

Latter Rain Pioneer Warnock Looks to Future

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By Steve Eastman

Before the revivals in Toronto, Pensacola, and Smithton [sic], even before the Charismatic movement, God sent an awakening to a tiny Canadian Bible College. Historians mark the beginning of what became known as the Latter Rain movement as February 12, 1948. The awakening spread rapidly from Sharon Bible College in North Battleford, impacting the world. The movement was well known for a renewed emphasis of laying on of hands, prophecy and singing in the Spirit. Yet these practices were mere side effects of something more important "hungering and seeking after the presence of God and enjoying His lordship.

Many of the names from Latter Rain days are forgotten, but people familiar with the movement always remember George Warnock. His book, *The Feast of Tabernacles*, is still enthusiastically read today. Most people assume he's enjoyed a long public ministry, but the Saskatchewan native prefers to stay out of the spotlight and has spent most of his time up to retirement working as a carpenter. Along the way he's written a number of books and articles as the Lord leads. Recently, around the time of the Latter Rain movement's 58th anniversary, OpenHeaven.com asked him about the past and the present time. The interview follows after a brief introduction by Brother Warnock.

First, I should mention that the original leaders of the movement never called it that. The term "Latter Rain" was a name that some how took over later, some months, perhaps a year or so, after the movement had started. In fact, those whom the Lord used in the beginning never approved of the title, even stating that it was not in any sense the Latter Rain as prophesied by Joel, but just a foretaste of it. They simply referred to it as "this move of the Spirit." I do not think there was ever an official covering called The Latter Rain. I just emphasize this to state it would be extremely

difficult for any one to say with authority, "This is Latter Rain doctrine." I was enriched in having partaken of the showers that fell in the early part of 1948, but I do not pretend to be an authoritative voice to define The Latter Rain Movement. All I can do is speak from my own part in the original movement, which in those early days was "flowing freely," meeting hungry hearts wherever they were.

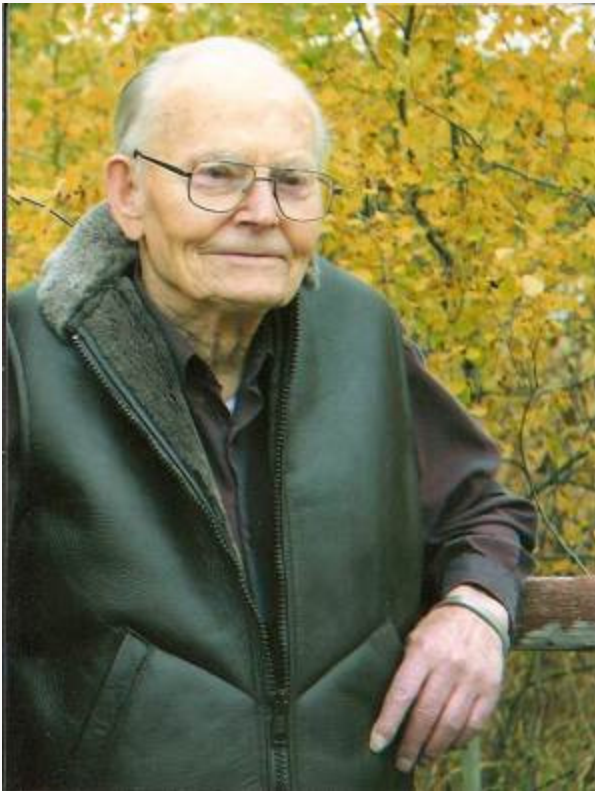
This has made it extremely difficult for the "heretic hunters" to pin down what Latter Rain was all about. The best they can do is major on the heresies of some they know had a part in the movement, and then in their ignorance affirm, "This is what Latter Rain teaches...." So I can only answer questions about Latter Rain as one who participated in the original movement, but as one who did not remain with the movement as it changed characters through the years, generally known as Latter Rain and later, as many denominations began to come into it, becoming known as the Charismatic Movement. By that time the movement seemed to embrace any group or denomination that was reaching out for new life in their churches by receiving the supernatural gifts of the Spirit.

What can the Latter Rain movement teach us today through example? What can we learn from it now, when it evidently does not have the same glow of the anointing it had in the beginning?

It seems to me that as strong ministries rose up in the Church, the Presence of the Lord was gradually superseded by strong leadership, and the Holy Spirit was grieved and began to withdraw. I would not lay blame on anyone. Perhaps as a movement we were all to be blamed in one way or another. But it did seem evident that ministry designed of God to cause the people to focus only on the Lord Jesus began to focus a lot on the vessel that God was using, rather than upon the Anointed One Himself. And what do we learn from this? It seems we never do learn the lesson that God would teach us, that apart from abiding union with Christ by the Holy Spirit no matter how powerful that ministry might be, God is dishonored, and the Holy Dove is grieved, and withdraws His Presence.

