

\$7.90

**WHO ARE  
THE BRISBANE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP?**

3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.

By

David Holden

BCF and related "Christian Fellowships" believe they will be made perfect before the return of Christ. Christians who do not join with them in their doctrines and practices will perish in the "great tribulation of the world".

Essential reading for those who have friends in this fellowship.

## Introduction

The first two editions of this booklet on the Brisbane Christian Fellowship were produced fifteen years ago. As the years have rolled on, people with concerns about the fellowship have contacted me from time to time asking if I was going to publish more up-to-date information on the group. My answer had always been no, as I had other more important writing projects to pursue. My view on the matter changed after 23 June 2008 when the ABC programme, "*Four Corners*" aired a documentary detailing some of the problems in the group. A flood of new information suddenly became available, so the decision was made to produce this 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

My interest in BCF started in the 1970s when several of my relatives joined the group. Some have since left. They were all excited over the feeling that they were part of a group that was alive with the spirit of God. But what exactly were they involved in? I decided to investigate.

Back in the 1970s, the Church was called "The Immanuel Church". Immanuel means "God with us". (Matthew 1:23). The name reflected the belief that God is with us.

There was also the belief that God was leading the Church forward in leaps and bounds, and that other Churches were being left behind. God was giving the Church a vision, usually referred to as, "The Vision".

The general direction of the Church fitted the mood of the times in the Pentecostal Churches of which BCF is a part. The 1970s was a time of rapid growth in the practice of speaking in tongues (ecstatic unintelligible speech). Anyone who spoke in tongues was deemed to have received a sudden infusion of an extra measure of the Holy Spirit - even if there were other issues in the individual that could indicate the contrary.

When I initially started investigating the group, it was difficult to pin down what they believed beyond the basics. I decided to drop the investigation and wait. Finally a breakthrough came when the leaders produced a book under a title which sums up their core belief, "Unto Perfection".

Finally, I had in black and white what they believed. However, gaining a copy of the book did not solve all of my problems. The book came across to me as being badly written and quite vague in many areas, perhaps deliberately so. Furthermore, some of their beliefs as stated in the book shocked me. I had to attend several meetings and talk with elders and members to make sure what I was reading were genuine beliefs and not just bad writing.

Some BCF members who read this booklet will argue that they are enjoying their time in BCF. The activities are fun, the people are friendly, and the music is pleasant. However, the core issues to consider with any Church are:

Does this Church accurately preach the gospel as revealed in the Bible? Does this Church accept the Bible as supreme over every other authority under God, and a complete, final and sufficient revelation from Him? Does it accept another revelation at odds with the final and complete revelation? Does this Church accept the ranking on doctrine which Christ gave us. "... 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'" (Matt. 22:37-40), or does it reject Christians who do not adhere to certain minor doctrines and practices?

My research indicates that BCF fails the above test. I invite you to read the article with a Bible to check what I have written. All things must be measured against the word of God (Acts 17:11).

A correction: The ABC "Four Corners" programme aired a documentary on BCF titled "The God of Broken Hearts" (23/6/08). The "Four Corners" web site kindly referred readers to my web site for more information. However, they also stated I am a former member of BCF. That is not the case. All of my contacts with BCF have been as a Bible-believing evangelical seeking to know more about the sect. Helpful information from the 4 Corners programme has been added to this booklet, primarily to the section on the history of BCF (page ten), and the section on families that have been split by the sect (page eighteen).

## OUTLINE

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The entrance at 40 Burton Lane Samford to:

- Brisbane Christian Fellowship Inc.
- Restoration Fellowships International (Qld) Inc.
- Vision One Inc.

## Christian Sect

The Brisbane Christian Fellowship (sometimes known as **BCF**), and other related “Christian Fellowships” e.g. Stanthorpe Christian Fellowship, Sydney Christian Fellowship and Melbourne Christian Fellowship are a Christian sect. They have teachings which run counter to the clear teaching of the Word of God. They believe the only alternative to death for those who do not join with them in their doctrines and practices is to “deny the Lord” (“*Unto Perfection*”, UP, p. 117) [p. 142-143].

The “Christian Fellowships” claim they are not a denomination. This claim is quite false as will be shown later. For the purpose of identification, I have called the various “Christian Fellowships” which hold to the doctrines and practices in BCF the “**Christian Fellowship Denomination**”. In 2008, the Christian Fellowship denomination had twenty-five affiliated groups. Not all Church groups that attach “Christian Fellowship” to their title are part of the sect. Also, Adelaide Christian Assembly is part of the sect.

The number of fellowships state by state which are listed on the BCF web site under the links section are as follows. Queensland has 6, Victoria 6, NSW 4, SA 1, WA 1. The total of listed fellowships for Australia is eighteen. Contact details for four overseas fellowships are given. Presumably, other groups are two small to list a contact address.<sup>1</sup>

The Christian Fellowship denomination believes God has just one true Church in every town and city to which he is calling all Christians. Only those who join themselves to this true Church will be made perfect, as Christ himself, before Christ comes again.

The beginnings of their teaching are generally ascribed by its adherents to the writings and teachings of **William H. Offiler**, pastor of Bethel Temple, Seattle, Washington. Pastor W. W. Patterson, also of Bethel Temple assisted in propagating his views. Additional teachings were added in the Australian fellowships - mostly in the 1970s.

Because I live in Brisbane, this article will centre on BCF. BCF, the largest group, has taken the major role in propagating the views of the Christian Fellowship denomination. The first part of this article will deal with the teachings of BCF. The second part will focus primarily on its history.

I have been led to write this paper because of the obvious need for an article like this, and because of my unique position. I have several relatives and friends within BCF, and others who have left from which to draw information.

My first close contacts with this sect (through relatives) go back to around 1975-76.

To ensure accuracy, I have found it necessary to give values to the information presented to me. Information which comes from articles published by BCF have been given the highest priority, followed by verbal information from elders, then by information from those within the group, and finally to information from those who have left BCF. Except where specifically stated in this article, I have sought collaboration of verbal information to ensure accuracy.

The main teaching guide from BCF is “*Unto Perfection*” published by *Tri Books*. Other works include “*Highlights from the Epistle to the Hebrews*” by Ray Guyatt, “*God and Time*” by Doug Watt, and “*Sonshine*” teaching material for children. “*Unto Perfection*” was written by Victor Hall, M. Wylie and D. Watt. The title of the book is abbreviated in this article to UP. A second edition of the book came out in December 1990 under the title, “*Let Us Go On Unto Perfection*”; abbreviated in this article to UP2. The page numbers, unless otherwise stated, refer to the first edition (April 1987). In some instances, a page number will be given in square brackets [p.]. This refers to the page number in the second edition. For other references, see the end notes at the end of the article. The Christian Fellowship denomination teaches the following:

### **Will Not Baptise a Person in the Name of the Father or the Holy Spirit.**

They will only baptise a person in the “name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (UP2, p. 68, 206). While it is true that Christians in the N.T. were baptised in “...the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 10:48. See also 8:16, 19:5). It is wrong to say a person should not be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matt. 28:19).

BCF does not recognise the above baptism. Those who have been previously baptised, must be baptised again in accordance with BCF doctrine and practice if they want to become part of BCF.

### **Only Those Who Speak in Tongues Have the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.**

That contradicts Jesus who said, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” (John 7:38). See also 1 Cor. 12:13. Many are turning from the view that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is limited to only those who speak in tongues, but BCF holds to this view quite strongly (UP2, p. 207).

### **Christians Must Join the “Christian Fellowship” Denomination**

BCF says, “The scriptures urge us all to make a ‘one-hundred-fold’ response to the call to be **part of the perfect church**, through which His kingdom will be revealed.” (UP2, p. 97).

It is partly their understanding of the Old Testament feast of tabernacles which draws them to this conclusion. They believe that because two of the three great feasts ordained by

God in the Mosaic Law; Passover and Pentecost, have had historical fulfilments; Tabernacles must have an historical fulfilment. This is a plausible though not necessarily correct conclusion. What is not so plausible is the very self-centred view as to how the feast of Tabernacles, and the events immediately prior to Tabernacles are allegedly going to be fulfilled.

The feast of tabernacles took place from the 15th to 21st day of the seventh month on the Jewish calendar. For the seven days all native born Israelites were to live in booths (temporary shelters made of branches) (Lev. 23:42-43). This was to commemorate the fact that Israel lived in temporary shelters while in the wilderness. It followed the sounding of the trumpets on the first day, and the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month.

Regarding the sounding of the trumpets, the Israelites were told, "On the first day of the seventh month hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to sound the trumpets." (Num. 29:1).

BCF believes this sounding of the trumpets which took place on the appointed day for centuries, points to events which are taking place today, namely, the calling of God upon all Christians to join the Christian Fellowship denomination! If you can not hear the call of God upon you (typified in the trumpet blast) to join the Christian Fellowship denomination, then you are said to be deaf to the Spirit of God. You have hardened your heart to what he is saying to you.

BCF says the 'blowing of the trumpets' on the first day of the seventh month was to call the people of Israel to the tabernacle. This aspect is fulfilled in the call of the Lord upon his Church, "...to be gathered as one body for the **Day of Atonement**" (UP, p. 121) [p. 150].

In response to the above claim, it must be stated that nowhere in the Bible are we told that the blowing of the trumpets on the **first** day of the seventh month was for the purpose of calling Israel together for the Day of Atonement. In spite of this, BCF have made their particular view a major doctrine in their Church. The blowing of the trumpets relating to the Day of Atonement took place on the Day of Atonement itself (Lev. 25:9).

The trumpets were sounded for several reasons:

1. To call the people of Israel in the wilderness together and to announce their moving out (Num. 10:2-3).
2. On the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9).
3. For battle (Num. 10:9, Judges 7:20-22).
4. For times of rejoicing (Num. 10:10, 2 Sam. 6:15).

BCF has obviously put a very self-centred interpretation upon the passage referring to the trumpets (Num. 29:1) when it teaches that this refers to a gathering of Christians in the last days to its own Church. If this 'ingathering' is to have a fulfilment in a great work of God in the last days, then it would be more natural to see this as pointing to the gathering of **all** Christians to meet Christ at the resurrection.

It would also be better to see this as referring to John the Baptist who was "A voice of one calling in the desert,

'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (Matt. 3:3).

### Day of Atonement

According to BCF, only those who are obedient to the call of God (trumpet call) will be able to appropriate the benefits of the 'Day of Atonement' which will follow this present period of the blowing of the trumpets. The 'Day of Atonement' is future, but near. When it comes, those obedient ones who have heeded the trumpet call will (for the first time in all history) 'appropriate all the fullness of the cross of Christ'. At this point the true Church (i.e. those who have responded obediently to the trumpet call) will be cleansed from every spot and blemish (Eph. 5:25-27, Rom. 8:16-23). This true and overcoming Church will then have been brought into a state of absolute 'sinless perfection' as Christ himself. "...the people of God on the Day of Atonement ... are clothed with His perfection..." (UP2, p. 134).

### Day of Atonement Fulfilled in the Christian Fellowship Denomination

BCF believes the fulfilment to the O.T. Day of Atonement is found in the Christian Fellowship denomination on the day that they are made sinless. BCF says, "**The day of perfection**" can also be called "**The Day of Atonement**" and that this third feast is yet to be fulfilled in the Church (UP, p. 89) [p. 107].

The term, "The day of perfection" can not be found anywhere in the Bible, it is a term which BCF has made up to fit their theology, it is quite false therefore to suggest that the Day of Atonement can be called the "day of perfection".

The Day of Atonement was on the "... tenth day of the seventh month..." (Leviticus 16:29). See also Lev. 23:27-28, 25:9. "The Lord said to Moses: 'Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.'" (Lev. 16:2).

The High Priest could only come into the "Most Holy Place" on the **Day of Atonement**, and then only after the appropriate sacrificial shedding of blood for his own sins; his household, and the sins of the community (16:17). The people were told, "...on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you." (16:30).

We note that sacrifices were offered on the Day of Atonement. The sacrifices and the spiritual cleansing are linked together. There can be no spiritual cleansing without the sacrifices. This points to Christ who has spiritually washed us clean through his death on the cross. We can not have spiritual cleansing without the death of Christ on the cross.

