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The River is Wide, But The Way is Narrow Part II

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Since Discernment Ministries was first published in 1989, we have carefully evaluated the direction certain "streams" of the Church have taken. It is not difficult to recognize that today signs and wonders will have an important role in leading what is now being recognized as the "cutting edge" church.

Without any doubt, we are human beings and so therefore have "human" experiences. There are those who weep and cry in the Presence of God. Many relate to God by their glorious experiences. However, our experiences are that - our experiences. As we move on, our experiences can and will change. If discouragement sets in, what then? Do we look for another experience? If so, disillusionment will eventually be the result. It is rather time to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. This growth can only be accomplished through the effectual working of His Word in our lives. There are many today who are partaking of blessings that they perceive to be of God. However, the Word of God warns us to be careful of seducing spirits and doctrines of

devils. Many enjoy a spiritual "high", but, alas for many the wave breaks sooner than expected and they are plunged into valleys of discouragement.

There is not a Christian on the face of the earth who would want to be guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Nor could they remain a Christian if they were guilty of such a serious evil. To level such an accusation against another Christian is tantamount to "spiritual intimidation". When there is a real work of the Holy Spirit, the fruits of the same Spirit will be in operation. Judgments and curses would not be leveled at those who may see things differently.

As Christians take their places on either side of the "revival" issue, the enemy has a field day. Accusations of blasphemy and pronouncements of impending judgment against those who oppose a "move of God" resound more and more loudly. The more vociferous the voices, the more the vital issues get clouded and reality is hidden behind the smoke of words that only reinforce the defense. What are these vital issues? Let us consider the prime issue. . .

The wide river of a One World Church moves steadily toward its goal to unite all the religions of the world by the year 2000. As the representative of the Catholic Church, the Pope makes overtures to the Hindus, Moslems and other religious leaders. After all, he has stated that we all worship the same God.

Bridges have been built to and from Rome at a rapid rate as the close of the century looms. The most significant bridge bringing together the sisters, "Charisma" (Charismatics), "Evangeline" (Evangelicals) and "Roma" (Catholicism) was the signing of a declaration on March 29, 1994 in New York. This document was entitled, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium". This document was formed specifically to ignore critical theological differences and have everyone work together as a "bridge-builders".

The endorsement of this document was a culmination of efforts spanning a number of years. The Charismatics had successfully established distinct ties with both Rome and the Evangelicals. (See Part I of this article in the March/April issue). It is of little wonder that the ratification of this document occurred so easily. Many viewed this document as a ground breaking effort to unite Roman Catholicism with evangelical Protestantism. In truth, it was the initial harvest - the first fruits of years of unity seed-sowing.

Since Charisma was already flowing with Evangeline, there was no problem in formalizing this new "unity". Among the many signers were: Bill Bright, Mark Noll, Charles Colson, John White, J.I. Packer, Jesse Miranda, Pat Robertson, Richard Land, Archbishop William Murphy and Cardinal John O'Connor.

One of the signers of the document commented: "What I brings the two communities together to this point is the experience of worshipping together in the Charismatic movement".

The foundations have been laid again for a One World Church! Accountability groups have been put in place via Promisekeepers, various discipleship ministries (cell churches) and Shepherding (Covenant) teachings. A global missions movement has brought foreign missions to the fore.

The streams from Latin American, Africa, China and other places have joined forces with this river that is gaining momentum in the United States, England, Australia, South Africa and other countries. New authority structures have quietly fallen into place.

There are those so called "visionaries" who see these radical changes. They are taking full advantage of these changes to set in place a new paradigm.

As emphasized before, terminology is very important to comprehend what exactly is taking place. There are those who would avoid being involved with "Charismatic" groups, so the label is conveniently changed.

C. Peter Wagner observed that the word "charismatic" "now has a half life of about 3-5 years as a meaningful technical term. It is rapidly losing the usefulness it might have had a decade or two ago because barriers which were high then are much lower now". (From a portion of a paper presented by C. Peter Wagner at the National Symposium on the Post Denominational Church).

A term used to describe this changing church in 1994 - 1995 was the "postdenominational church". This term, however, was difficult to explain to people within a specific denomination. It also did not sit well with certain denominational leaders. It was determined that this term would wound the Body of Christ.

Finally a term was agreed upon for the new courses C. Peter Wagner would be teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary. These courses would be called: Churches of the New Apostolic Paradigm.

This term is used in such a way that all three Sisters can adapt it accordingly.

ROMA (Roman Catholicism). The New Apostolic Paradigm is compared to the Apostolic Paradigm of the 1st to 3rd centuries.

