



The Burning Bush

MITA (P) 116/02/95

January 1996

Volume 2 Number 1

“OCCUPY TILL I COME”	1
Tow Siang Hwa	
EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS TOGETHER IN JOHN 17:21?	7
Jeffrey Khoo	
THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR	15
Timothy Tow	
WHEN LOVE DIVORCES DOCTRINE AND UNITY LEAVES TRUTH	30
John C Whitcomb	
THE PRINCIPLE OF SECONDARY SEPARATION	40
Charles Seet	
A REVIEW ARTICLE : “ <i>BE YE HOLY</i> ”: <i>THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN SEPARATION</i>	49
Lim Jyh Jang	
THEONOMY EXAMINED	54
Jack Sin	
SAIPAN MISSION NEWS	58
Pang Kok Hiong	
Class Notes	29
College News	57



THE BURNING BUSH

Official organ of the student body
of the
FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE
supported by the faculty

Rev Timothy Tow, MDiv, STM, DD
Principal, and Lecturer in Systematic Theology

Mrs Ivy Tow, BTh
Matron, and Lecturer in Greek

Rev Bob Phee, BA (Hons), BTh, MDiv, ThM
Registrar, and Lecturer in Apologetics

Rev Stephen Khoo, BTh, MDiv, PhD (c)
Dean of students, and Lecturer in Church History

Rev Koa Keng Woo, BTh
Lecturer in Bible Geography and Church Music

Rev Quek Suan Yew, BArch, BTh, MDiv, STM
Lecturer in Old Testament

Rev Jeffrey Khoo, BTh, MDiv, STM, PhD
Lecturer in New Testament

Rev Prabhudas Koshy, BSc, BTh, MDiv
Lecturer in Hebrew

Rev Goh Seng Fong, MA, MDiv, DMin
Lecturer in Pastoral Ministry

Mrs Jemima Khoo, BTh, MA, MRE
Lecturer in Christian Education

Editor : Jeffrey Khoo
Publisher : Far Eastern Bible College
Printer : Chin Chang Press

The Burning Bush is published bi-annually in January and July, and contains theological papers, sermons, testimonies, book reviews, College news, and alumni reports. It is distributed *gratis* to the FEBC family, Bible-Presbyterian Churches, and friends of the College and Church. Interested parties are cordially invited to a complimentary subscription renewable on a yearly basis.

Please direct all correspondence to:



The Editor
The Burning Bush
9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063
Republic of Singapore

“OCCUPY TILL I COME”

Tow Siang Hwa

Dr Tow Siang Hwa, pastor of Calvary B-P Church, was third president of the FEBC Board of Directors. He was conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Bob Jones University, South Carolina, USA, on May 6, 1995. The baccalaureate sermon below was delivered on April 30, 1995 at BJU.

We live in exceptional times. God’s Word calls these the last days. In just over four years it will be AD 2000. Mankind stands at the threshold of a new millennium. Unknown dangers loom ahead. History speeds to its grand finale. The Lord of history is about to return. The adversary’s days are numbered. He walks about with redoubled energy, seeking whom he may devour.

For the child of God, the last days are exciting days: every day brings us *one* day nearer that momentous event. How will it be when I see my Lord? I often ask. O blessed thought: soon we shall behold Him face to face! On that day, may He not be ashamed of me or you. Bob Jones University is raised of God “for such a time as this,” to stand for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Never forget what you have received in your time here. This school has imparted to you knowledge in your chosen field; implanted in you the precious Gospel seed; endeavoured to mould your character with godly standards and true holiness.

To each graduand the Master has delivered a pound. The ball is in your court. Play well for Him, the Captain of your salvation. Prove yourself by cherishing and upholding the values you have learnt. In your new life, godly habits and new routines will need to be cultivated. Never

let a day go without prayer and the Word. Sustain each day with unceasing prayer.

Today you leave the enfolding care of this Christian community. Tomorrow you face a harsh and hostile world. There will be tests of loyalties: the demands of career versus the Christian witness. Moral choices will have to be made. Can the Lord depend on you? When tested, recall the promise of Matthew 28:20, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” The ever present Lord is your strength. Look to Him, call upon Him. He is only a prayer away.

You say, “But the Lord is so long coming!” Are you sometimes faint-hearted? Be not faithless! Be not like the scoffers who ridicule the promise of the Second Coming. Remember those in Noah’s day would not believe, until the flood came and took them all away. So shall it be at our Lord’s return. You have been forewarned.

Why has the Lord not come? Simply because He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet 3:9). While He tarries, the Lord has work for you and me, to turn men and women in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. There is greatest joy in serving Jesus. We have received, and we must give. “To whom much is given is much required.” We have an urgent Gospel debt to pay.

I call to mind, how those who have no light are willing to forgo the world for their faith. Buddhist young men in Thailand give two of the best years of their life to be apprentice monks and to suffer hardship.

We who have the light of salvation are too concerned with self—self comfort, self interest, self enrichment—to do much for God. The children of light do well to learn from children of the world.

What must we do? God must deal with us. His Spirit must do a new work in each one. This comes not but by prayer and fasting, by deep soul searching and tears of true repentance. The love of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the fashionable modern lifestyle must be purged. God’s Spirit will do this in the yielded heart.

Only then can we truly occupy till He comes. Only then can I effectively do His will: by purity of life, purity of doctrine, purity in business, purity in associations.

“OCCUPY TILL I COME”

Sixty years ago the Lord saved me. Three years later I gave my heart and life to Him in consecration. Forty-two years has the Lord sustained me in the practice of obstetrics and gynecology. How many children have I delivered? What does it matter? I am more concerned with how many spiritual children I have helped to receive the second birth. My days of practice are numbered. It will be a glad day when all my time goes into the Gospel work. There is joy in serving Jesus!

Perhaps you say, “Let me carve out a career for myself, win my place in society, make a name for myself. After that, I will serve the Lord. Give me time!”

Let me suggest for your consideration: (1) Our times are in God’s hand. We can never be sure. We do not have all that time assured. (2) Serving the Lord and pursuing a career need not be in conflict—only have your priorities right. My formula: Serve God “full part time”—if you cannot go full time.

In life—whether study or business—time is the essence. A correct sense of timing can make all the difference between success and failure. So it is in God’s business. The best time to serve Him is now.

Solomon says, “Remember life is wind.” The Apostle James says, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour . . .” (Jas 4:14).

Two Certain Signs

Wisdom demands that we discern the signs of the times. God’s Word in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 describes two certain signs of our Lord’s imminent return: (1) a falling away first, and (2) the man of sin revealed.

A year ago, the first sign was fulfilled. The Evangelicals, presumed defenders of the historic Christian faith against the church of Rome, made a roundabout turn and published a declaration “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” (ECT).

This means that from henceforth Roman Catholic beliefs and practices are to be fully accepted by all Christians. This is the most devastating blow to the Protestant Church since the Reformation. By one stroke the death knell of Protestantism was sounded, and one remaining road-block to Rome is dismantled.

From now on the ecumenical process goes into top gear. From now on the ecumenical gospel means: **Salvation = faith plus works**. This is “another gospel.” Recall the problem of the Galatian church; the Judaizers had brought “another gospel”: **To faith add circumcision**. The Apostle Paul’s response to this is clearly spelt out in Galatians 1:8, 9. Those who had propagated this perverted gospel were messengers of Satan. They were accursed, no matter who they were, even if they were “an angel from heaven.”

The perpetrators of the ECT are among the most respected church leaders in the world. What they say carries the greatest weight and determines the direction of Christendom for the future.

But the Word of God enables the discerning believer to see things in their true light. The Apostle Paul describes the perverters of the gospel in these words: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness . . .” (2 Cor 11:13-15).

Sobering words of truth! Satan’s angels come not with horns, fangs, and hooked tails, but as preachers, pastors, evangelists, bishops, archbishops, etc. The authors of “another gospel” come to us as kindly, respectable, eloquent, cultured, and highly educated theologians, professors, presidents of seminaries and other prominent Christian leaders. These are in fact agents of Satan, wolves “in sheep’s clothing” (Matt 7:15).

“But that cannot be! These men are great soul winners for God,” some would protest.

We must heed the Word of God, not man’s reasoning. We must realise that saving souls and promoting evangelism do not qualify for entry into heaven. Our Lord’s own words are most sobering: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:21-23).

“OCCUPY TILL I COME”

We need to be very clear in this matter. What is “the will of my Father which is in heaven?” Is it to agree to the practices of image veneration, the bloodless sacrifice of the Mass, prayers to Mary and the saints; to believe in purgatory, indulgences, Papal infallibility, and other unbiblical doctrines?

Our Lord’s warning is clear: those who wilfully accept and promote these unbiblical doctrines and practices are not doing the will of God the Father, and will be denied entry into heaven. The day will reveal it, but today those who endorse the ECT document command a great following in Christendom and millions of Christians will be led into the broad way of ecumenical togetherness.

Today’s evangelicals have effectively sold the Lord for thirty pieces of ecumenical silver, crucified Jesus afresh, wilfully dismantled the Reformation and consigned the Protestant churches again to Roman bondage. In the name of unity and togetherness, they have trampled underfoot the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

The ECT declaration adds great impetus to the tongues movement, with their signs and wonders, swoonings and slayings, holy clapping and holy shouting, holy dancing and holy laughing.

It adds impetus to the “Promise Keepers” movement with the masses of deluded followers. Satan is smarter than you think.

In the evangelicals’ “falling away” we see the fulfilment of the first certain sign.

Sign number two: “The man of sin revealed.” Who can he be? God’s Word supplies the clue to his identity: This man “. . . opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess 2:4).

In all the world, and in all history, one man and only one answers to this description. He wears the names of God: Holy Father, Head of Church, Vicar of Christ. He sits on the “throne of God” in the “temple of God,” and is regularly worshipped by his bishops and priests. Up until now the evangelicals have resisted and opposed such worship. Now the ECT opens the way to man-worship and image-worship.

The defection of evangelicalism is complete. Christendom's subjection to Rome is sealed. The man of sin awaits his moment. His *Evangelisation 2000* has *AD 2000 Evangelism* in tow, powered by the evangelicals, obedient and subservient to Rome. Together, by AD 2000 the world will be "Christianised." In that day, all that dwell upon the earth shall worship a man, "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8).

Nevertheless the defection is not total. Our Lord has preserved His remnant few, as in the days of Jezebel and Ahab. He has His "seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kgs 19:18). So we stand, knees unflexed, confident in the ever living and soon coming Saviour. Stand fast, every one whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life. As for me and my church we shall stand with the Lord, against any ecumenical force, come wind come foul weather!

Occupy till I come! And behold I come quickly; my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown. I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS TOGETHER IN JOHN 17:21?

Jeffrey Khoo

Jesus' high priestly prayer—"That they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21)—is cited in the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT) document of March 29, 1994 as a proof text for Protestant-Catholic union. The 37 signatories of this ecumenical document include well-known evangelicals Dr Bill Bright (Campus Crusade), Dr Mark Noll (Wheaton College), Dr J I Packer (Regent College), and influential Catholics Prof Robert Destro (Catholic University of America), Fr Avery Dulles (Fordham University), and Fr Richard Neuhaus (Institute on Religion and Public Life). In the ECT document, they declare,

We together, Evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples.

The one Christ and one mission includes many other Christians, notably the Eastern Orthodox and those Protestants not commonly identified as Evangelical. All Christians are encompassed in the prayer, "May they all be one." Our present statement attends to the specific problems and opportunities in the relationship between Roman Catholics and Evangelical Protestants.

According to them, "Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ." The term "Christian" applies to "All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior" regardless of how He is actually known, understood, or embraced. If this be the case, then there is no reason why Freemasons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Moonies, Mormons, etc, should not be included for they too accept Christ in their own respective ways.

The ECT affirmation that Catholic and Orthodox churches are part of Christ's body despite the serious errors in doctrine and practice that

remain betrays its contempt for the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Ulrich Zwingli, and others.

The impact of ECT is already felt in Singapore. Recently, an evangelical magazine published here made an unprecedented and unpretentious call for Protestants “to repent” of their non-engagement with Catholics.¹ This has opened up “a can of worms.” Many are either confused over or are troubled by what is happening. The Roman Catholic Church is still steeped in its idolatry and heresies, but since it is Jesus who has prayed for such a unity in John 17, can a Christian not obey His Lord?

The question thus raised is: What did Jesus really mean when He prayed, “That they may be one?” Was Jesus praying for Evangelical-Catholic unity in John 17? What kind of unity was He really praying for?

Oneness in John 10:30

It is significant to note that when Jesus prayed, “that they may be one,” it was a *qualified* oneness that He prayed for. Jesus did not just say, “that they may be one,” as if any kind of oneness was meant. In order that He would not be misunderstood, Jesus defined the oneness as that which exists between God the Father and God the Son, “even as we are” (John 17:11). What then is this oneness between the Father and the Son?

The first time Jesus spoke of His oneness with God the Father is in John 10:30. There He said, “I and my Father are one.” The numeral “one” has the idea of singleness or oneness. From the context, it is clear that Jesus was speaking of His oneness in essence with God the Father. He was claiming equal deity. That this was meant by Jesus is seen in the response of the Jews who said, “[you] being a man, maketh thyself God” (John 10:33).

It should also be noted that the word “one” here refers not only to the divine essence but also to the divine mission. There is perfect concord between the Father and the Son in the work of redemption.² Meyer wrote,

The unity, therefore, is one of dynamic fellowship, i.e. a unity of action for the realization of the divine decree of redemption; according to which, . . . the Father acts in the things which are done by the Son, and yet is greater

than the Son (xiv.28), because He has commissioned, consecrated and sent Him.³

This unity of purpose and mission is elaborated on in John 17.

