

**THE TORONTO BLESSING: AN EXPRESSION OF CHRISTIAN
SPIRITUALITY IN THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT?**

by

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SUMMARY

Spirituality is a word in frequent use in contemporary society. In a broad sense it refers to the 'raison d'être' of our existence, the meaning and values to which we ascribe. Everyone embodies a spirituality in this wider sense, whether it be nihilistic, materialistic, humanistic or religious.

The present study evaluates the phenomenon of the Toronto Blessing in the light of spirituality in general and Christian spirituality in particular. By means of a broadly-based phenomenological methodology, the manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing are evaluated firstly, with respect to the bible; secondly, with respect to the Hindu experience of 'Kundalini awakening'; and thirdly, in terms of neuroscience and certain psychological processes, such as hypnosis, mass hysteria, and the role of body and mind in creating spiritual experiences.

Although Charismatics claim that the Toronto Blessing has a sound biblical foundation, no evidence to support this claim has been found. However, striking similarities are found between the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing and the techniques used in the 'Kundalini awakening' for the transference of energy. Finally, the major findings of this study support the conclusion that the Toronto Blessing is largely the result of psychological techniques. The possibility of Godly intervention is not totally excluded, but caution is urged, so as to be aware of extraneous factors that create similar manifestations. While it is agreed that the Toronto Blessing can be seen as an expression of spirituality in a broad sense, nevertheless it *cannot* be viewed as an expression of *Christian* spirituality in the Charismatic Movement.

KEY TERMS

LIST OF KEY TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

1. Spirituality
2. Christian Spirituality
3. Mysticism
4. Christian Mysticism
5. Charismatic Movement
6. Toronto Blessing
7. Kundalini awakening
8. Altered state of consciousness
9. Hypnosis
10. Suggestion
11. Vineyard churches

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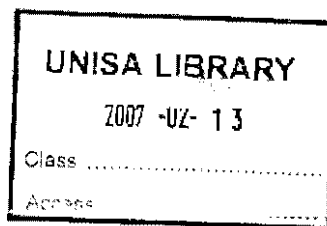
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY AND PROBLEM TO BE INVESTIGATED

The objective of this study is to investigate the Toronto Blessing as an expression of Christian spirituality in the Charismatic movement. The proposers of the Toronto Blessing claim that the manifestations accompanying it are the result of 'Godly intervention' and are substantiated by certain passages from the Bible. In the light of this claim and of current discussion, the following question can be asked: Is the Toronto Blessing an ecstatic experience related to Christian Spirituality which can be supported by similar incidents from the Bible, or is it an experience related to Eastern mysticism, more particularly as expressed in Hinduism in the phenomenon called the *awakening of Kundalini energy*? Similar characteristics are found in the Toronto Blessing to those in the Kundalini awakening. Similarities between the Toronto Blessing and eastern mysticism seem quite likely, considering the following remark by Fearon (1994:108): 'The "Word of Faith" Movement, with which some of the Blessing's progenitors have been associated, has been criticised for the "strong strands of Eastern mysticism" within its teachings'. In a different vein, one could also ask whether the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing are the result of psychological techniques.

In summary, the problem that needs to be investigated is whether the experience of the Toronto Blessing with its accompanying manifestations can be viewed as a form of Christian spirituality. In the process of this study the roots of the Toronto Blessing will also be investigated in order to ascertain whether its origin is Christian or non-Christian. In this study it is argued that the manifestations associated with the Toronto Blessing might be an ecstatic spiritual experience that originates from a non-Christian religion, prescribed by culture or even from humanly induced manifestations through the use of psychological techniques.

It is necessary at this stage to clarify some of the terms that will be employed in this thesis, such as Christian spirituality, biblical perspective, Charismatic Movement, and Toronto Blessing.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF TERMS

1.2.1 Christian Spirituality

This term refers to the way in which Christian individuals or groups aim to deepen their experience of God or the way in which they practise the presence of God (McGrath 1999:3). Saliers (1992:460) defines spirituality as '... a lived experience and a disciplined life of prayer and action which cannot be conceived apart from the specific theological beliefs that are ingredients in the forms of life that manifest authentic Christian faith.'

Christian Spirituality involves the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith (McGrath 1999:2). McBrien (1994:1058) elaborates on the term and points out that it has to do with human experience of God and with the transformation of human consciousness and human lives as outcomes of that experience. This experience of God is personal (Dowd 1994:38); not some impersonal life force, some impulse towards creativity, or some kind of magnetic field.

1.2.2 Biblical perspective

Confirmation and interpretation of the accompanying gifts and signs of the baptism of the Holy Spirit experienced in the Charismatic Movement are mostly traced back to the early church of the first century. Certainly the two most important passages of Scripture that are being used in this endeavour are Acts 2 and Joel 2. Joel 2 is understood to contain a 'double' prophecy; not only does it point to the 'supernatural' manifestations on the day of Pentecost but it also

forms the basis by which the Toronto Blessing and previous 'supernatural' moves in the history of Christianity are being interpreted. The manifestations as described in Acts 2 are interpreted as conveying a fuller understanding of what was meant by the prophecy in Joel 2. To place contemporary phenomena, related to the Holy Spirit, into perspective the social and religious culture of the early church must be taken into consideration. By placing the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the early church in their rightful context a more appropriate interpretation and relevant application for contemporary times can be achieved. It is, furthermore, important that a sound method of interpretation be used and that the interpretation of a particular text should have a clear relation to what was meant by the original text.

1.2.3 Charismatic Movement

The Charismatic Movement refers not to a specific denominational grouping but to the movement as a whole that transcends church boundaries, also known as the Charismatic renewal. This movement started in the 1960's and by the end of the 1970's had entered every major Christian denomination. The Charismatic renewal, as it is best known, is clearly identifiable by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the accompanying gifts or *charisms*. The purpose of the movement is rather to renew the existing church than to establish new churches. The ensuing *charisms* are seen as an actualisation of graces already received in baptism.

The Charismatic Movement or Neo-Pentecostals can be distinguished from the classical Pentecostals mainly by their greater emphasis on the actual practising of gifts of the Holy Spirit (*charisms*). The classical Pentecostals place emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the accompanying sign of glossolalia. The practising of spiritual gifts in the charismatic movement has gone through certain periods of spiritual renewal from the time the movement started, which are described and viewed by some as spiritual waves (Goring & Whaling 1992:93; Crim, Bullard, & Shinn 1989:162,564)

1.2.4 Toronto Blessing

The twentieth century, according to Stibbe (1995:10), is characterised by four main movements or waves of the Holy Spirit. The first wave in the twentieth century was the emergence of Pentecostalism in 1906. The second wave, the Charismatic Renewal, followed in the 1960's and was succeeded by the third wave, called the *Protestant Evangelical Renewal*, in the 1980's, which was sparked by John Wimber. The fourth wave, Stibbe holds, has started and the *Toronto Blessing* is the first sign of it. Springer (1988:xxviii-xxxii) refers to certain ecstatic manifestations, of which uncontrollable laughter is the most commonly known, that started in the early 1990's in the Charismatic Movement. Its proponents describe these manifestations as a 'touch of God' and the 'work of the Holy Spirit'.

The *Toronto Blessing* is characterised by the following ecstatic manifestations: falling to the ground, shaking, trembling, twitching and convulsive bodily movements, uncontrollable laughter, apparent drunkenness, animal sounds and intensive physical activity (Porter & Richter 1995:6-9)

The physical characteristics of the Toronto Blessing are many and varied. Spilka, et. al. (1985(a):176-178) and Hay (1987:91-92) describe the *Toronto Blessing* essentially as a non-verbal form of religious experience. The *Toronto Blessing* shows similar characteristics to mysticism. It is a religious experience typically involving such features as a sense of oneness with all things, a sense of timelessness and spacelessness, a sense of deep and profound peace, the dissolution of sense and of self and a feeling of ineffability - an experience beyond the language of a human being, in which the mind may simply be conscious of *the void*. The phenomenon of the Toronto Blessing *is also described as an unfamiliar language that God uses to work in people's lives* (Chevreau 1994:28). Some charismatics claim that they have rediscovered an old truth; namely, that God cannot be fitted into human made 'boxes'. God is suprarational. Although the Charismatics respect the centrality of the Bible in

their teachings on the one hand, it seems that when God comes in power, phenomena can take place which are non-biblical. The touch of God is viewed as more important than the Bible and need not be substantiated by Scripture.

1.3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The approach in this study will be mainly to investigate the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing with the aim of throwing more light on their origin. The Charismatic Movement places a high priority on the authority of the Bible as the 'word of God'. The charismatics' interpretation of biblical verses is used to substantiate the authenticity of the Toronto Blessing. In their minds the Toronto Blessing is from God. In order to test their interpretation, not only will their usage of biblical verses be evaluated, but other factors that might contribute to bringing about this experience will also be considered. For this reason a broadly-based phenomenological approach will be utilised. The Toronto Blessing phenomenon will be viewed against Biblical, cultural, religious, psychological and neuroscientific backgrounds in order to supply possible interpretations of the phenomenon. The aim of this research is not to be judgemental, but is rather to find possible explanations for the phenomenon in order to determine whether it could be viewed as a form of Christian spirituality. The research for this thesis is by means of a literature study.

1.4 LANGUAGE

Throughout this thesis, an attempt will be made to use *inclusive language*. In all instances within this study generic terms such as person, humanity and individual are inclusive of both male and female. For textual variation, the church will be referred to using feminine pronouns, consistent with traditional usage.

1.5 CITATIONS

The Harvard system of referencing will be utilised. Internet citations will be recorded according to the prescribed method (Li & Crane 1993). Internet access has been extensively used and academic papers on the Internet have been referred to. For the purpose of this study, the following method of citation will be used for Web documents with no publication date. The reference will be cited as follows in the bibliography: firstly the name of the author followed by n.d., then the Title [online]. Available: URL [Access date]¹. Within the text, citations will include the name of the original author of a work, followed by n.d. (no publication date) and then the page number of the document, for example: (Collie n.d.: 2) In the case where the publication date is known it will be included².

1.6 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one provides the introduction, orientation, terminology and a literature survey and describes the methodological approach that will be followed in achieving the aim of the study. In chapter two a theoretical foundation for Mysticism, Christian Mysticism, Spirituality and Christian Spirituality will be laid in order to establish a precise understanding of these terms, which will in turn create a solid backdrop against which the Toronto Blessing can be evaluated. In chapter three the historical roots of the Charismatic movement and the Toronto Blessing will be discussed. The manifestations that accompany the Toronto Blessing will also be examined, in order to create a basis for the following chapters that will evaluate these phenomena against different backdrops. In chapter four the Toronto Blessing manifestations, interpreted as Christian spirituality, will be discussed and evaluated from a historical biblical viewpoint. In

1 Example: Sherman, C. n.d., *The Invisible Web* [Online]. Available: <http://www.freepint.co.uk/issues/080600.htm#feature> [Accessed 27 Nov. 2000].

2 (Guide to Referencing Internet Resources Using the Harvard Style: University of Southern Queensland Library 1999-2001 [Online], 2001. Available: <http://www.usq.edu.au/library/resources/genref/harvardonlinereferencing.htm> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2001]).

this chapter the Scripture verses used by the charismatics to substantiate the Toronto Blessing as an authentic intervention from God will be evaluated. In chapter five a comparison of the Toronto Blessing manifestations with another mystical experience called *Kundalini energy*, expressed in Hinduism, will be carried out. In chapter six spiritual experiences such as the experience of the Toronto Blessing will be evaluated from different theoretical perspectives. These will include psychosocial, pathological, psychological and neuroscientific theories. Chapter seven summarises and concludes the study.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this thesis the literature survey is presented somewhat differently from the traditional manner. Investigating the experience of the Toronto Blessing as an expression of spirituality is a new field of research. The author has not come across any publications addressing this particular topic. However, the Toronto Blessing and the accompanying manifestations have attracted interest across a wide spectrum. From this wide spectrum of interpretation and evaluation four main viewpoints emerge, which can in broad terms be called (1) a polemic; (2) a charismatic/Pentecostal; (3) an inter-religious and (4) a psychological/neuroscientific viewpoint. The polemic as well as the charismatic/Pentecostal viewpoint interpret and evaluate the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing within the framework of the Christian tradition. The third viewpoint, an interreligious viewpoint, crosses over the borderline of the Christian tradition, however, finds contact points within other religions and seeks to interpret the Toronto blessing phenomena in terms of similar manifestations accompanying the spiritual practices of those religions. The fourth viewpoint, the psychological/neuroscientific viewpoint, considers the phenomena in the light of psychological and neuroscientific processes. In this study all the aforementioned viewpoints will be of particular interest, seeing that the hypothesis of this study is that the manifestations, or at least some of them, accompanying the Toronto blessing, might originate from a non-Christian religion as well as from psychological processes.

1.7.1 Polemic Viewpoint

This viewpoint refers to a scientific study of the experience of the Toronto Blessing within the discipline of theology. A polemical theology reflects a dispute internal to Christian faith, and should not be identified with apologetics, the defence and promotion of Christianity to those outside the Christian church. Polemics are more typically reserved for theological issues of great importance (*theologoumena*), but not necessarily dogmatic ones. Nevertheless, when dogmatic issues are at stake in the church, polemical theology, often of an astringent nature, is necessary (Smail, Walker & Wright, 1995:171-172). Polemic viewpoints are found on a scale from a conservative to a more liberal theological evaluation.

A supporter of this polemical viewpoint is *Pietersen* (1998). In this work, the book by *Stibbe* (1995), that substantiates the Toronto Blessing as an authentic move of God, is evaluated. The authors of this book differ from *Stibbe's* and other supporters' viewpoints, that the Toronto Blessing is a movement from God. The fact that people who choose to differ from this viewpoint are accused of 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit' is also rejected as unscientific. *Pietersen* (1998:3) clearly defines that the approach taken is not a judgmental approach but is rather one which acts according to Paul's advice in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21: 'Do not quench the Spirit, Do not despise prophecies, but *test everything*; hold fast to what is good ...' Testing is done according to Christian theological doctrines.

Another supporter of the polemical viewpoint is *Randles* (1994). *Randles* (1994:118) claimed to have found, through research, that the Toronto Blessing had descended from a long line of mysticism and erroneous teaching that went back to the 1940's. When this doctrine first emerged in the 1940's, it was rightly challenged by the mainstream Pentecostal denominations. He also warns that the deception never really died. It went underground until the day when sound doctrine would be of little concern among the leadership of the churches. The

aim of Randles is to inform the church of this danger. Randles evaluates the Toronto Blessing and its manifestations as deception and a threat to the church (*ibid.* 1994:118).

Hanegraaff (1993) also warns that Christianity has become a 'fast food Christianity'. He exposes some of the so-called prophets of the faith movement, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn to mention but a few, who are also involved in the Toronto Blessing, and points out that great deception is taking place under the banner 'Jesus is Lord'. He continues: '... while convinced that what they hear is the real thing, they are in fact turning on to nothing more than a cheap counterfeit. Eternal truths from the Word of God are being perverted into bad mythology - and all the while Christianity is hurtling at neck breaking speed into a crisis of unparalleled proportions' (*Hanegraaff*, 1993:10). *Hanegraaff* (2001) takes a very firm stand against the Toronto Blessing and terms it a counterfeit revival. In this revival, according to him, the pastors have peppered their preaching and practice with fabrications, fantasies, and frauds, seemingly unaware of their serious consequences. He also refers to the signs and wonders of this revival as 'lying' signs and wonders (*Hanegraaff* 2001:14).

1.7.2 Charismatic Viewpoint

From another angle the Toronto Blessing is evaluated and interpreted from the viewpoint of Charismatic and Pentecostal spirituality. Central to Charismatic/Pentecostal spirituality is the Spirit-baptism and regeneration. In this experience is an existential awareness of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a gift of the risen Christ. The distinct awareness of the Holy Spirit is also operative in revealing Jesus Christ as the author and content of salvation - and this apart from whether one employs a theology of subsequence or not (*Del Colle* 1993:107). Also central to their spirituality, charismatics place strong emphasis on the manifestations of the 'Holy Spirit', also referred to as the active working of the Holy Spirit, in their lives but also in their meetings. This viewpoint leaves room for 'supernatural' experiences to be viewed as part of their

spirituality. These supernatural experiences are mostly substantiated by their interpretation of scripture.

The Toronto Blessing, apart from being described as a movement of God, is also viewed as a renewal and refreshing movement. A stern supporter of this viewpoint is *Springer* (1988). The Toronto Blessing is viewed as the first sign of a coming fourth wave, and according to Springer (1988:214) this wave is 'empowerment by the Holy Spirit'. Members of the Fourth Wave, of which the Toronto Blessing is viewed as the first sign, define their encounters with the Holy Spirit as a step in the process of spiritual growth: the experience is normally described as a dramatic encounter with the Holy Spirit, with the need for continual fillings. Another strong supporter of this viewpoint is *Chevreau* (1994), who goes to great lengths to 'prove' that the 'new and extraordinary works of God' to which Edwards referred are precisely what he experienced when he first visited the Toronto Airport Vineyard. *Amott* (1995) claims that the Blessing is a move of God and that it will be accompanied with powerful signs, wonders and miracles, as in Jesus' time. *Joyner* (1990) predicted glorious times in the near future, referring to the Toronto Blessing. *Howard-Browne* (1992a) was amazed at the 'power of God', writing about manifestations similar to those of the Toronto Blessing that started to take place in his ministry soon before the Toronto Blessing itself happened. Most people who became 'drunk in the spirit' were also 'knocked down' by the spirit and laid on the floor. The inability to rise from the floor as a result of this event is attributed to what is called the 'glue' of the spirit referring to the 'working' of the Holy Spirit (*Howard-Browne* 1992b).

1.7.3 Inter-Religious Viewpoint

The Toronto Blessing and accompanying manifestations are viewed by some as an experience taken over from another non-Christian religion. This viewpoint holds that clear similarities exist especially between a particular experience in Hinduism called 'Kundalini awakening' and the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing.

St Romain (1994) in his book *Kundalini Energy and Christian Spirituality*, draws a clear parallel between the manifestations of the Holy Spirit as known in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles and Kundalini awakening in Hinduism. *McCleave* (1990) a self claimed Christian mystic, expresses the opinion that the mystical experience described by mystics is indeed the awakened Kundalini.

St Romain (1994) claims that Christian mystics had this truth about Kundalini hidden in their basic words but could not openly reveal it. More confirmatory evidence is visible in the similarities between laying-on of hands by a pastor of a Pentecostal or Charismatic church and the Hindu guru's 'shaktipat' (laying on of hands or touch on the forehead). *St Romain*, a Roman Catholic, also tells about a mystical experience that he had which is very similar to what is called Kundalini awakening in Hinduism. The characteristics of this encounter remind one a great deal of the manifestations of the Toronto blessing. The experience of *St Romain* brings him to a point where he asks the following question, is Kundalini energy what Christians call the Holy Spirit? Does the practice of laying-on of hands arouse the Kundalini energy? *Kuglin* (1996:118-119) explains that the Kundalini experience and the Toronto Blessing are almost identical in at least the following aspects: bodily manifestations, the impartation of the experience, the initial mental and bodily condition of the recipient and the transference of the experience. The 'Word of Faith' movement with whom some proponents of the Toronto Blessing associates and are involved have been accused of having strong relations with eastern mysticism (*Fearon* 1994).

1.7.4 Psychological/neuroscientific Viewpoint

Others view the experience of the Toronto Blessing as being self-induced or created. They hold that certain psychological techniques or processes can bring about such physical phenomena. The creation of an altered state of consciousness, a hypnotic or trance state, and the peer pressure in the Toronto Blessing meetings, opens the door for suggestion in order to create experiences. Other role players include culture, religious belief systems and practices, bodily

conditions and the role the mind plays in the formation and perception of experiences in human lives.

Writers such as *Porter and Richter* (1995) and *Wright* (1996) point out that an altered state of consciousness is created by some practices in these meetings and that psychological processes such as hypnosis and suggestion form an important part of the Toronto Blessing. *Newberg, d'Aquili and Rause* (2001) explain how religious experiences can be the result of human creation and discuss the role which altered states of consciousness play in this process. They also point out the important role that culture and religious perception play in the formation of experiences. An altered state of consciousness, according to (*Craffert 2002:70*), could be brought about in a number of ways. It could be created through bodily conditions or experiences or as a result of certain illnesses or injuries, or as the result of certain recreational activities or of religious practices. Induction can even be spontaneous (eg, during solitude or prayer) or while participating in a group activity (eg, a ritual dance or chanting). *Wright* (1996:16) believes that an altered state of consciousness associated with the Toronto Blessing is mainly induced through the religious rituals taking place in these meetings. These rituals include the songs sung during the 'worship service' and testimonies given by those who have already received the 'blessing'. In an altered state of consciousness the believer is susceptible to the suggestions of the leader, and can thus experience that which is presented as a manifestation of the Toronto Blessing, believing that it is authentic. *Haville* (1997:18), a previous proponent of the Toronto Blessing, explains the importance of creating the right atmosphere in these meetings through the 'worship service' in order to have the desired phenomena. Another minister involved in the Toronto Blessing, *Maritz* (1997), is of the opinion that many of the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing are brought on by psychological techniques and do not portray true revival. *Maritz* (1997) is concerned especially about the 'fruits' that the Toronto Blessing produces. In his experience, many people involved in the Toronto Blessing have experienced a decline rather than an increase in their spirituality. All other revivals in the history of Christianity

bore the fruits of true repentance and a holy life. In a study carried out by Maritz (1997) on early Christian revivals, he concludes that the centre of all these revivals was the proclamation of the gospel, resulting in true repentance, rather than a chasing after 'manifestations, experiences and visions'. Similar manifestations to those of the Toronto Blessing were observed in these revivals. These manifestations, according to Maritz (1997), unfortunately signalled the end of the revival rather than the essence of it. He believes that the revivals actually stopped because of these manifestations.

Different viewpoints and interpretations of the Toronto Blessing or similar 'supernatural' manifestations exist. Although these various opinions broaden the perspective of understanding it is necessary to evaluate and place such phenomena in the framework of spirituality and more specifically of Christian spirituality. The aim of the present study is to contribute to the on-going debate with respect to the phenomenon of the Toronto Blessing.

CHAPTER TWO

MYSTICISM AND SPIRITUALITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a preliminary study of mysticism and spirituality will be undertaken with the aim of establishing a theoretical basis for the thesis. It is also important to gain a clearer understanding of Christian mysticism and Christian spirituality in order to evaluate particular experiences of the Toronto Blessing as an expression of Christian spirituality later in the study. Eastern mysticism and the influence it might have on Christian spirituality will also be investigated.

2.2 MYSTICISM

2.2.1 Introduction

Literally hundreds of books have been written over a long period on the subject of *mysticism*. Mysticism falls into different types: mysticism of love and union, and of knowledge and understanding, are some of these categories. Approached from a different angle, mysticism could possibly be considered in its three aspects, of nature-mysticism, soul-mysticism and God-mysticism, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive; they may and do often intermix (Happold 1963:43). The aim of this section, however, is not to engage in an in-depth discussion of *mysticism* but rather to achieve a general understanding of *mysticism*. By this is meant that the reader will be informed in general about the term mysticism, the basic characteristics of mysticism and about what mystical experience entails.

Historically the word mysticism is associated with the mystery religions or mystery cults which flourished in the Graeco-Roman world in the early centuries of the Christian era. The word 'mystery' (*mysterion*) comes from the Greek verb

muo, which means to shut or close the lips or eyes. It is known that in the Eleusian, Dionysian and Orphic mysteries, which attracted thousands of spiritually hungry devotees to their esoteric rites and ceremonies, that a mystic was an initiate who in an oath of secrecy swore to be silent about the inner workings or ritual secrets of his or her newfound religion. The original meaning of mysticism is thus associated with mystery and secrecy and the occult (Johnston 1978:16). One of these mystery cults was Gnosticism, a pre-Christian Oriental mysticism in which it was assumed that the possessor of its secret knowledge would be blessed in this life and the next. It gathered enough support from early Christianity to develop into a blend between mystery religions and Christian faith. Gnosticism was therefore condemned as heretical and viewed as endangering the true faith (Harkness 1973:25).

The term *mysticism* is unfortunately surrounded by difficulties, given the equivocal meanings attributed to the word *mysticism* both in ordinary speech and in scholarly analysis. In the quest to understand *mysticism* one must also be aware of its association with occult practices¹, pathological states² and religious

1 Occult practices in general refer to the realm beyond empirical knowledge: that which is secret or hidden. Generally the study of the occult is classified into three different areas: 1. spiritism, 2. fortune telling and 3. magic (see Mather & Nichols 1993:212). Occult practices also include psychic powers such as Levitation (raising of the body from the ground), psychokinesis (moving of objects), precognition, telepathy (knowledge of others' thoughts) clairvoyance, clairaudience (seeing and hearing beyond the range of sensory perception). The last four practices are also known as extra sensory perception (ESP). Some of these psychic practices such as levitation, clairvoyance and telepathy are, among others, attributed to Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim mystics. Levitation is also ascribed to several Christian mystics. St Teresa of Avila (1518 - 1582 CE) for example describes 'raptures' in which (to her embarrassment) her body was lifted from the ground (see Hinnells 1984:260). Although some of these practices may accompany the mystical experience, they are not viewed as the essence of the mystical experience. The term 'occult' literally means 'hidden', but applied loosely it could refer to any matter supposed to be supernatural yet not clearly falling within the province of major religions. Occultism involves various methods of developing hidden or latent magical or psychic powers through extensive training to discipline the will (Hinnells 1984:360; Mather & Nichols 1993:212). Occult practices are also viewed by some as negative energies (Ankerberg & Weldon 1996:603) or a *hidden* form of worshipping Satan. Satanism is viewed as open worship of Satan (de Bruyn 1993:32). Although *Mysticism* believes in something beyond science, this does not mean that any occult practices that believe likewise can be termed mysticism. Underhill (1961:81) clearly rules out the fact that mysticism has any relation to occult knowledge, saying, 'It has nothing to do with the pursuit of occult knowledge.'

2 Early psychological studies of mysticism maintained that mystical experience could be seen as, *inter alia*, deviant behaviour, repressed eroticism, mental illness, or escapism (Egan 1982:6). The charge that mysticism pertains to the pathological needs to be verified. Although certain similarities, for example between some types of schizophrenia and certain

sentimentality³ (Kourie 1992:84). An unprejudiced and scientific inquiry is therefore needed to ascertain the nature of *mysticism*. The word *mysticism* has different dimensions. An important dimension of mysticism is pointed out by Smart (1967:420) as *introvertive* and *extrovertive mysticism*. *Extrovertive mysticism* refers to an experience of a dynamic external presence; for example, in *nature-mysticism* nature is seen with unusual vividness and clarity. A connection with the world is thus experienced through nature. *Introvertive mysticism* refers to an immediate contact with the transcendent and not to contact through an agent. Mysticism is, according to Smart (1965:75), '... an interior or introvertive quest, culminating in certain interior experiences which are not described in terms of sense experience or of mental images'. Borchert (1994:3) in a very general manner describes what seems to be *introvertive mysticism* as '... the experimental knowledge that, in one way or another, everything is interconnected, that all things have a single source'.

2.2.2 Different dimensions of mysticism

The scientific study of mysticism warrants a clear description of *mysticism*. A distinction between the true nature of mysticism and other applications of mysticism, according to Harkness (1973:18), can best be made by means of two German words describing *mysticism*, namely *Mystizismus* and *Mystik*.

Mystizismus is used to describe abnormal phenomena or occult pseudo-knowledge, at the core of this experience, often disparaged in scientific inquiry. A typical example of this distorted perception of *mysticism* is found in the scientific and technological world where people might realise that there is

phenomena associated with mysticism, do exist, the differences are such as to abrogate the view that the two can be equated (Kourie 1992:90). Both mysticism and schizophrenia involve withdrawal from society, the difference however is that the mystic maintains a measure of control whilst the schizophrenic does not. Furthermore the mystic can integrate his unique experience with his normal experience whilst the schizophrenic cannot, and lives in his own private world.

3 The mystical experience must not be related to religious sentimentality which includes a deeply felt acceptance of salvation, inner motivation caused by the reading of scripture or an urge to act according to one's religious belief.

something beyond science. In such cases occult practices such as voodoo charms, locks of hair, candles, beads, flowers, lotions and potions to ward off dangers and ensure good luck are viewed as "mystical", unseen powers which in a sense relate to the presence of God. Harkness (1973:160-161) elaborates on the point of pseudo-mysticism of the occult and establishes a clear distinction between the true nature of mysticism and other applications. The main distinction lies in the fact that mysticism refers to a meeting between God and the human spirit. These meetings have no aim to manipulate the Ultimate, or to claim one's own desires. Nor are they attempts to escape from the empirical, external self. *Mysticism* in its true nature is not what is commonly known amongst drug abusers as "tripping out". Mysticism provides no escape from the world but puts a person in touch with the world (McNamara 1981:4). A possible reason why people espouse distorted mysticism is because its truer form requires painful self-discipline. Others may take to the occult through a desperate hope that these things might work where all else has failed.

Mystik on the other hand, referring to true *mysticism*, believes that although the human spirit is finite, limited and clouded, it can nevertheless experience the presence of the Divine Reality that undergirds and permeates the world (Harkness, 1973:18).

Apart from the distinction between the true nature of mysticism and some distorted *mysticism*, James (1994:337) refers to 'diabolic' *mysticism*. According to him 'diabolic' mysticism refers to cases where 'mystical ideas' are seen as symptoms of insanity. He refers to these as 'lower mysticism', springing forth from the same psychological mechanisms as the classical, religious sort. The messages and emotions that are experienced, however, are negative. Johnston (1984:19) shares this viewpoint, as is clear from the following quotation: '... not all mystical states are delectable. Some are filled with anguish and pain; some are described in terms of dereliction and abandonment. Some are even dangerous and treacherous and are called distorted mysticism - not because the state is false but because it leads in the wrong direction and may bring the hapless

mystic to destruction.' The 'diabolic mysticism', according to James (1994) and Johnston (1984), forms part of the mystical process, called the darker side. Mystical life encompasses an inward journey into the darkness in which the chthonic elements of the shadow are brought into clear focus. These darker aspects of the personality can then be transformed, and the finite ego, so often seen as the totality of personality, can be seen for what it is, namely, as only one aspect of consciousness. Within the mystical gaze, the true self, the greater self can then come to fruition. The mystical consciousness therefore has an integrating and psycho-synthetic function. Diabolic mysticism, viewed in the context of the aforementioned viewpoint, forms part of mystical life and does not necessarily mean destruction although it could destroy and lead astray. It could also be viewed as a process of inner growth through suffering/darkness which leads to transformation. The great challenge is to distinguish between the sign and the reality.

Early psychological studies of mysticism have indeed maintained that mystical experience could be viewed as, *inter alia*, deviant behaviour, repressed eroticism, mental illness or escapism (Egan 1982:6), thus ascribing negative elements to it. Albrecht (1958) propagated a more acceptable psychological interpretation of mysticism. According to him mysticism could not be reduced to individual intra-psychic processes, or pathological states. Mysticism should rather be seen as a healing experience, leading to a 'contemplative consciousness'. 'Contemplation unifies and integrates consciousness in an all-embracing way and hence is psychotherapeutic' (Kourie 1992:91). Johnston (2000:95) warns that the psychic world into which the contemplative enters contains cosmic forces of good and evil. Moreover, the evil forces may present themselves as angels of light, as St. Paul himself said, leading contemplatives astray in subtle ways.

It seems then that amongst scholars differences exist. For some such as James (1994) and Johnston (1984) mysticism can include mystical experiences which have a positive or negative effect. Others such as Kourie (1992) and Albrecht

(1958) view the positive and negative aspects of mysticism as part and parcel of mystical life, focusing on the goal of healing and transformation. James (1994:19) does, however, agree that whether positive or negative, all mystical experiences, deserve recognition as available altered states of consciousness. The definitions of mystical states need to be value-neutral. He then concludes that like our rational states, mystical states encompass both truth and deception, pleasure and sorrow. The danger of this point of view could be that the perception might be created that all altered states of consciousness can be viewed as a mystical experience. The exercising of some psychic powers which also include an altered state of consciousness does not necessarily refer to a mystical experience. It is quite clear from the above discussion that the mystical experience, although having different dimensions, can be distinguished from distorted mysticism or occult practices. The aim of mysticism is transformation through union with God. Distorted mysticism and occult practices differ in that they have the aim of manipulating God in order to satisfy one's own personal needs or to escape from the world.

2.2.3 Definitions of mysticism

It is clear that mysticism has different dimensions. How can *mysticism* be defined? *Mysticism*, according to the *Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions* (Goring & Whaling 1992:355), refers to the spiritual quest for the most direct experience of God, or - in non-religious terms - a hidden wisdom. Umen (1988:24) elaborates on this point by explaining that mysticism is the belief that there is something beyond; something more than what the senses report. The mystic is convinced that in addition to the senses human beings possess they also possess an inner light, a level of consciousness, by which they can transcend materiality and make contact with Absolute Reality. This contact with God, according to Jones (1971:25), produces '... an immediate intuitive knowledge of God ... or of transcendent Reality or of Divine Presence.'

An authority on the topic of *mysticism*, Inge (1969:8), summed up his lifetime's study of the subject as '... communion with God, that is to say with a Being conceived as the supreme and ultimate reality'. The encounter with the divine can be expressed either as fellowship with God, *communio* or as oneness with God, *unio* (Kourie 1992:85). Whatever conceptual terminology may be used, most scholars describe the *experiential* nature of *mysticism*. 'Mysticism, therefore, is a manifestation of a deeper, permanent way of life, in which the purifying, illuminating and transforming power of God is experienced, effecting a transformation of the mystic's entire being and consciousness' (*ibid.* 1992:86). Sometimes a contemplative life style is the consequence of mysticism. Keller (1978:97) describes *mystics* as those who live their life and their faith not only on an intellectual level, but also '... on the level of deep psychological or spiritual experience, on the level of their innermost being.'

Many scholars agree that the contemplative lifestyle entails the Mystic Way, which leads to the actual communion with the Ultimate. The stages of the Mystic Way vary somewhat in different religions but in many cases consist of a threefold division. The stages are the purgative way, the illuminative way and the unitive life (Woods 1981:22).

Wapnick (1980:323-324) views the contemplative life as a structured process which culminates with the mystical experience. The mystic moves from 'an awakening of self' to the purgation of attachments to the social world and the self, resulting in '... a state of pure consciousness in which the individual experience nothingness' (Underhill 1961:169). A final step is added to this process when most mystics happily and successfully reintegrate themselves into the world of social attachments. It is their attachment to the social world that mystics renounce through the process, not the social world itself.

A mystical state could be experienced through different means. Many individuals devote their lives to cultivating a mystical experience. Through a method of meditation or ritual and dance a state of transcendence is induced. For other

individuals the mystical experience occurs spontaneously, in various situations, with religious connotations.

Mysticism, according to all the above definitions, can conclusively be described as the spiritual contact with the transcendent where the transformed ego rises into the timeless now in the realization of a oneness or fellowship with Absolute Reality or God. The mystical experience, which could be the consequence of a contemplative life style or a spontaneous occurrence, is an immediate intuitive knowledge of God, which causes things to be viewed differently and with new significance. All absurdities of society vanish in the presence of the fundamental love in which everything is one and meaningful. Newberg, d'Aquili & Rause (2001:101) sum up mysticism in the simplest terms, 'Mystical experience, in other words, is not about magic, or mind-reading, or the conjuring of visions or spirits; it is nothing more or less than an uplifting sense of genuine spiritual union with something larger than the self'.

Mysticism is not abnormal phenomena or occult pseudo-knowledge. It is not a way out of anguish, conflict and doubt. It is not a way to escape from the world but rather an immediate naked contact with Absolute Reality. Mysticism does not refer to some experience which is brought on by the will or ability of a human, either through psychological means or the subconscious. Underhill (1961:81) describes it as '... that organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God: the achievement here and now of the immortal in heritage of man.' Mysticism refers, rather, to the knowledge of God through experience.

2.2.4 Characteristics of *Mysticism*

Mystical states have certain marked characteristics.

James (1994) has identified four marks of the mystical state. Other scholars such as Bregman (1982:52-53) and Cox (1983:24-26) agree with James on the marks of the mystical state, namely

- *Ineffability.* The mystical state has the quality of *ineffability*. It is beyond all possible adequate expressions which are fully intelligible to one who has no knowledge of some analogous experience. It resembles a state of experience rather than intellectual expression.
- *Noetic Quality.* *Mystical states* are not only states of feeling but also states of knowledge. Insight into depths of truth obtained through the mystical state is not gained by means of discursive intellect and cannot be expressed in the language of the intellect. Yet these insights carry a tremendous sense of authority because of the conviction of the mystic that he or she has obtained knowledge.
- *Transiency.* The mystical state fades quickly; it is hard to recall the quality of the experiences from one's memory, they remain just out of reach. But some memory content always remains, and this can be used to *modify the inner life of the subject between the time of their recurrence and their being remembered.*
- *Passivity.* Although it is possible to prepare oneself for the reception of a *mystical* experience by means of the way of purgation, mystical states create the feeling that one's own will is in abeyance, as if the mystic is seized and held by a power not his or her own.

Happold (1963:45-48) has extended the abovementioned marks of a mystical state to include the following as well:

- Mystical states are also characterised by the presence of a *consciousness of the Oneness of everything.*
- A sense of *timelessness* is experienced during these states. Borchert (1994:11) terms the experience of *timelessness* the *nunc stans* - the stationary now. 'There is no longer any awareness of time, or of any stream of time with past and future. Rather, there is a sense of eternity.'
- Accompanying the sense of oneness and the sense of timelessness is the conviction that the ego is not the real 'I'. The mystical state is *all-embracing*. It is no longer the awareness of a separate personal ego that experiences something 'other' and feels that the self is enjoying, seeing

and experiencing. The experience is immediate, without words or pictures and without anything in between the ego and the other reality. 'It is the realization - with one's whole being - that all things are one, a universe, an organic whole into which the self fits' (Borchert 1994:11).

Newberg, d'Aquili & Rause (2001:104) add the following characteristics, ... mystical states are often characterized by strong, contradictory emotions – for example, terrifying fear might coexist with overpowering joy. In the mystical experience, time and space are perceived as nonexistent, and normal rational thought processes give way to more intuitive ways of understanding. The mystic frequently experiences intimations of the presence of the sacred or the holy, and often claims to have seen into the most essential meaning of things, resulting in a rapturous state that has been described as an interior illumination of reality that results in ultimate freedom.

Underhill (1961:81) prefers four rules, other than the four marks of James, to test any given case that claims to be mystical.

- True mysticism is *active and practical*, not passive and theoretical. The whole self is involved in the organic life-process. It is heard with the ears of the eternal spirit and seen with the eyes of the soul. The intellect holds no opinion. The mystical experience can be described in the words of Plotinus as '... the flight of the Alone to the Alone'. It provides the substance on which mystical philosophy ponders.
- It is *transcendental and spiritual*. It does not involve any physical activity such as exploring, rearranging or improving anything in the visible Universe. Mysticism puts a limitation on the mystic because he or she will never try to combine the advantages of the materialistic and the spiritual world in order to improve and elucidate the visible by help of the invisible, or to use the supernormal powers of the self for the increase of power, virtue, happiness or knowledge. The mystic's direct intuition of the

Absolute eliminates all lesser cravings. The mystic is destitute of super sensual ambitions and feels no need for occult knowledge or power in the true sense of the word.

- It is '... not merely the Reality of all that is, but also a living and personal object of love, never an object of exploration' (*ibid.*1961:81).
- It speaks of *living union with Reality*. Whether the mystical life is cultivated by certain methods or whether the mystical experience happens spontaneously, it is a definite state or form of enhanced life.

It is obtained neither from an intellectual realization of its delights, nor from the most acute emotional longings. Though these must be present, they are not enough. It is arrived at by an arduous psychological and spiritual process - the so-called *Mystical Way* entailing the complete remaking of character and the liberation of the new, or rather latent form of consciousness; which imposes on the self the condition which is sometimes inaccurately called 'ecstasy', but is better named the *Unitive State* (*ibid.*1961:81).

Mysticism, of Eastern and Western traditions, of ancient centuries, and of the present, portray the primordial longing for this absolute union, and the transcendent experiences to which it might lead. Although the mystics of different times and traditions used many techniques to attain this lofty union, from the pious self-denial of medieval Christian saints to the ritual sexuality of some tantric Buddhists, the mystical states they describe sound very much the same (Newberg, d'Aquili & Rause 2001:102).

Umen (1988) points to love as the most important mark of mysticism. This love is expressed in a deep-seated desire of the soul toward its Source. The mystic cannot be known by reason, but only by the love of one's heart. 'The mystic seeks to surrender himself to the ultimate Reality, not for any personal gain or earthly joys, but purely from an instance of love. The mystic is in love with the Absolute' (Umen 1988:31).

Underhill (1961:92) concurs with Umen on the self-surrendering aspect of mysticism, as can be seen in the following quotation: 'True mysticism is never self-seeking. The mystic does not enter his quest because he desires the happiness of the Beatific Vision, the ecstasy of union with the absolute, or any other personal reward. That noblest of all passions, the passion for perfection for love's sake, far outweighs the desire for transcendental satisfaction.' The mystic serves without hope of reward. Attainment comes by means of spontaneous and entire surrender of the 'self' and all things (*ibid.*1961:93).

The abovementioned characteristics of *mysticism* are summed up by Kourie's statement (1992:86) that it is an '*... awareness, although the sensory-conceptual apparatus of the mind remains in abeyance. Such a consciousness, characterised as it is by non-intellectual, non-sensory perception, has been considered different from everyday experience.*'

A true interface between mysticism and morality exists. Progress in morality is not only a prerequisite for, but also a sign of, spiritual growth. The value of mysticism, however, can never be measured in purely pragmatic terms (Kourie 1992:90).

In essence the mystical experience speaks of an altered state of consciousness, becoming a state which is much higher than the ordinary human consciousness. The normal intellectual activity which functions within a subject-object framework is not present in the *mystical* experience and it can thus be described as a spiritual experience. The mystical experience does not merely entail a sudden admission to the vision of truth. It is rather a progression towards higher levels of reality, to closer identification with the Infinite. The mystical experience is not motivated by self-centeredness but by love.

2.2.5 Mystical experience and religious experience

According to Nieto (1997:103) there are two types of human experience of

transcendence; namely 'religious experience' and 'mystical experience'. This distinction is also made by Stace (1961), under the terms 'mystical experience' and 'numinous experience': the latter referring to the religious experience. Fundamental similarities and differences exist between the two. Experience is a mental process. The mental and social structures determine experience itself. These two elements make experience universal and constant, and therefore capable of being both analysed and understood. Time and space are fundamental structures of the human mind. They provide the frame of experience, a means by which an experience can be conveyed. Without awareness of time and space there is no experience.

Firstly, the fundamental difference between a mystical experience and a religious experience is that during mystical experiences there is no awareness of time and space. Any such experience, according to Nieto (1997:105), which is non-spatial and time-less is not experience but rather meta-experience⁴. Because of the absence of time and space in this experience it cannot be expressed in common language. The mystic therefore refers to the experience in paradoxical terms as 'ineffable'. This is what is claimed by mystical experience. However, a religious experience refers to a moment of specific insight which, without being isolated from the rest of our total human experience, probes deeper into it and creatively compresses the broad experience of the religious life into a self-contained process. This self-contained process is spontaneous and comes upon the personal life as a flash and goes away in a flash, leaving its luminosity as a permanent compelling force within the individual's life. Time and space are present in this experience, thus providing mental structures which frame the content of the experience. The religious experience⁵, structured by space and

4 The term 'meta-experience' refers to an experience which is beyond our normative concept of experience. This is what the mystic is talking about if he or she refers to the 'ineffable' in his or her experience as the inability to transfer the experience into the diversity of our language and sense experience (Nieto 1997:146).

5 An example of a religious experience is found in the calling of Abraham by Yahweh in Genesis 12. In this narrative it is clear that the human personality involved was conscious of himself, of God and time and space. No unitive experience is implied. For Abraham *time* was primarily future time of the promise. *Space* was for Abraham a place to get away from, out of his relatives' homestead, and to look forward to the new space of the promised land.

time, sees the world and self as two separate entities and so perceives Divine Reality as independent from both the world and the self. Thus, secondly, the experience of *union* fundamental to all forms of mystical experience is alien to religious experience. The perception of space and time in religious experience also creates room for the dialogue between the human and the divine beings as two different entities. Dialogue is essential to many forms of religious experience, but dialogue is absent from some mystical experiences because when the difference between the Object and the subject, or God and the individual self, is overcome or temporarily lost, the use of words is unnecessary; for where there is no differentiation between the self and the divine, silence, rather than words or dialogue, is ultimately experienced (Nieto 1997:111). This experience is not necessarily ecstatic, although mild forms of ecstasy are not alien to it.

Nieto (1997:127) lists the following elements of religious experience:

- (1) Transcendent cosmic awareness;
- (2) Intensification of religious feeling;
- (3) Religious-noetic content (the Holy, grace, sin, forgiveness);
- (4) A sense of personal worth;
- (5) A feeling of peace;
- (6) Awareness of time and space.

The elements of transcendent cosmic awareness, noetic content, peaceful awareness and sense of worth are also present in a mystical experience. In the religious experience they are, however, modified by the nature of the religious experience itself. The experience of transcendence literally transcends religious confessions, denominations or ethnic groups. Intensification of religious feeling is a psychological-emotional presupposition of the personal experience itself. It also acts as an insulating factor, diminishing other forms of self-awareness and

The mental awareness of space and time, coupled with the verbal message of Yahweh to him and his response to it, determine the nature of his religious experience (Nieto 1997:111).

concentrating instead on the religious experience itself so that the external, alien, elements of the experience are suppressed. The noetic content determines its religious content and relates itself to the social structure of the individual who experiences it. It also helps to analyse and judge the individual experience and find its place within universal religious experience. The experience creates in such a person a sense of personal value and shields the person from any form of persuasion which judges such an experience as worthless. The feeling of peace is emotionally and psychologically an act of personal unconscious approval of the experience. Time and space constitute the very mental structures which frame the content of the experience (Niemo 1997:128-129).

Religious experience is not limited to a specific religious group, but is open to any possible form of universal human experience where some awareness of a Transcendent reality is implied. Although the 'mystical experience' is also viewed as a religious experience it is important to note that not all 'religious experiences' are necessarily 'mystical experiences'.

2.2.6 Extraordinary manifestations and mysticism

What is the place of extraordinary manifestations in mysticism? Kourie (1992:86) points out that certain extraordinary features such as ecstasy, visions, trances, locutions may accompany the mystical state. Mystical scholars acknowledge the presence of such epiphenomena but in general agree that such psycho-physical occurrences do not form an integral part of the mystical life and should not be sought after. A caution about those psycho-physical manifestations is also conveyed by John of the Cross (Allison Peers Vol.I, 1974:100). 'None of these manifestations must be prayed for, and if they occur, they must not be attended to. It is not necessary to determine if they are from God, they must just be put aside, in this manner they cannot harm. If they are from God, they will produce their due effect without being attended to' (Umen 1988:160).

Great mystical traditions speak of extraordinary psychic powers that may appear in the course of the mystical journey. The imagination of modern people is caught up in the manifestation of powers such as telepathy, clairvoyance, out-of-the-body experiences, thought projection and psychic auras. It is a mistake to pay too much attention to them, as they must be viewed as side-effects or by-products (Johnston 1978:194).

Kourie (1992:86) points out that those paranormal phenomena as mentioned above may occur in persons who do not claim to have any real mystical union with the divine. The use of hallucinogenic substances or psychedelic drugs may also produce states of consciousness superficially similar to mystical states. The test of authentic mysticism lies in the fact that the mystical experience has a transcendental content rather than exterior manifestations. Another important test of mysticism 'is to be found in the ethical behaviour of the mystic and his or her overall adaptation to life rather than in extraordinary gifts' (*ibid.* 1992:86). *Mysticism* is not a trance, an ecstasy or enthusiasm. Neither is it the wild frenzy of religious exultation nor an imagining of bright lights or the hearing of unutterable words. These do not emanate from the deep self but from the somatic unconscious (McNamara 1981:5). Happold (1963:38) refers to spiritualism and occultism as distorted types of mysticism. Nor need we be concerned with visions and states of ecstasy. 'Accounts of them are found in the writings of the contemplatives; they are, however, usually regarded with some suspicion and are in no way an essential element in mystical experience.'

Extraordinary manifestations, therefore, are not viewed as essential elements of the mystical experience. Furthermore, Ellwood (1980:32) points out that a distinction must also be made with regard to certain experiences that would be interpreted as religious but not mystical. These experiences include:

- a deeply felt acceptance of salvation as already granted by God. This experience might be transformative but does not necessarily entail a mystical experience.

- an intellectual enthusiasm which stems from reading and grasping the ideas of religion or spiritual philosophy. It is rather an encounter with the ideas of religion than with the reality behind it.
- a strong urge to commit oneself to moral or ethical principles derived from one's religious belief. This experience is related to religion and not a direct encounter with reality.
- a warm feeling experienced when looking at a religious painting or through participation in a religious rite.
- activities which are interpreted as the involvement of gods and spiritual powers, yet the style is rather one of manipulation of these gods and powers. These kinds of experience then become distanced control rather than unconditioned encounter, direct perception, and oneness.

The presence of extraordinary manifestations as part of the mystical experience is not denied. Some mystics, however, are of the opinion that such manifestations should rather be interpreted as psychological and subconscious *reactions* to the mystical experience. Yoga speaks of *siddhis* or miraculous powers, which include the ability to read hearts, to see the future, and to see things that are happening at a distance. In yoga the psychic powers are significant in that they will tell the master of the progress the disciple makes. Yet no authentic master will encourage a disciple to seek such powers. The disciple must be wary of such powers because of the danger of vanity. Being fascinated by the allure of power may distract one from the principal goal, which is salvation. Zen is even more radical in its rejection of extraordinary powers. Any extraordinary power that may arise in the course of one's practice is rejected and treated as illusion, like the *makyo* or 'world of the devil' through which one must pass on the way to enlightenment (Johnston 1978:194). Some religious experiences might also be erroneously interpreted as mystical.

Another viewpoint that warrants attention in this section is that some scientists believe that the mind of a mystic is a mind that has somehow become fundamentally confused. Mysticism, in other words, is the result of mental

pathology, and mystics, whether they suffer from neurosis, psychosis, or functional problems of the brain, are people who have clearly lost track of what is real (Newberg, d'Aquili and Rause 2001:108). Saver and Rabin (1997:498-510) refute the viewpoint by comparing the mystical experience to psychotic episodes and epileptic seizures. The comparison could best be illustrated by means of a table. Both mystical and psychotic experiences are accompanied by religious visions, voices, and other unusual events. The difference, however, lies in the interpretation thereof.

Mystical states	Psychotic experience
<p>The mystics almost always describe their experiences as ecstatic and joyful, and the spiritual unity they claim to achieve is most often described using word such as 'serenity', 'wholeness', transcendence, and 'love'.</p>	<p>Psychotics, on the other hand, are often confused and terribly frightened by their religious hallucinations which are often highly distressing in nature and often include the presence of an angry, reproachful God.</p>
<p>The mystic also experiences a break with 'reality'. This period is welcomed by the mystic and longed for. When mystics return to 'normal' reality they are able to share their experience coherently with others, and once again functions effectively in society.</p>	<p>For the psychotic, withdrawal from normal reality is an involuntary and usually distressing occurrence. Psychotic states can last for years, and they can drive their victims into progressive deeper states of social isolation.</p>
<p>Mystic's interpretation of their experience differ from that of psychotics. Mystical states mean a loss of pride and ego, a quieting of the</p>	<p>Psychotics in delusional states often have feelings of religious grandiosity and inflated egotistical importance. They may even see themselves, for</p>

mind, and an emptying of the self – all of which is required before the mystic can become a suitable vessel for God.	example, as special emissaries from God, blessed with an important message for the world, or with spiritual power to heal.
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The above differences make a very strong case that mysticism is not a product of psychotic delusion. Hallucinations are also associated with other conditions. Hallucinations can for example, be triggered by some type of temporal lobe epilepsy. According to Saver and Rabin (1997) the effects of epileptic seizure upon the temporal lobe of the brain have been associated with sensations of sudden ecstasy and religious conversions; with out-of-body experiences; with the apprehension of the 'unity, harmony, joy, and/or divinity of all reality', and in some cases, with the perceived presence of God.' When the overlapping aspects of the mystical experience and epileptic seizures are compared differences also surface as can be seen in the table below.

Mystical experience	Epileptic seizure
Most mystics may only experience a few mystical encounters in a lifetime. Mystical experiences reported by mystics are as variable as ordinary experience; the emotional tone might differ from time to time; an angelic voice might also have a different message.	Epileptic seizures tend to strike frequently and with regularity. The hallucinatory states caused by seizures also tend to be consistent and repetitive in pattern. The victim hears the same voice with the same message or feels the advent of the same inexplicable rapture.
Mystical experiences differ from all hallucinatory states, by the high degree of sensory complexity involved. Mystical experience can be described	Hallucinations usually involve only a single sensory system. A person may only see a vision, hear a disembodied voice, or feel a sense of presence, but

as a rich, coherent, and deeply dimensional sensory experience.	rarely are multiple senses simultaneously involved.
Mystics believe that their experience is real. The sense of realness does not fade as they emerge from their mystical states and it does not dissipate over time.	Hallucinations on the other hand feel real while they persist, but when hallucinating individuals return to normal consciousness, they immediately recognize the fragmented and dreamlike nature of their hallucinatory interlude and understand that it was a mistake of the mind.

According to the above explanation of Saver and Rabin (1997) the conclusion seems clear, '... the mind remembers mystical experience with the same degree of clarity and sense of reality that it bestows upon memories of 'real' past events'. The same cannot be said of hallucinations, delusions, or dreams. We believe this sense of realness strongly suggests that the accounts of the mystics are not indications of minds in disarray, but are proper, predictable neurological results of a stable, coherent mind willing itself toward a higher spiritual plane' (Newberg, D'Aquili & Rause 2001:113).

It must also constantly be borne in mind that however the nature of mysticism and mystical experience might be investigated, the only evidence available is the mystic's account of her or his experience. No scholar can get behind the autobiographical fragment to the putative 'pure experience'. The only evidence to support the analysis of the material on mysticism is the given recording of the mystic - the already 'experienced' and 'interpreted' first person record.

2.3 CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

2.3.1 Introduction

Gimello (1983:61) warns against the assumption that mysticism constitutes an autonomous and self-contained realm of human experience, in other words, that mysticism could be understood apart from the culture, history, tradition and discipline in which it is found. Mysticism does not possess its own independent rules, values and truths. Mysticism can therefore not be reduced to a single common core of pure, undifferentiated experiences. Not even two or three basic types can be identified. Mysticism is dependent upon, usually subservient to the deeper beliefs and values of the traditions, cultures and historical milieu that harbour it, thus, as it is related to those beliefs and values, so must it vary according to them. Watts (1998:69) confirms this view by stating that all religious experience must be formed and moulded by the language and categories that we have developed in our ordinary social existence. There can be no experience at all, religious or otherwise, that is radically independent of our natural life.

