

While writing this research paper for an English class at Drake Business School, in Astoria, New York, in February 2000, the Shekinah Glory visited me and entranced the whole 4-story building and the surrounding streets. The Shekinah really manifested powerfully while I was on page 2, paragraph 2, and lasted between 15 to 20 minutes. That day, I didn't get past page 2; I finished the paper about a week or two later. More details on pages 10-11 below.

## **Views and Evidences of the Current Visitation of God in the Earth**

**By David A. Castro, February 2000**

### **I Current Events and Reports**

#### **A) What in the World is Happening?**

In recent years, there has come a great development in the church world. It seems that a whole new wave of excitement, a revival of sorts, is coming into manifestation and stirring people to a renewed interest in religion and God. Church people are becoming happier about their church life, more enthused about knowing God, and more enthused about life in general. Non-church-goers, too, are being affected by this interest in God and the church, and seem to be more open than ever before to the practice of religion.

Church watchers and church historians all agree that this type of activity is not without precedent. All throughout history, there have been many occasions of spiritual awakenings with all the elements of the current awakening. Awakenings, revivals, and visitations of God, have always played a role in the history of man. They may come in slightly different ways, to any people or nation, for any duration of time, and, perhaps, with slightly different purposes. But overall, visitations of God would always stir people to an awareness and acknowledgement of Him, and challenge them to let Him be the Lord of their lives. This, again, is happening today.

There is a new term which has been coined to identify this new trend in religion. “The Toronto Blessing” is now the catch phrase for the attitude, the experience, or the affiliation with this new wave of revival in the church world globally. Why this term? For several decades, there have been many people awaiting another great spiritual awakening, hopefully one greater than the last. Well, it’s happening again, beginning with a demonstration of the Spirit of God in a little church in Toronto, Canada, just a few years ago.

In January, 1994, during a four day conference on revival, at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship church, (then known as Toronto Airport Vineyard), there was an amazing display of God’s power. The speaker, Randy Clark, a visiting pastor from St. Louis, Missouri, had just ended the main message on the first evening of the conference and made an altar call, asking those who wanted prayer to come up to the platform. Instantly there came a presence *from above* that filled the sanctuary and came over each one present. There were about one hundred and twenty people in the church that night. Some were in an adjoining room enjoying a Bible study when this divine presence came into the church.

People who came up to receive prayer from Pastor Clark began to feel the presence of God in an awesome and undeniable way and began shaking, trembling, falling to the floor and praising God. Some cried, some laughed, some spoke with other tongues, and some were in spiritual ecstasy. Even before approaching the platform to receive prayer, some were overcome by the presence of God and experienced manifestations of the Spirit on them. Right where they were sitting some were touched by the Spirit and fell to the floor unable to get up for several hours.

Mary Audrey-Crawford, the bible teacher in the classroom next to the main sanctuary, later testified that she and her students felt a glorious presence fill the room and overwhelmed

them so that they, too, began falling on the floor and speaking to God or praising Him in some way. Sister Mary said when she opened the door to see what was going on in the church she fell and could not stand up. So mightily upon her was the Holy Spirit in manifestation that she was unable to control her motor skills. As she looked upon the crowd of people in the main sanctuary, strewn all over the floor as soldiers slain in battle, she saw a marvelous mist in the air, indicative of the Shekinah glory cloud of God. This event was readily understood to be the visitation of God that this church had hoped and prayed for.

After this first night's service, which lasted several hours longer than scheduled, the excitement over having been visited by God in an awesome way was shared by phone by many of the witnesses. The members who didn't attend service that night deeply regretted having stayed home. They made sure they came the next night and compelled others to come with them. The second night, the house of the Lord was packed. The expectations of all those present were not disappointed. God came down again in awesome power, causing over half of those present to be touched by His Spirit in a tangible way and fall to the floor in divine joy or some other kind of ecstatic state. Again, many phone calls and e-mail messages were dispatched reporting that God was coming down in power and touching His people.

The third night, again the jam-packed church was visited with an awesome display of God's presence. People were powerfully blessed, refreshed, delivered from their sins, restored to intimacy with God, and in some cases healed of physical illnesses. The Pastor, John Arnott, and the speaker, Randy Clark, and all the ministers and leaders were so happy about what God was doing that they didn't want the conference to end. As often occurs in church revivals, it was feared that after the fourth night of the meetings the visitation would wane. So they agreed to continue to have nightly meetings indefinitely.

