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AN ANALYSIS OF BILL BRIGHT'S THEOLOGY  
AND METHODOLOGY OF EVANGELISM  
AND DISCIPLESHIP

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Travis Dean Fleming  
May 2006

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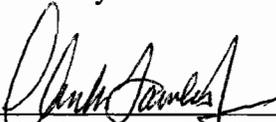
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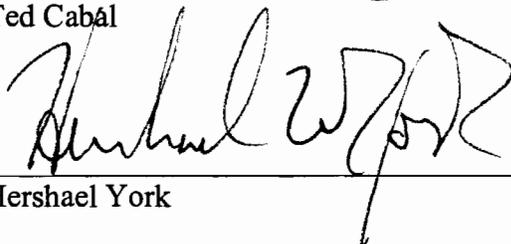
**AN ANALYSIS OF BILL BRIGHT'S THEOLOGY  
AND METHODOLOGY OF EVANGELISM  
AND DISCIPLESHIP**

**Travis Dean Fleming**

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## PREFACE

My journey in theological education began over a decade ago at North Greenville University in South Carolina. Dr. Walter Johnson first introduced me to systematic theology, and he challenged me to let the Bible be my guide for determining my beliefs. Moreover, I can vividly recall sitting in Dr. George Martin's classes at North Greenville as he challenged his students to be passionate about the Great Commission. I also remember his challenge to become a better student. After receiving a paper from him, I still can recall his comments: "Travis, you can do better, and you will do better." Thank you, Drs. Johnson and Martin, for your encouragement to do my best.

I must also say a special thank you to my supervisor and dean, Dr. Chuck Lawless. I still remember walking down the stairwell with Dr. Lawless, in front of the campus bookstore, my last semester of the M.Div. program, when he said, "You have the potential to do the Ph.D. program." Although throughout this arduous process I may have doubted those words, you have been both gracious and firm in offering constant help in the writing process. Thank you for not allowing me to settle for mediocrity. I will always be grateful to you for allowing me to be your grader and student associate for Professional Doctoral Studies, and for your pastoral advice regarding relationships. I consider you a true friend.

Unfortunately, Dr. Bill Bright passed away before I was able to choose a topic for my dissertation. His passion for the lost and commitment to the Great Commission, however, is still obvious today. Moreover, Dr. Bright has challenged me to "share the good news of Christ and leave the results to God." Campus Crusade has gone out of their way to help me in my research. My visit to the Crusade headquarters in Orlando proved to be invaluable for my research due to the help of Sid Wright, Judy Nelson, Angie

Bring, and numerous other persons who gave of their time. Angie answered frequent emails after my visit, responding to further questions I kept sending her way. Keith Davy, Vonette Bright, John Nyquist, and Ted Martin also were gracious in allowing me to interview them. This dissertation would not have been possible without your help.

I would be remiss if I did not say a personal thank you to my first pastorate, Concord Baptist Church in Dry Ridge, Kentucky. You all were more than accommodating to me during my seminar stage, and you allowed me to gain a love for shepherding people. You truly exude the compassion of Christ.

Friends and family are indeed a gift from the Lord, and I want to thank “Big Larry” for your interest and encouragement during the dissertation stage. Thank you, Melanie, for not allowing me to be a procrastinator during the final editing stages. Mom and Dad, thank you for “raising me up in the ways of the Lord” and for your prayers and encouragement. I love you both, and I could not ask for better parents. Guy Fredrick also helped me to be a better writer, and I could not have done this without you. Thank you.

To my little sister, Joy, who has Down’s syndrome, this dissertation is for you. To my brothers Mark and Jeffrey, I am proud of you and thank you for being my friends. Granny and Papa Coker, and to my late grandfather, Donald Fleming, I could not have asked for better grandparents to love me and model life for me. Finally, all of this schooling would be in vain if it were not for my Lord, Jesus. Thank you for giving me life both physically and spiritually. May “Your Kingdom come; Your will be done; On earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10 NAS).

Travis Dean Fleming

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2006

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The passing of one of America's evangelists made the headlines on July 19, 2003. At the age of 81, in his home in Orlando, Florida, Bill Bright died following an extended battle with terminal pulmonary fibrosis.<sup>1</sup> Right before his death, Bright still was able to demonstrate his passion for lost persons through the use of his "Four Spiritual Laws." He declared:

For you not yet believers: Seriously look at the magnificent offer of love and forgiveness that God extends to you. Before this day is over, receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Consider that God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. Take seriously that because each of us is sinful and separated from God, we cannot know and experience God's love and plan. Know that Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for you. Finally, you must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then you can know and experience God's love and plan. Those four points are the heart of God's good news to humanity. If you do not yet know Jesus Christ personally, please consider those points.<sup>2</sup>

The ministry which he and his wife Vonette founded in 1951, Campus Crusade for Christ International, has grown into the world's largest ministry with a staff which numbers approximately 26,000 full-time employees and some 225,000 trained volunteers.<sup>3</sup> The large number of staff and trained volunteers is indicative of an organization with the manpower to accomplish much. Furthermore, some place Bright on the same level as Billy Graham. Rick Warren notes, "Bill Bright, along with Billy

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<sup>1</sup>The Associated Press, "Campus Crusade Founder Bright Dies," *The Greenville News* Tuesday July 22, 2003.

<sup>2</sup>Worldwide Challenge in partnership with Journey Group, "A Farewell Tribute: A Life Lived Well" [on-line]; accessed 3 March 2004; available from <http://www.campuscrusade.com/downloads/WRBMemorialMag.pdf>; Internet, 11.

<sup>3</sup>*The South Carolina Baptist Courier*, "Campus Crusade Founder Bill Bright Dies," 31 July 2003.

Graham, was one of the two Giants for God who towered over the twentieth century.”<sup>4</sup>

Unlike Billy Graham’s, Bright’s notoriety did not come from leading public crusades, nor did it come from being known as a great pulpiteer. Instead, his *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet and the *JESUS* film are two of the tools that have been used to reach many for Christ. In fact, the *Four Spiritual Laws* has been translated into some 200 different languages and has reached close to 2.5 billion people, “making it the most widely disseminated religious booklet in history.”<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the *JESUS* film has been viewed by some 5.1 billion people.<sup>6</sup>

Noting the profound impact of Bright’s life and witness, Warren points out:

Bill also taught me that simple tools change the world. Millions of people now have faith in Christ because of tools he developed such as ‘The Four Spiritual Laws,’ the ‘JESUS film,’ ‘The Spirit-filled Life’ booklet and ‘The Ten Transferable Concepts’ curriculum. My own passion for creating tools related to the purpose-driven life and church came from his example.<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly, Bright had a great passion for seeing lost people changed by the gospel.

Former president George H. W. Bush also lauded Bright:

During my term as President, I often said that there can be no definition of a successful life that does not include service to others. As founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ, William Bright has done so much to show the invaluable beauty and importance of faith to countless devoted Christians. He truly is what I often refer to as ‘one of a thousand points of light.’<sup>8</sup>

Billy Graham also eulogized Bright:

I think Bill Bright was one of the most focused people I ever knew. He had one goal in life, to share the good news of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible. And by every means possible. His vision, his single-mindedness and his dedication

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<sup>4</sup>Rick Warren, quoted in Bill Bright, *The Journey Home: Finishing with Joy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), front pages.

<sup>5</sup>*South Carolina Baptist Courier*, “Campus Crusade Founder Bill Bright Dies,” 31.

<sup>6</sup>Adrienne S. Gaines, “Campus Crusade for Christ Founder Bill Bright Dies,” *Charisma* 29, no.2 (September 2003): 15.

<sup>7</sup>Rick Warren, “Bill Bright: A quiet giant” [on-line]; accessed 4 March 2004; available at <http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/1212626.html?view=print>; Internet.

<sup>8</sup>George H. W. Bush, quoted in Worldwide Challenge, “A Farewell Tribute.”

were a constant example to me and to countless others whose lives he touched across the world. He loved everybody, and I learned a great deal from him. Many times Bill would call me on the phone or come to see me just to encourage me in the work of the Lord. He always left me with a Scripture verse, and I knew he was always praying for me. . . . The Great Commission has never been rescinded and the spiritual needs of the world have never been greater. May the memory of Bill's life challenge each of us to a deeper dedication to Christ and a greater zeal to spread His word to the ends of this earth as long as God gives us life.<sup>9</sup>

Other noteworthy tributes have been made by distinguished persons within evangelicalism; however, space within this chapter will not allow for all of them.<sup>10</sup>

### Statement of the Research Problem

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Bill Bright's theology and methodology which undergird the practices of Campus Crusade for Christ. Tim Beougher makes a good point in his article "Lessons from Studying the History of Evangelism" by noting that criticism of evangelists should be expected. He aptly states:

The history of evangelism observes that virtually all the evangelists of the past (and present!) have been criticized. While sometimes deserving of the criticism (and we must learn from their failures as well as from their successes), other times it is the reflection of a hostile culture that sees the preaching of the cross as 'foolishness.'<sup>11</sup>

Thus, it should not surprise us that not everyone praises Bill Bright and what some call his "simple" theology demonstrated in the *Four Spiritual Laws*.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Bright is

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<sup>9</sup>Billy Graham, quoted in Bright, *The Journey Home*, taken from the tributes section in the front of the book.

<sup>10</sup>Two noteworthy tributes should be noted to show how people from all across evangelicalism thought highly of Bill Bright. He was well liked by Southern Baptists as well as charismatics. Adrian Rogers, senior pastor of Bellevue Baptist in Cordova, Tennessee, declared, "The thing I learned from him more than anything else is not how to dream or how to dare, but how to die. The last time I saw him, he was there in the bed, propped up with his telephone, commanding the world. And laying out vision, telling me, 'Adrian, here's what you need to do, here's what you ought to do, believe this, pray this, try this.'" Bright, *The Journey Home*, from the tribute section of front pages of the book. Moreover, Ted Haggard, a charismatic who is president of the National Association of Evangelicals says, "For any of us to live like he lived would be a wonderful manifestation of the grace of God." Gaines, "Campus Crusade for Christ Founder Bill Bright Dies," 15.

<sup>11</sup>Tim Beougher, "Lessons from Studying the History of Evangelism," *Evangelism Epistles* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1993): 2.

<sup>12</sup>Edward Plowman writes, regarding Bright, "An advocate of simplicity in communication, he tried to stay within an 800-word vocabulary in his writings (more than 100 books and booklets bear his byline) and speeches so that even the least educated

criticized for several aspects of his theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship.

### **An Absence of Scholarly Thinking**

Joel Sherer comments, “Bright shows little interest in scholarly thinking or theological investigation.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, William Martin, commenting on what critics say of Bright’s methodology, points out:

The criticisms are that it’s so simple it doesn’t prepare people for many kinds of intellectual challenges, that it doesn’t prepare them for the kinds of emotional difficulties they may face in life when they are faced with real tragedies, that it simply says, ‘God has a plan for your life. You are separated from God. Jesus is the only way, and you can receive Jesus.’ The implication is that everything will be all right. Of course, life is more complicated than that, and many people felt that unless people go much further into it and deeper into it, this will cause disillusionment.<sup>14</sup>

Added to the critics of Bright is Peter Gillquist, a former leader in Campus Crusade, who left with some of Campus Crusade’s staff to go into Eastern Orthodoxy. One writer says Gillquist did so “because he felt that [Eastern Orthodoxy] was deeper and more satisfying, and Eastern Orthodoxy represents something of the opposite pole from the Campus Crusade approach.”<sup>15</sup>

Other scholars also criticized Bright for being too simple in his ministry.

Bright recounts one scholar’s comments:

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could understand. To detractors, however, he made the gospel too simple.” Edward E. Plowman, “End of an Era, or New Beginning: Remembering Campus Crusade for Christ Founder Bill Bright,” *World*, 2 (August 2003): 13.

<sup>13</sup>Joel Sherer, “Bill Bright,” in *Twentieth-Century Shapers of American Popular Religion* ed. Charles H. Lippy (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989), 54. In addition, Joel Sherer points out that historian Nathan Hatch “groups Bright with Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell, and Jim Bakker as representative of the failure of conservative evangelicals to sustain serious intellectual life.”

<sup>14</sup>Kim Lawton, “Interview: William Martin on Bill Bright,” *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, 25 July 2003, Episode no. 647 [on-line]; accessed 16 February 2004; available from [www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week647.interview.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week647.interview.html); Internet.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

Bill, you're the head of one of the most dynamic Christian movements in the world. But you come across as being too simple—almost anti-intellectual. You need to be more scholarly and impressive in your speaking and writing. [Bright responded] 'I considered his words for a moment, but knew what my answer would be. Did it ever occur to you . . . that Jesus Christ spoke so simply that even the illiterate masses responded gladly?'<sup>16</sup>

Bright wrote, concerning the man's response: "His mouth literally dropped open. He appeared stunned, as though I had struck him. After a few moment's thought, he admitted, 'You know, I have never thought of it that way . . . you're right. Sometimes we become so engrossed in our doctrine and language that we don't think about true communication.'"<sup>17</sup>

### **A Faulty Gospel Presentation**

Further indicting claims against Bright were made by Walter Chantry, who said:

Today, we are told that witnessing is to begin with, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.' Love is set before sinners as the foremost characteristic of God. But Jesus didn't begin that way. And the Bible as a whole speaks more often of God's holiness than of His love. This is probably because men readily remember all attributes that might favour themselves and totally forget those which threaten or alarm them.<sup>18</sup>

Chantry goes on to indicate that Bright is wrong (without ever mentioning his name) by saying "To say to a rebel, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life,' is terribly misinforming. The truth is that God is holy. . . . This plan is not so wonderful. . . . The modern approach is diametrically opposed to Jesus' method with the young ruler."<sup>19</sup>

In addition, Craig Parton, who served on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ for seven years, makes accusations regarding Bright's theology and practices in his article "From Arrowhead to Augsburg: Bill Bright in the Light of the Lutheran

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<sup>16</sup>Bill Bright, *Witnessing without Fear: How to Share Your Faith with Confidence* (San Bernardino: Here's Life, 1987), 104-05. The scholar is unnamed in Bright's work.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>18</sup>Walter J. Chantry, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (Carlisle, England: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 28.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 29.

Confessions.” Parton accuses Bright of having an incorrect view of sanctification and sin. Moreover, the editor wrote an introduction, which appears before Parton’s article, in which he writes:

The purpose for publishing this article is not to attack Bill Bright, a gentle and earnest man, but to seriously question his whole approach to the doctrines of Justification, Sanctification, and biblical Revelation. Since the events which prompted this article took place, a further revelation of Dr. Bright’s seriously defective views of the Gospel appeared in his endorsement of the new book, *Evangelical & Catholics Together. Toward a Christian Mission* (Word: Dallas, 1995), where he, a signatory of the now famous document which grossly distorts the evangelical truth of Justification through faith alone, writes: “The joint statement by evangelical and Catholic believers in our Lord Jesus Christ has enhanced our efforts to reach the masses of the world with the gospel. I have no doubt that the population of heaven will be greatly increased because of this statement.”<sup>20</sup>

### Questionable Practices

Bright was passionate about some practices which he not only advocated, but also wrote about extensively. These practices are part of his methodology which he encouraged his staff and readers to implement.

**Spiritual breathing.** Bright wrote “Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?,” in which he talks about the practice called “spiritual breathing.” He writes, concerning the exhaling part, “Confess your sin—agree with God concerning your sin and thank Him for His forgiveness of it, according to 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:1-25. Confession involves repentance—a change in attitude and action.”<sup>21</sup> Regarding the inhaling part, he suggests, “Surrender the control of your life to Christ, and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith. Trust that He now directs and empowers you, according to the command of Ephesians 5:18 and the promise of 1 John 5:14, 15.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Craig A. Parton, “From Arrowhead to Augsburg: Bill Bright in the Light of the Lutheran Confessions” [on-line]; accessed 16 February 2004; available from <http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissar58.htm>; Internet.

<sup>21</sup>Bill Bright, “Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?” Campus Crusade for Christ (Orlando: NewLife, 2000).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

Parton critiques Bright's view of sanctification in which Bright practices "spiritual breathing." Parton suggests, "Bill Bright's approach to the Christian life appears to be, strangely enough, classically medieval."<sup>23</sup> Further criticizing Bright's view of sanctification, Parton suggests that Bright has an incorrect view of the depth of one's sin. He quotes Bright: "Since I learned how to breathe spiritually many years ago, I frankly do not have that much to confess."<sup>24</sup> Parton reasons, "Let me see if I've understood correctly. After enough years of 'spiritual breathing' your sins decrease. One enters an experience where sins of heart, word and deed (of both commission and omission) are numerically reduced."<sup>25</sup> Parton, however, believes that Bright's teaching leads one to have an incorrect view of sin. He writes, "Victorious life teaching [referring to Bright's teaching] leads in one direction: Christ's work on the Cross diminishes in significance while the sinner increases. Why must this be? Because as one focuses on 'sinning less,' the focus on Christ's atoning work is less."<sup>26</sup>

**Fasting.** Furthermore, Parton continues:

Bill Bright's publicized forty-day fast is the type of medieval monastic ritual placarded by 'higher life' monks in the sixteenth century. Instead of emphasizing the chief doctrines of Law and Gospel, sin and grace, forensic Justification, the centrality of the Cross, the imputed foreign righteousness of Christ, and Sanctification as a free gift, the monastic vow of fasting to demonstrate one's obedience and zeal rises like Frankenstein from the grave. The result is that spiritual elitism creeps in.<sup>27</sup>

Further criticizing Bright's views on fasting, Parton writes:

Bill Bright and his followers have equated their forty-day fast with that of Moses and our Lord. This is telling. Moses finished his forty days by returning with the Word written on stone. Bill Bright returned with words to be written for television. Not Scripture, mind you, but 'a word from God' that Bill Bright 'stakes his life on.' Confused? I think it means something like this: God speaks directly to certain

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<sup>23</sup>Parton, "From Arrowhead to Augsburg," 2.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 7.

Christians now under certain conditions and after you have showed Him sufficient denial, but doesn't bother to have it written down as Scripture any longer. Too much bother, apparently, and think how big the whole Bible would be! In any event, an eleventh commandment was apparently given to Bill and Vonette Bright, and the rough translation from the Greek is as follows: 'Thou shalt build a university. Real fast, too. And even better, thou shalt be on worldwide radio and television with thy wife.'<sup>28</sup>

### Other Questionable Beliefs

Bill Bright published numerous books and articles. These writings include other key doctrines which must be examined because they ultimately are related to Bright's theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship.

**Charismatic practices.** Bright wrote and spoke much on the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup> People who write extensively on the Holy Spirit might be labeled as charismatic, and one might want to label Bright as one. For instance, John Ashbrook, an independent Baptist, suggests that Bright and Campus Crusade had charismatic leanings. He says, referring to Campus Crusade's lifting their ban on staffers speaking in tongues:

Another Campus Crusade accommodation is to the charismatic movement. We have seen that this is a common adjustment within new evangelicalism. . . . This move was to be expected. The large numbers claimed by Christ in its expos and endeavors cannot be obtained in this day and age without charismatic participation. You cannot have this participation if you have staff rules against tongues speaking. . . . In the 'Here's Life, Korea' Crusade mentioned previously, Paul Yonggi Cho, pastor of the 150,000 member Full Gospel Central Church of Seoul, took a leadership role. Compromise with charismaticism is a necessary bedfellow of bigness in the ecumenical world of today.<sup>30</sup>

Bright, however, did not practice speaking in tongues, though he allowed his staff to do so if they did so privately.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>29</sup>See Bill Bright, *The Holy Spirit: The Key to Supernatural Living* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1980); and idem, *His Intimate Presence: Experiencing the Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit* (Orlando: NewLife, 2003); also see idem, *Transferable Concepts*.

<sup>30</sup>John Ashbrook, "Mr. Revolutionary (Bill Bright) and Campus Crusade" [online]; accessed 22 March 2004; available from [http://www.cephasministry.com/bill\\_bright\\_and\\_campus\\_crusade\\_for\\_christ.html](http://www.cephasministry.com/bill_bright_and_campus_crusade_for_christ.html); Internet, 4.

<sup>31</sup>Michael Richardson, *Amazing Faith: The Authorized Biography of Bill*

**Carnal Christianity.** A further area of Bright's theology that warrants examination is his view of carnal Christianity. He believed that a carnal person is "one who has received Christ, but who lives in defeat because he is trying to live the Christian life in his own strength."<sup>32</sup> He continued, "The worldly (carnal) person trusts in his own efforts to live the Christian life."<sup>33</sup> Is it biblical to say that a person may be a carnal Christian? This area of Bright's theology requires examination.

### **Analysis of the Criticisms**

What is one to make of the critiques of Bill Bright's theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship? Are Bright's theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship and what one finds in Campus Crusade for Christ's teaching biblical?<sup>34</sup> Does he validate his beliefs with the Word of God? The topic of focus in this dissertation

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*Bright* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2000), 148-49. Bill Bright had issued a policy statement for CCC which stated that while a staff member of CCC one could not practice speaking in tongues nor promote the teaching of it. His son Zac, however, experienced what he termed "the baptism of the Holy Spirit" or a charismatic experience as others may know it. Zac worked in one of the offices at Arrowhead Springs, yet Bright called on him to read the manual where it prohibited speaking in tongues. They argued, and Zac moved out of the house for a couple of weeks. After meeting with Zac again, and reaching some sort of reconciliation, CCC changed or amended its original policy statement on speaking in tongues "by allowing staff members privately to speak in tongues as long as it contributed to the ministry focus of evangelism, discipleship, and the fulfillment of the Great Commission."

<sup>32</sup>Bright, "Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?"  
3.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>34</sup>I believe that Bright's theology and Campus Crusade's methodology are inextricably linked because the staff would have to memorize material such as "The Four Spiritual Laws" which undoubtedly represent Bright's beliefs on evangelism. I do realize, however, not everyone would necessarily espouse Bright's theology on an individual basis. Nevertheless, Campus Crusade's methodology is representative of his theology. For instance, Bright started with a writing called "God's Plan," which then he crafted and tweaked into "God's Plan for Your Life." In this tract or brochure which he had CCC staff memorize, he focused on Jesus and his claims, why he came, and on how to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Richardson notes, "it was a road-tested compilation of what he had studied in two seminaries and what had actually been effective in his personal witnessing." Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 73.

is Bill Bright's theology and methodology as they relate to evangelism and discipleship. What did he believe about how to carry out the Great Commission? More poignantly, were his theology and methodologies biblical? This author extracted his theology and methodology pertaining to evangelism and discipleship from his numerous writings, audio tapes, videos, and interviews to discover what he believed about that which he greatly revered—fulfilling the Great Commission.

### **Background of the Proposal**

I was interested in evangelism before I ever entered seminary. Watching Billy Graham preach on television and give his invitations for people to come to Christ with "Just as I Am" playing always evoked a longing within me to see people accept Christ. Upon entering seminary in the fall of 1997, I chose the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth due to its emphasis on theology and evangelism.

Furthermore, in one of Chuck Lawless' classes in the Master of Divinity program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I learned that evangelism and theology are inextricably linked. For instance, if one claims to have a sound theology, but he or she does not witness, then one does not have a proper view of who Christ is and his command to witness (Matt 28:18-20). Moreover, if one does not have a solid theology of who God is, and understand God's perspective on sin as well as the forgiveness found in the incarnate Christ, then he or she will have nothing to share with others. Indeed, I strongly concur with C. E. Autrey's assessment: "There can be no effective and permanent evangelism without theology, and there would soon be few persons ready to study theology without evangelism."<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Lewis Drummond aptly stated, "There are very sound reasons why theology and mission must not be separated. The first and by far the most important reason is that they are never divorced in the Scriptures."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>C. E. Autrey, *Basic Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 13.

<sup>36</sup>Lewis A. Drummond, *Evangelism: The Counter Revolution* (London:

In further delineating my progression in the area of theology and evangelism, I add that Lawless challenged his students to answer the question, “When is someone evangelized?” I have concluded that one does evangelism by sharing the gospel; however, one is not evangelized until he becomes a follower of Christ. C. Peter Wagner, coming from the Church Growth perspective, shows this conclusion to be the case as well. He argues for disciple making as part of being evangelized. He notes:

The goal of evangelism for the Church Growth Movement is to persuade unbelievers to become followers of Jesus Christ and responsible members of a Christian church. No matter how many times they hear the gospel, if they do not become confessing and practicing disciples of Jesus Christ they are still regarded as being unevangelized.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, in Tim Beougher’s Personal Evangelism class, I wrote a comparison and contrast paper on Joe Aldrich’s *Lifestyle Evangelism* and Mark McCloskey’s *Tell it Often-Tell it Well* to see which evangelistic approach is proper for today.<sup>38</sup> I concluded that both approaches are necessary for effective evangelism; however, one’s lifestyle must be accompanied by confronting people with the truths of Christ’s salvation.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, Thom Rainer’s changing statement on the role of cold-call confrontational evangelism has also sparked interest in further study. He wrote in 1993, “As one who practiced and preached ‘cold call’ confrontational evangelism, I have

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Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 41.

<sup>37</sup>C. Peter Wagner, “Evangelism and the Church Growth Movement,” in *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues*, ed. Thom S. Rainer (Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1989), 27.

<sup>38</sup>Joe Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism: Learning to Open Your Life to Those around You* (Sisters, OR: Questar, 1993). Mark McCloskey, *Tell It Often-Tell It Well: Making The Most of Witnessing Opportunities* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life, 1986).

<sup>39</sup>Paige Patterson correctly notes, regarding the two approaches to witnessing, “With the example of New Testament methodology before us, a resolution of this current debate may be possible. Maybe the solution is not in choosing between two approaches but in doing both—and in doing them better.” Paige Patterson, “Lifestyle Evangelism” in *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century*, 46.

struggled with the decreasing effectiveness of this method.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, it is interesting that Rainer found in his study *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, published in 1996, that “cold call” evangelism is not dead. He writes:

Students of church growth have heard for years that traditional outreach is declining as an effective growth tool. The arguments are well known. People resent their homes and privacy being invaded by religious fanatics. You cannot motivate church members to gather every week to go visiting and share the gospel; cold-call visitation is dead. I recently read some literature by a supposed church growth authority who made similar remarks. Interestingly, almost everything he said about traditional outreach was contradicted by the data we received. Much to my chagrin, I was that writer!<sup>41</sup>

Rainer goes on to point out in the study of almost six hundred evangelistic churches, over half of their leaders said that weekly outreach was one of their most effective outreaches.<sup>42</sup> From my studies on Bright’s methodology, he believed in using confrontational outreach.

In my doctoral studies, I also became interested in the works of Jonathan Edwards. I wrote a paper on Edwards in which I demonstrated the passion of a keen theologian mixed with just as much passion for seeing the unregenerate converted. In addition, I have enjoyed studying the different aspects of the theology of evangelism. Timothy George says it well, regarding the connection between evangelism and sound theology: “There is an intrinsic connection between sound theology and biblical evangelism. The evangelical awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would not have occurred apart from the doctrinal foundation established by the reformers in the sixteenth century.”<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, one of my Ph.D. cohorts, David Bell, wrote a paper on the use of

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<sup>40</sup>Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 215.

<sup>41</sup>Thom S. Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 18-19.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>43</sup>Timothy George, “The Challenge of Evangelism in the History of the Church,” in *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century*, 18.

tracts in evangelism in which he examined Bill Bright's *Four Spiritual Laws*. He concluded that Bright's starting point in the *Four Spiritual Laws* should not have started with God's love. In fact, he wrote, "He should have begun with the God of creation who is a God of holiness and love."<sup>44</sup> Hence, I developed an interest to determine whether Bright's theology and methodology are biblical.

There has been no dissertation written which focuses specifically on Bill Bright the evangelist. In fact, after searching for dissertations on Bright, I found no dissertation written that deals with his theology or methodology. I even contacted Bright's authorized biographer Michael Richardson via email to ask if he knew of any dissertations on Bill Bright. He responded:

No, I am unaware of any dissertations on Bill Bright and evangelism, which is what made his heart beat. A fellow named John Turner has proposed a dissertation on Dr. Bright/CCCI as leadership model but it is not near completion (he's at Notre Dame). A chap named Westermann is writing a book about leadership in the broad sense and will include a cite or two about Dr. Bright. But it is YOU, sir, who have decided what should have been done twenty-five times by now!<sup>45</sup>

A dissertation on Bill Bright which deals primarily with his theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship is a contribution to academia due to the lack of current theological critique of his work. Additionally, I am confident that numerous dissertations will come in the near future, and this time frame adds to the importance of being one of the first ones to write about Bright.

### **Definitions and Limitations**

A plethora of definitions for evangelism can be found today. One perhaps could write a dissertation on a good definition of evangelism.<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, for

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<sup>44</sup>David Bell, "Tracts to Christ: A Proposal for an Analytical Framework with a Case Study" (paper presented in Tim Beougher's Evangelism Seminar, 29 October 2002 at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

<sup>45</sup>Michael Richardson, email correspondence with author, 2 March 2004.

<sup>46</sup>For example, Delos Miles' offers a simple but accurate definition of evangelism: "Evangelism is being, doing, and telling the gospel of the kingdom of God, in order that by the power of the Holy Spirit persons and structures may be converted to

examining Bright's definition of evangelism, I used the Lausanne Covenant's definition of evangelism as my guide for determining orthodoxy:

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world.<sup>47</sup>

I chose the Lausanne definition because it is a comprehensive definition which includes pertinent doctrines essential for biblical orthodoxy. For instance, it denotes that to evangelize is to "spread the good news." Indeed, evangelism is spreading the good news of salvation offered through Christ for the remission of sins. It also reveals that a person must repent and believe to receive the gift of the Spirit. Moreover, it points out, and I strongly concur, that evangelism is the "proclamation" of the gospel with "a view to persuading people" to accept Christ. I believe that one is not engaged in evangelism if he or she is not attempting to persuade one to turn to Christ. Even still, the definition includes a call to discipleship as well, which is key for a biblical methodology. Furthermore, it ends with the results of evangelism (or when one is "evangelized"), meaning one is obedient to Christ and involved in his church and service.

Bright's writings are in agreement with the Lausanne definition of evangelism. For example, regarding proclamation, he pointed out, "Every man, woman, and child on earth should have the chance to say 'yes' to Christ after hearing a clear, culturally

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the lordship of Jesus Christ." Delos Miles, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman, 1983), 47. Chuck Lawless revises this definition, adding: ". . . depending upon the triune God to draw His own unto Himself and His Church." Chuck Lawless, (classroom lecture notes, *Introduction to Evangelism and Church Growth*, Spring 2000).

<sup>47</sup>J. D. Douglas, ed., "Lausanne Covenant," in *Let The Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland Official Reference Volume: Papers and Responses* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 4.

relevant presentation of the gospel.”<sup>48</sup> Bright, in addition, includes discipleship as part of the task. For instance, he wrote, “In the early years of my personal ministry, I spent considerable time contemplating whether I should concentrate solely on evangelism, or pursue the dual objectives of evangelism and discipleship. After much thought and prayer, I decided that the Lord had called me to do both.”<sup>49</sup>

Bright’s definition of evangelism is “presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Bright’s definition of successful witnessing, which is similar to his evangelism definition, is: “Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God.”<sup>51</sup> Bright noted, regarding his approach to witnessing,

This is not to be interpreted as advocating a ‘hit-and-run’ approach to witnessing and ministry, without conscientious follow-up to help new believers get into God’s Word and grow in their faith. We firmly believe in the importance of a new Christian getting involved in (1) a church where our Lord is honored and the Word of God is proclaimed; and (2) systematic training in assurance of salvation, prayer, Bible study, fellowship with others and Christian growth.<sup>52</sup>

Limitations certainly apply to any writing, and this dissertation on Bill Bright has them as well. First, I have not added to the scholarly work that has already been done on definitions for evangelism, nor on the theology of evangelism. Numerous scholars such as Lewis Drummond in *The Word of the Cross* and Delos Miles’ *Introduction to Evangelism* have already taken on this task.<sup>53</sup> My work focuses on whether Bright’s

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<sup>48</sup>Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Help Fulfill the Great Commission* (Orlando: New Life, 1998), 19.

<sup>49</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 159.

<sup>50</sup>Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 14.

<sup>51</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 69.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Lewis Drummond, *The Word of the Cross: A Contemporary Theology of Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992). Miles, *Introduction to Evangelism*. See also John Mark Terry’s chapter “Accept the Biblical Mandate,” for a good summary of some of the current definitions on evangelism in John Mark Terry, *Church Evangelism: Creating a*

theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship line up with sound biblical theology.

Not only do I use the Lausanne definition of evangelism for determining orthodoxy, but I also refer to several evangelical theologians throughout the dissertation.<sup>54</sup> Evangelicals consider men such as Wayne Grudem, Millard Erickson, John Stott, Will Metzger, and Paul Enns conservative in their theology; hence, one will find numerous references to their work in juxtaposition to Bright's writings. I used more than one evangelical theologian to avoid being accused of bias from constantly quoting the same person. For instance, one reader may not agree with Wayne Grudem's writings on the Holy Spirit; however, he will find additional comments from other theologians such as John Stott.

A second limitation is in the areas of theology that I cover. For instance, when covering Bill Bright's writings, I limited the analysis to areas related to evangelism and

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*Culture for Growth in Your Congregation* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 1-14.

<sup>54</sup>Evangelicals are those who "see themselves, vocationally, as stewards of God's truth and guardians of his gospel in an age of apostasy; as a renewing and revitalizing force in world Christianity; and as a spearhead of sanity, discipline and reconstruction in a wasteland of antinomian worldliness. They treasure the Bible, the gospel and the ministry of the Holy Spirit as the true secret of personal and corporate spiritual life; confidently they proclaim Christ crucified, risen, reigning and returning as our peace, our path and our prize, even as they humbly beg his mercy for their own salvation. They view the preaching of God's Word as the climax of church worship, the Eucharist being confirmatory of divine grace; they value small Bible study and prayer groups as a key means of maintaining the spiritual life; they believe that spiritual gifts are given to all believers and that every member ministry in the body of Christ is the cutting-edge principle for congregational advance. It is this combination of distinctives that mark them out from alternative forms of Christian belief and life." J. I. Packer and Thomas C. Oden, *One Faith: The Evangelical Consensus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 161. Packer and Oden make it known that there is room for different views within the evangelical camp. They adequately note, "Debates still go on between paedobaptists and credo-baptists, liturgical and nonliturgical worshipers, lovers of modern praise songs and devotees of old hymns, classical Calvinists and classical Arminians, cessationists and charismatics, and those who can and cannot endure minority, sore-thumb status in dysfunctional sub-evangelical denominations. But evangelicals' shared view of the Bible and the atonement, of faith and life in Christ, and of the church's nature and mission hold them tightly together, more tightly than used to be the case when denominational walls were higher." Ibid.

discipleship. I do not cover such beliefs as ecclesiology or eschatology. However, I have covered what is needed to examine Bright's views to determine whether he is biblical in his beliefs regarding his theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship.

### Methodology of the Study

This study is an examination of Bill Bright's theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship, covering his beliefs on doctrines such as the doctrine of God, or theology proper; the doctrine of sin and the need for repentance; the doctrine of inspiration, and its importance in evangelism; the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and his role in evangelism.<sup>55</sup> I also examined numerous "Insights from Bill Bright," an email received from Salem Network. These writings are on different topics usually containing statements that serve as excellent primary source material regarding his theology. In addition, I examined Bright's writings on discipleship,<sup>56</sup> in order to show how he dealt with Christ's command to teach people everything he commanded (Matt 28:18-20).<sup>57</sup>

Bright also wrote and spoke extensively on the role of prayer and fasting. His "40 Days of Prayer and Fasting," which he attempted to do on a yearly basis, was no small feat.<sup>58</sup> Tying fasting and prayer to the Great Commission, he commented: "Fasting and prayer will do more to prepare millions throughout the world for revival than

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<sup>55</sup>Bill Bright, *God: Discover His Character* (Orlando: NewLife, 1999), which will serve as an excellent source for extracting his views on God's character. In it, he deals with things such as "Can Anyone Really Know God?" "God is All-Powerful," and "God is Sovereign." In addition, see also the video tape series, idem, *Our Great Creator: God Discover His Character*, 3 vols. (Orlando: NewLife Publications), to better determine Bright's theology in this area.

<sup>56</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts*. Bright wrote eleven Transferable Concept booklets in all. The booklets deal with basic doctrines of the Christian faith. See bibliography for the full listing of all eleven booklets.

<sup>57</sup>Bill Bright, *A Handbook for Christian Maturity: Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity* (Peachtree City, GA: NewLife, 1994).

<sup>58</sup>Bright first called for this in his book *The Coming Revival* (Orlando: NewLife, 1995).

anything else we can do. In addition, because God honors fasting and prayer, more people will come to Jesus Christ in the sweep of that renewal.”<sup>59</sup> But, is this emphasis part of a biblical theology and methodology of evangelism and discipleship? Even Bright made the following statement: “After forty-five years of emphasizing evangelism, discipleship, and fulfillment of the Great Commission, some may think that I have gone off on a tangent with my strong emphasis on fasting and prayer.”<sup>60</sup>

Another area of research is in the area of apologetics. I dealt with the role of evangelism and apologetics as I see it in relation to Bill Bright’s life and writings. I extracted the apologetic approach from Bright’s writings and other materials. Josh McDowell is one of the main apologetic voices within Campus Crusade for Christ; however, by examining writings such as *Jesus and the Intellectual*, I show how Bright dealt theologically with skeptics.<sup>61</sup>

I interviewed Vonette Bright, Bill’s widow, as well as Sid Wright, Bill’s former chief of staff. Keith Davy, who is in charge of the research and development department for Campus Crusade’s Campus Ministry as well as providing leadership for national evangelism efforts, also proved quite helpful in more than one interview. I also interviewed Ted Martin, former dean of the International School of Theology formerly run by Crusade. In addition, I interviewed John Nyquist who teaches at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois. Nyquist knew Bright well, and he has worked closely with Crusade for years. All of the aforementioned persons went out of their way to help in my research.

Furthermore, I surveyed at least twenty current or former Campus Crusade staff who served for summer terms or longer to gain an understanding of what they were taught

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<sup>59</sup>Bill Bright, *The Transforming Power of Fasting and Prayer: Personal Accounts of Spiritual Renewal* (Orlando: NewLife, 1997), 22.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Bill Bright, *Jesus and the Intellectual* (San Bernardino, CA: NewLife, 2000).

concerning evangelism and discipleship. I also visited the headquarters at Campus Crusade for Christ in Orlando, Florida, to gather research data which was unobtainable otherwise. Numerous persons who work for *WorldWide Challenge*, Crusade's magazine, were quite hospitable, and they did everything they could to help me. Moreover, I purchased over \$300 worth of books, tracts, and videos by Bill Bright in order to do adequate research on him.

### **Conclusion**

How is Bill Bright to be remembered? Should one believe his critics? Does he not deserve a fair treatment of his theology of evangelism and methodology of discipleship before one passes judgment? For those who are looking for an objective treatment of Bright, the following chapters cover in detail his beliefs.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIOGRAPHY OF BRIGHT'S LIFE

In order to understand Bill Bright, one must first consider his early years. One's family certainly plays a role in how one is taught to view the world—and one's family especially influences his work ethic. Bright's birth, parents, education, and conversion experience as well as sections on the founding of Campus Crusade, those who influenced Bright's theology, and Bright's passing will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **Bright's Early Life**

Michael Richardson, Bill Bright's biographer, describes the time in which Bright was born: "It was 1921, and America was a boiling cauldron of conflicting philosophies—communism, socialism, pacifism, and various other political theories that had come ashore from Europe to clash with values and beliefs that had made the nation great."<sup>1</sup> It was during such a time that Bill Bright was born on October 19, 1921, in a small community five miles from Coweta, Oklahoma, in a two-story house, on a five thousand acre ranch owned by his father, Forrest Dale Bright.<sup>2</sup> Bill's grandfather, Samuel Bright, was the first of the Bright family to put down his roots in Oklahoma.<sup>3</sup> Bill's mother, Mary Lee Rohl Bright, lost a previous son at birth; and with her pregnancy with Bill, she was told by her doctor that both her life and Bill's were at risk.<sup>4</sup> She began to pray for a healthy baby boy,

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Richardson, *Amazing Faith: The Authorized Biography of Bill Bright* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2000), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Bill Bright, *The Journey Home: Finishing with Joy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 1.

<sup>4</sup>Judy Douglass, "A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ," in *Principles*

and she told God that she would dedicate her newborn son to the Lord for his service.<sup>5</sup>

Bill's siblings included four brothers and two sisters.<sup>6</sup>

### **Bright's Home Life**

Bill's father, Forrest Dale Bright, brought adventure to Bright's life;<sup>7</sup> however, he was not a religious man.<sup>8</sup> Richardson points out, "Known as 'Dale' to friends and family, he took no part in religious matters as Bill and his siblings were growing up, believing that such tasks were for women and children."<sup>9</sup> Dale Bright was involved in politics in Oklahoma, and this involvement rubbed off on Bill as well. Dale became chairman of the Republican Party of Waggoner County, Oklahoma. Hence, Bill became acquainted with political life as he met numerous politicians who came through the Bright home for dinner parties.

This involvement was the prelude for his role as a leader in Campus Crusade, as

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*of Leadership: What We Can Learn From the Life and Ministry of Bill Bright*, ed. Ted Martin and Michael Cozzens (Orlando: NewLife, 2001), 399.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Richard Quebedeaux, *I Found It!: The Story of Bill Bright and Campus Crusade* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 4.

<sup>7</sup>Bright recalled, "I grew up on a ranch in Oklahoma, and we imported wild horses from the ranges of Wyoming and Montana. It was my privilege to have a father who was a superb horseman. He taught his five sons how to break and ride wild broncos." Bill Bright, *Living Super-Naturally in Christ* (Orlando: New Life, 2000), 119. For additional biographical information, see Bright Media Foundation, "Remembering a Supernatural Life Lived as a Slave of Jesus: Influential Women" [on-line]; accessed 16 March 2004; available from [http://www.brightmedia.org/high\\_bandwidth/interview6.htm](http://www.brightmedia.org/high_bandwidth/interview6.htm); Internet.

<sup>8</sup>Bright recounted, "I was never exposed to a godly man. My father was not a Christian, and my grandfather whom I practically idolized was not a Christian." Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 11. Additionally, see Bill Bright, *Witnessing without Fear: How to Share Your Faith with Confidence* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1987), 22, where Bright recalled, "My mother was a Christian, but my father was not a believer. So as I grew up in Coweta, Oklahoma, trying to take on the 'macho image' of my father and grandfather, I thought Christianity was for women and children but not for men. I was determined that, in spite of my shy nature, I would be strong and self-reliant and accomplish anything I set out to accomplish."

<sup>9</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 2.

he observed large numbers of leaders in his family home.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Bill would also act as the master of ceremonies while “introducing the candidates in meetings at the high school gym or in the open air on Main Street.”<sup>11</sup>

Bill’s grandfather, Samuel Bright, also played a major influence in his life. Bill recounted, “He was my hero and my idol.”<sup>12</sup> Samuel Bright was mayor of Begg, Oklahoma, and he lived in a nice house which young Bill admired. Consequently, Bill began to acquire a taste for the finer things of life through the influence of politics and land deals that he watched his grandfather and father transact.<sup>13</sup>

While Bill’s father provided the leadership and work ethic which he emulated throughout his life, Bill’s mother demonstrated a strong conviction for the things of God as well as a love for education.<sup>14</sup> A schoolteacher in her home state of Indiana before Bill’s birth, Mary Lee Rohl Bright wanted her son to know the Lord. Bill said, regarding his mother, “The first remembrance I have of ‘heaven,’ is from the lips of my godly mother. She was known as a caring, serving, loving woman in the small community where I grew up on a ranch. And she often spoke of heaven as easily as she spoke of the grocery store or

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<sup>10</sup>Richardson points out, regarding Bill’s introduction to politics through his dad’s friends, “He perceived that leaders could get together, present the vision of the work, engender a ‘barn-raising’ spirit, and actually see the vision become reality.” *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>In an essay written for a freshman college class, Bright said, “It was there [family farm in Coweta, Oklahoma] that I learned the things that are synonymous with farm-ranch life, which I believe will be an asset to me wherever I go or whatever I do. I learned to work and work hard, to chop corn when the sun was so hot that weeds withered and wilted as soon as they were cut down. I learned what it is to get up at 4 o’clock in the morning and work until dark.” Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 5. Regarding the spiritual fervor of Bright’s mother, he noted: “I assumed that all mothers were like that, but now I know that she was probably one of the ‘unique mothers of our time.’” Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 4. Additionally, Bright said that his mother’s prayers and godly example “were the greatest influence on my life.” Bill Bright, *God: Discover His Character* (Orlando: NewLife1999), 115.

the bank. It was a definite place to her, and I mentally filed away her certainty about it.”<sup>15</sup>

Bill also recalled his godly mother staying up late, after the family had gone to bed, reading her Bible and praying.<sup>16</sup> She lived to be 93 years of age.<sup>17</sup>

### **Bright’s Schooling**

Bill attended a one-room school building for the first seven years of his education.<sup>18</sup> Upon entering high school, he began to take an active part in leadership roles. He had a love for sports that led him to play football as a freshman in high school. However, while playing at his mere 125 pounds, Bright sustained an ear injury while trying to tackle a 250-pound fullback.<sup>19</sup> In addition to sports, Bright also helped to organize a 4-H Club, of which he was elected president.<sup>20</sup> Bright also became involved on the debate team, and his love for public speaking led him to be the public address announcer for the home football games. Moreover, he became president of the Epworth League, president of Future Farmers of America, and business manager for the school paper and high school annual. His senior year of high school, he won the Security National Bank Award for “best all-around student” of his senior class, which had only thirty-three members.<sup>21</sup>

Bright began college at a state school now known as Northeastern State

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<sup>15</sup>Bill Bright, *Heaven or Hell: Your Ultimate Choice* (Orlando: New Life, 2002), 13-14.

