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# REFORMATION TODAY



NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1990

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*Some of the pastors present at Northwest Reformed Baptist Family Conference, June 20-23, 1990. Kermit Minnick is on the far left as you look at the picture and Bruce Ray and Don Lindblad on far right (see editorial p. 3)*

## The Carey Conference for Ministers January 2-4, 1991

*College of Ripon and York St John, Yorkshire —*

**Theme: Bring Back Biblical Preaching**

**Speakers:** Norman Porter, Don Garlington, Donald Macleod, John Blanchard

The alarming casualty rate in Christian profession, the poor standard set for church membership, the high profile for entertainment in worship services, all this can be traced to deficiencies in preaching. At our conference last year we considered the subject of revival; preaching follows this year. It is by the powerful presentation of the Truth that the people of God are sanctified and unbelievers called to saving faith. As those who stand before the people to bring forth the eternal truths of the Gospel we are to be always moving forward in the development of our gifts and understanding of the Scriptures. In particular, John Blanchard will deal with the matter of the impact of our preaching: how to place the hay down where the sheep can reach it and how pastoral concern is to be intrinsic in the work of preaching.

This subject is relevant to all those in leadership in the church. Indeed, it represents the most urgent need throughout the world.

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*Front cover:* Daniel Busakiva and Pastor Sikhone Hashe of South Africa who are both studying at Toronto Baptist Seminary. Sikhone is an experienced pastor who is studying with a view to helping ministers in the Transkei. Both Daniel and Sikhone are Xhosa speaking

# Editorial



*The Whitefield fraternal has a fine programme of subjects. Shown above is Dr John Armstrong who leads the fraternal, standing on the right (see p. 2)*

Without doubt the 20th century will go down in Church history as the century of Ecumenism. From the time of the Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 through 80 years to 1990, activity has escalated to bring Christendom together. In the *Christian World Encyclopaedia*, Barrett speaks of a proliferation of 20,800 denominations. Where do we fit into that? What can we do to improve true unity which does not compromise the great centralities of the gospel? Every time a church in our circles adds a line to the 1689 Confession and makes that line paramount we have a new denomination.

Early in October I spent time with Dr Paul Schrottenboer who recently retired from his position as executive director of the Reformed Ecumenical Council. He has devoted 25 years of his life to promoting unity among Reformed denominations. The Reformed branch of the World Church has had three international ecumenical organisations, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1875; followed by The Reformed Ecumenical Synod which began in 1946, and then the International Conference of Reformed Churches which began in

1985. Difficult issues have arisen to dictate three bodies. However we are not dealing with small groups such as the association in California whose associational statement of faith is reported in this issue but large groupings of churches. The Grace Baptist churches in England number about 500. With a Reformed confessional basis they would qualify for membership with the ICRC.

The paper given at the Westminster Conference: The 1689, Why Another Confession? describes the historical reasons disposing the 1689 Confession. Christian unity was the primary purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Schrottenboer told me that the forces that work against unity are often greater than the powers that promote and encourage it. The human problems causing division are as great as and sometimes greater than the doctrinal problems. Don Garlington's articles in this respect have been on target.

## **Union with Christ**

The complexities involved with regard to inter-church and interdenominational unity are so daunting that one is

tempted to ignore the subject as something beyond solution. Yet when we realise the wonder of what it is to be one in Christ we dare not be cavalier about Christian unity. The way in which we approach the subject must surely follow the model provided for us by our Lord in his prayer for unity (Jn 17:20-23). The importance of unity is further stressed by the parameters of that unity defined in Ephesians 4:1-6. We are in one body, have one Spirit, share the same calling, have the same Lord, believe the same saving gospel, have the same baptism (as is explained in the article, Union with Christ), and are bonded together by adoption into the same family with the same Father. Divisions are forbidden (1 Cor 1). We are to pray and work to maintain the unity already given to us by being completely humble and gentle, with patience, forbearing one another in love. The constraint of statements such as Philippians 1:27,28 and Paul's own prayers in Romans 15:5 and Philippians 2:1-11 are cogent.

### **Examples of Christian unity and inter-church unity**

*South Africa.* In this issue there is a report of the annual conference at Skogheim, Natal, South Africa. The Skogheim conference is inter-denominational and multiracial. It is not a Baptist gathering. It continues to be an annual event looked forward to by many who value a reliable ministry and a wider fellowship which crosses many frontiers.

*Chicago.* The picture on p. 1 shows John Armstrong speaking to the men of the Whitefield fraternal at Wheaton. Recently I addressed this fraternal on the subject of the life and influence of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a subject prompted by the 800 page, 2nd volume biography by Iain Murray. My theme was, the doctor as Preacher-Evangelist, Puritan and Revivalist. Men of various

persuasions attend the fraternal and represent a unity of pastors who are prepared to give their attention to serious doctrinal subjects and encourage each other in their ministerial responsibilities.

*Canada.* The annual Carey Family Conference has served as a rallying point for the Reformed faith for several years. As the name suggests it is a Baptist meeting but non-Baptists are attracted and support the annual camp since they find so much in common and enjoy a strong bond of unity. There is little available in Canada which provides the blend of Reformed teaching and fellowship enjoyed at this annual camp by Lake Huron.

*California.* Of similar flavour is the annual family conference organised by the RB association in California whose constitution forms part of this issue. It was my privilege to be the visiting speaker this year at Idyllwild Pines, a beautiful resort high in the mountains. 250 attended. A strong desire for revival is increasing in this group. After one session about 18 men were spontaneously drawn to spend an extended time in intercession for revival, meeting in a secluded place though no specific exhortation had been given before. When the Holy Spirit inspires prayer it is probably a sign that we are moving toward better times. During my travels this year I have noticed the breath of the Spirit, no mighty wind, not even a breeze, but at least a breath and that is better than nothing. Remember that Elijah prayed until he saw a cloud no larger than the hand of a man. He knew then that the much needed rain to end the drought was on its way.

*The West Coast of North America.* Thirty years ago it seemed that the West Coast was destitute of Reformed churches. Now we are encouraged not only by the Los Angeles area as reflected in the

# Bearing One Another's Burdens

## Part 4

### *Look to Yourself*

*An exposition by Don Garlington*

We have seen thus far that restoration of dislocated members of the body of Christ places an onus directly on the one who engages in the work. If *restoration* is the actual goal, then the way in which this is attempted is all important. According to Paul, correction is to be undertaken in a 'spirit of gentleness' only by those who are 'spiritual'. We might think that this is enough, but it is not. The reverse side of the same coin is expressed by verse 1a: 'Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted.' In other words, a true spirit of gentleness is realistic in its assessment of self, because, at the end of the day, we are no less vulnerable than our brother who has fallen. It is this pointedly admonitory dimension of Paul's counsel which is expanded in verses 3-5.

Verse 3 sets before us the contrast of fact versus fiction. The fiction is my belief that I am 'something', while the fact is that I am actually 'nothing'. Paul's terms are clarified by the context and by parallel statements in other letters. The person of Galatians 6:3 who thinks he is 'something' sounds very much like the one addressed by Romans 12:3: 'I bid everyone among you not to think more

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above mentioned constitution but by the unity represented in the North West. Don Lindblad wrote in July to say:

'Approximately 200, coming from 15 churches, attended the Fourth North-west Reformed Baptist Family Conference, June 20-23, at Camp Gilead, a 45 minute drive east of Seattle. Kermit Minnick, pastor of Grace Bible Church of Numidia, Pennsylvania and editor of the *RBMS Update* was the featured speaker. He preached five times on First Love, First Deeds from Revelation 2:4,5 reminding his hearers of some of the characteristics of true love for Christ. Those who listened to this series were impressed with the need for personal revival. The remaining preaching times were taken by four local pastors, each preaching once. An encouraging sign at this year's conference was the pre-

dominance of young families and a large number of children.'

There is very little in the San Diego area of California and nothing cohesive known to us in British Columbia, Canada. Let us pray for increase and unity so that there might be a network of RB churches right down the western seaboard of N America.

<sup>1</sup> These papers with the title 'Reformation of Worship' are available from John Miller, 55 Warwick Road, THORNTON HEATH, Surrey CR4 7NH, UK (£3.50 including postage). The next Westminster Conference is scheduled for December 11 and 12, Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate, LONDON. Among the six subjects to be addressed are The Nature of Puritanism and Henry Martyn and Missions to Muslims. Write for details to John Miller as above.

highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him.' Paul's particular point to the Romans is that they should not covet gifts and offices which do not belong to them. Yet the underlying temptation is the same in both Romans 12:3 and Galatians 6:3, that is the tendency to think that somehow we have conquered the problem of pride and that we are incapable of falling into the same sort of sin as our errant brother. Thus, 'something', in the setting of Galatians 6, means an illusory vision of one's self, a self-perceived qualification to help others which does not really exist.

Anyone who possesses such a self-image is actually 'nothing', that is, he is not 'spiritual', he does not exhibit the love which is the fruit of the Spirit. In Paul's own words elsewhere, *'If I have not love, I am nothing'* (1 Cor 13:2). He is self-important, he has an inflated notion of his own worth and a deflated notion of his capacity for sin. What is worse, he 'deceives himself'. Paul's language here is strong. As R. Y. K. Fung informs us, the verb translated 'deceive' (*phrenapatao*) implies a 'totally subjective delusion'.<sup>1</sup> In other words, there is no objective basis whatever for entertaining such a high opinion of oneself. In this regard, some of the Galatians were no better off than the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:6f.). Certainly those who are 'nothing' are well advised not to try to restore others. They will only make matters worse, not better, and at the end of it all they will have an even more distorted view of their self-worth.

