

Baptists in Queensland and the Charismatic Movement

by David Parker

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Part 1 Introduction and Overview

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The Neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements impacted Baptists in Queensland strongly and caused intense reactions. Now that times have passed it is possible to study these developments and to learn from them. The Neo-Pentecostal movement evidenced itself in USA and elsewhere during the 1960s, and reached Queensland by the end of that decade. It made its presence felt in Baptist circles by 1972 at the latest, by which time it was reported in the official Year Book that at least two churches had been impacted.

The movement had taken hold earlier in NZ, and that country became a major source of influence for Australia in general and Queensland in particular. Various Pentecostal pastors from NZ settled in Queensland during and after the late 1960s. Their dramatically successful ministries soon became well known in Baptist circles and in some cases made direct impact upon the churches. This placed immense pressure on Baptists to respond in some way. Later there were extensive contacts and interchange between Queensland and NZ charismatic Baptist pastors and churches, and also with others of like mind.

In earlier decades, Queensland had been an extremely fruitful field for Pentecostal churches and evangelists (including some of the more extreme). Baptists had their share of unhappy encounters with them, some of which were notorious. Some Baptist families and pastors had a background in the Pentecostal movement. The usual Baptist experience of Pentecostalism came about through proselytising or dissemination of ideas by people sympathetic to their doctrinal ideas. Baptist opinions were mainly negative because of ostensibly non-biblical teachings, reputedly bizarre practices and often schismatic outcomes. Accordingly, the Baptist leadership at Union and local church level in the early 1970s was strongly opposed to the Neo-Pentecostal influences, considering them to be much the same as the earlier phenomena.

A bitter experience with supposedly liberal teaching at the theological college was underway at the same time, which exacerbated the negative attitudes of the denomination towards outside ideas. Coincidentally, this incident also involved inviting a Pentecostal (who was well known for his successful youth work) as a speaker at a college function promoting radical evangelism, which did not help cool the situation!

Support for the status quo on Pentecostalism was obtained from NZ Baptists who were already experienced in dealing with the matter. This help took the form of a report which was circulated amongst the churches by the Baptist Union Executive early in 1972. This report took the view that the Pentecostal movement usually only held attraction for those who were imperfectly instructed in biblical doctrine and in situations where fellowship and spirituality were defective. Hence the report advocated the value of the filling of the Spirit for a vital Christian life, but barely recognized the validity of charismatic gifts for the present day; it warned about the dangers of abuses and excesses on the one hand, and unsympathetic handling of situations on the other.

A special issue of The Queensland Baptist issued in February 1973 printed several articles sympathetic to the new movement. These were mainly personal and inspirational, testifying to spiritual renewal through the ministry of the Spirit; the value of these accounts was limited because some were not penned by local Baptist pastors. The major lead feature was a lengthy article by Dr E. Gibson, the highly respected and influential principal of the Baptist Theological College, which firmly taught against the idea of 'baptism of the Spirit' in the classic Pentecostal sense. The article also explained that tongues speaking had psychological significance only as a form of emotional release. The phenomenon could be triggered by a range of factors and was therefore in no way definitive of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Following this heavy treatment, the situation polarised for the remainder of the 1970s, but the pressure coming from the regular Pentecostal and newly formed charismatic groups outside the Baptist denomination became intense. Some of the non-Baptist Pentecostal churches grew exceedingly rapidly, and in the process attracted large numbers of sympathetic and curious Baptists to them. One completely new denomination grew to 57 churches in 25 years, equal to 40% of the Baptist achievement over 140 years!

Some Baptists, fearful of Pentecostalism and the changes it introduced, reacted strenuously against it, citing biblical reasons which should have made a strong appeal in the Queensland context. Others who did not wish to be involved personally were nevertheless impressed by the outstanding growth of these churches. Some pastors longed for the empowerment in their ministries that they saw, and others were hankering after the freedom of worship and spiritual revival that they heard about. Overall, Baptists were overwhelmed by the dramatic power and strength of the charismatic churches, and many not so secretly longed to see the process replicated amongst themselves.

In these heady days of the 1970s, young people, especially students, were strongly attracted to the new and vibrant life of charismatic churches. In the freer religious and cultural climate of the times, they had few problems in associating directly with this exciting new stream of Christian life. Many in the older generations were also ready for a new approach to their personal and church lives, being prepared to exchange their long held traditions of formal well-structured but what they regarded as often rather sterile services and institutionalised church activities for a spirituality that gave them a feeling of new meaning and the hope of liberty and empowerment.

There was also a process of generational change taking place amongst the lay leadership of the churches and their pastors. Amongst the latter was a large group trained under the college principal of the time, whose leadership had attracted record numbers of students who were soon pouring into the denomination as pastors. Although the principal took a very conservative line on Pentecostalism, he was well known for his definite teaching on the Holy Spirit and for his Keswick holiness preaching. His overwhelmingly large group of loyal students therefore composed a solid group of pastors who were now more open than the previous generation to the ministry of the Spirit, although not necessarily in typically charismatic forms.

During this and later periods, many pastors were not content with the quiet unassuming style of ministry often displayed by their predecessors. Instead they were far more intentional and entrepreneurial leaders, who could see the promise of large churches as tools to advance the mission of the church. *(To be continued)*

Part 2 - The Early 1970s

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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 hard line 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 Masters 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 apostolic 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 ones 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 per cent 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 doubtful. 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.

Moore Park

One other church that did not figure in the Executives 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 Taylors 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.

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 COCs 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 colleges 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 changes 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 Gods 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)

Baptists in Queensland and the Charismatic Movement

by David Parker

Parts 3

Introduction

This is the third article in a series (see Dec 2004 April 2006) on the development and impact of the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic movement which influenced Baptists in Queensland strongly from the 1970s. The second article concluded with the observation that in the mid-1970s there were signs that a change was taking place in official and popular attitudes. This set the scene for a period of radical change led by several churches which soon became well known for their charismatic character.

Rapid growth of new churches

As the 1970s progressed, Baptists could no longer ignore the impact of the movement in the community. The Pentecostal churches which had created such a stir around 1970 were now growing at a rapid rate. For example, Reg Klimionok's Garden City church, which had fewer than 100 members in 1969, expanded so dramatically that in 1982 it opened a new 2,300 seat auditorium to house its services to which people flocked; he also had a TV ministry, a Bible college, bookshop and counselling activities. The Christian Outreach Centre also grew—only 10 years old in 1985, it had an attendance of 2500, a school, Bible college and 31 branch churches in Queensland and NSW. Christian Life Centre had a printing works, book shop, and six outstations in addition to an attendance of 600 at its New Farm base. In most cases these churches also had strong missionary work overseas and growing social welfare activities. There were also thriving charismatic ministries in the Anglican, Uniting and Roman Catholic churches, and groups like the Full Gospel Businessmen's Association were also highly visible.

With this sort of growth taking place close by, Baptist pastors and churches were not so secretly longing to see the same increases replicated amongst themselves. Even those who were uncertain about the doctrinal orthodoxy or spiritual quality of the charismatic movement were wondering if it might in fact be a God-given revival which they should endorse or at least learn from—thus negating their former evaluations. Some pastors longed for the empowerment in their ministries that was apparently to be found in Pentecostalism; others were hankering after the freedom of worship and spiritual revival that they heard about. Others who were of the opinion that a heavy pall of formalism and legalism had descended on Baptist life were anxious to experiment with a new movement that promised freedom. And then there were those who were anxious to shrug off the restraints of congregational church government and diaconates by adopting the effective pastor-controlled models they saw.

For Baptists, not only in Queensland but Australia-wide, one important event symbolised the new mood that was in the air. This was the first ever National Baptist Family Convention, which was held at Miami on the Gold Coast in January 1975, and well supported by Queenslanders. The guest speaker was Bob Roxburgh, who was described in the official report as 'the apostle of church renewal' and one who said he believed in the church but was against it in its current institutional form. He had a Mennonite background and less than a year earlier had commenced the independent Capilano Christian Community in Vancouver, Canada. His addresses presented an enthusiastic and persuasive appeal for radical changes to the traditional ways, using principles he derived from the Bible promising new vitality of church life and outreach. In particular, he advocated the development of 'house-churches' instead of 'sanctuary churches', on the pattern of those seen in the NT. Here the emphasis was to be on deep interpersonal relationships supporting family life rather than highly organised church programs, and a pattern of leadership involving a plurality of elders instead of the time-honoured Baptist system of pastor and deacons. He acknowledged his use of the gift of tongues as a private practice, but explained that he did not place any value on it as a 'general public experience' or as a necessary evidence of the presence of Spirit.

Roxburgh's presentations at the Convention were supported by a wide range of other seminars which featured new church music and church growth principles. The latter were soon developed strongly by the Baptist Union of Queensland as it gave official endorsement and support for a series of public seminars taught by one of the leading US experts, Dr Win Arn. This move was reinforced by the establishment within the denominational structure in 1976 of a new department of 'church growth.' It was headed up by Rev Roy Conwell and was charged with the responsibility of teaching the new principles throughout the churches and employing them in church planting and outreach, thus attempting to fill the gap left by the closure of the Queensland Baptist Home Mission several years earlier.

Soon some of these new ideas appeared in tangible form in the churches—at least four of which quickly became icons of the charismatic movement as it blossomed in the 1980s. These ideas appeared more or less simultaneously during the period 1975 to 1980, but in different ways in the various churches and with considerable overlap and interconnection.

Cannon Hill

One of these was the Cannon Hill Baptist church, located in the eastern suburbs, a church which had started in the 1950s with a Sunday School, followed by services in 1964. The church was constituted in 1969 with the Spall family as one of the key groups involved. At first the church was led by student pastors, including Keith Bray (1966-67); Rev Clive Davis was an honorary pastor in the period 1972-78. John Spall was a hard working businessman whose varied interests included the Gospel Book Depot and a chain of 'Music Master' shops. He was a devoted and generous supporter of the church, as well as being involved in a host of other Christian activities. However, in the mid-1970s he suffered serious setbacks, including his own and his wife's severe health problems; the 1974 Brisbane flood virtually destroyed his business, and then economic events in 1975 created further severe pressure. These circumstances brought Spall to a point of personal crisis which opened the way for charismatic experiences, including personal healing—all of which was quite different from the orientation that he had been brought up to as the son of the well-known conservative Christian worker. John Spall had not consciously followed any charismatic leader, but through wide reading he had become receptive to new developments.

