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The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Heritage Queensland

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No. 62 Apr 2005

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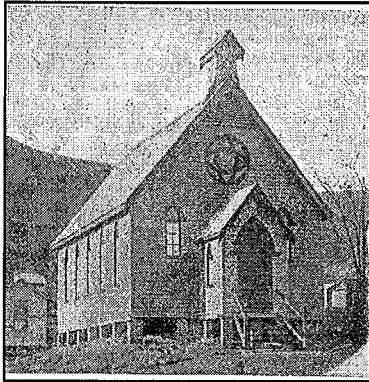
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Early Baptist Churches in Queensland No 16

Townsville Church

Reproduced from *The Queensland Baptist* May 1902 p 63

We continue the reproduction of a series of articles on early Baptist churches in Queensland which first appeared in *The Queensland Baptist*. These articles present some interesting details of the churches and buildings. One of the features of the original series was a photograph of the church with each article. Recent pictures of these churches are also shown where available.



A few Baptist friends in Townsville, the principal movers being Messrs. F. J. Yarrow and Charles Stewart, approached the Rev. T. Vigis, of Charters Towers, to form a Baptist Church in the town, and on the 27th January, 1888, Mr. Vigis convened a meeting for that purpose in Mrs. Wilkie's schoolroom [in Sturt St], at which nine persons were present. This was the foundation meeting. Services were started and conducted by the brethren in the meantime. The Rev. W. Whale was invited to visit and strengthen their hands, which he cheerfully did. In August, 1888, the Rev. J. H. Pryce came as a six months' supply, and left at the end of the term. In April, 1889, the Rev. Thomas Breewood came as a supply, and left in November, 1890. During this period, and till over two years after the arrival of the Rev. F. G. Buckingham in April, 1891, we worshipped in all sorts of rented buildings, but this gentleman was not satisfied with this state of affairs. Aroused by a sense of our need, and a determination to place matters on a higher and more dignified level, the Rev. F. G. Buckingham started things going, and officers and members responded cheerfully. In July, 1891, we purchased a corner allotment at the intersection of Fletcher and Sturt Streets, with two cottages thereon, for the sum of £500.

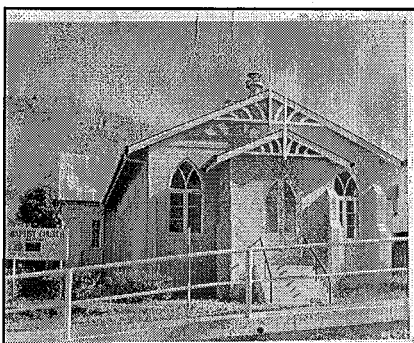
Two years after this, the Congregational Church having been vacant for a long time, we made an offer for the building, and in August, 1893, we purchased the structure, with all that was in it, for £80. It was a bargain. For a further £160 we got the building re-erected on our own allotment, and painted, and on November, 1893, we held the first service, which was one of thanksgiving. Our whole indebtedness at present is only £250, and the rent from the two cottages more than covers the annual interest.

The Rev. F. G. Buckingham remained with us until March, 1896, his pastorate covering a period of five years less one month. No one else has stood by us for a similar period. After his retirement we were a long time without a pastor, and various ministerial brethren from Brisbane supplied for a month at a time. The Rev. James Blaikie, at present of Hobart, supplied for six months, and much blessing was the result. In August, 1897, the Rev. A. G. Welter accepted a call to the pastorate, and remained with us until December, 1899. During Mr. Weller's pastorate, we re-seated the church with substantial, appropriate, and comfortable seats, at a cost of £40.

On the removal of the Rev. A. G. Welter, the Rev. R. Williamson (of Victoria) preached and laboured for six months, and his deeply spiritual utterances were constant food to us. In February, 1901, the Rev. J. S. Rapkins (late of Mount Morgan) accepted a call to the pastorate, and is with us at present, doing a good work, which promises to be expansive and stable. During the various periods we have been without a pastor, great assistance has been given by the officers in maintaining the services.

Wm McKenzie, Hon. Sec.

Note: The building described above was destroyed by the cyclone Leonta in March 1903; the remains were used to build a hall which was used until 1922. Then a disused powder magazine was dismantled and the bricks used in the Central Baptist Church building (left). After 60 years, this congregation combined with the other Baptist churches in the city to form the Townsville District Baptist Church, in modern new premises at Thuringowra (below).



