denomination will continue to support them as long as they are able to exercise an effective ministry.

It must be open to question as to whether these comments were as soothing as they were doubtless intended to be. But then it is the lot of those who serve as Baptist general superintendents on occasions to be shown to be far more provocative than they had believed they could be even when they tried!

In 1970 another denominational conference was held at Swanwick. Many papers were produced for it over a full range of subjects, and the conference was adjudged a success. The overall impact of the renewal within the ranks of the Baptist establishment was adversely affected by one detail at this time. J.D. Pawson had been invited to take part by leading the conference in a Bible study. This he did with an address from the Book of Joel on the need for the restoring of the wasted years consumed by the locusts. However it was intended, to those present it appeared to be a severe and untimely attack not only upon them, but also upon their predecessors over many years. The one high-profile Baptist in renewal was Pawson because of his notable ministry at Gold Hill, Chalfont St Peter. Many other charismatics had never shown any great interest in gaining the approval of the Union leadership. Several were moving ever nearer the point of severing their Baptist links altogether. Pawson hoped that the Baptist Union would be both reformed according to Scripture and revived by the power of the Spirit. To cautious but responsible leaders words such as his at this time gave ample confirmation of the wisdom of their indifference to his other well-known interests. Pawson's standing among denominational leaders was thus severely damaged at this point.

To compound matters even more, in 1971 an address was given at the National Assembly of the Baptist Union on the subject of the Humanity of Jesus that could not have been designed more expertly if the purpose was to divide and destroy the common witness of Baptists. The speaker was Michael Taylor, the principal of the Northern Baptist College. His title was 'The Incarnate Presence - How much of a man was Jesus Christ?' His argument was clear and his conclusions precise. As Taylor understood Jesus, there was no difference in kind between Christ's humanity and our own, nor in the way in which God was in Christ and in ourselves. It appeared that however much Taylor went on to affirm his acceptance of traditional Christology, in fact he thought its formulations to be irrelevant and did not believe a word of them. In an attempt to restructure those formulations, Taylor's work in a theological lecture hall where he was open to question and debate would have served well. On the platform of the Baptist Union Annual Assembly, and from the pulpit of Westminster Chapel of all places, it sounded as if he was endorsing a view of the Person of Christ that was heresy.

Even though the congregation rose to a man to cheer the address, many were deeply distressed by it. Dr David Russell sensed the mood of the denomination accurately: 'I must confess that as I listened to him, I sank lower and lower in my chair. I knew for a certainty that following the Assembly, the storm would break! And it did!'

As to the repercussions of the Taylor affair, we must wait at this point. Suffice it to say that when the popular minister of the Park Road Church, Bromley, Godfrey Robinson, newly appointed as vice-president of the Baptist Union, collapsed and died in his sleep in June 1971, hopes for the Baptist Union emerging from these troubles unscathed reached their nadir.

Guildford, 1971

While these critical issues were being debated by the Baptists, the work of charismatic renewal continued unabated as far the Fountain Trust was concerned. By now Michael Harper had gained considerable experience and expertise in handling the demands of an itinerant ministry, and the time seemed ripe for him to stage a major international conference. This took place at Surrey University, Guildford, from 12 to 17 July 1971 and was described by James Dunn as the coming age of the Renewal. Harper cited four reasons for this: first, it was international in its appeal and overseas delegates as well as overseas speakers participated; second, it was ecumenical, including over 40 Lutherans and 30 Roman Catholics; third, it was unifying, and the intention was to bring together rather than polarise those who attended; last, it was also didactic, and highly qualified theologians were able to begin to grapple with the major issues of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Though the participation of Catholics was publicly criticised by some Pentecostal leaders, it was clear that this conference set a new high-water mark in the life of the renewal movement. David Pawson had moved from Gold Hill and was now minister of the Guildford Baptist Church and beginning his most productive period as an exceptionally gifted Bible teacher and preacher. He approached this conference with considerable misgivings because one of the speakers was a Methodist known to Pawson from his Methodist days, and also known as a liberal-evangelical, Leslie Davison. In the event, after the diplomatic Michael Harper had managed to allay his fears, Pawson enthusiastically supported it.

