

# WHAT'S AHEAD For The CHARISMATIC RENEWAL?

*In the previous 10 articles we have looked at the trends of the past decade. Now, what about the future? We know that only God knows the future, but we believe by looking at existing trends, issues, people and events, we can understand trends we may expect in the upcoming decade, should the Lord tarry.*

**By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM**



**A**ll across the world people are talking of a "new wave" of the Holy Spirit. This is the terminology used by C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary and by Houston Miles, Assemblies of God apostle and pastor. Paul O'Higgins, former Roman Catholic priest, said in a recent newsletter, "In the coming wave of the Holy Spirit the Lord will manifest Himself in ways that will build on His past work in the church, but also go further than that which He has done with us until now."

Others disagree. They feel the Charismatic movement has died.

Karl Strader, a leading Assemblies of God pastor, says 70 percent of the Assemblies of God pastors believe the Charismatic movement was just a fad and is dead or dying. On the other hand,

Strader says, there are approximately 20 percent of the A/G ministers who have gotten involved with the Charismatic movement over the last 10 years. Those churches, he says, are flourishing.

Vinson Synan of the Pentecostal Holiness Church recently confirmed this to be true among nearly all classical Pentecostals. There are those rare churches which are experiencing phenomenal growth. In fact, there are entire geographic sections where churches have opened themselves to the move of the Spirit, but at this point no single denomination has emerged which has fully embraced the move of the Spirit.

For instance, there is a tremendous move of God among the Foursquare churches in the Pacific Northwest. But in other sections of the country the Foursquare churches continue to slosh around

in tradition with very little life.

## Evangelical and Liturgical Churches Struggling

What is true for classical Pentecostals (Vinson Synan says the word "classical" usually refers to something ancient which is parked in a garage and kept polished because it won't go very fast) is even more true in evangelical circles. Baptists and Presbyterians are busy splitting and arguing about angels on pinheads. Methodists—with rare exceptions—have either run off or gagged their most effective men. Then there're the liturgical churches. Over the last decade membership in the Episcopal Church has declined 15 percent while membership in Southern Baptist churches—despite their sniping at each other—was up 20 percent. Membership in Assemblies of God churches—thanks to the super-churches like Karl Strader's—increased a whopping 62 percent.

David Barrett's *The World Christian Encyclopedia* says that of a world population of 4,781 billion, 360 million are Protestant Christians. Of these, 58,999,900 are classical Pentecostals, 15,909,700 are Charismatics, and 38,000,000 are indigenous Pentecostals—meaning one out of every three Protestants is a Pentecostal—a total of 112,909,600. That is by far the largest of any group—more than twice the size of the Anglicans and the Baptists.

## Looking Down the Road

So what can we expect over the next 10 years?

I do not believe there is any new revelation being given to the church. There is simply illumination of old revelation—revelation which I believe is already contained in the Bible. Therefore the concept of "trends" is ambiguous. People talk of trends toward holiness, trends toward unity, trends toward the supernatural—but these have been with us all along. How then should we evaluate what seems to be taking place—and project those evaluations into the future?

O'Higgins feels the "new wave" will not revive the aging Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Instead the vine will put out new shoots. "From the stock of the old will come forth a new shoot, the mature, full fruit-bearing branch of the vine."

## Not a Wave, But a Tide

I agree, but take issue with the terminology. This new move of the Holy

Spirit is not a wave, it is a tide. It is rising and lifting without the froth and foam (and destructiveness) experienced in the early days of the Charismatic revival when the Holy Spirit hit the beaches with a crashing roar. This rising tide will have more power and stability—and will be accompanied by discipline and accountability, yet with even greater power than the wave. Those churches free from the bondage of tradition—that is, not anchored to the bottom with a short chain—will rise with the tide. The others will go under, pulled down by their own short-sightedness.

There are those who say the Charismatic movement is dead. Not so. It has been sleeping. That's not bad, for solid growth happens during sleep times. It has been through a dormant stage—a stage of putting down roots, of strengthening the stakes, so to speak, before lengthening the cords. Now there is an awakening taking place—with new growth and a new look. This "new movement" will be fueled by the same Holy Spirit as fueled the Charismatic wave, but it will have a different shape—and a different sound. The leaders will not be the classical Pentecostals of the last decade or the checkered-coated Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International types who were so used of God in the early days of the Charismatic movement. All things will be new.