Baptists in Queensland and the Charismatic Movement

Part 2 - 1970s

by David Parker

Introduction

This is the second article in a series (see Dec 2004 issue for Part 1) on the development and impact of the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic movement which influenced Baptists in Queensland strongly from the 1970s. It caused a great deal of uncertainty and controversy at various times, peaking during the 1980s. Although it has died away since then, it is possible that it might once again be a centre of attention if the recent hardline negative approach of Southern Baptist Convention in USA is emulated here— not such a remote possibility— given the close contact between Queensland and US Baptists.

The first article in this series was a general overview, and now we move into a more detailed outline, commencing with the decade of the 1970s. Reliable and easily accessible information about this topic is hard to locate; the material presented here has been gained from local church and denomination documentary sources, early and recent interviews with several pastors and others with first hand knowledge of the movement, general sources and personal experience. The overview is intended to be as complete as possible, but it is acknowledged that much more could be said. Contributions of information and documents, and corrections from readers are warmly welcomed.

As indicated in Part 1, the 1970s were characterised by an early negative response to the movement, followed by a quieter period for the rest of the decade. In fact, when writing a Master's thesis on the topic in 1976, Rev Mel Williams reported that there was perhaps only one church (Moore Park) with charismatics in membership. However this was to change in the 1980s. But even then, there were changes underway in areas closely related to the Charismatic movement which fed it and soon became identified with it.

Definitions

Pentecostalism (which had its official beginning just 100 years ago this month) is usually defined as a form of evangelical Christianity which believes in the Baptism of the Spirit as a necessary second stage of salvation after conversion; Spirit baptism is usually a tumultuous experience for the individual and it is proven to have occurred by speaking in tongues, i.e., either foreign languages not already known by the person or sounds which do not constitute an actual language. According to this view, unless a believer speaks in tongues, they must seek the baptism of the Spirit to enter into the "full gospel". Other "gifts of the Spirit" are also encouraged, especially miraculous healing. Because of this distinctive approach, Pentecostalism usually becomes a denominational grouping separate from other existing churches. In Australia, the most prominent of these denominations up until the late 20th century was the Assemblies of God.

The **charismatic** movement, on the other hand, believes that the spiritual gifts mentioned in the NT, such as healing, prophecy and words of knowledge are still available to the church today, and should be encouraged in the normal life of the church and of the individual. Baptism of the Spirit and speaking in tongues (especially as a private experience) are simply part of this overall "charismatic" (from Greek charisma – gift) environment. Any of the gifts may be given to individuals and no one gift (especially not speaking in tongues) is considered to be necessary for a Christian or a church; however, the presence of charismatic gifts is considered a sign and means of renewal and empowerment. Because of this more inclusive approach, the Charismatic movement did not form new denominations but sought, often with crusading zeal, to bring renewal to all denominations and churches. In the early stages (the 1960s and 1970s), the charismatic movement was often referred to as "Neo-Pentecostalism" but this term has now largely dropped out of use.

Some Baptists thought of themselves as more interested in **revival** and the **renewal** of the life and faith of the church and of their own personal Christian lives rather than aligning themselves with any particular doctrinal viewpoint about spiritual gifts or the Spirit baptism. Thus they were prepared to accept charismatic gifts if this was part of the practical experience. Others took a strong doctrinal position, sometimes called "**cessationism**", which taught that the miraculous gifts such as tongues and prophecy had served their purpose in the apos-

Speaking in tongues 'like a baby's babbling'

By ALAN GILL,
Church Reporter

"Speaking in tongues," the main manifestation of the Pentecostal belief in Baptism in the Holy Spirit, is similar to a baby's babbling speech, according to a report issued this week by the Sydney Anglican Diocese.

The 64-page report, which will be on sale shortly to the general public, is the result of the first official inquiry into Pentecostalism by an Australian church body.

The "babbling speech" claim is made by a Sydney psychiatrist who examined 40 people who spoke in tongues.

tolitic age and therefore had been permanently withdrawn by God at the end of the New Testament period. Thus any occurrences which were now claimed as biblical charismatic gifts were considered to be spurious or even evil, and needed to be strongly rejected as false teaching. They understood the NT to teach instead that the so-called "baptism of the Spirit" was not a second stage of the Christian life but was an aspect of conversion. The "filling" of Spirit for empowerment in witness and holiness in living was something that might be repeated many times throughout one's Christian life and ideally was the continuous experience of the Christian; hence the teachings of the popular Keswick movement about holiness and the higher Christian life were more acceptable biblically.