Does the Latter Rain Movement have a lesson for us about the sustainability of revival?

I think lesson number one is simply this: that God is faithful to visit His people from time to time; and we rejoice in that. But this rejoicing must be tempered with an awesome fear of God in our midst, without which the move of God will cease. But somehow we learn to cope without God's Presence and can continue doing the things the Spirit taught us, but now we do it by our own abilities. No longer is the Lord Jesus Himself, the Lord in our midst. We must learn that the manner in which God may have moved is not to become a mould for our gathering and keep trying to fit God's people into that mould.



God has much more for us than a continual rain storm. Certainly we need the rain and we rejoice in the rain when we are in a dry and thirsty land. But God is a good Gardener, and He does not intend to send the rain continuously, day after day, year after year. I have observed churches who love the rain so much, that if it stops raining they will bring in some kind of

rainmaker, to try to make it rain again. So there may be some measure of life there, but not really ordered of the Lord -- a jungle, instead of a garden, overgrown with weeds, disorderly, and perhaps with all kinds of creeping things -- a jungle rather than a fruitful garden!

And so after the showers of blessing, God sends the sunshine, and it gets warm, real hot sometimes. Why? Because this Gardener is looking for fruit -- good fruit, the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of His people. And so we are told the Gardener waits for the early rain, as well as for the latter rain because His real desire is that He might reap "the precious fruit of the earth." And so let us learn the lesson of the Rain -- I mean the true Rain from Heaven. It will nurture the thistles and weeds as well as the carrots and tomatoes if we do not give way to the Gardener to purge out of our lives all things that are not pleasing in His sight.

Trials and testings will come, and we wonder where God is. The revival has come to an end! Or so it seems. But it ought not to be considered as gone if God is there weeding, and pruning, and cutting back, and destroying a lot of unnecessary things in our lives, leaving us with a feeling we are desolate. How many ministers, how many of God's people in general have felt the desolation of the hot sun of the day when God was actually preparing His sons for another day, another season? How we need to learn God's intention in the "trial of our faith, which worketh patience"!

What was most precious to you about Latter Rain?

I would say it was the fresh anointing that was manifest in our gatherings individually and corporately. In a real sense it was "like the Oil on the head of the High Priest flowing down the beard, even to the hem of His garment." It wasn't just a gathering to see some great prophet or healer fulfilling his ministry. There was truly a corporate anointing that rested upon the people, and remained on them as they continued to walk with God.

Your *The Feast of Tabernacles* book explained a concept that the church world had never really thought about up till then. Many evangelicals recognized the correspondence between salvation and the Feast of Atonement. Similarly many Pentecostals recognized the correspondence between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Feast of Pentecost. Could you summarize the spiritual significance of the Feast of Tabernacles?

Like any of the other feasts in Israel, this Feast has many facets. It is preeminently a harvest feast. And though there have been times of harvest all through Church history, and there is a harvest now in many parts of the world, Jesus said "the Harvest is the end of the Age." So in end-time we may expect the ultimate harvest. Therefore, we expect to see the Latter Rain in full measure just before the ultimate harvest.

I do not doubt that the name they gave the 1948 movement (Latter Rain) was the promise, the first fruits of Latter Rain; but I think it was wrong to consider it to have been the ultimate Latter Rain. There was a chorus that I believe was given by the Spirit in those days that emphasized this. The chorus began with this line: "This is "the Promise of the Coming Latter Rain."The ultimate Latter Rain I believe is still to come.

But let us never forget that the rain is always given for the purpose of bring forth the good fruit of the land. And the Lord of the Harvest continues to wait for this great harvest. "Behold, the Husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth." He waits for it "with long patience." That's what any real gardener waits for -- the fruit.

I fear most people in the Church feel that the real burden of the Spirit is to get out there, and "get the job done." But the highest priority from God's standpoint is the precious fruit of the earth. And therefore, it ought to be the highest priority in our lives to be filled with the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, to be led of the Spirit, to be transformed by the Spirit, certainly to be restrained by the Spirit from doing those things that are not relevant to

the desire of God's heart. His burden is certainly that we might be disciplined by the Spirit, till we are disciples "as our Master" and therefore doing His works because our will has been crucified and made alive with the Life of Christ, and the will of God prevails in all that we purpose, or speak, or do.

Many thought the Feast of Tabernacles would be fulfilled back there 60 years ago. Do you think we are close to the fulfillment now?

