



# Living the Future

## Chapters 1–3

Living the Future: The Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit in the  
Vineyard Movement

ISBN-13:  
978-0692756126  
ISBN-10:  
0692756124

[www.Standuptheology.com](http://www.Standuptheology.com)

All Rights Reserved.

© by Douglas R. Erickson, 2016

## INTRODUCTION

I stood amazed in a small auditorium. People all around me stood with hands raised, or held quietly at their sides, singing a soft rock ballad together. Many were weeping, and around the room, groups of people were huddled together, praying for one another. Some were even lying on the ground, or kneeling in prayer. The pastor of this small church had just given a sermon on caring for the poor, and spoke about an outreach that the church was planning for the community in the coming weeks. In response, he had asked all those who felt moved to a deeper concern for the “lost, the least, and the last” to come forward for prayer. A single thought went through my mind as I watched this incredible scene unfold.

I was home.

The Vineyard movement is an emerging Protestant tradition with a global influence far beyond its numerical size. From its beginning in the 1970s, the Vineyard has grown rapidly, and has placed itself as a church movement that seeks to define a “middle way” between American Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism. The Vineyard has enjoyed a growing impact, evidenced by the expansion of the movement across the globe.

The Vineyard movement desires to incorporate the emphasis on conversion and sanctification from Evangelicalism, with the openness to and practice of the charismatic gifts that is the hallmark of Pentecostalism. Despite the influence of this ecclesial expression, there has been little academic work dedicated to the study of the theology and activity of the Vineyard. It is often considered within such categories as “neo-Pentecostalism”, “Charismatics” or the even less descriptive, and quite historically naïve, “Third Wave of the Holy Spirit”. Missiologists and church historians began to refer to three “waves” or large scale moves of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century.

- The “first wave” was the birth of the Pentecostal movement in the early 1900s.
- The “second wave” was the rise of the charismatic movement in the 1960s.
- The “third wave” was the emergence of churches like the Vineyard in the 1980s.

The pioneer of the Vineyard movement was John Wimber (1934–1997), who enjoyed a successful career as a jazz musician and rock band manager before his conversion to Christianity in a Quaker church. Early in his pastoral career, he discovered the writings of George Eldon Ladd, professor of New Testament at Fuller Seminary in California. His encounter with Ladd’s concept of the “already and not yet” kingdom of God dramatically changed Wimber’s approach to theology and ministry. This particular understanding of the kingdom of God, borrowed and modified from Ladd, established the ecclesiology, the eschatology, and the Pneumatology of the Vineyard movement. Further, members of these Vineyard churches argue that their theology and practices are unique from both their Evangelical and Pentecostal friends.

For a movement that is better known for its practical emphasis on healing and worship, some might wonder why we should bother to study the theology of the Vineyard. Shouldn’t Christians focus on doing the works of the Spirit? Is this arguing about minor points of theology even worth our time?

I had a seminary professor who told the following story. When he was a young father, he took his son to a playground, where his son met some other young boys. Soon they were talking about where they lived, what their families were like, whether they had any pets, what superheroes they liked – all the things that are important to kids. One of the boys proudly exclaimed, “My dad’s a doctor! He helps sick people get well!” In response, my professor’s son replied, “My dad’s a doctor too. But he can’t help anybody!”

Is this true? Is theological study only fruitless and divisive, or can it actually “help somebody”? If you think that the church would be better off

*doing* more and *arguing* less, I would tend to agree with you. However, I would ask for your patience, because most often the things we do are grounded in how we think about the world, faith, and God. That is, almost always, our theology and practice are intimately related. They feed off and influence each other, and thus, it’s better to have a firm understanding of the theology that supports or undergirds our church practices. While the theology may get a bit heady at times, it’s vitally important to understand both the theology and the practices of the Vineyard movement.

.....  
 All of us have a theology or background understanding of how we think the church should work, or what’s important in the life of a Christian.  
 .....

On to the theology...

While the idea of the kingdom of God as “fulfillment without consummation”, in Ladd’s terms, has become the contemporary consensus, this is the culmination of a 200-year quest. Beginning in the modern period with Immanuel Kant, and continuing through Albrecht Ritschl, Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer, Rudolph Bultmann, C. H. Dodd, and Joachim Jeremias, it would be no exaggeration to say that the concept of the kingdom of God has been one of the dominant themes in modern theological and biblical scholarship, as the theme occupies a significant place in the works of nearly all theologians in the modern period. The consensus of the mystery of the kingdom, or fulfillment without consummation, is well understood in many modern church movements, traditions, and communities. One of the primary arguments of this book will be that, while the Vineyard movement has adopted kingdom theology, its practice deeply reflects and reinforces this kingdom theology in a manner that separates the Vineyard from contemporary American Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism.

With this background, a number of questions may be raised. In what sense can it be said that the Vineyard movement is a “kingdom of God” based movement? What is the eschatology that justifies this view of the kingdom of God? Certainly, it is assumed that theological commitments

lay in the background of practicing the faith, so in what ways are Vineyard practices influenced by their particular conception of the kingdom of God? The movement claims to be a sort of “*middle way*” between traditional Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism; does this, in fact, hold true among the practitioners of the faith? How can we determine the degree to which theology influences practice, in either the movements under study or their contemporaries? Of particular concern in the light of the “pneumatological turn” in systematic theology, is the question: “What is the relationship between eschatology and Pneumatology in the Vineyard?”

.....  
 To sum up, the guiding question of this book may be stated as this: what distinguishes the Vineyard movement from other Christian communities that also claim to be based on the kingdom of God?  
 .....

In short, what does it mean to “Live the Future”? Notice that I do not say “living in the future”, as in what life in the kingdom of God might look like in some future, far-off day. We live, think and minister in the present. Yet somehow, the power of the future, the presence of God’s full eschatological victory, has invaded the present. So, we live a future reality in the present. If this is confusing, know that many theologians and pastors have puzzled over this very issue – it is often called “the mystery of the kingdom of God”.

There have been numerous academic studies done on the relationship between the kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit. James Dunn’s classic essay, *Spirit and Kingdom* (1970), sets the tone for much of this discussion from the Reformed and Evangelical side. Numerous Evangelical authors have offered their contributions from their respective theological perspectives. Pentecostals such as Amos Yong and Steven Land have eagerly embraced the kingdom concept and related it to Pneumatology and classic Pentecostal themes such as Spirit baptism and the operation of the *charismata*. Frank Macchia’s wonderful book, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*, discusses the kingdom of God concept with

the “central Pentecostal distinctive” of Spirit baptism. Missing in the discussion thus far is an investigation of how the kingdom of God concept influences the Pneumatology and practice of the Vineyard. This study seeks to fill that gap.

Given that there has been little academic attention focused on the Vineyard, this study will serve for many as an introduction to the theology and practice of this movement. While numerically the Vineyard cannot compare to the 600 million or more classical Pentecostals in Christendom, the influence of the movement on both Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism is considerable. Unfortunately, there has been little ecumenical dialogue from the Vineyard movement to classical Pentecostalism, and thus this study may also open the way for discussion among theologians and practitioners alike.

