

The British House Church Movement Of The 1970s

And its connection with the emergence of the Restoration Movement

I have avoided writing anything on this for decades, partly because I had many more important things to write about. However, several hundred articles and books later perhaps I should now give this some attention for several reasons. The first is that there appears to be the beginnings of a sovereign move of God to establish new, informal house churches in America, Australia and England. Learning from past mistakes would be beneficial, especially as some of these groups are already beginning to make the same old errors that trapped the earlier house church movement. Secondly, some of the published books that touch on this subject (*Streams of Renewal*, Peter Hocken, *Restoring the Kingdom*, Andrew Walker etc.) while valuable, have a few wrong perspectives, many gaps and insufficient focus on 70s house-churches. Finally, there are many current blogs and articles on the internet which receive great applause but which are hopelessly mistaken on factual matters and which draw very false conclusions. Some, written by certain influential women, even spell leader's names wrongly, mistake sons for fathers, get important dates wrong and completely misrepresent authors, failing to understand their thesis. This ought to be remedied. So for these, and other, reasons I have decided to give my 'tuppence-worth'.

What are my qualifications for this? Well the first thing is that I was there. I was converted in the winter of 1970-71, initially being closely related to Campus Crusade for Christ, but within several months was worshipping in a newly established house-church on the South Coast. Seven years later I planted another a few miles away in central Brighton. A few years afterwards I led this church into a new work (Clarendon Church) under Terry Virgo who was just establishing his Coastlands ministry from his back room (now New Frontiers). I stayed with this until the late-80s, serving in the leadership team and leading worship & musicians, until it developed in a diametrically opposite way to its beginnings under Baptist Henry Tyler.

After that I renounced Charismaticism (though I was never fully signed up to many aspects of it) and confronted the radical form that was emerging. I worked in independent churches of several sorts; acted as a consultant to various pastors; developed a full-time teaching and writing ministry, which God opened up for me, and I now again minister in a house-church. Through these experiences I have a unique opportunity to review the 1970s and 80s from several perspectives: independent non-Charismatic house-church, independent non-Charismatic established church, Baptist church, mainstream Charismatic/Elim, Restorationist Charismatic and para-church organisations.

I have also had a long association with David Lillie who was a key influence in the emergence of British house churches. His church conferences from the late 1950s and early 1960s are crucial to helping us understand what later transpired and I am, perhaps, one of the few people who have a copy of the transcripts of these conferences. It was out of these that the key men (the seven and fourteen – see later) met with Arthur Wallis; initially to study eschatology, but later to develop the early form of Restorationism.

While no one man can piece together all that went on from 1958 (David's first conference) to the late 80s, I can at least try to correct what I know to be wrong in the many articles

now appearing. It is imperative that the truth is the basis of 'informed' decisions and opinions, and this is particularly important in leaning upon history. I will try to establish fundamental issues as concisely as possible.

A sovereign move of God

Not the work of men

The first thing to emphasise is that the establishment and spread of a large number of independent house churches in the early 1970s was not the work of men or an organisation. While David Lillie's conferences with Arthur Wallis and a few independent works anticipated this, these men were not involved in the initial surge of new churches. All over the country God suddenly raised up one after another from scratch. It was also a time of many conversions (including my own), which was centred upon young people and predominantly students. Within a year of my conversion, our little Christian Union in Brighton Art College saw probably about twenty people come to faith, with nine of us getting baptised in the sea together in about 1972.

It has to be said that *Campus Crusade for Christ* was initially involved in some of these conversions; this recently formed organisation was particularly active in colleges during this period and was quite effective, as were the *Navigators*. In America at this time there was a bigger revival going, on chiefly affecting young people, producing what is popularly known as the '*Jesus People*'. There is no doubt that there was a spin-off from this revival that affected many students in the UK. A local church in Brighton, Park Hill FIEC, grew so much from student conversions in the early 70s that Martyn Lloyd-Jones himself took a personal interest and considered it to be a revival.

A reaction against formalism

Many young converts, quite a few (like myself), coming out of the Hippie movement found it difficult, having read in the New Testament how the early church met, to then present themselves in a formal, legalistic, dead church where one man did everything and there was no real fellowship. We could not correlate what the Bible said with what we experienced. Fellowship in our student union, sometimes meeting for prayer every lunch-time, was so much more vibrant and spiritual than what was supposed to be more important on Sunday; so a few of us stopped going to formal churches and met informally.

Within a short while we were meeting in a Brighton suburb, in the home of a college lecturer who was formerly a Congregationalist pastor and who had a good teaching ministry that was essentially Reformed with Higher-Life overtones. For several years we practised church as we found it in the New Testament and developed; but we were not Charismatic. For much of that time we were about thirty or more strong and the meeting included newly converted students, young married couples, and older couples who were ex-Brethren, ex-Pentecostal, ex-Anglican, ex-Baptists and ex-Congregational; later some ex-Jehovah's Witnesses were converted and joined us. We continued to see conversions, but nowhere near as often after about 1973.

We maintained friendly contact with other believers and leaders in the town and were known by other churches, but we chiefly ploughed our own furrow. At the beginning we also avoided all the jamborees and crusades that hit the town like a circus parade. Amazingly, even in my smaller plant in Brighton, strangers would turn up out of nowhere from as far apart as America and Australia. On one occasion a young girl visiting the town for an interview was at a bus stop praying to meet the Lord's people, as she knew no one. A girl from our fellowship got chatting to her and she ended up worshipping with us. Though our little group started with 14 people, we had 13 conversions in 18 months from locals.

Not chiefly Charismatic

Now I mention this because I believe it to be fairly typical. Many recent writers have said that the Charismatic Movement spawned these early house churches, but this is not true at all. Although there were some independent house groups that were Charismatic, who had been forced to meet outside the denominational churches where spiritual gifts were not welcome, they were not the majority – at least in my view. Indeed, it was still the case that Charismatic churches still had a negative Neo-Pentecostal stigma attached to them, resulting in most evangelicals being very wary.

Many solid evangelicals had become fed up with being stifled by dead legalism and so began prayer meetings in the week to enhance fellowship; these later developed into a proper Sunday meeting and, as the word got round, many folk joined with them. There was an impetus to get out of - dead works, large faceless works, denominations, organisations and formality. Books like *God's Frozen People* had recently been published (1964) expressing this frustration and quite a few groups formed out of the Anglican / Church of Scotland churches pictured in this book. It showed that the Biblical church has no building, professional training or clergy and no relation with the external secular world; it even emphasised that church was like a family, being organic and not an organisation. Ten years later books like *New Wineskins* (1975) would capture what was going on in putting those ideas into practice. Non Anglicans who had not read *Frozen People* certainly read *New Wineskins*.

it is true, as some authors claim, that the house-churches came together as a reaction against church legalism and formality, but it not true, as many do, to say that they all did so to enable the 'coming of the Spirit'. Most of those I experienced across the south of England had a goal of enabling the formation of a pure Biblical church. Furthermore, having more recently fellowshiped with leaders who were also there, I have found their experience to be the same as mine.

The Brethren influence

In those days there was a much greater proliferation of Brethren literary works (books, tracts, journals, magazines) than is found today and the influence of Brethren churches was still a factor, though declining in influence. Many people read Brethren Bible study books, especially on typology, and gained knowledge of their views on church structure and ministry almost by accident. There was also significant influence made by certain groups, such as the Honor Oak Fellowship in south London, which promoted the importance of fellowship and small meetings. Linked to T Austin Sparks of Honor Oak was Watchman Nee and many people were reading Nee's books on radical church life well into the early 1980s, though Nee is read much less today. None of these promoted Charismatic gifts or had any formal connection with Pentecostalism (Nee had some interest in this but it is not present in his writings).

Remember that at this time, late 60s-early 70s, Pentecostalism was still considered a rogue movement and finding someone who spoke in tongues was a rarity. In the early stages it was not spiritual gifts that were the prominent issue, but fellowship. I believe that this is again the case today and in many parts of the Charismatic church, especially the larger organisations, the proliferation of spiritual gifts, and even the emotionalism of orchestrated worship, is not quelling the desire for intimacy, fellowship, and spontaneity.

The work among student Christian unions

Finally, there was the work of the Christian unions and the influence of the IVF (*Inter Varsity Fellowship* founded in 1928), which later became the UCCF (*Universities and*

Colleges Christian Fellowship). This had begun as Norman Grubb's *Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union* (CICCU) in 1910, established in opposition to the liberal SCM (*Students Christian Movement*). In the main this was essentially Reformed and was, in the 1960s, associated with Martyn Lloyd-Jones and aided by Anglicans like John Stott. This union helped to support the smaller Christian union meetings, for instance by providing speakers, many of which spilled out into becoming house churches. There was no Charismatic involvement here until much later; even the Evangelical Alliance only became more openly associated with Charismatic matters under the later leadership of Clive Calver. It was this unrestricted opportunity for students to fellowship without formal liturgy which whet their appetite for a style of church that was not available in the denominations.

Independent Charismatic House-Churches begin to coalesce into groups

The term, 'House Church Movement', was coined later in the early 80s to describe a certain aspect of church development subsequent to this initial move of God. This was an odd and totally unsuitable term since what was happening was exactly the opposite; many people were joining larger Charismatic works from their smaller home groups, sometimes (as in my case) the whole group joined.

We must evaluate the various streams and movements leading up to this point.

The 1960s precursors

The main inspiration for the early house churches was Brethren teachings. Some leaders associated this with other influences, such as Charismaticism or Holiness ideas. Two key early leaders were Sid Purse and GW (Wally) North. Purse was influenced by Open Brethren and Charismatic teachings (he was ex-Brethren), while North was predominantly a Holiness teacher; but by the mid-70s these two men led the largest and most influential non-denominational churches.

Chard

Like many at the time, Purse and his wife were ostracised in their Brethren meeting after being baptised in the Spirit in the late 1940s, and started meetings in their home, 'Manor House', having been influenced by a small Pentecostal sect called 'Henry's Revival' [presumably Henri Staples' *Glory Meetings*, based in Newark]. Purse's church in South Chard, Somerset, began in 1951 and in 1956 a small meeting place was built adjacent to Purse's house. The focus at this time was praise and preaching, but by the mid-60s Chard was a centre for training in Charismatic ministry and teaching how to establish house-churches. The Chard group spawned many other men who would go out and act like missionaries for this brand of home-church Charismaticism, which was very Pentecostal at this time with a focus upon healing.

The roots of this were Latter Rain ideas from the rogue movement of the late 1940s, but few had heard of this in those days. Young Ian Andrews from Chard was even a friend of Kathryn Kuhlman and specialised in the Charismatic word of knowledge; Harry Greenwood became especially known for hearing God and prophecy. It is probably safe to say that many of the Charismatic folk in the 1970s genuine house-church movement gained their experience and teaching from Chard. However, Chard was not only influenced by Latter Rain heresies but was also associated (at least doctrinally) with the *Oneness Pentecostals* who baptised in the name of Jesus only, rebaptising those who had been baptised in the name of the Trinity. To deny the validity of the baptism of most believers caused serious contention, and gradually the movement declined as the wider Charismatic

Movement and Restorationism gained ground. Though initially involved in some of the early meetings convened by the Restoration leaders Purse soon walked away, rightly seeing the beginnings of a denomination and the use of control by leaders. Restoration works gradually enticed most of his people.

Wally North

North had many churches around London (the 'Great North Circular'), the Wirral, Bradford and also in Exeter. He was treated as a special leader and highly esteemed as a teacher by his followers but was essentially in the Arminian, Holiness tradition of America to the degree that he taught outright Wesleyan Perfectionism. But there were other confused ideas; in his perfectionism he taught that regeneration was not being saved from sin but was being filled with the Spirit; walking in the Spirit equates to perfect holiness. The result in his people was a dangerous introspection and this limited his church's numerical development. So, like Purse, the roots of his doctrinal ministry were heretical. His move to Scotland in the 70s resulted in his church dwindling and rapidly joining the emerging Restorationist groups; some leaders, such as David Tomlinson, were amongst them. The start of Bryn Jones' work in Bradford in 1969 was in the New Covenant Church which had been developed by North in the early 60s. By the mid 1970s both Chard and the North groups had nothing special to offer and not only collapsed in the burgeoning Restoration advance, but also suffered from the more general Renewal Movement in the historic churches.