This was not the case, however, for Harold Owen, now of Woking. His judgement mirrored the tensions among the Baptists to which we have already referred and which have remained a part of the backcloth for the whole renewal drama, coming to a head when restorationism became a major and separate sub-plot as the movement advanced. Owen did not feel he could give it much support because of the presence of a Roman Catholic speaker in Kevin Ranaghan.

The versatile team of speakers also included Robert Frost, Rodman Williams and Ralph Wilkerson, all from the USA. David Watson and Arthur Wallis from England were part of it. 'Mr Pentecost', David du Plessis, was also there. While only a few Baptist ministers booked in, many others attended, including R.E. Maycocks and Alan Braybrooks.

Nevertheless, the ongoing impact on Baptist churches was to be shown to be great. At first the leadership of the Union did not realise that a new movement was taking place before their eyes. It was not the property of the evangelical fundamentalists, though it was passionately evangelical. It was not owned by the conservative evangelicals. If anything they felt somewhat upstaged as a diminishing number continued to react, because of the

evidence of the more liberated spirituality among the renewed. It succeeded in promoting good ecumenical relationships, but it was not tied in to the ambiguities of the ecumenical movement. Many leaders of the mainline Pentecostal denominations were deeply suspicious, and very few renewal leaders had any desire to be closely identified with their views anyway. The trouble for the Union was that, while an increasing number of ministers and members were enthusiastically counting themselves in, their denominational leaders had not even been looking in the right direction. Guildford began to change all that, as the carefully modulated comments on the conference in the minute book of the influential Advisory Committee on Church Relations stated: 'It was clear that blanket condemnation is no longer possible of the charismatic movement. It would be important for us to consider how best to keep in contact with those participating in the movement.'

However, in keeping with the best traditions of ecclesiastical committees of all descriptions, they began the process by the application of a more easily controlled process, namely the drawing up of an appropriate book list for further study.

Crisis and Hope

Contending for the Faith (Jude 3)

The decade of the 1970s were years of mixed and contrasting fortunes for the Church in Britain. For Baptists, in particular, they began with a period of theological strife that could have been terminal for the national Union. They concluded with a report written by the general secretary of the Baptist Union, Dr David Russell, entitled *Signs of Hope*. For the charismatic renewal as represented by the Fountain Trust, the developments were diametrically opposed. The decade began with the affirmation that followed their first highly successful international conference at Guildford in 1971 that they were a movement that had come of age. They concluded with the announcement that, as from 1 January 1981, the Fountain Trust would cease its operations. Such a reversal of the respective fortunes of a historic denominational body battered by controversy, and a new and respected charismatic trust that was a stabilising factor among the renewed and a trusted representative of their views by the wider Church, was the last thing expected at the start of the decade.

As we shall see, the closure of the Fountain Trust did not signify the end of the renewal movement. In terms of our theme the closure, and the erosion of the influence of the Trust that lay behind it, was significant in both positive and negative ways. It aided the development of a new ethos in which charismatic Baptists could be themselves without the inhibitions of being a minority grouping under Anglican patronage. Towards the end of the decade we have the emergence of Mainstream which provided that setting within a broader alliance that was itself a substantial contribution to healthy renewal for a period. At the same time the removal of a body with a strong bias towards the Established Church meant the ending of some of the checks implicit in all experiences of de facto ecumenism. Thus some Baptists began to look towards the emerging restorationists, who were convinced that the days of all forms of denominationalism other than their own were over. Since strong

restorationists believed that all true Christians with a vital experience of the Spirit would inevitably gravitate to their new Churches, Baptists who followed this teaching could only do so by somewhat detaching themselves from their proper roots. It is one of the ironies of Protestant Church history that new Church groupings, which so often begin with a strong desire to repudiate the exclusive ties that they perceive as the supreme weakness of those from whom they separate, almost invariably go on to promote even greater degrees of exclusiveness for themselves.