First, we will look at the theological and historical background of the Vineyard. This section of the book may be new to many, but it is quite important to understand the history of the Vineyard before we study its theology. Next, we will study the eschatology of the Vineyard; which will be compared to, and contrasted with, the eschatology of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism. We will also quickly review the twentieth-century kingdom of God studies in order to understand the background of these theologies. Following this, we will move to the exciting recovery of Pneumatology in recent theology. This will lead to an examination of the theology of the work of the Spirit in the Vineyard, again contrasted with their counterparts in other Protestant traditions.

We will then start an investigation of the charismatic experiences of believers within the Vineyard tradition. The majority of this chapter will involve an analysis of the religious experience of Vineyard authors and members to understand more fully our characteristic practices. To be specific, the particular religious experience of the work of the Spirit expressed through the *charismata* of healing, demonic deliverance, and prophecy will be probed through an examination of popular level books, denominational publications, and other sources.

The final chapters will offer some constructive proposals about how the central idea of the enacted, inaugurated, eschatological kingdom of God impacts other topics in theology. This discussion will expand the

theological self-understanding of those within the Vineyard as well as provide a way for those outside the movement to understand the theology of the Vineyard movement.

It's important to understand that this study will offer a theological understanding of the Vineyard movement, but in no way do I assume that I have captured or set down in writing the theology of the Vineyard. It goes without saying that in a globally diverse, ever-developing church movement, a plurality of perspectives and options exist on a great many things. While I have attempted to remain faithful to the theological distinctives of the Vineyard, this work is by no means the final word on these subjects. Many more books on the Vineyard need to be written! It's also important to keep in mind Paul's words that "God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?" (1 Corinthians 12:18-19)

This book is not intended to show that the Vineyard is better, more godly, or more "biblically authentic" than any other church, movement, or denomination. We will simply discover what the Vineyard is. We are just one member of the body, and we cannot say to another member that the body doesn't need it, or that it is less important to the body of Christ, his global church. In Vineyard terms, we could say that we are just one vegetable in God's stew, and God certainly loves many diverse flavors in his stew!

✱ At the conclusion of this study, we will see that the inaugurated, enacted, eschatological vision of the kingdom of God is the central theological distinctive of the Vineyard movement. It will become clear that this central distinctive is grounded in scripture and evidenced in practice, and furthermore, this cohesion between theology and action forms a model that is greatly suited to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to both Western postmodern cultures, and majority world churches who preach the kingdom of God.

## Section I: The Theological Influences of John Wimber and the Vineyard Movement

In order to show the relationship between Pneumatology and eschatology in the Vineyard movement, it is first necessary to understand the theological influences of the pioneer of the movement, John Wimber (1934-1997). The objective of these chapters is to provide an overview of the formative theological influences of John Wimber. This will set the context for the more extensive theological discussion which will follow

..... later.  
 An exploration of Vineyard theology is in many ways a study of John Wimber himself.  
 ..... Wimber joined the young Vineyard movement when it was an informal collection of eight churches. He was quickly recognized as the leader of the movement, and for the next two decades put his stamp on the theology and practice of the Vineyard movement.<sup>1</sup>

First, we will discuss John Wimber's background, conversion, and early theological influences. As he was raised in an atheistic family with no churchgoers in the previous four generations, his perspective of church was largely as an outsider, especially to the form of Protestant Evangelicalism in Southern California in the 1960s. The importance of Wimber's not growing up within the evangelical subculture cannot be underestimated; it changed the way he thought about every aspect of church. Wimber's phenomenal career in professional music, culminating as the manager and arranger of the popular music group, "The Righteous Brothers", gave him further perspective on worship music in the contemporary churches he became exposed to. His professional music background and understanding of how music influences human behavior continue to impact the worship experience in Vineyard churches to this

day.

Next, we will discuss his early exposure to the Evangelical Quaker church where he became a Christian. This formative experience exposed him to doctrine and practices that can be found in Vineyard churches. John's conversion in 1963 at the Yorba Linda Friends Church in Yorba Linda, California, exposed him to the familiar doctrines and practices of the Protestant Evangelical churches in America: the focus on conversion, repentance, sanctification, a high view of scripture, and personal evangelism. These broad evangelical characteristics were combined with the unique Quaker influences of quietude, simplicity, and waiting on the Spirit, which Wimber practiced for nearly a decade.

The third major group of theological influences came to John Wimber as he became exposed to Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Majority World believers at Fuller Seminary. In this chapter, we will discuss how Wimber moved from a position of cessationism (believing the charismatic gifts like healing and prophecy have *ceased* with the passing of the apostles, which was the view of Yorba Linda friends Church) to become the leading figure in the "signs and wonders" movement. Exposure to and dialogue with sincere, wise, and mature Pentecostals like Russell Spittler, Peter Wagner and Donald Gee caused Wimber to reconsider his early cessationist positions. As a result of his biblical study and dialogue with these continuationists, Wimber began to change his position on the presence of the charismatic gifts in the contemporary church.

Finally, we will see how these formative theological influences set in place what would be later called "The Vineyard Genetic Code", which is crucial to understanding the character and theology of the contemporary Vineyard movement. Similar to my experience, many people have discovered their spiritual "home" in the Vineyard movement. Many people have said over the years that

*"You don't join the Vineyard, you discover you are Vineyard".*

This book hopes to reveal what is used to construct that home, and how it was built.

# ONE

## John Wimber and the Vineyard

### Conversion and Early Years

John Wimber was born on February 25th, 1934 in Kirksville, Missouri and was the only child of his mother, who was abandoned by John's father on the day he was born.<sup>2</sup> The family was not religious and did not attend or participate in any church. John was a musical prodigy, and, as an only child, spent long hours learning and practicing musical instruments. In 1953, as an eighteen-year-old, Wimber won first prize at the prestigious Lighthouse International Jazz festival competition.<sup>3</sup> After graduating from high school, John pursued a career in the music industry, writing, playing, and arranging jazz music, and winning numerous awards and recognitions. He married his wife Carol in 1955, and they soon had three kids, while living in Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1962 Wimber became the manager of an up-and-coming popular music band named "The Righteous Brothers", for whom he also arranged music and played saxophone. While his music career was skyrocketing, his personal life fell into despair. The couple was separated for some time, with Carol living in Los Angeles, and John in Las Vegas, before Carol began divorce proceedings in 1962.<sup>4</sup>

In a fit of desperation, John went out into the desert one morning to search for answers. He recounts that after crying out to God for help, Carol called him the next morning, asking to give the marriage one more try. John moved his family from Las Vegas to Orange County, California, in the hope that a more stable setting would help them straighten out their marriage problems. In December of that year, John and Carol met with one of John's oldest friends and fellow musicians, Dick Heying. Dick and his wife, Lynne, informed the Wimbbers that they had become Christians, and were part of a local church, Yorba Linda Friends Church, an Evangelical

Friends gathering.<sup>5</sup> In 1963, John and Carol went to Yorba Linda Friends Church, where they began attending a small Bible study led by a layman, Gunnar Payne.<sup>6</sup> Gunnar would become a foundational person in John Wimber's spiritual quest. For many months, John would badger Gunnar with many questions related to faith, the Bible, Christianity and Jesus. Eventually in that year, first Carol, then John, made faith professions and became Christians.<sup>7</sup>

In December of 1963 the Wimbbers faced a crossroads: in the midst of his newfound Christianity, John had been slowly letting his music career slide away, but Bill Medley of "The Righteous Brothers" called John and begged him to produce a Christmas Album. John eventually refused his offer. In the winter of 1964, Bill called again, this time informing him that they needed John on board because "The Righteous Brothers" had been tapped to headline for the Beatles' upcoming tour. Again, John Wimber refused, sensing that this was a temptation to re-enter his former life of music, drug and alcohol consumption and decadence. This decision proved to be John's final break with the professional music business.