Precursors

In the late 1960s when Neo-Pentecostalism was beginning its dramatic impact on churches in Queensland, Baptists were coming out of a period when they had been fully preoccupied by intense evangelistic, Home Mission and Christian Educational activity. Although revival had always been part of their thinking, there had been only a few signs of interest in the new movement of renewal that was becoming apparent elsewhere. One of these was when Principal TC Warriner was requested to address an Baptist Assembly in 1966 on the topic of the Holy Spirit; his address was well received and later published as a booklet by the Clifford Press. He emphasised the person and deity of the Spirit and his work in conversion, guidance and strengthening of the Christian, as well as the guidance, mission and unity of the Church. He devoted a special section to the ministry of the Spirit in relation to membership, operation and leadership of the local church and of the Baptist Union. Overall, he pleaded for a balanced and biblical understanding that would demonstrate the reality of the Spirit but not be misled by "extravagant perversions". Later in the same year the *Queensland Baptist* welcomed in an editorial the news that an unnamed church had been focusing on special healing ministries which appeared to be go beyond the common accepted practice of prayer for the sick.

But by 1970 the Baptist leadership was aware enough of the trends to make the Holy Spirit the theme for the half-yearly Assembly held in Townsville. The President, Rev Reg Jarrott, gave an address called "The Sweep of the Spirit" highlighting revivals throughout history, and stated: "God is preparing a way for his Spirit to work. . . . There is need for Baptists to remember in the seventies that it is not by power, but by the Spirit of God, that God will send His Spirit in reviving power to the church." Other supporting addresses were given by Revs CL Miller and VC Bowring. This was backed up by Rev Frank Stone who, in a circular to the churches in mid-1970, called for Baptists to pray that the Holy Spirit would work effectively through church members.

However, all this did not indicate a trend towards Pentecostalism, as Rev Norm Mergard's 1970 presidential address made clear – the emphasis was firmly on "The Living Christ". He warned his listeners not to heed the rowdy voices of unbelief, but to look to the risen Christ as the basis for life and evangelistic fervour. He said that God has called Baptists to be bearers of message of conversion and life in Christ; the regenerate church was "the pearl of great price" and evangelism was the way to "demonstrate the living Christ in this present hour." It was the gospel of God which was power of God to salvation.

In fact, there was some evidence that this Christ-centred approach was meeting with blessing. For example, at the old inner city church of Petrie Terrace, there were spectacular signs of revival during 1971 when a large numbers of young people began attending the church in response to outreach efforts in the King George Square and the establishment of an innovative coffee shop ministry, cell groups and Bible studies under the leadership of Pastor Alan Cossgrove; many conversions were recorded, baptisms occurred and people lives were turned around, in some cases, from crime and drug abuse.

Official notice of Neo-Pentecostalism

The first official reference to Neo-Pentecostalism itself amongst Baptists in Queensland occurred in September 1972 when General Superintendent, Rev Frank Stone and the Council reported to the annual Assembly: "Two of our churches have been affected by this [Neo-Pentecostalism] and some individuals in others." It was reported that a paper on the movement obtained from the Baptist Union of NZ had been circulated to the churches, the Department of Evangelism would provide studies on the Holy Spirit and there would be material in the *Queensland Baptist*. To deal with the problem, it said,

"It is important that our ministers give instruction on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, so that our people may be adequately equipped to live the Christian life and witness for Christ, and avoid the error of seeking "an experience", which may have no necessary Christian origin. The movement today claims to be a unifying influence, but there is little evidence of

this. *The teaching and practice of Scriptural doctrine as generally understood by Baptists, will emerge in a full-orbed Christian life.*"

Some details of the NZ report have been mentioned in Part 1 of this series. Limited copies of this report had been circulated to the churches in December 1971 and bulk copies were ordered for wider distribution early in 1972. Details of the special issue of the "Queensland Baptist" published in February 1973 as a means of giving directions on the movement were also mentioned in Part 1 of this series.

