January 24, 1997

To the Templeton Judges:

The following list details the circumstances of the stories in this entry:

1. Breaking news: The Episcopal heresy trial. This trial was big news nationwide. The day the decision finally was handed down this reporter assembled information in a few hours from all sides of the issue, particularly focusing on the reactions of the Texans who originally brought the charges. The reporter also highlighted their plans for a new network of conservatives and included a local pastor who is also a national conservative leader.

2. Feature story: Message from Pensacola. This reporter received a tip that the little-known Pensacola Outpouring was an amazing spectacle. When the reporter visited, she realized that this revival was also indicative of a bigger story on Pentecostals as a whole. Many Pentecostals are predicting that the world is about to end and that the revivals springing up worldwide are part of God's plan to usher in the end times. The reporter spent several days and nights with the people in Pensacola, observing and interviewing. She also contacted theologians and religion historians to provide perspective on the movement. The reporter was the first in the secular media to find and report on the Pensacola Outpouring. Not willing to stop at that, she broadened the revival into a meaningful story that showed how religious fervor affects Christians in modern America.

Analysis: For U.S. bishops an era fades. This story evolved during three days of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting. The reporter had intended to write an analysis of the twilight era of the bishops, but when Cardinal Joseph Bernardin died that week, the analysis took on more poignancy. The reporter showed that the week's news events -- or lack of them -- were indicative of the bishops' lack of energy. She quickly and thoroughly integrated that perspective with the commentary of others as well as her own observations gleaned from covering the Catholic Church.

4. Profile: Carless Talton. While researching a story on Criswell College, the reporter met student Carless Talton. As they spent the day together on city streets, the reporter realized how compelling her story was. So in addition to completing the original assignment on Criswell, the reporter spent several days with Ms. Talton to get to the heart of her unusual story. The reporting included extensive records checks to make sure Ms. Talton's story added up as well as conversations with the judge, a police officer and Ms. Talton's employer. Ms. Talton's story was picked up across the nation as a result of this first profile.

5. Writer's Choice: The millennium. This story demonstrates how the writer jumped on a trend before anyone else arrived. Instead of simply writing about the millennium as a big party or a social event, the reporter pulled together numerous sources concerned about the date's religious and spiritual significance. In a sidebar, she also wrote about a family that illustrates how dramatically the millennium is affecting some lives. The package took more than two months to research and write. It also included a sidebar about the first millennium and reporter-researched fact boxes that detailed how the millennium is being viewed by various Christian groups, secular groups, Jews and Muslims.
BREAKING NEWS

PUBLICATION DATE 05/16/96

An Episcopal court spared a retired bishop a rare heresy trial Wednesday, ruling that church doctrine doesn't prohibit ordaining gays and lesbians in committed relationships.

The ruling infuriated Dallas-area conservatives, who said it will lead the 2.4 million-member denomination further into "anarchy" and "dysfunction." It could lead some to break away and form a new organization, they said.

The decision, handed down at a cathedral in Wilmington, Del., centered on retired Bishop Walter Righter, who in 1990 ordained as a deacon a gay man in a long-term relationship. Bishop Righter, the retired bishop of Iowa who now lives in New Hampshire, knew of the relationship when he ordained the Rev. Barry Stopfel, who has since become rector of a New Jersey church.

Bishop Righter said he hoped the decision meant "there are no outcasts in the Episcopal Church.

"We're making too much out of bedrooms," he said. "The question isn't gay. It's what kind of relationship do they have? Is it monogamous? Is it faithful?"

Bishop James Stanton of Dallas led 76 bishops - including 14 from Texas - in calling for the heresy trial.

"We are profoundly disappointed," he said. "We are going to be in consultation with our colleagues across the country to discuss the next steps. We continue to be concerned for the unity of the church."

The heresy charge was necessary because ordination of noncelibate gays and lesbians is tearing the church apart, Bishop Stanton said. He said he'll consider appealing the decision. Meanwhile, he expects the ruling will cause more Episcopalians to leave their church and perhaps form a new denomination.

Bishop Stanton said he will remain in the Episcopal Church.

"Some people, I'm certain, are going to be talking about separation from the church," he said. "There have been numbers of parishes and people who have been crying out for some kind of provision . . . clamoring for guidance, help and support."

Bishop John Spong of Newark, who was Bishop Righter's superior and who later ordained Father Stopfel as a priest, said the ruling confirms his view that gays and lesbians can be priests.

"It means we take seriously our baptismal vows that we respect the dignity of every human being," he said. "The real issue is not sexual orientation. It's the holiness of a person's life."

He said similar fights have occurred over segregation and women's ordination.

"Every time a new issue comes up, there is a tension between those
who have identified the status quo with the will of God and those who believe revelation continues," he said. "The Christian church has been wrong a number of times. My only plea is we stay open to new insights."

The bishops hearing Bishop Righter's case said they found no doctrine that would allow them to take the charges to trial.

"The court is not giving an opinion on the morality of same-gender relationships," they wrote in their decision. "Rather, we are deciding the narrow issue of whether or not under [the church's disciplinary canons] a bishop is restrained from ordaining persons living in a committed, same-gender sexual relationship."

Conservatives say Bishop Righter violated a resolution passed at the denomination's 1979 General Convention that said ordaining a "practicing homosexual" was inappropriate. Like many mainline churches, Episcopalians permit gay clergy if they are celibate.

Donis Patterson, retired bishop of Dallas, was one of two judges who supported the majority opinion with caveats. The two wrote that Bishop Righter's actions threatened the church's unity because Episcopalians have never formally decided the question of ordaining noncelibate gays and lesbians.

The Rev. David Roseberry, rector of Christ Church in Plano and chairman of Episcopalians United, a conservative national group, said the decision showed disregard for the church's doctrine of marriage.

"Therefore the court has condemned Episcopalians to live in even more anarchy, conflict and dysfunction," he said.

Father Roseberry predicted that the church would break into a federation of dioceses.