#### The Yorba Linda Friends Church 1964–1977

Wimber began to explore his new faith in earnest. He became a disciple of Gunnar Payne, following Gunnar as he evangelized and ministered to the community of Yorba Linda, eagerly absorbing all he could from his mentor. John was a quick student, and soon began to lead Bible studies and evangelistic outreaches. The church experienced explosive growth in this period, and outgrew their facilities several times. In working with Gunnar, the classic evangelical characteristics of Bible study, personal evangelism, conversion, sanctification, and church life became second nature to John. His leadership abilities were obvious, so in 1970 John was asked to join the pastoral staff at Yorba Linda Friends Church, a position that he held until 1974. In these years, John would later recall that he and Carol had led hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people to Christ.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note that at this time, the Evangelical Quaker church was cessationist in regard to the operation of the charismatic gifts.<sup>9</sup>

What is Cessationism?

Cessationism is the theological belief usually attributed to B.B. Warfield that hold that miracles, signs and wonders were primarily given to authenticate the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles. Once the Biblical canon was completed, there was no longer any need for miracles or signs and wonders and so these were withdrawn from the Church by the Holy Spirit.

The Wimbbers had some exposure to various individuals who expressed the charismatic gifts, such as speaking in tongues and divine healing, and even had several experiences themselves, but owing to their theological convictions, rejected these gifts as normative.<sup>10</sup> In a following section, we will trace the greater influence of Evangelical Quaker theology on Wimber. John enrolled in Azuza Pacific College in 1970, earning a two-year certificate in Biblical Studies.<sup>11</sup> He was given the position of co-pastor of Yorba Linda Friends Church and was soon teaching 11 Bible studies and overseeing more than 500 people.

#### The Fuller Institute of Church Growth 1974–1978

In 1975, John Wimber was asked by Dr C. Peter Wagner to establish the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth at Fuller Evangelical Seminary in Pasadena, California.<sup>12</sup> The two men had met earlier, as Wimber had enrolled in a doctoral ministry Church Growth course taught by Wagner in 1974. In Wimber, Dr Wagner perceived exactly what he had needed in a partner: a practitioner who had a great deal of experience with the everyday practicalities of running a church. Wimber was at the point of burnout in his pastoral ministry, and welcomed the opportunity for a career change.<sup>13</sup>

At the Institute of Church Growth, Wimber began to travel across the U.S. visiting churches and studying their leadership structures and growth patterns. During this time, Wimber consulted with hundreds of churches from 27 denominations, and met over 40,000 pastors.<sup>14</sup> He and Carol maintained their membership at Yorba Linda Friends Church, but stepped away from most of their leadership obligations.

Several significant events at Fuller served to change the course of Wimber's ministry philosophy, and consequently shaped the eventual character of the Vineyard. First, Wimber came into personal contact with academics from Pentecostal and Charismatic backgrounds such as Michael Green, Russell Spittler and Donald Gee.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, Wimber developed friendships with many non-Western students and professors who had experience in foreign missions. These students and scholars such as C. Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft had robust understandings of the *charismata*, especially healing, deliverance and spiritual warfare, which challenged Wimber's cessationist paradigm.<sup>16</sup>

Ladd  
Finally, Wimber encountered the teachings of George Eldon Ladd, who synthesized the twentieth-century theological concept of the kingdom of God as being present, but not completely consummated. As a result of these influences, John began to question his cessationist position. Unknown to him, Carol had begun to do the same. In a small group of the Yorba Linda Friends Church, the Wimbbers and close friends, including Carol's sister Penny and her husband, Bob Fulton, began experimenting with praying for the sick. As the group grew in numbers and influence, they began to welcome and accept other manifestations of the Holy Spirit such as tongues and prophecy.<sup>17</sup> This move eventually drew them into conflict with the leadership of the Friends Church. In April of 1977, both parties agreed that the small group of people in relationship with John and Carol should part from Yorba Linda Friends Church, so that they would be free to continue their pursuit of the *charismata*.<sup>18</sup> It was a very difficult time for both the Wimber group and Yorba Linda Friends Church.

### Calvary Chapel Yorba Linda

In 1977, Wimber began leading a small group of believers that would eventually become Calvary Chapel Yorba Linda.<sup>19</sup> Initially, this group numbered over 100 people. Because of a connection with John McClure, John Wimber's assistant at Fuller, the new group affiliated with Dr Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel group and constituted themselves as Calvary Chapel Yorba Linda on Mother's Day, 8 May 1977.<sup>20</sup>

Chuck Smith had started the Calvary Chapel movement after

ministering to thousands of young people during the Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>21</sup> By the time Wimber joined the movement, Smith was leading a group of churches that were exploding in membership, even though they were primarily composed of teenagers and young adults – the so-called “hippie culture” of Southern California. One of the early leaders of the “Jesus People” movement of the sixties and seventies, Smith attracted numerous young leaders to his ministry.

At first, this was a good fit for the group gathered by the Wimbbers and the Fultons. John served as the de facto pastor. However, the harmony would prove to be short-lived. As the Yorba Linda Calvary Church continued to pursue the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit, they came into increasing conflict with other pastors and the leadership of Calvary Chapel. John increasingly incorporated time for healing prayer into their services, which had never been practiced in Calvary Chapels before.<sup>22</sup> John welcomed and accepted other charismatic manifestations, including speaking in tongues, prophecy, and deliverance from evil spirits. Further, Calvary Chapel had an expressly dispensationalist eschatology, that taught the end-times rapture of the Church.<sup>23</sup> This doctrine was in stark contrast to Wimber's view, which fully accepted the non-dispensationalist (even *anti-dispensationalist*) “already and not yet” kingdom theology of G.E. Ladd. These two sources of conflict, dispensationalism and cessationism, caused increasing tension between the two groups.<sup>24</sup>

The conflict grew and eventually proved to be too great a divide between the groups. The group around the Wimbbers and Fultons, now numbering over 1500 people, was blessed by Chuck Smith and sent out from the Calvary Chapel association in May, 1982.<sup>25</sup>

### The Vineyard Movement Begins

John Wimber had become close friends with Kenn Gulliksen, a Calvary Chapel pastor. By 1982, Kenn had over seven churches gathered in what he had named “the Vineyard”. Originally, Gulliksen had not envisioned that the Vineyard Churches would separate from the Calvary association; rather he considered the Vineyard churches under his care to be a subset or movement within the larger Calvary Fellowship. However, as Wimber and Gulliksen separated themselves from their Calvary peers by

encouraging the operation of the *charismata* within the Vineyard Churches, their parting with Chuck Smith was inevitable. When the Wimber group came out of Calvary Chapel in 1982, Gulliksen and Wimber immediately brokered a partnership, with Gulliksen giving Wimber the leadership of the fledgling Vineyard Churches. Thus, in May 1982 Wimber's group became known as the Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Anaheim. Within a year, over 30 other Calvary Chapels would change their affiliation to the Vineyard Movement.<sup>26</sup>