The churches referred to in the 1972 Annual Report were not named, but references in Executive Committee records indicate that they were Coolangatta/Tweed Heads and Windsor Road.

Coolangatta/Tweed Heads

At Coolangatta, Keith Bray had become minister late in 1968, after having served at Cannon Hill. He was also simultaneously pastor of Tugun. Some people at the Coolangatta church had become enthusiastic about Neo-Pentecostalism and pressured him to be involved as well. However, although he had already shown interest in the renewal of church structures and ministry through the use of the gifts of the Spirit, he was not willing to go in the Pentecostal direction. The Gold Coast-Tweed area had become something of a centre of Charismatic action and reaction. For example, on 25 Jan 1972, a rally with the theme "Pentecostalism and the Jesus Revolution Challenge" was held in Southport featuring some anti-Charismatic crusaders, one of whom was Rev Geoff Paxton, principal of Queensland Bible Institute, and another was Robert Brinsmead, based near Murwillumbah. Late in 1971, Rev Frank Stone, Baptist Union General Superintendent, visited Tugun and Coolangatta Baptist churches discussing Pentecostalism with the people there; the BUQ Executive discussed the situation late in 1971 and during the first few months of 1972. The matter was resolved when it was reported a short time later that Bray had advised his churches he would not promulgate Pentecostal views or attend Pentecostal meetings locally or elsewhere.

Windsor Road

The situation at Windsor Road was different. Here Rev G. Durward was coming towards the end of a 28 year pastorate. Prior to commencing at Windsor Road in 1944, he had been an Assemblies of God evangelist. Before the Baptist Union Executive would register him as a Baptist minister, they required him to sign an undertaking in which he "solemnly renounced all connection with the Pentecostal Movement". He agreed to do this, stating "that my views are one hundred percent those of the Baptist Church and that I will not at any time preach or teach any doctrine or engage in any practices which in word or spirit conflict with the views and practices of the Baptist Church". His ministry was very successful in the early years, but by the late 1960s the church began to decline seriously, tensions arose, and fears were held for its future. With the growth of Neo-Pentecostalism in the wider community, some apparently thought that Mr Durward might revert to his earlier beliefs and that the future of the property as a Baptist facility might be doubt. The situation at the church was discussed by the BUQ Executive during the early months of 1972; Dr E Gibson, Principal of the Baptist Theological College, was organised to give talks at the church to help contain the situation. At the time Mr Durward was concluding at the church early in 1973, the property was being transferred to the Baptist Union and consideration given to using it as the permanent denominational headquarters, a plan which did not eventuate. The property was eventually restored, the church recovered and had a strong ministry, with a charismatic flavour, for several years following.

However, during Mr Durward's ministry there had been occasional incidents involving healing and private use of tongues. Then upon his retirement he published a testimony in the June 1973 issue of the *Queensland Baptist* in which he specifically mentioned his healing ministry and made particular reference to his belief that healing was part of the benefit given by God through the atonement.

"FORUM ON PENTECOSTALISM"

"Attention Citizens, of Brisbane," said the advertisement in the "Courier-Mail". "PENTECOSTALISM AND THE JESUS REVOLUTION CHALLENGED!" the advertisement promised.

The rest of the advertisement and the circular sent out to ministers in the Metropolitan area read as follows:

"You can no longer ignore the challenge of Pentecostalism and the Jesus Revolution sweeping Brisbane and other great cities of the world.

- Will Pentecostalism destroy the work of the Protestant Reformation?
- Is the Jesus of the New Testament the Jesus of the Jesus Revolution?

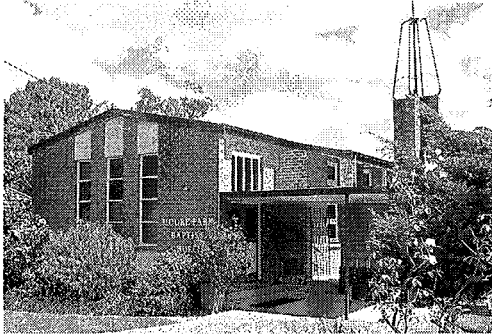
There was more than a slight suspicion that the whole thing was a "build-up" to get an audience for a team of pentecostalist speakers. From the number of pentecostal people in the audience it would appear that many of them also arrived at the wrong conclusion as to the purpose of the forum.