Meanwhile in 1979 the church had appointed Phillip James, formerly of the Christian Revival Crusade (1969-78), then of Frankston Baptist Church 1978 (a well-known Victorian centre of charismatic interest also called Full Blessing Church) as pastor, through contacts made by the Spall family. James was not accredited as a pastor, pending further review and theological studies, which never eventuated. Membership of the church up to this time had been only about 20, but James began to change the format of the service from the traditional pattern to a charismatic form using choruses and making room for ministry periods. Although James was not strongly gifted pastorally or in leadership, his coming enabled the church to change—growth began to take place, healings and other forms of charismatic ministry occurred. Membership climbed towards 100, necessitating enlargement of the Richmond Road building. James concluded his ministry after little more than a year, and Spall, whom he had mentored, was appointed to replace him. He followed the same pattern of charismatic leadership involving healing ministry and 'words of knowledge.' There was a dramatic increase in attendance and membership as people visited the church from near and far. Peak membership was recorded at 210 in 1985.

Spall was discouraged by BUQ officials from studying for ordination on account of his charismatic stance, but was accredited as a pastor by the Baptist Union in 1982. He was never a student of the Baptist college nor ordained. His declared intention was to maintain a balance, building on biblical foundations and avoiding anything spectacular, all within a clear Baptist framework; he believed that Baptists were more able than others to combine Word and Spirit without excesses. He found support from some denominational leaders but others were not convinced. After ten years at Cannon Hill, Spall spent some time in Vanuatu and then moved to Jimboomba, which at the time included people from a Pentecostal background. He was appointed an area superintendent, and in 2005, after his retirement, became President of the Baptist Union.

Fairfield

Meanwhile there were developments on the other side of Brisbane at the Fairfield Church, which was constituted in 1953. In 1974, it was devastated when flood waters submerged the building. In the same year, Col Patterson, a business man in his late forties from Melbourne, began studies at the Baptist college in Brisbane and associated himself with the church. He had been dramatically converted several years before and had involved himself in the independent Dingley Union Church. The diaconate of Fairfield, including Keith Stevenson and Doug Enseby, approached Patterson late in 1974, inviting him to become pastor in succession to John Tanner. Although not a Baptist at the time, Patterson accepted and was officially accredited by the Baptist

Union by the end of 1975. After completing his college studies at the top of the exit class, he was ordained in 1979.

Around 1979 or 1980, Patterson read the well-known book, *Body Life* by Ray Stedman, which proposed a radical restructuring of the church around small groups, a concept with which Patterson had already become familiar even while still in Melbourne. So he introduced small groups into the Fairfield church, which spelled the end of the traditional Wednesday night mid-week meeting. Contact with a NZ missionary living in Brisbane who was a member of the large charismatic Spreydon Baptist Church reinforced Patterson's interest in the House Church ministry. Under the leadership of its pastor, Rev Murray Robertson, a former Presbyterian missionary, Spreydon operated this system, and taught positively about spiritual gifts, used contemporary forms of worship and engaged in various outreach and social ministries. When Col Patterson and his wife Paddy paid a visit Spreydon and other Charismatic churches in New Zealand in September 1980, they came away convinced of the value of this ministry.

In December 1980 they announced their determination 'to proceed as quickly as possible' in that direction at Fairfield—the target date for commencement being March 1981. The 'house church' concept was an significant extension of the earlier 'small groups' system in which worship, Bible teaching, prayer, pastoral care and fellowship were to be de-centralised to cell groups meeting weekly in homes under the leadership of an appointed 'pastor'. This, it was believed, was the NT pattern, and it would enhance the spiritual growth and outreach of the church by improving personal relationships and providing much greater opportunities for the use of spiritual gifts; it would also lift the load on the Senior Pastor who would no longer be burdened with an increasing level of pastoral work.

The House Church system was intended to supplement the Sunday service, which, as a result of Patterson's visit to Spreydon, he also planned to develop along the lines he had seen there, so that it could become 'the high point' of the week. For this purpose, he abandoned the traditional one hour 'hymn sandwich' type of service because it was too restrictive for what he had in mind—extensive use of praise and worship through new styles of singing, ministry through words of knowledge, prophecy and tongues (both interpreted and as personal prayer language), and extensive bodily expression including dance and other forms of movement. Preaching would be followed by a ministry time including prayers for healing, laying on of hands for gifting or empowering through Spirit baptism. Keith Stevenson was appointed as pastor for creative ministry in 1984, before he moved to Hervey Bay the following year. Others who were associated with the ministry at Fairfield and later moved into other Queensland churches included John Merriweather (1980-82) later of Blackwater and then Lawnton/Rivers, and Doug Enseby (1983-87), later of Sandgate and Maleny.

Membership of the church had hovered around 40 up to the early 1970s, when it began to increase steadily, reaching 72 in 1979. In the next two years it jumped to over 100; it fluctuated around 100 until 1993, falling to around 70 over the next four years and then peaking again after 2000. Attendances were typically much larger than membership figures.

Caloundra

A third church was Caloundra. It was constituted in 1955 and for almost twenty years remained a small church serving the largely undeveloped holiday and retirement area. In 1974, leading up to a period of rapid growth on the Sunshine Coast, Max Wheat was appointed pastor. The structure of the church leadership was one of the first areas of change which he implemented. The Baptist Union set up a 'Commission on the Ministry' (it reported in 1976 and 1977), which invited responses from churches, Wheat decided to commence a weekly Bible study group to help the delegates understand the issues involved rather than expecting them to vote according to a formal decision of a church meeting. As a result of this process he came to the conclusion that according to the NT, the pastors, elders and bishops were the same ministry, and that there should be a plurality of eldership who had the authority and responsibility to make decisions within the context of the church. This was radically different from what he had experienced as the typical 'democratic' model of church government and the role of deacons as the administrators of church rather than as spiritual leaders. His colleague, Ken Kilah, who had become an associate pastor in 1978 (at first on an honorary basis, and then salaried), was in agreement with this new approach.

They felt that this new approach was biblically sound and would remove obstacles to renewal and growth. Therefore the church was restructured accordingly, but in hindsight, it was realised that they did not safeguard it properly with effective accountability measures, which led to serious problems in later years when the full-time salaried pastors became the only elders. In the meantime, this new leadership structure largely by-passed the church members' meeting and so made it much easier for the pastors to introduce new procedures and ideas into the church, including its worship and related programs.

Renewal and growth did take place, with reports in 1976 of baptisms, additions to the membership and other fruit, as various influences began to impact the church. For example, young people who made moved to Brisbane for study came in touch with new ideas and brought them back when they returned home for visits. As with others, Wheat was always seeking greater effectiveness in ministry and was impressed with the successes of neo-pentecostalism, but his conservative upbringing at Margate church was an inhibiting factor. However, about this time he changed his mind when his brother-in-law, Phillip Mutzelburg (now senior pastor of Heritage City Church, Ipswich), received life changing help from a Pentecostal church. This led to Wheat receiving charismatic experiences, and to the rapid development of Caloundra church as a leading charismatic church in the years ahead.

Holland Park

Similar re-focusing also took place at Holland Park. This church was constituted in 1946 after having been an outstation of Greenslopes for about 18 years. It made steady, if unspectacular progress in its membership, ministry and plant until the mid-1970s. There was some damage to its still new church building as a result of the 1974 cyclones and floods, but the church was without a permanent pastor from the end of the previous year. Pastor Keith Attwood was served in an interim capacity March-December 1974. He was followed by Rev Keith Bray (formerly of Cannon Hill and Coolangatta) who, after an initial period of ministry, was called to be full time from August 1975 and inducted in October.

Bray was soon sent by the church to a conference on evangelism in NSW so that the Holland Park could develop its ministry in this area. He and leading layman, Jim Miller, also attended the National Baptist Family Convention at Miami, Gold Coast in 1975, where the speaker, Bob Roxburgh, presented his innovative plan of church restructuring and renewal. Bray and Miller were enthused about this idea and soon after led the deacons and church in a study of the book, *Body Life*. The history of the church (by Glynn Bensley, p 8) states, 'Looking back, we are now certain that this was the beginning of the church's journey into renewal. After months of heart searching the church diaconate agreed that the church should strive to be a New Testament Church, accepting, as they were given, all the Gifts of the Spirit as shown in the Scriptures; allowing the Holy Spirit to move freely and incorporating an "Every Member Ministry".'

There was further modest development, but Keith Bray relinquished the pastorate in August 1977 to become manager of the Baptist Book Shop, although he remained as part-time minister of evangelism. There was some unsettlement during mid-1978 when some families departed and 'the leading youth worker left over a Pentecostal issue', but, 'the great majority of changes were cause for rejoicing as the hand of the Lord was being revealed.' (Bensley)

After the church was under some interim ministries for a period, Rev Ralph Legge, previously at Kalbar Baptist Church, became the senior pastor in June 1978, with Bray continuing in his part-time role. Later other associate pastors also joined the team. Legge, formerly of South Africa and with studies in USA behind him, was highly regarded by the church during his four year stay for his strong teaching ministry; it focused for some time on the doctrine of God which it was agreed laid a profound basis for the development of the church's growth in faith and later dramatic changes in worship. Legge moved to South Australia in 1982 and later became a committed charismatic, ultimately working with Pentecostal churches.

As the 1980s began, 'Body life' ideas introduced by Bray, and Legge's 'understanding of the principles of Body Life and Renewal' were credited with allowing the church be led 'gently into new expressions of worship, love for the Father and each other and in teaching of, and using, the Gifts of the Spirit. We saw the Holy Spirit moving in the leadership and in parts of the congregation and the Lord began to answer our prayers in conversions, healings, changed and recommitted lives and in other ways and we saw an outpouring of God's love which filled our hearts and altered many lives.' (p 10 Bensley) In anticipation of the loss of a senior pastor with Legge's departure, a Pastoral Care Fellowship system, similar to a Home Group or Home Church system, was introduced. This required increasing time on the pastor's part in training the leadership, but it was considered important as part of the 'every member ministry' policy.

By the early 1980s, Holland Park was not as advanced as other churches in a charismatic direction, but it would soon become the leader of them all.

The movement gathers focus and speed

These developments were at first largely independent of each other, but in the early 1980s, there was noticeable convergence and cross-fertilization, which opened the way to dramatic growth in the following years. The first evidence of this new development was a focus on the 'house church' movement.

Perhaps the earliest contact with this decentralised form of pastoral care took place at Hervey Bay Baptist Church, which commenced house groups in April 1980, following interest created in the system by a pastor visiting from Whatakane Baptist Church, NZ, for an evangelistic crusade. Later that year, the pastor, Phil Munro and five others from the church, visited NZ to inspect the system at work. They reported positively about their NZ experience and the success of the groups at Hervey Bay which, they said, were designed to 'create conditions for renewal and growth' through the groups led by locally ordained pastors or elders. However, the idea did not attract widespread support at the time.