"God is calling forth in my view a network of parishes and clergy who care deeply about the church," he said. "This is not a threat of schism. We're not threatening to leave. We're threatening to stay."

But after Wednesday's ruling, he said, staying won't be easy. "This is a prescription for ecclesial chaos."

Bishop Righter was the second bishop to face a heresy charge in the church's 207-year history. In 1924, a retired bishop who declared communism had superseded Christianity was convicted and stripped of his rank.

Wednesday's ruling comes after the resignation this month of the Rev. Rex Perry, rector of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation in Dallas. Father Perry, who pleaded no contest to public lewdness charges, was accused of exposing himself and fondling a clothed undercover Dallas police officer in a public restroom.

Bryant Hudson, of the Gay and Lesbian Justice Ministry in the Dallas Diocese, said that Bishop Stanton's opposition to gays and lesbians has created a repressive environment that "will continue to lead to the type of severe spiritual self-alienation and irresponsible sexual activity that led to Father Perry's arrest."

Bishop Stanton said Mr. Hudson was "trying to make some kind of
political hay out of a personal tragedy."
The bishop said Church of the Incarnation and Father Perry, who is married, supported his push for a heresy trial.
WRITER'S choice

publication date 11/09/96

The world's odometer is inching toward a millennial milestone. When the calendar finally rolls over to Jan. 1, 2000 - an event long anticipated, often feared - it will mean far more than just a humongous New Year's party. For a lot of people, the year 2000 will herald the biggest spiritual event ever.

"People notice when their odometer turns to triple zero," says Ted Daniels, director of the Millennium Watch Institute in Philadelphia. "It's a milestone. That's exactly what the millennium is. And like any milestone, we take it as a marker of change. It gets people anticipating with longing and dread."

The planning is already under way. The pope will start a jubilee celebration at St. Peter's Basilica by opening bronze Holy Year Doors, used only every 25 years, at midnight Mass on Christmas Eve 1999. In Colorado, a man who calls himself the Millennium Doctor hopes to lead a five-month caravan through the Middle East. In Virginia, the Millennium Institute is planning three years of sacred celebrations that will bring together world religious leaders. And Campus Crusade for Christ is leading a coalition trying to evangelize 6 billion people by 2000.

In Dallas, the Roman Catholic diocese plans to build new spires on its cathedral as an emblem of the millennium. A local composer is writing a cantata in honor of the calendar change. Pastors are preaching about the Battle of Armageddon described in the Book of Revelation. A Plano woman says aliens are trying to warn us that the end is near. And a fellow from Garland is said to be building a fleet of blimps that will airlift him 14 miles above the Earth as it is tossed by a cataclysmic shift on its axis.

Across the nation, deep thinkers have started cranking out books and holding conferences on What It All Means. Dr. Daniels, who has been tracking millennium mania since 1992, keeps tabs on 1,200 sources concerned with the date.

Let's just say it's a growth industry.

Last year, there were six web sites devoted to issues surrounding the turn of the century; now there are 6,000. Religious broadcaster Pat Robertson and others are writing Christian apocalyptic novels that are flying off the shelves. Hal Lindsey's The Late Great Planet Earth, which was the No. 1 selling book of the 1970s, continues to sell millions. Academics at the University of Chicago and Indiana University are working on a three-volume Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism.

A Worldwide Countdown

Although the new millennium actually will not begin until 2001, the
year 2000 will begin a huge Christian celebration because it marks the 2,000th anniversary of the approximate date of Jesus' birth. Christians have been anticipating the event for 1,000 years.

Because the Christian calendar is in common use worldwide, everyone else feels its effects. For the first time in history, satellite television and digital clocks will enable people on every continent and in nearly every country to mark the same turn of the century.

"When you have an unknown impending global event, you have to invent a meaning for it," Dr. Daniels says.

He says die-hard millennium watchers break down into four groups: evangelical Christians, some of whom believe that Christ will return and that the Battle of Armageddon will be fought sometime around the year 2000; environmentalists, who believe that we are polluting and populating ourselves into imminent apocalypse; UFO watchers, who believe that aliens are visiting the earth to warn humans that the end is near; and New Agers, who believe that 2000 signals the dawn of an enlightened era.

Many of them will use the occasion to latch onto theories that they believe prove the apocalypse is near. That's because most religious leaders don't know how to handle discussions about the end, according to James Moorhead, professor of American church history at Princeton Theological Seminary.

"Mainline religions haven't found a convincing way of talking about the end, so that has left an opening for all sorts of surrogates," he says. "Not that anybody ought to take the Book of Revelation literally. My point is perhaps mainline religion hasn't offered a convincing understanding of this point in history, and people have a hunger for some sense of the end."

Symbols and Fears

And so New Year's Eve 1999 has huge significance. On the threshold of the Big One, many people are frightened - of depleted resources, increased terrorism, sudden bankruptcies, outmoded industries and spiritual change.

Certain symbols have long been associated with their fears: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse woodcutting by Albrecht Durer, the Virgin Mary, whom many people believe is appearing around the world with messages that the end is near, and the two-headed god Janus, looking backward and forward in time.

People have harbored fearful feelings at the end of every century since at least 1300, according to Hillel Schwartz, author of Century's End: An Orientation Manual Toward the Year 2000 and probably the most celebrated scholar of the millennium. People invent utopias, believe that the world must be punished with apocalypse or purified with sobriety and feel that events are spinning out of control.

As a result, according to Dr. Schwartz, they tend to participate in activities that are characteristic of such times. For instance, they
perform acts of retrospect. At the turn of the 19th century, preachers delivered sermons and newspapers printed articles chronicling the accomplishments of the previous century and counting up its exact number of hours and days. Prophetic novels were all the rage.

These days, Dr. Schwartz says, Americans are erecting memorials. Last year the Korean War memorial was unveiled in Washington. There's a new one going up to honor Franklin D. Roosevelt and one in the works to commemorate black Revolutionary War patriots.