It was far from being Pro-Pentecostal. The speakers were not identified as to denominational links. Dr. Jack D Zwemer, described as a "University Professor from U.S.A." is, it was learned afterwards, a professor in Dentistry. Mr. John Slade, the Chairman of the gathering, is "A Teacher from New Zealand". Mr. Robert D. Brinsmead, "An Australian Author and International Publisher".

Here it may be said that the speakers had all studied their subject well, basing their argument on numerous New Testament passages. Very little was said about the Jesus Revolution. A great deal was said about the nature of the Gospel, God's plan of salvation, the gifts of the Spirit and the place of the Word of God.

Much of what was said was challenged by the questions that followed. The claim by the panel of speakers that modern Pentecostalism is a danger to the principles of the Reformation seems a difficult one to sustain.

To an impartial observer it would appear that "Forum" is not the best title for the procedure of this meeting. The word suggests a discussion



Moore Park Baptist Church

Moore Park

One other church that did not figure in the Executive's report was Moore Park. The minister here since June 1970 was Rev P. Audemard. He published a testimony of his charismatic experiences in the Feb 1973 special issue of the *Queensland Baptist*. This indicated that in Feb 1970, while still living in Melbourne, he had received a charismatic experience, including tongues, resulting in increased devotion in Christian living and empowerment in his ministry. When he came to the Moore Park church, he apparently took a fairly moderate line, but this did not satisfy either those on the conservative side or those who were charismatically inclined. First some of the former

group left in protest, and then the opposite occurred; membership declined from about 1973, and bottomed out in 1977 when Audemard resigned and moved into a fully fledged charismatic ministry on the Gold Coast, and after that returned to Victoria.

Nambour was another church which was affected about 1970, involving the loss of about 20 members sympathetic to Pentecostalism, including some leading officers of the church. In 1972, its membership dropped to 53, the lowest in almost 35 years. However, it recovered the next year, and after a slight dip, increased steadily thereafter; by 1977 it had made up all the lost ground.

There was varied impact in many different churches, although there are few documentary records to track the effects. However, writing about a decade later, Rev Frank Stone, who was in touch with the churches through his official role, was of the opinion that it was very difficult for charismatics and others to co-exist in the same church because of entrenched attitudes on both sides; he said that did not know any case where a church had benefited from the existence of charismatic group within it.

This attitude was reflected in the special issue of the *Queensland Baptist* in 1973, which showed some sympathy with the new movement, but was dominated by the negative view of the lead article. This line had no doubt been followed because of the direction shown by the report from NZ where experience was more extensive. Overall the solution was to ensure that pastors and churches taught the traditional orthodox position which, it was believed, would result in invigoration and stabilization. If this advice was followed, the official view maintained, the problem of neo-Pentecostalism could be contained.

Charismatic Explosion

This strong reaction by many Queensland Baptists in the early 1970s took place in the context of the explosion of the charismatic movement on the Brisbane scene. The prime example of this occurred when Trevor Chandler, a former Baptist lay pastor from NZ, came to the Full Gospel Church, Windsor where soon a highly distinctive and rapidly expanding Pentecostal ministry took place. When his ministerial credentials were withdrawn by the Pentecostal authorities, he formed his own Christian Life Centre. One of his colleagues was Clark Taylor, a former Methodist student minister and a 1959 Billy Graham Crusade convert who had a healing experience and received the Baptism of the Spirit in 1967. During 1968, while ministering at Holland Park, he was involved in some charismatic experiences with his parishioners there, and in 1969, as a theological student, conducted charismatic home groups in the Corinda area. As a result of tensions with the Methodist church over his charismatic ministry, he resigned in 1970. However, there was split between Chandler and Taylor in 1972, and after a period of itinerant ministry, Taylor formed the Christian Outreach Centre (COC) in June 1974. In the next 25 years, it grew very strongly, and established 57 branch churches plus schools, a university, welfare work and missions, which was equal to 40% of the Baptist achievement over 150 years! Another church which was beginning a rapid path to growth and influence was the Mt Gravatt Assemblies of God where Reg Klimionok had taken over as pastor in 1968.