Paul implies that those who imagine themselves to be somebody are unable to bear the burdens of others: fancying themselves to be without sin or weakness they are unable to sympathise with others or to concern themselves with their burdens; conversely, they are more likely to treat others with gentleness and humility if they feel their own weakness.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the 'I am something' mentality cannot fulfil the law of Christ.

Verse 4 is designed to prevent the self-deception just depicted: 'Let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbour.' The most emphatic element of this sentence (in the Greek) is 'his own work'. The 'work' in question is one's own endeavours to be obedient to God. Consequently, 'It is on his own conduct and performance that each person should concentrate, not the conduct and performance of others; he is to engage in self-assessment, not in critical evaluation of another.'<sup>3</sup> Paul chooses the verb 'test' (*dokimazo*) quite on purpose. It means to put to the test for the purpose of determining worth.<sup>4</sup> The standard of the test is, of course, the criterion of love, the immediate product of the presence of the Spirit. If my 'work' meets up to this standard, then — and only then — I am in a position to restore someone who has been overtaken in 'any trespass'.

The effect of self-awareness rather than other-awareness is that our boast will be in ourselves and not in someone else. That is to say, the reason for our boast will be sought in the good which we have done, not in the evil that others have done.<sup>5</sup> Boasting, in other words, should be grounded in positive, not negative,

factors: I am not to compare my avoidance of particular sins with Christians who have fallen into those sins and think myself better by the comparison. According to Betz:

It was recognised (by Paul and others) that the most widespread illusions occur because of comparison of oneself with others. *In playing this game, one can manipulate things at will so that the comparison always turns out in favour of oneself and to the disadvantage of the person with whom one compares oneself.*<sup>6</sup>

For many of us, however, the idea of boasting in what we do presents a rather serious problem. Is Paul really saying that we should boast? I think the answer is yes, but with one significant qualification. The boasting of Galatians 6:4 is not the kind Paul used to do. See Romans 2:17, 23; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 3:21; 2 Corinthians 11:21f.; Galatians 6:14. In other words, Paul's boast used to be in his standing as member of the chosen people and the degree of his dedication to the purity of God's covenant with Israel (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:4f.). Nevertheless, Paul still boasts. His boast is first and foremost in Christ and his cross (Rom 5:22; Gal 6:14) and thereafter in the work which Christ has him do (Rom 15:17-20; 1 Cor 15:10). One may infer, then, that boasting is legitimate, if it is *Pauline* boasting. Such boasting recognises the objective fact of one's own labours for Christ's sake and then ascribes to God the ultimate credit for all one's activities.<sup>7</sup> Paul can say that he worked harder than the rest of the apostles, yet it was not he but the grace of God in him (1 Cor 15:10). In Paul's own person, therefore, we have a prime example of what it means to boast in one's own work and not in the shortcomings of others. Consistency in this will qualify us to restore others who have fallen, and without it we are unqualified.

The believer's boasting in 'his own work' has as its main frame of reference the day of judgment. This is suggested by the future tenses of verses 4 and 5, but more especially by the idea contained in Paul's warning that 'each man will have to bear his own load'. Some embarrassment has been occasioned by what appears to be a contradiction between verse 5 and verse 2, according to which we are to bear one another's burdens. However, the contradiction is far more imaginary than real, simply because different points are being made. Verse 2 refers to our present aid of the one who is unable to shoulder his sin-burdens by himself. On the other hand, the combination of verses 4 and 5 directs us forward in time to the last judgment, at which every Christian must give an account for his individual actions to the Master before whom he stands or falls (Rom 14:4, 10-12). Up to and including the judgment there is a load that only we can bear;<sup>8</sup> and on that day no one will be able to escape censure of his own wrongdoing by comparing himself with the sins of others. The classic illustration from the Gospels is that of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk 18:9f.).

The seriousness of this awareness of judgment is driven home by the admonition of verses 7-10, according to which our present labour of sowing, either to the flesh or to the Spirit, is to be required at the end of this age. Paul here uses the metaphor of two soils into which one may sow.<sup>9</sup> To sow into the soil of the flesh, in this context, means to disregard love, the chief fruit of the

Spirit, and to treat our brethren with contempt and hatred. Those who have thus looked upon themselves too highly and upon others with despite will reap the harvest of 'corruption'. By contrast, those who have sown into the soil of the Spirit, in other words, who have loved their brethren and have corrected them, when necessary, in a spirit of gentleness, will reap the harvest of eternal life. In both cases, 'the eschatological yield is determined by present sowing'.<sup>10</sup> The awesome reality of this principle is not to be played down or explained away.

Paul draws the same line of connection between love and final judgment in Romans 12 and 13. The love which is 'unhypocritical' (12:9) will live peaceably with all and will never avenge itself, because (eschatological) vengeance belongs only to God (12:16-20). Such love will not be overcome with evil, that is, the evil of self-vindication, but will overcome it with good (12:21). Added to this is the love which does no harm to one's neighbour and thereby fulfils the law of God (13:8-10). For Paul the practice of love is all the more urgent because the night is far spent and the day is at hand; our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Therefore, we are to cast off the works of darkness and walk becomingly as in the light, making no provision for the flesh (13:11-14). Paul knew that the day of judgment will be one of testing claims. The validity of *our* claims to be admitted to the eschatological kingdom of God will be weighed in the balances not of our talk, but of our love — precisely the logic of Matthew 25:31-46.<sup>11</sup>

Our study of Galatians 6:1-5 ends on the same note on which it began. Unlike the Judaisers, who, to borrow the words of a recent editorial in this magazine, were 'high on orthodoxy and low on love', the church of Jesus Christ — the new Israel and the new humanity — is known by its love. Whereas the old Israel was distinguished by such 'boundary markers' and 'badges of identity' as circumcision, dietary laws, special days, and *hatred* of every violator of its way of life, of the new people it is said: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn 13:35).<sup>12</sup> Love, then, is *the* indispensable 'boundary marker' of the latter day people of God.

<sup>1</sup> *The epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 289-90.

<sup>2</sup> Fung, *Galatians*, p. 290.

<sup>3</sup> Fung, *Galatians*, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> 'Christians are summoned to a test of their own accreditation' (W. Grundmann, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, II, p. 260).

<sup>5</sup> H. D. Betz, *A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 302, explains that Paul's Greek idiom 'to have a boast' means 'to be able to show an achievement as a basis for boasting'.

<sup>6</sup> *Galatians*, p. 303 (italics mine).

<sup>7</sup> Betz remarks that 'Paul is in agreement with Hellenistic philosophy when he does not reject boasting as such, but asks what the basis for that boasting is. Of course, he goes his own way when it comes to the definition of the . . . object (basis) of boasting; for him it

is divine grace, and not reason, as it is for the philosophers' (*Galatians*, p. 303).

<sup>8</sup> The 'load' (*phortion*) of v. 5 is 'the traveler's own pack', 'the ineluctable (i.e., inescapable) duties of life that fall to each person, including answerability to God for one's own conduct and performance' (Fung, *Galatians*, p. 291). The 'burdens' (*barē*) of v. 2, by contrast, are the unbearable weight of sin, which cannot be supported alone.

<sup>9</sup> He uses the preposition *eis*, here meaning 'into'.

<sup>10</sup> Fung, *Galatians*, p. 295.

<sup>11</sup> I have explored the place of love in relation to the obedience of faith and final judgment in 'The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans. Part Two', forthcoming in *Westminster Theological Journal*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 245.



# A Reformed Baptist Association

*Five churches in California after several years of fellowship in the gospel have entered into formal association. Those who see the importance of David Kingdon's article 'Independency and inter-dependency' (RT 103) will be encouraged by this example of unity. It is hoped that many more regional associations will come into being, and that the following covenant type basis will be helpful as a guide. The document is produced exactly and no attempt has been made to anglicise the American style or terminology.*

## THE ASSOCIATION OF REFORMED BAPTISTIC CHURCHES OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Churches of the same faith and gospel order, so far as is necessary to communion; as they have all drank into and of the one and same Spirit; as they are branches of the one and same body, and hold to the one and same Head; and as they have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism; they therefore may and ought to have and enjoy fellowship and friendly intercourse together, as occasion may require and opportunity serve. This being in the discharge of those relative duties which may tend to the mutual benefit and edification of all of Christ's churches (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:5; Jn 17:20-26). Hence the Reformed Baptist churches in Southern California come together to form an association of churches.

### I. The Nature of An Association of Churches

- A. An association consists of different particular churches who have agreed to associate together at stated times to obey the Word of God, to promote their own interests and the good of common causes found among them. These churches are represented by delegates or messengers, which are the Elders and Deacons of each respective church.
- B. The manifold needs of the churches such as mutual encouragement and support, assistance of numerous types, edification, oversight, and cooperative efforts to advance Christ's kingdom bring about the need for an association.
- C. This practice of churches formally and informally associating is recommended by the apostolic practice of Acts 15 and the New Testament church practices of Galatians 1:2, Galatians 1:22, and Colossians 4:13-18; numerous historical examples such as the Abingdon Association in England and the Philadelphia Association in the United States; and the confessional position of our Baptist forefathers (see the *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, chapter 26 paragraphs 14 and 15). The spirit

of Christ's saving religion and the very reason of things further encourage this.