We're also interested in our origins. Thus, experts say, the round of new translations of the Book of Genesis, the Bill Moyers series this fall on Genesis and renewed debates about creationism.

New Spiritual Frontiers

Another typical behavior at century's end is inventing new spiritual frontiers, Dr. Schwartz says. In the 1890s, people tried to contact the dead to learn about people's "past lives." In the 1790s, people were fascinated with static electricity, which they believed could be harnessed to read others' minds.

In the 1990s, people are interested in the near-death experience, in which they believe they go through a tunnel toward death and then are transformed into "new" people.

Another example of a transformation experience, Dr. Schwartz says, is belief in alien abduction. Tens of thousands of UFO watchers believe that they are being abducted by aliens, operated on and then transformed into prophets of the end-times.

Lacy Shields, president of the UFOlogy Society, based in Dallas, says aliens are visiting earth to warn us that the world may soon end. She believes that a UFO touched down in her Plano neighborhood in 1978. Like thousands of others, she believes that she may have been abducted by aliens. She says abductees like her may be saved from coming tribulation.

"Maybe we'll be taken off the planet during the worst times by flying saucers. When it's safe, they'll come back later to try [to build a civilization] again."

But most Americans are going about their business of 1996, unaware that others are wringing their hands over impending apocalypse or hatching grand plans for 2000. While such attention to the millennium may seem silly, Dr. Schwartz says, the millennium watchers perform a valuable service.

"We can make this an important time," he says. "If nothing happens, there's going to be a tremendous feeling of frustration and disappointment. If people go through the year 2000 and do absolutely nothing different, years down the road people are going to ask what they did at the turn of the century and they won't have anything to show for it."

Dr. Schwartz is writing a book called What Are You Going to Do in the Year 2000, Seriously? In it, he proposes that people set aside time
for spiritual change. He's helping a small college focus its attention on the turn of the millennium, assisting the National Cathedral in Washington with its events and consulting with architects and composers nationwide.

One of the composers is Robert Xavier Rodriguez, a professor at the University of Texas at Dallas and composer-in-residence with the San Antonio Symphony. Mr. Rodriguez is writing Forbidden Fire: Cantata for the New Millennium, which is about the dangers, responsibilities and lure of knowledge. The score will combine modernist-sounding music by composers such as Stravinsky with the more traditional music of Beethoven.

"I believe the music of the future lies in reconciling the past and the present," he says. "This is an optimistic work that says I hope in the next millennium people will get it right."

Revelation and Armageddon

Some people, especially some evangelical Christians, believe that the end of the millennium roughly coincides with predictions in the Book of Revelation. At Hillcrest Church, a 3,000-member interdenominational congregation in North Dallas, for instance, the Rev. Lenny Allen teaches his members to be ready for Jesus' Second Coming.

He believes that the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 was a signal that the end is near because it fulfilled biblical prophecy. Now, he says, Christians await the rapture, when they believe they will be spirited to heaven just before the Lord returns and fights the antichrist in the Battle of Armageddon. Once the battle is over, Jesus reigns on Earth for 1,000 years.

"Something is in the air," Mr. Allen says. "Things can't go on the way they're going. So naturally, believers are going to have their eyebrows up even more than the secularists. But the secular world also realizes something is taking place. Sure, believers are anxious. Some are anxiously glad and others are anxiously concerned, depending on where they feel they are in their walk with the Lord."

Some people carry their end-time forecasts to extremes that are hard for many Americans to fathom. Richard Kieninger's plan for the apocalypse and the new civilization that he believes will follow is nearly always cited in books and articles as a particularly poignant example of millennium mania. Mr. Kieninger moved to Garland in 1976, attracted a small following and began building a utopian community called Adelphi 50 miles east of Dallas.

A few years ago, he predicted a cataclysmic earth shift on May 5, 2000, that will cause floods, tidal waves, earthquakes and volcanoes. But, he said, he would be ready. The last time he talked publicly, he was working on technology to airlift himself in a blimp 14 miles above the chaos.

A Time for Joy
For some people, the turn of the century will bring joy. A mellow guy who calls himself the Millennium Doctor is the top cheerleader for what he hopes will be a uniquely Christian celebration.

"I'm a physician of the soul," says Jay Gary, a Baptist whose focus is on Dec. 25, rather than Dec. 31. He has written a book called The Star of 2000 and created an Internet forum to promote the idea that the world should focus millennium mania on Jesus.

"My vision is to put magic back into Christmas for the new millennium," he says.

He also plans to re-enact the Journey of the Magi in the Middle East, starting from Iraq on Aug. 6, 1998 and traveling over land on camels to arrive in Bethlehem by Jan. 6, 1999.

"Rather than looking at what's wrong with life, I say, as the Millennium Doctor, we should look at what's right and how did it get that way, due to Christ," Mr. Gary says.

But it's not all that simple, even for Christians, says Gerald Barney, head of the Millennium Institute in Arlington, Va. "My sense of what Christianity is all about is being out in the world doing what you understand God wants done," Dr. Barney says. "I don't think we're doing a good job right now with regard to each other or caring for the earth.

I'm not expecting a Second Coming, frankly."

Getting Back on Track

So while the millennium brings out people's apocalyptic nightmares, it also gives them an opportunity to step back and contemplate history, he says.

"The 21st century can't be a continuation of the past," Dr. Barney says. "It was our bloodiest century ever. The inter-religious hatred, the damage to the environment, the despair of our young people, the sick way in which magazines and television present the relationship between men and women - there's something sick going on and there've got to be some big changes."

Dr. Barney has a few ideas. He's organizing a series of sacred celebrations around the world to mark the millennium. The first will be held in 1999 in South Africa, during the Parliament of World Religions. It will open a year of meditation and preparation for the new century.

In 2000, Iceland will host an observance in a natural amphitheater that will include world religious leaders and world youth leaders pledging partnership in making changes. The following year, youth in Costa Rica will host a final celebration at sunrise.