Baptists and Charismatics

Even though the charismatic movement in the Baptist churches was greatly restricted as a result of the negative attitude towards it and the firm action of the denominational leaders, there was still a significant impact upon Baptists. For example, when Taylor's COC, which was growing dramatically, moved to West End, it placed pressure on the nearby Greenslopes Baptist Church through attraction of its congregation and active proselytization of its members and leaders.

WINDSOR FULL GOSPEL CHURCH

PLEASE NOTE PLACE OF MEETINGS THIS SUNDAY.
SUNDAY SCHOOL AND MORNING SERVICE 11 A.M.
Y.M.C.A. YOUTH CENTRE -- LUTWYCHE RD.

WORSHIP, COMMUNION AND MINISTRY
SEAKER: REV. ERIC WILSON -- PERTH.

SUNDAY EVENING MEETING 7.35 P.M.
BRISBANE STATE HIGH SCHOOL,
CNR. VULTURE AND ERNEST STS.
SPEAKER: PASTOR TREVOR CHANDLER.
SHARE IN A DAY OF REVIVAL BLESSING.

MEETINGS THROUGH THE WEEK TO MEET YOUR NEED.
TELEPHONE OUR CHURCH FOR INFORMATION. 57 6533.

Similar pressure was noticed at Nundah Baptist Church when some of its young people were in contact with young people from the Wavell Heights Presbyterian Church where the ministers had become charismatics as early as 1969. In 1977, after a period of rapid growth with some tensions, a large part of the Presbyterian church moved out and joined with the strongly pentecostal Immanuel Fellowship (which soon became known as the Brisbane Christian Fellowship). In December 1972, Rev Stan Solomon, BUQ Youth Director,

was asked for advice by the Nundah Baptist pastor, Rev Mel Williams, on handling the young people at his church. This was the first time that Solomon became aware of the impact of the charismatic movement on Baptists.

Rev Geoff Waugh, a NSW Baptist, served with the Australian Baptist Missionary Society in Papua-New Guinea from 1965 to 1970, and then moved to Brisbane. In November 1971 it was reported he had resigned from the ABMS and was worshipping at the Windsor Full Gospel Church. Thereafter, he was involved with the Methodist Church at its Kangaroo Point training school which was known for his support of the charismatic movement. Later he transferred to the Uniting Church theological college and ultimately taught at COC's Christian Heritage College, maintaining all through his interest in charismatic renewal.

A controversial, although very low key, example of Pentecostal contact occurred when a Folk Fiesta was organised in March 1972 by the Baptist Theological College as part of a promotional drive in association with its relocation to Brookfield. One of the people featured was the popular youth counsellor, Charles Ringma, working amongst street kids and the drug scene; he had started Teen Challenge in Brisbane in 1971. His contribution, and that of music groups, created a very good impression and significantly improved the college's profile, especially amongst youth. However, Ringma's recently acquired Pentecostal affiliation created grave concern within the Baptist Union leadership, even though his beliefs were not a part of his presentation, leading to serious questions being asked about the circumstances of his involvement.

By now, the Charismatic movement was impacting most denominations and so Baptists could hardly be ignorant of it, even if they did not have a lot of personal contact, exact knowledge or theological ability to handle the doctrinal issues involved. There was a great deal of literature, ranging from popular to scholarly, circulating, and the media carried reports and advertisements of all kinds, all of which fanned the fires of curiosity and controversy.

But some Baptists did have reason for more intimate personal interest. Some leading figures had Pentecostal or Charismatic family background and contacts. Others were touched by the charismatic movement through the influence of friends and church colleagues, as people streamed from mainline churches to check out the new phenomenon. Although some were still repelled by the reportedly unbiblical teaching and bizarre behaviour, others were beginning to see positive results as they heard credible reports of transformed lives of new converts and lapsed or nominal believers. Others were attracted to the vibrant worship and fellowship that the charismatic churches practiced, and some reported positive results in healing and the restoration of broken lives. So there was a feeling that perhaps this new movement was the long awaited revival!

Signs of Change

While there was little obvious charismatic activity in Baptist churches during the mid- to late-1970s, there were other signs of a change. These were not, at first, overtly charismatic in themselves, but had a loose connection; however, they soon became more closely identified as part of the movement. One of the most obvious of these was in the area of music used in the church services.