I contend that this point made by Gimello and Watts is very important in the understanding and appreciation of mysticism. The mystical experience is not created in a void but finds form and structure that can be understood, or at least valued, according to the mystic's culture and religious system. The mystical experience can be linked to a structure created by the culture or religion that makes such an experience valuable, adding worth and development to the person's life.

The mystical experience is expressed in terms of the tradition the mystic finds him or herself in. According to the epistemological (validity) approach, the *inherited theological-mystical education*, Katz (1983:6), as well as the *rules and patterns of a person's discursive world* (Gimello 1983:76), not only contributes to the specificity of the mystical experience, but also forms the foundation and point of departure. A right understanding of mysticism is not just a question of

studying the reports of mystics after the experiential event, but also takes into account that the experience itself, as well as the manner in which it is reported, is shaped by concepts that mystics bring to, and which shape, their experience. Katz (1983:4) argues that the concepts of mystics cause them not just to experience an unidentified reality, which is then described in the language or symbols known to those mystics. For example, the Hindu does not experience an unidentified reality and then describe it as an anticipated Hindu experience. The mystical experience is not an unmediated experience of reality but is itself at least partially performed, anticipated, Hindu experience of Brahman. The experience is thus from the outset interpreted and valued in terms of the concept of the mystic. Christian mystics do not experience some unidentified reality which they then label 'God', but at least partially have the prefigured Christian experience of God, or Jesus. The Christian mystic's pre-mystical consciousness informs the mystical consciousness in such a way that the mystic encounters Jesus, the Trinity or a personal God.

Their scriptures also play an important role in the different traditions. What a person reads, learns, knows and experiences along the path creates to some degree the anticipated experience. 'There is a necessary connection between the mystic and the religious text studied and assimilated, the mystical experience had, and the mystical experience reported' (Katz 1983:6). For this reason the mystical experience is interpreted in the light of the particular Scriptural tradition.

It could also happen that mystics give a radical exegesis not of scripture, but of the experience, arguing that what they have experienced correlates directly with what scripture describes or prescribes. Their experience and its interpretation are understood by the larger faith community to which they belong and in the midst of which these proclamations are made, as *confirmation* of the inherited, authoritative tradition of scriptural interpretation(s) and not as heretical assertions that *threaten the pillars of the regnant orthodoxy* (Katz 1983:20).

The Language, the vehicle for describing the experience, is contextual. Words only receive their particular meaning in a specific context. As Penner (1983:93)

points out, Reality is relative to a language system, and thus mystical language cannot be viewed as referring to the same Reality, but rather to different mystical worlds.

According to the pluralist paradigm the essential context of mysticism is to be found within the parameters of a given society, and cannot be studied in a vacuum and apart from the social norms prevailing at a given time. Proponents of the contextual approach must guard against underestimating the importance of the experience itself in the process. The complex epistemological construction of mysticism as proposed by Katz (1983), in his discussion of the 'conservative' nature of mysticism, has its critics. The pluralist paradigm is critiqued in that the full weight of the mystical *experience* itself is not given due prominence. Mysticism is concerned primarily with experience and only secondarily with the philosophical conceptualisation and interpretation based on the experience. Although a link between mysticism and the formative milieu of the mystic does exist, the former cannot be reduced to the latter. Such a position militates against the view that different mystical experiences may well share certain similarities. It also militates against the very real affinities that actually exist between mystics of different traditions, affinities that are welcomed by the mystics themselves, and are not a product of philosophical speculation. Cultural conditioning, if pushed to its logical extreme, can become cultural subjectivism and eventually cultural solipsism (Smith 1987:560).

Smart (1983:125) does not agree with Katz's epistemological construction of the mystical experience insofar as he describes the 'purification of consciousness' that mystics of East and West strive to obtain, in which there is an elimination of words and images and which is beyond formulation. Evans (1989:56) is of the opinion that academia cannot have the last word on mysticism and suggests that it is only by becoming a mystic that the claim of a state of pure consciousness can be verified.

The pluralist model of Katz has value and the 'religious specificity' of different traditions and their 'conditional networks' is a *sine qua non* for any objective and scientific philosophical investigation (Krüger 1995:210, 212). What is to be avoided is the application of the pluralist paradigm as a doctrine. Kourie (1992:99) agrees that the pluralist paradigm has some value: 'At the outset, however, it needs to be clearly stated that the cogency of the pluralist model is not totally rejected. On the contrary, the validity and value of such an approach which emphasises the very real need for contextualisation of mysticism is to be lauded.'

The culture and religious system of a person plays an important role in the objective study of mysticism. But to reduce objectivity merely to culture or religion would be to deny other important aspects such as cultural influences outside a person's own culture, exposure to other religious practices, and circumstances bodily or mental that could contribute to the mystical experience.

Christian mysticism will therefore have its own distinct characteristics apart from the commonalities it shares with mysticism as a general phenomenon. Other possible role players in the mystical experience, however, must not be ignored. A further distinction can be made inside Christian mysticism, referring to different Christian traditions. For example, the Christian mystical experience in a reformed (Calvinistic) setting could differ from one in a charismatic setting. The difference could be attributed mainly to the different beliefs in the 'how' and 'what' of such an experience.

2.3.2 What is Christian mysticism?

Experiences recorded in the New Testament might be termed mystical, and passages particularly in the letters of Paul and the Gospels could also be interpreted as mystical. Paul's conversion experience could be viewed as a mystical experience. Paul and some of the authors of other letters refer to the mystery of the gospel of Christ. No word that could be translated as *mysticism* is

found in the New Testament. The church fathers used *contemplation* to describe that which was later called mystical experience.

In the course of time the meaning of the word mysticism changed. In the syncretism of Greek and Oriental philosophy which occurred in centuries immediately preceding the birth of Christ, known as Neoplatonism, the meaning of the word changed, to denote a particular sort of approach to the whole problem of reality in which the intellectual, and more especially the intuitive, faculties came into play (Happold 1963:18).

The use of the word in Christianity was largely due to the influence of Dionysius the Areopagite, also known as Pseudo-Dionysius toward the end of the fifth century. The result was that Dionysius' *Mystical Theology* and other writings were regarded by medieval theologians as authoritative. The medieval theologians used the term *theologia mystica*, by which they meant a particular type of insight and knowledge about God. When the more common word *contemplatio* was used in the medieval period it referred to an *advanced form of spiritual experience*. To attain this state of contemplation men and women withdrew from the world and lived entirely differently. The word mysticism became current only late in the Middle ages (Happold 1963:36-37).

For Dionysius the word mysticism retained the meaning of a secrecy of the mind which possessed no clear-cut thoughts and images and remained in obscurity and darkness. A similar state is found in Buddhism and in the mysticism of all the great religions, even when the theistic background of Dionysius is lacking. Dionysius claimed that to know God by a process of unknowing is scripturally based and appeals to the example of Moses who climbs the mountain and enters into the cloud of darkness. Moses did not see God - '*You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live*' (Ex 33:20) - but he knows God by unknowing; he knows God in darkness. He knows with the inner eye. This Dionysian darkness is what is now known as an altered state of consciousness. It speaks

of a mind emptied of discursive and conceptual thinking, remaining silent and empty (Johnston 1984:18).

According to Johnston (1978:18) the insights of Dionysius form the core for grasping the meaning of mysticism. Mysticism is non-discursive; in other words it is not a question of thinking and reasoning and logic, but of transcending all thinking and entering into an altered state of consciousness. In this state one finds oneself in darkness, in emptiness, in a cloud of unknowing because one does not know through clear images and thoughts, nor with the eyes of the body. In this state there is great silence - silent music, conceptual darkness, but the inner eye is filled with light. This is called the *via negativa*, by which the soul strips off its selfhood and, in ecstatic union with a transcendent deity, feels and knows its oneness with the Infinite.

This was to become a classic pattern of Christian mysticism. The *divine dark* featured in the anonymous English mystical writing *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The cloud of unknowing speaks of a 'thinking power' by which we can know creatures and a 'loving power' by which we can know God. 'God can be loved; but God cannot be thought. Love goes directly to God. Some mystics say that it "wounds" God. It brings the highest wisdom - *sophia* or *sapientia* - which is knowledge of God in a cloud of unknowing' (Johnston 2000:15). Two kinds of love exist: *active* love which refers to an act of the will, as when I help another person, or when I cry out with the psalmist, 'I love you, O Lord, my strength' (Ps 18). When this love, however, comes and possesses the very core of one's being it becomes *passive* love. Now it is an inner fire or light, a living flame of love, a compound of love and wisdom. The living flame of love is the Holy Spirit, who is purifying and making divine the human person. One's being becomes being-in-love with God (Johnston 2000:15-16).

The *via negativa* roots itself in the understanding that God is utterly transcendent to human knowledge and inaccessible through ordinary approaches. It originates in Oriental thought, which was in turn brought into Western tradition through

Plotinus and was mediated to Christianity through Plotinus and Dionysius. This type of mysticism is devotion to an "abstract Infinite". Christian mysticism, though, knows God through Jesus Christ, whom we are called to love with all our powers (Harkness 1973:27). Furthermore, Christian mysticism is not to be found in the influence of Greek philosophy, but in the Bible (Egan 1991:13). The distinctive quality of Christian mysticism, which is the essence of Pauline and Johannine Christianity, is the central experience, that centres around union with Christ. Christ-mysticism is in itself a form of transcendental experience. Through union with Christ men and women are raised above the sensuous, sinful and transient world, and belong to the Transcendent. Christ has entered the eternal order and Christians through their union with Him already partake in his exalted life, while they live in time and space (Spencer 1971:216-218). Therefore the origins of the Christian mystical tradition are first and foremost found in Scripture. Although the Christian mystical traditions were enriched by neo-Platonism and by Eastern religions, authentic Christian mysticism derives from the mystical spirituality of the New Testament and Jesus' Trinitarian mystical consciousness, which culminated in his death and resurrection. Christian mysticism, to be mysticism, is not an altered state of consciousness, although commitment to Christ in his mysteries ordinarily leads to it, but the unrestricted love for Christ, the total commitment, the enlightened faith is what makes Christians into Christian mystics. Johnston (1984:20) describes this in similar terms: 'What makes Christian mystics to be Christian mystics is the orientation to the mystery of Christ in a scriptural and sacramental context'.

Inge (1969:8) defines Christian mysticism in its simplest form as "communion with God". Underhill (1961:72) defines the mystic's goal as "union with the absolute". It is important to make a distinction between 'communion' and 'union'. Union might be interpreted as an ontological fusion of finite human nature with the infinite nature of God, which means a complete negation of the human identity, of the human *being*. Harkness (1973:23-24) points out that this view is basic to Oriental mysticism. It appears most clearly in the Vedanta or Hindu religion from which much of the modern interest in yoga is derived. Brahman is

the Absolute Reality beyond space, time and causation; Atman is the God within the individual soul as immanent, eternal self. Brahman and Atman are one. The union of the human soul with God can be obtained through meditation and other prescribed actions.

Is this merging of the human soul, or self, with God in such a manner as to lose its own identity, acceptable to Christian mysticism? It cannot be denied that *union with the Deity* appeared in much of the mystical literature of the Christian devotional classics. Meister Eckhart, regarded by some as the typical Christian mystic, made much of the divine ground, or spark or centre. Underhill (1961:420) refers to the following comment of Eckhart in this regard: 'I am to know God directly, I must become completely He and He I: so that this He and this I become and are one.' The same idea was also embraced by the Flemish mystic, Ruysbroeck, as quoted by Happold (1963:21) 'This union is within us of our naked nature and were this nature to be separated from God it would fall into nothingness.'

It seems that the language describing the mystical experience used by mystics varied between *communion* and the assumed *ontological merging of the finite with the Infinite* for a transient but ecstatic period, described as *union*. This view that goes back to Plotinus and Neo-platonism, as it was introduced into Christianity by Augustine, causes strain seeing that it hovers on the borderline of pantheism whilst endeavouring to retain belief in the personal God of Biblical Christian faith (Harkness 1973:22). The view that the human soul merges with God in such a manner as to lose its own identity runs counter to all the basic teachings of Christian theology. In Christian mysticism the term "communion" is most commonly used. 'When spirit and spirit meet, God remains God and man remains man, with an "I-Thou" relation in which there is meeting without merging' (Harkness, 1973:24). Butler (1922:3-4) clarifies the pantheistic implications of a metaphysical union with the Deity by showing that even when the soul's absorption in God is spoken of, the soul retains its own individuality and full personality. Ruysbroeck in his book *The supreme Truth*, as well as in his other

writings, makes a clear distinction between God and the highest created being. It will be erroneous to say that persons are absorbed in God in 'essential blessedness' and that nothing shall remain apart. He continues at another place in the same book to compare communion with God to fire and iron,

... iron is penetrated by fire, so that it works through the fire the works of fire, since it burns and shines like the fire ... yet each of these keeps its own nature - the fire does not become iron, and the iron does not become fire, for the iron is within the fire and the fire is within the iron, so likewise God is in the being of the soul. The creature never becomes God as God never becomes creature (Umen 1988:150-151).

Underhill (1961:420) evaluates many reports of the mystics in order to clarify the term *deification* and comes to the conclusion that no arrogant claim to identification with God is made, '... but as it was a transfusion of their selves by His self; an entrance upon a new order of life, so high and so harmonious with Reality that it can only be called divine.' The reports confirm that personality is not lost, but made more real.

Christian mysticism also displays some of the mystical characteristics as explained previously (cf.2.2.1.2), the difference being that specific reference to the Bible as authoritative Scripture is made. The Christian mystic's experience is *ineffable* in the sense that it cannot be expressed in words, but on the other hand the witnesses testify to an inexpressible joy and peace - a state of being in the soul which words can only faintly adumbrate. This may well be akin to what Paul expressed in his letter to the church of Philippians as '... the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus...' (Phil. 4:7).

The *noetic* quality would refer to the insight and intuition and the discovery that seems to be given from without. It is in keeping with the word recorded in John

14:26, 'But the counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things'.

Transiency is also part of Christian mysticism. The experience could not last for a long period of time. Such a form of mysticism would drain a great deal of emotional energy and to maintain it for long periods, even if one could do so, would cause psychological damage and could easily merge into a psychosis. Christian mysticism, understood in the milder form of mysticism, in which one quietly endeavours to live in the presence of God with recurrent periods of spiritual refreshment, would pose no such danger.

Passivity as a mark of Christian mysticism could be explained as follows. Some mystical experiences seem to come unbidden, but after suitable preparation. To quiet one's mind and conflicting emotions in order to hear the voice and feel the presence of God is not passive. Yet on the other hand the mystic finds a resting place in the knowledge that he or she does not have to carry his or her burdens alone and that God is the Great Companion (Harkness 1973:29-30).

Furthermore, it seems that another definite difference exists between mysticism in general and Christian mysticism in particular. There is agreement amongst mystics that the difference between the two lies in the interpretation of *union with God*. Christian mysticism rejects the idea, common in some other religions, of the absorption of the individual into the divine, and retains the distinction between the individual believer and God (Goring & Whaling 1992:355). This viewpoint is also illustrated by Katz (1978:29), in comparing Christian mystics with Hindu mystics. For the Christian mystic, union with God is not an experience of actual identity with God, but rather some other relation such as resemblance. Hindu mysticism insists that it represents identity with God, which writers on mysticism usually call union. The Christian mystic does not lose his or her own identity and fall into nothingness when in communion with God: such an event is rather a relation between the ego (I) and God (Thou) that exists where there is meeting

without merging. Although Christian mysticism believes that everything exists in God it holds back from pantheism⁶.

In addition, in Christian mysticism, communion is not with Absolute Reality but more specifically with God, the God of the Christian faith. 'Christian mysticism tends to focus on the person and suffering of Christ, attempting to move beyond an image and the word to the immediate presence of God' (Goring & Whaling 1992:355). The Christian mystical experience also includes the Holy Spirit, '... the realisation of human personality as characterised by and consummated in the indwelling reality of the spirit of Christ, which is God' (Inge 1969:32).

2.3.3 Eastern mystical influences in Christianity

The question could be asked: has Christianity been influenced by other Eastern religions? As pointed out earlier, certain practices such as meditation and yoga found in Christian as well as Eastern traditions do show a remarkable resemblance. Hinduism and Buddhism are two important Eastern religions that could have influenced Christianity. The possible influences of these religions will be discussed broadly.

2.3.3.1 Hinduism

Some aspects of the Indian faith and practice that came to America, stem from the influence of Sri Ramakrishna (1836 -1886), a Hindu saint and scholar thoroughly conversant with the major religions, whose holy living led to his being regarded as an *avatar*. One of his disciples, Swami Vivekananda, brought Vedanta to America and founded the Ramakrishna Order. He went as a delegate to the Parliament of Religions at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and travelled widely across America, with the result that Vedanta centres were founded in a considerable number of cities.

⁶ A variation of pantheism is panentheism holding that everything exists in God (and not God in everything), God being the 'whole' that encompasses and surpasses the world of visible things (Deist 1984:121).

Liberal clergymen were instrumental in helping Vivekananda to gain a social platform from which to spread his Hindu teachings. This led to the establishment of the Ramakrishna Mission in New York and a dozen other centres that propagate Hinduism (Howard 1969:201).

Three Swamis, Prabhavananda, Akhilananda and Nikhilananda, presided over three of the most important Vedanta centres in Los Angeles, Boston and New York. They had a wide influence through their writings and lectures on Hindu psychology and religion and on how these related to Western Christianity. Today it is no longer a strange sight to see swamis lecture on points of contact between Eastern and Western belief; in these cases Christ is regarded as an *avatar*.

Apart from the swamis, three other men from England, Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard and Christopher Isherwood have done much to spread the knowledge of Vedanta in America. Certainly the best-known exponent of Hindu mystical thought and practice is Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who has greatly influenced America (Yogananda 1972:405).

Paramahansa Yogananda, in 1920, spoke before the International Congress of Religious Liberals in America, sponsored by the American Unitarian Association. Once again, religious liberals were instrumental in providing a wide public platform to a Hindu leader. From 1920-1930 he led tens of thousands of Americans into yoga and other Hindu practices (Yogananda 1972:405-408).

In Hinduism the mystical experience or the ascent from consciousness to the super consciousness is called *samadhi*. The method by which an individual is brought from the empirical self into a transcendental state is called yoga (Harkness 1973:165). The attainment of union with Brahman or the severance of the self can be achieved by various means. Among these means self-mortification has an important place. Privation and inflictions are also used for the attainment of an ecstatic experience. Trance states are also induced by the practising of certain exercises, known as yoga. Various forms of yoga exist

(Umen 1988:53-54). Of the various types of yoga that exist the following forms of yoga are most commonly used: Jnana yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga and Raja yoga⁷. Siddha yoga, also known as Kundalini yoga, comes from the form of Hinduism known as Kashmir Shavism that stems from the Kashmir region of India. The god these Hindus worship is known as Shiva. Hindus who view Shiva as the supreme deity are known as Shaivites.

The practice of yoga, which is an important religious practice in Eastern religions, is a popular pastime for millions of people and is also practised in the Christian tradition. Yoga classes are regularly offered by the YMCA, the YWCA, in New Age and business seminars, on TV, and in Church practice. As Ankerberg & Weldon (1996:608) indicate: '... many churchgoers in mainline liberal denominations are seemingly willing to experience with it. Having received little or no discernment on the occult issues from their liberal churches, they may find themselves open to experimentation in practices or traditions that claim to offer spiritual power, enlightenment, and union with God.' Several books⁸ attempt to integrate yoga practice and Christian faith.

Umen (1988:54) describes the purpose of yoga in general as follows: 'The chief purpose of the practice of yoga is the use of the mind to suppress its own conscious movements, the whole body being so disciplined as to aid in the gradual suspension of consciousness and creating a state of pure ecstasy that is without thought and without sensation.'

The kind of yoga that is of interest for this study is *Siddha* yoga, also known as Kundalini yoga. Kundalini in English means '*the serpent power*'. It is a common Hindu belief that within each person resides vital energy coiled up like a 'serpent'

⁷ Jnana yoga refers to knowledge of God through philosophical reflection, while Bhakti yoga speaks of seeking God in personal devotion through love. Karma yoga is the selfless performance of work and action and Raja yoga is the realization of the self through mind-control and concentrated meditation (Umen 1988:55-57).

⁸ Promoters of this practice make such claims as 'Yoga and Christianity are founded upon similar wisdom' (O'Brien, 1978:2).

at the base of the spine. Through practising Kundalini yoga, along with chanting, meditation and an impartation of power from the guru, one can have the Kundalini awakening.

2.3.3.2 Kundalini in the Christian tradition

Although the word Kundalini comes from the yogic tradition, nearly all the world's major religions, spiritual paths, and genuine occult traditions see something akin to the Kundalini experience as having significance in 'divinizing' a person (White 1990:17).

In Christian teaching nothing is found which is comparable to the Hindu notions of chakras, astral body, and Kundalini energy. Neither is there a spirituality associated with a yoga system that is designed to lead one up through the various centres to the experience of union found in Christianity. Nevertheless the chakras, the astral body, and the awakening of Kundalini are experiences that can be identified in the experience of many Christian mystics. The Christian experience differs from the Eastern experiences in that it is not seen as a means to union but as a consequence of prayer.

St Romain (1994:110-112) reviewed some evidence of Kundalini amongst Christian mystics. He refers to a manuscript that was discovered by Gopi Krishna in 1978, written by Abbé N.de Montfauçon de Villars, in Paris, about three hundred years ago, entitled *Comte de Gabalis*⁹. St Romain (1994:111) quotes from the book of Kieffer (1988), where the word Christ was used for the first solar principle in man, referring to Romans 8 verse 10. *Solar principle* is a term frequently used in the book to signify Kundalini. In an allegory of Eve and the Serpent the primordial electricity or solar force, semi latent in the aura of every human being, was known to the Greeks as the Speirema, the serpent coil, and in the Upanishads, the sacred writings of India, it is said to lie coiled up like a

⁹ This work has much to say about Kundalini and Christianity and is often used by New Agers to demonstrate that Jesus knew about Hinduism.

slumbering serpent. The account of Eve and the serpent in the third chapter of Genesis is also a reference to this serpent power. When this force in her was stirred, she, through misapplication, received knowledge of evil because the force was directed downward. If the force had been directed upward, it would have brought knowledge of good. The dual operation of the solar force is symbolized as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Nothing can however be found in early Christian writings about Christ as the solar principle. Although Abbé de Villar, according to Keiffer (1988:8-9), was familiar with the sacred writings of India, which include many references to Kundalini, his book also includes references to the philosopher's stone and the writings of alchemists. Thus, his work cannot be considered as a serious study of early Christian spirituality. According to St Romain it must rather be viewed as an attempt to synthesize common elements in occult writings.

Another noteworthy reference to the experience of Kundalini among Christian mystics is found in *The Theology of Christian Perfection*, by Antonio and Aumann (1962). This book, once a standard reference for Catholics, includes a chapter on extraordinary phenomena. The extraordinary phenomena are considered as *gratia gratis datae* (special charisms not necessary for salvation). Not all manifestations listed in this chapter are seen as proceeding from a supernatural cause; many could be due to a mental, physical or nervous disorder, or even be caused by diabolic power. The authors, however, acknowledge that if these phenomena have God as their cause, they are usually found in persons living a holy life.

A wide variety of extraordinary mystical phenomena are listed by the authors. From this list of extraordinary phenomena St Romain (1994:112) finds the following that can be associated with Kundalini: flames of love, tears of blood and bloody sweat, prolonged absence of sleep, bilocation, mystical aureoles, incombustible bodies and bodily elongation¹⁰. Apart from these phenomena St

10 *Flames of love* speak of a burning sensation in the body, considered by the mystic to

Romain also recognises Kundalini energy at work in the spontaneous experiences of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and in the temporary paralyses of limbs experienced by St. Teresa of Avila.

Stigmata are also possibly related to Kundalini. St Romain (1994:113) refers to his own experience of Kundalini as a throbbing on the soles of his feet and the palm of his hand. He believes that it could have been a combination of Kundalini and meditation on the wounds of Christ that produced these stigmata. Numerous mystical phenomena of a psychic nature might also be related to Kundalini, although not all psychics experience Kundalini.

St Romain (1994:113-114) is of the opinion that latent psychic gifts¹¹ could certainly be enhanced by Kundalini. McCleave (1990:411), a self acclaimed Christian 'mystic', is of the opinion that the mystical experience described by mystics is indeed the awakened Kundalini. McCleave argues that there is a common origin for the experiences of higher consciousness that happened to all the mystics and yogis (*ibid.* 1990:419). He explains that Christian mystics had

be a sign of his or her love for God. Three levels are identified; namely simple interior heat, usually in the area of the heart, intense heat that causes discomfort and material burning which scorches the clothing and burns those whom the mystic touches. Saints Philip Neri and Paul of the Cross experienced this. *Tears of blood* - during times of intense Kundalini it is possible that blood vessels near the surface of the skin and in the tear ducts would rupture, rendering sweat and tears. St. Lutgard and Blessed Christina received this gift. Christ in Gethsemane also experienced bloody sweat. *Prolonged absence of sleep* - the kundalini current maintains the body in a state of freedom from emotional pain and sleep is not needed. St. Rose of Lima and St. Catherine de Ricci went without sleep for long periods. *Bilocation* speaks of the astral body that receives energy to leave the physical body and roam around and might be seen by those with inner vision. St. Clement and St. Francis of Assisi were noted for bilocating. *Mystical Aureoles* are the experience of inner light commonly associated with Kundalini. There are countless cases of Aureoles as with Moses, St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Philip Neri, to mention but a few. *Incombustible bodies*- may be not related to Kundalini but Kundalini brings along the transformation of bodily tissue One is seldom sick after undergoing the process, for example St. Peter Igneus and St. Dominic. *Bodily Elongations*, also a suspected work of Kundalini, produces a body stretching asana; examples are Stephana Quinzana and St. Catherine of Genoa (St Romain 1994:112).

11 The psychic gifts include visions, which can be of different kinds including clairvoyance, moving things without touching them (psychokinesis), hearing voices/ revelations (clairaudience), healing, foretelling the future, reading another's heart, seeing auras, and other gifts. The author is of the opinion that the mere fact that the mentioned gifts could be enhanced by Kundalini does not mean that they should be viewed as an integral part of mysticism.

this truth hidden in their teachings but could not openly reveal it. Mystics of all faiths expressed their knowledge in terms of their own faith. Accomplished yogis explained their attainments in terms of Kundalini. Christians on the other hand, unaware of the Hindu term, Kundalini, described the same phenomena, but named the animating, motivating spiritual force at work within them as the Holy Spirit. The Christian experience is described as the 'baptism' of the Holy Spirit.

McCleave (1990:419) expresses the opinion that Christian mystics cannot be viewed separately from mystics and yogis from other cultures. The Christian mystic's experience of a tremendous force - which they term the Holy Spirit - shows a striking resemblance with the traditional descriptions of Kundalini.

A strong convergence between Hindu and Christian spirituality can be established (St. Romain 1994:115), when comparing yoga with Pentecostalism. He points specifically to the similarities between the *shaktipat* in Hinduism and the *laying on of hands* in Pentecostalism and among the Charismatics. In both instances spiritual energy is released through touch and similar manifestations take place. This brings him to the question whether the Holy Spirit as known by Christians is not indeed Kundalini energy. McCleave (1990:411-412) seems to share this view, as he explains that the Kundalini experience is often accompanied by burning sensations in the body. In a similar fashion the Christian experience described as the 'baptism' of the Holy Spirit is referred to in the Bible: *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire*¹² (Matt 3:11). The mystics testify with the writer of Hebrews 12:29, 'For our God is a consuming fire' (McCleave 1990:412).

If the Holy Spirit is viewed as an energy or force, St Romain's question or its possible implication is contrary to mainstream Christian belief that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the godhead. This viewpoint is not only clearly portrayed in the different creeds of the Christian faith but also in Scripture. It seems like a

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contradiction if the Holy Spirit is described as an energy as well as a person. For stern believers in the Holy Spirit as a person this energy release could be interpreted as a result of the indwelling of the person of the Holy Spirit in a believer.

There could certainly be similarities between the *shaktipat* and the *laying on of hands*. Another question could be asked in this regard. Could the manifestations as a result of the laying on of hands indeed be ascribed to the Holy Spirit; are they not indeed the Kundalini energy? Or does the Biblical account of the Holy Spirit really include such manifestations as are related to the Kundalini awakening? These questions will be investigated in a later chapter.

The following conclusion may be reached from the foregoing discussion. St Romain and McCleave draw a clear parallel between the Kundalini experience and the mystical experience of Christians. The Kundalini experience seems to be viewed by some Christians at least, if not all, as *the* mystical experience. Furthermore, St Romain draws a parallel between the working of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement and the Kundalini experience. Although the proponents of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement do not view it in the same light, interesting similarities have been pointed out and warrant further investigation in a later chapter.

The nature and manifestations of Kundalini energy will be discussed in more detail later when compared to the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing.

2.3.3.3 Zen Buddhism

A different type of Eastern Religion hailing from Japan, Zen, a sect of Mahayana Buddhism, also reached America in the twentieth century. At the World Parliament of Religion in Chicago in 1893, it was further expounded by the Buddhist Abbot Soyen Shaku. But its most influential expositor was Suzuki (1870-1966). His best-known work is *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* in which

he finds similarities between Zen and the thought of Meister Eckhart (Harkness 1973:168).

Buddhism differs from Hinduism in that it has no God, such as the Universal self of Brahman or the Atman, within the individual soul. It has no soul as an individual entity, only an out-flowing stream of consciousness. The three pillars of Zen are teaching, practice and enlightenment, all under the instruction of a Zen master. The mystical experience of enlightenment, described by Suzuki as the Alpha and Omega of Zen Buddhism, is called *satori*. 'It is conceived as entrance into Buddhahood, the enlightenment which is both the discovery of truth and the transformation of life' (Harkness 1973:171). The most distinctive elements of *Satori* are *Zazen* and *koan*. *Zazen* refers to meditation, preferably in the lotus position, the spine erect, concentrating on breathing and the mind shutting out all distracting thoughts. A *koan* is a short story, often a dialogue between a student and a teacher, that points towards some essence of the spirit of Zen. *Satori* comes when the disciple realises that the answer lies not in logic but in an intuitive certainty that he lives in a Reality that transcends the world of time and space. Reality comes closest to being the Emptiness, or Godhead of Meister Eckhart.

The eight characteristics of mystical *satori* show an interesting comparison with the four characteristics of mysticism proposed by James (1994). These are irrationality, intuitive insight, authoritativeness, affirmation, a sense of being beyond, its impersonal tone, a feeling of exaltation, and brevity (Harkness 1973:169-172).

It seems that certain Eastern practices such as yoga and meditation, which are found in Buddhism and Hinduism, are perceptible in the Christian tradition and have become more popular and are more frequently practised amongst more open minded Christians in recent times. It seems quite appropriate to say that important avenues for such cross-cultural and interreligious pollination would be

the World Parliament of Religions and a tolerant attitude amongst different religions in order to learn from one another.

2.4 SPIRITUALITY

The term 'spirituality' is unavoidably ambiguous (Schneiders 1989:678), referring to (1) a fundamental dimension of the human being, (2) the lived experience which actualises that dimension, and (3) the academic discipline which studies that experience. Attempts by different writers to resolve this ambiguity include reserving the term 'spirituality' for the lived experience and referring to the discipline as 'spiritual theology'. Schneiders (1989:678) is of the opinion, however, that the term 'spiritual theology' is problematic. She gives four reasons with which I concur. Firstly, the emerging contemporary discipline which studies what has been defined as spirituality must be able to develop freely in terms of its proper subject matter and the appropriate scholarly approaches, especially in the context of Christian theological scholarship; it is crucial that it distance itself from its 19th century forebears. Illumination of the term 'theology', can in the second place, avoid premature resolutions of the question of how spirituality is related to theology. Thirdly, the term 'spirituality', precisely because it has little history in the academy and is not necessarily a theological term, has great potential for facilitating comparative and cross-traditional inquiry and dialogue. Lastly, spirituality better denotes the subject matter of the discipline without narrowing it, as other terms tend to do (Schneiders 1989:691). Furthermore, the term 'spirituality' is not subject to certain fixed ideas, whether acceptable or unacceptable, of theology. Theology moves in the field of the study of God, which refers to a rational involvement, whereas spirituality refers to an experience as a result of contact with the God who is studied through theology.

The term 'spirituality' - referring to the lived experience - has undergone expansion in the last few decades from being an almost exclusively Roman Catholic term before Vatican II to becoming gradually adopted by Protestantism, Judaism, non-Christian religions, and even other movements such as feminism

and Marxism. Although the term is difficult to define, the experience is analogous in all of these movements.

The adoption of the term 'spirituality' by a wider spectrum of cultures and belief systems has also altered the meaning of the term. It no longer refers exclusively or even primarily to prayer and spiritual exercises. Neither does it refer to an élite state nor a superior practice of Christianity. The term has broadened to include the whole of faith life as well as the life of the person as a whole, including its bodily, psychological, social, and political dimensions (Schneiders 1989:679). For many people the term *spirituality* has other-worldly connotations and implies some form of religious discipline. In a wider sense the term *spirituality* refers to the ultimate values and meanings in terms of which we live, whether they be other-worldly or worldly ones, and whether or not we consciously try to increase our commitment to those values and meanings. The term has religious connotations, in that one's ultimate values and meanings reflect some presuppositions as to what is holy, that is, of ultimate importance. The presupposed holy can however be something worldly, such as power, sexual energy, or success. In this broad sense spirituality is not an optional quality which we might elect not to have. Every person embodies a spirituality, whether it is a nihilistic or materialistic spirituality (Griffin 1988:1).

Two basic approaches can be taken with regard to discussing 'spirituality' (Schneiders 1989:689). On the one hand a *dogmatic* position supplies a 'definition from above' whereas an *anthropological* position supplies a 'definition from below'. For the dogmatic approach, spirituality means life derived from grace, which links it to Christianity. Any experience not explicitly Christian is viewed only by way of an extension or comparison. In the case of the anthropological approach, spiritual life emerges from the structure and dynamics of the human person. Spirituality is thus viewed as an activity of human life. This viewpoint opens up the possibility for engagement with the Absolute. If this engagement is with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, it could be called Christian. This engagement with the Absolute could take place in different ways

and is not limited to one type of engagement. In principle it means that spirituality is available to every human being who seeks to live an authentic life, although it does not mean that the term could not be used as an 'absolute'. A survey of definitions of spirituality conducted by Alexander (1980:247-256) points out that the term is being used mostly in an experiential manner, consonant with the anthropological approach. This fact also emphasizes the tendency to recognise Christian spirituality as part of a broader category, so wide that it is neither confined to nor defined by Christianity or even by religion.

2.5 CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

2.5.1 Introduction

The word *spirituality* is originally a Christian term. A theology of the spirit began to develop in Old Testament reflection on the breath or *ruach* of Yahweh and was further developed in New Testament reflection on the *pneuma* or Spirit, which almost immediately came to be understood as the Spirit of the risen Christ.

The English word *spirituality* is derived from the Latin word *spiritualitas*, and like its cognates *spiritus* and *spiritualis*, it can be translated from the original Greek terms *pneuma* and *pneumatikos*. The adjective *spiritual* is a Christian neologism and is used by Paul to describe that which pertains to the Holy Spirit. For example, in 1 Corinthians 2:15¹³: 'Those who are spiritual (*pneumatikos*) discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny'. The distinction Paul made here was that the spiritual person, the *pneumatikos*, is under the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Collins 1996:77).

Through the early centuries of the church the term was refracted by various cultural considerations. Though the term spirituality did not refer almost

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exclusively to the immaterial, it began to take on aspects of a broader ascetism, such as deprecation of both the body and its passions.

In the patristic period until the eleventh century the meaning of the word *spirituality* changed little. It referred to the life according to the Holy Spirit and all the activities of that life.

According to Collins (1996:78) the twelfth century can be viewed as a watershed. Theologians of the twelfth century began to separate spiritual life from the rest of theology. A century later Thomas Aquinas viewed spiritual life as spiritual theology and a subdivision of moral theology. It was used to contrast the spiritual with the material. At that stage the term was viewed as having a juridical meaning, according to which spirituality was the opposite of temporality.

In the seventeenth century spirituality referred to the interior life, especially to the affective relationship with God. The word *spirituality* acquired a new meaning in the seventeenth century (Sumhitra 1990:177-178). It was used for a kind of mysticism which was condemned by many. Some Puritans, like John Owen, used the word to refer to a devout Christian way of life, or the sphere in and over which the Holy Spirit has direct influence (Toon 1989:12-13). In the eighteenth century the sharp distinction that had existed for centuries between the ascetical and mystical life encouraged the use of a more comprehensive term - *spirituality*.

It refers to the spiritual life as a whole in all of its stages. It includes all stages of the pursuit of perfection in the interior life through spiritual exercises and the practice of virtue above and beyond what is required by the ten commandments, as well as the mystical life which crowned this pursuit in the case of some people.

In the nineteenth century the meaning of spirituality stayed the same but greater emphasis was placed on the lived spiritual life, in other words the experiential and practical implications of the word (Schneiders 1986:257-259). In the first half of the twentieth century a period of stability with regards to the discipline of

spirituality was experienced. In this period an interesting reflection of this more comprehensive approach that started in the eighteenth century was seen. Periodicals on spiritual life began to change their titles to include the term 'spirituality' and to upgrade the academic quality of their articles. A number of new journals in spirituality appeared and major theological journals such as *Horizons* and *Downside Review* began to publish studies in spirituality (Schneiders 1986:263-264).

2.5.2 Defining Christian spirituality

Schneiders (1989:684) defines 'spirituality' in general as: '...the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate values one perceives.' This broad definition of spirituality includes generally agreed upon characteristics, namely, notions of progressive, consciously pursued, personal integration through self-transcendence within and toward the horizon of ultimate concern. Spirituality, apart from being a generally shared term, can also take on a specific character, such as Christian, non-Christian, religious or secular, when the ultimate concern is defined. If the ultimate concern is God revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced through the gift of the Holy Spirit within the life of the Church, it is Christian spirituality. Toon (1989:13) explains that the addition of the suffix 'ity' to the word usually has the effect of causing that word to express a state or condition. Thus, spirituality can be interpreted as the state or condition of being spiritual.

Finding one single definition to describe the term *Christian spirituality* would be impossible. The concept of Christian spirituality is often found with various descriptions, such as 'Augustinian Spirituality,' 'Franciscan spirituality,' 'Lutheran spirituality,' or 'Wesleyan spirituality,' which point to various historical patterns that mark out the way of Christlikeness and relationship with God. There exists a deep foundational unanimity among Christians as to the goal of Christian

spirituality. However, the question of 'how' this pilgrimage should be meaningfully pursued varies within the Christian tradition.

At the outset it is important to point out that Christian spirituality can be differentiated in itself. The difference between some Catholic and Protestant spiritualities emphasizes this point. For some Catholics and Protestants spirituality will lay more emphasis on their own effort towards God, of union consummating purgation and illumination, whereas for others all is God's justifying mercy and this begins the mystical union, which is the first work of saving grace in our hearts (Wakefield 1983:363). In this study the latter viewpoint is supported.

Christian spirituality concerns the living out of the encounter with Jesus Christ. It '... refers to the way in which the Christian life is understood and the explicitly devotional practices which have been developed to foster and sustain the relationship with Christ' (McGrath 1999:3). Christian spirituality can be understood as the way in which Christian individuals or groups experience or practice the presence of God. Dowd (1994:39) points out that spirituality is not merely an intimate encounter with the divine Other, but an intimate relationship with the personal God who is always and only faithful to his covenant love.

Saliers (1992:460) defines spirituality as '... a lived experience and a disciplined life of prayer and action which cannot be conceived apart from the specific theological beliefs that are ingredients in the forms of life that manifest authentic Christian faith.' It involves the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith (McGrath 1999:2). McBrien (1994:1058) elaborates on the experience and points out that it has to do with our experience of God and with the transformation of our consciousness and our lives as a result of that experience. This experience of God is personal (Dowd 1994:38); it is not an encounter with some impersonal life force, impulse towards creativity, or a kind of magnetic force.

Rowe (1993:106) adds another element to the definition of spirituality, namely that it is a search for meaning and values. Apart from having relationships with other people and with God, it has to do with the universal search for individual identity. This search is for meaning and for values by which to live. Christian spirituality is the response to a deep mysterious human yearning for self-transcendence and surrender. This yearning is more than involvement with others; it is to surrender to the service of some person or cause bigger than ourselves. 'Spirituality is that human need for self-transcendence which cannot be satisfied with ordinary human relationships' (Rowe 1993:107)

Christian spirituality describes the relationship, union and conformity with God that Christians experience when they accept the grace of God, turn from sin, and walk according to the Spirit. McBrien (1980:1057-58) likewise refers to Christian spirituality as the cultivation of a life style consistent with the Spirit of the Risen Christ within us and with our status as members of the body of Christ.

The goal of Christian spirituality is Christlikeness and a restoration of the image of God (2 Pet 1:4), in which humans were originally created (Gen 1:26). Christians have different opinions as to whether this Christlikeness is to be anticipated in this life or in the life to come. All concur that Christian spirituality refers to growth in grace and sanctity (Tyson 1999:2).

It is concluded from the abovementioned definitions of Christian spirituality that the following foundational elements are shared:

- it starts through an encounter with Christ and acceptance of his grace;
- it continues as a relationship in which the Christian gives him or herself over to God's will;
- this is maintained through a devoted life style which includes spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting and Christian service within the scope of the Christian faith. This disciplined life cannot be conceived of apart from specific theological beliefs that form the basis of the Christian faith;

- it has the aim of becoming more like Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Rowe (1993:107) points to the important fact that in the realm of spirituality, discrimination and discernment are required. Dowd (1994:42) shares this view and points out that the church is responsible for discerning spirituality. Discernment can only be practised if the Scriptures are studied to find God 's way. The spiritual aspect of humanity can be distorted and manipulated by evil. Wakefield (1983:362) comments that Adolf Hitler was a spiritual being, a man, more than most, 'possessed'; yet his spirit was surely evil, judging by the destructive consequences of Hitler and the power with which he inspired others.

Christian spirituality in the Christian tradition as a whole is refined to take on its own distinctive character according to different interpretations also of the Bible. Seeing that the focus of this study is on charismatic spirituality it is necessary to lay a foundation for charismatic spirituality.

2.5.3 Charismatic spirituality

As stated earlier, spirituality cannot be rightfully understood if it is removed from the contexts of the culture, history, tradition, discipline and religious setting in which it is found. It possesses its own independent rules, values and truths. Spirituality is dependent upon the deeper beliefs and values of the traditions, cultures, historical milieu and religious setting which harbour it. As it is related to those beliefs and values, so must it vary according to them.

Christian spirituality is expressed differently according to the interpretation of scripture within different groups found in the Christian tradition. In these different Christian groups - for instance, Reformed, Catholic and Pentecostal/Charismatic groups - identifying characteristics are visible. These characteristics express their understanding of Christlikeness and a relationship with God.

Likewise, Charismatic spirituality will have a character of its own that marks out Christlikeness and relationship with God. For the purpose of this study it is important to place charismatic spirituality in the broader spectrum of Christian spirituality. In other words, what specific characteristics differentiate charismatic spirituality from Christian spirituality?

Del Colle (1993:94), after considering different definitions of spirituality, suggests that the following definition describes charismatic spirituality: 'Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality is a spirituality of communion in which God, self, the neighbour and all of the creation is known amid prayer and the praise of God through the giftedness of the Spirit's presence, power and the manifestations in a witness to the divine agency in the risen Christ.'

At the centre of charismatic spirituality is the model of Spirit-Christology. The most succinct definition of Spirit-Christology is that the Holy Spirit is attributed a constitutive role in the soteriological theology that can be identified as stemming from the person and the work of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does not only bear a witness to Christ or have a role in the work of salvation, but the knowledge of who Christ is and the salvation that he brings also proceeds from a basic and foundational pneumatological orientation. Directly relevant for Spirit-Christology is the coherence between the Christian apprehension of God in the *Christus praesens* and the *Spiritus praesens* and the praise of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Del Colle 1993:94-95).

In what way do Pentecostal and Charismatic spiritualities differ from existing Christian spiritualities? Pentecostals and charismatics generally define themselves on the basis of dissimilarities from rather than similarities with the other existing Christian traditions. The outstanding experiential reality that the Pentecostals and the charismatics share is the Spirit-baptism and the manifestation of the charismata. The Pentecostal-charismatic believer knows Christ as the Baptizer in the Spirit and the Spirit as the Paraclete who glorifies

Christ in the manifestation of charismata and the formation of virtue (Del Colle 1993:106).

In conclusion, charismatic spirituality emphasizes that communion with God has a reciprocal aspect in that it is accompanied by the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. God's participation in communion with man is seen in Spirit manifestations such as Spirit-baptism and the charismata. Man's participation in communion with God is expressed in the practices of prayer and praise. The expression of charismatic spirituality will be discussed in more detail later.

2.5.4 Comparison between Christian mysticism and Christian spirituality

According to McGrath (1999:5) the term *mysticism* was extensively used in the past to designate the general area of spirituality. Although the word mysticism is still used, especially in Catholic and Orthodox circles, it is gradually being displaced by the term *spirituality*. The modern terms *mysticism* and *spirituality* can both be traced back to seventeenth century France. The French terms *spiritualité* and *mysticisme* were both used to describe direct interior knowledge of the divine or supernatural, and were treated as more or less synonymous at the time. Confusion has arisen over the precise meaning. Two viewpoints existed. On the one hand some writers suggested that the two terms represent two different ways to speak about an authentic *personal relationship with God*, while others believed that mysticism should be viewed as a special type of spirituality which places particular emphasis on a *direct personal experience of God*.

I do not agree with McGrath that the term *mysticism* was replaced by the term *spirituality*. This view can easily lead to more confusion over these two terms. The perception could be created that mysticism ceased to exist and was totally taken over by spirituality. It would be more correct to say that spirituality could be viewed as an umbrella term, which also includes mysticism.

As mentioned above, a further distinction between the two terms is made by looking at the origin of the words *mysticism* and *spirituality*. The word *mysticism* has its origin in the Greek mysteries, and a mystic was accordingly viewed as one who had gained an esoteric knowledge of divine things and had been *reborn into eternity*. Whereas *spirituality* developed out of the Biblical terms breath (*ruach*) in the Old Testament and spirit (*pneuma*) in the New Testament, *mysticism* was not a Christian term from the outset but developed to include Christian mysticism after the birth of Christ. Spirituality with a Biblical origin developed over the years to include other forms of spiritualities as well.

Christian mysticism and Christian spirituality are closely related. The term Christian spirituality, however, seems to be a more acceptable word for some Christians because it is free of some of the negative connotations that have attached themselves to the term 'mysticism'. These negative connotations probably arose because of some accompanying psychic manifestations that in the mind of many Christians were considered occult. The term spirituality, in comparison with mysticism, is a more acceptable term for Christians because it can more easily be related to the bible. Although the mystical experience may be part of Christian spirituality, it is not expressed by that particular term in the bible. This study has the aim of investigating whether the Toronto Blessing is indeed a mystical experience and forms part of Christian spirituality and whether it is related to Hindu mysticism. Although an experience of God is seen as belonging to the Christian faith, the level of this experience differs from group to group in the Christian tradition.

The term *spirituality*, understood as describing all stages of the pursuit of perfection, and also the mystical life referring to a personal experience with God, underpins the viewpoint supported in this study. To be more specific, charismatic spirituality in particular emphasizes Spirit-baptism and charismata as evidence of God's involvement in human life. Charismatic spirituality must be investigated within the parameters of charismatic society and its understanding and interpretation of scripture.

2.6. CONCLUSION

From the theoretical foundation laid in this chapter the following conclusions can be drawn:

Firstly, mysticism is a very broad term, which although manifesting certain similarities in all religions, also differs from religion to religion due to its social, historical, theological and contextual variants. *Christian mysticism* can be differentiated from mysticism in general because of its Christocentric and Trinitarian ethos.

Secondly, spirituality is also a term widely used by many cultures and religions, yet *Christian spirituality* is once again differentiated from spirituality in general because of its Christocentric and biblical character. Spirituality is an activity of human life as such. The activity however is open to engagement with the Absolute but is not limited to such engagement. In the case of Christian spirituality the engagement with the Absolute refers to engagement with the person of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, with the aim of becoming more like Christ. It is generally agreed that Christian spirituality has its origin in the conversion to the Christian faith. The Bible provides guidelines that assist the believer in the continuous pursuit towards Christlikeness.

Thirdly, *interreligious spirituality* offers mutual enrichment across religious boundaries by incorporating practices from other religions (often not known by some Christian communities) in the path towards the ultimate goal. Interreligious spirituality is strengthened by the encouragement of interfaith relationships, and through a tolerant attitude amongst different religions, as well as through structures such as the World Parliament of Religions.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL ROOTS, DEVELOPMENT AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT AND THE TORONTO BLESSING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the roots, development and theological understanding of the Charismatic Movement and the Toronto Blessing that will produce an appropriate background against which these phenomena can be evaluated and provide an understanding of the experiences associated with them.

3.2 THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

3.2.1 Definition

The Charismatic Movement refers to a religious movement, which began in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. The name is derived from the Greek word *charisma*, which means 'spiritual gifts', 'favour' and 'grace' (Buskey 1978:10). Webster (1969:140) defines the word charismatic as 'an extraordinary power given to a believer by the Holy Spirit for the good of the church'. The connection between the Greek word *charisma* and the Charismatic Movement is found in the emphasis the movement places on the personal experience of the Holy Spirit as well as on the variety of spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit grants in that experience (Peart & Davies 1980:vii).

The word *charisma* is translated as 'gift' in the New Testament, and refers to that which is received, not earned or learned. Buskey (1978:10-12) points out that the word *charisma* is used by Paul in his letters to the Romans, Corinthians and

Timothy. To the Romans Paul wrote: 'I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gifts to strengthen you, that is that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine' (Rom. 1:11). The word 'charisma' used here refers to a gift that Paul is going to give to the recipients. Paul continues in Romans 6 verse 23, 'Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them'. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he also refers a number of times to a spiritual gift or charisma. Buskey (1978:12) evaluates the word *charisma* in the various contexts in which Paul uses it and concludes that a broad definition of a charismatic would be a person who is aware that he or she has received God's gifts. It would follow that a charismatic is a person who believes that God gives gifts to His people, and that these gifts are to be received and used. The term *Charismatic Movement*, according to Burgess & McGee (1988:130), refers to an occurrence of distinctively Pentecostal blessings and phenomena, such as the baptism in the Holy Spirit and accompanying spiritual gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, outside a denominational and/or confessional Pentecostal framework. The term refers to the 'non-denominational' patterns of charismatic Christianity.

The Charismatic Movement is not an organisation and does not have an established structure. The Charismatic Movement refers to groups of people across church boundaries with similar goals stemming from meaningful spiritual experiences.

3.2.2 Historical background

The history of Pentecostalism is also described in terms of 'waves'. The first wave is called 'Old Pentecostalism' or 'Classic Pentecostalism' and refers to the moving of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the twentieth century. The second wave is called the 'New Pentecostalism' or the 'Charismatic Movement', which began in the nineteen fifties in the major denominations. The second wave of the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement had its origins in nineteenth-century Methodism (Pearl & Davies 1980:viii). The third wave is known as the 'Signs and

Wonders' movement or the 'Vineyard' movement, which started in the nineteen eighties, referring to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (Wagner 1983:1-5). Although the third wave is known as the Signs and Wonders Movement its followers still view themselves as charismatics and thus as part of the Charismatic Movement in the broader sense. The Vineyard Movement later became the springboard for the dynamic growth of the Toronto Blessing.

It is also important to note that the Charismatic Movement in general experienced other channels of expression in its spirituality that all had an influence on its theology, teaching and practices. Two of these waves that warrant mentioning are the 'Word of Faith' and the 'Latter Rain or New Prophets' movement. These two will be discussed later (cf.3.3.2). Although different movements, as mentioned, have occurred from the nineteen fifties to date all of them are viewed as part of the broader Charismatic Movement.

3.2.2.1 Classical Pentecostalism

Möller (1983:10) is of the opinion that although certain sporadic and limited incidents similar to those of classical Pentecostalism appeared in church history in the midst of Montanism, among the Anabaptists, and some Huguenots, the roots of classical Pentecostalism are found in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Davis (1978:16) seems to concur and points out that speaking in tongues (glossolalia)¹, a distinguishing feature of classical Pentecostalism, occurred in British circles in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially with the successors of Edward Irving². In

1 The term 'glossolalia' refers to the phenomena found especially in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles when people are spontaneously speaking in other languages (Deist 1984:68). This language is unknown to the user and is also not learned by the user. For this reason it is viewed as a gift of the Holy Spirit. The word glossolalia comes from two Greek words, namely; γλῶσσαι ('tongue' or 'language') and λαλεῖν (to speak) (Möller (1983:89).

2 Edward Irving was a Presbyterian minister who served in London from 1822 till his death in 1834. He could be termed a Pentecostal. During the last five years his doctrinal position was virtually that of the Pentecostal body of today. He believed then that God was restoring the apostolic gifts, especially those of tongues, healing and prophecy. He well deserves to be called the forerunner of the Charismatic movement (Dallimore 1983:ix).

1875 Dwight L Moody had left a group speaking in tongues after preaching at a YMCA meeting in Victoria Hall. Tongues had also occurred during the Welsh revival of 1904, quite independently of Irving and Moody. It was Charles Parham, however, who was the first to give coherence and doctrinal significance to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues in the United States. This first phase of Pentecostalism in the twentieth-century that was started by Parham is called 'classical Pentecostalism' (*ibid.* 1978:17). According to Lovett (1975:126), the early raindrops of 'classical Pentecostalism' fell with the Welsh revival of 1904 and the ministry of Charles Parham. The real downpour, however, came with W.J. Seymore at Azusa Street³. This is described as follows by Synan (1971:108-109):

Men and women would shout, weep, dance, fall into trances, speak and sing in tongues, and interpret the message (in tongues) into English. In true Quaker fashion, anyone who felt 'moved by the spirit' would preach and sing. There was no order of services, but there was an abundance of religious enthusiasm. In the middle of it was 'Elder' Seymore, who rarely preached and much of the time kept his head covered in an empty shoe box behind the pulpit. ... At other times he would 'preach' by hurling defiance at anyone who did not accept his views or by encouraging seekers at the wood plank altars to let the tongues come forth.

Classical Pentecostalism emphasised baptism in the Spirit as a second experience following the conversion experience. Spiritual gifts would in turn follow this second experience. At this time the emphasis was on the gift of tongues and in the first three decades of the twentieth century this gift spread through America, Europe and other parts of the world. It gave rise to Pentecostal

3 At a watch-night service on 31 December 1900, Agnes N. Ozman asked Parham to lay hands on her. It was after midnight that Miss Ozman began speaking in what was then described as the Chinese language. But it was at 312 Azusa Street, in an old, disused, Methodist church building in downtown Los Angeles in 1906, that the watershed of classical Pentecostalism occurred and where the latter rain poured. The old church, where the elder W.J. Seymore preached a Pentecostal message, rapidly became the centre of a phenomenal revival, marked most spectacularly by the event of speaking in other tongues. Soon hundreds, then thousands of people, both curious and serious, began the pilgrimage, which was to last night and day for three years (Davis 1978:15-17; Budgen 1985:184).

churches such as the Assemblies of God, Elim and the Apostolic Church. Although the intention of its leaders was to keep this earlier part of the movement in the historic churches of Christendom, the exuberance of its adherents, coupled with a very critical attitude from more orthodox Church members, resulted, regrettably, in schism⁴.