<sup>16</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 2. Bright recounted, regarding his mother, “She was a very humble, quiet, gracious woman. I have never seen her do an unkind thing, never heard her raise her voice in anger, never heard her criticize anyone. Mother lived for her children and for our neighbors.” Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 4.

<sup>17</sup>Bright, *God: Discover His Character*, 115.

<sup>18</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 6.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

University. His prowess as a leader continued to blossom—exemplified in his involvement in numerous leadership responsibilities in college such as: president of the student body; president of Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity; editor of the college yearbook; president of the Oklahoma Federation of Student Councils; a member of the student council; and a member of Rho Theta Sigma honorary fraternity, Delta Psi Omega dramatics fraternity, Debate Congress and International Relations Club.<sup>22</sup> Bright was also listed in *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*.<sup>23</sup>

The bombing of Pearl Harbor occurred during Bright's junior year of college, and he was adamant about joining the military to help defend his country. After graduating with honors in 1944 from Northeastern, he tried to enlist in the military.<sup>24</sup> However, he failed his physical due to the perforated eardrum injury he received while playing football in high school. In time, he went to work for his dad on the ranch in his hometown. Subsequently, he was not happy while his heart was with those who were fighting for his freedom. He then took a job which was called "faculty in the field" through Oklahoma's higher education system. This position was directly related to Bright becoming the assistant county agent of Muskogee County Oklahoma. His job was to train men "at their places of work—farms, factories, and shops—for maximum productivity to support the war effort."<sup>25</sup>

Bright's determination and dissatisfaction with not being able to do what he wanted so greatly—that is, to serve his country with his fellow Americans—led him to

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>23</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 5.

<sup>24</sup>Bright graduated from Northeastern with a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics and a minor in sociology. Taken from Worldwide Challenge in partnership with Journey Group, "A Farewell Tribute: A Life Lived Well" [on-line]; accessed 3 March 2004; available from <http://www.campuscrusade.com/downloads/WRBMemorialMag.pdf>; Internet, 2. Bright Media, "Remembering a Supernatural Life Lived as a Slave of Jesus."

<sup>25</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 15.

move to California. He hoped he could sneak through the military's physical, without them noticing his burst eardrum. Bright, however, failed yet another physical, which caused great sadness and depression in his life.<sup>26</sup> It was not long, however, before a friend invited him to join as a partner in his specialty food business.

### **Pre-Conversion Years**

Bright was baptized in a Methodist church at 12 years of age, yet he did not demonstrate any fruit of having been converted.<sup>27</sup> Instead, he became disillusioned with those who claimed to know God. He was surrounded by hypocrisy in the little church he attended as a young boy. For example, he recalled, "One day the pastor of our small church ran off with a woman, leaving his wonderful wife and family behind. Consequently, I decided there was not much that was heavenly in the church."<sup>28</sup> Bright pointed out, "As a high school and college student I occasionally tried to read the Bible, but it made no sense to me. I found it boring and concluded that no really intelligent person could ever believe what it said. I certainly didn't think that the Bible was trustworthy."<sup>29</sup>

Bright did not move to California to find religion. Rather, he was concerned about himself and his new food business, of which he would eventually assume sole ownership. Moreover, his church background was the furthest thing from his mind. He noted, "Indeed, I decided heaven was what money could buy on earth, and I set my sights for what seemed like heaven to me—Hollywood, California."<sup>30</sup> His business, Bright's California Confections, sold fruits, jams, various candies, jellies, and additional epicurean

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>27</sup>Bright's mother was converted through the Methodist church around the age of 16. Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 4. Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 3.

<sup>28</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 14.

<sup>29</sup>Bill Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2004), 2.

<sup>30</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 14.

delights.<sup>31</sup> Through hard work and insight, Bright did well in his business.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, Bright considered himself a humanist and a materialist.<sup>33</sup> He often referred to himself as a “happy pagan.” Furthermore, he said he was “offended by any discussion of the cross and the blood of Christ. Such a gruesome thought seemed so distasteful to me, and my aesthetic nature rebelled at the idea.”<sup>34</sup> He did not want anything to do with God, Jesus, or the Bible.<sup>35</sup> He even called himself an agnostic, and he said that he did not know if God existed, nor did he care.<sup>36</sup> God, however, had different plans for Bright in California—candies and jams would not fill the void in his life.<sup>37</sup>

### Groundwork for Conversion

Bright’s arrival in California was not mere happenstance. Bright wanted to have a good time the first night he arrived in Los Angeles; conversely, God had other plans for him. Bright was on his way to see a play at The Pasadena Playhouse—being that he liked drama.<sup>38</sup> He, however, picked up a hitchhiker the first evening he was in town; but surprisingly this hitchhiker was no ordinary person asking for a ride. He was a member of the Navigators, and at the time, he was living with Dawson Trotman, the

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<sup>31</sup>“A Farewell Tribute,” 2.

<sup>32</sup>Bright recalls working twenty-four hour days at his business in order to make it big. Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 6.

<sup>33</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote*, 2.

<sup>34</sup>Bill Bright, “Insights from Bill Bright: My Moment of Awareness, August 30, 2004” [on-line]; accessed 9 September 2004; Salem Network 2004, Email Update. See also Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 18.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>36</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 22.

<sup>37</sup>Bright pointed out, “As a businessman, I worked hard and enjoyed material success, but deep in my heart I longed for ‘something more.’” Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 14.

<sup>38</sup>Jim Dailey, “A Conversation with Bill Bright,” *Decision*, April 2002 [on-line]; accessed 2 March 2004; available from <http://www.billygraham.org/print.asp?i=60&t=article>; Internet.

founder of the Navigators. The man invited Bright home to dinner. Even later this same evening, Bright went to a birthday party for Daniel Fuller, the son of the late Charles E. Fuller who founded Fuller Theological Seminary. Bright and Dan Fuller were soon to become close friends.<sup>39</sup>

It was not long before Bright met an elderly couple, his apartment landlords, who took a strong interest in him.<sup>40</sup> They were faithful attendees of the famous Hollywood First Presbyterian Church celebrated for its great preachers. At the time, Louis H. Evans, Sr. was the pastor. The elderly couple never gave up on asking Bright to attend the church to hear Evans preach, and one day their persistence paid off. Bright commented, “One Sunday evening I returned from an afternoon of horseback riding, smelling like a horse myself, and I decided to drop in on the evening service. I arrived after the program started, sat by myself in the back row, and left before the service was over so no one would see me—or smell me.”<sup>41</sup> Bright went on to say, “I didn’t see anyone, and, quite frankly, I didn’t want to see anyone.”<sup>42</sup> Bright’s name ended up with the church’s young adult group, who invited him to a party. He noted,

We had a great time. It was in the very luxurious barn of an actor who was associated with Hollywood Pres. I met a lot of wonderful college students and grads who were happy people. They weren’t getting drunk and carousing around, but they were having a good time.<sup>43</sup>

Bright continued attending Hollywood Presbyterian Church, and he developed relationships with a group of wealthy older people who began inviting him to swimming parties where they would talk about Jesus. He also began studying his Bible, which his

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<sup>39</sup>The information from this paragraph was taken from Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 6.

<sup>40</sup>Judy Douglass, “A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ,” in *Principles of Leadership*, 399.

<sup>41</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 23.

<sup>42</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 7.

<sup>43</sup>Bright, quoted in Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 7.

mother had packed for him in his shoebox before he left for California. He also enjoyed listening to Louis Evans, pastor of Hollywood Presbyterian.

He presented Jesus Christ and the Christian life in an attractive way I had never known before. So, as a matter of intellectual integrity, I was forced to begin an in-depth study of the life of Jesus—and the more I read and studied, the more I became convinced that He was more than just a great historical figure. He was truly the Son of God.<sup>44</sup>

Yet no one asked Bright to receive Christ. He declared: “I studied until I was at a place where I was ready to receive Christ. But nobody ever talked to me personally.”<sup>45</sup>

Bright, during his search for truth, was influenced by Henrietta Mears—the director of Christian education at Hollywood Presbyterian. One night in one of the college department meetings, Mears was sharing about Paul’s Damascus Road experience. Bright recalled, “She ended her message by saying to us, ‘When you go home tonight, get down on your knees, and say with the Apostle Paul, “Lord, what would thou have me do?”’<sup>46</sup> Bright would never be the same after listening to the message of God’s love that night at Hollywood Presbyterian. He now knew that he must act on what he had heard. That same night, Bright knelt beside his bed—this time money and materialism were not on his mind. He recalled:

I knelt beside my bed that night and asked the questions Dr. Mears had given us: ‘Who are you, Lord, and what do you want me to do?’ In a sense, that was my prayer for salvation. It wasn’t theologically profound, but the Lord knew my heart, and He interpreted what was going on inside me.<sup>47</sup>

He also said, regarding the night of his conversion, “Though nothing dramatic or emotional happened when I prayed, Jesus did come into my life.”<sup>48</sup> The year was 1945, and a change had occurred in a man who would influence many in the years to

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<sup>44</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 24.

<sup>45</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 7.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>47</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote*, 128.

<sup>48</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 26.

come. Bright pointed out, regarding his conversion, “Through my mother’s prayers and the ministry of the Hollywood First Presbyterian Church, I came to know the Maker of heaven and earth, our peerless, incomparable Savior, Jesus Christ.”<sup>49</sup>

One should pay particular attention to Bright’s own comments regarding his attraction to the gospel message in order to understand how his theology and methodology were influenced. It was not a theological treatise that attracted him; however, it was something profound. He declared, “What attracted me to Dr. Mear’s message and the gospel was *God’s love* [emphasis mine], which I discovered through my study of the Bible and through the love of the people I had met at Hollywood Presbyterian Church.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Bright commented, regarding the love he was shown:

As Dr. Mears spoke, I couldn’t help noticing her wisdom, her boldness, and her love. She was another proof that my stereotype of Christianity had been all wrong. She spoke with authority, yet I could tell she held a genuine love for each of the young men and women in the audience.<sup>51</sup>

Hence, one can gather, and more will be covered in later chapters, that Bright was impacted strongly by the ones who first reached him with the gospel—the gospel of God’s love.<sup>52</sup>

Assimilation in the local church was no problem for Bright after his conversion. He began to serve in Mear’s college department as president. In addition, he became chairman of the department’s deputation teams (mission task forces) which would find him on skid row in the rescue missions and in the local prisons of Los

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<sup>49</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 14-15. Bright points to his mother’s prayers as part of the means for his conversion. He declared, “My mother’s prayers had more to do with my salvation than did anything else.” Dailey, “A Conversation with Bill Bright.”

<sup>50</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote*, 128. In addition, see Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 26.

<sup>51</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 25.

<sup>52</sup>Bright commented, “When I look back on how God brought me into His kingdom and began even then to show me how hungry people are to know Him, a key thought stands out to me: All it took to begin my move toward God was the love and initiative of a few caring people.” *Ibid.*, 34.

Angeles for nearly five years.<sup>53</sup> Michael Richardson points out, “Bill became a spark plug in the Mears ministry machine.”<sup>54</sup>

Bright enrolled in Princeton Seminary fall of 1946; however, his business demands led to his departure one year later. In 1947, the first year of Fuller Theological Seminary in California, he enrolled as one of its students. He remained at Fuller until 1951 before withdrawing during his senior year.<sup>55</sup>

### **Lifetime Partner—Marriage**

Bright had remained in contact, even while in California, with a childhood friend from Coweta, Oklahoma.<sup>56</sup> Bill was five years older than Vonette Zachary. She graduated from Texas Women’s University in 1948, with a degree in home economics.<sup>57</sup> Bill did not like her in a romantic way while they were together in Coweta. It was not

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<sup>53</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 9. Additionally, once Bright married, he recalled serving on the deputation teams: “I had the privilege of leading a deputation group of more than a hundred dedicated college and post-college age young men and women who wanted to become disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ. We covered approximately thirty assignments each month, visiting the local jails and hospitals, skid row missions, and wherever we felt we were needed. I soon discovered that we had to wait our turn to go to jail services and skid row missions because there were many other churches covering this area of service. One day it occurred to me that there were no waiting lines to reach college students or the top executives of the city. Here were the neglected leaders of our world, both today’s and tomorrow’s!” Bill Bright, *Come Help Change the World* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1970), 24.

<sup>54</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 27.

<sup>55</sup>Information from this paragraph, see Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 12.

<sup>56</sup>Judy Douglass, “A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ.” 400.

<sup>57</sup>Vonette also attended the University of Southern California for graduate work in the field of education. Moreover, she taught public school from 1949-1952 in Los Angeles. She has received numerous awards, including Churchwoman of the Year by Religious Heritage of America in 1973; in 1982, she was named distinguished alumna of Texas Women’s University; and she also received three honorary doctorates. In addition, she has authored *My Heart in His Hands* devotional series, and she served as chairwoman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. For additional biographical information on Vonette Zachary Bright, see DemossNewsPond, “Vonette Bright: Co-Founder” Campus Crusade for Christ International [on-line]; accessed 29 March 2004; available at <http://www.demossnewspond.com/thejourneyhome/vonettebrightbio.htm>; Internet.

until he moved to California with an established business that he started to feel differently for her. He wrote to her, after more than two years of not seeing her, and made it apparent that he was romantically interested in her. It was almost half a year before Vonette replied, but they soon began corresponding regularly. It was during Bill's first visit to Vonette's campus that he asked her to marry him, and they remained engaged for three years.<sup>58</sup>

Vonette, however, did not appear to be a true Christian, and Bright began to take notice.<sup>59</sup> Bright pointed out, regarding Vonette's spiritual state, "This was one of the greatest conflicts of my life."<sup>60</sup> Adding to the instability of the relationship, Vonette was not pleased with the newfound religious fervor that she saw in Bill. He regularly placed Scripture passages in his letters for her to read, and he would ask her to pray about things. Therefore, she found it necessary to travel to California to correct his newfound religious fanaticism or else call off the engagement.<sup>61</sup>

Upon her arrival, she met many of Bill's friends from Hollywood Presbyterian. His friends communicated in a way that showed her that they had a relationship with Jesus that she did not have. She was determined to stay for the week, but she also was going to give Bill his ring back before leaving.<sup>62</sup> Bill also knew that they could not get married unless Vonette shared a relationship with Jesus. Yet he thought if he could just get Mears to talk to Vonette she would have a change of heart, and so it happened. Vonette talked with Mears. Richard Quebedeaux declares:

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<sup>58</sup>For a detailed description of Bright's marriage story, see Bright Media, "Remembering a Supernatural Life Lived as a Slave of Jesus: Influential Women."

<sup>59</sup>Judy Douglass, "A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ," 400.

<sup>60</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 36.

<sup>61</sup>See Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 13-14.

<sup>62</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 32. Also Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 13.

The inevitable happened. After a long period of discussion with Teacher [Henrietta Mears], Vonette did what she thought she had done as a little girl, but what had long since lost its meaning and relevance in her life: She committed herself to Jesus Christ in a personal way and entered the faith Bill had told her about but she hadn't really understood until this moment.<sup>63</sup>

The Brights were married on December 30, 1948, and they made their home in Hollywood, California. Vonette began teaching school while Bill continued working with his fancy food business and attending seminary. They learned, after being married for several years, that they were not able to have children.<sup>64</sup> They, however, decided to adopt two sons, Brad and Zac.

### **Contract with God**

When Bill and Vonette first married, they made a list of things they wanted out of life. Years later they made a new list together which included being slaves for Christ. They called it their "Contract with God."<sup>65</sup> Bill recalled, "Our new lists, surprisingly alike, included: (1) to live holy lives, controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit; (2) to be fruitful in our witness for Christ; and (3) to help fulfill the Great Commission in our generation."<sup>66</sup> He continued:

By this time Vonette and I had become increasingly aware that living for Christ and serving Him was our major goal in life. As a result of this awareness, one Sunday afternoon we decided we would sign a contract with the Lord. No one had ever suggested this; it was just something we decided to do together. Both of us had been very ambitious and very materialistic and had lived typically selfish lives prior to becoming Christians. Now the Lord had changed us and had given us a love for Himself and a desire to serve Him and others.<sup>67</sup>

Bill and Vonette signed their names to the list "as a formal act of commitment

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<sup>63</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 14.

<sup>64</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally in Christ*, 53.

<sup>65</sup>Bill and Vonette Bright will have a tombstone which says, "William R. (Bill) and Vonette Zachary Bright—Slaves of Jesus." Bright, *The Journey Home*, 10.

<sup>66</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 25.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

to Christ and His cause.”<sup>68</sup> As a result, they gave everything over to God which included all their possessions.<sup>69</sup> They became “‘slaves’ of Jesus that Sunday afternoon, by choice, as an act of the will.”<sup>70</sup> When asked in an interview on the 700 Club about the contract with God, Bright responded that he had never received money for his books because he felt like, as a slave, everything he had was a “gift of my messenger.”<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, he said that the contract was not a vow that would cause him to live in a third world country—meaning that God was not calling him to take a vow of poverty. He noted, “But God and his sovereignty had a plan.”<sup>72</sup>

Bill, in the interview with the 700 Club, was asked if he required other Campus Crusade workers to sign contracts with God as well. He responded:

I’ve never required it of anyone, though a good percentage of the people with whom I work have done it on their own initiatives. Because frankly, when you study in the Scripture, the Scripture clearly teaches we’re not our own. We’ve been bought with a price, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. So none of us really have any rights. I’m simply acknowledging that when I say, ‘Lord I want to be your slave.’ I know I’m a Son of God, an heir of God, and a joint heir of Christ. I’m seated with him in the heavenlies, but by choice; like Paul, Peter and others, I’ve chosen to be a slave.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid. Bright recalled in an interview, fifty-one years after the contract with God: “My wife and I signed a contract to be slaves of Jesus. He being our model. Philippians 2:7 tells us that the great Creator of the universe came to planet Earth disguised as a slave. Paul speaks of himself in Romans 1:1 as a slave.” Ken Horn, “Not I, But Christ,” *Pentecostal Evangel* [on-line]; accessed 19 February 2004; available from [http://www.ag.org/Pentecostal-evangel/conversations2002/4618\\_bright.cfm](http://www.ag.org/Pentecostal-evangel/conversations2002/4618_bright.cfm); Internet, 3. See also Bright, *The Journey Home*, 10.

<sup>69</sup>See Bright, *The Journey Home*, 99.

<sup>70</sup>Bill Bright, “Insights from Bill Bright: Slaves of Jesus Christ” [on-line]; accessed 18 July, 2004; Accessed 18 July 2004; Salem Network 2004, Email Update.

<sup>71</sup>The 700 Club, “Bill Bright: A Slave for Christ” [on-line]; accessed 16 March 2004; available from [http://www.cbn.com/SPiritualLife/churcha.../Bill\\_Bright\\_A\\_Slave\\_For\\_Christ.asp?option=prin](http://www.cbn.com/SPiritualLife/churcha.../Bill_Bright_A_Slave_For_Christ.asp?option=prin); Internet.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

### A Vision for Campus Crusade for Christ

Twenty-four hours after having signed the contract with God, Bright found himself studying for a Greek exam with one of his friends, Hugh Brom.<sup>74</sup> Bright vividly recalls the night when God visited:

We were seated at a desk in our living room. There was nothing unusual about the setting or about the circumstances. Vonette was asleep in a nearby room. Suddenly, without warning or without any indication of what was going to happen, I sensed the presence of God in a way I had never known before . . . . Though it could not have lasted more than a few seconds, I suddenly had the overwhelming impression that the Lord had unfolded a scroll of instructions of what I was to do with my life.<sup>75</sup>

Bright goes on to reminisce on his experience:

It is difficult to talk about such experiences for fear of being misunderstood or causing others to seek after such an experience; but I think I know a little something of what the Apostle Paul experienced on his way to Damascus. In any event, this was the greatest spiritual experience of my Christian life. At this time and in a very definite way, God commanded me to invest my life in helping to fulfill the Great Commission in this generation, specifically through winning and discipling the students of the world for Christ.<sup>76</sup>

Referring to his call to start Campus Crusade, Bright noted:

The next day I went to see one of my favorite seminary professors, Dr. Wilbur Smith, famous scholar and author of many books. As I shared with him what God had revealed to me, he got out of his chair and paced back and forth in his office, saying again and again, ‘This is of God. This is of God. I want to help you. Let me think and pray about it.’<sup>77</sup>

Surprisingly, Bright would not be the one to come up with the name for his vision for the Great Commission. He remembered, “The next morning when I arrived for his seven o’clock class in English Bible, Dr. Smith called me out of the classroom into a little counseling room and handed me a piece of paper on which he had scribbled these letters, ‘CCC.’ He explained that God had indeed provided the name for my vision.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 99. Bright pointed out, “I firmly believe that without our contract surrendering all to God, I would not have received the vision for the ministry He gave us.” Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 26.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid. Regarding the name “Campus Crusade for Christ,” Bright was asked in an interview whether the name was limiting considering that the ministry was not just for

Bright would not finish his senior year at Fuller Seminary. He said,

Ever since that spring night experience, it has been my passion and concern to be obedient to the heavenly vision that God had given me, even going so far as to drop out of seminary with only a few units remaining before graduation. I became convinced, and remain so convinced today, that God did not want me to be ordained. Though I have a great respect and appreciation for clergy, layman status has often worked to a great advantage in my ministry with students and laymen.<sup>79</sup>

Even though he did not finish seminary, he was awarded six honorary doctorate degrees.<sup>80</sup>

### UCLA—Beginnings

Bill and Vonette began to pray about what God would have them to do with the new vision. They solicited prayer support from their friends at Fuller Theological Seminary as well as from Hollywood Presbyterian.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, they decided to sell their fancy food business, and in 1951, moved into a rental house which was one block from the UCLA campus, near some sorority houses. Bill saw that the denominational ministries which were attempting to reach the campus at the time were not quite evangelistic enough.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, Bill began to look for men and women to serve on a board for Campus Crusade. His professor, Wilbur Smith, was the first he asked to serve. Afterwards, he asked Henrietta Mears, Billy Graham, Dick Halverson, Dawson Trotman,

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college campuses. Bright responded, “We have 70 ministries. Some are marriage related—some have to do with the ‘Jesus’ film’ in 600 languages. People have said to me, ‘Why don’t you change your name?’ And I’ve said, ‘Fine, come up with a better name and we’ll change it.’ But no one has done that.” The 700 Club Interview, 3.

<sup>79</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 27. For additional information on Bright’s not being ordained, see Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 17.

<sup>80</sup>He was awarded a Doctor of Laws from the Jeonbug National University of Korea, a Doctor of Divinity from John Brown University, a Doctor of Letters from Houghton University, a Doctor of Divinity from the Los Angeles Bible College and Seminary, a Doctor of Divinity from Montreat-Anderson College, and a Doctor of Laws from Pepperdine University. Taken from Bright, “Remembering a Supernatural Life Lived as a Slave of Jesus,” 2.

<sup>81</sup>Judy Douglass, “A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ,” 401.

<sup>82</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 17.

Cy Nelson, Dan Fuller, and Edwin Orr. All of them agreed to serve on the founding board of Campus Crusade.

Bill chose the University of California at Los Angeles because of its “radical minority [counter-cultural] which was exercising great influence and was causing unprecedented disturbances.”<sup>83</sup> He saw UCLA as a great challenge, and he felt like if they could be successful with the gospel on their campus, then they could be effective on any campus.<sup>84</sup>

The Brights began to recruit volunteer students who they could train to go out in teams to visit the fraternity and sorority houses, dorms, and other groups on the UCLA campus. The groups would tell people about Jesus Christ, tell their personal testimonies, and tell them how they too could personally know him. The first meeting occurred at the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority house, nicknamed the “house of beautiful women.”<sup>85</sup> Bill asked God to let there be at least one who would respond to the gospel to confirm that the vision for Campus Crusade was from him.<sup>86</sup> Hence, he shared his message and challenged those present to receive Christ. To say that God answered the Bright’s prayers is an understatement, for more than half of the sixty girls at the meeting communicated that they wanted to become Christians.<sup>87</sup> Bill declared:

It was a humbling experience, seeing God work in this marvelous way. This was a dramatic confirmation to me that the vision to reach the collegians of the world was truly from God. Unsure, stepping carefully, speaking reservedly, we had been cautious up till then; but God seemed to be urging us forward, filling us with badly needed confidence and assurance that, having called us to this ministry, he was with us.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 27-28.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>86</sup>Judy Douglass, “A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ,” 401.

<sup>87</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 29.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

The gospel message through the medium of Campus Crusade spread rapidly its first year on UCLA's campus. Bill noted that the men were more responsive to the gospel than the women.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, within the first few months of the first sorority meeting, more than 250 students at UCLA had made a decision to follow Christ; the student body president, editor of the school newspaper, and several top athletes were among the converted.<sup>90</sup> Both Bill and Vonette realized that if they could reach the leaders such as top athletes and frat and sorority members, they then could in turn reach others for Christ.

Bill realized that they needed staff and volunteers to be more effective as a ministry. By the end of the first year of Campus Crusade's ministry, they recruited their first staff person, Gordon Klenck, shortly followed by five others.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, by 1952, Campus Crusade had moved to the campuses of San Diego State, the University of Southern California, and the University of Washington.<sup>92</sup> Bill, regarding his decision on whether to remain at UCLA or to move to other campuses, commented:

At this point I had to make a very important decision. The vision that God had given to me originally embraced the whole world. If I were to stay at UCLA and devote all of my own personal energies to reach only one campus, I would be disobedient to that heavenly vision. I had fallen in love with the students and could have easily spent the rest of my life serving Christ on that one campus. Yet there was only one thing for me to do—recruit and train other people to help reach all of the collegians of the world with the good news of God's love and forgiveness in Christ.<sup>93</sup>

Judy Douglass points out, referring to the rapid growth of Campus Crusade, "One of the keys to the rapid development of the ministry was a very clear presentation of the gospel

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<sup>89</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 30.

<sup>90</sup>Judy Douglass, "A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ," 402.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid. It is interesting to note that the Bright's original stipulations for hiring staff included that one be a seminary graduate. They changed the requirement, however, after Bright said he could not find many who were available who met his requirement. So they opened the door for those with a completed bachelor's degree. See Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 31.

<sup>92</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 18.

<sup>93</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 30.

of Christ, one that people could understand, respond to, and share with others.”<sup>94</sup>

When Campus Crusade began, Bill used much of his own money he earned from his business to fund the ministry; however, he soon had staff raise their own support. Judy Douglass points out that even today every full-time missionary staff person raises his or her own support as well as recruits a team of prayer supporters.<sup>95</sup> Douglass notes that when staff raise their own support, Campus Crusade is able to bring on more staff persons to reach people for Christ.<sup>96</sup> In fact, *Money Magazine* has more than once named Campus Crusade as one of the top charities of its kind for the percentage of contributions spent on programs versus what is spent on administration and fundraising.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, Steve Douglass, current Campus Crusade president, reports that John T. Zietlow, Professor of Finance at Indiana State University, “did a study of non-profit organizations and ranked Campus Crusade one of the best run of those he examined.”<sup>98</sup>

### **First Headquarters**

Campus Crusade was growing to the point that they needed a place to call their own. Bright noticed a mansion for sale in the Bel Air neighborhood on Stone Canyon Road minutes from the UCLA campus. However, when he checked into the price of the mansion he soon realized that it would be impossible for them to afford it for their base of operation. Henrietta Mears, however, shortly learned that Bill was interested, and she purchased the mansion and invited the Brights to move in with her to help with the

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<sup>94</sup>Judy Douglass, “A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ,” 402.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>“A Farewell Tribute: A Life Lived Well,” 5. Additionally, CCC helped start the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability which holds Christian organizations accountable for the stewardship of their finances.

<sup>98</sup>Steve Douglass, “Excellence before God and Men,” in *Principles of Leadership*, 135.

expenses and the up-keep of the mansion. Thus, the mansion became the first headquarters for Campus Crusade.<sup>99</sup>

Campus Crusade soon ran out of space in the mansion. Bill Greig, who chaired the Midwest Keswick group, called Bright to see if he would be interested in their five acres of land on Lake Minnetonka in Mound, Minnesota.<sup>100</sup> Greig donated the land to Crusade, and Crusade added a new chapel and dormitory building.<sup>101</sup> This new location allowed them to have more space for training persons in sharing their faith. Then, by 1960, it became time for another move since their staff had now grown to 109, and they needed more room to train people.

Arrowhead Springs in Southern California's San Bernardino Mountains became the next venture for Bill. At the time, the resort would cost \$2 million; therefore, Bill and his staff began to seek God that the money might be provided. Bill noted, "God spoke to me as clearly as if there had been a public address system in the room. Unmistakably I heard him say, 'I have been saving this for Campus Crusade for Christ. I want you to have it, and I will supply the funds to pay for it.'"<sup>102</sup> It was on December 1, 1962, that the headquarters was moved to Arrowhead Springs.<sup>103</sup> In 1991, Campus Crusade moved from their Arrowhead Springs headquarters, which they had outgrown, to Orlando, Florida. They moved into a renovated warehouse until 1998, when they moved

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<sup>99</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 19-20

<sup>100</sup>The Keswick Convention started in England in 1873, and it still has branches today, such as the Midwest Keswick group. W.H. Aldis writes, concerning Keswick, "It is simply and solely a Convention devoted to the deepening of the spiritual life; the quickening of God's people; the exploration of our inheritance in Christ Jesus, and the appropriation of the blessing that may be ours through the fullness of the Holy Spirit." W. H. Aldis, foreword, *The Message of Keswick and its Meaning* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1957), xiii.

<sup>101</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 42.

<sup>102</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 21.

<sup>103</sup>See chap. 4, "Story of a Miracle," in Bright, *Come Help Change the World* for a detailed account of the move to Arrowhead Springs.

to the current headquarters on the Lake Hart campus.<sup>104</sup>

### The Molding of Bright's Theology

Bill's mother certainly played a key role in his life as he was raised in church, even though he was not a true believer at the time. He later said of his mother, "her godly example and powerful prayers were the greatest influence on my life."<sup>105</sup> Bright also noted that Wilbur Smith, the one who coined the name Campus Crusade, was one of his favorite professors.<sup>106</sup> Richardson writes, "Smith's cogent, empirical, apologetical approach to the life of Christ intrigued and captivated Bill's mind."<sup>107</sup> Bill additionally was influenced by men such as Harold Ockenga, Carl F. H. Henry, Harold Lindsell, Everett Harrison, and Gleason Archer.<sup>108</sup>

Furthermore, Bill liked a wide variety of preachers and Bible teachers. He liked the pastor of Hollywood Presbyterian when he first joined, Louis Evans.<sup>109</sup> Before

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<sup>104</sup>Judy Douglass, "A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ," 411.

<sup>105</sup>Bright, *God*, 115.

<sup>106</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 27.

<sup>107</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 48.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, 49. Harold Ockenga served as Fuller Seminary's president while Bright was a student, and he also helped found Gordon-Conwell Seminary and served as its president from 1969-1985. See "The Original Five" [on-line]; accessed 11 January 2005; retrieved from <http://www.seekgod.ca/fuller1.htm>; Internet. Carl F. H. Henry taught at Fuller while Bright was a student, and Henry was also a prolific author in the area of theology. Harold Lindsell taught missions, served as Dean of the Faculty and Vice-President at Fuller. He wrote *The Battle for the Bible* 1976. See "Biography" [on-line]; accessed 10 January 2005; retrieved from <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/192.htm#3>; Internet. Everett Harrison served as a Presbyterian minister, missionary in China, and he taught New Testament at Fuller Seminary. See "Everett R. Harrison," [on-line]; accessed 12 January 2005; retrieved from [http://www.moodypublishers.org/authors.php?action=view\\_author&id=122](http://www.moodypublishers.org/authors.php?action=view_author&id=122); Internet. Gleason Archer passed away April 27, 2004. He was a prolific author in the area of Old Testament. He also taught at Fuller Seminary, ending his teaching career at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois. See "Dr. Gleason Archer" [on-line]; accessed 11 January 2005; retrieved from <http://www.tiu.edu/trinity/announcements/archer.htm>; Internet.

<sup>109</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 24.

his death, he commented, “And I also enjoy such great Bible teachers as Charles Stanley, Adrian Rogers, John Hagee, David Jeremiah, and the ministries of Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Paul and Jan Crouch of Trinity Broadcast Network.”<sup>110</sup>

If any one person impacted Bright more than another, Henrietta Mears played a monumental role in Bright’s view of the Christian life and in his theology.<sup>111</sup> Regarding her influence, Bright proclaimed, “Apart from the example of my mother’s life and prayers, she, more than any other person, was responsible for my becoming a Christian, and except for her Vonette may never have taken that spiritual step through which I have had the benefit of her love, counsel and encouragement through the rich, exciting and fruitful years of this ministry.”<sup>112</sup> He declared, regarding Mears, “Her godly influence no doubt helped to prepare me for the launching of Campus Crusade for Christ International in 1951.”<sup>113</sup>

Mears was the director of Christian Education and taught the College Department at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood from 1928-1963. She was quite conservative in her theology. For instance, after reviewing much of the current Sunday School and educational material from many of the publishers when she first went to First Presbyterian, she decided that much of it was either too liberal or not deep enough biblically. Mears, using the mimeograph in First Presbyterian’s office, began with her staff to produce their own Sunday school curriculum.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 100.

<sup>111</sup>Billy Graham also writes about Mears, ““Dr. Henrietta C. Mears . . . has had a remarkable influence, both directly and indirectly on my life. In fact, I doubt if any other woman outside of my wife and mother has had such a marked influence. Her gracious spirit, her devotional life, her steadfastness for the simple gospel and her knowledge of the Bible have been a continual inspiration and amazement to me. She is certainly one of the greatest Christians I have ever known!” Earl O. Roe, ed., *Dream Big: The Henrietta Mears Story* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990), opening pages.

<sup>112</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 35.

<sup>113</sup>Bill Bright, “Insights from Bill Bright: The Banyan Tree and The Palm Tree” [on-line]; accessed 6 June 2004; Salem Network 2004, Email Update.

<sup>114</sup>Information from this paragraph was taken from Roe, *Dream Big*, 132-34.

Moreover, Mears' clear teaching of the gospel greatly impacted Bright during his time at Hollywood Presbyterian.<sup>115</sup> He learned from Mears that teaching the gospel clearly was important. She was known for saying, "Teach the Word clearly and correctly . . . to the end that people may come to know Christ as Savior and Lord and to grow spiritually, faithful in every good work."<sup>116</sup> Additionally, Bright learned from Mears that the Bible must be preeminent in one's ministry. Mears wrote: "Christian education recognizes the inspired Word of God . . . not only as its text and the sum of its message, but also as the source of the principles by which successful Christian education must be carried on."<sup>117</sup>

Notwithstanding, Mears also exemplified that discipleship is key to the gospel ministry as well. She would often ask people at her Sunday school training conferences, "What is the goal of your Sunday School?"<sup>118</sup> When they replied, "To lead boys and girls to Christ," she would respond, "No!"<sup>119</sup> She continued, "That, of course, is part of it—and you know the emphasis I place on evangelism—but if your task stops there, you will never be successful. Our job is to train men and women, boys and girls, to serve the Master."<sup>120</sup> Hence, as will be discussed in later chapters, Bright was able to see that discipleship was necessary for developing authentic Christians.

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<sup>115</sup>Mears declared, concerning the gospel: "Ask a man if he is satisfied. Most people are not content with their lives. A person must understand that he is a sinner. After he sees this, show him what he must do about his sin. Give him the facts about salvation. The sinner must come to the Savior. There must be a personal encounter. Never pronounce a person saved. Show him that everything is based on the Bible, and let him draw his own conclusions. Point out that his salvation depends on God's ability and faithfulness. And make sure he realizes that God will not cast him off if he sins. Also, show him what to do when he sins as a Christian. Urge him to begin confessing his faith before others immediately. Point out that Christ demands all of his life. The Lordship and Saviorhood of Christ should go hand in hand" Roe, *Dream Big*, 190.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*

Bright also admired James Stewart, a New Testament scholar.<sup>121</sup> Stewart's book, *The Strong Name*, gave Bright a clearer understanding of witnessing. He liked the following quote from Stewart:

If we could but show the world that being committed to Christ is no tame, humdrum, sheltered monotony, but the most thrilling, exciting adventure the human spirit could ever know, those who have been standing outside the church and looking askance at Christ would come crowding in to pay allegiance, and we might well expect the greatest revival since Pentecost.<sup>122</sup>

Bright visited often with Dawson Trotman, and they spoke regularly on leadership.<sup>123</sup>

From his notes with Trotman, he noted some helpful advice on creating an organization:

“When an organization is created it is largely made up of explorers and artists; after several years it will be made up largely of ‘judges and warriors’—meaning judges in the sense of ‘critics’ and warriors in the sense of ‘infighters.’”<sup>124</sup> The afore-mentioned quote shows that Bright paid attention to the advice that Trotman shared with him.

While at Fuller, Bill learned of a famous atheist philosopher, Cyril E. M. Joad, who gave his life to Christ. In Joad's book *My Return to Faith* he wrote of his conversion.<sup>125</sup> This book greatly helped Bill give a reason for the hope within him. Bill wrote, “Joad's decision took away any intellectual anxiety. From that point on, I knew I could witness to anyone who was rational.”<sup>126</sup>

### **The Road Home**

One who takes an objective look at Bill Bright's Christian life would be hard

<sup>121</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 121. See James Stewart, *The Strong Name* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1940).

<sup>122</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 32.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup>This book is mentioned in Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 47. See also “Bill Bright, Jesus and the Intellectual” [on-line]; accessed 27 December 2004, available from <http://www.billbright.com/intellectual/skeptics.html>; Internet.

<sup>126</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 47.

pressed to label him as a pretentious man. For instance, he was awarded the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion in 1996, which was worth more than one million dollars, yet he donated the money to promote prayer and fasting causes.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, he did not accept royalties from his book publications.

Bright became quite ill in his latter years. He was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis, a lung disease, around the year 1998.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, he developed diabetes in 2001.<sup>129</sup> He, however, was determined to keep working for the Lord. He declared, referring to the two years before his death:

In fact, the past two years have been among the most productive of my life, as I have been able to keep a vigorous schedule of writing, editing, producing teaching videos, some traveling and speaking, and even the co-founding of the Global Pastors Network, a strategy to help start 5 million house churches worldwide.<sup>130</sup>

Fear of death was not an issue as he continued to work for Campus Crusade.<sup>131</sup> For

<sup>127</sup>S. Adrienne Gaines, "Campus Crusade for Christ Founder Bill Bright Dies," *Charisma*, 29 September 2003, 2.

<sup>128</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 5.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Bill Bright, "Bill Bright's Benediction" *Christianity Today* [on-line]; accessed 16 February 2004; available from <http://www.kedesh.christianitytoday.com/global/pf.cgi?ct/2003/129/12.0.html>; Internet.

<sup>131</sup>Bright did not want the medical community to prolong his life in his dying days. For instance, he declared, "I want to die as if it were 1903, not 2003. I have signed the necessary papers to this end. . . . I do not want heroic or extraordinary measures taken by the medical community as I leave this life. I am on my way to a better life, and I do not want to be waylaid or detoured by the admirable but distracting technologies of the twenty-first century. . . . I want to cross the great divide as naturally and supernaturally as possible. Letting my body die in its natural way. Letting my soul soar in its supernatural way. And I have great peace about the journey." Bright, *The Journey Home*, 115. Bright also said the following before his death: "My beloved family, friends, staff members and partners in the gospel: I embrace you with the love of Christ. I want to share some things with you because I love you. Even in my death the Holy Spirit can use me to glorify the Father. I would be remiss not to share what He wants. So thank you for these moments. First, I am now experiencing what I have longed for ever since I met Jesus in 1945, when I asked Him into my heart. I fell in love with Him deeply as He revealed Himself to me through His Word. For all these decades my greatest joy has been being in His presence and serving Him alongside Vonette. Today, I am experiencing God face to face in ways so magnificent that they cannot be described in words. . . . So I offer you the same advice that Jesus offered His disciples in John 14:28 when He said they should rejoice at His going to be

instance, he declared:

Of course, if the Lord tarries, my day to enter glory will eventually come. What a wonderful day that will be! But it is a win-win situation for me. If I go, I will be with my wonderful Lord whom I have served for almost 60 years. If I stay, I will be able to joyously serve Him even more than I have in the past.<sup>132</sup>

Bright prayed for a miracle that his lungs would be healed.<sup>133</sup> He, however, was also content to leave his future in God's hands. He noted, "Yes, I can accept the life sentence of terminal disease as permitted by God, but I also believe God is able to heal, and by faith, I believed I should have an attitude to seek His healing."<sup>134</sup> The only regrets Bright recalled were not trusting Christ sooner and not trusting Christ for more converts to help fulfill the Great Commission.<sup>135</sup> Subsequently, on July 19, 2003, at the age of 81 in his home in Orlando, Florida, Bright passed away.<sup>136</sup>

### **Transfer of Leadership for CCC**

Bright, before his death, passed the presidency of Campus Crusade to his executive vice president, Steve Douglass, in July of 2001.<sup>137</sup> Douglass joined Campus Crusade in 1969, after working on a research project for one of his MBA classes at

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with the Father. Rejoice with me because I am no longer in this earthly tent. I am in the presence of the living God, satisfied at the deepest core of my being. And rejoice with me because I have finished all He called me to do. It has been a magnificent adventure to serve alongside my precious Vonette for over 50 years. . . ." Taken from "A Farewell Tribute."

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

<sup>133</sup>Vonette recalls, "I personally prayed for a miracle of healing and was blessed with how many new initiatives in treating and perhaps curing pulmonary fibrosis came into our lives in three years' time." Bright, *The Journey Home*, 163.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>136</sup>The Associated Press, "Campus Crusade Founder Bright Dies," *The Greenville News*, 22 July 2003.

<sup>137</sup>Jody Veenker, "Bill Bright Announces Retirement," *Christianity Today* [online]; accessed 16 February 2004; available from <http://www.kedesh.christianitytoday.com/global/pf.cgi?ct2000/130/43.0.html>; Internet.

Harvard Business School.<sup>138</sup> Bright hired him to help implement the findings of his research project, which dealt with the organization of Campus Crusade's leadership. The purpose of his research project was to find ways that Campus Crusade could improve their leadership and avoid turnover in it.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, Douglass has great respect for Bright, and he has no aspirations of trying to "replace" Bright. He says: "The first thing that people most often ask is, 'How will you fill Bill Bright's shoes?'" Douglass responds, "No one can fill Bill Bright's shoes. That's not possible. Bill Bright is a unique man in the history of time."<sup>140</sup> Douglass goes on to laud Bright by saying: "Bill was not only my leader and mentor for more than thirty years; he was like a father to me. Judy and I cannot imagine our lives without his great faith, vision and love. We will miss him so."<sup>141</sup>

### Conclusion

Bright's family life, schooling, jobs, friends, and church all played an important part in his life. His mark on Campus Crusade is quite evident in that what Campus Crusade teaches today is what he believed and implemented in the ministry. From his days in Coweta, Oklahoma, when he attended the Methodist church with his mother, to the years he spent at Hollywood Presbyterian under Henrietta Mears, his theology was shaped. How is Bright's theology to be remembered? What did he believe about the nature of the Bible, God, man's sin, and Christ's atonement? The following chapter takes an in-depth look at Bright's theology of evangelism.

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<sup>138</sup>Steve Douglass, "Excellence before God and Men," 132.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

<sup>140</sup>Janet Chismar, "Meet the New President of Campus Crusade for Christ" [on-line]; accessed 16 February 2004; available from <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/religiontoday/721904.html?view=print>; Internet.

<sup>141</sup>Steve Douglass, "A note from Campus Crusade's President" [on-line]; accessed 17 August 2004; available from <http://www.pastors.com/article.asp?printerfriendly=1&ArtID=4390>; Internet.

## CHAPTER 3

### BRIGHT'S THEOLOGY

Bill Bright, as noted in chapter 1, has been criticized for his beliefs.<sup>1</sup> Joel Sherer said that “Bright shows little interest in scholarly thinking or theological investigation.”<sup>2</sup> Richard Quebedeaux writes, “Bill has founded and directed a Christian organization that is remarkably *nondoctrinal* in character. It is extremely difficult to find systematic doctrinal formulations of any kind in his writings. And this is one reason many theologians term Campus Crusade’s theology as simplistic or superficial” [emphasis mine].<sup>3</sup> Wendy Murray Zoba writes, “CCC’s critics rightly suggest that the simple, marketable, pragmatic approach to theology does not attend to the problems of thoughtful evangelicals.”<sup>4</sup> Former Campus Crusade leader, Peter Gillquist, left Crusade to go into Eastern Orthodoxy for its deeper teachings.<sup>5</sup> Gillquist writes,

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<sup>1</sup>Bright commented, “Many times people have criticized and attacked me. But it is almost as though they are talking about somebody else. I try always to respond with love.” Bill Bright, “Insights from Bill Bright: The ‘Exchanged’ Life” [on-line]; accessed 4 August, 2004; Retrieved 4 August 2004; Salem Network 2004, Email Update.