In following these developments, further major points about the renewal so far masked by the excitement of its beginnings become clearer. Plainly, they indicate one of its continuing characteristics in the relatively short life of many of its apparently stable centralities. More significantly, they clarify the point that in and of itself charismatic renewal is a corrective for the whole body of Christ rather than a fresh revelation about its essential nature. As a corrective, renewal assumes but does not express the wholeness of the Gospel which brings the Church into being, which defines the nature of the Church, and which is the mandate of its ministry. Renewal underlines the importance of aspects of the Gospel the Church has long neglected in the need for vital and continuous encounters with the living Spirit of God. To put it another way, renewal as a corrective acts like an immunising agent for the health of the body. It deters what Archbishop Michael Ramsey described as 'the mistake of ecclesiasticism'. It protects from the condition of spiritual dryness. But taken exclusively by itself, the renewal virus breeds other diseases it was designed to combat because it lacks the compensating factors that come from the rest of the body. Hence in this period we deal with both the glory and the shame of the renewal, strong as the servant of the Church yet weak once it becomes the master. Its message has the capacity to initiate fresh discoveries of the grace of God but it lacks the ability to mature the characters of the renewed. It is these contrasting effects that we must now examine, beginning with the fraught condition of the Baptist Union in 1971.

Another downgrade

As we have seen, the upset caused by the address given by Michael Taylor on 20 May 1971 at the Annual Assembly was due to many other factors besides the theological convictions he expressed then. As we have already suggested with the benefit of hindsight, had the address been given in a lecture room and subjected to the normal questions it raised, there would not have been the controversy that it stirred. Whether or not that is the case, far-reaching debate was inevitable.

In evidence of this, the minutes of the council of the Baptist Union for the period make it clear that it occupied major time in the life of the council throughout the subsequent period from 1971 to 1972. It was the subject of further Assembly action in 1972. The repercussions continued in the life of the churches of the Union throughout 1972, 1973 and even after that.

At the heart of the debate was the theology of the address to which we have already referred. The subject was 'The Incarnate Presence: How much of a man was Jesus Christ?' In the course of his carefully scripted argument, Taylor said:

God indwells Jesus in the same way as he indwells his greatest saints and all of us . God is in Christ as God is in all men. Jesus is not of a different kind of stuff or substance. But Jesus is unique because God did something quite unique in Jesus. That uniqueness is not in the presence - 'God was in Christ'. It is in the activity 'reconciling the world to himself'. God is always active in the world, and his actions are never out of character, but he does different things at different times and what he did in Jesus is unique. He had never done it before and he has not done it again: he showed with unrivalled clarity that he loves the world, is involved in its struggles, is suffering to death for its salvation. He acted in a decisive way for the reconciliation of man to himself and for the healing of the whole of creation. He raised the Nazarene to life, the firstfruits of the harvest of the dead. Of no other can it be said that God did in him what God did in Jesus.

Taylor made it clear that he had no great enthusiasm for making the kind of argument that he offered as a confession of faith, since to him there was a far more significant way of expressing the significance of Jesus 'by starting at the other end'.

What is the significance of Jesus for us in here? How does Jesus illuminate this situation? What is the God who is active in Jesus doing now, and how do we co-operate with him? Where in this concrete set of circumstances can we celebrate and say 'Yes' and where must we say 'No' and how are we called to respond?