Each night, this same presence of God would come down and touch lives in powerful ways. By this time, people had already been coming from afar, but now many started coming from other cities and states. After the first week, many hundreds of visitors had been touched by the Lord in a significant way. And the meetings continued. By the first and second month of the revival, reports had already begun being aired around the world that a special blessing of God had come down in the city of Toronto, in an obscure part of the city, in a remote section of Mississauga, in a humble charismatic church, among a small group of people who had congregated to fellowship together and seek the Lord.

John Arnott, overwhelmed with the idea that God would choose his humble church to impact the world with a revival of the Holy Spirit, gives the following testimony.

We invited Randy Clark, a casual friend and pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in St. Louis, Missouri, to speak because we heard that people were being touched powerfully by God when he ministered. We hoped that this anointing would follow him to our church.

Yet Randy and I were in fear and trembling, hoping God would show up in power, but uncertain about what would happen. We were not exactly full of faith—but God was faithful anyway.

On January 20, 1994, the Father's blessing fell on the 120 people attending that Thursday night meeting in our church. Randy gave his testimony, and ministry time began. People fell all over the floor under the power of the Holy Spirit, laughing and crying. We had to stack up all the chairs to make room for everyone. Some people even had to be carried out.

Before Randy and his team came, they prayed. The Lord gave them a vision of a map with a fire breaking out in Toronto then burning up the whole map. God fulfilled this vision. Within days, the word spread that God was visiting us powerfully. But this outpouring didn't look like we thought it would.

We had been praying for God to move, and our assumption was that we would see more people saved and healed, along with the excitement that these would generate. It never occurred to us that God would throw a massive party where people would laugh, roll, cry and become so empowered that emotional hurts from childhood were just lifted off them. The phenomena may be strange, but the fruit this is producing is extremely good.<sup>1</sup>

B) Results of the revival

So awesome were some of the results of this visitation—including miraculous healings from cancer, diabetes, arthritis, mental disorder, terminal illness, deliverance from drugs, alcohol, and other vices, and dramatic transformations in many lives—that the news spread like wildfire virtually overnight that God was in Toronto. Both the religious and the secular media began to circulate many of the testimonies of individuals who had visited the church. The Daily News, in Tokyo, Japan, would report daily on their front page what was going on in Toronto. A newspaper editor in London referred to this revival as the *Toronto Blessing*, and that's what it has been called from that time on.

Within just a few months of the revival, hundreds of people from other countries had already visited the church. So many had booked flights from London, England, that the airlines had to schedule additional flights to Toronto, some had to wait longer than usual to fly to Toronto, and some had to be rerouted to another city or country in order to get to Toronto. But they insisted they had to get to Toronto!

Pastor Melinda Fish, of the Church of the Risen Savior, in Trafford, Pennsylvania, is one of the thousands of ministers who have been refreshed by the blessing of the Holy Spirit in the Toronto church. She has also become one of the spreaders of revival fire. In "The River is Here," she writes the following testimony.

The power of the Holy Spirit fell that night in an unusual way. One by one members of the church began to laugh, cry, shake and fall to the carpet under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This happened the next night, too, and the next.

News of the unusual phenomena spread quickly throughout churches in surrounding Ontario. Within days pastors were attending to see if God was truly there. News also spread through the secular press in Britain. Soon both curious and spiritually dry believers from all over the world were booking flights to Toronto. Two airlines, AirCanada and British Airways, had to add extra flights from London to accommodate the widening flow of seekers.

Word of the outbreak of something unusual reached the ears of those in the United States who read about it in a handful of periodicals, secular and Christian (including Charisma). Many believers heard about the unusual phenomena through negative reports from a nationally syndicated radio broadcast. So many seekers made their way to the Airport Vineyard in 1994 that Toronto Life magazine named the church Toronto's number-one tourist venue for that year.<sup>2</sup>

The small city of Mississauga, Toronto, became aflame with testimonies and reports, views and evidences, of *the Blessing*. In some places of business, some of those who had been especially touched at “the blessing church” began shaking, falling, staggering like a drunkard, or experiencing some other kind of manifestation of the Spirit of God upon them, in public. They would interest others around them in the things of God, lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, pray for them and impart the blessing to them, and encourage them to visit the church. Many businesses prospered dramatically, virtually overnight, especially hotels, restaurants, and, of course, the airlines trafficking the Toronto Airport.

C) The revival fire spreads

Many of those who had visited the Toronto church would be interviewed on television or radio and be given the opportunity to share with the world what they had experienced in Toronto; and the excitement would spread farther. Articles and editorials in hundreds of newspapers, newsletters, and magazines—both religious and secular—also helped spread the religious fervor. The internet, too, became flooded with reports and testimonials of what God was doing, not only in the Toronto Blessing church, but in literally thousands of other churches around the world who had been touched and blessed in some direct or indirect way by the Toronto Blessing.

