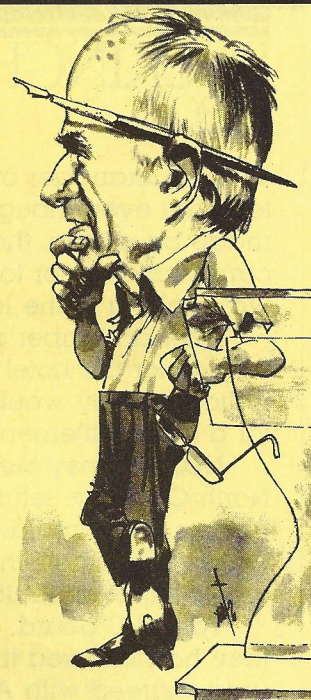


# BUCKINGHAM

## REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE & EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS



### ADAMS MARK HOTEL 5000, CHRISTIANS 0

The Adams Mark Hotel in St. Louis has accepted \$5,000 as an out-of-court settlement in their threatened lawsuit against the Abundant Life Fellowship in that city. That amount was shared—\$2,500 by Abundant Life and \$2,500 by the National Leadership Conference—to prevent the costly lawsuit the huge hotel said it was going to bring.

The strange circumstances—which actually did not involve the St. Louis church nor the NLC, based in Montreat, North Carolina—began two years ago. NLC director Bob Heil from Christian Outreach Center in Hillsboro, Missouri, had agreed to oversee a regional leadership conference planned for St. Louis in November 1988. Although the conference was promoted as an outreach of the NLC, it was functioning as a separate entity. Records in the NLC minutes specified the NLC board would assume no financial or legal responsibility for the regional conference—although it did allow its name and logo to be used to promote the conference.

Heil's local committee asked Mark Akers, an associate pastor at Abundant Life Fellowship, to be the administrator of the conference. With the committee's approval, Akers signed a contract with the Adams Mark Hotel agreeing to fill 200 rooms and to use their banquet facilities on the nights of November 4-5. The contract included a standard clause holding the party making the reservations responsible unless the contract was canceled 30 days before the conference. Akers signed the contract—as associate pastor of Abundant Life Fellowship.

Approximately 30 days before the conference, with registrations already much lower than expected, principal speaker Bob Mumford canceled. The committee, depending on Mumford's name to draw registrants, saw this as confirmation they should cancel the conference. Earlier Akers had telephoned a sales manager for the Adams Mark by and requested a two-week grace period into the 30-day notice provision. According to Akers, the sales manager

consented to this extension. However, when Akers finally called the hotel to cancel he was told he should have submitted the cancellation in writing. The hotel did not acknowledge granting the verbal extension. The Adams Mark Hotel then told him they were

holding him responsible to pay for all the rooms he had blocked out, as well as the banquet hall. They demanded \$44,959.95 from Abundant Life Fellowship and the NLC: \$19,773.00 for the rooms they said they were unable to fill and \$25,186.95 for the banquet. The implication was Adams Mark Hotel had already ordered banquet food which supposedly went to waste.

By this time the local committee had disbanded, indicating they felt no further responsibility for the growing fiasco. Bob Heil resigned as a director from the NLC, but met with the NLC board and asked them to share in the financial responsibility. Abundant Life Fellowship, whose name was on the line for the full amount, assigned another associate pastor, Jerry David, to negotiate the problem due to the enormous stress and emotional weight suffered by young Mark Akers.

Shortly afterward Adams Mark Hotel dropped the threat to sue for lost room income. It seems a Missouri Supreme Court justice had tried to register at the hotel the night the conference was to be held—and was told the hotel was full. When faced with testimony that they had not suffered loss from empty hotel rooms, Adams Mark adjusted their demand to \$25,186.95 for loss of banquet facilities.

Jim Jackson, executive director of the NLC, and Paul Russell, pastor of Abundant Life Fellowship—neither of whom had been involved in the original dealings with the hotel—pled with Adams Mark to drop the suit. Jackson made a special trip to St. Louis to try to reason

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with the manager of the Adams Mark. He was told that even though the cancellation was made by phone, the contract called for written cancellation prior to the 30-day cutoff. The hotel was sticking to the letter of the law.

After a number of threatening letters, attorneys for the hotel set a court date. They indicated they would drop the case, however, for a cash settlement of \$5,000.

NLC attorney Steve Aceto from Asheville, North Carolina, felt it was questionable that Adams Mark could win the case if it went to court. He warned, however, that the court costs would far exceed \$5,000.

The NLC board, feeling responsible since they had allowed their name and logo to be used, agreed with Abundant Life Fellowship to share the settlement rather than face the time and expenses of a lawsuit.

## Lessons Learned

There are several lessons pastors and church officials can learn from this situation.