Oneness in John 17

Jesus' prayer for oneness is found in two verses in John 17, viz, verse 11, "that they may be one, as we are," and verse 21, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

The Father-Son unity in securing the eternal redemption of the elect may be seen in Jesus' frequent use of two words in John 17, viz, *apostello* ("to send"), and *didomi* ("to give"). Throughout His prayer, the Lord repeatedly mentioned the fact that He was sent by the Father to accomplish the redemptive plan. It is significant that Jesus used the word *apostello* instead of *pempo*. Although both words may be used interchangeably, it is generally recognised that "when *pempein* is used in the New Testament the emphasis is on the sending as such, whereas when *apostellein* is used it rests on the commission linked with it."⁴ This is exactly what Christ meant when He used *apostello* seven times in this chapter (John 17: 3, 8, 18 [2x], 21, 23, 25). He wanted to indicate the fact that He did not act alone, but was absolutely obedient to His Father's will as One specially commissioned by Him to fulfil His purpose.

The idea of a commission can also be seen in what Christ said was His mission, namely, to complete the salvific work the Father had *given* Him. In this respect, the word *didomi* is used 15 times in John 17 (vv 2 [3x], 4, 7, 8 [2x], 9, 11, 12, 14, 22 [2x], 24) to refer not only to the Father's commissioning of His Son but also to the imparting of eternal life to His disciples. The purpose of Christ's first advent was to give eternal life. This is clearly stated in John 17:2, "[in order] that . . . he might give them eternal life." Eternal life is seen as a result of knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent (see also John 14:6).

It is thus obvious that Christ's mission on earth when He first came was a spiritual one. He came as the Lamb of God; to suffer, to bleed, and to die for sinful humanity. In perfect obedience to God the Father, He successfully accomplished that mission when He conquered death by His

resurrection on the third day. The mission Jesus committed to His disciples was the same as that which He had received from the Father; to preach the gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection, to a lost and dying world so that those who believe might receive the forgiveness of sins, and have eternal life.

The Christian mission is thus not a temporal one—to “contend for the truth that politics, law, and culture must be secured by moral truth”—as the ECT endorsers would have us believe. On the contrary, the primary duty of the Christian Church is a spiritual one—to “earnestly contend for *the faith* which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). This is because the present world system as predicted by the Holy Scriptures *is not getting better, but from bad to worse*, anticipating the fiery judgment when Christ returns, this time no more as a Lamb, but as the Davidic Lion—the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Christian duty of this century and in the third millennium if the Lord tarries is not to improve the world by the ecumenical power of an Evangelical-Catholic union, but to convert the lost by the uncompromised preaching of an unadulterated gospel that only Jesus saves! The power of the Church lies not in its numbers (the ECT boasts of a 1.7 billion strong constituency), but in the gospel of Christ—“the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16). It is significant to note that the Lord used only 12 faithful Apostles to turn the world “upside down,” hence right side up (Acts 17:6). The Lord has never relied on numbers to achieve His goals.

Not only must we know for what Jesus prayed, it is equally important to know for whom Jesus prayed if we are to understand what He meant when He said, “that they may be one.”

For Whom Did Jesus Pray For Oneness?

The people for whom Jesus prayed were Christians who had the following traits:

Firstly, they were a people *knowledgeable of the only living and true God*. Jesus explained that eternal life was a result of knowing the one true God, and Christ the Sent-one (v 3). What does “knowing” here mean? In the New Testament, the word *ginosko* “frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known; in this respect, what is known is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the

establishment of the relationship.”⁵ The word *ginosko* (“know”) is used four times in John 17 (vv 3, 8, 23, 25) to mean just that. To know God is to have a personal relationship with Him in Christ. The object of this knowledge is not any god, but “the only true God” (John 17:3). In the midst of many so-called gods, there is but one living and true God. Calvin translates this verse thus, “that they may know thee *alone* to be the true God.”⁶ This knowledge of who the only true God is comes only through knowing Jesus Christ “whom thou hast sent” (v 3). The word “sent” here is again *apostello*. The word *apostello* is especially used with reference to the ministry of the prophets and thus has the idea of a sending out in order to reveal.⁷ So *apostello* not only has the idea of commission but also of revelation. All authority has been given to God the Son to reveal who God the Father is.

Secondly, they were a people *obedient to the Word of God*. Jesus in His ministry on earth had revealed to His disciples the identity of Jehovah, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me . . .” (v 6). God revealed His Name in the Old Testament as “I AM THAT I AM” (Exod 3:14). What does that mean? The answer lies with Jesus for He is the Exposition of Jehovah’s Name in His seven “I am” statements: (1) “*I am* the bread of life” (John 6:35), (2) “*I am* the light of the world” (John 9:5), (3) “*I am* the door of the sheep” (John 10:7, 9), (4) “*I am* the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14), (5) “*I am* the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), (6) “*I am* the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6), and (7) “*I am* the true vine” (John 15:1, 5). These words of salvation were given to the disciples, and how did they respond to them?

Jesus told the Father that His disciples “have kept thy word” (v 6). The term *logos* is used by John in his Gospel with reference to the Word personified (ie Jesus Christ), and the Word inscripturated (ie the Holy Bible). This *logos* they have kept. The word “kept” is the Greek *tereo* which means “to observe,” “to obey,” “to pay attention to,” or “to keep under guard.” It has the idea of a tenacious holding on to a precious entity so as to prevent its loss.

In John 17:8, Jesus said that He has “given them the words (*rhemata*) which thou gavest me.” Not only have they held tenaciously to the Word (*logos*), but also to the words (*rhemata*). The switch from *logos* (singular) to *rhemata* (plural) is significant. According to Robertson, the plural *rhemata* refers to every single word of God (John 3:34) and of

Christ (John 5:47; 6:63, 68), while the singular *logos* (John 17:6, 14) refers to God's message in its entirety.⁸ This tells us that the disciples paid attention not only to the whole sum but also to each part of Jesus' teaching, and obeyed them. They did not pick and choose what they wanted to believe and practise. The disciples' total commitment to Jesus' instructions is further emphasised by three parallel aorist clauses in verse 8, viz, "they have received (*elabon*). . . , and have known (*egnosan*) . . . , and they have believed (*episteusan*)" Lenski wrote that these constative aorists indicate the disciples' *genuine* reception of, knowledge on, and belief in who Jesus was.⁹

Thirdly, they were a people *separated from the world*. Although they were "in the world" (John 17:11), they were "not of the world" (John 17:14). Jesus acknowledged the fact that the disciples were physically present in the world. But what was their relationship to the world? Jesus said, "they are not of the world." The phrase *ek tou kosmou*, "out of the world," is found in verses 14-16. The preposition *ek* with the genitive has a *partitive* sense. So when Jesus said that His disciples were "not of the world," He meant that they were "*not part of* the world." The "world" (*kosmos*) that Jesus spoke of here refers to the world's existing condition of alienation from and opposition to God.¹⁰ The disciples were a separated people. Separation from the present world system with all its ideologies, and vices is an essential component of Christian unity in Jesus' understanding. The doctrine of separation, not ecumenism, is central in Jesus' high priestly prayer (John 17:14-16).

Do those who propose this Evangelical-Catholic union manifest the above characteristics? Here are some questions to help us with the answer: (1) Can the Roman Catholic Church be said to know the only true God, even Jesus, when they include Mary in the Godhead? The Roman Church has made Mary Goddess when she accords to her such titles of deity as "Redemptrix," "Mediatrice," and "Mother of God." (2) Can the Roman Catholic Church be said to obey the Word of God which consists of only 66 books when they add to it spurious works like the apocrypha and their ecclesiastical traditions, thereby violating Jesus' command not to add to or subtract from His Word (Rev 22:18-19)? (3) Can the Evangelical Church be truly evangelical (ie Gospel believing and Bible defending) when she repudiates the doctrine of separation by belittling

the importance of truth, and in identifying herself with the apostate church?

Conclusion

What did Jesus mean when He prayed, “that they may be one, as we are?” Jesus prayed this prayer of unity because the disciples were commissioned by Him to preach the gospel to the world just as He was commissioned by the Father. When Jesus completed His ministry on earth, He sent them out as Apostles (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 1:8). Inasmuch as Christ was one with the Father in the divine mission to save His people, Christ prayed that His disciples would be one in mind and spirit to do the same work. It is important to note that Jesus and the Apostles, in their gospel ministries, never cooperated with the Pharisees and Sadducees, nor sought the help of Herod or Caesar. Such exclusivity is very much a part of the unity that Jesus prayed for.

This unity in the gospel mission that Jesus prayed for is confined to truly Protestant churches. For sure, Jesus did not pray for a unity between the church and the world, neither a unity between the true universal church and the false Catholic church. What He did pray for was a oneness of purpose in the spiritual mission of gospel proclamation among His Blood-bought and Spirit-baptised people. This unity to fulfil Jesus’ commission must be grounded on true evangelical creed (by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone), and true Biblical belief (in the Word of God alone made up of just 66 canonical books).

True Christian ecumenism, in the light of Christ’s high priestly prayer, can only be had when there is a clear separation by the Christian Church from all forms of unbelief and apostasy. As long as the Roman Catholic Church presents *another Jesus* (viz, Jesus is not sole Mediator, since Mary is co-Mediatrix), preaches *another gospel* (viz, salvation is not only by faith but by good works also), and believes in *another Bible* (viz, the Holy Scriptures plus the apocrypha, plus papal traditions), any union with her incurs God’s wrath (Gal 1:8). May the Church’s Protestant sons never do a Judas (“the son of perdition,” John 17:12) on Jesus. May Jesus’ prayer be answered,

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou

shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:14-17).

Amen.

Endnotes

¹ “The Roman Catholics: Ain’t Wot They Used To Be,” *Impact* (Mar-Apr 1995): 1-16; and Glenn Myers, “Meeting the Catholics,” *Impact* (Mar-Apr 1995): 17. My letters in response to that issue are published in *Impact* (Apr-May 1995): 7-9; and *Impact* (Aug-Sep 1995): 53

² *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “One.”

³ H A W Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John* (Massachusetts: Hendriksen Publishers, 1883), 330.

⁴ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “*ἡ ἀληθεία*,” by K H Rengstorf.

⁵ *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “Know.”

⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, trans William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 167.

⁷ BAGD, s.v. “*ἡ ἀληθεία*.”

⁸ A T Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933), 5:276.

⁹ R C H Lenski, *The Interpretation of St John’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 1132.

¹⁰ BAGD, s.v. “*ἡ ἀληθεία*.”

Rev Jeffrey Khoo is librarian, and lecturer in New Testament at FEBC.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

Timothy Tow

Introduction

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” As the Apostle John warns of false spirits and false prophets, more so does our Lord the same, yea, even false Christs “shall show great *signs and wonders*; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt 24:24). Peter adds with “false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies” (2 Pet 2:1), while Paul rounds up the list with false apostles (2 Cor 11:13), false brethren (2 Cor 11:26) and false witnesses (1 Cor 15:15).

Furthermore, our Lord likens these agents of falsehood in the parable of the Good Shepherd to thieves and robbers, strangers, hirelings and wolves. But His sheep will not follow them. The sheep with keen discernment between the master’s voice and the voice of a stranger will keep out of harm’s way. Conversely, the Apostle John concludes, “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*” (1 John 4:6). Hereby is the test: if you say, “Amen,” to the preaching of the Truth, you have the Spirit of Truth. If you reject the preaching of the Truth, you have the Spirit of Error!

The Spirit of Error

Now, Jesus says He is the Truth (John 14:6). If anyone attacks His Person, like the Docetists in John’s day denying His humanity (1 John 4:3), he is the tool of the Spirit of Error. When Arius, forerunner of

today's Jehovah's Witnesses, in the fourth century denied the full Deity of Christ, he was also used by the Spirit of Error. Throughout the long centuries, the Spirit of Error has made the salvation of a man's soul not by the sole grace of God, but by the complicated system of works by Mary, martyrs and saints, etc, etc. Of more recent history there have arisen the modernists and liberals who reject His infallible, inerrant Word, with the latest so-called Neo-Evangelical scholarship that hypocritically speaks of a "limited inerrancy." It is the Spirit of Error that counters the inerrancy of the Bible, yea, even the living Word who is Jesus Christ. But we believe the Word to be infallible and inerrant to the jot and tittle, and hereby reaffirm our faith on this doctrine of doctrines.

The Spirit of Truth

While Jesus is the Truth, the Spirit of Truth is *Another Comforter* whom the Lord, before His departure, promised to send to His Church (John 14:16). The Spirit of Truth is the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity (Matt 28:19). He proceeds from the Father (John 15:26).

He manifested Himself in power at Pentecost by giving utterance in many languages to the Apostles in order to expedite the Great Commission of the ascended Lord (Acts 2). He is sent to indwell believers and to teach and guide the Church into all truth (John 14:17; 16:13). The mark of the Spirit of Truth is that He will not speak of Himself, but rather testify of the Son. He shall glorify the Son, for He shall receive of the Son and show it to us (John 16:13, 14). The Holy Spirit, being holy, "will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit is not a frivolous Spirit intoxicating the Church with hysterical laughter or with barking like dogs or roaring like lions.

The Holy Spirit does not receive our prayers as the Father and the Son. His function rather is to make "intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:27). As He is sent from the Father by the Son (John 15:26), He is also called the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9). He is Comforter or Counsellor indeed, and no Jester.