Meanwhile, Dr. Barney's group is also writing what it calls The Millennium Report to the World, which will outline ways to sustain ourselves ecologically. He says the world's major institutions - religion, corporations, universities and media - aren't providing any leadership. Their task in the next century is to get the world back on track.

So many plans to make, so much to fix, so little time. Can we pull
it off?

"I've got two pictures in my mind," Dr. Barney says. "I think the 21st century could be a very, very enjoyable time. We could get to the point where, in effect, we've brought a measure of development and reasonable living conditions for the poorest countries of the world and we stop having a rat race in the industrial world and enjoy things and are careful about not wasting and the arts will flourish."

But there's a flip side.

"I can also see the possibility of a world in which the developing countries essentially are abandoned, and they get to feeling hostile and there's a lot of terrorism," he says. "I can see parts of the world where I think it's likely the situation will simply get to the point where the population can't be supported and there will be Rwanda-like situations."

Which scenario prevails? At this point, it's a draw, he says. So we'd better start working for change and saying our prayers.

"The first couple of decades of the 21st century," he says, "are a time when we decide which path we're going on."
BUNCH, Okla. - Bring on the apocalypse. Byron and Annie Kirkwood are ready.
They've got respirator masks, solar-powered radios, grain mills, Army rations, first aid kits, a pantry full of canned food and flat-out prayer to get them through the day when they say the Earth will make a cataclysmic shift on its axis and plunge us all into chaos.
"It's mankind's day of reckoning," Mrs. Kirkwood said of the event that she and her husband believe could come as early as 1999. They've prepared for more than a year, since the day they left their Carrollton town house and moved to a 7-acre property on a dirt road in eastern Oklahoma.

The couple said they were led to this remote, hilly country by the Virgin Mary, who's been dictating messages to Mrs. Kirkwood since 1987. A few years ago, the Kirkwoods turned the first messages into a book called Mary's Message to the World - now published in 10 languages - which detailed prophecies about the end-times.

When people began calling for advice about how to prepare themselves, Mr. Kirkwood wrote his own book, Survival Guide for the New Millennium, and set up a mail-order business selling survival items, the couple's six books and spiritual paraphernalia.

These days, they live in a 1960s ranch house, where she takes dictation from the Blessed Virgin at a computer in a sunny front room. Statues and paintings of Mary, all gifts from readers, fill the walls and bookshelves. A crystal hangs from the ceiling.

Mr. Kirkwood runs his business from a nearby building packed with freeze-dried food, camping supplies, books, maps and ham radio equipment. They're 15 miles from a hospital and 25 miles from a McDonald's. They miss take-out Chinese food. The rest of their family still lives around Dallas and Fort Worth. But, they said, they are at peace.

"We're on a spiritual quest," said Mrs. Kirkwood, 59.

The Kirkwoods are representative of some who've taken extreme views as the world approaches the turn of the millennium. While the vast majority of people don't put much stock in setting a specific date for the end of the world, it's a theme that runs through American religious history.

There have been two particularly famous date-setting instances, according to Richard Cogley, religious studies professor at Southern Methodist University. In the 1840s, a New York farmer named William Miller predicted that the world would end Oct. 22, 1843. When the world continued, he amended his prediction to Oct. 22, 1844. After that day
also passed uneventfully, his estimated 100,000 followers disbanded—but out of his beliefs was born the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Then, around the turn of the century, Charles Taze Russell founded the Jehovah's Witnesses and prophesied that Jesus' heavenly rule would begin in 1914. When it didn't, the group continued to recalculate the date of the Second Coming but without a specific date.

Whether they realize it or not, Dr. Cogley said, people like the Kirkwoods have been shaped by the beliefs of such date-setters. But on the world religious stage, people such as them play a small role.

"It's really uncharacteristic of all the world's major religious traditions to set any kind of dates or even approximate dates for the Second Coming or some other equivalent terminal event," Dr. Cogley said. "And any mainstream Christian group would not invest the year 2000 with such special significance."

The Kirkwoods didn't think much about the end of the world until a few years ago, when the messages from Mary began. He was a computer salesman and she was a nurse. They'd married in 1985; it was his second marriage and her third. Between them, they had five sons, now all grown.

At the time, Mrs. Kirkwood was suffering from depression. After reading a book about making a connection with God, she began praying for guidance. A few months later, she said, Mary's voice came to her during meditation sessions.

"I kept telling her I wasn't Catholic," said Mrs. Kirkwood, who was reared Methodist and joined the Southern Baptists as an adult. "I thought, 'She's made a mistake.' She finally said she had a message to send to the world through me."

Mrs. Kirkwood said she began to listen and take notes on her computer. Sometimes, she didn't know the meaning of a word - avarice, for example - so she typed it phonetically and looked it up later.

"I was confused," she said. "I didn't want to tell anybody." Least of all her husband, who, she feared, would think she was crazy.

But Mr. Kirkwood, though he'd been reared Methodist and had joined the Church of Christ as an adult, had always been interested in mental telepathy and UFOs. Maybe the messages were real, he thought.

They kept it a secret. Mrs. Kirkwood says she kept praying: "Let this be the truth."

By 1989, the couple had a 3-inch-thick pile of messages and what they believed was a mission from Mary to publish the prophecies. They found a small publisher, Blue Dolphin in Nevada City, Calif., which agreed to print 5,000 copies if they would put up half the $12,000 cost.

Eventually, Blue Dolphin sold 90,000 copies and then sold the rights to G.P. Putnam's Sons, which printed 208,000 copies two years ago. Last week, Putnam published a paperback edition with a 108,000-copy press run. The Kirkwoods estimated that a total of 600,000 copies, if the
foreign editions are included, have been printed.

The book quotes Mary as telling Mrs. Kirkwood: "You were chosen because of your prayers and meditations, and your earnest seeking to know the Truth. I chose you, dear one."