Lance Lambert

Lance was quite influential in the early days (70s & early 80s) as a house-church leader based in Richmond and his house-church had been active since the early 1960s. Later he became more identified with a focus upon Israel. He was not keen on the way Restoration was beginning to develop and steered clear, ploughing an independent furrow.

David Rushworth Smith

Smith had healed someone dramatically, and almost accidentally, through prayer in 1952 while at Cliff Methodist College. He then came into contact with Pentecostal ministries, such as those of AA Allen and TL Osborn and left Cliff in 1953. Afterwards, when pastoring a Congregational church in Hadleigh, Suffolk, spiritual gifts began to emerge; some called it an awakening. Soon he was pastoring Don Double, then a young convert, who would lead the later campaigns. In 1955 Smith moved and began a house-church in Ipswich where he had relationships with various Pentecostal leaders, such as Henri Staples, Peter Scothern and Vic Ramsey.

Theologically Smith is interesting since he did not teach a second blessing experience and refused to be called a Pentecostal, though in practice he affirmed the need to be filled with the Spirit after conversion. He also rejected all forms of prosperity messages and automatic healing in the atonement. Rejecting a call to be TL Osborn's European manager, he started publishing booklets and ministering healing via the *Evangelical Divine Healing Fellowship*, of which he was secretary.

While Smith could have developed in a similar way to Lillie and Wallis, he eventually felt that his house-church was sectarian and moved back into Congregationalism in Hertfordshire. In 1959 he met David du Plessis and drove him to meetings. He convened a healing conference in 1960 at High Leigh where Cecil Cousen spoke, thus showing how these men were moving around various circles at the time, interacting with each other. Participants in Smith's conferences spoke very highly of their evangelical content, power and unity, believing that they were more blessed than at the typical Pentecostal healing gatherings.

While Smith was at the forefront of the early Charismatic Movement, his ministry anticipated it and he remained fiercely committed to scripture. He was intent to be separate from the normal Pentecostalism present in the country, which many felt to be lacking in theological content and godly stature. This goes to show that there were many small movements that could be termed Charismatic underway in the early 60s before the Charismatic Movement formally began in the UK.

Edgar Trout

Trout was a Methodist who had known exceptional healing in his own life; indeed his instantaneous healing of a broken vertebra whilst in hospital is the most remarkable and genuine I have ever heard of. Having sensed the call of God early in life, he became a lay-preacher in 1935, ministering around Plymouth and Cornwall for over 20 years. He then held meetings in a non-denominational Plymouth mission with great evangelistic success. Being forced to deal with disturbances by exorcism, he was required to resign from running the Methodist Bible class, and was soon introduced to Pentecostals, being baptised in the Spirit in the 'Gloryland Assembly'. After this Trout started a church in his house in 1959, which began as a prayer meeting.

His significant healing ministry began in 1960 while preaching in Bristol, but he also felt that the Lord told him to help build an 'underground army', a command which has been issued since the early church and largely ignored by powerful centralising church leaders. After prevaricating for a while, Trout left the mission and formally established the *All For Christ Fellowship* in 1962 in his home; this cut back his itinerant ministry within Methodism. Gradually he established Sunday meetings and also conferences, beginning in 1962 at Paignton. The conferences enabled him to meet other significant men, such as GW North and Bill Grant, and to minister further afield.

What is encouraging about Trout is his passion for reality and holiness, and many have testified of the great power in his ministry. His burden for revival and repentance increased as he neared his death in 1968 and his house-church, though less influential, is on a par with Lillie's as an important precursor of what followed. However, like the other movements, his doctrine is erroneous in several areas.

Summary of these men and movements

What is unusual about these folk is that, though associated or influenced by historic Pentecostalism, they did not consider themselves as Pentecostals, nor would they readily submit to traditional Pentecostal theology. Most did not want to be part of denominationalism, while some were strongly averse to Pentecostal eschatology (Dispensationalism), let alone key theological errors. There were already independent house-churches in a Pentecostal mould led by independent Pentecostal evangelists who considered themselves to be Pentecostal, even if not ordained a such, but this new move in the late 50s and 60s was not a part of that. Something fresh was happening where there was a desire for life in the Spirit (felt to be the province of Pentecostals) associated with a desire for fellowship in homes (believed to be the strength of the Brethren). Some (like Lillie and Wallis) were clearer on this than others, but all were heading in this direction.

In all this they were really reaching out for the Biblical structure of the early church accompanied by the spiritual life of the early church. Independent house-churches are not the province of the Brethren, but are the apostolic norm. Mutual edification and fellowship participation requires, not a Pentecostal baptism in the Spirit (never demanded by any apostle and when taught does not refer to a subjective experience – 1 Cor 12:13), but the active ministry of believers filled with the Spirit who care about serving others.

However, not all who were interested in spiritual revitalisation understood about Biblical churches.

The contemporary institutional renewal movement

The Fountain Trust

At this time (1960s-70s) we must remember that many still had hopes for the renewal of denominational churches and Michael Harper formed the *Fountain Trust* to promote this between 1964-1980 in conferences and literature; its magazine *Renewal* began in 1966. Despite requests from Harper, David Lillie resisted getting formally involved, still hoping for the restored NT church and believing denominations to be outside God's plan. However, many others did remain in the churches for a very long time, trying to reform dead works from within, and particularly hoping for the emergence of Charismatic spiritual gifts. Much later Harper was very disillusioned with the lack of Renewal reform in the institutional churches and joined the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Renewal meetings, celebrations and conferences would be organised outside the main church to promote Charismatic things, but without any commitment for folk to leave the denomination. A sort of quasi-denominational stream began to appear where people got their shot in the arm outside the church but remained loyal to it [after the renewal meetings faded, folk substituted Restorationist celebrations and Bible Weeks]. In this milieu there were many Charismatic independent preachers who spoke at various meetings, like Denis Clark, Campbell McAlpine, Edgar Trout and Arthur Wallis. A few independent Charismatic churches did get started but not many.

A key problem with the Fountain Trust was that from the start it promoted ecumenism. Holding the belief that unity is based on a common experience, Roman Catholic speakers and writers were utilised by the Trust and one headlined at *The International Conference* at Guildford in 1971 where the Charismatic Movement was said to have 'come of age'. The Trust also collaborated with the Catholic National Service Committee after its formation in 1971. In those days this was a bridge too far, and it hindered progress for Harper.

This is the final significant influence for Restorationism. It must be observed that the Charismatic Movement was heretical and ecumenical at root. Virtually all the leaders who were promoting Charismatic ideas were Arminian in their Gospel, which is not surprising since Pentecostalism is Arminian. But many were also Dispensational and several held serious heretical ideas such as Methodist sinless perfectionism, *Oneness* theology or Latter Rain errors. This was the hotbed where the shoots of the Charismatic Movement, and subsequent Restorationist Movement, grew. It was some time before people with an essential Reformed theology embraced either movement. However, in time this did happen with men like Peter Lewis of Nottingham, close friend of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Stanley Jebb (Dunstable) or Terry Virgo, though Lewis and Jebb wisely stayed fairly aloof from close connections with any movement. Later on a more formal Reformed Charismatic grouping developed including such leaders as Greg Haslam, but this emerging group has now been largely absorbed into the current version of Restorationism.

Other works and movements

We must also remember that there were a few denominational churches, usually Anglican or Baptist, where the pastor was baptised in the Spirit. While this usually meant that the leader was ostracised, in some cases he had the loyalty of his people and the whole church accepted Charismatic things. Such was the case for David Pawson in Guildford (previously Chalfont St Peter), David Watson in Cambridge and then York or Colin Urquhart in Luton.

Gradually more such leaders led their churches into 'renewal', such as Barney Coombs and Vic Gledhill in Basingstoke, Henry Tyler in Felixstowe, Ilford but especially Hangleton (Hove), Harold Owen in Reading, followed later by David Brown and Mike Pusey in Aldershot. While not within the remit of this article, these men were associated with Charismatic house-churches at various levels, not least in speaking at conferences, fraternals and teaching through their books. Some, like Pawson and Urquhart, went on to leave the denomination and form or work in independent churches. By the early 70s there were many Anglican, Baptist and a few Methodist churches that were Charismatic.

By the mid-60s ex-Salvationist John Noble was emerging as a significant leader in the Essex region, who was gradually coming to understand the church message of Wallis and Lillie. After being baptised in the Spirit in Bethnal Green in 1961, his rise as a leader followed a prophecy by Cousen, in Ilford Elim Church in 1964, which said that the fivefold ministries of Ephesians 4 would be raised up from that meeting.

Lillie's last conference in 1965 (see later) was on the theme of apostleship and McAlpine was now a co-convenor with Wallis/Lillie. It was also the first conference they had organised outside Devon, being held in Herne Bay. Barney Coombs, GW North and Willie Burton attended. Many Brethren folk were receiving the Pentecostal experience and then ousted from their assemblies, adding to the numbers looking for fellowship. Ex-Brethren David Tomlinson was baptised in the Spirit in 1965 in one of North's meetings. David Mansell and Hugh Thompsen were also from a Brethren background. There was a general acceptance that the gifts of the Spirit must not be side-tracked into personal enjoyment in fringe meetings, but must be utilised to build and equip the church so that it might function properly.

In 1970 there was a conference in Paignton, Devon called *Our Generation* for 50 leaders, which comprised all the men who would subsequently lead the key Restoration works. Also around this time a group of men who had been baptised in the Spirit began meetings around London. Gradually these men came together in a loose fellowship and published a magazine called '*Fulness*' from 1970-1982. These included: Graham Perrins, Gerald Coates, David Mansell, John Noble, Mike Pusey, John MacLauchlan, George Tarleton and Maurice Smith (by this time in Chigwell). Mansell was also very active as a prophet in this company, but he later became more identified with Bryn Jones.

An informal group known affectionately as '*The London Brothers*' developed around 1970 which includes those just mentioned plus Terry Virgo (who was actually based in Brighton but commuted to London), with John Noble definitely emerging as the major figure at that time. Though Sid Purse was involved in these early diverse gatherings he, like Lambert, did not like the organised unity that was emerging and withdrew. The influence of Chard in Restoration groups waned after this time.

It was then that a small meeting of minor importance accidentally kick-started a whole new movement.

The emergence of Restorationism

The precursors

David Lillie

The burden of David Lillie was the restoration of the NT church in the formation of new house-churches where all the Charismatic gifts would be featured. This followed from his background in Brethren teaching (he was a friend of GH Lang), his personal Pentecostal

baptism in the Spirit in 1941 and his association with Classic Pentecostals (he was close to Pentecostal missionary Willie Burton and later to teacher Cecil Cousen).

Lillie met Cecil Cousen in 1953. Cousen was a direct link to Latter Rain ideas having been a Pentecostal pastor for a time in Ontario between 1949-51 and being very influenced by the movement in its heyday; his new ideas helped to force him out of the Apostolic Church to begin a new revivalist work in Bradford at Dean House. As well as speaking at many conferences and meetings, Cousen was on the advisory council of the Fountain Trust. His Latter Rain influence was to later affect many churches. Lillie and Arthur Wallis were also slightly influenced by the Apostolic Church (including ex-leaders Edgar Parkyns, H David Edwards & Cousen), the smallest of the English Pentecostal churches, but the only one to apply the ministries of Ephesians 4 to the modern church in an authoritarian way dominated by apostles.

Despite his Pentecostal views about Charismatic gifts, Lillie was utterly opposed to authoritarianism and never emphasised the role of apostles. What Lillie (as well his friends Arthur Wallis and Campbell McAlpine) was interested in was reforming church structures, and not introducing new discipleship doctrines. However, while he was a catalyst for different men and movements, and a great corespondent, Lillie was not a preacher and did not carry sufficient weight to exercise any meaningful control for the better over men he influenced in his conferences who developed these doctrines in the UK; however, he was deeply respected and wrote some wryly observed books.