BCF separates the death of Christ from the spiritual cleansing, so that the spiritual cleansing is fulfilled 2,000 years after Christ died. But "...Christ came as **high priest** of the good things that are **already here...**" (Heb. 9:11). Not things 2,000 years later. The Bible also presents **all** Christians as being the beneficiaries of the work of Christ as

high priest, not just a select group at the end of this age.

BCF also believes “The Day of Atonement is the day of marriage between Christ and His living ‘bride’.” (UP2 p. 133). However, the Bible says regarding the day of Atonement, “...you must deny yourselves...” (Lev. 16:29). By contrast weddings are a time of eating and drinking. A time to celebrate.

### **BCF and the great tribulation**

BCF believes those who have joined their fellowship will be given special protection so that they can face “the great tribulation of the world”, meanwhile, “...there are some Christians who do not escape to the wilderness as part of the woman, the bride [i.e. part of the Christian Fellowship denomination]. Further, the dragon vents his wrath on them and causes them to be overcome and killed under the rule of the antichrist kingdom.” (UP2, p. 142).

The clear threat is that Christians who do not join with them will die in the tribulation. BCF says, “They must now face the ‘great tribulation of the world’ and **be overcomers through death**, or else deny the Lord.” (UP, p. 117) [UP2, p. 143].

Those who are enjoying the special protection while other Christians are dying in the tribulation are said to be fulfilling the “tabernacles” festival of the O.T. (UP2, p. 151). A festival in which they were commanded to “...rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.” (Lev. 23:40).

If the fulfilment of this festival is a time in which many Christians will have to suffer and die in a tribulation, it can hardly be a time in which those who do not die can celebrate (“rejoice before the Lord your God”) without having a callous disregard for their brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. We must therefore conclude that this feast of Tabernacles is not fulfilled in one denomination. If we must find a fulfilment for this feast, it is far better to see it fulfilled in the gathering of all Christians into the kingdom of Christ.

### **The Woman of Revelation Chapter Twelve**

They believe that all those who join themselves to BCF doctrines and practices (Christian Fellowship denomination) are the ‘woman’ of Revelation chapter twelve who is “... given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.” (Rev. 12:14).

BCF says, “The full cup of God’s wrath is poured out for 3 1/2 years, while the ‘woman’, **the church**, is protected.” (UP, p. 112) [p. 142]. Christians who do not become part of the woman, the bride, are killed in the antichrist kingdom (UP, p. 116) [142].

In summary, “the church” is the Christian Fellowship denomination, and the Christians who do not join this denomination are killed under the rule of the antichrist kingdom.

Bible scholars take the view that the woman is the nation of Israel because she was “... the woman who had given birth to **the male child**.” (Rev. 12:13). Jesus Christ was born through the nation of Israel. She had “... a crown of twelve

stars on her head.” (12:1). This refers to the twelve tribes of Israel.

BCF believes “the manchild is born as a result of the marriage of Christ and the Church” (UP2, p. 141). This is where they get themselves into a lot of trouble, because if the ‘manchild’ is Christ - which he is - then how can the birth of Christ be the result of a marriage between the Church and himself? Here a sensible and natural understanding of a passage of Scripture is replaced by a very unnatural view to make a particular doctrine dominant.

It hardly needs to be said that it is a very self-centred interpretation of Scripture to make one’s own group the special focus of attention to the exclusion of all others for whom Christ died. As will be seen from this article, BCF and associated fellowships tend to be self-centred and exclusive in their outlook.

### **God and the BCF communion table**

According to BCF teaching, God recognises only those communion tables which hold to doctrines and practices in the Christian Fellowship denomination.

The gathering together of those who hold to BCF doctrines and practices as one body, is not simply a gathering in spirit, but a physical gathering of all who belong to this denomination to the one communion table in each city. That is why BCF followers travel - long distances in some cases - on a Sunday evening to fellowship at the one communion table. On the matter of the one communion table, BCF says, “A restored understanding of the Melchizedek order in our day, will again compel us to gather as one to the Lamb, at **one table...**” (UP2, p. 68). They clarify that statement by saying, “The desire of those who are born of God is to gather together to his body for the ‘hope of perfection’... **To the body of Christ, gathered in such communion as this, the Son of man will appear**” (UP, p. 111) [p. 135]. See also [p. 146].

The primary BCF belief which must be held to at these gatherings is the ‘**hope of perfection**’. They say, “The communion is the focus for the process of perfection, for as we gather to the Lamb, His blood cleanses us...” [UP2 p. 219]. The above forms part of the belief that God will make just one group of Christians righteous before Christ comes, to the exclusion of all others for whom Christ died.

The other extraordinary claim made by BCF is that Christ will only appear to those who are gathered to those communion tables which hold to BCF doctrines and practices. “To the body of Christ, gathered in such communion as this, the Son of man will appear”.

This is not a claim which can be substantiated from Scripture. In addition to that error, BCF has a view of their communion table which is similar to the sacramentalism found in Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholics believe Jesus is present at their communion table in a very special way; that his body is changed into the elements of the bread and the wine. BCF believes that Jesus is present at their communion table in a special way.

To come to this conclusion, they argue that Melchizedek, who brought bread and wine to Abraham in the role of a priest, was none other than Jesus Christ himself. They claim

that his actions (bringing the bread and the wine) are a reminder to us of communion. They say, "... if we are 'raised to sit with Christ', and are priests within the Melchizedek Order, then our gathering to communion is not to 'this mountain' or 'that place' but is a gathering 'in spirit and truth' **around the Lamb** ... we perceive that **Melchizedek Himself ministers** at His 'table', and He 'brings forth' the bread and wine, the life of the Lamb..." (UP2, p. 67).<sup>2</sup> The Christian Fellowship denomination believes they are the only Christians who gather around Christ the Lamb when they gather around their communion table.

Scripture does not say that Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20) is the Lord Jesus Christ. It simply states that "... He has become a high priest forever, in **the order of Melchizedek**." (Heb 6:20). Top biblical scholars do not take the view that Melchizedek was actually Jesus Christ. See for instance the Matthew Henry Commentary on Hebrews chapter seven.

### Cleansing

BCF believes that those who partake of their communion table are involved in a special cleansing process. "The communion is the focus for the process of perfection, for **as we gather to the Lamb, His blood cleanses** us, the water of the word washes us, and we partake of the life of His own perfected flesh." (UP2, p. 219).

Those who have come out of Roman Catholicism will see some similarities between the works of the two sacraments. The Roman Catholic sacrament promises to bring Christ into the believer when he or she eats the bread and drinks the wine. The bread is said to be changed into the body of Christ and the wine into his blood. The Roman Catholic believes he gains great spiritual benefit by taking Christ into his life in this way.

The BCF sacrament promises to cleanse. David Hall, an elder of the Adelaide Christian Fellowship spoke at a communion service at which I was present on 21 February 1993. He spoke of the communion cup as "**the cup that will cleanse us unto perfection**". BCF believes we should "... **direct our faith to the perfecting process that will utterly remove sin**." (UP2, p. 41). Sacramentalism plays an important part in the BCF service, as it does in Roman Catholicism. Our sins are not removed through sacramentalism, they are 'utterly removed' through the work of Christ (John 3:16, 5:24).

The communion service should point us to Christ. The Bible says, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Cor. 11:26). Quite clearly, it is Christ who is to be upheld before the people at the Lord's table; not the bread or the cup, or any other part of the communion service. The chief work of the communion service is to proclaim the saving work of Christ.

### The Body of Christ

BCF believes they, and they alone are the Body of Christ. They say, "The symbol of the 'Body' also portrays the church as a **singular** worldwide expression. There are not

many 'bodies', but only one..." BCF clarifies this statement by saying, "Such an understanding of the 'Body', destroys the notion of a 'mystical' unity shared by all Christians who 'worship the same God' or 'name the name of Christ'." (UP, p. 72) [p. 91]. (bold is in original).

A believer is not already part of the body of Christ. If he is led by the Spirit, he "gathers to the 'Body of Christ'" (UP, p. 111) i.e. to groups which hold to BCF doctrines and practices. "The desire of those who are born of God, **is to gather** to His body in true communion..." (UP2, p. 135. Emphasis in original). BCF does not believe a Christian is 'in Christ' if he is not part of the Christian Fellowship denomination. Ray Jackson, a senior elder has said, "But what does it mean for you and I to be in Christ? It really means to be in the body of Christ." (taped message on 03 January 1993). This statement makes the Church the gateway to Christ rather than Christ the way into the Church, the body of Christ. BCF says, "The scriptures urge us all to make a 'one-hundred-fold' response to the call to be **part of the perfect church**, through which His kingdom will be revealed" (UP2, p. 97).<sup>3</sup>

This again is a very self-centred view to declare one's own group to be the body of Christ, or the future perfect Church, to the exclusion of all other Christians. The Scriptures clearly declare that all Christians are part of the body of Christ, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Cor. 12:27).

Apart from the above error, BCF believes there should be only one Church (their denomination) in every town or city, but the word 'Church' (*Greek EKKLESIA*) can refer to all believers; to all believers in a city, or to believers who meet in a house. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, "... Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does **the church that meets at their house**." (1 Cor. 16:19). See also Rom. 16:5, Col. 4:15. There is no suggestion in Scripture that the various house Churches were in error because they did not meet at one communion table. "Churches met in small, house-based gatherings until at least the third century"<sup>4</sup>

### Christ Sat Down

The Bible says, "Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." (Hebrews 10:11-14).

Here we see the contrast between the many sacrifices of the priests, and the one sacrifice of Christ. The priest stands every day to offer sacrifices. Because of the sufficiency of the one sacrifice of Christ, he sits down; his work is completed. The effect of this one sacrifice is that "he has made **perfect forever** those who are being made holy." We note from this passage that the perfection which every believer possesses through this one sacrifice is something which **has already been accomplished**. It is not something

which needs to be accomplished at some future event. Those who stand before God with the righteousness of Christ put to their account are being 'made holy'. A gradual work of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer, transforming the believer into the likeness of Christ.

It is interesting the way BCF has distorted the Hebrews passage to back up their view that there will be a perfection in the last days for those who join their denomination. They say Christ has sat down and is waiting for two things: For His enemies to be 'put under his feet' and for the people He has perfected to be fully sanctified. "He is waiting for the **conclusion of the ministry of perfection.**" (UP2, p. 115). [emphasis in original].

He is actually only waiting for one thing, "for his enemies to be made his footstool." (Heb. 10:13).

### Parables

Even two parables are taken to refer to the BCF denomination. "These parables warn that many will miss the midnight hour of marriage in the 'time of the end'. We are urged to hear the call regarding the **perfection of the bride of Christ,...**" (UP, p. 110) [p. 134]. A perfection which BCF believes can only take place in their denomination.

There was a man who was at a wedding feast without wedding clothes. He was bound and thrown into the darkness (Matt. 22:11-13). The incorrectly dressed man refers to the Christian who did not join himself to the Christian Fellowship denomination.

The correct meaning of this passage is that the man did not cloth himself with the righteousness of Christ which goes to all Christians at the moment of faith (Rom. 5:17, Jeremiah 23:6).

### The ten virgins

They were all virgins; taken to mean that they were all Christians, but only those who had the oil could enter (Matt. 25:7-13). This is taken to mean that only those in the Christian Fellowship denomination will have sufficient oil (symbolical of the Holy Spirit) to enter. All other Christians will be cast out [UP2, p. 134].

This interpretation is quite absurd. Jesus Christ will not cast out any of those who have put their faith in him.

### Babylon the False Church

BCF believes all Churches that do not hold to BCF doctrines and practices are fallen, and they are actually the wicked Babylon of Revelation. She is a 'mother of harlots' (Rev. 17:5).

"Indeed, **the church as a whole is 'fallen'**; the 'candlestick' must be restored." (UP, p. 208) [p. 259].

"The importance of '**Babylon**' lies in the fact that the name of this ancient city appears in the book of Revelation as **the symbol of the false church.**" (UP, P. 209) [p. 261].

Ancient Babylon was a very beautiful and very powerful city. It was surrounded by an intricate system of double walls large enough for chariots to travel along the top. It

stood as a symbol of the greatness of man and his achievements. It was also a very corrupt city, every woman in the country was required to prostitute herself in the shrine of Aphrodite.<sup>5</sup> God said of Babylon, "Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah." (Isaiah 13:19).