3.2.2.2 The Charismatic Movement

The second phase of twentieth-century Pentecostalism is known as the 'Charismatic Movement' or even 'neo-Pentecostalism'. The distinctive feature of the Charismatic Movement is that the great majority of its members have remained within the historic churches. It is however also true that there have been fellowships setting up independent churches such as the 'house church', but this situation represents a minority of those involved in the charismatic renewal, albeit a strong and virile one (Peart & Davies 1980:ix). Before the charismatic renewal became a popular slogan, there were signs of new excitement in parts of the North American church. In the 1950's two important men were seen as sowers of the charismatic seed. Demos Shakarian set up a non-denominational Pentecostal style prayer fellowship, known as *The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship*, which lent respectability and financial strength to Pentecostal-style meetings and, by publishing a magazine, ensured that the respectability was put on record. The other sower, David du Plessis, a courageous minister of ecumenism, preached and sowed seeds of the importance of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal experience in every ecclesiastical establishment (Davis 1978:26).

One of the charismatic seeds that was sown bore fruit in the person of Dennis Bennett⁵, an Anglican clergyman, the Episcopal Rector of St. Martin's Church,

4 'Schism' in Roman Catholicism refers to anything that visibly divides Christ's one church. In Protestantism it refers to any division that takes place within a church for reasons not scripturally founded (Deist 1984:150).

5 Bennett was ordained in the Episcopal Church after studying at Chicago. Under the influence of some friends, and particularly another episcopal priest, Frank Maguire, Bennett

Van Nuys, California, who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (*ibid.* 1978:26). From the time of Bennett's experience and his proclamation of it to the church and the world the Charismatic Movement gathered momentum, and radical growth was experienced. As Albrecht (1999:37) puts it:

The earlier charismatic breezes gathered energy for full-force winds and by the early 1960s these winds had crossed nearly all Protestant denominational boundaries, affecting virtually every major Protestant tradition. Mixed response came through official denominational channels. It however did not stop the force of the Charismatic Movement and by the end of the decade nearly every one of the main Protestant denominations included a sizeable Charismatic constituency.

The adoption of Pentecostal techniques by Roman Catholics originated under the direct influence of Protestant Pentecostals and subsequently spread through clearly defined, preexisting sociometric[social] networks (Ranaghan & Ranaghan 1969; O'Connor 1971). The charismatic renewal came to the Catholic Church in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)⁶. The Catholic Charismatic Movement started officially in 1967 in two Catholic universities, Duquesne⁷ and

consciously received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in November 1959. The manifestations of Pentecostal-type Christianity outside the confessional Pentecostal framework burst onto the ecclesiastical terrain when in 1960, Dennis Bennett proclaimed to his congregation and the world that he had been baptised by the Spirit (Albrecht 1999:36). His renewal ministry quickly affected the church of Van Nuys, but it was also divided. Bennett subsequently resigned from the Van Nuys Church in April 1960, but did not leave the Episcopal ministry. In July 1960, Bennett was appointed to St Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle where he ministered to a dramatically revived church with a thriving ministry. Bennett's experience gave some kind of recognition and cohesion to what had been happening in isolated, often unreported incidents. He soon had national status and became an important element in the growth of the charismatic renewal (Davis 1978:26).

6 Abbott, W.M., S.J. (ed.) 1966. *The documents of Vatican II*. London-Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman.

7 A small number of lay faculty at Duquesne University in 1967 had been earnestly and intensely praying for a return to the type of Christian community and vitality akin to that described in the Bible as characteristics of the First Christians. During this period they were also introduced to two books: *The Cross and the Switchblade* (Wilkerson 1964) and *They Speak in other Tongues* (Sherrill 1965). The former book describes an Evangelical Protestant minister's adventures working with a gang of youths in New York City. A number of miracles are described in the book and are attributed to the Holy Spirit. The latter book deals with one man's experience in finding Christ in a more intense way through Pentecostalism. The theme of the book is that God is not to be found through logic or

Notre Dame, and spread across the nation (Bord & Faulkner 1983:i). Catholic Pentecostalism, as it was first named, did not only affect its own church but also impacted greatly on the Charismatic Movement as a whole. The Catholic contingent rapidly expanded and challenged others to share their charismatic experience actively in their own traditions (Albrecht 1999:38).

During the late 1960s and the 1970s a dramatic increase in non-denominational, Charismatic churches and organisations occurred. Many of the present day mega churches in the United States developed during this era. By the beginning of the 1980s, much of the Charismatic renewal had moved into the American religious mainstream. Unlike Classical Pentecostalism, the Renewal movement (Charismatic Movement) did not split off from mainstream churches, but remained within them as a springboard for change. The Charismatic Renewal expressed many of the increasingly inwardly-oriented, counter-cultural values of the late 1960s, including a thirst for authentic experience and supra-rational illumination, not tied to out-dated dogmas and centred in the spontaneity of the present moment (Richter 1996:104).

The momentum of the movement continued to forge new channels of expression through the years to follow. Many of these expressions emerged outside of the traditional denominational frameworks and the established charismatic patterns. One such expression is called the 'Signs and Wonders Movement' (Albrecht 1999:39), which provided the launching pad for the Toronto Blessing to really take off.

exercise of the intellect but through a 'leap of faith', a renunciation of self in favour of something greater. With a strengthened conviction and a working knowledge of Pentecostal orientation and techniques, these lay faculty members sought out Protestant Pentecostals, and two of them were subsequently baptized in the Holy Spirit. These two in turn laid hands on two others that were also baptized in the Holy Spirit. Shortly after their experience these four faculty members met with approximately thirty students on a religious retreat at Duquesne University. These students had also read the book *The Cross and the Switchblade* and were there to seek the will of Christ in their lives. From this nucleus of individuals the movement spread initially throughout college campuses in the Midwest: Notre Dame, Michigan State, and Iowa State in particular. From these institutions it diffused to other parts of the United States. Prayer groups sprouted throughout the United States, resulting in the emerging of a number of Catholic Charismatic communities and headquarters (Bord & Faulkner 1983:10-11).

3.2.2.3 Third Wave - Signs and Wonders Movement

Albrecht (1999:60) points out that if the Signs and Wonders Movement claims a founder, John Wimber⁸ deserves the appellation. Sarles (1988:57) describes the

8 Wimber pastored the thousands who attended the Anaheim Vineyard Christian Fellowship Church, a Signs and Wonders church, from 1977 to 1994. The Vineyard Christian Fellowship appeared on the American religious scene in the 1980's. To gain a real understanding of The Vineyard spirituality it is important to consider John Wimber's life and ministry. John Wimber was a successful rock/jazz musician, composer and record producer. On the other hand, however, his personal life was not so successful and spiralled into despair. He converted to Christianity in 1962 (Wimber & Springer 1986:xv). At that stage Wimber himself admitted that he knew very little about God or religion though he was increasingly focused on religious issues. He became involved in evangelism and started to testify about his conversion to anyone who would listen. Both John Wimber and his wife Carol, who was also converted, enthusiastically told friends of their newfound freedom from guilt and fear of death and their new purpose for living (Wimber & Springer 1986:vx). Wimber even took this a step further and enrolled in a Bible college associated with the Evangelical Friends and studied sociology and theology. In 1970 Wimber accepted the pastorate of a Quaker church in Yorba Linda, California. According to Coggins & Hiebert (1989:15), Wimber left the church disillusioned in 1975 despite apparent success. The reason for this in Wimber's own words, 'I began to lose the kind of joy and peace that I thought would accompany success. I was dissatisfied with my life and did not understand why. It was a disquieting and confusing time' (1987:59). Because of Wimber's previous success he became a consultant for the Southern California Fuller Evangelistic Association. He visited hundreds of churches in the United States, looking for a church growth formula. Wimber only found churches operating on programmes and efforts characterised by a lot of action, but void of the authentic work of the Holy Spirit (Stafford 1986:19). Up to this stage Wimber had not been in favour of the practices of the Pentecostals and Charismatics because he believed that controversy and division often surrounded their ministries. Furthermore he believed that charismatic gifts like tongues, prophecy, and healing were not for today and ceased at the end of the first century (Wimber & Springer 1986: xix).

Wimber however made contact with Fuller Seminary's church growth expert, C. Peter Wagner. Wagner's writings changed Wimber's viewpoint towards the Pentecostals and charismatics. It was Wagner's documented cases of healing and deliverance from evil spirits in South America that changed Wimber's position on the charismatic gifts. A combination of books which he read on the Pentecostal and charismatic phenomena, and his own re-reading of the New Testament in the light of Pentecostal witnesses, contributed to Wimber's re-evaluation of the charismata (Wimber & Springer 1986:xix).

The watershed event in Wimber's exploration, however, occurred in 1977. His wife Carol experienced a dramatic healing. Furthermore while asleep, she dreamed that she was filled with the Holy Spirit. When she awoke, she was speaking in tongues. Carol's healing and glossolalic experience melted John's scepticism (Wimber 1987:31). John Wimber still travelled as a consultant and his wife, Carol, started a Bible study group that grew to 50 members. In 1977 John Wimber started to pastor the Bible study group with which Carol had started and soon resigned his position as a church growth consultant. The church meetings started off in a high school gymnasium. Wimber started to preach from the Gospel of Luke, and was struck by the many healings and exorcisms Jesus did. In faith he also made altar calls for healings and although the church prayed for healings nothing happened. Many people left the church in disgust. Wimber did not give up and steadfastly continued and eventually after ten months a woman was healed of fever (Stafford 1986:19). Soon after the first healing the congregation experienced more healings and manifestations. The church exploded and multiplied into a movement of signs and wonders. In the first ten years the church grew to 6000 (Wimber & Springer 1986:x). A large number of non-Christians were attracted and converted to Christianity and the emerging Vineyard spirituality. The first church called itself Calvary Chapel - Yorba Linda, but changed its name to Vineyard in 1982.

Signs and Wonders Movement as '... a blending of evangelical commitments and charismatic practices. Those associated with this recent trend affirm the continuation of all the miraculous gifts mentioned in the New Testament and yet refuse to be labelled Pentecostals or Charismatics.'

The Vineyard churches can be thought of as a subset of the Signs and Wonders Movement. Some authors employ the terms synonymously. The Toronto Blessing is also associated with the Vineyard churches.⁹

The Vineyard congregations portray the following distinguishing characteristics, which are important to mention seeing that they have influenced the spirituality of the Toronto Blessing:

- *Worship.* The typical Vineyard worship bears the marks of Pentecostal/Charismatic worship. Phenomena such as expressive and sometimes ecstatic praise - glossolalia, prophecy, words of knowledge, prayer for healing and lengthy sermons represent similar components. Vineyard worship differs from Pentecostal worship, however, in the sense that members of Vineyard ministries have composed many of the songs used in the worship service. The Vineyard worship service has its own flavour in that it is loaded with excitement and high expectancy. They also tend to be more relaxed, 'hip', even 'laid back'. The Vineyard style seeks and attracts the youth. The typical Vineyard service reflects the traditional Pentecostal/Charismatic service 'made over' for the 1900's and beyond (Albrecht 1999:65).

Three years later the church relocated to Anaheim. By that time the church had 5000 members and some 120 Vineyards had emerged. These Vineyard congregations had existed as independent churches prior to affiliating with Wimber. Other churches dropped out of denominations and joined the Vineyard Fellowship (Coggins & Hiebert 1989:19). John Wimber once again became a consultant: this time he spoke to churches about the work of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's charisms (gifts) in the church life and growth (Albrecht 1999:64).

⁹ The so-called 'Toronto Blessing' phenomena emerged in the early 1990's in a vineyard church in Toronto (Sarles 1988:57). The Toronto Blessing will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

- *Concept of power.* The concept of power claims a central place in the Vineyard church's vocabulary, theology and experience. Spiritual power is normally linked to Spirit Baptism but in the Vineyard churches the view of this linkage is looser. The view of Spirit baptism varies within the Signs and Wonders churches, but Vineyard teaching often suggests that baptism in the Spirit is part of an evangelical conversion. In some Vineyards the category of Spirit baptism receives little attention at all (Albrecht 1999:65). Power in Vineyard is emphasised above all other teachings. Vineyard vocabulary demonstrates the point through terms such as 'power evangelism', 'power healing' and 'power encounters'. The Vineyard understanding of power is rooted in Wimber's concept of the kingdom of God. Wimber was convinced, through research into the New Testament and the writings of the theologian George Eldon Ladd, that the kingdom of God manifests itself as an invasive force. The thrust of the kingdom appeared in Jesus' preaching as well as his actions. Wimber was convinced that the kingdom of God must not only be presented in the church's preaching but also in demonstrative deeds. Works of healing and exorcism accompanied the preaching of Jesus. These actions demonstrated the power of God's kingdom over Satan's kingdom. It was Jesus' commission to his followers to do what he did that brought the final conviction to Wimber that the gospel should be demonstrative of the power of God (Stafford 1986:18). History of missions, more than once according to Wagner, portrays examples of missionaries who converted animistic peoples through power encounters¹⁰. Wimber extended the concept of 'power encounter' to include situations where the kingdom of God is preached. Signs and wonders will mark the preaching as they did in Jesus's time (Albrecht 1999:67).

10 Because of the complexity of missions created by the difference in culture, beliefs, and worldviews it is believed by Wimber & Springer (1987) that a powerful way to demonstrate the God of Christianity is by means of power evangelism. Power evangelism refers to miraculous events of healing and other manifestations. This of course is a valid viewpoint but it could also border on a reliance on superficial manifestations in order to convince people. Furthermore such an approach could easily replace faith by a chasing after for miracles or the supernatural, neglecting the proclamation of the true gospel.

Divine healing and word of knowledge. As is the case in traditional Pentecostal churches, Vineyard churches carry on the tradition, though adjusted. Prayers in the Vineyard churches create a high level of expectancy, which is believed to create an opportunity for the manifestation of supernatural power. Teachings of the Vineyard churches give a place to modern medicine and counselling but focus on divine healing as a sign of God's intervention, a sign of God's power, the only true cure for human needs. The charismatic gift, known as the word of knowledge, sometimes operates with divine healing. The word of knowledge is believed to bring discernment and insight, which helps to direct the prayer session. The word of knowledge, perceived to be supernatural in its source, can be shared with the one in need. Wimber is of the opinion that such knowledge comes during particular moments, called 'divine appointments'. God arranges these appointments with the aim of demonstrating his kingdom (Wimber & Springer 1986:51). The word of knowledge also has another very important role. The word of knowledge is given to a believer to share it with a particular person. The astonishing, supernatural nature of the message more easily penetrates the person's defences by creating the impression that he or she is special because of God's intervention in their lives. This perception of feeling special and being chosen often opens them up to the gospel (Stafford 1986:21).

3.2.3 Theological understanding of the Charismatic Movement

There are some theological perceptions that are prevalent among charismatics which give the movement a more limited definition. By stating the following theological perceptions the author by no means implies that there is an official position or doctrine of the Charismatic Movement. The theology of the Charismatic Movement refers to the ideas that are prevalent amongst charismatics, as found in their writings and in their fellowship (Buskey 1978:12).

The aim of this section is not to give an extensive discussion of the theological perceptions of the Charismatic Movement, but rather to give an overview of certain aspects in their theological perceptions that have a bearing on this study. This will lead to a clearer understanding of their views on certain aspects such as 'supernatural phenomena' and 'the work of the Holy Spirit', which will in turn shed more light on the Toronto Blessing phenomenon.

3.2.3.1 Bible as the final authority

The Bible is seen as 'the Word', which symbolises the belief that 'God speaks today', as in the past, that is that God speaks to God's people even as God spoke in the biblical days. The Bible speaks to contemporary needs, sometimes in an overly simplistic interpretation, but always relevant for 'the now' (Albrecht 1999:229). Charismatics tend to accept *the Bible as the final authority*. Logan (1975:34) confirms this viewpoint, 'The new charismatics are, nevertheless, one with the older forms of Pentecostalism in appealing to Holy Scripture as their authority, particularly emphasising the Acts of the Apostles as the normative pattern for the church.' They view their experience as a revival of Biblical Christianity (*ibid.* 1975:34). This viewpoint does not imply that all charismatics are fundamentalists. People in the Charismatic Movement are from various backgrounds, with different ideas concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures. A factor of commonality, however, is the confidence that the Scriptures are authoritative and provide a platform on which to base and judge faith, practice and spiritual experience (*ibid.* 1978:13). The Bible is the prime source of authority for doctrine and practice among charismatics. The message of the Bible is authoritative, rather than a particular view or doctrine of inspiration.

It seems, though, that in spite of the fact that the charismatics place large emphasis on the 'Bible as the final authority', their approach to the Bible in some cases clearly illustrates a lack in interpretation, which could lead to the creation of their own doctrines. Charismatics tend to base much of their teaching on very poor principles of hermeneutics (McArthur 1992:101). Fee (1976:119-121), a

Pentecostal himself, believes that apart from the missionary enthusiasm and life in the Spirit that the Pentecostals have brought to the church they are at the same time noted for weak hermeneutics. Fee is of the opinion that a reason for this is that the Pentecostals' experience has preceded their hermeneutics. In a sense, the Pentecostals tend to exegete their individual experience¹¹.

Complaints by proponents of the Charismatic Movement that theological traditions will put God in a 'Box', in other words limit the work of God through his Spirit, can indeed send a signal that doctrine hinders the freedom of the Spirit (Beverley 1995:75). According to Wright (1996:147), this idea that evangelical theology is a straitjacket that limits God pervades the whole Charismatic Movement. A further problem with this idea is that it creates not only freedom for the Spirit but also a fluid approach to doctrine which gives flexibility to the development of views on healing, prophecy, and miracles based on experience (Wright 1996:148). 'Wimber and the Vineyard churches are forging a new vocabulary, adjusting theological concepts (categories) and developing their own style' (Albrecht 1999:64). According to Wright (1996:148) Wimber and the Vineyard churches are cataloguing all of their spiritual experiences in order to develop a theology.

Certain claims are made against the interpretation of Scripture by some charismatics¹². McArthur (1992:103) puts this clearly: 'The task of hermeneutics is to discover the meaning of the text in its proper setting; draw meaning from Scripture rather than reading one's presuppositions into it.' Wright (1996:319) describes the use of the Scriptures thus: 'Instead of emphasizing the transformation and development of the mental capacities through a passionate

11 The practice that Fee refers to occurs when a person attempts to give credibility to his or her experience either by describing it as biblical, through improper use of bible verses, or by justifying the experience as above reproach and evaluation because of its supernatural nature.

12 From my own experience of being in charismatic circles for six years I must agree that in many instances Scripture was indeed interpreted to serve and sanction certain experiences as experiences from God. In the process a lack of proper interpretation was evident. Unfortunately many charismatics are not aware of proper principles of interpretation and believe what they are told by the 'leader' without questioning.

approach to the Scriptures, followers are exhorted to empty their minds, to become open to the irrational and to stop worrying about reason and logic.' This kind of interpretation of Scripture shows the characteristic anti-intellectualism that already alerts one to the possible understandings, interpretations and evaluations of a phenomenon such as the Toronto Blessing.

3.2.3.2 Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The phrase 'Baptism in the Spirit' or 'Baptism of the Spirit' is a phrase not found in the Bible. It is probably derived from its biblical verbal form 'baptise' ... with the Holy Spirit' according to Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8 and Luke 3:16 (Peart & Davies 1980:vii). Hamilton (1975:7) defines the Charismatic Movement as comprised of 'Those who have experienced a "baptism of the Holy Spirit" that involves receiving certain spiritual gifts.' Two aspects appear in the forefront, namely the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' and 'receiving of spiritual gifts'. What is meant by the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'? Basham (1973:59), a noted charismatic, answers the question as follows: 'The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second encounter with God (the first is conversion), in which a Christian begins to receive the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit into his life'. Bruner (1970:61) also points out that: 'The most important characteristics of the Pentecostal understanding of the baptism in the Holy Spirit ... are: (1) that the event is usually "distinct from and subsequent to" the new birth; (2) that it is evidenced initially by the sign of speaking in other tongues; (3) that it must be "earnestly" sought'.

Jesus promised this power to his disciples when He said, 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8). The second experience of the power of God, which we call the baptism of the Holy Spirit (following the first experience of conversion), is given for the purpose of equipping Christians with God's power for service. It is the spiritual baptism

from Jesus Himself, in which he begins to exercise His sovereign possession, control and use of us in a supernatural fashion through the Holy Spirit.

Some of the other key Scriptures that are used by the Pentecostals/Charismatic Movement to confirm the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' as a second encounter with God are:

- Acts 8:4-6; 14-17. Peter and John went to Samaria to believers who had received the word of God and 'laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit'.
- Acts 10:2. The record of Cornelius, 'a devout man who feared God' with all his household, who also received the Holy Spirit after they believed Peter's preaching (Acts 10:44-45). The evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was seen in the fact that 'they heard them speaking in tongues extolling God' (Acts 10:45).
- In Acts 19:2. Paul asked the disciples at Ephesus: 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' Paul laid hands on them and 'the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied' (Acts 19:6).
- Paul in his letter to the Corinthians writes, 'I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all' (1 Cor. 14:18). Although there is no mention of tongues in the narrative of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-7), this verse is used by Charismatics to conclude that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is described by the outward expression of the ecstatic speaking of a language which a person has never learned.

It is clear from the abovementioned scriptures that the emphasis is on the evidence of the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit', namely 'speaking in other tongues' or 'glossolalia'. Jorstad (1973:22) however points out that the public speaking in tongues, as an evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is with some exceptions not required by most charismatics. Walsh (1975:43) confirms this viewpoint by stating that Catholics have never demanded 'praying in tongues' as a sign of the reception of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, even though most, in

practice, do yield to tongues at this time. 'Praying in tongues should not be seen as the exclusive and universal sign of this internal release' (*Ibid.* 1975:43). The charismatics, then, unlike the Pentecostals, view speaking in tongues as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit and as an important gift for the believer, but not as the exclusive evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The importance of the Holy Spirit is emphasised by Jordstad (1973:61), who points out that Jesus considered the baptism of the Holy Spirit as so important that he forbade his disciples to begin their ministry until they had received the baptism. He comments on the relevance of the baptism in the Holy Spirit as follows, 'It is only through this heavenly gift empowering us, guiding us, transforming us that we have immediate union with the glorified Jesus and are given power to do His work and His will and to grow up into His likeness' (*Ibid.*: 1973:61).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit forms the heart of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement alike (Peart & Davies 1980:vii). It is the intense experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit, or of awakening to a new life through the transforming power of the baptism in the Spirit, that seems to find a central place in the Charismatic theology (Logan 1975:37). Among charismatics the emphasis is not so much on the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' as a second encounter with God but rather on the availability of God's power and blessing through the Holy Spirit (Logan 1975:20). It seems that much more emphasis is placed on the power that is conveyed with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Charismatic Movement.

The experience of mystery has always been a potent factor in Christian experience. McDonnell (1970:133) views this experience of mystery (baptism of the Holy Spirit) as inescapably tied to the dialectic of transcendence/immanence. Where this dialectic is broken, with radical emphasis upon either transcendence or immanence, the mystery is destroyed. The Pentecostal/charismatic experience is an attempt to restore the sense of mystery lacking in so much of

contemporary experience. For this reason Logan (1975:37) believes that Pentecostals/charismatics have resisted any attempt to deny the autonomy of this experience. They insist on the autonomy and integrity of the experience of the Holy Spirit. However, the uses to which such an autonomous experience can be put raise concerns in Logan's mind. He is of the opinion that critical questions must be asked regarding the use of the experience, for the benefit for both Pentecostal/charismatic and non-Pentecostal/charismatic¹³.

Adding his voice to that of Logan is O'Connor (1971:225), a Catholic Pentecostal, who warns that such strong emphasis on experience could lead to the vulnerability of charismatic Christians to certain interpretations. He uses the term *Charismania* to describe a preoccupation or fixation with *charismata* – the gifts of the Spirit. The power of the subjective experience can become an end in itself. Having the Spirit is having the experience. O'Connor (1971:226) attributes the propensity for 'feeling' to the condition of the times. In the modern culture reality is reduced to neat, manageable formulas. The church also rationalises its worship, even its broader life, to the unhappiness of many that complain of its sterility. The charismatics sense this loss of mystery and of the personal experience in both church and society. *Charismania* measures spirituality in terms of the number and spectacular intensity of experiences. It has the tendency to play down the rational and intellectual capacities of man. The rational faculties are often viewed as of a lower order than the affective faculties. An imbalance occurs in the spiritual life because of *charismania* (Logan 1975:38).

Important to remember is the power of discernment that was extolled by Paul as a charism also. Logan (1975:38) points out that any deep experience is always confronted with the danger of anti-intellectualism in the name of a deepened

13 The difference between Pentecostal/charismatic Christians and non-Pentecostal/charismatic Christians is mainly found in their different views on the manifestation and gifts of the Holy Spirit. For the Pentecostals/charismatics the working of the Holy Spirit is an important part of their spirituality. For the many non-Pentecostals/charismatics the supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit is not viewed as part of the spirituality of modern Christianity.

emphasis on experience. An experience not understood in terms of a sound historical and theological understanding could lead to extravagant and distorted interpretation. Logan (1975:39) concludes by saying that the experience in itself is not critiqued. Criticism is, rather, aimed at the usage of the experience. Charismania fails to appreciate the full power of God that aims to inspire the complete person, who comprises rational mind and ethical will as well as feeling heart. I concur with the statement of Logan (1975) and would like to add that this viewpoint in my mind does not imply that a Christian could not have an encounter with the Holy Spirit. It rather cautions Christians to sift carefully through experiences that are presented as 'Holy Spirit' experiences in order to ensure an authentic experience and relationship with God.

Another interesting viewpoint concerning tongues and the manner in which the gift is received. Budgen (1985:64) points out that the gift of tongues was only twice received directly in Acts 2 and 10. At other times it was received by the laying on of hands by the Apostles. The possible procedure as to how to receive the gift through the laying on of hands is however not mentioned. The build-up of expectancy and emotional preparation as means to receive the Holy Spirit cannot be excluded. It must be noted that emotions do play an important role in receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I hasten to say that not all Pentecostals/charismatics have received their experience in an emotional gathering. However, certain emotionally driven meetings do exist in Pentecostal/charismatic circles. One such meeting is called a 'waiting-meeting' (Budgen 1985:64). The aim of this meeting is to wait upon the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as the disciples did as described in the book of Acts. These meetings¹⁴ in some churches are normally conducted round the time of

14 I have experienced these meetings myself many times. The leader in many cases would walk up and down along the rows of candidates urging them to open their mouths and almost forcing them to speak in tongues. It seemed to me in many cases that the emphasis was more on the speaking of tongues than on receiving the gift. The following questions arise: Can the baptism in the Holy Spirit only be received at a certain time of the year or at a particular time in the church calendar? What is the real aim of these 'waiting meetings'? Is it a manipulative effort in order to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit? I am of the opinion that since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a continuous process, God willing, the baptism in the Holy Spirit can happen at any time without any human intervention and does not conform to a certain format with particular results.

Pentecost. The time of Pentecost is also viewed as the time for the gift of the Holy Spirit, in some cases the only time in the year.

Another important aspect of these meetings is found in the instructions and guidelines that are often issued (Budgen 1985:65). These instructions include the assurance that anyone who is saved is a candidate to receive this gift. The candidate is also prepared to expect that when the leader lays hands on him or her, the gift will be imparted. Furthermore, the candidate is told to expect the Holy Spirit to move on his or her vocal cords but that he or she must also cooperate with the experience. The candidate is encouraged to eliminate all fear, or otherwise the experience is not authentic. Many charismatics are even told that they must purposefully switch off their minds to enable the gift to function (McArthur 1992:271). The candidate is then requested to open his/her mouth widely, to breathe as deeply as possible as a sign of belief, and at the same time he or she is told that they are receiving the Holy Spirit now. One booklet guides the candidate as follows,

In order to speak in tongues, you have to quit praying in English. After you have come to the Lord with your prayers and petitions in English, you simply lapse into silence and resolve to speak not a syllable of any language you have ever learned. Your thoughts are focussed on Christ. And then you simply lift your voice and speak out confidently, in the faith that the Lord will take the sound you give Him, and shape it into a language. You take no thought of what you are saying as far as you are concerned it is just a series of sounds. The first sounds will sound strange and unnatural to your ear, and they may be halting and inarticulate. You may even have the thought that you are making it up. But as you continue to speak, and the lips and tongue begin to move more freely, the Spirit will begin to shape a beautiful language of prayer and praise (Christenson 1970:20).

Hagin (1982) guides believers who desire to receive the Holy Spirit along similar lines. For Budgen (1985:66) the abovementioned quotation by Christenson (1970) does not portray the actual gift of the Holy Spirit as experienced by the disciples on the day of Pentecost. There is no mention of the person co-operating, instigating – still less manipulating. Furthermore human thoughts were not put aside and no sounds were made as a 'venture of faith' (Budgen 1985:66).

The question could be asked then, is this speaking in tongues a psychological experience, in other words is it brought about by human efforts? A charismatic commentator writing on 1 Corinthians 12-14 makes an interesting comment, 'Experience seems to prove that the majority of those who reach out simply to God, do receive the gift of speaking in another language. Psychologically the only explanation that satisfies me is the fact that this is a potential capacity, dormant in most people, awakened in the Christian by the Holy Spirit and filled with meaning' (Bittlinger 1967:102). Budgen (1985:66) seems to agree that the gift of the Holy Spirit is rather to be viewed as 'a potential capacity' dormant in most people. It is not from God but it is psychological, from within the human being. A question that could be asked, is whether God is excluded from the psychological aspects of a human being? Is God not involved in the 'psyche' of the human being? In the oldest and most general use 'psyche' means 'soul' or the very 'essence of life', or more conventionally the meaning is limited to 'mind' (Reber & Reber 2001:577). I believe that God is active in the human being as a whole. The explanation by authors such as Bittlinger (1967) and Budgen (1985), referring to a 'dormant capacity' in most human beings, is acceptable also, taking into consideration that other agents or stimuli such as yoga or bodily conditions such as fasting and food deprivation are also believed to 'awaken' the dormant capacity in human beings and to bring forth similar experiences as are associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Kildahl (1972: 40), who investigated the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, came to interesting conclusions. In his view research has proven that

glossolalists are more submissive, suggestible and dependent in the presence of authority figures than non-tongue-speakers. For Kildahl this is an important point, seeing that a person needs to follow the suggestions made by a so-called 'leader' in order to be hypnotised. Research also shows that tongue speakers think about some benevolent authority person when they began to speak in tongues (*Ibid.* 1972:40). Kildahl (1972:54) is also of the opinion that if a person can be hypnotised, he or she will be able under proper conditions to learn to speak in tongues. He is furthermore certain that those who have the necessary psychological characteristics can learn to speak in tongues. This gives rise to the question: if it is truly a gift of the Holy Spirit, why must it be demonstrated and taught? The same routine is observed everywhere; namely a meeting devoted to intense concentration on tongue speaking, followed by an atmosphere of heightened suggestibility to the words of the tongue-speaking leader. Finally the initiate is able to make the sounds he or she is instructed to make. It is the same procedure that a competent hypnotist employs. Kildahl (1972:74) concludes, 'tongue speaking is a learned phenomenon'.

Ford (1975:116), on the other hand, takes a more cautious position regarding the gift of the Holy Spirit. She distinguishes between the genuine gift of tongues and 'induced tongues'. She believes that genuine tongues are received without human intervention. She clarifies this point by saying that gifts are only given when God sees a need. It is thus not in the power of the pastor or preacher to decide when to give a gift to anybody. Those people who have received them should use them in the liturgy under the guidance of the pastor in order to ensure that they are used in such a manner that they harmonize with the service. The moment the gift of tongues is created by human effort it becomes 'induced tongues'. The 'induced tongues' are an imitation of the genuine and people should refrain from techniques which have as their goal making people to yield to tongues.

According to Ford (1975:117) these practices of inducing the gift of tongues lead to 'divisiveness, dependence on authority figures, retrogression of the ego,

histrionic display and group camaraderie.' McArthur (1992:282) believes that tongues, as propagated by the Charismatics, ceased in the apostolic age. He continues by saying that the contemporary Charismatic Movement does not represent a revival of biblical tongues. It is, rather, an aberration similar to the practice of counterfeit tongues at the church of Corinthians. Tongues as evidence of the baptism in the Spirit appeared in Acts 2, 10 and 19 but there is no record of tongues in chapter 8. If tongues were to be a normal experience, why were tongues not mentioned in Acts 8 when the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit? Why does the text in Acts 2 to 4 not say that everyone who believed following Peter's sermons and who received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) also spoke in tongues? For something to be normative, it has to be common to everybody (McArthur 1992:212).

Different viewpoints on the authenticity of tongues (glossolalia) exist. It is my contention that each viewpoint has valuable arguments. I however believe that although tongues cannot be viewed as exclusive evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, tongues can occur today, but then rather in the context of Acts 2 as known languages, languages of other people. Ecstatic languages are found in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. The occurrence of ecstatic languages, understood in the context of these two chapters, however cannot be denied but seem to be less important than the proclamation of the gospel. The purpose of this ecstatic language according to Acts 2:11 and 1Cor 14:1 is for believers to better their heartfelt devotion to God. Many Pentecostals/charismatics believe that the gift of tongues that they received is to be used regularly. But the gift of tongues should never be placed above the preaching of the gospel. Furthermore, through the use of emotional and psychological techniques such as suggestion, an expectancy can be created which could in turn result in speaking tongues. Hypnosis can also be employed to induce tongues. It is also possible to manufacture so called 'humanly induced' tongues.

The phenomenon of tongues has been dealt with in detail because it is one of the most visible aspects within the Charismatic Movement.

3.2.3.3 Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In charismatic circles 'the gifts of the Holy Spirit' continue to function and they distinguish charismatic ritual from other Christian liturgies and also serve as a trademark of the overall spirituality (Albrecht 1999:231). Charismatic Christians emphasise the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4). Charismatic Christians believe that the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' is confirmed by the speaking with other languages and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Logan 1975:35). The spiritual gifts symbolise the relationship between God and human in the spirit-filled body of Christ. They symbolise, as actions involving the yielding or surrender of the spirit to God, the revelatory and soteriological activity of God working in and through believing human persons (Hocken 1986:172).

Although there are a variety of spiritual gifts only the gift of prophecy will be discussed briefly, seeing that it is relevant for this study. Prophecy is a very important gift in the Charismatic Movement because it is viewed as the ability to hear from God and the ability to speak forth in God's name. Many charismatics believe that God still reveals himself to his church. A very important way in which God is revealed is through prophecies. Members of the church normally convey these prophecies, and they form part of the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12. The 'prophet', the person who speaks for God, is first a seer. He or she has to see and hear before he or she can speak (Hocken 1986:172). These prophecies are interpreted as 'words from God to his people'. Prophecy is not seen as a means of foretelling or predicting the future, but as telling of God's promise of love and concern for his people. Bennett (1975:17) explains prophecy as follows: 'it has been variously and confusingly identified with preaching and witnessing, and certainly these activities may involve prophecy, but as it is being experienced again in the church it simply means that the indwelling Spirit of God can inspire the believer to deliver words from God to his people. 'Thus saith the Lord' is still the key phrase to prophecy.

Much emphasis is placed on the ability to hear God's word for contemporary times. The danger of this viewpoint is that charismatics may believe that prophecy has taken the place of Scripture in modern times. God continues to speak to his people through prophecy. This practice or belief creates a kind of 'supernaturalism'. The 'prophet' in the Charismatic Movement is seen as an instrument of divine revelation and an autonomous sanctioning is almost accorded to this position. This viewpoint in turn threatens any critique from church members, as it may be viewed as rebellion against God.

McArthur (1992:82) elaborates on the danger of such a viewpoint: 'by implication the so-called prophet is the mouthpiece for God's own words, and as a result every prophetic revelation will be as true, reliable, and inerrant as Scripture itself. Even if the prophecy is not corresponding with the continuous thread of the Bible it will still be accepted on the grounds of the Godly sanctioning of the 'prophet'.

Prophecy has a very important place in the theology of the charismatics. Many so-called prophets are found in charismatic circles. Randles (1994:9) points out that 'There is a wide range of the 'prophetic' and it is being taken up seriously by many within the Pentecostal and even Evangelical world.' These prophets are no longer confined to the margins of popular Christian experience either; they are in influential positions. Proponents for the office of modern prophets counteract the doctrine that the office of the prophet ceased at the end of the apostolic age by a claim that God has restored the office of the apostle and prophet¹⁵ in modern times (Wright 1996:276). Randles (1994:7) refers to a prophecy¹⁶ that announced a new generation of prophets, that would release prophecy on the

15 A certain 'prophet' by the name of Paul Cain is an example of such a prophet. He not only functions in the office of a prophet who receives prophetic revelation, but he also has a divine line of authority (Wright 1996:276). The 'divine line of authority' refers to the ability to hear directly from God in a sense displaying an uniqueness because of the office of a 'prophet'. Because the prophet hears from God directly he/she almost has an open line to God and that makes him or her an authority.

16 The Sweetwater Church of the Valley published the prophecy in *Life for all Nations*, October 7, 1994. Pastor Glenn Forster delivered the prophecy, which predicted the coming of a whole new generation of prophets that would release prophecy on the church as never before. These prophets would reveal a secret plan of God to restore his church and at the same time cause false religion to 'dry up'.

church as never seen before. In this prophecy it is also clearly said that God has a secret plan that will be unfolded by the prophets. Randles (1994:49) states that prophetic ministries¹⁷ have heavily influenced the Toronto Blessing.

This kind of supernaturalism opens up the door to practices, preaching and teachings which are based on so called 'prophecies' viewed as the 'word of God', while instead they may be nothing more than the desires and will of a human being. Realising this danger, many traditional Pentecostals reacted with alarm to the claims of modern 'prophets'. Wright (1996:277) refers to a Dr Carlson, the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, who said that 'Arbitrary and absolute direction by a prophetic gift is not in accordance with the New Testament teaching ...'.

3.2.3.4 Signs and Wonders

The early Christian church, as described in Acts, serves as the foundation for the charismatics' emphasis on 'Signs and Wonders'. After Peter preached a mighty gospel sermon we are told that 'Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostle' (Acts 2:34). Other scriptures confirm this: 'The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people' (Acts 5:12). 'The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them' (Acts 15:12). 'Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done – by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit' (Rom. 15:17-19). 'The things that mark

17 The Toronto Blessing is believed to be a fulfilment of prophecies given by Yonggi Cho, the world famous pastor of the world's largest Christian church in South Korea. Dr Cho prophesied in Toronto in 1984 that a revival would come to Canada and from there go to the four corners of the world, paving the way for the second coming of Christ (Wright 1996:268). The Toronto Blessing is also seen by many as the direct fulfilment of the prophecies of Paul Cain and Bob Jones.

an apostle - signs, wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance' (2 Cor. 12:12). There are three aspects to these signs, namely, healings, miracles and the ability to confer gifts on others by 'laying on of hands' (Budgen 1985:99). Charismatics aggressively pursue ecstatic experience, mystical phenomena, miraculous powers and supernatural wonders (McArthur 1992:157). Charismatics view Christianity without the miraculous as impotent, adulterated by the Western, materialistic mindset. As is the case with the Third Wave, charismatics believe that unbelievers must experience the miraculous to be brought to full faith. Merely preaching the gospel message, they believe, will never reach the world for Christ. Wimber (1987:17) cites Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel as a classic example of a 'power encounter' where the power of God vanquishes the power of evil.

This view of the role that the church plays amongst charismatics explains the desire and search for the miraculous. It is not only viewed as a characteristic of the church but also as a necessary component in order to be successful in the spreading of the gospel message. The message alone is not sufficient; it needs to be confirmed by God through signs and powerful revelation (Mark. 16:19).

Two important aspects of 'Signs and Wonders' are healings and miracles, which will be discussed briefly.

Healings. There were remarkable healings in the early church, for example the healing of the cripple at the gate called Beautiful (Acts 3:8). People were healed by the shadow and handkerchiefs of Peter as well as by the hands of Paul (Acts 5:15,16; 19:11,12). Even the dead were raised to life (Acts 9:32-43; 20:7-12). Faith healing is part and parcel of the Charismatic Movement. As McArthur (1992:241) states, 'Faith healing and the Charismatic Movement have grown up together'. A variety of perspectives on faith healing exist. Some maintain that God wants to heal all sickness; others come close to conceding that God's purpose may sometimes be fulfilled in our infirmities. Others equate sickness with sin but cannot explain why

spiritually strong people get sick. Some blame the devil for sickness. Some claim to have *gifts* of healing, others simply pray for healing and get results. Others use anointing oil or speak forth healing. Some faith healers claim to heal through 'miracle prayer cloths' (McArthur 1992:242). Some faith healers have taken healing so far as to market what they call 'seed-faith offerings': money donated to the faith healer as a down payment on one's personal miracle or healing (*Ibid.*, 1992:242). For example, a sick person will send an envelope with this so-called 'seed-faith offering' to the televangelists, as they are called, who in turn will pray for his or her healing. Many people have placed so much trust in this offering as an expression of faith, merely to be let down in the end. These practices seem to target desperate and vulnerable people.

I have no doubt in my mind that most charismatics are sincere people that seek God with an earnest heart. Unfortunately they are many times deceived by 'gimmicks'¹⁸ which they believe to be a revelation of God. All kinds of miracles are claimed, such as people that have been healed, or delivered from bondage, yet the preachers that claim to have performed these healings are almost never able to present any medical reports by medical professionals to confirm the authenticity of all these so-called healings. I believe God can heal people, but refuse to believe that humankind can prescribe to God when He must heal some

18 Robert Tilton, a prominent minister in the 'Signs and Wonders' ministry, makes use of gimmicks like 'miracle prayer cords' that are sent to people in order to return them so that he can pray for their needs; with this returned 'prayer cord' money must also be included. Other gimmicks include 'anointing oil' that he uses when praying for people. He has a telephone ministry and operators are instructed to get a promise of at least \$100 from each caller. Larry Lea, another minister, makes use of the so-called 'sowing the seed' (money offering) gimmick, promising people healing and solutions to their problems if they send in the money. Another 'faith healer', WV Grant, also promises people healing in return for money offerings. The arrogance of these so-called 'men of God' seems evident in statements they make: Robert Tilton 'Messing with me is messing with the apple of God's eye'. Rodney Howard-Browne said, 'If you steal money from this ministry (implying not giving to it, holding back money) you will die'. In a three-month-long investigation done by Prime Time News in the USA it was found that these preachers make a large amount of money per annum. After services held by these men, people give money offerings in large bins. Bank statements showed that WV Grant makes between \$6 000 000 and \$10 000 000 per annum. Robert Tilton's income for his ministry, tax-free, amounts to \$80 000 000 per annum (Video The Signs and Wonders Movement exposed: Part two – Money. Kerugma Ministries 1994).

one. When one listens to these 'faith healers', an attitude of arrogance toward God is often evident. The authoritative manner in which they come across creates the perception amongst their audiences that they have received a 'blank cheque' from God and can do as they see fit.

- *Miracles.* In 1 Corinthians 12, mention is made of both gifts of healing and 'miraculous powers'. Miracles refer to other aspects than healing. Miracles in general would refer to the times when the apostles were recipients of visions which were definitely of a predictive nature (Acts 10:19,20; 16:8-10; 22:17-21; 27:23-26). By angelic intervention Peter was delivered from prison (Acts 12). On at least two occasions apostles were instrumental in announcing miracles of judgement. Peter announced the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) and Paul brought temporary blindness on Elymas (Acts 13:8-11).

Many charismatics are of the opinion that the Holy Spirit's methodology has not changed; they believe instead that the church has changed, becoming formal and ritualistic. When this happened the church forfeited the power of the Holy Spirit. They believe that the 'power of God' is being recovered, after almost two thousand years. Many charismatics talk about the restoration of the 'New Testament Holy Spirit power' through their movement. This entails that what the apostles did in the first century, Christian believers are doing today (McArthur 1992:134). Some charismatics allege that if we concede that the age of miracles is past, we espouse a deficient concept of God. The following statements by charismatics confirm this viewpoint. 'Who in the world would want a God who has lost all of His zip? Could God do one thing in one century but not in another century? ... Has God lost all of His power?' (Hunter 1976:74-75). Any one denying miracles today has a '... faith that gives no room to a Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday and today and forever. They are quite comfortable with a distant God who hasn't done anything significant in 2,000 years' (Bixler 1970:59). These viewpoints expressed by some charismatics are valid as long as checks and balances are in place. Believing that God is active in human beings' lives requires all the more caution in discerning all experiences, in order to ensure that

not everything a human being experiences is simply attributed to God. Other conditions can also cause experiences. (This point is further discussed in chapter 6.)

Most charismatics share a strong view of signs and wonders, that is, of the supernatural. No wonder then that most charismatic meetings are characterised by a search and desire for the supernatural. The 'experience of God' plays an important role in the charismatic spirituality. Albrecht (1999:238-239) studied the charismatics' 'experience of God', expressed in their highly expressive forms of worship, and came to the following conclusion, '... that these ritual expressions are rooted in a spirituality, a spirituality that expresses itself and is nourished by its rites and rituals. I have assumed that the performance of the rites is an encompassing experience, one that includes the elements of the ritual field, and, according to Pentecostals, one that grounds itself as a human experience of the divine' (*ibid.*1999:238).

Though charismatics seem largely unaware of the fact that they participate in a rich heritage of Christian mysticism, the following statement by Underhill (1925:10) clearly illustrates the position of the Christian mystic as '... one for whom God and Christ are not merely objects of belief, but living facts experimentally known at first-hand; and mysticism [is]... a life based on conscious communion with God'. Albrecht (1999:239) adds that the Sunday services in the charismatic churches are designed to provide a context for a mystical encounter, an experience with the divine. This encounter is mediated by the sense of the immediate divine presence. The primary rites of praise and worship and altar response are particularly structured to sensitise the congregants to the presence of the divine and to stimulate a conscious experience of God. The aim of the praise and worship rituals is to provide a heightened sense of the presence of the divine. The rituals, gestures, actions and symbols all function within the context of the manifest presence of God. Rituals assume the presence of God in a general sense, if not the in-breaking of the Spirit in a 'supernatural way'. Charismatics seek a mystical sense of the

divine presence. If the worship leader says, 'Let's enter into the presence of the Lord', this is not seen as rhetoric. The congregation indeed expects a divine presence (*Ibid.* 1999:239). Emphasis on the supernatural in charismatic spirituality is unmistakable. Expectancy is heightened, as the congregation approaches certain rites, rites sometimes charged with anxious anticipation. This anticipation is stimulated by the history of the experience of the rite and the perceived presence and action of the supernatural (Albrecht 1999:241).

Indeed, the experience of the 'supernatural' in charismatic services can be described as Christian mysticism. Christian mysticism in its simplest form means 'communion with God'. If charismatics then claim that they experience and meet with God during the praise and worship and other rituals this can be viewed as a form of mysticism.

Ministry within the framework of the Charismatic Movement occurs in three dimensions, namely ministry to God in worship, ministry to the 'body of Christ', and ministry to the world through 'the Word' and 'the gifts' and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

3.2.3.5 Goals of the Charismatic Movement

What are the goals of the Charismatic Movement? Williams (1975:9) concisely sums up its purposes as follows:

A profile of the Charismatic Movement within the traditional churches would include at least the following elements: (1) The recovery of a vital and dynamic sense of the reality of the Christian faith; (2) A striking renewal of the community of the believers as a fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit; (3) The manifestation of a wide range of 'spiritual gifts' with parallels drawn from 1 Corinthians 12:14; (4) The experience of 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' often accompanied by 'tongues' as a radical spiritual renewal; (5) The re-emergence of spiritual unity that essentially

transcends denominational barriers; (6) The rediscovery of a dynamic for bearing comprehensive witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ; (7) The revitalisation of the eschatological perspective.

The purpose of the Charismatic Movement is to return to the practice and lifestyle of the early church as described in the book of Acts. A continuous communion with God through the Holy Spirit is also seen as a key element of this movement.

3.2.3.6 Summary

From the above discussion regarding the theological understanding and aims of the Charismatic Movement it is evident that a main characteristic of members of the Charismatic Movement is the important role the supernatural plays in their understanding. This in itself is not negative if understood in the correct context of proper hermeneutics. Some dangers are, however, pointed out by various writers. If the supernatural is not evaluated along the lines of sound practices of biblical interpretation a practice of anti-intellectualism could evolve. Such anti-intellectualism comes from a false spirit/mind dichotomy, and irrationality then evolves into a virtue. Many charismatics, according to McArthur, appear to believe that God's power can be displayed only in ways that are 'unearthly, eerie, or preposterous. As a result some charismatics disdain logic, reason and common sense in their eagerness to embrace such reports' (1992:185). Releasing oneself from doctrines by placing experience above doctrine holds the danger that a new theology can be created.

An emphasis on 'signs and wonders' began to gather momentum in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Wimber of the Vineyard Movement spearheaded this 'Third Wave'. He urged Christians to revive their faith in the supernatural by emphasising miraculous 'power healings, deliverance from demonic powers and prophetic words of wisdom' (Wimber & Springer 1986). The Third Wave created

fruitful ground for the Toronto Blessing to prosper. Pietersen (1998:17) makes an interesting observation in saying that the Toronto Blessing has affected churches that have already been influenced by the Charismatic Movement. The acceptance of the label 'charismatic' seems to imply an expectation of certain supernatural phenomena. 'Consequently, members of such churches are already socialised into accepting unusual phenomena in their worship gatherings' (*ibid.* 1998:17). In the light of this, the Toronto Blessing can be viewed as another channel of expression in the historical development of the Charismatic Movement and its strong emphasis on the supernatural intervention of God.

3.3 THE TORONTO BLESSING

3.3.1 History and roots of the Toronto Blessing

The phenomenon of the Toronto Blessing or the 'laughing revival' started on January 10, 1994, at a Vineyard church near the Pearson International Airport in Toronto. Rodney Howard-Browne¹⁹, a South African minister associated with the 'Word of Faith Movement', is the recognised father of this revival.

The Toronto Blessing has been greeted either as a wonderful blessing from God

19 Rodney Morgan Howard-Browne was born on June 12, 1961 in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Howard-Browne was born to become a major influence on the so-called 'Toronto Blessing'. He also calls himself 'the Holy Ghost bartender' (Wright 1996:220). This name implies that Howard-Browne is serving the blessings of the Spirit to the congregation and that they get 'spiritually drunk'. Also, his commands while ministering – 'receive' and 'drink', complement this image. After having graduated from Rhema Bible Training Centre in Randburg, South Africa he became pastor of the Full Gospel Church of God in Molteno (Cape Province). Howard-Browne then became involved in the ministry at Rhema Bible Church in Randburg in 1986. Thereafter he and his family left for Tampa, Florida in the United States of America where his ministry of 'holy laughter' started. Pastor Karl Strader of Carpenter's Home Church in Lakeland allowed Howard-Browne to introduce his message of 'holy laughter'. Howard-Browne succeeded immensely in spreading this event to churches both national and international. Since 1993 the 'holy laughter' movement has taken off (Guthrie n.d. : 1).

Fire is one of the most common metaphors to describe the phenomenon. People from all over the world subscribe to the Toronto church's magazine, *Spread the Fire*. In July 1994 the Anaheim, California, Vineyard held a 'Let the Fire Fall' conference. In January 1995 and again in January 1996, thousands attended 'Catch the Fire Again' conferences in Toronto to celebrate the first and the second anniversaries of the 'laughing revival'. News reports in the Christian media proclaim that the Fire is still ablaze at the Toronto church. Their new radio and TV ministries go on air under the same slogan. A new school also sees the light under the subtitle 'Fire to the nations' (Wright 1996:8).

or the result of a heretical and occult teaching. We shall now determine its roots.

The roots of the Toronto Blessing can broadly be traced to at least three sources, 'the Word of Faith' teachers, the 'Vineyard churches' and the 'Latter Rain' and 'New Prophets' movement (Sizer n.d :1; Randles 1994:119).

3.3.1.1 The Word of Faith Movement

The Word of Faith Movement, also known as the 'Faith' movement, represents a group of powerful and influential charismatic church leaders²⁰ and television evangelists who, through their broadcasts, reach several hundred million viewers world wide every week.

Central to the teaching of the 'Faith movement' is a force that, once appropriated, unlocks God's blessing. The 'Faith movement' believes that the human mind and tongue contain supernatural ability or power. When a person speaks, expressing his or her faith in supposedly divine laws, his or her positive thoughts and positive verbal expression allegedly produce a 'divine force' that will heal, produce wealth, bring success and in other ways influence the environment (Sizer n.d.: 2). This teaching of the 'Faith movement' originated with Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866), the father of New Thought, who popularised the notion that sickness and suffering ultimately have their origin in incorrect thinking (Hanegraaff 1993:29). Metaphysical practitioners have long taught their followers to visualise health and wealth, and then to affirm or confess them with their mouths so that the intangible images may be transformed into tangible realities (Bristol 1948; Baker Eddy 1971; Fillmore 1967).

Hanegraaff (1993:29) is of the opinion that the theology of the 'Faith movement' has attempted to sanitise the metaphysical concept of the 'power of mind', propagated by metaphysical practitioners, by substituting in its stead the 'force of

20 These leaders include Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Rodney Howard-Browne, Benny Hinn, Mauris Cirello and David Yonggi Cho (Sizer n.d.:2).

faith'. The distinction made by the 'Faith movement' is not truly different. According to Hanegraaff (1993:30), faith is the most intense form of mental action. He refers to Cady (n.d.) in *Lessons of Truth*, who explains that our affirming, backed by faith, is the link that connects our conscious human need with God's power and supply. There is also power in our word of faith to bring all good things into our everyday life. 'Such statements confirm that the distinction between the 'mind' of metaphysics and the 'faith' of the 'Faith movement' is little more than cosmetics' (Hanegraaff 1993:30).

It seems that a definite link exists between the metaphysical teaching of correct thinking and confessing and the teaching of the 'Faith movement' about the supernatural ability of the human mind and tongue. This teaching also explains the belief amongst followers of the 'Faith movement' that God automatically responds and accomplishes what we command when we positively confess our needs and desires in faith. As is the case with metaphysics, the idea of visualisation features in the notion of 'faith obtaining faith'. First the desire is visualised and then affirmed or confessed verbally. It is interesting that the 'power of the human mind' seems to be at the centre of the teaching of metaphysics as well as the 'Faith movement'. The power of the mind and the role it plays in religious experience will be discussed later (cf. 6.3.1).

3.3.1.2 Vineyard Movement

John Wimber's Vineyard Movement shows similarities with the 'Faith Movement' teachings. According to both movements, the western church needs a major paradigm shift²¹ in its worldview, from one that is rationalistic and ritualistic to a more supernatural and experience related stance. Thus Wimber's emphasis has

21 A paradigm can broadly be defined as an accepted model or pattern that is used to explain or evaluate a particular case in scientific practice. A paradigm is the result of a variety of viewpoints with regard to a particular case that over a period of time are formulated. A renewed paradigm or 'paradigm shift' is caused mainly by new insight into a particular case, that will bring about change in the model that will not necessarily be accepted by all (Kuhn 1970:29-30).

moved from proclamation of the Bible to a demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power, hence his 'power evangelism and power healings' (Sizer n.d.: 4)).

