

THE GLOBALISATION
OF CHARISMATIC
CHRISTIANITY

Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity

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CHAPTER ONE

A 'weird babel of tongues': charisma in the modern world

I vividly remember my first encounter with a charismatic church. It occurred during my final year of studying for an anthropology degree. During a particularly boring undergraduate lecture, a fellow student slipped me a note enquiring if I believed in God. When I scrawled a noncommittal reply, she asked if I wanted to accompany her to a local church that Sunday. I agreed (in a spirit, I told myself, of intellectual inquiry), and a few days later found myself sitting not in the Victorian Gothic pile that I had envisioned but in a school hall on the edge of the city. The 'altar' of the church consisted of a microphone and the 'organ' was a battered and out-of-tune piano. I arrived at the hall intending to sit at the back, but was soon spotted as a newcomer by an usher and placed towards the front row of seats so that I would be directly facing the microphone. The sermon was preached by a visiting Welshman who had come to give a 'revival' talk, and, although I admired the force and eloquence of his oration (and was surprised by its humour), I recall being even more struck by his keen control of the choreography and tone of the service. At one point, we were singing a hymn in a lackadaisical manner, following the stumbling efforts of the congregation's pianist. Half-way through the hymn, the visiting preacher pushed the pianist aside from his stool, took over the playing and transformed the hymn into a boogie-woogie version of itself. The hall erupted on cue.

No doubt my student friend had intended me to convert to the faith, but something rather different happened. The day after the service, I walked past a hot-dog stall near the city market-place and glanced at the person standing behind the counter. His face looked vaguely familiar. Then I recalled that he was the young man I had

been sitting (or, more often, standing) next to at the service. The previous morning, I had directed swift and surreptitious glances at him while his eyes remained closed in apparent ecstasy and his mouth uttered incomprehensible phrases that I realised were spoken in tongues. The juxtaposition in my mind of the everyday quality of the stall with the apparent 'exoticism' of the service was striking and remote from my experience. Ethnography, I decided, could be done in a school hall down the road as well as in more conventionally 'ethnographic' sites in distant parts of the world.¹ My student friend became a missionary, and emigrated to the United States in order to develop her proselytising career. I, however, became an anthropologist of religion.

This first encounter with charismatic worship took place over fifteen years ago. Although my memory of it is very clear, what strikes me now about the story as recalled is that its form, if not its end result, is remarkably similar to the narratives of personal conversion told by charismatics themselves. It may be that many years of listening to sermons have had as great an impact on my own sense of my intellectual past as they do on the spiritual self-perceptions of believers. As a final-year undergraduate, I was indeed a 'seeker' after a kind of Truth, but in my opinion I was looking for a research topic rather than a belief in God. The service made a deep impression on me, partly because it sowed the seeds for a later 'revelation' concerning my academic future which occurred as I looked at the charismatic carrying out his daily business of selling hot-dogs. These are classic conservative Protestant themes: hoping for personal guidance during a period of uncertainty; being led to an answer by seemingly coincidental and everyday but highly meaningful events; the translation of such events into a narrative that is repeated to others (Harding 1987; Stromberg 1993).

As my visit to the school hall indicated, charismatics tend to scorn the ornate buildings of conventional churches, seeing them as reminiscent of 'dead tradition' rather than living faith. The use of the hall exemplified the way any space, any context, could be

¹ Of course, I have reflected subsequently on the fact that I decided to work on Christians who are relatively more 'peripheral' in their society than those who belong to mainstream churches. I hope, however, that my analysis does not exoticise charismatics in an 'orientalist' sense.

converted to spiritually charged purposes. (Note that my fellow student had taken advantage of a less-than-gripping lecture as an opportunity for evangelisation.) The Welsh speaker displayed a finely tuned sense of how to gee up the service, but he benefited as well from a congregation that was rehearsed in opportunities physically and vocally to display signs of inspiration and enthusiasm. He could turn his unfamiliarity with the congregation to his advantage, imparting a feeling of novelty and freshness but also the notion that he came from a Christian community located geographically far from the local group yet clearly kindred to it in Spirit.

I soon discovered that the charismatic gathering I had encountered was a 'house church'. The latter is a term that refers to evangelising congregations, self-consciously separated from mainline Christian denominations in Britain, that Andrew Walker (1989:280) – perhaps with some hyperbole – has described as: 'The largest and most significant religious formation to emerge in Great Britain for over half a century.'² Theologically or politically motivated opponents of such churches, invoking themes often levelled at charismatics as a whole, have accused them of being highly authoritarian and of brainwashing their members into devotion to a rigid creed and all-powerful leader. In contrast, house church members see their role as encouraging a restoration of the New Testament pattern of the early Church, and in particular its inspiration by gifts of the Spirit as described in the Bible.³

Elements of belief and practice contained in the British Movement are paralleled but also transformed in contemporary charismatic and wider conservative Protestant circles throughout the world. Any attempt at a survey of the historical, theological and social connections between such Christians is a difficult task, not least because of the ambiguity of the descriptive vocabulary that must be employed. For instance, although in the United States the word 'evangelical' connotes a theological conservative, in Latin

² Assessing the exact significance of the apparent success of house churches, indeed of charismatics in general, is problematic in a number of ways. For instance, it may be that the vast majority of those actually joining house churches have already professed a Christian faith in some other context (Bruce 1998:228). According to such a view, the phenomenon still needs to be explained, but should not necessarily be seen as involving mass conversion of atheist hordes.

