

BUCKINGHAM REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE BY AMERICA'S FOREMOST
CHRISTIAN ANALYZER OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE &
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S SPIRIT-LED LEADERS

LOOKING AHEAD

As we enter the third month of 1986, let's take a look at where we are and what we can expect in the future.

Population Trends

The U.S. population has climbed over the 237 million mark. By 1990 it will be 250 million and by the end of the century it is estimated to rise to 265 million.

Over-60s: Five years from now 50 percent of the population will be in their 40s. The over-65 group continues to grow. If your church does not have a separate ministry to this age group—START NOW. Just as churches often call a full-time youth pastor, the need now is for a full-time minister to seniors. This must be more than a retired pastor who visits shut-ins. Today's "Over-60s" are vibrant, with many more years to serve. They are the church's richest mine of ministry and resources. Cultivate that mine wisely and it will produce richly.

The shame of Christian America is the way it treats the elderly. Most nursing homes are nothing less than death houses. God is going to hold us accountable unless we act swiftly to alleviate the shameful misery being experienced by our senior citizens who can no longer function. New methods of ministry are mandatory as we face the future. (Note: Christian Believers United in Montreat, North Carolina, is planning a conference September 23-24, 1986, for church leaders who work with senior citizens. Write Jim Jackson, Box 1000, Montreat, NC 28757.)

Working Mothers: Fifty-five percent of today's women have jobs outside the home. That will climb to 60 percent over the next 10 years. Thirty years ago that figure was less than 15 percent. Look for 80 percent of all wives under 45 to be wage earners. Over half the mothers of preschool children now work. That will increase. Plan for this trend. You'll not reach your key women with daytime meetings as in the past. You also need to assess your ministry to these women. A November study showed that more than one-half of today's working mothers confessed to periods of deep depression, brought on by the anxiety of having to work while their children were at home alone or in a child care center. New formats of ministry are necessary. Yesterday's programs will not meet today's needs.

Hispanics: If you live on or near the Mexican border, beef up your ministry to Hispanics. Experts say population in Mexico is expanding twice as fast as employment. It is a near-panic situation. Look for millions of Mexicans to flood across the

border. The church must be prepared to minister to these desperate people as the mission field comes to us. Aside from Mexico City, Los Angeles is, today, the largest Spanish-speaking city in the Western hemisphere.

Take a lesson from the South Florida churches who refused to minister to the Cubans. They are dying as the Hispanic population continues to explode. Thirty-six percent of the Miami electorate is Cuban and the city now has a Cuban-born mayor. Churches need to consider bilingual services designed for ethnic groups to be held at different hours, such as a Korean service on Sunday afternoon or an early morning service in Spanish.

Copyright Laws

Look for a crackdown on music copyright laws. Churches have gotten away with this for years, but growing discontent on the part of composers and their agents may bring down the ax. Especially is this true as churches put religious lyrics to secular music. Christian composers complain, but probably will not bring suit. Unbelievers have no such scruples and will try to collect damages. Last fall Bruce Gold, a New York attorney representing Chappel Music company, publicly threatened to sue any church using the Broadway show tune "Edelweiss" set to religious words. The tune, written by the late Richard Rodgers in 1959 for "The Sound of Music," has been widely used with religious lyrics in churches. Attorneys say such use will get a church in trouble only if the songs are sung on television or radio, or if they are printed in a booklet and distributed to the church.

Computers and Videocassette Recorders

Computers will continue to increase in number and capability. If your Christian school is not using computers, you are already behind. It's a must in the large church office. Use some of those computer whizzes in your church to work out innovative ways to improve your ministry.