A worldview is 'a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously) about the make up of our world' (Sire 1976:17). Wimber & Springer (1986:75) concur with Sire and adds that a person's worldview is actually his or her 'control box' of reality. Wimber further argues that a person needs to become aware of his or her own worldview as well as to alter it, where it endorses values that are contrary to Christianity, in order to experience God. Wimber's point of view is summed up in his emphasis on a 'paradigm shift' away from thinking with Western logic into the exclusively experimental way of oriental thinking. The Western worldview equals secularism, 'to think secularly', that 'is to think within a frame of reference bounded by the limits of our life on earth: that is to keep one's calculations rooted in this 'worldly criteria' (Wimber & Springer 1986:75). Inherent in the modern Western worldview is a desire to control everything - people, things, events, and even future events.

A Christian worldview is to accept all things in the mind as related, directly or indirectly, to humanity's eternal destiny as the redeemed and chosen children of God (Blamires 1963:44). The Christian's challenge then, according to Wimber & Springer (1986:82), is to alter the Western worldview to become a Christian worldview. This worldview is expressed in Wimber & Springer's 'power evangelism' (1986) that speaks of the actual revelation of God's power in people's lives. Power evangelism speaks of manifestations brought about by the Holy Spirit, confirming God's continuous involvement. Wimber & Springer (1986) list supernatural interventions of God from the early church until the twentieth century as confirmation of his viewpoint.

3.3.1.3 The Latter Rain and New Prophets Movement

The prophetic movement has come out of the Pentecostal world, particularly from the late 1940s revival called the New Order of the 'Latter Rain' movement²². From the 'Latter Rain' movement came the 'Manifested Sons of God' heresy, which was renounced by the Assemblies of God in 1949 (Randles 1994:14). Though it was discredited, its ideals have taken on a heretical life of their own. Franklin Hall²³ is commonly regarded as the 'father' of the 'Manifested Sons of God' movement, which he began in 1946 in San Diego with his 'fasting and prayer daily revival centre' (Sizer n.d.:7).

An outstanding element in Hall's teaching was his belief that Christians can actually become immortal through progressive stages of spiritual growth, and his teachings on attaining immortality in this life through psycho-spiritual exercises and through 'holiness' or righteous living. Hall believed that in the last days a generation would arise who would experience real 'torrents' of a long, overdue 'rain' of righteousness. A 'rain' of immortality upon the earth causes lasting freedom from all sickness and negative gravitational forces. The last generation preceding the Second Coming of Christ will exercise special power (Sizer n.d.:7). The 'Manifested Sons of God' movement stems from its interpretation of Romans 8:19: 'For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God²⁴ ...'.

22 In the late 1940s at an 'airport fellowship' in Canada, at a combination Bible school, orphanage, and church called the Sharon Home, George Hawtin and Percy Hunt, both heavily influenced by Branham began praying and preaching of a coming 'Latter Rain'. They proclaimed the beginning of a new thing and that God would restore the gifts of the Spirit and the ministry of the apostle and the prophet, and that gifts and ministries would be 'imparted' by the 'laying on of hands' of those whom God would so designate (Randles 1994:18).

23 Hall in that same year published a book, *Atomic Power with God through Fasting and Prayer*, that had an immense impact on the whole Pentecostal world (Sizer n.d.:7).

24 In the revelation of sonship, Romans 8:19 is seen as something that an elite company of believers attains to, through progressive revelation of 'who we are in Christ'. All of this sin-cursed creation does not await the Parousia, but only an elite remnant of Christians achieve glorification. These manifested sons of God are glorified through progressive revelation of their 'sonship'. The manifested sons are seen as Christ (Randles 1994:20).

The 'New Prophets' movement became prominent in the 1980s and is characterised by some prominent church figures in the Charismatic Movement who are acknowledged as 'prophets'. They are called 'new' prophets firstly to distinguish them from the prophets in the Bible and secondly because they are active in a later period in the history of the church. The prophetic movement offers a whole worldview, including an interesting prophetic interpretation of the 1980s and 1990s. To the 'prophets', the eighties was the prophetic decade and the nineties is the decade designated as the time for the restoration of the apostles, who are to bring in a 'special governmental anointing' that will radically reform the church. The 'New prophets' are no longer confined to the margins of popular Christian experience only; they are also in influential positions²⁵ (Randles 1994:9). The purpose of the 'new prophets' and prophetic movement is to take control and exercise rule over the power of Satan in order for God's will to be done on earth (*ibid.* 1994:13).

A clear connection exists between the 'Faith Movement', 'Latter Rain Movement' and the 'Vineyard Churches'. In all three movements the impartation of the so-called 'anointing'²⁶ plays a key role.

25 Paul Cain, a prominent 'prophet', is supposed to have gone to George Bush Snr with a prophecy while Bush was still in office, and other world leaders have recognized his prophetic gifting, including Saddam Hussein (Randles 1994:8). Other so called 'prophets' such as Rodney Howard Browne, Bill Hamon, Rick Joyner and Kenneth Copeland have all prophesied that the 'new prophets' would be consulted by world leaders, kings and heads of nations (*ibid.* 1994:9).

26 John Arnott, pastor of the Toronto Vineyard Church, has acknowledged that he has been a friend of 'faith' preacher Benny Hinn for 20 years and that Hinn has shaped his view of divine healing and the anointing (Sizer n.d.: 9). Furthermore, the other pastor of the Toronto Vineyard Church, Randy Clark, was introduced to the Toronto Blessing by 'faith' preacher Rodney Howard-Browne at the Rhema church in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the early 1990s. Not long after that Arnott was also attracted to the Toronto Blessing of Rodney Howard Browne (Chevreau 1994:23). The manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing were experienced at the Toronto Vineyard Church after a visit by Rodney Howard-Browne. These manifestations were subsequently experienced only at the Toronto Vineyard Church, but as Vineyard leaders and lay people visited the church from around the world, they too received an anointing, and manifestations spread to their churches. The so called anointing that men like Clark and Arnott received from Hinn and Rodney Howard-Browne has the characteristic of electricity in that it feels like a current of electricity flowing through one's body and is described as 'heaven's electricity supply' and 'like a jolt of electricity' (Sizer n.d.:10).

The three movements in their own particular manner contributed to creating an environment for the Toronto Blessing to prosper. The 'Faith Movement' introduced people to the power of 'faith that produces'. According to 'faith' teaching, 'faith that produces' starts in the mind visualising, and then affirming, the desired petition through confession. This could serve as a motivation for people to receive the Toronto Blessing. It is in your reach: if you can visualise it, you can obtain or experience it through confessing it. This movement shows a remarkable resemblance to metaphysics and also with visualisation practised by some adherents of Zen Buddhism. The 'Signs and Wonders Movement' emphasised the importance of the supernatural. Rationalisation of 'spiritual events' would lead to people not experiencing the supernatural. A 'paradigm shift' is needed which will allow a freedom to hear God's voice, and to experience His involvement, through different supernatural manifestations, without judging or evaluating it from a particular secular world view. The paradigm shift would also replace a rationalistic approach with a 'liberty to experience the supernatural' which cannot be evaluated in rationalistic terms.

The danger, however, of this viewpoint is that it could open a door for the non-critical acceptance of any manifestation whenever it is labelled as 'from God'. This movement could have contributed to an unquestioning acceptance of unusual manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing, on the grounds of a so-called freedom to experience the supernatural. The Latter Rain Movement preached a 'fresh' outpouring and restoration of the gifts of the Spirit and the office of the prophet and the apostle. Franklin Hall, the father of the Manifested Sons of God movement that also came out of the 'Latter Rain' movement, emphasised the coming of a special generation marked out for God's anointing. This generation – the Manifested Sons of God - will have the Spirit of God without measure and be known as the 'sons of God'. The Toronto Blessing, together with the contribution of the Latter Rain and Manifested Sons of God movements' teaching, could easily be viewed as the outpouring of God's Spirit without measure. This idea is clearly subscribed to by Howard-Browne in his

image of the bartender of the Holy Ghost, who seemingly serves the Holy Spirit's blessing to congregations without measure.

The 'New Prophets' movement that later came out of the 'Latter Rain' movement emphasised the power in human hands, through the exercise of prophecy. Prophecy will not only inform the church of God's continuous plans for them, but will even influence and guide world leaders. Taking all these movements into consideration, the Toronto Blessing can be viewed by most charismatics as a culmination of God's blessings, previously promised and experienced in a smaller measure through the different preceding movements.

3.3.2 Description of the Toronto Blessing

How can the Toronto Blessing be described? It is viewed in various ways. Stibbe (1995:10) believes that the Toronto phenomenon is the first sign of a 'fourth wave' which will result in global revival. For some such as Hand (1997:38), a charismatic pastor, it is a '... spectacle of hundreds of friends being called forward to receive the "Blessing" and falling over en masse; the jumbled heap of 200 bodies on the floor; hysterical laughter and people wriggling around, as if they were fish ...'. Others believed it to be 'fire from the Spirit' that fell on their congregation, initiating a 'renewal' that is preparing the way for the final world-wide revival leading up to the return of Christ (Wright 1996:7). Others make claims that the Toronto blessing is a definite and special outpouring of God's Holy Spirit for these troubled times (Porter & Richter 1995:1). Comments like these are based on the enormous effect the Toronto Blessing has had on churches in Britain and elsewhere. What began as a local phenomenon in Toronto, Canada, has become a movement that is attracting a dedicated following among a variety of people from all walks of life. The Toronto Blessing is making its presence known in churches of various types, including Anglican, Baptist, Roman Catholic and Methodist, besides a number of charismatic and Pentecostal groups (Porter & Richter 1995:1). Poloma (1994:2) describes the Toronto Blessing as '... a movement that balances order with spontaneity,

structure with freedom, and stability with change. It works to revitalise the “free movement of the spirit” associated with the Charismatic Movement but tries to maintain necessary structure in order to continue the movement.’

On the other hand, some critics view the Toronto Blessing as a revival of outright mysticism²⁷ that has descended from a long line of mysticism and erroneous teaching (Randles 1994:118). Others labelled the spontaneous, uncontrollable laughter as the ‘buffeting of Satan’ and as a terrorising experience. The phenomenon of the Toronto Blessing is likened to ‘the occult spirit of Babylon’ (Richter 1995:14-15). Some take a more cautious position, not judging or embracing the Toronto Blessing, by saying ‘if it is from God it will bear fruit’, basing their argument on the ‘wait and see’ principle (Lyons 1998:92). This principle is found in Acts 5:38-39 ‘And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you be found to fight against God.’

In short, the Toronto Blessing can be described as a spiritual phenomenon of some kind that has swept the charismatic, Pentecostal and even Evangelical world. It is often likened to a river: the river of God.

Various opinions and interpretations of the Toronto Blessing are therefore to be found. Some interpretations are positive, some negative. The burning question is not so much whether it is right or wrong but whether it is humanly induced or really a movement of God,

27 Even among mystics a strong warning is issued with regard to the dangers of mysticism. Although the action of the Holy Spirit can be found everywhere at the same time, there are other spirits at work in the world and in our hearts. These are the dark forces of evil. All of human life seems to show itself to be in a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness. Scripture also warns more than once, as in 1 Peter 5:8, that the aim of evil forces is depicted as the destruction of humankind. To make this struggle more complicated 2 Cor. 11:14 tells one that Satan can be disguised as an ‘Angel of the Light’. Furthermore, 1 John 4:1 clearly warns us to discern the spirits with great care. It must always be borne in mind that even in mysticism discernment must be applied (Johnston 2000:80).

3.3.3 Characteristics of the Toronto Blessing

The Toronto Blessing has a variety of physical characteristics, which are treated as 'manifestations of the Holy Spirit'. Not every feature will be found in every church affected. Typically the characteristics listed below are found. Astbury (2000:94), who did thorough research on the Toronto Blessing experience, points out that it is expressed in a multitude of vocal, kinetic or locomotor, spiritual, emotional and sensory expressions. These characteristics will now be discussed.

3.3.3.1 Vocal expression

The term vocal expression is used to denote activities involving vocal sounds, which are not necessarily verbal.

- **Laughter.** Outbursts of uproarious laughter almost invariably characterise meetings affected by the Toronto Blessing. Leaders often refer to the 'renewal' as 'party time'. One person said that he was laughing while doing 'carpet time'²⁸ because God told him jokes while he was on the floor (Wright 1996:82). Astbury (2000:224) noted some of the responses of people involved in the Toronto Blessing²⁹: '... while I was trying to walk, I started laughing. It was something that came out of my insides. I also can't say why I laughed'. '... well, I can't describe it – but I just burst out laughing. And for no reason or rhyme I just started laughing'. The uncontrollable laughter³⁰ is also referred to as 'holy

28 The term 'carpet time' is used in connection with the Toronto Blessing and refers to a person, being slain in the Spirit, landing on the floor.

29 Astbury did a study on the psychological aspects of the Toronto Blessing. Some of the quotes that will be used in this section are quotes she obtained from respondents in her study. They are very helpful in understanding the emotional side of the experience, especially if related to an experience such as Kundalini. A comparison between the Toronto Blessing experience and Kundalini will be made in chapter 5.

30 Richter (1995:8) describes the laughter as laughter that '... ranges from polite giggles to roaring, hysterical, uncontrollable fits of mirth, such as a young child might display when tickled. This 'gut-busting' convulsive laughter disconnects the person from what is going on around them.' Needham (1995:4) compares the laughter with the annoying 'laughing machines' found in amusement arcades.

laughter' and is often accompanied by falling backwards toward the ground (Fruchtenbaum n.d. : 3).

- **Weeping.** Some people, but relatively few, weep³¹ when experiencing the Toronto Blessing (Wright 1996:84; Astbury 2000:95). The weeping associated with the Toronto Blessing seems to be from deep inside. Some recipients believe that some emotional healing took place in the process of weeping.
- **Groaning and animal noises.** Sometimes the Toronto Blessing involves a person making animal sounds³². People have roared like lions, barked like dogs, brayed like donkeys, swum like fish, screeched like an eagle or even imitated Donald Duck (Richter 1995:8).
- **Glossolalia.** Glossolalia – speaking in tongues - has long been recognised as a feature of the Charismatic Movement. However, some have reported the experience as associated with this phenomenon of the Toronto Blessing (Astbury 2000:95).

3.3.3.2 Kinetic or locomotor expression

Kinetic or locomotor expression refers to experiences in which persons perceived a loss of physical control. A variety of these bodily behaviours over which people had no control has been reported. Some of these actions were 'normal' bodily reactions, experienced in an uncontrollable fashion, such as shaking,

31 Chevreau (1994:14,16) writes that after being prayed for he went down and while lying there he started weeping for almost forty minutes. At another time he fell on his face and 'began to weep, and did so for the next three-and-a-half hours'. Astbury (2000:226) reports the crying experienced by respondents as '... and then the tears came. I was in that time like very crying. And it was like a deep cry you know, from my heart.'

32 Astbury (2000:227) reports that one of her respondents began to screech like an eagle. Dupont (1995:7) reports that two people started to bark like dogs. The barks were interspersed with howling noises like wolves, or possibly dogs baying at the moon. Another person was screeching like a cat. Beverley (1995:69) heard one man making noises like a cow. Other people were making noises (oinking) like pigs and crowing like roosters. The lion roaring is said to be prophetic in that it signals a powerful word from Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah. In one case, it has been reported that someone was 'swimming in the spirit' as he was lying on his belly and behaving like a fish (Fruchtenbaum n.d.:3).

'drunkenness'³³, falling, or being 'slain in the spirit', jerking, crawling, trembling and swaying. Other behaviours were more unusual, like 'swimming' on the floor or 'running' like a rabbit (Astbury 2000:98). Some recipients of the Toronto Blessing feel a little giddy, others lose control of their limbs, as if drunk, and are unable to walk in a straight line or even stand, whilst otherwise being fully conscious. The Toronto Blessing has been described as 'drunkenness without having a hangover and without having expense' (Richter 1995:8). Thousand testify to getting 'drunk' and their experiences are so real that some evangelical Christian leaders are convinced that is as a result of the power of the Holy Spirit (Hanegraaff 2001:243).

Before or after people fall – 'slain in the spirit', as a result of the blessing their bodies may twitch or shake uncontrollably. This may sometimes resemble an epileptic seizure. The 'Toronto Twitch', often experienced in the stomach region, can occasionally be quite painful, and has been compared with labour pains (Richter 1995:8). Richter (1995:9) also reports about people that start running energetically around the church, jogging on the spot and bouncing up and down, even pretending to be 'red Indians' or 'racing cars'. Some recipients of the blessing roll around on the floor uncontrollably while experiencing the revival phenomena. One respondent reported that he was spinning uncontrollably in circles while he was experiencing the Toronto Blessing. Shaking while receiving the blessing is also commonly reported. Another person was shouting the name of Jesus at the top of her voice during the process (Astbury 2000:228-229). Astbury (2000:98) also reports what she terms 'hallucinatory experiences'. These denote perceived experience of something which is not visible to the natural eye, or to bystanders. For example, some participants reported feeling an invisible force hitting them, described as 'heavy air' or an 'invisible ball of fire' that landed on them.

33 Wright (1996:86) refers to the first Newsletter issued by Toronto Airport Vineyard, March 1994 vol I, which reported that 'Some are so drunk with the Spirit that they have to be helped from the meeting and driven home. Randy Clark, one of the leaders at Toronto Airport Vineyard, was reported to be drunk two or three times (Wright 1996:86).'

3.3.3.3 Spiritual expression

Spiritual expression refers to experiences such as people that 'heard from God'. One respondent reported: 'I heard the Lord explain his love for me in ways that brought deep emotional healing' (Astbury 2000:99). Chevreau (1994:40-41) also describes the touch of the Lord experienced in the Toronto Blessing:

They have been experiencing the presence of the Lord, and they're so sure of the encounter, the revelation, the 'touch', there is absolutely no doubt in their minds. Some of them have seen the Lord. Or something of his glory; there has been given a dream or an open vision. Some of them have heard audible words; some have heard words only with their hearts, but words, nonetheless; words that left them with no doubts as to who produced them. Some have felt the Lord's touch, physically. Some have felt the Lord's healing hand upon them, or the hand of blessing.

Chevreau (1994:41) also reported that he had smelled the presence of God while ministering at the Toronto Airport Vineyard church (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-15).

Beverley (1995:123-124) reports of a certain Bob Jones that claimed to have journeyed to heaven and hell and to have talked with the apostle Paul. Others have experienced a thick mist representing the glory of God (Wright 1996:91). Astbury (2000:244) reports what is called a 'levitation-type experience'. A pastor reported seeing a woman lifted into the air by an external force while he was praying for her. The same respondent reported seeing a kinetic motion reminiscent of flying backward. His interpretation of it is that an external force caused the woman to do this.

3.3.3.4 Sensory expression

Some recipients of the Toronto Blessing reported sensory manifestations, for example numbness, as well as sensations of heat and light (Astbury 2000).

Other respondents reported the experience of seeing a bright light and feeling a sensation of heat over them (Huima n.d.: 2). Recipients of the Toronto Blessing sometimes describe their experience, in impersonal terms, as being 'surrounded by the light of God' as being 'transparent with light', as 'resting under the cloak of his glory', as a 'state of blissful abandonment' or like 'electric current'. Sometimes recipients report out-of-body experiences³⁴.

3.3.4 Environment for the Toronto Blessing

The purpose of this section is to determine the nature of the worship that is taking place specifically in churches which have been affected by the Toronto Blessing, with the aim of determining the emotional environment. This evaluation will be done in general and the typical form of worship found in these meetings will be established.

Charismatics have been socialised into accepting unusual phenomena. The following picture of Toronto Blessing worship services emerges from literature and testimonies as well as personal experience of such meetings. I do not claim to have a complete picture of these services, but definitely several practices are commonly found in these meetings. The following aspects seem to make up the service generally: music, prayer, sermon, ministry time and testimonies.

- **Music.** The musicians in various services seemed to be of varying calibre and proficiency. The style and presentation of the music were similar. Normally each church would have a band or 'worship team'. The worship team normally consists of a 'worship leader' and other vocalists and a small ensemble of instrumentalists. The instruments would include a piano or electronic keyboard, guitars (bass and acoustic), drums and one or two other instruments (Porter 1995:117). The actual songs in every case were

³⁴ Belma Vardy reported seeing her self 'walking in a lush green pasture, hand in hand with Jesus' (Chevreau 1994:179-180).

contemporary. The majority of songs referred to personal needs and were addressed to the Spirit or were requests to God for more of the Spirit. Many of the songs are written in the first person, with a strong sense of personal and intimate relationship with God. A strong emphasis is placed on the individual receiving the blessing from God. Foster (1997:64) points out the emphasis that is placed on a 'time of worship', as it is known in charismatic circles, referring to a substantial period of singing. Music plays a very important role in these services. 'Music has the ability to influence our minds and induce obedience to a rhythm or emotion outside ourselves³⁵ – we can become carried away by music – even by good music – but we mistake this experience for something spiritual, when it is in fact sensual' (*Ibid.* 1997:64). This is due to an 'altered state of consciousness', in my opinion. While in the worship service one is focussing so much on moving into the 'spiritual realm' as it is referred to, typifying the area where contact with God is possible, that one is not aware of things around one. The worship leader will also exhort the congregation to take their eyes off the world and their troubles and focus on God. This normally goes hand in hand with certain bodily actions, such as closure of eyes and raising of arms as a sign of total surrender.

Music has an important impact on a human being. It can make him or her joyful or sad but it could assist a person to move into an altered state of consciousness. A repetition of the same song over and over again could make people more susceptible to what the preacher or leader suggests in a service. Music is a very important role player in the experience of charismatic spirituality generally, especially in the Toronto Blessing.

35 I noticed that songs are sung over and over again. While people are singing many are closing their eyes in an effort to see God while they are worshipping. I have also experienced that one could easily lose track with reality while in this process of worshipping God. I have seen many people, while worshipping, falling into a 'trance state'. People start swaying from side to side, some fall down and others express a joyful state.

- **Prayer.** The prayers in the Toronto services focus mostly on receiving more of God's blessing. At other times the prayers were addressed to the Spirit. Prayers can become quite urgent and repetitive and it seemed that the prayers, especially when focussed on an individual, have the aim of causing the person to fall 'under God's power', seeing that this will confirm that God has touched the person (Porter 1995:119). The laying on of hands also plays an important role in prayer, as a means to impart the blessing. The pastor or leader will normally lay his or her hand on the person's forehead between the eyes or on his or her stomach to impart the blessing or anointing. Pastors sometimes also impart the blessing by just saying a word or phrase over the congregation in order for them to receive the blessing. At other times they would use a gesture as if they are throwing the blessing at the people, accompanied with the words 'receive, receive' or 'more, more'. Or by the pastor's waving his hand over the congregation, they will apparently 'receive' the blessing³⁶. The time of prayer differs from service to service. In some services the pastor or leader will pray during the meeting; at other meetings prayer is combined with an altar call, that is when people are called to the front to be prayed for.

It is important to note that these prayers or phrases that are spoken out over people are done in a very authoritative manner, almost with an aggressive attitude. This practice can cause people to pretend they receive 'something' from the pastor in order not to offend him and his 'anointing' or because of a 'feeling of inferiority' because everyone else receives except they themselves. A kind of adaptation to mass behaviour is a real factor to be considered here.

36 Cf. Video – Signs and Wonders Movement exposed part 1 and 2, 1997. Kuilsrivier: Kerugma ministries.

- **Sermon.** No real sermon is delivered, apart from the using of some scriptures to establish the validity of the Toronto Blessing. An important element of the sermon is a warning to those who may be sceptical about the blessing. This evidently is to set the stage for the next phase of the service – ministry time, referring to the time the Toronto Blessing is to be imparted. 'It appears that sermons, rather than being concerned to deepen the biblical or spiritual understanding of the congregation, are often being used apologetically to substantiate and reinforce credibility for the Blessing' (Porter 1995:120). Wright (1996:17) reports a meeting that he attended. The theme of the sermon was that God wants to take people deeper into the Spirit. The preacher compared this to a river into which God is pulling his people deeper.

The contents of these sermons seem to suggest that something supernatural is going to happen in the rest of the meeting, rather than proclaim the true gospel. This kind of suggestion following the praise and worship service comes at the right time to affect already susceptible people.

- **Testimonies.** Testimonies are a powerful tool in the Toronto Blessing. Recipients are given the opportunity to testify about the blessing they have received. Several of the recipients testified how they had taken the blessing back to their home churches, where physical manifestations had also broken out (Wright 1996:16). At some meetings the recipients of the blessing are prayed for in public (Hand 1997:53). In many cases the recipient prayed for again in public will be slain in the Spirit (Porter 1995:120). The practice of praying for the person who has just testified is recommended in Vineyard literature (Dixon 1994:325). The testimonies also prepared the potential recipients of the Toronto Blessing.

A kind of standard is set by these testimonies and the practice of being slain in the Spirit again. This practice, in my opinion, is a powerful means of suggestion: that what happened previously will happen again. The congregants are assured that this blessing is also for them and are prepared to receive it.

- **Ministry time.** Is the term that is used to describe the dedicated time in the service when the manifestations of the Spirit are expected. Ministry time is not a case of individuals that come to the front to receive the blessing but rather an experience *en masse*. In most services the whole congregation is the arena where the blessing falls (Porter 1995:121). The blessing is administered to the people by means of the leader praying for it to fall upon them. The prayer is later extended by phrases like 'more, more' and 'receive, receive'. An interesting point is made by Porter (1995:121) when she observes that, '... it also appears that the blessing can be timed, planned, re-enacted whenever it is wanted or needed, whether it is wanted or needed, whether it be morning, evening, second service, or the like.' The pastor stays in control by doing the following: he moves around repeatedly, speaking to those who were not evidencing outward signs and reiterating that the manifestations are acceptable. The pastor will also manage the people by calling so-called 'helpers' to assist in ministering to the people. He may also close the service. Closing of the meeting, however, does not mean that all activity stops but rather that the 'formal service' is over. The 'unofficial' side of the meeting – the manifestations of the blessing, people doing 'carpet time', laughing, crying, shaking and dancing, in many instances stretch on into the hours of the early morning (Wright 1996:18). No specific mention is made of Christ or directions given to the person who wants to know about Christ, and no gospel preached (*Ibid.* 1996:122). Also the fact that 'catchers', as they are known, are standing behind the people who are prayed for, in order to catch

them when they are 'slain in the Spirit', points to the control the preacher has over the meeting and the people.

Control over these meetings is clearly in the hands of these leaders. This all the more raises a question with regard to the true freedom of the Spirit to work in the meetings, as is claimed by the leaders. If God is sovereign, how can a human prescribe to Him when to work by his Spirit and when to stop?

3.3.5 Summary

It is true that the Toronto Blessing can be accompanied by words or utterances of various kinds. But at its heart the Toronto Blessing is non-verbal in form. The Toronto Blessing is sometimes described in mystical terms (Fearon 1994:199). It has sometimes been compared to the experience of Christian mystics (MacNutt 1994:18).

Similar experiences are also reported amongst other religious groups. Amongst New-Agers and Hindus references are made to 'Kundalini energy', a dormant energy that lies in the form of 'a coiled snake at the base of the human spine' (see chapter 5). This energy can be triggered through various means and manifestations such as involuntary sounds, involuntary bodily movements, uncontrollable laughter or crying, talking in tongues and imitating various animal sounds (Wright 1996:92). While some Vineyard leaders are concerned about the Toronto Blessing phenomena, the majority believe the phenomena to be from God. The manner in which they deal with criticism is typically seen in the following statement by Chevreau (1994: 127) 'It is far healthier to focus attention on the wheat, and not on the chaff, nor on the enemy sowing weeds.'

3.4 CONCLUSION

This overview of the roots and development of the Charismatic Movement and the Toronto Blessing has indicated an emphasis on the supernatural. Different

movements in the Charismatic Movement, as a whole, have time after time laid emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit and God's intention to work through the Holy Spirit as a means of his blessing and spiritual upliftment. Most charismatics see a supernatural manifestation³⁷ of some kind as necessary in order to make charismatic spirituality complete. This belief in turn creates some expectancy for the supernatural amongst the participants in this movement. It seems that a meeting without some or other form of supernatural manifestation is viewed as not so successful.

It is my contention that the characteristics discussed above, that form part of the Toronto Blessing, could very easily create an environment for psychological processes and influences. As is the case with the Vineyard churches, charismatic churches in general show similar characteristics. A service is normally started with a worship service. Songs of praise and worship are sung mostly over and over again, creating an atmosphere of expectancy for something supernatural to happen. It also happened that the Holy Spirit is welcomed more than once and invited to take over the meeting. The worship service is normally then followed by preaching, which has as the theme that God wants to reveal himself in the meeting by some or other supernatural power encounter. The level of expectancy is then even further increased by the godly sanctioning of the preacher as the 'anointed of God'. The service finds its climax in the invitation at the end of the preaching. People are encouraged to trust God to meet with them and are invited to come to the front of the church, the so called 'altar call', where the preacher and his assistants will pray for them to receive the touch of God or blessing. Without implying that God cannot reveal himself supernaturally, the whole process followed in charismatic churches does leave this haunting question: Has this whole 'power encounter' phenomenon not been created by a subtle psychological process of suggestion and expectancy, culminating in an illusion? Hand (1997:53), an ex pastor of a church that experienced the Toronto Blessing, came to the following conclusion:

³⁷ The supernatural manifestations referred to here include all kinds of spiritual gifts such as healings, tongues and interpretation, and other physical manifestations such as people 'falling under the power'.

The techniques and ambient culture of the meetings ensure his conclusion. By using loud music, by calling forward previous recipients of the 'Blessing' and praying for them again in public, and by encouraging people not to use their minds but to 'receive/yield/drink', evangelical practice is aping the methods of hypnotists. The induction of 'altered states of consciousness' and the use of touch on strategic parts of the body to induce experiences are man-made forms of worship. They by-pass the rational faculty and produce a state of mind that is outside the scope of God's agency.

Although some recipients of the Toronto Blessing claim an authentic experience from God, the fact of a humanly induced blessing by means of certain psychological techniques, in a pre-created environment with a high level of expectancy for the supernatural, cannot be excluded and should always be envisaged as a strong possibility for creating such manifestations.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TORONTO BLESSING FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The proponents of the Toronto Blessing claim that the authenticity of the experience is founded in similar experiences in the Bible. This view could lead to Christians reading the Bible in a new way. An example of this is that Christians might try to find in the Bible examples of the strange physical phenomena associated with the Toronto Blessing. As shown in the previous chapter, charismatics place a high priority on the 'Word of God', the Bible, as an authentic and final authority serving as a yardstick for their experiences. It is therefore important to investigate some of the physical manifestations associated with the Toronto Blessing in the light of the biblical accounts presented by the charismatics. The aim of this chapter is not to explore all the possible scriptures used by charismatics but rather to select those that form the basis for their claim to a biblical foundation.

4.2 BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The Bible remains an authoritative source for the Christian. The Bible, for the Christian, renders a 'godly sanctioning' to matters, and the messenger in turn demands respect and obedience. The message of the Bible, however, can be interpreted differently because many methods of biblical interpretation may be used. Some, depending on their own particular point of view, might see some interpretations as incorrect. For others such interpretations could even constitute heresy and a misuse of the Bible. The important question for this study is not the question of which interpretation is right and which one is wrong, but rather to

consider the methods used by the charismatics in order to evaluate their experiences. It is necessary, however, to acknowledge that there are certain guidelines accepted in general that assist in the interpretation of the Bible. The aim of this chapter is not to conduct an in depth discussion of hermeneutics and exegesis, as this falls outside the parameters of this study. It will be appropriate, though, to briefly discuss the method of biblical interpretation used by charismatics. Thereafter certain basic guidelines in the interpretation of a biblical text will be offered that could be used by believers in general. The charismatics' application of biblical texts in order to substantiate the Toronto Blessing will then be evaluated according to the basic guidelines given in this chapter.

Several of the leading churches experiencing the Toronto Blessing have referred to themselves as 'word and Spirit' churches. The word is considered to be as important as the spirit (Porter 1995:38). The impression created by this phrase is that those who are experiencing the Toronto Blessing are seeking to explain the biblical basis for their experience. Porter (1995:39) makes an important statement with regard to establishing a biblical foundation for an experience such as the Toronto Blessing. This event cannot be established merely by discussing the Bible. The ability to quote biblical passages or supposed proof is not the same as establishing a biblical position, and reading the Bible is not the same as understanding and applying it correctly. 'Being able to interpret the Bible in a responsible way so as to provide a biblical foundation for a given belief or practice is serious business, and requires a well-considered approach to the Bible' (*ibid.* 1995:39).

4.2.1 Diversity in Biblical interpretation

Biblical interpretation is characterized by diversity. Different approaches have one by one appeared in the field of biblical interpretation as a result of changes and cultural shifts in meaning, in many previously accepted structures. Society is

manifesting a deeper sense of convergence between different religious approaches and a willingness to share different insights.

The move beyond the worldview that developed out of the seventeenth century, Galilean-Cartesian-Newtonian science, has meant that its driving forces, namely science, technology, and industry, are no longer dominant. Modernity, with its rationalist ideologies and its religion of materialism, attempted to provide an explanation of reality by employing mechanistic science, disconnected from spiritual and ecological values. Modernity was marked by an atrophy of our religious capacities. Postmodernism, with its holistic vision of science, offers a model which is no longer atomistic but organic. In terms of the new physics, all phenomenal reality is seen to be a net of causal connections or total interrelatedness. Postmodernity is experiencing a cosmic and mystical resurgence. This is evidenced in the growing interest in spirituality and world religions (Capra, Steindl-Rast, Matus 1992).

The impact of postmodernism can be measured in the variety of New and Old Testament methodologies in the twentieth century. The multi-dimensional nature of the methodologies is evident. Some of these methodologies include the following: *Structuralism*, a text-attentive approach, which from the perspective of the 1990s seems restrictive and prescriptive, with its own formalist bias. *Reader-response theory* refers to the approach where the emphasis is away from the author of the text and towards the reader. *Rhetorical criticism* deals with the strategies of the text by which it captures or orchestrates its audience. The *mythological approach* deals with the mythological character of biblical stories, which, while related to history, nevertheless reveal the workings of the human mind. *Liberation hermeneutics* is characterized by a bias towards the oppressed. An *interreligious approach* to understanding scripture comprises, 'a cross-cultural level of scriptural interpretation – an associative reading of scriptures from diverse traditions which is hoped would affect a revitalized understanding of

one through dialogue with others' (Kourie 1995:176). *Spiritual hermeneutics* has come to the fore in recent times. Spirituality does not refer to 'piety' or 'other-worldly' connotations only. The term should be seen in a much broader context: it refers to the *raison-d'être* of our lives, the meaning and values to which we subscribe, whether they be other-worldly or very much concerns of this world. Spirituality refers to a person's ultimate values and commitments (Kourie 1995:173-175). These different methods of interpretation are only a glimpse of the diversity that exists.

It is of importance to this study to ascertain the basic method of interpretation that is used by the charismatics. Charismatic hermeneutics will therefore be discussed below.

4.2.2 Charismatic hermeneutics

Although Pentecostalism is basically classified into *Classical Pentecostalism* and *Neo-Pentecostalism* or the Charismatic Movement, the basic approach to the interpretation of scripture in both instances remains the same. The terms Pentecostal and charismatic are often used together with regard to their basic methods of biblical interpretation (Albrecht 1999). However, the charismatics, according to Albrecht (1999:41), might have a greater need for a well thought-out basis for their experience. Moore (1987:4) points out four aspects of the Pentecostal and charismatic approach to the interpretation of scripture. Firstly, scripture is viewed as a 'living word' which interprets us. The Spirit flows through the word in ways we cannot dictate, calculate or programme. Thus, God and the word cannot be put in boxes and are not limited by traditions of humankind. Secondly, the charismatic experience of the Holy Spirit is grounded in a relational epistemology where knowing about God, and directly experiencing God perpetually, inform and depend on one another. The Pentecostal and charismatic experience is a legitimate presupposition of biblical interpretation

(Stronstad 1992:18). Thirdly, the responsibility of the believer to be a witness is grounded in the distinct belief in the priest- and prophet-hood of all believers. Lastly, scripture is approached communally in the church in order to hear what God may say to the entire congregation. It is felt that one individual cannot have the full knowledge of God.

For Stronstad (1992:25) Pentecostal or charismatic hermeneutics consists of three elements: it is *experiential*, on both the presupposition and the verification levels; it is *rational*, in that it incorporates both historical and grammatical principles of exegesis; lastly it is *pneumatic*, recognizing the Spirit as the illuminator as well as the inspirer of scripture. Autry (1993:42) concurs with these multi-dimensional elements but adds history, language, existence in time, openness to transcendence and community. The goal of studying the scripture is knowledge of (not simply about) God. It is important to recover the author's intended meaning for the original audience in order to serve the aim of knowing God. What the text means when read correctly (that is when understanding its original meaning) supports how the text functions - that is the creative reading. Pentecostals and charismatics believe that the same God who acted in the history of the church speaks and acts today. Therefore a Pentecostal/charismatic approach to scripture makes visible the hermeneutical implications of God's present activity (Autry 1993:49). For this reason Cargal (1993:168) argues that charismatic hermeneutics stands against the philosophical presupposition that only that which is historically and objectively true is meaningful, a presupposition shared by the fundamentalists and modernity. He argues that many forms of Pentecostal and charismatic hermeneutics 'have affinities with and could benefit from the insights of a variety of postmodern approaches to texts' (Cargal 1993:165). These include multiplicity of meanings and the dialogical role of experience.

In summary, charismatic hermeneutics include three basic elements: rationality, pneumatics and experience. The Bible is used as the Word of God and the prime source for justifying charismatic belief, life and experience. 'The Bible as word is seen as speaking to contemporary needs, sometimes in an overly simplistic interpretation, but always relevant in "the now" (Albrecht 1999:229). In order to hear the Bible speak in 'the now' it is interpreted rationally and this involves the use of disciplines such as historical and grammatical principles in order to determine the original meaning of the text. In other words, an emphasis is placed on determining what 'really' happened in the life of the early Christian situation as recorded in the Bible. This task of determining the original meaning is believed to be possible because of the help and involvement of the Holy Spirit, who is not only inspirer but also revealer of truth in the present. Determining the original meaning of the text does not imply that only that which is historically and objectively true is meaningful, but a multiplicity of meanings and the dialogical role of an experience as revealed by the Spirit for a present, given, situation also form part of this interpretation. The importance of the Holy Spirit in revealing the message of the Bible in 'the now' renders a type of freedom of interpretation that could exceed the religious traditions of humankind. In a sense this approach could be viewed as supernaturalism¹. The God that acted in history still acts today, and this means that an application of scripture represents a present activity of God in charismatic hermeneutics. What God did in the past can still happen today and therefore similar experiences to those recorded in the bible are envisaged as possible in the present.

¹ Supernaturalism refers to the belief that humankind can acquire knowledge in other ways than by means of the intellect, namely through divine revelation, but that such knowledge can be verified by the use of human reason (Deist 1984:165).

4.2.3 The governing presupposition of this chapter

It is important to establish the point of view that is taken in this chapter. The major aim of this study is to establish the spirituality of the phenomenon of the Toronto Blessing against the background of Christian spirituality in general. Christian spirituality is defined generally as experiencing God through an intimate encounter with God at conversion, but also as an intimate relationship with the personal God through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, with the aim of becoming more like Christ. The Bible provides guidelines in reaching this goal. Thus a biblical foundation is needed in Christian spirituality. The assumption of this study, then, is that the spirituality that the charismatics practice should be *biblical*. I am aware that the word *biblical* could once again mean different things to different people because of the diversity in biblical interpretations (cf. 4.2.1). The term *biblical* in this context however, assumes that the *original sense* of the biblical text is paramount. *Original sense* refers to the original intention of the author of the text. This could also be problematic, seeing that a distinction could also be made between 'what a text meant' and 'what a text means'. Most people recognize that what the Bible text says to us today is not precisely the same as what it said to its original readers. The two meanings are related but not the same. It can be said, however, that what the text means is different from, but constrained by, what the text meant originally. The phrase 'constrained by' is very important, seeing that the text cannot mean just anything (Smith 1998:42). I concur with the view that looking at the original meaning of a biblical text poses a constraint, in that what is commonly established to be the original meaning is just that, whether this meaning is viewed as the 'word of God' or merely an human interpretation of 'words of God or dealings of God'. From the original meaning of the text, of course, different interpretations will once again emerge.

Christians can and do reach varying conclusions about the meaning of texts for today. They differ both because of our deficiency in knowledge and because of

the richness of the Bible. The fact remains that both sources of variation are constrained by the original sense of the text. In other words we cannot say that, because we are not exactly sure what a text meant, it might mean anything at all. Nor can we say that, because the Bible is rich in meaning, it means anything we want. For Christians, what the Bible means today must bear a particular kind of relation to what the Bible originally meant (Smith 1998:44). The Bible can only be viewed as authoritative if we discipline ourselves to show how our interpretation is related to the original sense of the text.

Bearing this in mind, the following basic guidelines in biblical interpretation can be proposed. As MacArthur (1992:103) puts it, 'Misinterpreting the Bible is ultimately no better than disbelieving it.' In order to evaluate the charismatics' exposition of the Toronto Blessing it is important not only to be familiar with their hermeneutics but also to establish basic guidelines for biblical interpretation.

4.2.4 Basic guidelines in Biblical interpretation

Basic guidelines refer to principles that should assist with the proper interpretation of specific Bible passages. The task of hermeneutics is to discover the meaning of the text in its proper setting; to draw meaning from scripture rather than to read one's presuppositions into it (MacArthur 1992:103). The reader can never assume that his or her understanding of the text is the same thing as the Holy Spirit's or the author's intent. We, the readers, invariably bring to the text all that we are, with all of our experiences, culture, and prior understandings of words and ideas. Sometimes what we bring to the text, unintentionally, leads us astray, or else causes us to read all kinds of foreign ideas into the text (Fee & Stuart 1993:14).

The need for interpretation lies in the nature of Scripture itself. Historically the church has understood the nature of Scripture in much the same way as it has

understood the person of Christ – the Bible is at the same time human and divine. This dual nature of the Bible necessitates the task of interpretation.

The very first task of the interpreter is termed exegesis. Exegesis is the careful, systematic study of Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning. This is basically a historical task. It is an attempt to hear the 'word' as the original recipients heard it, to find out what was the original intent of the words of the Bible. Two aspects are important in this regard; context and content. There are two kinds of context: *historical* and *literary*.

The historical context has to do with several things: the time and culture of the author and the audience, that is, the geographical, topographical, and political factors that are relevant to the author's setting; and the occasion of the text. Is it a letter, psalm, prophetic oracle, or another genre? All such matters are especially important for understanding (Fee & Stuart 1993:22).

The literary context means that one should determine the meaning of words, phrases and sentences, and for the most part the meaning of these biblical utterances must be understood in relation to preceding and succeeding utterances.

Hermeneutics ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis, but is also used in the narrower sense of seeking the contemporary relevance of ancient texts. In order to find the meaning for the 'here and now' we need to ascertain what the original meaning of the text.

The following principles can be used in the interpretation of the Bible:

- (1) *The literal principle.* This principle does not refer to an unequivocal rigid literalism. It means, rather, that Scripture must be understood in its normal sense, including the use of figures of speech such as parables,

hyperbole, simile, metaphor, and symbolism. The first thing the careful interpreter looks for is the literal meaning, not some mystical, deeper, hidden secret, or spiritual interpretation. Although figurative language and symbolism occur in Scripture, their nature is quite evident in the contexts where they are employed. If an interpreter abandons literal interpretation in favour of mystical or allegorical interpretation, all hope of achieving accuracy and coherence is discarded (MacArthur 1992:109-110).

- (2) *The historical principle.* Another crucial step in understanding the meaning of a text is to have some grasp of the cultural, geographical, and political setting in which the passage was written. If the historical context is understood, the passage will be understood better (Fee & Stuart 1993:22; MacArthur 1992:111).
- (3) *The grammatical principle.* The syntactical construction of a passage is the key to its meaning. The meaning of a text can sometimes hinge on something as simple as a preposition. It matters a great deal whether a passage says 'because of', 'through', 'into', 'in', 'by' or 'with'. It is also important to bear in mind that in some cases the original word used can be translated by two or more different English words. Also, if a sentence refers to 'this' or 'it,' it is important to know the antecedent of the pronoun (MacArthur 1992:112).
- (4) *The synthesis principle.* The expression *scriptura scripturam interpretatur* or 'Scripture interprets Scripture' means that obscure passages in Scripture must be understood in the light of clearer ones. Scripture is put together with Scripture, with the aim of arriving at a clear, consistent meaning by means of the *synthesis principle* (Fee & Stuart 1993:26; MacArthur 1992:113).
- (5) *The practical principle.* This refers to the question: what does it all have to do with me? What does it mean in my situation, in the 'here and now'? At this stage it is important to show how interpretations of the text are related to the original sense of the text (Fee & Stuart 1993:25).

(6) *Mystical/Spiritual principle.* The question to be asked here is whether it is possible for the text to have an additional, deeper meaning beyond its original intent. After all, this happens in the New Testament itself in the way it sometimes uses the Old Testament. There are mystical experiences of Jesus. There is the baptism in the Jordan when the Spirit descended like a dove and the voice of the Father was heard. There is the transfiguration on the mountain – a scene that fired the imagination of the Byzantine church – when Jesus' clothes became dazzling white and there appeared to him Moses and Elijah speaking of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Or there is the prayer at the last supper when he gave them his body and blood. There was his dark night of agony at Gethsemane when he sweated blood; and there was the prayer of Jesus on the cross when he forgave his enemies and with the psalmist cried out: *Lama Sabachthani*. Peter went up on the roof to pray and fell into a trance. He had a vision of a huge sheet containing all kinds of animals and he, too, heard a voice. Ananias saw visions and heard voices; so did Cornelius the centurion. Prayer is mystical. There can be pitfalls and one can easily be deceived. 'Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light' (2 Cor. 11:14) (Johnston 2000:11). That means that a fuller, deeper meaning is possible and should not be ignored. Fee & Stuart (1993:27) point out that Roman Catholicism has less of a problem in determining the deeper or mystical sense of a text because of the magisterium, the authority vested in the official teaching of the church, that determines a fuller sense of the text. Protestants, however have no magisterium, and we should be concerned whenever anyone says he or she knows God's deeper meaning in a text.

The following errors should also be avoided. (a) One should refrain from making a point at the price of proper interpretation. What is meant here is that a preacher or pastor incorporates a foreign meaning into the text to get a desired

response; (b) Superficial study of the Bible should be avoided. The Bible should be handled carefully and with responsibility. The understanding of the Bible is not a matter of personal opinion; (c) A text of the Bible should not be allegorized or spiritualized unless the text itself calls for it. Some people use Scripture as a fable to teach whatever point they want to put across. Instead of seeking the meaning of the biblical material, they make it an allegory to support whatever they want to teach (MacArthur 1992:107).

When all is said and done the cardinal principle still remains: when interpreting the Bible the interpreter should always guard against making the Bible say whatever he or she wants it to say. Hermeneutics in this regard provides some checks and balances against falling into that trap. In addition, whatever interpretation is given this reading should always have some relation to the original meaning of the text.

The texts used by charismatics in order to substantiate the biblical foundation of the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing will now be evaluated in terms of the above criteria.

4.3 CERTAIN PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS EVALUATED IN THE LIGHT OF BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS

4.3.1 Introduction

Pentecostalism is seen as a renewal of Pentecost. Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality has as its foundation the account of the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. McArthur (1992:209) describes the importance of Acts 2 to Pentecostals and charismatics as: 'the charismatic touchstone, containing what many Pentecostals and charismatics view as the core truth of the New Testament...'. Emphasis on the empowerment by the Holy Spirit and the accompanying physical signs is an

important characteristic of Pentecostal/charismatic teaching. Other Scriptures in the Old and New Testament are also used to buttress this spirituality. It is necessary to examine the foundation text for charismatic spirituality - Acts 2 - in order to ascertain the scriptural basis for the supernatural intervention normally accompanied by physical manifestations.

4.3.2 Certain biblical accounts used by charismatics to substantiate the Toronto Blessing manifestations

Two important passages of scripture, amongst others, are used by charismatics on which to base their interpretation of the occurrence of supernatural manifestations. Acts 2 and Joel 2 can rightfully be labelled as two key passages in the charismatic interpretation of supernatural experiences. In the case of the Toronto Blessing the same two passages of scripture, with others, play an important role.

4.3.2.1 Acts 2:1-13

A typical argument found among Pentecostals/charismatics is that 'When God visited these early Christians with power (Acts 2) – something happened. Similarly, when God moves in power today we can expect something dramatic to happen' (Porter 1995:43). The event of Pentecost begins in a house where the disciples were all together (verse 1). It is not clear whether this house was the same location as the 'upper room' where the last supper was eaten, or one of the many rooms or halls of the temple (Witherington 1998:131; Stott 1990:61). The time of this event is precise, however, it occurred when the day of Pentecost came (verse 1). The occasion was the Harvest Festival because it celebrated the completion of the grain harvest. Pentecost was also called the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost because it took place seven weeks or fifty days after the Passover, which was when the grain harvesting began (Stott 1990:62).

The description of the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 is accompanied by three phenomena: a sound, a sight and strange speech (Stott 1990:62). In the first few verses of Acts 2, Luke uses the principle of analogy. In verse 2, firstly, a sound from heaven was like a violent wind but was not one. Secondly, the tongues were like fire but were not fire. In verse 3 Luke says there seemed to be tongues like fire that came to rest on each believer. The sound of this event is said to have filled the whole house where the disciples were sitting. Thirdly, all in the room were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in 'other tongues' as the Spirit gave them utterance. The speech was in languages which were not ordinary, but in some way 'other' (Stott 1990:62; Witherington III 1998:132). These three experiences seemed like natural phenomena (wind, fire and speech), yet they were supernatural both in origin and in character. Three of the higher senses of the people there were affected, yet what they heard was more than sensory. It was profoundly significant. What did these signs mean? Stott (1990:63) points out that they represented a new era of the Spirit, which had begun, as John the Baptist proclaimed. The wind may have symbolized *power* (such as Jesus had promised them for his witnesses, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8). The fire-like sight signifies *purity* (like the live coal which cleansed the prophet in Isaiah 6:6-7) and the speech in other languages the *universality* of the Christian church. Criswell (1978:72) is of the opinion that the 'sound of a rushing wind' typifies the *breath of God*, the presence of the Lord: the very Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon the people in the house. The *tongues as of fire* refer to the shekinah glory that came from heaven; it was cloven and it glowed over the heads of each of them. This signified their empowerment to proclaim the gospel. The speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance signifies that God intends that every tribe and language under the sun hear this glorious message in their own language and speech. Important to note about the speaking in other languages is the fact that it was not the result of intoxication, of drinking too much 'sweet new wine'. It might have seemed as if they were drunk because they had lost control over their mental and physical functions. Peter later assured the crowd

that they were not intoxicated (Stott 1990:66). Peter's assurance that they were not intoxicated does not imply either that they were drunk with something else, not necessarily even the Spirit. The assurance of that there was no drunkenness must be seen in relation to the unusual behaviour of the disciples and as a means of emphasizing the 'realness' of the experience as an experience above human effort, in other words a supernatural experience. Nowhere can any suggestion be found that Peter's assurance that the disciples were not intoxicated actually means 'spiritual drunkenness'.

There is no doubt that the day of Pentecost was characterized by supernatural phenomena. People were speaking in 'other' languages than their own language. Furthermore these languages were unknown to, and not previously learned by them. What they saw and heard was supernatural. What is important, however, is that the whole experience had a particular significance in that it prepared and empowered the apostles for their task as Jesus had promised. The verb 'filled' in verse 4 describes an initial endowment of someone by the Spirit for service (Witherington 1998:133). Furthermore the Pentecost experience was not for self-edification so much as it was for outward service. Another important fact is that no other physical phenomena are reported in Acts 2 apart from 'a sound from heaven that sounded like a rushing wind', 'tongues like fire' and 'other languages'. No mention is made of people 'slain in the Spirit' or 'laughing uncontrollably' as in the case with the Toronto Blessing.

Pentecostals/charismatics refer to Acts 2 as one of the foundational Scriptures for their spirituality. This chapter (Acts 2) justifies supernatural intervention by God through his Spirit. The experience of Acts 2 is seen as an introduction to the era of the Spirit, which started on the day of Pentecost. A continuous manifestation of the Holy Spirit is therefore envisaged by Pentecostals and charismatics as not only part of the New Testament church, but as also evident today.

4.3.2.2 Joel 2:19-32

Another key text used by Pentecostals and charismatics in conjunction with Acts 2 to justify the manifestations of the Spirit is Joel 2:19-32. 'It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophecy and your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions'. The fact that Peter quoted this text on the day of Pentecost has caused some Pentecostals/charismatics to believe that Peter was pointing to Pentecost as a fulfillment of Joel 2:28.

Some charismatics spiritualize 'the former rain' and 'the latter rain' of Joel 2:23. They argue that the former rain refers to the day of Pentecost and the latter rain to the outpouring in the twentieth century. This latter rain, according to them, is accompanied by physical manifestations of the Spirit. Throughout the Old Testament the 'former rain' refers to the autumn rains and the 'latter rain' to the spring rains. According to McArthur (1992:289) the 'former' and 'latter' rain have nothing to do with Pentecost, the twentieth century, or the Holy Spirit. 'Pentecostals and charismatics cannot use Joel 2:28 as a basis for saying tongues have been poured out a second time. In the first place, Joel did not even mention tongues. In the second place, the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was not the ultimate fulfillment of Joel's prophecy'. Wright (1996:228) is also of the opinion that the prophecy of Joel was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. He proposes a double fulfillment – at Pentecost and at the end of the age. The signs that have not been fulfilled yet in Joel's prophecy will be fulfilled at the Second Coming.

It seems clear that if Joel 2:19-32 is understood in its original context, it cannot be used to substantiate the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing.

(a) Pentecostal/charismatic interpretation: Acts 2:1-13 and Joel 2:19-32

Acts 2:1-13 is used by charismatics to substantiate different phenomena associated with the Toronto Blessing:

- Glossolalia.

In chapter 3 glossolalia is discussed at length. According to biblical accounts glossolalia can be found in the original sense of the text. Different accounts in the book of Acts as well as in 1 Corinthians 14 are used to support these claims. Varying opinions are found, however, about the modern practice of glossolalia. These opinions can be likened to the ends of a continuum. On the left side, some scholars believe that the practice of glossolalia is still relevant today. The practice of using ecstatic languages is still exercised in most Pentecostal and charismatic churches. In the middle of the spectrum, other scholars believe that glossolalia refers to a known language of other people, not one's own, and that this unknown language can be spoken in certain circumstances if God so permits and wills. The aim of such a language is to proclaim the gospel in the other people's own language. This experience is viewed as a supernatural intervention of God. On the right side of the continuum are found the scholars that believe that glossolalia ceased at the end of the apostolic age and that no occurrence of it prevails any longer (discussed in 3.2.3.2).

