

Baptists in Queensland and the Charismatic Movement

Part 7

By

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This is the full version of Part 7 (the final part) of the paper, Baptists in Queensland and the Charismatic Movement. It is the original version from which the paper printed in *Queensland Baptist Forum* Number 116 November 2023 and Number 117, March 2024 is an abbreviation.

The earlier parts were published in the Queensland Baptist Forum for 2004 to 2010 which are available on the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland website at <https://www.bhsq.org/bhq/forum/index.html> and also at <https://silo.tips/download/baptists-in-queensland-and-the-charismatic-movement>.

This section reviews some of the issues referred to in Part 6 around the mid-1980s, and then outlines further developments up to the end of the 1990s, by which time the issue had mostly faded from attention.

This series is based on scarce documentation available in Baptist and other resources, interviews and personal knowledge. It is a subjective assessment, and responses with more information and insights would be welcomed by the author.

The 1986 Statement

The Charismatic movement was causing considerable concern within Baptist churches in Queensland in the mid-1980s, so, as mentioned earlier, the Baptist Union of Queensland (BUQ) Executive decided to issue a statement about it. This 700-word statement, or 'Open Letter' as it was styled, was published in the July 1986 issue of the *Queensland Baptist* and it was also published with three explanatory papers and a covering letter from the President of the Baptist Union in a 34-page booklet. This booklet was widely distributed within the denomination in April/May 1986 under the non-specific title, 'A Guide to assist pastors in the Baptist Union of Queensland'. It was stressed that it was only the Statement (or 'open letter') that was regarded as the official view of the Baptist Union Executive.

It welcomed renewal (understood as daily infilling of the Spirit) and variety in worship styles (although it stated that this was not the same as saying that just any form of worship would do). The Statement said that Pentecostal doctrine was unacceptable in Baptist churches and anyone who held to those views 'effectively ceased to be a Baptist regardless of what he may call himself (sic).' Confusingly, it lumped 'Pentecostal' and 'Charismatic' views together as one, and listed the distinctive beliefs of that group as baptism of Spirit as a second experience after conversion and this to be evidenced in speaking in tongues, slaying in the Spirit, the right of physical healing, prosperity doctrine, signs and wonders, and authoritative leadership strongly invested in a few individuals.

Typical Baptist views were listed as baptism by the Holy Spirit at conversion, daily infilling of the Spirit evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit, warm but not excessively emotional content in worship, experience being subjugated to the Word of God, the centrality of expository preaching, the sovereignty of God in healing, and congregational church government.

The document called for love and tolerance in dealing with the differences, but said that where there were irreconcilable differences of opinion, it was the minority group, not those with Pentecostal views, that should leave and find a church that suited them. This meant of course that a fully recognized and accepted member church of the Baptist Union could hold views that were described in this statement as definitively 'non-Baptist'!

Although the three (unsigned) papers (on Spirit baptism, pastoral ministry, and relationships) covering 27 pages were not regarded as having the same authority as the official Statement, they were, in the accompanying introductory letter from the President, recommended for promulgation and study. They backed up the general Statement with further detail, explanation and examples. In particular, the first one provided a much more detailed statement of how Baptists understood Scripture on the disputed topics of Spirit baptism and tongues speaking, while the second reiterated in some detail Baptist distinctives on ecclesiology as a setting for the recommended pastoral approach to the issue. The papers were perhaps more strict and particular than the statement.

The title of the publication was subdued—it did not even refer to the Charismatic movement as such, but instead merely said, ‘A Guide to assist pastors in the Baptist Union of Queensland’, and neither did the covering letter!

Overall, the publication of this Statement provided a clear signal that as far BUQ was concerned, Charismatic practices and doctrine were not to be proscribed, a situation that was reflected in developments that followed.

Developments

There were some (subdued) direct responses to the publication of the Statement and papers, including some correspondence with the Executive. But it was made clear that the document was to be regarded as a definitive statement of the official position of the Executive—it was not an invitation to debate a discussion paper!

The reaction by the churches varied widely, and the advice given in the Statement to resolve differences of opinion with liberty and love did not always work out as planned. There were some churches that adopted charismatic principles—at least 12 could be documented but anecdotally, as many as one-third, or about 40 churches, were involved. Some churches encountered bitter conflict, with a couple of notable cases at the end of the 1990s going to an extreme in their stance. There were many who opposed any form of Charismatic expression, however mild—even merely in outward forms such as the use of ‘choruses’ or clapping or raising of hands in worship, claiming that such practices indicated an underlying acceptance of the movement. On the other hand, a few churches and individuals were interested in pursuing other forms of spirituality completely.

Perhaps the most prominent Charismatic church of all was Holland Park which continued its spectacular growth from earlier times when it opened its new campus at Mackenzie on the southern borders of Greater Brisbane in 1993, making use of a former Expo 88 building, and changing its name to Gateway Baptist Church. This facility gave it the opportunity to grow numerically and expand its range of ministries. Its status as a leading Charismatic Baptist church was soon matched by a church on the western side of the city. This was Kenmore Baptist Church which had commenced operations in the 1960s, and by 1993 was reporting 1,000 contacts. It reached a peak membership of nearly 600 in 2009 making it the largest church in the Union at the time, but it soon dropped back below the 500 level. It later moved to Seventeen Mile Rocks and changed its name to Riverlife Baptist Church.

Along with these churches, and the other already established charismatic centres such as Caloundra and Cannon Hill, which had varying fortunes, there were others where charismatic activity was reported. One of these was Majestic Park (now known as Eastside after a relocation and a merger), which was established first in the 1950s, a typical suburban church that experienced a period of significant growth in the early 1980s. The pastor at the time was Rev Ron Simpson (1980-89) who later became a Baptist Union officer specialising a leadership development. However, this growth suddenly ceased which caused a great deal of reflection by the leadership. Aware of the success and growth of renewal/charismatic churches, Majestic Park followed their lead in adopting a contemporary form of worship and the introduction of typical practices such as healing and prophecy. There were various influences including some contacts with a decidedly charismatic or Pentecostal pedigree.

On the outer northern side of Brisbane, Bracken Ridge, dating from an outreach from Sandgate in the early 1970s and constituted in 1983, took a softer line. By the mid-1980s it had gained an anti-charismatic reputation, but this changed in the late 1980s, causing some losses. However, the transition to a renewal church was soon completed and later an (undated) elaborate statement ‘Views on Charismatic Issues’ was issued. It expressed an openness to spiritual gifts, healing, prophecy, tongues, slaying in the Spirit and the ‘Toronto Blessing’ (which had become an issue by the time of the document). The church said it recognized the authority of the Bible, although it had to be interpreted according to its culture and noted that there were issues on which it was ‘silent or unclear’. Furthermore, it was noted that the church’s perspective in understanding Scripture ‘may change with time’. The church, which declared that it had a ‘heart for renewal’, said it was not going to be ‘bound by accepted tradition or established practice’ and that it was committed to diversity of belief and practice.

Sometimes churches were divided over the issue. One example of an amicable situation was Warwick, where in 1984 the church leaders stated in a report to the membership that ‘the Holy Spirit is operating in our Church.’ They said, ‘We believe that the Lord has been leading us into a Renewal Ministry’ They continued, ‘We believe that we should be continuously open to the operation of the Spirit’s gifts.’ The pastor, John Churchward, added a note to the report, ‘A Renewal Church is open to the operation of the Spirit of God in the ministry and worship of the Church. We are not, and do not propose to become, a Pentecostal Church.’ However, by 1987 it was reported that conflicting views on this stance had arisen and that some of the members had withdrawn to form a non-Charismatic church, to be named Emmanuel which existed for a few years. (*Queensland Baptist* (QB) July 1987)

But in other cases, the situation was tense. Labrador (later known as Coast Life and now Lifehouse Christian Church), as was mentioned earlier, was a case in point. It had announced in 1988 that it was a church ‘moving in charismatic renewal’ and soon after came under the guidance of Holland Park church. But a difficult situation arose due to differences of

opinion within the membership, extending over many years which led to the formation of another church at nearby Runaway Bay. However, the new church struggled and did not survive, while Labrador continued to expand,

Similarly, there was irreconcilable tension at Tarragindi, a church which had been planted by Annerley in the 1940s and opened its main building in 1953. It had grown to its maximum size of around 50 members twenty years later. By the late 1980s, serious divisions occurred over Pentecostal issues, although there were reports of several baptisms, and the name of the church was changed to Tarragindi Christian Family, a common action at the time. However, the situation deteriorated quickly, a Charismatic or Pentecostal element departed, and the church was closed in early 1988. Interestingly, the building was soon sold to a Pentecostal church.

Albion was another church that reported (QB July 1991) that 'the freshness of the Holy Spirit' was being experienced and that the congregation had grown dramatically from a very low number, following a brief ministry by Rev C Britten and then by Pastor Les Wallin, an intern from Gateway Baptist Church. To reflect these changes, the church name had been changed to 'Fire of Hope.'