Mrs. Kirkwood's book purports to tell Mary's version of Jesus' birth and her marriage to Joseph and describes what it says are their reincarnated lives. In one life, Mrs. Kirkwood writes, Joseph and Mary both came back as nuns, but Joseph didn't like life as a female and has since returned as a man.

Mary makes nine predictions in Mrs. Kirkwood's book, including changing weather patterns, animal extinctions, increased UFO activity, Pope John Paul II's imminent death and increased apparitions of Mary. The only way to stave off disaster is to pray, Mary says.

But once the Earth turns and is essentially destroyed anyway, between 7 percent and 40 percent of humanity will remain to build a new world, the Kirkwoods said. We'll have a solar system with two suns, a mild climate, telepathic powers, nourishment through our skin and children who are stronger and wiser than we are, according to Mrs. Kirkwood.

She said Mary also predicted that in 1994 New York and the Gulf Coast would permanently flood and that in 1995 California would fall into the Pacific Ocean.

Those predictions didn't come true, she said, because "we're in a period of grace" that could last 10 to 15 more years if enough people continue to pray. Originally, the Kirkwoods said, they believed 1999 was the year the Earth would shift on its axis. Now they think it could happen in 2012, or maybe later.

They're also not sure who will die or who might get to heaven during the Earth's shifting.

"We don't know who's going to go," Mrs. Kirkwood said. "I believe we're all going to get there eventually. Even the Hitlers. They'll be given chance after chance."

Until then, the Kirkwoods are happy to spread their message of love, peace and preparedness to whoever will pay attention.

"We haven't envisioned ourselves as trend-setters," said Mr. Kirkwood, 50. "We're just helping people become aware."
PENSACOLA, Fla. - The Rev. Stephen Hill opened a plastic bag, pulled out a raw pig's leg and waved it triumphantly at 3,000 people seated before him.

Moments earlier, he had hurled pocketfuls of fake pearls at the crowd, proclaiming, "You know the truth will set you free, but . . . you're like a pig in a pig sty stomping all over pearls."

Night after night for more than a year, Mr. Hill has shouted a version of this same message - get saved or go to hell - to thousands who have traveled from across the United States and as far away as New Zealand and Uganda to experience an extraordinary Pentecostal revival at the Brownsville Assembly of God.

Five days a week, buses and vans drop off loads of people who wait in line up to eight hours to get inside this Gulf Coast church. Some nights, 6,000 people crowd the sanctuary and overflow into the halls and nearby buildings.

More than a million people have attended since the revival began June 18, 1995, church officials say. During the services, worshipers fall to the floor, weeping and writhing. Officials say 55,000 of them have had a born-again experience.

Some observers say Brownsville Assembly of God is the epicenter of a larger American reawakening they compare with the Great Awakenings in the 18th and 19th centuries; in 1858, for example, 10,000 people a week were converted to Christ in New York City.

Church leaders say that what distinguishes Brownsville from other contemporary revivals is that it draws people from many denominations - Pentecostal, Southern Baptist, United Methodist, Episcopal and Roman Catholic - who spread the revival in their own churches.

"I've never seen anything like it in America," said Mr. Hill, 42, a barrel-chested evangelist with the charisma of a rock star. "They're hungry for the truth."

It all started simply enough.

Mr. Hill had come to Pensacola from Lindale, Texas, to preach a Sunday service for the church's pastor, the Rev. John Kilpatrick, whose mother had died of cancer. That morning, when Mr. Hill exhorted members of the large congregation to come to the altar for repentance, 1,000 people streamed forward.

Mr. Kilpatrick said he heard a sound like a rush of wind and felt a sensation like flowing water. Parishioners began falling and shaking as Mr. Hill prayed for them. Then Mr. Hill turned to the pastor and said,
"More, Lord."

"I hit the floor," Mr. Kilpatrick, 46, remembered. He was down for four hours, feeling God's hand on him like a heavy blanket. When he stood up, "I felt like somebody had stretched my bones."

The service lasted six hours. When worshipers returned for the evening service, they stayed seven hours. Mr. Hill agreed to come back the next night. By then, word had spread through the city.

For six weeks, Mr. Hill and Mr. Kilpatrick decided a day or a week at a time whether to continue. Mr. Hill is a former drug addict who spent time as a street evangelist in Dallas and around the country and as a missionary in Argentina. When the revival started, he weighed returning to international travel.

But he decided the work in Pensacola was too pressing. He decided to continue the services until God told him to do otherwise, he said.

Mr. Hill moved his wife and three children to the Pensacola area, and last month, they sold their Texas home. He believes the whole thing is divinely directed.

What else, he asked, can explain that the revival is happening in a city some know best as the site of abortion clinic bombings and the murders of two doctors? One of the killers, Michael Griffin, belonged to the Brownsville church briefly in the 1980s, as did John Burt, a militant abortion-rights opponent. During the revival, Mr. Griffin's wife, Patricia, gave testimony.

Although the church's concern with abortion has been overtaken by the enormous task of holding constant worship services, Mr. Hill sees parallels between the city's abortion-rights opponents and worshipers coming to the church.

"There's an intensity here about going after Christ," Mr. Hill said.

"People are comparing all the babies lost with all the new people coming into God's kingdom."

Mr. Kilpatrick, who's led the Brownsville church for 15 years, said the congregation had 1,800 members when the revival began 15 months ago; now it has 3,000. Its 5-year-old building is taking a trampling from the thousands of visitors.

The utility bill has quadrupled to $15,000 a month; child care is running $50,000 a year. Because services sometimes run until 3 a.m., parking lot security costs $3,000 a month. The congregation pays those expenses with a nightly collection.

"When God shows up, it will turn your whole life and ministry upside down," said Mr. Kilpatrick. "You loved God before, and you knew God, but now it's like the intimacy with the Lord moves in."

Both believers and critics of the phenomenon, called the Pensacola Outpouring, say that it fits naturally into American religious history, which is loaded with stories of mass conversions, pronouncements from God and miraculously answered prayers.