- Spiritual drunkenness

Acts 2:14 is often interpreted by charismatics so as to imply that people can be 'drunk in the Spirit'. Jackson (1994:305-306) is of the opinion that the apostles and disciples would not have been accused of being drunk merely because they were speaking in different languages. They would have been accused of inebriation because they were acting like drunks; laughing, falling, because some

were using slurred speech and others were exhibiting boldness through lack of restraint. The analogy of the gift of the Spirit being 'new wine' would lend itself to such a connection. Hoffman (1994:6) points out that the signs of spiritual drunkenness are not being able to speak, walk or stand, even amongst the leaders who try to preach, teach or lead services. Hoffman also refers to Acts 2:13-15 as proof of this phenomenon and concludes from this passage that the believers must have been acting like men and women drunk with wine. Wright (1996:86) reports that spokespersons for the Vineyard usually refer to Peter's statement to the onlookers at Pentecost, 'These men are not drunk, as you suppose', to assert that the anointing makes people act like typical drunks.

The claim that the disciples were spiritually drunk (as Jackson stated) because they had slurred speech is hardly possible. If 'spiritual drunkenness' is considered in the light of Acts 2:11, which states that the crowd were amazed because they could understand the speakers 'declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues', this view does not make sense. A further confirmation that the theory of spiritual drunkenness is not tenable is found in the fact that Peter was able to preach sensibly and that 3 000 people were convicted and converted without being interrupted by laughter or shrieks (Wright 1996:87). As Porter (1995:51) points out, there is no proof that the believers were 'drunk', firstly because Peter strongly denies it and secondly because the remark about the believers being drunk is not stated as a fact but as speculation by those who try to make sense out of the unusual events that were taking place.

Another Scripture is normally linked to the concept of being 'drunk in the Spirit': proponents of the Toronto Blessing also point to Ephesians 5:18, 'Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.' According to Jackson (1994:307), 'Being filled with the God's Spirit is similar to being drunk on wine. The difference is that the former is Holy and the other is sinful'. Porter (1995:52) reminds one of another Scripture that is used to

substantiate the notion of 'spiritual drunkenness'. This is John 7:37, where Jesus invites anyone who is thirsty to come to him and drink, and is linked with Acts 2:15, implying that drinking from Jesus would lead to 'spiritual drunkenness'. The passage in John is metaphorical, using the analogy of thirst and drinking to speak of belief and the receiving of the Spirit. No mention is, however, made of any 'spiritual drunkenness' as a result of drinking.

If the quoted verse (Eph 5:18) is viewed in context it is clear that Paul is not comparing the filling of the Spirit with drunkenness, but contrasting the two. Paul has been repeatedly contrasting the debauchery and ignorance of the Gentile life-style with the enlightenment and holiness of walking with Christ (Wright 1996:88).

The conclusion is that no biblical proof can be found in the proposed verses to support the claim of 'spiritual drunkenness' which is upheld by the proponents of the Toronto Blessing (Porter 1995:52).

4.3.3 Charismatic substantiation of the Toronto Blessing manifestations

In the method that will be followed below, it is not the intention to give a lengthy exegesis of all the verses that are referred to. Instead the verses will be listed, the original sense will be indicated and comments made on the possible application thereof to the Toronto Blessing.

4.3.3.1 'Slain in the Spirit'

A very prominent characteristic of the Toronto Blessing is that people are (so-called) 'slain in the Spirit': they fall to the ground when they receive the blessing. An easy answer to this phenomenon is that people cannot stand in the 'presence of God' or that 'people are not able to stand when the Holy Spirit touches them'.

It almost seems as if the 'falling in the Spirit', as it is also referred to, serves as confirmation that the person has indeed received the blessing. The distinctive characteristic of this phenomenon is that people fall backward and remain prone sometimes for hours at a time (Wright 1996:81). Jackson (1994:3) points out that this phenomenon is also called 'resting in the Spirit' because 'people feel weak and find it difficult to do anything but rest with God'.

The following Scriptures are used by Jackson (1994) to substantiate the belief that to be 'slain in the Spirit' is indeed biblical:

- The account of Ezekiel, who fell on his face in the presence of the glory of God (Ezek. 3:23). The Spirit lifted Ezekiel to his feet (verse 24). It is interesting to note that Ezekiel did not fall backward but on his face. Falling backwards typifies an out of control gesture, while falling on one's face typifies an act of the will to worship because of the glory of God, that is, a response of reverence in this case.
- The account of Daniel, who falls on his face in the presence of the angel Gabriel (Dan. 8:17; 10:9). In both these cases the angel touches him and commands him to stand upright. His falling on his face in this particular instance is the result of reverence and fear, associated with the presence of the angel.
- The falling down of the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:6). Once again, when the disciples fell on their faces Jesus touched them and said 'Arise, and do not be afraid' (Matt. 17:7). The reason for the disciples falling on their faces seems obviously to be the result of fear, as Jesus comforts them by saying 'do not be afraid'.
- The account of the soldiers who came to arrest Jesus, yet 'drew back and fell to the ground' (John 18:6). No evidence can be found in this account either that this experience was the result of a blessing from God.

- The account of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus where he fell to the ground (Acts 9:4). A light from heaven flashed around him (verse 3) and then he heard a voice saying: 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' (verse 4). Not all scholars accept the supernatural element of Saul's conversion. Such scholars attribute the 'light' and 'voice' of his experience to sunstroke or epileptic seizure. A partly psychological and partly physiological explanation of his conversion has been proposed². Most scholars, however, do accept the supernatural element of Saul's conversion. Stott (1990:165-166) points out that the experience of Saul must not be seen as normative to Christian conversion in the sense that every conversion must be accompanied by light and a voice. A normative element of this experience is that each conversion will portray an encounter with God, which in itself is supernatural. This encounter of Saul was not out of his control: as Stott (1990:173) describes it, 'Gradually, and without violence, Jesus pricked Saul's mind and conscience with his goads. Then he revealed himself to him by the light and the voice, not to overwhelm him, but in such a way as to enable him to make a free response'. Saul is not forced into an uncontrollable situation but merely responds to a gracious appearance of Jesus. Saul's falling to the ground does not refer to a force that threw him to the ground. Rather it speaks of his willing and reverent response to God. In verse 6 Paul is commanded to arise and go into the city.
- Peter who fell into a trance on the roof of Simon the Tanner (Acts 10:10).
- Paul's vision of Paradise (2 Cor. 12:1-4).

² A proponent of this viewpoint is Sargant (1957), in his book *Battle for the mind*, subtitled 'a psychological conversion and brainwashing'.

John falling at the feet of Jesus (Rev. 1:17). In this case John fell at the feet of Jesus because of the glorious appearance of Jesus Christ. Jesus then touched John with the words 'Do not be afraid' (Rev. 1:17).

The 'slaying in the Spirit' is also justified by the passage which reports about the ark of the covenant being taken into the temple: 2 Chronicles 5 describes the glory of the Lord that filled the temple. The glory is described as a cloud. Jackson (1994:3) interprets the passage as follows, since the Hebrew word for glory (*kabod*) means a 'weight'. Falling in the presence of God might be understood as being overcome by the weight of God's glory, forcing people to the floor. The falling can also be interpreted as God putting them to sleep for the purpose of divine intervention, rest and healing.

In all the above accounts, with the exception of Peter on the roof of Simon the Tanner and Paul's vision of Paradise, people willingly fell to the ground or on their faces as a result of adoration in the presence of God or an angel or because of fear. In none of these cases did any person fall backwards. In my opinion these Scriptures cannot be used to substantiate the idea that to be 'slain in the Spirit' is biblically founded. With the possible exception of Ezra's day in 2 Chronicles, all these examples concern private and individual encounters with God. We have no precedent for large-scale congregational 'carpet time', nor for any repeatable external phenomena that may prove to be an infallible sign of refreshing from the presence of God (Wright 1996:82). Since 'slain' is synonymous with death rather than an ecstatic encounter with God, the account of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11 perhaps comes closest to a biblical example of someone being 'slain in the Spirit'. 'The charismatic practice of slaying people in the Spirit has become so commonplace that many charismatics may be surprised to learn that the Scripture is utterly silent about such a gift.

There is no record that any apostle or leader in the early church had the ability to knock people into a Spirit-filled catalepsy³ (McArthur 1992:185).

4.3.3.2 Trembling and shaking

The following verses are cited to justify the shaking and trembling associated with the Toronto Blessing (Porter 1995:56-57).

- Jeremiah 5:22. 'Do you not fear me? Says the Lord. Will you not tremble at my presence, who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea ...'. God is commanding an unrepentant Judah – characterized as 'foolish and senseless' (verse 21) to repent because they do not fear him and his awesome power. The trembling in this context refers to respect and fear for the almighty God and does not point to a touch or filling by the Holy Spirit as is implied by the proponents of the Toronto Blessing.
- Psalm 2:11. 'Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.' These words are addressed to the kings and rulers of the earth, so that they might not be destroyed. The trembling referred to in this verse does not signify a trembling because of an intervention by God but rather refers to a respectful and awestruck heart.
- Habakkuk 3:16. 'When I heard my body trembled ...' In this verse the prophet in his prayer to God quakes at the destructive power of God in anticipation of God's destruction of his enemies.

None of the abovementioned accounts cited by the charismatics, however, refers to trembling or shaking as a result of a supernatural intervention of God similar to

³ Catalepsy is a waking state phenomenon which is apparently related to the low muscle tone peculiar to D sleep. An apparently normal, wide-awake person will suddenly collapse like a sack of potatoes, and then remain lying, fully conscious but powerless, able to move only his or her eyes. Catalepsy can occur in any emotion-charged situation and involves a paralysis of muscles, amongst other things (Jordean & Jordean 1989:242).

what is claimed to be happening in the Toronto Blessing. As Porter (1995:56) explains it, 'It is undeniable that the Bible records incidents of trembling and shaking before God, but these supposedly parallel passages are being misapplied in that they are taken as justification of similar phenomena supposedly witnessed in the Toronto Blessing churches'.

4.3.3.3 Weeping

Another manifestation, although reported relatively infrequently, is weeping. Chevreau (1994:14) explains his experience as follows, 'As I lay there, I started weeping. Wailing, if the truth be told, for something like forty minutes A long-standing bitterness and resentment was lifted in the process'. Chevreau reports of another time when he fell on his face and wept for three and a half hours (*ibid.* 1994:16). Jackson (1994:307) proposes that crying is a natural and normal response to the movement of the Holy Spirit. This is true, as many Scriptures point out. When Ezra read the neglected Scriptures, 'All the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law' (Neh. 8:9). God commended Israel for responding to the Law under Josiah by weeping (2 Chron. 34:27). Those who heard Peter preaching about Christ at Pentecost 'were cut to the heart' (Acts 2:37).

Wright (1996:85) makes a noteworthy remark with regard to the purpose of weeping in the Toronto Blessing,

The impression is given, and often expressed, that God is healing people's deep inner hurts instantaneously. This implies that God heals people spiritually without them going through the process of sorrow, confession and repentance. Of course, God may do gracious and transforming things in a spiritual crisis. But it is contrary to all we know from Scripture about the spiritual healing

process for people to come to abiding peace without any process of self-examination or conviction.

Weeping could be part of a religious experience, seeing that a person could certainly be emotionally touched by Scripture and the Holy Spirit. To say, however, that the weeping accompanying the Toronto Blessing has another purpose, namely spiritual healing, is in my opinion not in line with the general message of the Bible. Sanctification occurs after conviction, confession and sorrow, as sins are recognized and relinquished, rather than after weeping. Interestingly enough, as mentioned earlier, weeping is not as often encountered in the Toronto Blessing as 'uncontrollable laughter', which is viewed as the benchmark of the blessing.

4.3.3.4 Uncontrollable laughter

The Toronto Blessing is also called the 'laughing revival' because uncontrollable laughter has been associated with it from the beginning. Rodney Howard-Browne calls himself the 'Holy Ghost bartender' because of his supposed ability to dispense the 'new wine of laughter' (Wright 1996:82). He also refers to himself as the 'Holy Ghost Hitman' (Hanegraaff 2001:21). Outbursts of uproarious laughter almost invariably characterize meetings affected by the Toronto Blessing.

Stibbe (1995:110), one of the proponents of the Toronto Blessing, states that 'if we are to develop some theological foundations for assessing this experience (laughter) we must use the Bible as our guide'. Culver (1995:68) is of the opinion that Stibbe believes that the more references one can find, the more certain one can be of having biblical support. Stibbe (1995) lists thirty-seven verses in the Bible concerning laughter. Stibbe's whole argument is based on two categories of laughter that he identifies in the Bible, namely, (1) mocking, derisive laughter,

a key reference for which is Luke 26:21: 'Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh'. The word *gelaō* for laugh is of interest to Stibbe. He claims that the laughter referred to here is mocking and derisive (Stibbe 1995:116). (2) Joyful laughter, *sugchairo*, which Stibbe bases on the verb in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, in Genesis 21:6b, where Sarah, speaking about the birth of Isaac, anticipates the reaction of those who will hear of the birth. The verb in the Hebrew text that describes their reaction is *tsachaq*. Almost all English versions render *tsachaq* as 'laugh'. Most translate the phrase as 'will laugh with me', which suggests that Sarah's neighbours will share her own delight at Isaac's birth. The Revised Standard Version (RSV), however, has 'will laugh over me', which suggests that the laughter expresses a degree of amusement at Sarah's situation (Gen 18:12). Both senses are possible (Culver 1995:73). The extraordinary phenomenon of laughter in the Toronto Blessing, according to Culver (1995:76):

- (a) is uncontrolled/uncontrollable;
- (b) is prolonged beyond the usual duration;
- (c) occurs in the absence of the usual stimuli of laughter;
- (d) is believed to be a specifically religious experience owing to the unmediated activity of the Holy Spirit;
- (e) usually takes place in the communal context of a public meeting.

Some of the verses proposed by Stibbe (1995) and others such as Hoffman (1994) and Jackson (1994) will be examined at this point. The verses will be listed and then briefly evaluated in their original context.

(a) Derisive laughter

- Genesis 17:17, 18:12, 18:13 and 18:15 refer to the sceptical mocking with which Abraham and Sarah responded to God's promise concerning the birth of Isaac. Culver (1995:76) remarks that

references to these verses cannot be taken as a model for Christian behaviour.

- Genesis 38:23 and 2 Chronicles 30:10. The former concerns the contemptuous laughter of which Judah fears he may become the object, as a result of his relationship with a prostitute. The latter refers to the mocking laughter with which Israel refused the summons to Hezekiah's Passover (Culver 1995:76).
- Psalm 2:4, 37:13 and 59:8. In these verses the derisive laughter of God against his enemies is described. Such laughter cannot be viewed as normative to the Christian experience, as Culver (1995:76) points out: 'It is scarcely safe to assume without good cause that what is appropriate to God is appropriate to his people'. Porter (1995:55) adds to this: '... these are examples of God laughing at his enemies, hardly suitable to justify the Toronto Blessing's displays of laughter, especially if laughter is to be equated with joy. The concept is apparently being misconstrued'.
- Psalm 80:6, Lamentations 1:7, Ezekiel 23:32 and Habbakuk 1:10. These verses all refer to Israel's enemies that laugh at her. Once again they cannot be used to substantiate the laughter accompanying the Toronto Blessing.
- Matthew 9:24, Mark 5:40 and Luke 8:53 describe the scornful laughter with which the mourners greeted Jesus at the home of Jairus.

All the abovementioned verses fail to satisfy the proposal by charismatics that derisive laughter can be established as a model in Christian experience. Furthermore, it is scarcely necessary to point out that in any case the laughter they describe cannot be equated with the unusual phenomenon of ecstatic laughter (Culver 1995:77).

(b) Joyful laughter

The following verses are used to support the notion of joyful laughter:

- Proverbs 14:13 and Ecclesiastes 2:2, 3:4, 7:3 and 10:19. All these verses are general philosophical reflections on laughter and the human condition. As Culver (1995:77) indicates, they might be profitable to Christians, 'but they will not find in them encouragement to laugh nor any mention of the sort of laughter associated with the Toronto Blessing'.
- Genesis 21:6 and Psalm 126:2. The former reports Sarah's laughter and predicts that of her neighbours at the birth of Isaac. The latter verse describes the laughter of the freed captives returning to Zion. Nothing in either of these texts condemns laughter, but neither is there anything that suggests or indicates that it was expected or required.
- The only two verses that address Christians directly and explicitly on the subject of laughter are James 4:9 and Luke 6:21. James 4:9 rebukes the careless laughter which shows the absence of humility and repentance. According to Culver (1995:78), Luke 6:21 is the only verse in the Bible that positively and specifically predicates the laughter of Christians. Yet it does not speak of uncontrollable, prolonged, unusual laughter of the sort to be observed currently in the phenomenon of the Toronto Blessing. It does not speak of laughter in the present at all, but of laughter in the future. It is the laughter of those who have come into possession of the kingdom of God (Luke 6:20) and of their heavenly reward (Luke 6:23).

None of the texts considered and evaluated describes uncontrollable or unusually prolonged laughter. 'It was not mysterious or inexplicable in normal terms; if questioned, those who laughed could have pointed to a specific and normal reason or stimuli for their laughter' (Culver 1995:78). There is also no

reference to believe that any one laughed as a result of being touched directly by the Holy Spirit; they laughed for joy at the deliverance God had wrought in external circumstances, not because they had had an unmediated spiritual experience of God.

Since textual precedents for the charismatics' interpretations are too slim, Jackson (1994), Hoffman (1994) and others in the movement assume that joy and laughter are synonymous (Wright 1996:83). Jackson (1994:307) refers to John 17:13: 'the full measure of my joy within them'. He comments that the full measure within the Trinity is certainly full of laughter. Hoffman (1994:7) also cites a number of verses, Isaiah 9:3; 56:7; 51:3; Psalms 16:11; 25:6; 45:7 and Hebrews 1:9, that mention joy and/or gladness. Hoffman (1994:7) refers to Acts 13:52 - 'filled with joy and the Holy Spirit' - and then asks, 'Is it really so far fetched to believe that the disciples, as they were filled with the joy of the Lord, at times broke out in spontaneous and perhaps uncontrollable laughter?' These efforts by Hoffman and Jackson do not justify uncontrollable laughter as normative for Christian experience. Justification for the laughter associated with the Toronto Blessing cannot be based on speculation. Even if the disciples did break out in uncontrollable laughter (they did not, according to the Bible) this would still not be proof that such laughter should be normative for Christianity today. Christian joy in the New Testament is often equated with adversity, not with uproarious laughter. One example of this is James 1:2-3: 'Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance'. Other similar passages such as Philippians 2:17-18; 2 Corinthians 7:4-7; and 1 Peter 1:8 also convey this idea.

Many other verses with regard to joy are found in the Bible. In Luke 10:17 the disciples return from a mission with joy because the word of Jesus was fulfilled that demons would submit to them in Jesus's name. When Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection (Luke 24:41) they were filled with joy. Joy is a

Christian attribute: because of their salvation through Jesus Christ his people can be full of joy. Good news and tidings make people joyful. All the verses in the Bible referring to joy can be linked to God as a result of his mercy and goodness. Nowhere, however, is it stated that joy was uncontrollable as the result of some supernatural intervention by the Holy Spirit.

4.3.3.5 Animal noises

Participants in the Toronto Blessing also utter certain animal noises. These animal noises include roaring like a lion, barking like a dog, braying like a donkey or howling like wolves (Beverley 1995; Wright 1996; Richter 1995). The purpose of the roaring is explained as 'God's indignation at the state of the church and the impact of the enemy's presence in the church'. The roaring is also viewed as 'an announcement of God's intention to take back territory'⁴.

Long (1995:30) cautions about the roaring noise accompanying the Toronto Blessing as follows, 'It is better to speak in clear words rather than roaring'. He continues that people should be aware of manifestations imitated by Satan because scripture warns that Satan goes around like a lion and seeks to devour. Satan could get to people through imitations (2 Pet 5:7).

Not many texts are offered to substantiate the event of the roaring of a lion. The following texts, however, are mentioned:

- Hosea 11:10-11. 'They will follow the Lord; he will roar like a lion. When he roars his children will come trembling from the west. They will come like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria'. It is clear from the text itself that it cannot be used to justify roaring like a lion.

⁴ Quoted by Wright 1996 from Memorandum of Association of Vineyard Churches, 14 October 1994.

Firstly, this passage in the Old Testament's immediate context is in terms of a rebellious, ancient Israel. Secondly, God is pictured as the aggressive figure, with Israel depicted as trembling children following him. Thirdly, it is not the children who are roaring but God.

- In Hosea 13:7-8 when Israel is depicted as continuing to sin, God is depicted as a lion, a leopard and a bear, attacking and tearing sinful Israel to pieces. This message definitely renders no justification to any view of the experience as a blessing. Such a view is a misinterpretation of the passage.

It seems as if confusion and subjective interpretation reign in the justification of animal sounds. Jackson (1994) makes no mention of this phenomenon in his position paper on the manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing. Campbell⁵, according to Wright (1996:89), also does not deal with them in his paper. The limited number of verses used by proponents of the Toronto Blessing portrays a grey area with regard to this manifestation. It seems appropriate to conclude that nothing whatever in the Scripture can be found to cause one to believe that the Holy Spirit goes about making people sound and act like animals.

4.3.3.6 Further signs

According to Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality, the emphasis on accompanying manifestations of the Spirit is furthermore strengthened by Mark 16:15-20. The empowerment received through the baptism in the Holy Spirit has the aim of spreading the Gospel effectively. The Lord will work with his followers and confirm the word they proclaim by signs (Mark 16:20). Charismatics hold the view that since the command to preach the gospel to the whole world continues, the need to confirm that word by signs continues. They therefore claim that this

⁵ Wright 1996, citing Wes Campbell's paper 'Spiritual and Physical Manifestations of the Holy Spirit', Toronto Airport Vineyard, 15 October 1994, CRI transcripts p.76.

statement is a prediction of what will happen throughout church history – the gospel will be confirmed by signs that accompany its spread (Wright 1996:229). The crux of this passage, whether it is part of the Gospel of Mark⁶ or not, is that it is clearly linked with a specific action on the side of the disciples. The signs will follow as a result of the gospel being preached, pointing to a missionary effort to reach every creature. This passage can hardly then be used to point to the Toronto Blessing as a sign that God is confirming the word. As indicated in chapter three, not much preaching, let alone proclamation of the Gospel, takes place in the Toronto Blessing meetings. These meetings also cannot be viewed as 'missionary' efforts, seeing that they are attended mostly by believers seeking a 'blessing' from God.

4.4 COUNTER ARGUMENTS BY PROPONENTS OF THE TORONTO BLESSING

Many proponents of the Toronto Blessing resist the conclusion that there is no biblical basis for the phenomena of the Toronto Blessing. The following counter arguments are proposed:

4.4.1 The Bible is not the full extent of Christian revelation.

According to this argument evidence or revelation may also be sought in instances of contemporary prophecy, words of knowledge and words of wisdom. This viewpoint attributes the same level of authority as the Bible, or even a higher one, to these supposed revelations, and in turn accepts some concept of an open canon, perhaps without realizing it. This concept creates a canon with flexible boundaries, subject to expansion (Porter 1995:60-61).

⁶ The NIV points out in a note that this passage (Mark 16:15-20) is not in the 'most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses'.

This argument is thus not a sensible argument, especially in the light of the fact that charismatics emphasise the importance of the Bible in their spirituality, and in terms of their insistence that the Bible should be the guide in assessing experience (Stibbe 1995:110). The vast mainstream of orthodox Christianity throughout most of its history has held to the concept of a closed canon. This raises a set of theological and logical questions. How does one judge what new revelation must be included in the canon? What happens if previous revelation is contradicted by new revelation? Should the old revelation be discarded or do we introduce blatant contradictions into the Scriptures, and how do we decide which revelation to follow in the future?

In my opinion 'New revelation', as it is mostly referred to, is in most cases viewed as more 'relevant' communication from God, seeing that it addresses people in their own particular situation here and now. Many charismatics feel comfortable with this viewpoint because their theology gives ample room to the working of the Holy Spirit. The term 'working of the Holy Spirit' is a very wide term and covers a large spectrum of manifestations. It could become a kind of scapegoat for matters that cannot be interpreted in the context of the Bible or a particular theology. Without limiting the present work of the Holy Spirit, such liberty towards an experience with the Holy Spirit should have control measures in place or some sort of basic theology, in order to guard against deception. Without such measures or theology in place any event labelled as 'the work of the Holy Spirit' might well not be questioned by charismatics, which means that no control is exercised.

The question could immediately be asked: but should control be applied in this area? A number of philosophies or religions have measures and interpretations, even of the supernatural or paranormal, enabling devotees to discern dangers. For example in Hinduism, with regard to Kundalini energy, there is a distinction between an 'up flow' and a 'down flow' of the energy. The 'up flow' is viewed as

positive but the 'down flow' as negative. The caution not to experience the flow of Kundalini without the assistance of a guru indicates that in the Hindu view, supernatural/paranormal dangers must be avoided. Just as other religions have certain checks and measures I am of the opinion that 'the work of the Holy Spirit', should also be guarded prayerfully and that certain guidelines should be in place.

4.4.2 The Bible is not a 'text book' but a 'test book'.

This assertion is usually made in conjunction with the claim that a biblical reference cannot be found for everything Christians do, and that the absence of such a reference cannot be held to invalidate a particular practice.

I am of the opinion that the Bible is not a handbook or a book providing exact formulas or prescriptions for everyday life. By studying the Bible, glimpses of God's way of dealing with people and of his character and will are revealed. All that is recorded in the Bible happened in the cultural, political, philosophical and economic context of the particular people involved, and in this bed of rich surroundings the work of God can be detected. In the different books and messages in the Bible we do have pictures of God's character, of what he approves and disapproves of. We see his love and care for people, in that his only begotten son died on a cross so that humankind could be saved. Putting all this together as we read prayerfully, we can form a picture, an understanding, of what God's will is. We do not know everything about God (1 Cor. 13:9-12); we actually know very little, yet have enough information to be his children and have a desire to please him.

This, however, does not mean that we can just ignore the message of the Bible or merely abuse it to give authority or more weight to our own viewpoints. If we claim that the Bible gives us guidance and we acknowledge the authority of the Bible, some form of relation to it and control in its use must be in place, otherwise

why use the Bible at all? Fee & Stuart (1993:25) emphasize the need for some control in the interpretation of the bible, 'Otherwise biblical texts can be made to mean whatever they mean to any given reader. But such hermeneutics becomes pure subjectivity, and who then is to say that the one person's interpretation is right, and another's is wrong.' Culver (1995:80) points to the implications of such a view as meaning that the Bible is no longer regarded as an authoritative source of information concerning Christian practice, but only as a device for testing the validity of information derived from some other source. This will in turn open up the possibility of a church 'constantly engaged in testing an agenda of Christian practice drawn from who-knows-where, rather than taking Scripture as a starting point' (*ibid.* 1995:80).

The viewpoint that the Bible should be treated as a 'test book' rather than a 'text book' is sometimes used in conjunction with a three-fold distinction between what is scriptural, unscriptural and non-scriptural (or biblical, unbiblical and non-biblical). Coates (1994) took this approach in an article he wrote concerning 'Toronto and Scripture'. Others, like Wimber and Stibbe, also adopted such an approach (Culver 1995:81). According to this approach, things, which God specifically approves of, are distinguished as 'scriptural'. Things, which God specifically disapproves of, are distinguished as 'unscriptural'; and things, which fall into neither of these categories, are distinguished as 'non-scriptural'. Any experience should then be tested against the Bible, seeing that it is a 'test book'. If an experience is not explicitly approved or disapproved we are given the liberty to develop a wide range of activities which 'broadly reflects' things God approves of. These activities include Sunday schools, youth groups and 'devotion times'. Coates (1994:24-25) continues this line of argument and points out that the same liberty applies to manifestations of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Culver (1995:81) identifies certain flaws in this approach. Firstly the Sunday school is an institution of human devising, and Sunday school work is an activity

that engages people of their own free will in something under their control. On the other hand, physical manifestations of the Toronto Blessing are understood to be experiences, which come from outside the person affected, are neither of human devising nor under the subject's control, but have their origin in the will and activity of God himself.

Another weak point in this approach appears when the relationship between the Sunday school and the Toronto Blessing in terms of God's sovereign authority is considered. No claim was ever made that the sovereign authority of God rests on the institution of the Sunday school as an institution. It is merely a means to address the need to preach the gospel to children. But the Toronto Blessing is claimed to be a sovereign move of God although it falls in the same category as the Sunday school. Because Scripture does not command the institution of the Sunday school, such an activity cannot claim the status of God's sovereign authority. This in turn means that such activities are not binding on all Christians: some may accept them and others not. We are therefore not committed to accepting things that fall in the same category. The same liberty that applies to the Sunday school applies to manifestations of the Spirit. They could thus be accepted - or not. Advocates of the Toronto Blessing, however, insist that it is a move of God and no option is left to reject or criticize it (Culver 1995:82).

This argument ignores an essential distinction. The claims made for the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing are pitched higher than in the case of the Sunday school. The Sunday school makes no other claim than to be an expedient method of performing certain God-given tasks. Furthermore it is provisional and could be abandoned for a better method. In such a case, it is enough that we receive God's *nihil obstat*, that though there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that he approves of this particular method, there is nothing to indicate that he disapproves either. In the case of the Toronto Blessing manifestations there is no question of a provisional expedient but of a response

to the very presence of the Holy Spirit himself. 'Surely it is not unreasonable to demand that such large claims produce stronger credentials than are required in the case of a provisional expedient? The magnitude of the claim should be reflected in the strength of the evidence' (Culver 1995:83).

I concur with Culver's viewpoint and would like to add that one's inability to have some choice in accepting these manifestations as from God or not leaves a question mark. Also, the sort of finality or 'godly sanctioning' implied by the claim that the manifestations are a move of God, almost prohibits 'god fearing' people from even questioning, leave alone evaluating, this 'move of God'. Unknowingly a subliminal message is sent out that the manifestations of the Spirit, although not explicitly described in Scripture, are open to question.

4.4.3 An appeal to the complexities of the Acts of the Apostles.

Chevreau (1994:62) states that, 'when the book of Acts is reviewed, it is incontestable that there is a remarkable diversity of charismatic spiritual experience represented in the early communities, and that it is so rich in its variety that it defies standardization, form and formula, and sometimes even interpretation!'

It is true that the book of Acts has much diversity; this should make one very cautious in drawing upon it to establish normative Christian behaviour for today. As was pointed out earlier, it is important to explore the original meaning of the text as far as possible. Once the original meaning is established the cultural and other surrounding aspects of the text should also be distinguished in order to understand the relevance of the text for the 'here and now'. Porter (1995:61) makes an interesting point by stating that, however, one can occasionally be overwhelmed by the diversity and fail to see the patterns of regularity, sometimes because they are too predictable or because we do not want to see them. Porter

adds that there are several important occasions recorded in the Bible that typify the successful spread of the Gospel under the Spirit's direction (*ibid.* 1995:61). There are also a number of more spectacular manifestations of the Spirit such as tongues, healings and the like recorded in the book of Acts. The one common factor that unites all of them is a clear proclamation of the Gospel. It would then appear that any Toronto Blessing church which was wanting to be faithful to the book of Acts would make a clear proclamation of the Gospel in its worship.

4.5 THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Seeing that the charismatics refer to themselves as people that place a high priority on the Bible, it is appropriate to look at some verses describing the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. The following brief references to the work and role of the Holy Spirit can be identified in the Bible.

During the week before his crucifixion, apart from other teachings, Jesus gave teachings concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit. These include:

- John 14:16-17. 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you will know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you'. The Holy Spirit is here depicted as a helper that will be with Jesus's disciples. The role of the Holy Spirit is further explained as the one who will continue Christ's teaching ministry and the one who will remind his disciples of what Jesus had said while he was still with them (John 14:26).

- John 15:26-27. 'But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you will also bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning'. Once again reference is made to the fact that the Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus. According to Wright (1996:196), the role of the Holy Spirit throughout the early church age was defined by Christ as in the following way: 'He will not speak on his own, he will speak only what he hears He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you' (John 16:13-14). Another reference to the role of the Holy Spirit is found in Romans 8:26, which explains that the Holy Spirit assists the believers in their prayer life. Another reference is made to the fact that the Holy Spirit will witness with the spirit of the believers, confirming that they are children of God (Romans 8:14-16).
- The Holy Spirit does not only play a role in the believer's life, but also in the world and the unbeliever's life. For instance, take John 16:4: 'And when he has come, He will convict the world of sin, and righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father and you will see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged'. The role of the Spirit here is explained as, firstly, to convict the world of their sin. Secondly, the Holy Spirit confirms the authenticity of the message of Jesus, that it is the truth. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit will convince the world of their own judgment as a result of their unbelief.
- The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the believers' inheritance, the pledge and foretaste, the down payment of their heritage (Eph.1:13).

No evidence can be found in Scripture, describing the role of the Holy Spirit, that confirms the manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing.

4.6 CONCLUSION

It seems clear from the Bible that an ecstatic language did exist in the early church. To claim that it still forms part of the worship of the modern church is debatable. The practice is however not unfamiliar in Pentecostal/charismatic circles. Of all the claimed manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing, only ecstatic speech has reference in the original sense of some biblical accounts.

Scriptural interpretation requires a close adherence to hermeneutical principles, one of which is that the narrative portions of Scripture must be interpreted by the didactic portions. An example of this is that the Gospel narratives of the crucifixion are interpreted by the teaching about the cross in the epistles. According to Wright (1996:240), charismatics largely ignore this principle. They derive their *modus operandi* from personal experience bolstered by their interpretation of narrative portions. In the light of this it is understandable that they present many Scripture references as biblical proof for the physical manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing. If these Scriptures are investigated, however, no real proof for the charismatics' claim of biblical foundations for the Toronto Blessing is found.

The importance of hermeneutics was pointed out earlier. Hermeneutics provides a certain control in using the message of the Bible and applying it in the here and now. The core of this practice is to establish to the best of our abilities what the original text meant. Once this is determined, certain guidelines relevant to the Christian today can be drawn up. Viewing the Bible as an authoritative source implies that its message has relevance for our present life. Unfortunately interpretation of the Bible is not that simple because of the diversity of the audience that interprets the Bible. The result is the diversity of interpretations found today. What all interpretations should have in common, however, is a

definite relation to the original meaning of the text. If not, why then use the Bible at all?

The charismatics claim to be 'word and spirit' people who strive to experience being 'church' as the early church did. To accomplish this, a strong emphasis is placed on going 'back to the Bible' in order to ascertain what originally happened in the life of the early believers. Hand in hand with this goes an emphasis on the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. This viewpoint proposes that the believer should experience the presence and involvement of God through his Spirit. An experience as such is evident in different manifestations which are referred to, sometimes loosely, as charismata or gifts of the Holy Spirit. In many cases such manifestations are referred to as an 'outpouring of the Holy Spirit'. The charismatics, on the one hand, claim to be 'word' people and in terms of this identity confess that it is important in their interpretation of the Bible to find the original meaning of the text, in order to experience what the early church experienced. They further substantiate this claim by offering passages of scripture if they are questioned about the authenticity of the manifestations. The publications from the pen of charismatics such as Jackson (1994) and Stibbe (1995) sound the same message. Yet, on the other hand, the aforementioned evaluation of their interpretation of biblical passages and scripture, in order to substantiate the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing, shows that this practice in biblical interpretation is absent.

Another area in their interpretation of the Bible that poses a problem, in my opinion, is the term or phrase 'work of the Holy Spirit' and other similar phrases. This term covers a wide spectrum and it could easily become a cover for manifestations that cannot be explained or evaluated in terms of Toronto Blessing theology. Room is given to the 'work of the Holy Spirit' in their theology, but a lack of basically defined borders or criteria to measure the work of the Holy Spirit, and to educate Christians to discern the spirits, opens the door to

deception and invites artificially, mechanically produced 'manifestations'. As will be pointed out in chapter 6, other, different, role players can also produce similar 'manifestations'.

Regarding the concepts that word meanings are multiple and that the role of experience is dialogical, it must be granted that words, according to semantic theory, can and do have different meanings depending on the grammatical structure and context in which the words are found. It is also true that Christian experience has a dialogical role. Yet in all instances experience must have some relation to the original meaning of the text and the message of the Bible as a whole. In the above evaluation of the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing this link could in most cases not be established.

Apart from glossolalia, all other manifestations which are claimed to follow from the Toronto Blessing have no relationship with the texts which are provided to substantiate them. In my opinion the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing evaluated here do not have biblical foundations and cannot be viewed as biblical in terms of the basic method of biblical interpretation proposed in this chapter and generally accepted amongst scholars. The question arises: if the manifestations are not biblically founded, what then is their foundation? This question will be addressed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TORONTO BLESSING AND THE KUNDALINI EXPERIENCE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the Kundalini experience and its manifestations as practised in Hinduism. The experience known as the 'awakening' of Kundalini energy is normally accompanied by certain physical manifestations. People who receive the so-called 'Toronto Blessing' also report certain physical manifestations as a result of it. In this chapter the physical manifestations of the awakened Kundalini energy will be compared with the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing in order to establish any possible resemblance.

5.2 KUNDALINI

5.2.1 Introduction

What is Kundalini? The answer to this question is not simple. Briefly, Kundalini can be described as the personal aspect of the universal life force named *prana* by the yogic tradition. White (1990:21) is of the opinion that the primal cosmic energy is akin, if not identical, to *chi* (Chinese), *ki* (Japanese), the Holy Spirit (Christian), and various other terms from cultures that identify a life force that is the source of all vital activity. Through this life force a psycho-physiological transformation, a 'rebirth' process, as natural as a physical birth, takes place. Earliest references to this transformative process can be found in the most ancient scriptures of India, the Vedas. This archaic knowledge formed the basis of the later esoteric teachings as expounded in the Upanishads, Agamas, Tantras, and Samhitas, and especially in the many texts belonging to the Hatha Yoga tradition. Knowledge of this 'rebirth' process was by no means confined to India. It was also an integral part of the esoteric teachings of Tibetan Buddhism,

Chinese Taoism, the spirituality of certain American Indian tribes, and even of 'first people' such as the Bushmen of Africa. It was, however, in Hindu India that the process was most carefully studied and conceptually elaborated. There it became known as *Kundalini-bodhana* or the 'awakening of the Kundalini' (Sanella 1987:8).

5.2.2 Role of Kundalini in Hinduism

In Hinduism the basic human problem is not moral. A human being is not viewed as a sinner. He or she is not guilty of having broken God's law and therefore needing to be forgiven for sin and to be reconciled to God. The human problem in Hindu thinking is a metaphysical problem. The human being experiences him or herself to be something he or she is not, and does not experience him or herself to be what he or she actually is. The problem of the human is a problem of 'being'. Humankind has not reached its full potential (Mangalwadi 1989:1-2).

In Hinduism different streams of thinking exist. On the one hand the monist stream of thinking¹ believes that all reality is one. The human beings' problem according to this view is that they are infinite impersonal consciousness, but experience themselves as finite people. This is bondage. He or she is god but has forgotten this. Salvation according to this thinking means self-realization - the realization that the 'self' is the universal self; one's finite consciousness is really the infinite consciousness. On the other hand a stream such as the Hare-Krishna movement is part of what could be called a qualified-monistic philosophy². According to this view the human is not god but not distinct from god either. The human being's problem according to this view is that human beings have become alienated from Krishna and have lost that blissful Krishna consciousness. By chanting 'Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna' a person can return to that state of consciousness which is blissful, where the soul lives as a slave or servant of lord Krishna (*ibid.* 1989:1-2). In both of the abovementioned streams of thinking the problem of the human is identified as a problem of consciousness, of being.

¹ Human, animal, plants, rocks and trees - everything is one and this one is the infinite

Salvation³, according to Hinduism in general, would be to regain the state of consciousness before a human came under the influence of *karma* and became entangled in this world of bondage. One way to obtain salvation is through yoga; Varenne (1976:10) remarks, '... the aim of yoga is salvation, not the performance of fairground stunts'. An important step in the direction of salvation is the realization of a different state of consciousness. This realization should not be understood in a cognitive sense, that a human being intellectually or mentally learns who he or she is, but in the more direct sense of seeing him or herself for what they are. This perception or realization is dependent on the nervous system. The techniques of salvation are techniques of manipulating the nervous system. There are many different ways by which the nervous system can be manipulated to enter an altered state of consciousness⁴ or realize a different transcendental state of consciousness (Mangalwadi 1989:3). The technique essentially used in Hinduism for altering a person's state of consciousness by manipulating the nervous system is called yoga⁵. There are in fact many more kinds of yoga but the following five are normally encountered in the West: *Hath yoga*, *Japa yoga*, *Surat Shabad Yoga*, *Kundalini Yoga* and

consciousness. Everything we see is a manifestation or transformation of that one consciousness (Mangalwadi, 1989:1)

² Swami Prabhupada, considered to be the one who brought the Hare-Krishna movement to the West, feels very strongly about the view that a human is not god. He said that any human who says he or she is god is a dog and should be shot. The original state of the soul in this system is blissful Krishna consciousness. The soul lives in heaven with Lord Krishna (Mangalwadi, 1989:2).

³ Salvation in this sense is not a question of finding forgiveness from one's sins and fellowship with God but means, rather, to realize what you really are, that you are not a personal finite consciousness but infinite impersonal consciousness, or Krishna consciousness. Salvation is the realization or perception that you are pure self.

⁴ 'Altered states of consciousness' (ASC) refers to unusual conditions of perception achieved by the deliberate cultivation of often abnormal mental states, states not normally experienced apart from specific religious techniques and/or occult programs (Ankerberg & Weldon 1996:17). Altered states of consciousness are further discussed in chapter 6.

⁵ Yoga began originally as the practical aspect of the dualistic Samkhya philosophy, which taught that there is a soul and there is a body and matter. The soul and the body have become entangled and need to be separated in order to free the soul from bondage. Salvation in this regard means separating the soul from the body, achieving an isolation in which the soul will be conscious of itself and not of body and matter. So yoga originally meant isolation and separation and not yoking or union. Gradually the monistic stream of thought took over and became the mainstream of Hinduism. Yoga then began to mean 'union' or 'yoking' of soul with the greatself, the finite consciousness with the infinite consciousness (Mangalwadi, 1989:3).

*Tantra Yoga*⁶ (Mangalwadi 1989:3). Of particular interest for this study is *Kundalini Yoga*. Kundalini yoga is one kind of yoga that is used to obtain salvation, also called salvation through the 'serpent power'. The objective of yoga is to awaken the Kundalini in the process of salvation.

5.2.3 Myths and misconceptions about Kundalini

Myths and misconceptions also exist with regard to Kundalini. The aim of this chapter is not to explore and elaborate on these misconceptions but rather to achieve a clear understanding of Kundalini through the knowledge of what it is not. In the process of understanding Kundalini, it is also important to take note of distorted perceptions about it. From the viewpoint of Hindu India where the process was most carefully studied and conceptually elaborated, certain misconceptions are identified.

According to Khalsa (1990:132), a former researcher at the Kundalini Research Institute East, in Boston, great confusion exists in current writings and teachings about Kundalini and Kundalini yoga. On the one hand, authors say that Kundalini is the most potent and powerful energy for consciousness. On the other hand, readers are either warned not to practise it, or the techniques are referred to in veiled secrecy. The first problem with regard to understanding Kundalini is a lack of knowledge. Khalsa (1990:135) is of the opinion that some writers have written about things which they have not actually experienced. They prefer rather to read and quote than experience and test. Another distorted perception of Kundalini could be created by a negative experience, which includes anxiety, depression, fear and other neurotic and paranoid

⁶ *Hath yoga (hatha)* is essentially a yoga through which salvation is obtained through physical exercise. Because perception is dependent on the nervous system, and the nervous system is something physical, it is assumed that through physical exercises and breathing exercises one can manipulate one's nervous system and experience salvation. *Japa yoga* could also be called *mantra yoga*. *Japa* means to recite. A person focuses on a single stimulus, which can be a mantra like 'hare Krishna' or 'om'. Through concentrating on one stimulus the person can reach the state of emptiness of his or her mind that would automatically give peace and rest. *Surat Shabad yoga* - *Surat* means soul and *Shabad* means the Word, the Logos. This yoga would say that God is light and sound. The technique according to this yoga is to establish contact with the inner divine light or inner divine sound. *Tantra yoga* - not strictly speaking yoga but has the same result - is salvation through sex or through indulgence (Mangalwadi 1989:4-9). *Tantra Yoga* is also practiced by means of celibacy and asceticism.

conditions, which alternate with elevated blissful periods, visionary experiences, or creative moods, as described by Gopi Krishna (1975) in his book *The awakening of Kundalini*. Other writers such as Rele (1970) in his book *The mysterious Kundalini* make the mistake of limiting Kundalini to a particular type of energy or physical nerve in order to give it physical or scientific validity. In this case Kundalini is identified as the 'serpent power', which is the right vagus nerve of modern times, which supplies and controls all the important and vital organs. This is a narrow interpretation, which comes from a sincere attempt to explain the great physical benefits that accrue to practitioners of Kundalini yoga. Furthermore, such a view totally misunderstands the unlimited nature of this energy (Khalsa 1990:135).

The Kundalini experience not only comprises the fact that an individual has gone into a deep trance and is beyond this world or filled with inner lights. Rather it integrates an individual more fully with reality and gives him or her a broader vision and sensitivity so that they can act more efficiently (Khalsa 1990:137). Sanella (1987:10) elaborates on this point by emphasizing that the Kundalini process is not just an altered state of consciousness, since it can last from several months to many years. For its duration, the individual passes in and out of different states of consciousness - from wakefulness to sleeping and dreaming, and also to super-lucidity in any of these states. The entire process falls outside the categories of 'normal' and 'psychotic'. A person who undergoes this psycho-physiological transformation has experiences that are far from normal, though usually without becoming so disorganized as to be considered psychotic.

The Kundalini process is also not necessarily connected with the appearance of psychic phenomena⁷. There are psychics who have not undergone this transformation, just as there are those in whom the Kundalini is activated but who show no particular psychic talent. The Kundalini process may and often does lead to many special abilities, but is not intrinsically tied to them (Sanella 1987:10).

⁷ A striking resemblance between the proponents of the Kundalini experience and the mystics is observed. Both adopt the same approach with regard to psychic phenomena. They do not view psychic powers, although present, as an integral part of the experience.

It is clear from the abovementioned viewpoints amongst proponents of Kundalini that certain misconceptions do exist. Kundalini needs to be approached according to the Kundalini tradition and prescriptions in order to experience its benefit. Kundalini can go astray and create evil geniuses. Spiritual masters (gurus) warn against the forceful practice of certain disciplines in a mechanical fashion in order to reach a higher consciousness: the so-called 'power trip'. To awaken the Kundalini is one thing but to make it move upward in the passage of the sushumna - central conduit - is something else. As the individual advances in meditation⁸, he or she begins to encounter various menaces of Kundalini. Only an individual with great courage can cope with these menaces⁹

5.2.4 Organization of energies (*chakras*) in the human body

In order to understand the dynamics of the Kundalini experience in a human being one must go to the very foundation of tantric philosophy. According to this ancient philosophy, the entire universe is a manifestation of pure consciousness. In manifesting the universe, this pure consciousness seems to become divided into two poles, neither of which can exist without the other. The one pole retains a static quality and remains identified with unmanifested consciousness, called *Shiva*, and is conceptualised as masculine. The Sanskrit word *Shiva* means, literally, 'tranquil' (Sanella 1987:26). *Shiva* is depicted as being absorbed in the deepest state of meditation, a state of formless being, consciousness, and bliss. *Shiva* has the power to be, but not the power to become or to change. He has no power to act or to manifest. He is the power holder, but has no energy in his own right. Nevertheless, consciousness as the power that builds the world is based on and arises out of this consciousness as being. The other pole is dynamic, energetic, or the creative aspect, called *Shakti*, the great mother of the universe, for it is from her that all form is born.

8 Meditation can be described as 'a state of extended reflection or contemplation' (Reber & Reber 2001:421). Meditation has the goal of 'stilling' the mind or otherwise dramatically influencing it (Ankerberg & Weldon 1996:379).

9 Some of the menaces of Kundalini, listed by Kripalvananda (1977) in his *Science of Meditation*, are insanity, succumbing to disease, and even death.

Shakti is the subtlest of created things. She manifests herself as the entire universe, including matter, life, and mind (Rama 1990:28).

On the transcendental level, both aspects and poles are forever inseparable. *Shiva* and *Shakti* are always in ecstatic embrace. On the level of normal consciousness, however, they appear separated. For this reason the individual has only a trickle of that transcendental power available, just as he or she experiences only a fraction of that transcendental consciousness, in the form of individuated awareness (Sanella 1987:26). Rama (1990:28) explains the role of the two poles in the universe as follows:

The two poles or principles are united, but in the manifest world an illusion of separation is created between pure consciousness and its manifestations. Shakti is a projection of consciousness that veils the consciousness from which she was projected, in the innumerable illusory manifestations that she brings forth and we call the universe. The creation of this illusion is called involution or folding over itself. As a result of this involvement it seems to become complex. After aeons of time when the universe is dissolved, it is drawn or recollected into that shakti that produced it. This latter process is known as evolution. It is a further stage of development in which consciousness becomes uninvolved with its manifestations.

Ancient tantric teachings look upon the individual being as a faithful reflection of the macrocosm. The universal non-local power present in the human body-mind is believed to be located in the part of the human body corresponding to the base of the spine. This is also the first position of the first of seven principal centres or seats or *chakras* of power, arrayed along the body's central axis in conjunction with the spinal cord (Rama 1990:30). Another important part of the Tantra Yoga model is the three major 'ducts' or pathways along which the aroused Kundalini force can travel. These 'ducts' are called *nadis*. One of these pathways (*nadis*) is said to be a straight pathway connecting the seven centres or *chakras* and is known as the *sushumna-nadi*. One of the other channels or pathways starting to the left of it in the lowest centre is called the

ida-nadi, and the one starting from the right in the lowest centre is called the *pignala-nadi* (Sanella 1987:29). The two helical channels pass each other at the various centres until they merge in the *ajna-chakra* (sixth *chakra*). These *chakras* are commonly depicted as lotus flowers, with varying numbers of petals said to correspond to different forms of energy associated with each centre. These foci are the organs or limbs of power. They are localized vortices of bio-energy (Sanella 1987:27).

The centres or *chakras*, also sometimes referred to as energy points, which are located along the central axis, have names and are associated with elements (see figure 1).



1. The cakras

Figure 1.¹⁰

The first *chakra* at the base of the spine bears the technical name of 'root-prop' centre: the so-called *muladhara-chakra*. It is traditionally associated with the earth element, the sense of smell, the feet, and the general distribution of the life force (*prana*) in the body. The second *chakra* in ascending order is the so-

¹⁰ Figure 1 as illustrated by Shamdasani 1996. The author has added the captions.

called *svadhishtana-chakra*, located in the genital area. The name means roughly 'own standing centre', referring to the genitals as the most obvious characteristic of the human body. This centre is associated with the traditional water element, the sense of taste, the hands and sexuality (Sanella 1987:27).

The two lowest centres are grouped together because they represent the most primitive expression of energy, and states of consciousness that are mostly tied to the physical world and the basic instincts for individual and species survival (Rama 1990:31). The third *chakra* is called *manipura-chakra*, 'centre for the gem city', and is situated in the region of the navel, which in some traditions, is given as an alternative-resting place for the dormant Kundalini. This centre is associated with the traditional fire element, digestion, the base of the spine, and the sense of sight. The fourth *chakra*, situated in the region of the heart, is frequently referred to as the 'heart lotus' (*hrit-padma*), and also as the *anahata-chakra*. The Sanskrit word *anahata* means literally 'unstruck' and is an esoteric designation for the internal sound *om*. This centre is associated with the traditional air element, the sense of touch, feelings, the genitals, and the stimulation of the life force (Sanella 1987:28). The third and fourth *chakras*, located at the solar and cardiac plexes, represent a turning to more subtle relationships with the world. This relationship includes an active involvement in trying to organize the world, and to interact on a less physical plane than in the case of the first two *chakras*. The focus here is on the building up and expansion of one's sense of 'I-ness' (Rama 1990:32).

The fifth *chakra*, situated at the throat, is known as the *vishuddhi-chakra* or 'centre of purity'. This centre is connected with the traditional ether element, the sense of hearing, the mouth, and the skin. The sixth *chakra* is depicted as a two-petalled lotus located at the forehead between the brows, and is called the *ajna-chakras* or 'command centre'. It is also known as the third eye and associated with the mind (*manas*). It is believed, in addition, that the teacher can contact the disciple telepathically at this centre (Sanella 1987:28). The fifth and sixth *chakras*, that correspond to the cervical and pituitary centres in the human body, represent a movement away from worldly relationships to a world of pure form. In these centres the person perceives and relates to the

underlying forms from which the material universe comes. At this level creativity, intuition, and wisdom are exhibited (Rama 1990:32).

The seventh and final *chakra* of this main sequence is the *sahasrara-chakra*. The word *sahasrara* is composed of *shasra*, meaning 'thousand', and *ara*, meaning 'spoke.' The thousand spokes or energy pathways of this centre, located at the crown of the head, are representative of the experience of overwhelming light and bliss that results when the Kundalini force rises from the lowest centre to the crown centre. This centre is also described in Sanskrit literature as 'lustrous', 'whiter than the full moon', shedding a constant and profuse stream of nectar (Sanella 1987:28). The seventh *chakra* is the centre of pure consciousness. This is the abode of *Shiva*, pure transcendent consciousness, in each individual (Rama 1990:32).

The *Kundalini-shakti* or 'serpent power' is a latent power at the base of the spine that needs to be awakened, and thereafter it must rise through the different chakras in order for the person to experience spiritual and psycho-physiological transformation.

5.2.5 Kundalini awakening

5.2.5.1 Introduction

As mentioned above according to Tantric literature¹¹, there is a very mysterious and powerful force in the human body called *Kundalini* power or serpent power

¹¹ Tantric literature refers to particular scriptures of Tibet and India, certain practices and techniques taught by those scriptures (primarily involving yoga practice), and the religious and philosophical traditions based on those scriptures, all of this considered as a collective phenomenon (Brooks 1985:1). Although tantric beliefs and practice vary worldwide, a common theme is the belief that in its true, invisible nature, everything is divine (*ibid.* 1985:6). According to tantric philosophy the universe is a mystical tissue of consciousness, held in form by the tensions of duality - the polar opposites of positive and negative, light and dark, male and female, yang and yin. Tantra is the way to the mastery of these fundamental cosmic dualities - through the mastery of one's sexual function. Salvation is through indulgence. 'This sounds very crude, but within its own philosophical assumptions it makes sense. It is many different things, but one of the basic things of it is to use your sex experience to alter your consciousness, to give you an experience of blissful oneness' (Mangalwadi 1989:10). Salvation is also achieved via celibacy and asceticism (cf. fn 8)

(Viswanathan, 1992:193). The meaning of the word Kundalini must be considered in its proper context along with the word *shakti*, therefore the concept is also frequently referred to as *Kundalini-shakti*. Kundalini comes from the Sanskrit word *kundala*, which means literally coiled up like a spring or a serpent. *Shakti* comes from the root *shak*, that means to have power or to be able. Taken together, these two Sanskrit words might be translated as the coiled up power or the resting potential. Kundalini implies latent power, untapped potential or cosmic power (*shakti*) (Rama 1990:27). It is viewed as a very powerful form of psycho-spiritual energy that is curled, or coiled, at the base of the spine in the first chakra (Stutley 1985:169) - the possibility within each person of attaining a new and more fulfilling condition of life (White 1990:16). It can also be called the 'energy of consciousness' (Sanella 1987:8). Rama (1990:29) explains that because the human being is a miniature universe, all that is found in the universe can be found within each individual, and the same principles that apply to the universe apply in the case of the individual being. In human beings the surplus of energy that is not being used to maintain the functioning of the organism is also symbolically described as a coiled or resting serpent. This energy inside the human being is the cosmic energy; according to Woodroffe (1974:2), 'Kundalini is the Divine Cosmic Energy in bodies'. This Kundalini energy in individual bodies is '... the static centre round which every form of existence as moving power revolves' (*ibid.* 1974:42). Great energy and power as well as insight accompany the experience of Kundalini in the brain. The Kundalini power needs to be awakened in order to be of benefit to the human being. The awakening of Kundalini, according to Tantric literature, is a process to be approached with proper preparation, care and wisdom.