According to Bill Jackson, in his history of the Vineyard entitled *The Quest for the Historical Middle: A History of the Vineyard*, many of these pastors were attracted to Wimber's openness to charismatic gifts, and his experience and knowledge of church planting and church growth that he had gained in his years at Yorba Linda Friends Church. John Wimber stepped away from the Fuller Institute of Church Growth in 1980, but continued his close relationship with Dr C. Peter Wagner. In January of 1982, Dr Wagner called on Wimber to join him in co-teaching a new course at Fuller Theological Seminary. The course, which was destined to make history, was entitled "MC 510: Signs, Wonders, and Church Growth". In a quote made famous in Vineyard and Fuller Seminary circles, the Dean at Fuller Seminary at this time, Dr Robert Meye, reportedly said, "I know of only two seminary courses which have become famous...the first was the course on dogmatics taught at Basel by Karl Barth, and the other is MC 510 taught by John Wimber here at Fuller".<sup>27</sup>

Dr Wagner was the professor on record, but the course was largely run by Wimber. Wagner would often lecture on missiological or pneumatological issues, then would turn the classroom over to John Wimber for 'clinic time', at which point Wimber would begin to minister to those in attendance, all the while describing the process and phenomena that he observed.<sup>28</sup> MC 510 became one of the most successful (and controversial!) courses in Fuller's history, and put John Wimber, and the Vineyard Movement, on the national stage.

### Signs, Wonders, Church Growth: the Beginnings of a Distinct Theology

As early as 1964, John and Carol had experienced healing prayer when their son Sean, who was three-years-old at the time, had wandered into a bees' nest and received dozens of stings. Sean came running back to the yard crying "Flies! Flies!" His body was covered in red welts from the stings. John, who at this point had only been a Christian for a short time, began praying for his son even though he had no theological grid that would support such prayer. To his surprise, Sean was healed instantly and all of the welts disappeared.<sup>29</sup> However, Wimber recounts in *Power Healing* that, even though he did not have a theological system that allowed for the operation of the *charismata*, he continually had charismatic experiences such as praying in tongues, healing, and prophetic insight.

In August of 1977, Wimber had been teaching through the book of Luke at the Yorba Linda Friends church. He was thus forced to teach on the topics of healing and deliverance, even before he or the church engaged in the work of healing. He wrote that the congregation began to pray for the sick before he did, because they practiced what he was preaching! At one point, the church had been actively praying for healing for over eleven months without experiencing a single instance of divine healing. During this time, Wimber read countless books from church history to contemporary writers in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. They finally experienced a breakthrough when John prayed for a woman with a fever and she was healed instantly.<sup>30</sup> After this experience, the church continued to experience successful healing prayer on a frequent basis.<sup>31</sup>

.....  
 "power evangelism" is the dramatic conversion of individuals, families, or groups that sometimes occurs after an instance of divine healing or other displays of the Holy Spirit's power.  
 .....

As noted above, when Wimber came to Fuller Seminary as a student, his cessationist position was forcibly challenged by some of the faculty and his fellow students. Wimber notes that some of the students from Majority World countries introduced him to the idea of "power



evangelism”; that is, they told him stories of dramatic conversions of individuals, families, and groups that had occurred after an instance of divine healing.

After he became the leader of the fledgling Vineyard movement, Wimber faced a dilemma. Since 1977 he had been convinced that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were meant to be operative in the church. His early exposure to some of the more flamboyant and popular Pentecostal “faith healers” and evangelists had at one time turned him off to the *charismata* entirely. His Quaker sensibilities caused him to be skeptical of dramatic and flamboyant presentations and appearances that were often the hallmark of the popular “faith healers”. However, his interest and training in church growth drove him to explore the connection between miracles, evangelism, and church growth. This quest would eventually become one of the principal features of the Vineyard “DNA”.

#### Establishing the Vineyard Genetic Code

While he was at Fuller Seminary, Wimber became intrigued by a concept of sociology called *set theory*, which was introduced to him by Dr Paul Hiebert. Hiebert spoke of organizations forming under three different models: bounded sets, centered-sets, and fuzzy sets.<sup>32</sup> A bounded set is one in which the “boundaries” of who is in or out of the set are clearly revealed in the form of creeds, articles of commitment or even birthplace, race, or genetics. In contrast, *centered-sets* have no such clear markers, as

all subjects are oriented towards a commonly agreed upon center.

Thus, the main question in a centered-set is not, “Who is in or outside the set?”, but rather, “What is the trajectory of a particular member – towards the center or away from the

center?” Wimber was attracted to this concept, perhaps due to his Quaker influence, because he saw it as allowing more freedom within diversity for both individual believers and churches.<sup>33</sup> Alexander Venter, a South African Vineyard pastor who served as John Wimber’s research assistant for several years, states it this way:

The centered-set is a paradigm or frame of reference that is responsibly liberating. It is a flexible, value-driven society. The idea is that people are drawn to a set of values with which they identify, represented by the center...who the leaders are, and what they represent, attract others, who see in them the kind of life that they would like to live.<sup>34</sup>

Soon after Wimber became the leader of the Vineyard movement, he set out what he described as the Vineyard “genetic code”; that is, the essential characteristics that he hoped would be true of every Vineyard church. The immature genetic code was first presented by John Wimber at a conference for Vineyard pastors in 1983.<sup>35</sup> It was Wimber’s desire that the genetic code would become the distinguishing marks of Vineyard churches worldwide, even if expression or presentation of the code may vary owing to cultural or societal conditions.<sup>36</sup> The formal development and declaration of the code became a necessity as the Vineyard movement grew, and more churches chose to “adopt in” to the movement. Venter contends that Wimber realized that the code needed to be formally declared after the controversy with the “Kansas City Prophets” in 1991.<sup>37</sup> Wimber relayed the code often “in formal services, when adopting a church into the Vineyard, when ordaining a new pastor, or when commissioning a new Vineyard that had been planted and was now a fully-fledged church”.<sup>38</sup> Venter states the following items as principal elements of the genetic code: teaching and valuing the scriptures, worship, small groups, spiritual gifts, training, ministry to the poor, evangelism, church planting, and ecumenical relationships.

The Vineyard “genetic code” as taught by John Wimber had the following elements: Scriptures, worship, small groups, spiritual gifts, training, ministry to the poor, evangelism, church planting, and ecumenical relationships.

As we study John Wimber, it will become clear that identifying “what

John thought” is no easy matter. Not only did Wimber change his mind on a number of issues as he grew in understanding, his willingness to give the Spirit room to work also led him to hold many apparent contradictions. Many Vineyard leaders that I have spoken with, identified this ability to hold issues in tension as one of Wimber’s greatest strengths. These factors place a great deal of importance not just on what Wimber thought of any given issue, but when and under what circumstances his thoughts were captured. Wimber’s amazing ability to hold seemingly-contradictory ideas in tension can make understanding his theology quite difficult at times, as we will see. Not only was he able to hold views in tension with one another, he was actually comfortable in the tension itself. In order to understand the Vineyard movement, one must understand this willingness to live in a “both/and” existence allows for disagreement, process, and relationship to take pride of place, at times, over hard-and-fast doctrinal stands. This is why the Vineyard has attracted folks from both Reformed and Wesleyan backgrounds. Some Vineyardites have a very casual, “low church” approach; others greatly value the sacraments.<sup>39</sup> The Vineyard crosses many social, political, and ethnic lines. Beyond the commitment to inaugurated eschatology, Wimber sought to make room for believers from many backgrounds, beliefs and experiences. It seems like the Vineyard identity, expressed through the DNA and a commitment to be centered-set, is more an *ethos or approach* than a set of rules, doctrinal beliefs, or demands. Once again, many people don’t “become” Vineyard; they discover that they “are” Vineyard.

