

CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT - REVIVAL OR APOSTASY?

By Debbie O'Hara
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A wave is sweeping the world that many Christians are calling Revival. This is the biggest change to take place in the church since the days of the Protestant Reformation. Tens of thousands of pastors and church leaders in America have jumped onto the bandwagon of a Church Growth Movement that seems to be reaching the masses for Christ. Can this be the real thing? Just when we thought America as we knew it was coming to an end did we really manage to find a way to pick ourselves up and turn back to the Living God?

What are the methods being used to grow the church? Are they really God's methods or have churches compromised with the world and used techniques common to the New Age rather than to the Bible? As Christian author and preacher John McArthur said, "Contemporary evangelism has been beguiled and sabotaged by a ruinous lack of confidence in God's word... They have accepted the notion that scripture does not contain all we need to minister in these complex times. So they turn to human expertise in the fields of psychology, business, government, politics, entertainment, or whatever they think might supply some recipe for success that's lacking in scripture."

Since we are using human expertise to grow the church rather than relying on what God's Word tells us, it is very important to know who some of these experts are who are big in the growth movement. Although there are numerous people, for the sake of space I am only going to go into three of the biggest and most well known - Dr. Robert Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, CA., Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, CA and Pastor Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, (near Chicago) Illinois.

Pastor Schuller does not preach biblically, but preaches a man-centered religion of self-esteem and self-love. (Remember the humanist government schools doing the same thing?) He believes that sin is nothing more than a lack of self-esteem and that the greatest sin is to teach a person that he/she is unworthy. In the October 5, 1984 "Christianity Today" he wrote, " I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition." He believes

in positive only sermons so that people always feel good about themselves. The problem is that the positive Jesus he sends a message about is not the Jesus of the Bible. The Bible defines sin as rebellion against God, but Schuller finds that insulting. To him, Jesus was Self-Esteem Incarnate. Hell is not a place of eternal torment to Schuller but just merely a loss of self-esteem. I challenge anyone to find that in the Bible! Schuller's self-esteem message is actually more dangerous than that of the government schools because his message is masked in religious speak to mislead the masses. Is it any wonder there is no fear of God today and everyone does what is right in his/her own eyes?

Another very disturbing fact about Schuller is his longtime friendship with former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. It seems that both Schuller and Gorbachev worship the same Jesus. Back in October 2000 Gorbachev was a guest speaker at the Crystal Cathedral. Why would a church of Christ have a self-avowed Communist as a speaker? Gorbachev is the former Soviet butcher of Afghanistan. In trying to force the Afghans under Communism, gasoline was poured over those poor souls and they were burned alive. Land mines were booby-trapped to look like favorite toys and limbs were blown off of little children. God knows why this man is revered by Schuller and many others in the western world.

In Nov. 1987 that same Gorbachev that Schuller so highly esteems said in a speech at the 70th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, " In October 1917, we parted with the Old World, rejecting it once and for all. We are moving toward a new world, the world of Communism. We shall never turn off that road." He also went on to say that the changes in the Soviet Union were for cosmetic purposes and that their aim was to disarm the Americans and let them fall asleep. According to the New York Times of Dec. 26, 1989, Gorbachev said, " I am a Communist, a convinced Communist. For some that may be a fantasy. But for me it is my main goal." Notice this comment was made just after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In his own words Gorbachev states that we are moving toward world Communism and that Communism is his main goal. It is more than interesting that Dr. Schuller was the first person allowed to preach a sermon on Channel One, a channel committed to atheism in the former USSR. Communism has nothing to fear from the Jesus of Schuller.

Pastor Bill Hybels of the megachurch Willow Creek Community near Chicago has about 15,000 people attending church each Sunday. Hybels was greatly influenced by Dr. Schuller. Schuller helped fundraise for Hybels in the early days and believes that Hybels took the church growth movement farther than he himself was able to do. Willow Creek is a "seeker sensitive" church where like Schuller, there is no preaching against sin. People are not called on to repent but are entertained by rock music, drama and other types of media. There is no organ, piano, or hymnbooks with the old songs of the Christian faith. The New Age Christianity is actually a dressed up form of Humanism. The main focus is for people to enjoy coming to church and getting their "felt needs" met, not to be convicted of their sins. You might not win many souls to Christ, but it is a great

way to grow a church. Forget what God wants - give the consumers what they want and they will be banging on the doors.