There were others who were clearly diametrically opposed to the Charismatic movement in any form. Typical of these was Laidley church which, when needing a new pastor in 1992, advertised specifically for a 'non-Charismatic' applicant (QB Feb 1992). This clear statement of its position attracted some correspondence in the *Queensland Baptist*. Others, such as P J Hancox, a leading denominational and local church leader, was outspoken in rejecting 'miracle healings.' (QB September 1987)

But charismatic or anti-charismatic views were not the only options available to Baptists in Queensland during these years, although these alternatives were never strong. While some remained neutral adopting only some of the side-effects of the movement such as the new music that was on offer and a relaxed form of worship, there were other options taken up by some at various times with more vigour.

One of the alternatives was Reformed Baptist beliefs, an option that looked back to the second great stream of original Baptists, the Particular Baptists, dating from the 1630s. This stream had been responsible for many important developments in the history of the denomination, not the least being its passion for worldwide mission. Jireh Baptist Church which was situated in Fortitude Valley for more than 100 years from 1862 was formed originally on this basis and sent out the first Baptist overseas missionary from Queensland, provided the first two Home Mission Superintendents and was the spring of a string of churches on the northside of Brisbane. There were some examples of churches and individuals over the years adopting this expression of Baptist life, notably at North Rockhampton. However, this movement was strongly resisted by the Baptist Union and hardly flourished at all at the time although other forms of the same spirituality became more apparent in later years both within the Baptist Union and also in baptistic churches not affiliated with it.

Another alternative which made some appearance was associated with interest in spiritual exercises and retreats. One pastor lamented, 'some disillusioned evangelicals who have avoided charismatic practices are now going down this road.' (*Adelphoi* August 1994)

Growth and Concerns

However, even though not all agreed, charismatic ideas and practices were widely accepted as a valid option in terms of the 1986 Statement. For example, at the denominational level in April 1988, the visiting speaker at the Half-yearly Assembly, Rev Geoffrey Pound of New Zealand (later Victoria) spoke favourably about the impact of the movement in his home country, crediting it (and the Church Growth Movement) with considerable growth over the previous decade. Then there had been enough support for a combined Baptist Charismatic Renewal Celebration, sponsored by Holland Park church in May 1986. The same approach was occurring in other parts of the country, resulting in the formation of a 'Renewal Fellowship within the Baptist Denomination in Australia' which conducted a National Charismatic Baptist Conference held first in August 1987 and then again two years later. A number of Queenslanders were involved.

But the Executive of the Baptist Union was fully occupied with other matters during this time, especially dealing with the Law Society House matter and its consequences, as well as launching the Forward Thrust program designed to enlarge the denomination to 20,000 members and plant 35 (later 50) new churches by 2000 AD. There was no further guidance or discussion from the denominational leaders on charismatic matters, or any further development of the position outlined in the Statement. However, its general position on the matter was clear, including full endorsement of the Leadership Conferences including the Pacific factor (as mentioned earlier in Part 6) which provided a positive atmosphere for this new spirituality.

But this positive acceptance of the Charismatic movement as a normal part of Queensland Baptist church life did not go smoothly, and did not necessarily produce the raft of joyful, united and flourishing churches that were promised by its advocates. Instead, there were numerous signs of difficulty.

For example, in 1987, Rev John Tanner reported to the Assembly in his role as Associate General Superintendent that 'it is evident that the Spirit of God is working to some degree in many places.' However, he added, 'There is no place in which the spirit of God is yet free to do all that He is able to do.' Astonishingly, he repeated the same comment verbatim in the following year's report! He added, 'We need to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, guarding ourselves against the sin of arrogance and the competitive spirit that He might exalt us in due time.'

In 1986 he also reported that there had been a fivefold increase in the number of churches in conflict (a lot of which was attributable to the disturbances caused by the Charismatic movement) which amounted to more than 20% of the total number. He was able to report the following year that this number had been substantially reduced, but the fact that the situation had occurred in the first place and that it had been deemed worthy of reporting to the Assembly was a telling sign. Even so, in 1987, Tanner warned the Assembly about the failure of the denomination to maintain good internal relations.

Meanwhile, in 1986, the General Superintendent, Rev Brian Jenkins, said that it had been the most difficult year ever in his entire ministry, dealing with the Charismatic tensions and the Law Society House matter. In 1991 the president, Mr G H King, found it necessary to warn the denomination about the divisive practice of labelling people according to their beliefs. In the meantime, there had been a proliferation of seminars, conferences, books and sermons about conflict management which had become one of the most pressing issues facing the churches and denomination.

This mixed reaction to the Charismatic movement also produced a situation of unease in various contexts, which was revealed in some important official reports created during this period.

One of the most obvious was the 'Process of Analysis', a detailed report of conditions in the denomination which, as previously mentioned, was produced as the initial stage of the Forward Thrust programme. The results of this process, analysed by Rev Ken Conwell ('The Forward Thrust, Process of Analysis', 1991) have already been mentioned in Part 6 of this project where it was stated that the survey was a highly organised endeavour but only about 40% of churches returned their findings. Although this was a poor return, the results often showed considerable consistency on key issues and were considered valid enough to draw useful conclusions.

Overall, the process revealed that evangelistic outreach was weak, and vision for the future had been crippled. It also revealed tensions between pastors and church leaders and the membership, stating that (p 30) 'a very large degree of unhappiness with the leadership or Pastor is still a major cause of membership loss.' It also painted a picture of confusion in worship services which were in the course of rapid change, due especially to Charismatic influences. The survey found that worship was being 'influenced by such things as an over-emphasis on the subjective at the expense of objective truth. Also, churches seemed to be assimilating into their services, to varying degrees, the mass entertainment mentality of our society. At best the validity of these things is questionable by way of reference to Biblical principles of worship.' (p 77) Therefore, one of the key recommendations following the analysis related to worship read:

Develop for our churches a THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT ON WORSHIP (emphasis original) which honestly seeks to deal Scripturally with elements becoming increasingly popular in our services (*eg mass entertainment, hymns/songs focusing primarily on subjective experience and the like*). It would also be appropriate for such a statement to include reference to the cultural relevancy or otherwise of some of our worship patterns and practices. (emphasis added)

Another key finding related to the impact of rapid change occurring in the churches. The report stated, 'Growth and the 'charismatic issue' are seen as inseparably linked.' It went on to say, 'This is a perception that may not necessarily be supported by the facts but for a significant number of Baptists, it is an issue which has not been satisfactorily dealt with by the family of churches and so remains a hindrance to growth.' (p 37f)

Overall, the Process of Analysis showed that there was little evidence of dynamic spiritual renewal empowering the denomination, even though the charismatic movement which had promised so much in this area, and had been in progress for well over a decade at the time.

The same dismal situation was also found by the 'Structural and Spiritual Research and Review' team in its fourth report presented to the 1989 Assembly. This process had been initiated in the wake of the Law Society House matter and, while the earlier reports had mainly focused on organisational matters affecting the Baptist Union itself, this final report addressed the spiritual state of the churches. It said that there was much to be commended, including a renewal of worship and prayer, but there were other key concerns including division and disharmony within and between churches, and a failure to follow biblical processes to deal with this situation. This led to dissatisfaction and hurt in the all too many cases when it was simply the majority opinion forcing itself upon people.

The report also drew attention to worldliness in the churches, which was a serious issue in itself because a movement of the Spirit such as the Charismatic movement advocated should have produced a vastly different outcome. So it was not

surprising that the Report found a neglect of the 'fruit of the Spirit', an imbalanced emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit and a dearth of spiritual leadership.

Furthermore, it showed there was too much attention being paid to peripheral issues, while interest in the church's worldwide mission was low. There were also problems with financial stewardship coupled with a conformity to worldly standard regarding possessions and life-style. These deficiencies, the Report concluded, appeared *'to grow out of a lack of real understanding of the Kingdom of God and its principles, owing to a widespread lack of systematic Bible teaching at all levels in our churches.'*

At about the same time, reports to the Assembly indicated that the 'weaknesses' were showing up in the statistics. In 1988, growth and losses by roll revision were the worst in ten years, while baptisms were well below the average. To counteract this malaise, Associate General Superintendent Rev John Tanner said, 'Our people must be released from "church" duties to build friendships with lost people. Our pastors must be trained in evangelism skills and in developing an evangelistic church. Our churches must become redemptive communities.' (QB November 1988)

Consequently, in 1988, two 'Leadership Resources' were published analysing the current situation and advocating clear steps to improve it.