## **II. The Doctrinal Statement of This Association**

While we hold tenaciously to the inerrant and infallible Word of God as found in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments in the Holy Bible (and this being our *only* source of faith and practice); we embrace and adopt the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 as the most accurate expression of that system of doctrine taught in the Bible. This Confession, then, is the doctrinal statement and position of this association.

## **III. The Purpose of This Association**

The association thus of churches of like faith and practice is of special use and has its purpose:

- A. to show visible unity to the world and churches (Jn 17:20-26)
- B. to gain a greater knowledge, communion and love with sister churches
- C. to afford counsel and advice in difficult cases of varying types
- D. to preserve uniformity of faith and practice within the confines of our Confession of Faith; especially in dealing with doctrinal and practical questions
- E. to detect and deal with heresies, and in so doing maintain harmony and peace in the churches (1 Cor 14:33)
- F. to give financial aid and assistance when necessary
- G. to curb licentiousness in the wanton abuse of church power
- H. to cooperate in the spreading of the gospel both at home and on foreign soil
- I. to provide a place for educating our children and men called to the ministry
- J. to supply the pulpits of sister churches in the event one is without a teaching ruling elder/pastor
- K. to in every way advance and secure the interest of Christ's saving religion and strengthen and draw closer the bonds of union and fellowship.

## **IV. Membership in This Association**

- A. Any church holding to our Confession of Faith and conforming to the prescribed pattern for receiving churches may enter this association. Churches, besides those that enter at the original constitution, may be admitted on making application through a member church and giving satisfactory evidence in regard to their faith and practice.
- B. Considering that the union of churches in an association is a voluntary act, a voluntary union or confederation like the unforced confederation of members into a church, it follows that every church stands in the

same relation to its association as a member does to his church, and therefore is examined in the same manner on admission.

- C. Just as the association of churches may receive new churches into its fellowship; the associated body may also exclude from their connection any church that deviates from the Confession of Faith. Indeed it would be absurd to examine churches at their admission if afterward they depart from biblical faith and practice and are allowed to continue in the connection.
- D. Any member church desiring to withdraw from the association may do so by submitting a letter of resignation stating their reason(s).

## **V. The Power and Authority of This Association**

- A. Each church is independent and under the authority and control of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. No outside entity, whether it be a government, religious group or even another church and its officers, has any power or jurisdiction over one of Christ's true churches. Each congregation is self-governing and autonomous under the Headship of Jesus Christ and according to the Word of God.
- B. Nevertheless, the association has a right to call any delinquent church to account, whether for a wanton abuse of its power towards or over any of its members, neglect of attendance at the association, or any deviation from the Word of God and the Confession of Faith in principles or practice. If satisfactory reasons are not given by the delinquent church for their actions or reformation thereof, the association has the authority to exclude that church from its connection and fellowship.
- C. Let it not be thought that this power of the association over the churches in connection with it disannuls or destroys the independence of those churches. Because if any church of the associated body should become unsound in their principles, or act irregularly and disorderly, and will not do what is just and right, such a church will still remain an independent church, though an heterodox and irregular one. It would be inconsistent and wrong in the association to suffer such a church to continue among them, since, besides other considerations, they would become partakers of their evil deeds.
- D. Complaints may be received by the association against any church belonging to it, especially when the complaint is brought in by another church.
- E. The delegates or messengers of the churches in the association will convene at the next regularly scheduled meeting to hear and deal with

the complaint and make their determination known to the other churches.

- F. The delegates thus assembled are not armed with coercive power to compel the churches to submit to their decisions nor have they any control over the acts and doings of the churches. The association can take nothing from the transgressing church but what it gave to it. All this is in paragraph 15 (also see again B above).

## **VI. The Functioning of This Association**

- A. The delegates or messengers of the churches shall meet on the Saturday before the 5th Sunday to give an account of their particular church's spiritual state, assessing needs, consulting and making plans for the future (goals, hearing and dealing with questions and complaints, etc.).
- B. At every 5th Saturday meeting, the delegates shall elect a moderator and a secretary. The secretary shall keep notes of the proceedings of the meeting and shall send a copy to the Elders of each church.
- C. All of the churches in the association shall meet every 5th Sunday evening for a combined meeting for worship. The meeting on the Sunday evenings shall rotate from one geographical area to another in the Southern California area.
- D. The association shall have an Annual Family Conference, an Annual Sovereign Grace Bible Conference (six months before Family Camp) and an Annual All-Church Picnic (either Memorial Day or July the 4th).
- E. The association shall establish a bank account in order to create a Fund for carrying out its purposes and functions. Contributions to this Fund shall be voluntary. The monies in this account shall not bring a profit to one church or individual above another.
- F. In the event of dissolution no member church or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of this association. Any assets of the association upon dissolution shall be used to pay any outstanding debts. Any remaining assets shall be equally divided among the missionaries supported by the association at the time of dissolution. If there are no supported missionaries, then the assets shall be given to the Reformed Baptist Mission Services to use as they see fit.

May God the Father who chose the Church, and God the Son who made atonement for the Church, and the Holy Spirit who applies the redemptive work of Christ to the Church bless and enlarge our churches in Christ Jesus' name. Amen!

# Union with Christ

There are three realities which for wonder exceed all others in the universe. The first is the truth of the Trinity, three Persons equal in Deity, each different from the others, yet One. The second is the incarnation, that the eternal Son of God should unite in his one Person manhood and deity. The third is the spiritual union of the Church with Christ.

What the heart is to the body, union with Christ is to the soul. Union with Christ is the foundation of all our spiritual experience. When the wisdom of the Graeco-Roman world, superior for its quality and breadth to any other civilisation, had failed to produce an answer to the problem of sin, our sovereign Creator demonstrated his wisdom in the provision of a perfect man, Christ Jesus. By joining lost sinners to Christ a comprehensive remedy for sinners was provided. Paul sums it up in a sentence: 'It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption' (1 Cor 1:30). Our justification before God, progressive sanctification and the resurrection of our bodies are achieved through union with him.

How is this great theme presented in Scripture? We will examine four analogies which convey the truth of union with Christ. The first is that of marriage which has its roots in the Old Testament. The second is that of the vine and the branches as presented by our Lord himself. The third is baptism as explained by Paul in Romans 6. The fourth analogy often used by Paul is that of the human body. There are other figures such as building stones which rest for support on the chief corner stone (Eph 2:20,21; 1 Pet 2:6-8), but the above four will be adequate for our purpose.

Each of these analogies is set before us in the Scriptures with practical applications. We must not isolate the doctrine but note the biblical emphasis concerning the effect of that truth on our lives. The Puritan writers employed the term 'uses' and would elaborate these. I will use the word 'application' for each of the four likenesses.

## Marriage

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea employ the analogy of marriage to describe Jahweh's union with his people. 'Your Maker is your husband' (Is 54:5). The tie of husband and wife is sacred and indissoluble. Legally the two are one. The interests of the two are the same. However the picture employed is one of unfaithful Israel. 'But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord' (Jer 3:20). Nowhere is this likeness of marriage more strikingly portrayed than in Ezekiel 16. Jerusalem came into being by adoption from a position of utter humiliation, a new born babe in its birth-blood thrown out into a field. Taken up and saved, the child is nurtured to become a beautiful woman who is

married to Jahweh. But she turns to evil living and becomes a prostitute. This of course leads to a total breakdown of the marriage. Amazingly however repentance is predicted followed by reconciliation. The main lesson is the faithfulness of Jahweh. Powerfully illustrated is the factor of union in marriage. Sovereign grace is depicted throughout. Here is great comfort for sinners who feel acutely their former shame and wonder how salvation is possible. But salvation is by union with a husband who is faithful. 'Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed' (Ez 16:61). Conviction of sin can be extreme. When it is, this indissoluble union with God is the main form of comfort. We are saved by grace.

The analogy of marriage is the theme of Ephesians 5:22-33. As the two become one flesh in marriage, so the Church and Christ are declared to be one. This picture of marriage is further portrayed in Revelation, the wedding of the Lamb and his bride (19:7,8), and the Holy City, the new Jerusalem prepared as a bride (21:2). The union of the Church with Christ is a spiritual one in which every interest is united. In the Ephesians 5 passage there is a stress on the fact that the power of holiness to cleanse and beautify the Church is derived from her Head: 'he gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water of the word' (5:25-27). Stressed too is the love of Christ which does not falter. He is the Saviour of his Church in every respect not only in the redemption of the soul and body of his bride the Church, but in her temporal interests here on earth.

*Application.* It follows that if we are married to Christ then we are blessed with the joy of communion with him. Are you conscious of this priceless relationship which is yours to cherish and enjoy every day? In communion we enjoy the glory of Christ's person and work. We enjoy the unchanging character of Christ's love for us, for he loves us with an incomparable love, a love we reciprocate in communion. A spiritual union of this magnitude requires daily attention.