Pentecostalism a New Phenomenon Since 1901

In the light of what we have briefly studied of the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error, and of the various manifestations of the latter in the course of Church history, it is our purpose to examine a new phenomenon that has arisen in the Christian Church since the beginning of this century. Whereas in the centuries earlier the Spirit of Error has attacked the Person, Work, and Word of Christ, now in the last days, the attack is directed, ironically, against the Spirit of Christ in the name of the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest mischief perpetrated by the Spirit of Error, yea, even Satan himself.

Starting out as Pentecostalism, this seemingly movement of the Spirit has developed into a New-Pentecostalism which is now known as the Charismatic Movement. Of its beginning, the *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1978) says,

A number of fundamentalist Protestant sects that emphasise Spirit baptism as an experience different from conversion and evidenced by speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-13) [were the beginnings of Pentecostalism]. They also teach the inspiration of the Bible, salvation by conversion and revival, instantaneous sanctification, divine healing; and claim to be a restoration of original Christianity. Early Pentecostal meetings were characterised by outbursts of ecstatic enthusiasm featuring healings, speaking in tongues and motoric movements.

Pentecostalism began as an outgrowth of the Holiness Movement. In 1901 a Bible School called Bethel College was started at Topeka, Kansas, by Charles F. Parham, who using no textbook but the Bible, drilled his students in Spirit Baptism teaching . . .

One of the converts, William J. Seymour, brought the teaching to Los Angeles in 1906 where he founded the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission on Azusa Street. Seymour, a black with only one eye, was described by one who attended his mission as being 'meek, plain spoken and no orator,' in short, not a very charismatic personality. Despite his unimpressive appearance, the results of the Azusa revival attracted national attention . . .

Pentecostalism became an international movement early in its history . . .

Recent developments have excited a lively interest in Pentecostalism. Its impressive growth while the major Protestant churches have been declining has caused concern in many circles. The fact that higher social

classes are being attracted to its teachings — coupled with the building of attractive modern Church buildings, accredited colleges (such as Oral Roberts University), orphanages and other institutions — has also brought increasing public attention. In the post-World War II period a spate of new ‘independent’ Pentecostal groups has appeared, including the New Order of the Latter Rain, Wings of healing, the World Church, the Gospel Assemblies, and the Full Gospel Fellowship of Ministers and Churches, International. In addition to these, practically every major denomination, including the Episcopal, Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, now has its own charismatic element . . .

Charismatics and Roman Catholics Since 1967

According to *The World Christian Encyclopaedia* (1982 edition), as of 1980 there were 100 million people in the world who claimed to belong to the charismatic-pentecostal *movement*. What is more significant is that since 1967 the charismatic experiences have leapt across the fence of Protestantism into the Roman Catholic fold. What began as pockets of tongue-speaking has now spread like a prairie fire, as we will see later in this discussion.

In the early 1970s the Jesus People Movement, a young people’s movement, swept America and parts of Europe. It was about this time that Christian rock music began to be popular among these Charismatic young people. This new Contemporary Christian Music, as it came to be called, has spread to mainstream Christianity.

From Charismatism to Ecumenism

As to the spread of Charismatic practices into the Roman Catholic Church, its strength can be seen in such meetings. In 1975, 10,000 Catholic Charismatics gathered at the Vatican in Rome and received blessing from the Pope. In 1977, a Charismatic meeting of 45,000 was held in Kansas City and its chairman was a Roman Catholic. At the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelisation, July 22-26, 1987, at New Orleans at which 35,000 to 40,000 attended, 50 percent of the conferees were Roman Catholics. Thus, the blossoming of the Charismatic Movement into a full-fledged Ecumenical Movement with an ever-increasing Roman Catholic population has taken place in a matter of two decades. Furthermore, David W Cloud, who was an eye-

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

witness of the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit, says, “the charismatic movement is sweeping Asia and forms one of the most serious challenges to our missionary work and that of other fundamental preachers.”

Now, while it is admitted that not a few members, lay people, in the Charismatic Movement are born again Christians that love the Lord, it is the leaders of the movement whose doctrines and practices energised by the Spirit of Error that must be refuted. In making our refutation, we would borrow in part the Statement on the Charismatic Movement issued by the Far Eastern Bible College, Singapore, as follows:

We see this Charismatic Movement as a counterfeit of the work of the Holy Spirit, being in essence Satan’s confidence trick and end time deception.

Everywhere denominational distinctives are being dismantled and ‘Christians of every sort, Protestant and Roman Catholic, evangelical and liberal, believers and unbelievers, are drawn together in ecumenical fellowship — all in the name of the Holy Spirit.

We see in the Charismatic Movement an insidious force aiding the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT which is fast moving toward the formation of OIKOUMENE or ONE WORLD, Satan’s counterfeit of ‘the Kingdom of God.’

A movement that brings Protestantism which was liberated from the darkness of Roman Catholicism through Luther in the sixteenth century now back to Rome is undeniably a movement of the Spirit of Error.

The Error of Tongue-speaking

Now this Charismatic Movement makes tongue-speaking the evidence of Spirit baptism which is required of all Christians. And tongue-speaking is the chief phenomenon that is stressed in the coming together of Protestants and Catholics. We affirm there cannot be such a gathering of those who have the truth of salvation and those who are bound by a false tradition, but by the insidious working of the Spirit of Error. This insidious working of the Spirit of Error has now ripened into the Togetherness Statement of Evangelicals and Roman Catholics (ECT) since March 29, 1994, whereby the work of Martin Luther bringing in the Sixteenth Century Reformation is all but lost.

And inasmuch as the Word of Truth declares that tongues shall cease (1 Cor 13:8), and historical evidences during a thousand and nine hundred years of Church history show that Biblical tongues have ceased, it behoves us to conclude that tongues today are not from the Spirit of Truth but from the Spirit of Error. In the mighty Pentecost of Singapore 1935 when the Holy Spirit caused 2,000 to be soundly converted through Dr John Sung, we spoke no tongues but sang hearty praises to the Lord. The speaking of tongues was forbidden by the doctor in his North China campaign.

At Shihkiachwang in Hopeh the Band stepped on charismatic territory again, for the meetings were held at the AOG Church (Assemblies of God). John pointed out to them an anomaly. These who stressed on tongue-speaking as a sign of the Holy Spirit nevertheless had never repented of their sins. These so-called Holy Spirit filled ones were exhorted to come forward to confess their sins. Therefore Dr Sung stressed again, "What a sinner needs is not the gift of tongues but the gift of salvation. Too many who claimed to have the Holy Spirit ended up having an unholy spirit! Instead of being filled by the Spirit, they were felled by the Spirit."

That Biblical tongues have ceased is in full accord with the great Confessions of Faith of the Protestant Churches, and with the position of the Reformers. Charismatic tongue-speaking is not of the Spirit of Truth but from the Spirit of Error because it is often artificially induced through human agents, being unintelligible, jabbering utterances bringing confusion. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace . . ." (1 Cor 14:33). Even if, for argument's sake, tongues have not ceased, these tongue-rattling ones are silenced by Paul's advice to the confused Corinthian Church, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1 Cor 14:19). To speak with understanding is to be energised by the Spirit of Truth, to speak in a tongue of 10,000 syllables of repetitious unintelligibility is to be energised by the Spirit of Error. I have a new Christian friend who has been sucked into the tongue-speaking section of the Anglican Church. He tells of his taking lessons in tongue-speaking under the tutelage of his pastor. On request he jabbered away in a repetitious monotony of "ecstatic utterance." Several young people from the same church, now delivered, have similar "ecstatic utterances," all learnt from their pastor. Whether this is from the Spirit of Truth or the Spirit of Error, judge ye!

The Error of Divine-Healing

The next phenomenon stressed by the Charismatics is divine healing, miracle-working, showing off with “great signs and wonders.” Charismatic leaders like German-born Reinhard Bonnke, who had visited Singapore on two occasions, have made wild claims of healing, “causing the blind to see and the lame to walk.” To make such claim is not of the Spirit of Truth but of the Spirit of Error. A young Charismatic star of Singapore, Rony Tan by name, goes even to the extent of holding “miracle rallies,” also “making the blind to see and the lame to walk.”

Such bombastic display of pseudo-miracle power cannot come but by the Spirit of Error; inasmuch as our Lord and the Apostles had healed, but never by a miracle rally of the sick. If such faith-healers claim to be followers of the apostolic pattern, let it be known that “signs and wonders” were only those of an Apostle (Acts 5:12). These were given the Apostles to enable them to confirm the Infant Church (Mark 16:20). When the Church was established, the working of signs and wonders through healing was no longer needed. It therefore passed with the age of the Apostles, though there is a healing ministry by elders according to James 5.

We affirm that these Charismatic faith-healers, apart from snatching the glory of Christ for their own megalomaniacal ends, are deceivers, deceiving others and being deceived themselves. This blindness to those who claim to open the eyes of the blind is ludicrously published in Bonnke’s own after-campaign report, wherein a young lady “testified” how after the evangelist’s prayer, one of her eyes, not very successfully operated on, had now received a clearer vision. Nevertheless the same young lady also stated she would go for an operation of the other eye. Now, if the faith-healer was of the Spirit of Truth, he should have healed both eyes. Since he did not, he was of the Spirit of Error. “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut 18:22).

At the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit, Bonnke boasted of how he scared a white salesman to repentance in a music shop in Africa with Jesus coming out of his eyes. This is what our Lord meant

when he warned of “false Christs, inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt 24:24).

Now, from the healing ministry has erupted a hypnotic power whereby devotees are “slain by the spirit.” As shown on television, the latest and most powerful “worker” is Benny Hinn. With a swish of his hand, twenty, thirty, forty “frontliners” would be floored by an unseen power. This, it is claimed, is the working of the Holy Spirit. The significant thing of these who are “slain in the spirit” is that they all fall **backwards**, not forwards. “For the Lord hath poured upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and rulers, the seers hath he covered” (Isa 29:10).

Falling backwards as a result of some unseen power occurred also in the days of Wang Ming Tao. Let Wang Ming Tao, China’s greatest saint, who was once a charismatic but got out of it in good time answer this enigma of being “slain in the spirit.” In his book *These Fifty Years* (in Chinese), part of which I have translated and incorporated in mine, *Wang Ming Tao and Charismatism*, he says:

There is another danger linked with the Charismatic Movement, viz., many seekers for the charismatic gifts are transgressors in speech and walk by their abnormal, unruly and irresponsible conduct. During a meeting some would get up and dance, some would clap and shout, and there are others who behave most unseemly and offensively. When counselled, they would reply they are acting in deference to the Holy Spirit. Should any ask them how the Spirit would cause them do such thing, often one of their group would cite King Saul’s prophesying at Naioth and how he stripped off his clothes and lay naked for a day and a night (I Samuel 19:18-24). They admit that to lie naked is a loss of face. The Holy Spirit could cause Saul to do such a thing. But could He not cause us to do something special? Should the Spirit cause us to lose face, to be a laughing stock, we would be willing to suffer shame for the Lord’s sake. Not too long ago I saw how a charismatic leader used this same passage of Scripture about Saul in a magazine to prove that when the Holy Spirit fills a believer he can behave unseemly before other people.

What a monstrous error is this! How they have misinterpreted to such an extreme this Scripture passage! Now, when Saul lay naked, he was not under the blessing of God but rather under His punishment to his shame. We should know that Saul at this time was long rejected for disobeying God. God had meantime anointed David King. God’s Spirit had departed

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

from Saul and an evil spirit had come upon him. For envying David, he tried to kill him. David had to run for his life to escape Saul. At last he came to Samuel. When Saul came to know about this, he sent men to take David. But it turned out that three times men were sent to take him, three times these men prophesied by the Spirit of God when they came to Samuel. They could not lay hands on David. Finally this Saul, monster of monsters, went himself to take David, but who could imagine that before he could get his quarry, he was overturned with disgrace. Not only did the Spirit of God cause him to speak but also meet with what the three messengers did not experience — for a day and a night he lay down naked. Not only should we not seek Saul's experience but rather flee from it. . . .

Now, out of the practice of “slaying in the spirit” has erupted a new hysteria called “holy laughter” and out of the “holy laughter” a newest mania of barking, crowing, meowing and roaring of animal voices known as the “Toronto Blessing.” This so-called “blessing” has burst not only on Christendom but also taken centre stage of the world. It becomes sensational news to the curious, and to the gleeful chuckle of enemies in the world. “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up” (Hos 8:7).

Let Dr Frank McClelland and Dr Bert Oatley-Willis in their booklet, *The ‘Toronto Blessing:’ Christian Faith or Charismatic Feeling?* (April 1995) present their observation of the whole show:

The following eye-witness report is by a colleague of the authors, Don Morley. It is acknowledged that no two services can ever be the same, but what Don has written gives a fairly typical picture of a Toronto Vineyard Christian Fellowship meeting. The authors, and other acquaintances, have also attended with the purpose of making first-hand investigation and they confirm the validity of Don's observations. One difference is that the Toronto Vineyard has now moved to larger premises.

“On October 20th 1994 we went to the Vineyard Fellowship to witness the so-called ‘Toronto-Blessing’, held in a warehouse type building near the airport. There were about 400 people in the main hall, plus an overflow room. A survey by the leader indicated representation mainly from the United Kingdom and the United States.

“Other countries represented were Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Holland, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Most areas of Canada were represented, but only a relatively few visitors from Toronto itself. The

home congregation, when asked to stand, numbered less than twenty. This proved what we knew — that the ‘Toronto Blessing’ has little impact here.