Lillie's fellowship at Countess Wear, beginning in 1949, was probably the prototype meeting of what was to follow, being Pentecostal in the promotion of the gifts of the Spirit but based on Brethren teachings of non-denominational churches and the priesthood of all believers. While his friend Ren Jackman's meeting in Topsham was an independent Pentecostal work, Lillie's group was a new thing - Pentecostalism with a desire for the restoration of the NT church. It was greatly influenced by GH Lang's teaching on church life, particularly his book *The Church of God*.

As an aside, some critics of Lillie (such as Trichia Tillin, in the article *Bread & Games*, whose works are filled with factual errors) are completely mistaken in attributing Manifest Sons of God (MSG) heresy to him. While he may inadvertently have helped to be a conduit for some Latter Rain ideas in his conferences I can vouch that he has no MSG ideas. Just because someone uses the word 'sonship' does not mean that they have bought into the teaching of William Branham and others on end-time apostles and a global, supernaturally powerful church. Scripture uses the word many times but does not promote MSG doctrine. Neither did Austin Sparks teach this rogue doctrine. What they were both concerned with was the church restored in a Biblical manner, and thus coming to the fulness of Christ in the way that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:13. The goal of ministry is to equip the saints to become the fulness of Christ, a perfect man – but this is never achieved in this life. Indeed, Lillie has vigorously criticised the apostolic doctrines and practices that emerged out of Restoration in books such as, *Restoration ... Is This Still On God's Programme*, which Tillin has failed to read or learn from. Lillie also tried to persuade the early restoration men from going down that road. To blame him is ironic, wrong and unfair. Lillie's phraseology is more likely to stem from his mentor GH Lang's teaching in his book *Manifest Sons* (which has nothing to do with authoritarian leaders but the rewards of obedient, overcoming, disciples of all sorts), and Lang was bitterly opposed to Pentecostalism, though theoretically open to a Biblical expression of spiritual gifts.

In 1951 Lillie made friends with Arthur Wallis, who was to have a more significant role in what happened next.

Arthur Wallis

Lillie's Brethren influenced friend Arthur Wallis was considered a better teacher, though this is over-emphasised, and he became a sort of elder-statesmen to the men that followed. While he could have exercised some restraint over what followed, he failed to do so and accidentally helped to create a monster, much to the deep regret of Lillie. Wallis died before he saw the movement fully turn into a monolith, but I believe was having misgivings at the end. Lillie (now in his 90s) deeply regrets the way the Restoration Movement developed and is still championing independent house-churches.

In 1958 Wallis admitted that it was Lillie that had the greater vision for a restored NT church, Wallis was originally more interested in revival and was famous for his 1956 book on the subject (*In the Day of Thy Power*). Gradually Lillie convinced him of the importance of a Biblical restoration of the church and his Keswick-type aspirations for revival were modified. After a series of small day-conferences in Countess Wear, where Cousen often spoke, Lillie and Wallis hosted a series of national conferences which were to impact all the major leading figures in the early Restoration Movement. Attendance was by invitation only and those who came were virtually all leaders with a measure of some influence over others.

The first was in 1958 in Exeter entitled, *The Church of Jesus Christ: Its Purity, Pattern and Programme in the Context of Today*. Though its purpose was to wait on God and exchange ideas, the 25 people who attended were affected by Charismatic ideas, particularly by Cousen's speech. Graham Perrins dates his involvement in the Restoration scene from that time. There were two other key conferences that followed: at Belstone in 1961 and Mamhead Park, Exeter in 1962, which had 70 attendees (where Wallis first met Bryn Jones); plus a final less significant one in 1965. In these Wallis spelled out the double objectives of learning about church from Brethren teaching and learning about Charismatic gifts to use in the church from Pentecostal teachings. This was summarised as the church needing revival and reformation. In affirming this they clearly believed that what was needed was a new movement that was better than both these historic denominations, but one that would be organic and that would not lead to a new sectarian denomination. Those that received the gift of the Spirit through Cousen's ministry at these conferences would certainly have been receiving whatever the spiritual force was behind Latter Rain. The proof of this is seen in its emergence in later Restorationism (see later).

The essence of these conferences was that the churches needed:

1. The baptism of the Spirit. [Pentecostalism]
2. The supernatural gifts of the Spirit. [Pentecostalism]
3. A return to the NT principles about church. [Brethrenism]

Remember that this was before the Charismatic Movement began in England, and the first conference took place long before it began in America.

This is the basis of Wallis' later claim that Restorationism did not learn its key principles from Americans. However, this is debatable since it was through root American ideas and contacts that they had been baptised in the Spirit in the first place; Wallis did not even speak in tongues until 1961. It is also unquestionable that Americans in the 70s had a strong influence, as we shall see; especially regarding the discipleship/shepherding doctrines.

Ern Baxter

Another ex-Latter Rain minister very active in the UK in the 70s was Ern Baxter. He had once been the assistant to William Branham at the height of his healing tours, but even

Baxter became disenchanted with what he saw and eventually left in disgust. Baxter was to have a very significant influence over Bryn Jones and all who attended the Dales Bible Weeks where he spoke with great power. Baxter was friendly with Lillie but even the two of them together, at an informal meeting in a Brighton hotel in the late 70s or early 80s, could not stop the authoritarian way Restorationism was going as it developed into rigid institutionalism.

The Classical Pentecostal Influence

We must clarify this claim of many (not just Wallis) that the British Charismatic Movement did not originally have any significant links with American Pentecostalism. This is often said to suggest that it was a sovereign move of God independent from the radical excesses of what was still believed in the 1960s to be heretical by most evangelicals. However, this denial of a link is false. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and the flowering of the modern Charismatic Movement, especially in the Apostolic and Prophetic Movement (now the New Apostolic Reformation) which is the new form of Restorationism, is the fulness of Latter Rain teachings. We have seen that Cousen brought these ideas from Canada while Baxter worked with Branham. Many early Charismatics had close links with English Pentecostal leaders who were the direct result of American Pentecostalism. Cousen's father had worked with Smith Wigglesworth and was a pioneer of the Apostolic Church in England (early Pentecostalism, founded in 1916). Edgar Parkyns was another former member of the Apostolic Church who greatly influenced Wallis. Lillie had close connections with Pentecostals, as did many others. Bryn Jones was ex-Assemblies of God. David du Plessis visited England as a Pentecostal ambassador, spending a month here in 1964. Others followed, such as Jean Stone and Dennis Bennett (the American Charismatic Movement was directly associated with Pentecostalism; Bennett was baptised in the Spirit after a Pentecostal laid hands on him). Michael Harper deliberately combined Pentecostal ideas with his traditional denominationalism. We could continue in this vein. There is no doubt that the early Charismatic Movement was directly influenced by American Pentecostalism, but the emerging Restorationist churches deepened this influence with direct links to radical American Pentecostalists, as well shall see.

The Brethren Influence

We have already noted the major input of ex-Brethren leaders in the development of house-churches and also for the beginnings of Restorationism. Many of the Restoration leaders were also ex-Brethren, like Arthur Wallis, Gerald Coates, David Mansell, David Tomlinson, Graham Perrins and Hugh Thompson. Maurice Smith was ex-Honor Oak working with T Austin Sparks and though Sparks was originally a Baptist his church had imbibed many Brethren ideas and can be considered neo-Brethren. In 1967 Smith, with Ted Crick, established an influential non-denominational work in Canterbury.

To those names must be added two more ex-Brethren leaders who made a big impact in the 60s-70s, these were itinerant preachers Denis Clarke and Campbell McAlpine. Straddling the gap between the Renewal Movement in the historic church and the radical Restorationism that was forming, they were trusted by all sides for their experience and wisdom. McAlpine had even presided over a small revival in San Jose, California at one point. Between 1959 and 1964 Wallis and McAlpine had preached in New Zealand to encourage 'Spirit Filled Christians', though their ministry was seen as very divisive by the Brethren Movement. Though Wallis tried to gather Charismatic Christians into a new restored church this never happened, however a number of independent house-churches arose who were disaffected by traditional Brethren Dispensationalism. The fragmentation persisted for decades, but the point is that it was house-churches that emerged, not a new institution, though Restorationism has a strong hold today. It is fair to conclude that Wallis

must have learned some lessons from this, perhaps influencing the later emphasis upon covenant relationships necessary amongst leaders in order for a wider work to succeed.

The beginning of Restorationism

Wallis' gatherings of leaders

Restorationism started as an informal gathering of seven men in February 1972 to study the prophetic scriptures under Arthur Wallis. Curiously, this vision was the result of a change in Wallis' thinking from his traditional Brethren Dispensationalism to a more triumphal Postmillennialism. This idea would later dominate Restoration thinking. The gathering was originally six: Wallis himself plus Bryn Jones, Peter Lyne, David Mansell, Graham Perrins and Hugh Thompson, but John Noble was latter added, after much discussion as to his suitability. Out of this came a covenant of mutual commitment to each other.

Instead of chiefly discussing prophecy, what happened was developing a doctrine of restored Charismatic church life. In time these men came to be convinced that God had set them apart to be apostles for this new church and this was the tipping point from which Restoration began. Bryn Jones gave authority to the common feeling by prophesying, *'Seven shall be your number and thrice ye shall meet'*.

There was a development of Pentecostal ideas where the *logos* needed to be added to *rhema*; in other words teaching from God's word (*logos*) in the church also required the support of prophecy. This false idea (probably emanating from Watchman Nee) became much more prominent in later Word Faith teachings, but it is based on a grammatical fallacy; *logos* and *rhema* are used interchangeably in the Greek NT for 'word'! What this idea actually does do is affirm the authority of certain men! Though meant as a joke, it is ironic that they called themselves, 'The Magnificent Seven'.

The separation within Restorationism

Despite Jones' prophecy, the seven was doubled to fourteen [hence, 'The Fabulous Fourteen'], which included Gerald Coates, George Tarleton, Barney Coombs, Maurice Smith, Ian McCulloch, John MacLauchlan & Campbell McAlpine. Many consider this change to be a grave error by Wallis; indeed Wallis later admitted this himself [*Restoration Magazine*, 'Springs of Restoration, Part 2', Sept/Oct 1980]. However, it seems that McAlpine was hardly involved and drifted away. Most men in this group began to develop a more formal style of church out of their previous contacts with house-churches, Jones in Bradford, Mansell in Houghton, Coates in Surrey, Lyne in Bristol etc. Even Tarleton later admitted that this was the beginning of a new denominationalism, repeatedly spoken of in those days as, *'the new thing that God is doing'*.

In these churches there was a great emphasis upon the authority of leaders, and especially an unbiblical view of apostles, plus the importance of discipleship and submission to elders. Words like, 'shepherding', 'commitment', 'being under authority' and 'covering' became commonplace, largely promoted by *Restoration* magazine, tapes and books. The view developed that a Biblical Christian under God's authority was only one who was in a submitted relationship to an elder appointed by one of these new apostles – i.e. in one of the new denominations. The corollary was that Christians who were not in such a committed apostolic relationship were not properly related to God in real terms. There arose a widespread feeling amongst the many house-churches that they were not Biblical if not related to an apostle.

The seven and fourteen really applied the type of separation of Paul and Barnabus to ministry in Acts 13 directly to themselves, and said so publicly – but there is no

comparison. In reality the fourteen had ordained themselves by common consent to have authority over the church in Britain at that time. Later the fourteen became 28, but this group did not have the same significance.

This idea had partly arisen from contacts with Americans who had developed the Shepherding Movement there: namely the Fort Lauderdale Five: Derek Prince, Charles Simpson, Bob Mumford, Don Basham and Ern Baxter. Wallis downplays this, but other leaders present insist that it was the main source. Baxter and Mumford were to have the greatest influence in the UK, speaking in various conferences and northern Bible Weeks. Individual leaders also developed their own relationships with other Americans, such as Charles Schmitt, Orvil Swindoll and Wayne Drain. The key source for all the discipleship doctrines was the Argentinian Juan Carlos Ortiz and his book, *Call To Discipleship* was later published in England; Ortiz was certainly the inspiration for the Fort Lauderdale Five. However, Derek Prince's slim paperback, *Discipleship, Shepherding & Commitment* probably had more influence with English readers.