Evangeline (Evangelicals). Evangelical churches such as Willow Creek, Saddleback Valley Community Church, etc. might object to the term "apostolic". However, George G. Hunter III, in his book "Church for the Unchurched" referred to these churches as "apostolic congregations".

Charisma (Charismatics). The third use of "apostle" refers to those churches who have reinstated the office of the Apostle. (Latter Rain teaching has come full circle).

The church scene that is now developing seems to have an "independent" tone. However as the various streams converge, they become even more inter- dependent.

It isn't too hard to guess which definition suits Dr. Wagner the most. At the National Symposium on the Postdenominational Church, the book entitled, THE GIFT OF APOSTLE, by David Canistraci (Regal Books) was handed out to all the participants.

As the River becomes wider, more embracing and more appealing - every advantage is going to be taken to pull in all the streams to flow together. Before you get swept in by the strong current of the so-called revival, I remember that The Way is Narrow.

Enter ye in at the straight gate: for wide is that gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:13-14

CHASING THE CHARISMATIC CARROT

Charlotte Stucki

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear; lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or [if] ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with [him]. II Cor. 11:2-4.

Ever since I became a Christian at the very tender age of seven, I was determined that I would not be "just any ole Christian". I had been challenged by messages that said, "Do your best for Jesus", "Love Him with all your heart", "Surrender everything to Him". On the wall of my bedroom hung a plaque that said: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last". C. T. Studd's famous motto became mine: "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me; then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

At an early age, the call to be a missionary laid heavily on my heart. At nineteen I married my missionary-to-be husband. Together we determined that we would pay the price of absolute and utter devotion to Jesus Christ, "no matter what others did".

The hard realities of ministerial life soon confronted us. We realized that "to will was present, but how to perform we found not." In our great longings and expectations we found that to "be all that we could be in God's army" was a difficult task and nearly impossible to translate into every day experiences.

While I was a teenager, while my peers did the usual "teen-age" things, I spent hours devouring missionary biographies, devotional writings, commentaries and the Scriptures. Among my favorite books were those by Leonard Ravenhill. This godly man had spent the greater share of his lifetime praying for and urging others to pray through for revival. I not only read his books, but had the privilege to meet the Ravenhills and was deeply impressed by their sincerity and commitment to God. Therefore, it was not surprising that when my husband and I found ourselves coming short of realizing our dreams to "attempt great things for God and to expect great things from God", we thought that what we needed was what Leonard Ravenhill had been urging the church to do for many years. We needed to fast and pray until God sent a Holy Ghost revival.

It was this "elusive revival" that became the carrot-on-the stick which we would pursue over the course of two decades. This journey took us from one end of the United States to the other, to Argentina and then back again to the United States.

Our journey began in a parsonage of a Baptist Church which we pastored immediately following our marriage. Confronting the unbelief of the people, we longed to reach them with the simple Gospel. This was proving to be very frustrating. Two Pentecostal women occasionally attended our church and they told us that we needed something more. We needed the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In that Baptist parsonage we received the gift of tongues. This immediately thrust us out of Baptist circles and launched us into the new dimension of those who professed to have that endowment of power.

A year after our introduction into Charismatic circles, we found ourselves in Argentina. I was barely 20 and my husband 23 years-of-age. Finally we believed we were ready for real ministry. We were on virgin soil as far as the preaching of the Gospel. We were now endowed with power to not only preach, but also signs and wonders. We had given all, left all, sold all, sacrificed all - to serve Jesus with all our hearts. Surely now we would see the desired fruit of a multitude of souls born into the Kingdom.

Things just did not happen as we had dreamed. Hearts were still unbelieving. For all our new power, we were still powerless to effect any real change - other than a small handful of people who "gladly received the Word" and were saved.

We believed the answer was "revival". My husband set his face to fast and pray. He did this repeatedly for the better part of a year. In between those prolonged fasts, we traveled periodically to the south of Argentina where the Church was experiencing "revival" with all of the manifestations that were very strange to two former Baptists. We saw exorcisms as people vomited demons, we heard laughter as people were "laughing in the spirit" and we saw people "falling under the power". We listened as many told about their visions of heaven and hell. There was profound weeping, high praise and worship and every imaginable manifestation. The more we saw and heard, the more convinced we were that this was what we needed in our lives.

After many months, my husband declared, "I believe that God is going to speak to us tonight before the midnight hour." Together we knelt down in our little shack in the foothills of the Andes mountains waiting for the heavens to open and for God to rain down "revival" on us as well. There was no earthquake, no fire, no strong wind. There was only a still small voice which said, "My answer to you is Galatians 6:14. *God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* We were offended! This was not the answer we were looking for! In our hearts we knew, however; that God had spoken to us. It would take us another fifteen long years to know what God meant that dark evening.