The first "Scripture in Song" chorus book was published in 1976, and with its two successors, it quickly became popular. A report from the Baptist Book Shop in mid-1978 indicated these books were selling extremely well, although the same report also indicated strong sales for the more traditional book, "The Hymnal"; however, this was short lived as the use of hymn books was soon to be abandoned in favour of contemporary songs and overhead projectors. These new songs (or "choruses") not only represented a change of musical style from the hymns and gospel songs which had been used for generations, but they also introduced a new mood of praise and worship into the worship. More particularly, however, some of them were overtly charismatic, or even Pentecostal, in their concepts, extolling in particular the baptism of the Spirit, miraculous healing as a gift of the atonement and Pentecostal revivalism. Occasionally churches were happy enough to use the songs in general, but banned some of them because of their doctrinal content.

Associated with the new forms of music was a significant change in worship as a whole. It was becoming more informal both in the way it was conducted and in the dress and actions of leaders and church-goers. The structure was also altered from the older pattern of hymns, readings, prayers and the sermon arranged in a way that alternated presentation of the Word with the response of the people through prayer and praise, all led by the pastor in his role as spiritual leader of the church. Now there were much longer concentrated periods of praise in singing, and the use of worship leaders and singers; the organ and piano were replaced by bands of guitars, drums and keyboards. There was also provision for the spontaneous involvement of people in prayer, speaking and physical movement such as clapping, swaying and dance; in some cases there were periods of "free worship" for personal expressions and mutual ministry. In some cases, at least later, the use of tongues in prayer was permitted although it was sometimes controlled by the leadership to ensure that the biblical requirement of interpretation also took place; prophecy and words of knowledge also occurred in some places, as did specific healing and deliverance ministries.

Rev Norm Weston, who was Baptist Union Director of Christian Education 1974-79, summed up many of these changes in a paper at the 1977 Half-yearly Assembly. Commenting on the clamour for change in worship and the resultant tensions in the churches between advocates of the contemporary and the traditional, he explained that "genuine worshippers" were not looking for change so much as "meaningfulness" – and that this would not necessarily involve change but adaptation. Weston believed that the "genuine worshipper" wanted a "worship experience . . . that he understands, something that is relevant to him, and something that is worthwhile, both to God and himself." He said these worshippers were also looking for "a congenial context in which they can express their worship. They are looking for warmth and brightness, so that their worship can be happy and a joyful experience." In his contact with churches around the state, he had noticed four new characteristics emerging – there was a greater emphasis on "involvement", "sharing", "family significance" and "intimacy" in worship. He advised that in the light of these rapid changes, it was important not simply have "change for change's sake", or impose change when people are not ready for it or rejected it. He urged people not to forget the real nature of worship – acknowledging God's lordship, giving praise and worship and celebrating God.

Despite this irenic explanation, for some at least, the new developments were driven by new (or least, modified) understandings of the teaching of the NT about church, ministry and worship, and a desire for extensive and fundamental change in the spiritual values and structures of Baptist churches.

Other signs of change

These kinds of changes spread rapidly through the denomination, a process that was at least tacitly encouraged by some of the Baptist Union leadership. For example, General Superintendent, Rev Frank Stone in a report in 1976 urged the people to "Make more of worship, so that the magnificence of the living Christ is set forth and our people realise 'the worthiness' of Christ. Especially, the morning service should be alive to God meeting His people and not an educational period." He believed that Baptist should remember that "as the people of God we are 'victory people'" and should therefore be "People of Praise."

Specific focus on the Holy Spirit was also becoming more prominent. Dr Ted Gibson, Principal of the Baptist Theological College of Queensland, who had studied the Holy Spirit for his doctoral work years earlier, focused his research on this topic during his sabbatical in 1975. He had written an unpublished book on the topic and upon his return had lectured on it at when he delivered annual college lecture in 1977.

Similarly, Rev Roy Conwell, speaking as President in 1975-76, called for the power of the Holy Spirit to be seen in the life of the churches. He said that as well as defending the truth of gospel through argument and teaching, "Something more is needed, and that something seems to be the proclamation of divine truth with such authority and power of the Spirit, that it penetrates deep into the callous and casual attitude of the modern world! . . . The church will be as strong as its individual members, and her proclaimed message as penetrating in an unchristian world in proportionate measure to the Holy Spirit's control in the lives of her individual members."

All of these trends set the scene for a period of radical change in the late 1970s, led by several churches which soon became well known for their charismatic character.

(to be continued)