<sup>2</sup>Joel Sherer, “Bill Bright,” in *Twentieth-Century Shapers of American Popular Religion*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood, 1989), 54.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Quebedeaux, *I Found It!* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 90.

<sup>4</sup>Wendy Murray Zoba, “Bill Bright’s Wonderful Plan for the World,” *Christianity Today*, 14 July 1997, 27.

<sup>5</sup>Kim Lawton, “Interview: William Martin on Bill Bright,” *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, 25 July 2003, Episode no. 647 [on-line]; accessed 16 February 2004; available from [www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week647.interview.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week647.interview.html); Internet. Gillquist left Crusade in 1968 convinced that the Great Commission was to be fulfilled through the Orthodox Church. Several other Crusade staff left at the same time as Gillquist including: the National Field Coordinator at the time, Jon Braun; Canadian Director Ken Berven; African Director Gordon Walker; and Asian Director Ray Nethery. Gillquist and several who left Crusade started the Antiochian Evangelical Orthodox

Ultimately, there were a number of things that caused scores of us to leave the Campus Crusade organization in 1968. As for me, I felt I had done all I could accomplish there. The parachurch wind had had gone out of my sails. I wanted something more. But let me say that even to this day, I would rather present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a college fraternity or sorority house than anywhere else on earth.<sup>6</sup>

Charles W. Dunn, who currently serves as Dean of the Robertson School of Government at Regent University, wrote a small booklet, *Campus Crusade: Its Message and Methods*, in 1980, while teaching political science at Clemson University—where he also served as Campus Crusade’s faculty advisor.<sup>7</sup> Dunn, at the time he wrote the book, clearly was a Fundamentalist.<sup>8</sup> Bill Bright and Crusade were part of the “New

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Mission. Gillquist and Gordon Thomas Walker write, “We feel there are some things crucial to the evangelization of non-Orthodox Christians and to prevent our own Orthodox people from being proselytized by the Protestant sects and para-Church groups. One of these things is to teach our people to understand the terms and methods of witnessing which those other groups seem to use so effectively.” See Peter Gillquist and Gordon Thomas Walker, “Arrowhead Springs to Antioch: Odyssey To Orthodoxy” [online]; accessed 11 January 2005; available from <http://www.sthermans.ca/strange/gillquist.html>; Internet.

<sup>6</sup>Peter E. Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith*, rev. ed. (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar, 1992), 17-18. Frank Milanese also left Crusade for the Orthodox Church. Referring to his time with Crusade, he noted, “The Bible-study techniques as well as the encapsulating of important doctrinal messages into ‘transferable concepts’ gave me the tools I would later use to assist in the transmission of the Orthodox Christian message to youth and adults. I also learned one other very important skill while on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ: recognizing the sovereignty of God through specific prayers and through seeing specific answers to those prayers.” See Frank Milanese, “A Convert from Within,” in *Coming Home: Why Protestant Clergy are Becoming Orthodox*, ed. Peter E. Gillquist (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar, 1992), 64.

<sup>7</sup>Charles W. Dunn, *Campus Crusade: Its Message and Methods* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1980; reprint, Collingswood, NJ: The Bible for Today, 2005), 11 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>8</sup>Dunn stated, “I left New Evangelicalism with its emphasis on infiltration [of liberal and modernist churches] and affiliated with an independent, fundamental church meeting the New Testament’s criteria for a local church.” *Ibid.*, 19. Further proof of Dunn’s Fundamentalism is his bent toward legalism. For instance, Dunn criticized Crusade for not taking a stand against social drinking and dancing—typical of most Fundamentalists. He said, “Historically, the great Christian evangelists, until the present generation, have uniformly preached against such social sins as drinking and dancing, but never did I hear that mentioned in Crusade meetings. I am not suggesting that they openly advocated drinking and dancing, but only that they followed a malignant and non-biblical doctrine of infiltration of apostate and pagan organizations where drinking and dancing are tacitly, if not openly, approved.” *Ibid.*, 13.

Evangelicals” which had ties with those who do not accept the inerrant Scripture, according to Dunn.<sup>9</sup>

Dunn went on to make some strong accusations against Campus Crusade. He pointed out, “After sitting through more Campus Crusade meetings than I can recount and after reading much of their literature, I came to realize that the Campus Crusade message deceptively differs from the biblical message at crucial points.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Paul Tassell, a pastor in the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, said, in 1971, “Campus Crusade does not seem to understand the Biblical teaching of man’s depraved and reprobate mind. It tends to misjudge human nature. . . . Bill Bright misjudges human nature as seriously as did Arminius in the early part of the seventeenth century.”<sup>11</sup>

Is Bright’s theology of evangelism biblical? What did he believe about the nature of the Bible, God, man’s sin, and Christ’s atonement? Was he theologically liberal or conservative? Bright was Presbyterian, yet he did not like denominational labels.<sup>12</sup> For example, when asked in an interview on The 700 Club if he considered

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<sup>9</sup>Dunn defined “New Evangelical” as those who hold similar beliefs as the Fundamentalists, “but not the biblical teaching of separation; consequently, the New Evangelical movement, spawned in the late 1940s encompasses those who believe the Bible is inerrant and those who do not. Campus Crusade is not positioned with history’s oldest major Protestant group, the Fundamentalist, but with the newest major group, the New Evangelical. This new group, unwilling to come under the total authority of Scripture, now faces advanced apostasy in its midst. Campus Crusade, the most visible of the New Evangelical groups on college campuses, shows that it is not immune to the spreading cancer of apostasy.” Ibid., 7-8. For a clear explanation of how the “new evangelical” movement came out of Fundamentalism, see John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity & Faithfulness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 18-21.

<sup>10</sup>Dunn, *Campus Crusade*, 9.

<sup>11</sup>Paul Tassell, “Is Campus Crusade Scriptural?” (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1980; reprint, Collingswood, NJ: The Bible for Today), 12, 15 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>12</sup>Andy Butcher, “Still Shining Bright,” *Charisma*, October 2001, 46. Hollywood Presbyterian, where Bright was converted, is a Presbyterian USA church; see their website [on-line]; accessed 26 February 2005; available from <http://www.fpch.org/index.htm>; Internet. First Presbyterian in Orlando, Florida, where the Brights attended while in Orlando, is also PC (USA). It is the second largest church in the Presbyterian Church USA according to the PC (USA)’s statistics for 2003. See Orlando

himself evangelical or ecumenical, Bright declared:

I'm a classical Christian. I'm a New Testament Christian. I reject and throw out titles. I'm not a fundamentalist, though I'm fundamental in all of my doctrine. I'm not an evangelical, because that means that I exclude the Catholics and main-liners, and Orthodox. I'm a believer who loves Jesus and I work with everybody else whatever their denomination; Catholic, Orthodox, charismatic, mainline, evangelicals, anyone who loves Jesus. I'll work with them.<sup>13</sup>

Bright's theological beliefs, such as his view of the Bible and the key components of the gospel, are examined in this chapter to determine whether his beliefs were orthodox.

### **Building a Theology of Evangelism**

The building of Bill Bright's theology is delineated below; however, first, the link between theology and evangelism will be established to show the importance of the two disciplines being linked together. C. E. Autrey said it well regarding the link between theology and evangelism: "There can be *no effective and permanent* evangelism without theology, and there would soon be few persons ready to study theology without

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First Presbyterian's website for more information [on-line]; accessed 26 February 2005; available from <http://www.fpco.org/print/114.asp>; Internet. Additionally, John Adams reports on the memorial service for Bright where Bright's pastor, Howard Edington spoke: "The Rev. Howard Edington, then the senior pastor of the 5,500-member Orlando congregation, expressed dismay that the Presbyterian Church (USA) had failed to give Bright the honor he was due. 'One of the things that has troubled me is that here is a great Presbyterian and our denomination has either ignored or ridiculed Dr. Bright,' Edington said." John H. Adams, "Presbyterian who founded Campus Crusade dies at 81" *The Layman Online* Monday, July 21, 2003, [on-line]; accessed 26 February 2005; available from <http://www.layman.org/layman/news/2003-news-art.../pres-who-founded-campus-crusade.ht>; Internet.

<sup>13</sup>The 700 Club, "Bill Bright: A Slave for Christ" [on-line]; 16 March 2004; available from [http://www.cbn.com/SpiritualLife/churcha.../Bill\\_Bright\\_A\\_Slave\\_For\\_Christ.asp?option=prin](http://www.cbn.com/SpiritualLife/churcha.../Bill_Bright_A_Slave_For_Christ.asp?option=prin); Internet. Though, it should be noted that, in the aforementioned quote, Bright was not saying that he did not agree with evangelicals; he was merely declaring that he would work with anyone who believed in the basics of the Christian faith and who had a desire to reach others with the message of Christ. Ted Martin, former dean of the International School of Theology run by Crusade, confirmed that Bright would certainly be in agreement with the Evangelical camp's ideas. Bright just did not like labels which would keep him from reaching others with the gospel. In fact, according to Martin, Bright kept Crusade non-denominational so that he could minister to more persons with the gospel—for Bright believed that if he pushed denominationalism, he would not be able to reach as many people. Ted Martin, interview by the author, Louisville, Kentucky, 14 March 2005.

evangelism” [emphasis mine].<sup>14</sup> Alvin Reid declares, “One cannot adequately practice evangelism apart from a firm biblical base that is rooted in history and founded on a clear theology. At the same time, theology is incomplete without a view toward evangelism. Thus, there is a need to keep evangelism and theology together.”<sup>15</sup> Lewis Drummond also made a solid case for why theology and evangelism go together. He summarized three basic, yet well reasoned, ideas. He first stated that they are never separated in Scripture: “The first and by the far most important being that they are never divorced in the Scriptures.”<sup>16</sup> Paul wrote out of an evangelistic and pastoral concern for the churches—and the epistles are where much doctrine is deduced.<sup>17</sup> Second, he noted that “without sound theological content, evangelism soon degenerates into sentimentalism, emotionalism, and gimmicks.”<sup>18</sup> Third, Drummond believed that it is pragmatic to combine theology and evangelism being that “God has honored most profoundly the ministry of those who do.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Starting Points for Theology**

Everyone has a starting point for viewing reality—a worldview. Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino give a simple, but helpful analogy for understanding a worldview: “A worldview is like an intellectual lens through which we see the world.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>C. E. Autrey, *Basic Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 13.

<sup>15</sup>Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 84.

<sup>16</sup>Lewis A. Drummond, *Reaching Generation Next: Effective Evangelism in Today's Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 100.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations: Contemporary Answer to Crucial Questions about the Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2001), 19.

A worldview also consists of presuppositions or ideas which one brings to the table for interpreting reality. Presuppositions are part of one's epistemology—how one knows what he knows.<sup>21</sup> Ron Nash points out, “All human beliefs rest upon other beliefs that we presuppose or accept without support from arguments or evidence.”<sup>22</sup> Bright quoted from his friend John Barber's book *Earth Restored* to show how a believer views the world: “A biblical worldview is seeing the world as God sees it. It is thinking God's thoughts after Him in ALL areas of life. While many people think that God's Word only applies to areas like prayer, personal evangelism, and inward holiness, a biblical worldview assumes that the Bible also speaks to education, art, business, politics, technology, and more.”<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, Bright does well to refer to Barber's definition, for a worldview does pertain to every area or facet of one's life. Bright offered his own definition of a worldview. He noted, “A worldview is any ideology or philosophy that shapes the way a person relates to his or her world.”<sup>24</sup> Yet Bright believed that one must have a biblical worldview. He concluded, “It's so essential that we study God's Word, learn what God thinks, and integrate His thoughts into every part of our lives.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Bright's Views on Scripture**

Susumu Uda, at the Lausanne Conference in 1974, said it right: “Without

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<sup>21</sup>Lewis Drummond offers a more detailed but lucid explanation of the role presuppositions play in one's worldview. See chapter 4, “Constructing a Christian Worldview for Postmoderns and Moderns Alike,” in Drummond, *Reaching Generation Next*.

<sup>22</sup>Ron Nash, *Life's Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 20.

<sup>23</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote* (Orlando: NewLife, 1999), 148-49. It should be noted that Bright passed away before the final editing of this book. *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 149.

revelation there would be no foundation for Christian faith and action. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that with the reality of revelation Christianity stands or falls.”<sup>26</sup> In building a theology of evangelism, one must start with God’s revelation of himself. Bill Bright said:

Everybody has a basic belief in something, a manual for living, even if it is something he or she invented. And if you are going to base your life on anything, base it on the authority of holy Scriptures. There is no book ever written that has the power to change lives like the Holy Bible, and there is no philosophy of men that can compare with the words of our Creator-God and Savior Jesus. The Bible is more important than all the books in all the libraries in the world.<sup>27</sup>

One must have a source of authority, a guide, or a standard to declare what is right and wrong.<sup>28</sup> Today society does not like to hear the word “authority” or “accountability.” John Stott succinctly declared, regarding society’s disdain for authority: “Authority is a dirty word today—dirty, disliked, even detested. Authority smacks of establishment, of privilege, of oppression, of tyranny. And whether we like it or not, we are witnessing in our day a global revolt against all authority, whether of the family, the college, the bosses, the church, the state or God.”<sup>29</sup> Bright did well to recognize society’s disdain for a governing authority; he pointed out, “Because our secular society has rejected God’s holy inspired Word as the absolute standard for truth,

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<sup>26</sup>Susumu Uda, “Biblical Authority and Evangelism,” in *Let The Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications), 1975, 79.

<sup>27</sup>Bill Bright, *The Journey Home: Finishing with Joy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), xxi.

<sup>28</sup>Will Metzger says, “A scriptural doctrine of evangelism should be the controlling element in any practice of evangelism.” Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People: Revised and Expanded* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 19. L. R. Rush Bush says, “Truth is an essential element of God’s nature, for he is the only ultimate by which truth could ever be measured.” Russ Bush, “Evangelism and Biblical Authority,” in *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century: The Critical Issues* ed. Thom S. Rainer (Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1989), 105.

<sup>29</sup>John R. W. Stott, *The Authority of the Bible* (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, 1974), 3.

we have lost our reference point for reality.”<sup>30</sup> Bright, however, realized the Bible was to be the source for truth and authority. He adamantly declared:

Some may deride my life as that of ‘another Bible-thumper.’ I do not thump the Bible; I rather let it thump me. It is my source of discipline, encouragement, strength, joy, praise, and thanksgiving, and my attitudes about life—be they good, bad, and indifferent. Everyone can have his own opinion about the Bible, but I must ask, Whose word do you base your life upon? The fables of poets, the one-liners on television, the lyrics of intoxicated, pot-smoking singers, the anti-God themes of Hollywood movies, the God-mocking writers of anti-Christian publishers?<sup>31</sup>

### Special Revelation

The Christian worldview is built upon the foundation of special revelation. God’s special revelation is the only foundation on which one can build an orthodox theology of evangelism. Furthermore, special revelation provides the basis or the mandate for evangelism.<sup>32</sup> The Bible is God’s “special revelation.” Wayne Grudem defines special revelation as “God’s words addressed to specific people, such as the words of the Bible, the words of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles, and the words of God spoken in personal address, such as at Mount Sinai or at the baptism of Jesus.”<sup>33</sup> Bright did well to recognize that God’s Word is special revelation. He declared, “Each of us has an inborn spiritual need to know God, but we must go beyond our soul’s instinct to find out the specific details of what He is like and

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<sup>30</sup>Bill Bright, *God: Discover His Character* (Orlando: NewLife, 1999), 162.

<sup>31</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 65.

<sup>32</sup>Bush, “Evangelism and Biblical Authority,” 110. John White says, “How one views Scripture will determine the rest of one’s theology.” John White, *Scripture Alone: Exploring the Bible’s Accuracy, Authority, and Authenticity* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2004), 43.

<sup>33</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 123. Stott provides a good clarification between special and general revelation. He notes that “God’s general revelation was made through nature (heaven and earth proclaiming his glory), whereas his special revelation was made through miracle (inspiration and incarnation).” Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, 38-39. See also Paul Enns’ definition of special revelation in Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 158-59.

what He has done. The primary way we discover God's nature is through the Bible. It is His special revelation to us, His way of communicating with us."<sup>34</sup>

The Bible claims internally to be the Word of God, and Bright was knowledgeable of key biblical texts which offer proof for the Bible's validity. He pointed out:

The apostle Paul writes, 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV). The picture we get in this verse is of God's Spirit breathing the exact words into the minds of holy people such as the prophets Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel or the apostles Paul, Peter, and John, who then wrote down the words.<sup>35</sup>

Bright was correct in his view that God "breathed out" Scripture. Unique to this passage is the word *theopneustos* in verse 16, which literally means "breathed out by God" not "breathed into by God."<sup>36</sup> Gleason Archer points out that this demarcation is important, because the emphasis is placed upon the "divine origin" of the Bible rather than on a "special quality infused into the words of Scripture."<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, 2 Timothy 3 is the only place in the Bible where the word is used. Even still, Paul says that "all Scripture" is God-breathed—leaving no room for a partially inspired Bible. Hence, because of the key doctrine mentioned, Bright did well to refer to the passage in 2 Timothy 3:16.

**Inspiration/Inerrancy defined.** Tied to the passage in 2 Timothy 3:16 are the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy. In building a theology of evangelism, it matters whether one believes in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible—and it certainly

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<sup>34</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote*, 4.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 16. Paul indeed writes in 2 Tim 3:15-16 the clearest and most poignant explanation of how one is to view Scripture—God speaking to humanity. Paul refers to the Hebrew Scriptures which Timothy learned since childhood in verse 15 as *hiera grammata*, holy Scriptures. Timothy's grandmother and mother would have taught young Timothy from the Old Testament Scriptures. Additionally, it is important to notice that Paul said the sacred writings are able to give wisdom that leads to salvation.

<sup>36</sup>William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 562. See also Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 29.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

matters what a man, such as Bill Bright, with such a far reaching influence, believed about the Bible.<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Kantzer offers a definition of inspiration, saying, “As evangelicals perceive it, biblical inspiration is the work by which God guided the authors of Scripture in all their humanity so as to constitute the words of the Bible in its entirety as his written word to man, and therefore of divine authority and without error in its autographs.”<sup>39</sup> Bright also referred to the Bible as inspired.<sup>40</sup> He declared, “If I could be with you today as a life coach, I would hold up the Bible and say, ‘This is the book of Jesus. Love Him, trust His promises, and obey His commands recorded in this inspired Holy Book.’”<sup>41</sup>

Bright also believed in the inerrancy of the Bible. He pointed out, “After more than fifty years of studying the Bible, I am convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that it is the holy, inspired, and inerrant Word of God.”<sup>42</sup> Bright disagreed with those who say

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<sup>38</sup>John White makes an accurate statement regarding the outcome of those who do not esteem Scripture as God’s Word: “Almost every single collapse involving denominations and churches in regard to historic Christian beliefs can be traced back to a degradation in that group’s view of the Bible as the inspired and inerrant revelation of God’s truth. Once this foundation is lost, the house that was built upon it cannot long stand.” White, *Scripture Alone*, 43. An orthodox view of inspiration calls for inerrancy in the original autographs.

<sup>39</sup>Kenneth Kantzer, “Inerrancy: Clearing Away Confusion,” *Christianity Today* 25 (May 29, 1981): 12-13. Paul Enns adequately defines inspiration: “Inspiration may be defined as the Holy Spirit’s superintending over the writers so that while writing according to their own styles and personalities, the result was God’s Word written—authoritative, trustworthy, and free from error in the original autographs.” Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 160. Campus Crusade’s Statement of Faith, which was composed by staff persons and approved by Bright, according to Ted Martin, reads as follows: “We believe that it was written without error (inerrant) in the original manuscripts.” Campus Crusade for Christ International, “Statement of Faith” [on-line]; accessed 26 February 2005; available from [http://www.ccci.org/statement\\_of\\_faith.html](http://www.ccci.org/statement_of_faith.html); Internet.

<sup>40</sup>Bright’s views do not contradict *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, nor do his views contradict article 2 of The Lausanne Covenant which affirms the “divine inspiration” and that it is “without error in all that it affirms.” See “The Lausanne Covenant,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, 3.

<sup>41</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 61.

<sup>42</sup>Bright, *God: Discover His Character*, 161. The Chicago Statement reads, “We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud,

that the Bible has errors. He noted, “Although the Bible is not a scientific manual, when it mentions scientific facts, it is accurate. Sometimes these facts have not been proven until centuries after they were written.”<sup>43</sup> He continued, offering his polemic for the Bible, “Every detail, every thought, and every moment of historical reference in its pages are completely right.”<sup>44</sup>

**Verbal plenary inspiration.** An accurate view of inspiration also calls for a proper view of how God relayed his Word through men of old. God used men to write his words, and Bright was sure to explain this process. He acknowledged, “Knowing how God inspired people to write the Bible is essential to recognizing the reliability of the Bible.”<sup>45</sup> In addition, he pointed out, “One astounding aspect of God’s authorship is that He used humans, writing in their own style. Yet the whole of Scripture—written

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or deceit. . . . We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.” Articles 12 and 14 *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1206. It is necessary to use the word inerrant rather than “infallible” when referring to the Bible, because the word infallible is often used by liberals and moderates today to refer to the Bible’s trustworthiness in matters of faith or practice, while allowing for errors in other areas such as science. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 93. For those who object to using the word inerrant because it does not appear in Scripture, they must realize that neither does the word Trinity; however, there certainly is evidence in Scripture for the term. *Ibid.*, 95. Moreover, James White points out the foolishness of holding to infallibility while being hesitant to lay claim to the Bible’s inerrancy: “They find it attractive to be able to say the Bible is infallible in its teaching (and limiting the realm of that teaching to the ‘spiritual’) while not having to be labeled an ignorant fundamentalist for believing it to be inerrant. The problem, of course, is that this makes no sense. Infallible teaching is not derived from errant foundations.” White, *Scripture Alone*, 73. He went on to declare, “The certainty of the revelation is foundational to the proclamation of the gospel. Without inspiration and inerrancy, the gospel of power becomes a suggestion of weakness.” *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>43</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote*, 32. Bright went on to declare: “In the ‘Science’ section of its March 5, 1990, issue, *Time* magazine had an item, ‘Score One for the Bible,’ refuting the research of the late British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon, who claimed that Jericho was destroyed 150 years before the Bible records the Israelites’ destruction of the city. *Time* also noted many facts consistent with the biblical story. While Bible believers certainly do not need scientific proof as a prop for their faith, it is always nice when science and periodicals like *Time* catch up with the Word of God. *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>45</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote*, 17.

over thousands of years—is unified and complete. That has to be a miracle of God!”<sup>46</sup>

Bright also explained verbal plenary inspiration. He said:

Theologians use the term *verbal plenary inspiration* to describe the fact that God ‘moved along’ the writers to produce Scripture. Verbal plenary inspiration insists that God moved people to record only His thoughts but also the actual words of Scripture, all the while allowing the writers to express their unique personalities and writing techniques. Verbal plenary inspiration means that the Bible is fully inspired, not just in part, but in all its parts. This makes it impossible for anyone to say that the Bible is not fully the Word of God [emphasis mine].<sup>47</sup>

One’s theology of evangelism rises or falls on his or her view of God’s Word—the Bible. Greg Bahnsen succinctly states, “If the Bible is not wholly true, then our assurance of salvation has no dependable and divine warrant; it rests rather on the minimal and fallible authority of men.”<sup>48</sup> Certainly we live in an age in which many want freedom to choose what they “think” is truth. Nevertheless, the evangelist must go against the tide of relativism, and build his theology on the Bible—the place where one finds that Christ is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Furthermore, Bright built his theology of evangelism on the authority of God’s Word.

### **Key Components of the Gospel Unveiled**

Now that the foundation for a theology of evangelism has been built on the belief in the inerrant and inspired Scriptures, Bright’s beliefs on the key parts of the gospel will be examined. Whether or not the order of his gospel presentation is correct will be covered in chapter 4. Nonetheless, this chapter will look at what Bright believed about the doctrines of the gospel correlated with evangelism, with emphasis given to the attributes of God.

Will Metzger, in his 1984 edition of *Tell the Truth*, divides the content of the

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Greg L. Bahnsen, “The Inerrancy of the Autographa,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 154.

gospel into four main parts: (1) God—the Holy and Loving Creator; (2) Man—the Sinful Creature; (3) Christ—the Merciful Redeemer; and (4) Our Necessary Response.<sup>49</sup> These four main parts of the gospel are essential for evangelism. Metzger’s book, *Scripture, the Lausanne Covenant* and other evangelical, orthodox theologians will be used to judge whether Bright was orthodox in his theology of evangelism.<sup>50</sup>

### **God—The Holy and Loving Creator**

Metzger states, regarding who God is, “By reminding people who God is, we show them who they are, both in terms of their significance and in terms of the horror of their sinfulness.”<sup>51</sup> Bright raised an excellent question in the opening chapter of his book *God: Discover His Character*: “Is it possible for a mere human, less than a tiny speck on a pebble of a planet in the midst of a vast galaxy, to know the great God who created everything?”<sup>52</sup> He undeniably believed that it is possible to know God; however, he was also aware of the fears and joys of knowing him. He continued, “The quest to know, love, and serve God is the greatest adventure in life! Yet the goal of knowing God may seem impossible.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, 2d ed., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984), 44, 49, 61, 65. In his third edition, he includes a section on God’s law, 85.

<sup>50</sup>The Lausanne Covenant from the Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization 1974 will serve as one of the guides for judging whether Bright was orthodox in his beliefs. See J. D. Douglas, ed., “Lausanne Covenant,” in *Let The Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland Official Reference Volume: Papers and Responses* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 3-9. I will also refer to Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People: Revised and Expanded* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002) as a guide for the key parts of the gospel message. In addition, several evangelical theologians are used as a guide to determine orthodoxy.

<sup>51</sup>Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 62-63.

<sup>52</sup>Bright, *God*, 13.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. For a brief, but succinct, description of Bright’s views on God’s attributes, see Bill Bright, *God’s Attributes: Transformed by His Majesty*, *Bill Bright Signature Series* (Peachtree City, GA: NewLife, 2004).

James Montgomery Boice asked Bright, while interviewing him on the “Bible Hour” radio program, what he considered to be the most important truth to teach a follower of Christ.<sup>54</sup> Bright responded: “What an incredible question! No one had ever asked me that before, so I was not prepared to answer it. For a brief moment, I was speechless. But then I am convinced that God’s Holy Spirit gave me the answer: ‘The attributes of God.’”<sup>55</sup> Referring to God’s attributes, Bright noted, “Today I am more convinced than ever that there is nothing more important to teach another believer than who God is, what He is like, and why or how He does what He does. These attributes of God can be referred to as His character, nature, qualities, or personality.”<sup>56</sup> Hence, Bright believed, and rightly so, that one way for a Christian to get to know God’s character is through studying his attributes.

Bright’s desire to teach people about God’s character resulted from the way he saw Christians view God. He realized that many Christians need to know more about the God they serve. He declared, “It is wrong to treat our all powerful, infinite Maker as though He were our casual friend or the ‘Man Upstairs.’”<sup>57</sup>

Bright continued: “In fact, everything about our lives—our attitudes, motives, desires, actions, and even our words—is influenced by our view of God.”<sup>58</sup> Yet, is the God of the Scriptures trustworthy? Bright said:

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<sup>54</sup>Bright, *God*, 14.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 298. Bright continued, “Have you ever heard people speak of God as if He is their buddy? While God is our friend, we must never forget that He is so much greater than we are.” Bright, *Discover the Book*, 111. Bright went on: “Over time we [Christians] developed a distorted view of who God is and lost our sense of reverence, respect, and fear of Him. Instead of seeing God as our sovereign Ruler, He is more commonly viewed as our ‘buddy’ or ‘pal.’ Instead of recognizing Him as our awesome Creator and holy Judge, we relegate Him to the position of a peer. We have become too casual with God, even in our places of worship.” Bright, *God*, 298-99.

<sup>58</sup>Bright, *God*, 298.

But what about God? Can He be trusted? How far are you willing to go in trusting Him? The amount of trust you have in God depends on how you view Him. Some think of Him as a big bully, a cosmic policeman, or a divine Santa Claus. Others believe He is like their insensitive, selfish parents who do whatever they want because they have the size or power. . . . Others think of Him as a heartless dictator waiting to punish them for doing wrong. Perhaps you see him as a kindly grandfather who just shakes His head over the terrible plight of humankind but does not get involved.<sup>59</sup>

It is essential to note that Bright correctly realized emphasizing one of God's characteristics or attributes against another would lead to a distorted view of God. He pointed out, "As we study these attributes, keep in mind that if we exalt one of God's qualities over another, we can get a distorted view of God's character. In fact, over-emphasizing any one of God's attributes to the exclusion of others can lead to heresy."<sup>60</sup>

### **God as Eternal and Immanent**

Millard Erickson says, regarding God's eternity, "The adjective eternal is applied to him frequently, implying that there never was a time when he did not exist."<sup>61</sup> Bright believed, and rightly so, that "God is eternal."<sup>62</sup> He noted, "Time is a dimension that God created, and it does not bind Him. He lives outside of time. It baffles my mind to realize that God experiences all past, present, and future events simultaneously. He has no beginning and no end."<sup>63</sup>

Yet the Bible affirms that God is also immanent. Job points out God's control over creation. He says, "Behold, He restrains the waters, and they dry up; And He sends them out, and they inundate the earth" (Job 12:15 NAS). Bright affirmed God's

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 36. Bright, as noted later in this chapter, did emphasize love more than God's other attributes.

<sup>61</sup>Millard Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, ed. Arnold Hustad (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 82b.

<sup>62</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 114.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 115.

immanence as follows: “God is not some distant architect of the universe who remains light years away pondering His creation. He is a loving, involved Father who desires an intimate relationship with us.”<sup>64</sup>

### **God as Omnipotent**

God’s omnipotence means “that God is able to accomplish whatever he wills . . . in the way in which he wills it.”<sup>65</sup> Hence, God has all authority which he derives from no one. Bright believed that God has underived authority. He said, “He does not derive His power from any other source; all power has been His and will continue to be His for eternity. Any power that we have comes ultimately from God.”<sup>66</sup> His underived authority consequently means that God is all-powerful. Bright noted, regarding God’s power, “His power is not restrained or inhibited in any way by His created beings. . . . His power is not an abstract idea but a force to be reckoned with. Theologians use the term omnipotence to describe the awesome, unlimited power of God.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally in Christ* (Orlando: NewLife, 2000), 53. It should be noted that Bright, in his “acknowledgments” section of the book, thanks Nancy Sawyer Schraeder for her help in putting this book together—from the research to the writing. *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>65</sup>Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 238.

<sup>66</sup>Bright, *God*, 44.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 42-43. For additional information by Bright on God’s omnipotence, see Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote*, 114. Also see Bright, “Insights from Bill Bright: God’s Helpers” [on-line]; accessed 24 May, 2004; Retrieved 24 May 2004; Salem Network 2004, Email Update, where he says, “He is omnipotent. He can do anything, anytime, anywhere, without limit. He has innumerable angels, each of whom has great power. He could use one, or a million, to do whatever He wants done.” He also said, “God’s power is supernatural. His power is not limited by our abilities, resources, or intelligence. He is not bound by time or any physical barriers. His power can be awesome, as displayed in the parting of the Red Sea, or serene, as demonstrated by the still, small voice of God.” Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 153. Yet Bright was also aware of those who might try to refute God’s omnipotence by making unwarranted claims (such as God cannot tell a lie; therefore he cannot do anything he wants) which would make God contradict his attributes. He pointed out, “God is capable of doing anything—as long as it does not violate His other attributes. (For example, He cannot lie, change, deny Himself, or be tempted.) Otherwise, no task is too large or too difficult for Him.” Bright,

Undoubtedly, God's power is seen in the creation of the entire cosmos, as Psalm 19:1 declares, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (NAS). Bright believed that God's power (omnipotence) is also seen in the creation of the universe. He declared:

We live on a grand estate called Earth. As we look at the beauty and intricacies of our residence, we marvel at the genius of the design. When we gaze up into the heavens, we are overcome with awe at the vastness of what our Creator has brought into being. . . . Yet, with the unfathomable vastness of our universe, God spoke and the heavens and earth came into being; He laid the foundations of the world. . . . God's power is so unlimited that He could speak a few trillion more universes into existence, then the next day a few trillion more, then the same every day for a trillion years. It would not lessen His power one bit!<sup>68</sup>

### Trinity's Role in Creation

An orthodox theology of evangelism also must include a biblical theology of the Trinity, because heretical views exist even today.<sup>69</sup> Oneness Pentecostals teach a

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*God*, 42. Grudem says, "God cannot will or do anything that would deny his own character." Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 217.

<sup>68</sup>Bright, *God: Discover His Character*, 43-44, 47. Bright also correctly believed that humanity is created in the image of God. He declared, "God, the creator of over 100 billion galaxies, also *created us in His image* and has a wonderful plan for our lives. . . . We will only be significant to whatever degree we are willing to fulfill the plan for which God has created us" [emphasis mine]. *Ibid.*, 166. Bright continued, "In the morning each morning, I see myself, merely one grain of sand in the oceans and beaches of the earth and eternity, and I wonder: who am I that the awesome Creator-God of the entire universe should even contemplate my existence, much less listen to my lungs breathe and my heart beat? But He does. And He loves me. I am on His mind and in His plans for this day. Yes, God delights in each of His children. *He made us in His image*. We are very important to Him" [emphasis mine]. Bright, *The Journey Home*, 70. Bright's understanding of God being the all-powerful creator is in line with Metzger. Regarding God as Creator, Metzger succinctly states, "We must give people a thorough grounding in the character of God as the self-sufficient Creator as part of our basic gospel. . . . The erosion in the Western world of the Creator-creature distinction, which is foundational to all biblical thought, constitutes a serious challenge to our evangelism." Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 57.

<sup>69</sup>For an excellent synopsis of the Trinity in the Old and New Testaments, see Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, "Verses showing the plurality of God in the Old and New Testaments" [on-line]; accessed 20 February 2005; available from <http://www.carm.org/doctrine/trinityplural.htm>; Internet. Additionally, Bruce Ware declares, "The doctrine of the Trinity is both central and necessary for the Christian faith to be what it is. Remove the Trinity, and the whole Christian faith disintegrates." Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, & Relevance* (Wheaton, IL:

heresy known as “modalism” which denies that God is three persons in one.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, J. I. Packer offers an excellent reason why a biblical theology of the Trinity is necessary. He states:

We are evangelists, certainly. Stating the Gospel is our business, definitely. But that requires us to affirm the Trinity, for the Gospel is precisely the story of the three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—working together for the salvation of needy human beings. I know that for many in the churches the Trinity as a doctrine—the thought that God is three in one—is just so much lumber for the mind, orthodox truth which you keep in a cupboard at the back of your mind. For many folks, the truth of the Trinity isn’t relevant at all. But for evangelists, the truth of the Trinity is vital. Three coequal persons, always under the leadership of the Father, work together as a team for our salvation. The Father sent the Son; the Father and the Son send the Spirit.<sup>71</sup>

Bright covered the Trinity by noting His role in creation. He wrote, “Perhaps you have wondered, Who actually created the universe? Was it God the Father? The amazing answer to this question is that the Bible tells us that all three members of the triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—participated in the creation.”<sup>72</sup>

Bright took theological concepts, like the Trinity, and explained them in a clear manner.<sup>73</sup>

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CrossWay, 2005), 16. Furthermore, see Paul Blackham, “Evangelism through Explaining the Trinity” in The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, *The Mission of an Evangelist: Amsterdam/2000 A Conference of Preaching Evangelists* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 2001), 435-36.

<sup>70</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 242.

<sup>71</sup>J. I. Packer, “The Content of the Gospel,” in *The Mission of an Evangelist*, 33.

<sup>72</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 113. He continued, “The Bible proclaims that God is one yet triune. That is, He exists as three Persons in one.” Bright, *His Intimate Presence: Experiencing the Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit* (Orlando: NewLife, 2003), 33. It should be noted that Bright thanks Nancy Schraeder and Cindy Godwin for their help in putting this book together. *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>73</sup>Bright, for instance, used an analogy to help explain the Trinity. He said, “It can be argued that water is the most important substance on earth. All living things need it to survive. Water is defined chemically as H<sup>2</sup>O, a molecule made up of hydrogen and oxygen. It can exist in three states—liquid, ice, and steam. But it is always the same substance—H<sup>2</sup>O. This fact of God’s creation is a limited and imperfect illustration, but it helps us get on the right track in considering the mystery of the Trinity. However, when we come to believe we have the mystery solved, we are fooling ourselves! As finite human beings, we will never comprehend the depths of the mystery.” *Ibid.*, 33. Wayne Grudem, however, points out that no quantity of water is ever all three forms of water at

For example, he explained the Trinity as follows:

Theologians have called God's triune nature the Trinity. The members of the Trinity are involved with everything together, yet they also have distinct roles. This is hinted at in the first chapter in the Bible. Genesis 1:26 reads, 'Let us make people in our image' (emphasis added). The plural pronouns 'us' and 'our' mean that more than one person was involved. Who else but God was present during creation? No one. Therefore, the Trinity in its simplest terms means one God manifested in three persons with three distinctive roles.<sup>74</sup>

Bright continued, "Each member of the Trinity has His own role to play, but each is fully God. God is not three separate Gods like some envision, but has complete unity. No Person in the Trinity is less important, less powerful, or less of anything than any other Person."<sup>75</sup> Bright was orthodox in his beliefs regarding the Trinity. However, as noted in chapter 4, he placed an emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in one's life.<sup>76</sup>

### God as Omnipresent

Paul Enns writes, regarding the omnipresence of God, "More specifically, omnipresence may be defined as 'God, in the totality of his essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts.'"<sup>77</sup>

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the same time. Hence, Bright's analogy is inadequate for explaining the Trinity. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 240.

<sup>74</sup>Bright, *God*, 27-28. Bright further noted, "After mankind fell into sin, the Lord God said, 'The people have become as We are, knowing everything, both good and evil' (Genesis 3:22)" Ibid., 33. Bright continued, regarding the Trinity: "God the Father is first in the Trinity. In general, He orchestrates action. For example, He sent to earth God the Son, Jesus, and bestowed His authority upon Him. God the Son is the second person of the Trinity. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. He is the cornerstone and head of the worldwide Church. Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father interceding for His Church. God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is our Comforter. As the 'active arm' of God on earth, He lives within believers and guides us into all truth. He convicts us of sin and helps us know God and His will. Yet God is still one. It is difficult for us, with our limited comprehension, to understand how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are distinct personalities, co-equal, yet one at the same time. Our best efforts to understand this relationship fall far short." Ibid., 28.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>76</sup>For an excellent source regarding an orthodox view of the Trinity, see Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*.

<sup>77</sup>Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 194.

Bright believed that God is omnipresent. He substantiated his belief by quoting Jeremiah 23:23-24 (NIV): “‘Am I only a God nearby,’ declares the Lord, ‘and not a God far away? . . . Do not I fill heaven and earth?’”<sup>78</sup> Bright went on to proclaim:

God’s ability to be present everywhere is called omnipresence. It means that there is not a sliver of space anywhere in the universe where He is not dynamically and powerfully present with all of His wonderful personal attributes. He is not limited by a body, but is a Spirit who moves wherever He wishes.<sup>79</sup>

Bright continued in his explanation of God’s omnipresence: “He [God] is distinct from His creation, so far above it in every way that we cannot equate His essence with His creation. Yet because He has no limitations, God is also present in every corner of His universe. This means that He is present in the mountains and the stars, but He is not these things.”<sup>80</sup> The aforementioned quote from Bright also represents God’s transcendence. God is above his creation in all aspects—in his knowledge, in his power, and in his ability to be present everywhere at once.

### **God as Omniscient**

Paul Enns points out, regarding God’s omniscience, “A more comprehensive definition will state that God knows all things actual and possible, past, present, and future, in one eternal act.”<sup>81</sup> Bright believed that God knows everything that is knowable. He properly defined God’s knowledge as “omniscience.”<sup>82</sup> He also quoted the late theologian Stephen Charnock who said, “He knows what angels know, what man knows,

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Grudem, moreover, offers a good definition: “God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.” Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 173.

<sup>78</sup>Bright, *God*, 62.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 194.

<sup>82</sup>Bright explained, “Theologians call God’s unlimited knowledge omniscience (all knowing).” Bright, *God*, 85.

and infinitely more; He knows Himself, His own operations, all His creatures, the notions and thoughts of them.”<sup>83</sup> Regarding God’s omniscience, Bright pointed out:

Because God knows absolutely everything that can ever be known, He has never had to learn anything. He does not need a computer because all knowledge is instantly accessible to Him and He remembers everything at all times. He is never bewildered or confused or perplexed. He never has to figure something out; everything is always absolutely clear to Him. Nothing ever surprises God; He is always completely aware of all events because He sees everything. Nothing ever turns out differently than he expected or planned.<sup>84</sup>

Bright also correctly believed that God’s omniscience includes knowledge of the past. He noted, “Our omniscient God, however, never forgets the past. One of the marvelous facets of God’s knowledge is that He knows everything that has happened in the past as though it were happening right now. He has no dark recesses in his memory where some past action lies hidden.”<sup>85</sup>

Additionally, knowledge of the present is included in God’s knowledge, according to Bright. He did well to point out,

If God did not know all the present, then He could be deceived and misled. But God knows everything about all His creatures. . . . We can compare God’s knowledge to a mother who knows exactly what her child has done and is doing. Mothers often intuitively discern the real motives of their children’s actions. If that is true of a mother, how much more is it true of our heavenly Father!<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, Bright accurately understood that God has exhaustive knowledge of the future as well. He suggested:

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<sup>83</sup>Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, vol. 1 (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), quoted in Bright, *God*, 86.

<sup>84</sup>Bright, *God*, 86.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 89. Bright is also correct in his understanding of God not choosing to hold sins against believers when they ask for forgiveness—God does not forget one’s sins as if He can not recall them. He pointed out, “The only time God promises not to remember our past is when we seek His forgiveness. . . . Even though He is aware of our sins, He consciously does not ‘remember’ them after we confess them.” Ibid. Grudem also points out that passages such as Isaiah 43:25 where God says that he will not remember believers’ sins, mean that “God will never again let the knowledge of these sins play any part in the way he relates to us: he will ‘forget’ them in his relationship to us.” Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 192.

<sup>86</sup>Bright, *God*, 89.

Now consider the foreknowledge of God. . . . To prove His ability to predict the future, God gave us hundreds of prophecies in the Bible. One that fascinates me is the prophecy that the Jewish people would be called together as a nation [Duet 30:3; Isaiah 11:11, 12; Jeremiah 23:3, 4; Zephaniah 3:20]. The temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 and the Jewish people scattered from their homeland. What were the chances that a people without a country could survive as a nation? Every other nation since then has disappeared into oblivion. But in 1948, the Jewish people reestablished their homeland in Israel. The odds are astronomical of that happening after nearly two millennia. God's prophecies are 100 percent accurate because He not only knows the future, He also *controls* the future [emphases mine].<sup>87</sup>

Bright left no room in his understanding of God's knowledge for being labeled as an open theist.<sup>88</sup> He affirmed, as noted above, that God knows everything that is knowable. His knowledge includes knowledge of the past, present, and all future events, which the open theist cannot affirm.

### God as Love

Bright raised the question: "Indeed, why has the love of God in Christ been my major emphasis for more than half a century of ministry? It is because the heart of the Bible's message is Christ. Jesus Himself emphasized that He was the heart of God's revelation to mankind."<sup>89</sup> Bright, however, was criticized for emphasizing God's love

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>88</sup>For a thorough explanation of open theism, see Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000). Describing open theism, Ware says, "Many readers may be surprised to learn that this very view (namely, that God does not know much of the future and has to learn what happens as that future unfolds) is being advocated by a growing number of biblical scholars, theologians, and philosophers who identify themselves as evangelicals, some of whom teach at highly respected evangelical colleges and seminaries. . . they like to make central the notion that, for God as well as for us, much of the future is 'open' and hence not foreknown or foreordained." Ibid., 18.