On March 22, 1982, about a year after Colin Patterson had commenced the system at Fairfield, he was given the opportunity of sharing his experiences with many pastors when he was invited to speak to the Queensland Baptist Ministers' Fraternal meeting at Stafford North church. This produced many enquiries. To capitalise on this interest, in August of that year, a large team of 24 pastors and leaders from Spreydon Church, including senior Pastor Rev Murray Robertson and Pastor Brian Andrew, came to Brisbane to present seminars and speak on the subject. Meetings and services were held at the sponsoring churches, Cannon Hill, Fairfield, Labrador, Rochedale, and Holland Park, which gave first hand awareness of the new styles of worship. But two combined events provided a much wider platform. The first of these was on Aug 10th when Robertson presented the annual lecture at the Baptist Theological College, with the title 'House Churches—biblical principles and practical outworking.' Although there was concern expressed by the college leadership about allowing a charismatic to occupy this platform, the lecture went ahead before a packed and welcoming crowd in excess of 200 people.

The second event was an open all day 'House Church and Renewal Seminar' at Rochedale church on 14th Aug, which enabled a detailed presentation of the topic to be made by the visiting team. It was emphasised that the House Church system was not something additional to the existing church structure, but a completely new approach. Each group under its local pastor was 'a church in microcosm', promoting renewal by the use of spiritual gifts and delivering effective pastoral care and Bible teaching. This involved a change in the role of senior pastor from preacher and pastor to facilitator. New concepts in worship were presented in seminar sessions led by Pastor Andrew who encouraged freedom of expression, including bodily movement, drama and dance. The emphasis was on innovation, and worship as celebration. The *Queensland Baptist* editorialised about the event that the attraction of the seminar was 'a reaction to (dare we say revolt against?) Baptist predictability.' According to Robertson, Sunday services, baptisms and communion were typically predictable, and 'printed orders of service are often redundant because everyone knows what is going to happen'! This situation inhibited the spontaneity and movement of the Holy Spirit and so needed to be changed.

Once again, the response to this seminar was extremely positive. A follow up took place about a year later when a team of about fifteen people, organised by Max Wheat of Caloundra, paid a visit to Spreydon to reinforce their knowledge and experience of renewal. This strengthened connections between NZ and Queensland, and in particular led to the appointment of a new pastor at Holland Park who would take the church (and the movement in Queensland) to a new level of involvement.

At the time, veteran Queensland Baptist leader, Rev Frank Stone, was approaching his retirement. He made an uncharacteristically erroneous prediction that the charismatic movement was 'losing momentum' although he was correct in his belief that it would 'continue to have an influence in the year's ahead.'

Roy Conwell was closer to the mark. In his presidential address in 1975 he had spoken about need to proclaim the gospel in the power of the Spirit and how success in outreach would be proportionate to the filling of the Spirit in the lives of the people. Five years later, now as Associate General Superintendent (Pastoral), he said that he could detect 'signs, very definite in some places, of a movement of God's Spirit within our State. It is still only as a flower bud beginning to open, and the responsibility rests upon us as a denomination, local churches, and individuals to ensure that we energetically pursue this course on the one hand, and on the other hand, to stand aside and let God the Holy Spirit do his own work.' He followed this up the next year by urging Baptists 'as a denomination [to] pray for and expect a movement of the Holy Spirit right across the denomination. Only such a breath of the Spirit will bring the quickening power which our Churches needed to meet the challenge of this vast State with its almost unlimited potential.'

The 1980s proved to be the Charismatic era for Queensland Baptists, but it was to be one of turmoil.

Continued below

Baptists in Queensland and the Charismatic Movement

by David Parker

Part 4

Baptist Heritage Qld – Forum No 67 Aug 2007

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This is the fourth article in a series (see Dec 2004; April, Dec 2006) on the development and impact of the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic movement which influenced Baptists in Queensland strongly from the 1970s. The previous article concluded with the observation that the 1980s would be 'the Charismatic era' but it would be a period of turmoil. Some of the early aspects of this are described here and more will appear in Part 5.

In 1981 Rev Roy Conwell, Associate General Superintendent (Pastoral) of the Baptist Union, spoke for many when he said that 'we as a denomination must pray for and expect a movement of the Holy Spirit right across the denomination. Only such a breath of the Spirit will bring the quickening power which our Churches need to meet the challenge of this vast State with its almost unlimited potential.' It might have seemed that his prayer was being fulfilled during the years that followed when the 1980s became the charismatic decade for Queensland Baptists. For example, the following year, 1982, his successor, Rev. John Tanner, pointed out evidences of Holy Spirit at work across the state. There was, he said, continuing growth in the north, and 'most of our churches are experiencing a quickening in some measure' although he conceded that 'not one is where it could be under God.'

But it was not an unmixed blessing. Tanner warned, 'There is no room for complacency. Wherever the Lord is doing a work, the Evil one will try to enter in by subtle duplicity and even by open opposition. This has occurred on some fronts and we have suffered some losses as a result.'

Denominational Change

At the denominational level, change was in the air, which allowed for and encouraged, new trends, including the Charismatic movement. However, this was not the only direction in which people were wanting to move. About the same time, for example, there was a growth in interest in the Calvinistic heritage of Baptists. This was a reminder of a strong impulse of this kind in the early days of Baptist life in Queensland, one that drew from one of the earliest and most virile traditions of Baptist life as a whole. There was also an interest in the social responsibility with the formation of a Baptist Social Justice group.

It was obvious that there was pent-up pressure for change amongst Baptists, as in other parts of the community. Perhaps the most obvious sign of change at the denominational level was the retirement of the General Superintendent, Rev. Frank Stone at the end of 1981, after 25 years in leadership of the Union. Widely respected for his wisdom and steady hand, he did not expect the Charismatic movement to amount to much. Nevertheless, he did not try to dampen interest in it, even if his 'un-charismatic' personality did not exactly encourage it. (There are, however, indications that his private theology was not so conservative.) He had prepared the denomination for the transition to a new era as best he could, but after so long a period, it would be difficult. The process and the person appointed to succeed him would be critical.

The position was filled on an interim basis during 1982 and 1983 first for a few months by Rev, Murray Sinfield and then for a longer period by Rev. Noel Charles, both pastors of long experience. Rev. Len Maycock had become the administrator in 1980. Rev. Roy Conwell, who headed up church growth since 1977, became Associate General Superintendent (Pastoral) in 1980. In 1982, he was succeeded by Rev. John Tanner, first on an acting basis, and then permanently. Tanner had been pastor at Fairfield 1971-74, prior to Colin Patterson's appointment; he was at Salisbury briefly (1975-6) before working in the Solomon Islands with the South Sea Evangelical Church Bible College, 1976-79. Since his return to Queensland he had been a field minister for Christian Education with the Baptist Union.

The recommendation for a new General Superintendent was made in April 1982, and endorsed at a special assembly in July 1982, although the replacement did not begin work until late 1983. The choice had fallen on 44 year Rev. Brian Jenkins, Home Mission Director for the New Zealand Baptists, who had a record of extensive ministry and was visiting lecturer in Christian Education and Evangelism at the Baptist college there. His wife, Lorna, also a Christian Education lecturer, was widely experienced in various forms of ministry and leadership. The charismatic movement was well established in NZ, and Baptists in that country had come to grips with it much more thoroughly than in Queensland. Several of the influential leaders of Pentecostal churches in Queensland and in other parts of the country had come from NZ. Queensland Baptists also had been impacted by this NZ influence through the highly successful house church seminars conducted by the team from Spreydon church in 1982.

Jenkins was not known in Queensland, although some of the leaders had met him at conference in Melbourne where he had given a balanced assessment of the charismatic movement in NZ. Those recommending him felt that his experience in NZ made him a very suitable choice, and well worth the wait of over a year between his appointment and his arrival. However, opinions were polarised as to his stance and likely impact on trends in Queensland. For some he would be an apostle for the movement, while others expected that, since he knew the movement first hand, he would provide a stout defence against its insidious dangers. In the event, he was personally uncommitted and as a leader of a denomination, tried to take a mediating position. But he certainly recognised that it was necessary for Queensland Baptists to tackle the issue in a healthy manner, rather than side-stepping it or rejecting it out of hand. Whatever his approach might be, or that of others in positions of influence, the spirit of renewal was generally in the air.

Plan and Pray Days 1984

An important indication of trends was revealed in a significant denominational conference held in 1984 to review the existing state of affairs and to plan for the future. It was the first such review since a conference of ministers in 1975. Titled, 'Plan and Pray Day - the Way to 2000', the Brisbane conference was held on 23rd June, 1984, with further sessions for regional churches at Rockhampton July 2 and Townsville July 3. 110 people (only one lady!) met in Brisbane and forty met at northern centres; in all, 50% of the churches were represented.

Its primary aim, rather condescendingly, was stated as giving 'opportunity for the Spirit of God to speak to us about His intentions for our future', and then considering 'creatively the challenge of expanding God's kingdom through our work together to the year 2000 and beyond' and with a view to deciding on a 'a plan with achievable, measurable, objective goals for Baptist work to the year 2000.' A study booklet containing detailed population and church statistics and other papers on various aspects of the state of the denomination was the basis of the carefully managed small group process used to achieve these aims.

The main practical result was deciding on a 5% annual increase in membership (double the existing level), and agreeing that 35 new churches were needed, along with the re-location of many existing churches which were stagnating in poor sites. Associated with these were other goals including equipping members for ministry, life-style evangelism, and the encouragement of new concepts in ministry (such as small group structures, multiple staff, enhancing the role of the pastor as an equipper of others), and new styles of outreach to neglected groups and closer relations with the local community.

In particular, one of the most common themes which emerged was the call for 'spiritual renewal of the whole body' of Baptists, involving inspirational leadership and spiritual challenge through conferences and participation with the churches. Significantly, it was believed the most crucial way to achieve this was through the prayerful identification and use of spiritual gifts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which would be accompanied by increasing freedom of worship. It was anticipated that by AD 2000, there would be 'a significant swing to the renewal movement'—not 'Pentecostalism' with its distinctives of speaking in tongues and Spirit Baptism, but instead, 'the use of a full range of spiritual gifts of members as a body.' The term 'charismatic' was de-emphasised as being vague or unspecific. However, already, according to reports presented to the conference, about 14% of the churches were classed as charismatic, 1% reformed and 85% traditional.