“What we observed was sickening and diabolical. Many times we felt like walking out and had to force ourselves to stay. For the first forty-five minutes a band with two soloists led the singing. The people were standing and singing with them to deafening rock type music. The songs were about worshipping the Lord, but the music and behaviour seemed to be opposed to the Lord’s honour. During the singing the crowd was progressively aroused.

“In all, only about four different songs were used but each was repeated over and over — the chorus of the first song being sung thirty times. There was much arm waving, shouting with horrifying screams and, when the music volume was lowered, the drone of what must have been ‘tongues’ could be heard. By the end of the singing many of the crowd were exhibiting spasmodic, uncontrollable bodily ‘jerks’, which continued for the rest of the evening. When the leaders were speaking and one of these spasms occurred they either made a loud shout, or their words came out as a shout.

“Apparently this evening marked nine months since these ‘happenings’ began and they felt they had now ‘come to birth’. Between two of the songs, one of their own women went off in a screaming account of the movement coming to birth. Here screams and actions were so realistic that for a time we thought she was actually experiencing labour pains.

“Four people were called forward to testify, but they had very little to say except that since receiving ‘the blessing’ they had a love for everyone. One man declared he had received the gift of prophecy that afternoon. He also said when he saw people lying on the floor after receiving ‘the blessing’, he wanted to lie on top of them to share it.

“One woman was so overcome by the spasms she appeared to be very drunk and could hardly walk. Here testimony time was taken up by she and the leader making jokes about her appearance of drunkenness. The crowd laughed hilariously so that it resembled a comedy show. Following each ‘testimony’ the leader prayed for them and they fell into a trance, one man later roaring like a lion. . . .”

The Error of Prophesying

Let it suffice to conclude with a third and last analysis of charismatic prophesying. With the closing of the New Testament canon, God’s

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

revelation to man was complete. And the Apostle Jude has said, “The faith was once [and for all] delivered unto the saints.” No preacher is to add any word as directly received from God to the Sacred Scriptures nor to take any away from it. But the stress on visions, voices and prophecies by Charismatic leaders has gone so haywire that it encourages some dauntless charismatic suitor to tell the young lady with whom his heart is inflamed, “The Lord told me last night that I should marry you today.” I would advise the harassed young lady to reply, “But the Lord did not tell me, neither last night, nor this morning.”

David W Cloud—the discerning fundamentalist reporter—who listened to dozens of prophecies, so-called direct revelations from God, like the prophecies received by Old Testament prophets, at the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit, July 1987, declared that his own feelings were best described by a man named Neil Babcox, pastor of the Pentecostal Word of Life Church (Carbondale, Illinois), until his leaving the Charismatic Movement. Consider the testimony of this man who once gave such prophecies himself and who believed in such things:

“Prophetic messages were quite common at our Church. In fact, whenever we assembled to worship, spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, were foremost in our minds. Even though we followed no prescribed liturgy, there was an unwritten order of worship that always included the opportunity for one to prophesy according to the proportion of his faith (Romans 12:6) . . .

“Our prophecies seldom if ever predicted the future. Instead they took the form of fervent exhortations or simple words of comfort. Generally they consisted of various biblical phrases and fragments pieced together like a patch-work quilt. Often they focussed upon such theme as the imminent return of Christ or God’s forgiving love. Most of the time the prophecies were spoken in the first person as if God Himself were addressing us, but occasionally the phrase ‘thus saith the Lord’ was used even as it was by the prophets of the Bible . . .

“There was something distinctly romantic about the notion of prophesying. There you are, standing in succession to the prophets of the Bible. Samuel and Elijah saw your day coming and were glad. True, your lips are unclean, but they have been touched by a live coal from off the altar. Like Isaiah, you have heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And you responded, ‘Here am I. Send me! . . .’

“Yes, it was all very romantic. But gradually, what had started as a romantic venture, an idealistic quest for spiritual gifts, was slowly imperceptibly changing. Into what, I wasn’t sure. ALL I KNEW WAS THAT THE EXCITEMENT AND ROMANCE OF PROPHECYING WAS TURNING INTO AN UNEASY SENSE THAT THE PROPHECIES I HEARD, INCLUDING MY OWN, WERE HARDLY WORTHY OF THE NAME. THE IDEA THAT THEY WERE THE WORDS OF THE LIVING GOD WAS BEGINNING TO SEEM PAINFULLY LUDICROUS. Would the romance now become a comedy of errors, or a tragedy, perhaps? At any rate, one thing was certain: this burden of the prophets was becoming a crushing, onerous weight. And I couldn’t help wondering if the weight which I was carrying was not the burden of the Lord at all, but some foreign yoke of bondage . . .

“IN MY CASE THERE WERE FOUR SIMPLE WORDS THAT PLAYED A DECISIVE ROLE IN CHANGING MY HEART: THUS SAITH THE LORD. To me, these were most unsettling words. And the more I comprehended their meaning, the more I understood what the prophets meant when they spoke them and what the Holy Spirit meant when He inspired them, the more unsettling they became . . .

“‘Thus saith the Lord.’ WHAT ABUSES I HAD SEEN OF THOSE WORDS! WHAT BITTER FRUIT I HAD SEEN BORN BY MEN AND WOMEN SPEAKING THESE WORDS! I have seen people married on the basis of guidance received from personal prophecies only to be divorced a week later because of a terrible scandal. Many lives have been harmed by such prophetic guidance. What actions, what conduct, have been countenanced by a ‘thus saith the Lord’ . . .

“The moment of truth came when I HEARD A PROPHECY SPOKEN AT A CHARISMATIC CHURCH I WAS VISITING. I WAS SITTING IN THE CHURCH TRYING TO WORSHIP GOD WHILE DREADING THE APPROACH OF THAT OBLIGATORY MOMENT OF SILENCE WHICH SIGNALLED THAT A PROPHECY WAS ABOUT TO BE SPOKEN. THE SILENCE CAME, AND SOON IT WAS BROKEN BY A BOLD AND COMMANDING ‘THUS SAITH THE LORD!’

“Those words triggered an immediate reaction. Conviction, like water rising against a dam, began to fill my soul. ‘Listen my people . . .’ [the prophecy commenced]. Until finally, the dam burst: ‘THIS IS NOT MY GOD,’ I CRIED WITHIN MY HEART. ‘THIS IS NOT MY LORD!’” (*A Search For Charismatic Reality — One Man’s Pilgrimage*, pp. 49-59; Neil Babcox . . .).

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

What Babcox cried out in his heart that night about the Charismatic prophecies, reflect exactly the cry of my own heart [reiterated David W Cloud] as I heard the blasphemous prophecies in New Orleans. This is NOT my Lord and my God speaking! It is NOT the Holy Spirit, but a false spirit. These are hard words to those caught up in this movement, but this is a discernment based on the teaching of the Word of God and the fruit of the Charismatic movement, and should not be taken lightly by anyone.

What is said by David W Cloud of the charismatic prophecies he heard at the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit 1987 can be said of John Wimber in his Australian campaign also in 1987 in a self-proclaimed, "Third Wave of the Holy Spirit." Speaking extra-Biblically "words of knowledge" as a direct revelation from God, he prophesied in Sydney, according to Andrew Shead, how "hundreds of millions" will turn to the Gospel and AIDS will be cured. This will be brought about by the display of **signs and wonders**. Ironically, our Lord has preempted Wimber's trademark of **signs and wonders** in Matthew 24:24, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great **signs and wonders**; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

So, by "power evangelism," that is, preceded by **signs and wonders** of healing and tongue-speaking, slaying in the spirit, and now barking and roaring, the muted voices of dogs and lions, Wimber's disciples will impress hundreds of millions of people, and AIDS will be cured in these last days. But does our Lord say so? Rather pestilences (and AIDS is a pestilence) will be sent in judgment, and the Church will be lukewarm like Laodicea (Rev 3:16), "and because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt 24:12).

Nor will there be mass conversions in hundreds of millions but rather the command to accelerated missions by the age-old Great Commission, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt 24:14). There is no charismatic power to missions and evangelism, for the power is in the Gospel itself, and it is by the foolishness of preaching and not sign-power that it will go forward (Rom 1:16, 1 Cor 1:23, 24).

The Spirit of Truth who would guide us into all truth by His Holy Word the Bible has no part indeed in any of the above extra-Biblical prophecies which cannot come but by inspiration of the Spirit of Error.

Nor does the Spirit of Truth have any part in miracle rallies or divine-healing lapsing into “slaying of the Spirit,” mass hysterical laughter, and in barking and roaring.

Conclusion

Let us hear the prophet Jeremiah, “Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD” (Jer 23:31, 32).

Jesus says, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:15-23).

In conclusion, let us hear the Word of the Apostle John again, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. . . . We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:1, 6).

Rev Dr Timothy Tow was President of the Far Eastern Council of Christian Churches (FECCC). The above is based on a message delivered at the Second National Conference of the Indonesian Council of Christian Churches, Jakarta, November 26, 1987, brought up to date.

Class Notes

Rev **Charles Tan** (BTh '73) received the Doctor of Ministry degree from Grace Theological Seminary in May 1995. Rev Tan is pastor of Bethany Independent Presbyterian Church.

Agus Siregar (DipTh '86) was ordained on October 3, '95 under the auspices of Galilee B-P Church (Rev Philip Heng). Rev Agus Siregar pastors a B-P outreach in Belawan, North Sumatra.

Rev **Bob Phee** (BTh '77), pastor of Sembawang B-P Church, and lecturer at FEBC, took his sabbatical since June '95 to work on his doctorate at Temple Seminary, and Oxford Graduate School (Dayton, Tennessee).

Lim Hai Seng (DipTh '84) has started a ministry called *Sketch 'N Tell*. Hai Seng--an accomplished cartoonist--uses the sketch board to tell the good news of salvation to primary school children in Australia. He is a member of Bethel B-P Church in Melbourne.

Setsuko Takashima's (DipTh '84) new address is: Number 2, Kasetsu Jyutaku 32-15 Shioya Cho 6 Chome Tarumi-ku, Kobe, Japan.

Rev **Cheong Chin Meng** (BTh '89) of Gospel Light B-P Church, Pr **Kiantoro Lie** (BTh '92) of Calvary B-P Church (Batam, Indonesia), and Rev **Wee Eng Moh** of Berean B-P Church (BTh '92), have returned to study for their MRE on a part-time basis.

Rev **Kim Kyung Soo** (DipTh '90) principal of the Bible College of East Africa and missionary of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (USA) is on a year-long furlough. During this time he would be studying at Pensacola Christian College, Florida.

Rev **Joseph Lional** (DipTh '90) pastors Zion Coimbatore B-P Church (India). The church sanctuary of 1,000 sq ft, and parsonage of 750 sq ft, is currently under construction and should be completed by January '96.

Lee Kim Shong (DipTh '90), and his dear wife Lai Yat, were blessed with a baby boy named Samuel Hee Voon. Kim Shong preaches at Calvary Jaya B-P Fellowship, Malaysia.

Rev **Lee Won Bok** (DipTh '92) is pastor of Elim Presbyterian Church, #18-7 Deihung-Dong, Mapo-Gu, Seoul, Korea.

Continued on page 39

WHEN LOVE DIVORCES DOCTRINE AND UNITY LEAVES TRUTH

John C Whitcomb

It is evident that leading neo-evangelical writers in the evangelical world believe that our main goal must be to eliminate doctrinal distinctives and to emphasise unity among those who claim to be Christians. There must be, in their opinion, a minimising of doctrinal distinctives to give Christians a united front which will impress the world and thus secure a listening ear.

This position, however outwardly attractive or impressive to the superficial observer, is a disaster when viewed in the light of Scripture. In total contradiction of the philosophy of ecumenical evangelism, the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ has a very different emphasis. The great commission does not say, "Make disciples of all nations by whatever means or methods may come to your mind." Our Lord was much more specific on *how* His work should be done in this world. The great commission also contains the command to bring the converts immediately into a teaching programme. Notice how definitely this is stressed in the words of the Lord Jesus, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." In other words the *entire Scripture* is the basis of this instruction, and this must be the supreme emphasis of the great commission in terms of priorities. It is a lifelong assignment for the pastor-teacher, under the Spirit of God, to bring a new convert into the *whole counsel* of God's revealed Truth.

God's Commission Minimised

It is this great task which, in modern ecumenical evangelism, is minimised to the point of vanishing away entirely. The new goal is to bring the person to Christ and then to turn him loose to "pick the church

of his choice” (or no church if he pleases). The “convert” is left to the Holy Spirit to take care of. The neo-evangelical has done his job in evangelising the world by the streamlined techniques of twentieth century methodology. One of the basic ideas of today’s philosophy of ecumenical evangelism is that *love* is really more important than *doctrine*. Neo-evangelical authors tell us that doctrine divides, whereas love unifies.

What does the Bible say about this? Is it really true that in the New Testament love is more important than doctrine, or Truth? In the so-called “love” chapter of 1 Corinthians 13, we are told, “Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love (*agape*).” Some say, “That settles it; love is supreme!” But when we examine that chapter more carefully we discover that *Truth* is also mentioned in the chapter. In verse 6 we are told that, love “rejoices in the truth.” In other words, faith, hope and love are *virtues* but Truth has an altogether different status. It is the *frame of reference*, the *foundation*, the *atmosphere* without which virtues such as love cannot exist at all.

Love rejoices in the Truth. Why? Because without Truth to define it, to interpret it, to protect it, to guide it, to channel it—love can become a total disaster. We dare not place Truth on the same level as virtues. Virtues would shrivel up and die if it were not for Truth. We cannot imagine life on this planet without water. Water is absolutely essential for life, as long as it stays within proper channels, within its canals, aqueducts and pipes. But when water gets out of control, it is the second greatest catastrophe that can happen to this planet, second only to fire. On the one hand it is an absolutely essential blessing, but on the other hand, it may become a near-total disaster. So it is also with love.