What's happening in Pensacola is the logical and perhaps final step
in a reawakening that began after the televangelist scandals in the 1980s, according to Michael Brown, adjunct professor of Old Testament at Pat Robertson's Regent University School of Divinity in Virginia Beach, Va.

Other events viewed as part of the reawakening are the "holy laughter" revival out of Toronto, in which the faithful report encounters with the Holy Spirit leading to uncontrollable outbursts. Last year's campus revivals, youth-led marathon prayer sessions that began at colleges in the South and spread across the country, are included.

In September, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth held a daylong "prayer for awakening" as part of a nationwide Baptist effort to usher in revival.

Dr. Brown views the Pensacola Outpouring as a broader manifestation of these movements, particularly because it is touching other denominations. Southern Baptists from Columbia, Miss.; Mobile, Ala.; and Macon, Ga., have begun meeting for Pentecostal-style worship after members experienced the Brownsville revival.

Good News, a United Methodist magazine, published a story about the effect the revival is having on a Pensacola Methodist congregation - which has offered volunteers for Brownsville's services and added a looser-style worship at its own church.

Even 30 Amish people from Pennsylvania visited for several nights and fell to the floor, touched by the Holy Spirit. Weeks later, they returned, and the father of an 11-year-old boy testified that his son was so affected that he went door to door asking people whether they were saved.

These events are part of a worldwide awakening that is seeing 140,000 people a day commit their lives to Christ, said the Rev. Gary Stratton, dean of the chapel at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., and a student of American revivals.

"It's a significant moment in church history and Western history," Mr. Stratton said.

But Edith Blumhofer, an expert on Pentecostalism at the University of Chicago Divinity School, said what's happening is not all that mysterious.

Believers, she said, are motivated by a desire to be swept up in emotion and are nostalgic for the church of their grandparents' day.

"It's a big event within a certain world," she said. "It represents what they see as a tangible moment of the ideal of everyone repenting of their sins."

Try telling that to Ray and Crystal Lyons of Mason, Texas, who stood in line one recent day with their two boys, Tyger, 8, and Colt, 4.

The family made a stop in Pensacola on their way to a rodeo in Arkansas, where Mr. and Mrs. Lyons planned to continue their evangelism work with cowboys.
"This revival is sparking everything worldwide before the . . . [end times]," said Mr. Lyons. "I believe it’s upon us within the next five years."

Mrs. Lyons had a cheerier reason for waiting in the Florida sun: "We wanted to get into the presence of God."

Once inside, they weren’t disappointed. People milled about, some of them twitching because the Holy Spirit touched them, they said. As a band began to play, the church erupted into singing, clapping, jumping and cheering.

Moments into the service, a blond teenage boy bounced on the balls of his feet and wiped tears with his T-shirt. Girls wept openly. People knelt in the aisles. Some took off their shoes because, they said, they stood on holy ground.

Mr. Hill appeared on stage, stretched his arms grandly and said, "The glory of the Lord is here. Just do what you feel!"

Ervin Rinas was not impressed. Two of his daughters and a grandson had dragged him all the way from Cleveland, hoping that he would accept Christ.

In general, he said he considered the whole business a bunch of fanaticism. On the other hand, three of his four children are born-again Christians, and he said he wanted to understand. He spent most of the service with his arms crossed over his chest, looking annoyed at people rolling on the floor around him.

Much of Mr. Hill’s sermon dealt with the unsaved and the critics. "A critical spirit will damn your soul," Mr. Hill said, pacing across the stage and into the crowd. "It'll keep you from revival. A critical spirit is one who analyzes everything. . . . It's a miracle you’re alive because you're a stench in God's nostril."

Then he demanded that the critics, and every other sinner in the house, repent. He called them to the altar, bathed in klieg lights and framed with two fake palm trees.

"Come on! Let's go!" he shouted, as people began to stream forward. A woman wailed as she raised her hands and ran down front. Others walked slowly, as if in a trance.

By the time Mr. Hill was finished, more than half the 3,000 in attendance stood at the front of the sanctuary and clogged the aisles.

Mr. Hill began praying with the weeping and wailing sinners.

"Fresh anointing!" he shouted, as he touched their foreheads and they crumpled to the floor.

Ray White, a truck driver from Grandview, Mo., watched intently. He’d attended the night before.

"I had habitual sin in my life," he said. "I had lust and adultery. I couldn’t stop." Then Mr. Hill touched him and, he said, he was healed.

Nearby, Debra Henry of Muskogee, Okla., watched with brimming eyes. She, too, had come the night before and felt God's hand.
"It was gut-wrenching, like the deepest cleansing I've ever felt," she said.

Church leaders believe that the wild and mysterious healings will last a few more years and touch thousands more lives. They aren't afraid of skeptics.

"For those of you having a hard time with weird things," Mr. Hill told the crowd, "read the history of your church. Most churches in America are founded on miracles."
ANALYSIS

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WASHINGTON - For a generation of Roman Catholic bishops, it is twilight.

You could see it clearly this week, as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops - 300 mostly gray-haired men wearing black suits and clerical collars - gathered for its annual meeting in the ballroom of the graceful old Omni Shoreham Hotel.

You could feel it as the bishops kept a sad vigil for the most influential and trusted of the prelates - Chicago Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, who died Thursday morning at age 68 of pancreatic cancer. Blotting tears from their cheeks, they chanted and prayed in memory of the Chicago cardinal, a 30-year member of the conference who through the years served as both its general secretary and its president.

An era had ended.

Cardinal Bernardin was the most visible member of a cohort of bishops whose time is passing. Cardinal John O'Connor of New York and Cardinal James Hickey of Washington are past the retirement age of 75, held over at the pope's request. Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia is 73. The archdiocese of Denver is vacant. And retiring in the past two years were Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco and Bishop James Malone of Youngstown, Ohio.

"Who replaces these people will make a very big difference in how the church is perceived in the United States," said the Rev. Thomas Reese, senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center in Washington and the foremost expert on American bishops.