Babylon in the book of Revelation is a symbol of all that which is evil and corrupt. We read, "With a mighty voice he shouted: 'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.'" (Rev. 18:2) See also Rev. 14:8, 16:19, 18:10, 21.

Given the evil within ancient Babylon, and the fact that God has destroyed that ancient city **forever**, it can not possibly refer to any Christian group large or small. The Babylon of Revelation is also destroyed forever (Rev. 18:21).

The best that can be said of the attempt by BCF to link this ancient and corrupt city with all Christians who are not part of their doctrines and practices is that it is a poor attitude to take toward other Christians who do not agree with them. It is a particularly poor attitude when they claim that unity amongst Christians is necessary as a witness to the world that they may believe (UP, p. 72) [p. 204].

BCF makes the claim that all Christians must depart from Babylon, "To be part of the true woman, the bride of Christ, every Christian must depart from Babylon and her activities." (UP2, p. 269).

BCF does not stop at claiming all of the Churches are fallen, and that therefore all Christians must depart from 'Babylon'. They also make the blasphemous claim that the principle of antichrist, and **Satan himself, must be removed from the Church** in the time of the end. They say:

"**The church is the true temple**, which is to be perfected and cleansed of all the elements of impurity. In the 'time of the end', three elements - the principle of antichrist, **Satan himself**, and then Babylon are all to be judged and **removed from the temple of God.**" (UP2, p. 267).

It is because of this attitude that "we are the only true Church" that BCF should be classed as a sect. Some have used a stronger term; "a cult". In my personal experience, I have not read such a blasphemous statement as the previous paragraph, against the Church, over which Jesus Christ is the head; not even in literature put out by some of the cults. The Bible says regarding the headship of Christ, "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy." (Col. 1:17-18). When people attack the Church, they also attack the head of the Church.

The Bible says Satan is in the **world**, and that we have overcome him and all other evil spirits. "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4).



'Church-bashing' is a favourite past-time of those who are involved in the cults. For instance, the 'Worldwide Church of God' or 'Armstrongism' believes they are the only group which proclaims the true gospel since the time of the apostles. Among the many errors taught by this group is the view that through self-effort, man can earn his salvation.

Those who are dedicated to BCF doctrines and practices can readily tell you how bad things are in the other denominations. Some will even have a personal tale of woe which they have carried with them from their previous Church. This gives the impression - if you listen to enough of the tales - that things are quite bad outside of the Christian Fellowship denomination. They conveniently forget that many have left BCF and have found greater spiritual growth and happiness in another denomination.

### **Sinless Perfection in the Last Days.**

BCF uses Ephesians 5:25-27 to support the view that in their denomination there is a progressive cleansing and sanctification of the Church; primarily through gathering around their communion table [UP2, p. 219]. This process continues to the point where the Church is ready for the day of perfection, the day on which it will be sinless, 'perfect', as Christ himself, and therefore worthy of presentation to Christ as his Bride. However, a close examination of the Ephesians text shows that it is not saying what BCF wants it to say. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." (Eph. 5:25).

Bible commentators point out that the cleansing and sanctification spoken of in v. 26 is not a present process, but **an accomplished fact**. Bible scholar Francis Foulkes for example points out that the verb 'having cleansed' in the original Greek is in the aorist tense, indicating a **past completed act**. The aorist tense settles the matter, there can be no other interpretation. There are several passages in the N.T. which speak of 'sanctification' as an accomplished fact in Christ. e.g. "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, **you were sanctified**, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11). See also 1:2, 2 Tim. 2:21, Heb. 10:29.

Another passage used is Proverbs 4:18 which says, "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day."

This passage refers to all of the righteous, not just to a select group at the end of this age. This is made clear from the next verse which says, "But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble." (Prov. 4:19).

BCF believes the shape and dimensions of the Old Testament temple supports their view of the perfect Church in the last days. We know from the book of Hebrews that the temple and the sacrifices associated with it point to the work of Christ as High Priest; see especially chapters eight to ten, but it says nothing about the Church being made perfect in the last days. In our study of Scripture, it is important to start with the passages which give clear teaching, and work

to the not so clear, not the reverse. BCF - as with most sects - falls into much error because this basic principle is ignored.

### **Use of the words "perfect and "perfection"**

The view that God will establish a perfect Church on the earth in the last days can not be arrived at through a study of Scripture. The word "*Perfect*" is used thirty-six times in the Bible. Not once is it used, or even remotely used, in the sense of the Church being made perfect in the last days. In Colossians 1:28-29 we are told, "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me."

We note from this passage that the word 'perfect' (Greek *teleion*) is used in the context of what the apostle was presently trying to achieve through his admonishing and teaching. He was not waiting for a future event. Also, the word is used in the sense of maturity in Christ, not in the sense of sinless perfection (See "*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*" by W.E. Vine).

In another passage the apostle says, "...our prayer is for your perfection" (2 Cor. 13:9). Again, this is not something which he is waiting for at a future event. He tells the believers to aim for it now. "Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal..." (2 Cor. 13:11). Other translations have 'Be perfect' (KJV). 'become complete' (NKJV). He is urging the believers to be mature in Christ, and he is urging them to do it now.

### **We deceive ourselves**

The teaching that we can be perfect before Christ comes contradicts the plain teaching of Scripture, "**If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves** and the truth is not in us ... If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." (1 John 1:8-10). It is only **when Christ returns** that we will be made like him; **not before**. "... what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that **when he appears**, we shall be like him, ..." (1 John 3:2).

### **BCF Rejects the Righteousness of Jesus Christ**

The mainstream denominations believe their security is in the past completed work of Christ. This includes his righteous life which he has won for every believer and is put to the account of the believer at the moment of faith in Christ. BCF doctrine in effect rejects this righteousness in preference to a **self-righteousness** accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit in the last days. BCF says "...the people of God on the **Day of Atonement** ... are clothed with his perfection..." [p. 134].

This is the most serious of their errors because it denigrates the person and work of Christ. BCF has a zeal for God, but it is not based on knowledge. That was the complaint which the apostle Paul had against the Jews. He said, "For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since **they did not know the righteousness that comes from God** and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's

righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be **righteousness for everyone who believes.**" (Romans 10:2-4).

BCF seeks to establish their own righteousness through a work of God in their Church in the last days. They fail to see the righteousness which is available now in Christ for everyone who puts their trust in Him. As for the lasting benefit of this righteousness available in Christ, God says, "... the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. **But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.**" (Isaiah 51:6).

Jesus Christ alone is presented in Scripture as the only source of this righteousness. There is no suggestion that the righteousness required to satisfy the demands of a holy and righteous God can be met in any Church, or in any other way. We can only rest in Christ, the Bible says, "...This is the name by which he will be called: **The Lord Our Righteousness.**" (Jer. 23:6). The apostle Paul brings out the contrast between the sin and death which has been brought into the world through Adam, and the righteousness and life brought into the world through Christ by saying, "For if, by the trespass of the one man [*Adam*], death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the **gift of righteousness** reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:17).

Martin Luther told an acquaintance to say, "Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, just as I am Your sin. You have taken upon Yourself what is mine and have given to me what is Yours. You have taken upon Yourself what You were not and have given to me what I was not." <sup>6</sup> For more information on the subject of salvation, see my paper, "*The Hindu, the Muslim and the Christian*" at: [www.defenceofthefaith.org](http://www.defenceofthefaith.org)

### **BCF and Roman Catholic Justification**

Roman Catholicism (classical) teaches the view that a person is saved through an 'infused righteousness'. This 'infusion' of the Holy Spirit and of righteousness is obtained through observing the religious practices of the Church. This means that the R.C. Church is able to claim that only those who belong to the R.C. Church and observe their practices can be saved. The Protestant Reformation taught through the exposition of the Scriptures that this teaching is wrong. We are not saved through a righteousness within ourselves obtained through religious practices, church attendance, or any other means. We are saved through a righteousness outside of ourselves in the person of Jesus Christ, and that righteousness is received and put to the sinners account through faith. "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, **a righteousness that is by faith** from first to last..." (Rom. 1:17).

### **The Imputed Righteousness of Christ**

Regarding imputed righteousness, BCF says, "The meaning of imputed **righteousness**, is that His righteous life has been offered as a '*free gift*' which we may live out by faith (Rom. 5:15,16)..." (emphasis in the original) UP2, p. 18.

The above explanation fails to take into consideration

what *impute* means, it certainly does not mean to *offer* something. *The Macquarie Dictionary* says, "...*Theol.* to attribute (righteousness, guilt, etc.) vicariously; ascribe as derived from another." When the sins of believers are imputed to Christ, it does not mean that he is turned into a sinner. It means that the sins of believers are put to his account; he is treated as though he were a sinner without actually being one. It is on account of our sins imputed to him that he suffered and died.

When the righteous life of Christ is imputed to the believer, it does not mean that the believer is turned into a perfect person. It does mean that God treats him as though he is perfect; the Holy Spirit is given to him and he is adopted into God's family. Furthermore, on account of a righteousness not his own, he is finally given a perfect heavenly reward.

In summary, BCF is correct in stating that the righteousness of Christ is a free gift (Rom. 5:17), but commits a serious error in failing to explain that the righteousness is imputed (put to the account i.e. credit) of the believer (Philippians 3:9).

Regarding the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, BCF says, "...it is not a legal position we can claim..." (UP2, p. 18). That position is quite wrong, "Some people claim that acceptance with God which has a legal basis does not display the love of God, it is too cold and formal. Suppose for a moment that there was no legal basis to marriage; a young couple just live together on the basis that they feel a love for each other. Both partners may come and go as often as they like, as there are no legal ties whatsoever. It may sound good on the surface to base a relationship on feelings, but both partners would soon feel very insecure in such a situation... love needs to be able to express itself through law, to be able to say, 'I will commit myself to you through the bad times as well as the good'. In like manner, God through his law commits himself to the forgiven sinner. God sent his Son to live under the law and be found righteous, and then to die in the place of transgressors of the law, and finally to bind himself to the forgiven sinner with the promise that he will not leave us or forsake us. This is the way in which true love will commit itself. So the law of God expresses the love of God, just as a marriage based on law expresses the love that the couple have for each other." <sup>7</sup>

### **Justification**

BCF teaching on the subject of justification is to say the least, very inadequate. They say, "The meaning of justification, is that his life, which alone is justified, can be received and lived, and we are truly saved by his life. (Romans 5:10, 18)." (UP, p. 12) [p. 18].

Justification - a legal term - is at the heart of the gospel, Martin Luther said, "Any Church that lapses from it can scarcely be called Christian".

Almost any dictionary of theology written by evangelicals will clearly explain the meaning of 'justification'. "*Bakers Dictionary of Theology*" for instance says the biblical meaning of 'justify' "...is to **pronounce, accept, and treat as just**, i.e., as, on the one hand, not

penally liable, and, on the other, entitled to all the privileges due to those who have kept the law. It is thus a forensic [legal] term, denoting a judicial act of administering the law - in this case, by declaring a verdict of acquittal, and so excluding all possibility of condemnation. Justification thus **settles the legal status** of the person justified. (See Deut. 25:1, Prov. 17:15, Rom. 8:33f. In Isaiah 43:9, 26, 'be justified' means 'get the verdict')... There is no lexical ground for the view of Chrysostom, Augustine, the Medievals and Roman theologians that 'justify' means, or connotes as part of its meaning, 'make righteous'".

### Salvation

A passage in "*Unto Perfection*" presents the view that we are saved through our lives being changed. "The Word, if understood and received into the heart, becomes an 'incarnate' word which can *save the soul by changing our lives.*" (James 1:21). (UP, p. 13) [p. 18].

James 1:21 actually says, "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you." NB. It is the 'word' which saves, not the changed life.

### The 1,000 Year Day Theory

BCF believes the word 'day' in many key passages of Scripture is to be interpreted as being 1,000 years long. e.g. the days of Genesis Ch. one, so the week of creation was 7,000 years long. Their eschatology is based upon the 1,000 year day theory. There will be two days or two thousand years between the first and second comings of Christ. They claim that there were three days between the end of creation and the fall of Adam, i.e. 3,000 years. However, there is no sound scriptural evidence to support their view.