If this is true, then where did this ethos come from? A number of places certainly, but the first formative influence for John Wimber was the little Quaker church where he came to faith. For this reason, it will be these Quaker influences that we will examine first to determine how the Vineyard developed its unique identity.

## TWO

### The Influence of the Evangelical Friends Church on John Wimber

#### Evangelical Friends in America

To understand the influence of Quakerism on John Wimber and the Vineyard, it is necessary to understand the place of Yorba Linda Friends Church within the larger historical tradition of the Society of Friends and then, within the particular stream of evangelical American Friends.<sup>1</sup> Quakerism, or the Religious Society of Friends, as they prefer to be called, is a broad and diverse movement that has evolved into numerous groups across the globe.<sup>2</sup> In North America, there are currently four major groups within the Friends tradition.<sup>3</sup> The four groups all trace their heritage to the historical Friends like George Fox, William Penn, Robert Barclay, and the Puritan Movement in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> During the nineteenth century, however, a major division occurred which created two major streams within the modern Society of Friends.<sup>5</sup> This split occurred primarily as a reaction to, or an embrace of, the dramatic growth of evangelical revivalism in American Protestantism during the middle of the century. As Methodist revivalism swept first across England, and then across the American frontier in the Second Great Awakening, American Quakers were increasingly affected by the theological and practical implications of the “revived” faith.<sup>6</sup> For many, the call to renewal, to holiness, and to a return to the teachings of scripture, was a call to return to the Quaker roots of Fox and Barclay. For many others, however, revivalism – and its theological sister, the holiness movement – represented a grave threat to historical Friends theology and practices. For American Friends, this controversy would cause the “great separation” of 1827–28, which eventually created a divide within the Society of Friends that exists to the present day.<sup>7</sup>

In 1887, Quaker representatives from various groups met in Richmond, Indiana to confer and dialogue over issues that had divided them. Delegates of the conference produced the "Richmond Declaration of Faith", which was largely evangelical in its tone and doctrine.<sup>8</sup> In 1947, the Association of Evangelical Friends was formed from groups still associating with yearly meetings in the Gurneyite or revivalist traditions.<sup>9</sup> This group was later reformed as the Evangelical Friends Association, of which Yorba Linda Friends Church was a member. In 1989, the Evangelical Friends Church International was birthed, which included Friends meetings from countries outside the United States. It's important to understand how Yorba Linda Friends Church gave Wimber's churches both Evangelical and Quaker characteristics.

#### Quaker influences on John Wimber

It is quite obvious that John Wimber was greatly influenced by his Friends heritage and, more specifically, Yorba Linda Friends Church. It is important to understand how and to what degree they influenced Wimber, and then the consequent development of Vineyard theology and activities. To answer these questions, we will consider a number of characteristics of the Friends heritage that greatly impressed Wimber and, in turn, have become foundational characteristics of the Vineyard movement. We will also see that Wimber rejected or heavily modified certain beliefs and practices of Yorba Linda Friends church as well.<sup>10</sup>

Wimber picked up a number of influences from his Quaker church experience that persist in one form or another in the Vineyard to this day. Some of these are:

- a de-emphasis of the clergy-laity distinction
- a low key, non-hyped expectation of the Spirit's working
- caring for the poor and working for justice
- a refusal to treat other Christians, even strong critics, as enemies.

Recalling that John and Carol Wimber's early exposure to faith was not through a "professional" minister, but through Gunnar Payne, a lay leader, it is not surprising that the democratization of ministry, or *de-emphasis of the clergy-laity distinction*, became an essential element of Wimber's approach to ministry.<sup>11</sup> Wimber later canonized this in the Vineyard as "everybody gets to play". In their time at Yorba Linda Friends Church, John led groups, Bible studies, and meetings well before he was recognized as an official church "pastor". Wimber did hold that there were offices of church leadership such as pastors and elders; he recognized that these designations should be given to those who perform the work of the office. In his famous response to a Vineyard pastor who questioned him on how to choose elders for his church, Wimber replied: "Elders are those who Eld".<sup>12</sup> This commitment to "everybody gets to play" means that all believers, not just the professional paid clergy, are called do the work of the ministry. All are called to witness and evangelize, All are called to pray for the sick, All are called to serve and care for the poor.

.....  
 "Everybody gets to play" means that every member of the church is called to evangelize, heal the sick, and serve the poor. These are not just the tasks of the paid clergy, but for all of the believer's in the church.  
 .....

Wimber's early exposure to what he referred to as a Pentecostal extremism and emotionalism caused him to neglect the gifts of the Spirit for many years. When the small group at Yorba Linda Friends Church did begin to experience a move of the Spirit, a simple, yet profound waiting in quietude and expectation characterized their meetings.<sup>13</sup> At the birth of the Vineyard, Wimber would instill this simple, yet bold expectation as a foundational element of Vineyard worship. He avoided any attempt to manipulate, emotionally charge, or "hype up" worship times; in his view this blocked the work of the Spirit and created false expectations and hollow worship. Carol Wimber writes of these early days:

No theatrics, nothing staged....casual and simple. Unpretentious and culturally current. Non-religious and transparent and honest. A 'come as you are' gathering where anyone would fit in, where one wouldn't have to 'dress up' to go to church. Where the leader doesn't look any different than the rest of the people.<sup>14</sup>

Many years later, the Vineyard is still recognized for its simple, casual approach to worship that still expects the Spirit to "show up".<sup>15</sup> Although Yorba Linda Friends had been heavily influenced by Evangelical cessationism and dispensationalism, and so had moved from its "Quaker" roots, Wimber's group found in the tradition the evidence of supernatural phenomena that gave birth to the term, "Quakers".<sup>16</sup> The early Quaker meetings were characterized by a habit of waiting expectantly in silent prayer for the Holy Spirit to fall. When the power of the Holy Spirit fell on them, they often physically trembled or "quaked". Very similar phenomena began to occur in the early Vineyard meetings, and Wimber began to recognize these physical responses as potential signs of the Spirit's presence. We will investigate these physical phenomena in detail a bit later.

Wimber often encouraged preachers or worship leaders that the more the Spirit showed up in power, the more they should "tone down" the emotional hype, energy or language. The reason for this was that Wimber strongly believed that the Spirit of God was enough, and did not have to be assisted by human emotional manipulation. His early experience with flamboyant Pentecostal preachers was in stark contrast to the expectant, quiet, and relaxed approach of the Friends.

③ From the very early days of the Vineyard, Wimber instilled the values of caring for the poor, working for justice, and feeding the homeless or destitute.<sup>17</sup> If anything, the Friends tradition is most known for its concern for prisoners and the poor, and its work against institutional injustice and racism. Carol Wimber recalls John's sincere desire to serve the poor before they had become a Vineyard when he told her: "If God ever has me pastor a church again, I pray we will devote ourselves to the poor".<sup>18</sup> While at the Anaheim Vineyard, Wimber established one of the largest food shelves in

the area. Since then, numerous Vineyard churches have established food shelves, language training programs, even job training and employment counseling.