Interest in what God was doing began to grow at an exponential rate. Within the first year of the revival, over one million people had visited the Toronto Blessing church, which had purchased a much larger sanctuary within ten months of the commencement of the revival. Many

ministers from other churches had flown in from many parts of the world to receive an encouraging word, a renewed vigor, an uplifted spirit to continue doing the work of the Lord in their own ministries.

## **II What Does This Mean?**

Each time throughout history, whenever God would bring a revival to a people or nation, it would always involve extraordinary manifestations of His Spirit, and would always draw people closer to Him. Revivals recorded in the Bible reveal the same. There would be seasons of spiritual drought, an apathy among a people, and God would begin to show up and remind them that He exists, that He loves and cares for them, that He is able and willing to heal and deliver them from their difficult circumstances, and that He has a better life for them. When He would show up in some more spectacular ways, His tangible presence would be so overwhelming at times that people would be overcome and fall to the ground, oftentimes shaking, jumping, shouting, or speaking with other tongues in praise to God.

This type of event shows that God is drawing near to us, and invites us to draw near to Him. Church leaders contend that this current visitation of God is destined to become the greatest and last, culminating in the Second Advent of the Lord.

## **III Where are we Headed?**

When God shows up in special times of visitation, it is always with a purpose in mind. His blessing is always headed somewhere. His motive is always to reveal His great love for us which He demonstrated by giving His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us on the cross of Calvary two thousand years ago, so that we could be forgiven of our sins. His goal today is to prepare us for His return.

Many church leaders believe that the current revival was prophesied in the Bible. They believe that we are living in the last days of which Jesus and His disciples spoke, and that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in great power which the Apostle Peter referred to in the Book of Acts, Chapter two, and which began on the Day of Pentecost, is now coming into full fruition. They expect a great awakening which would inspire people to acknowledge God and seek spiritual fulfillment. Leaders of different church denominations, though their teachings may slightly differ, mostly agree that there is an imminent harvest of millions of people who are going to become a part of the church at large.

Since the Toronto Blessing first began, and its resulting great religious excitement, many books have been written to give the account of what happened in the first few days and weeks of the revival, what has been happening since then, and what we can expect. Seminars and conferences on religious themes have become extremely popular since the beginning of the revival. Gospel concerts, evangelistic crusades, and Christian events in general, have all begun to experience unprecedented popularity and success. Many Christian bookstores are also doing quite well.

#### **IV How We Can Be a Part of What God is Doing**

Religious leaders who affirm this spiritual revival are saying that people ought to go to church and become a part of this current revival. Since the church structure is instituted by God, it is there that instruction and edification in religious matters can be obtained, and it is there that God's people meet to fellowship with each other and bless the Lord as one body. It is also there that the Lord's presence can most freely bless His people. "The Lord is in His holy temple," (Psalms 11:4).

The current visitation of God which began in Toronto, Canada in January, 1994, and which has become a worldwide revival, is an undeniable and incontrovertible fact. It has even been defined as the greatest move of God in all of history because of its duration as well as its dynamics. This current event seems to be increasing and becoming more and more intense. Interest and excitement about the things of God is growing fast and stirring people to a greater relationship with God.

The face of Christianity, and of religion in general, is changing rapidly. People are changing the way they see religion. The world will never be the same. Even people who do not want to accept or affirm this revival are being forced to rethink and redefine their whole premise of Christian ministry. This is the result of the current visitation of God.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>John Arnott, "The Father's Blessing" Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL, 1995, p. 590

<sup>2</sup>Melinda Fish, "The River is Here" 1996, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996, p. 14

I attended Drake Business School from July 1999 to March 2000 and graduated with honors that month. My experience there was enjoyable and memorable, and got me inspired to go to college over the next few years. But I did have some problems. A handful of foolish persons brought some persecution my way and tried to make my time there impossible; they got me on probation just within three weeks of the beginning of my program, almost got me kicked out, threatened to have me beaten up, and one even brought her husband to deal with me. He took one look at me and left.

During my last term, while doing a research paper on "The Current Visitation of God in the Earth," I happened to be alone in my classroom; for some strange reason, my three classmates and the instructor all had other engagements for that hour. Each day of class there would always be all kinds of noises and sounds throughout the school: instructors teaching, students talking and typing on keyboards, books and papers shuffling, phones ringing from the administrative offices, people walking through the hallway, and the sounds of traffic and people heard coming through the windows. The school was located on the busy intersection of Broadway and Steinway Street in Astoria, New York City, a commercial district; the classroom was on the third floor, and it was during the early afternoon of a weekday. Naturally, there was always a lot of activity and noise in the atmosphere—but not on that day.