Psalm 90:4 is used to support the one day = 1,000 years view. It says, "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night." (Psalm 90:4). The first part of the passage is used to support the theory, while the second part is completely ignored. A watch in O.T. times was about four hours long. The passage in the context in which it was written shows the power of God. He stands beyond the confines of time, while man by contrast is limited by time, he must face death. "You turn men back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, O sons of men.'" (Psalm 90:3).

BCF believes there will be approximately 2,000 years from the first coming of Christ to his second coming. They are in some difficulty with this view because they also believe that the prophetic year was 360 days long and it is this 360 day year that should be used for calculation, and not the current 365.24219. This shorter year brings the return of Christ well short of the year 2000 AD. 28.7 years short to be exact. Many scholars believe that Christ was actually born in 4 BC at the latest (because it is widely believed that Herod died in 4 BC). This would place the return of Christ at about 1968. Even when we allow for the claim that the 2,000 years between the first and second coming of Christ is only approximate, the theory is still in big trouble.

### BCF and the 'Restoration Movement'

BCF teaching is very similar to that of the 'Restoration Movement' in England. I will make a digression here and explain what has happened with this movement because it is helpful to see the consequences of similar doctrines.

The Restoration movement (for brevity I will use the letters RM) is much larger than the Christian Fellowship denomination. It is a movement which has split several large Churches in England. They believe God will restore their Church beyond the N.T. pattern in the last days, and is calling all Churches to join the RM. They believe that those who do not receive the 'prophetic ministry' in the RM will miss and not be prepared for the coming of Jesus. This teaching is a very subtle and deceptive attack upon the work of Christ. It undermines the faith which people have in Christ and transfers that faith - at least in part - to the RM. For that reason and many others, the RM has been thoroughly condemned by men of God in that country. For more information on this movement, see my article, "*What is the Restoration Movement?*"

### Apostles in the Restoration Movement.

The Restoration Movement does not believe their apostles are in the same category as the twelve apostles. They were people who had seen Jesus and were able to testify to his resurrection (Acts 1:21-22, 4:20, 5:32, 1 Cor. 9:1, 15:8). Furthermore, they were not chosen by the Church, they were chosen by Christ (Mark 3:13, Gal 1:1, Acts 9:15). They had a very special role. The Church is "built on the foundation of the apostles..." (Eph. 2:20). The Greek word translated 'built' is in the aorist tense, which denotes a past completed event. The work of the apostles is a completed work. There can be no other foundation. The apostle Paul was part of this special apostolic ministry. He was a witness to the resurrection of Jesus and was specially chosen by Him (Acts 9:4-5, 15).

In addition to this primary group of apostles there is another group to which Scripture makes reference, e.g. Gal. 1:19, 1 Thess. 2:6, Rom. 6:7, 1 Cor. 15:7. The Restoration Movement believes their apostles are part of this second category, and that they are in fulfilment of Ephesians 4:11 which says, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers," (Eph. 4:11). The majority of Bible scholars believe the special apostolic and prophetic work ceased after the foundation of the Church had been laid through their ministry (Eph. 2:20).

Even if we allow that the second category of apostolic ministry continues in the Church today, the apostolic ministry in the Restoration Movement lacks credibility. It grew out of the Pentecostal House Church Movement in England. The leaders of the various House Churches were invited to a conference in 1958 to discuss the ordering of God's Church and kingdom. This was the beginning of many meetings between some of the leaders. Eventually there grew the conviction between the leaders that God was going to raise up a true and perfect Church in the last days, and that they were to be the apostles, prophets and leaders in this perfect Church. Initially seven men were in this group, but

after prophecy that another seven should be added, a further seven were brought into the group to make up what was known as the ‘fabulous fourteen’. From their number, some were chosen to be apostles, some prophets and others were leaders. Ironically, Arthur Wallis who shared his vision about the perfect Church with the leaders (Restorationists prefer to call it ‘God’s vision’) was not chosen to be a prophet or an apostle.<sup>8</sup> The fourteen broke bread together, and believed this to be the beginning of God’s one true united Church.

The fourteen would often share together in prayer and prophecy. Afterwards, many of the group would go to the pub for continued fellowship. Campbell McAlpine found this a bit hard to take, he did not approve of mixing Spirit with spirit, so he quietly withdrew from the ‘fabulous fourteen’.<sup>9</sup>

### Submission to the Apostles

The Restoration Movement believes in a Church hierarchy in the following order, apostles, prophets and then elders. The Church is taught to submit to this hierarchy. The sin of rebellion and individualism is strongly condemned. This teaching from the so called ‘apostles’ really amounts to ‘do as I say, but don’t do as I do’.

When serious disputes arouse amongst the fourteen, there was a serious attempt by the leaders of the Restoration Movement in America to patch things up. It was made clear to the British that if their group did not hold together, then the unity message which they were proclaiming would be jeopardised. The Americans proposed that the two factions submit to Arthur Wallis, he in turn should come under the submission (also called ‘covering’) of an American. This solution was not agreeable to both parties, so the Restoration Movement in England remains split in two.<sup>10</sup> This destroys the claim that God wants Christians to join together under this ‘apostolic’ ministry.

For those who are pre-disposed toward chasing after the most sensational work of the Spirit of God, coming under an ‘apostle’ sure beats being under a mere pastor in a long established denomination. In England, not only have many individuals placed themselves under the authority of the ‘apostles’, even whole Churches have done so.

The apostles in the Restoration Movement have been given the title ‘apostle’ because of the great contribution they have made to the movement. I will not deny that they have made a great contribution to the movement, but there are men who have made a great contribution to the spread of Christianity, not simply within one group, but on the world-stage. I refer to men like John Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, William Tyndale, David Livingstone, Hudson Taylor, C.T. Studd, George Whitefield, John Wesley, C.H. Spurgeon and Billy Graham. These are all outstanding men for the work they have done, but none of them have had the title ‘apostle’ conferred upon them. It is an indication of their whole-hearted devotion to the task of proclaiming the gospel that they did not seek the title ‘apostle’ or any other title for that matter. Their sole aim was to proclaim Christ.

The Christian Fellowship denomination, regardless of the good example of the above men, had plans to have apostles added to the eldership. **Ray Jackson**, at a rally on 03 January 1993 said, “I do believe in apostles and that **God has apostles to manifest in this hour** ... we do have a charge to live in the apostolic administration”. It is expected that Victor Hall will for instance, attach to himself the title, ‘apostle’. It is surprising that BCF will continue in this direction, given the failure of the unity message, and the ministry of the ‘apostles’ in England. A further difficulty will be the inevitable comparisons which will be made between those who take on a title, and those who are more worthy of a title, but refused all titles.

Our Lord gives this instruction and warning to those who seek after titles. “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi’, for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father’, for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher’, for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For **whoever exalts himself will be humbled**, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” (Matt. 23:8-12).

### BCF and the Return to Rome The Gospel

The history of Roman Catholicism reveals that faith in the historical work of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners was gradually replaced by a faith in the work of God in the sinner to make him or her acceptable in the sight of God. Eventually, religious works came to be the means of salvation.

BCF likewise distorts the gospel, they say, “The message of the gospel is of being born again and of growing up into His likeness.” (UP2, p. 9). This statement is a believer-centred statement, it speaks of the work of God in the believer. The gospel by contrast is Christ-centred. It tells of the glorious work of God in Christ which frees us from the just punishment which we deserve for our sins against God.

The apostle Paul, in explaining the gospel says, “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.” (1 Cor. 15:1-5).

Quite clearly, what God does in the believer is not the gospel; it is the **fruit of the gospel**. The gospel is the good news of what God has done in the work of Christ to save sinners. The Bible says, “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, ...” (Rom. 1:17). This ‘righteousness from God’ is the righteousness of Christ. Without Christ, there can be no gospel, and certainly no righteousness.

The Reformation returned people to the Scriptures, and showed that we are saved through a righteousness outside of ourselves in the person of Jesus Christ, and through his

suffering and death; not our own. Therefore the claim that believers who do not join with BCF in their doctrines and practices must 'be overcomers through death' (UP, p. 117) [p. 143] is quite false.

### The Priesthood

Roman Catholicism places all of its adherents under the authority of the priesthood. The priesthood becomes the indispensable means by which the adherent receives spiritual blessing. BCF restores this priestcraft with its subjection to the elders (and apostles if they eventually nominate who they will be).

The Reformation freed those who were willing to listen, from priestcraft, and brought them under a much superior submission; to that of Christ.

### The Pope

Roman Catholicism believes the Pope is able to make infallible pronouncements. These infallible pronouncements have equal standing with Scripture and are necessary to give contemporary directions to the Church from God.

The Restoration Movement has a similar system. They replaces the Pope with their prophets for these infallible pronouncements. Strangely, BCF seems to be heading in the same direction. The Reformation, under the leadership of Luther, Calvin and others, brought Christians back to the sure Word of God as the only infallible rule for faith and practice.

Because of the many similarities in the doctrines and practices of Roman Catholicism and BCF; particularly with regard to the sacramentalism, and the submission to the elders, it would be reasonable to describe the doctrines and practices of BCF as a Pentecostal Roman Catholicism. See the last page revealing the decline toward Roman Catholicism.

### BCF History

The view that God is calling all Christians to one Church in every city and town; a Church which will be made perfect to the exclusion of all others, is generally ascribed by its adherents to **William H. Offiler**, who was pastor of Bethel Temple, Seattle, Washington (he died in the 1960s).

The man primarily responsible for taking this teaching from America to Australia is **Ray Jackson Snr.** He came to Australia in 1950 and started a Bible College in Sydney, but later made his headquarters at the Immanuel Assembly in Melbourne. He had an itinerant ministry in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Malaysia.<sup>11</sup> The Churches he started were called the "Associated Mission Churches of Australasia" (A.M.A.). They were renamed the "Immanuel Church" before being renamed, yet again! "Christian Fellowship", with the name of the town or city prefixed.

In the 1980s, the charismatic Jackson had a strong following of people lapping up his Church progress to perfection teaching. While proclaiming that doctrine, there was a dark side to his life that he kept hidden. In 1988, it was exposed that a young lady was being repeatedly called into his office and sexually molested. Quite clearly, Ray

Jackson Snr. was not a spiritually mature man of God. His sinful behaviour was an embarrassment to his teaching that those in his Church were moving on to a personal perfection. The reader may wonder how people can continue with the personal perfection teaching when, in a very real way, it was exposed as being false. There is no easy answer to that question. That is just one part of the mystery with this sect.

The above sad event in the Christian Fellowship denomination's history was largely forgotten until it was further exposed by the investigative reporter, Chris Masters on the ABC "Four Corners" programme aired on Monday 23 June 2008. That programme primarily looked at the manipulation and control tactics employed by BCF to keep under control some of those who have strayed from BCF doctrine and practice. Control tactics which have created a considerable amount of stress in some families, and even divorce.

Regarding Ray Snr., initially, leaders in the Melbourne Christian Fellowship tried to defend him. Tony Lyon, who was in the Melbourne Christian Fellowship from 1963 - 1988 confessed on the "Four Corners" programme, "We all made apologies, yes, yes. We all defended him and later on found that it was the indefensible we were trying to defend."<sup>12</sup>

Ray's son, **Ray Jackson Jnr.** has taken over the work in Melbourne. Ray said in his message at a BCF rally on 03 Jan. 93. "In my upbringing, I was brought up in a **teaching of perfection**". Quite clearly, it would have been better if he had stepped aside from the teaching and taken a critical look at it from the point of view of the Bible.

**Vic Hall**, a tool maker by trade, began his ministry in New Zealand. He had picked up the perfection teaching from his father, a Pentecostal preacher. He later moved to Melbourne where he met Ray Jackson Snr. and was encouraged to spread the teaching of the "Perfected Body". He took this teaching with him to Brisbane in the late 1960s.

Giving strong support to Vic are his two brothers, David, pastor of the "City Wide" Church in Adelaide, and Stephen, pastor of the "Stanthorpe Christian Fellowship". It probably won't come as a surprise to readers to learn that none of the above Hall brothers have had a formal theological education from a fully accredited theological College.

Vic Hall co-authored a book, "*Journey to Ephesus*" in which he claims he had to turn down an offer of a chief engineer's job in Melbourne to come to Brisbane. I personally find it rather puzzling that someone would offer an engineers position to a tool maker; a person who does not have a degree in engineering. Vic Hall's interesting claims don't stop there. He also reports in the book that he met Jesus, "a medium-build, unassuming Jewish figure".