Saddleback Community Church pastored by Rick Warren is another megachurch based on the same philosophy as Schuller and Hybels. **All three of these men got their churches growing by following the expertise and marketing techniques of Peter Drucker, a humanist who believes according to the Oct 1998 issue of Forbes Magazine that "The social universe has no "natural laws" as the physical sciences do. It is thus subject to continuous change" (page 154).** The guy believes in no moral absolutes and yet these pastors are basing their church growth movement on Drucker's marketing techniques! Just like big business these three pastors surveyed the consumers they wanted (non-churched people in their communities) to figure out their "felt needs" so that the church could respond to them. Their Sunday morning services in turn are geared toward non-believers. Forget about God's purpose for the church, which is to edify the saints. Since doctrine divides, only the love of God is preached. Forget about His holiness and judgement. These guys want "seeker sensitive" non-threatening churches to appeal to these non-believers, so if the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ makes them feel guilty then let's just throw it out! After all we need to reach the market with what the consumer wants. Maybe that is why Pastor Bill Hybels along with Pastor Rick Warren spoke at a conference at Schuller's Crystal Cathedral where there were homosexual pastors in training. I guess this must be one of those changing moral values that our expert Peter Drucker was talking about.

While more and more people are becoming familiar with what is happening in schools (Goals 2000) and in business (Total Quality Management or TQM), they haven't caught on yet that the same thing is happening in churches (Church Growth Movement or CGM). While in the workplace and the government schools we have given up truth in the name of tolerance and diversity, in the church we are giving up truth for the sake of "unity".

Just like in government schools, didactic teaching is out. Instead of teachers who teach facts, you have facilitators to keep the dialogue going. Little do people realize that a technique called the Hegelian Dialectic is being used on them to get rid of the old fashioned notion of truth. (Find out about the Hegelian Dialectic at www.newswithviews.com/BeritKjos/kjos.htm) **Francis Schaeffer, the foremost evangelical thinker of our time, spent the last years of his life warning about bringing this dialectical process that had already permeated all of our other institutions into the church. Once people have been run through this process, they can no longer discern truth. It is the brainwashing process used by those that follow the Marxist/Communist philosophy to control their people.** This technique can only be used in a group and it needs to be used on people with different sets of beliefs. Isn't it interesting that churches are working more in small groups now? Since the church is being geared toward unbelievers, it is really the believers that are being changed by use of this technique. Divisiveness is not allowed. Consensus is the goal.

Humanists believe that they can bring peace on earth without God. The experts just need to control the human environment and take care of all human needs. (In other words, Communism) Sounds a lot like the new church growth movement doesn't it - focusing on the "felt needs" of people rather than relying on the sufficiency of God's word? What is communism/socialism but focusing on the people group? No divisiveness allowed and no room for the individual. Notice how our kids in schools are working more and more in groups and getting group grades. They have to perform community service in order to graduate and to get into the best colleges. Now community service, not serving God, is the largest part of being church-ed, too. Sounds a little like the days of Hitler and Stalin doesn't it? Everyone must serve the state.

What more clever way can there be to get the American people to accept Communism than to send them out into their communities to work for free and to have them think they are doing it for God? This movement is all about changing the beliefs and behavior of Christians to move them into that New World Communism that Mikhail Gorbachev was talking about.

While I do believe that there are many good Christians caught up in this movement, they are deceived and they need to repent and get out of it. Maybe it is time to start asking some tough questions of your church leaders to find out where they stand in regard to this humanist philosophy that has swept through our churches like a wild fire. Is it possible that this movement that many call revival is really the end times church of apostasy that we were warned about in Revelation?

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Debbie O'Hara is a homeschooler and avid reader. She has held a position in management in the aerospace industry in Southern California. She left the business world to become a full time mother. Doing the research necessary to provide a comprehensive homeschool curriculum led her to a keen interest in the direction of our country. She and her children are active in the political process both locally and nationally. She is a wife and mother of eight children. Debbie is a contributing writer to www.NewsWithViews.com. E-Mail: ohara9@cox.net