God’s Definition of Love

Love without divine definition (God’s revealed channels within which it must flow) becomes the most horrible thing on earth. It can destroy human beings by the million, and can be reduced to satanic sentimentalism.

Observe what happens within a home when mother or father exhibits love toward a child by refusing to discipline it. In the name of love, the child is destroyed, as the *Book of Proverbs* makes so clear. Love, as defined by God, is doing for a person that which is best for him in the

light of eternity, no matter what the cost may be. That is how it is defined by God.

Love Obeys the Truth

Somehow when it comes to world evangelism many people have forgotten God's definitions and have fallen into sentimentalism. We must consider some key Scriptures to illustrate the distinction between love and Truth. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31). The Lord Jesus Christ said that ultimate freedom may only be achieved by total submission, unconditional surrender to Truth. There is nothing here about love.

There are many who speak glowingly of their love for Jesus Christ and for lost men. Listen to our Lord's very blunt statement in John 14:15, 21, 23, and 24 as He stresses that obedience to Truth is the best form of love, "If ye love me, keep my commandments . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings."

This is what we may call the acid test of love: Does a man obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ? It really makes no difference how much we talk about our love if we are not obeying Christ. Is this not a tragedy within homes, where children will occasionally say to a mother or father, "I love you," and write these words on a card at birthday time or Christmas? But many a parent grieves because all the year long, or at least for long periods of time, there is very little obedience or respect, and those sentimental words therefore mean next to nothing. It is obedience that counts, not words. Obedience without love is theoretically possible, but love without obedience is impossible. It is a satanic substitute for God's plan.

Love Teaches the Truth

John 21 gives an example of one who said much about his love for Jesus but when it came to obedience it was not there. His name, of course,

was Peter. He insisted, that he would never waver in loyalty saying, “Even though all the disciples betray you, I will not. You can count on me.” But when the pressure came his resolution collapsed, he denied his Lord, and as Jesus looked at him in that courtyard, he went out and wept.

After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Sea of Galilee, the Lord confronted Peter very lovingly, but in truth, and said, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? [Do you really love Me more than these other disciples?] He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs . . . Feed my sheep . . . Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). How do we express love to the Lord Jesus according to the lesson of this confrontation? By feeding His sheep, as He also commanded in the great commission—by teaching His people and training them in the whole counsel of God, “teaching them whatsoever I have commanded you.”

Acts 20 provides a good example of an apostle who obeyed the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although he says nothing about love for the Ephesian people in this passage, he exhibited the supreme love of any disciple toward the Ephesians. What did he do for them? Did he say, “I love you, I love you, I love you?” Acts 20:26 and 27 gives the answer, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Paul had preached for three months and when some had spoken against his message he had separated the disciples to meet in the hall of Tyrannus. Here, for two years, he instructed that group in the whole counsel of God. Imagine the prolonged, in-depth, intensive training those Ephesian elders must have experienced through Paul.

The result was “that all they which dwelt in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord Jesus.” Everyone in the province heard the true message about Christ because the apostle based his evangelism on the clear, sound doctrinal instruction of that pioneer band. That is God’s key for world evangelism.

Modern ecumenical-style evangelism would have arrived in the city of Ephesus, proclaimed an absurdly simplified, non-controversial, streamlined message, and then rushed off to another city.

Love Leaves Nothing Out

It was not easy for Paul to preach the doctrinal material which he taught those men at Ephesus. He dealt with doctrines which were controversial, offensive, and divisive, which is why he said, “I *shunned not* to declare unto you . . .” Remember the words of Galatians 1:6, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Why be so blunt and perhaps jeopardise the loving relationship which he enjoyed with that church? It was necessary to risk becoming their enemy, as Paul tells us in Galatians 4, in order to *tell them the Truth*.

A passage in Ephesians 4 tells us how to achieve the perfect balance. Notice the gifts that God has given to the true Church, the body of Christ, for service and ministry in this age. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11). Every one of these gifts in the form of a person is a *doctrinal* person. They are all totally involved in *Truth*. All were totally involved in preaching, teaching and disciplining in the light of revealed Truth. There is no teaching whatsoever in the New Testament suggesting that love is more important than doctrine or Truth. Love is referred to in this passage by verse 15 when we read of “speaking the truth in love.” Love is the manner and method of speaking Truth. Love is the servant of Truth. It makes it easier to receive, absorb and digest. But it must never be allowed to eclipse or set aside Truth.

God’s Truth can never change, but God’s Truth in the hands of human messengers is a very delicate and fragile thing. It is either vigorously proclaimed and defended or it tends to evaporate within one generation. Truth cannot be perpetuated through compromise, and compromise cannot be avoided without separation. This basic principle has been illustrated over and over again in the history of church groups, Christian institutions of higher learning, missionary societies and so forth, down the centuries. We can name group after group, organisation after organisation, that began with a deep desire to honour Jesus Christ and His precious Word. But within one, two or at the most three generations they collapsed as instruments of the Holy Spirit because there was no

determination or courage to implement the *biblical separation* from elements that poisoned, contaminated and destroyed the essential testimony.

Love Resists Poisons

There is no living system known to science that can survive without an intricate, elaborate and *constantly-used* system to purify that living system from poisons. And this is true in God's Church, in the understanding and perpetuating of God's Truth. It is impossible for any organisation to survive unless it has a system to purify itself from poisonous influences. We need to remember that we are in a highly poisoned environment or atmosphere. We are immersed in Satan's world, and he has constant access to every servant of God through his fallen nature.

Some feel, however, that the goal of winning people to Christ is more important than holding faithfully to all the teachings of the Bible. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7).

The whole question of success in the Christian ministry needs to be constantly re-examined. How can the relative success of a Christian ministry be evaluated apart from God's infallible, inerrant Word? Who is to determine what success means? Was the Cross of Christ a success? The world apparently does not think so. What we consider success in the ministry of a fellow-Christian may turn out to be an awful failure at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

Love Keeps God's Rules

Judgement will begin with the Church and when that day comes we will discover that a man will not be crowned except he has contended lawfully (2 Tim 2:5). Those who run the Christian race must run according to His rules if they expect to receive a prize. And so the issue is not *speed* and *noise* but humble, dedicated obedience to His Word. Says Paul, "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Cor 9:24).

We are not suggesting for one moment that biblical separation ought to lead to extremes of isolation which are often drawn as a caricature of

the separatist position. God cannot be honoured by either compromise or isolation. The Lord Jesus Christ gave us the perfect example in His relationship with terribly sinful people. He showed us how to be totally separate from their sin at all times, and yet involved with such people so that they could hear His message.

Separation dominates God's dealings with Israel even before Moses, at the call of Abraham. We could study the elaborate visual aids of the Tabernacle, Temple and Priesthood, the courts and the curtains, and note the awful penalties which fell upon people who in any way compromised or contaminated the precious, infinitely delicate repository of God's revealed Truth. We have in the Old Testament a millennium-and-a-half of visual aids on the doctrine of separation from error as the necessary backdrop for New Testament revelation on the subject.

May I introduce the greatest of the Old Testament style preachers, John the Baptist. What form of compromise can we detect in John the Baptist? "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance . . . The axe is laid unto the root of the trees" (Matt 3:7, 8 and 10). John the Baptist gave his hearers two alternatives. Either they must be baptised with the Holy Ghost, or with fire. Either they must be immersed in the Spirit of God through faith in the Messiah, or they must be immersed in the fire of an eternal hell.

How do we know that hell fire is referred to here? Because the very next verse says that He "will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." In this preaching there is not one inch of compromise, accommodation, negotiation, or sharing of religious insights with those religious apostates.

Was this a loving approach exhibited by John the Baptist? It was the *only possible* approach. How else could true love be expressed in the case of people who were on the brink of eternal hell and could only be saved by being shocked into a recognition of their depravity and God's imminent judgement? And in my personal opinion it was on the basis of this preaching that we read in the book of Acts that many of the Pharisees believed. With the warning of John the Baptist ringing in their ears they understood their position in the sight of a holy God.

Love Protects the Flock

Did the Lord Jesus encourage His disciples to listen sympathetically to other religious leaders of that time? Did He suggest that they needed to have exposure to different religious viewpoints to broaden their understanding of the options available? The answer is given in Matthew 7:15 where the Lord says, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.” The Lord Jesus also said, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees . . . ” (Matt 16:6). In other words, “Do not dare submit yourself to their teaching, for their contaminating, poisonous influence is absolutely deadly.” And yet we are told today by neo-evangelicals that we should both teach and study in liberal (or semi-liberal) universities and colleges of theology.

But now listen to Matthew 10:34 where the Saviour says, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth.” There is one thing worse than division and that is *peace with compromise*. Truth is infinitely more important than unity. “I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foe shall be they of his own household” (Matt 10:24-36).

Love Corrects Error

Why? Because for the sake of Truth, even families (the closest-knit unit on earth) will be split with hostility and enmity so that at least someone within that unit can perpetuate God’s Truth. How will the Lord Jesus Christ build His church? It is through separation from error. Consider Matthew 18:15-17, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

This means that error, either moral or doctrinal, must be eliminated from the body, or the church cannot grow in the way which alone can honour God. In Romans 16:17 the apostle Paul says, “I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the

doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” We are to be markers, watchers and observers. If we honour and love the Lord Jesus, we will watch for anything which may destroy His Truth. We will avoid such people, and we will turn from them.

It is very significant that the *size* of the company in error, or the majority or minority balance is not discussed here. Martin Luther was able to mark or discern those that caused divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which he had learned from Holy Scripture, and he avoided them. Thus he excommunicated *the entire Roman Catholic Church*. He said to the whole vast majority of Christendom in Western Europe—*anathema!* Praise God for that decision, which involved enormous courage.

Dealing with the Corinthians who had failed to excommunicate a moral apostate in their midst, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:9-12, “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?”

Notice this amazing statement of biblical separation. We do not separate from immoral people who are not Christians. We are to associate with publicans and sinners who are the potential recipients of the Holy Spirit’s convicting, converting work, through our witness. But the one group we are to separate from are Christians who are immoral, or who are *doctrinal heretics*. These are the people we must excommunicate, or separate from. We are not even to eat with them. Why not? Because if a worldling or a young, untaught Christian watches you having fellowship (which is what I understand “eating with” to mean) they could interpret the outward form of fellowship to be an endorsement of the heresy or moral misdemeanour.

Result of Compromise

The apostle Paul states the reason. It is that the testimony of Truth might at all costs be protected from misunderstanding on the part of

untrained or unenlightened observers. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 the apostle declares, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” A good way of life, or good doctrine, is always contaminated by a bad environment or bad associations, whereas a mere association of the good with the bad will never make the bad thing better. The good gets worse; the bad does not improve. It is the same with a rotten apple in a barrel. The bad one never gets better, but the good ones go rotten.

Is it right for doctrinal purity to be blatantly submerged for the sake of outward ecclesiastical unity? Surely this is a total denial of the Holy Spirit’s Word through the Scriptures.

Dr John Whitcomb was professor of theology, and director of ThD studies at Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana, USA. He now pioneers the work of the Conservative Grace Brethren Churches, and is actively engaged in Bible Conferences around the world. The above article is taken from “Separation and Obedience,” a 1983 “Sword and Trowel” supplement, reproduced here by kind permission of Dr Peter Masters, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6SD, England.

Continued from page 29

Rev **Das Koshy** (BTh ‘92, MDiv ‘94), pastor of Gethsemane B-P Church reports that the Registry of Societies has approved the church’s application for registration (vide Singapore Government Gazette, July 28, 1995, notification number 2481). A thanksgiving service was held on August 26, ‘95 at Shalom B-P Church.

Rev **Pang Kok Hiong** (BTh ‘92), and Elder **George Lim** (CertRK ‘92) have translated into Chinese, *Those Mysterious Dinosaurs: A Biblical Approach for Children*, by Mrs Norma A Whitcomb. To order, write to Whitcomb Ministries Inc, P O Box 277, Winona Lake, IN 46590, USA.

Lee Young Lyoung (BTh ‘94) is a MDiv student at the Bible College of the Presbyterian Assembly in Korea.

Lazum Lonewah (BTh ‘95) of Myanmar is pursuing his MDiv at Temple Baptist Seminary, USA.

Continued on page 53

THE PRINCIPLE OF SECONDARY SEPARATION (2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-15)

Charles Seet

Secondary separation (or second degree separation) is distinguished from primary separation (ie, separation from sin and false teachers). Secondary separation involves separation from believers who do not practise primary separation. This distinction is important. Many do admit that the Bible clearly teaches separation from unbelief and false doctrine. However, a number are not willing to admit the same concerning separation from believers who deliberately neglect this teaching on separation.

Part of this unwillingness is due to differing views on 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15, where the apostle Paul gave these words, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. . . . And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

There are generally two views on the applicability of this passage to secondary separation. Some limit the application of the command from Paul only to the specific situation he was addressing: the problem of some members who refused to work. Those who see this often restrict the meaning of the words “walking disorderly” to “loafing,” and of “tradition” to Paul’s specific command against loafing.¹

Others suggest that Paul’s choice of words shows he is stating a general principle, and then applying it to the situation of loafing brethren at Thessalonica. This same principle must therefore have a broader scope of application to any form of disobedient behavior including fellowship

with doctrinal error and unbelief. Many of those who hold this view, therefore, see in the passage in question a clear command for secondary separation.