- All conferences, large or small, should be run under the umbrella of corporate protection. In this case the local committee should have incorporated. Instead, they allowed Abundant Life Fellowship to provide corporate protection.
- No church should allow another group to use its name or corporate protection unless it both controls the event and is willing to bear all responsibility for mismanagement and/or liable costs.
- Never, never sign a contract without reading the fine print.
- Never sign or allow a staff member to sign a contract in the name of your church unless you are willing to stand behind it to the letter of the contract provisions.
- Do not be fooled by smiling faces and verbal concessions of hotel sales officials. All that counts is the contract. Those smiling faces will disappear if you don't do things their way. You are not dealing with "brothers" when you make arrangements with *any* business—you are dealing with the world system.
- You are morally—and sometimes legally—responsible the moment you allow your name or logo to be used by another group or individual. Never allow this to be done unless you maintain supervisory control.
- Never allow anyone to sign a contract which you might later have to account for.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT?

The charismatic movement was (and is) an emphasis on the person and power of the Holy Spirit. Since the nature of the Holy Spirit is growth, movement and change, the nature of the charismatic movement is change. If it did not change it would not be charismatic. That means the constant adopting of new structures along with new emphases. It also means an enlargement of doctrinal understanding. Over the last 20 years the charismatic movement has gone through a number of emphases: deliverance, shepherding, plurality of elders, apostolic leadership, five-fold ministries, youth/hippie, worship, praise, dance, anti-church, local church, Israel, anti-Israel, missions, prayer, power evangelism, prophecy, faith, prosperity, end times...gasp! All are good and there will be more.

One of the major changes has been the growing acceptance of the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit in denominational circles—combined with a new desire for fellowship across denominational lines. In the beginning the Roman Catholics led the pack in being open to the Spirit and to the new ecumenism. Several years ago Catholic charismatic leaders pulled back, following some of the tirades against the Catholic Church by evangelist Jimmy Swaggart and publisher Jack Chick.

Now, however, there is a new openness thanks to such groups as the North American Renewal Service Committee (NARSC).

James Robison, Jack Taylor, Peter Lord and others have helped open the doors into the nation's largest denomination: Southern Baptists. With the exception of a few pockets of resistance, most Baptist churches—while not necessarily allowing speaking in tongues from the floor—have adopted charismatic forms of worship.

The same is true in many Episcopal churches. The diocese of Central Florida recently consecrated John Howe, one of the world's leading Episcopal charismatic priests, as their new bishop. The high church ceremony—complete with chants, torches and processions—was held in the 6,000-seat sanctuary of Calvary Assembly of God in Orlando and climaxed with the lively singing of charismatic choruses.

While in the early days the charismatic movement produced much division, it is now the catalyst which is drawing all Christians together all over the world. This, it seems, is the nature of the Holy Spirit—to divide, then heal.

Nearly all the world's major evangelists, from Yonggi Cho to Reinhard Bonnke, are charismatic. Their meetings are characterized by healings, miracles, signs and wonders. Evangelists who are not moving in the realm of the Spirit—even those who preach the Bible—are having little success.

Today the major objection to the charismatic movement is no longer theological—rather it is behavioral. People do not like to change. They don't like surprises. The charismatic movement is full of both.

Even so, there is a fresh wind blowing and a new acceptance—for the time being—of the miraculous as the norm for the Christian life. That will soon turn against us as the world drops back into its hate mode. But for now, we're experiencing a time of unprecedented openness to the things of God. People are eager for God and seem to realize their need for supernatural power.

#### **THE HIGH PRESSURE OF YOUTH MINISTRY**

Teenage suicide is a tragic phenomenon of our times. At present it ranks second only to drug and alcohol abuse among causes of teenage death.

But the pressures felt by today's teens are also shared by those working with them. In March, Ken Miller, youth director at the Stetson Baptist Church in DeLand, Florida, committed suicide. Miller's death brought the matter home to me since he is a product of my town. His former pastor, Wayne Harvey, at the First Baptist Church of Indialantic, Florida, described Miller as "an inspirational young leader, intent on bringing people to Christ." Yet under the mysterious pressures that sometimes accompany the youth ministry, he grew strangely depressed. Without warning, he took his own life.

Commenting on Miller's death in the *Florida Baptist Witness*, Scott Bebout, a youth pastor from Meridian, Mississippi, pointed out the pressures youth pastors work under.

"For years youth ministry has been viewed as a second-rate vocation and at best a stepping-stone to 'real ministry'—the pastorate. Most people have not a glimpse of what full-time youth ministers experience in the course of a year. Youth ministry today is far more than softball, fellowships and campouts. We deal almost daily with young people and families who are going through intense struggles.