In the light of the furore all this unleashed it was amazing that Taylor had been given the brief of speaking on such a theme at such a time. At the end of the Assembly there is always a brief meeting of the council to transact small items of business like the co-options of a certain number of candidates to serve on the council alongside those appointed by ballot. This meeting duly took place on 28 April 1971. After the necessary business had been done, Stanley Voke raised the question of the theology of the address and urged the council to repudiate the views that had been expressed in it, and reaffirm its acceptance of the doctrinal clauses of the Declaration of Principle. Discussion on the issue was short-circuited, however, when Dr Payne moved the adjournment of the council on the grounds that Taylor was not there to defend his viewpoint. This duly happened, and it was agreed that any repercussions to the address would be handled at the discretion of the general secretary. During May and June letters began to arrive on the general secretary's desk. The Superintendents' Board became increasingly uneasy and asked for copies of the address to be made available to them. The superintendents were correct in their understanding of a groundswell of unease that was building up.

By October 1971 a small group of young London ministers had arranged another meeting to attempt a statement of Christology which was clear, unashamedly evangelical and orthodox in its doctrinal content. They invited their best-known colleague to make it and he agreed to do so. This was J.D. Pawson. His subject was 'How much of a God is Jesus?' The address was given to a packed Bloomsbury Chapel on 2 October 1971 and was fully reported in the Baptist Times. For his efforts, some supporters of the controversial views expressed by Taylor now attacked Pawson, charging him with Docetism, Apollinarianism and Arianism among various other heresies. Others expressed the wish that now that both wings of the denomination had vented their views, it was time to call a halt, but this was not to be. Having failed to make any public statement in April, the General Purposes Committee of the

Baptist Union agreed to prepare a statement which was delivered to the council in their November meeting. It was a comprehensive summary acknowledging the extent of the distress that was being felt as a result of the address and now the debate. It affirmed the need for theological reflection, and supported the integrity of Michael Taylor. It reaffirmed the doctrinal clauses in the Declaration of Principle.

At the council the debate moved forward to a major confrontation in the Union by two steps that were taken. First, in order to free himself from the responsibilities and limitations of being chairman of the council, George Beasley-Murray resigned from that position. He was convinced that this issue was of such enormous significance that he needed to marshal all his theological skills to help the denomination repudiate heresy. To this end he wrote a paper entitled *The Christological Controversy in the Baptist Union*, and sent it to all accredited Baptist ministers.

Second, the council agreed the text of the recommendation from their committee with minor amendments but added an addendum to it that was seriously damaging in its consequences in the wider constituency. At its heart were these words:

Not only is it [the denomination] characterised by evangelical and missionary zeal; it possesses a treasured heritage of liberty of opinion and utterance and since the seventeenth century has shared in the struggle for religious toleration and the freeing of men's minds and consciences from intellectual and civil fetters. Accordingly the Union has always contained within its fellowship those of different theological opinions and emphases, believing that its claim for toleration involves tolerance and mutual respect within its own ranks.

When this addition was released to the churches, the storm clouds in the denomination were in full view. A number of ministers forthwith resigned from the lists of accredited ministers. The BRF at their annual conference in Swanwick declared, 'We cannot in conscience remain associated with the life of a Union which has decided to tolerate the denial of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. How we translate this conviction into action will be a matter of individual judgement.' By January 1972, the council realised belatedly that not only was there enormous unease throughout the whole family but that the former president of the Union Sir Cyril Black and George Beasley-Murray were determined to act on this. In March the council agreed to a motion expressing regret at the confusion caused by the addendum. But on 26 April 1972, a year less a day from the utterance that caused the trouble, by a massive majority of 1800 to 46 with 72 abstentions the Assembly affirmed the Black resolution. This declared

that the Declaration of Principle represents the basic requirement for fellowship in the Baptist denomination and that we attach high importance to the loyal and wholehearted acceptance of it. In particular, we assert the unacceptableness of any interpretation of the person and work of Jesus Christ Our Lord which would obscure or deny the fundamental tenet of the Christian faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, truly God and truly man.