This report, with its '20/20 vision', was a positive and promising outcome which had the potential to lead to significant progress. But unforeseen developments would intervene which would destroy most of the immediate benefits of the conference.

Rapid growth

Jenkins strongly supported the conclusions of the Plan and Pray Day, and was enthusiastic about the possibilities of achieving the bright future he saw for the denomination. Even though his initial impressions were that church life including worship was rather 'stodgy', he believed the Spirit was moving in Queensland. There were indications to support his assessment. For example, there were reports in *The Queensland Baptist* of renewal in a number of churches including Bracken Ridge, Kenmore and Ipswich, in some cases including the fruitful use of spiritual gifts.

The positive response to the new 'house church' method resulted in changes for many churches leading to a loss of emphasis on traditional programs for children, youth, men and women, and especially the long standing mid-week prayer and Bible study. Sunday Schools, which had been boosted strongly in earlier years by the All-Age movement, began to decline and the centralised Baptist Youth Fellowship rallies would also fade away. The focus was now on fellowship and home-based groups under lay leaders who were given a large amount of responsibility for the pastoral care of the people. In fact, the plan was that these home groups would be the primary instrument of pastoral care leaving the 'pastor' free for preaching and overall supervision of the policies and direction of the church. These groups would be the place where the 'body life' would be expressed and the opportunity for the exercise of all kinds of spiritual gifts, leading to the nurture and growth of individual Christians.

Traditional structured worship using the minister-led service of hymns, prayers, readings and preaching was replaced by the contemporary 'praise and worship' style, which was usually informal in leadership and dress, and apparently free-flowing but in fact tightly choreographed. It typically began with lengthy concentrated sessions of praise music, using a band rather than organ and piano, sometimes involving bodily movement including at times 'spiritual dance', free personal prayer, and in some cases, the use of tongues and words of 'knowledge' and 'prophecy'. Other general parts of the service would follow before the preaching took place; in some cases, the service concluded with periods of 'ministry' such as prayer, counselling and deliverances.

These innovations were pushed along by Schools of Ministry at churches like Caloundra, Kenmore and Holland Park featuring visiting overseas exponents of renewal and charismatic teaching, such as Argentinian, Juan Carlos Ortiz, along with the new style music which attracted large numbers of pastors and other leaders often from long distances. This impetus was reinforced by other overseas speakers invited to Queensland for specific conferences and seminars on related areas of interest such as Gene Getz, Ralph Neighbour and Robert Banks. In the later 1980s, many travelled south to participate in the popular conventions conducted by John Wimber of the Vineyard Movement.

In 1984 the Baptist Union Field Ministers began a series of Leadership Conferences for pastors and church leaders at the newly opened Mapleton Family Centre. These highly popular conferences focused on intense worship and dynamic speakers majoring on deeply spiritual themes as well practical aspects of church life. Over a ten year period, they attracted people who were anxious for personal renewal and greater effectiveness in ministry. Among the most successful were those which featured teams from the Solomon Islands; this 'Pacific Factor', helped along by the links with John Tanner and others, was intensified as teams of pastors and others exchanged visits between Queensland churches and those in these islands, thus giving Queensland Baptists a taste of the powerful spirituality that was typical of these people.

At the grass-roots, level there was further reinforcement when teams of 'lay renewalists' from USA visited Queensland churches over a number of years. Groups of a dozen or so would travel from USA at their own expense and stay several days at a time in a series of local churches sharing in all the activities of the church, especially the home groups.

To accommodate these developments, the growing numbers and the desire to project a new image of the church, there were many changes to church property, including the re-designing of interior space to eliminate the formality of the traditional pulpit, communion table and baptistry, and especially the organ, piano and choir areas. These were usually replaced by a wide open platform which allowed for room for movement and space for the singing teams, bands, preachers and other participants in the worship. In many cases, there were no crosses, lecterns, other 'churchy' signs; baptisms were often held in home swimming pools and other non-church places. The atmosphere of the services became relaxed and people, including the pastors and those leading the services, dressed in casual clothing, and used informal language. The exterior profiles of new buildings were usually deliberately designed to be non-ecclesiastical, resembling warehouses and shopping centres rather than churches. In other places new buildings were erected either on existing properties or in new locations, typically in outer areas, often in industrial or commercial rather than residential areas, where there was much more space available for large structures and car parking.

Caloundra opened a new set of buildings in 1982 which was claimed as the largest 'Baptist church and community complex' in Queensland although the church auditorium itself (seating 250) was no match for the City Tabernacle that had been erected more than 90 years earlier. Large churches were also erected at Townsville (the result of three churches merging and relocating), Kenmore, Maroochy, and Hervey Bay, while Holland Park moved its services to a school auditorium. Fairfield relocated to a new site and changed its name to Fairfield Christian Family.

In line with John Tanner's 1984 report that there were at least three churches 'planning new ventures which could result in each having a membership in excess of 500 in the near future', the statistics showed, as Brian Jenkins stated in 1985, 'excellent . . . even spectacular growth' in some areas. From 1984 to 1987, the number of churches with 200 or more members grew from 3 to 10, accounting for 24% of the total Union membership and averaging a 27% growth rate. In the same period, when there were about 135 churches in the Union averaging about 80 members each, the proportion of churches with fewer than 50 members grew from 33% to 40%.

Holland Park

The most outstanding example of charismatic renewal took place at Holland Park church, whose rapid development was directly linked to the 1982 house church seminars. Brian Andrew, a member of the Spreydon pastoral team was one of those who visited Queensland for the seminars. Following his return home, he contacted the pastor of Fairfield indicating that he felt a leading to return to Brisbane in a pastoral capacity. There was no vacancy at Fairfield but Andrew was put in touch with the Holland Park church which was looking for a senior pastor. There was a positive response and in April 1984, Andrew, with his wife Moira, began his ministry in Queensland.

Andrew, who had a trade background and was part of the surfing culture, was converted in the early 1970s in the midst of the 'Jesus Revolution.' He engaged in voluntary work in Papua New Guinea using his carpentry skills. He spent two years at the Bible College of NZ, and then with his wife Moira, two years with the charismatic missionary organisation, Youth with a Mission (YWAM). After a similar period with World Vision in NZ, he joined the pastoral team at Spreydon around 1980. He was still only in his 30s when he took up his work at Holland Park.

He saw himself as a 'middle of the road charismatic, open to all the gifts of the Spirit.' His impact was immediate, building on the groundwork laid in previous years through the ministry of Keith Bray, Ralph Legge, and Jim Miller, and focused on 'body life' concepts. The church began to expect that the kind of experiences described in the book of Acts would take place in their church. The official history of the church puts it this way: 'With Brian Andrew's coming God began pouring out a blessing on the church. People came from all over because God's presence was so evident, especially through the worship times. Many wept, were saved or healed as they worshipped. At the end of the services it was not uncommon to have up to fifty people come forward for prayer, kneeling or sitting at the front of the pulpit area.' (Bensley, p 13).

Membership doubled within the first year, and attendances grew so large that it was necessary to remodel the church to provide more room. By the end of 1985 two morning services were being held at the Yuletide Street property and evening services moved to the Mansfield High School, in the vicinity of two large Pentecostal churches in the 'Bible Belt' of Brisbane, and right across the street from another small Baptist church. At the annual meeting in 1985, when over a hundred new members had been added, Brian Andrew spoke of a 'word' he had received from God, 'I will do a great thing for my glory is upon you; you will be a light to the city, the nation and the nations of the world.' This set the pattern for the future as the growth and expansion continued. The congregation reached around 1000 by the end of the decade, necessitating the church's relocation to a large new facility at Mackenzie in 1993 under the new name of 'Gateway'.

Growth came from conversions (about 1000 in the first seven years of Andrew's ministry, with 450 baptisms), and by attraction of charismatically-inclined people from other Baptist churches and from churches of other denominations. Due to Andrew's links with YWAM, many of its personnel made Holland Park their home church.

The size of the pastoral staff was enlarged to cope with the demands, reaching up to around eight at the peak, including at various times Col Noyes, Rob Floyd, Van Shore, Bob Gray, Geoff Slade, Barry Huntington, Rod McShannon, Ed Brewer, Robert Coleman, Graham Wheat, and Paul Jones. Dr Dorothy Harris (later Mathieson) was appointed to head up missionary work, and so became one of the first female pastors in Queensland (the other just before her was Dawn Courtman at Windsor Road). Harris later

became involved with the newly formed NZ-based charismatic mission, Servants to Asia's Urban Poor, with which Holland Park developed close connections.

The church also strongly supported extension work throughout Queensland in association, for example, with the Baptist Union's 'Mission to Queensland.' Holland Park also conducted its own evangelistic and renewal ministries across the state and began to take special interest in certain churches, fostering their work by supplying ministry teams and even pastoral assistance, especially through its own Bible college. The church's wider influence was also enhanced through active missionaries and other leaders of Christian work, including the Baptist Union itself, being associated with the church. One of these was former Baptist missionary from NSW, Dr Geoff Waugh, who taught renewal studies for the Uniting Church, conducted conferences and edited a journal on the topic.

Some of the pastors specialised in various kinds of ministry, but in the early years the ministry was mainly carried out through the home groups, up to fifty or so of them, headed by the lay pastors. Using the principles which had been developed earlier and in common with other churches using this strategy, home groups were the main instrument for pastoral care, teaching and outreach. Home group leaders were in effect pastors of mini-churches and baptisms and membership of the Holland Park church was processed through them. The regular sessions for Home Group leaders were dynamic experiences of shared ministry, prayer and vision at the grass roots.

But from 1988, following a visit by Brian Andrew to South Africa to investigate the administration of large churches, a change was made to an area pastor system where each member of the pastoral team was responsible for a regional zone and its home groups, under the general direction of the senior pastor. This was a significant alteration which would have profound effects on the life of the church. Through various visits for conferences and other purposes, Andrew and his team gained guidance and inspiration from the American scene on charismatic renewal, church growth and administration through contact with groups such as Willow Creek and Vineyard.

A Conference for church leaders held in 1986 attracting well over 200 people and a music conference conducted by the authors of the familiar *Scripture in Song* chorus books further reinforced the church's own life and leadership as a charismatic centre.

People reported experiences which typified the charismatic renewal generally including a sense of liberation with a new awareness and love for God, a new capacity for worship, prayer, witness and evangelism, a deep desire to study Scripture, and a new ability to love others, to be open towards them and to serve their needs. In the church services and home groups, there was a greater hopefulness and expectancy that God was working in their midst, with a corresponding freedom of spontaneous and joyful praise and worship, often expressed in intense prayer for people, discernment of spirits, prophecy, prayer for healing, spiritual dance, singing in the Spirit and the use of tongues in prayer.