④ Historically, the Friends have been both criticized and honored for their commitment to pacifism and non-resistance.<sup>19</sup> While Wimber did not embrace pacifism *per se*, he at times did embrace the idea of pacifism, especially in responding to his critics or enemies. In the 1990s, when he came under significant personal and corporate attack, he published an *Equipping the Saints* article titled: "Why I don't respond to criticism".<sup>20</sup> According to Carol Wimber, this conviction came to Wimber at a Friends camp in 1976, where John became convicted that he should not openly defend himself against public attack, but instead, let his public actions and reputation speak for itself.<sup>21</sup> Wimber was fond of telling his pastors, "Your enemy is never your real enemy...even when he acts like it".<sup>22</sup>

# THREE

## The Influence of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism on the Vineyard

### The Impact of Evangelicalism on John Wimber

As mentioned earlier, Yorba Linda Friends Church identified itself with the evangelical Friends movement, an identification that continues to this day. It is clear, then, that much of John's Wimber's early theological formation was influenced by Evangelicalism, first by Gunnar Payne, and then YLFC. This influence began very early in his conversion process – the interactions with Gunnar, John and Carol's subsequent participation in the Bible study group led by Payne, and the conversations with his sister-in-law and her husband significantly formed Wimber's mature philosophy of ministry. From this early connection to Payne, Wimber *experienced* numerous Protestant Evangelical practices, even before his conversion to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Some of these influences that worked their way into the Vineyard identity are:

- a focus on conversion, repentance and sanctification
- a high view of the Bible for edification and instruction
- culturally-relevant mission

① The first evangelical trait that Wimber observed, and later embraced, was the focus on the “new birth”, or the process of conversion, repentance, and sanctification.<sup>2</sup> Wimber observed this process in his close friends Dick and Lynn Heying,<sup>3</sup> and then among other people that attended Gunnar Payne's Bible study. It is impossible to overestimate the influence of these early evangelical experiences on the development of Wimber's thought. His later involvement with Calvary Chapel, his association with

the Fuller Institute of Church Growth, and his inclusion of these evangelical characteristics within the Vineyard “DNA” are all natural outcomes of his early experiences at YLFC and his relationship with Gunnar Payne.<sup>4</sup> As Wimber matured in his leadership skills, he was given more responsibility at YLFC. He personally led numerous small groups, and taught in larger gatherings. However, evangelism was always a significant element of his life during this period.<sup>5</sup> His proficiency in this task led to his becoming a paid staff pastor at YLFC in 1970.<sup>6</sup> Evangelism, the new birth, sanctification, and the fulfillment of the “great commission” (Matthew 28), continued to be a significant element of his ministry throughout his tenure at YLFC, in Calvary Chapel and into the Vineyard.<sup>7</sup>

② In the Bible studies led by Gunnar Payne, Wimber was exposed to another significant hallmark of evangelical identity, namely a high view of the Bible, signified by the expectation that each believer read and study the scriptures to seek understanding, in order to maintain a relationship with Jesus. This act was to happen in both individual, small group, and corporate gatherings. When John and Carol Wimber interrogated Gunnar Payne about the person and mission of Jesus, and the reality of personal conversion, Payne’s reliance on the scriptures provided Wimber with a model that he would never waver from. Even many years later, when he was speaking before crowds of thousands as the leading figure of the signs and wonders movement, Wimber was still essentially an expository preacher. In the early days of the Vineyard movement, Wimber’s emphasis on “equipping the saints” for ministry was grounded in his robust reading and application of the Bible. His teaching ministry, first at Yorba Linda Friends Church, then at Calvary Chapel and in the Vineyard, was all built upon the foundation that was laid in his life in those early days of learning from Gunnar Payne.<sup>8</sup>

③ After Wimber left YLFC in 1975, and began to attend Calvary Chapel, he became an eager disciple of Chuck Smith’s approach to ministry.<sup>9</sup> Smith had intentionally designed his ministry outreach to be attractive to the hippie culture of Southern California. Services were often casual, open-air affairs, sometimes on the beach. Music was generally built around the rock music culture – the worship music often sounded like soft-

rock songs that could be heard on the radio. Attire was casual, even “beach wear”, and there was very much a “come as you are” ethic.<sup>10</sup> For youth that were turned off to the formalistic and staid mainstream church culture, the casual and contemporary style of the Calvary Chapels presented fewer barriers to their religious searching.

Wimber was obviously impressed with this intentional value of being culturally relevant, considering his previous experiences of churches being extremely out of step with culture as we previously discussed.<sup>11</sup> Calvary’s emphasis on being culturally engaged is a long-held feature of Evangelical Protestantism in America. In contrast to Protestant Fundamentalism, early Evangelicals sought to critically engage with secular culture, rather than withdraw and disengage from secular culture as fundamentalists had in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> In his attempt to create a church culture that would be attractive to the hippie generation, Smith had continued in the trajectory. When Wimber began leading the Vineyard movement, *Culturally Relevant Mission* became one of the movement’s key values.<sup>13</sup>

.....  
Culturally Relevant Mission has become one of the hallmarks of the Vineyard movement- this does not mean changing the Gospel to fit the expectations of the culture, but communicating the Gospel in ways that make sense to the culture.  
.....

### The Impact of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement on John Wimber

As John Wimber began to shed his cessationist ideas he realized that he had come to his belief, not from a careful and reasoned study of the Bible or theology, but rather from his personal distaste of popular faith-healing personalities.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it wasn’t the gift of divine healing that he rejected; rather it was the models of healing that he had been exposed to that he believed to be strange, culturally or socially inept, or, in his words, not “with it”. As a former professional musician and jazz player, the

Pentecostal healers he had seen or heard of were simply “uncool”.<sup>15</sup> Despite his occasional experiences with divine healing, such as the healing of his son Sean<sup>16</sup>, Wimber was still quite skeptical; that is, until he met what he considered to be reliable, trustworthy models – first at Fuller Seminary, and then in the Charismatic and Pentecostal world.

Wimber’s cessationist ideas were first challenged by missionaries and students at Fuller Seminary who had witnessed significant charismatic experiences of physical healing. Recalling this time in his book, *Power Healing*, Wimber wrote:

I met professors like Donald McGavran, Chuck Kraft, Paul Hiebert, and the School of Theology’s Russell Spittler. Their courses and reports of signs and wonders from the Third World once again softened my heart toward the Holy Spirit and divine healing. I was especially impressed by the relationship between charismatic gifts like healing and church growth in Third World countries. Not only was there numerical growth, there was vitality and integrity in many Third World churches.<sup>17</sup>

Because these reliable witnesses challenged his presuppositions, he began an urgent study of the Bible to understand all that he could about the charismatic gifts. Once he was convinced that his early cessationist views were suspect, he began to eagerly and regularly pray for the sick in order to develop patterns and practices that would reflect his convictions. He also began to seek out and read popular authors that practiced divine healing, in order to glean as much as he could from their experiences. Wimber became personal friends with many of the leaders of the Charismatic Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The “Charismatic Movement” refers to the dramatic rise in charismatic experiences within traditional Catholic, mainline, and Evangelical Protestant churches in the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike classical Pentecostalism, Charismatics chose to stay in their denominations, and yet seek charismatic experiences, rather than leave these churches and traditions and form new ones, as many Pentecostals

had done in previous generations.<sup>19</sup>

The Charismatic movement or the “Second Wave of the Holy Spirit” differed from Pentecostalism in that Charismatics chose to stay in their existing churches and denominations, even as they sought out powerful charismatic experiences of the Holy Spirit.