The first was called *'Nominality – Cause and Cures'* by Rev John Tanner, Associate General Superintendent of the Baptist Union. This 74-page book originated as an academic paper discussing theoretical assessments of the secular and religious causes of nominality, and included three case studies of unnamed Queensland Baptist churches, medium to large in size, documenting their experiences over the period 1983 to 1987. The study was carried out in the context of the aim of the Baptist Union, enunciated in 1985, of reaching 20,000 members by 2000 AD. However, that goal was in jeopardy because, Tanner claimed,

Present statistics indicate that every year one out of every 25 people, who has previously professed faith in Christ, been baptised and joined the church, has become so hurt, disillusioned, frustrated, faithless or sinful that he or she has left the local church never to return.

He believed 'a major source of the difficulty is the incipient nominality which pervades many Baptist churches.' (p 2) Nominality was seen when 'Christians whose lives lack evidence of a real and current experience of Jesus Christ' (p 27).

The cure was renewal, 'the process by which God brings a person to experience new life in Christ.' (p 3) So in the light of the evidence marshalled in the report, Tanner proposed a six-step strategy to deal with the situation. This strategy would provide 'opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in and through the Church bringing people to a vital and continuous experience of Christ' (p 66). He said, 'Every person and every generation must encounter the living Christ in a relevant way.' (p 66) It was stated that it was 'the responsibility of leaders to ensure that each person and each Church walks daily in the newness of life that is in Christ.' (p 66).

Once again, it was a damning indictment that nominality was considered a problem because the Charismatic movement claimed to be a recovery of the definitive biblical approach to such matters and had accordingly promised increased fervour and elevated spiritual life. The state of affairs addressed by Tanner in this project indicated that there were serious issues to be faced. However, his plan to remedy this situation was largely traditional in concept and organisational in nature, involving 'appropriate strategies and committed leaders' (p 66), and so would not be considered a charismatic solution.

The companion publication to this work of Tanner on nominality was a 66-page study, *A Strategy for Conserving Members* (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1988) by Rev Trevor Ross, who had previously been a Field Minister of the Baptist Union. He used a detailed statistical analysis covering 30 years of membership figures to reveal that the denomination had lost one in four of all newly baptised people, and that it had lost at least two of the other four within a few years.

Surveys also showed that rapid change in the churches was responsible for a considerable loss of mature members, much of which was attributed to the impact of the Charismatic movement, especially in the worship services, but also due to fact that 'church members' meetings have been too hurtful for many' people (p 11).

Another reason given for these departures was the lack a pastoral care, a situation which was 'endemic to church life.' He reported, 'The last five years have been a pastoral disaster' –the rate of losses due to this factor alone had increased by 325% in that period. In a particularly scathing statement, the book pointed out that often recent converts leaving the church were 'vulnerable to Satanic attack', a situation which would be exacerbated if 'in the closing stages of their church experience, their shepherds [pastors and other church leaders] injured them'. In such circumstances, the author pointed out, 'they may feel better off unshepherded.' (p 9)

It was not evangelism that was lacking—there had been a welcome improvement in that area, and subsequently in baptisms—but it was retention of new members that was the problem. In fact, to reach the goal of 20,000 members by the year 2000, as envisaged by the Forward Thrust movement, Ross pointed out, would require a significantly greater increase than had been achieved over all of the previous 30 years!

So, allowing for the welcome and entirely justifiable possibility of changes to church structures and worship patterns, the book proposed a strategy to conserve new members. Ross set out a system of Bible teaching and discipleship concepts to achieve this. He adopted a classic Baptist evangelical approach in which the teaching of Scripture, the Lordship of Christ, and the faithful obedience of believers were paramount, enlivened by both the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit. As such it would not likely appeal to fervent charismatics.

Overt Charismatic practices and spirituality were not the only factors causing turmoil in the churches which gave rise to the concerns observed by Tanner and Ross. However, Tanner's recommendations themselves highlighted another important cause of disturbance – the idea that churches should have a defined and well-calculated philosophy of ministry, which would result in a clear plan of activity with appropriate organisation, staff and facilities to support the new approach. This meant that substantial changes in the life of a church were usually required, transforming the church into something that many people found uncomfortable.

Even the very concept of a planned and programmed church life was something foreign to them, at least at the levels which soon came to be the norm. The first time this kind of approach was adopted in Queensland Baptist churches to any degree was with the advent of the All-Age Sunday School movement from the late 1950s. This new concept, introduced from churches in the United States, required a great deal of reorganisation within the many churches that adopted it, including buildings and property, church organisation, programming and mobilisation of members. The nature of the impact on the local church was typified by the title of one of the books used in the training program, *The church organised and functioning* by W L House & W O Thomason (Convention Press, 1963).

For some people, this concept reflected far too much acceptance of contemporary business and corporate principles which were in conflict with the spiritual and family orientation with which they had been familiar. Most of the churches at that time were not large—only a handful had over 200 members and around 40% were under 50 members, meaning that advanced forms of organisation were hardly required. Therefore, it was especially difficult for them to accept this new form of church structure and organisation, especially when forcibly enacted. Therefore, sharp negative reaction was not unexpected. Later developments would see this concept of church organisation taken very much further.

Concerns such as these were also on the mind of the General Superintendent, Pastor F W Stallard, arising especially from observations made as he moved amongst the churches. Eventually in March 1990 felt he had to issue a two-page warning about the state of affairs. It was an extremely stern statement and one that was most unusual for a person in his position.

He opened the document by quoting Hebrew 12:28-29 with its reference to God as 'a consuming fire' and went on to state that over the previous three years he had noticed a deterioration in standards of worship in all types and sizes of churches. He pointed to slovenly preparation of services, the almost complete disappearance of 'the spirit of reverence and awe' with a consequent 'lack of dignity' which he declared seemed to ignore the fact that 'we are worshipping the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, the Head of the Church.'

He also deplored the lack of attention to Scripture and prayer—in fact he stated bluntly, 'This is one of my greatest concerns.' Reporting that he had been in services where there had been no Bible reading at all and the only prayer being for the offering, he asked the question, 'Are we still men and women of the Book?' (emphasis original!) He pleaded 'both in love and concern' that the churches should 'maintain an excellence in our worship' because our Lord 'is so very worthy of that worship.' He concluded, 'Certainly let our worship be with vitality and life but also with awe and reverence.'

Even allowing for personal preference, this was a highly significant statement coming from the head of the denomination who was arguably more aware of conditions in the churches than anyone else. It indicates without doubt how seriously deficient the weekly life of the denomination had become.

Assessment and Achievement

So overall the situation was far from encouraging. The turmoil in Queensland was replicated nationally as evidenced from a long series of letters to the editor of the *Australian Baptist* newspaper when its columns were opened for three months in early 1988 for a limited period of discussion of the topic. It was a virtual frenzy of highly charged conflicting opinions, indicating that Australian Baptists were in serious disagreement about the matter.

The retiring secretary of Laidley church, Herb Mutzelburg summed it up in the *Queensland Baptist* October 1989 by stating that 'the emergence of the Charismatic movement in so many churches' was biggest issue of his 50+ years in the post. A correspondent in the *Australian Baptist* (16 Sept 1987) with wide knowledge of many churches right across the

country said that the denomination was ‘very sadly’ divided into two groups over the charismatic movement. These assessments were confirmed by the announcement in November 1990 that the Renewal Fellowship within Australian Baptist Churches was discontinuing its meetings after less than six years of operation on the grounds that there was no pressing need for it any longer, because ‘the Holy Spirit renewal within our denomination is here to stay.’ (Australian Baptist (AB) November 1990)

Several of the openly charismatic churches reported strongly growing membership figures in the early 1980s, but several declined in the later part of the decade, while others peaked in the early 1990s, only to decline in the early 2000s. Church membership statistics show that overall the denomination grew steadily during the last quarter of the century, but it did not keep up with the general population. Overall, charismatic church growth was little different from the rest.

However, there were some positive achievements, which were arguably encouraging signs for the future. The leadership of the General Superintendent, Pastor F W Stallard, short though it was (1987 to 1990) with its emphasis on relationship-building, warm-hearted pastoral care and the fostering of cooperation, was widely welcomed. There was a growth in prayer, encouraged especially by the ministry of Don Miller, speaker at the 1988 Assembly, with a video prayer campaign led by Pastor Stan Simmons which reached the vast majority of the churches. The pastoral care of pastors was set to be enhanced with the appointment of Area Superintendents after a long period of discussion. The adoption of Forward Thrust would provide a strong focus on evangelism and outreach for the denomination.

But even so, it was time for the Executive to act again and show leadership on the matter of the Charismatic movement. Further action was needed.

1990 Statement on the Charismatic Movement

So only about three years after the circulation of the original *Guide* with its Statement and papers, the Baptist Union leadership was aware of considerable concern about the Charismatic movement. There were requests for copies of the original publication, but it was felt that it needed revision before being re-circulated.