In 1712 Matthew Henry preached three sermons on daily communion with God. These were so popular that he was persuaded to publish them as a short book which has often been reprinted under the title *Directions for Daily Communion with God*. The outline used by Henry is straightforward. We are urged to begin every day in prayer (Ps 5:3). Then we are exhorted to spend the day in communion with God; 'My hope is in you all day long' (Ps 25:5). Finally we are reminded that we should conclude the day in communion with the Lord (Ps 4:8). Of course communion all day with God does not mean we can be involved in concentrated prayer, but rather that we can be conscious of the felt presence of Christ with us because we practise communion. Our union with him is a wonderful privilege, enjoyment and strength, of which we partake too little.

In Ephesians 5 Paul tells us plainly that he is comparing marriage with the union of Christ to his Church. The ideal is that the husband should love his wife and care for her, encouraging her in every way. Sadly this quality of marriage is seldom stressed today and rarely achieved by husbands. But in Christ the Church possesses the perfect husband. He loves us perfectly and we can rely on

his faithfulness. In our trials he will never leave us or forsake us (Jn 16:33; Heb 13:5,6). Our marriage to Christ is a spiritual reality. We must draw upon that and be comforted by it to the full. This can only be done as we practise daily meditation and communion.

### **The vine**

The picture of the vine and the branches is our Lord's own illustration of union with himself (Jn 15:1-8). We might think of the great vine at Hampton Court Palace in London, purportedly the largest in the world. It is several hundred years old and extends to about forty metres. Pruned back every year, it produces an enormous harvest of grapes. The roots must be extensive and since the river Thames is near we imagine that there is no shortage of moisture. Each branch produces fruit as it derives its nourishment from the trunk.

*Application.* As Jesus presents the simple picture his first application is that fruitfulness is an absolute necessity. Every branch that does not produce fruit will be taken away by the Father.

His second application is that every branch will be subject to pruning by the Father. What is this pruning? In terms of progressive sanctification we think immediately of Hebrews 12:4-12. God disciplines all his children who are subject to his correction. We are reminded by this that justification and holiness of life can never be separated. You cannot have the one without the other. Justification is implied by the words of Jesus in verse three, 'You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.' Justification is legally conferred. Holiness is spiritually conveyed just as sap runs through the trunk of the vine to the branches.

His third application is the stress laid upon our responsibility to maintain union. 'Remain in me!' That is an imperative. Union is to be cultured. It is not to be taken for granted. Attention and care are required. It is only by maintaining this union that fruitfulness is possible. Great fruitfulness, 'Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control', is possible through constant attention to our union with the Son of God. Jesus reminds us of the primacy of prayer and of meditation in the words of Scripture when he says, 'If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples' (15:7,8).

### **Baptism**

Paul uses this as a principal analogy to provide the theological foundation for union with Christ. We must be careful therefore to do it justice.

We begin by noting the nature of the likeness. Baptism means to dip or to dye, to plunge into, or to immerse. Note the action involved. In spiritual baptism the action is one of moving the believer from one orbit into another. He is taken from the world and placed in, baptised into the orbit of Christ. The prepositions

in the Greek are used consistently, *eis* into, and *en* in, denoting total identification attained by the action of placing into. We can readily understand why Paul's favourite theological expression is 'in Christ'. It is claimed that he uses this 164 times.<sup>1</sup> To be spiritually baptised into Christ is at the same time to come into union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Hence the baptismal formula commanded by our Lord, baptising them in (*eis* into) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19).

There is one spiritual baptism (Eph 4:5), namely, the joining of believers to Christ. 'For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ' (Gal 3:27). Romans 6:1-11 spells out the fact that we are united in our humanity with the humanity of Jesus. We are one with him in his death, burial and resurrection. The believer is identified with Christ so completely that he can say, 'I died! When Christ died on the cross that was my death. It was a dreadful death in which my Saviour bore God's wrath toward my sins! It was a death in which he died and was buried. That was my burial. Three days later he rose from the dead in resurrection of glory. That was my resurrection.'

Romans 6 reminds us of the necessity of the incarnation. The only way in which we could be redeemed was for God's Son to take flesh and blood and thus share in full our humanity. Thus in his death he had destroyed him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb 2:14). The union we have with Jesus is a union with him as a man. In the incarnation he took manhood to himself. He possessed all the faculties of manhood in the same proportion as we do: physique, intellect, affections, conscience, will and individual personality. He never ceased to be God. He had no sin. It is to that man that we are joined by faith. It is that man who has taken our place. It is that man who will raise us from the dead. 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die' (Jn 11:25).

When a baptism is enacted the focus is on union of that believer with Christ and the washing away of his sins (Rom 6:1-4; Col 2:12; Acts 22:16). But the primary focus is on union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. The believer is united to Christ in those momentous events of 2,000 years ago. Nevertheless the Christ of those events now reigns in glory and we reign with him.

A parallel which illustrates this is seen in the people of Israel. They were baptised into Moses in the cloud and the sea (1 Cor 10:2). They were united to their leader and transposed through his leadership into a new realm. They died to Egypt and were made alive in a new relationship to God. When the people passed through the Red Sea they were united as a new community to live in a new environment.

By way of summary, what exactly does Paul mean by the term 'in Christ'? First, it means complete identification of the believer with Christ in his death, burial, resurrection and ascension, as historical events. Second, it means a complete union with Christ now as he rules the Church. To enlarge a little on the second



point, we who are ‘in Christ’ live and reign with him now (Rev 20:1-6). We have been translated spiritually out of the old realm. ‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has gone, the new has come!’ (2 Cor 5:17).

*Application.* In Romans 6:11-25 the idea that we can compromise with sin is firmly repudiated on the basis that we are united to the holy Son of God. Sin in every shape and form is totally incompatible with that union. We are alive in him and must count ourselves dead to the realm of sin. We must give our bodily members to God as instruments of righteousness. We are now the possession of God.

In Romans 7 Paul deals with our relationship to the law. He illustrates from his own experience the tremendous tension that exists on account of the fact that we remain in a fallen world and still have to contend with remaining sin in our bodies (designated ‘flesh’ [KJV]) or ‘sinful nature’ [NIV] in Gal 5:16-18). In the violence of the conflict we are to be comforted by Christ’s victory on our behalf and we must never allow ourselves to be moved away from the foundation of justification. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (7:25; 8:1).

The application of union with Christ continues in Romans 8 where we are informed of our absolute responsibility to put sin to death (8:13). That obligation is set before us in the context of life in the Holy Spirit. He, the Holy Spirit leads us (8:14), assures us of our sonship (8:15,16) and enables us to pray (8:26,27).

This emphasis on life in the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:1-27, is reinforced by other Pauline writings. By believing in Jesus and following his instructions we have received the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:2). The Holy Spirit maintains our spiritual union with Christ. He works in us to transform us to the likeness of Jesus with ever increasing glory. This glory comes from the Lord by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). The text says, ‘The Lord, who is the Spirit.’ In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul contrasts the old covenant with the new. This is the age of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and from Christ to work in us the work of redemption. Jesus declared that the Spirit would live in us. He, Jesus, ‘will come to us and will be in us’ (Jn 14:17-20). Always in the Trinity there is concurrence of will and action. When Paul says, ‘Now the Lord is the Spirit’ (2 Cor 3:17,18), he is not confusing Christ with the Spirit. Rather he is pressing home the reality of the fact that the Spirit is powerfully carrying forward the work of holiness in us all, based on our union with Christ.

Lewis B. Smedes comments helpfully on 2 Corinthians 3 when he writes, ‘In the new covenant, God sustains his community not by an external code, but by the dynamic presence of himself as Spirit. He is not powerless to transform the community inwardly. He is the life-giving Spirit. A new day has come — the day of the new covenant. A new experience has been given — the writing of the law within the heart. The new day is the Spirit’s presence. The new experience is the experience of new power through the Spirit. But the new day and the new

experience are also, decisively, the day and experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. The experience of the Spirit is the experience with the Lord. In the new age, the Lord is the Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

### **The human body**

This analogy is employed three times and used in an extended way of application. In Romans 12:3-8 the point made is that all believers derive their function and gifts from union with Christ. Because all the members derive the life from the same head they all belong to each other. Every member therefore must work in unity with the others for the common good. The dependence of the members upon each other is the emphasis in 1 Corinthians 12:13-31. Every member has been baptised into the body of Christ. He is the head and every member derives his ability, his gifts and his directions from him, and always with the good of the body in view. The body must function as a unity which reflects the nobility and majesty of the head. Ephesians 4:15,16 tells of our vital union with the head from whom the whole body is united, every part contributing to the building up of the whole.

*Application.* The main thrust of this analogy is that the unity with the head should be reflected in the unity of all the members. It is disastrous when one member says to another, 'I don't need you!' It is also injurious to the body when one member says to another, 'I am better than you!' If one church or group of churches takes a superior posture, 'We are the only ones doing the work of reformation right!' or, 'We are the only ones who worship aright!' then division is bound to follow. If one church commends the truth of the gospel by good works, by displaying love, by consistent holy living, that must in itself glorify Christ. But as soon as a competitive spirit of pride enters in, then there is division, just as there was at Corinth, one party glorying in the oratory of Apollos, another in the Jewish ruggedness of Peter, and yet another in the academic superiority of Paul. As it is ludicrous in a human body for one member to despise another or lord it over another, so it is in the body of Christ.