³ See Acts 2, Romans 12: 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.

America the term can refer to any non-Catholic Christian (Stoll 1990:4; Spittler 1994:103). Alliances between groups themselves shift over time. However, a summary account is necessary at this stage, even if it is subsequently qualified in the light of specific cases such as the one I shall be presenting in this book.

CONSERVATIVE CHARISMATICS

So far, I have been using the term ‘conservative Protestant’ as a blanket term for all believers who can be characterised as ‘charismatic’, ‘Pentecostal’, ‘evangelical’ and ‘fundamentalist’. ‘Conservative’ in this sense does not refer to a political orientation, even if many of the politically active Christians thus designated might nowadays be considered more rightist than socialist (most notably in the United States). It refers instead to a broad support within the Protestant rubric for ‘traditional’ positions on such doctrines as the Virgin Birth of Jesus, the reality of miracles as reported in Scripture and the inevitable return of Christ to rule over the earth (Ammerman 1991:2). In their rhetorical affirmation of biblical literalism and explanation of events in supernatural terms, conservatives contrast broadly with the more self-consciously symbolic, interpretative and naturalistic approaches of liberals.

Amongst conservatives, charismatic Christians occupy a particular if fluid place. Some of the roots of their present expansion can be linked to specifically Pentecostal models of worship whose Arminian, Methodist and Holiness origins were consolidated in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revivals in the United States and Europe. Marsden (1991:41) notes that, while liberal, modernist religion of the time emphasised the gradual cultivation of the good qualities inherent in the person, Holiness adherents argued that only the dramatic work of the Holy Spirit could cleanse the heart and overcome human nature. The perfectionism and sanctification available to the believer were wrought by supernatural means, but were always under threat if the person did not guard against future temptation.

The term Pentecostal, derived from the Greek, refers to the fiftieth day after the second day of the Jewish festival of Passover. At such a time, according to Acts 2:1–4, the representatives of the

early Christian Church in the first century were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues. By invoking the possibility of deploying glossolalia in the present (as well as exercising other spiritual gifts such as healing), the Pentecostals of the early twentieth century saw themselves as traversing (indeed, bypassing) history in order to embody the beliefs and practices of an original, authentic Christianity. They drew a distinction between tongues as a sign of initial baptism in the Spirit and later manifestations of the gift (Williams 1984:73–4). Tongues were therefore an important indication of the reception of grace but also a form of subsequent empowerment.

According to most accounts of the origins of Pentecostalism, an outbreak of glossolalia in a Bible college in Topeka, Kansas, was followed by the 'Azusa Street' revival in Los Angeles in 1906, initiated by the black evangelist William J. Seymour. On 18 April of that year, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter described the Azusa Street Revival incredulously as a 'Weird Babel of Tongues', indicating the scepticism and hostility with which it was received in wider, polite society.⁴ Much in the faith appeared to have black, slave roots, including its orality, musicality, narrativity in theology and witness, emphasis on maximum participation, inclusion of dreams and visions in worship, understanding of correspondence between body and mind and antiphonal character of worship services (Hollenweger 1997:18–19). Extensive criticism, frequently from fellow Christians, of their supposedly indecorous fanaticism encouraged some believers to form separate churches where they could worship as they wished.

In a sense, charismatics of today revive not only Acts but also the history of the early Pentecostal Church in their practices and beliefs – involving glossolalia, healing and prophesy, personal testimony and consciously cultivated liturgical spontaneity – even if they do not always call themselves Pentecostals. The connections between more 'classical' and newer styles of worship can be seen in Poloma's (1982:4–5) definition of charismatics as: 'Christians who accept the Bible as the inspired word of God, but who also emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who

⁴ Olsen (1998:10).

have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.’ In this quotation we see the juxtaposition of two key elements – the canonical text and the possibility of personifying sacred revelation and power – that coexist in both Pentecostal and more broadly charismatic faith.