Accordingly in mid-1989, the Executive, at the instigation of the General Superintendent, F W Stallard, began a process to check the paper for ‘possible amendments’. A few points about it were noted as needing attention and there had been at least one expression of concern about it from a senior member of denomination. The Superintendents were given the task of reviewing the statement, after which the Executive would authorise the final wording. In January 1990 the revised document was adopted by the Executive for publication. The new version of booklet, including the papers (unrevised) with a new covering letter (this time from the General Superintendent), was released in February 1990.

The Statement itself, which was a little longer than the earlier version (796 vs 691 words) due mainly to the use of more verbose language, was not published separately. It was described as a ‘second draft’ but in fact it was a new version which did make some small but significant changes. The cover title was changed to acknowledge openly the issue of concern, ‘Baptist Union of Queensland - A Statement on Charismatic Issues’. This acknowledgement continued in the covering letter (headed, ‘A personal word’ from the General Superintendent) which was now described as a ‘statement’, not merely ‘an open letter’. It was also made clear that the Baptist Union Executive was responding to ‘continuing requests for the document’ and that concerns about the charismatic movement were being ‘constantly raised in many quarters.’ The Executive considered this to be ‘a very vital issue’ which had been ‘constantly raised in many quarters.’ It also expressed the need to make the views of the Executive ‘widely known’.

But contrary to the more strident nature of the title, the Statement was a little more subdued with the removal of the underlining of some words. There were two cases—the original had stressed that renewal should be a ‘daily experience’, and that churches should not accept just ‘any form of worship’ under the rubric of welcoming variety.

In the body of the document there were minimal but highly significant changes, reflecting the changed mood both in the churches and in the denominational leadership.

The opening paragraph (like the title) set the focus clearly and solely on the Charismatic movement itself (not implying, as the original statement did, that that it was just one issue among many in which there was ‘a diversity of beliefs and practices’). It also indicated that the continued concern for guidance on the matter had been going on ‘for some time’ even though it was less than four years since the first statement had been issued. It also acknowledged the actual state of affairs in the churches by referring in an understatement to a ‘bewildering diversity’ of ideas existing.

The document omitted the view that renewal could be expressed in different ways with different individuals. It now stated in a remarkable ecumenical gesture that ‘tolerance and love’ should be shown not only to Baptists (with different views) but ‘to all christians’ (sic). Furthermore, now in cases of intractable differences of opinion, it would be only as a last resort that division should occur.

There were slight variations in the section describing Baptist distinctives, but there was a very significant change in referring to the non-Baptist parties—they were now ‘Australian Pentecostal Churches’, not ‘Pentecostal and Charismatic’ churches. This was a necessary clarification which had become clearer in the few intervening years since the first publication and signalled a new approach to the issue.

Another significant change was the evaluation of those who adopted these (now only) Pentecostal views. They were no longer regarded as ‘ceasing to be Baptist’ but they merely ‘ceased to be in sympathy with Queensland Baptist emphases’. Extra sentences were added saying that ‘in order to maintain their integrity’ such people should find a church that ‘embraces Pentecostal distinctives’ or else, if they chose to remain in their original Baptist church, they should ‘not promote’ non-Baptist doctrines ‘for the sake of unity.’ Thus it was now the ‘non-Baptists’ who were now expected to leave (or at the very least, to be silent about their views).

So what this new statement did was to accept that the Charismatic movement was a continuing reality, but it was to be distinguished from Pentecostalism which was clearly identified as a separate movement. However in making these changes, the document failed to define ‘Charismatic’—despite its title! This meant that there was a large indefinite space opened up, in which all kinds of Charismatic views and practices could legitimately flourish. This signalled an ever-clearer acceptance of the Charismatic movement as an option for Baptists in Queensland than the 1986 document had done. This was a typically pragmatic solution, but time would show it had serious ramifications.

Once again there was little reaction to the statement. Letters (one very lengthy) were received from a couple of churches. Veteran former missionary, Rev C D Baldwin wrote to the Queensland Baptist refuting the possibility of tongue-speaking as a gift of the Holy Spirit, which was met with only desultory further reaction (and none from Queensland).

But a new era was about to dawn with the passing of the 1980s, which would introduce significant changes including a swing to a new direction.

Baptists and the 1990s

Baptists in Queensland were going to be impacted by the dramatic new atmosphere of the 1990s just as much as any other part of society. The most notable effect on Baptists in Queensland, at least coming from the denominational leadership, was concern about the current state of affairs and the need for a new approach to church and denominational life after the turbulent 1980s. It would be a decade of changes. For one thing, there had already been many changes of personnel—during this period there were at least 12 senior figures and staff who either died, resigned, were replaced or otherwise moved out of important denominational posts.

Then the Baptist Union itself was facing difficulties. The May 1990 issue of the *Queensland Baptist* magazine put it bluntly: ‘State of Union causes concern’ was the page 1 banner headline, introducing a report from the General Superintendent, F W Stallard, showing how dire the financial situation was. He pointed to three factors—poor communications, general economic pressures and a spirit of isolation. However, this was to be his last published statement because, before that issue of the magazine had even been finalised, he had died—a brief initial announcement was made on the same page as the main article. But in his short period in office, Stallard had already been setting a new direction with his very welcome pastoral approach to his role. This had begun to establish a new trend for the denomination. There would be many further steps along the path as the decade progressed.

The new approach was best seen in the words of the incoming President, Rev N E Weston, in the keynote address (Report Book 1989-90) in which he said,

Over many years now, there has been a strong emphasis on inward-looking ministries – developing body life; building one another up; discovering spiritual gifts; enjoying new concepts of worship; getting involved in small group experiences; experimenting with renewal ideas, studying new structures for church life, etc, but outreach and evangelism has been neglected, and this has been reflected in our annual statistics – minimal growth.’

Going on to call for a new surge which involved ‘outreach for the unreached’, he chose evangelism as the theme of his 1990 presidency. However, after a short time moving around amongst the churches in his presidential role, he was able to report a much better spirit in the midst of considerable diversity. He said that ‘there now seemed to be a far greater degree of understanding’ in contrast with the ‘judgmental’ attitude of earlier times. Yet he was still concerned about the ‘ineffectiveness of outreach and evangelism.’ (QB September 1990)

His successor, G H King also spoke on the ‘Mission of the Church’ in each of his two years, while in 1995 the state evangelist, Rev Drew Kelso repeated the same theme once again for his presidential thrust. The Associate General Superintendent of the Baptist Union, Rev John Tanner, had also struck the same note, calling the denomination to

repentance because of its failure to evangelise. He said, (QB February 1990), 'Christ called us to go. If we are not going we should repent for our disobedience.' Furthermore, he added,

If we're so tangled up in maintaining things that we are just running the machinery of the church instead of adding more of our relatives and friends who are dying without Christ, then we need to repent.

I think it calls for a deliberate act of repentance within the context of worship in every local church in Queensland, and it needs to start with pastors and church leaders.

The Forward Thrust movement, with its ambitious aim of extensive evangelism and church planting, continued after Stallard's death, but gradually morphed into merely a fund-raising process. In 1997 it was reported that there had been 21 churches constituted in the previous decade (although 2 were the result of split, 3 were re-plants and 8 others had closed prematurely.) The target of 20,000 members by 2000 was not achieved—and still has not been! However, reaching nearly 13,000 members it had improved by about 50% over 30 years, although this did keep pace with the general population growth.

Yet, for all the expansion there were also concerning losses. The BUQ Executive was alarmed by reports indicating there were substantial numbers of people leaving Baptist churches and moving to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. So in 1990 it decided to set up an investigation of the situation, although there was no indication of any further action.

So it fell to the incoming General Superintendent, Rev (later Dr) Stanley W Solomon, to lead the denomination into the new decade with all its uncertainty. He achieved considerable success in this task, but with nuances that would lead to a different approach once again.

Solomon had been a successful pastor at Townsville during the 1980s, and in his early days, a youth director for the Baptist Union. He served as General Superintendent during most of the new decade, from 1990-1998, and at the end of his tenure, was described as 'a catalyst for change.' (QB February 1998)

Faced with a difficult situation, it is noticeable that Solomon did not call on the charismatic legacy of the 1980s, which had promised so much, but rather looked to the traditional Queensland Baptist motives of increased evangelism, prayer and deeper commitment. An article in the *Queensland Baptist* at the commencement of his term summed it up with its heading: 'Fervour, urgency needed for evangelism priority'. (QB March 1991). Asking 'How do we move forward with fervour and urgency', he said,

Our great weaknesses are becoming so comfortable that the evangelism priority has all but disappeared from the life-style of many, 'labelling' others who think or do things differently from us, and using labels in a derogatory way, and equating leadership with rule or dictatorship and as a result adversely opposing attempts by God-appointed leaders to lead.

He backed up these calls for evangelism by repeatedly quoting a statement attributed to the noted missiologist, C Peter Wagner (1990, *Church planting for greater harvest*), that the best form of evangelism was church planting.