Is there a broader application of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 as a principle of separation from brethren who deliberately disobey the biblical injunction of separation? The following study will reveal that there is.

The Context: Separation From Disobedience

Paul wrote this passage because some in the church refused to work. But the scope of the sin is not limited to slothfulness. The loafers are referred to in 3:6 as *δὺς ἑκάστης ἀκαταστάτου* (“every brother who is walking disorderly”). Why did the apostle choose to use this unspecific phrase rather than something more convenient, like *δὺς ἀνεργῶν* (“everyone who is not working”)? The word *ἀκαταστάτου* is a *hapax legomenon* (ie, a word occurring only once in the scriptures) and is the adverbial form of the word *ἀκατάστατος*, which itself occurs in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, and is also a *hapax legomenon*. The verb form, *ἀκατάστατος*, occurs significantly in the same context (in v 7) as the adverb, and it also is a *hapax legomenon*. It therefore becomes difficult to attach any meaning more specific than what is known from the common usage of this word (“not in proper order,” as found in 3 Macc 1:19, Philo, Josephus, Bel and the Dragon, etc).²

Therefore the word *ἀκαταστάτου* (“disorderly”) used in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 need not necessarily refer only to people who are not working. Unfortunately, English translations like the NIV have paraphrased the Greek in rendering the passage: “We command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle” This obscures the principle and limits the passage to only one *application* of the principle, namely — the problem of loafers.

After using this phrase, the apostle Paul goes on to use another equally non-specific phrase: *ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ἣν ἔλαβον ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων* (“not according to the tradition which they have received from us”). The word at issue here is *tradition* (*παράδοσιν*). This word is found only five times in Paul’s epistles (1 Cor 11:2, Gal 1:14, Col 2:8) and twice in 2 Thessalonians (here, and in 2:15). In none of these other

occurrences, is the word ever employed in the sense of one particular teaching or commandment alone. It stands for all Christian teaching, oral or written.

Since both of these non-specific phrases are found in the very first verse of the paragraph in which Paul proceeds to address the issue of errant non-working brethren, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that he deliberately chose to begin his instruction by stating a general principle, before dealing specifically with the problem itself. This pattern can be demonstrated in many other Pauline passages (Rom 13:1, 6; 1 Cor 6:12, 13-20; Gal 5:1ff). The whole of verse 6, is therefore *a general principle*, that believers ought to separate themselves from any person in their midst who was deliberately disobeying any part of the whole body of inspired instruction. Thus, the main issue this paragraph addresses is *disobedience*.

Furthermore, this disobedience was carried out despite repeated instructions against it. Between verse 6 and verse 14, Paul specifically mentions that his purpose was to deal with those who refused to work. But before speaking directly against the sin itself, he reminds them that the unethical nature of this behavior was *already* taught and well-known to them: “For ye yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you . . . to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Thess 3:7, 9, 10).

It would seem that the culprits were now being castigated more than just for their refusal to work. The issue had become their insistence in behaving the way they did, despite the clear apostolic instruction by word and life they had received. They had not done this out of ignorance, and could have no excuse for it. Furthermore, following the commandment they received when Paul was with them, they also received the letter of 1 Thessalonians, in which Paul gave the same commandment in 4:11, 12.

The situation therefore was now different from before. The focus of concern has by now shifted away from their refusal to work, to their refusal to obey a divine injunction.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SECONDARY SEPARATION

The command that Paul gives in verse 14 at the end of this paragraph then becomes his final instruction on dealing, not with the sin of loafing, but with the sin of disobeying divine instruction. Since this second epistle would now be the third time the culprits had heard the same instruction (which is given in v 12), their failure to amend their ways would constitute the abominable sin of *persistent, wilful disobedience*. And for this, they would need to be disciplined, for if they still persist, they might end up in a state of rebellion against God: “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (v 14).

When this point is understood, it becomes easy to see in retrospect, that the issue the apostle must have had in mind when he wrote in general terms in verse 6, is basically the issue of disobedience. This is plain because the same solution is prescribed in both verse 6 and verse 14.

When we begin reading the passage, one thing that becomes apparent is the seriousness of the passage: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” The word *command* in verse 6 occurs only four times in this epistle, three of which are in our passage of study. The injunction is followed by the invocation of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This invocation can only mean that Paul is making the command as authoritative as it can possibly be. In verse 12 he makes the same invocation, but this time, in addressing the culprits themselves and giving them the commandment to cease from their error, the third time.

What might possibly have motivated the apostle to add such an urgent invocation to his command? He seems most urgent here, in emphasising beyond doubt, that this command to separate from disobedient brethren must be strictly observed. It cannot be ignored, by-passed, or given less attention than other scriptural injunctions (and yet, much of the time, it is).

The command that is given so urgently in 3:6 is the command to *withdraw oneself* (*ghYj`YgeUj*) from the offenders. This word only occurs here and in 2 Corinthians 8:20, where Paul speaks about measures taken when handling church funds, to ensure that one is above reproach: “Avoiding (*ghYj`YgeUj*) this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us, providing for honest things, not

only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” The context in 2 Corinthians, suggests that it is a strong word, and one that would convey the idea of taking special measures to avoid getting oneself embroiled in the disorderliness of the offenders.

The special measures to be taken are given in detail in 3:14 (“. . . note that man, and have no company with him”). The offending party must be noted and not given the privilege of enjoying familiar spiritual fellowship with other believers.

It must be noted that the action prescribed here is not identical to that prescribed by Paul against an offender in 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, for there it is added that one is not to *eat* with the offender in question. It also must be remembered, however, that the Apostle is speaking in the context of a church. Therefore, this verse cannot be used to advocate absolute social and secular excommunication.

One reason why this verse cannot mean a total cut-off of dealings with the offender, is that the object of this action is not punitive, but corrective. It is meant to make the offender realise his error enough to be willing to change his ways and want restoration. This objective is clearly spelled out in the following terms: (1) “. . . that he may be ashamed.” (3:14); and (2) “. . . admonish him as a brother” (3:15)

This would become impossible if the command to keep oneself separate meant total excommunication. Communication can, and, should, continue. The offender must not be kept in the dark about the exact reason why he is not being given the same treatment as before. And this information is not to be given in a spirit of contempt, but rather, in a spirit of brotherliness. The brotherly spirit needed is akin to that commended by Paul for the restoration of a believer in Gal 6:1, 2.

Separation is therefore the divinely commanded response to the sin of disobedience within the body of Christ. This response is necessary because any believer who deliberately disobeys God’s commandments, must be disciplined, out of a brotherly concern for him.

It therefore appears that the context of the passage studied presents a biblical principle that has a much broader application. This text gives us a scriptural warrant to separate from *believers* who deliberately disobey *any* explicit biblical teaching.

The Application of The Secondary Separation Principle

Once we are convinced that there is an implicit command of secondary separation in the Scriptures, the next step would be to investigate how it is to be applied. Very much depends upon whether the disobedience in question was deliberate or not, and upon the response of the offender toward the measures taken. Discipline is a matter that must be handled most carefully to bring about the desired results. The following are five suggested modes of applying the command at the various stages of the process:

- (1) Believers must first be taught that compromise with doctrinal error and unbelief constitutes the sin of disobedience to the commandment of separation. If he had been involved with those who teach error and unbelief, out of ignorance, then separating from him is not justified. But the most important duty, that cannot be neglected, is to *inform* him from the Scriptures about the principle.
- (2) Some do not practise separation because they have not come to the same conclusions about the Bible's teaching on separation as we have. They might not be deliberately disobeying the Scriptures. Earlier on, reference was made to those who believe that 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 applies only to loafers. Similar modes of interpretation have also been applied to other passages on the issue of separation. Once we are convinced of the warrants these passages give us for advocating separation, we need to explain our reasons as objectively as we can, to win the unconvinced over to what we believe is the only biblical position on the issue, praying that the Holy Spirit will give them light.
- (3) When a believer understands the issues of separation and is fully convinced of their biblical authority, then he becomes responsible for responding to them. If in a moment of spiritual weakness, he now compromises the commandment of separation, he needs to be confronted with his error of violating a commandment he already knows.
- (4) If he responds to this confrontation with a repentant spirit, and acts upon the commandment of separation, then disciplinary measures need not be taken. But if he responds with a rebellious spirit and defends his error after having known the scriptural teaching on

separation, then it becomes necessary to show disapproval by separating from him.

- (5) When separation has caused its desired result, there must be restoration. The onus lies on the offender to prove that he is no longer worthy of separation. He must cease to defend his error, and act upon the commandment of separation. Once it is evident that he is no longer compromising with doctrinal error and unbelief, steps must be taken to incorporate him into the fellowship of the church.

One or Two Kinds of Separation?

The question is sometimes asked whether a distinction should be maintained between primary and secondary separation. Instead of doing that, it is suggested that we simplify both into just one category, namely, biblical separation. The desire to eliminate this distinction is not without good reason. In exchanges that have taken place over this issue, the term “secondary separation” seems to have acquired some unfavourable associations.

According to the late Rev Timothy Pietsch—missionary to Japan—there have been missionaries who

. . . have found it very profitable to claim to be Bible separatists but at the same time attack what they revile as “second degree separation.” By this device they are able to get support and help from Bible believing separatists and at the same time remain in good standing with the new evangelicals enjoying their financial support. They are very quick, however, to separate themselves from those they vilify as “second degree” separatists. . . . The Bible knows nothing of this degree of separation from apostasy. Beware of the man who speaks of “second degree separation” for he is inventing a straw man that he can knock down to try and prove he is being faithful to the Lord, when actually he is only pretending obedience. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully (Jer 48:10).

We agree that the obvious compromise and deceit of these missionaries deserve a strong response. But we wonder if it is really justified to react against them by blaming the term “second degree separation” (which is virtually synonymous with the term “secondary separation”). A better way to deal with those who revile secondary separation would be to prove that the Bible does teach a separation from those disobedient to the command of separation from unbelief. They may

THE PRINCIPLE OF SECONDARY SEPARATION

revile the term, but they cannot easily knock down the clear teaching itself.

We need to ask whether by calling secondary separation “secondary” or “second degree” we are making it less scriptural or biblical than it is. If not, then there is no harm in continuing to use this designation. Still, considering the unfavourable associations this term has acquired, it may be wise to rename it “separation from disobedience and compromise” (while renaming primary separation, “separation from apostasy and unbelief”). But our greater concern perhaps should be whether just calling them both “biblical separation” (therefore eliminating the distinction between primary and secondary separation) could lead to confusion and misunderstanding in an area where precision is so needful.

If the distinction is not made, could this lead to “dialogue” with false teachers and perpetrators of unbelief (in apparent efforts to ‘restore’ them)? And could it also lead to the other extreme of unnecessarily excluding groups and individuals who do not take a definite stand on separation, simply because they never had it clearly taught to them? In the light of the errors that could result by allowing full play to an indiscriminate understanding of separation, surely there is a need to define accurately for posterity, the different grounds, the different attitudes, and the different objectives of implementing the two kinds of separation taught in the Scriptures.

Conclusion

When all is said and done, the fact remains that once secondary separation is understood and accepted as scriptural, it must be applied. Each believer must work out for himself how it is to be applied in his own particular circumstance.

In our present time, there is a need to apply secondary separation not only to individuals within a church, but also to whole churches, denominations, institutions and organizations, which have deliberately compromised the injunction of primary separation. A believer who finds himself involved in such institutions, when he becomes convinced of the principle of secondary separation, will often have to grapple with the issue of whether he as an individual can successfully “admonish” the

whole erring group. This is often near-impossible, and separation becomes necessary — he has to leave the group.

It becomes obvious that to do this, believers need to be well-informed about the contemporary scene in the Christian world. The point being made is as follows: to apply the principle of secondary separation, a good knowledge of the Scriptures alone is insufficient. There is also the need to know exactly what various individuals and groups have done and believed, even at the highest level. It is this, perhaps, that poses the greatest difficulty to the implementation of the scriptural principle of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14 in the church today. Realising this, every separatist must conscientiously arm himself with both scripture and evidence in his effort to preserve and defend the Christian Faith. May God help us to be obedient to His Word till He comes.

Endnotes

¹For example, see Robert L Thomas, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, EBC, ed. Frank E Gaebelin (Michigan: Regency Reference Library, 1978), 11:334.

²BAGD s.v. “Uhhj_hk”

³Timothy Pietsch, “The Sin of Neutrality,” in *Reformation Banner*, (July-December 1992): 13.

Charles Seet--FEBC alumnus--lectures at the Centre for Biblical Studies, Philippines.

A REVIEW ARTICLE

“BE YE HOLY”: THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN SEPARATION

Lim Jyh Jang

“Be ye holy”: *The Call to Christian Separation*, by Fred Moritz. Greenville SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1994. 134 pages.

Having read several books on the subject of Biblical separation, I am of the opinion that, *“Be ye holy,”* by Fred Moritz is perhaps the best in terms of accuracy, depth and clarity, balance and readability. The thesis of this book, which I am also in hearty agreement with is that “the holiness of God is the foundation of all separation, whether personal or ecclesiastical” (2). The result is that this book is at once a concise introductory treatise on the holiness of God, and a handbook on the principles of Biblical separation.

Holiness: The Foundation of Separation

Moritz provides a refreshing study of God’s holiness supported by a technical appendix on the “etymology and uses of biblical words for holiness” (105-115).

Moritz describes God’s holiness in three ways. Firstly, God is intrinsically holy. God’s holiness is an inextricable aspect of His nature and character. This is seen not only in how He is addressed in the Scriptures, but also in His hatred for evil (10-12). And because God is intrinsically holy, “His holiness becomes the standard which determines right and wrong in human conduct” (12).