Over the past three or four decades, charismatic styles of worship have diffused throughout congregations and denominations of varied theological persuasions. An important influence in spreading the message to mainline churches and middle-class churches throughout the world was David du Plessis (1905–87), a Pentecostalist minister from South Africa and associate of Oral Roberts (Marsden 1991:78). Du Plessis had himself been touched by the spirituality of black South African Christianity with its healing, tongues, dreams and visions (Poloma 1982:11–12; Poewe 1994:3). The spread of the renewal to mainstream Christianity is also associated with the Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett, who in 1960 announced that he had received baptism in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Bennett was forced to resign from his church in California but nevertheless continued to recruit Christians for his cause. It is therefore now possible, as Spittler (1994:105) has noted, to talk of charismatic Lutherans, charismatic Presbyterians and so on, implying the ability of such a ‘genre’ of worship to attach itself to a multitude of theological orientations and, increasingly, to the middle classes. Particularly from the 1950s and 1960s, charismatic forms have grown and diversified, sometimes within more established denominations, sometimes in previously non-charismatic contexts, sometimes even in Catholic churches.⁵

Important as such developments are, this book focusses on the activities of more explicitly conservative, Protestant charismatics. Leading conservatives in recent years have included Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network and former presidential candidate, the televangelical healer Oral Roberts and the scandal-ridden Jim and Tammy Bakker. These charismatics – themselves embodying different styles of worship and even theologies – are merely some of the best-known participants within a huge and increasingly transnational network of Christians, comprising congregations, networks, fellowships, mega-churches and even

⁵ On Catholic charismatics, see McGuire (1982); Neitz (1987); Roelofs (1994); Csordas (1994, 1997).

so-called para-churches.⁶ Sometimes, they are termed 'neo-Pentecostals', signalling their connections with previous forms of worship but also more novel tendencies in appealing across class barriers, denominational affiliations and even towards a greater accommodation with material prosperity. Although ostensibly independent, many of the neo-Pentecostal churches have joined such associations as The International Communion of Charismatic Churches, the Charismatic Bible Ministries and the International Convention of Faith Ministries (Brouwer et al. 1996:267).

Since the 1970s, the charismatic scene in the US and elsewhere has been hit by what is sometimes called a 'third wave' of the Spirit (following first Pentecostalism and then charismatic renewal). It has often been cultivated by independent ministries, and is closely associated with such luminaries as the now deceased John Wimber (Harris 1998:80; Percy 1996, 1998). A North American, Wimber gained a following around the world that transcended denominational affiliations. In the UK, for instance, his movement and others like it have had an impact on groups ranging from house churches to Anglican congregations.⁷ Since 1994, 'Airport Vineyard', a Christian fellowship based in Toronto and connected with Wimber's Ministry, has become the centre of the so-called 'Toronto Blessing' (Hunt 1995).⁸ The Blessing itself is manifested in powerful physical forms, including outbursts of uncontrolled laughter, and parallel phenomena have spread to charismatic churches around the world.

Interconnections among conservatives are now highly fluid, and mutual influences between classical Pentecostals and other charismatics have become increasingly evident. Describing developments in the US, Shibley (1996:1) talks of how southern-style evangelicalism has spread throughout the country as a whole, but has itself been transformed in new, pluralist contexts. Along with

⁶ Probably the best-known example of the latter is the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, founded in the 1950s. The principle behind para-church organisations is that they can co-ordinate activities distinct from those of conventional congregations (Nilsson 1988; Hunt et al. 1997:2).

⁷ Percy (1998:187) identifies John Wimber, Benny Hinn, Morris Cerullo and Reinhard Bonnke as key figures in the new revival.

⁸ On the Toronto Blessing, see also Poloma (1997); Richter (1997); Percy (1998). The Canadian church's chief pastor had prepared for a renewal of his ministry by, among other things, receiving the prayers of Benny Hinn (Hunt 1995:261).

the ‘southernisation’ of religious activities beyond the South has come what he calls the ‘Californication’ of conservative Protestantism. Thus some conservatives have accommodated to the anti-institutional, therapeutic, cultural preferences of baby boomers (Hunter 1987). In Britain, meanwhile, Walker (1997:24) states: ‘The sociological distinctions we might have made, even ten years ago, between classical and neo-Pentecostal are now difficult to sustain in the light of new Charismatic alignments and the syncretistic tendencies of late Pentecostalism.’ Older Pentecostals may dislike the worldliness of newer charismatics, but they are increasingly likely to see such tendencies within their own congregations.

For Percy (1998:144–5), the contemporary period is one of dislocation from earlier eras. He describes early forms of Pentecostalism as expressing a relatively homogenous response to secular modernism. Contemporary revivalist forms, however, appear to compete with and borrow from a post-modern world of healing movements, the New Age, materialism and pluralism. Percy may be exaggerating the unity of classical Pentecostalism. The point remains, however, that older boundaries between charismatic life styles and those of the wider world do appear to be shifting and becoming increasingly permeable.