Solomon was also aware of the changing circumstances facing the denomination in the 1990s, and so proclaimed that it was necessary for Baptists to 'change or die' (May 1993). But as well as suggesting a range of practical measures to modernise church life, he also urged churches to 'allow for doctrinal diversity among members in the non-essential issues.' And as a warning, he added, 'be careful how narrowly you define "essential".' His was essentially a pragmatic approach which favoured evangelism and the spiritual life, and in this way, opened the door to a new era in the denomination.

He repeated this message often. In the *Queensland Baptist*, March 1994 he said, 'While Assemblies and forums discuss, argue and bicker ad nauseam' and 'while Christian people fall out of love and fellowship over such differences' it was the case that 'our friends and neighbours plummet headlong to Hell.' He said, 'This is to our shame' so 'We need to worship, pray, witness and live – and don't argue. Just do it.'

But halfway through his term, he was concerned that there had been little sign of change:

As I survey the work of the churches and my own role of leadership in this year past, I wonder where the fire is? Obviously, the fire of God has fallen in some places but even in those places, not in revival dimensions. There are churches, however, where although the outward appearance is unchanged, the fire has near gone out. (BUQ Annual Reports 1994)

A year later he repeated the same concern:

The vision will be fulfilled as we constantly obey Jesus as Lord, hold fast to the inerrant Scriptures, proclaim (tell) our friends the good news (Gospel), publicly stand for truth, justice and biblical morality in our society and constantly war against Satan in intercessory prayer. (BUQ Annual Reports 1995)

He became more pragmatic like this as time went on, focusing on whatever would produce growth, irrespective of its particular background or character.

However, although focused on church growth, evangelism and zeal for prayer, he was also obliged to deal with the realities of church life. In October 1993, he felt the need to issue a statement in the *Queensland Baptist* about a controversial Charismatic practice, prophecy, which was causing concern and division in the churches. He conceded that it had biblical precedent, so it could be accepted although 'with less than absolute divine authority'. He declared that it could be helpful for the guidance and edification of the Body and of individuals within the Body. He described it as 'a kind of ordinary congregational prophecy which God could use to bring things to the surface, but which were stated in human words. Therefore he announced that, since Scripture says, 'Do not quench the Spirit', it was 'quite validly part of church's life, properly regulated.'

There was also another troubling issue. He reported to the Assembly in 1993 that there had been 'a greater than usual loss from our ministers ranks through sexual sin.' So he took the unprecedented step of making a forthright statement in the *Queensland Baptist* (June 1993) on how this problem was being handled by the Baptist Union authorities. This was a problem that had already brought down the high-profile founder of the large Christian Outreach Centre, Clark Taylor, in 1989 (a second offence), and in later years, it would become a public scandal affecting many high-profile Pentecostal and other Christian leaders.

In addition, in 1993 Solomon found it necessary to report that 'There have been a significant number of churches this year which have struggled with internal conflict usually between a pastor and his "supporters" and opponents within the congregation. These churches and pastors have all suffered significant losses.'

To pursue the goal of evangelism and church growth so much desired by the leadership, many different schemes were adopted during this period. The Rick Warren Saddleback 'Purpose Driven Church' scheme and the Bill Hybels Willowbank 'Seeker Sensitive' model became very popular. These schemes typically used well-tested principles adapted for the contemporary situation, and were based on traditional evangelical theologies of evangelism, conversion and church growth.

Meanwhile, the Baptist Union, its officials and staff were increasingly preoccupied with a series of top-level reviews of the organisation stimulated by the SSRR reports arising out of the Law Society House matter. These developments involved the wholesale restructure of the Baptist Union which took place during the 1990s and were not completed until after the end of the decade, leaving the shape and life of the denomination unrecognizable compared with former days. Much time and energy were diverted to these matters, but the laudable impassioned pleas of people like the General Superintendent for increased spiritual passion and evangelism did not seem to get the traction anticipated.

Charismatic Developments

During this period of change and more outward focus, the development of Charismatic interests with the Baptist denomination continued, but they were affected by some developments within the wider Pentecostal and Charismatic worlds.

As pointed out in Part 6, the Wimber movement, and with its emphasis on signs and wonders, had already begun its impact in Queensland in the late 1980s. The first Wimber Vineyard churches were established in 1995. This movement fell on fertile soil in Queensland, not only with the outcomes of the Mapleton Leadership conferences and the 'Pacific spirituality' but in the much earlier background of pietistic evangelicalism which had been typical of Baptist life for decades.

The Wimber movement was characterised as 'the third wave of the Holy Spirit', indicating a significant change from two earlier movements (Pentecostal and Charismatic) in that Wimber regarded the gift of tongues as simply one of the available blessings of the Spirit, rather than linking this gift strongly to a definitive and necessary second experience, as the Pentecostals did. Similarly, he did not link healing to the atonement as in the earlier movements, but rather with the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus Christ, as depicted in the Gospels. These views were more in line with the 1990 BUQ Statement and so would be more acceptable to Baptists in Queensland. Accordingly, there are anecdotal reports of the personal use of tongues seen in devotional terms, a practice which received some endorsement in the Wimber era, although it is reported that Wimber himself did not experience the phenomenon.

There was some interest in, and some leakage of Baptists to the growing Wimber movement of Vineyard churches as well as some reaction to its claims. However, the main and enduring impact was a general one across many churches in worship style and content, including Vineyard music.

Already there had been significant changes to worship and the use of music during the 1970s and 1980s in Baptist churches as a result of the Charismatic movement. The most noticeable change was the introduction of 'choruses' into the services. In the morning service, they either replaced hymns in the traditional format of the services where from opening call to worship to closing benediction the flow of the worship through various phases was assisted by hymns and other forms of music. Alternatively a number of choruses might be sung as a block.

The most common of these choruses came from the three *Scripture in Song* books which were produced by New Zealanders, David and Dale Garratt and issued from 1979 to 1988 with nearly 700 pieces. In the first volume, the songs were typically very short and based closely on the text of Scripture—hence the title 'choruses'. However, later these and other new forms of music were not of the same format, and hence the term 'Contemporary Christian Music' (CCM) would be more suitable, although the term 'chorus' remained widely used. The *Scripture in Song* choruses were also written for piano with guitar chords, which marked a clear departure from the common earlier use of the organ to accompany hymns written in four-part vocal harmony style, although often pianos were in use as well.

These changes were radical and not appreciated by all, so the widespread 'worship wars' began in which advocates of both systems held very strong and divisive views, often causing severe disruption to church life. In contrast with hymnbooks which were mostly denominational in origin, CCM was typically interdenominational. This meant that Baptist distinctives found in almost all of the hymnbooks in use previously were lost, another cause of concern for some. The highly syncopated and unmetrical musical style of CCM was another issue, along with arrangements which were not always manageable by the musician. Similarly, the notoriously poor singability of some pieces caused problems, again contrasting strongly with hymns, a genre that had been honed over a long period to suit the abilities of non-professional singers in the congregations, as well as many of the musicians.

Soon there were more forms of CCM, especially songs produced by Hills Christian Life Centre, Sydney (later, Hillsong), especially from those of Geoff Bullock, who joined the church in 1983 and was its worship pastor from 1987 to 1995 where he also directed their popular conferences. One of his early much-admired songs was 'The power of your love' (1992). Two volumes of songs appeared, (1992, 1993), with only a few pieces in each, although Bullock's pieces were often regarded by church worship leaders as separate from the official CLC productions. Another popular song-writer from this centre was Darlene Zschech, creator of the highly popular 'Shout to the Lord' (1993) who succeeded Bullock as worship pastor (1996-2007).

A study of Baptist churches in Brisbane and Ipswich conducted in 1996 (Catherine Grieve, *Music use for congregational singing by Baptist church in Brisbane and Ipswich since 1900*, Giffith University, 1996; *QB Forum* No. 38 December 1997) showed that there was widespread use of CCM, but that its introduction had created considerable tension (p 139). Of the 24 churches responding (all 53 churches were contacted and multiple surveys were completed within each church), at least 75% used both hymns and CCM (p 137), drawing variously from five main sources (all of them used *Scripture in Song*) (p 216-7). One church used CCM only, and two churches also used music created by their own people.

Wimber, previously a professional musician, made a significant contribution to music in worship and created his own particular form of CCM, using western soft rock style, the largest selling genre of Christian music in the 1990s for his simple devotional songs, often styled 'love songs to Jesus' (which contrasted with the more strident type of music being produced elsewhere at the time). A few churches in the Queensland study were found to be using his contributions.