<sup>89</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 46. Bright continued, "God is the source of all love. It is the supreme expression of His nature." Ibid., 129. Martin Luther also said that God "is 'nothing but burning love and a glowing oven full of love.'" Martin Luther *LW*, LI: 95, quoted in Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 220. Bright went on, regarding God's love, "Yet we must give heavy emphasis to God's love and the grace and forgiveness available to all people through faith in the great sacrifice of God's Son, our wonderful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *This was the emphasis that God placed on my heart when I first became a Christian and is what drew me to Him.* This has also been the emphasis of Campus Crusade for Christ" [emphasis mine]. Bill Bright, "Harry Left The Church." Insights from Bill Bright [on-line]; retrieved 19 May 2004. Salem Network 2004: Email Update. In addition, see Bright, *First Love: Renewing Your*

rather than his holiness when speaking to nonbelievers. For example, Walter Chantry said, “To say to a rebel, ‘God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life,’ is terribly misinforming.”<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, a missionary Bright knew condemned him for focusing on God’s love. Bright recalled his criticism as follows: “‘I would never preach a sermon like that,’ he scolded. ‘I leave talking about God’s love to the theological liberals. My message emphasizes faith.’”<sup>91</sup>

Yet Bright did not shy away from emphasizing God’s love toward sinners. He wrote, regarding how one is to view God’s love:

God’s love is expressed to all people, not just those who love Him. He loved us first before we loved Him—even when we were unlovable. That is hard for us to accept at times. Yet all people benefit from His loving care: ‘He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.’ When the sun rises, its warm rays are an expression of God’s love; when the rains come, they demonstrate God’s love to all.<sup>92</sup>

Regarding God’s love, Bright described the three kinds mentioned in the Bible. He pointed out, “In New Testament times, there were three primary words for love: *eros* (sensual love); *phileo* (brotherly love); and *agape* (unconditional, supernatural love). Our world speaks mainly of *eros* or *phileo* love, but God’s love is *agape*, the purest, deepest kind of love.”<sup>93</sup> Bright continued to explain God’s love. He noted, “Love is the supreme

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*Passion for God, Bill Bright Signature Series* (Peachtree City, GA: NewLife, 2002), 28-29.

<sup>90</sup>Walter J. Chantry, *Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (Carlisle, England: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 28.

<sup>91</sup>Bright, *God*, 213.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.* God’s love is also demonstrated through his common grace, which Bright indirectly referred to in the above quote. The rain from above and the sun which shines are all examples of God’s love toward all of his creation, common grace; yet this grace is not saving grace. Common grace, as will be discussed later in this chapter, for the Arminian, restores the sinner’s ability to choose or reject Christ when presented with the gospel. Bright did not say that he concurred with this position. See Grudem’s description of common grace in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 657-68, and particularly 663 n. 5.

<sup>93</sup>Bright, *God*, 212-13.

expression of God's personhood and flows out of His goodness. It affects all His other attributes. The Bible does not say, 'God is holiness' or 'God is power,' but 'God is love.' God's heart overflows with His supernatural and unconditional love for us."<sup>94</sup>

God is definitely a loving God; however, his holiness cannot be separated from his love. Certainly, a sinner needs to know that God's love cannot be appropriated in his life while God's wrath rests upon him, until he repents and receives Christ (Rom 1:18).<sup>95</sup> Paul Enns points out, "Many see holiness as the foremost attribute of all because holiness pervades all the other attributes of God and is consistent with all He is and does."<sup>96</sup> More attention will be given to the issue of God's love and holiness later in this chapter and in the following chapter when the content of the *Four Spiritual Laws* is covered.

### **God as Sovereign**

In building one's theology of evangelism, God's sovereignty should receive proper attention—lest one's view of God becomes anemic. Metzger commented, regarding God's sovereignty and human responsibility, "A scriptural emphasis on divine sovereignty and human responsibility should be at the heart of a right view of the human will and a recovery of fervent evangelism today."<sup>97</sup>

Bright often referred to God as sovereign. He declared,

Compared to Him, no other ruler or reign is even a blip on the screen of eternity. He does not need ceremony or to drape Himself in grandeur to appear more regal. Jewels and wealth mean nothing to Him. Yes, this divine Ruler is none other than the Sovereign God. His throne is far above the universe in heaven; He rules over all. David, himself a king, asked, 'Who is this king of glory?' Then he answers his own question, 'The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, invincible in battle . . . The

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid. For more information on God's love see Bright, *The Journey Home*, 94.

<sup>95</sup>It should be noted that Bright does cover God's holiness and punishment of sin in great detail, as will be noted later in this chapter. However, the sinner must understand that, yes, God does love him, but, God's love does not come without some requirements which He expects of man.

<sup>96</sup>Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 192-93.

<sup>97</sup>Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 109.

Lord Almighty—He is the King of glory.’ [Ps 24:8-10 NKJ] In one of the final chapters in the Bible, John identifies Him as ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’ [Rev 19:1 NLT].<sup>98</sup>

Bright covered three ways for the believer to view God’s sovereignty. He believed, and rightly so, that God, first sovereignly rules the universe. He noted:

God reigns so supremely above His creation that we cannot question any of His actions. Whatever God wants to have happen will happen; His will cannot be thwarted. Daniel explains, ‘He determines the course of world events; He removes kings and sets others on the throne.’ God’s creative actions set the stage for His sovereignty. He was able to create because He was in absolute control of every particle of material even before He brought it into being. Once He formed something, no matter how simple or complex, He remained in absolute authority.<sup>99</sup>

Referring to the pot and the potter from Jeremiah, Bright additionally stated:

Through this illustration, God pointed out His *limitless sovereignty* [emphasis mine]. ‘O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand. [Jeremiah 18:6 NLT]’ As Creator, God could do whatever He wanted with His creation. No matter how much the clay complained or rebelled, it was shaped by the strong hand of the potter. Centuries later, Paul points out: ‘Shall what is formed say to Him who formed it, ‘Why did You make me like this? [Rom 9:20 NIV],<sup>100</sup>

Another way Bright succinctly explained God’s sovereignty is by explaining his rule over the laws of nature. He pointed out, “God established the scientific laws that regulate the universe; only He can overrule their effect. For God, miracles are ‘routine.’”<sup>101</sup>

Bright, thirdly, said that God sovereignly fulfills His eternal master plan. He noted, “God actively directs His creation toward a pre-determined conclusion. Therefore, he controls all other authorities.”<sup>102</sup> Yet Bright realized that God’s sovereignty is not that of an evil, utilitarian dictator. He pointed out, “Because God is good, He is a gracious Sovereign and obliging Benefactor rather than an arbitrary tyrant. Understanding God’s sovereignty causes us to focus on Him, not ourselves. Our response is to fall at His feet

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<sup>98</sup>Bright, *God*, 103.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

and give Him everything we are and own.”<sup>103</sup> It is true; when one properly understands God’s control over the entire creation, both the physical and the metaphysical, one’s response should be an attitude of worship and humility that Sovereign God would choose to know humans personally.

### **God as Holy**

Bright recognized that God’s holiness is important, but he was not always clear on whether God’s holiness or love is his preeminent attribute. For instance, he said, “Of all God’s attributes, nothing compares to the splendor and beauty of His holiness. It is chief among His attributes. . . . In fact, theologians speak of God’s holiness as His ‘central and supreme perfection.’”<sup>104</sup> He, however, also mentioned that God’s love is the supreme expression of his nature: “Love is the supreme expression of God’s personhood and flows out of His goodness. It affects all His other attributes. The Bible does not say, ‘God is holiness’ or ‘God is power,’ but ‘God is love.’ God’s heart overflows with His supernatural and unconditional love for us.”<sup>105</sup>

Bright would have done well to have clarified how both God’s holiness and love can be his preeminent attribute. As it stands, he has listed them both as being the dominant or preeminent attribute. He has contradicted himself by not clarifying his position. Both God’s love and holiness, in fact, are dominant attributes of God’s character, and Bright merely needed to clarify that both God’s love and his holiness are to be emphasized together as his dominant attributes.

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 109, 111.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 130, 132. For additional comments by Bright on God’s holiness, see Bright, *Discover the Book*, 121. Bright commented, “God’s holiness is His nature. He is holy through and through. He generates holiness; He did not acquire it. In fact, the Bible tells us that holiness is a key characteristic in God’s nature. When the Old Testament prophet Isaiah encountered God, he heard the angels around God’s throne cry out, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with His glory!’ (Isa 6:3).” Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Bright, *God*, 212-13.

Bright further explained that God's holiness caused him to think of his own sinfulness, and he used an analogy of a suit becoming soiled. He pointed out,

We are like a man wearing a beautiful white suit who was invited to go down into the depths of a coal mine. In the darkness of the mine, he was not aware that his suit was becoming soiled. But when he resurfaced into the dazzling light of the noonday sun, he was fully aware that his suit had become sooty and dirty. The light of God's holiness reveals the darkness of our sin.<sup>106</sup>

Bright created a helpful way to picture man's sin and God's holiness through his soiled suit analogy. It should be noted that Bright believed man is corrupt from birth (as noted later in this chapter when sin and depravity is covered). Nevertheless, as most analogies, this one breaks down when closely examined. Humanity is not born with a white suit, but with a dark and stained suit according to the Scriptures. Jeremiah declares "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it" (Jer 17:9 NAS)? King David lamented in Psalm 51:5 "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (NAS). The apostle Paul pointed out, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12 NAS). Humanity's "white suit" is not "becoming soiled" but rather is soiled from birth.

God's wrath is also a part of God's holiness.<sup>107</sup> Bright referred to Habakkuk 1:13, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; You cannot tolerate wrong" (NIV).<sup>108</sup> He further reasoned, "God's holiness demands consequences for sin. We have broken His standard of holiness, and His holiness demands that He judge sin, not ignore or excuse it."<sup>109</sup> He stated, "Yet God's wrath is not uncontrolled anger, like we may sometimes

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<sup>106</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 131.

<sup>107</sup>Grudem declared, "God's wrath directed against sin is therefore closely related to God's holiness and justice. God's wrath may be defined as follows: God's wrath means that he intensely hates all sin." Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 205-06.

<sup>108</sup>Bright, *God*, 133.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

think. Instead, it is a planned and just act that has its roots in God's holiness."<sup>110</sup>

### **God as Mercy**

Bright believed that God displays his mercy through common grace. For instance, he said:

We realize that a fraction of change in our environment could destroy all life on Earth. If the distance between the Earth and sun was changed even slightly, our atmosphere would be too cold or too hot to sustain life. Without sufficient atmosphere around the Earth, harmful rays from outer space would kill us. But God sustains this planet on which we live in a marvelous fashion so that we enjoy night and day, summer and winter, rainy seasons and dry. Jesus stated in the Sermon on the Mount, '[God] gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too.' [Matt 5:45 NLT] God provides the necessities of life for every human born on this planet. . . . Our merciful God always seeks the welfare, both temporal (life on earth) and eternal (life in heaven forever), of His children and those who have not yet accepted His love and forgiveness. Although many people show mercy to others, God is the grand master of mercy. His very nature desires to relieve us of the self-imposed misery and distress we experience because of our sin.<sup>111</sup>

Bright also believed that the greatest demonstration of God's mercy is seen in Christ's act of mercy on the cross.<sup>112</sup> The work of Christ on the cross is covered later in this chapter.

### **God as Justice**

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 89:14 "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before Thee" (NAS). Isaiah prophesied concerning the Messiah, "There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this" (Isa 9:7 NAS).

Bright realized that God is a God of justice. He noted, "As the holy and

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 231-32. For additional information on Bright's views on God's mercy, see Bill Bright, *God's Attributes*, 82-86.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 83.

righteous sovereign of the universe, God cannot ignore or overlook any act of sin.”<sup>113</sup> He fittingly continued, “God’s anger over sin should never be underestimated: ‘You spread out our sins before You—our secret sins—and You see them all. We live our lives beneath Your wrath . . . Who can comprehend the power of Your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear You deserve’ [Ps 90: 8, 9, 11 NLT].”<sup>114</sup> He further commented, “God hates sin and loves justice . . . But He is also patient, desiring that all people recognize their sin, come to repentance, find forgiveness in the sacrificial death of His Son, and so escape the judgment of eternal death.”<sup>115</sup>

Bright’s view of God’s judgment of believers and nonbelievers is also biblical, because he believed that believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and unbelievers will face the judgment of God before the Great White throne judgment.<sup>116</sup> He also understood that God delays his punishment of sinners so that more can find eternal life. He correctly noted, “All believers are saved because God delays His justice. . . . None of us deserve even one day of life because of our sinful, depraved nature, so we must be grateful for a just God who delays punishment.”<sup>117</sup> Indeed, Bright’s view of God’s justice is biblical.

### **God as Immutable**

One who is building his or her theology of evangelism must also believe and

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<sup>113</sup>Bright, *God*, 194. For more information on Bright’s comments regarding God’s justice, see Bright, *Discover the Book*, 123. Also, see Bright, *God’s Attributes*, 69-74.

<sup>114</sup>Bright, *God*, 194.

<sup>115</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 124.

<sup>116</sup>Bright, *God*, 197. Bright’s view of two separate judgments was influenced by dispensationalism. See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 7:213-17. In contrast, there are those, such as Wayne Grudem, who believe that there will be only one judgment according to Scripture. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1141-42.

<sup>117</sup>Bright, *God*, 201.

share about a God who is constant—not an arbitrary God who is undependable and unapproachable. The Bible paints the picture of a God who is unchanging. God says, “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed” (Mal 3:6 NAS). James writes “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow” (Jas 1:17 NAS). God’s immutability, according to Paul Enns, is “that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in His purposes and promises . . . and is free from all accession or diminution and from all growth or decay in His Being or perfections.”<sup>118</sup>

Bright did well to declare, “Our only hope in this life lies in one fact: God never changes. He is the constant that we can count on while everything else around us deteriorates.”<sup>119</sup> He continued, “The God of the Bible is the only unchanging Supreme Being. . . . Theologians call this consistency and dependability God’s immutability.”<sup>120</sup> Bright went on to declare, “He never changes in His essential being, never varies how He reacts to sinful man, to man’s repentance, or to man’s worship. Sin and unbelief always displease Him; obedience and faith always warm His heart.”<sup>121</sup> Bright was careful to explain God’s immutability to those who might misunderstand it—such as those who might say, “What’s the use in praying?” He pointed out:

Perhaps you are thinking: If God never changes, what is the purpose of prayer and other communication with God? I want to caution you about using God’s immutability as an excuse not to pray or to ask Him to intervene in your daily life. Although He will never change His plans, Scriptures abound that show how God alters His temporary purposes in response to our faith and actions. For example, He reverses His judgment because of sincere repentance of sinners. At other times, He

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<sup>118</sup>Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 189.

<sup>119</sup>Bright, *God*, 272. For more information on God’s immutability, see Bright, *God’s Attributes*, 92-94.

<sup>120</sup>Bright, *God*, 273.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*

responds to the needs of human beings or the fervent prayer of the righteous. This is one of the mysteries of God's nature. We know that God never changes, and yet He relates to us and gives us our free will. When we pray and ask Him to intervene in our lives, He does so—when it is in line with His will.<sup>122</sup>

Bright's views on God's immutability are biblical and pass the test of orthodoxy.<sup>123</sup>

### Holy Spirit

In building one's theology of evangelism, having an orthodox view of the Holy Spirit is important, for people are prone to misunderstand Him.<sup>124</sup> Bright understood the potential for this problem as well.<sup>125</sup> He aptly noted:

There are many names for the Holy Spirit, but also many misconceptions about Him. Perhaps this is because He is impossible to picture in our minds. With some effort, most of us can form mental images of God the Father and God the Son. We can read about God and His dealing with His people in the Old Testament. We can read about Jesus in the New Testament. We can understand their relationship by

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<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 288.

<sup>123</sup>See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 163-65, for an excellent explanation of God's immutability.

<sup>124</sup>Bright pointed out, "Many people make the mistake of depersonalizing God's Holy Spirit. They think of Him as some kind of will or force within them, not a He but an It. They confuse Him with the vague generic idea of a conscience, or pick up false ideas from Eastern religions about some small 'spark' of God within mankind. But the Bible is very clear that none of these accurately describe who the Holy Spirit is and how He relates to us." Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 31. Bright also noted, "Much of the mystery and ignorance comes, of course, through the fact that God's Spirit transcends our five senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. He can be perceived only by our spirit—that unseen part of us that is renewed at salvation. . . . We cannot touch Him physically, though we can be touched emotionally by Him. We cannot see Him, yet He refines our vision and understanding of our awesome Creator and Savior. We cannot hear His voice, but we can listen for His guidance." Ibid., 30.

<sup>125</sup>Bright wrote, "In the course of our ministry, we have surveyed many thousands of Christians in churches around the world. Sadly, nearly 95 percent of the respondents have indicated that they have little knowledge of who the Holy Spirit is or why He exists." Bill Bright, *The Secret: How to Live With Purpose and Power* (Orlando: NewLife, 1994, 2003), 36. It should be noted that Bright said, regarding the writing of this book, "Through the years I have authored scores of books and thousands of articles. There once was a time when my schedule allowed me to personally write, edit, and polish each manuscript; today, however, ministry responsibilities do not allow me such luxury. So when God placed a great desire in my heart to write this book, *The Secret*, I happily sought the counsel of my long-time friend and former fellow staff, Dan Benson. Dan has helped me put into this book the essence of what I have taught and sought to live for over fifty years. I am indebted to him for his professional assistance." Ibid., 7.

watching how earthly fathers and sons relate to each other. It is considerably more difficult to understand the Holy Spirit.<sup>126</sup>

Indeed, New Testament scholar Gordon Fee echoes Bright's beliefs. Fee succinctly states, "For most of us our understanding of the Spirit falls considerably short of personhood. We have a certain immediate empathy with the student who once told a colleague of mine: 'God the Father makes perfectly good sense to me; and God the Son I can quite understand; but the Holy Spirit is a gray, oblong blur.'"<sup>127</sup> Bright adequately pointed out, regarding who the Holy Spirit is not, "He definitely is not a bundle of warm feelings or good memories, or some vague cosmic force."<sup>128</sup>

John Stott, regarding a measuring stick for orthodoxy for beliefs on the Holy Spirit, points out, "A reliable test of the genuineness of every person and movement claiming the endorsement of the Holy Spirit is whether they honor the Lord Jesus Christ, draw attention to him and promote his glory."<sup>129</sup> Bright passes Stott's test. For example, Bright wrote:

But the Holy Spirit does not wish to call attention to Himself. He is the enabler, the empowerer, the equipper, the counselor, and the helper. He desires to promote the work of God and *glorify Christ* (John 16:13, 14). He does this in several ways: The Holy Spirit bears witness of Christ and reminds us of Christ's teachings (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit indwells and empowers every believer (1 Cor 6:19). The Holy Spirit manifests Christ's nature within us (Rom 8:9).<sup>130</sup>

An orthodox theology of the Holy Spirit must also refer to him as the third person of the Trinity—fully God. Bright believed that the Holy Spirit is God. He declared, "*The Holy Spirit is God*. He is not an 'it.' He is not a divine influence. He is

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<sup>126</sup>Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 30.

<sup>127</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 5-6.

<sup>128</sup>Bright, *The Secret*, 37.

<sup>129</sup>Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, 88.

<sup>130</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 31.

not a fleecy white cloud. He is God with all the attributes of deity.”<sup>131</sup> Not only is the Holy Spirit fully God, however; he is to be referred to as a person as well—which Bright was sure to do. He further commented:

God’s Spirit is *fully a person* with all His own individual traits. He speaks, inspires, guides, convicts, comforts, and encourages—all functions an individual personality might perform. Jesus always referred to Him in that light. He used the personal pronouns He and Him, but never the impersonal pronoun It. When he spoke to His disciples in the upper room about the Holy Spirit, He used the Greek word *paracletos* meaning ‘calling to one’s side.’ That name tells us that the Holy Spirit has the ability to give aid and to comfort or console.<sup>132</sup>

**Holy Spirit’s role.** Bright noted that part of the Holy Spirit’s job is to bring conviction. He pointed out, “First, the Holy Spirit came to convict the world of sin and lead us unto all truth.”<sup>133</sup> He was also correct in his view that the Holy Spirit must convict or draw sinners if there is to be true salvation. He said:

It is through the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives that we come to recognize our sin and our need for a Savior. He then draws us to God’s truth and to the salvation that is available only through Jesus Christ. Did you know that you can never come to salvation unless the Holy Spirit is involved? Jesus said, ‘The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit’ (John 3:5). When you share your faith with a nonbeliever, it is the Spirit who is at work, convicting the person of his sin and drawing him to God.<sup>134</sup>

Simply put, according to Enns, “Regeneration is the act whereby God imparts

<sup>131</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 73.

<sup>132</sup>Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 31. Jesus, however, did not speak Greek to his disciples as Bright wrote in the aforementioned quote. He would have spoken Aramaic to them. Bright’s statement hence is incorrect as it stands. See also, regarding Bright’s comments on the Holy Spirit as a person, Bill Bright, *The Holy Spirit: The Key to Supernatural Living* (San Bernardino: CA, Here’s Life, 1980), 9-10.

<sup>133</sup>Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 34.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.* See also Bright, *The Secret*, 38. Bright also said, “We can be certain that the Spirit will remove an individual’s barriers of doubt. But He does something else as well: He convicts people of their sin and their need for salvation. We often worry about how we can persuade a nonbeliever to be saved from his sin when he refuses to acknowledge the existence of sin. Again, this work of persuasion is not our responsibility but the work of the Holy Spirit.” Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 158.

life to the one who believes.”<sup>135</sup> The Holy Spirit brings conviction which can result in regeneration.<sup>136</sup> Bright declared, “The Spirit transforms our lives through a new birth.”<sup>137</sup> He further commented, “‘Regeneration’ refers to a believer’s spiritual rebirth.”<sup>138</sup> He used Titus 3:5 and John 3:3 as passages pertaining to regeneration.<sup>139</sup> Paul writes to Titus, in a marvelous picture of the Holy Spirit’s regenerative work, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of *regeneration* and renewing by the *Holy Spirit*” [emphasis mine] (Titus 3:5 NAS). Furthermore, Christ told Nicodemus that one must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3 NAS).

**Baptism versus filling by the Spirit.** Scripture indicates that there is only one baptism of the Spirit whereby persons are baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13 NAS).<sup>140</sup> Bright writes, “God baptized you into one body for unity. . . . At the moment

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<sup>135</sup>Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 338.

<sup>136</sup>Whether or not one believes in the doctrine of “irresistible grace” will determine whether he believes that God’s conviction through the Holy Spirit results in conversion. It is not clear from Bright’s writings whether he believed in it because he did not refer to the doctrine in his writings. Metzger points out, regarding regeneration and conversion, “Regeneration and conversion are words to describe two different ways of viewing salvation. Regeneration is viewing salvation from God’s side; it is an instantaneous impartation of new life to the soul. We may or may not be conscious of the exact moment this happened to us. Conversion, on the other hand, is viewing salvation from our perspective. It is a process of the entire work of God’s grace from the first dawning of understanding and seeking to the final closing with Christ in new birth. For some, this is a period of years; for others merely an hour. We respond in time to God’s action in eternity.” Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 89.

<sup>137</sup>Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 20.

<sup>138</sup>Bright, *The Holy Spirit*, 14.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid. Enns also refers to these two passages as key texts in discussing regeneration. Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 338.

<sup>140</sup>Furthermore, Enns declares, “There are not two baptisms by the Spirit. Some groups distinguish between 1 Corinthians 12:13, ‘by one Spirit,’ suggesting the placing into the Body and Acts 1:5, ‘with the Holy Spirit,’ suggesting a subsequent act of empowering for service. However, the same Greek preposition *en* is used in both phrases, and it is precarious at best to attempt a distinction where the same Greek phrase is used in

that you receive Christ you become a child of God; your sins are forgiven; you are filled with the Holy Spirit; and you are baptized into the body of Christ by the Spirit.”<sup>141</sup>

Bright’s view of Spirit baptism is biblical; but what about his emphasis on being “filled with the Spirit”?<sup>142</sup> He believed that a believer could be baptized by the Spirit only one time, at the time of conversion, yet one could be “filled by the Spirit” throughout one’s life.<sup>143</sup> He declared,

There is but one indwelling by the Holy Spirit, one rebirth by the Holy Spirit, and one baptism by the Holy Spirit, for all of these glorious acts take place the moment a person receives Christ. However, there can be many fillings by the Holy Spirit. In the Greek language, in which the New Testament was originally written, the meaning of ‘be filled with the Spirit’ is clearer than in most English translations. ‘Be filled’ literally means to be constantly and continually filled, controlled and empowered with the Holy Spirit every moment of every day.<sup>144</sup>

Bright further defined being filled with the Spirit: “It means very simply to be

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both passages.” Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 267. Gordon Fee says that there are commentators who argue that the baptism in 1 Cor 12:13 is water baptism. He, however, points out that it is the Spirit who makes the church one, not water baptism. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 604.

<sup>141</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 93. Idem, *Revolution Now!*, 71-72.

<sup>142</sup>Bright’s views on the Holy Spirit are covered further when the tract “Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?” is discussed in chapter 4, where Bright’s witnessing methodology is discussed.

<sup>143</sup>John Stott holds a similar belief as well. He said, “As an initiatory event the baptism is not repeatable and cannot be lost, but the filling can be repeated and in any case needs to be maintained. If it is not maintained, it is lost. If it is lost, it can be recovered. The Holy Spirit is ‘grieved’ by sin (Eph 4:30) and ceases to fill the sinner. Repentance is then the only road to recovery. Even in cases where there is no suggestion that the fullness has been forfeited through sin, we still read of people being filled again, as a fresh crisis or challenge demands a fresh empowering by the Spirit.” John Stott, *Baptism & Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*, second ed, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 48. Wayne Grudem vouches for the same beliefs as Bright and Stott regarding the “filling of the Holy Spirit.” Grudem writes, regarding the “filling of the Holy Spirit,” “Because of its frequent use in contexts that speak of Christian growth and ministry, this seems to me to be the best term to us to describe genuine ‘second experiences’ today (or third or fourth experiences, etc.). . . . Therefore, it is appropriate to understand filling with the Holy Spirit not as a one-time event but as an event that can occur over and over again in a Christian’s life.” Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 781-82.

<sup>144</sup>Bright, *The Secret*, 50-51.

filled with Christ. Since the Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ, if I am filled and controlled by the Spirit, I shall be filled with Christ—I shall be abiding in Him; I shall be following Him; I shall be walking in the light as He is in the light; and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse and keep on cleansing me from all unrighteousness.”<sup>145</sup>

### **Bright on Sanctification**

One’s theology of evangelism must also include knowledge of how to live a holy life. Millard Erickson points out “So while sanctification is God’s work, the believer has a role as well, entailing both removal of sinfulness and development of holiness.”<sup>146</sup> Certainly, believers battle constantly with temptations, and there is a great need to live godly lives. Bright correctly noted, “We must not underestimate the urgency of holiness.”<sup>147</sup> He declared, “By God’s grace, I have longed to be a holy man ever since I met Him in 1945. Through the reading of God’s Word, prayer, and seeking to obey Him, the pursuit of holiness continues to be one of the most important goals of my life. The Bible calls this process sanctification.”<sup>148</sup>

Bright also was well aware that living a holy life is a daily battle. He pointed out, “Holy living involves a daily decision to surrender to the lordship of Christ. It involves yielding our will to God and adopting His perspective for life.”<sup>149</sup> Characteristic of his love for teaching people how to do something, the practical side of doctrine, he pointed out steps to take for sanctifying one’s life. He noted:

The secret to changing bad habits like cursing is to turn the problem over to God. By faith, admit that you are helpless to change your bad habit. By faith ask His Spirit to give you righteous language to replace the filthy language. As you walk in the Spirit

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<sup>145</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 75

<sup>146</sup>Millard Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 315b.

<sup>147</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 146.

<sup>148</sup>Bright, *God*, 176.

<sup>149</sup>*Ibid.*, 146.

moment by moment, your heart is prepared to act righteously the next time someone angers you. When this happens, take a deep breath and start praising God for something good in the situation. Trust God to take over and work out the problem. This will make the difference in your reaction and the results of the problem.<sup>150</sup>

Bright believed that people are not excited about living a life of holiness because they do not understand how following Christ closely brings joy and excitement in the Christian's life.<sup>151</sup> He quoted C. S. Lewis, regarding living a life of sanctification, "How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing . . . it is irresistible. If even 10 percent of the world's population had it, would not the whole world be converted and happy before a year's end?"<sup>152</sup> Bright offered encouragement for those who struggle to live a holy life. He pointed out that living a life of sanctification is a process—"something we will be working on until the Lord takes us to heaven."<sup>153</sup>

### Man—The Sinful Creature

The Bible is quite clear that humanity is sinful. Paul writes, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12 NAS). Paul Enns defines sin as "a debt, suggesting man's obligation and inability to meet the debt."<sup>154</sup> If one does not have a biblical/orthodox view of sin, one will not understand the seriousness of the chasm between God and man.<sup>155</sup> Albert Mohler succinctly points out, "Genuine Christianity

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<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>151</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 178.

<sup>152</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Letters to an American Lady* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 19, quoted in Bright, *Discover the Book*, 178.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 179. He continued, "In the process of sanctification, God's Word assists us in our spiritual battle. As we study His Word, God by His Spirit is conforming us in attitude and in behavior to the person of Jesus Christ." Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 109.

<sup>155</sup>Bright noted, "Some esteemed philosophers describe humans as basically good. When asked why there is so much evil in the world, these philosophers suggest that a person's environment may influence him to do wrong or that a chemical imbalance in the brain may have caused her evil behavior. There may be some truth in these statements, but they certainly can't explain Hitler's 'final solution' or a serial killer's

cannot escape dealing with sin. The Gospel will not allow any evasion of sin as the universal human condition of revolt against the Creator, the God of absolute holiness and absolute love.”<sup>156</sup> Bright defined sin as “an act of going one’s own independent way. It is a lack of relationship or fellowship with God. The Bible clearly defines sin as falling short of God’s standard, which is His own perfect righteousness. Sin manifests itself as self-centeredness.”<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, Bright declared, “The man who treats sin casually is not likely to be a Christian, according to God’s Word.”<sup>158</sup> Referring to sin, Bright further noted, “It is the antithesis of His nature and the perversion of His laws. Just as a flyspeck in a glass of milk would make us shudder, God cannot tolerate sin of any kind.”<sup>159</sup> Hence, one can see that Bright took sin seriously.

### Original Sin

One who builds his or her theology of evangelism on the truthfulness of God’s

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murderous spree or the terrorist bombings of the World Trade Center. They can’t explain why most two-year-olds hate to share their toys or why we have an urge to strike back when someone hurts us. But the *Bible’s record* of the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden *guides us* in our understanding of human nature. The New Testament also reminds us that “‘all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard’ (Romans 3:23)” [emphases mine]. Bright, *Discover the Book*, 67-68. Bright further commented: “No matter how polite or civilized we were before we became Christians, at our core we were sinners. No amount of good works or finishing school could change that. We were predisposed to sin.” Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 79. Bright further declared, “The old self rebels against God and will twist and turn anything and anyone to try to preserve itself. Yet Jesus said, ‘He who saves his life will lose it.’ As we yield ourselves to the selfish nature, our lives develop cancers in the eyes of God. You can watch the self as it demands attention, seeks its own way, insists on vain recognitions of this world, works to build little monuments to itself, manipulates people to make itself look good, neglects to spend time with God or loved ones, and indulges itself with food and leisure and pleasure. If we are yielded to the Holy Spirit, we will not do these things—yet we do not yield to Him, and we do the wrong things.” Bright, *The Journey Home*, 88.

<sup>156</sup>Albert Mohler, “The Disappearance of Sin—A Flight from Reality” [online]; accessed 13 August 2004; available from <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/weblogs/mohler/1279010.html?view=print>; Internet.

<sup>157</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 39.

<sup>158</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>159</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 122.

special revelation—the Bible—must adhere to the doctrine of original sin. Bright said,

Ever since Adam and Eve first disobeyed God, every person has been born with a sinful nature that insists on exerting self-will, even against the Creator. Isaiah describes our dilemma, ‘How can people like us be saved? We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away.’ [Isa 64:5-6 NLT]<sup>160</sup>

Because of Adam and Eve’s sin, humanity has nothing within to please or satisfy the demands of a just God. In fact, a great chasm exists between God and humanity. Bright was well aware of the chasm. He declared:

Because God is perfectly holy, He could not wink at sin; He had to punish it. Because God is just, His punishment was not just a slap on the wrist. The consequence of humanity’s sin was eternal separation from God. But because God is merciful, He was pained to see His creatures suffer eternal separation.<sup>161</sup>

**Depravity of man.** Bright believed in the depravity of humanity—yet his writings do not use the words “totally depraved.”<sup>162</sup> Nonetheless, he definitely wrote on

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<sup>160</sup>Bright, *God*, 176. Bright pointed out, “God had a spiritual genetic code for humanity. Adam was made in God’s image and perfectly reflected God’s character. But when Adam sinned, that spiritual image became distorted. Since then, the image of God has been distorted in all people.” Bright, *Living Supernaturally in Christ*, 21. Bright further noted, “The flesh (and its nature) is not neutral; it is at war with God.” Bright, *The Journey Home*, 88. Bright additionally stated, “Similarly, Adam’s sin produced death and decay for those he represents. Every man and woman born on this earth has suffered for Adam’s willful disobedience. Thus the writer of Ecclesiastes observes, ‘Death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart’ (Ecclesiastes 7:2).” Bright, *A Man without Equal: Jesus, The Man Who Changed the World* (Orlando: NewLife, 1992), 54-55. In writing this book, Bright sought Don Tanner and his staff to help with writing the book. *Ibid.*, 5. See also, *Discover the Real Jesus*, where Bright further commented, “Because Adam sinned and thereby passed a sin nature on to all his descendants, all humanity is infected with the sin disease. The punishment for this disease is physical death.” Bright, *Discover the Real Jesus*, 58.

<sup>161</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 130. Another one of Bright’s useful, simplistic analogies, which explain doctrinal concepts in laymen’s terms, is as follows: “Reaching God by doing good works is like trying to jump across the Grand Canyon. It is between six and eighteen miles across, 276 miles long, and one mile deep. The world’s record in the long jump is less than 29 feet. A jumper could train for years and even break the world record, but he would still fall far short of the canyon wall on the other side.” Bright, *Discover the Real Jesus*, 59.

<sup>162</sup>See Campus Crusade’s “Statement of Faith” which reads, article 7, “Man’s nature is corrupted, and he is thus totally unable to please God. Every man is in need of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” Bright even said of himself: “Let me say

the depravity of humanity—including himself among the depraved. For instance, he declared, “In this period of sickness, in what are probably my final earthbound days, I am more aware than ever of two realities: the first to emerge is the *dark depravity* [Bright is referring to his sinful nature] and utter unacceptability of my sinful nature before a holy God, and the second is the wonderful, embracing love and mercy of our Savior.”<sup>163</sup> He in fact believed that humans are spiritually dead without Christ. He declared, “Before coming to Christ, we were dead spiritually. Paul explains in Ephesians 2:1, ‘Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins.’ We could not do anything to change our situation any more than a dead body can get up and dance.”<sup>164</sup> The aforementioned quote makes it clear that Bright believed that one’s depravity keeps one from choosing to follow Christ—for a dead body cannot get up to dance. He also stated that one needs the Holy Spirit to make the decision to follow Christ. For instance, he asked, “Did you know that you can never come to salvation unless the Holy Spirit is involved?”<sup>165</sup> Bright’s views on sin are biblical.

### **Bright’s Beliefs on Hell**

The doctrine on hell, though unpleasant, is a must for one’s biblical theology

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again: it was not until I realized how unlovely I was in the eyes of a holy God that I came to understand how much He really loves me. *I, a worm*. He, the great Lover of my soul.” Bright, *The Journey Home*, 92. He further stated, “Because of sin, he [man] is by nature degenerate and corrupt. With his understanding darkened and conscience-defiled, his thoughts and affections are worldly, sensual, and ‘full of evil.’” Bright, *A Man without Equal*, 55.

<sup>163</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 87. “Mankind seems so slow and unwilling to accept this truth: God is holy, pure, and totally sinless. We should shriek at sin the way some do at the sight of mice or snakes or hornets. God hates sin. So must we.” *Ibid.*, 80. Bright continued: “What a *depraved rascal* Bill Bright is in the old man! With the hymn writer, I say, ‘My sinful self my only shame; my glory all the cross.’” *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>164</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 29.

<sup>165</sup>Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 34.

of evangelism.<sup>166</sup> There are evangelicals, however, who are opting for a less than biblical view on hell—such as annihilationism.<sup>167</sup> Bright was well aware of the tendency to misrepresent the doctrine of hell.<sup>168</sup> Yet Bright declared, “We must not withhold from people the ugly realities of an eternity without God in hell for those who refuse His love and forgiveness and the penalty of sin, both temporally and eternally, because Jesus Himself spoke of these things often. That can also be a motivator for people to receive Christ and come into the Kingdom.”<sup>169</sup> Bright further commented, “Jesus does not say

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<sup>166</sup>Bright quoted Billy Graham, who said, “Unless we believe in a future judgment or that people are lost forever without Christ, the cutting edge of evangelism is blunted.” Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, gen. eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1998), 377, quoted in Bright, *Heaven or Hell: Your Ultimate Choice* (Orlando: NewLife, 2002), 44. It should be noted that Bright thanks Mike Richardson for his research and editorial assistance for the creation of this book. *Ibid.*, 5. Also, for additional information on the doctrine of hell and annihilationism, see Lee Strobel’s discussion with J.P. Moreland in chapter 6, “Objection #6: A Loving God Would Never Torture People in Hell,” in Lee Strobel, *The Case For Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

<sup>167</sup>Bright quoted Robert Peterson who says that annihilationism seriously underestimates the pains of hell; indeed, the lost would rather be annihilated because their suffering would be over. . . .” Elliot Miller, “Evangelicals and the Annihilationism of Hell” (*Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1991), 8, quoted in Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 42. In contrast, Stott said, in a debate with a liberal Anglican, “I am grateful to you for challenging me to declare my present mind. I do not dogmatize about the position to which I have come, I hold to it tentatively. But I do plead for frank dialogue among Evangelicals on the basis of Scripture. I also believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal, conscious torment.” Taken from Larry Dixon, *The Other Side of the Good News: Confronting the Contemporary Challenges to Jesus’ Teaching on Hell* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 71. Also, see J.P. Moreland’s discussion with Lee Strobel on how hell will be: Moreland believes that language such as “flames of hell” is a figure of speech. He says, “For example, hell is described as a place of utter darkness and yet there are flames, too. How can that be? Flames would light things up. . . . Using the flame imagery is a way of saying he’s a God of judgment.” Strobel, *The Case for Faith*, 176.

<sup>168</sup>Bright said, “There are many misconceptions about the reality of hell. One is the idea that a loving God, by His nature, would not send anyone to such an awful place. Another is the concept of reincarnation—we die only to come to life again as a different creature. Others believe that after the body dies, the soul is absorbed into the cosmos or is dissolved into a supreme being. In either case, the individual personality ceases to exist.” Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 33.

<sup>169</sup>Bill Bright, “Insights from Bill Bright: Harry Left the Church” [on-line]; accessed 19 May 2004; Salem Network 2004, Email Update.

that we can determine who enters the kingdom and who does not. But we can declare that someone has been forgiven of their sins if they have truly placed their faith in Christ. We can also say with certainty that anyone who has not received Christ will spend eternity in hell.”<sup>170</sup>

Bright had a change of emphasis in his ministry regarding hell which proved important for balancing his theology of evangelism with both God’s love and his punishment of sin. Near the end of his life, he declared:

I confess I have failed in my ministry to declare the reality of hell as often as I have the love of God and the benefits of a personal relationship with Christ. But Jesus spent more of His time warning His listeners of the impending judgment of hell than speaking of the joys of heaven. God never planned for any human ever to go to hell. It has never been my emphasis to focus on hell because it is a place designed by God for our enemy and his demons.<sup>171</sup>

Bright commented further,

I have never felt the need to focus on telling people about hell. However, as a result of a steady decline in morals and spiritual vitality in today’s culture and a growing indifference to the afterlife, I have come to realize the need for a greater discussion of hell. . . . I have come to see that silence, or even benign neglect on these subjects, is disobedience on my part. To be silent on the eternal destination of souls is to be like a sentry failing to warn his fellow soldiers of impending attack. It is like knowing calamity is coming and not sounding the alarm.<sup>172</sup>

Bright not only realized that he should warn those without Christ about hell, he

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<sup>170</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 111. Bright also said, “The Bible refers to hell 167 times. But never forget, there is a cross at the entrance to hell. The only way a person can go there is to push the cross aside and deliberately reject God’s love and forgiveness. . . . God did not establish hell for the purpose of scaring people into heaven. Nevertheless, it is a biblical fact that a place of eternal punishment exists, and those who do not know Jesus as their personal Savior ignore it to their own destruction” Bright, *The Journey Home*, 149. Bright does not comment in his writings on the plight of those who have never heard the gospel. The apostle Paul makes it clear in Romans 1:19-21 that God’s general revelation holds humanity accountable: “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (ESV).

<sup>171</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 32-33. See also Bright, *The Journey Home*, 148.

<sup>172</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 48.

was also broken, as any true evangelist should be, over the plight of the unconverted. He declared, “My joyous anticipation of heaven as my home has always been tempered by my realization that not everyone may be there.”<sup>173</sup>

**Bright’s description of hell.** Bright raised the following questions: “Is THERE REALLY a hell? Is it a rowdy tavern kept by a fellow in a red suit with horns and a tail? If not, what is it like?”<sup>174</sup> He defined hell as follows:

The word ‘hell’ is translated from ‘Gehenna,’ a narrow valley outside Jerusalem where idolaters burned their children as sacrifices to the god Molech. It later became the city’s stinking, ever-burning garbage dump. As the place where the bodies of dead animals and criminals were thrown into the continuous fire, it came to picture everlasting destruction. This was the analogy Jesus used to describe hell as eternal torment.<sup>175</sup>

Bright described the torture and agony of hell in the following way:

Hell is a place of unfathomable torture. On this earth, we may know the pain of touching a hot stove or an overheated auto engine. We draw back, repulsed by the pain for a few moments. But imagine if those moments extended for a million billion years! It would be as if a volcano had erupted and we found ourselves swimming in the hot molten lava, alone, forever, with no hope of rescue or relief, ever. . . . All the senses will be under attack. Our nostrils will burn with stinging heat, and we will smell the stench of burning flesh. We will taste our own vomit. We will hear the wails of others whom we cannot see, and consequently, we will not be able to aid them. We will see only the unending nature of this torment; although there will be unimaginable heat, there will be no light in this tunnel of eternal darkness. Every touch will cause the flesh to rot and fall away; and we won’t be able to bring one moment’s comfort to our bodies (Matt 18:8; 22:13). . . . In hell the body will be in such intense pain that it will seem almost paralyzed. The inner person will burn with anger—at self, at God, at the devil, at others. This anger will flood the soul with pain. Constant turmoil will dominate the mind, and there will be no place of appeal, no friend to turn to, no way out, no light, no ending of it, no lessening of it, no prospect nor hope of it ever coming to pass. It will stay, nag,

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<sup>173</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 148. He also pointed out, “Who can be comfortable describing hell? Yet there is no way I can deny the truth of hell’s existence. Jesus made it a priority to warn of hell and to advise how to avoid it, so how can His followers be silent? I agree with the famous evangelist D. L. Moody, founder of Chicago’s Moody Church and the Moody Bible Institute, who said, ‘When we preach on hell, we might at least do it with tears in our eyes,’” cited by Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, gen. eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 377, cited in Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 29.

<sup>174</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 29.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

burn, churn the stomach, grimace the soul. It will bring regret and tragic sensations of abject failure, lost opportunity, and utter hopelessness.<sup>176</sup>

Bright went on to address the common reply from those who do not believe a loving God can send anyone to hell. He responded:

I am often asked, ‘How can a loving God send anyone to hell?’ This question betrays an incorrect understanding of God. Although God is loving and merciful, He is also holy, righteous, and just. To emphasize some of His attributes at the expense of others creates a distorted view of who God is and therefore creates false expectations of what He will do at the judgment seat. . . . As I read the Bible, I read of a God of love and compassion who created men and women in His own image and made available to us a wonderful life of beauty-rich and full of His presence and provision. But I also read of a God who is holy.<sup>177</sup>

### **Christ—The Merciful Redeemer**

The foundation for Bright’s theology of evangelism is laid upon the inerrancy and the infallibility of Scripture, and his view of who God is forms the frame or the skeleton for the building. One’s view of Christ, however, is vitally important for building a theology of evangelism.