Tides ebb and flow—but the ocean remains. There has been an ebb of the Spirit over the last several years, but now the tide is coming back in—with greater power than ever before.

Here are the trends I see materializing over the next decade as we approach the close of the century.

### **More Signs and Wonders**

Signs and wonders will increase, especially among evangelicals. Despite the constant bickering among evangelicals, and their penchant toward the negative, there is an exciting trend beginning to emerge, John Wimber says more than 3,000 Southern Baptist pastors have recently received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Although many pastors and denominational officials are resisting, thousands of evangelical lay-people are attending the James Robison crusades. C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary is making a significant contribution. Thousands of Baptists are sitting under the teaching of Spirit-filled leaders such as Jack Taylor and Peter Lord.

Many evangelical colleges and seminaries, once closed to any mention

of the Charismatic dimension are now beginning to move in the Spirit. The most evident move of the Holy Spirit during the next decade will be among evangelicals—especially Southern Baptists.

### **New Forms of Worship**

Christians will break from the traditional, even Charismatic traditions, and will begin to experience new forms of worship. Worship has long been the vehicle upon which the Holy Spirit has rid-

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den into the lives of people. As worship changes, intensifies, and takes on new forms—so the Holy Spirit finds residence in the worshippers.

Over the next 10 years we will see an increase in worship—in churches, in home groups and in individual Christians. The excitement of the last 20 years will deepen as worshippers do more than raise and clap their hands. Look for interpretative dance—worship in motion—as well as other forms—to become common in most churches. Music will become more disciplined as people move from the Charismatic be-bop to serious, but free worship.

### **New Leadership**

New voices of leadership will emerge. There are some leaders already ascending whom God has obviously anointed for the future. Methodist evangelist Mark Rutland of Atlanta is one of those. Keep your eye on emerging leaders from the Pacific Northwest, where there is a mighty explosion of the Holy Spirit beginning to take place—especially among the Foursquare churches. Men like former Quaker pastor John Wimber and Southern Baptist evangelist James Robison are leading the way among evangelicals—boldly proclaiming the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit with signs and wonders. Oral Roberts has been carefully grooming young Billy Joe Daherty as one of his successors.

Rhema Bible Training Center has finally come of age and will produce a new breed of balanced leaders. Look for prophetic voices to emerge from New England. Pastoral voices all over the nation are being raised against the strongholds of the enemy. Evangelists are emerging, no longer thumping pulpits and screaming with red-faced anxiety about the rapture, but instead calling Christians and non-Christians into a love affair with Jesus.

### **True Apostolic Ministry**

For centuries the church has shunned the concept of apostles as a valid ministry for today (although the office remains among liturgical churches under the name "bishop"). Today a number of men with valid apostolic ministries are being recognized across the nation. Ken Sumrall of Liberty churches headquartered in Pensacola; Bob Wright of the Covenant Church in Annapolis; Roy Hicks Jr. of the Foursquare church in Eugene, Oregon; Charles Simpson of the Gulf Coast Fellowship in Mobile; Terry Fullam, Episcopal priest-at-large from Darien, Connecticut; Larry Tomczak from Washington, D.C.; Bob Heil of Hillsboro, Missouri; Dick Iverson of Portland, Oregon; Bob Weiner of Maranatha Ministries; Don Pfothenauer of Blaine, Minnesota—these are just a few of hundreds who are emerging with true apostolic ministries. Many of these are heading up new denominations; others are functioning in specialized circles of influence; some are apostles-at-large to the entire body of Christ. The term is no longer taboo.

### **Christian Schools**

A gradual eroding of the spiritual foundations of government is forcing Christians to form their own schools—by the thousands. The two latest decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court may prove to be the straw that broke the camel's back—forcing Christian parents to withdraw their children from public schools. The decision in late March that allowed homosexual public school teachers to promote their way of life before their classes, and the decision in early June forbidding even a "moment of silence" for prayer will force even the die-hards to admit that God is no longer welcomed in public schools.

Bill Gothard is devoting full time promoting his concept of home schools. Thousands of churches and church groups are sponsoring Christian schools as an alternative to the humanistic trends

emerging in public schools. Look for more to come—with increasing government opposition as states see Christian schools as competitors to public schools.