SACRED TEXT AND HOLY TOUCH: FUNDAMENTALISTS AND CHARISMATICS

The issue of the firmness or otherwise of religious boundaries is key to a further issue relating to charismatic identity. Charismatics are often associated by outsiders with another wing of the conservative Protestant revival – Christian fundamentalism. The drawing of such a parallel is sometimes a little misleading. Cox (1995:15) highlights the differences he perceives to exist between the two by invoking an opposition between textual and tactile orientations to faith: ‘While the beliefs of the fundamentalists, and of many other religious groups, are enshrined in formal theological systems, those of pentecostalism are imbedded in testimonies, ecstatic speech, and bodily movements.’⁹ Marty and Appleby (1992:43) similarly

⁹ Hollenweger (1997:191) expresses the historical distinctions pithily: ‘Fundamentalists and the neo-orthodox mounted arguments. Pentecostals gave testimony.’

see the main distinction as concerning the role of the Bible in establishing the framework of life and community. Pentecostals are said to lay emphasis on prophecy, tongues and faith healing, with divine revelation from the Holy Spirit complementing guidance from the Bible. In contrast (*ibid.*): 'Fundamentalists are uncomfortable, to say the least, with the open-ended character of pentecostalism and feel that the Bible alone is perfectly sufficient in guiding Christian moral, religious, and political action.'

Fundamentalist unease at being identified with such aspects of Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity can be explained by looking at historical factors and the (partially) separate development of these two forms of religious conservatism. Fundamentalism as a movement does not draw upon the Arminian, Wesleyan sources of Holiness and Pentecostal groups. Rather, it emerged from a coalition of diverse evangelical groups who articulated a theologically based opposition to such early twentieth-century bugbears as secular labour politics, higher biblical criticism, Darwinism and forms of modernism.¹⁰ Arguments reflecting a Calvinist zeal to preserve doctrinal purity and stressing the inerrancy of Scripture were developed to combat historical-critical approaches to the text (Cox 1984:44; Harris 1998:4). Between 1910 and 1915, a series of pamphlets called *The Fundamentals* was produced. In the 1920s, fundamentalists rather than Pentecostals took the lead in mounting arguments during the Scopes Trial, even though the two groups shared many of the same attitudes to the secular world (Hollenweger 1997:191).

Charismatics' supposed ignorance of Christian tradition and theology, apparent emotionalism and emphasis on the possibility of continued revelation from the Holy Spirit, remain anathema to many representatives of fundamentalism. Wesleyan-inspired concepts of the entire sanctification of the believer have also proved an obstacle to conservatives of a more Calvinist persuasion (Harris 1998:24). Unsurprisingly, therefore, charismatics and fundamentalists have often viewed each other with a certain amount of sardonic

¹⁰ See Bruce (1990b:17) and Harris (1998:2). It would however be foolhardy to emphasise sociological separation too much. Marsden (1991:3) notes that the early fundamentalist coalition did include militant conservatives based in Methodist, Holiness and Pentecostal congregations, as well as Baptist and Presbyterian ones. The lines of division gradually emerged over time as fundamentalism became more exclusively Baptist.

mistrust, and sometimes overt aggression. The fundamentalist Baptist Jerry Falwell, probably best known as the leader of a now-defunct religio-political lobby group called the Moral Majority, has referred to speaking in tongues not as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit but as a consequence of having eaten 'too much pizza the night before' (quoted in Bruce 1990b:201).

In practice, however, these two wings of conservative Protestantism share many convictions in their seeking for radical conversion and 'personal' relationships with God, stress on salvation through Jesus, rhetoric of biblical literalism and belief in Christ's impending return (even if the timing and nature of the return are disputed). They share a common enemy (manifestations of diabolic atheism) and a common aspiration (restoration of early, authentic Christianity). It may be that charismatics/neo-Pentecostals are generally less theologically and politically polemical than fundamentalists. None the less, in recent decades, more outwardly oriented representatives of both these groups in the United States have worked together or in parallel in order to make their feelings widely known over specific issues such as religious education in schools, abortion and family values. Differences have sometimes been suppressed in order to present an agenda that appears as united as possible. Both have defined themselves as providing guidance and leadership after the spiritual, cultural and political crises of the 1960s, including the uncertainties of the Vietnam period.¹¹ The lack of an established Church in the US, combined with a relatively decentralised legal and political system, has aided them in their attempts to gain power on local levels at least (Bruce 1990a). Communications technologies have been used to disseminate conservative Protestant messages to ever-broadening cultural areas. At the same time, increasing numbers of charismatics and fundamentalists have managed to reconcile the exercise of faith with the valorisation of contemporary forms of corporate capitalism (Cox 1984:60-4). Given the parallels that exist between charismatic and fundamentalist ways to be a conservative Protestant, I therefore find it most useful to describe

¹¹ Of course, signs of evangelical revival were evident before the 1960s. The period immediately after the Second World War witnessed the work of healing revivalists and the international work of Billy Graham. A faith founded on an apocalyptic vision of the world found resonances in the new atomic age.

charismatics, adopting Percy's term, as 'fundamentalistic'. Percy (1998:62–6) is correct to note that fundamentalism is not just a noetic phenomenon, but also a way of being in the world.