### **Incarnation**

An orthodox theology of evangelism leaves no room for misunderstanding Jesus Christ. Any evangelist who expects to be faithful and obedient to the mandate of the Great Commission must represent the biblical Jesus—God in human flesh. Bright raised a pertinent question for non-believers, “Who is Jesus of Nazareth to you? A myth? A mere man? Or the Son of God? Your life upon this earth and for all eternity is affected by your answer to this question.”<sup>178</sup> Indeed, every person with a rational mind must answer the same question—who is Jesus? Bright began his description of Jesus as follows: “As a tiny, helpless baby He came to the world He had created, in a universe He

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>178</sup>Bright, “The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ,” *Knowing Jesus Personally* (Campus Crusade for Christ, 1993), 4.

ruled, and He made Himself known to us as Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>179</sup> Bright adequately declared further evidence of his biblical, orthodox view of Christ:

Jesus Christ is the central figure of the Bible. He is the incarnate God, who came to pay the penalty of sin so that we—believers of the past, present, and future—can have a relationship with Him. From Genesis, with its symbolism of the nation that would produce the Messiah, to Revelation, where the Messiah returns in glory, the Bible presents God’s love through Jesus Christ.<sup>180</sup>

**Christ’s nature.** One must also be sure to describe properly Christ’s nature—two in one. Bright referred to several passages of Scripture to show that Christ indeed has two natures in one. The first passage shows Christ’s deity—fully God: “In Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body (Col 2:9 NLT).<sup>181</sup> He also referred to Hebrews 1:1-3 to show Christ’s deity:

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, He has spoken to us through His Son. God

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<sup>179</sup>Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 19. Bright believed in the virgin birth of Christ: “God in the person of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin . . .” Bright, *A Man Without Equal*, 56. In addition, for a more detailed description of the virgin birth, see Bright *Discover the Real Jesus*, chapter 4. Bright died before the final editing and revisions of this book; however, the publishers kept Bright’s verbs in the present tense to make sure that his thoughts are maintained, *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>180</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 44. Bright further commented on the incarnation: “In Jesus, God became flesh so we could see, hear, and touch the invisible God. Through Christ, God intricately created every living thing, and Jesus continues to hold our complex universe together even now.” Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 18. He also said, “Our glorious risen Savior is God’s powerful Word—His revelation—in flesh.” *Ibid.*, 128. Bright showed several other biblical references to show that Christ is God in human flesh: “Jesus claimed to be the I Am of the Old Testament. Here are some examples of His statements: ‘I am the bread of life.’ (John 6:35) ‘I am the light of the world.’ (John 8:12) ‘I am the gate.’ (John 10:9) ‘I am the Son of God.’ (John 10:36) ‘I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25).” Bright, *Discover God*, 46. See article two of Campus Crusade’s *Statement of Faith*: “Jesus Christ is God, the living Word, who became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. Hence, He is perfect Deity and true humanity united in one person forever.” In addition, Bright declared, “Fully God and fully human, Jesus lived among us and demonstrated through His life and teachings just how we are supposed to live. He was the Word of God made flesh. Then, on the cross where men crucified Him, He paid the penalty for our sins. He took on our punishment so that we might be spared to enjoy eternal life and an intimate relationship with Him. He rose from the dead as the ‘first fruit’ of this new order, just as we, too, will rise again.” Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 19.

<sup>181</sup>Bright, *Discover the Real Jesus*, 40.

promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son He made the universe and everything in it. The Son reflects God's own glory, and everything about Him represents God exactly (NLT).<sup>182</sup>

Christ's humanity is evident in the passages Bright referenced. He referred to Hebrews 2:14 where the writer says that Christ had a body of flesh and blood.<sup>183</sup> Bright also pointed out that one fact proves that Jesus was a man—his human death.<sup>184</sup> He died as any human would have died if he were being crucified.

Bright did well to explain the history behind the doctrine of Christ's nature. He pointed out, "Theologians have a term for Christ's two natures—the hypostatic union of Christ. The phrase comes from the Council of Chalcedon, a famous church council that met in AD 451."<sup>185</sup> After quoting part of the Council of Chalcedon's statement on Christ's nature, he continued:

Admittedly, it takes a theologian to unpack all the meaning in the council's statement. But since then, many esteemed Christian thinkers, councils, and other groups have reaffirmed the hypostatic union of Jesus. To summarize what these illustrious people meant, we could say this: At His unique birth, Jesus took upon Himself a human nature and remains both undiminished deity and true humanity united in one person forever. This is part of God's perfect plan to reach down to His human creation and set up a way we could understand and communicate with Him forever—through Jesus!<sup>186</sup>

**Substitutionary atonement.** Not only was Christ God incarnate with two natures in one, but He also came to accomplish God's plan of redemption which is first revealed in Genesis 3:15—the *proto-euangelion*, the first gospel.<sup>187</sup> Bright believed that

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<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>187</sup>Although Bright did not refer to Genesis 3:15 as the *proto-euangelion*, he did refer to this passage as follows: "God first revealed this plan in the Garden of Eden. Speaking to Satan, God said, 'He [the Messiah] will crush your head, and you will strike His heel' (Gen 3:15)." Ibid., 59. Paul Enns, validates this view; he points out, "Genesis 3:15 should be understood as referring to Satan. Although he would have a minor victory,

Christ died as a substitute and that Christ appeased God's wrath toward sinners.<sup>188</sup> He correctly declared, "Christ's death on the cross has once and for all satisfied the wrath and justice of God for the believer's sin."<sup>189</sup> Bright continued, "Jesus provided a dramatic reprieve from our sentence and punishment. Jesus was beaten, tortured, and hung on a cross to die in our place to satisfy God's demand for justice. The Merciful Judge became Our Gracious Savior!"<sup>190</sup>

Bright used an analogy of a snake bite's antidote to demonstrate how Christ's shed blood saves one's life. He explained:

The bite of a cobra is deadly, but science has developed an antidote. First, venom is drawn from the snake and injected into the bloodstream of a Belgian stallion. This mighty horse becomes deathly ill, but does not die because the antibodies in its blood are stronger than the cobra's poison. Then the horse's blood is used to make an antitoxin serum, which, when injected into the bloodstream of a cobra's victim, can save the person's life. In this way, the blood of the mighty stallion overcomes the power of the venom and preserves numerous lives.<sup>191</sup>

Bright's analogy is helpful for understanding how Christ's blood saves sinners, and Bright's Christology was certainly biblical. However, this analogy, like the soiled suit analogy, breaks down theologically. While it would be accurate to say that the blood of the mighty stallion saves the lives of the snake bite victims, the analogy fails because the stallion never dies, and it never rises from the dead. In order for Bright's analogy to

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the seed of the woman (Christ) would deal Satan a death blow." Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 41.

<sup>188</sup>See Crusade's *Statement of Faith*, article 3: "He [Christ] lived a sinless life and voluntarily atoned for the sins of men by dying on the cross as their substitute, thus satisfying divine justice and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone." Bright further stated, "Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross satisfied God's just nature. God the divine Judge, showed mercy and clemency for us guilty sinners. It is the mercy of God that sees man weighed down by sin and therefore in a sorry and pitiful condition, needing divine help. At the cross, God's attributes of both justice and mercy found complete fulfillment—simultaneously! Is that not amazing?" Bright, *God*, 234.

<sup>189</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 110.

<sup>190</sup>*Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>191</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 212.

be completely theologically accurate, the stallion would have to die and rise from the dead.

Bright was clear in his explanation for why Jesus had to come and shed his blood for humanity. He declared:

None of our manmade standards of behavior meet the requirements of a holy God. God's holiness mandates that we keep all His laws perfectly at all times. The only way we can come into His presence is by having our sins covered by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Only through Christ's payment can our holy Judge extend His mercy to us.<sup>192</sup>

Therefore, Christ had to come and shed his blood on humanity's behalf.

Christ's resurrection will be covered in the following chapter which covers Bright's apologetic method. Nevertheless, Bright certainly believed in Christ's resurrection. He declared, "It is immensely important to know that Jesus physically, in a body, rose from the dead."<sup>193</sup>

**Bright on Christ's imputation.** The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer when one accepts Christ as Lord and Savior. Grudem describes Christ's imputation as follows: "Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and therefore God thinks of it as belonging to us. It is not our own righteousness but Christ's righteousness that is freely given to us."<sup>194</sup> Bright also believed that God imputes Christ's righteousness on behalf of the new believer:

We can be righteous only when God's righteousness is imputed, or freely given to us as we place our faith in God's only Son, Jesus Christ. Abraham was an Old Testament illustration of this truth, which was not fully revealed until Jesus came

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<sup>192</sup>Bright, *God: Discover His Character*, 135. Bright continued, "He came to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and was raised from the dead. And now—miracle of miracles, marvel of marvels—this holy, incomparable, peerless Son of God has come to dwell within every believer." See Bill Bright, *Living Supernaturally in Christ*, 11. Bright further said, "Because of Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross, our sins have been forgiven." *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>193</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 140.

<sup>194</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 726.

some 2,000 years later. Genesis 15:6 explains, ‘[Abraham] believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness’ (NIV).<sup>195</sup>

**General versus limited atonement.** For whom did Christ die is certainly a controversial issue among Christians, and this brief section’s intent is not to juxtapose the two sides. The classical Arminian position suggests, “God willed the application of the Atonement to all, but that the divine purpose was frustrated by human resistance.”<sup>196</sup> Bruce Demarest offers a modified Calvinist view of the atonement which allows for biblical support from both the limited and the general atonement viewpoints. He makes a solid argument in favor of Christ dying for all, making salvation possible for all, but limiting the application of the atonement to the elect.<sup>197</sup> Bright clearly believed in a general atonement, even though one will not find in his works a discussion or debate between the two.<sup>198</sup> He declared:

Jesus Christ came to take away the sins of the world. He became sin for us. The

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<sup>195</sup>Bright, *God*, 176. Grudem confirms that Abraham is a picture of righteousness being imputed to one who believes God. He writes, “He ‘reckons’ it to our account. We read, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’ (Rom 4:3, quoting Gen. 15:6).” Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 726.

<sup>196</sup>Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: Foundations of Evangelical Theology The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 193.

<sup>197</sup>Demarest says, “In sum, regarding the question, For whom did Christ die? We find biblical warrant for dividing the question into God’s purpose regarding the provision of the Atonement and his purpose concerning the application thereof. Scripture leads us to conclude that God loves all people he created and that Christ died to provide salvation for all. The provision side of the Atonement is part of the general will of God that must be preached to all. But beyond this, the Father loves the ‘sheep’ with a special love, and in the divine will the Spirit applies the benefits of Christ’s death to the ‘sheep,’ or the elect. The application side of the Atonement is part of the special will of God shared with those who come to faith. This conclusion—that Christ died to make atonement for all to the end that its benefits would be applied to the elect—coheres with the perspective of Sublapsarian Calvinism. It differs from the Supralapsarian and Infralapsarian schemes, which teach that Christ died to make provision only for the sins of the elect. And it differs from the Arminian scheme of decrees, which states that God willed the application of the Atonement to all, but that the divine purpose was frustrated by human resistance.” Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 193.

<sup>198</sup>Ted Martin confirmed that Bright believed in Christ’s general atonement. Ted Martin, interview by the author, Louisville, Kentucky, 14 March 2005.

perfect, holy Son of God took on the stain of our sin. He endured and satisfied the judgment of a pure God for our misdeeds—not just one or two sins, but every sin you and I have ever committed or will commit in our lifetimes! . . . Although Jesus abhorred sin and evil, He willingly took on the sins of all people . . . during Christ’s crucifixion God miraculously tore in two the heavy curtain that kept men and women from the Holy of Holies.<sup>199</sup>

Bright also believed that the atonement would be applied only to those who repent and believe in Christ. He stated, “Those who accept God’s forgiveness become spotless and pure so they now have access to God.”<sup>200</sup>

### **Exclusivity of Christ**

The temptation to teach that there are other ways to God besides Christ and that all might be saved undoubtedly exists today. Pluralism, inclusivism, and universalism are three beliefs which are most certainly antithetical to the gospel. Ron Nash defines a pluralist as “a person who thinks humans may be saved through a number of different religious traditions and saviors.”<sup>201</sup> Inclusivists, according to Timothy George:

Agree with biblical particularists that Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and humanity. However, out of concern for the ‘fairness’ of God and the ‘wider hope’ of universal salvation, they teach that many of the unevangelized may be saved through God’s general revelation. According to some (though not all) proponents of this view, the major world religions contain sufficient truth to bring their adherents to a saving knowledge of God, apart from the special revelation of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.<sup>202</sup>

Timothy Beougher defines universalism “as the teaching that though hell may

<sup>199</sup>Bright, *God: Discover His Character*, 142-43. A Calvinist who holds to limited atonement would not agree with Bright’s aforementioned quote. For the limited atonement, or particular atonement, view suggests that Christ took on the sins of the elect—not the whole world. See Grudem’s discussion of particular redemption, Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 596.

<sup>200</sup>Bright, *God*, 143.

<sup>201</sup>Ron Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 22.

<sup>202</sup>Timothy George, “Forum Discussion on Inclusivism” in *Who Will Be Saved?*, 146-47. Ron Nash points out that the inclusivist believes in the “ontological necessity of Christ’s work”—meaning that Christ’s work on the cross had to occur in time and space for anyone to be saved at all. However, as Nash notes, the inclusivist does not affirm that Christ’s work on the cross is “epistemologically necessary” for one to be saved, i. e., a person does not have to have explicit faith in Christ in order to be saved. Nash, *Is Jesus The Only Savior?*, 23-24.

exist, it will eventually empty, for God's will to save all persons individually will finally triumph."<sup>203</sup> Moreover, Alvin Reid aptly notes, "More dangerous for evangelism is a practical universalism in churches. We live as if all people are saved. On the other hand, it is just as bad to live as if we don't care whether people are lost."<sup>204</sup> One's theology of evangelism, which is built upon the trustworthiness of God's revealed Truth, the Bible, must teach that Christ is the only way to make it to heaven (John 14:6).<sup>205</sup>

Bright definitely believed and taught that explicit faith in Christ is necessary for salvation—Christ's exclusivity. He declared, "Only Christ provides us hope beyond the grave."<sup>206</sup> It should be noted that the aforementioned quote does not necessarily place Bright in the exclusivist camp, for even the inclusivist claims that only Christ's work on the cross provides hope. The following statement, however, sheds additional light on his stance.

Bright wrote, "By dying on the cross for our sins He willingly took upon Himself the death that each individual person deserves because of sin. It is *by believing* that Jesus Christ died for man and by *receiving Him personally* that one becomes a Christian" [emphases mine].<sup>207</sup> He further noted, "Jesus does not say that we can determine who enters the kingdom and who does not. Nevertheless, we can declare that

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<sup>203</sup>Timothy Beougher, "Are All Doomed To Be Saved?" in *Who Will Be Saved?*, ed. Paul R. House and Gregory A. Thornbury (Wheaton, IL: Cross Way, 2000), 84.

<sup>204</sup>Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 97.

<sup>205</sup>It should be noted that Bright's apologetic response to the exclusivity of Christ will be covered in a later chapter on Bright's apologetic method. However, brief mention of Christ's exclusivity is mentioned now to further demonstrate Bright's beliefs regarding Christ.

<sup>206</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home* 38. Bright also wrote, "Men and women are truly lost without Jesus Christ. According to God's Word, He is the only way to bridge the gap between man and God. Without Him, people cannot know God, and have no hope of eternal life." Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 39.

<sup>207</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now*, 31-32.

someone has been forgiven of their sins if they have truly placed their faith in Christ. We can also say with certainty that *anyone who has not received Christ* will spend eternity in hell” [emphases mine].<sup>208</sup> Consequently, a cognizant faith in the person and work of Christ is necessary to be saved, as the aforementioned emphases demonstrate—receiving Christ personally cannot be done by one who is not cognitively aware of his or her decision to accept Christ.

### **Our Necessary Response**

The Bible is not ambiguous regarding the plight of humanity outside of Christ. Humans are sinful and separated from creator God.<sup>209</sup> The gospel, however, is about a loving creator God who came to earth in the person of Christ Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, to redeem the “whosoever will” (John 3:16 AV). God, however, requires man to have explicit faith in Christ and to repent of his sin in order to receive Christ’s forgiveness.<sup>210</sup>

Bright succinctly pointed out to nonbelievers: “It is so easy to do nothing about our spiritual lives. But ‘doing nothing’ actually is making a choice.”<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, in surveys conducted by Crusade, Bright revealed that “nearly 95 percent of the thousands of students surveyed did not know for sure how to get to heaven. That is heartbreaking,”

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<sup>208</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally in Christ*, 111.

<sup>209</sup>Bright’s use of evangelistic tools to explain the content of the gospel is covered in detail in the following chapter. Nonetheless, attention is also given in this chapter to man’s response.

<sup>210</sup>Packer raises a pertinent question, “Do we tell people that repentance is the measure of the reality of faith? It’s very easy to tell people, ‘Believe that Jesus died for your sins and you’re in the Kingdom.’ But Scripture says that real faith brings forth real repentance, turning from sin, going the opposite way from the way you were going, accepting the new life in which you’re changed.” Packer, “The Content of the Gospel,” in *The Mission of an Evangelist*, 36.

<sup>211</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 16-17.

he said.<sup>212</sup> He continued, “Even now, this is life’s most crucial question: When you die and stand before God and He asks, ‘Why should I let you into My heaven?’ What will your answer be?”<sup>213</sup> He clearly had a passion for people to learn how to know God.

### **Repentance**

The Bible is clear that one must repent.<sup>214</sup> Christ himself declared, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5 NAS). Paul, speaking to King Agrippa, declared, “Instead, I preached to those in Damascus first, and to those in Jerusalem and in all the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance” (Acts 26:20 HCSB). Grudem defines repentance as “a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”<sup>215</sup>

Referring to Christ, Bright suggested, “He spoke often about heaven and hell and the need for all to ‘repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near’ (Matt 4:17, NIV). Jesus preached this message because He cared about people. He longed for them to receive forgiveness of their sins, to be reconciled to their heavenly Father, and to have the gift of eternal life.”<sup>216</sup> Bright further commented, “Receiving Christ involves turning from self by repenting of your sins and trusting Jesus to come into your life to forgive your sins and make you into the person He wants you to be. Just agreeing intellectually that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died and rose again is not enough.”<sup>217</sup> He further

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<sup>212</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid.

<sup>214</sup>Metzger writes, “The Holy Spirit in regeneration instills in the hearts of unbelievers a change of mind about their former life (repentance) and an irresistible drawing toward the One who shows mercy (faith). Conversion is then both a turning from and a turning toward.” Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 67-68.

<sup>215</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 713.

<sup>216</sup>Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 8.

<sup>217</sup>Bright, *Discover the Real Jesus*, 71-72.

noted, “In the Bible, the word ‘repentance’ means a complete turnaround—both inside and outside. No looking back. Repentance is a lot more than simply feeling guilty. It means moving beyond guilt to transformation. It means turning from going your own, independent, self-centered way to embracing God’s will for your life.”<sup>218</sup> Bright’s definition of repentance is biblical.

### **Faith**

The need for repentance is clear from the Scriptures, yet the need to believe or have faith in Christ is also explicit. Paul and Silas declared to the Philippian jailer, “And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household’” (Acts 16:31 NAS). Repentance and faith come together—one cannot be authentic without the other. J. I. Packer defines faith as follows: “The nature of faith, according to the NT, is to live by the truth it receives; faith, resting on God’s promise, gives thanks for God’s grace by working for God’s glory.”<sup>219</sup>

Bright defined faith simply as “our trust in God and His Word.”<sup>220</sup> He continued, “Faith is putting your trust in God and His promises.”<sup>221</sup> Bright’s definition of faith, like his definition of repentance, is simple but in line with Scripture. Faith is trusting God that what he says in his Word is indeed true. Furthermore, Bright was well aware that faith must have Christ as its object—no one else nor any object will be sufficient. He declared, “Faith is more than mental agreement with God; it assumes a beautiful and warm relationship with Christ. Faith must have an object—and that object is Christ. We do not merely believe in Him; we cling to Him. We began our Christian

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<sup>218</sup>Bill Bright, *First Love: Renewing Your Passion for God*, Signature Series (Peachtree City, GA: NewLife Publications, 2002, 2004), 58-59.

<sup>219</sup>J. I. Packer, “Faith,” in *The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* ed. Walter A. Elwell, abridged by Peter Toon (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 175.

<sup>220</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* (Peachtree City, GA: LifeConneXions, 1965, 1994, 2000), 12.

<sup>221</sup>Bright, *How You Can Be Sure You Are a Christian*, Transferable Concepts (Orlando: NewLife Publications, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1995, 1998), 34.

life through faith in Christ; we live our spiritual life by walking in faith.”<sup>222</sup>

Explicit faith in Christ is also necessary for one to be saved—contrary to the inclusivist view. Bright declared,

When we believed in Him and received Him as our Lord and Savior, we did so by faith. Ephesians 2:8, 9 declares, ‘It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast’ (NIV). By placing our faith in Christ, we received not only the blessings He has planned for us, but His very life.<sup>223</sup>

Bright was sure to point out that salvation is never earned or worked for—rather it is a free gift by faith. He wrote:

Salvation by faith, not works, is revolutionary because every religion of the world, except Christianity, teaches that man must seek to find God and earn his salvation by good deeds. Jesus repeatedly emphasized good works, but never as a means to salvation. Rather, the Bible teaches, good works are produced in and through us by the Holy Spirit after man believes.<sup>224</sup>

### **Eternal Security/Perseverance of the Saints**

Christ makes it clear in John 6:39 that he will not lose any of the believers given to him by God the Father. Paul also writes “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30 NAS). Bright correctly believed that the believer, once born again, is secure for all eternity.<sup>225</sup> For instance, he wrote:

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<sup>222</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 151.

<sup>223</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally in Christ*, 29. Bright noted, regarding Christ’s blood, “On what basis do I expect God to invite me into His heaven? On the basis of the shed blood of Jesus upon the cross of Calvary for my sin, nothing more, nothing less. I am fully aware that salvation is a gift of God that I receive by *faith alone*. . . .” [emphasis mine]. Bright, *The Journey Home*, 9. See also 97, n. 207.

<sup>224</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 29. Bright further commented, “If you are a Christian, your sins have been forgiven. You cannot add one iota to what Christ has already done for you upon the cross. Tears, good works, self-efforts and penances cannot provide reconciliation to God. They are not needed. It is faith that makes what Jesus Christ has already done for us a reality in our personal experience.” *Ibid.*, 107-08.

<sup>225</sup>For a detailed, biblical description of eternal security/perseverance of the saints, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, chapter 40, “The Perseverance of the Saints (Remaining a Christian),” 788-809.

Whether we are alive or have stepped over into the next life, God is with us. No spiritual force or being can separate us from His amazing love. No future tragedy or difficult circumstance can ever remove us from the presence of Christ's love. It does not matter where we go on earth or even in space, we can never go beyond the boundary of His all-encompassing love. God has even removed the barrier of sin between us and Him, because while we were in the midst of our sin, Christ died for us.<sup>226</sup>

Bright aptly continued, "Though I may sometimes do that which would grieve or quench the Spirit, that forgiveness is always there. I was assured. I could lose fellowship with God, but I would never lose my relationship with Him."<sup>227</sup>

### **Analysis of Bright's Theology**

Bright's views on Scripture, God's attributes, man's sinfulness, Christ's provision, and man's necessary response have been covered. Yet there are several issues regarding Bright's theology which need to be analyzed.

#### **Arminian or Calvinist?**

When discussing one's view of the sovereignty of God, the question often arises, at least for a person with an interest in deeper theological issues, whether one is a Calvinist or an Arminian. Bright did not like to be labeled by denominational titles, and he never claimed to be an Arminian or a Calvinist.<sup>228</sup> Indeed, he made statements which appear to contradict each other. Some of his statements were Calvinistic. For example, he declared: "The amazing truth is that *we have been chosen*, and not by some childhood

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<sup>226</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 180.

<sup>227</sup>Bill Bright, "Insights from Bill Bright: My Moment of Awareness" [online]; accessed 30 August 2004; retrieved 30 August 2004; Salem Network, Email Update.

<sup>228</sup>In an interview, Ted Martin confirmed that Bright did not like to be labeled. However, Martin did concur that Bright leaned toward the Calvinist side due to his emphasis on eternal security and God's sovereignty. However, according to Martin, Bright was not a "five-point" Calvinist. Martin stressed that Bright believed in the eternal security of the believer, and he confirmed that Bright's beliefs on predestination would be consistent with predestinating those whom God foreknew would accept him, which is consistent with the Wesleyan Arminian view of election. Ted Martin, interview by the author, Louisville, Kentucky, 14 March 2005.

peer. Our awesome Creator *selected each of us* to be part of His eternal kingdom! . . . Our loving heavenly Father *has chosen us* to be His children and to enjoy Christ's unshakable kingdom" [emphases mine].<sup>229</sup> Additionally, regarding his own conversion, he used language characteristic of a Calvinist: "Then one day as I was studying the Scriptures in my search for God, *He sovereignly opened my mind*" [emphasis mine].<sup>230</sup>

On the other hand, Bright made the following statement which appears to be more Arminian. For instance, he noted, "God knew that once you chose to become His child, you would become 'holy and blameless' before Him."<sup>231</sup> However, the following illustration suggests that he would be, perhaps, a modified Calvinist. For instance, he explained human freedom as follows:

This is a hard concept to grasp. Let me explain with an illustration. A few days

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<sup>229</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 104. Bright further noted, "God is sovereignly involved in directing each of our lives. Proverbs states, 'Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.' [Proverbs 19:21 NIV] God carefully supervises all that happens. No event escapes His notice. No person is beyond His influence. No circumstance exists outside His control." Bright, *Heaven or Hell*, 115.

<sup>230</sup>Bill Bright, "Insights from Bill Bright: My Moment of Awareness" [online]; accessed 30 August 2004; Retrieved 30 August 2004, Salem Network 2004: Email Update. Referring to God's sovereignty by no means classifies one as a Calvinist; nevertheless, addressing God as sovereign does reduce the chance of being "man centered" in one's theology, which is associated with Arminianism. A Calvinist believes that God has "chosen" or "elected" individuals for salvation, not based on the individual's choice, but rather on God's choice of the individual. For a detailed, explanation of the theology Calvinism, see Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, chapter 33 "Calvinistic Theology," 475-88.

<sup>231</sup>Bright, *God*, 98. Bright writes in regards to the parable of the sower and the seed: "The other three listeners (types of soil) will squander the message or reject it outright. Jesus Christ Himself recognized that, and though His compassion drove Him to love and long for every human soul, He knew that man would exercise his God-given power of free choice both for and against Him. And man continues to do so today." Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 71. In considering what little can be found regarding election or matters dealing with Calvinism/Arminianism, Bright appears, if one reads his comments on free-will, to fall on the Arminian side. His numerous comments on man choosing God, by his free-will, rather than God choosing man are evidence of his stance. Bruce Demarest describes Arminians as those who believe that man has the choice to choose or reject God. The problem with being able to label Bright as an Arminian is that he never mentioned prevenient grace in his writings—and this doctrine is endemic to Arminians. See Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 104.

ago, I flew to Dallas. I had complete freedom to get up and walk around on that jetliner. I could go get a magazine or talk to my fellow passengers. I could take a nap or make a telephone call. I had complete freedom—*within limits*. However, *I could not alter the plane's course*. That plane was going to Dallas! . . . Our relationship with God is like that. We are not robots mechanically programmed to follow His decrees. *God has a course for us that has been charted before the beginning of time*. God assures us in His Word: 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.' *His master plan for history will be accomplished*, whether we choose to work with Him or follow our own stubborn way. Although He allows us to choose and suffer the consequences of our choices, *He never relinquishes control of the plans to accomplish His purposes*. *God turns the pages of history*; we do not [emphases mine].<sup>232</sup>

Bright made comments which suggest that he did not believe that humans have complete free will. In the aforementioned quote, he said that he could not alter the plane's course; God has a course for us that has been charted before the beginning of time; His master plan will be accomplished; God never relinquishes control, and God turns the pages of history. These statements are Calvinistic in that they suggest that man's freedom is limited by his nature, regenerate or depraved, and he is limited by a Sovereign God's master plan. One could make a case that an Arminian believes the same aforementioned statements. However, the consistent Arminian would suggest that one's depraved nature would not prohibit him from choosing to accept Christ.

Indeed, a tension exists between God's sovereignty in the salvation of sinners and their responsibility to repent and believe. J. I. Packer explained the tension as an antinomy.<sup>233</sup> Bright also realized that the two doctrines had to be held together, though seemingly contradictory. He pointed out that:

Many of the truths of Scripture that appear contradictory are not to be rationalized. Rather, they are to be accepted by faith. This is no less true regarding the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation. Although the natural mind perceives two competing truths, or a paradox, in the mind of God these truths represent one, consistent idea. If God sees it this way, then by faith, so should we.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup>Bright, *God*, 114.

<sup>233</sup>J. I. Packer, *Evangelism & The Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961, 1991), 18.

<sup>234</sup>Bill Bright, *God's Supernatural Book* (Orlando: NewLife Publications, 2002), audio transcript. Bright further commented, "Beloved, God does both sovereignly

One's theology of evangelism can be within the boundaries of orthodoxy, whether one finds himself on the Calvinistic or Arminian side of theology, as long as he upholds several key doctrines. For instance, the belief that the Bible is infallible and inerrant in its original autographs; God is three in one—Triune; man has original sin, which prohibits him from having a relationship with God; Christ, fully God and fully man, yet divine, came to die as a substitute for sinners; and man must respond in faith and repentance to Christ's free offer of forgiveness. Though this list is not an exhaustive one, it merely shows the basic tenets of the gospel that both sides, both Calvinists as well as Arminians, should find common ground on in their theology of evangelism. One who believes that God has already chosen those who will be saved before the creation of the world, or those who believe that God chose individuals based on his foreknowledge of who would choose him, agree that the same number of people will be saved in the end of time. Furthermore, both sides must agree that Christ's Church is the means by which lost persons must hear the gospel.<sup>235</sup> Bright is not outside the confines of orthodoxy in his

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choose us unto salvation and lovingly hold out a worldwide offer of the gospel to whosoever will. Do not view this as two competing truths, but rather, through the Holy Spirit, see both sides as one unified truth that finds its source in the immeasurable nature of our gracious God." Ibid.

<sup>235</sup>This author personally wrestles with whether God chose individuals for salvation based on his own sovereign choice or whether he, in his sovereignty, allowed humanity to respond to a free offer of the gospel, and then he elected based on whom he foreknew would choose him. There are certainly problems with both views. The Calvinistic side has a problem accounting for true human freedom, and the question as to how can the gospel be a genuine offer of salvation to those who are not of the elect also can be raised. The Arminian side has a problem with diminishing God's sovereignty in salvation to a works based salvation based on what man chooses to do to bring about salvation—that is, man's choice brings about salvation. This author likes the middle knowledge viewpoint which suggests that God created a world in which the people who never respond to the gospel would not have responded regardless of any number of "possible worlds" in which God might have created. Paul Copan sheds light on this view: "In the middle-knowledge perspective, some persons possess 'transworld depravity' or 'transworld damnation' and would have been lost in any world in which they were placed. Many such persons, according to God's providential arrangement, would have been unevangelized anyway. The middle-knowledge or possible-worlds perspective stresses that no one is actually lost because he was born in the wrong place at the wrong time. Everyone who would have responded to the Gospel of Jesus has the opportunity to hear it. On the other hand, those who suffer from transworld depravity and thus would

theological beliefs regarding God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

### Theological Inconsistencies

It is difficult to determine when Bright believed regeneration takes place. For instance, he said, "When a person receives Christ as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit translates him from his spiritually dead natural state into a new, spiritually alive child of God."<sup>236</sup> He further commented, "But the Holy Spirit can neither bring revival, nor regenerate the world until believers repent and turn back to Him."<sup>237</sup> These comments reflect one who believes regeneration occurs after faith and repentance. Nevertheless, Bright also made statements which appear to place regeneration before faith and repentance. He declared,

We can be certain that the Spirit will remove an individual's barriers of doubt. But He does something else as well: He convicts people of their sin and their need for salvation. We often worry about how we can persuade a nonbeliever to be saved from his sin when he refuses to acknowledge the existence of sin. Again, this work of persuasion is not our responsibility but the work of the Holy Spirit. Anyone who has ever shared his faith can attest to the powerful conviction that often fills one who is confronted by the gospel. There is a sudden, overpowering awareness of the reality of sin; a person suddenly sees himself through new eyes. There are often tears, remorse, and a tremendous desire for immediate salvation. . . In short, God is sovereign. If He desires to reach out to someone with the gospel through you or me, He will do so. It is our responsibility to go and share God's love and plan of salvation.<sup>238</sup>

Bright appeared to have a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in

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refuse to receive the Gospel and submit to Christ in any world in which they could be placed may be providentially placed in a location where the Gospel would not come anyway. Those who are lost in actuality would be lost in any possible world. They would always refuse the Gospel if they heard it." Paul Copan, *"True For You, But Not For Me:" Deflating The Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1998), 130. Of course, there are theologians who disagree with the middle knowledge viewpoint by suggesting that in the end, the middle knowledge viewpoint still does not solve the problem of God's sovereignty and human freedom. See Wayne Grudem's critique of William Lane Craig's middle knowledge in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 349.

<sup>236</sup>Bright, *The Holy Spirit*, 14.

<sup>237</sup>Bill Bright, *His Intimate Presence* (Orlando, NewLife Publications, 2004), audio transcript.

<sup>238</sup>Bright, *His Intimate Presence*, 158.

regeneration in the aforementioned quote. For the Holy Spirit is the one who quickens the sinner and enables him to respond to the gospel. Paul Enns correctly states, “It [regeneration] is not the result of human experience. In other words, it is not something the person does but something that is done to the person. . . . Regeneration is an act of God, not a cooperative effort between God and man.”<sup>239</sup> However, Bright’s comments elsewhere, as noted above, make it difficult to determine accurately his view.

Another area which Bright was inconsistent in his beliefs (his beliefs are assumed from his statements) were his comments on God’s love. He placed great emphasis on the love of God. There is no doubt that one’s theology of evangelism must emphasize God’s love for humanity; however, God’s love must be emphasized alongside God’s holiness. Bright, as noted earlier in this chapter, contradicted himself by holding both God’s love and holiness as God’s preeminent attributes.<sup>240</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Bright’s views on Scripture pass the test of orthodoxy—for he believed in the inerrancy and the infallibility of God’s special revelation.<sup>241</sup> He also believed that all of Scripture is God-breathed—not a partial inspiration view. Bright additionally passed the test of orthodoxy regarding his doctrine of God. He believed that God, three in one, is the sovereign Creator of the universe. He also understood that humanity is depraved, and man has no way to bridge the great gap between himself and God. Jesus, however, came to be man’s substitute on the cross to provide salvation to those who will repent and believe in Christ. Bright’s theology of evangelism is solid because his theology is from the Bible. As John Stott echoed, “Indeed, the Bible is the only basis on which the

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<sup>239</sup>Enns, *The Moody Handbook*, 339-40.

<sup>240</sup>Walter Chantry did raise the issue of Law One in the *Four Spiritual Laws*. However, this issue will be covered in the following chapter.

<sup>241</sup>See article 2 of *The Lausanne Covenant*.

authentic evangelist can build his or her message. The Bible is indispensable to true evangelism.”<sup>242</sup>

One can write about orthodox theology; however, what about putting it into action? Bright believed that people are without hope, but how did he put into practice what he believed? Bright’s views on witnessing are covered in the following chapter.

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<sup>242</sup>John Stott, “The Evangelist’s Message Is Bible-Based,” in The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, *The Mission of an Evangelist*, 55.

## CHAPTER 4

### BRIGHT'S WITNESSING STRATEGY

This chapter covers Bright's witnessing strategy. His witnessing strategy included personal evangelism, which would occur either on college campuses or through one-on-one contacts in everyday life. It also included mass evangelism, which would occur by showing the *JESUS* film. His witnessing methodology incorporated evangelistic tools (tracts), the *JESUS* film, hosting evangelistic Expos, and campus ministry, which included blitzing college campuses with the gospel. The first part of this chapter analyzes Bright's style of personal evangelism—lifestyle or confrontational. The second part of the chapter covers *The Four Spiritual Laws* followed by additional tracts which Bright and Campus Crusade used. The third part covers Bright's mass evangelism strategy, and the chapter ends with an analysis of Bright's apologetic method in evangelism.

Bright developed numerous evangelistic tools for the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* and the *JESUS* film are just two of them which have help expose over six billion persons to the gospel, according to Bright before his death.<sup>1</sup>

Campus Crusade reports their total decisions for Christ worldwide in 2002

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<sup>1</sup>Rick Warren, "Ministry Mentor: Bill Bright" [on-line]; accessed 18 February 2004; available from <http://www.pastors.com/article.asp?ArtID=2072>; Internet, 5. Total exposures (exposure—meaning when a person hears a clear presentation of the gospel and has an opportunity to respond by trusting Christ) across the world since Crusade's beginning in 1951 through 2001, are reported as 6,784,048,202. Taken from *2001 Global Ministry Report*, Campus Crusade for Christ International, 2002, 12, 5.

totaled 23.3 million.<sup>2</sup> They also have more than 27,000 staff worldwide, more than 225, 000 trained volunteers who currently work with Crusade, and they are present in 191 countries.<sup>3</sup> If one were to go by numbers alone, one would conclude that Bright and Crusade have had a global impact for the cause of Christ. However, it is important to examine the tools Bright used to train and lead people in evangelism. Are they biblical and still worthy for Christians to use today for the purpose of sharing their faith? Is his witnessing strategy one that should be followed? These questions and more are examined in the following pages.

### **Bright's Witnessing Strategy**

Bright's development and implementation of the evangelistic tools (tracts) used by Campus Crusade, as well as the *JESUS* film, serve as invaluable tools used in his evangelism strategy. However, it is important to discuss his strategy. The Lausanne Covenant's definition of evangelism provides a grid for determining whether Bright was orthodox in his evangelism.<sup>4</sup>

Bright had a three-fold strategy which he implemented in Campus Crusade:

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<sup>2</sup>Campus Crusade for Christ, *Reaching Our World for Christ: Your Introduction to Campus Crusade for Christ* "Ministry Timeline," 2004, 17.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>The Lausanne Covenant's definition of evangelism reads as follows: "To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world." J. D. Douglas, ed., "Lausanne Covenant," in *Let The Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland Official Reference Volume: Papers and Responses* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 4.

winning men to Christ, building men in the Christian faith, and sending men into the world.<sup>5</sup> He also believed that his evangelism strategy was biblical. Pointing to the Apostle Paul, he proclaimed:

The apostle Paul and the early disciples were strategists. We would do well to emulate their example. A careful study of the missionary strategy of Paul reveals that he was led of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in the leading centers of influence in trade, travel and learning. His converts and those of the other disciples went from these centers of influence to the highways and byways to proclaim the same gospel, to the extent that it could be said that these new Christians ‘turned the world upside down.’<sup>6</sup>

Bright held fulfilling the Great Commission given by Christ as his preeminent task. It was 1951 when he received his vision for reaching college students and felt compelled by God “to fulfill the Great Commission in this generation, specifically through winning and discipling the students of the world for Christ.”<sup>7</sup> Fulfilling the Great Commission, according to Bright, would occur through the dual task of proclamation and persuasion.<sup>8</sup> He further noted, “We should seek to make a prayerful, intelligent presentation of the gospel to every living person and leave the results to God.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, he believed that everyone who believes in Christ, not just the eleven disciples, is to help fulfill the Great Commission.<sup>10</sup> Bright explained what he meant by fulfilling the Great Commission in the following quote:

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<sup>5</sup>Bill Bright, *Revolution Now!* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, N.D.), 182-83.

<sup>6</sup>Bright, “Action in an Urgent Hour!: A Strategy to Help Reach the World for Christ,” *Action* 1 no. 1 (Spring 1969) :4.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Quebedeaux, *I Found It!: The Story of Bill Bright and Campus Crusade* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 17.

<sup>8</sup>Bright was not outside of the parameters of The Lausanne Covenant. For instance, it states, “But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God.” Douglas, “Lausanne Covenant,” 4.

<sup>9</sup>Bright, “History’s Greatest Plan Part 1” *Worldwide Challenge* 6, no. 10 (October 1979): 36.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

Will every person hear the gospel in our generation? No, there are people who because of physical or mental difficulties will not hear the gospel through human voices or written word. There are some individuals who live in remote and inaccessible areas of the world where they may not hear. Yet, when the majority of people in each country hear of Christ and many of these become disciples, the Great Commission will have been fulfilled. This does not mean that the majority will become Christians but that they will at least have had a chance to hear and to believe.<sup>11</sup>

### **Lifestyle or Confrontational? Bright's Evangelistic Style Exposed**

Bright believed that each believer is to be involved in fulfilling the Great Commission. Yet he practiced a specific style of evangelism which he recommended others emulate as well. Which approach for witnessing is one to use—a lifestyle or a confrontational/intentional approach? There are evangelicals who advocate using one approach over the other; hence, what is the biblical style?

### **Lifestyle or Confrontational Evangelism**

Joe Aldrich, in *Lifestyle Evangelism*, advocates using a lifestyle/incarnational approach to evangelism. This style of evangelism, according to Aldrich, contains three stages: cultivation, which is an appeal to the heart through building relationships; sowing, an appeal to one's mind through communicating revelation; and reaping, which is an appeal to the will for one to respond to the revelation.<sup>12</sup> He suggests that the confrontation/ intrusional model is the most common. He also is skeptical, however, of most Christians using it. He notes, referring to confrontational evangelism, "I doubt that 10 percent of the body of Christ will ever be effective in this type of evangelism."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 168-69. Bright's interpretation of when the Great Commission will be fulfilled is not theologically accurate. The Great Commission will be fulfilled when the entire bride of Christ is reached with the gospel. The Arminian and the Calvinist both can agree that God knows who his bride is—whether God has chosen his bride, the Calvinist position, or whether he allows the bride to choose him, the Arminian position. The outcome is still the same.

<sup>12</sup>Joe Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism: Learning to Open Your Life to Those around You* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1981, 1983), 77.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.

On the other hand, Mark McCloskey, in his book *Tell It Often-Tell It Well*, refers to the confrontational approach as the comprehensive—incarnational approach to evangelism, which he advocates using. McCloskey points out,

There are just too many people who need to know Christ as soon as possible to insist that effective evangelism must be relational in approach. Not everyone is blessed to have Christian friends who can ‘flesh out’ the life of Christ. Not everyone is fortunate enough to witness the life-changing power of the gospel and new life in Christ as it is manifested corporately in the local church.<sup>14</sup>

Later, he aptly suggests:

Thus, a philosophy of evangelism that insists on the presence of a relational element (as normative practice) will unfortunately exclude those not privileged to have meaningful exposure to Christian friends or the corporate witness of the church. This is why many groups practice initiative evangelism and employ strategies that encompass masses of people. It is not that they are against the relational element in evangelism, but they do not allow it to determine the scope of their outreach.<sup>15</sup>

The biblical evidence for an intentional approach to evangelism is certainly available. As Paige Patterson points out, in Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, and with Zacchaeus, Christ was indeed intentional in his approach.<sup>16</sup> However, this author also realizes that both a lifestyle as well as an intentional approach for evangelism are necessary. Some nonbelievers may require a relationship which develops over time with a believer in which trust and respect are earned and the opportunity to witness is given. Such persons may be turned off to someone they do not know who tries to “evangelize” them. On the other hand, there are some nonbelievers who may be ready to respond to Christ; however, they need someone to tell them how. Patterson succinctly comes to a solution for the debate between the two approaches to personal evangelism: “With the example of New Testament methodology

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<sup>14</sup>Mark McCloskey, *Tell It Often-Tell It Well* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life, 1986), 171.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>Paige Patterson, “Lifestyle Evangelism,” in *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Thom S. Rainer (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1989), 45.

before us, a resolution of this current debate may be possible. Maybe the solution is not in choosing between two approaches but in doing both—and in doing them better.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Bright’s Intentional Evangelism**

Bright believed that successful witnessing was “simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God.”<sup>18</sup> He further noted:

This is not to be interpreted as advocating a ‘hit-and-run’ approach to witnessing and ministry, without conscientious follow-up to help new believers get into God’s Word and grow in their faith. We firmly believe in the importance of a new Christian getting involved in (1) a church where our Lord is honored and the Word of God is proclaimed; and (2) systematic training in assurance of salvation, prayer, Bible study, fellowship with others and Christian growth.<sup>19</sup>

Bright undoubtedly advocated an intentional approach to evangelism. Crusade staff use the word “initiative evangelism.”<sup>20</sup> In fact, he endorsed McCloskey’s book suggesting, “This book articulates our mission, our message and our methods in attempting to proclaim the good news of our Savior and Lord to all men throughout the world.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Bright referred to Crusade’s style of evangelism as aggressive: “Campus Crusade for Christ is committed to aggressive evangelism. By aggressive evangelism I mean going to men with the good news of our living Christ and His love and forgiveness, not in argumentative tones nor with high pressure techniques, but taking the initiative to tell (as the Apostle Paul wrote) all men everywhere about Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>18</sup>Bill Bright, *Witnessing without Fear: How to Share Your Faith with Confidence* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life, 1987), 69.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ted Martin, “Commitment to the Great Commission,” in *Principles of Leadership: What We can Learn from the Life and Ministry of Bill Bright*, ed. Ted Martin and Michael Cozzens (Orlando: NewLife, 2001), 64.

<sup>21</sup>McCloskey, *Tell It Often*, 9.

<sup>22</sup>Bill Bright, *Come Help Change the World* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1970), 95.

Bright was also quite clear on why he felt intentional evangelism was the better style:

If you expect to reach men for Christ, you must talk about Christ. Do not talk about peripheral matters. There is a tendency to try to encourage others to become active in our churches. This is important, but this approach is not what reaches men for Christ. There are many people who are antagonistic to the church today, and if we are going to reach them for the Savior, we must talk about Christ, not the church. That will come, but in most cases, it will come after they have received Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, Bright recognized that friendship (or relational) evangelism also has its place in reaching people for Christ. For instance, if one often has contact with a non-believer such as a friend, co-worker, or family member, Bright urged taking a slower approach (“go slow”) with these individuals.<sup>24</sup> He further declared:

As I have suggested, I believe there is a place for friendship evangelism, and I would be wrong to say that the philosophy of friendship evangelism is unscriptural. Likewise, those who hold that it is the only way to share Christ, and that initiative evangelism is unscriptural and ineffective, are just as wrong. A careful reading of the New Testament makes it emphatically clear that initiative evangelism is the intent of our Lord when He commands us to ‘Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, Bright noted two weaknesses in the friendship or relational model to evangelism. First, he said, “Christians mistakenly subscribe to the friendship evangelism philosophy to the extent that they rarely share the gospel with another because ‘our relationship isn’t quite strong enough yet.’”<sup>26</sup> Bright suggested that individuals never get around to sharing their faith for fear of ruining the relationship. Referring to the relational model, he noted, “To justify this approach, or non-approach, they decide they’ll wait for the non-believer to ask me about my personal faith,’ and try

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<sup>23</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 161.