### **Era of the Super-church**

Although Americans will never come close to imitating Paul Yonggi Cho's phenomenal Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea—primarily because of cultural differences—the era of the super-church is upon us. Americans like to think big. They take pride in bigness. While the Charismatic movement had its beginnings in the almost private excitement of supernatural manifestations and warm, personal relationships—this has now emerged from the boiler room into the sanctuary. Lower interest rates will tempt churches to borrow from lending institutions in order to build bigger buildings to accommodate the crowds.

### **A Shift in Christian TV**

Christian television will start its shift from entertainment to teaching. This is one trend not yet evident—but it is bound to happen simply because it is right. People cannot live on the constant froth of Christian entertainment, nor can they be fed by receiving three minutes of exhortation by the smiling TV host who is introducing the next song or testimony. The absence of this will spawn some innovative ideas on the use of video for teaching.

These will not be the “talking heads” of the past decade, but expertly produced and dramatized Bible stories for children and themed teaching for adults. As adults go to video stores now to rent films, so Christians will begin renting teaching videos which will blend entertainment with spiritual truths.

### **More Catholicism**

Catholics will withdraw even deeper into Catholicism. In the April 3 issue of the *Buckingham Report* I reported on “Catholics becoming more Catholic.” Although Catholic leaders will continue to dialogue with Protestant leaders—indeed, will even reach out asking for more fellowship—the emphasis will be on shunning true ecumenicity among the people. It will be a matter of fellowship—the emphasis among the shepherds (at select times) and segregation among the sheep. Look for an increased emphasis among Catholic Pentecostals on traditional Catholic values, including the exclusivity of the “Mother Church” as the true body of Christ and a return to such things as the rosary and a public emphasis on Mary.

### **Christian Institutions**

There will be an increased growth of and emphasis on Christian institutions. The natural progression of Christianity is from experience, to faith, to fact, to experience. One generation will have an experience with the Holy Spirit. The next generation, not having its own experience, accepts the experience on faith. The third generation, void of experience, either establishes a legalistic doctrine or

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tries to encapsulate faith in institutions. Then history must wait for a fourth generation to rebel against the rigidity of legalism, break the bonds of institutionalism, and seek God in desperation for a fresh personal experience.

The only hope out of this dread downward spiral is for the rise of institutions which insist on personal experience and teach faith—not dead legalism. I see institutions such as these arising. Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, Jimmy Swaggart and Ken Sumrall have formed outstanding colleges and Bible schools and are moving in this direction.

A few, old, established schools are coming alive also. Emmanuel College, the small Pentecostal Holiness school in Franklin Springs, Georgia, under the leadership of a progressive president, Dr. David Hopkins, is pouring new life into a waning denomination. Institutions have, in the past, bred death. I predict a change in this as the schools of the next decade spawn new life.

### **Danger: Quicksand Ahead**

I cannot close without a parting shot. Watch out for the computer. It can quickly become a greater enemy of true spirituality than it is a friend. Not because it is inherently evil. In fact, the computer is a gift from God—like church buildings, television and sound systems.

However, anything which deper-

sonalizes the body of Christ is the enemy. If used judiciously the computer is a wonderful aide. The temptation, however, will be for the church to use the computer for what it is designed to do—replace people.

The trend has already started. In large churches people are already known in the church office as numbers—rather than by name. Pastors find it far easier to send form letters or to use automatic dialing with his recorded voice for things which should be written or said in person. Automatic tithe withdrawals are already taking place as giving becomes depersonalized. In many cities you can call “Dial-a-Prayer” and get a computerized voice which will minister to you. Is that any different from writing your favorite TV evangelist and getting his form letter in return mail with counsel and a sincere-sounding “I’m praying for you” written in longhand as a P.S.—by a robot. Be careful. He will also replace the shepherd if you let him.

As churches grow, pastors will find it too easy to let the machine do the ministering—and the lying—for us. With each letter a bit of integrity is eroded away as the electronic lie replaces grace and truth.

I am not condemning the computer. I praise God for it. It has speeded up the work and made things more efficient. The danger: it will make us lazy, it will depersonalize, it will begin to make demands (“We can’t do it that way...The computer’s not programmed for that...It will upset the system”).

Christians need to remember: Jesus came to set us free from “the system.” The computer, like the Sabbath, was given to serve man, not man the computer. However, if we’re not careful we may wake up one day and discover we’ve become slaves to a wonderful machine which lies for us, replaces our personal touch with forms, and categorizes people into neat little pigeon holes. The end result will be the destruction of uniqueness and individuality and the church will find itself back under the law—a new kind of law programmed by sophisticated software. ■



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