Commenting on 1 Corinthians 12:27-30 Don Carson says, 'In the New Testament, characteristically each local church is not a part of the whole church, but simply the church — the outcropping of the church or the exemplar of the church in any particular place. So also with Paul's language about the body. Paul does not mean that each congregation is part of the body of Christ, or a body of Christ. Each congregation, each church, is *the* body of Christ. Each local church, if I may put it this way, is the exemplification of the church.'<sup>3</sup>

The unity of the members of the Church is likened by our Lord to the unity that exists between the three persons of the Trinity (Jn 17:20,21). There could not be a unity more sublime and perfect than that of the Triune God. Yet the union into which we are brought in Christ and by him with the Father and the Holy Spirit is of that order. That is truth of a superlative kind. We are to reflect on the

responsibility to seek to maintain a unity of that quality with all members of the family of God. This means that we must study to avoid the impediments to that unity and seek to bring reformation in cases where abuse of church power or any other malpractice has created divisions, even if they seem to be beyond repair.

Division comes not only by quarrels and hatreds but by expressions of superiority already referred to. Erroneous teaching is also responsible for major divisions. To cite Don Carson again, 'If the charismatic movement would firmly renounce, on biblical grounds, not the gift of tongues but the idea that tongues constitute a special sign of a second blessing, a very substantial part of the wall between charismatics and non-charismatics would come crashing down. Does 1 Corinthians 12 demand anything less?'<sup>4</sup>

#### *Summary — the terms we use for union with Christ*

A variety of adjectives is used to describe what is involved in being 'in Christ'.

*First, this union is 'a faith union'.* How do we come into union with Christ? The answer always is by faith. About fifty times we read of believing 'into' Christ (Jn 1:12; 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; Rom 10:14; Gal 2:16). We believe in him with a faith of obedience (Rom 1:5; 15:18; 16:26; Acts 6:7). A faith which does not result in obedience is a spurious faith. By faith we come into union with Christ and it is by faith that we continue to live for him. We are justified by faith to live a life of faith, as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith' (Rom 1:17).

*Second, this union is a gracious union.* 'For he chose us *in him* before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight' (Eph 1:4). We have by God's glorious grace been given redemption *in the One* whom he loves (Eph 1:6,7). We have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing *in Christ* (Eph 1:3). 'Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy made us alive *in Christ* even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms *in Christ Jesus*, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us *in Christ Jesus*' (Eph 2:4-7).

*Third, this union is a spiritual union.* As we have seen, this is a union sustained by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:17).

*Fourth, this union is a living union.* 'Christ lives in me and the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God' (Gal 2:20). The union is vital in a living sense.

*Fifth, this union is a federal (racial) union.* As Adam is the head of a fallen race so Christ is the head of a new race (Rom 5:12-21). 'Through the obedience of one many are made righteous.'

*Sixth, this union is a human union.* We are one with the man Christ Jesus, the only mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2:5). This has been strongly asserted. Bultmann and other liberals maintain that the accounts of Jesus are myths and stories. Not so! Our union is with a real man, the risen man, Christ Jesus.

*Seventh, this union is an experiential union.* We are united to a 'felt Christ'. We are sensitive to his presence with us personally and sensitive to his presence in the assembly of worship, praise and prayer. We reciprocate the incomparable love that he has for us. We dread a situation in which he could say of us as he said of the Ephesians, 'Yet I hold this against you; you have forsaken your first love' (Rev 2:4). The marriage union has been stressed. You cannot have a valid marriage union without at the same time an experiential union. When in California recently a missionary from Papua New Guinea described to me the communion services celebrated in a church of converted cannibals. They all weep when they come to partake of the bread and wine because they feel intensely the meaning of union with the Son who saved them from a life of unspeakable cruelty. That illustrates heart experience.

*Eighth, this union is a mystical or wondrous union.* The term 'mystical union' can be unhelpful since it tends to give the idea of something mysterious and intangible. The word 'mystery' is used in almost every case in the New Testament to point to that which was hidden but has now been clearly revealed (Eph 1:9; Col 1:26,27). What is now revealed is 'Christ in us the hope of glory'. That is a wonderful fact.

*Ninth, this union is a comprehensive union.* To be united to Christ is to be united to him extensively in all he has done for us. As we have been reminded by the analogy of marriage our every interest and our every concern and our every anxiety is embraced in this union.

*Tenth, this union is an indissoluble union.* 'No one can snatch them out of my hand' (Jn 10:28-30); 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?'; (Rom 8:35). 'And so we will be with the Lord forever' (1 Th 4:17).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Deissmann in *Die Neutestamentliche Formel 'In Christo Jesu'* (Marburg, 1892) cited in Lewis B. Smedes, *All Things New*, Eerdmans, 1970, pp. 78 and 83ff. Deissmann maintained that Christ in his ascension turned into an air-like substance in which men can live and move and have their new being. This confusion shows how needful it is to be clear about the glorified humanity of Jesus and of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. George Smeaton comments powerfully in his book on the Holy Spirit on the disaster for the Eastern Orthodox Church in rejecting the procession of the Spirit from the Son.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis B. Smedes, *All Things New*, Eerdmans, 1970, pp. 56-59. We must always keep the balance. The three Persons of the Trinity were at work throughout the OT epoch, but in the NT the distinctive work of the Persons becomes crystal clear. As we go back to the OT with that clarity it is wonderful to observe the divine inspiration of the Scriptures as God reveals himself in the progress of revelation.

<sup>3</sup> Don Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, a theological exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14, Baker, 1987, pp. 47ff.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 50.

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## The Experience of John Davison

As I lay in the middle of the road, on November 2, 1989, with a worm's eye view of the transit van heading towards me, I began to realise that my left leg was suffering something far worse than a mere acceleration of my four-year-old arthritis.

I had stepped down from our church mini-bus, after helping a physically disabled person inside, and it was as if there had been no leg inside my trouser. A passer-by helped me up and I continued driving to the prayer meeting at the church of which I am an honorary pastor. It was the last time I drove.

When I kept my appointment with a doctor the following evening I had to drag my leg along with the aid of a stick to support me.

He acted quickly to have me admitted into our local hospital within forty hours, on November 5. Tests proved negative, but my left hand became weaker in its grip. On the 7th I was taken by ambulance to the next town where I could have a CAT scan in the Neurology department of a large hospital there. A small 'cyst' was revealed under my skull. When questioned, the neurosurgeon agreed that this was a tumour and that he would have to operate to remove it. He told my wife that without



*This photo of John was taken at the Carey Ministers' Conference in January 1989*

surgery I would have six months to a year to live, and that I would become progressively weaker. With an operation survival chances were 99%, but 9% that I would be left with some permanent disability.

After starting me on a five-day course of cortisone to reduce swelling and to make surgery safe, I was allowed home for two-and-a-half days so that I should go in 'relaxed' on Sunday for surgery early on Monday 13th.

Our approach to this, the first of two

shattering blows, was in three forms: spiritually, emotionally, and practically.

Spiritually, we clung to our personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to the promise in his Word in the Bible, that 'all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose' (Rom 8:28).

Emotionally, we reviewed our happy marriage of over twenty-eight years and faced up to the possibility that we might be parted — if I were to be the 'one per-cent' who died undergoing surgery — or that I might never be the same again — if I were to be one of the nine per-cent who were left with disabilities. Those were precious days.

Practically — I clarified our insurances and my will and told my co-pastor what funeral arrangements I wanted should the need arise. Our family came to visit; friends called in, and the telephone rang. The time soon arrived for Janice to drive me the twenty-two miles to the hospital. She had to leave me there to think and pray and to await surgery.

I had enjoyed fifty-four years of active good health, with nothing worse than tonsillectomy and glandular fever, hardly ever seeing a doctor. Naturally, it took time for the seriousness of this to sink in, but from the first shock we both had a quiet confidence that, whatever the outcome, we were prepared to accept it peacefully as given to us by our God. This is not stoicism which has kept us going when we might have fallen into despair. It is the experience of all who know the reality of the living God and his promised comfort in their time of need.

Thirty-eight years ago I had another kind of experience which has helped me through this one. At the age of seventeen, I knew the forgiveness of my sin through a super-natural conversion to

Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I was brought to see that he bore the punishment for my sin when he died upon the cross as my substitute. He took the judgment of sin, for sinners who offend a Holy God, and the pardon for sin was applied to me by faith in his atoning work.

I am, therefore, no longer my own, but his by purchase; I know that everything the believer experiences is planned by God to make him more like Christ. As John Ryland (1753-1825) wrote:

*He that formed me in the womb,  
He shall guide me to the tomb;  
All my times shall ever be  
Ordered by his wise decree.*

*Plagues and deaths around me fly;  
Till he bids, I cannot die;  
Not a single shaft can hit,  
Till the God of love sees fit.*

So there are no 'accidents', 'mistakes', or 'unforeseen events' in God's plan. He 'predestinates the believer to be conformed to the image of his Son'.

On the afternoon of November 13 I awoke to sunshine in the intensive care ward, and in full possession of my faculties. I felt no pain, and never have done; the expected discomforts had to be endured but did not last long. I was placed in a ward the next day and on Wednesday the drainage tubes were removed. I was dressed and sitting in a chair when my visitors arrived — to their amazement. I made good progress that week, and all seemed to be going well.