In the early 70s ex-Brethren Graham Perrins was considered a major apostle and also edited *Fulness* magazine. By 1974 clear new denominations had arisen with satellite smaller churches in union with the larger group, the very thing that they had originally set out to avoid: Jones in the north, Noble in London and Perrins in the west.

Alongside these burgeoning churches, now established as large congregations with very formal platform ministry, there were a number of large conventions. Chief among these in mid to late 70s were the Capel Bible Week in Surrey (from 1970-1976, initiated by ex-Plymouth Brethren leader Fred Pride), where Baxter spoke in 1974, and the Lakes and then Dales Bible Weeks. The success of the Dales put Capel out of business.

In 1976 the fourteen split, making the two existing streams not only more formal but often quite antagonistic to each other. Part of the reason for the split was the empire-building of the Americans. The relationships in the fourteen were always going to be awkward with such dominant personalities; Jones and Noble were always going to be in some sort of antagonism, no matter how committed they were to relationships. As the Fort Lauderdale leaders became more involved, especially Baxter and Mumford, they proposed a resolution to this clash – both Jones and Noble should submit to Wallis (who had no apostolic gift) while Wallis should submit to an American. Noble utterly refused, rightly explaining that Wallis wasn't up to the job, but ultimately Jones wasn't up to control by Americans either.

There were other problems, such as the affirmation of Perrins and MacLauchlan that prophets were primary; even liberal Noble could not accept that. Open discord broke out between Baxter and some of the London brothers in a Bible Week at Bath, leaving them aggrieved. Mansell fell into open sin and nobody dealt with it effectively. The formal split between the leaders around Jones and those around Coates /Noble was a letter from Wallis which effectively excluded them by disassociating himself from their ideas and practices. There was some lingering bitterness.

After Baxter failed to prevent this split, involvement with the Fort Lauderdale group diminished, being severed in 1979 and the local leaders, based around Jones in the north and Coates / Noble in the south became more authoritative. Jones established his own magazine, *Restoration* in 1975. For a time, between the late 70s and mid 80s, the Bradford group was the most important and influential being better organised, more Pentecostal and more authoritative; certainly Jones later confided to David Lillie that those were his 'glory days'. For a time Wallis was closely involved in Bradford and edited *Restoration*, but later went to assist a new work in Southampton with Tony Morton before he died.

Coates' eventually emerged as the chief leader in the London based group, which was more relaxed, less committed to the Bible and less structured; his church, 'Kingdom Life' was in Cobham. John Noble was initially an apostle working from Romford with his own connection, 'Team Spirit'. Initially this southern group seemed less able to organise large Bible Weeks but later had a couple of successes with the *Festival* conventions. Coates was definitely upset that he was never asked to participate in the Dales or the later Downs Bible Weeks. He seemed oblivious to the fact that his lack of Biblicity prevented Jones or Virgo from trusting him to preach. Perhaps this inability prompted Coates' closer relations with non-Restoration organisations and churches than either Jones or Virgo (though Virgo is much more open such relations today than in the 80s). Noble established contacts with Roman Catholics. After 1984 a number of people pulled away from Noble in Essex, including Nick Butterworth and Maurice Smith. For many living in the pressure cooker of kingdom relationships in all groups, there was a realisation that a ghetto mentality had taken over from normal living. This is still the case today where Restoration members have no social interaction with anyone except those from their church. No wonder that evangelism is ineffective and methodologies grasped with anxiety, to no avail. George Tarleton called the whole thing a delusion and left.

By the late 70s, other men who were once part of the London Brothers and the wider *Fulness* group fragmented: Peter Lyne went to New Zealand; John MacLauchlan disagreed with John Noble about the covering of the Yeovil church while Ian McCulloch went off on his own. Graham Perrins decided to leave and work with MacLauchlan in the west, retaining an association with American Wayne Drain – both men and their churches later fell apart. However, for a time they produced a new prophetic journal, *Proclaim* – which was more scholarly than others, and had a significant influence on small groups in the west. Virgo and Mansell allied with Jones. *Fulness* magazine tried to continue, renamed *Dovetail* and edited by Nick Butterworth, but fizzled out in the early 80s. The *Fulness* grouping became disparate and disorganised at the time that Jones' ministry became strong and well-structured and while Virgo's ministry took off like a rocket, soon to leave both groups behind.

A separate history could be written about the development of Coates' team and today his 'Pioneer People' agglomeration is more organised and the largest syndicate of Restoration-type churches (sometimes called 'New Churches' in this stream) outside of New Frontiers, a work which we will now consider.

Coastlands / New Frontiers

In the late 70s Terry Virgo was encouraged by Bryn Jones to develop a new apostolic work in the south east centred around what he had already established in the Art College then Hove Town Hall celebrations plus the Downs Bible Week (started 1979). He had close associations with his own church in Seaford, Henry Tyler in Hangleton (Hove), some brothers in Haywards Heath and David Fellingham, then assisting Ian Barclay in St Luke's Brighton. The opportunity to get a building in central Hove enabled Tyler to split from Hangleton Baptist (where friction had developed when the other pastor returned from Africa), and Fellingham to split from St Luke's. This produced a congregation of about 200 (big in those days). To this was soon added a small house church led by myself. These three strands were the beginnings of Clarendon Church, now Church of Christ the King.

Shortly after this in 1981 Tony Morton, closely associated with Jones, started the 'Cornerstone' in Southampton. Other smaller works followed. In those days Bradford still held the most influence, but this was starting to wane. Virgo's Coastlands ministry became more and more organised, requiring offices, full-time administrators and managers of

various sorts. His chief administrator, Nigel Ring, proved to be a key man and a methodical organiser while retaining a quiet and trustworthy character. Through various contacts and promotional events Virgo was to become the chief focus of Restorationism in the UK. Gradually the Bradford church became less and less important and the Restoration magazine folded. Some Dispensationalists drew false conclusions from this; it had simply finished its purpose. However, Virgo's empire (now renamed *New Frontiers*) went from strength to strength, today comprising about 2,000 international churches. In the mid-to-late 80s Virgo forged a relationship with John Wimber and took over the organisation of the Signs & Wonders Conferences, this gave his ministry an even bigger impetus. However, amongst all this the ethos of his local church had completely disappeared under the welter of his apostolic purpose and mission strategy.

In the late 80s, when I left, completely disenchanted at the failure of the originally declared strategy, there was a gradual exodus of nearly all the original key non-full-time leaders, the men who had chiefly developed the church on the ground. 110 valuable men of some sort of leadership capacity or potential left in fourteen months, according to the church administrator (not Ring, who was the apostolic team administrator). There was much sadness and a great deal of abuse, which we needn't discuss here; such is common in these types of heavy-handed works. The church went from being fellowship-based and originally envisioned to form a church on every Brighton street, to being a centralised, formal, frozen congregation, emotional, entertainment-based, superficial work based upon men. It had become worse than that which the original members had left to avoid. The idea of the modern Charismatic 'apostle' is equivalent to an Anglican archbishop and nothing like the ministry of a Biblical church-planting apostle. Indeed, I doubt that any of the modern Charismatic apostles have ever planted a church with their own bare hands from scratch.

Whatever the shortcomings, Virgo's New Frontiers is the largest and most powerful Restoration type agglomeration, still centred in Brighton but based in an expensively refurbished retail unit to the north of the city-centre. It claims to be a family of about 2,000 international churches, but I suspect that the direct influence of Virgo's apostolic authority varies enormously amongst them. Some of these churches were strategically planted, with various levels of success, while others were existing churches that chose to join forces with, or receive help from, Virgo's apostolic team.

A comparison of the ethos in the mid-1980s Restorationist churches		
Bryn Jones Group	Terry Virgo's Group	Gerald Coates' Group
Pentecostal root.	Baptist root	Brethren root.
Rigid methodical structure.	Rigid authoritarian structure.	Relaxed, structure.
Very well organised and managerial.	Well organised and managerial.	Less well organised, poor business management.
Formal leadership.	Formal leadership.	Relaxed attitude to leadership.
Arminian.	Calvinist (superficially).	Extreme Arminian.
No relationship with Charismatic Reformed leaders of standing.	Strong relationships with Charismatic Reformed leaders of standing.	No relationship with Charismatic Reformed leaders of standing.
The Bible is authoritative (if wrongly interpreted).	The Bible is authoritative (if wrongly interpreted).	The Bible is not the sole, nor even the chief, authority.
Upholds law and grace with caveats, as with Pentecostalism.	Affirms grace but tends to antinomianism.	Very antinomian.
Old fashioned Pentecostal mores.	Slightly worldly lifestyle of leaders.	Openly worldly lifestyle of leaders.
Publishes national magazine.	No national magazine.	No national magazine.
Able to organise effective Bible weeks.	Able to organise effective Bible weeks.	Unable to organise effective Bible weeks effectively until 1984.
Purchase of large, well-equipped buildings.	Purchase of large, well-equipped buildings.	Main buildings rented.

Virgo's ministry acceptable.	Jones' ministry initially acceptable; less so after mid 80s..	Coates' ministry not accepted by Jones or Virgo.
Not open to external church links.	Slightly open to external church links.	Very open to external church links.
Strong use of music and songwriters.	Strong use of music and songwriters.	Less successful use of music and songwriters (more so later).
Some developing international contacts and some old contacts.	Very strong international contacts and growing international structure.	Slight development of international contacts.
No great link to Wimber.	Strong link to Wimber by late 80s.	No great link to Wimber.
Commercially savvy.	Beginning to be commercially savvy. Very commercialised by end of 80s.	Less commercially savvy.

Bear in mind that this is a comparison of the situation in the mid-1980s; things have changed today.

Other independent Charismatic works

There are many individual churches and syndicates that have remained influential to a lesser or greater degree, whilst refraining from formal links with the two current main Restorationist works. Probably the most important of these is Roger Forster's 'Ichthus' group. Forster emerged from the Honor Oak Fellowship of T Austin Sparks but the original ethos was Open Brethren ideas coupled with Renewal. Sparks is still held in esteem by some members of Ichthus, though he would have been horrified at the teaching and practices in this group. Early on Forster had links with the *Fulness* group but gradually developed his own work, though he still has close relationships with Coates and others in that stream, partly through the mutual association with Graham Kendrick. Forster was particularly involved with the Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare (Territorial Spirits) doctrine and worked with Kendrick on the Praise Marches to implement this doctrine strategically. Like other Modern Charismatics he has no qualms about ecumenism. However, does not follow the discipleship and submission methods of New Frontiers or Pioneer and features women in leadership (especially his wife Faith) to a degree not found in either.

We could mention many more large churches, such as those in Basingstoke, Lincoln or Ewell, but this would be outside the scope of this paper. It must be remembered that though this paper examines the origins of Restorationism it is not a detailed history of this movement. The purpose of this article is to show the origins of the 70s house-church movement, explain how and by whom it was hijacked, and draw conclusions that are relevant to the contemporary scene.

What happened through these 30 years?

There was a gradual inculcation of Latter Rain doctrines and practices

The influence of people like Cecil Cousen, Ern Baxter, Bob Mumford and Derek Prince brought with them the baggage of Latter Rain heresies. While other early leaders such as, Campbell McAlpine and David Watson had a wider influence with a more moderate Charismatic emphasis, the streams that would later develop into Restorationism were more influenced by the radical Latter Rain men.

As an example let's look at the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit. This had been emphasised by Pentecostals for sixty years by the early 60s and was chiefly considered to be brought about by tarrying meetings. This was where people seeking the experience would gather to pray and consecrate themselves to God and wait for the power to fall; though this was unbiblical, at least there was no focus on men passing on power. Often this

would continue well into the night until, being more psychologically amenable through tiredness, something usually happened. I went to such a meeting as late as 1972 and left early after refusing to be cajoled by the Pentecostal leader who was ranting and chiding people to respond in a supernatural way. However, within a few years of this such meetings were unheard of and the standard Charismatic practice was to lay hands upon people and pray for them to be filled with the Spirit. Now while this had occurred many times before in private settings, it was the emphasis of Latter Rain that taught it was chiefly by the imposition of hands by a gifted leader which brought the gift of the Spirit and power. This is pure eastern paganism – transmission of spiritual power from an adept to a disciple by the imposition of hands.