5.2.5.2 Preparation for the awakening of Kundalini

Proper preparation is needed in the awakening of Kundalini so as to minimise the possibility of awakening Kundalini in a negative way. Rama (1990:35) confirms the need for preparation: 'To genuinely awaken Kundalini, one must first prepare himself [sic].'

Rama (1990:36-37) gives an overview of different methods that are traditionally used to prepare the student to awaken Kundalini. These methods fall under the umbrella term Kundalini yoga, which in essence refers to specific techniques in order to harness and so control one's physical and mental powers in order for the Kundalini to be awakened (Stutley 1985:176). An individual can be prepared for the awakening of Kundalini through physical means such as the practice of hatha yoga, including purification exercises. These exercises will prepare the body to tolerate the heightened energy of Kundalini. Considerable preparation is involved: advanced postures, energy locks and seals called mudras and bandhas, and breathing exercises (pranayama) help to re-channel the dynamic energy (prana) and use it to awaken the latent energy (Kundalini). Another means of preparation could be through intense concentration and meditation on specific sensory nerves such as the tip of the nose or the root of the tongue, along with concentration and meditation on certain *chakras*. Exercises done with intense concentration help and prepare the individual to withdraw consciousness from its absorption in the physical body, and to master the quality of energy associated with a specific *chakra*. Meditation on a specific *chakra*, along with the repetition of a particular thought form (mantra) and a visualisation (yantra), can awaken energy from the Kundalini and bring it to flow up through the centres.

Physical and mental celibacy is another path that can lead to the awakening of Kundalini. Instead of discharging the vital force in the service of procreation, the yogi who follows this path learns to absorb that energy and direct it upward. The external union between male and female is forsaken and an internal union between the male (shiva) and female (shakti) principle takes place. Intense devotion can also assist in arousing Kundalini.

Krishna (1990:199-200), an expert on this subject, describes the different aspects of the awakening of Kundalini, in which preparation plays an important role, as follows:

The awakening may be gradual or sudden, varying in intensity and effect according to the development, constitution, and temperament of different individuals; but in most cases it results in

a greater instability of the emotional nature and a greater liability to aberrant mental conditions in the subject, mainly owing to tainted heredity, faulty modes of conduct, or immoderation in any shape or form. Leaving out the extreme cases, which end in madness, this generalization applies to all the categories of men (and women) in whom Kundalini is congenitally more or less active, comprising mystics, mediums, men of genius, and those of an exceptional high intellectual or artistic development only a shade removed from genius.

Rama (1990:33) adds this more positive description of the awakening Kundalini:

Usually it is depicted as a sudden, intense, 'earthshaking,' and transforming experience. But such an experience is rare. It is more usual for tiny bits of this energy to be released through various means. One then experiences breakthroughs, bursts of energy and enthusiasm, peak experiences, a sense of wellbeing and similar changes in consciousness. This is analogous to what happens in psychotherapy as bits of the unconscious are brought into one's awareness. Occasionally there are more startling breakthroughs, in which a significant quantity of the latent power is released.

The awakening of Kundalini can lead to unusual experiences. Krishna (1990:200) in this regard warns against a sudden awakening of Kundalini, which, even with preparation through yoga or other spiritual practices, can result in sudden powerful vital currents in the brain and other organs. This in turn carries a grave risk of strange mental conditions, varying from moment to moment, exhibiting in the beginning the abnormal peculiarities of a medium, mystic, genius, and madman. Rama (1990:35) also confirms this: 'The experience of a 'bad trip' after ingesting a powerful psychoactive drug is nothing compared to the release of this force (Kundalini) in one who is unprepared.'

An interesting comparison exists between the awakening of the Kundalini power and other religious experiences. Bodily or physical as well as mental

preparation is found in most religious experiences (these influences are discussed in 6.2.6).

5.2.5.3 Process of awakening

According to Chinmoy (1990:455), there are two paths for an individual to enter into Kundalini yoga; namely through the tantric process (according to Tantric literature) and through the vedantic process (according to Vedantic literature). The tantric approach is systematic and elaborate but is a dangerous way. The danger of this way lies in the fact that it deals with the vital and emotional life. Either one will purify him or herself by entering bravely into the vital world and come out triumphantly, or one will be totally lost in the ignorance of the vital world if he or she is not strong enough inwardly to conquer the vital forces there. The vedantic way is more simple and mystical, and also safer and in no way less convincing or fulfilling. It is safer than the tantric way because the seeker concentrates and meditates to raise, purify, and illuminate his or her consciousness before he or she tries to deal with the obscure, impure lower vital forces that could effect enslavement. When the seeker enters the lower vital world with the light of illumination, he or she sees that the lower vital world is illuminated, purified and divinized.

As was previously indicated, Kundalini is actually awakened by Kundalini yoga, also called *Maha yoga*, which means 'great yoga', or *Siddha yoga*, which means 'perfect yoga'. How exactly Kundalini is awakened is unknown. Mangalwadi (1989:9) describes it as another power overtaking the human being, an extra-egoic power which is called 'guru's grace'. The practice of Kundalini yoga involves not only the awakening of the Kundalini *shakti* but also systematically leading her through each of the *chakras* to the sahasrara or crown *chakra*, the abode of *Shiva* (Rama 1990:33). As indicated earlier the word *yoga* means 'yoking', 'harnessing' or 'union', and this union can be understood as the uniting of Kundalini *shakti* with *Shiva* (pure consciousness). Specific techniques to harness and so control one's physical and mental powers are used in the practising of Kundalini yoga (Stutley 1985:176). Yoga's aim is to isolate the *purusa* (soul, person) from *prakrti* (nature); this isolation is to be accomplished

by a process of mind control. The objective of this isolation is to make the mind assume its original, pure and unmodified status, in order to release the soul from its travail (Mahadevan 1984:124).

When the serpent (Kundalini) in a human being is awakened *shakti* (energy, divine power) travels from the spine to the head and passes through the six different chakras. As the serpent power moves up through the different psychic centres (chakras) it produces tremendous psychic, mystical or spiritual experiences. When the serpent power reaches the crown of the head, Shakti meets Shiva, and a person is said to experience the highest type of spiritual ecstasy (Washburn 1988:187). Rama (1990:32) explains that through this meeting of Shakti and Shiva an individual becomes fully conscious. There is no longer an unconscious or latent power - the individual is fully awakened and illumined. The human being experiences divinity. No Samadhi (union with God) is possible if this power is not awakened.

According to Tantrism and Hatha yoga it is important that the awakened Kundalini be guided through the central channel alone. As it ascends in the central channel, the different centres become active and, according to some authorities, they actually come into existence only at that moment. The aroused Kundalini, as it passes through each centre, temporarily energizes it and, as it moves on, absorbs its energy. By the time the Kundalini force reaches the topmost centre, the rest of the body is depleted of bio-energy. The lower extremities tend to become cold and corpse-like (Sanella 1987:29). This physiological phenomenon contrasts with the intense experience of bliss, light, and super lucidity associated with the entry of the Kundalini current into the topmost centre. This experience is not one of catalepsy but of formless ecstasy or *nirvikalpa-samadhi* (Sanella 1987:30). At first the full ascent of the Kundalini force lasts for only a brief period, perhaps seconds or minutes. Then the Kundalini moves back into one or other lower centre. According to Tantra yoga the objective is to repeat this elevated state as often as possible, until the Kundalini resides permanently in the crown centre. The descending Kundalini must be consciously guided and come to rest not lower than the heart centre.

Kundalini activity in the lower three chakras is thought to be fraught with dangers, including ego inflation and rampant sexual desire (Sanella 1987:30).

5.2.6 Shaktipat (saktipat)

The Kundalini energy is, however, not only awakened by yoga. Kundalini energy can also be awakened by a Guru, through what is called *shaktipat* ('descent of shakti'). This technique is also called Siddha Mahayoga, Kundalini Mahayoga or Shaja Yoga (spontaneous yoga) (Keutzer nd.:3). Washburn (1988:187) explains that when Kundalini is being aroused into activity, be it by means of ascetic or meditative practices, Kundalini manifests itself as the goddess Shakti. When the Guru touches the disciple the aroused Kundalini, manifested as Shakti, is transmitted.

St Romain (1994:116) refers to one of the well known authorities on Kundalini, Swami Muktananda, who states that there are four ways in which the Guru can transmit shakti: by touch, word, look and thought. The most common way of transmitting *shakti* is by touching (*shaktipat*) the disciple, usually in the space between the eyebrows (the location of the sixth chakra), but also in the area of the heart or at the base of the spine. Not every one receives the same degree of awakening as a result of *shaktipat*. The Guru transmits his own divine shakti (Kundalini energy) into the disciple. It is the divine function of the Guru to awaken the dormant Shakti. When the Guru transmits his power into a disciple, the inner aspect of Kundalini is automatically activated and set into operation.

In contrast to Hatha and Kundalini yoga, where specialized disciplines to awaken Kundalini are undertaken, shaktipat brings about quick and thorough transformation. As a result of shaktipat, it frequently happens that disciplines described in other forms of yoga are spontaneously practised. St Romain (1994:116) refers to Swami Muktanda, who writes that a person may experience involuntary movements of the body, such as shaking and movements of the arms and legs. The head may even start to rotate violently. A person may even automatically perform various yogic positions (*asanas*), gestures (*mudras*), and

different kinds of control over breathing (*pranayama*), which are all part of Hatha yoga.

Siddha yoga or *Kundalini* yoga is attributed to the grace of the Guru. In contrast with other forms of yoga the final goal is attained through great effort and difficulty, but in *Siddha* yoga a person attains it very naturally and spontaneously. In the words of Swami Muktananda: '*Siddha* yoga is very easy, very natural' (St Romain, 1994:116).

5.2.7 Signs and symptoms of awakened Kundalini

When Kundalini is awakened, the person will invariably feel some involuntary movements of the body, which begin with trembling and shaking, of an intensity varying with different persons. Some experiences are accompanied by violent shaking of different kinds. Such physical movements are accompanied with a heretofore not experienced feeling of pleasure, of spiritual intoxication. These symptoms are seen as symptoms of awakened Kundalini and are followed by various signs and experiences too many to be enumerated (Tirtha 1990:94). Sanella (1987:93-102) prefers rather to distinguish between signs (objective indications) and symptoms (subjective descriptions). He also arranges these into four basic categories - motor, sensory, interpretive, and non-physiological phenomena. Motor phenomena refer to any manifestation that can be independently observed and measured and sensory phenomena to the inner sensations such as lights, sounds, and other experiences normally classed as sensations. Interpretive phenomena refer to any mental process that interprets experience and non-physiological phenomena, taken at face value as genuine occurrences, must involve factors for which physiological explanations are not sufficient.

Consulting the following sources, Tirtha (1990:94-97); Sanella (1987:93-102); Collie (n.d.:1-2); Guiley (1991:320-321) and Huima (nd.:1-2), the signs and symptoms of the Kundalini wakening can be summarised as follows according to Sanella's proposed categories (the list is by no means exhaustive):

1. Motor phenomena

Motor phenomena include:

(a). Automatic body movement and postures

These movements are known as *kriyas* (actions) in yogic terminology and are spontaneous, although the person may be able to inhibit their occurrence; they can affect any part of the body, even the eyes. The movements can be smooth and sinuous, spasmodic and jerky, or vibratory, and result in the automatic assumption of otherwise difficult yogic postures (*asanas and mudras*). Automatic movements can also include spontaneous crying, laughing, screaming, singing, whistling and the person's body dropping to the ground, or beginning to rotate like a grindstone, or a person starting to leap like a frog from place to place or lie down like one dead. Also, numbness or pain in the limbs are experienced, as well as a feeling that life is passing away, and there may be convulsions like those of a dying fish (Sanella 1987:94; Huima nd.:2; Collie nd.:2; Tirtha 1990:95). The whole body shakes involuntarily and becomes uncontrollable. Such a person is influenced spiritually as if some spirit has taken possession of his or her body, and under that influence the postures of yoga are involuntarily performed without the least pain or fatigue; instead the person feels increasingly buoyant (Tirtha 1990:94).

(b) Unusual breathing patterns

According to yogic theory, the life force (*prana*) pervades the whole body. Prana is closely associated with the breath, which is the mechanism by which the life force enters, circulates, and then leaves the body. The yogi aspires to control the flow of the breath/life force in order to harmonize his/her bodily energies and increase his/her vitality. The yogic manipulation of the life force is technically known as *pranayama*, comprised of *prana* – 'life' and *ayama* – 'extension or lengthening'. *Pranayama* is often also translated as 'breath control'. During the Kundalini experience uncommon breathing patterns can occur automatically. These breathing patterns include rapid breathing, shallow

breathing, deep breathing or extended breath retention. These spontaneous alterations of a person's customary breathing patterns can cause a great deal of anxiety. Some authorities also warn against a sort of superficial acceleration of the Kundalini's ascent by means of *pranayama* (Sanella 1987:94).

(c) Paralysis

During deep meditation the body sometimes becomes temporarily locked into certain postures (Sanella 1987:95). The posture of such a person can become fixed. The person's tongue pulls back or rises up towards the soft palate, with his or her hands stretched out forcibly. Whilst in this fixed posture sight is attracted towards the middle of the eyebrows, the eye balls begin to revolve and together with this, cessation of breath comes with no effort to inhale or exhale and the mind becomes vacant, void of all outward knowledge (Tirtha 1990:95; Collie nd.:2).

2. Sensory phenomena

Sensory phenomena include the following:

(a) Tickling sensations

Sanella (1987:95) describes this phenomenon as follows: 'The skin or the inside of the body may tingle, tickle, itch, or vibrate. Apt descriptions are a deep ecstatic tickle and orgasmic feelings. These sensations often start in the feet and legs, or the pelvis, and move up the back to the neck and the crown of the head and then down to the forehead, the face, the throat, and the abdomen where they terminate. The progression is seldom this ordered, but when it is, we can consider it as a typical physiological Kundalini cycle.' Collie (nd.:2) adds to the list also prickling, stinging or crawling sensations. Tirtha (1990:94) mentions that with the trembling of the body a sensation of 'hair on roots' can also be experienced.

(b) Hot and cold sensations

Sensations of temperature extremes, affecting either the whole body or parts of it, also described as hot or cold flushes, occur typically in the Kundalini cycle. The hot or cold flushes might also move through the body on occasion, like tingling or tickling sensations, but not in a recognizable pattern (Sanella 1987:95; Collie nd.:2; Huima nd.:2).

(c) Inner light and visions

A variety of photistic (light) experiences may occur during the physiological Kundalini process. Light experiences may include visions of red light of the size of a whole human body, of white and black spots, and of the lentil-sized 'blue pearl' in which the matrix of the universe is seen. Formed visions of varying complexity may also occur, though they are rarer. Apart from visions of inner light or lights there are cases where the experience of inner light is accompanied by the ability to see a darkened room as if illuminated. In some cases people have perceived an aura or halo of light around the illuminated mystic or enlightened being (Sanella 1987:96). When in meditation the person sees divine visions and falls into a dreamy state of mind, has divine smells, sees divine figures, has divine tastes, hears divine sounds, experiences divine touch and receives instructions from gods (Tirtha 1990:97).

(d) Inner sounds

Sounds that are perceived internally include a variety of characteristic noises, such as whistling, hissing, chirping, roaring, and flutelike sounds (Sanella 1987:96). Collie (nd.:2) adds to the list also sounds like those of a waterfall, bees buzzing, whooshing or thunderous noises. A person can also utter sounds like those of animals, frogs or of a lion or like those of jackals, dogs, tigers, which are fear inspiring and not pleasant to hear (Tirtha 1990:96). The Sanskrit texts on Hatha Yoga contain numerous references on this phenomenon, and some even offer a formal arrangement of such sounds, proceeding from the gross to the subtle and ending in the 'transcendental' sound called *nada*. This mystical sound is also known as the sacred syllable *om* (Sanella 1987:96).

(e) Pain

One of the effects of Kundalini is pain (Wolfe 1978:36). Painful sensations are often reported in the head, the eyes, the spine, and other parts of the body (Sanella 1987:97). Collie (nd.:2) refers to a racing heartbeat and pains in the chest as well as pressure within the skull. These pains may begin abruptly, without apparent cause, only to vanish as abruptly and mysteriously after a period of time – lasting from a few seconds to hours and days (Sanella 1987:97).

3. Interpretive phenomena

Interpretive phenomena include:

(a) Unusual or extreme emotion

The following emotions might be experienced during the Kundalini process: ecstasy, bliss, peace, love, devotion, joy, and cosmic harmony as well as feelings of intense fear, anxiety, confusion, depression, and even hatred. Normal emotions may be experienced more intensely. In the later stages, feelings of bliss, peace, love and contentment tend to predominate (Sanella 1987:98). These emotions may also evolve in an emotional outburst, rapid mood shifts, unprovoked or excessive episodes of grief, rage and depression (Collie nd.:2). One in ecstasy can begin to sing hymns in tones of music charming to hear and whose composition and poetry come out involuntarily, the person's hands start clapping rhythmically, and he or she may begin to pronounce unknown languages. Such a person can also experience a feeling of being intoxicated without taking any drug, or feel like one drunk with divinity, being unable to work, and may remain mute and dislike speaking to or hearing others speak (Tirtha 1990:96).

(b) Distortion of thought processes

One's thinking may be speeded up, slowed down, or altogether inhibited. Thoughts may seem out of balance, strange or irrational (Sanella 1987:98). A person may experience mental confusion, feel on the brink

of insanity, enter complete trance states, or may become impulsive and feel alienated (Collie nd.:2; Sanella 1987:98).

(c) Detachment

One may feel that he or she is observing, from a distance, his or her own thoughts, feelings and, sensations. 'This consciousness differs from mere aloofness or anxious withdrawal in as much as the observer self experiences itself in opposition to the observed mental activities' (Sanella 1987:98). This condition is sought after in the Sufi expression 'the fire of separation'. This condition does not usually interfere with the individual's normal functioning.

(d) Dissociation

During the Kundalini process a person can also withdraw him or herself from identification or active involvement with its associated mental processes. One may feel as if there is nobody, everything looks vacant, one is void of all outward knowledge, the eyelids open and close in spite of one's efforts (Tirtha 1990:95). A person may also become egoistically identified with the Kundalini process, leading, for instance, to the delusion that he or she has been divinely chosen for some great mission and that he or she receives instructions from gods (Sanella 1978:99).

(e) Single seeing

This state can be identified as a distinct state in terms of the typical and graphic metaphors used by those who have had this experience (Sanella 1987:99). Swami Muktananda (1974:132) describes single seeing as follows: 'My eyes gradually rolled up and became centred on the *akasha* (space) of *sahasrara* (crown centre)... Now instead of seeing separately, they saw as one.' This refers to seeing with the third eye, and must be understood as an actual change in visual functioning. The third eye is iconographically depicted as located in the middle of the forehead but its true location is in the brain core itself (Sanella 1987:101).

(f) Great body experience

The Kundalini process can also be accompanied by the sensation of being larger than the physical body (Sanella 1987:101).

4. Non-physiological phenomena

Non-physiological phenomena include:

(a) Out of body experiences (OBEs)

An out of body experience involves the subjective feeling of leaving the physical body either as a conscious identity ('etheric double') or in the form of a supra-physical counterpart ('astral body'). This phenomenon has come to the attention of the medical community through the large number of patients who have reported having had this experience during anaesthesia or while being otherwise unconscious. Medicine treats out of body experiences as hallucinations or delusions. They are also known as near death experiences (Sanella 1987:102).

(b) Psychic perceptions

Psychic abilities to obtain information through means other than the known physical senses are frequently reported by people experiencing the Kundalini process. New revelations of scriptures come to the person while in meditation. Strange powers of oratory are acquired and the person does not feel the need of approaching even Brahma, the creator himself, for knowledge (Tirtha 1990:97).

Hindu and Buddhist scriptures make up the most extensive literature on the subject of Kundalini. This literature emphasizes that, particularly on the path of Kundalini awakening, a competent teacher is essential.

5.2.8 Positive and negative effects of Kundalini

According to Davis (1990:464), Kundalini awakening will contribute inter alia positively in the following manner. One may experience that he or she is more creative and alive because of the Kundalini awakening. The kundalini process

can be inherently therapeutic (Sanella 1987:113). The development of Kundalini leads to the linking of various levels of consciousness, so that other states of consciousness may be connected with waking consciousness (Arundale 1990:462). A person may also experience an increase in sexual desire. Not all will experience this but those who do, will be able to handle the matter appropriately. If the process of arousal is successful the lower human will be brought under the control of the spiritual human (Bailey 1990:459).

The awakening of Kundalini could also be experienced negatively. Writers such as Davis (1990); Bailey (1990); Sanella (1987) warn against the dangers of Kundalini. In essence they agree that the Kundalini power could be catastrophic for a body which is physically, emotionally and, most important, spiritually unprepared. Experimenting with Kundalini in such a manner is indeed 'playing with fire'. Forcing Kundalini awakening prematurely is extremely dangerous (Bailey 1990:449). Davis (1990:464-465) warns against pursuing Kundalini awakening for the wrong reasons, which means that people may end up on the fringes of the occult sciences and become mediums, sorcerers, and pseudo-spiritual leaders. Instead, the high purpose of Kundalini is a very real transubstantiation, in which the higher consciousness becomes a jewel in the setting of the lower, the higher taking up its abode in the lower, that is to say in the waking consciousness itself. The lower knows itself to be merely a setting, and offers its substance for the jewels of the higher. This is in fact effecting continuous consciousness (Arundale 1990:462).

5.2.9 Evaluation of Kundalini

Many questions are asked with regard to Kundalini. There are different viewpoints about what Kundalini really is. For the purpose of this study it is important, therefore, to ascertain the relation between the Kundalini awakening and spirituality.

Kundalini awakenings can and do happen even without any spiritual preparation or meditation practices (Sanella 1987:118). The rising of Kundalini may happen suddenly or over a period of several years. Bentov (1987:128) makes a very

important observation elaborating this phenomenon by saying that exposure to certain mechanical vibrations, electromagnetic waves, or sounds may trigger the rising of Kundalini. Bentov (1987:129) is of the opinion that the Kundalini effect is part of the development of the nervous system. This development can be elicited by the practice of any of several different types of meditative techniques, or it may develop spontaneously. These observations trigger the question: Is Kundalini related only to religious or spiritual life?

According to some schools of thought, spiritual life is dependent on the Kundalini power. They insist that the latent energy of the body-mind must be galvanized into activity and raised along the bodily axis to the crown of the head before a real spiritual transformation can occur (Sanella 1987:119). If this is true, why is it that some genuine mystics have never consciously experienced the psychophysical symptoms associated with the Kundalini arousal? They did not experience headaches, burning sensations, painful currents of energy shooting from the feet or the base of the spine up into the head, or into one of the seven chakras of energy in the body. A double-sided explanation to this question can be given. Firstly, it could be that these individuals, that have not experienced Kundalini, are relatively free of the kind of obstructions or psychophysical resistances that tend to complicate the Kundalini process in others. Secondly, it could be that their psycho-spiritual realizations are the result of only a partial awakening of the Kundalini power (Sanella 1987:120).

It is accepted that the Kundalini process fulfills an evolutionary function in the body-mind, but does this mechanism really have anything to do with the spiritual process? At the outset it is important to define 'spiritual' in this context, which can be generally understood to consist in attitudes and techniques leading to psychic experiences or powers and extraordinary 'altered states' of consciousness. This definition clearly makes spirituality a matter of the evolving nervous system, and some people indeed make this claim (Sanella 1987:120). Floor (1990:291-293), a neuroscientist, believes that the Kundalini awakening can be related to 'energy' rather than 'reproductive fluids'. Furthermore he believes that Kundalini energy is triggered in the brain, and that the sensations felt in the spine and internal organs during the arousal of Kundalini are the

secondary reverberations of a primary activity in the brain that projects outward into the body via the peripheral nerves. He explains as follows:

Nerves work electrically and in a fraction of a second, nerve pathways carry messages from the tip of the spine to the brain. The awakening of Kundalini often occurs in a flash, a time scale indicative of a process related to nerve activity. The actual biological trigger for Kundalini energy could be the brain. But one may object, the awakening of Kundalini does not feel as though it begins in the brain, or even in the head. However it is crucial to realise that one can't feel any of the brain's activities directly in the same sense that one can feel, for example, a finger moving. Thus a person cannot know whether a sensation that seems subjectively in the pelvic region actually does arise there or whether, on the other hand, it is a consequence of a process that began in the brain outside of awareness and was subsequently transmitted to the lower body by way of nerve connections (*ibid.* 1990:293).

Another viewpoint, perfectly consistent with the great non-dualist traditions of the world such as Advaita Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism, simply perceives most so-called spiritual accomplishments as experiences generated within the body-mind and therefore not truly self-transcending. They are the products of the great search for fulfilment or happiness. Sanella (1987:120) defines spirituality as follows: 'authentic spirituality, by contrast, is founded in the moment-to-moment transcendence of the ego, the body-mind, and all possible experiential states. It has nothing to do with the search for God or higher evolutionary possibilities. It requires living on the basis of the intuitive recognition that there is no real separation from life, or God, or Transcendental Reality.' Da Free John (Da Love-Ananda)(1980:18) puts this as follows: 'Our obligation is not to introvert and go elsewhere to God, nor to extrovert and exploit ourselves in the self-possessed or anti-ecstatic mood that presumes God to be absent or nonexistent. Our obligation is to Awaken beyond ourselves, beyond the phenomena of body and mind into that in which body and mind inhere'. The Kundalini experience is not the way to God realization. Sanella

(1987:122) refers to an unpublished talk dated July 8, 1978 by Da Love-Ananda.

In this talk Da Love-Ananda remarked as follows:

Attachment to the brain through the inversion of attention in the Kundalini, or Life-Current, is traditionally promoted as the way to God. This is an error that has crept into the spiritual traditions. The way to God is not via the Kundalini. The awakening of the Kundalini and becoming absorbed in the brain core is not God-realization. It has nothing to do with God-realization. It is simply a way of tuning into an extraordinary evolutionary mechanism. The way to God-realization is the one by which that mechanism is understood and transcended completely.

The key to the practice of real spiritual life lies in the heart. People make the mistake of focussing on the dimensions of the mind or the body, and lose focus on the heart. The principle of spirituality is at the heart, and the fire of the spiritual process is awakened there. The fire is not situated at the perineum, nor is it up at the crown. It is at the heart, at the place of infinity, the root of the being, the feeling core of the body-mind (Da Free John 1980:27).

Ankerberg & Weldon (1996:606) carried out a thorough study on Kundalini and report that they have found Kundalini in scores of new religions, many occult practices, and in some practices of New Age medicine. They have found no less than fifteen different new age health techniques in which proponents claim that their methods may arouse Kundalini. Spirits typically possess Hindu and Buddhist gurus, who account for scores of new religions, although they refer to this possession as a 'divinising' and not a 'demonising' process. Ankerberg & Weldon (1996:607) make the following observation: 'Thus, whether in the eastern guru's transmission of occult power termed *shaktipat*, ... classical shamanism, Kundalini, or similar phenomena in other traditions, one is dealing with basic occult energy.' Kundalini in the view of Mukatanda, Bubba (Da) Free John, and other gurus, may not be directly attributed to the spirits, but the spiritistic associations and the manifestations are so pervasive that one would be hard-pressed to deny them (*ibid.*1996:607).

Kundalini energy is admittedly an occult energy; it is personal and supernatural; it can function independently of the person; it permeates and infuses the individual; it can force spontaneous yogic and other actions, including worship; it produces a form of consciousness and personality alteration hostile to Christian Faith; it is related to evil pagan gods and deities; it is described as 'being possessed' by those who experience it; it is dangerous and destructive not only to human life but to conventional societal values and morality (*ibid.* 1996:600).

It is clear from the above discussion that Kundalini is viewed differently by different people. Some believe that Kundalini is a spiritual path to God-realization, whilst others believe that it is only an extraordinary mechanism and not God-realization. The proponents of Kundalini energy commonly view it as the cosmic energy dormant in the human being. Awakening of this energy brings the awareness of being one with the Ultimate. Some believe that the Kundalini experience is a matter of the evolving nervous system. There are also some who view the Kundalini as spirit possession. Furthermore the Kundalini phenomenon is encountered in many different religions and for that reason also it is interpreted in different ways.

The Kundalini awakening is, however, described as a 'spiritual' experience as it relates to techniques leading to psychic powers and extraordinary consciousness. It could also be called a 'religious spiritual' experience, seeing that it forms part of a particular system of faith and worship. In the light of the viewpoint of Sanella that Kundalini is not the way to God but a way to self-realization in order to come to God-realization (1987:122), it could be viewed as a psycho-physiological process performed by humankind. Only when this process is understood as such and transcended completely can God-realization be reached. I am of the opinion that the concept of Kundalini, referred to as a latent power residing inside every human being, could indeed be true. Furthermore the energy can be released and awakened by certain techniques. I would, however, like to define or describe this energy as related to God's spirit. I am concerned that the awakening of the energy by certain techniques produces

manifestations not intended. A typical example would be that pliers could be used as a hammer although they are not intended for that purpose. From a Christian viewpoint it could be argued that this 'energy' could be God's spirit or breath placed in the human body that gives life. It could further be argued that only God can give human life. Thus life or 'energy' inside a human must be related to God's activity. This energy, however, can be awakened to produce certain manifestations or ecstatic states as a result of the mechanics of the human body. All the efforts to awaken this 'energy' could then be viewed as the human being's urge for God.

I support the viewpoint that the Kundalini experience is not necessarily a religious spiritual experience, because certain mechanical vibrations, electromagnetic waves or sounds could also bring it on without religious spiritual preparation such as meditation and yoga. Biologically it is believed to be triggered in the brain and could be a creation of the human mind. Kundalini could also be defined as the 'psychosomatic power-reservoir' of energy.

Many unanswered questions remain with regard to this energy. Should human beings deliberately seek after this energy? Are the manifestations of an awakened Kundalini not the result of human beings becoming involved in something they are not supposed to be involved with? Is the so-called awakening of the 'energy' supposed to happen?

Are the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing possibly brought about by this energy?

5.3 THE TORONTO BLESSING AND KUNDALINI

5.3.1 Comparison between manifestations of Kundalini and the Toronto blessing

The comparison will be undertaken without listing all the physical manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing, seeing that a detailed discussion was carried out in chapter 3 (see the manifestations as discussed in 3.3.4). Some

theologians and other Christians believe that a comparison exists between the manifestations of the so-called Kundalini awakening and the Toronto blessing manifestations.

Huima (n.d.:1); Collie (nd.:1-6) and Kuglin (1996:118-119) explain that the Kundalini experience and the Toronto Blessing are almost identical in at least the following aspects:

- both involve the very same bodily manifestations;
- both are distributed in the very same way, namely by a touch or by some other method from one already 'in fire'. The phenomenon is very contagious;
- the reasons for the bodily manifestations are the same;
- the same initial mental and bodily condition is needed to receive the experience;
- both consider the transfer of the power to be a central issue which is subject to scientific considerations.

The similarities shown in more detail in the tables below.

Outward manifestations

The outward signs can be grouped into mental signs, vocal signs and physical signs. Mental signs can include visions, ranging from ecstatically blissful to frightful. Vocal signs can include spontaneous vocal expression, ranging from singing to the making of animal sounds. Physical signs range from trembling to certain yoga postures.

Kundalini experience	Toronto Blessing
Laughing and weeping are as unintentional and uncontrollable as hiccoughs (Collie nd.:4).	Uncontrollable laughter (Collie nd.:4). Astbury (2000:223-224) describes it as loud, uncontrollable laughter. The stimulus of the laughter is unknown and it seems to take the form of a spontaneous outburst.
Singing or reciting mantras (Huima nd.:2).	Inspired singing in the spirit as well as other inspired utterances including tongues (Huima nd.:2).
Animal sounds like those of a frog, a lion, or like jackals, a dog and tigers (Tirtha 1990:96).	Animal sounds include roaring like lions, barking like dogs, braying like donkeys, groaning like angry bulls, growling roosters and gobbling turkeys (Richter 1995:8-9; Fruchtenbaum nd.:3 and Kuglin 1996:112-114).
Involuntary trembling and shaking of the body occur and the body can also drop to the ground. Postures of yoga are involuntarily performed as if under the influence of some spirit. Also numbness in the limbs is experienced (Sanella 1987:94; Tirtha 1990:95).	A person's body starts to twitch, tremble and shake uncontrollably before or after the person's body has dropped to the ground (Astbury 2000:233). The 'Toronto Twitch' as it is known, is occasionally associated with pain, and has been compared with labour pains. Strange postures in general can be performed such as people moving their bodies rapidly and rhythmically, even erotically, or making karate like chopping actions with their fore arms (Richter 1995:8; Huima nd.:2).
The following emotions might be experienced: ecstasy, bliss, peace, love, devotion, joy and cosmic harmony (Sanella 1987:98). A person can also feel intoxicated without taking	Inward joy is experienced as well as laughter that causes the person to leap with joy (Roberts 1994:129; Richter 1995:8). A person may also feel as if drunk and unable to walk in a straight

Kundalini experience	Toronto Blessing
<p>a drug, or feels like one drunk with divinity (Tirtha 1990:96)</p>	<p>line or even stand, whilst otherwise fully conscious. This has been described as drunkenness without a hangover and without expense (Richter 1995:8; Costella nd.:4; Astbury 2000:237).</p>
<p>An altered state of consciousness is experienced. A person may experience a consciousness that differs from mere aloofness or anxious withdrawal in as much as the observer, self, experiences itself in opposition to the observed mental activities. A person may also experience a feeling that he or she has been divinely chosen for some great mission and is receiving instructions from gods (Sanella 1987:98-99).</p>	<p>The Toronto Blessing generally reflects what is reported to be deeply meaningful, ecstatic religious experience. It occurs as a result of altered states of consciousness¹² (Dixon 1994:4). It may also be accompanied by 'prophetic insights' into the future, 'prophetic' announcements from God, deep insight into one's own or another's problems, visions and 'out of body' mystical experiences (Richter 1995:9).</p>
<p>Aches also accompany this experience. Painful sensations are often reported in the head, the eyes, the spine, and other parts of the body, racing heart beat; and pressure within the skull (Sanella 1987:97; Collie nd.:2).</p>	<p>The 'Toronto Twitch' referring to an experience in the region of the stomach, can occasionally be quite painful, and has been compared to labour pains (Richter 1995:8).</p>
<p>A variety of light experiences may occur. These experiences include: visions of red light, white and black spots, and a lentil-sized 'blue pearl' in which the matrix of the universe is</p>	<p>A characteristic of the Toronto Blessing is described as a 'thick atmosphere' in the Brownsville Assembly of God. The 'thick atmosphere' is described as 'fog' in the church. It is also described as a</p>

¹² Dixon (1994), in his book *Signs of Revival: Detailed historical research throws light on today's move of God's Spirit*, makes detailed comments on altered states of consciousness in chapter five - Medical Perspectives on manifestations.

Kundalini experience	Toronto Blessing
seen. A person may also see an aura or halo of light around the enlightened person (Sanella 1987:96).	blue haze that appears in the place (Costella nd.:4).
A feeling of heat or cold flashes. Sensations of temperature extremes, affecting either the whole body or parts of it, also described as hot or cold flushes are experienced (Sanella 1987:95; Collie nd.:2; Huima nd.:2).	A person also experiences heat or cold in the body. Some have described this as an electric current that goes through them making them tingle all over. Others describe it as a form of liquid that flows through their body (Richter 1995:7; Costella nd.:3).
Contagiousness of the Phenomena	
Kundalini experience	Toronto Blessing
According to Huima (nd.:3) there can be no doubt that shakti is contagious. The presence of a person whose shakti is strongly active can awaken the shakti of those around him or her.	The 'anointing' is known to be contagious by nature and is easily transferred from one to another. Some charismatics have referred to it as a 'spiritual virus' (Huima nd.:1).
Outward method	
Kundalini experience	Toronto Blessing
The awakening of Kundalini happens basically by means of two ways. One approach requires initiation by a guru and relies on the technique called 'shaktipat', also called: Siddha Mahayoga, Kundalini yoga or Sahaja yoga. Kundalini could also be awakened by means of yoga or meditation (Huima nd.:3). A guru can transmit shakti in four different ways; namely by touch, word, look and thought (St Romain 1994:116).	Touching people, blowing over them, speaking a 'word' over them or even just looking at them is exactly what happens with this experience (Huima nd.:3; Collie nd.:5).

Distributors of power	
Kundalini experience	Toronto Blessing
Any one 'on fire' can give shaktipat, in other words, any one whose Kundalini is already awakened. Because shaktipat is viewed as a science, only those instructed in that science can give it (Huima nd.:4).	The Toronto Blessing can easily be transferred to another person from one 'already on fire'. Short courses are also conducted to direct intercessors before they minister to people.
Therefore it is desirable that the guru be empowered to give shaktipat only by his own guru and that he has been trained in an unbroken lineage back to a great master who was fully aware of the science of shaktipat. In this way some quality control is maintained (Huima nd.:4). This is much more individualistic than the Toronto Blessing though, which only ever seems to occur in large groups, however the transference is believed to be by a person in both cases.	The method used to distribute the Toronto Blessing differs from the traditional Christian view on intercessors. Traditional intercessors focus on God and His work; no control, surveillance or intervention from people is needed. In the Toronto Blessing the intercessors are instructed to watch people and their bodily manifestations to determine what the spirit is doing. In this way the Toronto Blessing resembles a science more than the traditional intercession (Huima nd.:4). In meetings associated with the Toronto Blessing, usually only appointed ministers are allowed to pray for people. This illustrates the control of leaders over the meetings (Huima nd.:4).
Requirements for a receiver	
Kundalini experience	Toronto Blessing
The unique perspective of Siddha Mahayoga is that because Kundalini is an intelligent force, it will upon awakening, naturally direct the practice of the student.	The receiver is also asked to surrender to the 'power of the Holy Spirit' and to receive the good work of God without questioning.

<p>All that is required of a student is that the student must completely surrender to this force. As a result of Kundalini's awakening spontaneous purifying movements, called <i>kriyas</i>, occur.</p> <p>To reach the point of total surrender to shakti takes practice. Some aids in cultivating surrender are chanting and selfless service. Through these practices a person's heart is opened and made more susceptible to the influence of shakti (Huima nd.:5).</p>	<p>Also, chanting spiritual songs is done abundantly in meetings associated with the Toronto Blessing. Through these songs people are moved to a light trance and are so enabled to receive spiritual experiences (Huima nd.:5).</p>
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5.3.2 More similarities between Pentecostalism/Charismatics and Kundalini

St Romain (1994:115) points out that a strong convergence can be noted between Hindu and Christian spirituality when comparing Siddha Yoga with Pentecostalism. He continues by noting the following similarities:

- In Siddha Yoga, Kundalini is awakened through the grace of the Master or Guru. The Guru transfers spiritual energy to the disciple through a graced touch called a 'shaktipat'. The Guru touches the disciple between the eyes on the forehead. This area between the eyes is also known as the area of the third eye (spiritual eye) or the sixth chakra. The transfer of energy by the guru is done through this energy point (sixth chakra). The Guru awakens the dormant Shakti, by transmitting his power into a disciple. The Guru's task, however, is not only to awaken Kundalini; he must also control and regulate the process until the disciple attains the ultimate realization of Self; he also helps the disciple to remove all blocks which hinder spiritual development. The Guru can release the Kundalini by means of touch, word, look and thought. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh would daily go into trances, falling down and entering into super-conscious bliss, having visions, and 'out of body' experiences. Rajneesh

would transfer his 'guru grace' to his followers by a touch or sometimes by a wave of the hand. Uncontrollable laughter or weeping, convulsions, roaring, barking, hissing and the like would accompany the transfer. His followers would find themselves involuntarily hyper-ventilating to cool off (Church of the living word 1996:8)

- In Pentecostal Christianity, too, the transmission of spiritual energy is evident. This transmission also takes place by means of the laying on of hands by the pastor, mostly also on the forehead between the eyes. The practice of 'laying on of hands' frequently results in spiritual gifts or charisms such as speaking in tongues, prophesying and healing. Great love for other people could also be a result, as well as spending more time in prayer. These and other gifts come spontaneously as the Spirit prompts the believer.
- With the laying on of hands in Pentecostal/Charismatic meetings spontaneous asanas, similar to the Kundalini arousal, take place. People fall to the floor and shake or roll, and animal noises and uncontrollable laughter have been recorded in most of the Toronto Blessing meetings. This phenomenon is known as 'slaying in the Spirit' or 'resting in the Spirit'. According to St Romain (1994:118), people who have experienced this describe it as a sense of feeling overwhelmed by God's power and love, feeling moved to lie still in a semi-trance state as an incredibly blissful energy races through their bodies. Some people report healings in memory and body as a result of resting in the Spirit.

Collie (n.d.:5), a former follower of Muktananda Paramahansa, compares her sitting before an altar with a picture of Mukatananda Paramahansa and a statue of a coiled cobra snake, eating prasad (food blessed by the presence of the guru), to the experience of those who receive the Toronto Blessing. The Toronto Blessing, according to Collie, is imparted in a similar fashion by their own gurus, called Pastors. The fruit is the same. The manifestations are the same. According to Collie (n.d.:5) it comes via a human being. It comes after many repetitious choruses, which bring one into an altered state of consciousness, similar to the state obtained through yoga. Thus the believer is open to receive the impartation from the pastor or guru. The impartation of the

blessing is clearly seen on a video – ‘The Signs and Wonders movement – Exposed’ (1997). Kenneth Hagin imparts the blessing by staring people in the face while laughing at them. A female and a male sitting in the front row of the church then started to pull faces and began to glide off their chairs, similar to the movement of a snake. All the while Kenneth Hagin is hissing like a snake, and every now and then his tongue goes in and out like that of a snake. Rodney Howard-Browne, on the same video, explains that God told him to impart the blessing by touching a person with the finger on the forehead. He continues to describe the falling down of people, while they are presumably ‘slain in the spirit’, as ‘it looked like an angel that stood next to the person and smacked him with a baseball bat against the head’.

Collie (n.d.:4) reports about a lady in one of the Toronto blessing meetings who was totally confused. She asked her husband where she was, did not know where she lived or what her name was. Mental confusion and lack of concentration, as illustrated in this case, are two signs of one’s ‘serpent power’ being released. Collie further records a meeting where a blue ‘cloud of glory’ filled the sanctuary and then a very sweet smell filled the place. This is also in line with a Kundalini awakening when the scent of incense or flowers is also experienced.

Another important comparison between the Toronto Blessing and the Kundalini awakening is the seeming anti-intellectualism associated with the experience. Meditation has the goal of reflection or contemplation, emptying the mind of all other thoughts in order to awaken the Kundalini energy. In receiving the Toronto Blessing participants are also exhorted to empty their minds, to shut out their rational processes and to lose control in order to receive the blessing (Wright 1996:143,319).

5.4 CONCLUSION

The fact that some kind of ‘energy’ resides inside human beings cannot be denied. Different opinions about its origin and description exist, however. In Hinduism it is referred to as Kundalini energy. If it is assumed that the ‘energy’

referred to equals the spirit or breath imparted to human beings by God, it could be further argued from a Christian point of view that some kind of 'energy' does indeed reside inside human beings. The purpose of this impartation of God's breath or spirit is to give life to a human being. Genesis 2 verse 7 states, 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.' God breathed his spirit or breath into the human being and the human being became a 'breathing creature' (nâphash). When the human being dies, scripture informs us that the breath or spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecc. 12:7). The question could be asked: but is the spirit of human beings not the Holy Spirit residing in them? A distinction must be made here between a living human being and the Holy Spirit. Apart from the physical body of a human being, an inner being or a spiritual being is identified. This distinction is found in a number of scripture verses for instance 2 Corinthians 4:16 states: 'Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.' 'For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him?' (1 Cor.2:11). Acts 17:16 reports that Paul was stirred in his spirit. Thus from scripture it is ascertained that the human being consists of an earthly body and a spiritual being. The Holy Spirit is believed to be the third person in the Godhead and is involved in the believer's life in different areas, as was pointed out in chapter 4. Certainly the most important fact is that the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, signifying that the believer belongs to God (Rom 8:9). The Holy Spirit also testifies with the spirit of the believing human being that he or she is a Christian (Rom 8:16; Eph.1:13-14).

It is clear from a Christian viewpoint that the purpose of this God given breath ('energy') is to give life. From the viewpoint that human beings are created by God and thus receive this life giving 'energy' it seems that the same 'energy' can also be manipulated for other purposes, such as 'so called' enlightenment or higher spiritual attainment. Christianity, however, is based on the relationship between a human being and a personal God. The Christian's spiritual state does not depend on human effort but on the continuous transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Once again, as indicated in chapter 4, certain guidelines from scripture as to the purpose of the Holy Spirit in believers do exist. No mention is

made of such practices as the awakening of some kind of 'energy'. But is the awakening of Kundalini not the same as the accounts of Pentecostal phenomena described in the New Testament, as suggested by St Romain (1994)? The accounts referred to by St Romain, however, clearly signify Godly intervention rather than human effort in obtaining supernatural manifestations. For example, in the account of Simon Magnus, Acts 8:9-24, he discovered that the manifestations accompanying the preaching of the Gospel could not be obtained through human effort or means. Also, the gifts of the Holy Spirit in I Corinthians 12 cannot be attributed to Kundalini awakening. In this case once again the Holy Spirit does not bring the spiritual gifts into action by human effort but as he wills (1 Cor. 12:11).

The main difference between the Kundalini awakening and the Pentecostal phenomena in the bible is that the Kundalini awakening is mostly brought on by human efforts and techniques, whereas the Pentecostal phenomena and manifestations as recorded in the bible are the result of the Holy Spirit intervening as he wills. To suggest that the Holy Spirit could be manipulated by a certain methodology is not only to undermine God's sovereignty but also to suggest that human beings can prescribe to God.

This causes the author to conclude that the energy residing in all human beings, when 'awakened' or stimulated through certain techniques, can probably produce certain manifestations. The development of technology is sufficient indication that human beings have enormous potential. Unfortunately this human potential can also lead to the destruction of the human race. I am of the opinion that the same applies to the energy residing inside a human being. It can be utilised to bring forth distorted manifestations if it is employed without considering God's purpose. To illustrate this point, a musical instrument can be used to make unpleasant noises but at the same time it can produce beautiful, harmonious sounds if played correctly. Human beings are created with their own will and can therefore live their lives as they see fit. From a Christian viewpoint, however, God has given guidelines for living one's life in order to attain God's purpose for it.

What makes this evaluation even more difficult is the fact that in different religious settings similar manifestations take place. The resemblance could very easily lead to the conclusion that the Kundalini awakening and the Toronto Blessing are the same experience and thus brought on by the same force. Both experiences could thus be the result of one of the following: firstly, they could be the result of God manifesting Himself to humankind in different religious settings; secondly, they could be the awakening of the same physical and psychological energy residing inside human beings, brought on by certain methods such as hypnotism in different settings. Thirdly, they could be the result, as some claim, of occult power.

The first possibility seems problematic. From a Christian viewpoint God is believed to reveal himself in accordance with Scripture. In chapter 4 it was pointed out that the manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing have no biblical foundation. Thus, viewing such manifestations as the work of God seems problematic. Secondly, these manifestations could possibly be the result of occult power. This possibility was not investigated as it is outside the parameters of the study. The final possibility, namely that it is the same energy residing inside human beings that is awakened, seems to be the most likely. Based on what tantric literature teaches about the awakening of Kundalini, it seems possible that with the Toronto Blessing energy is also awakened and very similar results obtained. The same conditions or preparations seem to apply, namely the emptying of the mind in order to move into an altered state of mind as well as the transmission of energy from the guru or pastor. I hold the same opinion as Floor (1990) that this process is triggered in the brain and that the bodily results are the secondary reverberations of primary activity in the brain, that project outward into the body via the peripheral nerves. The energy is thus dormant not at the spine of the human being but in the brain. The sensing of the experience, although it seems to have started at the spine, is because the brain's activities are felt directly and instantly, in the same sense as any other bodily sensation, because of the speed with which messages are carried from the brain to the tip of the spine via nerve pathways. Furthermore, these manifestations seem to be the result of a desire on the side of humankind to receive them. In both the Kundalini experience as well as in the

Toronto Blessing, humans mostly obtain these experiences by means of a certain methodology. In the Kundalini experience it is through the 'shaktipat' of the guru or through meditation or yoga. Some indications exist that in isolated cases it might be a spontaneous experience. With the Toronto Blessing, people are also deliberately seeking the experience of the Toronto Blessing. Many people have travelled from far, even from abroad, to experience it (Porter 1995:115-116). The pastor in some form or manner also transmits it. It can be through a spoken word, a prayer, a gesture or 'laying on of hands'. In both cases an expectation of the experience is created within the potential recipient.

In both instances clear indications also exist that people receive these experiences while in an altered state of consciousness. Obtaining such a state of consciousness seems to be inevitable necessary before receiving the Kundalini awakening as well as the Toronto Blessing. Certain psychological processes that will be discussed in the next chapter could also produce these altered states of consciousness. An altered state of consciousness is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in the Christian tradition¹³. Reference to such states can be found in the Bible. What is important is how this altered state of consciousness is brought about. In the Bible not much information is found about the situation surrounding any individual that experienced an altered state of consciousness. It seems however to take place in the normal way of life and as a result of God intervention, whereas other altered states of consciousness are brought about methodologically through means such as meditation, deprivation and yoga. It is therefore of particular interest for this study to look at altered states of consciousness, seeing that they seem to form an integral part of the Toronto Blessing. In the next chapter altered states of consciousness and their role in religious experiences will be evaluated from different theoretical viewpoints.

13 2 Corinthians 12:2 Paul speaks of an experience that points to an altered state of consciousness. Acts 10:10 also reports Peter experiencing an altered state of consciousness.

CHAPTER SIX

ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES OF THE TORONTO BLESSING: DIFFERENT THEORETICAL VIEWPOINTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two chapters the Toronto Blessing was evaluated from a Biblical perspective as well as from a religious perspective. It is also necessary to look at other theoretical perspectives on spiritual experiences and more specifically those of the Toronto Blessing.

The four different viewpoints on spiritual experiences that will be discussed in this chapter will include a viewpoint grounded in neurobiology and neuroscience, which maintains that the nervous system constructs the world of everyday experience. The underlying concept of this viewpoint is that consciousness and conscious experiences are largely the construct of the human nervous system. A second viewpoint refers to insights from transpersonal anthropology that indicates that similar transpersonal experiences are to be found among people in all cultures of the world (Craffert 2002:54). A psychosocial viewpoint focussing on the manifestations of behaviour in the religious context, as well as a pathological viewpoint focussing on psychiatric disturbance and psychological disorder will also be discussed.

The different theoretical viewpoints will not only open up other avenues for looking at religious/spiritual experience but also help one to understand the human beings who have these experiences in their effort to make contact with God. The experience of the Toronto Blessing will also be evaluated in terms of the different theoretical viewpoints.

It is evident that altered states of consciousness are part and parcel of religion. For example, in a study of the social and cultural patterning of altered states of consciousness (ASCs), it was found that such states exist in religious contexts in 90% of the sample of 488 societies (Bourguignon 1979:245). In order to understand spiritual experiences it is therefore important to know more about altered states of consciousness.

6.2 ALTERED/ALTERNATE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS (ASCs) IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Altered states of consciousness are a psychological phenomenon, and different factors contribute to causing the condition. What is meant by *altered states of consciousness*? Clearly, in order to understand an altered state of consciousness, consciousness must itself first be understood.

6.2.1 Consciousness

Puddefoot (1996:42) makes an interesting distinction between beings in the universe. On the one hand he places things that are capable of looking out upon the world and prone to so doing (however crudely); things with inside-out orientations as well as outsides (such as organisms); and on the other hand there are things with just outsides (such as stones). A human being, according to Puddefoot (1996:43), not only has a brain but is a brain. This viewpoint describes the two terms he uses, namely 'inside-out-ness' and 'outside-in-ness'. The term 'inside-out-ness' does not refer to what can be seen by opening a human being up, but to his or her orientations, which render the human being fundamentally different from a stone. The inside world of a human being is its inside-looking-out-ness, and the perspective of the human being on all other things constitutes an outside-looking-in-ness. There is directness about these orientations, something irreducible to mere physical, chemical and biological description. We would have no reason to believe in the existence of such directness in organisms but for the fact that we experience it in ourselves. With

an outside-in-ness view, the danger exists of not differentiating between the brain as a biophysical organ, and being a brain. This implies that if there were only outside-in processes in the world, there would be no thoughts, no meanings, no sensations of colour, hearing, touch, and therefore no qualities and no consciousness. Self-awareness, consciousness, inside-out-ness, are all features of the mind because human beings enjoy the properties of complex brains. Brains produce minds because human beings are conscious brains with minds (Puddefoot 1996:49).

What is consciousness? 'Human beings can only be conscious or conscious of the self, while engaged in something else. Consciousness is condemned to be the bridesmaid forever and never the bride, always on hand to help proceedings along, but never the focus of attraction itself' (Puddefoot 1996:46). Consciousness, in simple terms, is the brain's ability to be present to itself.

The five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell) each register in the brain. The brain's ability to be present to itself through a feedback process (awareness through memory) largely explains the mechanism of consciousness. Consciousness simply attaches the brain's feedback loop to its normal sensory abilities. The brain registers the products of the senses and through this registers its own presence (Puddefoot 1996:47). Each feedback cycle depends on our ability to present to our current conscious selves those things we produced earlier. One of the most important properties of feedback is called 'recursion'. It involves the way a system's next state is dependent upon its previous state or states. The brain is a recursive system because its next state depends upon countless previous states (including states produced by these processes which were started long ago, for example when we suddenly find a solution to a problem popping into our heads long after we stopped trying to remember it). It also shows another aspect of the 'correlation' that must occur if the brain is to assemble all the components of the solution to a complex problem at the same time (for example, when we are bringing a fork full of food to our mouths, the mouth is opened in sequence with the arm being raised) (Puddefoot 1996:48).