Janice was given two reports by the surgeon. On the first she was told that only partial removal of the tumour had been possible because it was deep rooted and had a good blood supply. If any more had been taken it would have left me paralysed and with a changed personality.

When the biopsy results were ready she was told that my tumour was an astrocytoma – an active tumour giving me a fifty-fifty chance of recovery after five weeks of radio-therapy. Added to this my ‘comparative youth, fitness, recovery so far, the way I conducted myself and my positive attitude’ were all in my favour. It was a hopeful verdict.

After a total of seven weeks in hospital I was discharged, bald, on December 20, and, though tired, I began my convalescence anticipating a return to active life. There were many repair jobs in our old house that I could do. I was doing so well after three months that my doctor was happy to allow me back to work on a part-time basis on April 11, five months after surgery. He and I were certainly working at the ‘positive attitude’!

During this time, and from my first week-end at home – less than two weeks after my operation – I had suffered Jacksonian epileptic fits, which varied in frequency and strength, but by Easter it seemed as if the right balance of medication had been achieved to cope with my high metabolism. We were even able to take a six-day break to Jersey in February, staying with friends, and I had only one fit while I was there. So I really was making good progress and managed to work four mornings each week at the Regional Architects’ Office where I am a Group Leader, a distance of thirty miles away. I commuted by bus – a total of three hours travelling and over six hours away each day.

Upon my return I always felt the need to rest on the bed for a while. By the seventh week I had lost my balance more than once and had fallen, and on May 30 I could only just manage to drag myself from the bus stop to my home. I could not move for three-and-a-half hours. That was my last day in the office.

That weekend Janice drove me to the sea, an hour away, but the trip was uncomfortable; I could not take a step without her support for I was ominously ‘listing to port’, and I dozed on the journey home. The day out made a pleasant change, but we knew ourselves that something was very wrong.

On Monday, June 4, our doctor made his usual weekly early morning visit. From what we had to tell him he had to admit that he feared the tumour might be growing again. Further surgery was out of the question and more radio-therapy impossible, since I had received the maximum dose. When the significance of these words sank in, I had the second shattering blow of my illness. Although I have no fears for my own future, I was, and am, heartbroken at the thought of Janice being left alone. We slept little that night, and wept much.

But the assurance that a loving God knows what he is doing in our lives has wonderfully sustained us over the months. The following Monday our doctor very understandingly gave us as long as we needed to talk things through with him. We had prepared thirteen questions for him. Since I am an architect, I need facts in order to plan; since I am a Christian, I want to face reality. One question I asked him was, ‘How long do I have?’ – to which he replied that if pressed he would have to say, ‘Three months, more or less.’

This must be one of the hardest things a doctor has to say, and it was hard for us to take. I could not understand how there could be such a sudden deterioration in my otherwise apparently good progress, and realised that three months would take me to September, just past my fifty-fifth birthday and within two months of a year since my operation. So it would appear that surgery and radio-therapy, among other National Health resources utilised on my behalf, had

been unable to change the pre-surgery prognosis given to Janice — ‘Six months to a year, with increasing weakness.’

May I say at this point that all the efforts of the medical profession to restore me to good health were not in vain, and we much appreciated a period of improved mobility because it enabled me to wind up important matters in the home, office and church. We are both very grateful for the skill of the neurosurgeon, and for the constant support, consideration and wisdom of our doctor. They have our sincere respect and we thank God for them.

Another question I asked concerned retrogression. I was told that I would become weaker, sleep more and one day not wake up. I observed that that was very biblical — described as ‘asleep in Jesus’, in the case of believers.

Since November many Christian friends in this country and in the United States have been praying for my full or partial recovery, if it pleases the Lord. We know that God *is* able to heal me, but physical healing is not necessarily God’s will for all his people, and he has enabled us to face the reality of death — a certainty for us all. It must be a fear-some thing to face if one is not prepared to meet God. For one who is, there is a joyful anticipation of being with the risen Christ in glory, of sharing with him the peace and joy, the holiness and happiness of heaven.

I do not know what each day holds for me; my fits give me only a few seconds warning. Some last for three minutes, some develop into a sort of ‘ring circuit’ and last from two to three hours, even with diazepam. I am painfully conscious throughout.

As a recent example, I was asked to take a small but public part in the wedding of a young friend. As the June day

approached my fits increased in frequency and severity, and there was a very real possibility that an attack might occur during the ceremony. At first I had agreed to do it, but then thought that it would be much better to decline. This disappointed the bride, so after much prayer, I agreed to take part — and no fits occurred on the day; nothing happened to distress and upset the wedding.

This was achieved by faith in Christ, because I was exceedingly fearful of spoiling the occasion by drawing attention to myself. It may seem a small answer to prayer, but it is a very real one nonetheless. This account of my illness is not for the purpose of displaying our ‘great faith’, but it is intended to show the great faithfulness of God to the promises of his Word, which are proved during times of trial. He is to be trusted.

It is now the beginning of August and two of my ‘three months’ have passed. My left leg does not respond, except from the hip. I have a caliper to aid my foot-drop, and my left arm is losing power. There is no dexterity now in those fingers. I am much weaker, more tired, and my speech is affected by a stammer. Fits now occur almost daily instead of weekly.

The love of our family and of our friends is wonderfully sustaining and they show it in many ways. Their visits from near and far, their phone calls, flowers, gifts and letters, cheer us greatly and the daily prayers of Christian friends are surely being answered as we are kept from fear or despair.

With a quiet joy I look forward to being with Christ, not only in heaven, but when he re-appears in power and great glory to a new heaven and a new earth in which there will be no sin, or sickness — and no need of a medical profession! I long that all whom I love will join me there someday. August 1990.



# The Canadian Carey Family Conference: 1990



*Pictured here are speakers and leaders at the Canadian Carey Family Conference*

The 12th Canadian Carey Family Conference (hereafter CCFC) convened from August 25 to August 31, 1990. The location was the Lambton Conference Centre near Sarnia in Southern Ontario. Two hundred and thirty-two, including the children registered for the conference, a very encouraging number of these being below the age of twenty. It has always been a matter for praise that the conference has proved so popular to teens and children. Parents have not had to 'drag' their children to the conference; frequently the young folk have been the most enthusiastic and insistent that the family must attend.

The conference is sponsored by the Fellowship for Reformation and Pastoral Studies (FRPS) which is a loosely knit group of Reformed pastors which seeks to promote the doctrines of grace and an appreciation for the Reformed faith. This is done by promoting a monthly pastors' study group held in Toronto from September to April; a pastors'

conference held at the beginning of May; the magazine *Reformation Canada*; and CCFC leadership is provided by Pastor Bill Payne (Burlington) and Pastor Roger Fellows (Bowmanville).

The Lambton Centre provides some cabins and rooms and a dining hall for those who are not enthusiastic about camping, but the majority of the families spend the week in tents or tent-trailers and some even in very comfortable recreational vehicles. This year the tenters proved their fortitude by surviving a tremendous storm on the Monday night with heavy rain, very powerful winds and crashes of thunder and lightning. Our tenters have survived other similar assaults from the weather in past years. This led Pastor Don Brehaut of New Brunswick to refer to this as the 'Scarey Conference'! However for most of the week we enjoyed good weather and a cheerful and positive spirit prevailed.



*A group emerging from the prayer meeting. A time of prayer precedes every session at the conference, an example for others to note*

The main speaker at this year's conference was the editor of *Reformation Today*, Erroll Hulse, who incidentally slept right through the thunderstorm and we understand a Richter scale five earthquake when he was in California. He dealt with the assigned topic, 'The person and work of the Holy Spirit', and preached each evening from Sunday to Thursday. Having laid a good foundation in relating the work of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, our visitor from England proceeded in subsequent evenings to deal with the baptism of the Spirit and regeneration; conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment; evangelism; and revival. These sermons were presented with earnestness and zeal and were a great blessing to all present. It was a joy for us to have Lyn Hulse and daughter Sharon present for the conference and the fellowship and inter-action of our three guests with those attending the conference was a further dimension of the ministry.

The conference began on Saturday evening, August 25, with a message from Pastor Brian Robinson of London,

Ontario on the subject 'Christian contentment'. At the service on Sunday morning Pastor Don Brehaut of Anagance, New Brunswick preached on 'God and the backslider'. Monday morning's session brought Pastor Don Theobald of Binbrook, Ontario, to deal with the important subject 'Women in ministry', and this was done in a way that was both sensitive and faithful to Scripture. On Tuesday morning it was Pastor Ted Angrove of Toronto presenting a paper on 'The New Age Movement' and on Wednesday Dr. Michael Haykin delivered an excellent address on Jonathan Edwards. Pastor Tom Rush of Oromocto, New Brunswick spoke on 'Worldliness' on Thursday morning and the week concluded with an address from Peter Pikkert on 'The cause of Christ in the Middle East'. Peter, a member of the Trinity Baptist Church in Burlington, had just returned from four years in Turkey and was able to give an up-to-date informative and challenging message. Each address in the morning was followed by a half hour period of questions and discussion. The ministry of the brethren in the morning sessions was much appreciated.