There is no doubt that Cecil Cousen's teaching brought this new emphasis to the UK directly from Latter Rain sources in Canada. He not only passed this on in conference speeches, magazines and ministry, but also through his work with the Fountain Trust. The Fort Lauderdale men also followed these rogue teachings. This is an example where Pentecostal traditions were being changed by assimilating aspects of heretical Latter Rain teachers, producing a new set of norms in British Charismaticism.

Other emphases of Latter Rain were brought to the fore by the Fort Lauderdale men, especially Derek Prince. These included the idea of discipleship, spiritual authority, the necessity of exorcism of demons, fasting for spiritual power, covenanted commitment, end-time triumphalism, and the total submission of one's life to elders (heavy-shepherding). Many of these ideas had been outlawed or discouraged by Classical Pentecostals, just as the Assemblies of God banned Latter Rain in 1949; but gradually the radical wing of the British Charismatic Movement accepted them. Teachings like these, as well as radical church structures under 'apostles', distinguished Restorationists from Charismatic Renewal in other churches.

It should be noted that a sea change occurred at the beginning of Restorationism. The eschatological base of both the Brethren Church and Pentecostalism was Dispensationalism, a very negative, novel and heretical form of Premillennialism which began after 1830. The early pioneers of Restorationism were mainly steeped in Brethren ideas or were Pentecostals. With Arthur Wallis' ministry they were prompted to change this Dispensationalism for a new form of triumphant Postmillennialism, and this undergirded their whole ministerial ethos. Instead of things getting worse and worse in a great tribulation, the church was to get stronger and stronger until, under the ministry of end-time apostles and prophets, the kingdom of the Lord would fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (a prophecy actually related to Christ's return). Indeed, the term *Restorationism* is taken from Acts 3:21 (which is also related to the Second Coming). This positive view of the end seems to have been new and exciting to them, though some Puritans held a conservative form of Postmillennialism four hundred years earlier. What it did do was to excite and affirm their newly found 'apostolic' status as leaders; it also separated them from Classical Pentecostals.

While they saw some slender links with earlier appearances of the restoration of gifts and apostles, such as with Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church in the 1800s, this eschatology set Restorationists apart from their Dispensationalism. However, what this also did was to give them a very strong link to Latter Rain teachings which also affirmed, not only the ministry of end-time apostles and prophets, but also the triumphant success of these ministries in a global revival. Latter Rain set itself apart from Classical Pentecostalism not only by its eschatology, but also by its promotion of the primary leadership of apostles and prophets over syndicated churches. This enabled Restoration leaders to feel very comfortable with Latter Rain teachings. In time, even the most far-out

heresies of this aberrant group would be adopted by Restorationists, even outright pagan notions of coloured auras, magically appearing gold dust and oil on the skin, seeing glory on people and so forth.

The culmination of Latter Rain ideas came with John Wimber. Having set the stage in British Restorationism, church leaders were ready to accept teachings and practices that would have been immediately rejected out-of-hand ten or fifteen years earlier. The list of pagan ideas that came with the whole Signs & Wonders package is hard to believe, and yet the softened up Charismatic churches fell for it completely. From this base, the church now would fall for anything – literally, and soon followed the excesses and heresies associated with the Kansas City Prophets, the Toronto Experience, Pensacola, Promise Keepers, right up to Todd Bentley’s wicked and lying aberrations. All these are but the flowering of Latter Rain, itself rooted in the evil heresies of men like Franklin Hall and William Branham. For those unfamiliar with the heresies, I will mention a small sample of each in this table.

Latter Rain	Branham	Wimber
Faith creates new realities.	Denied the Trinity and held a modalistic view.	Denied the authority of the Bible; ' <i>God is greater than his word</i> '.
Pagans who fast will get prayers answered while Christians who fail to fast will not see answered prayer. Closing the eyes in prayer destroys faith.	Hell is not eternal punishment.	Accepted truth from extra-Biblical sources – such as demons, other religions, shamans.
Men can become immortal by ascending mystical degrees of growth, can hover, fly in space and be free from accidents. Coloured 'immortal' substances rest on those with faith. Raising the left hand enabled believers to smell Jesus and drive insects from houses.	Rebaptism in the name of Jesus only.	Called God and Christ a ' <i>force</i> '. Dishonoured the Lord Jesus; he once called him a ' <i>blasphemer</i> ' and said he sometimes had ' <i>no faith</i> '!
'Body-felt salvation' meant that sickness, tiredness and body-odour could be eliminated.	Equated the Bible with the Pyramids and astrology.	Had openly occult phenomena in his meetings; now exposed by co-workers.
Belief in the demonisation of believers	He claimed that Satan had sex with Eve and blamed women for evil in the world.	Endorsed heretics. Endorsed Hindu, pantheistic and Gnostic heresies.
Belief in a form of astrology.	He healed by clairvoyancy or channelling (via 'his angel') who gave him the word of knowledge and he always obeyed this 'angel' whom he disassociated from the Holy Spirit. He once met an occultist whom he said looked exactly like his 'angel'.	Accepted Catholic miracles, supported the Pope, loved Mary, believed in relics.
Advocated benefits of UFOs.	His followers were 'the Seed of God'.	Believed in ghosts, ancestor spirits, earthly gods, nymphs, dryads, planetary influences, natural (unchristian) healers, shamanism (witchcraft) etc.
Powerful praise & worship, emotionalism, the felt presence of God, singing in the Spirit.	He later baptised people in his own name.	Falling over is indicative of a work of God.
The use of personal directive prophecy.	He was the angel of Rev 3:14 and 10:7.	Believed in occult coloured auras.
A purified elite group of overcomers will manifest Christ and possess the Spirit without measure, will purge earth of resistance. They will redeem all creation, restore the earth and eventually overcome death.	His own co-workers accused him of fraud and occultism.	

The false practices and teachings in these groups and individuals can be multiplied, so great is the error in them. Yet today, many of these things are fully accepted by people who call themselves evangelical. For this reason they cannot identify false teachers and false

prophets when they arise. To this day, none of the Charismatic leaders who signed a document supporting the Kansas City Prophets (KCP) have repented – even though Wimber himself later rejected them and agreed that he had been deceived.

At the time of this document (1990), it was already known that the KCP had made great errors and that some (such as Bob Jones) were already guilty of gross sin. The signatories (which include Roger Forster, Terry Virgo and Gerald Coates) stated that they had examined them and their ministry and were satisfied that it was of God. This was despite the fact that one month earlier the KCP had confessed to 15 areas of error in their teaching and practice and Wimber admitted that there was evidence of the demonic in their ministry. Two (Paul Cain and Bob Jones, both Latter Rain men) were later deposed for gross sexual sin, alcoholism, spiritual abuse, sexual abuse, doctrinal error and fraud. Today they are ministering again, both have supported Todd Bentley. Yet in 1990 these men prophesied over most UK Charismatic leaders and elders and from that day a new level of deception reigned over the Restorationist churches. This prepared the way for the Toronto deception four years later. Paul Cain, who had ministered with Branham, brought the worst extremes of Latter Rain errors directly into the English church and ministered widely, even in Westminster Chapel, until his downfall.

Latter Rain has come of age and is flourishing in all streams of the New Apostolic Reformation, which includes the key British Restorationist networks, after initially being outlawed. This was enabled by the Restoration Movement.

House-churches gradually coalesced under a single church banner

This was often due to the inherent weakness of poor teaching or a lack of strategic direction in weak elders. Sometimes it was due to the absorption of a vision by an ‘apostolic’ figure, coupled with a desire for wider fellowship. The benefits of small group intimacy occasionally became outweighed by the desire for wider fellowship and participation in a larger mission. A key factor was the growth of a new type of worship not seen before, large praise meetings with new vibrant songs played by bands in large venues where singing in the Spirit would produce rhapsodies of worship. This is not possible in small house-churches. Though, in fact, all this emotional manipulation is unbiblical, fleshly and pagan (see later), in the late 70s early 80s it was new and very attractive. Many of us were fooled into thinking that we were closer to God and more able to give ourselves to him with this musical paraphernalia. The main problem was confusion of Old Covenant types and shadows, now cancelled, with New Covenant simple, spiritual reality.

So, for various reasons, small house-churches, one-by-one, became assimilated into some stream or another. Only a very few remained a going independent concern, but these usually degenerated into formal churches with buildings over time, the very thing that they had left in the beginning.

The churches gathered into conglomerates – usually under a single apostolic figure

As house-churches coalesced into, or joined with, larger churches in buildings, these churches either expanded under a dominant figure, or joined together under one man in a wider area. Various patterns emerged. Some Restoration church centres would remain as a mother church with smaller satellite churches around, with the smaller ones meeting altogether periodically. On occasion there was some diversity in these satellites and thus the whole work could be called a conglomeration. Some developed a large mother church with satellite meetings that were not designated as churches, rather congregations or such like. Some had a large central church that had no suburban meetings but only many cell groups in homes. These were agglomerations. It is interesting that house-churches which

remained independent and unstructured gradually disappeared, while the churches organised by men stood.

The syndicated churches grew into a more and more formal agglomeration

Eventually, the key pattern was to centralise all the members into one large church, often meeting in a retail park industrial unit, with various forms of smaller meetings developed ad hoc. Thus various apostolic or prophetic leaders would have a very large Sunday meeting in a big building to advertise (or authenticate) their leadership ministry to foreign church leaders to give them international credibility. Thus, over a period of about ten or so years, men had taken a move of God to build small churches meeting in homes on an organic base into a large, centralised, organised meeting to support their authority.

It has been observed, particularly by sociologist Max Weber, that a powerful charismatic leader who initiates a new movement by his personal charm and ability always ends up spawning an institutional structure. As Peter Lewis once said to me, *'The man with a message spawns a movement which becomes a monolith'*. This has been seen repeatedly in church history and it was inevitable that the groups founded upon key men like Jones and Virgo would become more and more institutionalised. This must happen, of necessity, to continue controlling the animal you have created.

What eventually emerged in Restoration was exactly the opposite of their original vision. In the 1961 conference convened by Lillie and Wallis in Belstone, Devon, Arthur Wallis (remember he was esteemed by all the Restoration apostles and chiefly originated their ideas) said the following:

History reveals that wherever the churches have come under central authority, sooner or later power has got into the hands of the wrong people. Sooner or later there is rigid conformity which limits the activity of the Spirit, and there quickly follows a decline in spirituality and the speedy dissemination of error. When each church is self-governed, there is much greater likelihood of the elders standing at the door and keeping error at bay. ... This vital principle of the self-sufficiency and completeness under Christ of each local church could save us from another denomination, from which may the Lord deliver us! ... Rule in the church is not to be a dictatorship. ... We should expect the Head to raise up from the midst of each local church all that it needs by way of ministry, and offices, and functions. It is not to be dependent on outside control, though warmly welcoming outside fellowship. [This quote from the original minutes transcribed by Lillie can also be found in, *Restoration – Is It Still On God's Programme?* David Lillie, p16-17, 85.]

In opposition to this, articles by various authors in Restoration Magazine, which were gathered together into a book by David Matthew as *Apostles Today* (1988), state the Restoration vision regarding apostolic ministry. Virgo categorically claims that elders, even if appointed by 'apostles', are unable to deal with all the issues arising in the local church without apostolic input. This bold assertion that one man can do better than a whole team of local, gifted, discerning elders, is the worst expression of pride I have ever seen. According to him, *'wrong emphases, spiritual coldness ... the creeping death of legalism ... mystic gnosticism'* can only be prevented by an 'apostle'. In fact this list is exactly the sort of criticisms I have previously made of so-called 'apostolic' works, including his own in Brighton. It is also the sort of criticism made by defectors from Restoration works such as Tarleton and Tomlinson. Any leader who claims to be *'the hub of the wheel into which all the spokes fit'* [*Apostles Today*, p52] ought to be disciplined for blasphemy, not submitted to without thinking. Christ is the centre of the church.