So the issue was resolved. As Dr Russell said at the conclusion of a debate that was the centre-piece of the Assembly, 'May we all leave older and wiser.' In total, it eventually transpired that the 38 churches that removed themselves from fellowship in the Baptist

Union were soon joined by eight more. It was a grievous wound to the life of the Union, and the division in the body had gone deep. David Russell confessed that he was not convinced that this was the best outcome, and E.A. Payne was reported by *The Times* religious affairs correspondent Clifford Longley as believing that the denomination had taken 'a lurch to the right'. With these words he demonstrated that although he was still undoubtedly the outstanding Baptist leader of these days, he was out of touch with the grass roots convictions of those whom he represented. David Russell now had the unenviable job of seeking to bind up the wounds by finding, then applying, the healing balm of a new common vision for the future of the Union.

Renewal advances

The striking success of the Guildford conference in 1971 continued to make its impact on the Baptists throughout late 1971 and 1972. One of the major factors in this change of mind concerning the renewal was the emergence of Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which had already surfaced at Guildford through the presence of Kevin Ranaghan on the speaking team. By far the most significant development to begin to emerge followed this up and was of major ecumenical significance. It was in the form of the interest and later commitment of one of the senior Roman Catholic cardinals, the primate of Belgium, Cardinal Suenens. It was not long before his commitment to renewal led him to publicly testify to the blessing of the baptism in the Spirit, to commend the practice of speaking in tongues, and to urge his Church and all Churches to embrace the renewal as a genuine movement of the Holy Spirit. Hence Suenens became a major spokesman for the renewal movement, and it is true to say that his participation raised the awareness of the wider Church, including Baptists, to renewal issues.

Created cardinal in 1962 by Pope John XXIII, Suenens was heavily involved in the arrangements and the business of the second Vatican council in 1962 for whom he was one of the four moderators. He was widely regarded as the leader of the reforming group of the council. Clearly, with his involvement, it was no longer a case of dealing with a few Pentecostal extremists. Suenens was a friend of Pope Paul VI, and a close collaborator and joint author with Archbishop Michael Ramsey. He certainly could not be ignored. Suenens had chosen the phrase, 'In the Holy Spirit' when he became a bishop. His charismatic pilgrimage commenced while on a lecture tour in the USA. There he encountered some charismatic nuns in Philadelphia who told him of the wonderful changes the Spirit had been achieving in their lives. Soon he was able to speak of his own response to baptism in the Spirit, which he interpreted as a release of the Spirit already received at baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. He described tongues speaking as a way of God showing us that the Spirit of God is with us to help us to pray in depth, and as another of his 'surprises'.

Essentially, Suenens saw the renewal supplying the spiritual dynamic for the institutional changes that Vatican II had set in train. He perceived that it would be an enormous boost to the quest for Christian unity, of which he was a strong and passionate advocate. As a senior member of the Roman hierarchy there is no doubt that he saw the future of a united and dramatically reformed Church within the see of Rome. He did not appear as a speaker on the platform of the Fountain Trust until the international conference at Westminster in August 1977, where to great applause Tom Smail introduced him with the words, 'Bienvenue, M. le

Cardinale'. Nevertheless, his influence throughout the movement had grown before then through the meetings of the Catholic renewal agencies and the European charismatic leaders' conference. He formed a strong friendship with Tom Smail, and he and his theologian Paul Lebeau much admired Smail's robust summaries of Protestant and Reformed theology.

In the summer of 1976, the meeting for European charismatic leaders convened at Mechelen and the theme was *koinonia* - fellowship. Theological papers were given, and there was serious discussion on the theme proposed by David Pawson on the place of the Virgin Mary in our salvation. Although no agreement was reached, some positive propositions were arrived at. The cardinal presided over a Eucharist, held in the chapel at Mechelen in which Cardinal Mercier is buried, the initiator of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic conversations which had taken place some 50 years previously. So, throughout the years from 1971 to 1977, the Roman Church was usually represented at major conferences organised by the Fountain Trust. The support of the cardinal was crucial. Nor was he disposed to be exclusively concerned with Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal. For instance, he was happy to come as the special guest to a dinner arranged by the Baptist philanthropist and former president of the Baptist Union, Sir Cyril Black. He seemed to be quite as much at home among evangelicals as he was in his own Church.