Take a close look at VCRs as teaching aids in Sunday school and home groups. Your church should invest in several small VCRs now—as well as a large screen VCR capable of projecting on a screen or wall in your auditorium. Look for a lot of good stuff to be produced in the near future. For instance, I am amazed at the enthusiastic reception being given my series titled **The Journey to Spiritual Maturity** using teaching on location in the Sinai. A number of churches are ordering it to be passed around in small groups. Drop me a line and I'll send you full information. If you take a mission trip, take along your video camera. Our home group has exchanged videotapes with stateside missionaries we support, making the relationship warm and personal. Recently, at a churchwide party, a group presented a "play" they had produced for video, depicting the church staff in ludicrous situations reacting in caricature fashion. It was hilarious. The possibilities are almost limitless.

Kiplinger says satellite TV dishes will be a lot cheaper in a couple of years, with prices dropping to about \$500 for a good dish. They'll be smaller, too. It might pay to wait. Sales are already way off as more cable-TV stations scramble their signals.

COSMONAUTS REPORT ANGELS IN SPACE

Calling it the best international news of 1985, the January 5 issue of **Parade** magazine carried a story from **Weekly World News** saying Soviet cosmonauts Vladimir Soleyev, Oleg Atkov and Leonid Kizim said they saw celestial beings last July during their 155th day aboard the orbiting **Salyut 7** space station. "What we saw," they said,

"were seven giant figures in the form of humans, but with wings and mist-like halos, as in the classic depiction of angels. Their faces were round with cherubic smiles." They described them as a "band of glowing angels with wings as big as jumbo jets." Twelve days later the figures returned and were seen by three other Soviet scientists, including woman cosmonaut Svetlana Savitskaya. "They were smiling," she said, "as though they shared in a glorious secret."

SEDUCTION BOOK STILL HOT STUFF

Dave Hunt's book **Seduction of Christianity** was one of the major topics discussed by 400 top charismatic ministers at the annual Idea Exchange in Charlotte in January. My mail has run very heavy since I reported on the book two months ago. No one is neutral. This gives rise to an intriguing question: Is it possible for a Pharisaical spirit to be passed along in print, exciting a latent, religious spirit in others (or perhaps a spirit of legalism) causing readers to respond with anger?

I am troubled when I see Christians attempting to correct error by using the method of Procrustes. You remember he was the Greek legendary innkeeper who grew angry when his guests did not fit his beds. To force uniformity he had them stretched on a rack or he hacked off their feet. That method is still used by today's legalists, who insist all biblical interpretation fit their theology. Bob Schuller is right: "Nothing is more dangerous than religion in the hands of a negative person." No wonder he's one under attack in the book.

I appreciate those who have written telling me of the meek spirit of the authors and their publishers. You'll be interested in knowing of a letter I've received from Norman G. Juggert, an attorney from Costa Mesa, California, who represents Harvest House Publishers and the authors. He states: "We have been instructed to notify you of our client's strong objection to your December 4, 1985, **Buckingham Report**...." He then challenges me on biblical interpretation issues and concludes: "If you elect to repeat your attacks upon the integrity and motives of our client, we will recommend that all legal remedies be pursued."

Heathen writers and producers don't sue Broadway reviewers, but when you feel divinely commissioned to defend the faith, then courts of law, stretching racks, and crosses all seem justified. Welcome to the New Age the book so aptly warns us about.

IN THIS ISSUE I AM SPOTLIGHTING...

ORAL ROBERTS FORMS MINISTERIAL FRATERNITY

Saying that for 38 years he had felt the "irresistible pull of destiny toward this meeting," Oral Roberts called 27 of the nation's charismatic leaders to a special meeting in Dallas to form a new ministerial alliance.

Gathering in Dallas were Tommy Barnett, Happy Caldwell, Kenneth Copeland, Billy Joe Daugherty, John Gimenez, Jack Hayford, Marilyn Hickey, Freda Lindsay, John Meares, Mike Murdock, John Osteen, Earl Paulk, Tommy Reid, Jerry

Savelle, Karl Strader, Stephen Strang, Lester Sumrall, Hilton Sutton, Vinson Synan, Bob Tilton, Roberts' wife, Evelyn, their son, Richard, and myself. Unable to attend but sending word of complete support were James Buskirk, Buddy Harrison and Kenneth Hagin, Sr.