PREACHERS OF PROSPERITY

One wing of the global (neo-Pentecostal) charismatic revival has been particularly successful as well as controversial in recent years. It is known variously as the Faith, Faith Formula, Prosperity, Health and Wealth or Word Movement, and is the main focus of this book.¹² The exact place of the Movement in the broader spectrum of conservative Protestantism is disputed, since many Faith Christians maintain ambiguous and sometimes acrimonious relations with fellow charismatics. If the Movement's supporters regard it as a revival of old faiths and a reclamation of the Christian's right to have dominion over the earth, opponents see the Faith Gospel as dangerous in its irresponsible claims to solve all problems – spiritual, physical and financial.¹³

However, Faith ideas are becoming increasingly respectable and widespread in the charismatic world. Various reasons have been proposed for the apparent success of the Movement in the US. Brouwer et al. (1996:24) see it as the latest revival of an older gospel of wealth that received a fresh impetus during the later 1970s. They note that it may have benefited from widespread disenchantment with mid-twentieth-century liberalism. In addition, the Movement has spread from its bases in US ministries to become a world-wide phenomenon over the past twenty years.¹⁴ Considerable followings are found in large urban areas with middle-class constituencies, for

¹² I shall normally choose the appellation 'Faith' both for the sake of convenience and because, in my experience, Swedish and American adherents are themselves happy with it as a term of self-description. Of course, a variety of terms is used in these and other countries. My choice of the word 'Movement' is perhaps more problematic. Broadly, it implies an organisation with a sense of direction, social boundaries and clear leadership. The Faith network, on the other hand, is permeable, and, although Hagin is an influential figure, it is clearly decentralised and diffuse. However, the idea of movement has the advantage of evoking a sense of charismatic fluidity combined with evangelical mission.

¹³ For such critical texts, see, for instance, Farah (1978); Hunt and McMahon (1985); Barron (1987); Brandon (1987); McConnell (1988); Horton (1990).

¹⁴ See, for instance, Poloma (1982:237–8); Gustafsson (1987); Hollinger (1991); Marshall (1991); Gifford (1993); Coleman (1991; 1993); Cox (1995:272); Hackett (1995); Coleman (1998); Gifford (1998).

instance in South Africa, South Korea, Guatemala and Brazil (ibid.:6). Faith teachings have also appealed to less-advantaged groups who have maintained aspirations for personal (and sometimes wider) forms of transformation and empowerment.

Three areas of teaching give the Movement its distinct theological profile: healing, prosperity and 'positive confession'. The first two refer the believer to a reconsideration of the Abrahamic covenant: a blessing that in the Old Testament was promised to a particular people is said to be extended to all through the atonement of Christ.¹⁵ As a born-again Christian, the believer is a possessor of faith, and learns to draw upon new-found power not only through obedience to God, but also through specific acts that draw divine influence into the world. Thus 'positive confession' is a statement that lays claim to God's provisions and promises in the present (Hollinger 1991:57).¹⁶ In a highly critical account, Brandon (1987:17) paraphrases such thinking as 'What you say is what you get' and sees it as deriving from the idea that humans, made in God's image, can have divine dominion over creation by deploying language.¹⁷ A clear implication of ideas concerning positive confession is that words spoken 'in faith' are regarded as objectifications of reality, establishing palpable connections between human will and the external world. They form a kind of inductive fundamentalism (Hunt 1998:277). Believers are supposedly enabled to assert sovereignty over multiple spheres of existence, ranging from their own bodies to broad geographical regions. Emphases on both personal empowerment and the unlimited capacities of objectified language can reinforce each other when a Christian uses words to create desired effects in the self. One Faith preacher describes the principle behind this idea by using the imagery of a thermostat and timer in a central-heating system: the system (i.e. the person) inevitably reproduces whatever is programmed into it.¹⁸ As we shall see, the association of the self and spiritual practices with mechanical processes is a common feature of believers' discourse.

¹⁵ See Galatians 3:13–14.

¹⁶ Compare Romans 10:10; Mark 11:23–4; Proverbs 18:21; Proverbs 12:13.

¹⁷ Compare Mark 11:23–4; Matthew 9:29; Philippians 4:19. See also Hagin's *How to Turn your Faith Loose* (1985). ¹⁸ Capps (1980) cited in Brandon (1987:25).

Faith ideas have been adopted to varying degrees by many of the most famous televangelists in the US, including Pat Robertson and Oral Roberts. The figure most closely associated with the Movement's foundation and expansion is Kenneth Hagin. The story of his life provides both a classic narrative account of evangelical salvation and a microcosm of shifts in charismatic alignments throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Hagin was born in Texas in 1917, apparently with a serious heart defect (McConnell 1988:58). After a troubled and sickly childhood, he decided as a teenager to give his life to Jesus. In return, the young Hagin received the gift of divine revelation – Mark 11:23–4 – telling him not only that faith could move mountains but also that prayer could help him attain his desires. Hagin came to understand the divine message as indicating the importance of avoiding doubt: even while still apparently sick, he had to believe that he had already been healed for his physical condition to improve.