To return to 1973, this was the year for the next international Conference following the successful meeting in Surrey in 1971. Nottingham was the venue, and the theme was 'Gathered for Power'. This was also the title of the book written by Graham Pulkingham to describe the remarkable transformation that had taken place in the Church of the Redeemer Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas, during his ministry there, and he was a main speaker at Nottingham. Michael Harper managed to complete his own book on the same ministry before the conference, entitling it *A New Way of Living*. Essentially, Pulkingham was claiming that renewal leads on to a form of community sharing that enables the Church to break through the barriers of personal isolation in society and family, especially as this is experienced by the lonely single or those with special problem conditions through medical or psychological causes. He advocated a new adventure in extended family homes in which the members of the new family contributed all their possessions and their earnings by agreement. Each household was to be led by strong, dependable and resourceful men, who together formed a corporate church eldership. They expected total loyalty from their new family and total compliance from their spouse and nuclear family. He believed that new charismatic communities dominated by 'intense love, indomitable faith, and a spirit of praise' would make a dramatic impact on the secular western world of the 1970s. The result would be in significant evangelistic advance. Harper used the words of Eliza Doolittle, the heroine of *Pygmalion*, to make the point:

We are sick of sermons, books, discussions, theologies, Bible lectures. We are not interested in hymns, anthems and choruses. Don't spout poetry at us. Show us. Give us a demonstration. We want to see action. Words are not enough. Your words make us sick and we won't listen to you any more.

Harper had been so hugely affected by his own experience of the new lifestyle of the Houston church that there is little doubt that Nottingham was designed at least in part as a

launch pad for Pulkingham and the highly talented musical group he had brought with him, known as The Fisherfolk. Within a year Pulkingham had moved to England to set up his own ministry community. They were placed under the guidance of the bishop of Coventry, Cuthbert Bardsley, and became known as The Community of Celebration. Another of Pulkingham's admirers was Dr George McLeod, then head of the Iona Community. He was also a speaker determined to share his own insights on the needs of the hour. For him, spiritual renewal was crucial but not in itself complete. He looked for a political expression of the love of Christ in a willingness to serve the whole community for Christ's sake.

What does it mean to be in Christ, not just in personal regeneration but in political obligation? To love God might be called the vertical of the cross but to love our neighbour is the horizontal . . . I pray God that Nottingham will nail us to the cross, that buried with Christ we may rise with Christ to full stature.

He contributed in this way at the conference, but also gave his backing to the work that Pulkingham had set his hand to. Bishop Bill Burnett of Grahamstown, who was to go on to become the last white South African archbishop of Cape Town, was also a speaker. David Pawson redeemed a promise made to Michael Harper in 1971 by speaking on the Freedom of the Spirit, from the letter to the Galatians.

With such a galaxy of speakers, and a full attendance, the Nottingham conference was considered another notable success for the Fountain Trust. Among those who attended was Emmanuel Sullivan, an American Franciscan who had already written sympathetically on the potential for the renewal to renew the Churches in a survey prepared for the British Council of Churches. He wrote in glowing terms of his experience at Nottingham:

There was nothing narrow about the spirit of Nottingham. There was no Orthodox presence and a limited Roman Catholic one. Yet the spiritual witness of both these historic Churches was appreciated. There was ecumenical witness throughout the conference but proselytism never raised its ugly head It has been said that at Guildford the charismatic renewal movement came of age. At Nottingham it was evident that the movement was becoming mature.

In the matter of finance, however, the Nottingham conference did not pay its way, but there was more to it than this. The central issue advocated at Nottingham was that of extended family living. It was expected to be a major breakthrough for the renewal. Certainly attempts were made to take it up and community living was promoted with great zeal. The following year the same emphasis was brought from California in a visit by Ken Pagaard, pastor of First Baptist Church, Chula Vista, near San Diego, linked with the American Baptist Convention. His church was replicating the Houston experience in a different setting close to the border with Mexico, in southern California, and from a Baptist base. In his ministry in England he made contact with a number of Baptist churches and ministers and encouraged their experimentations with forms of extended family living.

