

BUCKINGHAM

REPORT

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

THE CURSE OF DEBT

On June 25 the Commerce Department revealed that the United States is now the world's top debtor nation. That means the United States has borrowed more money from foreign interests than foreigners have borrowed from us. Our total debt to other nations is now \$107.4 billion. Economists predict it will hit \$250 billion by the end of this year and easily top \$500 billion by 1990.

Three years ago the United States was the world's largest creditor.

What does this mean?

1. If foreign interests call for their money—and it is not available—they might take over huge portions of American industry or real estate.

2. We are now so dependent on foreign money that the entire nation would fall into serious recession if foreign investors pull their money out of the country. (Note the pressure on Ronald Reagan to sell arms to nations such as Saudi Arabia which have threatened to withdraw huge investments if he does not, or to keep liberal trade deals going for the same reasons, despite their harm to American industry and farming.)

3. Far more serious, the nation has slipped from being "blessed" to a nation now under the curse.

Greed

I warned of this in my May 1, 1985, issue. At that time I concluded that our problem could be summed up in one word: greed. We've overpriced ourselves and overpaid our workers. People abroad can do our jobs better—and cheaper—than we can. American workers no longer strike for better working conditions; now they strike because of greed. They want more because others are getting more. Management fights back from the same motive. The result: Experts are saying this erosion of our industrial base is permanent.

What does God say about this? He gives specific ways to determine if you are blessed or cursed. If you are blessed, "you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none....If

you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom" (Deut. 28:12-13).

On the other hand, "if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all His commands and decrees...all these curses will come upon you and overtake you....The alien who lives among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will sink lower and lower. He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be the head, but you will be the tail" (vs. 15, 43-44).

That's scary. And sad. Debt is one of the great plagues of our nation. As our government leaders encourage borrowing beyond our means, it sends the same message to the people of the nation.

Debtor Church

Even sadder is what is happening in the church. It is impossible for pastors to speak with integrity, encouraging their flocks to get out and stay out of debt when the corporate church goes into debt to worldly institutions. In fact, corporate church debt actually encourages Christians to go into debt.

One pastor told me of his tremendously successful new plan to raise money for his building fund. In this plan the corporate church does not go into debt as a legal entity. But the real church—people and families—does go into debt. The plan, simply stated, was a deal with the bank where the pastor lined up 750 people who each personally borrowed \$1,000 from the bank, repaying it at \$33 a month. The bank advanced that money to the church and the 750 people were able to deduct the entire amount of their loan, including the interest. It's a remarkable plan with one exception: It binds families into debt and unequally yokes believers with unbelievers.

If your primary purpose as a pastor is to build buildings, this is a good plan. If your purpose as a shepherd is to lead your people to be free from debt, you'll have problems with such a plan.

God's Way

A better plan! Ask 750 people to **invest** (that's the scriptural way to use a bank) \$33 a month for three years. At the end of that time let them give \$1,000 plus interest to the church. This way the people **use** the bank as lenders rather than enslaving themselves to the bank as borrowers. Of course, the corporate church will have to wait three years to build. And you'll lose the leverage of a legal debt in raising your money since the church, unlike the bank, cannot foreclose on bad promises. But it keeps the corporate church and the people—who are the church—in the blessing column rather than under the curse.

If God is no longer blessing our nation since we are a debtor nation, what will His judgment be upon His church if we continue our practice of being a debtor church—owing money to aliens and infidels?

DISCIPLESHIP LEADERS BREAK UP

The discipleship "movement" has finally come to a resting place. Recently the remaining four leaders—Charles Simpson, Ern Baxter, Don Basham and Bob Mumford (Derek Prince broke from the movement last year)—met with 500 of their key undershepherds in Chicago. The agenda: to discuss vital issues concerning the past relational structure of the movement.

In an early June letter to selected friends, Mumford summed up the purpose of the Chicago meeting. "For 15 valuable years we sought to live out our commitments in Ft. Lauderdale and then Mobile according to what we felt was the Lord's purpose for us....The outcome of the Chicago meeting was that we felt we should dissolve the governmental basis under which we have been operating for so many years. Although we are preserving the relational bonds...this has...released each of us to operate in our own spheres of ministry and calling, giving us the freedom to express ourselves in our uniqueness."

What Does This Mean?

Ern Baxter will operate independently from his home in San Diego, traveling and teaching.

Bob Mumford has moved to San Rafael, California, and will resume his role as a traveling teacher which incorporates a new plan to hold lay leadership seminars in key cities around the world for the "motivators of society." Mumford says, "For the first time in many years I am now solely responsible for my own area of ministry."

Charles Simpson and **Don Basham** remain in Mobile to work with **New Wine** magazine. Simpson continues to give pastoral oversight to the

Gulf Coast Christian Fellowship.