Having gained his health, Hagin became a preacher. Moving from Baptism to Pentecostalism, he was licensed as an Assemblies of God minister in 1937. After the Second World War he participated in healing revivalist circles and worked within the ministries of independent evangelists. According to Hollinger (1991:59), Hagin then adopted a strategy that was vitally important for his future career. In line with changing styles of charismatic worship, he shifted from older styles of Pentecostal practice (indeed, he was eventually forced out of the Assemblies of God) into less legalistic, separatistic expressions of faith. During the late 1960s and 1970s, after he transferred his ministry to Tulsa, Oklahoma, he began to develop a national profile. Alongside his Living Waters Church he initiated his 'Faith Seminar of the Air', a programme syndicated on radio stations in the US and Canada. Rhema Bible Training Center and Rhema Correspondence Bible School were founded in 1974.

Hagin claims to have had numerous personal visits from Jesus. In addition, he deploys the mass media with some skill, with his *Word of Faith* magazine and other teaching materials distributed monthly to many thousands of homes. A major part of his legitimacy and influence comes, however, from the fact that his ministry has acted as the training ground for so many preachers who

have themselves become prominent within a globally ramifying movement. By the mid-1990s, almost 16,000 graduates had been produced, most of them from North America but including others from almost thirty different countries (Brouwer et al. 1996:190). Hagin may not have formal, bureaucratic control over the numerous offshoots of the Faith Movement; none the less, his influence through social, educational and mass media channels has been undeniable, even if in practice his son (Kenneth Hagin Jr) now runs much of the ministry and its associated organisations.

Other important preachers in Faith circles have developed specialised profiles through aspects of their teaching or preaching styles, but all tend to echo Hagin's entrepreneurial model of establishing an overtly independent ministry that is a vehicle for evangelistic activity far beyond the level of the local congregation. Kenneth Copeland (originally a pilot working for Oral Roberts), based in Fort Worth, Texas, is generally viewed as Hagin's successor in spearheading the Movement. He travels extensively around the world, frequently with his wife, Gloria, and has become well known for his teachings on the 'laws' of prosperity. In addition, some well-known preachers clearly echo Faith principles without necessarily being at the heart of the Movement in organisational terms. Morris Cerullo, for instance, was based in the Assemblies of God before becoming involved in post-war healing evangelism. In 1961, he started his own independent ministry, World Evangelism, in California (Schaefer 1999). Cerullo acquired the Bakkers' defunct television ministry, Global Satellite Network, in 1990, and has continued to expand his healing ministry beyond the US into Asia, Africa, Latin America and even parts of Europe. Cerullo maintains his autonomy and yet shares platforms with other preachers who disseminate their own versions of the prosperity message. The Movement on a global level does not have firm boundaries of membership or non-membership, and it is marketed via mass rallies, workshops, conferences and media products that appeal to diverse constituencies of believers.

Faith leaders tend to deny that they are part of a fixed denomination (McConnell 1988:84-5). Certain organisations that transcend the local, congregational level do however function to consolidate national and transnational networks. For instance,

in the late 1970s, Hagin helped to found the International Convention of Faith Churches and Ministers. Other leading figures in the Convention have included the North Americans Lester Sumrall (now deceased), Jerry Savelle and Fred Price, the South African Ray McCauley, Reinhard Bonnke (formerly a missionary in Africa, now based in Germany), the Nigerian Benson Idahosa and Ulf Ekman from Sweden. Although the strengths of personal alliances may vary considerably, these figures share pulpits, ratify each other's prophecies and market each other's goods (Gifford 1993:179–80).

PROSPERITY GOES GLOBAL

In recent decades, Faith ideas have been transferred to, as well as transformed within, numerous contexts around the world. Certain areas such as the Muslim Middle East have proved largely resistant to the message, but generally the expansion has been impressive. Paul Gifford has traced the diffusion of Faith ideas in a number of African countries. In much of his work he argues that the effects of such teaching should be considered in political and economic as well as religious terms. He tends to emphasise the strength of North American influences on activities throughout the continent, partly through missionaries but also through economic, educational and preaching contacts. Writing of local black and West African missionaries in Doe's Liberia, Gifford concludes (1993:296): 'The message they disseminated was devised in the southern states of America and inextricably bound up with Western culture.'¹⁹ Describing a Pan-African Crusade by Reinhard Bonnke,²⁰ much of which took place in a giant tent financed by Kenneth Copeland, Gifford states (1987:85): 'In this strain of religion, things like "democracy", free enterprise, individual liberty, "a strong dollar", and American military superiority acquire almost divine status.' Strong links with the United States are also said to

¹⁹ Gifford is unlikely to be surprised by Walls's (1991) claim that, in the late 1980s, probably over 80 per cent of the world's Protestant missionaries came from North America, with the great majority of these coming from unaffiliated organisations, often Pentecostal in character.