Everything fell apart! My husband became gravely ill. A year later we were back in the United States. Two more missionary casualties. The one place we had experienced

"revival" was now 9000 miles away. What were we going to do? We spent the next several years making pilgrimages to one place after another where we heard that God was moving. However the "move" had either just ended before we arrived or it would start up shortly after we left. The "revival" carrot was certainly elusive.

Then we found it finally! It was an Utopia in the hills of Tennessee where revival had broken out in a Christian community. We moved our family (now including four children) once again. We thought we were in heaven. The worship was wonderful and praise flowed like a river. Prayer meetings lasted several hours, four times a week. The apparent zeal for Jesus of the people impressed us deeply. There was such commitment to God and to each other. The vision of the community was to be on the "cutting edge". They would be the "City on the hill" and "God's great end-time army".

To our dismay, we found that all that glitters is not gold. What had appeared to be so beautiful on the outside, inwardly was the "poisoned apple". The carrot was an illusion. We had again found fool's gold. There was death in the pot. It was in the hills of Tennessee we came to the end of the road. One day we looked at each other and cried, "we have been beguiled". As Satan deceived Eve through his subtlety, our mind had been corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. Where did we go wrong?

For the next several years we began to retrace our steps. What had happened? Firstly we had to examine our own hearts. They had been deceitful and that was where the delusion and started. How were we beguiled? Just as Satan beguiled Eve . . . he sang to her a little siren song like this: "there's gotta be more. . .there's gotta' be more." It was not enough that God had created them, placed them in a Garden where every need was provided, offered to them the fruit of a tree that would give them not only created life, but eternal life. We had been beguiled by the same song, "There must be more".

Yes, it was wonderful that Jesus died for all our sins; that He sent to Holy Spirit to abide within, that we have the Word of God, that He ever lives to make intercession for us and that He is coming again! All that is wonderful. But there is MORE! You can BECOME! You can become spiritual, devoted, a cutting-edge Christian, powerful, gifted, anointed - just like Jesus. The seed of pride that lies buried deep in the soil of every human soul sprouted, grew, budded, blossomed and flowered until one desperate and lonely day in the midst of "revival" God said, "ENOUGH! The axe is laid to the root of this tree! I forbid that you should glory in anything save the Cross of Jesus Christ!"

Revival? Have it if you must. However, I know there is a more excellent way. It is the narrow way of determining to know nothing but my infirmities and His Cross. Of suffering the loss of all things, including my self-centered sensual experiences for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Of knowing that *"I have been crucified with Christ,*

nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." Oh the sweetness of abiding in Him every moment that I live, without the strain of trying to find His" manifest presence" in some distant Mecca. The joy of being free from the need to become anything other than what I already am, a sinner whose faith rests in the Glorified God-Man who has become for me "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

I am so thankful for the mercy of God that led me out of the wilderness of spiritual harlotry where for so long I thought I could find a more thrilling and titillating relationship in subjective experiences that were fueled by angels of light rather than the simple, quiet, restful heart-home that Christ, my real Husband, has provided for me.

Searching for a carrot, instead I found a CARAT - the Pearl of great price, the Gold of Ophir, the One in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge. The preeminent Christ - in whom WE ARE COMPLETE.

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The following was found amongst my husband's (Travers van der Merwe) notes - in his handwriting after his death (March 1, 1995)

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

He came from the bosom of the Father
To the bosom of a woman;
He put on humanity that we might put on divinity;
become the sons of God;
He came from heaven where the winds never blow,
frosts never chill the air,
flowers never fade.
You never telephone for a doctor,
there is no undertaker, no graveyards,
no one is ever buried;
He was born contrary to the laws of nature,
lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity
and only once crossed the boundary of His land;
But in childhood He startled a king,
in boyhood He puzzled the doctors,
in manhood He ruled the course of nature;
He walked upon the rocking billows
and hushed the deep sea to sleep;
He healed the multitudes and made no charge for His service
He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries
In the world could not hold all of the books
ever written about Him.
He never wrote a song
yet He has furnished the theme for more songs
than all the songs written combined;
He never founded a college, marshaled an army,
nor fired a shotgun;
Yet volunteers under His orders have walked
into the strongholds of the enemy and made rebels
stack arms without a shot being fired;
He is the Star of astronomy; the Rock of geology;
the Lion and the Lamb of zoology,
the Harmonizer of all discord and
the healer of all diseases;
Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on;
Satan could not seduce Him, Herod could not kill Him,
death could not destroy Him,
the grave could not hold Him;
Up from the grave He arose with a mighty
triumph over His foes;
God has highly exalted Him
above every other name, that as the Name of Jesus
every knee shall bow and every tongue confess
that Jesus is the Christ!