Scripture does not teach this one-man-focused leadership; in fact it teaches the opposite. God gives gifts of men to the church and pastor-teachers are elders who lead the local work. Scriptural information about church government, ministry, guidance and teaching is directed to elders. The equipping is done by elders. The need of the church in Crete (Titus 1:5) was elders not an apostle. The flock is given to the guardianship of shepherds, not some unnamed master of the shepherds. The deliverance from wolves and leading into rich pasture is the work of shepherds. Prov 11:14 tells us that the presence of many counsellors brings safety in decision-making; this is why a team of equal elders is the Biblical norm for church leadership. The claims of Virgo reject this, teaching that one specially gifted man is better than all the locally gifted counsellors. In historical practice, the strategies and counsel of formally accepted 'apostles' by Restoration groups have led to some of the worst disasters and cases of spiritual abuse England has ever known.

As an aside, it is interesting that the demand for intimacy, fellowship and house-meetings never dies. The power and emotionalism of the large meeting, being superficial, does not sustain affection. In 1984 the house groups around Bradford were so popular that Jones suspended them to concentrate attention on the central church. In the south, Virgo was persistently troubled by clamours for local expression of one sort or another and deflected this by constantly changing local strategies, but always concentrating on the centralised large gathering.

The syndicate leaders grew more and more authoritarian

Bloated with false impressions about their spiritual authority, these men (no matter how nice and humble they are personally) inevitably became more authoritarian and business-like. With huge overheads, money became a constant feature in ministry, requiring tithes, gift-days, merchandising, conferences and so on to generate the cash to keep the salaries and buildings going. After trying to dispel rumours of 'heavy-shepherding' and leadership failures in the early 80s, in fact by the 90s the main works had become more like corporations run by chief executives than anything seen in scripture. The word of the apostle or prophet was actually seen to be the voice of God and it became extremely difficult for anyone to criticise a strategy developed by him. Even when these strategies failed one-by-one, there was no enquiry, no accountability, but the church just moved on to the next project, and the next.

Social control

Democracy was repeatedly condemned by Restoration leaders, despite consensual decision making being evidenced as a chief feature in Acts 15. The level that Restoration leaders controlled the lives of church members has even been discussed by sympathetic authors. Andrew Walker notes that, *'Restoration religion circumscribes the lives of its followers to a far greater extent than is typical not only in the mainline denominations but also in the majority of Pentecostal churches'* [p124]. Usually this membership commitment is given willingly until there is a straw to break the camel's back. This may be due to too much pressure applied, too many demands on time, family breakdowns, frustration at the demands of mission strategy over church building / relationships, or the unrighteous behaviour of leaders which is attempted to be covered up.

The level of leadership control has been frightful. Though taught as a covenanted commitment to one another, the commitment of church members was really subservience to leaders, and this easily leads to abuse. There are well documented case studies of such abuse in several books and articles, so we do not need to outline them here; however, we can summarise some of these unbiblical actions as:

- Demanding that people move house to a certain area.
- Demanding that people leave or change jobs.

- Telling couples that they should or should not marry.
- Refusing some people to have contact with certain other people.
- Demanding that members pledge *total* obedience to the leaders.
- Demanding control over personal life issues. [N.B. Ron Trudinger of Basingstoke church, *'Every man needs another man with delegated authority as a shepherd over his personal life ... a voice from God.'* *Built To Last*, p126.]
- Controlling certain people's money, demanding money for certain reasons.

While some leaders claim that this was never the case, it certainly was the case in many streams and groups. It was sometimes claimed that the story of an elder demanding a certain type of wallpaper in someone's lounge was a joke; I have actually met that somebody and it is a true story. We could add many more items to this list; no independent commentator seriously doubts that Restoration always was, and still is, manipulative and authoritarian. 'Apostles' that have left the movement admit this (such as David Tomlinson). Tomlinson himself has spoken derisively of a leader who retained copies of all the house keys of the members.

Sooner or later this level of control hits thoughtful, mature individuals, even if it takes many years, and they leave. There are even refuge centres set up by ex-restoration leaders to help people overcome spiritual abuse. This is why these works currently are overpopulated with young people and students who are not yet jaded, and it is why those situated in large student towns do well – the membership is always in flux; as many coming in leave by the back door, often when the college course ends. The large building bought to seat 1100 for Virgo's HQ in a town containing over 30,000 students many years ago is still only half full and has never been more than three-quarters full; contrary to prophecies that it would be. These works, despite all their efforts, find a sort of levelling-off point, above which they do not significantly rise.

Many of the leaders who walked away from both types of Restorationist groups did so because of the social manipulation caused by authoritarian leaders. Whether we consider David Tomlinson leaving Bryn Jones, Nick Butterworth and Maurice Smith leaving John Noble or George Tarleton leaving them all, as well as the thousands of unnamed members who left all streams over the years, the key reason was leadership manipulation, frustration, disappointment and the burnout caused by heavy-shepherding. The 'apostles' probably do not realise this and feel that they are simply applying what they believe to be Biblical leadership; the problem is that they are deceived and this is not Biblical leadership by any stretch of the imagination. Another valid question is, 'Who disciplines the "apostles"?' While Restoration 'apostles' have given various answers to this, in practice the answer is, 'No one'. A comparison with cults in the way leadership is maintained, at all levels, is inevitable.

Biblical apostles do not demand total submission; even Paul persuaded his churches when changes needed to be made (2 Cor 5:11), acting like a nursing mother (1 Thess 2:7) or a father (Gal 4:19). Authoritarianism cannot work in a family environment, and that is what the church primarily is. Modern 'apostles' fail to understand this and see the church under their control as an empire or a battleship. In any case, there is no modern counterpart to apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21:12); a Biblical apostle of the church (2 Cor 8:23) is a missionary, as we have explained. Furthermore, churches are small, meeting in homes and are led by a small team of equal elders; there is no such thing as a senior elder, let alone someone higher. The whole Restorationist structure is a figment of man's imagination and utterly unbiblical.

Social control results from the Restorationist empire being equivalent to a theocracy; ‘apostles’ hear from God and pass instructions down the line of various leaders (pyramid hierarchy) to get the people to do their will, which being from God is supposedly ‘safe’. Well, the many failures, mistakes, errors, deceptions, frauds and sins over the years prove that this is very unsafe. Just as the Charismatic delusion about hearing from the Spirit by a subjective impression is unsafe (it can merely be man’s feelings or demonic manipulation – how can one tell?), so the impressions of an ‘apostle’ are also unsafe. Leaders can only teach what God commands in his word and encourage believers to apply God’s word to themselves; truth sets men free not the ideas of man. Failing to understand this, ‘apostles’ and authoritarian elders gave instructions, or even commands, to church members thinking that they are God’s mouthpiece, and usurping the authority that belongs to Christ alone. Peter’s words, ‘Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock’ (1 Pt 5:2-3) ring out as a warning to this [‘Overseer’ does not have the meaning of manager but emphasises the care of others]. Would that church leaders led by example and not by usurped authority.

Independent thinking lower-level leaders were pushed out

In the course of all this authoritarian development, the men that God always uses most – the mavericks, the independent thinkers, the questioning, those that do not fear men – were gradually elbowed out. The very men that vibrant works need to provide the catalyst for change and make leaders accountable, were removed; usually they left out of sheer frustration. Those leaders that remained were seen as humble and quiet (which they often were) but were chiefly compliant men who would never rock the boat. While there are a few exceptions to this, in the main, authoritarian leaders will pick acquiescent men, close friends or family to trust the work to.

God’s people are always more important than strategies

This is one of the key differences between house-churches and large Restoration works. Restoration churches are based upon an ‘apostolic’ vision and strategy, and in following this people always suffer. Tremendous pressure is put upon families and working people in order to give money and use up their time. In some sober moments this has even been accepted by a few ‘apostles’, though nothing was done to stop it continuing.

It is a disgrace that, in order to follow an ‘apostolic’ strategy, the Lord’s people are damaged, or even abused in extreme cases (and there have been many). The ‘apostles’ must believe that their wisdom is of vital importance or they would not do this (hopefully), but this is an abuse of the qualification for leadership. Church leaders (which are only ever elders not anyone else) are to ensure the safety, cherishing, nourishing and spiritual development of the members; to fail in taking care of this edification is sin. But Restoration leaders go much further by failing to develop and then actively hinder both ministry progress and nourishment. Further still by bringing in, or encouraging listening to, heretical teachers (such as Paul Cain or Todd Bentley) their people are badly damaged by deception. Elders are supposed to keep wolves out of the sheepfold, not invite them in to eat the sheep!

The problem is that ‘apostles’ prioritise strategy over pastoral needs – they ignore their own people. In the pride of their self-belief as God’s mouthpiece they reveal a lack of care about the sheep – the very thing they are called by God to concentrate upon. When a large number of mature, gifted pastors left one large work, the ‘apostle’ dismissed this huge exodus as merely, ‘autumn leaves’. To treat men so callously, who had given their lives to build the church and care for the flock over ten years, is worse than shocking, it is a tragedy.

I am genuinely fearful that on the Last Day there will be a terrible judgment on such leaders. Every single case of damage done to a church member will have to be accounted for before the Great Judge, and there will then be no excuses. This should make these men tremble and seek repentance. Any church system that continually damages the flock in the slightest way is wrong, pure and simple. The Lord is caring for his people and will severely punish those who abuse them.

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matt 18:6)

Questionable methods were used to poach local believers and to split existing churches.

Much has been written on this so we do not require an extended discussion here. The proof of ungodly strategies is blatantly seen in planting new churches in places where there is already an historic work with a similar doctrine and practice. Thus, Virgo planted churches in Bristol where Peter Lyne and Dave Day had worked for decades, Jones planted a new work next to that pioneered by Tomlinson in Birmingham; Coates' did the same in Southampton where Tony Morton was working. If you say to folk, '*Come with us and we will do you good*' you can only be talking to Christians in an existing church. There were very many bitter complaints from the pastors of mainline churches of all stripes, particularly Baptist and AOG. Sometimes the exodus of people from a Baptist church would leave the remaining folk unable to keep up payments on the building; often churches closed. All this behaviour is unrighteous.

If God is really doing a new work under someone's ministry to build the church as a demonstration of his end-time kingdom (the main ethos of Restorationism) then he will raise it up from evangelistic success, as in fact was the case with many previous sects and denominations which formed out of revivals. The sheep stealing of Restorationism is evidence of not being under God's hand, not numerical growth demonstrating God's favour. What is worse is that, on many occasions, the way in which sheep were poached was reprehensible.

Anti-denominationalism became the new denominationalism

Anti-denominationalism was a very loud message in the early days of Restoration, especially amongst the London Brothers. John Noble actually wrote a book called, *Forgive Us Our Denominations* in 1971. These were seen as creating disunity and were, de facto, sin. However, as leaders waned and fell, as new churches and groups emerged, in time a new, and much harder, denominationalism arose. Restorationism became a series of new denominations within a wider fold of a 'restored' Charismatic church. At the head of these denominations were apostles, who in reality are archbishops over a series of diocesan bishops leading churches in their agglomeration; thus New Frontiers is a denomination, Pioneer People is a denomination, Bryn Jones' Bradford church and Harvestime group was a denomination in the 80s.

Even in the early 70s this tendency towards denominationalism and authoritarianism began to be seen. There was a very controversial issue of *Fulness* which actually described the church as a pyramid with apostles at the top. Though much denigrated and later rescinded, in truth this is how Restoration churches developed. The early warnings of John Noble and Maurice Smith not to form a new sect were unheeded.