A further revelation about which Vic has written concerns the sexual scandal in Melbourne in 1988. He claims he "... foresaw the corruption in a dream of a spider laying a web at the feet of the elders without anyone noticing."<sup>13</sup>

Followers of Vic Hall lap up these revelations without question. He is viewed as a giant before God who is leading the Church on a higher plain. A critical look at what he says

is not deemed to be necessary.

At this point, we need to look at the history of revelations in the 1970s and 80s. It was in that period that Pentecostalism seemed to be wild with the supernatural from God. People spoke in tongues in Church. There was interpretation of tongues and prophecy. Services today in the mainstream Pentecostal Churches in particular, such as The Assembly of God, are far more sober. There is usually no tongue-speaking, interpretation of tongues or prophecy in AOG services.

The decline in interest in prophecy arose from the failure of what was really guesswork. I know of two men who were told they would soon be married. Decades later they are still single. A further problem with the alleged prophecies was their lack of help to the Church. I will give you a case in point. Jimmy Swaggart was a very prominent Pentecostal preacher. He was exposed at the end of the 1980s for his unhealthy interest in sex. He had pornographic literature in his car, and had visited a prostitute on several occasions for private viewings of sexual acts.

The exposure was a shock to the Church which was felt around the world. It happened at a time when alleged prophets were prophesying about all sorts of minor issues, but no-one prophesied a warning to Church leaders that a huge scandal was about to hit the Church. To continue believing the prophecies, you would need to believe that God is interested in informing individuals about minor issues in their lives, but he is not interested in helping the Church to avoid scandal.

I see a similar problem with Vic Hall's revelation. The revelation did not prevent the sin and scandal in Melbourne, and it did not help the Church once the sin became known. The only help this revelation gives is to the reputation of Vic as a prophet in the eyes of those who believe him. One man who has publically confessed he was troubled by the prophecies/revelations was Bill Johnston (in the sect from 1957-1984). He decided to get out. In the mainstream Churches today, anyone who pronounces a 'revelation' is generally regarded as being dishonest or self-deluded.

### **The mood within BCF**

So far, I have primarily dealt with the doctrinal and behavioural errors of the elders. I now must deal with the mood and attitude of the congregation. They too play a part in the errors of this sect.

As indicated earlier, many Pentecostals considered their Church to be alive with the Spirit of God. It is in that context that BCF had its beginnings. BCF in the eyes of many was a dream Church. If you just dream the dream, then the dream would somehow become a reality. The Church in the 1970s had a high percentage of young people with little knowledge of the word of God and of essential biblical doctrines. The emphasis was on the work of the Spirit. It was believed that God was powerfully at work in the Church, and that was all that mattered. The Holy Spirit would lead them, particularly through Vic Hall. A concern I had at that time was that the young people were too trusting of Vic. Vic had some big ideas which were very flattering to Church members. Particularly his view that they would be

protected while Christians who did not join them would go through the tribulation. My impression was that Vic was in need of sound theological training.

For the young people, it was not theological accuracy that mattered. What really mattered was the amazing journey that God was going to take the Church on as revealed by Vic. The story had to be true because it *felt* right, and it was backed up by the other elders. Anyone who questioned the story was spoiling the dream. So is fulfilled the Scripture which reveals that people will hire those who are willing to give them a message their itching ears want to hear (2 Timothy 4:2-4). Clearly, we can't lay all of the blame on Vic Hall and the elders!

### **The carrot and the stick**

Listening to flattery can be very dangerous, it can dull the mind to objective truth. After the flattery - the carrot; came warnings about not being dedicated to the Church - the stick.

Some people may have thought they were up on a pedestal along with the rest of the Church, but as they absorbed the messages about the need to wholeheartedly support the Church, they would discover they were actually at the bottom of a big hole from which it would be difficult to extricate themselves.

One lady who could not bear staying with the Church any longer left and joined another. She eventually got hold of a copy of my booklet *Who Are The Brisbane Christian Fellowship?* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). She told me she had been very concerned about her eternal security since leaving BCF because of what they had taught her. She reported that words were not enough to express her gratitude that I had written the booklet. She is now fully trusting in Christ; not in any Church.

Others are also concerned about the fear factor. David Lowe, who left the sect in 2003 reports, "They keep people there by fear - fear that you'll lose your salvation if you leave." David decided to leave, but his decision to leave left him estranged from his wife and children who are still caught up in the sect.<sup>14</sup>

Jeff, another ex-member complains about the trap in which many find themselves. Jeff was in the MCF/BCF movement for 37 years, and a leader for 33 years, he reports:

"Vic Hall, whose pet doctrine on 'Orders of the Throne' had been rejected by Jackson, introduced and expanded new mechanisms for control called 'trust', 'fatherhood', 'Gospel of Headship', 'The Mirror of the Corporate' etc in which he radically changed the doctrinal direction of the church to become much more inward and exclusive.

Where once a person could know forgiveness of sin by praying to God, and knowing salvation by accepting Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Saviour, and one could receive guidance in life by reading God's Word, now forgiveness and salvation were only possible if one was in the appropriate order or chain of command. If you were outside of that chain ie God to the Elders to the Husband to the Wife to the Children, then salvation was not possible, hence the term 'Gospel of Headship'".<sup>15</sup>

From the above, it can be seen that Vic Hall has a well-developed carrot and stick approach for his group. The carrot

being special blessings for those who fully engage with the fellowship. The stick being the threat of the loss of salvation for anyone who leaves. That is a typical formula within cults.

### **Jealousy**

As indicated earlier, BCF is in the Pentecostal grouping of Churches, so is BCF warm and friendly with the other Pentecostal Churches? You would think so, but that is not the case. In 1972, **Clark Taylor** started a different Pentecostal ministry, "The Christian Outreach Centre" (often known simply as COC) from the living room of his home. This outreach has spread to more than 120 countries. The growth of BCF, previously the Immanuel Church, has been very poor by comparison, particularly in view of the fact that God is supposed to be aiding the BCF work in a very special way. Some who have left BCF have related to me that BCF is very jealous of the success of the Christian Outreach Centre.

It was in 1977 that the **Immanuel Church** changed its name to the "Brisbane Christian Fellowship" (BCF). Some complain that BCF presents itself as having begun in 1977, ignoring its true beginnings much earlier under a different name. This gives the false impression of fast growth over a shorter period of time. It is certainly true that BCF ignores its earlier beginnings in some of its advertising. For instance, a pamphlet in 1993 advertising "Focus '93" says, "Brisbane Christian Fellowship is a non-denominational 'renewal' fellowship which was established in 1977." No mention is made of the earlier beginnings under a different name.

### **Churches Split**

The **Wavell Heights Presbyterian Church** suffered a serious setback in 1977 when it was split that year by the Brisbane Christian Fellowship. By 1977, Wavell Heights Presbyterian was largely Pentecostal, especially the evening service. One person described the Church as being so strongly Pentecostal, that it could no longer be described as a "Presbyterian" Church. At this time, Alex Wylie was the minister, and Ian Barlow the assistant minister. Bill Barnes was the Cession Clerk. Immediately before the split, the Church was having close fellowship with the Immanuel Church (now BCF). The Church joined with the Immanuel Church in a family camp at which Vic Hall (the senior pastor at Immanuel) spoke. Within two months of this camp, all of the senior leadership, along with the clear majority of the Church (approx 200) decided to become part of the Immanuel Church, which was soon afterwards renamed, "The Brisbane Christian Fellowship".

They followed Alex because he had a likeable personality and they were Pentecostal in doctrine and practice, also they were impressed by the vision which BCF is offering. Alex, who died of a heart attack on 05-02-96, was following his son Murray, who had left and joined BCF much earlier.

**Cross Bearers** was another Church to suffer a split because of the claims made by BCF. Cross Bearers was one

of the vibrant Pentecostal groups which came into being in the 1970s. In its full-time eldership were Ray Guyatt, Bruce Mackay and Noel Mann. Cross Bearers started having meetings with BCF in 1988. BCF was of the opinion that the joining process would take a couple of years. However, Ray Guyatt and Bruce Mackay (both from a Brethren background) were eager to join with BCF as soon as possible. Those who were hesitant about the move wanted to examine the BCF doctrines more thoroughly and have some more discussion about the move, but as far as some of those with a brethren background were concerned, there was nothing further to discuss, BCF was offering unity, the very thing they wanted. It is not uncommon for those in the Brethren Church to have a dislike for denominations.

Around August 1989, Cross Bearers started meeting with BCF for the evening service at Chandler. For BCF, who had been seeking after Churches for a long time to join with them at their one table, this was a big win. Cross Bearers continued to meet for the morning service at Fortitude Valley. They were renamed the **Valley Outreach**.

Not everyone in the new Valley Outreach was happy with what was happening at BCF. Some missed the freedom and spontaneity in worship to which they were accustomed. Others were concerned about the doctrines and the rigid control which was exercised. One person described this new involvement in BCF as "the most religious thing I have been involved in since coming out of Roman Catholicism".

In February 1990, 50% of the old "Cross Bearers" group decided to pull out of BCF and form a new group called **Hebron Christian Fellowship**. Meanwhile, the remaining 50% continued at the Valley.

In January 1993, BCF had thirteen elders ministering in nine different locations for the morning services. Those elders were: Victor Hall, Alex Wylie, Murray Wylie, Ken Andrew, Doug Watt, Ian Barlow, Rob Cudby, Alan Elliott, Bruce Mackay, Ray Guyatt, Colin Bourne, Bill Barnes, and David Flak. The groups scattered around the city came together at that time to the Chandler Sports Complex for the evening service. When the hire cost of the complex was substantially increased, they moved for a few years to the Albany Creek High School for their services before moving to their own specially built complex at Samford.

### **BCF is a Denomination**

BCF often makes the claim that it is not a denomination. This is not a claim which will stand up to close inspection. Before a Church can perform weddings, it must be registered as a recognised denomination, and BCF does perform weddings.

There are many Bible Colleges and organisations which are truly non-denominational e.g. The Sydney Missionary and Bible College and Scripture Union. When a person attends an interdenominational Bible College, he expects to receive teaching which is universally accepted by the mainstream protestant denominations. BCF by contrast, not only believes, but emphasises teaching which is not accepted by any other denomination.

While I was the pastor of a Church in Rockhampton in

the mid 1980s, I received a pamphlet from a Church group with doctrines and practices that are very different from those which are held to by BCF. They made the claim that they are not a denomination. It must be very confusing for non-Christians when they come across various Church groups which have competing doctrines and practices and make the claim that they are not a denomination.

### **Membership in the “Christian Fellowship” Denomination**

BCF often makes the claim that you can not join BCF, it does not have a membership roll. This is meant to give the impression that it is just a group of Christians who have gathered together. This is quite a false impression because, as already shown above, BCF has doctrines and practices which are not held to by any other denomination. Furthermore, it tends to be more forceful in the proclamation of its particular doctrines and practices. Although it does have a “go softly” approach with newcomers.

One chap complained that the elders were “at him and at him” for a long time to get baptised again. This time, according to BCF teaching. That is, he had to be baptised “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”. He felt he was part of BCF once he had relented to the demands, and was baptised according to their teaching.

It would not be unreasonable to claim that a person is part of the Christian Fellowship denomination once he is baptised according to their teaching, even though this denomination does not keep a membership roll.

### **Senior Defections**

A severe embarrassment to BCF is the fact that several of their elders have found fault with their theology and have left.

Two men who played a key role in the Church in its infancy were Ray Jackson and his son, also Ray. **David Jackson**, brother of Ray Jackson has pulled out of the movement.

Greg Passmore, the brother-in-law of Vic Hall (the senior elder at BCF) read widely and soon saw the errors in BCF, so he left. Others include Ed Wickham, Noel Mann, Philip Jones and Charles Rhingma who went as a missionary to the Philippines. It has been reported to me from several sources that some of these men were not allowed to go quietly. They came under strong attack, sometimes of a personal nature.

### **Other Defections**

I have talked with several people who have left BCF and a common complaint I hear is that BCF will turn against those who start to find fault with their theology and/or practice. They are friendly with you while you “run with them”.