<sup>24</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 94. Bright stated, “For the person with whom you’re in frequent contact, your approach should be generally less direct. It’s important to take the time to build a relationship of friendship and trust, to show by word and deed that you love and care about him. This approach has been called ‘friendship evangelism’ by some, and it does have its place.” Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 94.

to simply model Christianity through their non-verbal witness. As a result, the gospel often falls by the wayside.”<sup>27</sup> The second weakness, according to Bright, is that Christians use the model as an excuse to never share their faith.

Furthermore, regarding the intentional approach to evangelism, Bright admitted that he too was human when it came to being bold or quick to witness. He commented:

I have never found witnessing to come naturally and easily. Some of you may find this difficult to believe, but by nature I’m a shy, reserved person; initiating conversations with strangers is sometimes difficult for me. Even sharing the greatest news ever announced—that ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life’—is not always as easy for me as you might imagine. . . . I don’t even know if evangelism is my spiritual gift.<sup>28</sup>

### **Personal Evangelism with Evangelistic Tools**

Bright believed in using evangelistic tools (tracts) as an aid in intentional evangelism. Some, however, may think that tracts are antiquated and irrelevant for today’s society. Daniel Southern, current president of the American Tract Society, has a different viewpoint. He suggests, “One tool surpasses all others in terms of reaching people with the Gospel. That’s an evangelistic tract. . . . Nothing has been used more widely in the world to reach people for Christ than a Gospel tract.”<sup>29</sup> Southern continues,

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 18. There is a debate in evangelicalism as to whether evangelism is a spiritual gift. Greg Ogden, in his book *Discipleship Essentials*, suggests that evangelism is a support gift. He says, “Those who have support gifts have the responsibility to prepare the rest of the members of the body in the exercise of their ministry gifts (Ephesians 4:11-13).” Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 192. Donald Whitney succinctly points out, “While it is true that God gifts some for ministry as evangelists, He calls all believers to be His witnesses and provides them with both the power to witness and a powerful message.” Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life: Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 101.

<sup>29</sup>Daniel Southern, “Multiplying Your Ministry Through the Use of Tracts,” in Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, *The Mission of an Evangelist: Amsterdam 2000* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 2001), 417-18.

“Our palm-sized pamphlets—Christians know as gospel tracts—equip rescue groups at tsunami relief sites across the sea, comfort U.S. troops in the Middle East, and inform movie-goers about faith in mid-America.”<sup>30</sup>

Alvin Reid, professor of evangelism at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, says that tracts “are valuable not only because they keep the witness on track with the gospel but because you can leave them with people for later reading and reflection.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, great leaders of the Christian faith such as D. L. Moody, J. Wilbur Chapman, Luis Palau, Bill Hybels, and Billy Graham have all written gospel tracts.<sup>32</sup> Undoubtedly, a dissertation can be written which deals with gospel literature/tracts alone; however, the following pages will cover Bill Bright’s use of tracts (“evangelistic tools” as he called them), beginning with the *Four Spiritual Laws*.

### **Background of *Four Spiritual Laws***

It was 1956, on the campus of UCLA when Bright invited a salesman to speak to Crusade staff during one of their training sessions. Bright recalled: “He trained salesmen how to sell. He received a very generous figure traveling the world teaching corporate leaders how to do their thing, and he was a Christian and a friend.”<sup>33</sup> The salesman told Bright and the staff present that one must have “a pitch” in order to be a

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<sup>30</sup>Daniel Southern, quoted in Mark Brown, “American Tract Society finds few topics prove taboo: Marks 180 years of changing hearts,” *The South Carolina Baptist Courier*, 24 February 2005, 16.

<sup>31</sup>Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 197-98.

<sup>32</sup>Paul Harrison Chitwood, “The Sinner’s Prayer: An Historical and Theological Analysis” Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Louisville, Kentucky, 2001, 49.

<sup>33</sup>Bright Media Foundation, “Remembering a Supernatural Life Lived as a Slave of Jesus: Equipping Believers” [on-line]; accessed 16 March 2004; available from [http://www.brightmedia.org/high\\_bandwidth/interview3.htm](http://www.brightmedia.org/high_bandwidth/interview3.htm); Internet, 3.

good salesperson.<sup>34</sup> Bright summarized the salesman's talk as follows:

In other words, a man who is a good automobile salesman tells every potential customer basically the same things, and the better he communicates, the more successful he is as a salesman. But the danger, he explained, is that when a man becomes weary of hearing himself make the same presentation, he develops presentation fatigue. When this happens, he often changes the message and loses his effectiveness.<sup>35</sup>

The salesman went on to compare the automobile salesman to the Christian who witnesses on a regular basis, and the salesman suggested that the Christian likewise should develop a simple presentation of the gospel. According to Bright, the salesman continued, "Now in sharing Christ, we need to develop a simple, understandable, logical presentation just like the successful salesman does . . . . And we need to stick with that message and not yield to presentation fatigue."<sup>36</sup> The salesman then focused on Bright's method for sharing Christ. Bright remembered his saying:

Bill Bright, who works with students and professors and outstanding business executives, as well as with men on Skid Row, thinks that he has a special message for each of them, but the fact of the matter is, though I have never heard him speak or counsel, I would be willing to wager that he has only one pitch. Basically, he tells them all the same thing.<sup>37</sup>

Bright, however, was not happy with the salesman's estimate of his methodology. He noted, "I recoiled, I reacted. I don't have a pitch, you know when I witness the Holy Spirit speaks through me."<sup>38</sup> He also said that he "squirmed" in his seat, and he hoped that his face did not show his discontent with the salesman's comments.<sup>39</sup> However, Bright began to think about what the salesman said, and he soon began to change his mind. He recalled:

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<sup>34</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 43.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 106.

<sup>37</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 43.

<sup>38</sup>Bright Media, "Remembering a Supernatural Life Lived as a Slave of Jesus," 3.

<sup>39</sup>Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 106.

When the meeting was over I was still feeling irritated over the speaker's message. But as I began to reflect on exactly what I did say in various witnessing opportunities, I asked myself: Do I share the same basic message with everyone? Is my message really that simple?<sup>40</sup>

Upon further reflection and a time of prayer, Bright realized that he did use a basic message, regardless of his audience, which consisted of God's love for them, Christ's death for their sins and his resurrection from the dead, as well as how they could receive Christ in their lives.<sup>41</sup>

***God's Plan for Your Life.*** Bright wrote down on paper that same day his basic presentation of the gospel, which he entitled *God's Plan for Your Life*. He described the new presentation as "a positive, twenty-minute presentation of the claims of Christ: Who He is, why He came and how man can know Him personally. It does not contain any startling new truths. It is a simple statement of the gospel."<sup>42</sup> He immediately asked his staff to memorize the plan, and they began to share it on the college campus.

Bright noted, "Because of this one presentation alone, our ministry was multiplied a hundredfold during the next year."<sup>43</sup> Bright soon realized, however, that a twenty-minute presentation of the gospel was too long, and he became convinced that he needed to condense the *God's Plan* presentation. Hence, Bright shortened it, and he had his staff write out the condensed version on the back of the *Van Dusen Letter*.<sup>44</sup> He

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Bright Media, "Remembering a Supernatural Life," 4.

<sup>42</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 44. Michael Richardson writes, regarding *God's Plan*, "It was a road-tested compilation of what he had studied in two seminaries and what had actually been effective in his personal witnessing." Michael Richardson, *Amazing Faith: The Authorized Biography of Bill Bright* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2000), 73.

<sup>43</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 44.

<sup>44</sup>Bright Media, "Remembering a Supernatural Life," 5. The *Van Dusen Letter* was written by Bright before the *Four Spiritual Laws*. He wrote the *Van Dusen Letter* as a response to a business acquaintance (Van Dusen is a pseudonym for the business

subsequently became aware that he needed to make it more accessible to his staff.

### ***Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?***

The printed version of the condensed *God's Plan* became *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* Bright labeled the *Four Spiritual Laws* “the distilled essence of the gospel.”<sup>45</sup> Much was happening during the time Bright penned the *Four Spiritual Laws* in the advancement of science and technology. The Russians had launched the Sputnik satellite. Thus, he knew that he needed to connect with students’ knowledge of science to meet them culturally.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Bright’s bridge to the readers of the *Four Laws* began: “Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, so there are spiritual laws that govern your relationship with God.”<sup>47</sup> Bright’s starting point, particularly when he first penned the *Four Laws*, was an excellent way to contextualize the gospel message. At a time when modernity ruled the college campus, he was perceptive enough to connect with his audience in language many college students understood. The *Four Laws* read as follows:

(1) God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. (2) Man is sinful and separated from God, thus he cannot know and experience God’s love and plan for his life. (3) Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for man’s sin. Through Him you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life. (4) We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God’s love and plan for our lives.<sup>48</sup>

Each of the laws deserves examination in the following paragraphs.

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acquaintance) who wanted to know more about how to know God personally. It contains more detail than the *Four Spiritual Laws*, which summarizes the main content of the *Van Dusen Letter*. Bill Bright, *Dear Dr. Van Dusen: Your Life Can Become A Great Adventure* (San Bernardino, CA: NewLife 2000, 1992).

<sup>45</sup>Bill Bright, “May I Introduce You?” *Worldwide Challenge*, 7, no. 2 (February 1980): 30.

<sup>46</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 73.

<sup>47</sup>Bill Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* (Peachtree City, GA: LifeConnXions, 1965, 1994, 2000), 2.

<sup>48</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 46.

**Law One.** Surprisingly, Law One differed from the way gospel tracts were usually done.<sup>49</sup> Bright did not begin with God’s wrath or punishment of sinners; he went against precedence and began with God’s love.<sup>50</sup> Michael Richardson points out, “Until then, all the versions of God’s Plan had begun with an emphasis on human evil, consistent with the prevailing approach to evangelism in those days in conservative American church culture.”<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to note the reasons why his tract did not begin with God’s wrath or man’s sinfulness. Bright recounted the story as follows:

I remember that this was not the way we had expressed the first law in the original draft, but this change was made just before we went to press. I had done my final editing and had left Vonette and the girls to finish the typing. As I had been traveling a great deal and it was quite late, I had gone upstairs to bed. In fact, I was in bed, just at the point of going to sleep, when suddenly there came clear as a bell to my conscious mind the fact that there was something wrong about starting the Four Laws on the negative note of man’s sinfulness. Why not start where God starts, with His love? I had been drawn to Christ originally because I was overwhelmed with God’s love. The love of God had been the basis of my presentation of the gospel ever since I had become a Christian. I wanted everyone to know how much God loves him and that God has a wonderful plan for the life of everyone who will accept His plan. I felt that few people would say ‘no’ to Christ if they truly understood how much He loves them and how great is His concern for them. So I got out of bed, went to the head of the stairs and called down to Vonette and the girls to revise the presentation so that the first law would be, ‘God loves you and has a wonderful plan for you life,’ instead of ‘You are a sinner and separated from God.’ We moved the statement of the fact of man’s sin and separation from God, making it Law Two. Thus, the Four Spiritual Laws started with the positive note of God’s love. There were other minor revisions, but this was the basic one. Sometime later, one of the girls said to me, ‘I was so distressed over your change in the presentation that I wept that night. I was afraid that you were beginning to dilute the gospel and that you were no longer faithful to the Lord, because you placed such a strong emphasis on the love of God rather than on man’s sin. Now, in retrospect, I realize of course that this is one of the greatest things that has ever happened to the Campus Crusade for Christ ministry.’ Now literally millions of people all over the world are being told, through the presentation of the Four Spiritual Laws, that God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their lives. Can you think of any more exciting, wonderful message than this to proclaim to the world?<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Paul Chitwood sheds light on the departure from “strict Calvinistic theology” in gospel tracts to a language that has “obviously softened” throughout the twentieth century. Chitwood, “The Sinner’s Prayer,” 52.

<sup>50</sup> Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 73-74.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 46-47.

Bright included two key Bible passages in Law One. First, he referenced John 3:16 to emphasize God’s love, and then in order to emphasize God’s plan, he quoted John 10:10: “[Christ speaking] ‘I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly’ [that it might be full and meaningful].”<sup>53</sup> John 3:16 undeniably reveals the heart of God, for God does love his creation, those created in his image, in a definite and tangible way. In fact, he loves humanity so much that he sent Christ. Concerning John 10:10, certainly Christ came for all those who will place their trust in Him—and those who trust Christ will have an abundant life—yet, Bright should have qualified “abundant” to prevent being misinterpreted. The potential for misinterpreting “abundant” exists due to the way the “health and wealth” gospel proponents portray the Christian life. Gary Burge describes the “abundant life,” or the “life in full,” as being similar to a sheep who is content because of the leadership of its shepherd.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, Andreas Kostenberger points out that the “full life” in the “here and now” does not happen without persecution.<sup>55</sup> Hence, the abundant life can be one of contentment as well as persecution. Bright did not end Law One with the two Scripture references; rather he asked a poignant question: “Why is it that most people are not experiencing the abundant life?”<sup>56</sup>

It is important to note that the *Four Spiritual Laws* tract was revised. Law One was changed from “God loves you and *has* a wonderful plan for your life” to “God loves you and *offers* a wonderful plan for your life” [emphases mine].<sup>57</sup> What might appear to be a minor change, from “has” to “offers,” in fact is a major change. John Nyquist,

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<sup>53</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?*, 3.

<sup>54</sup>Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 290. Burge suggests that Ps 23:1, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” is a good picture of the “life in full.” Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 304.

<sup>56</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?*, 3.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 2.

professor of evangelism and missions at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, said, regarding the change:

I can say that Dr. Bright was a committed Presbyterian and I think many of his Presbyterian friends challenged him with regard to the idea of the use of the verb 'has' as over against the idea of 'offering,' referring probably to the Calvinist idea of 'can you know that God has a plan for everybody.' Maybe this was simply a change of words or vocabulary, vernacular there, to make sure that it did not, or was not biblically inaccurate, or it was not unclear with regard to what God does for all people. . . . Bill Bright himself did not see himself primarily as a theologian. He was a businessman practitioner and these kinds of things, I think, tended to come from a combination of his own meditation and reflection, but he paid a lot of attention to people who might, let's say, have wanted to make corrections or were outright critical.<sup>58</sup>

**Law Two.** Bright wrote Law Two as follows: "Man is sinful and separated from God, thus he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life."<sup>59</sup>

Bright was quite clear that although God loves man, man cannot know and experience God's love because he is separated from him. He quoted Romans 3:23: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" to emphasize that man is sinful. He also pointed out:

Man was created to have fellowship with God; but, because of his own stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own independent way and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.<sup>60</sup>

To emphasize man's separation from God he quoted Romans 6:23: "'The wages of sin is death' [spiritual separation from God]."<sup>61</sup> He clarified man's separation as follows: "God is holy and man is sinful. A great chasm separates the two. Men are continually trying to reach God and the abundant life through their own efforts: good life, ethics, philosophy, and more."<sup>62</sup> Bright concluded Law Two by stating: "The Third Law

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<sup>58</sup>John Nyquist, interview with the author, 28 March 2005, Louisville, Kentucky.

<sup>59</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* 1965 version in *The Van Dusen Letter*, 24.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

gives us the only answer to this dilemma. . . .”<sup>63</sup> Again, it is quite clear that man is separated from a holy God because of his sin, according to Law Two.

**Law Three.** Bright explained the provision of Christ on man’s behalf in Law Three. He declared, “Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for man’s sin. Through Him you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life.”<sup>64</sup> Bright was sure to point out Christ’s substitution by noting that Christ died in humanity’s place. He referenced Romans 5:8: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

With a diagram of Jesus’ name on the cross, bridging the gap between God and man, Bright noted, “God has bridged the chasm which separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place” (see figure 1).<sup>65</sup>

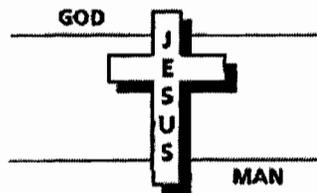


Figure 1. Diagram—Law Three

Moreover, Bright also made it clear that Christ rose from the grave. He quoted parts of 1 Corinthians 15:3-6, “Christ died for our sins . . . He was buried . . . He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred. . . .”<sup>66</sup> Bright continued by emphasizing the exclusivity of Christ. He declared, “He is the only

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

way to God . . . ‘Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me’ (John 14:6).”<sup>67</sup> As noted in the section in chapter 3 on the exclusivity of Christ, the aforementioned quote is not necessarily an exclusivist claim; however, Bright emphasized the exclusivity of Christ in Law Four.<sup>68</sup>

**Law Four.** Bright suggested that most nonbelievers believe the first three laws; however, Law Four was needed to explain how people could know God.<sup>69</sup> He began Law Four by declaring that explicit faith in Christ is necessary. He said, “We must *individually receive* Jesus Christ as *Savior* and *Lord*; then we can know and experience God’s love and plan for our lives” [emphases mine].<sup>70</sup> He continued by stating: “We must receive Christ. . . . ‘As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name’ (John 1:12).”<sup>71</sup>

He also was sure to explain that one “receives Christ” through faith. He quoted Ephesians 2:8-9, an excellent passage regarding grace through faith: “By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”<sup>72</sup>

One must also receive Christ by personal invitation, according to Bright. He used Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.” Yet Bright’s hermeneutic for Revelation 3:20 is not accepted by all Bible scholars. David Aune does not believe this passage is written

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>68</sup>See p. 98 n. 212.

<sup>69</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 47.

<sup>70</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* 1965 version in *The Van Dusen Letter*, 26.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 27.

to the nonbeliever as an invitation to accept Christ, but rather he sees it as referring to individual believers.<sup>73</sup> Robert Mounce also believed that Revelation 3:20 refers to believers in the church of Laodicea.<sup>74</sup> Those who interpret this passage as being an invitation for sinners to accept Christ usually are more Arminian in their theology. For instance, Church of the Nazarene scholars, W. T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor interpret Revelation 3:20 as an invitation for sinners to receive Christ. They note, “Therefore while salvation depends entirely upon God’s initiative, it is not imposed. Man must open the door of his heart (Rev. 3:20).”<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, Bright did well to make sure individuals knew the difference between intellectual assent to the gospel and personally receiving Christ by faith. He declared, “Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self, trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive our sins and make us what He wants us to be. It is *not enough to give intellectual assent* to His claims or *to have an emotional experience*” [emphases mine].<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52 (Dallas: Word, 1997), 254. Aune points out, “Rev 3:20 needs be interpreted neither eschatologically (i.e., the appearance of Christ at the door understood as a metaphor for the Parousia) nor individualistically (Christ knocks at the door of the heart). As a Christian text, however, it reveals some features not totally compatible with its present setting. The door upon which the risen Jesus knocks must be that of the worshipper’s home. Christian homes were commonly used as gathering places for worship, yet in this passage it appears that only an individual Christian is involved, not a congregation. . . . The meal to be shared by Jesus and the worshipper may be construed as the Lord’s Supper, but it probably is a meal intended to be shared only by two, Jesus and the worshipper.”

<sup>74</sup>Mounce declared, regarding Rev 3:20, “Verse 20 is often quoted as an invitation and promise to the person outside the community of faith. That it may be pressed into the service of evangelism in this way is obvious. . . . In the context of the Laodicean letter, however, it is self-deluded members of the church who are being addressed.” Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 113.

<sup>75</sup>W. T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor, *God, Man, & Salvation: A Biblical Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1977), 412.

<sup>76</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* 1965 version in *The Van Dusen Letter*, 26.

Bright used two circles with “self” on one throne, the “self-directed” life and Christ on the other, the “Christ-directed” life. He then asked the questions: “Which circle represents your life? Which circle would you like to have represent your life?”<sup>77</sup>



Figure 2. Diagram—Law Four

He concluded Law Four with a suggested prayer for individuals to pray to receive Christ. Bright wrote, “Lord Jesus, I need You. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.”<sup>78</sup>

In addition, the revised edition also includes the word repentance in parentheses.<sup>79</sup> John Nyquist suggests:

I believe that the word ‘repentance’ was added because of increased comment from the ‘Reformed community’ re: the use of the booklet in various denominations. Specifically, Dr. Bright was a committed Presbyterian and had many friends within that denomination. And although I could only speculate at this point, I might say that those ‘friends of Crusade’ within Presbyterian circles offered some constructive criticism, and Dr. Bright always said that he learned more from his critics than from his friends because his critics drove him to his knees.<sup>80</sup>

Including the word repentance is important because one who is lost needs to be certain that he or she understands that repentance is mandatory for accepting Christ (Luke 5:32). In addition, the revised edition also includes a section, after Law Four, where Bright encourages believers to depend on facts and faith rather than on one’s feelings

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?*, 9.

<sup>80</sup>John Nyquist, email correspondence with author, 29 July 2005.

after accepting Christ. He also included a section on what has happened in the believer's life once one accepts Christ, suggestions for Christian discipleship in the acronym GROWTH, and he ends with an admonition to find fellowship in a good church.<sup>81</sup>

### ***Would You Like To Know God Personally?***

John Nyquist said that the changes to the *Four Spiritual Laws*, which resulted in the *Knowing God Personally* version, are traced to the early 1970s. He pointed out that the director of England's Campus Crusade wanted to find out why the English students were not responding to the *Four Spiritual Laws* and to the gospel. Crusade sent a research team into Liverpool to do ethnographic surveys to find out more about the English students' interests in life and focus of study. The Crusade team discovered that the English students were turned off by the closed circles (self-directed and Christ-directed life circles) represented in the *Four Laws* which depicted "a very neat way of looking at the world." The students, according to Nyquist,

were more positive about what anthropologists would call a fuzzy set in which things were not so predetermined, but they emphasized relationships. This was pre-postmodern. It was in the seventies for sure that this research team came up with the idea of 'God loves you and wants to have a personal relationship with you. That is, the whole *Four Laws* booklet was recast in terms of relationships. Well, it was first then, in England, that permission was given and it moved quickly to the continent once Bill said it was ok, that the *Four Laws* booklet was pretty much abandoned in Europe and started to be known as the *Knowing God Personally* booklet.<sup>82</sup>

This tract begins differently from the *Four Spiritual Laws*: Bright said, "The following four principles will help you discover how to know God personally and experience the abundant life He promised."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>"G" stands for "Go to God in prayer daily (John 15:7)." "R" means to "Read God's Word daily (Acts 17:11); begin with the Gospel of John." "O" means to "Obey God moment by moment (John 14:21)." "W" stands for "Witness for Christ by your life and words (Matthew 4:19; John 15:8)." "T" means to "Trust God for every detail of your life (1 Peter 5:7)." "H" stands for the "Holy Spirit—allow Him to control and empower your daily life and witness (Galatians 5:16, 17; Acts 1:8)." Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?*

<sup>82</sup>Nyquist interview.

<sup>83</sup>Bill Bright, *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* (Peachtree City, GA:

**Principle One.** Principle One was significantly changed. This time the first phrase included a reference to creation, and the “has a wonderful plan” was also removed. It reads as follows: “God **loves** you and created you to know Him personally. (References in this booklet should be read in context from the Bible wherever possible.)”<sup>84</sup> In this revised tract, Bright included the fact that God created humanity, but it also denotes why God created—that is, to know them personally. The Scripture passages are the same in this tract as the ones in the *Four Spiritual Laws*; however, Bright concluded Principle One with a different question: “What prevents us from knowing God personally?”<sup>85</sup>

**Principle Two.** Principle Two contains a few significant changes. It reads: “Man is **sinful** and **separated** from God, [the same as in the original *Four Laws*, but what follows is significant due to the addition of the “personally” language] so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love.”<sup>86</sup> Bright left out the part about God’s plan for man’s life. Principle Two, in this present tract, includes emphasis on the fact that man cannot know God personally because he is sinful and separated from God—nor can he experience God’s love (see figure 5). The emphasis on the fact that man cannot know God personally is a welcomed change from the original *Four Laws* in which Law Two does not necessarily guard against intellectual assent when read by itself.

Furthermore, regarding the diagram depicting holy God and sinful man (figure 6) Bright added a few qualifying words:

This diagram illustrates that [not included in the original *Four Laws*] God is holy and man is sinful. A great gulf [original version says chasm] separates the two. The

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NewLife, a version of the *Four Spiritual Laws*, 1968), 3. See also Bright’s how to approach for using this tract, Bright, “Rescue Equipment: This easy-to-use tool gives you the words to tell those around you about Christ,” *Worldwide Challenge*, 29 no. 2, (March/April 2002): 21.

<sup>84</sup>Bright, *Would You Like to Know God Personally?*, 3. Bold formatting and bracketed remarks in original.

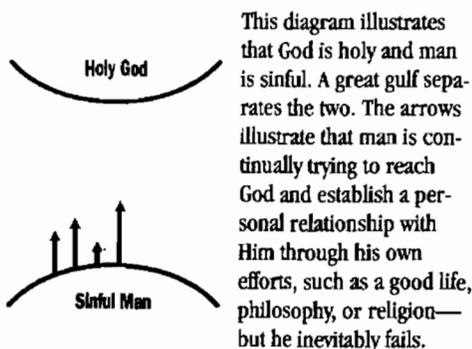
<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 4.

arrows illustrate [added] that man is continually trying to reach God and establish a personal relationship [“establish a personal relationship” is added, and “abundant life” as the original version states is removed] with Him through his own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion [“religion” is added and “ethics” is removed]—but he inevitably fails [“but he inevitably fails” is also added].<sup>87</sup>

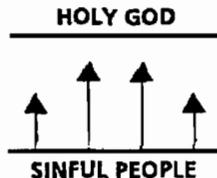
#### Man Is Separated

“The wages of sin is death” [spiritual separation from God] (Romans 6:23).



The third principle explains the only way to bridge this gulf...

Figure 3. Diagram—Holy God/Sinful Man



The Third Law gives us the only answer to this dilemma. . .

Figure 4. Diagram—Holy God/Sinful Man (original version)

**Principle Three.** Principle Three also includes the “personally” language, which undoubtedly focuses more on the relational nature of God. Law Three reads: “Jesus Christ is God’s **only** provision for man’s sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God’s love.”<sup>88</sup> The original Law Three reads, “Jesus

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 5.

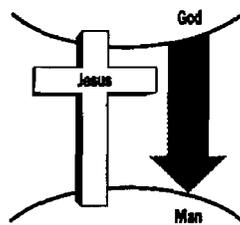
<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 6.

Christ is God's **only** provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life."<sup>89</sup>

Through Him alone ["alone" is added] we [we is used rather than you] can know God personally and experience God's love ["God personally" is added, and God's plan is replaced with "experience God's love"].<sup>90</sup> Additional language is included to explain the diagram of the gulf or chasm. This tract reads: "This diagram illustrates that ["this diagram illustrates that" is added] God has bridged the gulf [gulf is used rather than chasm] that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins [to pay the penalty for our sins was added]" (see figures 5-6)."<sup>91</sup> He succinctly concluded Principle Three with a new phrase: "It is not enough just to know these truths. . . ."<sup>92</sup>

#### He Is the Only Way to God

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me'" (John 14:6).



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.

It is not enough just to know these truths...

Figure 5. Diagram—Law Three

<sup>89</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* 1965 version in *The Van Dusen Letter*, 25.

<sup>90</sup>Bright, *Would You Like to Know God Personally?*, 6.

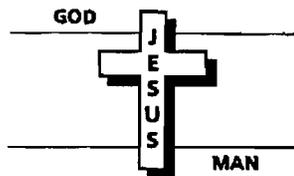
<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*

**He Is the Only Way to God**

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me'" (John 14:6, NASB).

God has bridged the chasm which separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place.

**LAW FOUR**

WE MUST INDIVIDUALLY **RECEIVE** JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD; THEN WE CAN KNOW AND EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE AND PLAN FOR OUR LIVES.

Figure 6. Diagram—Law Three (original)

**Principle Four.** Principle Four also includes some additional words which add clarity to the tract. It reads: "We must individually **receive** Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know God personally [God personally is added] and experience His Love ["plan for our lives" is left out]."<sup>93</sup> Bright added, "When we receive Christ, we experience a New Birth (Read John 3:1-8.)"<sup>94</sup> Bright also included some changes in the "suggested prayer" which, again, emphasizes knowing God personally. In the original *Van Dusen Letter* Bright wrote Law Four as follows: "We must individually **receive** Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives."<sup>95</sup>

**Analysis of the *Four Laws* and *Would You Like to Know God Personally?***

Is the *Four Spiritual Laws* a valid tool to use in sharing one's faith? There is

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Bright, *Have You Heard of the Four Spiritual Laws?* 1965 version in *The Van Dusen Letter*, 26.

no doubt that the *Four Spiritual Laws* has exposed a plethora of persons to the gospel. Professor Alvin Reid readily comments, “With the first person I ever led to Christ, I used the *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet produced by Campus Crusade for Christ.”<sup>96</sup> However, Bright himself realized that it was not the only way to talk to persons about Christ. He declared, “We do not claim that the use of the Four Spiritual Laws is the only way to introduce others to Christ, nor even the best way;” however, Bright continued, “Because of the large number who receive Christ simply through reading the Four Laws, I give many thousands to people whom I will never likely see again. I expect to see many of them in heaven.”<sup>97</sup>

There are areas to be critiqued in the *Four Laws*. First, in the original version of the *Four Laws*, Bright did not include the word “repentance.” He did, however, include it in the updated version and in *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* Additionally, the original and the updated version of the *Four Laws* were written in language which assumed that a person was familiar with the God of the Bible—the Judeo-Christian worldview. By not including language about God being the Creator, the tracts are not sufficient for today’s postmodern culture, because the laws presume that a person will have some knowledge of God.<sup>98</sup> Keith Davy with Campus Crusade writes,

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<sup>96</sup>Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 197.

<sup>97</sup>Bright, “May I Introduce You?,” 31. Bright continued, “There is no magic in the *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet. God blesses its use because it contains the distilled essence of the gospel, especially when it is used by men who are controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.” Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 48.

<sup>98</sup>John Nyquist believes that the *Four Spiritual Laws* were designed for a modern person who thinks logically. He notes, “Because there is a flow to the booklet, there are some presuppositions beginning with the booklet, but the booklet flows laterally and logically, from one [law] to the other.” He continues, “when a student is ready to hear about God, and this is the assumption that the student or person with whom one is talking, does understand the existence of God, that’s where the *Four Laws* booklet would start. It would be a misunderstanding to say that the Crusade staff and people who are trained by Campus Crusade are rigidly to simply use, memorize, or read the booklet, when in fact, it could be falling on deaf ears for nothing more significant than worldviews that are now confused. I would say that the idea of a four point outline or a five point outline or whatever, certainly was never intended to communicate the whole of the

“To begin a discussion with ‘God loves you’ can leave unanswered the critical question of ‘Which God?’ or ‘Who is God?’ Is it the infinite and personal Creator of the Bible or the impersonal force of the movies that pervades the cosmos?”<sup>99</sup>

Additionally, Will Metzger is correct in his assessment that one cannot speculate that unbelievers have a biblical worldview. He points out, “Far too many Christians today are making this wrong assumption about their hearers—thinking that they understand some basic concepts in the Bible. Although most Western countries have a Christian historical background, the dominant worldviews of people are not Christian at all.”<sup>100</sup> The tracts are, however, sufficient for a person who has been exposed to the Judeo-Christian worldview. Also, to say that “God has a wonderful plan” for one’s life opens the door to possible misinterpretations of God’s plan. What about the Christian in China who is being persecuted for his faith, or the person who dies a martyr for following Christ? Are these persons’ lives part of God’s wonderful plan? Whatever happens in one’s life is indeed part of God’s wonderful plan

Was Bright being true to Scripture by beginning with God’s love rather than man’s sin and depravity? There are those who say the way Bright chose to begin his *Four Spiritual Laws* is not biblical. David Bell suggests that Bright should have started with Creator God in his gospel presentation in Law One. Bell writes, “He should have begun with the God of creation who is a God of holiness and love.”<sup>101</sup> True, in the 1965 original version of the *Four Spiritual Laws*, Bright would have done well to have begun

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gospel. It was always an outline. It was always an opportunity to go deeper and to expand on any one of those points. Perhaps it would be fair to say that the four laws booklet was a beginning of a conversation and not the end of a conversation.” Nyquist interview.

<sup>99</sup>Keith A. Davy, “The Gospel for a New Generation,” in *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 360.

<sup>100</sup>Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People*, rev. and exp. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 53, 55.

<sup>101</sup>David Bell, “Tracts to Christ: A Proposal for an Analytical Framework With a Case Study” (paper presented in Tim Beougher’s Evangelism Seminar 29 October 2002 at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky).

with something about Creator God—while maintaining the “God loves you” language. The Creator God in Genesis does not overlook Adam and Eve’s sin. Moreover, one can see that Creator God holds Adam and Eve responsible for their sin, and God holds sinners today accountable as well. Hence, people need to hear that they are responsible for their sin to the one who made them.

Charles Dunn, regarding Law One, suggests:

Several times I have asked Campus Crusaders to show a member of the Mafia the first of ‘The Four Spiritual Laws,’ namely that ‘God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.’ To this, a Mafia member could easily respond, ‘Yes, God does love me. Look how He has blessed me.’ The first of the four spiritual laws would not cause the Mafia member to see his exceeding sinfulness and God’s holiness.<sup>102</sup>

Dunn isolates Law One from the rest of the Laws as though Bright intended for it to be a complete gospel presentation. Dunn would need to show the Mafia member Law Two as well. Dunn goes on to state, “The first of the four spiritual laws is an interesting technique in a psychological package designed to mass produce Christians. It takes the edge off man seeing himself as he really is: naked, destitute, and condemned before the Holy God.”<sup>103</sup> Even still, Dunn suggests:

What if Jesus had used the first of the four spiritual laws with the rich, young ruler in Mark 10? Jesus could have signed him up for LTC (Leadership Training Class) right away as one who had ‘prayed to receive Christ.’ But Jesus, not wanting to deceive the rich, young ruler, showed him his great sin and what God demands, so he went away sad because he was unwilling to give up everything to follow Jesus.<sup>104</sup>

Again, Bright never intended people to stop at Law One. Law Two certainly reveals that sin separates humanity from God. Dunn fails to take into consideration that Jesus never would have spoken to the rich young ruler if he had not first loved him enough to tell him about his sin. In fact, Mark 10:21 says that Jesus loved the rich young ruler before he

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<sup>102</sup>Charles W. Dunn, *Campus Crusade: Its Message and Methods* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1980; reprint, Collingswood, NJ: The Bible for Today), (page citations are to the reprint edition), 11.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 11-12.

ever told him to go and sell all he had (Mark 10:21 NIV).

Referring to the *Four Spiritual Laws*, Rick Miesel also declared:

It may be an ‘exciting, wonderful message, but for those that are perishing, not an accurate one. God’s plan for lost, unrepentant sinners is anything but ‘wonderful’ or ‘exciting’ (see Rom. 1:18-32 and Rev. 20:11-15). Emphasizing God’s love at the expense of making man cognizant of his sinful, lost condition, is a perversion of the gospel. It might bring in larger numbers of professing ‘converts,’ but what gospel have they really believed? A ‘Universalist, ‘God loves everybody’ gospel message,’ is not the gospel the Apostle Paul conveyed in his letter to the Romans (1:18-5:21).<sup>105</sup>

Miesel also fails to take into account that Bright intended for all four laws to be shared with a lost person. Miesel’s claims would be fair if Bright intended only Law One to be his gospel presentation; however, Bright included all four laws so that one may have an accurate picture of the gospel. In addition, Miesel’s claim that Bright believed in a “Universalist, ‘God loves everybody’ gospel” leaves the door open for misinterpreting Bright’s beliefs. Universalism is the belief that in the end God will save everyone, regardless if one repents and believes in Christ or not. Bright certainly was not a Universalist.

Furthermore, Walter Chantry said:

Today, we are told that witnessing is to begin with, ‘God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.’ Love is set before sinners as the foremost characteristic of God. But Jesus didn’t begin that way. And the Bible as a whole speaks more often of God’s holiness than of His love. This is probably because men readily remember all attributes that might favour themselves and totally forget those which threaten or alarm them.<sup>106</sup>

Chantry also needs to take into account that Bright dealt with man’s sin and separation from God in Law Two. Chantry makes a good point by noting that people remember

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<sup>105</sup>Rick Miesel, “Campus Crusade for Christ—(Crusade for Who?)” [on-line]; accessed 19 January 2005; available from <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/ccc/ccc.htm>; Internet.

<sup>106</sup>Walter J. Chantry, *Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (Carlisle, England: Banner of Truth, 1970), 28. Bright, however, covered God’s holiness in Law Two where he stated, “God is holy and man is sinful.” To say that God loves people before telling them that God is holy and man is sinful is not unbiblical. To tell people God loves them without ever telling them that they are separated from a holy God is unbiblical—which Bright avoided doing.

attributes which most favor themselves rather than the ones which might alarm them. One, however, cannot easily prove from Scripture that Jesus did not begin with love with those he encountered. One needs merely to examine how Christ dealt with the woman with the issue of blood who touched his garments (Mark 5:21-34 NAS), or how he dealt with the paralyzed man who was lowered through the roof in Capernaum (Mark 2:1-5 NAS), or even how he had compassion on the crowd when he fed the five thousand (Mark 6:34 NAS).

These men have made some serious charges against Bright, because they allege that he presented a faulty gospel. Michael Richardson, however, points out, referring to Bright's emphasis on God's love in Law One,

Love, forgiveness, acceptance, provision, peace, delight—these were the attributes of God that had drawn him. He had lived long enough to recognize special personal acts of God's love. The many answered prayers of his mother for him, his release from guilt and his amazing infusion of confidence in God that happened when he became a Christian, and God's timing in leading him and Vonette along life's journey—all this spoke to him not of a God who indicted first but of One who lovingly invited you into His living room.<sup>107</sup>

The *Four Spiritual Laws*, in its original version, is faithful to Scripture. It presents a God who loves the world so much that He sent Christ to redeem the “whosoever will” who are separated by their sin (John 3:16 AV). Ted Martin, former professor at Campus Crusade's International School of Theology, declared, “I have been over the Four Spiritual Laws booklet many times with a fine-tooth theological comb and I find it to be biblically and theologically sound.”<sup>108</sup>

This author believes that there was nothing wrong with Bright's order of the *Four Laws*. If one were to take Law One by itself, and hold it up as a complete

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<sup>107</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 74. Richardson continues, “He knew that in his own inner core, in that place Blaise Pascal referred to as ‘a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man,’ he had been and still was overwhelmed by God's love. In the quiet place at night where peace either is or isn't, Bill had experienced the revolutionizing effects of the love of God. It had turned him from a money-hungry, status-conscious, Hollywood-enthralled ‘happy pagan’ into a God-conscious, Christ-centered, self-giving, world-burdened missionary evangelist.” *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>108</sup>Ted Martin, “Consumer Report: What's Inside the Four Spiritual Laws?,” *Worldwide Challenge*, 8, no. 7 (July 1981): 20.

presentation of the gospel, then certainly it would be incomplete. Bright, however, was sure to include all Four Laws as the basic gospel message. Scripture, according to John 3:16, is clear that “God so loved the world,” and stating that God loves the world is definitely biblical. If one were to stop with Law One, then clearly he would miss the dreadfulness of man’s sin and separation from God—found in Law Two. Hence, Dunn, Chantry, and Miessel’s claims are unwarranted.

Nevertheless, another valid criticism comes from Tassell who said, regarding witnessing with the *Four Spiritual Laws*,

For instance, it says nothing about Hell. Most college students today do not have any background whatsoever in the Bible. Is it being honest to talk about receiving Christ into one’s life without making it clear that the Bible emphatically teaches that man is headed for eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire because he has sinned against a Holy God and is now under the just wrath of that Holy God?<sup>109</sup>

Bright would have done well to have included something about a person’s destination who is separated from God. Law Two would be a good place to mention something about hell; however, it is left out of all of versions of the *Four Laws*.

Furthermore, John G. Balyo disagreed with the way Crusaders witnessed using the *Four Spiritual Laws*. He pointed out,

Campus Crusade workers are told not to use the Four Spiritual Laws as a tract (which I would accept) but to read straight through the Four Spiritual Laws with an unsaved person. They have pause to get the appropriate answers at the right places. Thus the approach is programmed to bring a person to a decision by agreement with the Four Spiritual Laws. There is no word of caution to the worker to see if there is any real conviction of sin. Decisions resulting must necessarily often be superficial.<sup>110</sup>

However, Crusade staff persons, in a survey sent via email, overwhelmingly responded that they were *not* told to read straight through the *Four Laws*, thus rendering Balyo’s claims as unwarranted.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Paul Tassell, “Is Campus Crusade Scriptural?” (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1980; reprint, Collingswood, NJ: The Bible for Today), 14-15, (page citations are to the reprint edition), 14-15.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>111</sup>I asked in question number 1, “Are you told to read straight through the Four Spiritual Laws in witnessing encounters? Explain.” Here are a few of the responses:

### **Additional Evangelistic Tools Campus Crusade Uses Today**

Campus Crusade uses numerous evangelistic tools (tracts) based on the *Four Spiritual Laws* which deserve acknowledgement. According to Keith Davy, who directs the research and development department for Campus Ministry as well as provides leadership for national evangelism efforts, the most popular tract which college students like to use is the *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* version designed particularly for college students.<sup>112</sup> It includes language about Creator God, and it has more pictures than the original *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* It also retains the “wonderful plan” language in Law One: “God loves you and created you to know Him personally. He has a wonderful plan for your life.”<sup>113</sup>

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Amy, who is on Crusade staff at Northern Illinois University said, “No. We are given the 4 Spiritual Laws as a tool to use while sharing our faith. I often use it because it gives a clear outline of the Gospel straight from the Bible. But I have never been told that I am to read straight through it.” Becky, who was on staff for eight years at James Madison University and now serves at the Crusade headquarters in Orlando, Florida, said, “My training in the 4 Laws was to get through as much of the content as the person is receptive to. (My Campus Director would pound it into the heads of the students he trained, ‘The goal is *not* to simply ‘get through’ the Four Laws. The goal is to share truth with the person.’) I’ve done everything from reading straight through the content, to ‘surfing’ to the place that the person had asked questions about. I most often flipped to 1 John 5:11-13 to talk about assurance of salvation.” Harvey, who served with Crusade for 31 years with Crusade which included stops at the Universities of Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Yale, said, “When first trained as a student, that may have been said to me. The reason given was to help me find comfort in not having to know everything, but being able to rely on the tool to communicate the message. As I was further trained as a staff member the emphasis was to use the tool as a focal point for the conversation and to allow the person to interact with the concepts in it in a conversational way. Any emphasis I received about reading straight through the booklet was tempered by a desire to engage the person in a dialogue about faith.”

<sup>112</sup>Keith Davy gave some insight on the change of the college ministry version of *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* He pointed out that the college ministry continues to use the four point outline as the classic way of communicating the gospel; however, students were feeling like the original *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* was dated. Hence, they brought students in to give their input on what changes should be made to update the tract without taking away the basic message of the gospel present in the original version. Davy notes, “From that then, our design team, under my leadership, came up with the blue booklet [of the *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* tract]. . . . It became available in summer of 2000, and Dr. Bright was very much involved in [its approval].” Keith Davy, interview with the author, Louisville, Kentucky, 17 March 2005.

<sup>113</sup>Campus Crusade for Christ, *Would You Like to Know God Personally?*

Crusade also uses *The Passage* for evangelism. Bright did not design or write the tract, though it received his approval.<sup>114</sup> This tract contextualizes the message for African Americans by tying their struggle for physical freedom to everyone's need for spiritual freedom. The tract begins as follows:

In pre-Civil War America, thousands of African Americans escaped to freedom by way of the underground railroad, a secret network of relationships and safe houses. Harriet Tubman, an escaped slave herself, returned to conduct others to freedom nineteen different times via this passage. Many of us today, while physically free, still experience various forms of bondage. There is still a need for spiritual and lasting freedom. This need exists because, in our search for freedom and personal fulfillment, we make choices that lead us away from, instead of toward a relationship with our creator, God. This booklet will help you consider four principles that describe THE PASSAGE to true freedom and a personal relationship with God.<sup>115</sup>

The first principle in this tract is more thorough in its biblical doctrine than the previous tracts covered. For example, it reads: "God's Desire: God created you in His image. He wants you to know Him personally, so you may experience the love, peace and freedom He offers."<sup>116</sup> Not only does principle one draw attention to God being the Creator, but being created in God's image with His desire to know his created creatures personally is also denoted.

Keith Davy also came up with a tract, through Crusade's Research and Development department, geared toward postmoderns called *Life@Large*.<sup>117</sup> It includes

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(Orlando: NewLife, a version of the Four Spiritual Laws, 1965, 1968, 2000), 3.

<sup>114</sup>Campus Crusade for Christ, *The Passage* (Orlando: NewLife, adapted with permission, from *The Four Spiritual Laws*, 2002).