*Roger Fellows was not able to attend the conference this year. He and Bill Payne are the main organisers. Bill and Hetty are featured above. On the left is Dr Djaballah whose presence in Ontario is sorely missed. He is now teaching in a seminary in Montreal*

During the morning sessions the younger people had their own ministry. A fine group of about thirty teens met under the direction of Pastor Kirk Wellum (Sarnia) and Don Sway (Burlington); and the children aged 4-7 and 8-12 had their respective groups — both bulging at the seams! A nursery was also provided.

The preaching ministry of the conference was supplemented by the literature ministry of Fred Huebner who operates the Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, USA. Fred has contributed in this way from the very first conference. His magnificent selection of books at very reasonable prices is a vital part of the work.

Mention should also be made of the meals provided for those eating in the dining room. Excellent meals were organised by George Veenvliet who used to be a baker, is now a bricklayer, and judging by his work at this conference could certainly be a chef! George was wonderfully assisted by Rick Thibault and his two young sons,

George's wife Florence, Ernie and Kay Wood and several other faithful friends.

'Music Night' has become a feature at the CCFC. After the service on Wednesday evening people are invited to participate in a ministry of music and a good number generally do so either by singing (solos, duets, etc.), or by playing instruments. This proved to be a time of real blessing and our guest speaker was moved to comment on the 'high quality' of the musical offerings.

All in all it was a wonderful week. The CCFC has been a wonderfully successful venture from its very beginning. The credit for this must go to our gracious God whose blessing has evidently been upon it. The faithful biblical ministry, the warm and happy fellowship, the obvious enjoyment of the children and young people, the help and cooperation of so many including pastors, and a cheerful and positive spirit, have all contributed to a week that some describe as the highlight of their year. We praise God for this year's conference and look forward to another great week in 1991.

# Book Review

## JOHN WIMBER — Friend or Foe?

Alec Taylor

John Wimber and his 'Power Evangelism' teaching has had a profound influence upon evangelicals throughout the world. He has won over to his cause best-selling Christian author, psychiatrist John White. Thousands attend Wimber's teaching seminars and those of us who have warned against his teachings and practices are rarely heeded.

Wimber and his team conducted a Spiritual Warfare conference in Sydney during March of this year. Not all evangelicals welcomed him with open arms! Prior to the conference, Anglican clergyman Phillip Jensen and two other men had a discussion with John Wimber, Jack Deere and Paul Cain of Vineyard Ministries which lasted just under three hours. Australians do not mince their words and Jensen writes, 'The meeting concluded with an invitation to cancel the Spiritual Warfare Conference and to go home to America.' Their invitation was ignored and the conference went ahead, attended by 5,500 people who each paid \$150. Some very discerning men attended the conference and have written what I consider to be the most devastating exposure of Wimberism that is available. The booklet, *John Wimber — Friend or Foe?* is well-written and well-produced. The contributors are gracious and fair and sometimes humorous (I smiled and smiled at the comment on so-called words of knowledge and prophecy at the end of the book). There is also a short testimony on 'One woman's struggle with "Power Healing" teaching and how it applied to her family.' What did Phillip Jensen and his friends find out about 'Wimberism'?

*Healing* In the discussion, Wimber admitted that his healings were radically different from those of Jesus and his apostles. He was then asked about 'the claim of his books and his previous teaching that the powerlessness of evangelicals lay in their failure to pray for and claim the Signs and Wonders of the Kingdom seen

in Jesus and the Apostles. He replied that thanks to the advice of Jack Deere he had come to understand that the current miracles fit into the New Testament not at the point of Jesus and the Apostles and the coming of the Kingdom, but in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and the gifts of healing.' Phillip Jensen points out that 'this change of mind seriously compromises the stance of the previous Signs and Wonders conferences, Vineyard Ministries and John Wimber's books. He was asked if he would be explaining this change of mind to the Sydney conference, but declined. (As it turned out, both views were expressed during the course of the week.)' Jensen writes, 'It is to be seriously doubted that any miraculous healings are taking place at all. (The failure so far to provide Christian doctors with cases to verify from the Sydney Conference only contributes to the growing doubt over any genuine miracles.)'

*The Mind by-passed* Brent Rue, one of the conference team, told his listeners, 'God wants to woo us from our minds to our spirits' and warned his hearers to 'watch out for evaluating what is going on with your mind'.

Our Australian brethren are to be greatly commended for the timely assessment of John Wimber and his teaching. They demonstrate the appalling theological ineptitude of Wimber and his team. They have sounded the alarm. May God use their booklet to rouse many from their slumber, apathy or blindness. Buy copies of this booklet and place it into the hands of friends who have been taken in by Wimber.

(*John Wimber — Friend or Foe?* available from St Matthias Press, c/o 5 Stanton Road, London SW20 8RL. Price is £1.95, cheques payable to Tim Thornborough.)

*We are grateful for Pastor Alec Taylor's permission to print the above extract from his review.*

# News

## **London, The Evangelical Library, Stephanie Wright**

The Evangelical Library, London, provides a valuable service to its members. Following the death in 1985 of the librarian Mr Gordon Sayer, the position was taken by Stephanie Wright who had worked as assistant librarian since 1981. Stephanie was a most talented librarian upon whom we could rely for a speedy and efficient service of required books or information. One of her responsibilities was to recommend to the committee those books which should be purchased.

Her decease through a car accident on August 8 came as a terrible shock to us all. Stephanie's parents worship at Hall Green Baptist Church, Haworth, a reformed work which has recently been encouraged by the ministry of pastor Keith Dredge. Haworth was the scene of revival during the 18th century under the ministry of William Grimshaw. Stephanie's father, Michael Wright, is secretary for the Northern Fellowship of Particular Baptists. Our deepest sympathy is extended to the family in their bereavement. We need to support the Evangelical Library during this time of discouragement.

## **Philippines, Grace Evangelical Chapel, Box 4224, Manila 1099**

Pastor Antonio Hermano recently completed two years of studies at the London Theological Seminary. He rejoined his wife and two children in Manila in July just 13 days before a severe earthquake shook Manila. Antonio reports that the bewildered Filipinos have suffered bombings and attempted coups, political unrest, earthquakes, floods, devastation of crops by first drought then typhoons and flash floods and now the Gulf crisis, which affects not only



*Toni Hermano is featured above.  
On his left is Sing Lau*

the oil price, but also the half million Filipino workers in the Middle East.

Following the tragedies reported in July, Antonio expressed gratitude at the way funds were raised locally for survivors, yet grieved that rescuers were unable to offer life and salvation to the dying. He prayed, 'Lord, why haven't I started church-planting yet?' In September he wrote, 'Unless hearts and individuals are changed, society can't change for the better but for the worse. Moral decadence has become apparent everywhere in our land . . . the gospel is being watered down, sugarcoated with entertainment or social gospel. . . . Nevertheless here's my good news. Our Worship Services have started with 15 at the first meeting on August 12.' Prayer is requested for accommodation, hymn-books and furnishing for the new work. The ground floor of a home has been made available for a short period. The believers are praying that sufficient support will be forthcoming not only for the Hermano family needs but for premises which will suffice for their

living space as well as accommodating the church services. The group is seeking to bear a faithful testimony in the community and plan outreach by way of tract distribution and Bible studies.

### **South Africa, Nineteenth Evangelical and Reformed Conference**

Held at 'Skogheim', Marburg, Natal  
July 6-11, 1990

After the joy of hearing Dr O. Palmer Robertson's systematic exposition of the prophecy of Habbakuk in 1987, many had great expectations for the 1990 conference as Palmer Robertson was once more the guest speaker.

In his simple yet profound style Palmer covered in three sessions the heart of the messages of Ecclesiastes: The frustrations of life; Ezekiel: The departing and returning glory of God; Revelation: The final note of praise. Hearing the papers encouraged many to go back to these books of Scripture in order to make an in-depth study.

From 1 Thessalonians, encouragement was given to pray in the light of Christ's return. The paper on civil disobedience was handled with great care, and stimulated much discussion throughout the day.

For many, Palmer's exposition on the 'Curse of Canaan' in Genesis 9:25 was most helpful and resolved a matter that had caused great pain to many of the Black brethren. In the paper entitled 'The God of the Generations' the clear providence of God working in the line of families was focused on.

The warmth of Palmer Robertson's pastoral concern for all and the quality of his ministry at the conference endeared him to many as he encouraged them in the Lord.

Fabio Frescura presented a most useful paper on the Christian and his Bible. The Black pastors at the conference expressed great appreciation for this

paper as it encouraged them to live by the mandate of the Word in spite of difficult opposition. Fabio encouraged all in his paper on the 'Christian and the covenant' by majoring on the covenant commitment of God to his people.

For many Martin Holdt's paper on 'The Christian and depression' was of great practical use. Martin used the incident of the disciples on the road to Emmaus as God's directive for working through depression.

The conference was a time of edifying preaching, warm fellowship, challenging question sessions, stimulating discussion and strengthening of faith in the Lord of all glory and grace.

*Trevor Marshall.*

### **Garston, Liverpool, Caring for Life**

The encouraging developments of the work of Caring for Life in its various aspects, the latest being outreach to Romania, have been reported in recent issues of *RT*. One of the features of this work has been flexibility to adapt to local needs and situations. A group of 'Friends of CFL' have been praying and seeking to help practically in meeting the needs of homeless people on the NW coast of Britain.