Wimber found solid teaching and much common ground with practitioners from many theological backgrounds. Father Francis McNutt, a Catholic, became a mentor and a dear friend.<sup>20</sup> The Episcopalian priest Dennis Bennett was also a strong influence.<sup>21</sup> Other notable Charismatic authors that influenced Wimber as he studied the topic of divine healing include Ralph Martin, Michael Green, Martin Lloyd-Jones, Donald Gee, and Russell Spittler.<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that what Wimber sought from these authors was not a *theology* of healing, but rather, techniques, insights, and experiences related to the actual *practice* of divine healing. Because he considered the Charismatics to be closer to him theologically than the Pentecostals he knew at the time, Wimber made many enduring friendships among the Charismatic practitioners.<sup>23</sup> He willingly had Charismatic leaders submit articles to *First Fruits* and *Equipping the Saints*,<sup>24</sup> allowing them to teach at conferences on healing, and he became a frequent guest on Charismatic-oriented television shows like *The 700 Club* and the Christian Broadcasting Network.

As Wimber enthusiastically embraced his new theology and practice of healing, he then went back into the Pentecostal tradition; this time with his eyes more open. Although he still had some reservations about certain unusual approaches to healing,<sup>25</sup> he now understood that the practice could be real and vital to the church. So he began to investigate the healing ministries of famous Pentecostals such as Oral Roberts, Aimee Semple McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman.<sup>26</sup> However, he did so with eschatology from Ladd firmly in place; thus, while he accepted and borrowed the practices of many Pentecostal healers, he rejected certain aspects of their Pneumatology, such as their conception of the baptism of the Holy Spirit,

the so-called Second Blessing, and their doctrine of tongues being the initial evidence of that baptism.<sup>27</sup>

.....  
 Wimber disagreed with Pentecostal theology on three major areas: The “second blessing” or “subsequence” view of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues as evidence of that blessing, and healing being “guaranteed” in the atonement.  
 .....

As Wimber studied these sources, he realized that divine healing of the body had been operative throughout church history up until the post-Reformation period, when the so-called “mystical” practices of the Catholic Church were called into question.<sup>28</sup> While most Pentecostals at the time held a “constitutional” view of the gifts, Wimber’s experience caused him to question this. The *constitutional* view, refers to a person’s “constitution” or innate ability, like an athletic, musical, or mathematical talent.

He began to understand that not only physical healing, but healing from emotional wounds, and even deliverance from the influence of demonic spirits could be taught and developed in the church; that is to say, these were gifts that could be *learned* and therefore the practices themselves could be *studied, practiced, and therefore improved upon*.<sup>29</sup>

.....  
 The Constitutional view of the gifts teaches that the gifts of the Spirit are similar to how we would say “She is a natural musician” or “He is a gifted athlete”.  
 .....

He later wrote: “I also read every Christian book about healing I could find. My motive was not only to learn how I could pray effectively for the sick, but to *learn how I could learn to train and equip every member of my congregation to pray for the sick*”.<sup>30</sup> My personal history in the Vineyard bears this out. Before I came into the Vineyard, I had assumed that the

gifts were expressed by people who had been given the gift – much like someone might have natural musical or athletic talent, or the ability to understand mathematics. Hence, just as people were “natural athletes”, I thought some people were “natural” healers, prophets, or so on. When I read and heard Vineyard teachers declaring: “everybody gets to play” and speaking of the *situational* view of the gifts, I realized that this made much more scriptural and theological sense. (We will discuss these issues in more detail in a following chapter). I began to learn as much as I could about praying for the sick and prophecy, and began to *practice* the use of these gifts. Like many people, this new perspective completely overturned my view of ministry and the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup>

.....  
 Because Wimber had a *situational*, rather than a constitutional, view of the gifts of the Spirit, he understood that the use of the gifts could be taught and built up in the church, as he had done at Fuller with MC 510.  
 .....

Wimber’s new journey brought him into familiarity with other *charisms* that he had formerly rejected, such as speaking in tongues and prophecy. Once again, he turned first to the scriptures, and then to contemporary sources to understand these phenomena. While he would never place the importance on tongues that the Pentecostals had, he did come to recognize the gift as a legitimate charismatic expression. He embraced prophetic gifting as well, which would eventually, for better or for worse, be nearly as well known in his ministry as healing.

Finally, he did come to appreciate and value historic Pentecostalism as an authentic, biblical and timely expression of the global church, even as he maintained significant theological disagreements over certain aspects of their practice and theology.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, he counted many Pentecostals as close friends, and developed lifelong ministerial and professional relationships with many Pentecostal ministers, theologians, and healers. In many ways, he saw his calling as the “Pentecostalizing” of the traditional Evangelical church, or restoring the appreciation and



practice of the *charismata* in mainstream Evangelical churches.

### The Worldwide influence of the Vineyard Movement

John Wimber's untimely death in 1997 was not only a blow to the Vineyard, but to countless churches, groups, and denominations that had come to embrace his model of church renewal.<sup>33</sup> Wimber's ecumenical sensibilities and his willingness to love and accept the whole range of historical Christian expression had been birthed at Fuller, expanded in his renewal ministries, and evidenced by the pastors and leaders from many dozens of denominations and traditions that attended his funeral. After his passing, the Vineyard movement reorganized itself again, and named a young protégé of Wimber, Todd Hunter, to be his successor as National Director of the Movement in the U.S.A. It remained to be seen, however, if the theology, values, and practices put in place by Wimber would remain after his formidable presence was gone. In the popular press, there was certainly some speculation about whether the movement would survive once Wimber's forceful personality and brilliant mind had passed from the scene.<sup>34</sup>

However, there was even more complexity, as Wimber's travels worldwide, and the emphasis on overseas church planting in the 1990s onwards, began to show results. By the year 2000, only three years after Wimber's death, there were national or regional Vineyard bodies all across the globe, with growing churches and influential leaders in Scandinavia, Great Britain, Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America.<sup>35</sup>

Wimber's ecumenical sensibilities bore fruit beyond the worldwide Vineyard movement. In Great Britain, his ministry partnerships birthed a new expression within the Anglican Communion, namely the New Wine Movement. Wimber had traveled to London as early as 1981, where he held renewal meetings at Anglican churches led by David Pytches, David Watson, and Sandy Millar.<sup>36</sup> Wimber's desire to renew Evangelicalism, which Peter Wagner had coined "The Third Wave", continued to develop after his death as well. While there is no official "Third Wave" association per se, numerous prominent Evangelical churches in America function quite like Wimber's vision of renewal, and yet do not affiliate with the