But his impact was not only in the form of the music but most importantly in the way it was to be used within the worship service. In contrast to the typical service with its rhythm of music, readings, prayers, hymns and other elements, he used a three-part form of service with a lengthy period of music to begin, then preaching and finally ministry (prayer, deliverance and the like) For the crucial initial stage, he advocated an often very lengthy free-flowing period of music and singing that moved through five-stage process (*Renewal Journal* 6, 1995, 'Worship: intimacy with God' by John and Carol Wimber). He used the tempo and keys of the music to take the worshippers from the initial gathering in a 'call to worship' right through the depths of 'intimacy with God', which he said was the aim of the entire process. The strong emphasis on 'intimacy with God' in Wimber's approach (from his Quaker background) was also another aspect that would appeal to Baptists in Queensland with its pietistic evangelical background.

So the 'praise and worship' segment with its five phases was intended to do what the entire service did in the earlier forms of worship. The second stage, the 'sermon', was orphaned from 'worship' and had only a didactic function. The 'ministry' segment was also unconnected. Thus the nature and purpose of the worship service, not just its musical content or other particular features had been radically changed.

The musical aspect of this form of service became almost the standard in Baptist worship in Queensland even if other aspects of Wimber's theology were not endorsed. However, it is doubtful if many understood this most distinctive aspect of the Wimber phenomenon, the five-phase use of music, much less applied it in any conscious way. The form of 'contemporary praise and worship', which also came under other Charismatic influences over time, soon degenerated into a period of singing (reminiscent of the old 'pre-service praise service in the evening services) using contemporary music as a medium, the quality of which varied widely according to skills and talents of the particular church. In fact, in less than 20 years, by 2008, Rev Dr John Sweetman, Principal of Malyon Theological College, could say after observing many churches around the state that there was a 'largely stereotyped' form of service again after some years of changes, which was made up of the following:

Worship services are almost identical in the majority of churches. Most churches are very similar in their style of worship. After the diversity of the last 25 years, this is quite remarkable A typical service would be five or six songs (divided into two segments by a talking spot), a sermon, and a final song. Singing (accompanied by a band) and preaching would be central.

This form of worship, although it followed the structure of Wimber worship, showed none of the distinctive Wimber distinctives regarding the five phases of worship or any other particular theology, and hence the accuracy of the term, 'largely stereotyped'.

Wimber's approach to music was also matched by his advocacy of informality in dress and other aspects of worship. This Wimberesque feature also became standard practice in churches, which transformed worship dramatically from the former patterns—to the consternation of many.

There were other features of Wimber's approach that were favourable to Baptists. One was its strongly missional approach and the other, his emphasis on every member ministry, summed up in his aphorism, 'Everyone gets to play' which would resonate strongly with the Baptist idea of the priesthood of all believers. However, this principle did not apply to church government as it did historically and distinctively for Baptists, but only to the worship, a feature which emasculated Baptist polity. In fact, Wimber churches were not congregational in any sense, but strongly authoritarian—another trend that was effectively morphing itself into the Baptist scene in Queensland.

However, there was one major strand of Wimber's approach that did not find traction amongst Baptists in Queensland. This was his concept of 'power evangelism.' He believed that contemporary evangelism needed to follow the pattern seen in the Gospels where 'signs and wonders' accompanying the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God were what led to conversions. He argued that modern-day Christians had to reject their almost complete acceptance of a naturalistic worldview and adopt instead a 'supernaturalist' one in which the miraculous was the norm in, as in the period of the Gospels. Hence the need for 'power' or supernatural evangelism.

This aspect of his teaching was never taken up by Baptists in Queensland whose strong investment in traditional 'natural' evangelism was being reinforced and boosted during the 1990s as a way of dealing with the issues the denomination faced. There was no chance that this investment, going back to the origins of the denomination, would be wasted! The only changes made to that traditional form were new incarnations associated with new developments such as the 'Purpose Driven Church' emanating from Rick Warren and the Saddleback Church which appeared from the mid-1990s and the 'seeker sensitive' style originating with the Willowbank Community Church and Bill Hybels from around the mid-1990s. There were other variations as well such as the Lay Renewal movement—featuring both personal evangelism, the gifting of an evangelist and church-based community-oriented programmes, but none of these adopted the 'power' theology.

So overtly the Wimber movement made little overt impact on Baptists in Queensland, but covertly it was a different story.

The Toronto Blessing or 'laughing revival', which began in 1994, also did not have as much impact on Baptists in Queensland as in other forms of Pentecostalism or the Charismatic movement. This movement, named for its origins at the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church, presented itself with dramatic physical phenomena including falling, laughing/crying, shaking, prostration, healing, tongues, and unusual noises like animal sounds. These bizarre characteristics, no doubt, left many people unpersuaded about its spiritual nature, but it was pointed out that many of the famous and well-accredited revivals in the past had been associated with unusual phenomena, a fact which has not often been realised by those who looked back to these revivals with much approval.

It was reported in *Renewal Journal* 5 (1994) that people attending the Wimber conference in Brisbane in April of that year also saw some of the same phenomena occurring there. There was some acceptance of it, at least its basic characteristics as a renewal movement if not the external phenomena.

In May 1995, the *Queensland Baptist* printed a full-page, edited version, of an article by Rev Dr David Coffey, Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The Toronto movement had made a huge impact in the UK, especially at the famous Holy Trinity Brompton church (the founder of the Alpha Course). This article was largely an even-handed discussion of

the phenomenon, advocating caution with respect to its spiritual validity and value. However, there were some strong responses to the article in subsequent issues of magazine, with one correspondent regarding its publication as covert endorsement of the Toronto Blessing by the Baptist Union of Queensland.

However, there was no other evidence of this, although in the March 1995 issue, another article taking the same line, this time by the General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, Dr Denton Lotz, had been published. After describing several different scenarios where charismatic influences had been present in various churches and with widely varying reactions, he said,

We must not be afraid, but welcome those positive contributions to renewal that come from various movements outside of our tradition. ... Let's all be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit and the discipline and instruction of Scripture and the fellowship of believers as part of our trinitarian faith worshipping God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There was not much other reaction, but Rev Ken Kilah of the charismatic Caloundra Baptist Church included a visit to the Toronto church as an option on his world tour in 1996, thus joining the many thousands of others who made the same pilgrimage.

The NCLS survey of 1996 found that 21% of responders nationwide approved of the Toronto blessing, including 10% who had experienced it, but 47% of Baptists disapproved, with 7% having experienced it. A cautious approach was reflected in the (undated) policy statement by Bracken Ridge Baptist Church on its website, which said:

We accept that some of these manifestations (e.g. laughing, deep sobbing) may be from God and do not wish to discredit anything that God is doing. Certainly the Bible contains some rather unusual manifestations (e.g. 1 Sam 19:23-24). ... We will not encourage these manifestations but neither will we rule out the more 'normal' manifestations.

Although there were reports from many places around the world that the 'Toronto blessing' did have positive impacts on churches and people, it was soon disowned by the Vineyard movement and its leader, John Wimber—the Toronto church was expelled from the organisation within two years of the appearance of the phenomenon on the grounds that it was no longer operating within the Vineyard model and, in particular, that it was making use of practices which were outside the biblical records and which could not be justified theologically.

Meanwhile, closer to home, there were movements in the Pentecostal churches which were impacting Baptists in Queensland. Perhaps the most outstanding of all was the development of local mega-churches, including Christian Outreach Centre (later Citipointe) and also Hills Christian Life Centre (later Hillsong) which took over the operation of Garden City Christian Church, Mount Gravatt (regarded as Australia's first megachurch) in 2009.

Apart from a general atmosphere of success and vitality created by the megachurches which affected many other churches, the most significant influences on other churches, including Baptists in Queensland, coming from Hillsong were its music and its conferences. The conferences held annually from 1986 featured well known speakers and musicians and attracted many thousands of attendees. They featured not only inspirational speakers, both local and international, but were also a high-power music-fest, serving to introduce and disseminate the Hillsong style (the church was renamed Hillsong in 2001 capitalising on the popularity of its music which went under that name). Along with millions of other Christians around the world, Baptists in Queensland used Hillsong music extensively. However, there has been controversy over whether using their music also involves not only supporting and endorsing the program, philosophy and finances of the church, but more importantly, a subtle acceptance of its Pentecostal doctrines, especially Prosperity Theology.

These issues have not been a source of major public discussion amongst Baptists in Queensland, but in the current circumstances, when there have been many serious issues raised about Hillsong church (and others), it has become a matter of concern. However, given the sheer amount and quality of music produced by Hillsong (and later by other similar organisations such as Bethel and Elevation), it is difficult to take any other approach. Those with traditional Baptist views of worship remain uneasy with these developments and, in particular, so do those who are inclined to a more Reformed approach.