Although Holland Park retained its Baptist connections and supported the denomination financially, its own rapid development meant that it focused most attention on its own ministry and program. Apart from its missions in other parts of the state and deliberate church fostering program, it did not have extensive involvement with other churches, even those of similar charismatic interest. Its size and strength meant that it was not dependant on the denomination or other para-church ministries like many other churches were. During the latter part of the 1980s, Holland Park had become the largest church in the denomination by far, eclipsing the position that City Tabernacle had held for so long, and it was known across the country and even internationally as a glowing example of charismatic renewal.

Rochedale

Although Holland Park's experience during the 1980s was extraordinary, the pattern of growth was not always so straight forward. Holland Park itself (along with other churches in the Bible Belt) later took a negative turn, but already there had been uncertainty at Rochedale, which was the venue for the 1982 house church seminar.

According to its official history, Rochedale began in 1974 as outreach from Upper Mt Gravatt church, growing out of a children's ministry, with meetings held in the primary school. Initially, the leader was Ian Cathie, who was regarded as enthusiastic and energetic. The church was constituted on 9 Nov 1975. One of the immediate projects was to secure a building, on property in Nerida Street.

Cathie remained until 1977, and was succeeded by (Rev) Max Davidson. Conservative, theological, studious, a gifted teacher and with a strong missions interest, his ministry was different from that of his predecessor. In this developing outer suburban area, there was steady growth (doubling the membership) through conversions, and the Sunday School and youth work soon became quite large. At this time the church was young and innovative in practice but not charismatically oriented, even perhaps the reverse.

To help cope with the growth of the work, some paid part-time assistance was obtained from a local member who subsequently was commissioned to serve in Indonesia, and plans were made for the appointment of a second pastor. Phil Munro, a relatively new convert from the Sydney beach scene, who had made very positive impact at Hervey Bay Baptist Church, was appointed during 1981 to start with the church at the beginning of the following year. However, in the meantime, Davidson resigned to take up an appointment on the faculty of the Baptist Theological College of Queensland, where he served with distinction from 1982, before moving to Perth and ultimately to Sydney, and retiring to Queensland in 2007.

Under Munro, Rochedale's life, worship and ministry became quite charismatic and grew extremely quickly, soon reaching 450 in the worship service, and developing a very large children's and youth ministry. (The house church seminar was held at Rochedale early in Munro's ministry.) This necessitated more pastoral leadership, so Rev Noel Charles (formerly of Ipswich, and recently acting General Superintendent) was appointed Senior Pastor in August 1984. In contrast, he brought a more conservative influence on the ministry of the church.

At this time it was decided to purchase 44 acres of land in Underwood Road to greatly improve the church's buildings and facilities. This project created a great deal of tension and was to have a long influence on the life of the church. The two pastors, Charles and Munro, represented radically different expressions of ministry, and these differences and corresponding differences within the congregation polarised the church, creating disturbances and some severe personal problems. One of the local members, Ian Nutley took on a pastoral role as a full-time salaried elder. His position soon became important because both pastors left the church only a few months apart—Charles in 1985 and Munro in 1986. Reported membership peaked in 1987 at 170. However, these developments did not bring reconciliation to the church, and soon people began to go elsewhere—charismatic members tended to go to Holland Park, while others went to Salisbury.

The church was going through some deep waters and leadership, once again, became a real issue. After an extensive search, Pastor Mike Sims came from Canada, commencing on a full time basis in November 1986. He was more 'open' than his predecessors, a good preacher and had a great love for worship. However, despite his leadership, from the mid-to-late 1980s, the church encountered difficult times, which lasted for about a decade. The elders were under enormous pressure, the church was plagued with sickness, deaths and sexual immorality. Soon after Sims' arrival, the Nerida Street building was sold, followed at a later time by the disposal of the Underwood Road land. Services and other activities were held in various hired locations until a new church building was eventually erected in Rochedale in 1994, and the church became strong again and became a significant centre for the charismatic renewal movement.

This mixture of enthusiastic growth and difficult tensions was often repeated in other churches which were attracted to the charismatic movement, while others adopted a negative approach. There was considerable confusion and controversy indicating that decisive leadership was needed.

To be continued

Baptists in Queensland and the Charismatic Movement

by David Parker

Part 5

Baptist Heritage Qld – Forum No 69 April 2008

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This is the fifth article in a series (see Dec 2004; April 2006, Dec 2006, Aug 2007) on the development and impact of the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic movement which influenced Baptists in Queensland strongly from the 1970s. The previous article concluded with discussion on key churches and developments in the early 1980s.

Tension and Problems across the Denomination

Many other churches experienced tension and division to greater or lesser degree. In some cases, such as Churchill, building programs and financial obligations complicated the process. In other cases, doctrinal issues were more directly linked to charismatic and Pentecostal practices such as the teaching on the Baptism of the Spirit, the use of tongues, or miraculous healing, and these became the flash points. This was exemplified at Labrador, a plant from Southport, where Rev. L E Bull, pastor since 1982, moved strongly in a charismatic direction with overt teaching on the Spirit baptism, and attracted an influx of a new attendees. However, many of the existing members were not in favour with the result that tension came to the surface during 1985 with a 50/50 split. A new fellowship comprised of the non-charismatic group was formed at nearby Runaway Bay which had a promising beginning but did not survive in the long term.

In many cases it was the new style of worship which caused problems. In some cases the changes in worship were regarded as something superficial because it was merely a matter replacing an old fashioned style (especially in regard to music and formality of leadership, behaviour and dress), with a contemporary and relaxed approach. But often it did involve more fundamental doctrinal and spiritual issues including healing and the use of tongues. The change in structures, including the new role and stance of the 'senior pastor' and the introduction of elders and worship leaders, were also factors which led to problems. Sometimes this was merely because it involved a change from a familiar pattern, but in other cases it seemed to be a change from the well-established Baptist doctrine of the church; in yet other cases, it was seen as marginalisation of older members and a push for a new authoritative role for pastors which later developed in a few places into the new doctrine of apostolic leadership.

It was inevitable that deep-rooted and widespread changes like these caused difficulties across the denomination, which added to the feeling of unsettlement caused by the many other changes which were taking place around the same time. Union leaders were soon reporting on the extent of the difficulties. In 1982, for example, John Tanner had warned of duplicity and opposition, and the next year John Llewellyn, speaking as President, wondered if Baptists were frightened to raise the subject of the Spirit 'lest people become suspicious of us'. At the same time Acting General Superintendent, Noel Charles, welcomed growth, especially in places where there had been none for years, but reported that the appearance of the new people and new structures had brought hurtful conflict and casualties.

When the new General Superintendent, Brian Jenkins surveyed the result of the strong growth in the middle of the decade, he saw decline and division, and the need for reconciliation as churches struggled with the new theology and new forms of worship. While the innovations were good, they did stimulate fears, prejudice and scandal, and Baptists, he said, therefore needed to learn to deal with conflict.

These sentiments were reinforced by Tanner. In fact, in 1986 he was reporting that there had been welcome movements of the Spirit in many (although not in all churches), resulting in crowded services and

expansion, but that there were serious difficulties in around 30 of the churches—almost 25% of the total number—a 500% increase on the normal state of affairs. It is not surprising then that when Fred Stallard took over the leadership in 1987 he was faced with hurt, suspicions and lack of trust. Although Tanner said that the number of problem churches had by then dropped back to about normal, he warned against arrogance, competitive growth, tension and rumour.

It was obvious that the problems were deep and widespread. The dilemma was that, as Tanner reported in 1984, in many churches worship was freer, relaxed, more personally oriented and they were becoming more caring and open. However, this welcome renewal, linked in the minds of many with the charismatic movement and the new interest in the Holy Spirit, also brought with it misunderstanding, confusion, conflict and division. A crisis was looming which called for a response from the denominational leadership. Even a conservative like John Llewellyn could not avoid noticing it, and in his 1983 address tried to provide some balance by speaking of ‘the living God – active in trinity’ and ended by declaring: ‘Let us be spirit-filled, God-elected people’ so that the evangelistic task could be done. The next year, Dr Les Sands reinforced this by speaking from his professional perspective about ‘body’ life.

But the most overt statement of support for renewal came from Rev. C Louis Miller in 1985 when he devoted his presidential address to ‘The Holy Spirit’s Work in the Church Today.’ A popular leader with a successful pastoral ministry behind him, he had just retired after a leading the rapidly growing Baptist Community Service department for more than 15 years. His siblings were already well involved in charismatic renewal—his sister Thora had been a long time member of Cannon Hill church and his brother Jim had been one the most influential leaders at Holland Park. As his biographer, David McMahon outlines, Miller had his own personal experience as well. As early as 1970 he had spoken at a Baptist Assembly on the topic of the Holy Spirit. A few years later his mind turned towards the topic again his through reading, especially a book by Catherine Marshall. In late 1983, he was exercised again, and soon underwent an experience of the filling of the Spirit which transformed him, and opened the way for his particular emphasis as Union President. Following his year of office, he was deeply involved in dealing with a crisis which was to overtake the denomination. Late in 1987, he was diagnosed was cancer, but as a result of a ‘prophecy’ received by Rev Reg Own and prayer for healing, went into remission. However, he suffered further ill-health and the cancer reappeared, leading to his death on 30 Sept 1989.

In his 1985 address, he endorsed the view of others that there was ‘evidence of the moving of God’s Spirit here in Queensland.’ He said that it was ‘God’s will that every Christian be filled with the Spirit’. This filling, he said, was not something automatic or gradual, but people had to ‘deliberately seek and receive this blessing by faith’ and meet the conditions for its bestowal through repentance and acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ. It could be repeated many times in a person’s life, and would lead to ‘a new and wonderful sense of the presence of God, a new love of Jesus, a new experience of prayer and a new power in ministry.’ The Spirit’s work in renewing the local church, he said, would bring a new reality in worship, a new quality of fellowship through caring for others, sharing one’s life and openness to others, and a new acceptance of the ministry of each member through spiritual gifts. The role of home groups was very important in this process, as was the emergence of new leadership styles and pastoral roles. He concluded his address, ‘I believe God is wanting to do a new thing in Queensland by moving mightily by his Spirit, in renewing the Church, and bringing revival to the nation.’