Most people who leave BCF are able to leave quietly, but Graham (not his real name), told me that he and his wife were subjected to a considerable amount of harassment when the elders found they were leaving. This was due in part to his vocal opposition to some of their practices. He and his wife related to me the following incidents.

On their final night with BCF, several elders came up to Graham and his wife, and subjected them both to a very

strong verbal attack which left Graham’s wife in tears. Graham was angry that they could talk about love in the Church, and yet treat both himself and particularly his wife in such a way.

When he told the elders they were leaving BCF, the elders replied that they were “leaving the Body of Christ”. Graham replied, “How can we be leaving the Body of Christ, the Body of Christ is everywhere”. Graham and his wife were told that “no one who leaves BCF ever goes on with the Lord”. To which he objected, “That is not true...”

The elders did not want Graham and his wife to be in the Church during the message, but they decided to stay. The message was about goats being amongst the sheep. Graham tells me that when the elder spoke with him after the message, he said, “That was for you”, to which Graham replied, “If it was for me, then why didn’t you look at me?”. To which the elder replied, “I didn’t want to embarrass you.”

One chap who has left BCF says “They get you in through the ‘fathering’”. He was in need of counselling when he joined BCF, so he decided to submit himself to the elders. The submission to the elders is a biblical principal, but in BCF it is taken to an extreme. What I mean by extreme is that it goes beyond submission to elders in spiritual, moral and Church matters. It means submission to them in many personal matters as well. For instance, Graham tells me that the BCF elders complained to him quite bitterly when he moved to a new area without his consulting them as to where he should move.

In another instance, a couple in their late twenties had to wait until the elders felt it was OK for them to go ahead with their marriage. In England and the USA, this system is called ‘shepherding’. It gained media attention in England because of alleged abuses of eldership authority. BCF call their system ‘fathering’.

People in BCF are led to believe that those who submit to the ‘fathering’ are getting more than human help, they are getting a considerable amount of divine help as well. BCF also takes the view that to rebel against the elders is tantamount to rebellion against God himself. Submission to the elders is very heavily emphasised.

The Bible says, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority...” (Heb. 13:17). The mainstream protestant denominations take the view that this does not mean Church leaders have authority over personal and business matters. The Bible also says, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities...” There are limits to the authority of civil government, likewise, there are limits to the authority of Church government. Limits which BCF elders exceed in many cases.

When the chap who was receiving counselling was told something which he knew to be quite wrong, he realised that the counselling was not from the Lord and his “eyes opened up” as it were, and he began to realise that there were many other things in BCF which were not quite right. Eventually he left and rededicated his life to Christ.

The control BCF is exercising over some of its members is creating a considerable amount of stress, Chris Masters reports, “Medical professionals in Brisbane have confirmed to “Four Corners” a problem of stress and breakdown among



BCF members, often seeking secret treatment, treatment Helen Pomery says saved her life".<sup>16</sup>

Chris Masters also reports a concern of some parents in BCF is an increasing desire by elders to remove young members from their parents and place them in shared housing where they can be more easily monitored and controlled by Church elders.

### Followers Heavily Taxed

The giving which is urged upon the congregation is very high in comparison to the mainstream Christian denominations. The people are instructed to give a tithe (one tenth) of their **gross** income, and that is used solely to pay the elders wages! In the established denominations, the practice is to give a tenth of the income that is left *after* tax is taken out. In addition to the "tithe collection", there are two further collections, the "Needs Box" for anyone in need of food etc, and the "Expense Bag" which pays for maintenance on elders cars, building expenses etc. It is not unusual for sects and cults to tax their followers very heavily.

I have received complaints that there is no open accountability regarding the finances which meets the standard of most other denominations where members usually receive a printed statement which sets out where money has come from and where it is going.

Investigative journalists have managed to discover the amount of money the Fellowship Churches are making. One reports, "The Brisbane Christian Fellowship Inc is an association of Churches registered in Queensland with a multimillion annual turnover and \$4.68 million cash in the bank. Restoration Fellowships International (Qld) Inc appears, from its 2007 annual return, to be an asset-holding entity for the churches with around \$9.2 million in fixed assets."<sup>17</sup>

Chris Masters, investigative journalist with the ABC sheds further light on BCF income (*Four Corners*, 23/06/2008) he says, "According to its annual return the Brisbane church collects over **\$3.5-million** in a year, almost two-million of that from tithing." That's more than \$67,000 per week. So, in summary:

|                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| \$3.5 million   | BCF annual income.                  |
| \$4.68 million  | Cash in the bank.                   |
| \$9.2 million   | Fixed assets.                       |
| \$13.88 million | Cash in the bank plus fixed assets. |

The above figures seem a bit large to those in modest sized Churches, but it must be remembered that BCF has a large congregation. Some have put forward numbers as high as 1,000. Lets do a calculation assuming a congregation of 800 with 600 of that number paying a tithe on a gross income of \$700.00 pw. The remaining 200 for various reasons pay nothing. We have:

$600 \times \$70 \times 52 = \$2,184,000.$

If the givers are reduced to 500. We still end up with a total at the end of the years of more than 1.8 million dollars! Clearly, BCF is doing quite well financially, although most members would not know just how well. That brings us to

the next point.

### The Tactics of A Sect

A key tactic used by all of the sects is to restrict the amount of available information to its members. The Roman Catholics at one time had a list of banned books. For a time, the Bible was banned!

Jehovah's Witnesses are actively discouraged from reading any material which is critical of their doctrines and practices.

When a close friend of mine from BCF was in his denominational Bible College in 1977, I asked him how large was the library in his college. He replied that they did not have a library. They just took notes from the lectures. I was at the Sydney Missionary and Bible College in 1974-75, an interdenominational Bible College. When I mentioned that the College had 12,000 books in the library (and constantly growing), he was very surprised. I was even more surprised that his so called "Bible College" did not have any books at all! I wondered to myself what the lecturers had to hide that they could not expose their students to a wide range of books.

I asked my friend what systematic theology was he studying? He replied that there was no systematic theology, they just took notes on whatever the lecturer decided to give them. They never knew from one day to the next what they would be studying. They were totally at the mercy of those who gave the lectures, with no outside independent reference from which to check the information given to them.

People within BCF are constantly told that they are advancing beyond the other Churches. They alone have the real truth to which other Churches must heed. The subtle effect of this type of propaganda is that those within BCF have little desire to read material which is not published by their Church. My own observation has shown that those within BCF are often very ignorant of sound theology and of what is happening in other Churches.

A consequence of teaching a church that your denomination is better than the others is that you can begin to believe that your Church is actually better than the other Churches in your own denomination. This is what appears to be happening with BCF. A man who has been with BCF for more than twenty years told me some years back that they are now advancing ahead of their sister Church in Melbourne. Because they are more advanced, they will become the headquarters for the whole world! Vic Hall will be the "top dog" so to speak of this world-wide Church. I wonder what the Melbourne Christian Fellowship makes of these ambitions. In the 1960s and 70s, Melbourne was clearly the senior fellowship. The Bible College - more accurately, an indoctrination centre - was located in Melbourne.

### Separation

A tactic used by all sects is to separate their members from contact with other Christians, especially well-informed Christians. You will not see members of the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons at Christian conventions where all of the major protestant denominations are gathered together to hear an internationally recognised speaker. Likewise, you

will not see a group of people from the Christian Fellowship denomination at a major Christian Convention.

For several years, a group from Kingaroy travelled more than sixty kilometres to the “Bell Christian Fellowship” rather than fellowship with other Christians in Kingaroy. This is not an isolated incident, at other towns where there is not enough members to support an elder, the Christian Fellowship group will travel long distances to fellowship with another group holding to BCF doctrines and practices. All the time they do this they actually proclaim the view that Christians should join together so that the world might believe! (UP2, p. 91, 204).

### **Spirit of Confusion**

BCF often changes its doctrine which has led one person to say that “There is a spirit of confusion in the place.” They have changed their doctrine in three key areas.

#### **1. Healing in the Atonement**

For many years, BCF taught the view that God provides healing in the atonement (saving work of Christ) for all Christians. According to this view, all Christians need do when sick is claim their healing in the name of Christ and they were healed. Many Pentecostal groups held to this view. When this view was found to be in error it was dropped by the majority of the Pentecostal Churches. BCF quietly dropped this erroneous view also. It will come as a shock to some who are new to BCF to learn that their denomination once held to this false view.

A staunch defender of BCF doctrines and practices once told me that BCF has never promoted the “healing in the atonement” view. Unfortunately for this chap, I have documented evidence that they did. It was promoted in “**The Trumpet Sounds**”, a paper edited by Ray Jackson, the official paper of the “Immanuel Church” (The name of the Church before it was renamed BCF). In support of the above view the paper says, “Yes, a definite purpose in His whipping, and death! That cancer of yours received a blow from a whip that crushed it. That tuberculosis was healed with His stripes. Tumours, headaches, heart disease, blindness, ... every disease known and unknown to science, was taken care of, DISPOSED of, when they WHIPPED my Jesus ... to think that the Son of God should wipe out SICKNESS by suffering Himself. Claim that scourging, my friend, it paid for your healing.”<sup>18</sup>

The passage quoted in support of this view is Isaiah 53:4-5. It is actually taken out of context. The Isaiah passage actually refers to spiritual healing.

For more information on the Faith Healing Movement and the above error, read “*The Promise of Health and Wealth*” by Dan McConnell, or my paper on my web site which has the same title. It’s a free download.

#### **2. The Jews.**

BCF initially held to the view that the nation of Israel has no further purpose in God's end-time plan of events. I remember having a debate with a chap in BCF at that time over this issue, and pointing out Romans chapter eleven to

him.

To some extent the Jews were despised because of their present lack of faith. Now BCF correctly believes they have a future role in God's plan and purpose, and consequently they are more highly regarded.

#### **3. Pre. mid or post tribulation.**

A reliable source has told me that BCF once held to the pretribulation view. The view that the Church will be raptured from the earth before the great tribulation occurs. Now they believe they will go through the tribulation while protected in the wilderness. They see themselves as being the “woman” of Revelation chapter twelve at this time.

### **Appeal to the Supernatural**

BCF has no firm biblical warrant for their self-centred interpretation of Scripture. There is a far better explanation which encompasses all those for whom Christ died. So how do they get people to adopt their teaching? Part of the answer is that they restrict information as already explained. Another major reason is that like Roman Catholicism, they appeal to the supernatural. Two key areas in particular where many see God’s guidance are in the alleged prophetic messages and in the writing of the “*Jerusalem Passion*” oratorio.

### **Prophecy**

Many within BCF in the past at least - I haven’t visited BCF in the last couple of years, so I won’t comment on what they are currently doing in this matter - believed that God was guiding their Church through prophetic messages given during the worship service. Toward the beginning of each BCF service, there was a time of prophecy where a microphone was passed to those who wish to give a prophetic message to the congregation. If someone began to give a message which was not in keeping with the theme at that time, or is not in line with BCF doctrine, then the amplifier is cut so that the speaker is forced to stop. On one occasion, when the father of Vic Hall was in the congregation, he began to give a message which was not acceptable, so Vic gave the signal to cut his father short.

Several people in BCF have spoken to me in wonder at the similarity in the prophetic messages given. The harmony between the messages is regarded as good evidence that God is guiding each message, but the more critical observer will note the crowd control which is exercised through the control of the microphone.

### **The Jerusalem Passion**

BCF promotes its vision through “The Jerusalem Passion”, oratorio, which is presented by the “**Vision One**” team. An aptly named team considering they want all Christians to be one with them in their doctrines and practices. The standard of this oratorio which has been enjoyed by hundreds of people around Australia is very high. It would rival the standard of the ‘Mormon Tabernacle Choir’, but few people who attend the performance would understand what BCF is seeking when they seek union with other Christians.

Many in BCF have expressed to me the view that the "*Jerusalem Passion*" oratorio, which was written by Murray Wylie in 1987 must have been inspired by God because it was written in a short time. That of course is not a very sound basis on which to form one's theology. Should I become a Roman Catholic because a Roman Catholic produces his work in a short time?

### **The Supernatural in the cults**

Those who appeal to the supernatural for support of their teachings forget that the cults also appeal to the supernatural. Roman Catholics appeal to the alleged miraculous in their Church, as do those in Christian Science and the Mormon Church to name just a few.