"The words 'peer pressure' are sometimes

overused, but the pull of the world is a pull that often wins. Many times it is the youth minister who intercedes in delicate circumstances and provides a healing balm for that young person. Oftentimes it is the youth minister who will get the call from a distraught parent concerning a child.

"These kinds of experiences are not put on the calendar or the weekly mailout, but they are so very real. Ninety-nine percent of the time we are ready and willing to help with these kinds of situations. Add to these emotional kinds of experiences, family responsibilities, retreats, Bible studies, parent meetings, cookouts and other important elements of youth ministry and you can begin to see the possibility for stress in a youth minister's life.

"Maybe out of the tragic death of a peer in youth ministry will come an awareness in the body of Christ of the pressures and pain that many of us feel at times. The joys and victories far outweigh the pain and pressure. Nevertheless when those difficult times come, it is so important that our family and the church realize our struggle and respond with the healing medicine of encouragement.

"Sometimes in a church full of people, the loneliest person in the room is the youth minister. May the darkness surrounding the death of Kenneth Miller bring to light the importance of youth ministry."

#### **A PLUG FOR MARRIAGE PLUS**

In the past I've promised that if I discovered some church-oriented ministry I felt I could endorse, I would let you know. Ray Mossholder's Marriage Plus seminars deserve that endorsement. Ray led a six-day marriage and family seminar in our church recently and it was better received than any seminar we've ever had.

Marriage Plus is the outgrowth of 27 years of marriage and 17 years of Bible study. The seminar is based on more than 1,000 Scripture verses which Ray uses in his ministry. Last year more than 300 couples canceled divorces as a result of Marriage Plus. On the closing night in our church Ray asked how many had come to the seminar contemplating divorce as a way out of an unhappy marriage, and as a result of the seminar, had abandoned all thoughts of divorce. Of the more than 400 in attendance, 17 couples raised their hands.

A member of Jack Hayford's Church on the Way, Ray is a former radio newscaster and an outstanding communicator. He often comes into

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a church on a Friday for a weekend Singles' Conference, prior to the marriage seminar. He asks only travel expenses and love offerings. His closing night seminar on sex in (and out of) marriage was explicit, wholesome and guilt-freeing.

For information contact: Ray Mossholder Ministries, Box 4105, Chatsworth, CA 91313.

## YOUR CALL TO THE MINISTRY

Recently I received a letter from a young man who said he was sending the same letter to 12 other ministers asking advice concerning his "call to the ministry."

His letter dealt with two questions. The first one had to do with whether there was a biblical requirement for a pastor to have formal schooling before he begins his pastoral duties. His second question was personal: "Is there anything you can tell me about how it will be for my family and me when starting a new church?"

Here's my answer:

"Formal schooling, while highly desirable, has nothing to do with God's call. While churches or denominations may put such requirements on their appointed leaders, God does not. However, for a man to snub education is foolish. While I do not believe churches should make such a requirement for their pastor, I hope every man/woman of God would make it a personal goal to get as much formal education as possible.

"The answer to your second question is much more difficult—indeed, impossible—to answer. I can make some general suggestions. (1) It will be incredibly difficult. (2) If God has not ordained it, it will fail and you and your entire family will suffer. (3) If there is any way you can be happy and stay out of the ministry, do it. (4) Do not leave your job until you are assured you have adequate income from your church to support your family. (5) Consider never leaving your job and remaining a "tent-maker" as possibly God's plan for your life. (Many pastors, including myself, have remained bivocational and are glad.) (6) If at all possible, do not strike out alone. Work under the covering of your present church (or denomination) and submit to wise and godly counsel on the local level."

## USE YOUR TELEPHONE

The Dartnell Institute says the cost of sending one business letter from your office has now risen to \$9.00. That figures in dictation to a secretary, typing, stationery and postage. Word-processed or machine-dictated letters run \$6.50 a letter. As a result many churches are using the phone—rather than the mail.

John Haggai, of the Haggai Institute in Atlanta, seldom uses the mail except to send documents, formal invitations or his magazine. On regular occasions he pulls out a list of his special friends, sits down at his phone, dials the number himself and chats. He keeps the conversations short—usually less than a minute. Because of his ability to say a lot in a few words, sign off and call another friend, he keeps the lines of communication open.

You can save a lot of money by using a long distance service. For instance, our church subscribes to Transcall America which saves us about 35 percent off regular long distance rates. We have 12 different code numbers assigned to key staff members. Each month our financial secretary gives me a read-out of all my calls for the previous month. Last month my record showed I made 66 long distance calls. I spoke a total of 298 minutes—an average of 4.5 minutes a call. The cost was \$83.91—an average of 28 cents a minute or \$1.28 a call. That's considerably less than \$9.00 a letter.