This address, with its breadth of vision and clear identification of worship, fellowship and ministry as the key issues, was later regarded by Tanner as an excellent statement of the position held by Baptists. John Tanner also made a vital contribution to the renewal movement during his period as Associate General Superintendent 1982-91. His previous missionary work in the Solomon Islands had enabled him to introduce the powerful spirituality of the Pacific to Queensland Baptists through visits of ministry teams from those areas to churches and conferences. Return visits by Queensland Baptist pastors and lay people reinforced this influence.

Crises in the mid-1980s—Law Society House

But still not everyone was convinced, and the Union leadership was under extreme pressure to respond to provide guidance for the churches. But it was pre-occupied with another serious unsettling problem.

In 1985 the head lease of Law Society House, the building in Albert St Brisbane in which the Baptist Book Shop was renting space, was purchased by the Baptist Union. It was hoped that this move would bring in a good income and provide low rent and long-term security for the Book Shop’s location. However, what

seemed like a sound investment suddenly turned in a potential multi-million dollar disaster when the rental property market suffered a severe decline, and some major tenants left, leaving the Baptist Union without the anticipated income to cover the heavy liabilities of the lease; if unresolved, this situation would financially cripple the work and even the future of the Baptist Union. The problem was largely blamed by many people on the leadership of the Baptist Union, especially the Rev. Brian Jenkins as General Superintendent and Rev. Len Maycock as Associate General Superintendent (Administration); the Executive and Finance Board were also implicated, but it was the salaried staff who bore the brunt of the matter, leading to their sudden dismissal at a Council meeting, then their reinstatement at the Assembly soon after, and finally to their resignations.

What seemed like a hopeless situation was turned around when a substantial lump sum payout was negotiated. To secure the considerable sum required, funds were raised by special appeal, the sale of real estate and from the cash reserves of several departments of the Union. Although the extra financial demands were normalised by the end of 1987, this episode caused a financial setback, but more importantly, severe uncertainty and critical loss of confidence in the organisation and leadership of the Union, not to mention the need for new personnel in key positions, and financial stringency. There was even more unsettlement as a committee appointed to examine the circumstances surrounding the original problem produced a series of reports leading to wide scale restructuring the Union—a process which seemed to continue from that point on for well over a decade.

Brian Jenkins concluded his service as General Superintendent in May 1987 and returned to New Zealand, being replaced by Mr Fred W Stallard, a layman who had been best known as a senior manager in Woolworths Ltd; he had also shot to prominence by providing great impetus for the establishment of 'Mission to Queensland' in the early 1980s. Maycock finished his ministry with the Baptist Union in August 1987 and returned to pastoral work. He was succeeded by former university administrator, Mr Gordon H King, who had been chair of the Executive and Council through the early stages of the Law Society House episode and also treasurer, 1980-83. He would later serve two terms as President, 1991-93.

Crises in the mid-1980s—Charismatic Concerns

The impact of the Law Society House issue was felt directly at the denominational level, but at the same time, the problems associated with the charismatic movement were being felt in many churches scattered across the state. They were rapidly coming to a head. In fact, in the same letter in which the President, Dr Sands, notified the churches about the Law Society House affair, he also referred to these other problems:

Your Executive has been concerned over the number of difficulties being experienced by our Churches this year. We have been involved pastorally. None of these situations have been simple—they are usually very complex. Quite a few have had, as an element, inability to come to terms theologically and pastorally with issues arising from what is known as the 'Charismatic movement'. It has led to heartache and disruption for some. This has been heavy upon the hearts of Executive Members and, no doubt, others too. It led to the decision to look at the theological and pastoral issues involved.

It had been more than ten years since the Baptist Union leadership had given any specific public guidance on the charismatic or neo-Pentecostal movement and the problems it was causing. Now the pressure had become so strong that it was necessary, despite being embroiled in the Law Society House affair, to deal with it. The catalyst was a letter written in August 1985 to the Executive from a pastor, Rev. J D Mills of Beenleigh, seeking advice and action.

To start with, in October and November 1985 Jenkins and the Executive tried to help by arranging separate meetings of pastors supporting and opposing the movement to clarify where Baptists stood. But this venture had mixed results, creating misunderstanding while not pleasing either side—in fact, exacerbating tension in some quarters by polarising the situation dramatically. At least, it underlined in the minds of those involved how divisive the Charismatic movement's presence amongst Baptists was, and the difficulty in coming to terms with it.

Following on from this debacle, the Executive worked on producing a statement and a set of papers which it hoped would provide a way forward. Finally, in April 1986, the Executive issued a 29 page booklet containing the official statement followed by three supporting papers. The papers were unsigned, but one on biblical perspectives was written by the former college principal, Dr E Gibson (who had written

his doctoral thesis on the topic of the Holy Spirit), Rev R E Conwell wrote on pastoral concerns and the final one, on relationships, was by former missionary and later President, Mr Charles Horne.

The official statement was published in *The Queensland Baptist* and circulated to the churches (see page 7). It called for mutual respect and frank discussion with a view to better understanding between the different groups. It acknowledged the need for renewal, diversity of practice, liberty of belief and a spirit of love. Yet it clearly defined the official position of the Baptist Union Executive on controversial topics relating to the Holy Spirit. The paper on biblical teaching (following similar lines to the author's 1973 QB article—see earlier in this series) tackled traditional Pentecostalism, advancing the view that speaking in tongues was, if anything, a ministry gift associated with evangelism and building up of the quality of church life, not an emotional post-conversion experience connected with the baptism of the Spirit. This meant that it could in no way be considered essential to the 'full gospel.'

The paper giving guidance on pastoral practice from the 'conservative evangelical tradition' declared that Baptists should not give in to 'minority interested parties, who see the new "charismatic" emphases as being essential to the growth and stability of present day Baptist churches.' It questioned the doctrinal justification for typical Pentecostal and charismatic practices such as slaying in the Spirit, healing in the atonement, repetitious singing generating emotional dynamics and the place of 'signs and wonders' in evangelism. It conceded that 'legalistic' attitudes and a 'stuffy' atmosphere in existing churches did contribute to the growth of the charismatic movement, and recommended against dogmatic doctrinal judgements. Instead, it claimed that good biblical preaching and consistent pastoral visitation would produce mature Christian faith and life in the context of the 'devastating divisive' influences from the charismatic movement. A true work of the Spirit in the lives and pastors and churches would bring holiness and spiritual growth, rather than the elitist, unethical behaviour which often seemed to appear. God could even bring healing, it said, but only within his own sovereign purposes and not at the demand of his people.

This paper was clear that Baptist pastors should show loyalty to the denomination and maintain its unity by not promulgating contrary views, and that people who had adopted Pentecostal beliefs should, as a matter of integrity, not undermine Baptist churches, but find other places in which to worship and serve.

The booklet was, as usual for Baptist Union statements of this kind, one that was issued for guidance only and had no legislative power. It helped to deal with one of the main difficulties—confusion over terminology—by defining unacceptable charismatic and Pentecostal characteristics. However, it could not do much about the problem of inaccurate, misleading, even erroneous or malicious claims and counter-claims of false teaching, anti-biblical practices and destructive attitudes which were often levelled against churches and pastors on both sides of the question. More importantly, it failed to respond sympathetically to the mood for renewal that was so widely evident, but merely endorsed traditional evangelical teaching on the ministry of the Spirit in regeneration and empowerment for life and ministry.

Whatever the actual situation was, virtually no one thought of themselves as 'Pentecostal' in as defined by the document, but only as moderate Spirit-filled people. So it left the way open for a continuation and even development of their current practices and attitudes. This resulted in a further expansion of charismatic interests in many parts of the denomination during the following period of time, until at length other ideas about church life captured the attention of Baptists in Queensland, and the movement ran out of momentum. This trend was exacerbated by an increasing polarisation of Pentecostalism due to excesses which characterised the movement at large and led to it being discredited, or at least by-passed, in the minds of many.

To be continued

Baptists in Queensland & the Charismatic Movement

Part 6

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by David Parker

This is the sixth article in a series (see Dec 2004; April 2006, Dec 2006, Aug 2007, Apr 2008) on the development and impact of the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic movement which influenced Baptists in Queensland strongly from the 1970s. The previous article concluded with details of an official Statement of the Baptist Union of Queensland on the subject, published in 1986.

The 30-page book prepared by the BUQ Executive on the Charismatic movement was issued in April 1986 as “a guide to assist pastors.” This point had to be explained and emphasised by the Executive in response to a specific question addressed to it – it was definitely for guidance only; furthermore, it needed to be made clear that it was the Executive statement itself in the form of the “open letter,” not the background papers which were printed in the second part of the book, that was the official position. Presumably the hope was that there would be a trickle-down effect which would effectively deal with the problems which were threatening to tear the denomination and many of its member churches apart. However, that proved to be a forlorn hope as the issue had to be faced again within four short but turbulent years.

Aftermath of 1986

The executive, officers and staff were too pre-occupied with a host of pressing issues facing the denomination to take any further direct action in relation to the problems caused by Charismatic movement amongst the churches, even if they had the will to do so. The most pressing of these other issues was the financial crisis brought on by the Law Society House affair. The denomination was faced with the prospect of finding very large financial sums to extricate itself from the situation. The funds required were raised from reserves, Queensland Baptist Community Service (now QBC), the sale of property and a special appeal. The payments were made by the end of 1987, but the denomination laboured under the financial consequences of this heavy impost for a much longer period.

Then came the staff and leadership fall-out. The General Superintendent and Associate General Superintendent (Admin), who were generally held responsible, offered their resignations early in the saga. However, it was decided to keep them on until the problems were resolved, although the process by which this achieved was plagued by confusion and controversy at the Council and Assembly levels. Once the situation was under control, both men were expected to resign, which they did in May and August of 1987. This led to the process of finding replacements and a period of transition as the new staff settled in. There was also some impact on members of the Executive and Finance Advisory Board. However, there were other staff members who left at about the same, including Revs Trevor Ross (Field Minister Christian Education), Bob Wenn (Field Minister Youth) and George Stubbs (Mission Development Officer). The resignation of Brian Jenkins also involved loss of his wife, Lorna, who had made a significant contribution in more than one area of Queensland Baptist life in her own right.