²⁰ Reinhard Bonnke is the founder of Christ for All Nations. The organisation was originally based in South Africa, though in mid-1986 it was moved to West Germany.

be evident in the ministry of Ray McCauley (Gifford 1988), a preacher who trained under and was ordained by Kenneth Hagin.²¹ McCauley founded the Rhema Bible Church in Randburg, Johannesburg, in 1979, and according to Gifford the Church's gospel of prosperity has helped to support state authority and therefore draw attention away from the need for social change. For prosperous white South Africans, Faith ideas are said to present comforting messages that emphasise the need for order in society and justify the possession of wealth as a sign of divine grace. For poorer blacks in Africa, on the other hand, the preachers of health and wealth do not appear to offer practical schemes for societal development but present alluring images of efficiency linked to foreign missionaries as well as forms of prosperity that do not rely on the initial possession of resources (Gifford 1993:186–9). Some Faith preachers may also present an Americanised message whilst denying its cultural origins. Thus, at Bonnke's 1986 Fire Conference in Harare (attended by 4,000 evangelists from forty-one African countries) one of the guest speakers, Kenneth Copeland, emphasised that prosperity was not inherently American. Instead, it relied on the following of universally applicable biblical principles (*ibid.*:152).

In a recent book, Gifford (1998) has attempted a comparative examination of Christianity, including Faith ministries, in different parts of Africa. In this work, he locates his analysis more explicitly in a consideration of indigenous factors that might influence the reception of revivalist forms. Gifford accepts that Pentecostalism has been on the continent for most of this century, but argues that a new charismatic wave has been evident since the 1970s, resulting in a situation where the Faith Gospel has become widespread (*ibid.*:39). While in the past missionaries have been mostly North American, there now seems to be a strategy of supporting more locally based workers, even if the influences from abroad remain

²¹ Gustafsson (1987:46) notes that Kenneth Hagin participated in Rhema's church-consecrations in 1981 and 1985. In the *Eagle News* newsletter of 1 June 1985, McCauley wrote: 'The Lord, through prophesy, has given ample encouragement and confirmation that the impact of this ministry will be felt nationwide and internationally.' Indeed, Rhema Ministries South Africa established daughter congregations in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Malawi, England and Scotland (Gustafsson 1987:46) and in 1982 took part in a satellite communion, organised by Copeland, involving churches from twenty-three countries.

evident. In Ghana, one of the churches with the highest profiles is Christian Action Faith Ministries International, founded by Nicholas Duncan-Williams, son of a politician–diplomat (*ibid.*:77). By 1995, the congregation boasted 8,000 members and was located in a large new complex. A church of broadly similar ideology, whose name also expresses its translocal aspirations, is Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church. Gifford observes that Otabil's Faith message of releasing the power of the person and Black pride, reinforced by media images of travel and communications technology, strikes a responsive chord among Accra's educated, English-speaking, upwardly mobile youth (*ibid.*:82). Otabil himself appears to exemplify his followers' aspirations, and he presents himself as the model of a successful entrepreneur. He has recently been developing plans for a new university.

The Faith message in Ghana emphasises the idea of power, a concept already of some significance in local discourse. Such influence, moreover, is regarded as extending beyond the transformation of the individual person. The new Faith churches subscribe to a political theology (as already seen in South Africa) by praying for a God-fearing leader who brings his people prosperity.²² Indeed, in 1993 local charismatic churches prayed for and over Jerry Rawlings the President (Gifford 1998:86). Similar emphases are evident in Zambia through the actions of Frederick Chiluba, leader of the Movement for Multi-party Democracy and leader of the country for much of the 1990s. Chiluba is 'born-again', and received the gift of tongues from Reinhard Bonnke (*ibid.*:193). As the Faith paradigm became more widely accepted in Zambia, he declared the country a Christian nation on national television in 1991. During the ceremony to celebrate the fourth anniversary of declaring Zambia to be a Christian nation, he stated that because Zambia had entered into a Covenant with God the nation would be blessed to the point where it would stop borrowing from others and become a lender of resources instead. Diplomatic links were also established with Israel, and in 1994 and 1995 healing televangelist Benny Hinn visited the country and pledged to support Chiluba's re-election (*ibid.*:204). The preacher Nevers Mumba,

²² Here we see a version of the Old Testament idea, located in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, of the connections between a godly ruler and national prosperity.

former Bible School student in Texas²³ and Zambian interpreter for Bonnke, developed Chiluba's Christian Zionism partly by emphasising the need for Christians to counter local threats from Islam and partly by creating a three-level schema for understanding the different kinds of Christian nation (*ibid.*:233). According to Mumba, some nations have declared themselves to be Christian (Zambia); others display a great awareness of Christ but have not actually made a declaration of identity (Ghana); in addition, a nation may actually be founded upon biblical principles, as exemplified by the United States.