Consciousness, according to (Kriel 2000:112), is neither a property of the mind nor a separate phenomenon but a *manner of existence* in the world: '... consciousness is not a separate reality, a totally different type of reality. It is not something inside the body. It is a manner of existence of certain highly complex animals, a manner of being-in-the-world of certain animal species ... Consciousness is a non-spatial aspect of biological reality' (Kriel 2000:93-94). Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili (1990:90) define consciousness as '... a term referring to the ongoing stream of experience that is mediated by a functional neural complex. This complex is a continuously transforming entrainment of neural networks that, among other things, models the world. The transcendental world that it models commonly includes the being as it operates in the world.' In the human evolutionary process 'flesh became mindful flesh'. Tart (nd:1), describes the ordinary state of consciousness as: 'something (not) natural, but a highly complex construction, a specialised tool for coping with our environment and the people in it, a tool that is useful for doing some things but not very useful, and even dangerous, for doing other things'. Neuroscience and evolutionary biology show that it is not consciousness that evolved but the nervous system. Consciousness, according to this view, is thus a property of the nervous system. The nervous system in turn is conceived as a complex affair, structured at multiple, hierarchically functioning levels (Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1990:82). The neural system of all creatures operates according to the same basic principles of chemical stimulation and electrical conduction that propel the human neurobiology (Newberg d'Aquili and Rause 2001:15).

The limbic system is credited with the potential of spiritual experience¹ and the limbic system is common to all peoples. The limbic system is the autonomous nervous system, consisting of cells of myriads of types, which constructs the world of everyday experience. According to Laughlin (1997:472), neuroscience can demonstrate that every thought, every image, and every feeling and action is

¹ Joseph (2001:106) points out that this might explain why a belief in souls, spirits, haunted houses, angels or demons, and the capacity to have mystical experiences, including the sensation of being possessed by gods or devils or hearing their voices, is worldwide.

demonstrably mediated by the human brain. Most of the structures mediating consciousness are therefore located in the brain - produced by the nervous systems, with or without stimulation from events occurring in the external world (Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1990:110). The result is that images experienced in the sensorium when one is in a so-called altered state of consciousness (ASC), are just as real as when experienced in 'normal' consciousness. For example, the image of a flash of light (whilst in an ASC), and gentle pressure on the eyeballs (in 'normal' consciousness) will both result in the experience of light in the visual receptors (Siegel 1977:134).

A field of neural connections that involve millions of neural cells and their support structures mediates each moment of consciousness. A certain state of consciousness will therefore refer to a temporal clustering of the content and organisation of consciousness or an identifiable pattern of particular human potentials of conscious experience (Tart 1980:251, 256). 'This linking up of neurons to form networks, and networks to form even more complex networks and models is a process known as *entrainment*. As the term implies, systems become hooked up (much as railroad cars) to form "trains". Entrainments may be relatively enduring or momentary, depending on the function being performed' (Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1990:52-53). '[The] Conscious network is a system perpetually transforming its internal organisation and its engagement with the world' (*ibid.* 1990:95). Consciousness is not a single phenomenon - there are various types of consciousness (Kriel 2000:99). The brain is a collection of physical structures that gather and process sensory, cognitive, and emotional data (perceptual processes), resulting in the phenomenon of thoughts, memories, and emotions in the mind: '... the mind cannot exist without the brain, and the brain cannot exist without striving to create the mind' (Newberg, d'Aquili & Rause 2001:33). The unity between brain and mind describes the term *consciousness*.

6.2.2 Altered states of consciousness

The term 'alternate state of consciousness' is preferred by some scholars to replace the term 'altered state of consciousness'. The term 'altered' was first used to refer to states that changed as a result of psychedelic drugs (Austin 1998:309-310), with an implicit pejorative connotation. An altered state refers in broad terms to a state that deviates from the way consciousness should be. For some scholars this was a single-minded viewpoint. The term 'alternate', on the other hand, refers to different states of consciousness that prevail at different times for different reasons, and implies that no one state is considered standard (Zinberg 1977:1). The term 'alternate states'² infers the obvious that many optional states occur (Austin 1998:306).

Human beings have commonalities on a physiological and mental level because of the universality of the neurobiological system. This phenomenon is called a cultural homoversal (Kruger 1995:160). One such homoversal comprises certain altered states of consciousness (ASC). The capacity for awareness and consciousness, which are therefore essential products of our bodily evolution, includes a broad spectrum of human potentialities. Of these potentialities, so-called altered states of consciousness (ASC) are conditions in which sensations, perceptions, cognition, and emotions are altered from the point of view of ordinary consciousness (Bourguignon 1979:236). Ordinary consciousness would refer to a specific configuration of these potentials. Alteration of these specific configurations of potentials would result in altered states of consciousness, like sex, eating or vocalisation.

Altered states of consciousness are not 'natural', meaning that, provided the right

² The term 'altered states of consciousness' will, however, be used in this study, seeing that the aim of the author is not to give an in depth exposition of altered states of consciousness but to make the reader aware of such states and the role they play in religious experience.

stimuli exist, such states are a condition or activity (or range of conditions or activities) of which human beings at large are capable (Lambek 1989:38). It is also important to distinguish between ordinary (normal) and extraordinary states of consciousness. Certain states of consciousness are ordinary in the sense that they are viewed as the normal consciousness which people experience every day. Ordinary states of consciousness include waking, sleeping, and dreaming with transitional periods between them. Thus all people experience these different stages of baseline ordinary consciousness. Ordinary (normal) states of consciousness are not homoversal - meaning that they are not the same for all human beings, in other words not fixed or standardised. The reason is that culture plays an important role in determining states of consciousness, whether normal or altered. Both normal and altered states of consciousness will differ from culture to culture. Tart (nd.:2) explains the role of culture in consciousness as follows:

Because we are creatures with a certain kind of body and nervous system, a large number of human potentials are in principle available to use, but each of us is born into a particular culture that selects and develops a small number of these potentials, rejects others, and is ignorant of many. The small number of experiential potentials selected by our culture, plus some random factors constitute the structural elements from which our ordinary state of consciousness is constructed. We are at once the beneficiaries and the victims of our culture's particular selection. The possibility of tapping and developing latent potentials, which lie outside the cultural norm, by entering an altered state of consciousness, by temporarily restructuring consciousness, is the basis of the great interest in such states.

There are also a great variety of potential states that are extraordinary³. Not all

³ The term *extraordinary states of consciousness* in this study refers to a state of consciousness that is altered because of certain induction techniques forming part of a religious or cultural setting. Thus it does not refer to stages of ordinary or base line consciousness.

people experience such a state though many people might experience some form of it during their lifetime, because of illness (high fever) or because of their cultural and religious setting (Craffert 2002:73).

Alloisio (n.d.:2) explains that the ordinary state of consciousness which a person experiences while awake is necessary for survival in the physical environment. Ordinary consciousness is characterised by a high degree of rationality and a relatively low degree of imaginative capacity. In an altered state of consciousness rationality is normally low or different, for example night time dreaming, during which an entire dream world is created. The term 'state' is not to be trivialised but denotes the states or stages of behaviour through which the individual progresses (Harniman nd:1). If a state of ordinary consciousness may be defined as a usefully distinctive organisational pattern of the components of consciousness, an altered state is then a qualitative, as well as perhaps a quantitative, alteration in the overall pattern of mental functioning relative to some ordinary consciousness, such as when the person who experiences it feels that his or her consciousness is qualitatively different from the way it functions in the ordinary state (Tart nd:3).

An altered state of consciousness can be described as a unique, dynamic pattern or configuration of psychological structures, an active system of psychological sub-systems. The overall pattern, the overall system properties, remain recognisably the same although the component structures/sub-systems may show some variation.

6.2.3 The Toronto Blessing associated with an altered state of consciousness

Writers like Dixon (1994:4); Stibbe (1995:85); (Foster 1997:61); Hanegraaff (2001:237) and Richter (1995:6), to mention but a few, are in agreement that the experience of the Toronto Blessing can be associated with an altered state of consciousness.

According to Tart (nd.:2), current psychological knowledge points out that the following ten major subsystems (collections of related structures) show important variations as a result of altered states of consciousness. These variations in subsystems are also present in the recipients of the Toronto Blessing: (1) *Exteroception* - that is the sensing of the external environment. People describe the Toronto Blessing experience as a current of heat emanating from an external source and 'coming over' them, the presence of a greater power; (2) *Interoception* - referring to the sensations the body feels and its reaction to these. Recipients of the Toronto Blessing reported sensory manifestations such as numbness and electrical currents flowing through them. Recipients of the Toronto Blessing also experience certain spontaneous bodily manifestations such as falling, rolling, jumping, spinning, shaking, inability to walk, jerking, drunkenness and a loss of physical control (Astbury 2000:229-239); (3) *Input-Processing* - referring to automated selecting and abstracting of sensory input so that a person only perceives what is important in terms of personal and cultural (consensus reality) standards. Recipients of the Toronto Blessing expand on the dissociative nature of their experience, describing it as 'switching off' to the people around, and focussing exclusively on the Toronto Blessing, seeing that it is important in the religious setting they find themselves. Some people also reported a feeling of being lifted out of the surroundings, into a different place; (4) *Memory* - recipients experience an inability to remember the manifestations. Because of their loss of memory they base their account of what had happened mostly on what other people had told them (Astbury 2000:268, 311); (5) *Subconscious* - the classical Freudian unconscious as well as many other psychological processes that go on outside our ordinary states of consciousness, but that may become directly conscious in various altered states of consciousness. Kaplan et al. (1994:305), refers to a psychological term, 'acting out', which is a direct expression of an unconscious wish or impulse in action; unconscious fantasy is lived out impulsively in behaviour. Some of the behaviour approximating animal activity accompanying the Toronto Blessing, people acting like lions and oxen and eagles, might also be interpreted in this manner (Kuglin 1996:112). The following quotation confirms the need to 'act out' '... all of a

sudden, for no apparent reason, I started screeching like a hawk. And ... apparently I stood up on the bench and started waving my arms as well. Like an eagle' (Astbury 2000:227); (6) *Emotions* - various emotional variations are reported as accompanying the Toronto Blessing, such as crying, uncontrollable laughter, joy, groaning and shouting (Astbury 2000:229-239); (7) *Evaluation and Decision-making* - refers to our cognitive evaluating skills and habits; it seems clear that the ability to evaluate and make decisions while experiencing the Toronto Blessing is affected, judging from the following quotations '... while I was trying to walk, I started laughing. It was something that came out of my insides. I also can't say why I laughed. It just bubbled out of my insides'. 'And when they started laughing I started to laugh' (Astbury 2000:224). (8) *Space/Time and Sense* - the construction of psychological space and time and the placing of events within it. People lose track of time or space while in the 'presence of God' or when they are 'slain in the Spirit'. People that were slain in the Spirit often report that they felt physically anaesthetised or weightless (Richter 1995:7); (9) *Sense of Identity* - refers to the quality added to the experience that makes it a personal experience instead of just information. Recipients reported being united with God while receiving the blessing. They felt drawn into a greater unity with God, a very real experience. The manifestations are attributed to God or the Spirit (Astbury 2000:311); and (10) *Motor Output* - muscular and glandular outputs to the external world and the body. Much physical activity accompanies the Toronto Blessing, such as: running, jumping, jogging on the spot, bouncing up and down, falling down, groaning and weeping (Richter 1995:8).

The variation in the subsystems, which is also experienced with the Toronto Blessing, once again confirms the altered states of consciousness in which the manifestations take place.

The viewpoint that the Toronto Blessing is an ecstatic experience is even more strongly confirmed when it is evaluated in mystical terms. Writers like Richter (1995), Fearon (1994) and MacNutt (1994) view the Toronto Blessing in these terms. According to (Spilkin, et al.1985; Bregman 1982; Cox 1983) the following

points include characteristics of mystical experience:

- The experience is *noetic* in that it is not only viewed as a subjective experience, but rather as a source of knowledge: Recipients of the Toronto Blessing describe their experience as teaching them about God. The lesson is that God loves them, and wants to change them, and that He has made them as part of a body (Astbury 2000:296).
- The experience is *ineffable* - those who have experienced it find it difficult to express in words what they have experienced. Astbury (2000:296) points out that while reading the quotes of recipients of the Toronto Blessing he came across frequent 'ums' and 'ahs' and seemingly rambling commentaries. This bears testimony to the fact that sometimes people really struggle to express their experience.
- The experience is viewed as *holy* in a religious sense. Recipients of the Blessing report a sense of awe at the experience of being touched by God.
- The experience is *passive* in the sense that the recipients were seized and held by an outside power not of their own making. Recipients of the Toronto Blessing describe it as being taken over and controlled by God or 'overcome by the Spirit' so that they may 'rest in the Spirit' (Richter 1995:7).
- The experience is characterised by *positive affect*. The Toronto Blessing experience is described as an experience of joy (Richter 1995:8; Astbury 2000:229-239).
- The experience is *paradoxical* in that it seems to defy logic. From a psychological point of view the illogical aspects seem evident. However for the recipients it seems logical from their understanding of God and their relationship with Him.

It seems clear from the above points that altered states of consciousness make up an important part of spiritual experiences, and more specifically in this case the Toronto Blessing. The Toronto Blessing also shows similar characteristics to mystical experience, which could lead to the conclusion that it is mystical. A

brief comparison between the Toronto blessing experience and a mystical experience follows later in this chapter (cf. 6.5). An altered state of consciousness can be induced.

6.2.4 Induction of altered states of consciousness

Altered states of consciousness can conveniently be divided into *the natural*, *the traumatic* and *the induced* (Foster 1997:61). An altered state of consciousness is created by the following two operations, namely: by forces that break up the ordinary basic states (actions of a psychological and/or physical nature) and by structural, psychological and physiological forces which are applied to create the desired altered state of consciousness. It is, however, important to note that, given the large number of components of consciousness which can be affected and the many induction techniques, together with the variety of cultural settings within which they operate, it is impossible to give a unified definition of any individual aspect or of the overall group of phenomena. Each induction technique merely modifies human consciousness and does not contain its own content. Experiences thus brought about by this induced state, also relate to the specific cultural setting, mental structures, specific expectations with which the experience is approached as well as to the symbolic meaning which is attached to it (Bourguignon 1979:241).

An altered state of consciousness could thus be brought about in a number of ways. Craffert (2002:69) points out the following situations which bring about alterations of states of consciousness: bodily conditions or experiences (e.g. highway hypnosis); certain illnesses (e.g. fever) or injuries; certain recreational activities (e.g. mood-altering drugs or long distance running); or such alterations could also be the result of religious practices (e.g. rituals). Induction can therefore be deliberate (e.g. meditation) or accidental (e.g. highway trance), it can be by artificial means (e.g. drugs) or within a natural setting (e.g. dancing or drumming). Induction can even be spontaneous (e.g. during solitude or prayer) or while participating in a group activity (e.g. a ritual dance or chanting).

The altered state of consciousness associated with the Toronto Blessing is mainly induced through religious rituals taking place in a particular religious environment. The music, group activity, modelling and the large crowds play a key role in inducing altered states of consciousness. Wright (1996:16) describes the singing he encountered in the 'worship service'⁴ that led up to people entering into an altered state of consciousness:

We stood for forty-five minutes of rousing songs accompanied by the upbeat of a drummer and a battery of skilful guitarists. The six or seven choruses sung during this time were repeated over and over again. All were simple and contemporary, although unknown to me. ... Several others began with: 'Glory and honour for ever', 'Send revival fire again', and 'Do it again Lord'. As the singing progressed the audience became increasingly animated. Many waved their hands high in the air. Some swayed back and forth. Some shook. ... Clapping of hands and amen's came fast and furious. Strange sounds rose above the singing – groans, shrieks of laughter and cries.

It is evident from the above quote as well as from the author's own experience that the leaders of most of these Toronto Blessing meetings, knowingly or unknowingly, use techniques and practices that induce an altered state of consciousness. As a result of these induced altered states of consciousness the participants become more receptive to what follows in the rest of the meeting.

6.2.5 Characteristics of altered states of consciousness

An altered state of consciousness includes the following specific characteristics (Ludwig 1969:13-18):

4 The term 'worship service' refers to a time of singing in charismatic circles. This time, also known as 'praise and worship', normally takes place before the preaching and ministering to people. The 'worship service', as the term suggests, is a time of worship where the participants are encouraged to give themselves in an effort to worship God.

- (1) Alterations in thinking, including predominance of archaic modes of thought, blurring of cause-effect distinctions, and cognitive ambivalence.
- (2) A distorted perception of time or of temporal reality, compared to ordinary reality.
- (3) Depersonalisation, a loss of control of the self and inhibition.
- (4) Increase of empathy, followed by sensations of becoming one with other people or objects.
- (5) Body-image changes and perceptual distortions.
- (6) Change in meaning; attachment of increased or specific significance to subjective experience or external cues, leading to thrilling feelings, insights and revelations of 'truth' that then carry an unshakable conviction.
- (7) Sense of the ineffable; the essence of the personal experience is felt to be not directly communicable, and this is often explained by varying degrees of amnesia.
- (8) Feelings of rejuvenation, renewed hope or of rebirth.
- (9) Hyper suggestibility. Altered states of consciousness not only increase suggestibility but also increase the susceptibility and propensity of persons uncritically to accept and/or automatically to respond to specific statements (i.e., commands or instructions of a leader, shaman, demagogue, or hypnotist) or non-specific cues (i.e., cultural or group expectations of certain types of behaviour or subjective feelings). Hyper-suggestibility can also refer to the increased tendency of a person to misperceive or misinterpret various stimuli or situations, based either on his or her inner fears or wishes.

The abovementioned characteristics are found in the experience of the Toronto Blessing and are more fully discussed later (see table under 6.3.3).

6.2.6 Role players in creating spiritual experience

Human beings do not live in isolated environments and are therefore influenced by certain factors that contribute to what they experience. Some specific

important role players in this regard are religious life, the human body, hypnosis, and mass behaviour (mass contagion).

6.2.6.1 Role of religious life in spiritual experience

Religion is a multi-dimensional human phenomenon, and analyses of any of these dimensions can never claim to cover all the details. The following dimensions can be distinguished: doctrines, myths, ethical teachings, rituals, social institutions and religious experiences of various kinds (Smart 1991:6-16). A religious experience of any religious tradition can be analysed from the point of view of any or all of these dimensions. None of these dimensions, however, is fixed with any pre-established content. This means that one must take other factors into account: such as what kind of religion is referred to is it a temple based religion or is it a personal religion is it a primal religion (one which is coterminous with a natural society) or is it a critical religion which stands in tension with a natural society (Pye 1995:8)?

Religious experiences are given very little attention and have been described as the Cinderella of theological reflection (Veldsman 1990), the reason being that Christianity places more emphasis on guarding explicit doctrines than on giving attention to spiritual experiences (Zuesse 1991:171). The lack of reevaluation of spiritual experiences in the Christian religion could be a reason for the limited understanding and interpretation of them. Advice given by James (1994:24) seems appropriate in this regard: 'By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots.' It is also necessary, however, from time to time to look at the roots and evaluate the fruits. The need for a better understanding of spiritual experience is furthermore emphasised by La Barre (1972:261), who proposes that most knowledge of the supernatural derives *de facto* from the statements made by religious visionaries and ecstasies, while the priests only administer the ecclesia established on this supernatural basis.

A large variety of religious experiences have been documented. These include

mystical, trance, possession and similar experiences. In a very large percentage of the societies for which data are available, altered states of consciousness are manifested regularly as part of religious rituals and religious expression Bourguignon (1979:245).

The Bible is also filled with visionary stories, dream experiences and other similar mystical or religious experiences. Not much is made of these experiences and the role they played in the Christian tradition. According to Pilch (2001:2), the Bible is actually filled with experiences of 'altered states of consciousness', starting with Genesis, where God puts the first creature into a deep sleep in order to create Eve (Gen 2:21) and ending with Revelation where John repeats four times that what he reports is the result of experiences in trance (Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke reports more than twenty ASC experiences. The Apostle Paul was drawn to the early Christian movement by means of a vision (Gal 1:11, 2:1). Peter reportedly went into a trance (Acts 10:10). Some writers argue that mystical experience plays an important role in Paul's letters, and that the heart of his letters is about union with God in Christ (Kourie 1998:447; Ashton 2000:113-142).

It is clear from the abovementioned remarks that experiences in the Christian tradition are similar to what is called mystical experience. Also, these experiences are found in other religions, that broaden the scope of such experience tremendously (cf James 1994; Kruger 1995:132-134). Even in the religious movements called 'sects' or 'cults' their basis of them can be traced back to some religious experience.

Religious experience is therefore not confined to sects and cults but belongs to the very heart of many traditions. It was also at the centre of the early Christian movement (Craffert 2002:56).

6.2.6.2 Role of the body in spiritual experience

Religious traditions acknowledge the influence of bodily conditions on *psychological* or *spiritual* states. Within specific cultures these are taken for granted and receive little attention. Actions such as going up a mountain, remaining in solitude, keeping awake and depriving oneself of food are significant indicators of the type of experiences involved (Craffert 2002:59). According to anthropological literature a close connection exists between religious experience and the human body. Wulff (1997:49) points out the direct relation between the body and *spiritual discipline*: assuming certain postures, depriving oneself of food (fasting) or sleep, and submitting the body to certain discomforts or control of breathing. The two main ways are by means of physiological deprivation or physiological overstimulation. Four major forms of physiological deprivation exist, namely fasting, sleep deprivation, restricted sensory stimulation and breath control.

Winkelman (1992:95) points out that in many religious traditions fasting is viewed as a means of seeking prophetic revelations or visions. Fasting practices result in nutritional deficits, which whether actively sought or involuntarily encountered, can contribute to changes in the central nervous system that facilitate the induction of *altered states of consciousness*⁵. Fasting often goes hand in hand with other ritual activities. Sleep deprivation can take on several forms in religious contexts, including vigils and solitary prayer. The effects of sleep loss are well documented as resulting in symptoms such as delusions or tactile hallucinations (Wulff 1997:75).

⁵ Deprivation of food and water has a direct effect upon the pituitary and adrenal glands that affect the hypothalamus and hippocampal-septal systems (Winkelman 1992:95). Practically, this means that during fasting 'the brain is nourished exclusively by glucose (simple sugar), which the body cannot store for more than a few hours. During total fasts, even days in length, glycogen, the form in which carbohydrates are stored in the liver for future use, is exhausted and triglycerides (a combination of the trihydric alcohol glycerol and fatty acids) in body fat are broken down, a process that frees the components for use. Finally, when body fat is depleted, muscle protein is broken down into amino acids, most of which can be converted into glucose' Wulff (1997:72). During the Middle Ages fasting practices, according to Kalweit (1992:83), caused people's body chemistry to turn ecstasies and visions into everyday occurrences

Restricted stimulation is the result of a variety of practices such as meditation or solitude. Well-documented examples exist of religious seekers who retreat to mountains, forests, deserts, mountain caves or the top of a pillar or pole. The drastic reduction of environmental input can within a matter of hours result in depersonalisation, disturbances of body image, auditory and visual hallucinations and the like (Wulff 1997:76).

Breath control by means of either rhythmic breathing or holding of breath both influence the intake of oxygen and its proportions with carbon dioxide in the bloodstream, which can also contribute to one's state of consciousness. Physiological overstimulation refers to ritual practices such as drumming, chanting, singing and dancing (Wulff 1997:85).

Experiences brought about by the abovementioned bodily conditions are very real experiences for the participants: the deities they encounter are deities-out-there and the worlds visited are worlds-out-there (James 1994:75; Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili 1990:132,270). Taking into account the fact that bodily conditions can have an effect on psychological or spiritual states, it is clear that altered states of consciousness, interpreted as religious/spiritual experiences, could be the result of bodily conditions. Which further implies that a so-called encounter with God could be nothing more than an experience brought about by certain bodily conditions to which a person is exposed. It is also possible that although the body plays a role in an experience the experience could be authentic. An example is the trance Peter went into (Acts 10:9-10). Although the previous verse indicates that Peter was very hungry and some commentators interpret food deprivation as having induced the trance (Stott 1990:186), the experience and vision is believed to be authentic. Arrington (1988:108) adds the following: 'Prayers, visions, angels and the ministry of the Spirit – all emphasise that these events were initiated and empowered by God himself. However, the emphasis on the divine initiative does not deny personal decisions or make Cornelius or Peter robots. Both these men had visions after prayer'. The issue thus is not the questioning of religious or spiritual experiences as such but,

rather, testing the origin of them. It seems that physiological over stimulation plays a key role in the Toronto Blessing. The meetings can continue for hours on end. The singing also lasts for a very long time and songs are sung over and over, creating an altered state of consciousness or a trance like state. The prayers by the leaders during these meetings are also focussed on the Spirit and on receiving 'more and more and more'. The prayers, in some services of Rodney Howard-Browne, consist of nothing more than the words 'filled' or 'fill' repeated over and over again as he lays hands on people. The words 'filled' or 'fill' are some of the words used to impart the 'blessing'. Through the testimonies of those who have received the 'blessing' it can be viewed as normative, thus suggesting such behaviour as an essential for the believer (Astbury 2000:305).

6.2.6.3 Hypnosis and mass behaviour

The term 'hypnosis' is derived from the name of the Greek god of sleep, Hypnos, and was coined by an English physician, Dr James Braid, in 1843. Incidentally, it is an unfortunate term since it conveys the erroneous impression that hypnosis is the same as sleep, while hypnosis actually means an increased receptivity to suggestion (Caprio & Berger 1998:12). The term 'hypnosis' was further complicated by the tendency, which dates back to the discoverer, Franz Anton Mesmer, to regard the process of hypnotism as one which transports the subject into a separate 'state of mind', also known as an 'altered state of consciousness' (Spanos 1989:97). Also the fact that the phenomenon attracted a coterie of charlatans and faith healers, and more recently, nightclub entertainers who make unsubstantiated claims and show a singular reluctance to use proper controls in their work, has complicated the matter even more (Reber & Reber 2001:331). The present view, however, is that a hypnotic 'state' does exist. It is somewhat less dramatic than was often portrayed but does, in general, and according to Reber & Reber (2001:331), display the following characteristics:

- (1) Although a sleep-resembling state is achieved, the EEG pattern of hypnosis does not resemble that of any of the stages of sleep. In a hypnotic state, reflexes are present and in natural sleep reflexes are

diminished or absent. The hypnotic state may be compared to a dreamlike state. Furthermore the hypnotic state cannot be likened to a state of absentmindedness, or a state of dissociated consciousness, in which a subject is partially withdrawn from reality. The subject is actually fully aware of what is happening and is extremely alert (Caprio & Berger 1998:13);

- (2) The normal planning functions of a hypnotised person are reduced and the hypnotised person tends to wait passively for instructions from the hypnotist;
- (3) The subject's attention becomes highly selective and the subject may hear only one person, to the exclusion of others;
- (4) Role playing is readily accomplished, the hypnotised person frequently becoming quite thoroughly immersed in a suggested role; and
- (5) Post-hypnotic suggestion is often observed, frequently a specific amnesia that prevents the subject from recalling things he or she has been told to forget.

Hypnosis can be defined as a sleep-like condition produced by the hypnotist in a subject who allows himself or herself to accept and respond to certain specific suggestions. Two kinds of hypnosis can be distinguished. 'Hetero-hypnosis' refers to the induction of the 'hypnotic state' in a subject by someone else such as a hypnotist, also sometimes called the 'operator'. 'Autohypnosis' or 'self-hypnosis' refers to the induction of the hypnotic state by oneself (Caprio & Berger 1998:13).

According to the proponents of hypnosis there is nothing mysterious about it. Hypnosis in itself is also not harmful seeing that it is merely bringing a person to a relaxed state of mind. However when the aim of hypnosis, namely to change the way a person thinks and acts, is considered it becomes problematic. Especially for the reason that the subconscious mind, that will be the target for the suggestions, will accept it, whether true or false, without questioning. Its application is based on the known psychological relationship between the

'conscious' and the 'subconscious' minds. The subconscious mind has no power to reason, and accepts and acts upon any fact or suggestion given to it by the conscious mind. Hypnosis works because human beings are suggestible. 'Suggestion is the key to hypnotism' (Caprio & Berger 1998:23). Suggestion is described as 'the process of inducing someone to behave in a particular way, accept a particular opinion or believe in something, through indirect methods. Suggestion can be directly given to a person when in a trance state. The term is only used when no force, argument, command or coercion is used to bring about the desired effect' (Reber & Reber 2001:724). Human beings are continually influenced by the powerful suggestions given during their early years, resulting in their developing a true ability to reason and to think logically. A critical, rational faculty is gradually developed. A human being could therefore select what he or she wants to believe as true, based on his or her own experience or experiences of others. To change or improve a condition or to cause a person to behave in a particular way, a suggestion must reach the subconscious mind, meaning that the suggestion must bypass the conscious or critical faculty. This is possible when a person is in a 'state of hypnosis' or his or her critical defences are lowered through such a state. Also, the constant exhortation to empty the mind carries with it the urge to yield control of a person's personality. 'Leaders are really exhorting people to short-circuit their normal self-control systems' (Wright 1996:143). Typical phrases used to attain this condition in the Toronto Blessing are, 'don't take control' and, 'if you lose control, He takes control'.

It was also discovered that suggestions are far more powerful, and acceptance of them is much faster, when emotions are involved. Habits are often associated with emotional satisfaction. Any sign of distress causes one to reach for the 'pacifier' or habit. A habit can be established from just a single input, if strong emotion is simultaneously present. Because of the suggestions we subconsciously receive on a daily basis, we develop a system of beliefs that cause us to react automatically without logic. These automatic reactions are, for example, demonstrated in our religious attitudes. Suggestions need not be

verbalised. Silent thoughts are also 'self-suggestion', influencing movement in certain directions (Caprio & Berger 1998:28).

Mass behaviour or mass contagion refers to the collective behaviour of a mass of people, without any obvious direct or personal communication or mutual influencing of the individuals making up the mass. The assumption is that mass-communication systems are the channels through which societal influences occur (Reber & Reber 2001:414). Such a societal influence is called 'social reality' and refers to something that is agreed upon by a group of people. If the group agrees that something is acceptable, each individual in the group will accept it without question because the group norm supersedes individual rationality (Astbury 2000:355). Marks (1947:150) describes the power of mass behaviour as follows, 'if imagination and hysterical contagion had been left to do their hallucinatory work, the crowd would have created its own miracle.' An individual's belonging to a social group causes this process of social comparison which can induce people to see, feel, smell or hear things that are not physically there.

In essence hypnosis can be categorised as an altered state of consciousness. It can further be argued that hypnosis has the aim of suggesting certain things to the hypnotised person that he or she will passively follow without questioning them. It has also been ascertained that hypnosis need not have a formal setting and can be self-induced.

Creating, unknowingly to the recipient, a 'hypnotic' or 'trance state' followed by suggestion seems to be an important part of the Toronto Blessing. The following assumptions are gathered from observation or description of the worship meetings of the Toronto Blessing. The meetings are full of expectation of the unusual and the long hours of the meetings create a charged atmosphere. More focus is placed on 'ministry time' than on the sermon (Wright 1996:217). The suggestion that the Holy Spirit is going to bless people in the meeting is continuously sent through. One way in which this is done is through music,

especially the type of music including guitars and drums, that has the ability to influence the minds of people and induce obedience to a rhythm or emotion outside themselves (Foster 1997:64). Rhythmic music and dance, as well as drumming, are known in early cultures to create a trance state. If a person's senses are overloaded through continuous repeated music the stress will affect the normal functioning of the mind and the person will become disorientated and confused and end up in a trance state (Captive minds hypnosis and beyond 1983). This process of moving into a trance can be likened to a 'hypnotic state' where individuals become suggestible. Individuals attending the Toronto Blessing meetings are brought into a relaxed state through the rhythmic music and the songs that are sung over and over again (Hanegraaff 2001:237).

Haville (1997:18), a well-known figure in the Toronto Blessing circles, describes the preparation for the blessing as follows: 'I had learned how to create the right atmosphere. I knew that the nature of worship itself was vital to the "anointing" falling. I knew it was essential to be personally in control of the service, to have the right songs and no distractions. I knew that the right songs created the right ambience. ...The atmosphere was everything.' The congregation is led by the music leader, who has the task of bringing the congregation into contact with God or into a 'spiritual realm' through 'praise and worship' as it is known. During the worship service the worship leader gives instructions to the congregation such as 'let's raise our hands', 'let's focus on God' or 'close your eyes and worship God'. The majority of the congregation will follow these instructions. The songs that are sung during the worship service place a strong emphasis on the individual and his or her receiving the blessing. Through this process the individual's attention becomes highly selective and focusses on God and the blessing. Words of the songs are key elements to enable an individual to focus on the Holy Spirit and on what is going to happen (Haville 1997:18). Role-playing is an important part of the worship service, and the worship team together with the leader guide the congregation in how to worship God physically, through bodily expression, and emotional expression. Some individuals, while in the worship service, move into a 'trance'. This is evident by

their swaying slightly on their feet from left to right or *vice versa*. Others stand with a serious expression on their faces, expecting something to happen. Haville (1997:18) points out that through the worship people are not only brought into a 'trance' state but are also prepared for the suggestions that will follow. A great expectancy about receiving the blessing is created.

Aspects such as the lyrics of the songs, testimonies, demonstrations of people previously 'being touched by the Holy Spirit' on the platform, as well as the messages of the leaders, suggest that a 'blessing' is about to be poured out during 'ministry time'⁶ (Wright 1996:215). Hanegraaff (2001:230-231) describes the preparation before receiving the 'blessing' as follows: first the subjects are worked into an altered state of consciousness by the use of music, then peer pressure is applied by the perception that everybody else is receiving the blessing and that it is desirable for everyone who is serious about God, which in turn creates an expectancy in the follower. This altered state of consciousness created by the worship service is seemingly enhanced by the proponents of the Toronto Blessing, as can be seen by the following prophecy given by Lindell Cooley, a worship leader: 'The Lord is saying, I'm bypassing your mind and going straight to your heart'⁷ (Fisher & Goedelman 1997:17). Amott (1995:182) adds to this even more explicitly and concisely, 'God offends the mind to reveal the heart'. Howard-Browne discourages people from praying for the 'blessing' in his services; instead he encourages them to start laughing (Hanegraaff 2001:239). Finally the power of suggestion is used as a 'placebo' to 'cure' a host of psychosomatic symptoms and sicknesses.

The sermons that follow mostly have the aim of preparing the people for the blessing, focussing on themes like 'God is doing a new thing' or 'God's spirit is moving all over the world blessing and restoring His people' or 'God is healing

6 Ministry time refers to the time in the service when people are ministered to in prayer.

7 This prophecy of Lindell Cooley was uttered during a Conference on Ministry in 1997, Grand Rapids as cited in Fisher, G.R. & Goedelman, M.K. 1997. 'The Murky River of Brownsville: The Strange Doctrine And Practice of Pensacola Revival'. *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 1997, 17.

and restoring His church'. Acceptance of the preacher's message is confirmed by the verbal expressions by individuals, such as 'amen', 'praise the Lord' and the clapping of hands. This undivided focus on the preacher is obtained through promoting the preacher, by suggesting that he is 'anointed', which makes the believers more susceptible to receiving the 'blessing' (Haville 1997:18). The critical mind is addressed during almost every service and people with critical views are warned that they could 'miss out' on God's blessing and upset the spirit of God by such an attitude. Statements such as this can easily cause people who are evaluating the experience to change their minds because they feel guilty, being accused of 'hindering' God in his work. On doctrinal grounds the leaders of the Third Wave commonly label those who oppose them as Pharisees. They are labelled Pharisees because they are using sound doctrine as a shield to curtail and control the work of the Holy Spirit (Wright 1996:157). Another way to put critics at ease or cause them to lower their defences is by the testimonies of pastors during the 'testimony time'. These pastors will then testify how they had been blinded by the devil, but that their eyes have now been opened. Once they doubted that God could be in such bizarre manifestations as pawing the ground like an angry bull, but now they 'know' experientially that God often move in mysterious ways (Hanegraaff 2001:249).

Emotions play an important role in these meetings and the two emotions used almost without exception in these meetings are 'guilt' and 'fear'. Guilt that an individual is 'out of line', missing out on God's will in his or her life, and 'fear' that he or she might miss salvation and eternal life. The effects on the suggestible congregation are clearly seen during 'ministry time'. Ministry time is not structured and can take place at different times in the meeting. It can be in the beginning, during or at the end of the meeting. The impartation of the blessing comes through different 'techniques' or 'methods'. I have seen leaders simply using phrases like 'receive the blessing' accompanied by a movement of the hand symbolising a throwing action. Some people, wherever they are standing in the church, will then fall to the ground, start jerking and shaking and experiencing the symptoms of the blessing as described in chapter 3. Another

method is to touch people on the forehead between the eyes, also known as the 'laying on of hands'. Haville (1997:19) reports how he blew over the congregation and saw them collapse onto the floor under the 'anointing'. Another method of imparting the 'anointing' or blessing is by throwing an item of clothing or even by wagging of a finger (Haville 1997:21). A Hypnotist, Albert Ignatenko, from the Psychic Institute in the Ukraine, demonstrates how he similarly transfers his energy by the throwing movement of his arm. This results in the participant falling backward, exactly as is the case with the Toronto Blessing. Ignatenko explains that he can do this merely by transmitting a thought that is transposed into action (The Signs and Wonder Movement-Exposed 1997 (video)).

It seems that the impartation of the blessing is planned carefully in order to create the right perception amongst the believers. In many of the services testimonies of people that have received the blessing are given and in so doing the expectancy level is increased. It is very important at the start of the 'ministry service', when the blessing is imparted, that a good response to the blessing is portrayed in order to ensure that believers are susceptible to the blessing. This is ensured by focussing on the most responsive people during the prolonged worship session as an illustration of God presently blessing people. Their response, such as experiencing ecstasy for some time while lying on the floor, or shaking energetically while praising God with mantra-like chanting, is attributed to God's touch. Haville (1997:20) points out that he focussed on those who had already been touched and by ministering to them first, ensured that the impression of the blessing being imparted was all the more confirmed in the minds of the believers. Foster (1997:68) explains that the selection of people already responding serves as a crowd suggestion and some people who might not have succumbed, will then do so.

Foster (1997:70) discusses a twelve-point method used by some leaders and helpers to impart the blessing. According to him it demonstrates the classic methods of hypnosis being used.

- (1) At every meeting the worship session should be followed by the testimonies of those who have received the blessing previously. After the testimonies they should be prayed for again in order to receive a fresh blessing, through suggestions such as 'drink' or 'receive' the blessing. By this action the congregation is softened up for what is to follow; seeing others being hypnotised aids one's own hypnotism.
- (2) When 'ministry time' begins look for the people that are obviously most anointed, in other words those that display manifestations such as crying, shaking and laughing. A person whose attention is already highly selective is used. This is common practice in hypnotism.
- (3) If no outward manifestation of the Holy Spirit is observed, be selective in calling people forward who sense a strong anointing – that is, people more suggestible to the experience. Once again selection is taking place in order to create an impression of God's blessing.
- (4) Put people at ease about receiving the blessing more than once. It is in order to be prayed for more than once. The more you receive, the better, and more fully each successive time. The suggestion is made to an already compliant group. The 'more you soak' is effectively the same as 'the deeper into a hypnotic state you go'.
- (5) Keep assuring people that it is in order if they do not receive any unusual manifestation because God's Spirit works differently in people. After all, it is said, the manifestation is a by-product; a changed heart is the aim. Through reassurance again and again, people are brought into a relaxed state, preventing a critique and dismissal of the experience. Manifestations play an important role in these meetings. Without them they would be quite dull. The suggestion implants itself in those hypnotised and forms a post-hypnotic suggestion, so people keep repeating, when challenged, that the manifestations are a by-product - despite evidence to the contrary.
- (6) Encourage people not to be fearful of what God is doing. This requires reassuring words from the leaders. Reassuring messages confirm the correctness of the experience.

- (7) Leaders are encouraged to allow themselves to be prayed for by others. Leaders seem to be the gatekeepers; by allowing others to pray for them the suggestion is made that all is well. The believers feel more comfortable and open up. Here is a clear equivalent of the stage hypnotist's plant, or in some instances a 'known pliable volunteer'; demonstration on such a person always helps induce hypnosis in others.
- (8) Some times children are afraid to receive until they see their parents or other adults whom they know receive. Some children have even been reported as being fearful of some of the manifestations they have experienced, such as being pinned to the floor. It would be reprehensible, even for the stage hypnotist, to practise on children.
- (9) Keep the environment 'light and easy'. This is a classic hypnotic condition. Feelings of lightness and pleasant heaviness are very common in hypnotic states.
- (10) The leaders are encouraged to refer to these manifestations as 'times of renewal' (Acts 3:19), seeing that it is a more acceptable term than revival. Revival has the connotation of touching the larger community. Also the phrase 'resting in the spirit' should be used rather than 'slain in the spirit'.
- (11) When the number of people waiting for prayer to receive the blessing is large, prayer should be started with those with the lowest anointing, seeing that the quality of prayer (effectiveness) goes down with time. Again, these are classic conditions for hypnosis. Since when has prayer become a sort of essence that can be diluted?
- (12) Encourage people who were prayed for to put testimonies in written form immediately. These testimonies play their part in pressurising the non-compliant people. The suggestion is made through these testimonies that to reject them is to reject God, 'quench the Spirit', 'grieve the Spirit' or even 'blaspheme against the Spirit'. Sadly, most will succumb to such pressure, especially if, as is the case in many instances, they are at the Toronto event over a period of days in a

foreign country and have spent considerable sums of money (Foster 1997:73).

Wright (1996:46) reports about professor Edward Shorter of the University of Toronto, a student of 'the history of religious hysteria', who was interviewed by CBC television and shown a series of videos that were taken from the Airport Vineyard church and the Toronto Blessing meetings. His comment: 'Two hundred years ago the same symptoms were described as evidence of demonic possession. These people are "primed", they have a script in their mind, not consciously but deep in their unconscious mind. They know what kind of manifestation they are to produce.' Beverley (1995:158) describes the Toronto Blessing phenomena as follows, 'The phenomena do not seem to be supernatural at all but rather psychological – the product of intense desire, expectations, suggestibility and the atmosphere of the Vineyard meeting.' Of the manifestations he comments as follows, 'Are they proof of the supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Not at all. ... Each of them can be imitated by most people. ... Too much about the manifestations can be explained psychologically.'

Mikhael (1995) has discovered scores of parallels between the charismatic phenomena and what happens to subjects under hypnosis. Mikhael came to this conclusion by examining descriptions from the Pentecostal writer, MacNutt (1994), testimonies from meetings led by John Wimber and, phenomena associated with the Toronto blessing. He compared these descriptions with those of eminent writers on the subject of hypnosis. Mikhael (1995:19-42) discovered that every one of the phenomena reported as part of the Toronto Blessing, has routinely taken place where hypnosis has been practised. Mikhael (1995:75) feels that the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing are not only the work of the flesh but also believes, from his research, that the movement cannot be explained just in terms of the power of suggestion. Instead he finds parallels between hypnosis and witchcraft, clairvoyance, shamanism and divination. McArthur (1992:185) is of the opinion that the charismatic movement is filled

with, as he calls it, 'outrageous accounts of behaviour that resembles trances, seizures, subliminal messaging, hypnosis, suspended animation, frenzy, hysteria, even dementia'.

In my opinion I do not agree with the viewpoint that the Toronto Blessing could be demonic. As mentioned earlier an analysis of this viewpoint is not within the parameters of the present investigation. I contend, however, that the likelihood/possibility of a hypnotic state accompanied by suggestion being used as methods to impart the Toronto Blessing cannot be excluded from these meetings, as was pointed out clearly. I also believe that leaders, whether knowingly or unknowingly, make use of psychological techniques such as suggestion in their statements such as 'God is going to touch people', 'God is here' or the 'Holy Spirit is in our midst'. If it is assumed that most of the people attending the meetings are in a hypnotic state, such suggestions aimed at the subconscious mind can have extensive effects. The subconscious mind does not question any suggestion, whether true or false, but embraces or accepts it fully (Murphy 2000:16). Psychologists have done tests to measure the reaction of the subconscious mind to suggestions and found that whatever suggestions were made to the respondents under hypnosis were accepted and believed (*ibid.* 2000:17-18). If the suggestion was made to a person that he or she was a snake he or she would start gliding and hissing like one. The reason for this is that the conscious mind that serves as 'gate keeper of the mind' and questions all things is bypassed. This means that whatever the leader or pastor suggests to his followers who are in a hypnotic state will be accepted. Whether it is the words 'receive, receive', 'fill, fill' or 'more, more', the person will actually believe that he or she receives what the pastor is suggesting, namely the blessing. Furthermore it is suggested by testimonies and previous reports that the event of receiving will be confirmed by particular manifestations. What is even worse is the fact that what is suggested and accepted, however true or false, while one is in this hypnotic state is determinative for the belief system of the person. The damaging effects of the blessing might not only be limited to the actual experience during the meeting but could also have long term effects, such as

questioning God and his ability when a so-called encounter or healing turns out not to be real. It seems, in order to conclude, that 'supernatural manifestations' cannot always simply be attributed to God or the working of God's Spirit. Supernatural manifestations can also be mechanically 'manufactured' by human beings using psychological techniques, even in a meeting held in the name of God. I am by no means downplaying the supernatural working power of God by his Holy Spirit, but am rather, reprimanding the reduction of God's power to mere man made manifestations.

It is commonly believed that everybody can be hypnotised if they so *desire*, and if they believe in the *power of the hypnotist*. People that seek help from a psychiatrist or psychologist do not know exactly themselves what they are looking for. The solution is given or suggested to them by the psychiatrist or psychologist and because they trust him or her as a power or force they accept it (Captive minds hypnosis and beyond 1983). The same principle applies to the Toronto Blessing. Firstly, people that go to such meetings have the *desire* to receive the Toronto Blessing. Secondly, they believe in the leader or pastor conducting these meetings and view him as a *power figure*, as is the case with a hypnotist or psychiatrist. Thirdly, in similar fashion the people desiring the Toronto Blessing do not know what they are looking for or what the 'blessing' really entails. The 'blessing' is simply imparted to them by the pastor or leader when he prays for them or by speaking out words over them such as 'fill' or 'receive'. They do not know what they are receiving but fully trust the pastor's judgement because he/she is believed to be an anointed person. Lastly, people are more suggestible when under a lot of emotional stress. Many people attending these services are experiencing, in a lesser or greater degree, emotional stress and seek relief or healing. In my opinion the mere idea that through hypnosis a person opens him or herself to the suggestions of another person, without really knowing what the intention of that person is, creates a question mark and objection in my mind. The level of suggestibility and vulnerability created by a hypnotic state, and the consequences of this for the person passively following the instructions of the hypnotist in this process, in my

opinion have not yet really been realised. What about the person's right to exercise judgement and choices in the evaluation of the suggestions made to him or her? Hypnosis could even become a cruel practice if it is exercised or applied unknowingly to the recipients in gatherings such as the Toronto Blessing meetings under the pretence of religion, whilst selfish human accomplishment might be the real motive for it. It is also important to note that not each and everyone attending these Toronto Blessing meetings succumb to the so-called manifestations. Many people have walked out of these services untouched by the so-called 'blessing'.

6.3 DIFFERENT THEORETICAL VIEWPOINTS ON SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

6.3.1 Neuroscientific perspective on spiritual experiences

Another question that arises when looking at altered states of consciousness is of course the question: How much of this experience is really real? Or could the role that bodily conditions, culture and the nervous system play in these experiences confirm the theory about a 'God module', proposed by some, that could be identified in the human brain? This would imply that God is only a creation of the human mind.

It has already been indicated that in a great majority of human societies, ritually induced forms of altered states of consciousness do exist. Within the category of altered states of consciousness that take place in a religious setting, one major distinction must be made between ecstatic and meditative states of consciousness. These can be placed on a single circular continuum that represents two altered ways of attaining the Self (Craffert 2002:74). The one side of the continuum reflects *ergotropic arousal* - which mobilises the body during stress. This state is characterised by a hyperactive mental activity that can be induced by hallucinogenic drugs and mystical exaltations. The other side reflects the *trophotropic arousal* - which is characterised by a hypo-active mental

activity that induces a progressive desensitisation to external stimuli and leads to the ecstatic states of *zazen* or *samadhi* (Wulff 1997:109-110; Alloisio nd.:2). The two ends of the continuum represent different physiological processes; however they bring about much the same result, namely an experience of oneness with the universe (unitary experiences). D'Aquili and Newberg (1993:5-6) indicate that neurophysiologically speaking, such unitary experiences can be driven from the body up (bottom-up), meaning that they can be triggered by the physical behaviours of ritual, or they can be set in motion by the mind, starting with nothing more substantial than a thought (top-down).

Newberg, D'Aquili & Rause (2001:113) explain that humans are blessed with an inborn genius for effortless self-transcendence. This can be explained by experiences such as 'losing yourself' in a piece of beautiful music, or feeling 'swept away' by a rousing patriotic speech. Like all experiences, moods, and perceptions, unitary states are made possible by neurological functions. More specifically, they are the result of the softening of the senses of self and the absorption of the self into the larger sense of reality that we believe occurs when the brain's orientation area is deprived of neural input. As seen earlier rhythmic behaviours of religious rituals can set into action the motion of depriving the mind from neural input, leading to moments of transcendent spiritual unity. In addition transcendent spiritual unity can also be achieved by patterns of behaviour with no spiritual intent but which are nonetheless ritualistic, for example through a quiet song in the proper setting. The same effect can, however, be achieved through other mood-shifting rhythmic activities. Slow rhythmic activities such as reading a poem, rocking a baby, or praying can have one type of effect while fast rhythmic activities such as distance running, having sex, or cheering along with a crowd of thousands at a football game have another. Both the fast and slow rituals can drive the brain to unitary states, even though using slightly different mechanisms.

Rhythmic behaviours can lead to unitary states by causing the orientation area to be blocked off from neural flow. The intensity of these states will be dependent

on the degree of neural blockage. This can vary from minimal blockage to total blockage that in turn will increase the intensity of the unitary states. This spectrum of unitary states is called the *unitary continuum* (*ibid.* 2001:115). At the baseline of this continuum is the state of mind in which we experience most of our lives, such as eating, sleeping, our interaction with others and our conscious awareness that we are in some fashion connected to the world around us. If one moves up in the continuum at low levels this blockage of neural flow results in mild unitary sensations, such as the feelings of unity and common inspiration shared by worshippers in a moving religious service. Moving along the continuum, we find a progression of increasing intense unitary states, associated with feelings of spiritual awe and rapture. If prolonged and rigorous rituals are involved, trance states may occur and moments of ecstasy and visions might be experienced. At the farthest end of the continuum, where the neural flow is blocked out largely or totally, profound states of spiritual union take place, such as those also described by mystics (*ibid.* 2001:116).

One of the features of religious traditions is to subsume the origin of an experience into the experience. An experience must be understood and interpreted in terms of the prevailing religious perception. The result is that the experience is identified with the interpretation - consequently, the experience has to confirm the local spirits, gods, ancestors, angels and the like as agents in the experience and as the cause of the experience, and the world-out-there which is experienced within each tradition is taken for granted as 'out there' (Craffert 2002:76). However from a neuro-scientific and transpersonal anthropological point of view, the diversity of transpersonal states shows that interpretive aspects of experience tend to diverge from individual to individual and from culture to culture. This confirms the point that certain states of consciousness can exist without any cultural practice or interpretation being attached to them (such as where illness and fever produce visionary experiences of light or geometric figures). The potential for altered states of consciousness is part of the 'hardware' of the species, but the form and the function as well as the meaning of these altered states of consciousness is determined by the culture (software

programmes) of society (Wedenoja 1990:284). Neuroscience thus points out that within the brain many of these processes are very similar, but because they are systems phenomena, which are co-determined by culture, they are to a certain degree always different.

Human experience must be understood as a bipolar unity, which incorporates both interpretive cognition and sensorial attributes (Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili 1990:28-29). A human experience consists of both sensorial and interpretive aspects and it would be useful if a clear distinction between the two could be maintained. There is thus a correlation between what is experienced in the sensory system and how it is interpreted in terms of a greater understanding of things. Human experiences can thus be seen as the same but also as different. They are the same (bodily) and they differ (culturally) - together they confront us with comparable human experiences. Nieto (1997:104) explains experience as follows: 'Experience is a mental process involving sensory participation. Outside of a mental awareness of these two processes, mental and sensory, there is no experience. Man's experience themselves and the external world; the "I" and the "not-I". But man's experience is a mental construct. It is this mental aspect of the experience that shapes experience itself.' Experience is not given in a vacuum but is formed by the mental web of the mind. 'Religious experience, like all experience, is grounded in the brain and has neurological correlates' (Watts 1998:69).

The abovementioned research also raises the question whether God exists only in our brains. In other words is God not merely the creation of the human mind? A further question is whether it would be possible to perform a *godectomy* by removing a portion of the temporal lobe.

The following facts have been established by the neuro-scientific approach. Firstly, all that is meaningful to religious experiences happens in the mind. The following quote from d'Aquili and Newberg (2000:31) confirms this view: 'Whatever the ultimate nature of spiritual experience might be - whether it is in

fact a perception of an actual spiritual reality, or merely an interpretation of sheer neurological function - all that is meaningful in human spirituality happens in the mind.' Winer (1995:5) has the following explanation with regard to the origin of the Toronto Blessing manifestations. As a person who has experienced the Toronto Blessing manifestations himself as well as from a neurological perspective, he speculates as follows: 'I feel that all the responses I've seen or experienced personally are empirically explainable by our current knowledge of the brain. Specifically, I suggest that the responses result from activation of the brain's temporal lobe (laughing), motor centres (jerking, twitching), or brainstem (falling, "drunken walk", or inability to move)'. Winer (1995:5-7) compares the laughter associated with the Toronto Blessing as similar to that experienced in the temporal lobe in complex partial epilepsy. The falling to the ground, being unable to rise, known as being 'slain in the Spirit', as well as the drunkenness, he views as similar to the experience of narcolepsy. More specifically he refers to the symptom of cataplexy, that is, the 'temporal loss of limb muscle tone usually following the strong emotion such as fear or laughter'. In severe cases people in the midst of a cataleptic spell will be unable to move their entire body. In less severe cases, cataplexy may be characterised by a drunken-like stagger or a more isolated loss of muscle tone in the head, neck and torso.

The hearing of voices can be attributed to a bicameral mind⁸. Photism, the seeing of a bright light, accompanies many mystical ecstatic experiences. Whether photism is associated with psychological arousal or electrical brain activity, it is accompanied by a sensation of being in a friendly presence, and feelings of being awe-struck.

One must be very cautious not to conclude that the statement that meaningful spirituality happens in the mind denotes that God does not exist. If we trust our perceptions of the physical world that are also only blips and flashes inside our skulls, there is no rational reason to declare religious experiences as fiction or as

⁸ The bicameral mind supposedly evolved into left-brain dominance (somewhere between 2000 and 1000 BC). However, the experience of hearing voices today posits a reactivation of some residual activity of right brain dominance (Astbury 2000:322).

only in our minds (d'Aquili and Newberg 2000:147).