The new Associate General Superintendent (Admin) was Mr Gordon H King, a former university administrator who has been chair of Executive during early stages of Law Society House affair, and General Treasurer 1980-83. The post of General Superintendent was filled (first of all on an acting basis) from June 1987 by Mr Fred W Stallard, Baptist Union President in 1980-81 and dynamic chairman of the Department of Church Life and Growth (CLAG) in its formative years. As a lay pastor, he was familiar with local church and denominational work, especially in the establishment of the successful Mission to Queensland. However, by occupation he was a business man who had risen to become state manager of Woolworths Ltd. After a period working away in NSW, he returned to Queensland in 1985, and left the company in mid-1986. He resumed his involvement with CLAG, managed the ailing Baptist bookshop and studied briefly part-time at the College. He was prominently involved in measures to deal with the Law Society House affair. So what he lacked in formal

ministerial training and pastoral experience, he certainly made up in administrative, leadership, and spiritual qualities. Accredited as a pastor a few months after commencing duties, he enjoyed the confidence of those who had worked with him and was seen as a visionary and a man of action, although his progressive manner and urgent desire to make things happen did not please everyone.

Serious questions had been asked about how such a situation at the Law Society House affair could have arisen in the first place so a thorough-going review was established, known as the “Spiritual and Structural Review and Recommendation” group (SSRR). This committee believed that “nothing short of radical restructure” was needed, but it realised that all that could be done at the time was to propose a “a tightening up” of the existing arrangements. Nevertheless, its wide-ranging recommendations which were brought forward progressively over subsequent years produced many changes in an atmosphere of on-going unsettlement. Even when the SSRR committee finished its work, change was still in the air and during the whole of the 1990s the further radical changes to the function, purpose and structure of the denomination referred to by SSRR took place. These were paralleled by similar radical changes at the local church level, leaving the whole denomination in a permanent state of flux and uncertainty.

Separate from the SSRR process, the Baptist Theological College was also going through revision of its curriculum and staffing, some consequences of which were to cause serious and divisive repercussions throughout the denomination in the 1990s. Furthermore, over the same period, the assembly was debating ordination and the ministry of women, topics which were the focus of considerable concern for the churches, which led to further uncertainty and loss of confidence. The Executive was forced to make an embarrassing back down over one of the decisions resulting from that process.

Problems reported

The atmosphere surrounding all these disturbing developments took the focus away from spiritual renewal. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that there were problems in the churches and amongst the pastors, facts which denominational leaders mentioned frequently in their reports. For example, in 1986 Brian Jenkins reported severe frustration and testing within the Baptist “family”, and spoke about the need for self-examination and forgiveness. Events associated with the Law Society House affair had, he said, dominated the denominational work, and imposed a heavy cost; for him it was the most difficult year in his ministry and caused him to make painful re-evaluations.

At the same time John Tanner (Associate General Superintendent Pastoral) called for humility instead of a spirit of arrogance and competition. In his 1986 annual report, he acknowledged that it had been a period of considerable numerical growth, but revealed that there had been an unprecedented number of churches in trouble (about 25% in all). He pinned the cause on spiritual immaturity, often showing up as a lack of love exhibited in people making accusations against others rather than thinking the best of them. He believed the Spirit of God was working in some churches, but certainly not in all of them!

The next year Tanner repeated some of the same devastating observations; he believed that “There is evidence of a failure to walk in the light amongst some of our people” although he was pleased to notice that many of internal church problems had disappeared. Yet on entering into his new role as General Superintendent, Fred Stallard was not so optimistic – in the troubled and deep waters, he found there was lack of trust and suspicion which called for much prayer, witnessing and serving, with a determination to avoid everything that would cause division and spoil the work.

Solutions – spiritual and structural

To try and deal with these issues, Tanner focused on the broader “kingdom” perspective, seeking to encourage cooperation between churches. He also tried to promote a wider view that also included attention to indigenous Murri churches and the contribution that could be made by links with the South Pacific where he himself had previously exercised a brief ministry. He placed emphasis on regional pastors’ conferences in retreats to mend relationships, and more effective leadership training. (Tanner eventually moved into a new role with the denomination as Field Minister for Spiritual Development; a Field Minister for Leadership Development was also appointed in 1990.)

As General Superintendent, Fred Stallard committed himself to effective pastoral care, seeking to develop the prayer life of the denomination and taking up the objectives set out by his predecessor in striving towards the goal 35 new churches and 20,000 Baptists in Queensland by the year 2000. This program would revive the impetus from the 1984 “Plan and Pray” Day which had been completely overshadowed by intervening events.

The ambitious new scheme in which Stallard was deeply involved was known as “Forward Thrust.” This was designed to provide a compelling vision for the “Family of Churches” which would unite them over the

next decade as they marched forward to fight their “common enemy.” The plan focused on the local churches becoming evangelistic, discipleship-oriented, prayerful and missionary-minded. The initial period of prayer, Bible teaching and training would lead up to an extensive evangelistic thrust in 1992.

The official launching was planned to take place at a grand rally held on 3 March 1989 at the Sleeman Sports Complex, when Stallard was to be officially installed as General Superintendent. This was to be followed by launching rallies, complete with video replay, at several churches up the coast to Cairns. The elaborate function was attended by 2000 people who heard their new leader passionately call on them to “take on a vision” of reaching the state for Christ, a call that had been made on more than one occasion before during the long history of the denomination in Queensland.

Stallard’s efforts were well appreciated, but Forward Thrust, which absorbed a huge amount of effort, took on a highly structured and organisational mode in its effort to work the denomination out of its malaise. In particular, one of the main arms of the movement was a highly detailed survey known as the “Process of Analysis.” This was to be undertaken by the churches to evaluate their situation, and thus provide a blue print for action locally and denominationally. However, it proved to be a disappointing failure. Only about 40% of churches persevered with the 63 page long survey. Limited as it was in its scope and value, this survey, when reviewed by Ken Conwell, nevertheless showed that evangelistic outreach was weak and vision for the future had been crippled. It also revealed tensions between pastors and churches and painted a picture of confusion in worship services which were in a state of rapid change. There was little evidence of dynamic spiritual renewal empowering the denomination, even though the charismatic movement which had promised so much, had been in progress for well over a decade. The highly analytical nature of the survey process and the orchestrated nature of the Forward Thrust program overall were dampeners on any signs of renewal that might have existed, despite the genuine hopes of leaders like Tanner and Stallard who so strongly promoted it.

So these developments which followed the Law Society House affair and the publication of the official Statement on the charismatic movement provided more than enough to occupy the time and energy of the denominational leaders. They were content to let the Statement provide guidance for ministers and churches and to encourage all parties whatever their stance to work together as fully as possible in the activities of the “family of churches.” The deep concern about the divisions and problems caused by the charismatic movement seemed, with only some exceptions, to overshadow the possibility that this movement could also have provided the spiritual power and renewal which many sought.

Charismatic Growth

Yet during this time there were some examples of denominational and church activity that fostered interest in the charismatic movement. At the Half-yearly assembly in April 1988, the guest preacher was Rev Geoff Pound of New Zealand (who later moved to Victoria), who spoke on church growth. He encouraged Queensland churches to follow the lead of New Zealand where, he said, the charismatic movement had been the cause of rejuvenation of churches and growth in spiritual vitality, which more than compensated for tensions also associated with it. However, Pound found his positive assessment was not acceptable to many in the audience who seemed to think that any sign of charismatic influence was something to challenge and oppose.

Pound’s emphasis was supported by a report in the *Queensland Baptist* the previous month in which Brian Andrew, minister at Holland Park church, spoke glowingly of charismatic developments in New Zealand after a recent visit to his old church, Spreydon Baptist. Some further prominence was also given to the growth of the charismatic movement when a notice appeared for the “first National Baptist Charismatic Conference” to be held in Sydney in October 1987. Speakers included Murray Robertson of Spreydon, NZ, Rev Ralph Legge formerly of Holland Park Queensland, and Rev Reg Owen, Associate Pastor of Fairfield.

General Superintendent Stallard’s personal interest in prayer was reinforced with the visit of Dr Don Miller of USA to the 1988 Assembly (when Stallard was formally appointed as General Superintendent). Miller’s Prayer Video ministry was promoted heavily and used in many churches with evident positive results. Writing in the *Queensland Baptist* in February 1988, Stallard said, “I believe that the Lord is preparing us for a movement of His Spirit across our denominational and local church ministry.

The value of small group and house church ministries, which were prominent aspects of charismatic renewal, was strengthened by the visits for lectures and seminars of such acknowledged experts in this field as Ralph Neighbour, Roberts Banks and Gene Getz. There was further impetus in this general area from the visit of several lay renewal teams from the US during this period of time.

Leadership Conferences and the Pacific Factor

But one of the most important contributors to the new environment were the leadership conferences which

the Baptist Union had commenced in 1984. Led by BUQ field staff, especially John Tanner, they were held at the prestigious new Mapleton Baptist camp site and were aimed at pastors, deacons and elders and others with influence in the churches. They became a vital part of the plan to improve relations amongst churches and pastors and to deepen the spiritual life of the denomination. Church growth was the topic for the 1985 conference, and it featured amongst others personnel from Spreydon Baptist Church of New Zealand which had already been so influential in Queensland. Speaking in the *Queensland Baptist*, John Tanner said, "We believe God can work miracles of grace and miracles of growth. The men of God leading this camp conference want to help you to see some of God's miracles in your church."

The conferences were very well received, but in 1987 there was a powerful new factor which intensified their impact enormously. Drawing upon the previous experience of Tanner with the South Pacific, the main speaker was Michael Maeliau of South Seas Evangelical Church, Solomon Islands. Tanner described Maeliau as "a man who talks with God and talks for God" who "has God's word for the church today." Charles Horne, then BUQ president, a highly respected missionary leader with a lifetime of pioneering service in Papua New Guinea, described him as "one of God's gifts to the Pacific." About 100 attended the conference with many reporting fresh vision and vital spiritual experience.

Already some churches were making contact with the South Pacific (including Hervey Bay, Rochedale, Cannon Hill) both to offer physical aid as well as evangelistic and pastoral support. Visits by pastors and church members to these areas introduced them to the intense spiritual life found in Pacific Island Christianity.

Maeliau was again invited to the leadership conference in 1988, and this time he brought with him 15 colleagues who were split into teams to visit a considerable number of churches in south east Queensland prior to the conference. This engendered huge interest, resulting in an attendance of more than 450 at Mapleton (a record for the centre which overflowed its accommodation capacity), and the creation of a highly intense weekend of ministry in which, as the *Queensland Baptist* reported, "Their joyous, extrovert, worshipful participation generated the setting in which Michael Maeliau opened the Word of God with some challenging insights." The report went on to say, "Michael Maeliau lives in his message. As he spoke of 'Recognising the Father', and coming face to face with Him with nothing between, you felt that was exactly what he was doing. Michael called the listeners to a new preoccupation with God." Participants spoke enthusiastically of the experience. The reversal of attitudes towards the Solomon Islanders was not ignored – once people from this land were badly treated as indentured labourers on Queensland sugar plantations, although there were also sincere attempts at evangelisation; now, however, they had come as welcome and honoured ministers of a highly passionate form of the Christian experience.