I have to say, "Yes, I do." But even as I say that, I am reminded of what the apostles said about the end being close at hand. Take Peter. He said, "The end of all things is at hand." That was well over 1900 years ago. God would always keep our expectations high. But personally I have never sought to bring certain dates into the picture, nor agree with those who do. Like the rising of the sun, the point or sunrise is different for many nations. I believe it could well be that way in end-time also. Some people, some nations, may experience these deep workings of God at different seasons, according to God's own purposes. I have no real understanding of that, but I see that possibility.

According to the autobiography on your website, you returned to your trade of carpentry just a few years after writing *The Feast of Tabernacles*, only ministering in public occasionally after that. A lot of ministers today would not do that after writing such a well-received book. Why did you?

I had printed 2000 copies of the book in 1951, and had them available for the annual Camp Meeting at North Battleford, where I had been involved somewhat in ministry but mostly in a deacon sort of capacity, in the compound where we lived and held meetings. Relatively few of these books were taken by the people in those early days and it was not a well-received book by too many people, as far as I know, until some years later. But that really had nothing to do with my decision to go back to my trade.

I was aware of a fresh and new anointing when the brethren had ministered to me in 1948, "through prophecy and the laying on of hands." A larger stream that flowed out of it soon became known as Latter Rain, but I was not convinced that it had retained the original glow and anointing as at the beginning and I saw no reason for staying in a movement that seemed to me to have gone the way of most other movements of the past. I felt no urgency in my heart to continue on as a part of the larger stream of Latter Rain.

Nor did I then, or now, consider that "being in the ministry" was in any way the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." But rather the highest calling I believe is to simply "walk with God" and do His will, be it in the shop, on the farm, in an office, or on the assembly line.

But I do admit that in those early days of revival, I just assumed that it would increase in favor with God, and with His Presence in our midst culminating in this "glorious Church" that the apostle spoke about. I was greatly disappointed when it became apparent the movement was going the same as all previous movements. Yet I found great assurance that God will continue His great works in the earth, according to His own plan and purpose, until the Church in the throes of persecution and desolation and apostasy will become the Church Triumphant.

Another of your books, *Feed my Sheep*, compares the people of God asking for an earthly king during the days of Samuel, to the church in later times looking for leaders who rule by the authority of their office. Why is this dangerous?

I would choose to word the question, "Why would you consider this to be grievous to the heart of God?" Simply for the same reason that it was grievous to Samuel, and grievous to God. But why? Because God's desire from eternity-past (if there is such a thing) was a "Man in His image" with whom He would find true companionship and fellowship. God never had any desire for men to become great and mighty. The heart of Samuel was

much like the heart of God and this "great" prophet had no other desire but to see God's people walk with God, and come to know God.

But could God not raise up a king who would have this passion for God and His people? Yes, and surely God had such a king in the making. But it takes time and patience and long-suffering on God's part to bring forth such a king. But we, like the people in Samuel's time, do not realize that, and the thought is: "Give us a king like yourself, to rule over us. Give us God's great man of power to rule over us," when in fact God always looks for the humble and the contrite heart, and that takes much time, and much of God's dealings, to bring forth such a man. Somehow we like the idea of God's instant kings! Men who suddenly acquire great power from God and do mighty things!

But God is looking for a dwelling place, not in earthly temples, nor yet in men and women who are gifted to do great things but in men and women who simply love God with all their hearts, minds, souls, and spirits. Somehow it is difficult to embrace that concept of God because in our present state we really do not know nor understand the depths of God, and of His holy nature.

Your book *From Tent to Temple* talks about Moses communing with God in a tent. What is the significance of that for today?

The Lord gives us a little insight into this aspect of a tent being God's habitation, in His rebuke to David, who desired to build God a House. "Have I ever asked any of my servants to build Me a House? I always chose to dwell in a tent from the time I brought My people out of Egypt." It's a clear picture of God's desire for His habitation with men. A tent is just a simple structure, humble, without all the adornments of a permanent structure, for God Himself desires to be our One and only object of worship as we gather in His Name.

The tent is designed for the traveler, the pilgrim -- a temporary dwelling that can be taken down and folded up any time as God wills. He is to be

our Glory, with nothing added that would detract from the beauty of His own Presence in our midst. I know God ordained a most beautiful temple, the one that Solomon built according to the plans that God gave to David, but even then Solomon made it clear, in the dedication of that temple, that it was simply to be a house of prayer, not in any sense a structure that God admired as His home. "Where is the House that ye build unto Me, and where is the place of My rest?; For all those things hath Mine hand made.... But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and trembleth at My word." (Isaiah 66:1, 2)

Our God does not feel comfortable trying to dwell with the high and the mighty and the proud. So when He came to earth in the Person of our Lord Jesus, it is said that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." In the Greek it reads very literally: "And the Word was made flesh and pitched His tent among us." The reason of course is explained, "and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

O how often men would deny themselves the Grace and the Truth and Glory of God by beautifying the sanctuary or the altar or the pews, or the structure of the building itself to make it appealing to men! Yet in the sight of God, it can be very obnoxious, if and when men admire the structure, and care less for the Presence of God in their midst.