In a sense they can't be replaced. The average age of active bishops in America is 62, which means there are few young, energetic men with the drive to bring people together the way Cardinal Bernardin did. Even last summer, as he was dying, he launched a nationwide plan called the Catholic Common Ground project to try to end the divisiveness he saw eating away at the American church.

In part because of this divisiveness, the next few years will be difficult for new bishops. Increasingly, American culture exerts a powerful pull on their flock, which pays less and less attention to church teaching such as opposition to abortion and euthanasia, support for priestly celibacy and care for the poor and immigrants.

"I don't think this group is retreating from the positions it took in the past, but it doesn't seem to be exacting the kind of leadership it did in the past," Father Reese said.

Gone are the heady days of forceful pastoral letters on nuclear
weapons and the economy, documents whose contents were scrutinized by parishioners and politicians alike. Gone are the newsy pronouncements and the sense that people were really listening to dignified spiritual leaders.

Now, after a decade of Vatican appointments of new bishops, the conference is more cautious and conservative. Without the moderation and consensus-building of Cardinal Bernardin, some bishops say, it will be difficult to forge ahead with bold initiatives.

This week's opening address, delivered by Bishop Anthony Pilla of Cleveland, was an examination of the beleaguered state of the priesthood, in which he described priests under siege by negative images, sexual misconduct and a "weariness of spirit" caused by the growing demands placed on the shrinking number of priests.

"Those of us who have lived through the last 30 years have experienced a period characterized by bounding hope and much fear mixed together," Bishop Pilla said. "Perhaps we were innocent enough to think that renewal would be only full of hope and not disorienting. We were forgetful of the freedom of the Spirit who, blowing where the Spirit wills, sometimes blows things down."

And so the bishops managed only to plod along this week. They issued a 10-point call to the nation to put the needs of the poor at the center of national economic decisions. But the initiative, which received little attention, was based on a 10-year-old document: the bishops' landmark pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All."

On the other hand, they voted on a pastoral plan on young adults that says the church must use every available means - from the Internet and health clubs to mentoring and peer groups - to reach young people. The plan urges parishes to reach out in several languages to young people with "personal invitations, telephone calls, bulletin notices, letter, the Internet and e-mail."

It also calls on youth to bring the gospel to their peers. It's an urgent issue because young people aren't involved enough in churches, they said. But compared with pastoral plans of the past, there was little excitement about it.

Bishop Charles Grahmann of Dallas talked this week of his memories of earlier days, when "the alert in the public was very high" about the bishop's work, particularly when they issued their landmark 1983 pastoral letter decrying nuclear weapons - a document shepherded through the conference by Cardinal Bernardin.

"I witnessed a great support for the document on nuclear weapons and economic justice," said Bishop Grahmann, 65, who has been a bishop 16 years. "Oh, there was a great dialogue, but that was the beauty of it - the tension existed out there.

"Now," he said, "the issues now are not that dramatic." Even abortion doesn't excite passions, he said, because "there's a significant population that supports the voice of the bishops, so you
don't have the government against the bishops."

Bishop Grahnmann predicted that the next decade or so would see greater marginalization of the American bishops. "They're going to be sufferers and martyrs," he said. "More and more, society tries to silence the voices of those who raise the issues of great moral concern."

Not everyone holds such a pessimistic view. Father Reese said the bishops could be influential if they took up the issue of biblical authority.

"Biblical fundamentalism is alive and thriving in this culture," he said. "The Catholic Church has a lot of intelligent things to say about interpreting Scripture and praying about Scripture. If they could do that in a way that would capture the imagination of Americans, this would be a great service.

"I mean, is Bill Moyers going to tell us what to think about Genesis, or are the Catholic bishops?"

For now, Mr. Moyers, whose PBS series on Genesis is the talked-about spiritual topic of the moment, has the spotlight. But the bishops could grab it back again.

"They've got to pay attention to what's happening in the world around them," Father Reese said. "In the past they picked hot issues that captured the imagination of the American people. They dealt with issues in ways that involved a lot of people in the parishes so people felt they had an impact.

"And," he said, "they've got to get their act together as a body and listen to each other and form consensus - and that's what Cardinal Bernardin was so good at."
PROFILE

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Carless Talton has a mission.
Today it's Shorty. He's a tiny man wearing a camel coat and smoking a cigarette outside a liquor store in East Dallas. Shorty's in bad shape. He can't get together $1.36 to buy a 40-ounce bottle of beer, and he's sick from not having had a drink all day. Ms. Talton is hovering, touching his arm and talking.
"You ready to know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?" she asks.
Silence. Shorty peers at her, fades out, then nods. "I wanna change," he says, heaving and weeping. "I ain't goin' nowhere else."
"Folding her hands over his fingers, Ms. Talton prays, "Lord, we ask you to be with Shorty and convict him in his heart.
"It ain't that bad, Shorty," she says. "I done been there."