The links with the South Pacific continued in the following years. There was on-going impact as Solomon Islanders and others visited Queensland churches on various occasions. On the other hand, Queensland Baptists who visited the area were indelibly impressed with the kind of spirituality which they witnessed and experienced. For example, in a 21 day visit to the Solomons by eight pastors in April 1989, it was reported that all learned new lessons in prayer and "true spiritual ministry", all were "exposed to the ministry of the Holy Spirit personally" and had "experienced the life of a church in revival." The leader, John Tanner, considered that "this is the best method available to Queensland Baptists to develop pastors in personal godliness, maturity, spiritual power, and commitment to the world-wide task of the church." These ad hoc contacts developed into more permanent and official relationships, and in some cases, the migration of Solomon Islanders to Queensland where they found openings for ministry.

There were also visits for ministry to other countries such as Fiji, the Philippines and India by pastors and people from a number of Queensland churches including Fairfield, Cannon Hill, and Hervey Bay. In addition, some people who had served as missionaries in these areas ministered at later times in Queensland, where their understanding of the spirituality of these new Christian communities was still an influential factor in creating a more intense spiritual atmosphere.

However, it should be noted that Michael Maeliau's ministry in his own country took a sad turn when he became deeply involved in highly conflictual local politics and hopelessly preoccupied with a vision of how he believed God would use his SSEC church to lead the world church to unheard of blessing and influence. After a lot of tension and destructive events which impacted extremely negatively on the SSEC and the nation of the Solomon Islands, he was eventually disciplined and dis-fellowshipped by his church for heretical teaching and refusal to change his ways. (<http://toabaita-authority.blogspot.com/2009/08/michael-maeliau-excommunicated-from.html>)

Meanwhile, the Mapleton Leadership conferences still played an important part of the BUQ program for a few more years before they were discontinued.

The John Wimber movement

These developments were reinforced by another important factor which was becoming part of the Australian scene (as it was worldwide)—the influence of the so-called “Third Wave of the Holy Spirit” associated with John Wimber (1934-97) and his “signs and wonders” (or “power”) evangelism and “power healing” ministries. In the 1970s Wimber had been prominent in the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth which had a wide ministry in USA. Later he began to lead a home group in a Friends (Quaker) Church in California and develop charismatic ideas which grew dramatically, resulting eventually in the “Vineyard Church” movement, first in North America and then globally.

In contrast with earlier Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, the “Third wave” took a broader view of the gift of tongues, regarding it as one of a range of spiritual gifts, not one exclusively linked to the experience of Baptism in the Spirit. In particular, it linked the existence of these gifts with the presence of the Kingdom of God at the present time, and believed that the kind of “signs and wonders” (including miraculous healing and power evangelism) exhibited in the ministry of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels are the norm for evangelism in the modern era. Wimber’s views were more readily accepted by evangelicals because he based them on the widely influential teaching about the Kingdom of God which had been developed by G E Ladd at Fuller Theological Seminary. Operating within what was recognized as a broad evangelical context, Wimber nevertheless presented a heightened spiritual world which was more typical of Pentecostalism.

Central to this was the way Wimber starkly contrasted his “power evangelism” with the “programmed” evangelism that had become the standard practice in the wake of famous revivalistic evangelists such as Finney, Moody, Chapman, Sunday and most famously, Billy Graham. Queensland Baptists had embraced this form of evangelism as strongly as any other Christian group.

However, the new Wimber approach democratized spiritual gifts with “signs and wonders” and created the expectation that they are accessible to all Christians as part of their conversion experience; this differed from other Pentecostal views which stressed the post-conversion baptism of the Spirit which believers needed to seek with specific intention and protracted prayer. Wimber’s position referred instead to the “kingdom authority” possessed by all Christians (as reflected in the popular song, “Majesty”) which gave power in the daily Christian life over sickness and the demonic because of the existence of the victory of Jesus Christ in present age.

One of the important factors in this approach stressed by Wimber was the necessity to be aware of the spiritual world, which he argued had been virtually obliterated by the secular worldview of the modern era. He believed that most Christians had absorbed this view to the detriment of their spiritual life and the witness of the church. Instead, Christians needed to have a new perspective on the spiritual world, and become co-workers with Christ and thereby become partners with him in the ministry of “signs and wonders”.

This aspect of his teaching fell on well fertilized soil amongst those Queensland Baptists who had been so impressed with the Pacific Island spirituality which they had encountered in the Mapleton Leadership conferences, the associated visits by the Solomon Islanders to local churches and the visits by Queenslanders to the Solomons. The “Pacific” spirituality was a sample of exactly the views that Wimber advocated. Wimber’s teaching was also not foreign to those who had been brought up in the Keswick “deeper life” holiness tradition which had been fostered for many years at the Mt Tamborine Easter conventions – although in more recent years, in common with the movement elsewhere in Australia and worldwide, the conventions had lost their distinctive character associated with the original Keswick movement and had become merely a Bible teaching and missionary convention.

Wimber’s views were integrally incorporated into his innovative music style (he had been a professional musician before his conversion in 1963) and the new set of Vineyard songs which tended to replace the older “Scripture in Song” stream. He also introduced distinctive worship patterns with the aim of developing an intimacy and awareness of God especially in the “praise and worship” section of the service. This new pattern of music and worship soon became increasingly popular. By using the new Vineyard songs (and others like them) many Queensland churches were influenced, in some cases unwittingly, while others had their views reinforced and expanded. However, it is not clear that many churches understood the principles of intimacy that Wimber proposed and the way they were to be advanced through the “praise and worship” segment. So the musical part of the service, which became so dominant in contemporary worship, soon deteriorated, either into a new traditional form or a musical performance; in cases where musical talent was limited, it merely became a repetitive and uninspiring sing-song.

Wimber’s message was spread widely by practical seminars (and associated recordings) and especially by two influential books (co-written with Kevin Springer), *Power Evangelism* (published in 1986) and *Power Healing* (1987). These books became well known in Australia, and the teachings they incorporated were presented in the seminars and conferences presented by Wimber when he visited the country.

The first visit occurred in November 1987 when about 4500 people attended a conference on “Power Evangelism” in Sydney, with satellite meetings held in other places including Brisbane. Wimber returned early

in 1989 with his “Power Healing” conference in Melbourne attracting 6000; the “Power Evangelism” conference was repeated at that time in Perth drawing over 1100. “Spiritual Warfare” was the topic for a round of conferences in Sydney and Perth in March 1990 (about 7000 total), while holiness was the focus in Sydney Oct 1991 (4000 attendance, and 10,000 at a public rally) with “Revival fire” as the subject in Perth. The final conferences were held in April 1994 under the theme, “Doin’ the Stuff” held in Brisbane and Perth.

People travelled long distances to attend these conferences. According to records supplied by Kairos Ministries, the organisers of these conferences, the largest proportion of attendees were Uniting Church ministers with Anglicans coming next; Baptists showed considerable interest at around 20%.

But not all were prepared to accept Wimber’s influence, and the issue became controversial. A sample of the other view was seen in well-known Queensland Baptist conservative layman, Phil Hancox, who was prominent in denominational, local church and inter-denominational work. He took aim at Wimber’s healing ministry. In the September 1987 issue of the *Queensland Baptist* he referred to devotees as being “gullible” and cited a British report by a professor of medicine who had arranged for a team of doctors to attend a healing service in England; their overall conclusion was that there was no sign of “any healing of organic physical disease” but only evidence of clever use of hypnotic trance. To Hancox the question was clear, “what will the delegates to the Healing Seminars [conducted by Wimber in Australia] believe they have witnessed – genuine miracles or ‘lying wonders’.”

Responses to Hancox’ letter published in the February 1988 issue from Alan Wecker, Lewis Larking and Dr Barry Heyworth defended Wimber, explaining that he presented a wider approach than simply miraculous physical healing; Wimber included spiritual renewal and as Larking put it, “roundly condemns the way western Christianity has been blinded by a materialistic world view in which we are limited in our experience through the five senses rather than expecting to see God supernaturally at work.” An alarmist report in the June 1989 *Queensland Baptist* from a conference in Melbourne in 1989 in which Wimber was quoted as saying that “The world would soon be swept by many incurable contagious diseases similar to AIDS” did not help to calm the tension. At the same conference, Wimber referred to the “shame which has come upon the Church because of the exposure of the sins of some prominent Christians” but predicted that “The proud, arrogant church leaders of the 80s will give way to humble leaders in the 90s” and that “out of darkness would come hope and cleansed people.” He added, “There would be a wave of holiness, then a harvest wave in a Church without sport or wrinkle.”

It was obvious, as Rob MacKenzie of Greenslopes Baptist Church pointed out in an editorial in the same issue, that the church was, typically, over-reacting to the “latest world trend.” He explained, “the problem with a group that actively promotes signs and wonders is that they have to keep producing signs and wonders to validate their ministry. The problem with a group that denies signs and wonders is that they are limiting God to the size of their finite minds. The truth lies somewhere in between; there must be a balance.” He proposed that the focus should be on Christ crucified who is the one who “changes lives.” Whether Queensland Baptists could find that focus was another matter.

As pointed out in my two-part article on renewal published at the time in the *Queensland Baptist* (1986), there was a strong movement by a significant group within the denomination to be free of the old forms of worship and church structures which were felt to be rigid and restrictive. They believed the new forms of the charismatic movement provided a way to renew their Christian life and would help to free up their worship and ministry. Some reported later that they did enter a new era when such ministries as spiritual gifts, healing and prophecy were opened up to them in a way that had been denied to them earlier, with positive outcomes over the years that followed. Whether these people understood clearly what was involved in Wimberism or “Pacific” Christianity, or even cared about the doctrinal issues involved is doubtful; the drive for change from the older ways seemed to dominate.

According to former Baptist missionary Dr Geoff Waugh, well known for his advocacy of the Charismatic movement, some of the most obvious examples of the impact of the Wimber movement included the new wave of Vineyard songs taking over from the earlier favourites, the more casual and relaxed preaching and worship style, and a great openness to “signs and wonders”, healings, prophetic words and words of knowledge; he also mentions a more relational and consultative organisational pattern in churches and the move away from members’ meetings deciding business with instead the involvement of elders and home groups.

(to be continued)