Secondly, neuroscience cannot disprove the existence of deities on the grounds that they are only electrochemical blips and flashes within the neural pathways of the brain. Tracing religious or spiritual experiences to neurological processes does not disprove their realness (Craffert 2002:80, Watts 2000:121). D'Aquili and Newberg (2000:146) explain as follows 'If you were to dismiss spiritual experience as "mere" neurological activities, you would also have to distrust all of your own brain's perceptions of the material world.' The fact that certain processes in the neurological-system can be identified and mapped does not mean that there is no ontological reality to that which is perceived or experienced. The example of colour can be used to illustrate this point. The fact that only certain mammals have the necessary receptors in the eye and brain to perceive colours does not mean that colour does not exist and that it is all in the brain. The fact that God is experienced through the neural machinery in the brain for experiencing God, cannot lead to the conclusion that God does not exist (Floyd 1999:26). The fact that religious experiences are so different from one another means that the brain processes involved will be very different. Some are striking, memorable experiences that stay with people for life. In fact, a person can experience anything in a religious way. For a deeply religious person all experiences would be religious experience. No simple theory of a 'God spot' in the brain can thus be adequate (Watts 2000:123).

Although it is suggested that the temporal lobes are the origin of mystical religious experience, this does not mean that the experience is not real to the person. 'Even though you may suspect, as a scientist, that this is an electrical phenomenon similar to thousands of others, it doesn't change the fact that for the individual such an experience has been awesome, tremendous, utterly without precedent. I mean, your God coming and sitting down next to you, that's a pretty freaky thing' (Cotton 1995:213). Although the possible neurological components of the revival phenomena are recognised, the potential of the experience to impact positively is also acknowledged.

Thirdly, this point of view does not say that the Unknown (the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*) of religion was considered to be external when in fact that Unknown was all the while within us (La Barre 1972:261). In other words, it undermines the identification of the experienced deity with external reality and the experienced world (in soul flight or mystical trance) with the world-out-there. It is neither outside nor inside but within the total bio-psychosocial system (Craffert 2002:80).

Fourthly, it is accepted that human beings are genetically hard-wired to have ASC experiences, including the possibility of religious experiences. This, however, is no proof that God does exist out there. Neuroscience cannot prove that God has indeed put an antenna in the human brain to connect us to the divine (Craffert 2002:81; Floyd 1999:26).

Fifthly, it must be said that speculations about the God module must include the complexity of a bio-psychological system. It is not only the complexity of the brain itself, but the complexity of bio-psychosocial systems as such, which defeats the idea of a 'God module' which can be physically removed (Albright 2000). Neither brain research nor the structure of the brain in itself can explain why we take for real what we actually take for real. What is experienced is thus provided by both the neuro-chemical commotion in the brain and the cultural system.

The question, when looking at all the abovementioned observations, is not whether God is real but what kind of God/gods are constructed as real. Can all the deities who are seen, heard, felt and encountered in religious experience be real and what kind of deities do we have to accommodate? It is one thing to accept the epistemological reality that neural images all have the same epistemic status but it is something different to endorse all such deities as equally real externally for all of us (Craffert 2002:83).

The aim of this study is not to confirm or refute these neurological issues. What

is important, however, is to broaden the understanding of these manifestations by providing a rationale for such behaviour.

6.3.2 Social psychology perspective on spiritual experiences

Strauss (1981:58) points out that shared social understanding plays a key role in religious understanding. He continues by saying that the very nature of 'experiencing' is socially defined as well. Astbury (2000:301) found this view pertinent with regard to the Toronto Blessing manifestations typifying a revival experience. If it is a shared understanding that the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing are rolling on the floor and laughing, then it is more likely for that behaviour to occur as indicative of a person undergoing religious experience. The social environment where the spiritual experience takes place is also important. Astbury (2000:162-178), in her research on the Toronto Blessing manifestations, points out that the location where the manifestations took place was mostly a religious meeting of some sort - church meeting, prayer group, youth camp or Bible college - but also at home. Certain activities during which the Toronto Blessing took place are also identified. Many of Astbury's respondents indicated prayer and the laying on of hands as simultaneous activities during which the Toronto Blessing occurred. The laying on of hands accompanied by prayer normally takes place when people are specifically called out for prayer during the Toronto Blessing services. Others experienced the Toronto Blessing during a time when people were prophesying. Some people experienced the Toronto Blessing during the activity of worship and others experienced it whilst listening to sermons being preached.

It is further clear that a certain religious climate is created in order for the manifestations to take place. Porter (1995:118), in her investigation into the worship services taking place in churches that experience the Toronto Blessing, indicates that the songs that are sung were mostly focussing on 'me' as an individual and were apparently used to focus on the individual in terms of furthering the effects of the Blessing. According to research done by Bourguignon

it became clear that in a very large percentage of societies for which data are available, altered states of consciousness are manifested regularly as part of religious rituals and religious expression (1979:245). In the Toronto Blessing setting bodily conditions also play an important role in creating certain spiritual states. Wulff (1997:85) mentioned that one of the bodily role players in creating a psychological or spiritual state is physiological over-stimulation, which refers to ritual practices such as drumming, chanting, singing and dancing. All of these practices are found, albeit in a different way, in the charismatic movement. The singing of songs in these congregations is normally led by a band of musicians playing electric guitars, keyboards, drums and some other instruments (Porter 1995:117). Choruses are sung over and over again (similar to chanting) during these meetings (Hanegraaff 2001:237). The conditions for the experience to take place are further helped along by other religious actions, apart from music. The following observation of Porter (1995:119) is self explanatory: 'The prayers were sometimes focussed on aspects of current phenomena, calling on God to bring "more, more"; at other times the prayers were addressed to the Spirit and focussed on a particular individual, apparently with the goal of the person falling to the floor'. The focus of the prayers is mostly the Spirit, rather than the Father and his work through Christ. Sermons in these meetings are short, with the aim of establishing the validity of the Toronto Blessing. People attending a Toronto Blessing meeting may easily participate in or react to the suggestions made by the leader of the service as a result of the level of suggestibility already created (Ludwig 1969:17).

The *group effect* must also be noted as an important influential factor in the Toronto Blessing experience. Argyle (1976:167) points out that risky behaviour is valued in a group and that cautious individuals move to more extreme positions after group discussion. Under some conditions individuals might even behave in an uninhibited fashion in large groups. When self-consciousness is diminished in a group context, behaviours tend to become disconnected from attitudes. Diminished self-awareness tends to promote de-individuation (Myers 1989). The de-individuating process is commonly observed in the Toronto

Blessing experience. These experiences are typically reported in the context of being prayed for by a minister, when an increased sense of God is experienced, with a lessening sense of self and of the crowd present in the venue (Astbury 2000:301). Crowd dynamics or the force of mass suggestion is very powerful. Mass hysteria is a full force: it strikes intellectuals, non-intellectuals, rich and poor alike. Its wellsprings are subconscious and biological, not rational, according to Marks (1947:195). The proponents of the Toronto Blessing, according to Hanegraaff (2001:258), capitalise on these expectations and forces in order to create the illusion that they are endowed with supernatural powers. The physical manifestations and lack of bodily inhibition of the Toronto Blessing are viewed by some as resistance to over-regulation by the church, and by society at large (McGuire 1990; Richter 1995; Turner 1992). The Toronto Blessing phenomena are occurring across differing denominations - even those typically viewed as conservative. This may also point to an escape from behaviour constraints. The lack of bodily inhibition, the view that God is controlling the events, and the mystical/inexpressible view of the phenomena can be explained in sociological terms. Richter (1995:27) explains as follows: 'The theological background to the (Toronto) Blessing downplays more mainstream traditional Christian teaching that speaks in terms of self-giving, self-sacrifice and self-denial.' Contrary to this creed, the motto of the Blessing seems to be 'receiving more and more and more'. In the Toronto Blessing meetings, catchphrases like 'give him/her more Lord, more Lord and fill or filled' are used by leaders such as Randy Clark and Rodney Howard-Browne (Astbury 2000:304).

Modelling plays an important role in the experience of the Toronto Blessing. During the Toronto Blessing meetings people, who have undergone an intense experience, are called forward to testify. This often results in a re-enactment of the experience in front of the crowd. People that attend these meetings are surrounded by 'models' who are undergoing intense manifestations of varying sorts. When this modelled behaviour is viewed as normative and desirable in the social context, there is social pressure to comply. This kind of social pressure

may not always be overt. Subtle social pressure, via both negative and positive reinforcement, can be highly influential in shaping adherence to norms (Astbury 2000:305).

It is also important to note that some participants who experience the Toronto Blessing may return to be ministered to on many occasions, perhaps to the exclusion of other forms of spiritual growth. This kind of attachment to the experience is of concern, not just on the grounds of superficiality but because it may represent an escape from psychological trauma rather than a resolution of such trauma. Participants also, on the other hand, may be finding a safe place emotionally to discharge accumulated anxiety and trauma in a cathartic way and therefore be open to real insight and spiritual growth (Murphy 1995:75). The important question here is: does the emotional outpouring result from the 'experience of the Holy Spirit' or simply from anxiety or need, and is it healthy or unhealthy, psychologically and spiritually? Experiments conducted in 1962 showed that people who were artificially aroused emotionally by the stimulant adrenalin could be influenced in a group into interpreting their feelings as anger or as euphoria by the presence of planted 'stooges' (Spilka et al(a). 1985:157). Participants can therefore be influenced by suggestion in a group, such as in the church services of the Toronto Blessing, even if the individuals are, in objective terms, 'not suggestible'. Leaders of ecstatic worship groups can influence the interpretation of the experience of the participants (Murphy 1995:75).

Large crowds, contextual cues and the presence of a respected and authoritative leader may all have contributed to the intense experience expressed by recipients. A further effect of these circumstances seems to be a self-justification of the experience when recipients are asked to reflect on it in an extra-spiritual context. For recipients to reflect negatively upon their experiences would have required a negative evaluation of both the group and their own experience. Validation of self thus requires validation of the members of the group who were performing the same behaviours as the recipient (Astbury 2000:302).

6.3.3 Pathologically-oriented perspective

Astbury (2000:310) points out, in her attempt to find information pertaining to the types of behaviours reported by respondents, that she was struck by the reality that most of this information was located within texts on psychiatric disturbance and psychological disorder. She continues by explaining that from a pathology-based perspective, behaviours associated with the Toronto Blessing could be re-conceptualised with reference to psychological terminology.

Dissociative-type spiritual experiences associated with the Toronto Blessing, are reported by several authors (Chevreau 1994; Richter 1995; Roberts 1994; White 1989). Dissociative trance is defined as follows by Kaplan, et. al. (1994:650): 'Dissociative trance involves narrowing of awareness of immediate surroundings or stereotyped behaviours or movements that are experienced as being beyond one's control.' Numerous behaviours reported in the Toronto Blessing could also be classified as dissociative trances.

According to Astbury (2000) and Kaplan et al (1994), the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing can be viewed as follows from a psychological point of view:

Manifestations from a religious viewpoint	Manifestations from a psychological viewpoint (information obtained from Kaplan et al (1994))
<u>Slain in the Spirit</u> : falling to the floor and remaining in that position for varying lengths of time	<u>Cataplexy</u> : 'temporary loss of muscle tone and weakness precipitated by a variety of emotional states' (p.304)
<u>Inability to move</u>	<u>Catalepsy</u> : 'general term for an immobile position that is constantly maintained' (p. 304)

<p><u>Experiencing heat or cold sensations</u></p>	<p><u>Synaesthesia</u>: 'sensation or hallucination caused by another sensation (for example, an auditory sensation is accompanied by or triggers a visual sensation; a sound is experienced as being seen, or a visual experience is heard).' (p.307)</p>
<p><u>Jerking and involuntary movements of various body parts</u></p>	<p><u>Catatonic excitement</u>: 'agitated, purposeless motor activity, uninfluenced by external stimuli' (p. 304)</p> <p><u>Overactivity - psychomotor agitation</u>: 'excessive motor and cognitive over-activity, usually non-productive and in response to inner tension' (p. 304)</p>
<p><u>Being united with God</u></p>	<p><u>Unio mystica</u>: 'an oceanic feeling, one of mystic unity with an infinite power; not considered a disturbance in thought content if congruent with patient's religion or cultural milieu' (p. 307)</p>
<p><u>Seeing visions</u></p>	<p><u>Hallucinations</u>: 'false sensory perception not associated with real external stimuli; there may or may not be a delusional interpretation of the hallucinatory experience' (p. 307)</p>
<p><u>Hearing God speak</u></p>	<p><u>Auditory hallucination</u>: 'false perception</p>

	of sound, usually voices but also other noises, such as music; most common hallucination in psychiatric disorder' (p. 307)
<u>Feeling of being lifted out of one context, into a different place</u>	<u>Dissociation</u> : 'a disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity, or perception of the environment' (Astbury 2000:477).
<u>Being controlled by God</u>	<u>Delusion of control</u> : 'false feeling that one's will, thoughts, or feelings are being controlled by external forces' (p. 305)

Astbury (2000:312) points out that in her survey the majority of respondents mentioned this type of dissociative trance. From their frame of reference, however, they perceived this state as a state of being 'with God'. The experience of God is mostly experienced while doing 'carpet time'⁹ or being 'slain in the Spirit'. Cotton (1995:115) describes being 'slain in the Spirit' as a 'temporary, therapeutic ritual-induced collapse'. In the context of the Toronto Blessing this type of experience plays an important role. In psychiatric terms the word 'dissociation' has implicit pathological overtones¹⁰. The term is used to describe 'altered states of consciousness in which ordinary, waking consciousness is displaced partially or completely by that which I either

9 The term 'carpet time' is well known in charismatic circles and refers to people spending time in the "presence of God" while they are being slain in the Spirit.

10 While there are certain similarities between some types of schizophrenia and certain phenomena associated with mysticism, nevertheless, the differences are such as to abrogate the view that the two can be equated. The following differences between schizophrenia and mysticism exist. Although both involve withdrawal from society, the mystic maintains a measure of control over his/her process whilst the schizophrenic does not. The mystic usually integrates his unique experiences with his/her normal experiences and therefore functions completely in society. The schizophrenic lives in his/her own private world (Kourie 1992:90-91).

experience or believe is not me' (Taves 1993:201). During these dissociated experiences, sensory automatisms such as 'seeing visions' and 'hearing voices' can occur. Motor automatisms can similarly occur - such as falling, physical spasms and jerking. Astbury (2000:313) also points out the phenomenon known as possession. In her research some of the respondents referred directly to a feeling of being 'taken over' by an external force. Possession implies an interpretation of trance as an invasion of one's body and a displacement of one's personality by another being. In other words the person becomes a vehicle for a spirit (good or evil). Kaplan, et. al. (1994:650) describes possession as the replacement of the customary sense of the personal identity by a new identity. This replacement of identity is attributed to the influence of a spirit, power, deity or other person and is associated with stereotyped 'involuntary movements or amnesia'. Astbury (2000:313) concludes that the respondents, although perceiving themselves to be influenced by an external force, did not seem to perceive their identity as being subsumed into the personality of this external force.

The mind-body link cannot be ignored in a discussion of religious experience and its behavioural outcomes, as Wulff (1997:42) puts it: '... it is impossible to find any religious experience or behaviour that is not grounded in the fact of embodiment'. He elaborates on this view as follows: '... the religious traditions have long taken for granted the profound influence of bodily conditions on psychological or spiritual states. Spiritual disciplines often include exercises that operate directly on the body: assuming certain postures, depriving oneself of food and sleep, submitting to various other kinds of bodily discomforts or controlling the rate of breathing. Each of these techniques manipulates bodily processes toward the achievement of certain desired states of consciousness. Some of these methods are undoubtedly thousands of years old. Furthermore, religious rites typically require active bodily participation, ranging from sitting, standing and kneeling, common in Western traditions, through touching sacred objects and circumambulating holy sites, to dancing, spinning or falling' (Wulff 1991:41-42). This process may facilitate the 'healings' of some of the recipients

of the Toronto Blessing which have been described above and in the relevant literature.

6.4 ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

6.4.1 Introduction

Recipients of the Toronto Blessing have attributed the cause of their experience to the supernatural. God (and the Holy Spirit) is viewed as responsible for producing the behaviour that they have displayed. This attribution is perfectly logical in the spiritual context within which this behaviour occurs, as the behaviour is viewed as congruent with the belief system. From a psychological perspective, however, a belief system is initially formed, is then maintained, and certain factors may induce change within that system.

6.4.2 Development of a belief system

The term 'attitude' refers to a relatively stable organisation of beliefs, feelings, and tendencies towards something or someone (Morris 1996). According to Astbury (2000:352), in considering how an individual develops a belief system the basic tenets in the development of attitudes need to be considered. Within a belief system, beliefs and behaviour are likely to be congruent.

Within the Christian context, people may grow up in families with strong religious values. These values are socialised into the person at a young age. In their life, the exposure to the turbulence of adolescence and young adulthood will frequently bring a questioning and re-evaluating of belief stances. What, then, would be likely to convince people, one way or another, to believe in a certain religious perspective?

Astbury (2000:353) proposes that there are various steps, posited by theorists, en route to being persuaded regarding various viewpoints. The three steps are typically posited as attention, comprehension and acceptance.

6.4.2.1 Attention

Information must seize the attention of the recipient, otherwise it will be filtered out according to the action model of behaviour (Ajzen 1985). It is thus very important that the information presented should be noteworthy. According to Astbury (2000:353), in the context of the Toronto Blessing the behaviours of people are noteworthy. They make people in the audience sit up and take notice. In her research Astbury (2000) has found that the respondents in her study had heard of the Toronto Blessing prior to their actual experience of the phenomenon.

6.4.2.2 Comprehension

In order to persuade a person the person needs to pay more than fleeting attention to the information presented. This can be accomplished either by fascination or annoyance. People are more likely to remember something that they either enjoyed or immensely hated (Astbury 2000:353).

Astbury (2000:353) points out that two of the respondents used in the study expressed that they had been disgruntled with their exposures to the Toronto Blessing. According to the reasoned action model of behaviour, they would be just as likely to remember the Toronto Blessing as those for whom it had been enjoyable.

6.4.2.3 Acceptance

To accept information, elements of persuasion are needed. According to the principles of effective communication, both the message itself and the manner in

which it is presented are crucial elements in the persuasion process.

Astbury (2000:354) points out that the source of the information is of vital importance. For the Toronto Blessing recipients, these sources include respected leaders. The content of the message is also important, seeing that people are more inclined to block out what they do not want to hear (Kleinhesselink & Edwards 1975). The Toronto Blessing message is very familiar to most Christian people but it contains a novel behavioural twist, according to Astbury (2000:354). Fear is also an important component in the effectiveness of persuasion. Sermons that contain elements of caution, urging people to avoid displeasing God for fear of hell, may also contribute to the conversion process. Regular reference is made in the Toronto Blessing meetings to the point that not being accepting, or being critical, of the 'blessing' is displeasing to God (Hanegraaff 2001:249).

6.4.3 Factors inducing change in a belief system

As pointed out earlier, recipients of the Toronto Blessing believe that their experience can be attributed to God and the Holy Spirit. Interestingly enough, people that have never previously experienced God in such a manner can also be moved to believe that such an experience is the work of God. This occurrence points out that certain factors can influence or change a belief system or even create a new aspect of it.

Astbury (2000) in her research clearly pointed out that certain psychological processes could influence the understanding and interpretation of the recipients of the Toronto Blessing. It is evident from her argument that people tend always to look for ways of justifying what they believe. Different psychological theories point out how this self-justification or attitude change is brought about.

6.4.3.1 Social comparison theory

Two sources can influence people when comparing their beliefs in order to decide whether or not they are correct: physical reality and social reality (see Festinger 1957).

- *Physical reality*

This concept refers to the world as it is perceived through the physical senses. The physical senses serve as the most important test to decide whether something is real or not. Recipients of the Toronto Blessing tend to infer the reality of their experiences by what they can discern through their senses. Recipients argue that people are falling to the floor and laughing and therefore this must be proof of the power of God. I have also found, when attending services of this nature, that the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing serve as proof that they could not be the work of a human but of God. One obviously needs to be careful, as Astbury (2000:355) reminds one not to assume that the inference is a straightforward one. It involves some kind of cognitive understanding of what is causal in this type of inference. This is where the concept of social reality comes in.

- *Social reality*

A social reality refers to something that is agreed upon by a group of people. If a group of people decides that black is white, then within that group, the norm applies. Social support in adherence to beliefs is an important concept. A person will find validation or refutation for his or her beliefs in his or her reference group. In the context of the Toronto Blessing, the social group plays an important role. There is a large group of people who are validating the experiences which are happening in the group context. A social reality only retains its cohesion insofar as it finds support from the group members, hence the strong tendency for group members to exert pressure on 'deviant' members

to change their beliefs. It is through this process of social comparison that people can be induced to see, feel, smell, hear or feel things that are not physically there. This is not a matter of telling lies on their part but occurs because they really believe what they are professing (Astbury 2000:355). This reality is established in the Toronto Blessing by group dynamics, by so many people reacting to the blessing expressed by the physical manifestations. What the larger group portrays as acceptable and desirable brings about a change in attitude and acceptance of an individual within the group (Hanegraaff 2001:257).

The meaningfulness of religious experience results from an 'interplay between what is believed to be possible and what is' (Neitz 1987:99). An example of how this process can take place is explained by the theory of cognitive dissonance.

6.4.3.2 Cognitive dissonance theory

Fiedler (1996) believes that behaviour in a social context is regulated by the interplay between affect and cognition. Festinger's (1957) theory of dissonance provides clear insight into the process of attitude change. According to his theory, a person will resolve the dissonance created between two opposing pieces of information by either (a) changing his or her own attitude - this will also impact on his or her behaviour, or (b) changing his or her behaviour - this will also impact on his or her attitude.

Experimental research in this field showed that people who had insufficient external justification for their actions would tend to change either their attitude or their behaviour (Festinger 1957; Hobden & Olsen 1994). These studies further showed that decisions produce dissonance. Myers (1999:155) argues that the dissonance produced by the decision needs to be dealt with in the following manner: 'after making important decisions we usually reduce dissonance by upgrading the chosen alternative and downgrading the unchosen option.' The result of people committing themselves to a decision seems to be a 'deciding-becomes-believing' effect (Myers 1999:156).

In the context of the Toronto Blessing the 'deciding-becomes-believing' effect seems to be an important key in understanding the attribution process of the recipients. Some of the respondents expressed that they had been against the Toronto Blessing when they were first exposed to it. After they, however, adopted an open mind to it and allowed themselves to demonstrate some of the behaviours, they believed not only that the behaviours were real but that God had caused them (Astbury 2000:357). Some recipients that were opposed to the Toronto Blessing experienced dissonance because of their opposition. Once the recipients, previously opposed to the Toronto Blessing, changed their behaviour the dissonance was reduced and this resulted in a change of attitude. Because of the possible fear of displeasing God, created by feeling left out because all the others were receiving the 'blessing', people changed their attitude from being critical to being receptive. This is further helped along by the testimonies of others, implying that those who are still blind cannot see that the blessing is from God (Hanegraaf 2001:249).

Another important role player in the Toronto Blessing context is 'faith'. Devout faith may prove resistant to change, even in the face of discomforting information. Faith can intensify in the face of discomforting information. Batson and Ventis (1982) refer to such a process of belief intensification. They base their argument on Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance and conclude that belief intensification occurs in the presence of three variables: (1) a deeply rooted belief, (2) when the person had made public his or her beliefs; and (3) contact with like minded people that provide a social support for adhering to such a belief. Furthermore an intensified belief complicates the process of adopting different, new views. In return, people with an intensified belief sometimes even tend to become very aggressive when approached with another point of view.

6.4.3.3 Attribution theory

It becomes evident through research that, in order to maintain or enhance meaning, people tend to make attributions to sources of control. (Spilka, et. al.

1985(b)) points out that a premise of this theory is that people are motivated to make sense out of their world, and therefore they make inferences regarding the causal factors behind events. This need to know is motivated by a need to control one's own life as well as to enhance or maintain self-esteem (Bulman & Wortman 1977). A dominant theme in the attribution theory has been the focus on situational and environmental factors as determinants in how people think and behave (Shaver 1975). If people, for example, experience intense emotion and they are uncertain of the nature of such emotions, they will tend to label the experience in accordance with the views of other people around them. A strong belief in the supernatural tends to correlate with an external locus of control (Randall and Desrosiers 1980). Recipients of the Toronto Blessing reported incidents that happened to them as if God was dictating the situation and they were forced to behave in certain ways.

6.4.3.4 Self-perception theory

Attribution theory suggests that the cause of people's behaviour as viewed by others is attributed to either intra- or extra-personal factors. When people are seen as being coerced into an action, then the environment is viewed as causal, but if people voluntarily engage in actions the motivation is viewed as intrinsic to that person (Astbury 2000:360). The self-perception theory (Bern 1972) suggests that people make similar assumptions regarding their own behaviour. If a person views his or her actions as being uncoerced, then we are more likely to view our actions as reflections of our beliefs and attitudes.

In the Toronto Blessing, the laughter and excessive joy are key manifestations. From the self-perception theory perspective, if recipients are induced into smiling and laughing in a group context, they are more likely to interpret their mood states as congruent with their behaviour. Similarly, if a person is caught up in a 'group hysteria' type of reaction, where everyone around him or her is laughing uncontrollably, it is feasible that the 'abundant joy' feeling may be interpreted in the light of the intensity of the laughter behaviour (Astbury 2000:361).

The psychological phenomenon known as 'group think' may also contribute to the self-perception theory. It is possible in a group context that people may misinterpret how other people are thinking and what they are feeling. This is known as pluralistic ignorance (Myers 1999:315). In the Toronto Blessing context it might happen that recipients view the responses of other people in the Toronto Blessing as exactly the same as their own and that their interpretations may not be accurate. The 'group think' phenomenon shows the following features:

- (1) The group's power and correctness of belief is overestimated. The aforementioned is characterised by an illusion of invulnerability, and the unquestionable belief of the group. God is viewed as omnipotent and by default his followers are given the same power. This results in the group being classified as 'righteous'. Because the group is righteous and what happens is God induced, no alternative explanations for experience are needed. In the Toronto Blessing context many recipients base the correctness of their experience on their social acceptance within the group. Because so many people have experienced it, it must be right, it must be from God. The person's own rational ability is overtaken by the righteousness of the group.
- (2) Members are 'closed minded'. Beliefs and decisions are rationalised and the group's stereotyped view of opponents internalised. It is argued that 'real faith' does not give credence to opposing views. Astbury (2000) demonstrated this closed-mindedness in the discussion of one respondent who had experienced the new presence of gold fillings in her teeth as a result of the Toronto Blessing. When the dentist disclaimed her belief, she steadfastly adhered to her beliefs regarding what God had done.
- (3) Pressure to uniformity. This includes pressure to conform, self-censorship and the illusion of unanimity. In the Toronto Blessing people are pressured to conform to group norms by a variety of processes: belonging to the group, instruction by the leadership, and observation of their peers. In one of the Toronto Blessing meetings I attended, the

leader pressured the congregation to conform to the group norm, using scriptures and fear. He referred to king David who danced before the ark (unlikely behaviour for a king); his wife however condemned him. The preacher used this part of scripture to demonstrate that David's behaviour typified people who are willing to 'flow with God's new move' (the blessing) no matter how strange it might look and feel, and that David's wife typified unwilling, stubborn and critical people. The result of the stubborn behaviour of David's wife was that God closed her womb. The preacher thus warned people of the consequences of stubbornness.

- (4) Withholding of pertinent information by leaders. 'Group think' may also be obtained by withholding of information from group members. The media contained numerous stories refuting healings and miracles of the Toronto Blessing. This information was never given to the congregations. If negative information pertaining to the Toronto Blessing was shared with the people it was normally done in the context of belittling the source of the contradictory evidence (people without faith going against the work of God). When such belittling information is given to the congregation they react by laughing, endorsing the perspective of the minister (Astbury 2000:364).

Although each person involved in the Toronto Blessing believes that he or she is making an individual choice in the matter of religious decisions, the chances are that those choices are the product of social influence (Batson & Ventis 1982). The religious group to which a person belongs provides an important reference group for that individual. A reference group is any group whose opinions and judgements matter to the individual (Astbury 2000:365).

It is my contention that a person is never free of different processes of influence in a religious experience. A basic knowledge of such influences is therefore necessary in order to evaluate religious experience more scientifically, and further cautions one not to simply attribute an experience in a religious context to the work of God.

6.5 THE TORONTO BLESSING A MYSTICAL OR RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE?

The fundamental difference between a mystical and a religious experience was pointed out in chapter two (see 2.2.5). It is very important at the outset to understand the differentiation made by Nieto (1997) between a 'religious experience' and a 'mystical experience'. The main difference is that in the 'mystical experience' union is the key word. The individual is taken up in union with Divine reality. The individual having a 'religious experience' views Divine reality as independent from both the world and him or herself. Although a mystical experience is also viewed as a 'religious experience', it is important to know that all religious experiences are not 'mystical'. An experience, according to Nieto (1997:104), is a mental process involving sensory participation. There is no experience without the mental awareness of these two processes, the mental and the sensory. Time and space are fundamental structures of the human mind and provide its frame of experience and constitute the difference between a mystical and religious experience because they constitute mental structures which frame the content of the experience. A mystical experience is non-spatial and time-less and is thus a meta-experience (ineffable). A religious experience, on the other hand, can be transferred into the diversity of our language and sense experience because of time and space.

It seems evident that recipients of the Toronto Blessing do not lose track of time and space while in the 'presence of God' or while they are 'slain in the Spirit'. Recipients report that they were lying on the floor, or on the stage, also adding a time period to this memory. People that were slain in the Spirit often report that they felt physically anaesthetised or weightless, but can express in human language what they had experienced: mostly explaining that they have been in the presence of God, that God touched them and that God expressed his love for them. Glossolalia (i.e., speaking in tongues) is commonly reported as one of the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing. Although the content or message conveyed by glossolalia is unknown to others and to the recipient it is viewed as

a heavenly language given to communicate with God in the spirit. The recipients of this language also cannot explain what is said through this heavenly language but believe it to be for edification and the strengthening of their relationship with God. This phenomenon, on its own, confirms communication between God and human beings. Many reports, however, reveal a definite dialogue between God and the recipient while experiencing the presence of God. These dialogues are either God expressing his love to them or the recipients committing their lives to him anew. Furthermore, all recipients viewed God and themselves as separate entities. No mention is ever made of an experience of union.

An external locus of control seems very evident in the Toronto Blessing experience. Recipients report that some external locus of control came over them, causing them to do all kinds of things over which they had no control. This external locus is, however, identified without exception as God or the Holy Spirit, or even Jesus (Astbury 2000:234).

Furthermore, the manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing not only match the characteristics of altered states of consciousness but also reveal some of the characteristics of a mystical experience such as a transcendent cosmic awareness, a noetic quality, a sense of peacefulness and a sense of worth (see 6.2.4). Finally, if the experience of the Toronto Blessing is compared with the mystical experience certain similarities do appear, as stated above. However, certain core elements of a mystical experience are also absent from this experience. Firstly, no mention is made of an experience of union. Secondly, no mention is made of a lack of awareness of time and space and, lastly, also no indication is given of the ineffability of the experience.

The uncontrollable nature of the Toronto Blessing might lead one at first glance to typify this experience as 'mystical'. However, when the characteristics of the Toronto Blessing are compared with the characteristics of a mystical experience as described above, it must be classified as a religious experience rather than a mystical experience.

6.6 CONCLUSION

No spiritual experience can be measured in its entirety. But it is important for the methodological study of spiritual experiences to know that different factors exist in creating or assisting in the formation of experiences, whether classified as religious or in general terms. If an experience is labelled 'religious', it refers to a specific relationship that exists between a human being and a deity. In these cases a cautious approach must be taken in distinguishing the possibility of a creation of the mind posing as a real spiritual experience - understood as an experience brought about by God's intervention. Penn-Lewis (1976:100) explains that there can be 'mixed spiritual manifestations'. From a Christian perspective Penn-Lewis indicates that true and false manifestations are sometimes accepted together. In her own words, '... the majority of believers fails to understand that there can be mixed workings of (1) Divine and Satanic, (2) Divine and human, (3) Satanic and human, (4) soul and spirit, (5) soul and body, (6) body and spirit; the latter three in the way of feelings and consciousness, and the former three in the way of source and power' (*Ibid.* 1976:100). A distinction like this is important for the Christian who believes that God is a personal entity who has revealed Himself to His people and still does. In my opinion it is likely that the Toronto Blessing mainly falls within the category of soul and body. I also believe the following categories play a role. Firstly, the divine and human category because earnest people believe they are in contact with God and therefore also including the second category, body and soul in this encounter.

Another important aspect concerning religious experiences is that an experience must be understood and interpreted in terms of the religious perception of that specific group (Craffert 2002:75). In Hinduism the Kundalini awakening experience is interpreted in terms of the Hindu religious belief system and the interpretation will confirm that belief with regard to the god, spirits and agents of that belief system. The manifestations of the Toronto Blessing are in the same manner interpreted to confirm the intervention of God and the Holy Spirit as the

key figures of that belief system. This manner of interpretation does not guarantee, however that every religious experience will be the result of God revealing himself to humankind.

A very real possibility is that experiences, which are experienced as real, can be created neurologically, given the right conditions. Neuroscience has established that all meaningful religious experiences happen in the mind, whatever the ultimate nature of the spiritual experience might be, in other words, whether it is an actual spiritual reality or merely an interpretation of neurological function (d'Aquili & Newberg 2000:31). The effect of hypnosis and mass behaviour on the experience of an individual is also pointed out. This of course does not mean that actual spiritual experiences do not exist. It rather cautions one to be careful not to conclude that all experiences are authentic spiritual experiences related to God, or to put it differently, occur as a result of God's intervention.

Furthermore, certain psychological processes also contribute to the person's attribution of his or her experience to a cause. These psychological processes could induce change in a belief system. If they induce change they could surely change one's attitude and behaviour. If they change one's attitude to belief in something he or she previously rejected, they can surely change a person to believe in something that does not really exist. In the group context one can be made to believe anything the group wants one to believe, seeing that the ability to rationalise has to a large extent been crippled. It also seems clear that critical thinking is viewed as an obstacle for receiving the 'blessing'. This is evident from the following quote made by Arnott (1995:182) 'God offends the mind to reveal the heart.'

Finally, such processes poses the question, with regard to the Toronto Blessing experience, whether it is not merely a creation of the human mind helped along by means of certain psychological conditions created in a religious setting. As said previously, the aim of this study is not to measure spiritual experiences, and more particularly the Toronto Blessing experience, in order to determine whether

they are authentic or not. The aim of this study is, rather, to find possible explanations for the phenomena known as the Toronto Blessing. Stemming from the above discussion, it seems evident that the experience of the Toronto Blessing can indeed be a creation of the human mind brought about by certain psychological techniques used by the leaders of these Toronto Blessing meetings. It has further become evident that the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing can be re-conceptualised from a psychological viewpoint. This of course implies that the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing do not belong to the Toronto Blessing exclusively but are already known by different names in psychology.

Altered states of consciousness need not have a negative connotation. Most, if not all, religions have altered states of consciousness, to a lesser or greater degree, as a means of making contact with or experiencing God. The altered state of consciousness, however, is not God but a vehicle to meet with God. For example, in Christianity a fervent prayer takes place in an altered state of consciousness where the person who prays earnestly reaches out to make contact with God. The Christian is less aware of the world around him or her but imagines him or herself to be in communication with God. What is problematic about altered states of consciousness is the interpretation of the experience during the altered state of consciousness. An experience can be viewed and evaluated in many ways: it could be the result of many things which cannot be measured. An experience can however be evaluated within a specific belief system to see if it adheres to what is prescribed by that belief system. Religious experience may claim to be in touch with the source from which that experience is ultimately derived, yet these data are both comfortable and problematic: comfortable to the one who experiences them; problematic to the observer who tries to provide an overall meaning and satisfactory answer which might solve the paradoxes of the nature of these human experiences themselves. Furthermore, the nature of divine manifestations and its unitarian and pluralistic apprehension constitute the crux of this problem. It could be said then that the results of human experience regarding Divine Reality are indeed paradoxical because they

both reveal and conceal the nature of Transcendence at the same time (Nieto 1997:104).

I am aware of the different worldviews and religious beliefs and psychological processes that underline this debate. The posit that God is heard, seen and felt implies a belief in God as a physical external reality - from a religious perspective. Taking all of this into account, it would be presumptuous to evaluate this experience from a different viewpoint and reach the finding that the people that experience the Toronto Blessing are not well psychologically or spiritually. The evaluation of this experience is facilitated by the knowledge of all the influences that could play a role in creating such an experience. The aim of this study is not to make a decision for the reader but to provide different perspectives and interpretations, enabling one to make a more responsible evaluation.

I am of the opinion, however, that the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing for the most part are brought about by subtle application of psychological techniques such as hypnosis, starting with the 'worship service'. This process is further expanded by the suggestion that the physical manifestations known to take place in the Toronto Blessing are the result of the touch of God, and then, lastly, by administering the 'blessing' through prayer or simple mantras such as 'fill, fill, fill' or 'More, more' and 'Let it flow out of your belly'. The suggestions made in these meetings are even more successful because of the kind of hypnotic state which has been created during the worship service, thus making the respondent susceptible to whatever is suggested to his or her subconscious mind. To deny that such conditions are likely to exist in these meetings is to ignore human behaviour and the effect that circumstances have on it. Human beings are not isolated from nor untouched by things that happen around them. What is true, however, is that not all people are equally susceptible to hypnosis and suggestion, and for that reason a number of people attending these services do not succumb to the subtle psychological techniques.

Furthermore I am not suggesting that all pastors or leaders involved in the Toronto Blessing are wilfully applying these psychological techniques. I would therefore rather propose that these techniques, although not known to all pastors as psychological techniques, are knowingly or unknowingly being used in these meetings. Probably as a result of 'modelling', pastors do follow what other pastors do. This viewpoint does not exclude or deny the fact that I believe that the Holy Spirit can and does indeed minister to the church and Christian believers even today. At the same time I refuse to accept that manifestations destroying relationships and denigrating the sovereignty of God should be labelled as the work of God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study the Toronto Blessing has been investigated in order to ascertain whether this phenomenon and its accompanying manifestations could be viewed as a form of Christian Spirituality. The Toronto Blessing has been discussed from a broadly-based phenomenological viewpoint, in order to open the investigation to different explanations and viewpoints of the phenomena. The aim with this approach is not be judgmental but rather to get different perspectives on, and explanations for the Toronto Blessing. The roots and development of the Toronto Blessing and the actual physical and emotional manifestations that accompany it are discussed. This is followed by a consideration of the different possible factors that could contribute to this phenomenon.

From the foregoing study, the following conclusions concerning the Blessing have been reached with regard to Mysticism and Christian Spirituality, the roots and characteristics of the Charismatic Movement and the Toronto Blessing, the biblical foundation of the Toronto Blessing, the Toronto Blessing compared to the Kundalini experience, and a psychological and neuroscientific evaluation of the Toronto experience.

7.2 MYSTICISM AND CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Mysticism and spirituality were discussed with the aim of establishing a theoretical foundation for this study. Mysticism and Spirituality, although closely related, cannot be equated. A distinction between the two is found in the origin

of the words *mysticism* and *spirituality*. The word *mysticism* has its origin in the Greek mysteries, and a mystic was accordingly viewed as one who had gained an esoteric knowledge of divine things and had been reborn into eternity. Spirituality developed out of the Biblical terms breath (*ruach*) in the Old Testament and spirit (*pneuma*) in the New Testament. *Spirituality* is '... the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives' (Schneiders 1989:31). Different terms for them are mostly used because of different religious and cultural settings. The current term in some Christian circles, however, seems to be spirituality. *Mysticism*, on the other hand, is probably not that well known in all Christian circles. It seems as if some Christians are more comfortable with the term spirituality in my opinion, because of a lack of knowledge of mysticism and a hesitancy to know more, probably because of the unfavourable attitudes of some church traditions. Christian *mysticism* is distinguished from *mysticism* in general by the fact that the experience is related not to an unidentified reality which is labelled 'God' but rather to the fact that at heart it has the prefigured Christian experience of God, or Jesus. The Christian mystic's pre-mystical consciousness informs the mystical consciousness in such a way that the mystic encounters Jesus, the Trinity or a personal God. Christian *spirituality* is defined as Christocentric. Christian spirituality refers to a conversion to a particular religion, namely Christianity. Furthermore, it emphasises an ongoing relationship with God through Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It was also pointed out that Christian spirituality could also vary because of the different viewpoints within Christianity. An example can be found in the difference of spiritual expression that exists between reformed Christianity and Charismatic Christianity. Charismatic spirituality includes a greater emphasis than reformed spirituality on a supernatural encounter with God. This encounter does not only occur at conversion but is a continuous experience confirming the relationship between the human being and God.

Supernatural encounters are accompanied by different physical and emotional manifestations. The physical manifestations are viewed as confirmation that God is actively involved in the believer's life. The Holy Spirit is believed to be the source responsible for the manifestations and the 'presence' of God. The Bible is, furthermore, viewed as an authoritative source in Christianity, and any 'supernatural' manifestations that take place and are viewed as Christian spirituality should therefore always have a clear relationship with similar manifestations as recorded in the original meaning of such Bible texts and authentic Christian faith (Saliers 1992:460).

The Toronto Blessing evidences some characteristics of a mystical experience such as transcendent cosmic awareness, a noetic quality, a sense of peacefulness and a sense of worth. Certain core elements, however, are absent from this experience: there is no lack of awareness of space and time, no indication is given of the ineffability of the experience, and also no mention is made of union with God; a clear meeting between God and human (as different entities) is, rather, implied. The Toronto Blessing can thus not be viewed as mystical in the true sense of the word.

7.3 ROOTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT AND THE TORONTO BLESSING

According to most scholars the history of Pentecostalism needs to be understood in terms of a number of waves. The first wave comprises the Classical Pentecostalism that started in the beginning of the twentieth century. The second wave broke in the nineteen sixties and was known as Neo-Pentecostalism or the Charismatic Movement. The third wave is termed the Signs and Wonders Movement. These three waves that Pentecostalism has experienced do not imply separate movements but must rather be viewed as different expressions of Pentecostalism. Although the third wave is known as the

Signs and Wonders movement, followers of this movement still view themselves as part of the Charismatic Movement. The third wave or Signs and Wonders Movement became the launching pad for the Toronto Blessing, also referred to by some as the start of the fourth wave. Especially the Vineyard churches' teaching on power evangelism, referring to the supernatural manifestation of God, prepared the way for the acceptance of the Toronto Blessing and its accompanying physical manifestations. Under the guidance of a prominent Vineyard preacher, John Wimber, charismatics were conditioned to expect a 'time of refreshing from the Spirit'. Furthermore, the expectancy of the supernatural amongst Vineyard church members opened up the door for them to embrace the Toronto Blessing. The Toronto Blessing can be even better understood if other influences in the history of the charismatic movement are considered. The Word of Faith movement propagated a kind of metaphysics, whereby health and prosperity are visualized and then verbally confessed in order to convert or transform intangible images into tangible realities. In addition, the Signs and Wonders movement emphasized the supernatural. According to them the church needed a greater involvement of God in everyday life. This involvement is envisaged through certain manifestations wrought by the Holy Spirit. These manifestations are known as signs and wonders and are out of the ordinary. Another expression of Charismatic spirituality, the Latter rain Movement, propagated the outpouring of the Spirit without measure. Once again the emphasis was placed on the supernatural that would be brought about by the Holy Spirit. If all these expressions, which in their own right created an atmosphere conducive to a highly expectant people, are considered it is understandable that the 'outpouring' known as the Toronto Blessing can be viewed as part of their spirituality. Furthermore no definite description of the form or shape of the Toronto Blessing is given, and a wide arena is left open for whatever manifestation occurs to be labelled as the Toronto Blessing or 'working of the Holy Spirit'. One of the cornerstone scriptures of charismatic spirituality, founded in Acts 2, emphasizes the baptism of the Holy Spirit that flows out in a

lifestyle characterized by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, adding all the more to the supernatural character of this movement.

From the history of the charismatic movement it became clear that different factors fertilized the ground for the Charismatic Movement and the Toronto Blessing. Teachings with underlying metaphysical principles emphasizing the importance of supernatural manifestations, without discerning that 'supernatural' manifestations could also be brought on by human intervention as well as demonic influence, created a platform for and an easy acceptance amongst their members of 'strange' manifestations as interventions of God. This in turn brought about an animosity towards other Christians who proposed any different viewpoint. Such an attempt is interpreted by some charismatics as an attempt to stop the 'work' of God. People that do not view matters in the same way the charismatics do are also sometimes made out to be 'blocking' God's dealings with his people or as clinging to traditions that render God's manifested word powerless.

7.4 THE TORONTO BLESSING EVALUATED ACCORDING TO SIMILAR EXPERIENCES IN THE BIBLE

Charismatics claim that the manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing are founded in the Bible. Because of their belief that the Toronto Blessing as a whole is scriptural and can be explained as the 'work of the Holy Spirit' it is accepted without questioning. In chapter four the most prominent manifestations of the Toronto Blessing were evaluated in the light of some biblical accounts. No real biblical evidence from any of the verses or passages used by the proponents of the Toronto Blessing was found to substantiate a biblical origin for it. Chapter 4 concludes that no physical manifestations equivalent to the ones described as part of the Toronto Blessing could be traced in the original meaning of the Bible. Bible references used by charismatics are either taken out of context or refer to

manifestations brought about by natural stimuli and not as a result of a supernatural cause. The charismatics' method of interpreting the message of the Bible also seemed at times to be unscientific, and a tendency to claim multiple meanings for a text, with no relationship to the original meaning of the particular text, is also evident.

7.5 THE TORONTO BLESSING MANIFESTATIONS COMPARED WITH SIMILAR MANIFESTATIONS DURING THE KUNDALINI EXPERIENCE

The physical and emotional manifestations encountered in the Toronto Blessing and in the so-called Kundalini awakening have been compared. The two experiences show many similarities, as does the process through which the different manifestations occur. With the Kundalini awakening the experience comes mostly as a result of either Kundalini yoga or through the shaktipat of a guru. The Toronto Blessing experience is received either seemingly spontaneously in meetings where certain conditions similar to yoga pertain, or by a practice similar to 'shaktipat', known as 'laying on of hands'. In both instances the area where the body is touched is on the forehead between the eyes. This location corresponds with the location of the 'third eye' or sixth chakra according to Hinduism and other eastern religions. Sometimes the person being prayed for is touched on the stomach area. This location corresponds with the location of the third chakra – 'manipura-chakra'. The third chakra in some traditions is also viewed as an alternative resting place for the dormant Kundalini (Sanella 1987:28). The touch on the stomach is believed to awaken the dormant energy, resulting in some kind of physical manifestation. In charismatic circles sometimes a touch on a person's stomach while being prayed for is also believed to bring about a supernatural encounter, sometimes explained as the area of the 'innermost being' referred to in John 7:38, from where the river of living waters will flow. The conclusion reached is that there are indeed many similarities between the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing and the Kundalini

awakening. The similarities could be brought on by similar practices: meditation/concentration could create an altered state of consciousness rendering the person suggestible to such an experience, and the touch of the guru or pastor could release human energy.

I am of the opinion that the possibility of the presence of occult power in bringing about some of these manifestations should not be excluded. I am not convinced that these manifestations are always brought on as a result of some kind of Godly intervention or union, as is claimed.

7.6 THE TORONTO BLESSING EVALUATED FROM WITHIN DIFFERENT THEORETICAL VIEWPOINTS

The role of body and mind as well as psychological processes in creating such manifestations was discussed. It was established that certain factors do exist, and that they influence the perception and evaluation of any experience a human being encounters. The religious concepts and belief systems found in different cultures to a large degree dictate the parameters for evaluation of a religious experience. The body as well as the mind, together with the circumstances the person is put through, plays an important role in the creation of an experience. Experiences can also be brought on by psychological techniques like hypnosis and suggestion. It has been established that hypnosis and suggestion could actually create what the hypnotist wants to create. Also, a religious environment such as a 'worship service' in charismatic church meetings shows features of hypnosis and suggestion. People can be subtly moved into a 'trance' or an 'altered state of consciousness' through the music and songs of the Toronto Blessing meetings. The environment created by the 'worship service' not only moves people to an altered state of consciousness but creates an expectancy and makes them suggestible concerning the 'supernatural event' that will be administered by the pastor or leader. It has further been pointed out how the

pastor or leader knowingly or unknowingly applies these techniques to attain the desired effect. In my opinion most of the manifestations result from emotionally hyped up people being brought into a trance state in order to receive whatever the pastor suggests the 'blessing' to be. To make things easier for the proponents of the Toronto Blessing no definite criteria to measure the authenticity of these manifestations are in place, neither are the recipients trained to discern between the 'spirits', as the Bible warns. This leaves the door wide open for 'induced experiences'. It is clear that not all so-called religious experiences can be attributed to God. They could very easily be the creation of a human being or of an occult entity. The 'manifestations', when not explainable in terms of scripture, are comfortably explained in Charismatic circles as 'the work of the Holy Spirit'. Throughout this investigation I have also strongly expressed not only my belief in the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit but also my belief that some manifestations can be viewed as such when it is actually brought about by other factors. I further believe that some guidelines are given in the Bible in order to assist in evaluating its origin. If a 'christian' event does not have any relationship with the original meaning and general message of a biblical text it should be evaluated in terms of other possible explanations. The Bible also warns of false prophets and teachers that abound: even the devil poses as an angel of the light. The possibility of false teachers in modern life is not merely fancy.

7.7 FINAL CONCLUSION

As was pointed out in chapter two, the term 'spirituality' has undergone expansion in the last few decades. The adoption of 'spirituality' by a wider spectrum of cultures and belief systems also altered the meaning of the term. The term has broadened to include the whole of one's faith life as well as the life of the person as a whole, including one's bodily, psychological, social, and political dimensions (Schneiders 1989:679). In the light, then, of this definition of

spirituality the Toronto Blessing can be viewed as 'spirituality' in general. When the definition is narrowed down, however, to Christian spirituality another set of criteria applies. 'Christian spirituality' refers to a lived experience with God that started with a conversion encounter. The purpose of Christian spirituality is for one to become more like Christ. Very important in Christian spirituality is the biblical and theological foundation thereof (Saliers 1992). Christian spirituality shows a distinctive character according to the interpretation of the Bible, with the aim of having a relationship with the original meaning of the biblical text. To place the Toronto Blessing experience within the category of Christian spirituality seems problematic for the following reason. The term 'Christian' refers to a wide audience, which includes a spectrum from reformed Christians to Pentecostal/charismatic Christians. Each person has an expression and description of how he or she views spirituality that differs from any other. The Toronto Blessing experience can therefore not be categorised as an expression of Christian spirituality, seeing that this experience is not acceptable to all those who form part of the larger body of Christians. What about 'Charismatic spirituality'? An important part of Charismatic spirituality is the emphasis on the supernatural intervention of God by his Spirit. According to the charismatics' own method of interpretation, the 'Word', the Bible, is important and their emphasis on the 'working of the Holy Spirit' is based on their desire to move back to what the early church experienced, thus to a biblically based spirituality. From the outset the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing seem to fall into this category of the 'working of the Holy Spirit'. When the manifestations accompanying the Toronto Blessing are, however, evaluated in terms of the charismatics' own criteria, namely the original situation of the early Christians as recorded in the Bible, a different story emerges. When the author used generally accepted scientific methods of Biblical interpretation no substantial grounds for these manifestations could be found in the Bible. The scripture verses used to substantiate the charismatic viewpoint are mostly applied out of context. The responsible interpretation of the bible message according to accepted criteria seems to come

second and the experience is interpreted as above reproach. It seems as if the 'touch of God' – that is a 'personal encounter with God' is viewed as more important than the Bible. The perception is thereby created that the Bible is understood and interpreted in order to substantiate the experience, instead of the authenticity of the experience being evaluated in the light of the biblical text. Bearing in mind that Christian spirituality, as well as Charismatic spirituality, places a high emphasis on the authoritative role of the Bible in the evaluation of this experience, the Toronto Blessing as an expression of charismatic spirituality is also excluded. If however it is evaluated in the charismatics' own terms and according to their own belief it will be viewed as spirituality, because it gives a channel of expression and demonstration of their faith. Spirituality viewed from the broader viewpoint does not necessarily include the Bible as an important reference, and spirituality in this sense also includes practices focusing on how to get in touch with one's own spirit and releasing one's own spiritual energy to other people, in order to attain one's full potential. According to current debates in the field of spirituality, particularly with respect to the revival in South Africa, the manifestations of the Toronto Blessing could also be the result of the transference of energy from one person to another.

Many different viewpoints on 'supernatural' manifestations do exist. Some people claim that knowledge of God is obtained through an experience, or several ongoing experiences, with God. Through these experiences a certain personal knowledge about God is obtained. Others believe that the origin of such experiences is situated in the particular culture of the person, that prescribes the knowledge and kind of experience which confirm the source to be God. Some conclude that Christian spirituality is related to the knowledge and revelation gained through the message of the Bible.

I conclude that the experience of the Toronto Blessing should rather be described as 'spirituality' in general, and not as Christian spirituality, because it has no clear substantiation in or relation to the message of the Bible. This wider definition, referring to an experience or expression of religion, leaves room for other processes such as social, cultural and psychological processes to form part of what is described as 'spirituality' (for example, the rituals of all other religions that do not have the Bible as their basis but are described as the 'spirituality' of that group). In the Toronto Blessing the psychological aspect plays a predominant role in bringing about the spirituality that confirms the Charismatic viewpoint of what is believed to be communion with God. When this proposed 'communion with God' is, however, evaluated in the context of the Bible no grounds for such justification can be found.

7.8 FURTHER RESEARCH

I concur with Veldsman (1990) and Zuesse (1991) that spiritual experiences are not being thoroughly investigated as they should be, and clear guidelines about such experiences in Christianity are not being laid down. The spiritual world is a reality and cannot be denied, yet very few substantial Christian doctrines exist about spiritual experiences or manifestations and the Church's views on them. Three basic approaches seem to be found. On the one hand, some Christians accept each and every manifestation or experience without question when termed as being 'from the Spirit'. On the other hand, others believe that such experiences are either manmade experiences or the result of occult practices and reject them in totality. There are also those that accept some experiences and reject others, but will not necessarily agree amongst themselves. The different approaches emphasize the lack of documented scientific doctrines on what the Christian churches believe. If the Christian churches are divided in their viewpoints on this issue, at least each stream or expression of Christianity (for example, Reformed or Pentecostal/charismatic) should have its own doctrines,

so that followers are not confused by the large variety of beliefs surrounding this matter.

it would be an interesting study to investigate the 'gold filling' and 'golden dust' phenomenon that is also viewed as a supernatural manifestation of God, where people experience a golden filling in their teeth which had never been there previously. Other people experience a golden dust raining on them. All this is believed to be from God.

With the greater emphasis on 'spirituality' these days, such issues need to be investigated in the ambiance of spirituality and more specifically that of 'Christian spirituality'. Such investigations are necessitated by the fact that these and other manifestations take place mostly under the banner of Christianity, and leave large numbers of believers wondering about the origin, the meaning and the value these events have for their understanding of Christian spirituality. It is my hope that the foregoing study will clarify certain matters pertaining to the Toronto Blessing and serve as an inspiration for more research in this field.

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