Christians who drift from the Word of God and appeal to the supernatural, open up a flood-gate for similar claims from those who have drifted even further from the Word of God.

### **Problems**

BCF believes they have the one true communion table for the Brisbane area. They have built a place for worship out at **Samford** because of an alleged prophecy that they should do so. My choice for this group would have been Deception Bay. The problem with the move to Samford is that Samford is not in the Brisbane area! This leaves the way open for a rival group to take up the position of having the one true communion table in Brisbane. Are there any contenders for this throne? If a rival group should start up, claiming to have the true communion table in the Brisbane area, BCF will be left in the outer; quite literally.

### **A Split**

The emphasis of the Christian Fellowship denomination on unity puts them under a lot of pressure to guard against division. A split has already occurred in the Melbourne Church. Around 1970, Richard Holland left the Melbourne Christian Fellowship (MCF) and established a separate group called the "Waverley Christian Fellowship". This group, under the leadership of Kevin Connor, grew to around 1,500. Leadership has now passed to his son Mark.

The brother of Richard Holland remains as one of the early leaders in the Melbourne Christian Fellowship. The split in the Melbourne Christian Fellowship is a severe embarrassment to the Christian Fellowship denomination because of their doctrine that God is calling all Christians to join with them in their doctrines and practices.

### **The BCF Table**

BCF claims that the communion table to which they gather is not the BCF communion table, it is the Lord's table. This is not a claim which will stand up to serious investigation. BCF does not participate with other Churches in the work of evangelism, they do not allow ministers of other denominations to speak at their services, and they certainly don't allow them to minister at their communion services. Furthermore, at least 90% of those who participate at the BCF communion service have been baptised according to BCF doctrine and practice. In summary, the BCF

communion service is conducted by elders holding to BCF doctrines and practices, and the majority of those in attendance at the services hold to the same beliefs. Any suggestion that their communion service is simply a gathering of all denominations is quite false.

### **No Biblical Scholars Join the Sect**

A further difficulty for the BCF view is the fact that BCF and the Restoration Movement can not point to one outstanding biblical scholar who has joined their ranks, in spite of their being in operation for many years, and their desperate push to get others to join them.

Toward the end of the 1990s, I noticed that the Christian Fellowship sect was advertising their 'Vision One' choir performances in *New Life*, a highly regarded Christian Newspaper based in Melbourne. It is a paper which adheres to the fundamental Christian doctrines, and serves the evangelical Christian community throughout Australia. I wrote to the editor expressing my concerns that they were inadvertently supporting a group which promotes heretical views. The New Life board read the evidence I submitted to them and followed up with a meeting with Christian Fellowship denomination elders. The conclusion of the New Life board who are well equipped theologically to deal with such matters was that my concerns were well founded, and therefore, they would no longer accept advertising material from the Christian Fellowship denomination.

### **Signs of A Work of the Holy Spirit Not Evident**

The claim that God is doing great things in BCF can only be made in the darkness of ignorance. The work of Vic Hall does not compare well with others.

God worked powerfully through George Whitefield (1714-1770). He preached in the open in England and America to very large crowds, numbering up to around 60,000. He was the foremost figure in the 18<sup>th</sup> century awakening.<sup>19</sup>

The greatest preacher in modern times was C H Spurgeon. "When a general census of church attendance was taken on an ordinary Sunday in London in 1886 the total congregations at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, morning and evening, exceeded 10,000 people! ... By 1899 over a hundred millions of his sermons had been issued in twenty-three languages."<sup>20</sup> A key reason why God was able to work so powerfully through the above men was because they honoured God by honouring his word, the Bible.

BCF claims that the drawing of all Christians to their communion table is mentioned in the Bible! If that is the case, then we should expect that this drawing would be accompanied by greater power than those instances which are not mentioned in the Bible. The claim is seen to be false when it is found that God is not drawing people to their Church. The Church has been struggling to maintain its numbers for many years.

By way of contrast, it should be noted that the number of people who came to hear Alan Walker during the eight day mission at the Brisbane City Hall in 1953 numbered 45,000. The evangelist Billy Graham drew even larger crowds to the crusades in Sydney and Melbourne in 1959.<sup>21</sup>

### The Shaking of the Churches

BCF believes God will “shake the Churches” because they have not joined them. They do not say that this shaking of the Churches is predicted in the Bible. If it is not predicted in the Bible, then can we expect it to be more successful than the joining of all Churches to the one communion table which according to BCF *is* mentioned in the Bible?

If the shaking is successful, then how do we account for events which are not mentioned in the Bible - the shaking - being more successful than events which are specifically mentioned? For instance, according to BCF, the gathering of all Christians to the one table.

### The Importance of Unity

BCF believes people will more readily put their faith in Christ after Christians are united in the Christian Fellowship denomination in the last days. The show of unity in this way will cause people to believe. They say, “The perfected body of Christ is to demonstrate the unity of the Godhead here **on earth**, so that the world may believe.” (emphasis in original) [UP2, p. 91].

It is true that Christ prayed for unity amongst Christians, he said, “... I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me.” (John 17:20-21).

BCF quotes the above passage in support of their argument [UP2, p 91], but it is not saying what BCF wants it to say. Jesus is not praying that there will be unity in the last days through the means of some denomination. He is praying for **all** Christians; for “those who will believe in me”. His prayer is not limited to Christians living in the last days.

At the time of Christ’s prayer there was a division between Jew and Samaritan, but there was an even greater division between Jew and Gentile. Divisions have now been set aside because of the work of Christ. The Bible is able to say, “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.” (Eph. 2:14-16). We note that **Jews and Gentiles in Christ are “one new man”** whereas the Gentiles were formerly “...without hope and without God in the world.” (2:12).

There are many problems with the view that Jesus has limited his prayer to Christians who will be living in the last days [UP2, p. 204]. What about those who were living in the previous 2,000 years? A further difficulty is that even according to their own teaching, many Christians will not join with them in their doctrines and practices in the show of unity which they desire. They believe many Christians will “miss the midnight hour of marriage” [UP2, p. 134]; that they will have to die in the great tribulation of the world

[UP2, p. 142-143].

If the Christians who do not join the Christian Fellowship denomination must stand up for their faith and die in the great tribulation; then surely it is these Christians who are suffering for their faith who are bearing the greater testimony to the world, and not those who escape from this test of faith to the wilderness [UP2, p. 142].

### All Christians are united in Christ

The view taken by evangelical scholars is that the unity amongst Christians for which Christ prayed has been a reality from the birth of the Church. There is overwhelming biblical evidence for this position. For instance, “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, **members together of one body**, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 3:6). Also, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Cor. 12:27). “... for we are all members of one body.” (Eph. 4:25). “As it is, there are many parts, but one body.” (1 Cor. 12:20). “for we are members of his body” (Eph. 5:30). “... we, who are many, are one body...” (1 Cor. 10:17). See also Eph. 4:4, Rom. 6:5, 1 Cor. 12:12-13), Col. 3:15, Gal. 3:28, Phil. 2:1.

### Preaching Unity: Practising Division

BCF actively proclaims unity, however, in every instance where they have been able to gain enough members in a town, they have pulled them out of the Churches in which they have been involved, and have formed a separate Church. The Christian Fellowship denomination has at least twenty congregations Australia-wide. BCF elders have approached many Churches and have urged them to share with them in their ‘vision’ from God, and join with them. One chap made the observation that if God was behind their ‘vision’, then many thousands of Christians would have joined them by now.

In 1987, in what can only be described as a very desperate attempt to fulfil this ‘vision’, several elders from BCF approached Churches in the Kingaroy area with a plan to join the Churches together. They specifically gave the assurance to the relevant pastors of the Churches that they were not wanting to form a separate Church. Needless to say, many of the pastors were very suspicious. Their suspicions were well founded; several people adopted BCF doctrines and practices and formed their own separate group.

The pastor of the Assembly of God denomination in Kingaroy at the time was aware of the very divisive nature of BCF teachings and practices. He told me that a couple who were influenced by BCF teachings when he was the pastor of a Church in western Queensland, decided to leave fellowship with the AOG congregation, and join themselves to another couple for fellowship who had also adopted BCF teachings. He was surprised when he discovered just how divisive BCF doctrines and practices are.

### Not the First

BCF is not the first Church to claim that it is going to lead in a restoration process in which the other Churches would become involved. The “**Churches of Christ**” believed

they had a mission to restore the Church to a New Testament Christianity. Once the Church of Christ Restoration Movement (not to be confused with the Restoration Movement in England) got established, it began teaching that "...all Christians were 'united' in the Restoration Movement and no one else was saved."<sup>22</sup>

**Alexander Campbell**, the founder of the Churches of Christ, in a debate in October 1823 introduced the erroneous theory of "baptism in order to the remission of sins" he also went as far as to teach that "One cannot be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ unless he is baptised in order to be saved".<sup>23</sup> This in effect means that people are saved through the teachings and practices of this particular Restoration Movement. A view which sound biblical scholars will reject.

A severe embarrassment to Campbell and his supporters is the fact that Campbell himself did not get baptised "in order to be saved". This would mean that the head of this particular Restoration Movement is not saved. Fortunately for Campbell, his teaching is in error. We are saved through a far greater work than a work within a Restoration Movement or any other movement for that matter. We are saved through nothing less than the work of the Son of Almighty God; Jesus Christ.

God the Father has put his stamp of approval on this work by raising his Son from the dead, and by giving the Holy Spirit to all those who come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. This is a guarantee that God will soon give the full reward which he has promised. "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

The **Sydney Church of Christ** (not to be confused with the Churches of Christ denomination) is another denomination which has a self-centred view of Scripture. They are also known as the "Multiplying Ministries Movement" or the "Discipling Movement". They believe "Only their church is the true Christian church." They focus on the work of the believer instead of the work of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

"**The Church of God** (Cleveland) began in August 1886 when nine persons, including Baptist pastors Richard J Spurling, Sr., and Richard J Spurling, Jr., resolved to 'restore primitive Christianity and bring about the union of all denominations.' They named their work 'Christian Union'.<sup>25</sup> The name was changed to 'Church of God' in 1907. In 1981 they had a worldwide membership of more than one million. They believe that divine physical healing is provided for in the atonement (saving work of Christ).

Part of the mission of the **Roman Catholic** Church is restoration. They believe the Protestant denominations are 'separated brethren' which they must bring back into the fold.

The ecumenical movement believes that it is very important that Christians join together in one large Church so that they can be a powerful witness to the world. As already mentioned, the Restoration Movement in England

has also attempted to get Churches to join their movement and has largely failed. This is due in part to the attack of highly respected men of God in that country on the theological errors in the Restoration Movement, particularly the implication that you must belong to the movement in order to be saved.

BCF has not attempted to join the above much larger groups. We can safely conclude that they have not done so for doctrinal reasons. They believe doctrine is too important to sacrifice for the sake of unity. It is precisely for this reason that the many Churches which BCF has approached will not join themselves to BCF, and certainly no outstanding biblical scholar will join himself to this denomination.

BCF doctrines and practices have not only separated people from sound healthy Churches, they have also separated people from their own families. One chap shared with me his story regarding the loss of his wife to the sect resulting in divorce. It was partly because of the much hurt that has been caused that I have been felt lead to write this booklet exposing BCF.

### Splitting families

Hadyn Simmons, a past member of the Toowoomba Christian Fellowship reports on how the elders tried to place themselves above his father in the family relationship.

His father was a minister in the Toowoomba Fellowship, but fell from grace when he had disagreements with the other leaders. He suffered a heart attack from the stress. The other leaders visited him in hospital, but instead of offering him comfort and well wishes, they presented him with a letter which explained why God was punishing him with the heart attack. Hadyn was told, "... I wasn't to consider my father as my father any more, that I was to consider them as my father and my spiritual fathers." His mother was told she couldn't sit at the front of the church anymore.<sup>26</sup>

In another case, Helen Pomery suffered at the hands of the BCF elders. She was so appalled by her treatment she wrote 500 letters to BCF members to reveal what had happened to her. The *Four Corners* documentary reveals her relationship with the elders soured considerably when her daughter proved unsubmitive and gained a boyfriend outside of the fellowship. The programme did not give an opinion from the elders as to what the daughter was doing that was wrong, but the outcome for Helen was very traumatic. Her daughter was excommunicated from the Fellowship. When Helen refused to follow a directive from the Elders to not have contact with her daughter, she in turn was excommunicated. That resulted in a deterioration in the relationship with her husband who is a senior member in the Fellowship, to the point where they divorced. He then married a BCF woman from a broken marriage.