An important aspect of Gifford's analysis is his pointing to differences in the way that Faith ideas are used by various preachers in Africa. For instance, he contrasts Otobil's stress on skill and training as key components of success with the approach taken by Handel Leslie, head of the Abundant Life Church in Kampala, who places more emphasis on the quasi-magical gifts possessed by the pastor and his anointing (1988:162). Healing in Leslie's church, in contrast to many other Faith congregations around the world, is a relatively peripheral concern, with business success the chief focus. Perhaps the most intriguing point made by Gifford, however, relates to his argument that, in the face of increased marginalisation in global terms, some African churches provide an important arena and vehicle for international contacts (*ibid.*:93). Faith churches are significant not only because they participate in trans-local networks, but also because they cultivate an ideological context where the virtues and excitements of internationalism are stressed – and contrasts are often evident here with many more established independent churches, which provide fewer links with the outside world. Faith preachers are often presented as having 'just flown in today' or as leaving soon for foreign parts. Bible Schools list among their teachers anyone from overseas who has visited them, and testimonies are cultivated from people who have been abroad. A particularly important feature of Faith practice in this regard is the convention or conference phenomenon (*ibid.*:233). Such gatherings provide occasions for the bringing

²³ Bonnke arranged for Mumba to study at 'Christ for the Nations' in Dallas, Texas, between 1982 and 1984. This Bible School supported Mumba to the tune of 100 dollars a month for years after his return to Africa.

together of congregations to hear preachers from many parts of the world, as well as opportunities for international products to be marketed.

Rosalind Hackett's work on West Africa partially reinforces Gifford's emphasis on American involvement in local charismatic activity. She also reiterates his point that believers may nevertheless present their faith as being unconfined by cultural boundaries (1995:211). She acknowledges the influence of such established North American healing revival figures as T. L. Osborn, Oral Roberts and Morris Cerullo, but also notes the activities of 'Archbishop Professor' Benson Idahosa, founder of the Church of God Mission International in Benin City (ibid.:201). Idahosa studied with Gordon Lindsay at the Church for Nations Institute in Texas in 1971 and has established a religious empire that echoes (and was partially funded by) those of his American 'Faith' counterparts. His achievements have included a Word of Faith group of schools, a Faith Medical Centre, the All Nations for Christ Bible Institute (involving students from forty nations, taught by people from the US, India, England and Nigeria) and various international crusades organised under the rubric of Idahosa World Outreach. We therefore see in Idahosa's case a common pattern in Faith ministries, and one that was evident in Gifford's observations: a 'local' organisation is set up, often aided by foreign influence or even money, and becomes a new centre of influence that defines its identity not only in terms of local outreach but also in relation to influence exercised over a transnational sphere of operations. Idahosa's reputation as 'The Apostle of Africa' is for external as well as internal consumption, providing him with a legitimacy that extends beyond the continent itself. His ministry acts not only as a new centre, but also as a point of mediation between Africa and the external world, whilst bringing together and training Christians from different countries in the continent itself. Nicholas Duncan-Williams, for instance, was a student at Idahosa's Bible College in the late 1970s before he set up his own 'international' church in Ghana.

In explaining the emergence and apparent success of Faith styles of preaching and worship in African contexts, Hackett proposes a number of interlinked factors. Clearly the missionising

actions of American evangelists are important, as is the role of the mass media in disseminating the message. It may be that economic recession combined with political disillusionment encourages people to seek alternative source of power and life-style transformation (1995:205), while she notes that the strong Muslim presence in, for instance, Nigeria, has encouraged some Christians to renounce their apolitical stance in order to bring their own agenda to the fore through lobbying candidates in elections. At the same time, Hackett places more stress than Gifford does (at least in his earlier work) on the role of indigenous styles of relating to and appropriating Faith Christianity. She notes (*ibid.*:211):

We [should not] forget the predominantly American origins of the pentecostal and charismatic revival in Africa. Yet in its present phase, the forces of appropriation and negotiation seem to be more active, with more evidence of agency by African evangelists. It is hard to resist gospel ships and their cargo, but indigenous inspirational literature is now beginning to proliferate and some African evangelists are becoming well known on the global circuit. At one level they appear to be content to reproduce the theological tenets of the movement (a skill much admired in certain cultural contexts), but it is in the process of selection that we find an African emphasis and creativity – in the importance attributed to deliverance, healing and experience, for example.

Here, we see the ambiguities associated with the cultural status of transnational religious revivals such as that promulgated by the Faith preachers. A theology whose origins lie predominantly in the United States is sometimes ‘reproduced’, sometimes selectively appropriated, in a new context. The development of the revival into a world-wide movement provides a set of numerous recursive channels through which Faith ideas, interpreted through (in this case) an ‘African’ lens, are then disseminated beyond that continent into the global networks of preachers, conferences, media products, and so on. In this sense Faith ideas may have clear North American origins and be associated with highly powerful ministries in the US, yet they are subject to constant forms of cultural appropriation, repackaging, and redissemination into the transnational realm.

Work carried out on Faith churches in Latin America expresses similar concerns in relation to issues of personal and political