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Carless Talton once turned tricks and did drugs at this spot. She was addicted to heroin and cocaine, beaten by a pimp, nearly died of gangrene and bore a "trick baby" in prison.
Six years ago, she was born again as a Christian. A few months ago she started trying to save souls where she once was lost. Each week, Ms. Talton treks through streets littered with glass shards and into swampy, filthy apartment complexes to witness to addicts, hookers and poor immigrants from Vietnam and Mexico.
Hers is an earthy, gutsy Christian witness. She calls hookers "home girls," describes Jesus as her "major attorney" and vows never to leave anyone who needs help.
Ms. Talton was born in 1949 in Arkansas. Her mother gave her away to her great-grandparents when she was 11 months old.
At age 20, she joined the Army and moved to San Francisco, and the following year she got married. The marriage lasted a year, until her discharge.
By then she was pregnant with Michelle. When her daughter was 2, Ms. Talton moved to Riverside, Calif., with a man who played in a band.
She started working as a massage parlor manager. Her lover was hooked on cocaine and heroin, and soon she was, too. One day there was a raid on the massage parlor, and Ms. Talton was arrested. Scared of jail, she left Michelle with a friend and ran away to Las Vegas, where she was hired as a receptionist at a call-girl business.
One night a manager asked her to meet a client.
"Well, he just came over to me and the next thing I knew he was on top of me," she said. "It just became easy. You just kind of steel
yourself and drink alcohol, and I had my drugs waiting."
The money was good. One night she made $7,500, she said. But her addiction worsened, and her boss didn't want her. She ended up back in Riverside.
"By now I'm not a call girl," she said. "I'm just a straight-up dope fiend whore."
When Ms. Talton was arrested and sent to jail for a few days, she lost custody of her daughter, who went to live with her father.
"I started going to jail regularly," Ms. Talton said. "I had accumulated some wealthy tricks that paid for my house and car. They were giving me thousands of dollars."
One of them got her pregnant. In 1981, she gave birth to Dawn in prison. Upon Ms. Talton's release, Michelle, then 12, moved back with her and the new baby.
Ms. Talton said her daughter hid money and food stamps so the family would have something to eat. Otherwise, Ms. Talton would have used it to buy drugs.
"My daughter saw me with men. She heard what was going on in the other room," Ms. Talton said. "She didn't have any childhood with me."
Michelle, now 26, says she missed most of a school year during that period. Once, she said, she called an ambulance when her mother overdosed.
"I knew what she was doing was wrong," Michelle said. "I felt unwanted. I felt like I was too young to be doing what I was doing."
Early in 1983, Ms. Talton was arrested for prostitution and sent to jail again. She sent the girls to Arkansas to live with her brother.
One night Dawn hit her head on a cast-iron railing, and her brother and sister-in-law put her to bed, Ms. Talton said. The little girl apparently died in her sleep.
When she learned the news, Ms. Talton boarded a bus to Arkansas, but she stopped in Dallas to visit friends - and shoot dope. She never made it to Arkansas to pick up Michelle, or to bury Dawn.
Michelle was sent back to her father, and Ms. Talton sank deeper into desperation. She never called her daughter, who thought she was dead.
"For years there was nothing to my life except Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday," Ms. Talton said. "That was the time for hustling for the weekend, because people got paid then."
She stayed in motels in East Dallas and on Harry Hines Boulevard, strung out and turning tricks. In March 1989, Ms. Talton noticed a fiery, throbbing pain in her right leg. Black and green gunk oozed out of it.
"I was shooting dope to take the pain away," she said.
It was gangrene. A policewoman stopped her, noticed the sore and arrested her on a felony drug charge. After booking her, she took her to Parkland Memorial Hospital, where the sore was scraped and wrapped
and her leg was saved.

At the hospital, "the nurse kept saying, 'Do you know Jesus Christ? Because you were about to die,' " Ms. Talton remembered.

A few weeks later, she was arrested for public lewdness. The two arrests would turn out to be the start of her turnaround.

In early June, Ms. Talton went before state District Judge Larry Baraka.

'I probably weighed about 90 pounds and my face was all sunk in,' she remembered.

The judge told her she was a mess and that if she wanted out, he would help her. He sentenced her to 10 years' probation, of which she served five, and sent her to a Dallas rehabilitation center called Help Is Possible.

Near the end of her 9-month stay, Ms. Talton feared she wouldn't stay straight on her own.

So she made a deal with God. "I said, 'God, if you send someone to me who knows you, I'll commit my life to you.'"

The next day, she met a bookkeeper who worked at the center. "We introduced ourselves, and she said, 'Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?'" Ms. Talton remembered. "I'd prayed the night before and - bam! - here she was."

Ms. Talton committed her life to Jesus, began attending church and got a job pumping gas. One night she waited on a familiar-looking man who seemed to know her, too.

Suddenly, they connected: He was Elmer Stone, who had arrested her when he was an undercover vice officer in East Dallas.

"She told me she's trying to straighten up and do right, and I was glad because I'm a Christian also," said Officer Stone, now a crime prevention officer in University Park. "If I had any little bitty part to do with her turnaround, I've done what the Lord wants us to do."

Officer Stone said he knows of no one else who ever made it off the East Dallas streets.

"And she was as hard as I'd ever seen anywhere," he said.

Soon, Ms. Talton reunited with Michelle in Dallas. Michelle said that for a while she worried that her mother would backslide. But no more.

"I'm proud of her," Michelle said. "Her story is unbelievable, but it's all true."

Now the two spend hours talking, making up for lost time. A month after Michelle came to stay with her, Ms. Talton got a job at the La Madeleine restaurant in Plano, and she is now a shift leader.

Everything was falling into place, but God wasn't through with her, she said.

One summer day in 1993, Ms. Talton was on her way to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting when she saw the now-defunct Gaston Avenue Baptist Church at Gaston and Haskell avenues. She'd turned tricks at that spot.
Then she noticed a sign out front: Criswell College. Excited, she called for an appointment.

She wanted to go to school, to learn to teach God's word and share her conversion. Was it OK that she had a criminal record? she asked.

Criswell administrators were so moved by her story that they gave her a scholarship. She has two years to go to earn a bachelor's degree in biblical studies and counseling.

"I've learned what's going on in the Bible, so I can address it in street terms," Ms. Talton said.

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She uses the Bible and street language to reach Shorty.

After Shorty prays, Ms. Talton calls the Dallas Life Foundation, a homeless shelter. Then she loads him into her car and drives him there.

While directors try to get him to answer questions, Ms. Talton sits next to him, quietly assuring him: "The pain you're feeling is not going to be there forever."

Shorty is balking. He can barely speak and is falling asleep. Finally, he agrees to stay overnight. He'll get a shower, a place to sleep and a hot meal.

Will Shorty make it? Ms. Talton is enough of a believer to hope so. "If I can do it, he can do it," she says. "We just have to pray and believe that change will happen."