Also over the past months a centre for counselling has been taking root in Merseyside and refurbishing of the old Garston Bridge chapel building has now been completed to provide excellent accommodation for a Drop-In centre which opened on September 24 under the direction of Jean Brown. The aim is to make the centre a warm, welcoming, friendly place where people can call in to relax, make new friends or seek individual help or advice or simply find a listening ear. Single parents, the lonely, unemployed, alcoholics and those with drug-related problems are being reached. It is of tremendous encouragement to see the work progressing with the prayerful and practical backing of a lively Reformed church.

# The Fall of the Televangelists

*A review article by Pastor Bill Ascol*

**The Agony of Deceit, edited by Michael Horton, Moody Press. 284 pages. \$12.95.**

The American Church is in serious need of reformation on many fronts. Too many Christians sit at home content to be warmed by the light of the gospel, while multitudes around them perish in utter darkness. Meanwhile, the sons of Tetzl mount their 'electronic pulpits' and enter the homes of millions with a gospel that is no gospel at all. New high technology has been abused by charming indulgence hawkers to bring spiritual life in America to a new low, so that this culture is now on the brink of what one author calls 'the new dark ages'. Mr Michael Horton and his evangelical contributors have nailed their 'theses to the door of the electronic church' (page 251). They have given them the title, *The Agony of Deceit*. According to the editor, the book 'is about the rotted foundation under so many of the popular ministries: errant beliefs, distorted doctrine, and unsound convictions with regard to the heart and soul of biblical faith' (page 11).

This book is a collection of fourteen essays written by twelve authors. Its editor, Mr Michael Horton, is a young man who has already demonstrated his ability as an author (see *Mission Accomplished*, Thomas Nelson Publishers). He is founder and president of Christians United for Reformation (CURE) and currently serves as minister at St Luke's Reformed Episcopal Church in Anaheim, California. The list of contributors is quite impressive. In addition to Horton, they are:

Dr R. C. Sproul, president of Ligonier Ministries  
Dr Art Lindsley, theologian at C. S. Lewis Institute  
Dr Henry Krabbendam, theologian at Covenant College  
Dr Walter Martin, president of Christian Research Institute  
Dr Rod Rosenblatt, theologian at Christ College  
Dr W Robert Godfrey, historian at Westminster Seminary  
Dr C Everett Koop, former US Surgeon General  
Dr Quentin Schultze, professor at Calvin College  
Mr John Dart, religion writer for *Los Angeles Times*  
Mr Ken Curtis, president of Gateway Films  
Dr Joel Nederhood, host of 'The Back to God Hour' on radio

Acknowledging that there are many concerns with American 'televangelism' (a word coined to describe those who use television and other mass media to

preach their message and solicit financial support for their cause), Horton states: 'The intention of this volume is to strike at the root, which we are convinced is heresy. That is not to say that immorality is unimportant but to say that it is consequential — an effect rather than a cause' (page 28). The contributors to this volume have not approached their task with a vengeful glee, but rather with a sense of grief that this book had to be written. Following the biblical example concerning recovering an erring brother, the contributors approached the various 'televangelists' in question, asking them: 1. Is this what you actually said? 2. If you said this, are you aware that this is a heresy which has been condemned by the church in the past? 3. Are you willing to recant this erroneous teaching? It was only after these steps were taken (and the 'televangelists' refused to recant) that *The Agony of Deceit* began to be written.

The book is divided into two parts: 1. Facing the Facts (nine chapters) and 2. Facing the Future (five chapters). In addition to this there are three appendices, as well as a Scripture index. No less than 23 'ministers' and their 'ministries' come under scrutiny in the book, among them such well-known personalities as: Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Robert Tilton, Frederick K. C. Price, Jimmy Swaggart, Pat Robertson and Robert Schuller.

Dr Henry Krabbendam divides these 'televangelists' into two categories: 1. 'positive thinkers' (such as Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller) and 2. 'positive confessionists' (such as Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Oral Roberts and Robert Tilton). The 'positive' (or possibility) thinker emphasises the power of the mind, manifested in visualising and imagining. Korean Paul Yong Cho exports this deadly error. According to this philosophy, 'One's inner potential is so enormous and one's inner energy so powerful that one can literally think, visualise, imagine, or believe into being what one desires' (page 70). The positive thinker places more emphasis on the natural, asserting that 'what the secularist can accomplish, the Christian can achieve more effectively ... with Jesus' (page 71). Through this type of teaching the door is wide open for a wedding between Schuller's brand of Christianity and the new age movement. Both emphasise human potential and treat man as sovereign.

The 'positive confessionist' emphasises the supernatural in his philosophy. He 'holds out the prospect of prosperity and success as the supernatural realisation of the even more enormous possibilities that are presented to him in the framework of salvation' (page 71). This teaching is also man-centred, and even goes so far as to assert that man is himself a god. Earl Paulk, in his book entitled, *Satan Unmasked*, claimed:

Adam and Eve were placed in the world as the seed and expression of God. Just as dogs have puppies and cats have kittens, so God has little gods ... we have trouble comprehending this truth. Until we comprehend that we are



little gods and we begin to act like little gods, we cannot manifest the Kingdom of God (page 90).

Commenting on this tragic heresy, Walter Martin says, 'Those who propagate these erroneous views . . . have sadly crossed over into the kingdom of the cults and stand in need of genuine repentance, lest they come under the inevitability of divine judgment' (page 104).

It would be impossible in the scope of a review to give fair treatment to all the strengths of this book. Indeed, each one of the twelve contributors brings his own strong points to his critical analysis of the 'electronic pulpit'. Some of the more striking features of the book are:

1. The spirit in which the book was written. Too often Christians are guilty of addressing doctrinal and/or practical differences through the printed media, without first encountering at a personal level those with whom we differ. This makes it appear that Christians enjoy 'bashing' anyone who may disagree with us. While it must be admitted that often various personalities will not open themselves and/or their ministries to personal scrutiny and critique, Christians are nonetheless under the obligation to attempt reconciliation at the personal level first. Michael Horton and his associates have set an example for us all in their attempts to contact the various religious personalities who come under scrutiny in *The Agony of Deceit*. The fact that some, when contacted, refused even to consider the charges made against their teachings, and that others refused to respond to attempts made to contact them, makes the publishing of this book even more vital.

2. The wealth of information contained in the book is worth the price of the book, even if a person did not happen to agree with the critical analysis of those under scrutiny. Anyone who would like to know something of the beliefs of these 'media preachers' without having to sift through their writings will welcome the publishing of *The Agony of Deceit*. Pertinent quotations can be found throughout the book. There is even an Appendix (C) which serves as 'A Ready-Reference Guide' whereby 'In no more than fifteen minutes, one may take (or be taken through) a look at the errors of those we are critiquing as they state their positions *in their own words*' (page 267). The appendix takes up such topics as the authority of the Bible, the sovereignty of God, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of salvation. Two examples will demonstrate some of the terrible errors catalogued in this index:

We make our own promises to do our part. Then we can tell God on the authority of his word what we would like him to do. That's right! You can actually tell God what you would like his part in the covenant to be! (Robert Tilton).

Pray to yourself, because I'm in your self and you're in my self, We are one Spirit, saith the Lord. . . . You don't have a god in you. You are one! . . . When I read in the Bible where he (Jesus) says, 'I Am,' I say, Yes, I Am, too! (Kenneth Copeland).

3. The keen theological analysis of the 'positive thinking' and 'positive confession' movements makes this book an invaluable tool for anyone who is confronted by disciples who have imbibed the errors of these groups. Throughout the book the connection is made between various gnostic heresies which threatened the life of the early Church and the contemporary teachings of the 'positive confessionists'. (Positive thinking is not properly gnosticism, though its errors are very much the same.) The writers have made a great contribution to the contemporary religious scene by bringing historic creeds to bear upon present theological errors. There is even an Appendix (A) which sets forth four of 'The Ecumenical Creeds' (Apostles', Nicene, Chalcedon, Athanasian). Once again we see that there are no new heresies. Rather, contemporary heresies are only old heresies dressed in different clothes.

I do not see how any serious, thinking Christian could read this book and remain either actively supportive of or passively neutral concerning the dangerous errors propagated by various 'televangelists' over the media airways in the US as well as other countries. The 'electronic church', so called, is not a church at all. A church is a gathering of believers called out of the world and into service for Jesus Christ. The Church is referred to in Scripture as 'the body of Christ'. At its best, the 'electronic church' is only 'a hand and a mouth'. The mouth makes various claims, some true and some false. The hand is continually outstretched, asking for more and more financial support. Certainly the Christian Church cannot be content to let the grossly disfigured beast called the 'electronic church' pass for the expression of Christ's body upon this earth. Christians everywhere can do at least three things to stem the flood tide of error.

1. Repent where we have been complacent about the matter of personal evangelism and content to let others (even 'televangelists') do our work for us.
2. Rise up in holy indignation and humble intercession concerning these religious media personalities who, in espousing their particular heresies, must repent or else perish eternally.
3. Consider ways to make responsible and redemptive use of radio, television and other mass media as a means to assist (but never to replace) the Christian Church in its task of taking the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to every creature on this globe.

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1 year £7.00 — 2 years £12.00 BRITISH ISLES  
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