Recently I discovered an editorial I wrote for **Logos Journal** 11 years ago. "Logos Journal has reservations about some of the discipleship methods. We agree with Charles Farah that the seeds of denominational structure have been planted, although the leaders at CGM say they have no desire for this. We also fear the dangers of extra-local submission. Discipleship in its purest form must be on a local basis. In Acts 6 the word 'disciple' was synonymous with the word 'believer.' Men were not disciples of Peter or Apollos, but of the living Lord.

"As in all movements, it takes a healthy push of the pendulum to set it in motion. We feel that, given time, the discipleship movement will stabilize...."

It's taken 11 years. But things are back to normal.

IN THIS ISSUE I AM SPOTLIGHTING...

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN TULSA?

We were all a little awed by the tremendous turnout at the first meeting of the Charismatic Bible Ministries. Although this was the third year of the pastors' conference on the Oral Roberts University campus, none of us—even Roberts himself—expected 7,000 to attend. That's more than three times as many as last year, and seven times as many as attended the first conference.

Of course this meeting was more than another pastors' conference. It was the inaugural meeting for Charismatic Bible Ministries (CBM) which you've been reading about in the **Buckingham Report**.

It was unique. Everyone, including the speakers, paid their own expenses. There were no honorariums. There was only one offering. It amounted to \$56,495 and was given to Yonggi Cho to help evangelize Japan.

I am used to attending conferences where the big wigs come flying in just in time for their speaking session—then fly out. This conference was unique. The "big names" were there, but they were part of the congregation, coming to receive ministry rather than public recognition. It reminded me of those times when the camera pans the audience at the Academy Awards celebration and you see all the famous movie actors sitting together. Mike Evans, James Beall, Merlin Carothers, R.W. Schambach, Jerry Fry, Don George, Charles and Frances Hunter, Bob Tilton, Bob Weiner, Dick Iverson, Ralph Mahoney and hundreds of other "household names" were present. Morris Cerullo told me, "I'm here because I want to be part of God's

plan for end-time destiny." Tommy Reid called the meeting "the most significant meeting in the history of the church."

Powerful Meetings

The sessions began Monday afternoon. Billy Joe Daugherty, the young pastor of Tulsa's Victory Christian Center, was the moderator. Roberts was the opening speaker, saying the Holy Spirit had "mandated" him to restore signs and wonders to the contemporary church. He was followed by Larry Lea, pastor of the Church on the Rock in Dallas who is also the new dean of the ORU seminary. Instead of speaking, however, Lea said the Lord had instructed him to lead the group in prayer. It was a powerful demonstration of spiritual principles as the young pastor/educator put aside his ego and allowed the Holy Spirit to sweep through the congregation in prayer ministry.

That night Jack Hayford of the Church on the Way, Van Nuys, California, spoke, warning the men of the danger of "ending up in the middle of miracles but becoming prey to the very demons you expel." He pointed out frankly that "in the middle of miracles is the muddle of moral failure." Hayford was followed by Jerry Savelle, a teacher in the word/faith movement.

Anytime this many Spirit-baptized Christians get together there will be present those with strange spirits. On at least two occasions these spirits manifested themselves graphically.

During the opening session a man in the center bleachers stood and began to shout condemnation on Oral Roberts. It came in the form of "prophecy" and Billy Joe Daugherty, who was presiding, handled it forcefully. "That word is not of God!" he said. When the man continued to shout, Daugherty pointed at him and commanded the spirit to be quiet. The man got up and stormed out of the meeting.

The next morning, while Oral was speaking, a well-dressed man in the side bleachers leaped to his feet, waving some kind of paper. He began shouting in a loud voice, "In Jesus' name... Roberts...message...here me...God is...Gary...time to...." I was impressed how rapidly things happened and how efficiently the ushers and attendants reacted. In less than 10 seconds the man was surrounded by attendants. Someone in the control booth dimmed the overhead lights in that section. As the man continued to scream incoherently five men picked him up and carried him up the steep aisle to an exit. The man's beautiful and elegantly dressed woman companion seemed in shock over what was happening. Other men gathered around her, comforted her and gently escorted her out to join her husband. Oral never missed a word; he continued to speak

as if nothing had happened. There was no need to refer to the situation; it was well in hand.

Roberts was specific in what he felt CBM could offer cooperating churches. "I believe in one year we can give each cooperating church the ability to double its income, size and miracle ministry." He closed his message by encouraging the pastors to emphasize four points in their ministry: (1) Get into revelational knowledge; (2) Use tongues as a trigger for full release of the Spirit; (3) Get people involved in the mighty acts of God; (4) Free yourself of any impediment—secular or spiritual—that keeps you from being your true spiritual self.