For about a twenty minute period of time, as I looked at the computer screen and began writing the research paper, and thought about the current move of God, (and particularly the *Toronto Blessing*), the Shekinah Glory Cloud of God visited me in that room. He had arranged for me to be alone so that He can be with *me*. I didn't fall into a trance, hadn't dozed off and had a daydream, and wasn't simply imagining the presence of the Holy Spirit: I was fully awake and in my right mind, knew where I was and what was around me, and knew that it was the Shekinah Glory literally there.

I was keenly aware of the absence of sounds—no phones ringing, no people or traffic heard coming from the windows, no one walking through the hallway, no one typing, talking or teaching, even though all the other classrooms were filled with students and instructors and computers. It was not simply a rarity but a natural impossibility that at such a time of day, at such a place, there would be absolutely no movement or speech for as long as twenty minutes. And, as usual, the classroom doors were open. God had come into the building and entranced the whole of it, and I knew it. It was clear to me that every individual in that building was in a similar stupor as all those on that floor, and maybe anyone in the vicinity outside, too, because there was absolutely no activity inside or outside.

I said, "God, You're here. You're here. Your Shekinah Glory is literally right here, right now, and I know it. Why are You here, Lord? Is there a special reason for Your Glory being here this way?" He put thoughts in my mind that I translate: "I'm affirming what you're writing about because I'm truly in it," (the global move of God that was influenced by the *Toronto Blessing*, beginning in 1994) and "I'm blessing you for obeying Me in coming to this school and toughing it out, and I'm delivering you from the vexation placed on you by those who persecuted you."

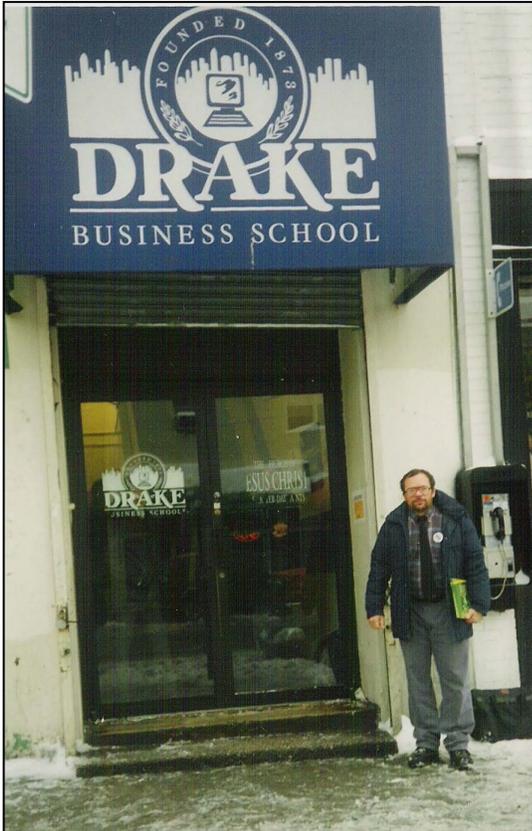
All through the time of His presence there was such a holy silence in the atmosphere that one could hear a pin drop. I was very aware of the fact that God had put everyone in that building in a *deep sleep from the Lord*—as he did to King Saul's soldiers when the Psalmist David penetrated Saul's guard and captured his spear and cruse of water, (1Samuel 26:12)—and left them with absolutely no knowledge of the event. But I knew it and have kept it as precious all these years. When the Shekinah lifted and faded away, sounds, talking and activity gradually resumed as normal and I enjoyed an otherwise normal day.

God can do glorious things right in the middle of regular, normal activities without anyone knowing about it. The fools who sought to trouble me quit the program and didn't graduate. Three years later, the school (which had been in business for over a hundred years), in all its locations, went bankrupt and is no longer in business.

I earned the Computerized Business certificate from Drake Business School in 2000, and also the Perfect Attendance and Outstanding Mentor and Dean's List awards. The experience was wholly rewarding, and I have remained close friends with some of my graduating classmates: Phillip, Andrea, Jorge and Cristina. Somehow, they still consider me their mentor a decade later. We have all grown spiritually, visited church together, and accomplished what we set out to do while at Drake.

(This testimony is taken from my 6<sup>th</sup> book, "30 Years of Dreams, Visions, Trances.")

P.S. I have written about supernatural experiences of the Holy Spirit since the 1980's and was not unfamiliar with those that were in manifestation in the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship Church, which I have visited six times between 1995 and 2000, and about which I have read a lot and consider myself informed. My experiences there were blessed beyond measure.



Circled in blue is the room in which I sat and began writing the paper when the Shekinah Glory appeared on a weekday afternoon. I worked at nights at the Rite Aid Store below.