The group, meeting January 20-21, agreed to the name Roberts had selected: **Charismatic Bible Ministries (CBM)**. Paul Yonggi Cho has agreed to be honorary international chairman for the organization.

No Longer a Lone Ranger

Admitting that he had been a "loner" for many years, Roberts said it was time for the heads of all the various charismatic ministries to band together for fellowship, for protection, and to enhance one another's ministries. He stated, "This is not a day of forming a denomination to emphasize some neglected biblical truth. If this group becomes a denomination it will soon be like all the others. But the hour of the independent church has come—including those who are independent while being members of a denomination." Despite some unanswered (and unasked) questions, the Dallas group seemed to be enthusiastically behind Roberts' plan.

The fear of forming a denomination seemed foremost in the minds of many present. Roberts tried to dispel this, saying the fellowship must be a "work of God bigger than any denomination." Others agreed, expressing support if the new group did not seek to "credential, control, or discipline." Jack Hayford pointed out that the inclusion of denominational ministries (Assemblies of God, Foursquare Gospel, Pentecostal Holiness) in CBM invalidates the accusation that this is another denomination.

Bob Tilton called it a "tabernacle of protection" for men in ministry as well as for their churches.

Tommy Barnett said that, as an Assemblies of God pastor, "I really do need what CBM offers." He went ahead to say he felt the Assemblies of God needed the exposure they would get from men of CBM.

John Gimenez mentioned that this same desire for ministers to gather together is going on in many places. "All over the nation there is a rising desire to get together, to cooperate, to help one another."

Hilton Sutton said he had a "stirring sense in my spirit we are beginning something." He added that "some of our theological differences do not disturb the Holy Spirit as much as they disturb us."

Happy Caldwell spoke of this being the "seed of the greatest unity in this hour," and Freda Lindsay said she felt CBM could be the "catalyst to bring in revival."

Tommy Reid reminded the group of the more than 19 million charismatic/Pentecostal people in the United States and said the "vast majority of these have a deep need to come together. None of us," he said, "realize the potential of the seed being planted this day."

That, it seemed, was the general feeling of all present. Roberts likened the meeting to the one in which the founders of this nation signed the Declaration of Independence and went as far as to say those who agreed to become original trustees might be putting their "lives and their ministries" on the line. Marilyn Hickey then shared a vision of the trustees being the "Davids of our day" against the Goliaths of the world system.

John Osteen said there was a great need to pool knowledge for strength of the Body. It was a theme picked up by Mike Murdock, who said CBM existed for "resistance, information and relationship."

Battle Lines Forming with IRS

The theme of resistance was a major topic of the meeting. Roberts spoke passionately and prophetically when he said he believed that within five years the Internal Revenue Service will challenge the church system in America. For more than three years, he said, there have been seven IRS investigators in his buildings investigating his Christian Healing Fellowship—the name of his church. Their intent: to prove the fellowship is not a “church” according to their 14-point definition. (Ironically, none of the 14 points fit the New Testament church, which should be the standard of all contemporary churches.) The IRS wants Roberts’ ministries struck from the list of tax exempt organizations. Roberts feels they have come after him because he has the largest parachurch organization in the nation. If IRS disqualifies him, he says, then what is to prevent them from coming after every independent church in the nation?

Obviously this is one of the reasons Roberts now feels he can no longer be a loner. He needs the support of kindred ministries around the nation. On the other hand, Roberts is a shrewd strategist. He’s a kind of fellow who loves to be under attack so he can turn it into a challenge. In fact, the name of his new book is **Attack Your Lack**. I don’t believe he deliberately goaded the IRS into a fight, but he’s sure making the best of it now that they have desecrated the holy city in Oklahoma.