Soon this development produced more threatening results which presaged the decline of the Fountain Trust. The immediate consequence was a crop of damaged families, broken marriages, severed relationships, and troubled people. Apart from the highly organised

exception of the Jesus Family Bugbrooke, extended family living soon lost its attractiveness and support and the interests of the renewal moved on to different territory. We shall return to the story of the Bugbrooke Community later, but note at this point that it was for a variety of reasons that they were never accepted within the mainstream of the renewal, just as they were also to be out of fellowship with the Evangelical Alliance and the Baptist Union.

The main problem in extended family living ultimately arose over the issue of the marriage covenant between the two persons of the husband and the wife, and the teachings of Scripture on the nature of the marriage bond. At Nottingham, Pulkingham had arrived in Britain with an extraordinary reinterpretation of the teaching of the Scriptures on this basic issue, which encouraged such a strengthening of the commitment of the married to the extended family in the Church of which they were members that inevitably there was a lowering of their commitment to their spouse and their nuclear family. Ultimately, it took Tom Smail to expose the theological issues of Pulkingham's ministry with a robust restatement of the uniqueness of the covenant of Christian marriage. In the course of our own travels, my wife and I visited the Chula Vista Church in 1976 and found that, while the teaching there had not been as extreme as in the case of Pulkingham's ministry, the church itself and the homes which we visited were quite unhappy conglomerate gatherings, not happy extended families.

At this point some of the inherent weaknesses began to emerge as far as renewal as a whole was concerned. For one thing, the Pulkingham episode exposed the way in which the British expression of renewal has consistently depended upon the insights of North American teachers who either claim or are soon invested with the status of the all-wise guru. Their North American achievements are impressive when compared with those of our own less successful preachers who are attempting a very different task set amid the challenges of the very different Western European spiritual atmosphere now overwhelmingly secularised. Renewal seldom takes due account of those differences, and does itself few favours by these unwise promotions and comparisons.

More than this, it demonstrated one of the least attractive characteristics of the renewal, which is to adopt a fresh enthusiasm for a brief period. For a while it is conceived and promoted as being in itself the total answer to the needs of the Church, the one missing piece in the jigsaw of the purposes of God which, once it is found and put in place, will secure the ever elusive revival about which the renewal constantly affirms its faith. When the one theme does not deliver what is expected of it, the tendency has been to drop it without further ado in pursuit of its successor. But the truth is that these enthusiasms pursue each other with restless haste across the stage of the consciousness of renewal, each one consuming its predecessor with cannibalistic ferocity. No one biblical truth can deliver all that its discoverers promise, and the great revival remains but a distant mirage.

The lesson that Nottingham was underlining was a familiar one for us all, but it was not yet learned by the charismatic movement. It is that ill-considered, theologically insecure insights offering the promise of long-term blessings through short-term schemes are doomed to disappoint. Pulkingham has had many counterparts, all of whom have ultimately become a danger to the survival and growth of the renewal which first gave them prominence. We should never refuse to listen to the teaching of those who come from other lands. Many of

our most reliable and helpful visitors come to us from North America and commend their ministry by the modesty with which they give it. But beware the words of the guru. Like each of us, they all have feet of clay. We know that the power of the Gospel is made known in the self-offering love of Christ upon the cross. The triumphs of the early church rejoicing in the glorious presence of the Spirit in their midst were won at the cost of much sacrifice and heroic confessions of personal weakness and inadequacy. If the renewal attempts to draw us away from our crucial centre in Christ's Calvary or in our own reflection of that experience, it is false teaching indeed. So supporters of charismatic renewal must never forget the lesson that in the life of the Spirit there are never any shortcuts to success.