Apart from the impact of Pentecostal music, the apparent threat of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements which had precipitated the 1986 and 1990s statements from the Baptist Union began to decline. This was largely due to the fact that Pentecostalism was changing rapidly from its traditional doctrines and practices by moving more overtly to a Prosperity Gospel with its 'wealth and health' teaching. This was to be increasingly linked inextricably with its post-millennial 'seven mountains' dominionism teaching, or 'hyper-victorious living post-millennial eschatology' (P James Noble, 'A brief history of Pentecostalism in Australia', 1917)

This concept is usually traced back to ideas promulgated around 1975 by Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth with a Mission, and widely adopted in Pentecostal, Charismatic and New Apostolic circles, with Revelation 11:15 as a key text: 'the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord'. This teaching holds that because of the coming of the Kingdom of God in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, and of his victory over the fallen world through the cross and resurrection, believers should recapture seven great areas of human culture (including government, education, the economy and media etc) in the lead up to triumphant return of Christ. ('Invading Babylon', by Lance Wallnau and Bill Johnson, © 2013; at the popular level, Elle Hardy, Beyond Belief: How Pentecostal Christianity is taking over the world' – Hurst and Company, 2021)

This teaching and other related developments coloured Pentecostalism, and were obviously highly distinct from most Baptist views. So the form of Pentecostalism, as defined in the 1990 Baptist Union Statement, had become irrelevant. No other update dealing with these later developments was ever issued, arguably because the distinction between this modern form of Pentecostalism and Baptist life was now so considerable. As such, Pentecostalism did not pose any existential threat as it had in the past.

However, on a more general level, the obvious numerical success of the Pentecostal movement continued to be a factor in the consciousness of many. Its highly promoted positivity, and the optimistic view it had of spreading the Christian message through its 'dominion' theology was hard to resist, especially when other churches were performing so poorly. There was a desultory round of correspondence in the *Queensland Baptist* in early 1997 when one correspondent suggested that Baptists should shun the negative and pessimistic pre-millennial eschatology which was the typical traditional belief of many, in favour of post-millennialism. This view was rejected by a later contributor as being a Charismatic teaching which was 'not true Christianity.' (QB March, May, 1997) However, nothing was said about the original correspondent's blatant willingness to casually change doctrine for the sake of numerical success!

Meanwhile, under the impact of these developments, charismatic BUQ churches had varying experiences.

Baptist Churches in 1990s

The 1990 Statement by the BUQ Executive opened up a new and enhanced approach to the Charismatic movement. There were some general reactions and developments.

During the 1990s, the 'Pacific Factor' (see Part 6), which had been introduced during the 1980s at the Mapleton Leadership Conferences, was prominent. Many churches welcomed teams of people from the Solomon Islands and had them minister at regular and special services. Typical of these was Stanthorpe Baptist Church. It was reported in the February 1991 issue of the *Queensland Baptist* that people described the visit of the Solomon Island team as 'something beautiful ... something good.' They were 'So humble and so close to the Lord they adored, that being in contact with them one could not help being drawn to the Saviour.' In preparation, church people had been meeting daily at 5am to pray for revival. There were meetings and gatherings in many locations, but the main Sunday service was 'a time [they] would never forget.' They reported, 'the Holy Spirit had taken over. ... Revival has come'.

Another sign was the rapid adoption of the Alpha course by many churches. The first church to announce its use was the well-known Charismatic church at Labrador on the Gold Coast in 1995. This highly popular course was developed in 1977 at the influential Charismatic Anglican Holy Trinity Church Brompton, London as means of teaching the basics of the Christian faith to church members and adherent, but by the 1990s it had been expanded to become an evangelistic tool. It consisted of a number of weeks of informal meetings featuring discussion around a meal. But the highlight was regarded as the 'weekend away' which was deliberately charismatic in nature. After this pivot, the final parts of the course followed up with discussion of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The course soon became extremely popular not only in Great Britain but around the world, in many languages and in many denominations.

By the end of the 1990s, 10 more Baptist churches in Queensland had announced their use of the course including the Charismatic churches Fairfield, Heritage and Burpengary. It was promoted strongly in an article in the *Queensland Baptist* in November 1999 indicating that the course was by then being used in more than 90 countries around the world. It has since become a regular part of the outreach of many churches and denominations, including Roman Catholic, although the full course with its charismatic content, may not always be used. The Baptist denomination is reported by the Alpha organisation as one of the main users in Australia.

The 1990 Statement enabled churches interested in the Charismatic movement to flourish without inhibition. Several of them did and their memberships grew or continued to grow from the earlier positions.

However in one prominent case a serious situation developed which affected its future significantly. In the mid-1990s problems developed within the leadership of Gateway Baptist Church, at that time arguably the leading Charismatic church, which led to the sudden departure of its influential pastor, Brian Andrew. Andrew had originally come from the

highly influential charismatic church, Spreydon Baptist Church, Christchurch, New Zealand. Strong growth had occurred under his ministry, but this momentum was lost with his departure, and even though various measures were tried, it could not be recaptured.

As Sam Hey ('God in the Suburbs and Beyond', PhD, Griffith University, 2011, p 244) pointed out, the unplanned departure of Andrew from the church was significant because it was part of a series of high-profile calamities overcoming other significant charismatic groups. There had been the implosion of the flamboyant Logos Foundation based in Toowoomba when the former Baptist founder, Howard Carter, resigned in August 1990 following exposure of sexual affairs. Then closer to home, the two other large Charismatic churches in the Bible-belt of southern Brisbane in which Gateway was now located also were forced to depart. As Hey states,

The founder of the Garden City AOG megachurch [Rev R Klimionok] was accused of financial manipulation. ... The Gateway Baptist megachurch felt the strain of expansion that contributed to a disagreement between the founder and church elders that led to his resignation in 1996.'

And

'the COC founder [Pastor Clark Taylor] resigned [in 1989] after allegations of sexual misconduct.'

Although the reasons for these megachurch leaders' resignations varied greatly, the common theme of an overemphasis on charismatic leadership with insufficient accountability and support was present in each case. While some megachurches such as Hillsong continued to grow under their new leadership, the attendance of some levelled off or declined from the peaks they reached in the late 1980's.

Under the spirit of the 1990 Baptist Union Statement, it was expected that all parties, Charismatic, anti-Charismatic or otherwise, would tolerate each other and allow each group to pursue its own vision of Christian and church life as it wished without judgement. Although some churches did pursue their own vision enthusiastically, in general, other aspects of church life and various particular issues, such as the structural reorganisation of the Baptist Union, gradually took over the focus of attention. These developments were some of the factors that caused the General Superintendent, Rev S W Solomon, to be so disappointed with progress, lamenting that, as far as he could see, 'the fire has near gone out.' (Annual Report 1994)

But this principle of toleration could also have a negative side as well. A Baptist Theological College (later Malyon Theological College) lecturer, Rev G Sunstrom, warned about this in the November 1994 issue of the *Queensland Baptist*, saying,

Factions seem to be developing within our denomination. By this I mean a growing lack of acceptance by some of the positions that differ from their own. Is it true that there are those who would love to say out loud that certain churches should not belong in the Union because they are too so-called 'charismatic' and to be 'charismatic' is not to be truly Baptist? ... My concern is that we are seeing a gradual polarizing and hardening of certain positions within our denomination. This can constitute attitudinal sin which is dangerous. For Paul, it was a sign of immaturity in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1: 10, 3:4).

The BUQ and Charismatics/Pentecostalism

So the principle of toleration could have negative consequences, but there was little further attention paid by the Baptist Union leadership to the Charismatic Movement or Pentecostalism in Queensland for most of the 1990s. However, there were some difficulties late in the decade with more extreme issues, and with Pentecostalism as distinct from the Charismatic movement.

First, in 1998, there were discussions within the Baptist Union as to the boundaries between Baptist beliefs and practices and those of Pentecostalism in regard to the convictions of those making application for the Baptist ministry. The 1990 Statement was soon re-affirmed as the official position. There was a suggestion that this Statement would be reviewed again, but no action was taken.

Then in 1999 there was awareness that a new development was occurring under the name of 'Apostolic Church Leadership' or the 'New Apostolic Reformation' (NAR), promulgated especially by the well-known US missiologist, C Peter Wagner. NAR focused on the list of five church leadership gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 and claimed that a new era of the church has arrived in which the offices of apostle and prophet in particular had been re-instated with extraordinary powers. According to this view, apostles in particular have supreme authority over the church, receiving direct revelation from God for the operations of the church. This concept, of course, varies enormously from Baptist church congregational government, and even historic episcopal models. As a central tenet, NAR also advocated 'dominion theology' which

teaches that Christians have the power, right and obligation to reclaim authority over the fallen world systems and cultures in the name of Christ. Political involvement, theocracy and spiritual warfare over demonic and other evil forces are typically parts of the *modus operandi* of the NAR.

Several examples of this movement had appeared around Australia and a 'National Apostolic and Prophetic Conference' was to be held in Brisbane in February 2000, featuring Wagner and many Australia speakers including some Baptists. Attendance was around 3000 people. The Baptist Union Executive sent representatives to this event and their report was accepted, but no further action or discussion took place.