Planned Spontaneity

Tuesday afternoon the service erupted into a healing meeting as Richard Roberts and his father prayed for a number of pastors and missionaries who came forward. One old black man, many years a missionary to India, responded to a word of knowledge. He had recently returned to the States, weary and burned out, only to find himself working 19 hours a day to support himself and his family. He said his body had broken down and "the saints" took up an offering to send him to the conference to be remade. Oral himself leaped up and began to pray. He sounded like the old Oral back in his tent as he slapped the old man on the head and shouted, "BE HEALED!" Instantly the old missionary began to run, his legs pumping and his head thrown back in ecstasy as he sped back and forth across the front of the huge Mabee Center. The audience was on its feet shouting and praising God. It was a powerful demonstration of the conference theme: the restoration of signs and wonders to the church.

A month before, when I was at ORU for graduation exercises, Roberts had asked me to be one of the major speakers for this conference. (Speakers were chosen by the steering committee made up of Roberts, Ken Copeland and Billy Joe Daugherty.) He promised to confirm with a letter. However, since I had heard nothing I assumed other plans had been made. I settled back and just enjoyed the conference. I knew Yonggi Cho was to speak Tuesday night and Oral would close the meeting Wednesday morning speaking on what the American church should expect in days to come as the IRS intensifies its attack. As the Tuesday afternoon healing ministry drew to a close I was busy making notes when my wife punched me in the ribs, "Billy Joe just introduced you. You're on!" I grabbed my Bible, realized the message I had earlier thought of preaching was totally inappropriate, breathed an "It's-up-to-You" prayer and pushed off the dock into deep water. Aside

from offending everyone at one time or another during my message, we had a good time. I even shouted a little bit. But why not? It was that kind of meeting.

There was very little corporate worship, just a few songs at the beginning of each session. All of the 60 trustees of CBM spoke briefly, however. Some were called on to evaluate various messages (not mine, thank the Lord) and others simply brought personal words. In fact, some of the most powerful messages were contained in those brief exhortations.

Happy Caldwell from Arkansas summed up much of what was being felt. "For 30 years the body of Christ has fought Oral Roberts. Now with the completion of the third phase of his ministry—the formation of CBM—we find that the seed ground into the earth by the heel of those who fought him is producing fruit. That fruit is now being given back to the body which fought him."

Perhaps the highlight of the conference was a word from Vinson Synan, former official of the Pentecostal Holiness Church—the church that had spawned, and later rejected, Oral Roberts. Synan spoke following Ed Cole's call for forgiveness which came in response to Jack Hayford's message. He asked Oral and Evelyn to come forward. He quoted the old Negro Christmas carol, "We didn't know who you was," and asked them to forgive the Pentecostal Holiness Church for the way they had treated them in the past. It was a deeply moving time as the Robertses responded in love.

The external manifestations of the conference, however, were not nearly as important as what was happening in the spiritual world at the same time. The conference was preceded by a half-day meeting of the 60 trustees (27 original trustees and 33 others they chose to serve with them) of CBM, a virtual who's who of the charismatic movement. At this time final approval had been given to the structure of the organization: a loose-knit association of leaders employed by non-profit organizations.

An executive committee was elected. They are: Oral Roberts, chairman; Jack Hayford, vice-chairman; Kenneth Copeland, treasurer; Billy Joe Daugherty, secretary; Charles Green; Marilyn Hickey; and Karl Strader. Approval was given to the tax-deferred annuity plan to be offered by CBM—a retirement fund which all members are eligible to join. Roberts announced his ministry was "seeding" \$1 million to the

fund and would contribute matching funds up to \$100 a month to each one who joins. In other words, if a pastor or church staff member invests \$100 a month into the CBM annuity plan, Roberts will add another \$100, and the \$200 will be invested, earning interest until retirement.

A statement of purpose was adopted: "The purpose of the fellowship is to provide a broad range of spiritual, educational and professional benefits to ministers who choose to participate. The foremost benefit is mutual fellowship and spiritual enrichment during conferences: the sharing of methods, revelations, prophecies, teachings in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and personal encouragement from one minister to another." In adopting this the trustees laid the foundation for the spirit of unity as men and women of widely divergent ministries pledged themselves to work together for the good of the kingdom.

CBM is not opposed to church denominations and it does not discourage its members from being involved in their own denomination or independent group. CBM desires to be a fellowship which nurtures and strengthens one another, and by that encouraging unity among both independent and denominational leaders.

Roberts' statement to the trustees was classic: "Anyone who reads history knows the strength and longevity of any movement revolves around its ability to reproduce leadership. Now I know why God ordered me to establish ORU, with its seminary, medical school and City of Faith. All the toil, sweat and fears we endured by our faith will become our great joy if the university can be a vehicle to reproduce the leaders of the future. Without new leadership in the church, this great flow of the Holy Spirit will subside. For that, I submit to you my life's work."

In other words, Roberts is giving his entire ministry back to the body of Christ.

Standing in front of the 7,000 leaders at the first session the 68-year-old preacher wept openly, "I've always been a loner," he confessed. "And I've been lonely. Tonight I feel I've been welcomed into the family of God."

Those interested in receiving more information and an application form to join CBM (the fee is \$25 a year) may write: Charismatic Bible Ministries, P.O. Box 701230, Tulsa, OK 74170.