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>117</sup>Campus Crusade for Christ, *Life@Large* (Orlando: WSN Press, 1999). For a detailed look at this tract, see Keith Davy, "The Gospel for a New Generation," in *Telling the Truth*, chap. 26. Regarding the use of this tract with people from other religious backgrounds, Davy points out, "in the field test of *Life@Large*, particular attention was paid to the individuals from other world religions and from various ethnic backgrounds. As the student testers recorded these conversations, the outcomes of both groups were very positive." *Ibid.*, 365.

language describing “God’s story” and “your story” which personalizes the gospel story with those seeking truth for their lives. It is the most thorough doctrinally of all the tracts, as far as explaining who God is, because of its Creator God language. According to Davy, Bright was aware and familiar with the tract, although he did not personally write it.<sup>118</sup> It begins: “Every person has a story—a life story. What’s yours? Have you ever stopped to consider how your story fits into the story of *Life@Large*? *Life@Large* is the story of life. It’s God’s story and our story, woven together with themes of the Bible—from beginning to end.”<sup>119</sup> Its first principle is “Intimacy,” and God as Creator is a key theme. It reads as follows: “From the beginning, relationships have been woven into the tapestry of our lives. God fashioned us as masterpieces that would reflect our Creator’s image. We were designed to experience intimacy, loving God and each other.”<sup>120</sup> It then proceeds to relate two sections, “God’s story,” and “your story.” God’s story reads:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you have set in place—what are mortals that you should think of us, mere humans that you should care for us? . . . God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them. . . . Your Story. . . . On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your current desire to know God personally? (Ten is the highest) Why?”<sup>121</sup>

Clearly, this tract is the most thorough biblically in describing who God is of all the tracts produced by Crusade because of the detail included on Creator God in the aforementioned quote. However, this tract does not contain the word “repentance,” which is a key part of the gospel which must be presented in any gospel presentation, nor does it include the word “hell.”

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<sup>118</sup>Keith Davy interview.

<sup>119</sup>Campus Crusade for Christ, *Life@Large*, 1.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 2.

*Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery  
of the Spirit-Filled Life?*

Bright created the tract on the Holy Spirit. He used it as an evangelistic tract as well as a way to disciple new believers on life in the Spirit. He declared, referring to the Holy Spirit booklet, "The benefit of using the Holy Spirit booklet is that it is concise and transferable. It clearly states what an individual needs to do to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It closes by asking the reader to make a decision and suggests a prayer he can use."<sup>122</sup> Bright recalled the story of how the Holy Spirit tract was created. He and Vonette were resting at Charles Fuller's house when he felt compelled to get out of bed:

The midnight hour had come and gone by the time we had arrived and unpacked. Some time near one o'clock in the morning we wearily climbed into bed and fully expected to be asleep by the time the light was out. But God had other plans. As I turned over to go to sleep, I found my mind flooded with truths concerning the Holy Spirit. Fearful that I might forget them if I didn't write them down, I got up for pencil and paper and found several shirt boards. After filling the shirt boards, I found some brown wrapping paper and continued to write furiously. That night God gave me the truths concerning the Person and work of the Holy Spirit that have been basic to the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ through the years. This material has now been incorporated into our Bible study course, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, which is being used by many churches and various Christian organizations around the world. This basic and revolutionary concept of how to be filled with the Holy Spirit has been condensed into a small booklet comparable to the Four Spiritual Laws presentation and is entitled, 'Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?' This Holy Spirit booklet is being used by many thousands of Christians all over the world to help lead carnal Christians into an abundant and fruitful life in the Spirit.<sup>123</sup>

Bright began the tract as follows: "Every day can be an exciting adventure for the Christian who knows the reality of being filled with the Holy Spirit and who lives constantly, moment by moment, under His gracious direction."<sup>124</sup> Bright proceeded to mention three kinds of people whom the Bible describes as the natural person, the spiritual person, and the worldly (carnal) person (see figure 7).

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<sup>122</sup>Bright, "The Message Christians Need to Hear," *Worldwide Challenge* 10, no. 8 (Sept/Oct 1983): 17.

<sup>123</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 49-50.

<sup>124</sup>Bright, *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?* (Orlando: NewLife, 2000), 2.

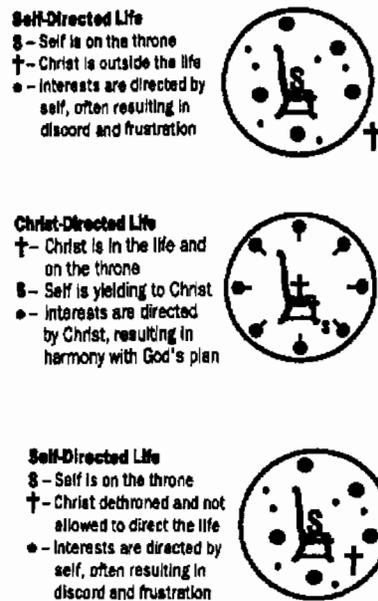


Figure 7. Diagram—The Three Circles of Spiritual Life

He said that the natural person is one who has not received Christ and has a “self-directed life,” which is true.<sup>125</sup> He went on to quote 1 Corinthians 2:14, “A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”<sup>126</sup> The spiritual person, according to Bright, is one who has a Christ-directed life and is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He referenced 1 Corinthians 2:15, 16, “He who is spiritual appraises all things. . . . We have the mind of Christ.”<sup>127</sup> The third person Bright described is a worldly or carnal person: “One who has received Christ, but who lives in defeat because he is trying to live the Christian life in his own strength.”<sup>128</sup> This person also lives a self-directed life; however, Christ is at least on the inside of the circle—yet, “self” is on the

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 3.

throne. He quoted 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NIV): “Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?”<sup>129</sup>

Bright then introduced four principles for living the Spirit-filled life. The first principle reads: “God has provided for us an abundant and fruitful Christian life.”<sup>130</sup>

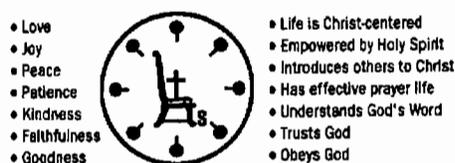


Figure 8. Diagram—The Spirit-Filled Life

Several “traits” also are listed which should be present in a person’s life who is filled by the Spirit (see Figure 8 above). Bright commented, “The degree to which these traits are manifested in the life depends on the extent to which the Christian trusts the Lord with every detail of his life, and on his maturity in Christ.”<sup>131</sup> Then, Bright raised the question leading to Principle Two, “Why is it that most Christians are not experiencing the abundant life?”<sup>132</sup>

Principle Two is where Bright has received ample criticism over the years because of his belief in “carnal” Christianity (“carnal” Christianity is addressed later in

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

this chapter).<sup>133</sup> Bright stated principle two as follows: “Worldly Christians cannot experience the abundant and fruitful Christian life.”<sup>134</sup> Bright also included several characteristics of the worldly (carnal) Christian:

He is either uninformed about, or has forgotten, God’s love, forgiveness, and power (Rom 5:8-10; Heb 10:1-25; 1 John 1; 2:1-3; 2 Peter 1:9; Acts 1:8). He has an up-and-down spiritual experience. He cannot understand himself—he wants to do what is right, but cannot. He fails to draw on the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life (1 Cor 3:1-3; Rom 7:15-24; 8:7; Gal 5:16-18).<sup>135</sup>

Bright made a statement which protected him from offering false security to the person who may not be a true believer. He declared, “The individual who professes to be a Christian but who continues to practice sin should realize that he may not be a Christian at all, according to 1 John 2:3; 3:6-9; Ephesians 5:5.”<sup>136</sup>

Bright continued, in Principle Three, “Jesus promised the abundant and fruitful life as the result of being filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>137</sup> Bright explains the Spirit-filled life as a “Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15).”<sup>138</sup> Moreover, he believed that the believer could live a Spirit-filled life by faith.

Principle four states: “We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith; then we can experience the abundant and fruitful life that Christ promised.”<sup>139</sup> Bright advocated

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 6. Bright continued, regarding his definition of “carnal” Christian, “The carnal Christian is one who has received Christ but who also has allowed his fleshly nature to reclaim the throne through sin. God still has possession of this person, and Christ is still in his life, but the individual is not yielded to God.” Bill Bright, *The Secret: How to Live with Purpose and Power* (Orlando: NewLife, 1994, 2003), 54.

<sup>134</sup>Bright, *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?*, 6.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., 10.

maintaining a walk in the Spirit by making sure that one constantly rids himself of sin through a process he called “spiritual breathing.” He pointed out:

If you become aware of an area of your life (an attitude or an action) that is displeasing to the Lord, even though you are walking with Him and sincerely desiring to serve Him, simply thank God that He has forgiven your sins—past, present, and future—on the basis of Christ’s death on the cross. Claim His love and forgiveness by faith and continue to have fellowship with Him. If you retake the throne of your life through sin—a definite act of disobedience—breathe spiritually. Spiritual Breathing (exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure) is an exercise in faith that enables you to experience God’s love and forgiveness. 1. Exhale: Confess your sin—agree with God concerning your sin and thank Him for His forgiveness of it, according to 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10: 1-25. Confession involves repentance—a change in attitude and action. 2. Inhale: Surrender the control of your life to Christ, and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith. Trust that He now directs and empowers you, according to the command of Ephesians 5:18 and the promise of 1 John 5:14, 15.<sup>140</sup>

**Spiritual breathing.** There are critics of Bright’s “spiritual breathing.” Craig Parton, who served on staff for Crusade for seven years, says “Bill Bright’s approach to the Christian life appears to be, strangely enough, classically medieval.”<sup>141</sup> Michael Horton, referring to “spiritual breathing,” believes “the Spirit is viewed less as a person than as a quantity of divine substance, poured into the believer in varying degrees, depending on how closely one followed the rules for ‘appropriation.’ This infusion-centered rather than imputation-centered doctrine of salvation exactly parallels the medieval system.”<sup>142</sup>

Regarding “spiritual breathing” being medieval, the medieval Jesus Prayer has some similarities with “spiritual breathing.” The Jesus Prayer is a prayer started by

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<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>141</sup>Craig A. Parton, “From Arrowhead to Augsburg: Bill Bright in the Light of the Lutheran Confessions” [on-line]; accessed 16 February 2004; available from <http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissar58.htm>; Internet.

<sup>142</sup>Michael S. Horton, “The Higher Life at the Orlando Prayer Summit,” *Modern Reformation Magazine*, (January/February vol. 4, 1995) [on-line]; accessed 25 April 2005; available from <http://www.modernreformation.org/mh95summit.htm>; Internet.

Eastern Orthodox spiritual writers, Diadochus of Photice (mid fifth century) and Saint John Climacus of Mount Sinai (579-649).<sup>143</sup> The Jesus Prayer consists of repeating in repetition: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.”<sup>144</sup> In modern Orthodox practice, the prayer might end with “have mercy on me a sinner.”<sup>145</sup> Timothy Ware writes, “By the twelfth century (if not before), the recitation of the Jesus Prayer had become linked to certain physical exercises, designed to assist concentration. Breathing was carefully regulated in time with the Prayer, and a particular bodily posture was recommended: head bowed, chin resting on the chest, eyes fixed on the place of the heart.”<sup>146</sup> The Jesus Prayer, according to an Athonite hermit, does bring about an awareness of one’s sinfulness. The hermit suggested, referring to those who pray the Jesus Prayer, “The first gift which Christ gives to the man of prayer is the awareness of his sinfulness. He stops believing that he is ‘good’ and considers himself ‘the desolating sacrilege . . . standing in the holy place’ (Matt. 24.15). Like the saw of a surgeon cutting through the bone, the sharp word of the Spirit penetrates to the depths of the soul.”<sup>147</sup>

Parton and Horton’s claims, however, do not prove Bright unorthodox in his beliefs on the Holy Spirit. Even though there are similarities between the Jesus Prayer and “spiritual breathing,” Bright did not intend for one to physically practice exhaling and inhaling with the confession and acceptance of forgiveness for one’s sin. “Spiritual breathing” is metaphorical language which Bright found similar to the physical act of breathing. One can see that the association of Bright’s approach to “spiritual breathing”

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<sup>143</sup>Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Great Britain: Richard Clay, 1963), 74.

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>145</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup>Archimandrite Hierotheos Vlachos, *A Night in the Desert of the Holy Mountain: Discussion with a Hermit on Jesus Prayer*, trans. Effie Mavromichali (Greece: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1991), 111-12.

seems to be a pragmatic approach to living a “Spirit-controlled” life.

Moreover, Horton claimed that Bright viewed the Holy Spirit less as a person than as quantity of divine substance. However, Bright referred to the Holy Spirit in personal language when he described “spiritual breathing.” He said, “Trust that He now directs and empowers you.”<sup>148</sup> His approach is not found in Scripture: that is, the words “spiritual breathing,” with exhaling and inhaling, are not present. Nevertheless, he merely found a way, or a method, for individuals to follow when they feel like they are struggling with sin and being “filled” with the Spirit.

**Carnal Christianity.** Furthermore, Paul Schaefer believes Bright was a proponent of two types of Christians.<sup>149</sup> Inevitably, this debate is tied to the “Lordship controversy,” and it is not the intent of this author to delve into the “Lordship” debate in detail.<sup>150</sup> Yet men such as Paul Schaefer believe Bright advocated that one could accept Christ as Savior without accepting him as Lord. Schaefer suggests, “Bright’s overall presentation corresponds well to that of the dispensationalist Chafer [Lewis Sperry] and the Keswick proponent Barabas on the issues of two types of Christians and the doctrine of sanctification.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup>Bright, *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Holy Spirit?*, 15.

<sup>149</sup>Paul Schaefer, “An American Tale,” in *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation*, ed. Michael Horton (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 173.

<sup>150</sup>Nevertheless, for a detailed analysis of both sides of the debate, see Randall C. Gleason, “The Lordship Debate,” in *Principles of Leadership: What We Can Learn From the Life and Ministry of Bill Bright*, ed., Ted Martin and Michael Cozzens (Orlando: NewLife, 2001), chap. 25. Also, see John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel according to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

<sup>151</sup>Schaefer, “An American Tale,” 173. The Keswick movement began in 1875 with an emphasis on holiness and the Holy Spirit’s role in one’s life. Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 3: 182-83. One can see the similarities between Keswick teachings on two types of Christians and Bright’s writings. For instance, the Keswick teachings indicate the following, regarding “carnal” Christianity: “It is to be feared that there are multitudes of believers who are still in the category of what the apostle Paul describes in his Letters to the Corinthians as ‘carnal.’ It is only as we walk in the Spirit, in a condition of unflinching

R. C. Sproul, however, does not believe that Bright was advocating two types of Christians when Bright referred to one being a “carnal” Christian. Sproul argues convincingly in support of Bright’s use of the language “carnal” Christian. He in fact writes:

In the popular booklet published by Campus Crusade for Christ called ‘The Holy Spirit Booklet’ . . . mention is made of a distinction between two kinds of Christians. I am confident, however, that is not the intention of the booklet or of its author. Rather, in a pastoral way, Dr. Bright is discussing the classical struggle here between the flesh and the Spirit that every genuine Christian faces. The point of the booklet is to call us to exercise the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives in order to keep the evil tendencies of the old man in check. The old man is to be put to death daily. Victory comes in the Christian life by keeping our eyes upon the Spirit who is to reign over our possessions. . . . All Christians are ‘carnal’ insofar as we continue to struggle with the old nature of flesh. But no true Christian is carnal in the sense that the flesh totally dominates his life.<sup>152</sup>

This author agrees with Sproul’s interpretation of “carnal” Christianity which properly characterizes Bright’s view. In fact, one’s theology must allow for the possibility of a true believer to fall into a state of sin.<sup>153</sup> Several Reformed Confessional statements refer to a state when a true believer falls into sin bringing reproach on the cross of Christ.<sup>154</sup> What would one call such a person, other than carnal, when he or she

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obedience, that we have power not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” W. H. Aldis, foreword, in *The Message of Keswick and Its Meaning* (Great Britain: Purnell and Sons, 1957), 71. One can also see in Andrew Murray’s writings (influenced by Keswick teachings; and Bright was greatly influenced by Murray’s writings) strong similarities between Murray and Bright’s writings on carnal Christianity. See chap. 3, “Carnal or Spiritual?” in Andrew Murray, *The Deeper Christian Life* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker, 1995). Even still, one should see Lewis Sperry Chafer’s chap.1, “Three Classes of Men,” in *He That Is Spiritual*, rev. and enlarged (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times, 1922). John Nyquist suggested that Bright would not have known about the Keswick movement. Of course, Nyquist would not definitely know whether Bright was aware of the movement. John Nyquist, interview

<sup>152</sup>R. C. Sproul, *The Pleasures of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), 159.

<sup>153</sup>Ted Martin pointed out that the Lordship advocates do not allow for a proper understanding of those who fall into sin. In fact, what else besides “carnal” as Paul mentions in the Bible, can one call these individuals? Ted Martin, interview with the author, 20 January 2005, Louisville, Kentucky.

<sup>154</sup>For instance, the “Westminster Confession of Faith” reads in chap. 18 “Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation,” “True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God’s withdrawing the

is in a “backslidden” state, all the while realizing that the person is truly regenerate? Former professor of theology at The International School of Theology, Alan Scholes, makes a valid point regarding Bright’s view. Scholes suggests that “the wholesale rejection of the notion of ‘carnal Christians’ by Lordship advocates seriously underestimates the impact of sin in the lives of believers. Paul’s words to the Corinthians undeniably teach that ‘carnal Christians’ do exist (1 Cor 2:14-3:3).”<sup>155</sup>

***Satisfied?*** The Holy Spirit booklet underwent some changes which resulted in the production of *Satisfied?* in 2001.<sup>156</sup> Bright allowed Keith Davy to make revisions to the Holy Spirit booklet while maintaining its basic message which included the “three kinds of lives” and “spiritual breathing.”<sup>157</sup> However, due to the influence of those who were Reformed in their theology, the “carnal” language was removed.<sup>158</sup> The *Satisfied?* booklet became the campus version. Davy pointed out that while the Holy Spirit booklet’s message was being shared, the booklet itself was not being used as often, and

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light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may be, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.” Westminster Confession of Faith (1643-46) quoted in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1188. Moreover, the “1963 Baptist Faith and Message” reads, in the section “God’s Purpose of Grace,” “Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the cause of Christ, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation.” “1963 Baptist Faith and Message,” *idem*, 1201.

<sup>155</sup>Alan Scholes, “Doctrinal Convictions and Persuasions,” in *Principles of Leadership* (Orlando: NewLife, 2001), 389.

<sup>156</sup>Jennifer Abegg, “Satisfied?” *Worldwide Challenge*, 29, no. 3 (May/June 2002): 33.

<sup>157</sup>Davy interview.

<sup>158</sup>*Ibid.*

“in the minds of some of the users it did not communicate as effectively as the *Four Spiritual Laws*.”<sup>159</sup>

Davy also pointed out that some of the users of the Holy Spirit booklet, that is, those from a more Reformed background, were not as comfortable presenting it. They were uncomfortable not only because of the “carnal language,” but as Davy pointed out, they also were not comfortable with the theological presentation of the filling of the Spirit.<sup>160</sup> He went on to suggest, “What was discovered under the gracious guidance of the Lord is that part of the solution was to make it more like the *Four Spiritual Laws*.”<sup>161</sup> The *Four Spiritual Laws* has principles, or laws, which included numerous Scripture passages to back up each principle. Therefore, Davy revised the Holy Spirit booklet with more Scripture after each principle. Indeed, the *Satisfied?* booklet is more user friendly because it easier to follow the Scripture and diagrams.<sup>162</sup>

### Mass Evangelism

Bright’s intentional approach to evangelism led him to believe in sharing Christ with as many people as possible. Mass or saturation evangelism (which is obviously intentional) would characterize his strategy for witnessing to the college campus and to the world at large.<sup>163</sup> He pointed out:

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<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid.

<sup>162</sup>Campus Crusade for Christ, *Satisfied?* (Orlando: NewLife); adapted from *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?*, 2001.

<sup>163</sup>Alvin Reid defines mass evangelism generally as “any gospel message preached to a crowd, including a musical, drama, block party, or some other tool.” Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 266. Bright declared, “Campus Crusade is a worldwide movement totally dedicated to one goal: to help fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord by taking the claims of Christ to the millions of students in every country of the world, and, through them and a trained adult leadership, to help saturate each country of the world with the good news of God’s love and forgiveness in Christ.” Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 19. Bright’s use of Explos, “Here’s Life America,” The *JESUS* film,

There is a law of average. An insurance salesman knows that the more telephone calls he makes, the more appointments he sets up, and the more appointments, the more sales. The same is true of spiritual harvest. The more people with whom we share Christ, the more there will be who will receive Christ as their Savior, and more people will become witnessing disciples.<sup>164</sup>

Bright believed in using every means possible for sharing Christ with the whole world. He pointed out, “Every conceivable program of winning men to Christ is used, including personal evangelism; large evangelistic meetings; evangelistic home Bible studies; action groups; films; radio; television; direct mail; evangelistic coffees, teas, breakfasts, luncheons, and banquets for both men and women; and literature distribution.”<sup>165</sup> He started with the college campus where he saw the future leaders of America. He said, “These students represent the major source of manpower to help change the course of history. They need to be reached for Christ.”<sup>166</sup> He further declared, “Since the inception of this ministry our slogan has been, ‘Win the campus to Christ today, win the world to Christ tomorrow.’”<sup>167</sup> Bright’s mass evangelism approach to sharing the gospel is evident in the following events which he and Crusade planned.

**College blitzes.** Bright’s first college blitz occurred at the University of California-Berkeley around 1966. The counter-culture movement was in full swing at this time. Bright noted,

As Christians and as members of the Campus Crusade for Christ staff, we were concerned that so little was being accomplished for Christ on this campus, the fountainhead of the radical movement. So, at one of our campus strategy sessions it was decided that we would call together 600 of our staff and students from across the nation and invade the University of California with the good news of Christ through a

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and college blitzes were part of his mass evangelism strategy which he planned in order to reach numerous people with the gospel.

<sup>164</sup>Bill Bright, “How to Ensure a Bountiful Harvest,” *Worldwide Challenge*, 8, no. 9 (September 1981): 6.

<sup>165</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 182.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., 180-81.

<sup>167</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 81.

week-long convention. Our theme was ‘Solution—Spiritual Revolution.’<sup>168</sup>

Numerous meetings occurred where the gospel was presented with an invitation to receive Christ. Additionally, the 600 Crusade Staff used some twenty telephones to call students individually to try and make appointments with them in order to share Christ with them. Hundreds of the students who called made decisions to accept Christ, according to Bright.<sup>169</sup> The day began with rain, yet God brought the sunshine before Billy Graham spoke to approximately 8,000 students in the Greek Theater.<sup>170</sup> By the end of the week, over 700 students made commitments to Christ with an additional 2,000 who wanted to know more about Christ.<sup>171</sup>

“**Explo ’72.**” The first of several mass evangelistic meetings occurred June 12-17, 1972, at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Texas, which filled with some 80,000 college students, high school students, and lay persons for training and encouragement in evangelism.<sup>172</sup> There were approximately 63 locations throughout Dallas where training was offered, and every night delegates packed the Cotton Bowl to hear men like Bright, Billy Graham, and the Rev. E. V. Hill.<sup>173</sup> The week-long training concluded with a monumental Christian music festival in which over 200,000 people heard singers like Johnny Cash, Andrae Crouch, and Reba Rambo sing about Christ.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., 100.

<sup>170</sup>Paul Eshleman, “Sowing Broadly,” in *Principles of Leadership*, 233.

<sup>171</sup>Bright, *Come Help Change the World*, 99.

<sup>172</sup>Chuck MacDonald, “Where Were You in ’72?” *Worldwide Challenge*, 9, no. 6 (June 1982): 6. For a detailed account of the Explo ’72 story, see Paul Eshelman and Norman Rohrer, *The Explo Story: A Plan to Change the World* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1972).

<sup>173</sup>MacDonald, “Where Were you in ’72?,” 6.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid., 10.

**“Explo ’74.”** Campus Crusade’s South Korean director, Joon Gon Kim, planned another “Explo,” similar to the one in 1972, to take place in South Korea. “Explo ’74” was, at the time, the largest gathering of believers to be trained in evangelism and discipleship. Bright reported that 324, 419 believers were trained in evangelism and discipleship for the entire week.<sup>175</sup> The police estimated that at least two of the evening meetings surpassed 1.3 million in attendance.<sup>176</sup> Bright also reported that 274, 000<sup>177</sup> people made known their decisions to receive Christ with an additional 120, 000 indicating that they wanted to know more about Christ.<sup>178</sup> Reports show that by 2000, nearly half of South Korea reported to be Christians, while less than 20 percent indicated they were in 1974.<sup>179</sup>

**“Here’s Life America.”** Bright commented on the beginnings of the “Here’s Life” campaign. He noted, “‘Here’s Life, America’ was born out of one of the gravest periods of crisis ever to confront our nation, the late 1960’s and early 70’s. Never had there been such conflict in America since the days of the Civil War.”<sup>180</sup> Bright and Crusade leadership in 1974 sensed the need to come up with a strategy to help reach or saturate the nation with the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>181</sup>

They decided that the local church and their pastors would be the best means to help carry out the plan, with Crusade as a source of help for training. Bright noted, “We

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<sup>175</sup>Bill Bright, “History’s Greatest Plan Part 1,” *Worldwide Challenge*, 6, no. 10 (October 1979): 36.

<sup>176</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 39.

<sup>177</sup>Bright, “History’s Greatest Plan Part 1,” 36.

<sup>178</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 159.

<sup>179</sup>*Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>180</sup>Bill Bright, *A Movement of Miracles* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1997), 22.

<sup>181</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

recognized that the resources for accomplishing this task already resided in local churches. Thousands of Christians are sitting in churches right now—ready for action.”<sup>182</sup> It was May 1975 when the campaign was launched on the first pilot city of Atlanta, Georgia. Jimmy Carter, governor of Georgia at the time, and his wife Rosalynn helped launch the campaign in Atlanta with a press conference.<sup>183</sup>

Furthermore, the slogan “I found it!—new life in Christ!” was coined as a way to capture people’s attention. Numerous means of media were employed: lapel buttons, billboards, bumper stickers, television ads and shows, newspapers and magazine ads, radio announcements, and door-to-door visits were also made. There were call centers set up where people could call the “I found it” telephone numbers to find out more about the gospel. By 1977, more than 179 million Americans in 250 cities and thousands of smaller communities were saturated with the “I found it” campaign, according to Bright.<sup>184</sup> Additionally, Bright noted that more than 532,000 people made decisions to follow Christ.<sup>185</sup>

One notable outcome from the campaign is that Crusade was able to work with close to 15,000 churches from various denominations, and nearly 325,000 Christians received training in how to share their faith.<sup>186</sup> Bright was definitely involved with the campaign. He declared, “I met day after day in city after city with pastors, city fathers, lay people, and others, praying, planning and asking God to work His miracles.”<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>183</sup>Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, 43.

<sup>184</sup>Bill Bright, “Campus Crusade Milestones: A Monument to God,” *Worldwide Challenge*, 8, no. 10, (October 1981): 10.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

<sup>186</sup>Bill Bright, “After 1980—Then What?,” *Worldwide Challenge*, 7, no. 9 (January 1980): 9.

<sup>187</sup>Bright, *Movement of Miracles*, 46.

**1980 World Evangelization Crusade.** Campus Crusade's director for South Korea, Joon Gon Kim, coordinated the crusade in which more than two million people gathered at the night rallies.<sup>188</sup> Cumulative attendance at the four nightly rallies totaled close to 10.5 million people.<sup>189</sup> One million persons indicated that they received Christ for the first time.<sup>190</sup>

**“Explo '85.”** Whereas the previous Explos were held in one location, “Explo '85” was the technological use of live satellite transmitted messages to numerous conference sites, on different continents, over the period of four days. Bright traveled to four different conference sites on three continents to speak to delegates via satellite.<sup>191</sup> Bright noted that 300,000 people from close to 160 countries were trained at ninety-eight conferences in discipleship and evangelism.<sup>192</sup> He concluded, “This undertaking was so gargantuan that only God could have enabled us to be successful.”<sup>193</sup>

### **The *JESUS* film**

Bright declared, “The response to *JESUS* has proved that it is one of the greatest evangelistic tools in history. . . . Between 30,000 and 50,000 are indicating their desire to receive our Lord Jesus Christ each day.”<sup>194</sup> Bright used John Heyman, a Jewish

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<sup>188</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 164.

<sup>189</sup>Vickie Kyte, “Korea’s Incredible Crusade: Massive rallies and unprecedented response highlight the '80 WEC,” *Worldwide Challenge*, 7, no. 11 (November 1980): 40

<sup>190</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup>Bill Bright, “Looking to the Future: The impact of EXPLO 85,” *Worldwide Challenge*, 13, no. 2 (March/April 1986): 57.

<sup>192</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup>Bill Bright, Introduction, in Paul Eshelman and Carolyn E. Phillips, *I Just Saw Jesus* (San Clemente, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1994), 7-8.

movie producer, to help produce the film. Bright also enlisted Paul Eshleman, former Campus Crusade director at University of Wisconsin as well as the former director of the Campus Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, as the one in charge of the film. Heyman suggested that the movie on the life of Christ be taken directly from the Gospel of Luke.<sup>195</sup> Bunker Hunt, a friend of Bright's, helped to finance the making of the movie, which had a budget of six million.<sup>196</sup>

Filming of the movie was on location in Israel, with Brian Deacon playing Jesus. More than five thousand people helped to make up the cast.<sup>197</sup> Moreover, great measures were taken to ensure the theological accuracy of the movie. A research team of twenty-five was responsible for writing a 318-page document, which described in detail the theological, biblical, historical, sociological, archeological, and geographical background of each of the movie's scenes.<sup>198</sup> The film opened in the fall of 1979 in America.<sup>199</sup> It now can be seen in some 858 different languages or dialects with over two hundred additional translations in the works.<sup>200</sup> As of December 2004, 197,357,774 individuals have made decisions to follow Christ after having seen or heard the *JESUS* film.<sup>201</sup> It is also used predominantly in overseas missions efforts.

Crusade has done some assessment on the effectiveness of the *JESUS* film. They asked James F. Engel and J. Scott Morey to lead a research team in a field

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<sup>195</sup>Christi Roberson, "The Story of 'Jesus'," *Worldwide Challenge*, 12, no. 3 (May/June 1985): 28.

<sup>196</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>197</sup>Richardson, *Amazing Faith*, 168.

<sup>198</sup>Roberson, "The Story of 'Jesus'," 31.

<sup>199</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>200</sup>Laura Chapman, "The JESUS Film Turns 25," *Campus Crusade Today: A Special Report* (December 2004): 3.

<sup>201</sup>*Ibid.*

assessment to determine the impact of the film in Mali and Southern India. Engel's and Morey's conclusions are quite positive regarding the use of the *JESUS* film, yet they also saw room for improvement, as noted in their document "Impact Evaluation of The *JESUS* Film Project: Survey Report for Mali and India."<sup>202</sup> For instance, the team concluded that the *JESUS* film has had "an unprecedented impact on conversion among the viewers."<sup>203</sup> However, they also realized that follow-up in the lives of the new converts was deficient, particularly in the Islamic country of Mali. The team responded,

How can respondents be expected to grow in Christ and cope in Mali, an Islamic country, without a clear understanding of the Trinity? This is just one example of deficiencies in grasp of the nature and attributes of God in both locations. It is our recommendation that simple research methods be included in follow-up teaching which encourages ongoing evaluation of the extent to which new converts understand both biblical foundations and the implications of what it means to follow Jesus. Otherwise, deficiencies of this type will continue to surface and impair spiritual growth.<sup>204</sup>

Crusade has made the needed changes to the beginning of the *JESUS* film in order to explain the Old Testament background of who God is in relation to Jesus as he is portrayed in the *JESUS* film. Crusade writes, "The new segments should have particular appeal to Muslims, whose questions about who Jesus is and where He fits into history have often served as stumbling blocks in their search for faith."<sup>205</sup> The Crusade writer continues:

While a visual representation of Creation unfolds on the screen, the narrator for the Old Testament introduction explains that God formed man in His own image because he wanted a relationship with human beings. The story continues as the viewer learns about the sin that caused mankind's separation from God, and God's loving, eternal plan for reconciliation. The introduction also includes the story of

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<sup>202</sup>James F. Engel and J. Scott Morey, "Impact Evaluation of The *JESUS* Film Project: Survey Report for Mali and India," produced by Development Associates International, February 2001.

<sup>203</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>204</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>205</sup>Campus Crusade for Christ, "Old Testament Introduction/Close to the *JESUS* film."

Abraham, a patriarch of Islam, and one whom Muslims revere. The story seamlessly advances to Isaiah's verses about a Messiah who would fulfill Old Testament prophecies, bringing salvation to all mankind.<sup>206</sup>

The *JESUS* film team did not change anything from the actual story from Luke, but they did add a conclusion to the film which summarizes the gospel story and encourages the viewers to respond to Christ. Also, Bright was aware of the needed changes to the *JESUS* film before his death.<sup>207</sup>

### **Analysis of Bright's Strategy**

Bright's idea to take the gospel to as many people as possible is certainly biblical. After all, Christ commanded his disciples to take the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:18-20). His creation and use of practical evangelistic tools like *The Four Spiritual Laws* have introduced the gospel to a myriad of persons. *The Four Spiritual Laws*, as well as versions of it, are still in use today, even after Bright's death. The fact that they are still being used today to introduce people to Christ serves as proof that Bright made a substantial contribution to the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

Bright's intentional evangelism also is advantageous for fulfilling the Great Commission. Too many people need to hear for the first time that God loves them and Christ died so that they may have a relationship with him for people to sit idly without being intentional with the gospel. Bright said it well, "If you expect to reach men for Christ, you must talk about Christ."<sup>208</sup>

"Here's Life America" was also a noble idea with numerous persons exposed to the gospel and thousands of churches encouraged and aided in reaching their neighborhoods for Christ. From college blitzes, to the numerous Expos where people

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<sup>206</sup>Ibid.

<sup>207</sup>Connie Veldkamp, who works with the *JESUS* film, wrote that Bright was aware of the changes needed in the film. Connie Veldkamp, email correspondence with author, 1 September 2005.

<sup>208</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 161.

not only heard about Christ, but where people were also trained and disciplined in how to share their faith, Bright was exemplary in his leadership in mass evangelism. Hence, one can see that Bright strived to be an equipper of others in sharing their faith.

Nevertheless, as with most mass evangelism efforts, it can be troublesome to get those who respond to the gospel to become active in a local church. Yet Bright was aware of this trend, and he is not solely responsible when the local churches, which include the pastor and its members, must be equally responsible, if not more so, since they are accountable for their “Jerusalem.”<sup>209</sup>

### **Bright’s Apologetic Method**

Not only does the church have the mandate to tell others about Jesus, but connected with the Great Commission, every believer also has the mandate to be able to give an answer or a reason for why he believes in Jesus. Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:15, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (NIV). The Lord gives some candid instruction through the apostle Peter. As a believer, one is to be able to dialogue or give a reasonable response, an apology, for why he believes in Jesus. Hence, one can gather that there are two mandates that the church is to be fulfilling—evangelism and apologetics. Furthermore, evangelism and apologetics are linked inextricably for the task of fulfilling the Great Commission. Apologetics is evangelism’s helpmate—one needs both to be able to “give a reason for the hope within” (1 Pet 3:15) and for fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup>Bright was aware that people were not joining local churches right away as they should. He even pointed out, regarding those who did not join: “According to many involved in local and mass evangelism, this may be the rule rather than the exception. For example, Dr. Billy Graham often states that the real success of his city-wide crusades can not be adequately determined for at least five years.” Bright, *Movement of Miracles*, 127.

<sup>210</sup>Ted Cabal aptly points out, “No one who evangelizes does so without apologetics, because apologetics comes into play whenever an unbeliever disobeys the gospel in an evangelistic encounter. As soon as the unbeliever provides a reason for

What is apologetics, and how does it fit in with the role of evangelism?

Apologetics is “that branch of Christian theology which seeks to develop principles for making a specific apology,” says Joseph Rosas.<sup>211</sup> J. P. Moreland offers a better definition. He defines apologetics as a “ministry designed to help unbelievers to overcome intellectual obstacles to conversion and believers to remove doubts that hinder spiritual growth.”<sup>212</sup> Hence, apologetics is related to helping unbelievers overcome their skepticism or questions about the Christian faith while believers’ faith is encouraged. Apologetics cannot prove, nor make a person believe that Christianity is true; this work comes from the divine working of the Holy Spirit. Apologetics, however, can help show that Christianity is true.<sup>213</sup>

### **Bright’s Apologetic Method**

Ted Cabal, an apologist, argues for a “Gospel-centered” apologetic approach to evangelism: “Gospel-Centered Apologetics endeavors to keep the heart and mind of the unbeliever focused upon his need to receive the Good News, because it alone is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16).”<sup>214</sup> Bright never specifically

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rejecting the Good News, the evangelist also becomes an apologist. Perhaps most evangelists are unaware of this, but when an unbeliever resists the gospel, it is impossible for the evangelist to escape the application of apologetic theory, even if only intuitively.” Ted Cabal, “Great Commission and Apologetics,” in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God’s Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless (Louisville: Pinnacle, 2005), 154.

<sup>211</sup>L. Joseph Rosas III, “Evangelism and Apologetics,” in *Evangelism in the Twenty-First Century*, 114.

<sup>212</sup>J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), 131.

<sup>213</sup>William Lane Craig says that “we can know Christianity is true because of the self-authenticating witness of God’s Holy Spirit, and that we can show it to be true by means of rational argument and evidence.” William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Chicago: Moody, 1984; rev., Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 299.

<sup>214</sup>Cabal, “The Great Commission and Apologetics,” 156. There are several apologetic approaches to defending the faith, such as classical, presuppositional,

referred to a certain apologetic approach. However, like Cabal, he approached defending the faith with the goal of reaching someone for Christ. Several areas from his writings are noted below where he engaged in apologetics for the sake of presenting the gospel.

**Bright's defense of Scripture.** Although Bright's view of Scripture was noted in the previous chapter, additional areas dealing with his apologetic approach will be examined. John Warwick Montgomery said it well regarding using Scripture as an apologetic approach for witnessing: "The final and best evidence of God's existence lies in his Word—in the triple sense of Christ, the gospel he proclaimed, and the Scripture that infallibly conveys it."<sup>215</sup> Bright likewise turned to the Bible as evidence for the truthfulness of Christianity. He believed that fulfilled prophecy served as proof for the

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evidentialist, and the fideist approach. Bright drew mostly, though not exclusively from the evidentialist approach. He was thoroughly convinced that once an unbeliever examined the evidence for Christianity, he or she would move toward belief. For example, Bright said, "I have yet to meet a man who has honestly considered the overwhelming evidence concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who does not admit that He is the Son of God. While some do not believe, they are honest in confessing, 'I have not taken the time to read the Bible or consider the historical facts concerning Jesus.'" Bright, "Who is this Jesus?", 3. Another example of Bright's gospel apologetic approach can be seen in a conversation Bright had with a graduate student at an evangelistic event in Minnesota. A Hindu approached him and said that he was offended at the claims he was making about Jesus being the only way to heaven. The student said that he believed that Christianity was one way to God. Bright proceeded to talk to him about the claims of Christ rather than entangle himself in peripheral issues—which could prove argumentative. Bright asked the student, "'Now tell me, do you believe that 'the greatest man who ever lived' would lie about Himself? Or do you believe that He was a deluded lunatic who just thought He was the only way to God?'" Bright, *Witnessing without Fear*, 39. Bright prayed with the man to receive Christ.

<sup>215</sup>John Warrick Montgomery, "The Death of the 'Death of God'," in *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1970), 106. Cornelius Van Til believed in starting with Scripture in one's apologetic method rather than ending with the validation of its authority. Interpreting anything without looking through the spectacles of Christian theism, found in Scripture, is to have nothing but "brute facts." For instance, Van Til declared, "Thus the Bible, as the infallibly inspired revelation of God to sinful man, stands before us as that light in terms of which all the facts of the created universe must be interpreted. All of finite existence, natural and redemptive, functions in relation to one all-inclusive plan that is in the mind of God. Whatever insight man is to have into this pattern of the activity of God he must attain by looking at all his objects of research in the light of Scripture." Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1955), 124.

validity of God's Word. He declared, "I believe the Bible is the Word of God because it is the book of Jesus. The Old Testament has more than three hundred prophecies concerning the promised Messiah, which were fulfilled by Jesus. He is recorded as quoting the five books of Moses, and those of Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Psalms, and Jonah."<sup>216</sup>

Realizing that ultimately the Holy Spirit brings conviction regarding the trustworthiness of Scripture, the amazing discoveries of archeologists most surely come in second. Bright noted, "For centuries skeptics have claimed that the Bible is filled with historical errors. They have pointed to several biblical accounts, particularly in the Old Testament, where archeology contradicted the Bible. In many cases scientists have been proven to be inaccurate and the Bible has been shown to be trustworthy and reliable."<sup>217</sup> Bright pointed out that scientists have said that the Bible is historically inaccurate because they believed that King David was a fictional character since the remains of Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian cultures do not refer to him. Yet Bright noted that an Assyrian stone tablet, dated from the ninth century BC, was found by archaeologists in northern Israel. He continued, "It shows an Aramaic inscription listing Assyria's enemies. Included in the list were the words 'king of Israel' and 'house of David.'"<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home: Finishing with Joy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 65. Bright also pointed out: "The reliability of the Bible is seen in the amazing fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the New Testament. . . . Scholars estimate we can find approximately twenty-five hundred prophecies in the Bible. . . . But the odds that all two thousand prophecies could have been fulfilled by chance is less than one in 10<sup>2000</sup> (that is one with two thousand zeros after it)!" Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2004), 27. Bright further noted, regarding Christ's birth, "Over 400 years before His birth, the prophet Micah foretold the precise location of that event." Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 27. For Bright's list of Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ which were fulfilled in the New Testament, see Bright, *Discover the Book*, 28. For a detailed, yet clear look at Bible prophecy, see chap. 11, "Why is Biblical Prophecy Important?" in John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith* (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 2002). See also J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

<sup>217</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 33.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid. For additional archeological findings noted by Bright, see Ibid., 34. Pat Zukeran confirms this finding in his article "Archaeology and the Old Testament." Pat

Another question, which one who wants to build an orthodox theology of evangelism must answer, is whether the transmission or the copying of the manuscripts down through the years was reliable.<sup>219</sup> Bright understood that the copies we have today are entirely trustworthy.<sup>220</sup> Further delineating his apologetic approach for the Scriptures, he noted:

The Bible we read today is a translation from texts that have not changed in thousands of years. Before the printing press was invented, the text of the Bible was copied by hand. The scribes who did the copying received special training. Some dedicated their entire lives to this task. They were so careful about what they did that after four thousands years scholars can find only a handful of letter discrepancies between the earliest Hebrew manuscripts and today's Bibles. Through these scribes and other events, God has preserved His Word through the centuries.<sup>221</sup>

Furthermore, the miraculous discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 in the Dead Sea village of Qumran, is yet another example of the copies' trustworthiness. Bright noted that this discovery was one of the "most important factors supporting the accuracy of the Old Testament."<sup>222</sup> He went on to note, "Contained in the manuscripts was a copy of

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Zukeran, "Archaeology and the Old Testament" [on-line]; accessed 29 July 2005; available from [www.biblicalarcheology.net/Bible/Archaeology AndOldTestament.html](http://www.biblicalarcheology.net/Bible/Archaeology%20And%20OldTestament.html); Internet. See also Laurie Copans, "Ancient Jewish Tablet Found" [on-line]; accessed 29 July 2005; available from [www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/13/world/main536330.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/13/world/main536330.shtml); Internet.

<sup>219</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 30.

<sup>220</sup>Robert J. Morgan points out that the "scribes and copyists were meticulous beyond belief. They even devised elaborate systems for numbering every letter and word; if a scribe was off by even one letter, they would destroy the whole manuscript." Robert J. Morgan, *Evidence and Truth* (Wheaton, IL: CrossWay, 2003), 83.

<sup>221</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 30. Bright also said, "Over the years, archaeologists have found thousands of manuscripts of bits of the New Testament and even some complete copies. By comparing these, we can get very close to what the New Testament writers originally wrote. Some of these copies are dated less than 100 years after the original gospel or letter was written. For an idea of how good this evidence is, compare the New Testament with other writings that are about as old as the New Testament. For example, Julius Caesar wrote a book called *The Gallic War* about 50 years before Christ was born. We obviously do not have the original copy. Yet, we do have nine or ten copies, and the earliest of these was made about 900 years after the original. This is a normal gap for ancient writings." Bill Bright, "Who is this Jesus?" Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1990, 7.

<sup>222</sup>Bright, *Discover the Book*, 31.

the oldest known Hebrew manuscript of the book of Isaiah. Strikingly, the document is extremely similar to the book of Isaiah found in today's Bibles."<sup>223</sup> Bright's assessment is accurate. For instance, Gleason Archer, an Old Testament scholar, points out:

Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript known (AD 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text . . . . The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.<sup>224</sup>

**Miracles as proof.** The Bible is replete with miracle pericopes in the Old and New Testaments. However, miracles can be either a stumbling block or an encouragement for one coming to Christ.<sup>225</sup> Bright affirmed the miracles which Christ performed. He pointed out, "In addition to the revolutionary message He proclaimed, the miracles Jesus performed stand as a testimony to His true person. They were not capricious demonstrations of brute power, but were acts of a loving God, anxious to reveal His benevolent character to man."<sup>226</sup>

**The resurrection as proof.** William Lane Craig aptly stated, "Fortunately, the Christian faith does not call for us to put our minds on the shelf, to fly in the face of common sense and history, or to make a leap of faith into the dark. The rational person, fully apprised of the evidence, can confidently believe that on that first Easter morning a

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<sup>223</sup>Ibid.