However, many of the features of the NAR at the local and regional level advocated by the conference speakers have become almost common place in the period since. These, as indicated in reports, include generic names for churches, the pastor as leader not so much the employee of the church, the congregation being the incubator of new leaders rather than theological college, 'plugged in worship', an emphasis on tithing to solve financial problems, and mission-driven outreach.

In the meantime, two Queensland churches which had followed Pentecostal lines strongly had come to the attention of the Baptist Union Executive.

The first was Peace Memorial Baptist Church in North Rockhampton. This church, located initially at 101 High Street, had its origins in the 1930s and became known as North Rockhampton Baptist church. It was strengthened in 1975 with the absorption of other churches at Park Avenue and Mount Morgan. It became involved in difficulties in the early 1980s when the pastor, Rev Keith Legge, wanted to adopt Reformed Baptist principles, but the Baptist Union reacted strongly against that move. A little later it was led by Rev Colin Britten (1982-87), an acknowledged charismatic, who began moving the church in that direction with changes to the worship services and occasional prophecies. Although there was some resistance, the membership climbed beyond 100.

After the conclusion of Britten's pastorate, the church called a Salvation Army officer, Captain John Alley, commencing in 1988. The church continued its growth pattern, reaching a maximum of over 220 members in 1995, with a large staff, ancillary ministries (school, ministry training institution, bookshop) and several satellite churches in the surrounding areas (including Gracemere, Yeppoon, Mount Morgan and Monto). It relocated into large new premises at 650 Norman Road, opened in 1994. By now the church had moved strongly into charismatic practices and beliefs. In particular, Alley referred to a 'prophecy' of 1992 to assert his authority as an apostle taking much greater power in the church. He soon became a strong advocate in Queensland and beyond of the 'Apostolic movement' which was promoted by Dr Peter Wagner in the USA. The name of the church was changed yet again to become 'Peace International Christian Church', indicating that it saw itself as the base for a far-reaching ministry extending well beyond the local and national areas.

A 'Charter for Peace International Network of Christian Ministries' issued in February 1997 stated the belief that 'The Holy Spirit is restoring the ministry of apostles to lead, govern, and father the body of Christ'. It went on to say,

We have heard the call of Christ to rise and build a network of Christian ministries which will span the globe and every nation. We believe we have a specific commission to facilitate the ministry of apostles and the networking of churches and other ministries in all nations.

The document added,

Apostolic ministry is the need of the hour not only to bring covering, protection, blessing and success to these young ministers but also to unite these various churches in strong networks under the leadership of local and international apostles and prophets.

The Charter explained that 'The apostolic Network is not a denomination, nor a mission society' and that there was no intention to separate from the Baptist Union. However, questions began to be raised about the characteristics and direction of the church, both locally (leading to the loss of many supporters), and also in the Baptist Union. The Executive showed serious concern about this development and after considerable investigation and discussion, it brought a recommendation to the Baptist Assembly in 2000 indicating that Peace Church had withdrawn from the Baptist Union and that its pastor, John Alley had also ceased to be recognised a Baptist minister. The property reverted to the Baptist Union (which had a significant interest in it through its loan scheme) and eventually it was taken over by Rockhampton Baptist Tabernacle which had found itself obliged to leave its site in the central city after nearly 140 years.

Burpengary Baptist Church was another case of concern for the Baptist Union Executive. This church was established in early 1980s in a developing area north of Brisbane, quickly becoming a viable church, although not without tensions over charismatic and other matters from the beginning, resulting in the loss of some members. The church was led from 1988 to 1990 by Rev Keith Bennett under whose influence charismatic influences again became evident, once more with some tensions. However, from 1992 when Rev Keith Buxton (1992-2006) formerly from the United Kingdom and with missionary experience, became pastor, it moved very quickly to a definite charismatic stance, with many changes also to

the organisational structure and life of the church. As early as his first year at the church, he wrote to the *Queensland Baptist* (April 1992) replying to a letter which had appeared in a previous issue objecting to the Charismatic movement. Buxton said

It is precisely such opinions ... that contribute to and even foster misunderstanding and even division within our Baptist community. There is a clear inference in this letter that those of a charismatic persuasion of whom I am one though such 'labels' are often unhelpful do not hold 'to the doctrine of faith and the authority of the Word of God'. Furthermore, it is clearly implied by my brother pastor that I am deceiving, or at the very least in danger of deceiving, those whom I pastor, and that I am an (unwitting) agent of 'a counterfeit spirit of Jesus'.

He went on to say,

I would lovingly suggest that sweeping condemnations of 'charismatics', made either in ignorance or in fear, or perhaps both, are not in keeping with the Holy Spirit, evident in many areas of the church in these days.

Then in 1993, he was featured in a full-sized page 1 article in the May issue of the *Queensland Baptist*, declaring that his church was 'on a pilgrimage of discovery' as it moved to a new site and was erecting a large new building. He reported that people had received physical and spiritual healing and were being 'renewed' and 'revitalised'. He attributed these developments first of all to the discovery of 'a biblical balance in using spiritual gifts'. He also indicated that the church was 'consciously charismatic' and 'consciously committed to renewal' but, at the same time, in the exact spirit of the 1990 Statement, 'also committed strongly to the Baptist family of churches'. Although acknowledging the use of spiritual gifts, he rejected claims that his church was 'Pentecostal' arguing that 'people who call us Pentecostal have failed to come to an understanding of biblical, spiritual renewal.' He ended the article by advertising his willingness to help other churches interested in 'renewal'.

The new church site with its ambitious building program was a base for equally impressive ministry plans. There were many baptisms and a sharp increase in membership to well in excess of 200, although there were claims that many were not locals. With this expansion, the church grew increasingly charismatic—to the point where, in 1988, there were mature plans to sell the entire property to a large Pentecostal church, Reach Out for Christ, led by Steve Ryder. Both the pastor, Buxton and his church would then leave the Baptist denomination.

But this did not eventuate, and there were increasing problems with the property, which was highly indebted to the Baptist Union. Buxton's pastorate ended in 2006 and the church sought to re-invent itself as a much smaller but still strong church with a much lower charismatic profile. It eventually left the Baptist Union and operated elsewhere in the district under a different name, leaving the property to be occupied by a new Baptist Union-approved church plant.

Conclusion - what did it all achieve?

The 1990s, such a significant decade in many ways, saw the Baptist Union and its churches also pass through many changes. As the period came to a conclusion, denominational restructuring, which included some attention to basic beliefs and practice, as well as some new personnel, along with new methods of operation with community involvement, church planting and evangelism were some of the main interests.

By the turn of the century the Charismatic movement was no longer an issue of concern generally for Baptists in Queensland. Although some churches and people continued to be attracted to its practices, it came to be regarded as just another option—in true post-modern style! The outward forms, such as the use of distinctive music and practices like clapping and the raising of hands in worship, were simply matters of preference, with hardly any underlying or deeper significance—or at least, pastors and people seemed to be ignorant of or ignored any such meaning. By 2008, Rev Dr John Sweetman, Principal of the Malyon Theological College concluded, 'The renewal movement has waned.'

So what had thirty years of turmoil achieved? What was the significance of this period of Queensland Baptist church history which had initially promised so much in terms of growth and claimed so much in relation to the spiritual life and renewal, and yet had caused such angst? It had given way, as Sweetman said, 'to a more pragmatic era'. Yet, in doing so it had failed to produce the promised long-lasting renewal. In the meantime, it had been the cause of wholesale attitudinal and organisational changes in the denomination and the churches, especially in forms of worship, church organisation and leadership patterns.

One influential senior Baptist lay leader opined that the coming of the Charismatic movement was the greatest thing that ever happened to Baptists in Queensland! He was applauding the way the Charismatic movement had so dramatically destroyed what he regarded as the oppressive negative and legalistic forms and traditions that had blighted the

denomination for years. But this was, of course, only the personal outlook of a particular individual with his own set of values, and was certainly not the experience of all. As usual in such cases, the explosive impact caused much collateral damage.

Despite all its promise and claims made for it by its proponents as being a revival of the long-lost standard form of Christianity and church life, it had faded away and left in its wake a mixture of blessing and heartache. One pastor said, '[A] lot of people who pursued charismatic Christianity with a desire for a close, whole of life walk with Christ, found charismatic Christianity as sterile as traditionalism.' (*Adelphoi*, August 1994).

Earlier movements in the life of the Baptist denomination, such as the post-World War I 'Forward Movement' and the All-Age Sunday School Movement of the 1960s, had, each one in its own way, provided welcome reinvigoration. Yet the impact of the Charismatic movement was much more dubious.

One thing was abundantly clear—despite the considerable upheaval the Charismatic Movement had caused to the lives of many people and churches, it had utterly failed to produce what an earlier influential leader had anticipated,

We 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. (*BUQ Annual Report*, 1983)

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