Secondly, God is transcendentally holy. By this Moritz understands that “God is unique in His holiness and is separate and distinct from His

creation” and “He is exalted in holiness.” This is seen in how the Scripture describes the beauty of God’s holiness, and how His glory is so often linked with His holiness (13). And because God is transcendently holy, man’s sin nature is made the more glaring, so man is brought to the lowest depths of humility.

Thirdly, God is immanently holy. Those who have experienced God’s grace are brought to dizzy heights of awe and wonder, marvelling at how an infinitely holy God could have condescended to dwell with man (14). A knowledge of God’s holiness must surely cause hearts to respond with gratitude, joy, worship, and willing obedience.

Personal Separation

“God’s holiness demands that His people imitate that holiness, for His holiness is the foundation of holy conduct in men” (16). This is taught not only in the Old Testament, in the ceremonies and laws, but also in the New Testament as the basis for holy Christian living (16-17). Personal separation is that Christian conduct which is governed by this principle of imitation—to be holy as God is holy. This is the aspect of sanctification which the believer is personally responsible for (21). Moritz sees this as the most important dimension in the doctrine of Biblical separation. Yet most books on separation fail to discuss it (4).

The goal of personal separation, is holiness. Indeed, for the believer, holiness begins with the justification brought about by the death of Christ on the cross (26-29). By this imputation of righteousness, we are said to be positionally holy. The believer is then called to live a holy life because it is both the will of God, and a prerequisite for service (30). This, according to Moritz, may be accomplished by the reading of the Scriptures, by being filled with the Holy Spirit, and through the occasional chastening of God (31). Holiness causes one to abhor sin, to have pure thoughts, and to be like Christ (32-35). A separated Christian life would enable “the believer to have an effective, powerful witness in the world” (29).

Ecclesiastical Separation

From the the holiness of God flows not only personal separation, but also ecclesiastical separation. Ecclesiastical separation is that aspect of

separation that calls God's people to separate from all forms of false religion and unbelief. In the Old Testament, this is taught clearly in God's call to Israel to keep away from idolatry. At the same time, the importance of the doctrine is taught indirectly, in the repeated emphasis on ceremonial purity (49-50). In the New Testament, the doctrine is clearly taught in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1. Lest any should say that ecclesiastical separation is a minor doctrine little discussed in the Bible, Moritz is quick to point out that there is "a profusion of passages that deal with the subject of separation from false teachers and false doctrine" (55).

In response to the neo-evangelical charge that ecclesiastical separation is contrary to evangelism, Moritz astutely observes that "the best known New Testament passage which deals with separation [2 Cor 6:14-7:1] also deals with evangelism" (47). The passage specifically warns *against co-operation with unbelievers in evangelism* (51).

Thus the Scripture is clear, consistent and uncompromising on ecclesiastical separation. Bible-believing churches must withdraw from apostate churches and have no fellowship with them. Believers who find their church or denomination going apostate must first "make an honest effort to rectify the situation" (61), failing which, they themselves must withdraw from that body.

Separation From a Christian Brother

Even more difficult than the issue of ecclesiastical separation is the issue of "separation from a Christian brother." This is assumed correct in most books on separation from the fundamentalist perspective, but hardly defended or dealt with in detail. Moritz faces the issue squarely, proving from Scripture that it is indeed a Biblically founded doctrine that flows logically from the doctrine of the holiness of God. Moritz proves from Matthew 18:15-17 that separation from erring brethren is a disciplinary measure that must be taken as a last resort (74-75). In his exposition of 1 Corinthians 5:1-11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, he submits that separation is commanded by God, and must be based on "both theological and moral" grounds (75-80).

Moritz concludes that the disciplinary act of separation ought to be applied on (1) the sinning brother; (2) the immoral brother; (3) the

unequally yoked brother; (4) the lazy brother; (5) the disobedient brother; and finally (6) the heretical brother (82-83).

The Spirit of the Separatist

In the final chapter, Moritz deals judiciously with “the spirit of the separatist.” The chapter may be seen both as a reminder as well as a rebuke to separatists. On the one hand, there is “a dangerous tendency on the part of younger separatists today . . . to look at the weaknesses of the older generation [such as being unduly harsh, and focusing on personalities rather than principles] and abandon or moderate the position they took because of these weaknesses” (91). On the other hand, there are separatists who have made separation an end in itself, and have lost the “zeal for souls”; or have cooled in their love for God; or have neglected the fruit of the Spirit in their own lives (91-92). In so doing, they have become isolationists. Moritz challenges the first group to be as “militant as Jude, Paul, Peter, and John in the ministry of the Word” (91). He advises the second group to display the “meekness and gentleness of Christ” (94). Separation as practised by Paul was “accompanied by deep emotion, and not harsh, unfeeling, and insensitive” (96).

Conclusion

Moritz, in his introduction, presents three specific goals of his book. Firstly, “it seeks to re-focus [younger] fundamentalists” who may be disillusioned by decades of apparent failure among the older fundamentalists in their practice of separation. Secondly, it “intends to challenge those who have grown up in the New Evangelical frame of reference . . . to take a hard look at the distinctiveness of New Evangelicalism and to examine the roots of the movement.” Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it “intends to call for a change.” Separatists who have forsaken evangelism need to reorientate their focus. They need also “to examine the criteria by which they separate from other believers and make sure that biblical principles, not personality conflicts, guide such action.” At the same time, there must be “a fundamental and radical change on the part of those who repudiate separatism” (2-4).

Has the book achieved these goals? Only time would tell, but to be sure Moritz has packed into his brief book much food for thought for both

the fundamentalist and the neo-evangelical. The book should appeal to the fundamentalist for its firm Biblical and theological foundations. It should appeal to the neo-evangelical, for its level-headed, and scholarly treatment of the subject. The neo-evangelical who reads the book with an “open mind and heart” cannot but admit that the Bible does teach separation. The fundamentalist who reads the book with the same openness cannot but remain faithful to the doctrine and practice of separation, while taking care not to become isolationistic.

This book deserves the widest possible circulation. May more holy and separated lives be the result of this carefully written piece of work.

Mr Lim Jyh Jang is a second year MDiv student of FEBC. The above paper was submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the course on “Biblical Separation” conducted during the January-May '95 semester.

Continued from page 39

Alex Nasongo Wugu (BTh [c] '95) is now teaching at the Bible College of East Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.

Leonard Musyoka (BTh [c] '95) is a preacher of the Independent Presbyterian Churches of Kenya. His ministry includes conducting Bible classes at the Kitui Prison, and in five secondary schools. Soon after his return to Kenya, he got married to Monica on December 31, '94. Those who want to reach him may write to P O Box 333 Mwingi, Kenya, East Africa.

Jenny Woo (CertRK '95) of Shalom B-P Church left May 12, '95 to study at Xinjiang University, China. Another FEBC graduate Miss **Leong Pui Fun** (BTh '90) is also there.

Wong Chin Woon (BTh [c] '95) and his wife **Srithorn** (DipTh '89) are missionaries to Saipan. Their address: Caller Box PPP380, Saipan MP 96950, Mariana Islands, USA.

Jack Sin (MDiv [c] '95) was appointed pastor of Maranatha B-P Church on May 1, '95. Pastor Sin replaces Rev Colin Wong as chairman of the pro-tem committee (wef June 1, '95). Rev **Colin Wong** (BTh '87) is presently working towards his STM at Biblical Theological Seminary, USA, and plans to return by end '96.

THEONOMY EXAMINED

Jack Sin

Theonomy is made up of two Greek words, *theos* (“God”) and *nomos* (“Law”). Literally, it means, “God’s Law.” Theonomy or Reconstructionism refers to a so-called Christian movement which has gained momentum since the late sixties in America. What is it all about and how does it differ from the Reformed, Premillennial position?

The founder of Christian Reconstructionism is Dr Rousas J Rushdoony, an American Presbyterian minister and scholar. In 1965, he formed the organization called *The Chalcedon Foundation*. In 1973, he published *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. Another well-known Reconstructionist is Dr Greg Bahnsen who wrote *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, a 650 page work that is widely distributed. A third man is Dr Gary North who has written more than 25 books promoting Reconstructionism in its various forms.

Words like Dominion Theology or Kingdom Theology are familiar words associated with Reconstructionists. According to them, it is the duty of Christians to bring about a restored paradise on earth before the coming of Christ. It will be an earthly kingdom patterned after the societal framework given to ancient Israel prior to the monarchy. Every nation must adopt the Mosaic laws if the world is going to see peace and prosperity. The principal goal of Reconstructionism is thus the political, and religious dominion of the world through the implementation of all the moral, social, judicial, and economic laws of the Old Testament.

Some Charismatics have embraced Reconstructionism and are looking forward to a victorious scenario of mass conversions, and political supremacy in the near future.

All Reconstructionists hold to a postmillennial view of eschatology. They believe that the world would get better. The kingdom of God will

THEONOMY EXAMINED

grow so mighty in size, strength and influence that the world will become totally Christianised before the return of Christ. Many of them draw historical reference to the rule of Emperor Constantine who made Christianity an official religion in the Roman Empire during his reign (313-337 AD). Others quote Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)—the Lord Protector—who reigned during the Puritan era in England in the 1650s, and Abraham Kuyper (1837-1910)—a Dutch pastor and theologian—who became the Prime Minister of Holland (1901-1905). All these examples in their respective contexts do not promote Theonomy at all.

What is wrong with Reconstructionism? Reconstructionism is wrong in that it fails to realise that the world comes under the judgment of God. The work of reconstruction is not the Church's but Christ's when He returns. In this present order, God has ordained the civil magistrates, and Christians are required to submit to them in their administration of justice (Rom 13:1-17). Jesus for example paid the tax required by the secular government (Matt 17:24-27). Paul did not launch a crusade against the injustices of slavery in the Roman Empire. What he did do was to exhort Christian slaves "to be obedient to their masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again" (Titus 2:9). Peter likewise exhorted, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Pet 2:13, 14).

Is Theonomy or Reconstructionism theologically sound, biblically defensible and consistent with Calvinism? Robert Godfrey has this answer,

The appeal of theonomy, like that of many contemporary Christian movements, is its simplicity and apparently biblical character. The great complexities and frustrations of the secular, modern world lead many to look for easy solutions. But in a fallen world, solutions to great political problems are not always easy. The approach of theonomy is a novel one in the Reformed community and uses the Scripture in a way that is alien to Reformed Christianity.

Rushdoony called Calvin's view of the civil law "heretical nonsense." Calvin called a form of theocratic thinking remarkably like theonomy "false and foolish." When it comes to law and civil government, Calvin and theonomy do not have much in common. ("Calvin and Theonomy," in

Theonomy: A Reformed Critique, edited by William Barker and Robert Godfrey [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 312).

While we decry antinomianism that is so rampant today, we do not want to swing to the other extreme of imposing upon a nation the demands of the Mosaic penal code primarily given to a Jewish theocracy.

The social-political laws given in the Mosaic economy were abrogated with the advent of Christ and is no longer necessary today. Israel was God's chosen nation. God had stringent regulations and rules for them for a specified purpose and period. But the moral laws of God are perennial and binds us under the Ten Commandments. It is to be obeyed not in letter only but much more in spirit.

The New Testament nowhere suggests Christian dominion over the present world system in the way proposed by theonomists. As Dr Carl McIntire has said, our duty is not to mass convert the world, but rather to accelerate the Great Commission to the ends of the earth for a witness unto all nations before Jesus returns. Not this new Theonomy but the old Theology, a worldwide missions is the Lord's plan of salvation to as many as would believe.

Missions is on the decline according to Dr Howard Carlson; the average age of missionaries in the West today is 60. The B-P churches are a young movement. We have plenty of young people. The greatest contribution you can make to this age is to take up the cross and follow the Lord wherever He will lead you to save souls and plant churches. "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isa 6:8). Amen.

Jack Sin (MDiv [c] '95) is pastor of Maranatha Bible-Presbyterian Church. The above article is taken from the Maranatha Weekly of July 9, 1995.

College News

During the May-July '95 vacation, FEBC conducted two **Daily Vacation Bible College** courses: (1) Church Discipleship (2 credits) by Rev Dr Goh Seng Fong, and (2) Zechariah (1 credit) by Dr John C Whitcomb.

Rev Dr Timothy Tow, the principal, spent nine weeks (May 14-July 9, '95) in Canada ministering to the young Calvary B-P Church at 3065 Ridgeway Drive, #34, Mississauga, Ontario L5L 5M6. Elder Daniel Chew is resident overseer of the church.

The first business meeting to discuss the **21st Century Reformation KJV Study Bible** was held on May 31, '95, at Suncoast B-P Church, Florida, USA. Those present were Rev Dr Timothy Tow (Editor-in-chief), Dr Arthur Steele (US coordinator), Rev Dr Howard Carlson, Dr Ed Oliver, Dr Morris MacDonald, and Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo. Others in the team include Dr John C Whitcomb, Dr Carl Martin, Dr Robert Beede, Rev Kevin Backus, Rev Edward Paauwe, Dr Tow Siang Hwa, Rev Quek Suan Yew, Rev Stephen Khoo, Rev Bob Phee, Rev Das Koshy, Rev Dr Goh Seng Fong, and Mr Charles Seet.