Vineyard Movement.<sup>37</sup> These Evangelical congregations have rejected both cessationism *and* core Pentecostal doctrines like the baptism of the Holy Spirit being a separate, identifiable experience subsequent to conversion with speaking in tongues as initial evidence of this baptism. Formal membership in organizations such as the Christian Churches Together, as well as the National Association of Evangelicals is further evidence of Ecumenical participation of the Vineyard movement.<sup>38</sup>

As the Vineyard was faced by ecclesial and ethical issues in the post-Wimber era, the theological responses were developed out of the theology, values, and priorities established by Wimber and the early leadership of the Vineyard. However, it became evident that tensions in these values created issues that could not be ignored. For example, the solid evangelical background of the Vineyard led to a commitment to the teachings of scripture, and yet, the value of culturally-relevant mission often revealed a struggle between interpreting scripture and communicating the truth of scripture in a way that was understandable by the surrounding culture. What is more, the commitment to being a centered-set, rather than a bounded set movement, created pressures about defining the boundaries of the Vineyard movement; that is, as the movement sought to define itself in the post-Toronto period,<sup>39</sup> one of the difficulties was doing so from a bounded set perspective, and understanding exactly how – and if! – Toronto had betrayed the Vineyard DNA.<sup>40</sup>

While numerous specific issues have come to the fore in recent years that were only marginally present in the Wimber years, the issue of women's role in ministry was the first major test of the post-Wimber process of corporate leadership and discernment. No longer would one dominant voice rule the conversation, namely that of Wimber's, but more remarkably, Wimber's "voice" was only one voice among others; the question of "What was John's view" was no longer the definitive answer to any particular question.<sup>41</sup> In place of Wimber's dynamic presence, arose a diverse, corporate and communal decision-making process, based on dialogue, interaction, and mutual biblical and theological reflection.<sup>42</sup>

As the Vineyard began to plant churches in major urban centers, and primarily ethnic congregations grew as a result, it was inevitable that the

issues of justice, diversity, reconciliation, and immigration reform would arise. All these issues were addressed as practical ethical demands of kingdom eschatology, which held caring for the poor and breaking down barriers between peoples as an essential feature of the “works” of the kingdom of God. As previously noted, concern for the poor had been in the Vineyard DNA from its inception. The issues of justice and racial reconciliation were well noted at times in Vineyard history, and would become a growing concern in the twenty-first century, with the creation of numerous justice initiatives and conferences.<sup>43</sup> More will be said of this growing understanding of ethnicity and reconciliation in a concluding chapter.

.....  
 From the very early days of the movement, Wimber understood that inaugurated eschatology would eventually impact all facets of church life- including justice, ethnic reconciliation and care for the marginalized of society.  
 .....

The Vineyard U.S.A. developed a national initiative, Mercy Response, which focused on sending supplies, volunteers, and practical assistance to areas which had seen significant natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornados and flooding. 2008 saw the creation of a national justice task force which focused on propagating the message of justice and assisting local Vineyard congregations to pursue justice.<sup>44</sup>

This group grew to become the Vineyard Justice Network, focusing on issues like:

- sex trafficking
- modern-day slavery
- immigration reform
- caring for the environment
- systemic poverty and injustice.

A growing justice issue is the concern for the environment and global climate change. Beginning with the publishing of *Saving God's Green Earth: Rediscovering the Church's Responsibility to Environmental Stewardship* in 2006, the issue of environmental stewardship and climate change was included in the justice rubric.<sup>45</sup> Noted Christian environmentalists like Dr Calvin DeWitt have been engaged by Vineyard leaders and invited to speak at conferences and churches.<sup>46</sup> Environmental stewardship was included on the agenda of the first national conference focused on justice issues in November 2013, and is likely to be a continuing concern as the movement continues to engage culture from its inaugurated eschatological framework.

#### Conclusion: A Unique founder, a unique movement

We have seen that John Wimber greatly influenced the identity of the Vineyard movement itself. However, it is equally clear that an essential element of Wimber's genius was precisely his willingness to investigate and absorb sources and influences dramatically different from his own, and to incorporate these influences into his thinking as he saw fit. These abilities to recognize, clarify, and evaluate theological concepts served Wimber not only in his quest to form a sustainable, healthy church organization, but he continued to rely on these gifts as he sought theological grounding for his church. Wimber's brilliance and ability to combine diverse sources is especially displayed in his blending of eschatological and pneumatological concepts to form a new theological hybrid that would become the bedrock of Vineyard identity. While it was often frustrating for many of his key leaders, his ability to hold competing ideas in tension allowed him time and patience to “see what the Father was doing” in the Vineyard. In order to understand Wimber's experiment, it is first necessary to have an understanding of the fundamental elements he chose to work with, primarily the “inaugurated eschatology” of George Eldon Ladd. Ladd's work, in turn, stands as the culmination of a century of modern investigation into the meaning of the kingdom of God in the preaching of Jesus. It is to this subject that we will now turn.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. If the Vineyard is just “one vegetable in God’s stew”, what do other churches or denominations contribute to the diversity of worship styles, approaches to ministry, or ways of doing ministry that make the overall Church (big “C”) healthy or stronger? What do various theologies or practices of churches other than the Vineyard contribute that we can appreciate and be thankful for?
2. It was stated that John Wimber came from a family with no church attenders in the previous four generations. In what ways might this background influence Wimber’s expectations of church, or his understanding of what the church should be? What might he see differently, be confused by, or not understand? What things might he seek to change when he began leading his own church?
3. Gunnar Payne was a model for Wimber in many ways. Why do you think Gunnar’s life story had such an impact on Wimber as a young Christian? Why do you think John was so attracted to Gunnar even though they were so different in age, experiences, and occupations?
4. John Wimber moved from a position of cessationism regarding the gifts of the Spirit to one of continuationism. How might your faith and experiences change if you believed in cessationism? What about the activity and practices of the church?
5. Why do you think the exposure to Majority World students and missionaries had such an impact on Wimber while he was at Fuller Seminary? What changed in his worldview?

## **Section II: Eschatology in the Vineyard**

This section introduces one of the main themes of the book, which is the concept of the kingdom of God in the Vineyard. As our central question is exploring the relationship between the work of the Spirit and the establishment of the kingdom of God in the Vineyard movement, this chapter plays an essential role. Before we begin the examination of the Vineyard’s theology of the kingdom of God, it is necessary to understand the background of kingdom of God studies in the last century.

It is no exaggeration to state that the theme of the kingdom of God has been one of the dominant themes of recent Protestant theology. Since Albrecht Ritschl published his *Justification and Reconciliation* in 1870, which placed the kingdom of God as a central theme, scholars have recognized that no understanding of the message of Jesus can be complete unless one engages with the idea of the kingdom of God. In turn, numerous Protestant church traditions have approached the concept of the kingdom from their perspectives. The objective of these chapters is to place Vineyard eschatology within the background of two major late modern Protestant options: American Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism.

This chapter will proceed as follows. First, we will consider the history of kingdom of God studies of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In connection to this study, the quest culminated in an evangelical consensus represented by the work of George Eldon Ladd, who had a primary influence on John Wimber. Thus, it is necessary to review Ladd’s work in greater detail. We will then look at two contemporary Protestant traditions – Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism – to see how key elements of their eschatology fit with this consensus.

Finally, I will attempt the same process with the Vineyard by placing it in context with this broader theological conversation on eschatology. Included in this section will be more engagement with important concepts within the Old and New Testaments that are found in Vineyard