But we must not lose sight of the prime meaning of the Tent. It is the tent that we are in our humanity. And God wants to dwell in our humanity, as He dwelt in Jesus. And God can be glorified in us, only as the beautiful Presence of the Lord Jesus is seen moving and walking in us.

Many observers of the church scene are sensing a change is in the air. More people are turning to home fellowships instead of more traditional kinds of churches. Others are opting for ministries where worship is offered up 24 hours a day. Where do you think this is heading?

I do not know if any of these things in themselves are leading us closer to God. But no doubt there is a hunger among many of God's people and a certain restlessness of spirit as they look for something real. There is no virtue in a home fellowship except perhaps there is generally a greater freedom for people to bare their hearts, or share something God has given them. But very often even the home-group can become a gathering unto one another instead of unto Him. But when we as individuals begin to sense God's burden for us, surely it will change our attitudes and our concepts of true worship.

True worship ought always be 24 hours in the day if we are true worshippers. Worship that is "in Spirit and in Truth" must be ongoing. It's not just something you do. It's something you become, a worshipper. I was invited to a gathering one time, where their brochure announced there would be a worship leader demonstrating radical worship. I did not go. I am sure I would have walked out if I had gone.

But the term "radical worship" did cause me to think of a couple of instances in the Bible which I would describe as being radical worship. Job, a righteous man, afflicted by Satan with God's permission so that he lost almost everything, and was afflicted with a very severe skin disease and sat in a pile of ashes, worshipping God. I would call that very radical. Or Abraham, when God told him to offer up His only son Isaac upon an altar on one of the mountains that God would show him and he climbed the mountain with his son Isaac, and performed the most radical, and most awesome kind of worship one could imagine.

So what if we should promote the idea of worshipping God 24 hours a day! Indeed we should. But it has nothing to do with learning how to perform such a kind of worship. But if we are in tune with God, and walking in the Spirit we should, from the time we rise in the morning till we go to sleep at night, we should be worshippers of God "in spirit and in truth."

We should not expect any reward for some kind of religious worship that we have contrived, to get something from God. True worship brings us to the place where we fall before God in utter contempt for all that we are and causes us to exalt the Lord of Glory, in deep humiliation and abhorrence of everything that springs from our carnal hearts and minds. True worship toward God springs from a heart that loves Him so much, and desires His Presence so much that in all that is within us we are "worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth."

What tips can you give us for getting to know God more intimately?

I wish I could muster up some tips from my own experience that would cause God's people to know Him more intimately. I wouldn't know how to do that.

I think of a small lad with his hammer and saw in his hand and you walk up to him and say, "Can you give me some tips how to build a house?" And I think I hear him saying, "I don't think so, but go to the door where I live, and ask my Father. He could help you."

All I can do or say is, "Go to Father, submit yourself before Him as a small and erring child, and ask Him to reveal His Son in your life, in a way you have never known Him before." For surely the Son will do that. He will always reveal the Father in a living way, to those who come before Him in humility and lowliness of heart.

What is your top burden for the Church today?

I would hope that I carry but one burden, which is the burden of the Lord Jesus Himself. For His counsel to those who carry many burdens is very simple: "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of (from) Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

I am confident that the Lord's "burden" for His people is to walk in the "more excellent way" as declared by Jesus and by the apostles. So I must declare that to be my burden for God's people, as I minister to them by His anointing, the more excellent way. It is the Way of perfect Love.

We have been blessed with spiritual gifts in our lives, and spiritual ministries in the Church. I know there is still a lot of chaff but God gives grace to blow away the chaff, and find the true Seed. And in that true Seed we discover the highest prize, the greatest treasure that God has reserved for His people. It was revealed in Jesus.

For surely He was a man of great and awesome love and manifested that love in the most awesome way, when He died for sinners at the hands of wicked men. Now this is the Love that He has reserved for us and He has declared it again and again and we must declare it again and again, "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Now that's a very heavy burden for the Church to embrace, and the only way we can carry such a burden is to take His yoke upon us, and learn from Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart and we too shall find rest for our souls.

For more information about George Warnock and his teachings, visit his website at www.georgewarnock.com

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