This is the lot of all religious movements that refuse to be absolutely Biblical. It had happened to its forerunner, Pentecostalism. The Pentecostal church was founded upon what adherents believed to be revival and this was the motivation for all Pentecostals, such

as Cousen. Indeed, revival became directly associated with what Pentecostals stood for. But instead of a fluid, fluctuating expression of divine power in reviving the Lord's people, the Pentecostal message became entrenched in firm denominationalism within a few years. From this it increasingly fragmented into very many new denominations, so that today there is no single identifiable Pentecostal force. Donald Gee, a respected and scholarly Pentecostal, expressed his concern about this, *'Before we became so Movement-conscious we thought more often of the Pentecostal Revival as a means of grace to quicken whomsoever the Lord should call. ... Pentecost is more than a denomination, it is a REVIVAL'* [Donald Gee, Editorial in *Pentecost* magazine, quoted from Hocken, *Streams of Renewal*, p62; emph. original.]

Biblical ecclesiology never leads to denominationalism, but is based upon independent local churches that are led by a team of equal elders who rule by consensus of the whole church; not difficult with small numbers based upon the principle of family. While these fellowship with other local churches, and may come together to discuss a widespread problem affecting all (as in Acts 15), there is no oversight of many churches by one man or a single organisation. The churches Paul planted remained local and independent. Restorationism took independent house-churches raised up in the 70s and welded them into a corporation governed by a single figure that they wrongly called an apostle, thus creating instant new denominations. If denominationalism is a great sin, as they all previously taught at the beginning, then Restoration is a wicked work by their own definition.

Worship became an emotional, music-driven, entertainment

Even in the larger initial gatherings of proto-Restoration churches, say in the London meetings at the Leprosy Mission hall, there was absolute freedom in worship times. There was no plan, no dominant worship leader, just the free participation of those present. The idea of controlled and manipulated platform leading during worship was absent. This changed after the influence of John Wimber's music dominated bands. I remember early Coastlands leadership conferences where perhaps 200 men worshipped together with almost no leading at all. Participation was open and free, there was only the piano of Phil Rogers, and yet the worship was more godly, spiritual and edifying than anything seen in the churches now run by those same leaders. Modern young Charismatics have no experience of body-ministry, open fellowship and spontaneous contributions.

Many Charismatic-inclined people meeting in small historic churches were duped by their attendance in large celebrations and Bible Weeks. By virtue of a bigger pool of talent, leaders could gather a good team of musicians from several churches to provide a seriously good light rock band to power the worship times. Some Bible Weeks had whole orchestras. When people from historic churches worshipped in these settings it blew their minds. Nothing like this was available to them in their church, which may have had a piano, organ or very rarely a fellah playing acoustic guitar occasionally. In these large celebrations there were piano, electric keyboards, multiple orchestral instruments played very well but also the driving force of drums, electric bass and electric guitar. A time of singing in the Spirit, if handled well, could turn into an evocative rhapsody of instrumental improvisation coupled with vocal harmonisation. It could be very moving (if totally fleshly and pagan). Visitors wanted to experience this every Sunday but their church was dull as beans by comparison. Over time this frustration grew until they left – on this basis – to join the nearest large Charismatic work. The professionalism of the musicians was a key factor in attracting people to Charismatic churches; in fact, I believe it is probably the chief factor since often people would leave good teaching ministry behind for much weaker ministry – but with good 'worship'.

Over time this predominance of rock musicians on the stage grew to becoming more than a light rock or folk-rock backing group to being a dominant force of loud rock lacking all sensitivity. I know of many people who took earplugs to worship. The music became an end in itself and a chief attraction for young people. Now this would be bad enough if this was worship and if instrumental music is encouraged by the apostles; but it is not worship and the apostles are utterly silent on music.

There is no instrumental music in the New Testament church of any kind, and worship is to do with submission of the heart in reverence to God and nothing to do with entertainment. Even joyful praise is focused upon the fruit of lips – the song of praise to God a cappella. Not only is there no teaching on instrumental music, not only is there no mention of music in the church on earth, not only is the idea of many musicians an Old Covenant feature that is a shadow which has passed away, but the early church had no music for hundreds of years. Instrumental music was considered a distraction by the church fathers that originated from pagan sources. Music in church was not widespread until about 1200. Calvin, Luther and even Spurgeon had no instrumental music in their churches.

The developments of Restorationism took a church whose worship was based upon godly hymns and metrical Psalms, plus the occasional chorus accompanied by a lone acoustic guitar, and took it into the realms of a loud rock concert frequently based upon trite, superficial self-obsessed songs. This is to import the pagan world into the church in a very obvious way. Even under the Old Covenant there were never any drums in the temple, since they were always considered to be the province of emotionally driven heathen worship.

Is this rant the jaded opinions of an old fashioned traditionalist who hates guitars? No, I speak as a musician who has played in blues, rock, jazz and folk bands since the mid-60s. I was one of the first (if not the first) to use an electric guitar in Charismatic worship and improvise during singing in the Spirit. In fact in, about 1980, my improvisation was once stopped by Terry Virgo standing next to me as he felt that the people were not ready for it then. I was Virgo's Chief Musician for a year when David Fellingham was otherwise occupied. I played in the orchestra at the Downs Bible Week and I led the first ever rock band (with Stuart Townend on keyboards) to play on Songs of Praise to an audience of 9 million, a segment that was frequently requested as a repeat. Despite all of this, I proclaim that music is not to be used in the worship of God people in church. If you can show me a New Testament apostolic text encouraging it then I will repent – but you can't.

Churches concentrated upon human ideas and strategies

House-churches originally formed in order to have proper Biblical fellowship. These were people who already honoured God, loved his word and worshipped Christ; but they felt that they were lacking in Biblical intimate *koinonia*. Having gathered together in homes, they simply sought to be the people of God in their area. They broke bread, worshipped, read scripture, prayed and encouraged one another. Often they would share a communal meal together first. Evangelism just simply flowed out from the normal community life – they witnessed to their family, friends and neighbours in a natural way. When someone became interested, they were invited to the meeting where they felt welcomed and all was natural.

When Restoration 'apostles' gathered house-churches into a large organisation all this was lost. There was also a lack of effective evangelism; so all sorts of mission strategies were activated, one after another, in a desperate attempt to gain converts. None of them were effective to any great degree. After over thirty years this forlorn attempt is still being tried.

[I do not count the supposed success of the Alpha Course, which did not even originate within Restoration but in an institutional church, since its content is so weak, its message so neglectful of key issues, its focus on a subjective experience and the fact that its published testimonies are so shockingly poor. I have grave concerns that only a small percentage of supposed converts may actually be saved; just as the case with crusade evangelism.]

What Restoration did was to take a Biblical strategy that worked, break it, and build a human strategy centred upon men that didn't work. It still doesn't work, which is why the evangelical church is dwindling in this country and statisticians are prognosticating the extinction of evangelicalism for the first time since the Reformation. Violent persecution, threats of invasion, political control and heretical onslaughts could not break the UK church, but the Charismatic Movement and Restorationism is now close to doing this.

If Restorationists cry out that they have large churches and this isn't true, they should ask why it is that as many people have gone out the back door as came in through the front for over thirty years; why are they not much bigger if they have the truth? Why are 2,000 people leaving the national church every week? Why is the nation not impacted for the good, but rather deteriorating fast, despite forty-nine years of Charismatic influence? Where is the promised global revival? What happened to the 1990 prophecy of national revival? Why have there been so many cases of leadership apostasy if all is well? Why the thousands of cases of spiritual abuse? Why is there a dearth of missionaries? Why is charitable giving at an all-time low? The overall influence of the Charismatic Movement has been disastrous for England and leaders need to be honest.

Next year will be the year of Jubilee since the official inception of the Charismatic Movement in Britain; the Jubilee was the time to shed bondage. It will also mark the 40th year since the beginnings of Restorationism; forty is symbolic of a period of testing and trial. It is time to return to Biblical principles and form new house-churches that will survive the coming persecution as an underground movement.

Beware men of vision

The word 'vision' is not used by the apostles in their letters and does not appear in the NT at all in the sense of a project or goal. Charismatic leaders use the word 'vision' to speak of planning a future objective with flair, wisdom and imagination; such men are described as 'men of vision'. Frequently such men will quote Proverbs 29:18 in the KJV, '*Where **there is no vision, the people perish***', as a means of substantiating their strategies. They do not affirm the rest of the verse, which states, '*But happy **is he who keeps the law***'. Even if there is no fresh revelation from God, the people that stand fast on God's word will be safe and blessed. A new revelation or a fresh vision is not necessary to a happy and fruitful Christian life, but obedience to God is vital.

The Restoration 'apostles' came along in the 1970s with a vision, and they published this strategy very effectually. Thousands of people were caught up with this vision and followed them, many to their cost; there is no doubt that the British church has suffered greatly and the proof is evident in its diminished status and numbers. We must learn from this not to follow men who have a dream, who are clear in their purpose and goals, if that strategy is unbiblical.

The church does not need some great vision, some fresh strategy. God is not doing 'a new thing'. The work of salvation was finished at the cross, and human history since is the working out of that finished purpose; there is no new one. What the church needs to do is to faithfully obey what God has already declared it should do. What is the point of a new

vision when the church is already ignoring the key principles about church and ministry that God has commanded?

Men are tickled by new things; they have itchy ears for a new wind of doctrine; but this is always dangerous and is fundamentally demonic.

We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting. (Eph 4:14; all deceit comes from the devil.)

The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. (1 Tim 4:1).

Error is always imparted within a message of a new vision, a new revelation; all heresies began this way. The genuine apostles, on the other hand, were happy to keep reminding their people of existing doctrines and laying a proper foundation.

I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things. (2 Pt 1:15)

I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder. (2 Pt 3:1)

Vision and clarity of purpose is good if it is to expound the truths of God's word and to stimulate men to be reminded of good doctrine. Outside of that, men of vision are a hazard, and always promote the deceptions of men.

Crucially, the churches lost their focus on Christ and spiritual things

It is a salutary lesson that some of the key men running big organised and authoritarian church networks today came out of settings that were very Christ-focused. Forster was originally from the Honor Oak Fellowship where the teaching from T Austin Sparks, Harry Foster, Bill Sergeant and others was extremely Christ-centred. Some of Forster's early writings for Harry Foster's *Toward The Mark* magazine were godly and breathed of the Lord; today he is an extreme Arminian, a radical Charismatic, an ecumenical facilitator and a supporter of prohibited leadership by women. Virgo was tutored under the saintly ministry of Pastor Rudman at Holland Road Baptist church in Brighton; now he leads one of the most extreme Charismatic networks in the country that has been repeatedly accused of spiritual and emotional abuse. The work cannot be said to centre upon Christ in anything other than a superficial way, but rather is centred upon man. Though it, unusually, claims to be Reformed, it denies and opposes many of the central doctrines taught by John Calvin and is out-of-step with all the key Reformed standards. Sadly, examination of members shows that most have very little understanding of Biblical doctrine or even what the Gospel is, being Amyraldian at best. An example of the lack of discernment is shown by Virgo's support of extreme heretic and false prophet Todd Bentley; this support continues even after Bentley's adultery and remarriage and the knowledge that his sinful relationship was being conducted before the Lakeland Revival.

All this is inevitable if men lead their churches away from the principles revealed by the true apostles of Christ. There is no way that men of vision can expect spiritual and godly fruit to result from disobedience to God's word. For instance: most large Charismatic churches do not break bread regularly, some not at all; yet this is the very reason scripture gives for us meeting together. The weekly gathering to celebrate the Lord's Supper enables us, in a very practical way, to focus upon the life, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. To take just one other example, scripture shows us very clearly that church is local, small, based upon being a family, interdependent and led by a team of equal elders. Where so-called 'apostles' establish leadership by a hierarchy of distant, authoritarian, non-representative, inexperienced paid workers presiding over unbiblical meetings, the result will be utterly opposed to the strategy of God.

What we need to learn from history

By the late 1980s the great sovereign move of God in creating a host of independent house-churches across England, mostly from newly converted young people, had been captivated by a few men and transformed into an inflexible, dumbed-down, formal, large structure. These men had taken a disparate group of independent organisms and gathered them into a large, mindless, emotionally-driven organisation. Some leaders even had the audacity to publicly state that their big centralised church was the authentication of their apostolic authority. In other words they existed for men and not God.