The College began its **new semester** on July 17, '95 with a day of prayer at Beulah House. We thank the Lord for a good intake this year of 30 new students: Asa Timarong Asaria (Palau), Bae Kyung Sik (Korea), Bong Thang (Myanmar), Chiang Mui Leng (Singapore), John Ching (Singapore), Ekawati Kaslim (Indonesia), Kim Jung Ae (Korea), Ko Sek Bee (Singapore), Kwon Sung Chan (Korea), Lee Byong Sang (Korea), Lee Li Ki (Korea), Irene Lee Yen Fong (Singapore), Emily Loo (Singapore), Jahangir Masud (Bangladesh), Florence Moey (Singapore), Olga Danuwinoto (Indonesia), David Paauwe (Australia), Park Hye Kuen (Korea), Park Kyung Ae (Korea), Park Sin Young (Korea), Joshua Pinto (Singapore), Uansrithong Pornpayong (Thailand), Robert Tan Hok Tjai (Indonesia), Sim Poh Geok (Singapore), Tan Swee Hwa (Singapore), Tanarat Siriwaranan (Thailand), Vincent Toh (Singapore), Va Bi (Myanmar), Scott Van Steenberg (USA), Won Jong Woo (Korea). FEBC's total student body stands at 90.

Continued on page 64

SAIPAN MISSION NEWS

Pang Kok Hiong

Rev Pang Kok Hiong is a BTh graduate of FEBC. Together with his dear wife, Guek Mui, and two young sons, they are helping mainland Chinese working in textile factories in Saipan find salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have been missionaries to Saipan for the last three years. Below is a report of the wonderful work God is doing in Saipan.

Amazing Harvest Continues

Last Easter saw the largest batch of mainland Chinese converts being baptised in the Lord. We thank God for the 48 members added into the Church with much tears of joy. Surely the promise of God's Word is manifested, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with Him" (Ps 126:5, 6). Of these young converts, seven have gone back to their homeland bearing the salvation power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Another 35 were baptised end of June in our second baptism of the year. All praise to God our almighty Father for this great opportunity.

Provoking Letters from China

Among those baptised were three sisters who are new contract workers in Saipan. They will be with us for the next two to three years. The most wonderful thing about them is that they are the fruits of our converts who have returned to China and have been serving the Lord full-time. There are at least a dozen of the returnees who have entered the vineyard to serve in various capacities. Many part-timers are also



Rev Pang Kok Hiong and family



Christians of the Saipan Church

becoming the pillars in the house-churches. We have been receiving many letters from different parts of China crying for help. "Dear Pastor, please pray for our country here, the church is under great attack by all sorts of heretical teachings . . . there are so-called 'Shoutists' who shout 'hallelujah,' 'Amen,' and 'Praise the Lord' so loudly that their meetings always end up in chaos! Another group known as the 'Born again sect' teaches the followers to grieve and cry openly in repentance in order to show that they are truly saved. A sister doubted my salvation because I do not behave like one of them! And there is the 'Prophet Elijah Hong of New Testament Church' who prophesied the date and place of Jesus' return! Pastor, the cultic activities and heretical teachings are rampant! But our untrained house-church leaders have no answer to these terrible crises. Will you come and help us . . .? Please . . ."

"For the past few months, the 'weather' here is unusually disturbing! The churches of the Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) are redoubling efforts to shut down a number of house meetings in Shanghai. Both Uncle Li and Dr Chen (prominent house-church leaders) have been arrested! Dr Chen will be released this week but nothing is heard of Uncle Li (who had been imprisoned three times for a total of 16 years; this being his fourth arrest). Please pray that we would not be disheartened but be faithful unto death!"

Dear readers, these are but a few selected letters. There are many more which are too sensitive to share with you here. Will you care to pray? Pray for this great land of our ancestors that: (1) There will be a peaceful transition in Beijing when paramount leader Deng passes away. (2) The house-churches, especially the leaders, will stand firm in times of adversity.

Open Doors and Harvest is Plentiful, but Where are the Workers?

Fiji

At the end of March after my blessed trip to the Holy Land, Rev Tang Wai Kay and I went for an exploratory mission to the Republic of Fiji in the south Pacific. Thank God for granting us a safe and wonderful time in reaching out to the Chinese residing and working there. The call

came when two of our Saipan converts were recruited to work in Fiji. Though Fiji is a so-called Christian country, predominantly Methodist, there is only one Chinese house-church with less than ten members. The only ordained “pastor” is a middle-aged lady from Taiwan. She is a full-time manager of a book-room, and is not actively reaching out to the Chinese population of about 17,000 there. There are about 5,000 “local Chinese,” the majority of whom are Fijian citizens who have settled down, and have well established businesses. These Chinese from Southern China (Guang Dong) came as early as 1900 with the intention firstly of making money, and then to return to the mainland for brighter prospects. However, many chose to stay on. These are the second or third generation Chinese who speak very fluent English.

Official figures on the number of Chinese immigrants are not easy to get. Some believe that there were 12,000 new immigrants in 1992. This is twice that of Saipan! They are mainly shop owners, factory workers, market gardeners, and almost all of them come from mainland China. In the week we were there, Rev Tang and I took turns conducting gospel meetings in two of the factory barracks. The two sisters—our hosts—were overjoyed to make all the necessary arrangements. An average of 25 persons from all walks of life attended the meetings. These included four university graduates from China who are holding high posts in some business companies. Due to the short stay, we could only meet but a fraction of the Chinese there. Those who had attended showed a keen desire to understand the Christian Faith. We also met some local church leaders, especially a conservative Korean pastor, who expressed much willingness to help.

Nauru

It was on my way back to Saipan that the plane stopped at the Republic of Nauru for two days. Nauru, a tiny island with a land area of 21 square kilometres, is the world’s smallest nation having a population of only 8,000. Nauru is famous for its easily accessible phosphate mine to make fertilizer. There are 500 to 600 mainland Chinese working in small businesses and factories. Most have yet to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, and there is no Chinese Church and no missionary. Thank God for giving me the opportunity to share the Gospel with some of these people.

Two shopkeepers accepted the Lord as their Saviour. But sadly, I had to leave, and there is no shepherd to nurture them in the faith.

Palau

I made a short follow-up trip to Palau recently. Palau got its independence on October 1, 1994, and became the newest member of the United Nations. Since then, the Americans, Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese, and even mainland Chinese are flocking to this island republic full of economic potential. At present, there are about 1,000 Chinese residing and working there. More are expected to come once Palau develops further. During our visit there, we praise God for the unexpected opportunity to meet with the Education Minister of Palau who is an ordained pastor. He expressed his support to help us start a Chinese ministry there. The senior pastor of the largest Protestant Church in the Capital and a retired senior pastor also expressed their willingness to help us. After sharing our desire and vision of reaching out to the Chinese population in Palau, the retired senior pastor and the church treasurer (a deacon) agreed to be our local sponsors in the establishing of a non-profit organisation in the name of “Bible-Presbyterian Church of Palau” with no strings attached. This will be an independent mission and church organisation not under any denomination or church in Palau. Yes, the gospel door of Palau is wide open! “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it” (Rev 3:8). Dear readers, please pray for this exciting development. But the question is: Who will go? Will you?

Ed: The Lord has sent to FEBC a student from Palau this semester. His name: Asaria Asa Timarong.

Chinese Bible College

It has been my great desire that there should be a fundamental, missions-minded, and Spirit-filled Chinese Bible College like FEBC (or a Chinese department in FEBC) to train the non-English speaking young men and women for future Chinese ministry throughout the world. The following are some of my thoughts on why a Chinese Bible College or a Chinese department is a must:

- (1) One fifth of the world's population is Chinese. The Chinese language is one of the most spoken languages in the world.
- (2) Most of the existing Chinese Bible Colleges in the world are either liberal, neo-evangelical, or pentecostal. So far, I have not come across any fundamental, separated Bible College. Many of our young people whom the Lord has called to serve have turned neo-evangelical, and have joined the ecumenical movement because they received their training in less than conservative schools.
- (3) China has at least 80 million believers. Mainland Chinese form the largest migrant group in the world. The number is on the rise as China gradually opens her doors. Almost 90% of the mainland Chinese do not speak English. Does God have a plan for us (overseas Chinese) to help the churches in China long deprived of sound Biblical teaching? Do not forget that there are already 50 million overseas Chinese to reach out to. The Chinese churches must be informed of the many deceptions of the end times, and be led back to the old and true path. "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there be enlargement and deliverance arise . . . from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Mordecai's answer to Queen Esther can be our most appropriate lesson.
- (4) The importance of the Bible College, and the impact that it can make, should never be underestimated. Dr Tow Siang Hwa once said, "No church can grow and prosper without a succession of good and strong leaders for future generations. . . . The role of the FEBC in equipping workers for God's vineyard is of inestimable value. Without FEBC the B-P Churches would fade away in a generation."

In recent months, Guek Mui and I have been discussing, thinking, and praying what the Lord would have us do in the future. Which is the most effective strategy to reach China for Christ? In view of the Lord's soon coming, it is imperative for each of us to check our hearts, "Am I doing my best for Him?" The Lord has opened many doors for us to enter with the Gospel. The children of the world are venturing out to various parts of China, Vietnam, India, and other areas with great plans and sacrifices, but what are we, the children of light sitting and doing here?

Let us awake, and reap the harvest before it is too late! Remember, this ever changing world is not permanent for us who belong to Christ, we are but passers-by. I humbly pray like Joshua, “as for me and my house we will serve the Lord!”

Please Pray, Please Help

Dear readers, please remember us in your prayers. At present we have meetings every night, seven days a week to cater for the spiritual needs of the 150 members. We also have a vibrant Christian book ministry, audio and video tape ministry, which Guek Mui and I are very busy with daily. (Our VCRs run for 18 hours daily duplicating tapes!) Every night, both of us spend three hours in travelling time. Our two boys (one is four years old, the other two) are keeping us busy all day too. We really need helpers! Thank God for sister Jenny Chin of Grace Bible-Presbyterian Church (Mandarin Service), an FEBC student, who helped us for a month during her College vacation.

Continued from page 57

Three **night classes** opened to the public are offered this July-November semester: (1) 1 Corinthians (Monday) by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo, (2) Church Evangelism (Wednesday) by Rev Dr Goh Seng Fong, and (3) Acts of the Apostles II (Thursday) by Rev Dr Timothy Tow.

The **off-campus Certificate of Religious Knowledge** (CertRK) programme has attracted five students: Mr Jhoon Tang (Tabernacle B-P Church), Dn Henry Tan (Life B-P Church), Dn Chan Weng Seng (Calvary B-P Church, Petaling Jaya), Mr James Sun (Bethel B-P Church, Melbourne), and Mr Patrick Leong (New Life B-P Church).

God willing, FEBC lecturers and students (a contingent of 30) will visit Myanmar, February 16-20, '96, to participate in the dedication of the new four-storey building of **Far Eastern Fundamental School of Theology** (FEFST) headed by Rev Robert Thawm Luai, an FEBC alumnus. The 4th graduation service of FEFST will also be held at the same time. FEBC lecturers will conduct seminars for pastors and students. We will also see Andrew Kam's (DipTh '94) orphanage, and Yangon B-P Church.

AT LAST!



CONTENTS

- I. THE B-P SINGAPORE TREE HAS SEVEN ROOTS
- II. TRACING THE AMERICAN ROOT—From Events that Led to Separation from the Presbyterian Church, USA
- III. SEPARATION FROM UNBELIEF—Leads to Formation of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions
- IV. WHAT IS BIBLE-PRESBYTERIANISM?
- V. LINKAGE TO A GREAT CHURCH MOVEMENT
- VI. PERIOD OF LAYING FOUNDATIONS, 1950-57
- VII. PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION AND GROWTH, 1958-64
- VIII. PERIOD OF TESTINGS AND FURTHER OUTREACH, 1965-71
- IX. PERIOD OF MULTI-DEVELOPMENTS AT HOME AND ABROAD, 1971-1995
- X. A DISSENTIOUS SPIRIT THAT LED TO THE DISSOLUTION OF SYNOD, OCTOBER 30, 1988

FOREWORD BY ELDER CHIA KIM CHWEE

The story of the B-P Church, Singapore has to be told. It has been known to be the fastest growing church here. WHY? It is being told in this book—The Singapore B-P Church Story—by its founder pastor Dr Timothy Tow in a way that no one else can tell it. Dr Tow first related it to the students of the evening class of the Far Eastern Bible College, of which he is the Principal. His holy intention was that “they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

The Singapore B-P Church Story is a story of joy and tears, a story of spiritual conviction, courage, perseverance and God-given victories in the face of great odds. The author—Dr Timothy Tow—attempts at a comprehensive historical narration of the Singapore B-P Church. He first traces in a most interesting way, the origin of the B-P Church from its first root in the 16th Century Reformation to its seventh root in the Life B-P Church, Singapore. He concentrates on its vital American root and reveals the situation of the B-P Church in Singapore today.

The book is written in the author’s by now, well known, (Dr Tow having written many books) easy flowing, easy-to-read, yet spirit-moving and heart-inspiring style. Dr Tow has also, in the spirit and wisdom of letting them tell their own story, incorporated, to a large extent, the individual B-P Churches’ own accounts of their respective church growth and missionary expansion. He completes the book powerfully telling his readers clearly what he wants them to know. He wants them to be in no doubt what a B-P Church is and what it was founded for. He wants all to know that “it is the duty of all true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ to make a clear testimony of their faith in Him, especially in these darkening days of apostasy in many professing churches . . .”

Those who are curious to know about the dissolution of the B-P Synod will want to read this book. Members of B-P churches will find this book illuminating. The old BPs of the Prinsep Street era will treasure the record of their fond memories. Generally the book has interest for all in the Lord’s business.



BEULAH HOUSE