This is clearly a case of an innocent person, paying for the wrongs of another - imagined or real. Needless to say, wrongs should not be dealt with in a Church in that manner.

There have been many reports to myself and the media of manipulation and control exercised by BCF leaders. Damien Chime who was in the Toowoomba Christian Fellowship

reported to "*A Current Affair*" that leaders in his fellowship complained that he was spending too much time reading the Bible, and not enough time reading Christian Fellowship literature. When he did not submit to the dictates of the eldership, he found himself in a lot of trouble from his parents who are under to some extent, the control of the elders. His parents told him to leave home, so he was left on the street with nowhere to go. Finding accommodation was not easy. At one point, he had to sleep in a bus stop for shelter.<sup>27</sup>

Dr David Milikan from the Uniting Church is an authority on cults. He says of BCF, "What I know about that Church is that it's an aberrant and abusive religious structure ... once people joined they become locked into believing everything said - no matter how absurd."<sup>28</sup>

I won't say anything further on the interpersonal relationship problems between some ex-members and the Elders. Those who want to read further in that area can do so by doing a Google search on *Brisbane Christian Fellowship*. You will find at least one or two sites dedicated to ex-members who tell their stories. Also, Morag Zwartz who wrote a book on a cult in Melbourne plans to write a book on BCF. I believe it will focus on personal issues. At this point, I want to return to the theological errors in BCF, and also point the reader to the positive message of the Bible.

### Church-Centred

Because BCF is Church-centred in its theology - actually BCF centred - instead of Christ-centred, it gives the impression that you need to belong to the "Christian Fellowship" denomination in order to be sure of your salvation. Particularly when they teach that those who do not join with them must - in the last days - die in the great tribulation of the world or else deny the Lord (UP, p. 117) [p. 142-143].

The Bible by contrast is **Christ-centred**, and gives the assurance of salvation and security in Christ. For instance it says regarding our salvation. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13). In another passage we read, "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life." (John 6:47).

We note from these passages that the life which is given to those who put their trust in Christ is **everlasting** life, not a temporary life which can be taken away from those who happen to join themselves to the wrong denomination. See also Romans 6:23, John 3:16.

The Bible also tells us that those who put their faith in Christ are adopted as his children; children who are precious in God's sight and who are not in danger of being cast off because they do not worship in a particular denomination. Regarding our adoption, the Bible says, "Yet all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:12-13). See also Eph. 1:5, Gal. 3:26.

A further difficulty with the BCF position is that it distorts the character of God and makes him what he is not.

Instead of his being a God who owns and loves all of those who come to him through Christ, he is turned into a nit-picky Deity who makes the much larger group of Christians die in the great tribulation of the world, simply because they happen to belong to the wrong denomination!

### New life in Christ

The Bible says regarding the radical change which takes place for all those who place their faith in Christ. "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:1-7).

We should note from the above passage, the radical change in the life of the sinner as a result of his putting his trust in Christ. He is changed from a person who was dead in transgressions and sins, and followed the ways of this world, to one who is raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms. It is because of the work of God in Christ that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, not because of the work of a particular denomination.

Christians need to be wary of any group which claims that they alone can raise you up to a new position in Christ, or:

- Has a new teaching. If it's new, it may not be true.
- Claims that they are the one true Church.
- Claims to have specially enlightened teachers.
- Does not encourage its congregation to read the widely accepted and respected Bible teachers.
- Slanders other Churches.

The Bible gives clear instruction on how Christians can advance in their spiritual walk when it says, "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness ... for we are all members of one body." (Eph. 4:22-25).

We should note from this passage the complete lack of any suggestion that Christians should attach themselves to an elite Church in order to grow spiritually. Rather than join an elite group, the clear teaching is that we should recognise our equal standing in Christ with other Christians, for "... we are all members of one body." (Eph. 4:25).

### Summary

When all of the various distortions of biblical doctrine are looked at together, we discover that the distortions have a general trend in one direction. Firstly, I will list the distorted doctrines.

- God recognises only one communion table.
- You must heed the trumpet call to join God's recognised communion table.
- You must come to the Melchizedek order of priesthood at the communion table.
- You must be part of the woman of Revelation chapter twelve to escape the great tribulation.
- Sinless perfection in the last days for those who join God's communion table.
- Christians must escape from Babylon, the false Church.
- Christians must be in the order of headship, which is from God to the elders to the father to the mother and finally to the children.
- Christians must submit to the eldership.

As can be seen from the above, the general direction of the above doctrines is toward creating a captive audience for the elders. It is as though someone has searched the Scriptures for passages which can be bent to suit a particular purpose. I will add two more points which are quite different from normal Church practice.

- Members should give a tenth (tithe) of their gross income, rather than net (after tax) income.
- Members do not receive an account as to how Church money is spent.

The above two points leave the way open for elders to make a lot of money, then hide from the congregation just how much money they are making. In most Churches, the pastor receives an income which is comparable to the incomes of those he is ministering to. Furthermore, the members of the Church know exactly how much he is being paid because it is listed in the financial statement.

### Conclusion

"... if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:21).

The above statement is relevant to our discussion. If righteousness could be gained through belonging to the Christian Fellowship denomination, then Christ died for nothing.

Christians need to be on guard against error. The apostle Paul warned the Galatians not to turn to another gospel, "which is really no gospel at all..." (1:7). Jesus warned, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." (Matt. 7:15). To the casual observer they appear to be harmless, but they are far from harmless if they get their way.

The apostle Paul warned, "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and

distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30).

The distortion of the truth by BCF, has the effect of drawing many people after themselves in a spirit of fear. They dare not leave BCF because of the fear that they may not be purified ready for the coming of Christ. Christians need to carefully study the Word of God so as not to be deceived by those who distort the truth.

The truth sets us free (John 8:32). The truth is that we can not stand before God with the righteousness which is required of Him by attending a particular Church or denomination; nor by involvement in a particular movement, no matter how extraordinary the claims which it might make for itself. We can only stand safe and secure in the presence of God on judgment day through the work of Christ; through his righteousness, not our own.



Some Christians are travelling down the wrong lane

Addendum:

See page twenty-two for addendum titled, "Theological Decline and the Brisbane Christian Fellowship".

## End Notes

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23. "The Restoration Movement", p. 4, 9.
24. Robert Forsyth, "The Sydney Church of Christ: a critique", p. 2, 3.
25. "Religious Bodies in Australia", p. 138.
26. *The Courier Mail*, 28 June 2008, p. 14.
27. *A Current Affair*, Channel Nine, 6:30 pm, 11 July 2008.
28. "*The Courier Mail*", 28 June 2008, p. 14.

## Recommended Reading

Articles by David Holden are available free of charge from: [www.defenceofthefaitth.org](http://www.defenceofthefaitth.org)

Those who want to read personal stories from those who have escaped the influence of BCF should do an Internet search on "Brisbane Christian Fellowship". A couple of web blogs are dedicated to personal accounts of the sect.

David Holden, "The Hindu, the Muslim and the Christian". A four page pamphlet on salvation. The doctrine of salvation is terribly distorted by this sect.

David Holden, "The Hand of God", This booklet looks at the remarkable hand of God on many events in history including the baptism of the Holy Spirit. 22 pages, available free from web site.

Arnold Dallimore, "The Life of Edward Irving", Banner of Truth, 188 pages, p/b. This is an interesting story of an intelligent and capable man who allowed extraordinary claims to the supernatural to grow in his Church. It led to his downfall. Cost is around \$23.00.

Andrew Walker, "Restoring the Kingdom", (Hodder and Stoughton publishers, 300 pages, p/b).

Bob Ross, "The Restoration Movement", Pilgrim Publications, 112 pages, p/b). This book by Ross has nothing to do with the 'Restoration Movement' mentioned in this paper. It deals with the many errors into which the leadership of the Churches of Christ in America fell when it made claims that it was going to restore the Church to a N.T. standard of Christianity. However, there are some similarities, so it is helpful.

Gregory Boyd, "Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity", Baker Book House, 234 pages, p/b).

Dan McConnell, "The Promise of Health and Wealth", Hodder and Stoughton, 195 pages, p/b).

David Holden, "The Objectivity of the Faith: A faith with a firm foundation", magazine format 7 pages. This paper is helpful for those who think the Christian faith is largely reliant upon subjective (personal) experiences for support.

David Holden, "The Promise of Health and Wealth", 6 pages, magazine format.

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Box 641  
Albany Creek 4035  
Australia  
[www.defenceofthefaitth.org](http://www.defenceofthefaitth.org)



# THEOLOGICAL DECLINE AND THE BRISBANE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

When we look at the theology of the Roman Catholic Church and compare it with the great work of the Reformation in proclaiming once again a sound biblical theology, then look at the theology in BCF; we will see that there is a steep decline in the standard of theology in BCF which takes its followers almost back to the dark ages of Roman Catholicism in many areas.

## ROMAN CATHOLICISM

The Pope is very necessary so that the Church can receive current infallible guidance from God.

The sacraments themselves play an important part in the salvation process. They impart spiritual life to the believer.

Believers are saved through an infused righteousness. God puts some of his righteousness within the believer. The believer himself becomes acceptable before God with his own righteousness and good works.

The Roman Catholic Church is God's appointed Church. Only those who belong to the RC Church can be sure of salvation.

Christians outside of Roman Catholicism are "separated brethren". They must "return to the fold" if they are to be Spiritually blessed.

Only the priest is capable of clearly understanding Spiritual truths. Therefore many books were banned during the dark ages to prevent believers from falling into error.

There is an element of fear within the RC Church. If the believer fails to maintain regular RC Church attendance, there is the danger that he will lose his salvation. The RC Church is the "rock" to which the believer anchors himself.

As can be seen from the above, the standard of theology found within the Brisbane Christian Fellowship is much lower than the high standard reached during the height of the Reformation hundreds of years ago. The Brisbane Christian Fellowship has become Church-centred in its theology, and is likely to become more so as its "vision" fades and it fights to prevent people from leaving its ranks.

## THE REFORMATION

All that is necessary for moral conduct, faith etc. can be found in the Scriptures.

The sacraments of themselves can not impart spiritual life. They simply point to the saving work of Jesus Christ.

We are saved through a righteousness outside of ourselves in the person of Jesus Christ. The focus of faith is away from self to Christ.

The Reformation shifted the focus from being Church-centred to being **Christ**-centred. Membership within a Church cannot save.

No Church, organisation, denomination or movement can contain the marvellous workings of the Spirit of God. He stands beyond denominations.

Christians are encouraged to read the Bible and other books because the Holy Spirit is able to lead them into all truth.

Jesus Christ is the "Rock" to which the believer anchors himself. He can not lose his salvation through attending another Church. Nor gain perfection through a Church.

## THE BRISBANE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Apostles and prophets are necessary so as to give the Church current infallible guidance from God.

Only those who partake of the bread and the wine in the Brisbane Christian Fellowship can be sure of salvation. The gathering around their table is a means to spiritual security.

Salvation is fully secured through a righteousness given to those who hold to BCF doctrines and practices. The focus of faith is toward self, to the righteousness within.

The Brisbane Christian Fellowship promises perfection for all of the faithful within its ranks in the last days. Those outside of its ranks will not be perfected.

The Brisbane Christian Fellowship alone contains the work of God in the last days. If a person is to be Spiritually blessed, he or she must belong to the Brisbane Christian Fellowship. Christians outside of the movement are part of the wicked "Babylon" of Revelation.

Believers are discouraged from reading widely and from attending other Church services because only the leaders in the Brisbane Christian Fellowship can guide the believer into the truth.

The Church is the "rock" to which the believer anchors himself. He is in danger of losing his salvation if he takes up membership in another Church because only those in the Brisbane Christian Fellowship will be perfected just before the return of Christ.

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March 1993, November 1993  
3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. September 2008

ALETHEIA PUBLISHING  
Box 641  
Albany Creek 4035  
Australia  
[www.defenceofthefaith.org](http://www.defenceofthefaith.org)

ISBN 978 0 9578052 2 4