Changes Coming

Kenneth Copeland contributed a refreshing insight by pointing out that church tax exemption is not even scriptural. “It was a blessing for a time,” Copeland said, “but is not necessary for ministry. We should not fear its removal. If that comes it will separate the sheep from the goats.”

An interesting aside emerged as Roberts talked of his battle with the IRS. Lester Sumrall said the IRS had been in his building for a year. He said one of the agents told him, “I’ve come to destroy you. I’ll not leave until you are destroyed.” As in Roberts’ situation, Sumrall discovered the IRS had come to prove he was not a “church”—despite the fact he holds weekly services in a church auditorium seating 3,500 people. Sumrall is still in the midst of his battle, having had to hire expensive lawyers who admit they are confused.

While Sumrall’s revelation of his battle with the IRS casts some doubt on Roberts’ claim that Oral Roberts Ministries has been singled out, it lends credibility to Roberts’ claim that the IRS is, indeed, coming after Christian organizations with an intent to destroy them.

Steamroller?

In his letter of invitation to this initial meeting it sounded as if Roberts really intended to submit to his brethren. He promised to leave all decisions—including the choice of a name—to the original 27 trustees. They are to set the direction, choose the remaining 50 trustees, and decide upon the future course of action.

To a certain degree this was so. When I commented on the need among many pastors for medical insurance and a health-care program for churches, Dr. James Winslow of the City of Faith responded excitedly and promised a feasibility study. But when it came to the name of the organization it was obvious the old Oral Roberts steamroller was still greased up and in motion.

A vote was called for. Shall we organize? All yeas. Does each man present agree to be one of the founding trustees? All yeas. Shall the name of this new ministerial fraternity be Charismatic Bible Ministries? All yeas.

Suddenly some of Roberts’ staff members appeared, handing out pre-printed certificates to each person present. Each trustee’s name was printed in beautiful

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calligraphy—with the name of the organization, Charismatic Bible Ministries, printed at the top. Each certificate was decorated with a gold corporate seal. Chug, chug, chug...the machine rolled on.

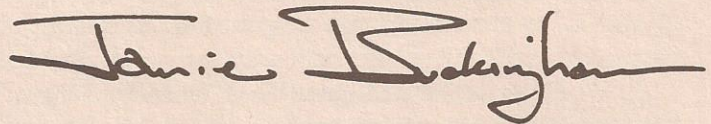
However, even while my journalistic mind smirked, the Spirit in me was forcing me to ask certain questions—questions each cynic needs to answer. Are men such as Oral Roberts, who give the impression of being non-submissive, really pushing their personal programs, or have they actually heard from God and therefore know ahead of time their programs are going to come to pass? Could it be faith, rather than presumption, which causes such men to go ahead and print up certificates even before the vote is taken? Integrity demands an answer.

Headquartered in Tulsa

It was the unanimous feeling of the group that Roberts should be named temporary chairman and the ministry should be headquartered at ORU—not only for convenience, but to give credibility. At the heart of CBM is a tax deferred annuity plan which will provide a retirement fund for pastors who participate. Roberts is giving \$1 million as “seed money” to put it into action. The final plans for CBM will be revealed at the ministerial fellowship meeting held at the Maybee Center on the ORU campus June 23-25 in Tulsa.

My Personal Conclusion

After much honest questioning I conclude this is an “idea whose time has come” and this group of men have seized the hour. I applaud Oral Roberts for his vision, his boldness, and the risk he is taking by submitting himself to other men. Roberts states: “I am committed spirit, mind and body—with my time, effort, finances and the full force of my faith—to serve with you and make CBM the mightiest force for Christian unity and the healing of the body of Christ the world has yet known.” God honors that kind of faith and personal commitment. I urge each of my readers to attend the June conference. Full details on this and the benefits offered by CBM are available by writing Charismatic Bible Ministries in care of Oral Roberts University, 7777 South Lewis, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74171.



P.S. Coming next issue: a full analysis of what's going on at PTL.

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