Throughout church history it has been difficult for Christians to avoid this tendency to centralisation and submission to a single authority figure – it is how sinful man naturally works. Despite a God-given theocracy even Israel demanded a monarchy to be like the other pagan nations. In secular history tribes always gathered into national states, usually under a king. To just consider western Celtic and Germanic peoples – the Helvetii and Cimbri became the Swiss; the Teutonic Angles, Jutes and Saxon tribes coalesced into Germany; the Belgae, Iceni and others became the British; the Gauls and Franks became the French and the Celtic tribes in Eire became the Irish. Natural man always centralises; in the same way churches tend to agglomerate. The need for security and power brings people together and a central leader always emerges. It is not easy to avoid this tendency; but it is a predisposition that always corrupts.

In church matters it is deadly. All the Biblical principles regarding church life are centred in: a focus upon Christ, locality, smallness, family, fellowship, unity, interdependency, leadership plurality and dependence upon God. Large centralised works are the opposite of all these things by necessity. In this way, the centralising, organising, authoritarian works of church leaders ruin the work of God and disobey all his commands regarding local church life. It is not simply that people prefer smallness and do better where they are known and can contribute; it is not that it is a better means of evangelising neighbourhoods; nor is it that it is more efficient and easier to replicate. The key reason for meeting in homes according to a Biblical pattern is that it is obedience to God's word. Large churches that are based on hierarchical leadership, rigid structures and large buildings are disobedient – plain and simple.

Many of the original house churches of the 70s were intrinsically weak due to a lack of decent Biblical teaching. People had primarily come together for fellowship and, for a time, enjoyed this smallness, intimacy and interdependence despite the lack of sound ministry. What was needed from men who could preach powerfully was to enable and equip these groups and help them to become strong and effective in mission, and so replicate. Instead what these men did was to gather the various groups near them into an agglomeration under their authority to build a large centralised organisation. This was the equivalent of stealing from God to bolster their ego. Some even used the slogan, '*Come with us and we will do you good*'. Many found to their cost, years later, that joining such a work ruined their lives and did them great harm. The catalogue of abuse and damage done by these large works will only become fully known on the Day of Judgment, but the stories that have emerged in the last few decades from those being counselled by wiser men are deeply shocking and numerous. One former leader, who was a close friend and colleague of a famous 'apostle', said to me upon leaving the work after twenty years of service, that churches should be made to publish a government health warning, '*Joining this church could seriously damage your health*'. He was not joking.

In the seventies the key reason for going to church was meeting with the Lord Jesus and being able to do it on intimate terms with other believers. The main reason for church-going today, in these large works, is having an emotional shot in the arm by near-pagan forms of music-driven worship. The purpose of the house-churches was originally to fellowship with God with one's brethren and do whatever he commanded; the purpose today is always strategically based upon mission.

The reason for this is the self-delusion of leaders and their appetite for numbers to prove themselves. Most of the modern 'apostles' have little clue what an apostle is or what their own ministry truly is. They confuse being an archbishop with the church-planting, missionary, Biblical apostle and claim an authority proper only to the apostles of the Lamb, such as Peter (though even Peter rejected authoritarianism in his letters). This is never the province of anyone today; this measure of ministry ceased with the death of John around the end of the first century. Any true apostolic ministry today is being sent out from a church and starting a new work from scratch and this is the authority of the apostles of the churches. Such men have no intrinsic authority in their home church, other than what their ministry is there (say, teacher).

Most of the modern claimants of apostolic ministry are really gifted in evangelism; indeed some of them started as evangelists until promoted. As a result they were never gifted to pastor and direct a church. The result of putting an evangelist in charge of a church will be to continually focus upon mission instead of Christ, push people out instead of gather them in. They will not be over-concerned with protecting the sheep from predators, nor of properly and systematically feeding them doctrine. They won't equip them, but they will wear them out, being oblivious to their needs, especially family men. Often the pressures they put upon families end up splitting the family: parents from children, husbands from wives, families from grandparents and relatives. Wrongly they teach that the highest priority of life after God is to the eldership and church strategies – instead it is to their own family first. The wrong men are leading the churches, and this focus on mission, organisation, growth strategy and hierarchy came with the capture of house-churches by 'apostles'.

Furthermore, they attributed the work of God to themselves. The measure of being an 'apostle' in the early days of Restorationism was whether you had started a church. Well, in those days there were hundreds of men who could be said to have started a church because there was a work of God in the 70s to raise them up, just as there was a real measure of revival in the multiple conversions of students and young people. The planting of house-churches was not the special work of these men but a contemporary move of God. [In fact some of them never did actually start a church anyway but had people with churches join them.] Instead of recognising that God was doing something, they developed a Latter Rain type idea about apostolic authority (which is unbiblical) and promoted themselves to this type of apostleship. It was a coup to create an oligarchy amongst English churches.

Sadly, many of these lessons appear to have not been learned. As people again clamour for intimacy, fellowship, simplicity, freedom and relationships, there is a new move a generation later to start house-churches. However, men are again forming conglomerations out of these house-churches, albeit with a new name and a different ethos to Restorationism. Inevitably, these organisations, however loose, tend to promote the leader, not the ethos. Furthermore, the ethos itself is often wrong, being a focus upon style rather than Christ. The reasoning given in many apologetics for their organisation is the development for a community style of mission, or community social action, or community fellowship. None of these are reasons for meeting in homes.

We meet together to focus upon Christ and we primarily do this by obeying God in celebrating the Lord's Supper with reverent worship and thanksgiving. Many find that having a preparatory communal meal is helpful, as the early church did, but the meal is not the focus; our attention must be firmly placed upon Christ. This means that after the Supper there will be mutual edification, as described by the apostles, based upon prayer, teaching, scripture reading, encouragement and exhortation or even admonishment. Singing, started by anyone, will interject contributions and the lack of instrumental music enables this to be done effortlessly. This sort of meeting is firmly based upon apostolic teaching and more information on it can be found in other articles by the author.

A concise summary of crucial church principles

Note: there is no space here for references and exposition, I have done that in many other papers, which can be consulted for more information.

Leadership

- Is by a team of equal elders (parity and plurality).
- There is no single leading elder or senior minister. No such terms exist in scripture.
- Deacons manage practical affairs to deal chiefly with caring for the poor and needy. They have no spiritual authority.
- Leaders don't dominate but lead by example, teaching and counsel - like fathers.
- Strategic decisions are made by consensus of all.

Church buildings

Do not exist; it is a sin to waste God's money on such things. Furthermore, they work against the principles of the church to be a family of interdependent, mutual ministries.

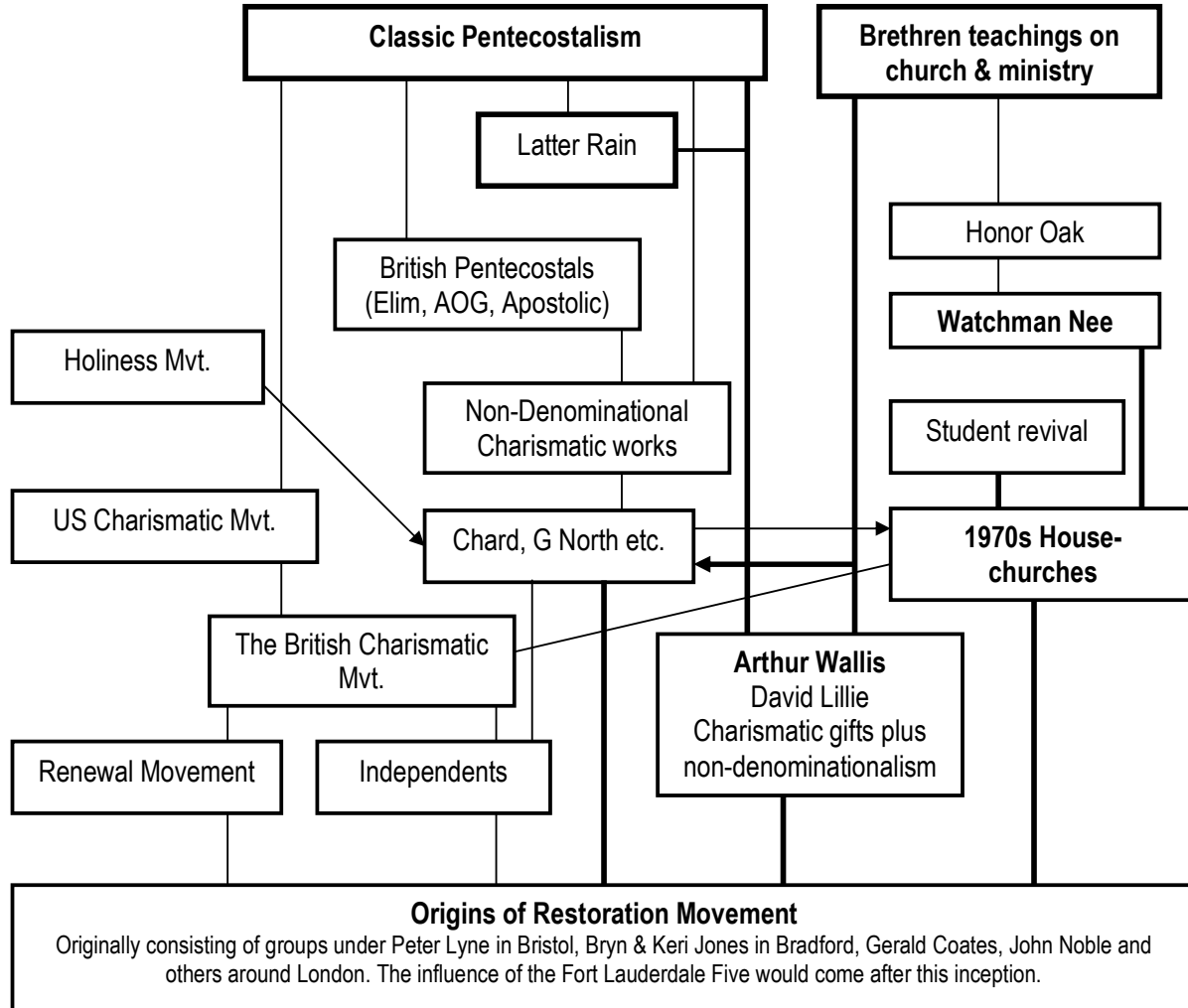
Ministry

- The Sunday gathered assembly is an opportunity for *koinonia* (fellowship) where all can participate under God's sovereignty and the Spirit's direction. It is the job of pastors to ensure that this is orderly.
- Teachers (who are also pastors) have an important ministry. Without teaching the church will suffer greatly since the job of the church is to ensure that members are equipped to serve, and this is done by teaching. Teaching is so important that, if necessary, a separate night ought to be used for ministry. Teaching should also take place in homes where people can be catechised and matured in doctrinal thinking.
- Teaching always involves discussion, dialogue and questioning.
- Sermons are especially the way the Gospel is preached to outsiders in the NT. Within the church the emphasis is upon dialogue, encouragement and participation.
- The word of God undergirds all teaching ministry. There is no place for drama, dancing, slide-shows, light shows, media presentations or worldly entertainment.
- Women are not allowed to teach or have authority over men.
- Giving of money is chiefly for the poor and needy; first in the body but then also to neighbours.
- Full-time leaders are the exception. Money is only given to those who have an itinerant ministry and cannot work, or to local elders who would otherwise be overwhelmed; however, in a team of equal elders such cases are rare. There are no salaries, but only freewill gifts by members in response to God. Leaders must live by faith.
- Evangelism is done naturally by members through their personal contacts.

Meetings

- The central place is the Lord's Supper. This is the reason why the church meets. It must be conducted with all reverence and opportunity for prayer, worship, and thanksgiving.
- A communal meal may precede the Supper, but is distinguished from the Supper.
- As well as the Supper there are: prayer, singing, scripture reading, sharing, exhortation, encouragements and admonishing, in the exercise of those ministry gifts that God has given to members. The church functions like a family.
- There is no mention in the NT of musical instruments in the church.
- There is no place for disorderly behaviour of any sort.

An Overview of Origins



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