<sup>224</sup>Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 29.

<sup>225</sup>For a detailed analysis on the problem of miracles for the unbeliever, see Craig's chapter "The Problem of Miracles" in Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, chap. 4. For a tool for building a defense in support of the validity of miracles in the Bible, see C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: How God Intervenes in Nature and Human Affairs* (New York: Macmillan, 1960). Also see section 5, "Miracles," in Ronald H. Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), and Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind: A Defense of Biblical Miracles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

<sup>226</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 30.

divine miracle took place.”<sup>227</sup> There was a time, pre-conversion, when Bright thought it would be intellectual suicide to believe in the resurrection of Christ. He noted, “As a young skeptic, I had difficulty believing in the resurrection, for I could not believe in the supernatural.”<sup>228</sup> Yet when he began to investigate the claims of Christ, he discovered that no other religion claims that its founder has been raised from the dead.<sup>229</sup> He also stated, “Any argument for the validity of Christianity stands or falls on the proof of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>230</sup> He believed that the unbeliever must face the evidence of the empty tomb.<sup>231</sup> He also realized that the resurrection from the grave made salvation possible for those who believe in Christ and repent of their sin.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>227</sup>William Lane Craig, “Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?,” in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 166. For an excellent examination of the arguments for and against the historicity of Christ’s resurrection, see the debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Ludemann in Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli, eds., *Jesus’ Resurrection Fact Or Figment?: A Debate between William Lane Craig & Gerd Ludemann* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000)).

<sup>228</sup>Bright, *Worldwide Challenge*, 7, no. 4 (April 1980): 35.

<sup>229</sup>Bright said, “The empty tomb destroys religions and glorifies Jesus of Nazareth as the Creator-God and Savior of the world.” Bright, *The Journey Home*, 133.

<sup>230</sup>Bill Bright, “The Resurrection: Does Today’s Christian Commit Intellectual Suicide?” *Worldwide Challenge* (March 1975): 10. Bright continued, “Without the certainty of His resurrection, we would come to the end of this life without hope, with nothing to anticipate except despair and doubt.” Bright, *Journey Home*, 131.

<sup>231</sup>Bright declared, “The empty tomb is the evidence that unbelievers must face. How else can anyone explain why a handful of timid souls, cringing in fear of the mighty Roman Empire and the tight grip of the organized Jewish religion, would go forth shouting even at the threat of their own martyrdom: ‘He lives. He is risen. The tomb is empty. See where they laid Him?’” Bright, *The Journey Home*, 134. Bright continued, “His tomb remains empty. There is no body in the grave of Jesus Christ. You can go to the tombs of the pharaohs, to the tomb of Muhammad, to the tomb of Confucius, to the tombs of religious prophets and leaders. In those tombs are their bones. But in the tomb of Jesus Christ, there is nothing. His body is not there. Christianity is the only belief that draws millions of pilgrims each year to line up to witness an empty room.” *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup>Bright stated, “The Son of God was hanged on a cruel Roman cross until, literally, His heart gave out and He died, paying the price for our sin and our shame. Buried in a borrowed tomb, He was raised from the grave, just as He said He would.” *Ibid.* Bright continued, “Because of the resurrection, Jesus has forgiven all of our sins—past, present and future. No one else can do that.” Bright, Newsletter “May 1980: The

Bright explained that if someone had tried to steal Jesus' body from the tomb, the stone and the soldiers would have stopped this scenario from happening. He also noted that "Jesus' enemies would never have taken the body since absence of His body from the tomb would only serve to encourage belief in His resurrection."<sup>233</sup>

Bright referred to several scholars in his defense of the resurrection. He quoted from C. S. Lewis' famous trilemma: "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said wouldn't be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on a level with the man who says he's a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell; you must take your choice."<sup>234</sup> He also noted Paul Maier, professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, as saying:

If all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was actually empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy or archeology that would disprove this statement.<sup>235</sup>

Bright came up with several conclusions which he reached regarding the resurrection. He declared, "Since 1945, I have spent many years studying the Resurrection,

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Resurrection: Joyous Truths, Sober Responsibilities" taken from The Bill Bright Collection CD Rom.

<sup>233</sup>Bright, *WorldWide Challenge* (March 1975): 10.

<sup>234</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1980), 52, quoted in Bright and Bright, *The Journey Home*, 134. This author realizes that Lewis was not referring specifically to Christ's resurrection in his trilemma; however, the trilemma is applicable due to Christ's claim to have risen from the dead. If Christ had not risen, he would be a liar—as Lewis's trilemma suggests. Bright also referred to Simon Greenleaf who is at Harvard Law School. Greenleaf said, "It was therefore impossible that they [the early Christians] could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact." Bright, *The Journey Home*, 135. Additionally, he mentioned John Singleton Copley who he referred to as one of the most brilliant legal minds in British history. Copley noted, "I know pretty well what evidence is, and I tell you, such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet." Bright, *Jesus and the Intellectual* (San Bernardino, CA: NewLife2000, 1959, 1992), 23. Bright found this quote in Wilbur M. Smith, *Therefore Stand: A Plea for a Vigorous Apologetic in This Critical Hour of the Christian Faith* (Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1945), 425..

<sup>235</sup>Bright, *The Journey Home*, 136.

including five years as a student at Princeton and Fuller Theological Seminaries, learning from some of the most famous and godly scholars of history. I have come to some definite conclusions that are among the ‘many infallible proofs’ referred to in Acts 1:3 that attest to the authenticity of the Resurrection.”<sup>236</sup> Bright noted the following:

1. Jesus predicted His resurrection. Both the prediction and the Resurrection are compelling. Together, they pose a simple question: Shall we believe what Jesus said?<sup>237</sup>
2. The Resurrection is the only reasonable explanation for the empty tomb.<sup>238</sup>
3. The Resurrection is the only reasonable explanation for the early disciples’ change from cowering and fearful followers into bold proclaimers of a living Lord.<sup>239</sup>
4. The Resurrection is the only reasonable explanation for the growth of the church in the face of intense and murderous persecution.<sup>240</sup>
5. The Resurrection is the only reasonable explanation for the hundreds of persons who witnessed the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 15:6).<sup>241</sup>
6. The Resurrection is the only reasonable explanation for the total transformation of Saul of Tarsus from a zealous Pharisee engaged in systematic persecution of Christians to Paul the apostle, who became the most prolific advocate of Christ as resurrected Savior and living Lord.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>236</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>237</sup>See also Bright, *Jesus and the Intellectual*, 16.

<sup>238</sup>Craig comes to this same conclusion. See Craig, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?,” 146-66.

<sup>239</sup>Bright added, “They must have seen Jesus with their own eyes and touched Him with their own hands following the resurrection, just as they claimed. Otherwise, these men who denied our Lord and fled at Jesus’ trial and death would not have become courageous enough to offer their own lives on the altar of martyrdom.” Bright, “Make Every Day like Easter” *Worldwide Challenge*, 8, no. 4 (April 1981): 9.

<sup>240</sup>John Ankerberg and John Weldon also say, “The existence of Christianity—the Church could not possibly have begun apart from the physical resurrection of Christ.” Ankerberg and Weldon, *Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith*, 125. See also chap. 18, “People Claim JFK and Elvis Are Alive, Too!” in Paul Copan, *True For You, But Not For Me: Deflating The Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1998).

<sup>241</sup>Bright added, “He was seen on many different occasions after His resurrection—once by as many as 500 people.” Bright, *Worldwide Challenge* (April 1980): 35.

<sup>242</sup>The six conclusions by Bright are from Bright, *The Journey Home*, 139-40.

## Bright's Refutation of Other Religions

An important part of evangelism and apologetics is being able to show how other religions are inconsistent compared to Christianity. Bright refuted numerous religions in his writings by referring to Scripture as well as by showing how the other religion is inconsistent. His goal was to point people to Christ.<sup>243</sup> Two examples follow.<sup>244</sup>

For instance, Bright was able to point out the inconsistencies in the New Age Movement which is characterized by numerous concepts including monism, “all is one, one is all”<sup>245</sup> and pantheism, “God is one with all things.”<sup>246</sup> Bright did well to differentiate between God's omnipresence and the New Age idea of pantheism. He pointed out, “The belief that God is everything and everything is God is called pantheism. . . . To

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<sup>243</sup>Bright pointed out, “As one studies the religions of the world, one becomes aware that no provision is made for the forgiveness of sin apart from the cross of Jesus Christ. Basically, man subscribes to the concept that if his good works outweigh his bad works, he will go to heaven or the equivalent. But if his bad works outweigh his good works, he will go to hell or the equivalent—according to his particular religion.” Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 41. He continued, “Of course, he does not know until this life is over to which place he will go. What a tragedy! How inadequate is such a religion or philosophy. God has promised that we can know Him and have fellowship with Him for all eternity, through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 41. The Muslim does not know whether he will be in “paradise” when he dies, unless he dies for Allah. If his good works outweigh his bad, then he may make it in. Bright realized in the aforementioned quotes that there is a vast difference in the salvation offered in Christianity versus Islam. For a detailed look at how to witness to Muslims, see Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Muslims* (Eugene, OR: Harvest, 2002).

<sup>244</sup>See also Bright, “Witnessing World Changers: Sharing Christ with Difficult People Groups” (Orlando: NewLife Publications, 2004), audio transcript.

<sup>245</sup>Douglas Groothus, *Confronting the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 21.

<sup>246</sup>Rogers, “Contemporary Cults,” 411. Norman Geisler defines pantheism as the belief “that God is in the world or, rather, God is the world.” Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1976), 173. Additionally, Geisler makes an excellent point which serves as a defense for witnessing to New Agers who do not realize that their worldview is inconsistent. He says, “The most fundamental criticism of a strictly pantheistic world view is that it is actually unaffirmable by man, for no finite individual reality exists as an entity really different from God or the absolute. In essence a strict pantheist must affirm, ‘God is but I am not.’ But this is self-defeating, since one must exist in order to affirm that he does not exist.” *Ibid.*, 187.

carry it further, this belief leads to the conclusion that since everything is god, we are gods. These fallacies take away God's majesty and make Him common and ordinary. But pantheism is not what the Bible means when it describes God's omnipresence."<sup>247</sup> Bright also was aware of the relativism which characterizes the movement. He continued,

New Agers believe that everything is god and god is everything. The source of authority or 'truth,' they say, is what your experience. . . . In other words, you may believe one thing to be true today, but then an experience tomorrow will change that truth. And what you believe to be true will not be true for me. For New Agers, truth changes. But we learned that God's truth never changes. It is the same today as it has always been.<sup>248</sup>

Bright did well to refute the relativism of New Agers. He noted, "If we look at the phrase 'there is no absolute truth,' it is logically inconsistent. It states an absolute truth about absolute truth while claiming there is no absolute truth! The whole idea that truth is relative contradicts God's Word."<sup>249</sup>

Bright also realized that the New Age movement could not really define who or what God is: he pointed out, "Some 'religious' people consider God a force, and evil spirit, or something encased in wood or stone. As a result, their concept of God is hazy or impersonal. If God were merely an energy force or a composite of the universe as New Age philosophies teach, knowing Him personally would be impossible."<sup>250</sup> The believer who wants to develop an apologetic approach for witnessing to New Age persons will need to recognize the inconsistencies in the worldview of the New Age person. Groothuis aptly notes, "Christians must learn to witness to the truth of their faith and to expose the weaknesses of the New Age."<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>247</sup>Bright, *God*, 80.

<sup>248</sup>*Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>249</sup>*Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>250</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>251</sup>Douglas Groothuis, *Unmasking The New Age: Is There a New Religious Movement Trying to Transform Society?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 173.

Additionally, Bright dealt with atheism. Atheism is the belief that there is no God. Norman Geisler says that atheists believe “that there is no God in the world (as pantheism holds) and there is no God beyond the world (as deism claims). There is no God of any kind, anywhere.”<sup>252</sup> Bright wrote about the conversion of several prominent atheists who changed their minds after taking a serious look at the evidence for Christianity. He referred often to C. E. M. Joad, a former atheist who was converted.<sup>253</sup> He pointed out that Lew Wallace, a general and literary genius, set out to write a book which would discredit Christianity. While writing chapter two of the book, Bright noted that because of “solid, irrefutable evidence, he could no longer deny that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.”<sup>254</sup> Furthermore, Bright pointed out that C. S. Lewis, a former atheist, studied the evidence for the deity of Christ and accepted him as Lord and Savior. Bright went on to quote Lewis, who said:

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool. . . or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.<sup>255</sup>

Bright was also aware that the “burden of proof” lies on the atheist to prove

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<sup>252</sup>Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 215.

<sup>253</sup>Cyril E. M. Joad was head of the Philosophy Department at the University of London. Bright noted, “Dr. Joad and his colleagues, Julian Huxley, Bertrand Russell, H.G. Wells, and Bernard Shaw, have probably done more to undermine the faith of the collegiate world of recent generations than any other group. Dr. Joad believed and taught that God was an impersonal cosmos and that there is no such thing as sin. . . . Dr. Joad became convinced that the only explanation for sin was found in the Word of God—and the only solution for sin was the cross of Jesus Christ. He became a zealous follower of the Lord Jesus. No doubt many of his followers turned to faith in God through his testimony and writings. God’s long-suffering and incredible patience brought this skeptic to his knees at the cross. Truly, God’s delayed justice is an opportunity for His mercy to be shown to many” Bright, *God*, 201-02.

<sup>254</sup>Bright, “Who is this Jesus?” 2.

<sup>255</sup>Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, quoted in Bright, “Who is this Jesus?,” 2.

that God does not exist. He declared, “I wish someone had explained to me that even the logical philosophical arguments all point to the reality of God and that the atheists do not have a case. Collectively the arguments for God are so compelling that the burden of proof is placed on the nonbelievers to prove that God does not exist in the face of all the evidence.”<sup>256</sup>

### Conclusion

Bright made his mark on the map of evangelicalism when he wrote the *Four Spiritual Laws*. The original version, though still proving useful with individuals who have a biblical background, is not as helpful for sharing in a postmodern culture because it fails to explain God adequately. The newer versions of the *Four Laws*, such as *Would You Like to Know God Personally?*, *The Passage*, and *Life@Large*, prove to be more useful for today’s culture. Furthermore, Bright’s intentional evangelism was biblical in that he attempted to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) by sharing Christ with as many people as possible. However, what did Bright believe about discipleship? The following chapter will examine this important part of the Great Commission.

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<sup>256</sup>Bill Bright, “What I wish I had been Told (Orlando: NewLife Publications, 1993), audio transcript, taken from part 2 “The Attributes of God.” Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman, Jr., suggest, “If significant evidence can be presented to show that it is highly likely that God exists, then the burden of proof is on the person who would argue that God’s existence is unlikely.” Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 212. Bill Gordon suggests, as part of an apologetic approach for witnessing to atheists, to answer the philosophical arguments against God’s existence by reaffirming the doctrine of creation. Bill Gordon, “A Closer Look at Atheism” North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1996, 2001 [on-line]; accessed 5 May 2005; available from <http://www.sub.namb.net/evangelism/iev/belief-bulletins/Default.asp>; Internet. Geisler also makes an excellent point for building one’s apologetic approach for witnessing to atheists. He says that one must assume God if one is trying to disprove him. He goes on, “to disprove God via evil one must assume the equivalent of God by way of an ultimate standard of justice beyond the world.” Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 233. The atheist cannot provide a logical purpose or telos for why humans were created. Bright rightly added, “Let us consider God’s purpose for men. One can readily see that God has created everything for a purpose. The Bible says that it was through the Son that God made the whole universe, and to the Son He has ordained that all creation shall ultimately belong. There is order, system, and design to the whole of creation.” Bright, *Revolution Now!*, 43.

## CHAPTER 5

### BRIGHT'S DISCIPLESHIP METHODOLOGY

Bright believed that discipleship was important, and the following pages examine his discipleship methodology. The chapter will first look at those who influenced Bright's discipleship methodology, followed by an analysis of Bright's discipleship material. The last part of this chapter covers Bright's view on fasting and its connection with revival.

The Great Commission given by Christ includes going and telling others about the good news of the gospel. Yet Christ was also just as clear that his disciples are to go and make disciples of others—reproduce other followers. He declared, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19, ESV). Hence, one who desires to be a true follower, or disciple, of Christ must have a plan to disciple others who repent and believe in Christ. However, the intent of this section is not to focus on “when one is evangelized” but rather to look at what one should teach those who have repented and believed in Christ and have become a disciple or follower of him.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Bright's Discipleship Methodology**

Bright did not develop his discipleship methodology without input from others in his life. Henrietta Mears played a key role in his conversion experience, and her strong emphasis on the Bible and discipleship proved to be influential. She pointed out to the

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<sup>1</sup>C. Peter Wagner makes an excellent point regarding “making disciples” and “disciple making.” He suggests that “making disciples” involves unbelievers who repent and believe in the gospel for the first time. “Disciple making” includes teaching Christians the important truths about the faith once they have responded to the gospel. C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth* foreword Ralph D. Winter (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1989), 52-53.

teachers who attended her Sunday School training conferences that training men and women, boys and girls, to serve the Master was the goal of Sunday School.<sup>2</sup> John Nyquist affirms that Mears played an important role in what Bright knew about discipleship.<sup>3</sup> Vonette Bright also said that Mears “influenced him as much as anyone.”<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, a parachurch group, influenced Bright in the area of discipleship. John Nyquist points out that Trotman influenced Bright in the area of one-on-one discipleship and Scripture memorization—hence, the structured or programmatic nature of the Navigators had an impact on Bright.<sup>5</sup> Besides Mears and Trotman, Howard Hendricks and Robert Coleman influenced Bright in the area of small group discipleship. Nyquist noted that Bright respected Hendricks, from Dallas Theological Seminary, and every time Bright had a chance to “either hear him speak or to invite him to a crusade conference to speak, he would do it. It was nothing that ‘Howie’ wrote; it was Howie’s speaking and his ministry to the staff of Crusade that was influential in Bill’s thinking.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Bright’s Philosophy of Discipleship**

Robert Coleman aptly states, “Discipling men and women is the priority

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<sup>2</sup>Earl O Roe, ed., *Dream Big: The Henrietta Mears Story* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990), 191.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with John Nyquist by the author, 28 March 2005, Louisville, Kentucky

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Vonette Bright by the author, 17 February 2005, Louisville, Kentucky

<sup>5</sup>Nyquist said, “I know for sure that Bill called Dawson on the phone in the fall of 1951 and asked Dawson, because Bill as a business man, did not know, like he said, his own words were, the first thing.” Interview with Nyquist by the author. Bright also said that he was reminded of Trotman’s personal motto “Born to reproduce.” Bill Bright, *5 Steps to Making Disciples* (Orlando: NewLife, 1997), 8.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Nyquist by the author.

around which our lives should be oriented.”<sup>7</sup> Bright showed that he was concerned about making disciples as well. He declared, “The Great Commission will not be fulfilled until we become as interested in disciples as we are in decisions.”<sup>8</sup> He was aware of Christ’s example of discipling his disciples. He noted, “Jesus was constantly involved in ministering to multitudes of people, but He also spent much time discipling those closest to Him, especially the twelve.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Bright referred to the apostle Paul’s declaration in Colossians 1:28 where Paul said, “So everywhere we go we talk about Christ to all who will listen, warning them and teaching them as well as we know how. We want to be able to present each one to God, perfect because of what Christ has done for each of them (Living Bible).”<sup>10</sup> Even still, Bright noted Paul’s admonition to Timothy to teach others in 2 Timothy 2:2: “For you must teach others those things you and many others have heard me speak about. Teach these great truths to trustworthy men who will, in turn, pass them on to others (Living Bible).”<sup>11</sup> Bright concluded, “Successful disciple-building is simply taking the initiative to build disciples in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.”<sup>12</sup>

Not only was Bright concerned about making disciples, he also included discipleship as part of the task of the Great Commission. For instance, he wrote, “In the early years of my personal ministry, I spent considerable time contemplating whether I should concentrate solely on evangelism, or pursue the dual objectives of evangelism and

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<sup>7</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1987, 1998), 9.

<sup>8</sup>Bill Bright, *Revolution Now!* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade, 1969), 178.

<sup>9</sup>Bill Bright, “You Don’t Have to Be a Mathematician to Multiply Yourself,” *Worldwide Challenge*, vol.7, no.6, June 1980, 31.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

discipleship. After much thought and prayer, I decided that the Lord had called me to do both.<sup>13</sup> He further commented, “Evangelism and discipleship are equally important and vital for healthy Christian growth. We cannot separate the two.”<sup>14</sup>

Bright’s philosophy of discipleship also included what he called spiritual multiplication. He pointed out:

When you personally introduce another to Christ, that is spiritual addition. But when you deliberately disciple the new Christian and help him to win, disciple and send others who will do the same to still others, that is spiritual multiplication. The apostle Paul specifically commended this principle to Timothy, his son in the faith: ‘And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.’ Beginning with only two persons and using this simple, continuous cycle of discipling, or spiritual multiplication, the entire world could be totally evangelized and saturated with the gospel in only 32 subsequent steps, because two multiplied by itself 32 times equals more than the entire population of the world.<sup>15</sup>

Bright recommended several steps to follow in the discipleship process. First, he said one should lead by example—one should be a discipler of others if one expects others to become disciplers.<sup>16</sup> According to Bright, being an example should be seen in three different ways. First, one should live a holy life.<sup>17</sup> Second, one should be a witness

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<sup>13</sup>Bill Bright, *Witnessing without Fear: How to Share Your Faith with Confidence* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life, 1987), 159.

<sup>14</sup>Bright, “You Don’t Have to Be a Mathematician to Multiply Yourself.”

<sup>15</sup>Bill Bright, “History’s Greatest Plan Part 2” *Worldwide Challenge*, November 1979, vol.6, no. 11, 31. See also Darrel Heide “Spiritual Multiplication” in *Principles of Leadership: What We Can Learn from the Life and Ministry of Bill Bright*, ed. Ted Martin and Michael Cozzens (Orlando, FL: NewLife, 2001), chapter 13. Robert Coleman also refers to the concept of multiplication in discipleship. He notes, “The early church grew by evangelistic multiplication, as witnesses of Christ reproduced their lifestyle in the lives of those about them.” Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1987, Spire edition, 1998), 30. Similarly, LeRoy Eims suggests, “What I enjoy so much about the ministry of multiplying disciples is that it is scriptural and it works.” Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* foreword Robert E. Coleman (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 26.

<sup>16</sup>Bill Bright, “Teaching Others to Teach Others,” *Worldwide Challenge* vol., 10, no.7, July/August 1983, 11.

<sup>17</sup>Bright, “You Don’t Have to Be a Mathematician to Multiply Yourself.”

for Christ.<sup>18</sup> Third, one is an example by the priority one gives to building disciples.<sup>19</sup>

Second, Bright said that one builds disciples by praying for them.<sup>20</sup> It is true, as Bright pointed out, that Jesus as well as the apostle Paul prayed for those whom they disciplined. Third, Bright believed that building committed disciples involved teaching truths for spiritual growth.<sup>21</sup>

### **Discipleship Topics**

Bright realized the need for effective follow-up of new believers. He declared, in the early years of Crusade's ministry,

A Bible study series designed for new Christians was desperately needed—a study that would stimulate individuals and groups to explore the depths and the riches of God's Word. . . . In 1955, I asked several of my fellow associates to assist me in the preparation of Bible studies that would stimulate both evangelism and Christian growth in a new believer. The contribution by campus staff members was especially significant because of their constant contact with students in introducing them to Christ and meeting regularly with them. Thus, the Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity was the fruit of our combined labor.<sup>22</sup>

Bright taught spiritual truth to new converts in one-on-one discipleship by using his *Transferable Concepts, Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity: A Handbook for Christian Maturity*, and *The Four Spiritual Laws*.<sup>23</sup> A transferable concept, according to

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. These areas included teaching the disciples to make Christ Lord of their lives; teach them how to walk in the Holy Spirit (as well as how to breathe spiritually); teach them the importance of Bible study and memorization of it; teach them to witness by allowing them to follow one's example of witnessing; teach them the importance of Christian fellowship; teach them to be baptized and join a local church; emphasize the importance of love; teach them to be a servant; teach them to be good stewards of their time and talents; and impart a vision for fulfilling the Great Commission. Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Bill Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity: A Handbook for Christian Maturity* (Peachtree City, GA: NewLife Publications, 1994), 7.

<sup>23</sup>Bright noted that the *Handbook for Christian Maturity* is a one volume guide, expanded and edited version of the eleven-booklet *Transferable Concepts*, Ibid. Vonette Bright confirmed that Bill used these materials in one-on-one appointments with

Bright, “is an idea or a truth that can be transferred or communicated from one person to another and then to another, spiritual generation after generation, without distorting or diluting its original meaning.”<sup>24</sup> The following paragraphs cover specific spiritual truths Bright emphasized in the discipleship process.

**Bible Study.** Spiritual discipline scholar, Don Whitney, declares, “No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word.”<sup>25</sup> Bright dealt with how to study the Bible effectively in *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Study the Bible Effectively*<sup>26</sup> and *Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity: A Handbook for Christian Maturity*.<sup>27</sup> Bright’s views on Scripture were covered in chapter 3; his instructions on how to teach others how to study the Bible are now noted.

Bright realized that he should first establish the reliability/authority of the Bible. Hence, he directed those who might have questions about the accuracy or the history of the Bible to read Josh McDowell’s *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* or F. F. Bruce’s *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* In addition, in *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity* Bright provided an excellent explanation for the authority for the Old and New Testaments, as well as an in-depth look at both the Old and New Testaments to discover the key themes in the different books of the Bible.<sup>28</sup> Bright

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new believers. This information was taken from an email from Angie Bring who works for Campus Crusade for Christ, 16 December 2005.

<sup>24</sup>Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Walk in the Spirit* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1998), 3.

<sup>25</sup>Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 28.

<sup>26</sup>Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Study the Bible Effectively* (Orlando: NewLife, 1999).

<sup>27</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps*, 187-229.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 201.

also made sure to explain the different genres of Scripture for his readers by listing the books which make up the Pentateuch, the historical books, poetry, major prophets, minor prophets, gospels, Acts, Pauline epistles, General Epistles, and Revelation.<sup>29</sup> Even still, he did well to note that “Jesus is the central figure of the Bible.”<sup>30</sup>

Bright mentioned several Bible study approaches for the believer to practice for a more effective study. First, he recommended setting aside 15 minutes a day to have a quiet time and to do Bible study.<sup>31</sup> According to Bright, one can read a portion of the Bible and then meditate on it, and others may want to use a devotional book which contains passages of Scripture.<sup>32</sup> He also suggested reading through the Bible in a year. Second, he recommended taking a few minutes each day to memorize portions of the Bible.<sup>33</sup> Third, he suggested setting aside a few hours each week to study the Bible—working through a book or studying a character. He named numerous tools which would assist one in his study: two different versions of the Bible, one topical study Bible; a concordance; a Bible

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 191-93, and 341-429.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>31</sup>Bright recommended choosing a definite time and place for devotions. He pointed out, “A brief time of meeting with God in the early morning and walking in vital union with Him throughout the day, ‘practicing the presence of God,’ is more meaningful than spending an hour or more in a legalistic way and forgetting Him for the rest of the day.” Ibid., 181.

<sup>32</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Study the Bible Effectively*, 18. Whitney recommends finding “at least one word, phrase, or verse to meditate on” each time one reads the Bible. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 34. Richard Foster aptly points out, “Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God’s voice and obey his word. It is that simple. I wish I could make it more complicated for those who like things difficult. It involves no hidden mysteries, no secret mantras, no mental gymnastics, no esoteric flights into the cosmic consciousness.” Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* (New York, NY: HarperSan Francisco, 1978, 1988, 1998), 17. Bright also stated that one can engage in Bible study, prayer, personal worship, and meditation all in the same devotional time. Bright, *Ten Basic Steps*, 182.

<sup>33</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Study the Bible Effectively*, 19. Bright added, “The Navigators are well-known for their wonderful Scripture memory resources.” Ibid., 20. Whitney says that memorization of the Bible supplies spiritual power, Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 42.

dictionary; and books, workbooks, and tapes on the topic one chooses to study.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, he included four key questions to ask when studying a Bible passage: What does the passage say? What does the passage mean? How can I apply the passage to my daily life? And, how does this passage fit into or relate to the rest of Scripture?<sup>35</sup> Bright also included a plan he called the “4 Ts:” (1) Then: Write down what the passage meant to the people for whom it was written. (2) Timeless: Look for principles that transcend the period in which the passage was written. (3) Today: Apply the timeless truth to today’s world. (4) To Me: Then apply the timeless principle to a specific area in your life.”<sup>36</sup> Bright suggested different methods for studying the Bible such as a book study, chapter study, or a topical study.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Study the Bible Effectively*, 21.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 25. Regarding what the passage says, Bright continued: “With this question, determine simple facts such as who the passage is talking about, the general subject and subtopics, and the setting. Also look for basic information such as when the event occurred (historical and cultural background) and the characteristics of the main character.” Ibid. Regarding what the passage means, he added: “From the basic facts, you can then find the meaning in the text. Identify the main principles and the lessons learned. To help you understand areas that are not clear to you in the passage, look up cross-references before you consult your study aids. Remember that the Bible is its own best commentary.” Ibid. Regarding applying the passage to one’s life, he noted: “Design an action plan to put the principles and lessons into practice. Then write out a personal prayer related to the main application asking the Holy Spirit to help you apply it to your life.” Ibid. Regarding the passage relating to the rest of the Bible, he pointed out: “No passage of Scripture stands alone. Each correlates with the whole theme of a chapter, book, and the entire Bible. Read other portions of Scripture related to the passage you are studying to see how they fit together. Also scan the entire book in which the passage is recorded to get a clearer idea of how the passage relates to the whole.” Ibid., 26. LeRoy Eims also recommended asking the “who, what, where, when, why, and how questions” in personal Bible study. Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 166. In addition, Whitney asks excellent questions of the text: does this text reveal something I should believe about God; praise or thank or trust God for; pray about for myself or others; something I should have a new attitude about; something I should make a decision about; something I should do for the sake of Christ, others, or myself? Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 60.

<sup>36</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Study the Bible Effectively*, 26. For additional study questions, see Bright, *Ten Basic Steps*, 224-27.

<sup>37</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps*, 224-25.

**Discipling Others to Evangelize.** Chuck Lawless points out that disciplined church members are “ready to face the battles that accompany evangelism.”<sup>38</sup> Hence, discipleship in the area of evangelism is important. Bright, in training disciples in witnessing, divided his plan into two categories—personal preparation and taking the initiative. In personal preparation, he began by telling his readers to be sure that they are Christians.<sup>39</sup> Second, he said to be sure that there is no unconfessed sin in one’s life.<sup>40</sup> Third, he said to be filled with the Spirit.<sup>41</sup> Fourth, he said to be prepared to communicate one’s faith in Christ.<sup>42</sup> In communicating one’s faith, Bright trained his staff and new Christians in how to use *The Four Spiritual Laws*.<sup>43</sup>

In taking the initiative, Bright recommended praying for one’s lost friends and family members.<sup>44</sup> He declared, “Prayer is really the place where people are won to Christ; sharing the Good News is just gathering in the fruit.”<sup>45</sup> Second, he noted that one should just “go” and tell people about the gospel.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Bright recommended

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<sup>38</sup>Chuck Lawless, *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches that are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 93.

<sup>39</sup>Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be a Fruitful Witness* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1995, 1998), 9. Bright noted: “In hundreds of our training conferences, which are attended by sincere and dedicated church members in each community, ten to twenty-five percent usually indicate that they either received Christ or gained the assurance of their salvation as a result of the training.” *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>43</sup>See Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Introduce Others to Christ* (Orlando, FL: NewLife Publications, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1998), 21-31.

<sup>44</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be a Fruitful Witness*, 21. Bright continued, “Make a prayer list or keep a prayer diary and pray for specific non-Christians and Christians by name and for specific events.” *Ibid.*, 22. Prayer will be treated as a separate discipline in this chapter.

<sup>45</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps*, 289.

<sup>46</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be a Fruitful Witness*, 22.

making a list of lost people, beginning with persons in one's family, whom God might lead one to reach for Christ.<sup>47</sup> Third, he pointed out that one should be sure to talk about Jesus, not just "peripheral matters."<sup>48</sup> Lastly, Bright said that people should expect God to use them. He declared, "When you talk about Jesus, expect men and women to respond—not on the basis of positive thinking, but because of God's faithfulness, His love, His sovereignty, His power, and His promise that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."<sup>49</sup>

**Discipling in Prayer.** Richard Foster suggests, "Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father."<sup>50</sup> Likewise, Bright took prayer seriously as a spiritual discipline. He defined prayer as "much more than words. It is an expression of the heart toward God. It is an experience, a relationship—not an activity."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Bill Bright, *How You Can Help Fulfill the Great Commission* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1998), 27.

<sup>48</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be a Fruitful Witness*, 24. Bright described three "sound barriers" that one usually has to break through in a witnessing encounter. The first "sound barrier" occurs when one mentions the name, Jesus. Bright pointed out, "Once we turn the conversation from dating, fashions, politics, work, sports, or any other topic to spiritual things, we have broken the first barrier." The second barrier occurs when the gospel is shared. Bright declared, "We must blast through this one also because many people, when they understand who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for them, will want Him in their lives." The final barrier happens when one calls for a response from the nonbeliever. Bright realized that this barrier can be the most difficult; however, one must ask the person if they would like to receive Christ. Bright, *Ten Basic Steps*, 277.

<sup>49</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be a Fruitful Witness*, 27.

<sup>50</sup>Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33.

<sup>51</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity*, 81. Chuck Lawless places prayer as one of the main purposes of the church. He declares, "Prayer was as much a part of the calling of the early church as were worship, evangelism, discipleship, ministry, and fellowship." Lawless, *Discipled Warriors*, 151. Lawless further notes three ways teaching about prayer can help accomplish some important goals: "First, people learn more about God's gracious nature, strengthening their theological foundation. . . . Second, thorough teaching gives patience when prayer seems to go unanswered. . . . Third, teaching about and leading the church to pray keeps the focus on God." *Ibid.*, 159-

Bright, in his *Ten Basic Steps*, pointed to Jesus' lifestyle of prayer as a reason believers today should pray. He declared, "If Jesus was so dependent on this fellowship in prayer alone with His Father, how much more should you and I spend time alone with God!"<sup>52</sup> He also included short Bible studies after each lesson on prayer which the disciple should use. The studies are simplistic, yet helpful.<sup>53</sup>

Bright raised an excellent question for his readers, one which even a more mature Christian might not be able to answer. He asked, "To whom should we pray?"<sup>54</sup> He continued: "But how do we approach the most powerful Presence in the universe? Do we pray directly to Him? Do we pray to Jesus Christ and ask Him to present our needs to the Father?"<sup>55</sup> He noted,

Your prayers are validated by Jesus Christ and are interpreted to God the Father by the Holy Spirit. But since God is one God, manifested in three persons, it is perfectly acceptable to pray to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. There is no jealousy among the three persons of the Trinity. However, the scriptural pattern that Jesus taught addressed the Father.<sup>56</sup>

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60. Whitney aptly notes, "If you've ever learned a foreign language you know that you learn it best when you actually have to speak it. The same is true with the 'foreign language' of prayer. There are many good resources for learning how to pray, but the best way to learn how to pray is to pray." Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 70-71.

<sup>52</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Pray with Confidence*, 14.

<sup>53</sup>The studies are simple in that Bright did not go into great detail in each question; however, the new believer would receive a good biblical introduction to the discipline of prayer. For instance, Bright directed the reader to read John 14:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Acts 4:23-33, and Matthew 9:38, and then he asked for at least three reasons for prayer. See the Bible Study after the lesson on "The Purpose of Prayer" in Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 156-58.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Pray With Confidence* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1995, 1998), 17. Wayne Grudem also believes that it is acceptable to pray to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. He points out, "There is therefore clear enough scriptural warrant to encourage us to pray not only to God the Father (which seems to be the primary pattern, and certainly follows the example that Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer), but also to pray directly to God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Both are correct, and we may pray either to the Father or to the Son. . . . Though no prayers directly addressed to the Holy Spirit are recorded in the New

He included a helpful excerpt by Andrew Murray. Murray wrote:

We all admit the place the Father and the Son have in our prayer. It is to the Father we pray, and from whom we expect the answer. It is in the merit, and name, and life of the Son, abiding in Him and He in us, that we trust to be heard. But have we understood that in the Holy Trinity all the Three Persons have an equal place in prayer, and that the faith in the Holy Spirit of intercession as praying in us is as indispensable as the faith in the Father and the Son? How clearly we have this in the words, 'Through Christ we have access by one Spirit to the Father.' As much as prayer must be to the Father, and through the Son, it must be by the Spirit. And the Spirit can pray in no other way in us than as He lives in us. It is only as we give ourselves to the Spirit living and praying in us, that the glory of the prayer-hearing God, and the ever-blessed and most effectual mediation of the Son, can be known by us in their power.<sup>57</sup>

Additionally, Bright used an acronym "ACTS" to introduce what should be included in prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.<sup>58</sup> Adoration, according to Bright, includes worshipping and praising God.<sup>59</sup> One who has sin in his or her life needs to confess the sin and ask for forgiveness when approaching God in prayer. Bright did well to point out,

Always be totally transparent with God. Don't wear a façade or put on an act. He already knows everything about you, so tell Him exactly how you feel at all times. If you do not feel spiritual, tell Him so. If your heart is cold, admit it. If you have been disobedient, confess it and receive His forgiveness and cleansing, which will restore you to fellowship with Him.<sup>60</sup>

Bright admonished his readers to be thankful for all of the blessings in one's life, but one should not forget to pray in supplication. Pray for one's own needs, but also pray for others' needs as well, according to Bright.<sup>61</sup>

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Testament, there is nothing that would forbid such prayer, for the Holy Spirit, like the Father and the Son, is fully God and is worthy of prayer and is powerful to answer our prayers." Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 381.

<sup>57</sup>Andrew Murray, *The Ministry of Intercession: A Plea for More Prayer* (Fleming H. Revell, 1898), 119-20, quoted in Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 162-63.

<sup>58</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Pray with Confidence*, 20.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 22-23.

**How to be filled with the Spirit.** Bright believed that proper teaching regarding the Holy Spirit in the believer's life was important. Bright's beliefs on the Holy Spirit were covered in chapter 3; nonetheless, his teachings on the Holy Spirit in his discipleship material will now be noted.

Bright was sure to explain who the Holy Spirit is to new believers. He pointed out, "The Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not a vague, ethereal shadow, nor an impersonal force. He is a person equal in every way with the Father and the Son. All the divine attributes ascribed to the Father and the Son are equally ascribed to the Holy Spirit."<sup>62</sup>

Bright included short Bible studies at the end of each lesson on the Holy Spirit to help people better understand him in *Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity*. For instance, he asked and stated the following: "In 1 Corinthians 2:11, what indicates that the Holy Spirit has intellect? Find the one word that describes the nature of the Holy Spirit in each of the following references. Romans 8:2, John 16:13, Hebrews 10:29, Romans 1:4. What is His function or role? John 14:16, 26, 1 Corinthians 3:16, John 16:13, 14, Acts 1:8. What is the chief reason the Holy Spirit came (John 16:14)?"<sup>63</sup> These exercises help one to understand the Holy Spirit's personality and purpose. Bright stated that the Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ and to lead believers into all truth.<sup>64</sup>

In another lesson, Bright described the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. He asked, "When you became a Christian (that is, at the time of your spiritual birth), the Holy Spirit did a number of things for and in you. What are they? 1 Corinthians

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<sup>62</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 129-30. See also Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be Filled with the Holy Spirit* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1995, 1998), 12-13.

<sup>63</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 130-31.

<sup>64</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*, 13-14.

3:16, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 2 Corinthians 5:5.”<sup>65</sup> These verses show that the believer becomes God’s temple, a place where the Holy Spirit dwells. The Holy Spirit also seals and baptizes the believer into the body of Christ. Furthermore, he stated, “Explain in your own words what the Holy Spirit does for the Christian according to the following verses: Romans 8:16, Romans 8:26, 27.”<sup>66</sup> Paul shows in Romans 8:16 that the Holy Spirit bears witness with the believer that one belongs to God, and in verses 26 and 27 he reveals that the Holy Spirit intercedes for the believer when he or she does not know what to pray.

Bright also believed that many Christians are not walking in the Spirit because of their lack of knowledge of him. He said that Christians distrust God’s trustworthiness, and they are afraid of letting the Holy Spirit have complete control of their lives.<sup>67</sup> In one of his lessons, he asked the following: “What is the command found in Ephesians 5:18? . . . If your desire to be filled with the Spirit is sincere, what will you do now (Romans 12:1-2)? This means there can be no unconfessed sin in your life. The Holy Spirit cannot fill an unclean vessel. He waits to fill you with His power.”<sup>68</sup> Bright said that the believer can be filled with the Spirit by faith. He wrote the following prayer for the believer to pray:

Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have been in control of my life, and as a result, I have sinned against You. I thank You for forgiving my sins through Christ’s death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to take control of the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled, and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I pray this in the name of Jesus. As an expression of my faith, I now thank You for taking control of my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 134-35.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 134.

<sup>67</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*, 18, 22.

<sup>68</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 140-41.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 142. Bright included an additional prayer: “Dear Father, I need you. I hunger and thirst for a more vital relationship with You. I admit that I have been in control of my life. As a result, I have sinned against You. Thank You for forgiving my

Bright included a lesson on how one can know when he or she is filled with the Spirit. He asked: “What will the Holy Spirit demonstrate in and through your life as a result of His filling you (Galatians 5:22, 23)?”<sup>70</sup> Paul lists the fruits of the Spirit in these verses. Bright also recommended that one ask himself the following questions as a test to see if one has been filled with the Holy Spirit: “Do you have a greater love for Christ? Do you have a greater love for God’s Word? Is prayer more important to you? Are you more concerned for those who do not know Christ as Savior? Are you experiencing a greater boldness, liberty, and power in witnessing? If you can answer yes truthfully to these questions, you undoubtedly are filled with the Spirit.”<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, according to Bright, one is continually filled by the Holy Spirit through loving God with all of one’s heart, confessing known sin in one’s life, appropriating the infilling of the Holy Spirit by faith, spending time each day in prayer and Bible study, obeying God’s commandments, and by witnessing for Christ.<sup>72</sup> Bright also warned the believer to be prepared for spiritual conflict which comes from the world—materialism, fleshly temptations, and the devil.<sup>73</sup>

**Stewardship.** Bright believed that believers should be good stewards of all that God has given them. He declared, “Jesus Christ created us (Colossians 1:16). He bought us with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18, 19). And God anointed Him as our

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sins through Christ’s death on the cross for me. I now confess and turn from my sins and surrender the control of my life to the Lord Jesus. By faith I invite You to fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled. You promised to fill me if I ask according to Your will. I pray this in the authority of the name of Jesus Christ. To demonstrate my faith, I now thank You for filling me with Your Holy Spirit and for taking control of my life. Amen.” Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*, 29.

<sup>70</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 143.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>73</sup>Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Walk in the Spirit* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1998), 16-20.

Lord (Ephesians 1:20-23; Acts 10:36; Romans 10:12). Thus, the whole of our life—our personality, influence, material substance, everything—is His, even our successes.”<sup>74</sup>

Bright established God’s precedent of stewardship in a lesson on “The Christian and Giving.” He asked several questions regarding the Trinity’s stewardship which are helpful for the new Christian to gain a proper biblical understanding of God’s willingness to give. For example, regarding God the Father’s stewardship, Bright asked, “What was God’s greatest gift to mankind?”<sup>75</sup> Regarding the stewardship of God the Son, he asked, “What was Christ’s supreme purpose in life (John 6:38; Hebrews 10:7)?”<sup>76</sup> Concerning the stewardship of God the Holy Spirit, he stated, “List characteristics of the Holy Spirit’s nature that make giving a priority with Him.”<sup>77</sup>

Bright covered stewardship of one’s time as the first of several areas which God requires accountability in one’s life. He suggested that one should consider tithing one’s time in order to be a good steward of it. He realized that the Bible does not specifically command to tithe one’s time. However, he said, “[O]ur Lord did command us to put Him first in all things (Matthew 6:31-33). Giving back a percentage of our time enables us to give God priority and assures that we will fulfill our service to Him.”<sup>78</sup> Additionally, Bright asked, “As wise stewards who know and are obedient to the will of God, what will we spend much of our time aggressively doing (Mark 16:15)?”<sup>79</sup> This question reveals Bright’s concern for evangelism.

Bright covered stewardship of one’s body as the second area one is

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<sup>74</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 301.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 306.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 307.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 310.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 311.

accountable to God. He included an applicable, biblical study on how one is to be a good steward of his or her body. Moreover, he incorporated short study sections on each of the following parts: the tongue, the heart, the mind, the hands, the feet, the eyes, and the ears.<sup>80</sup> He concluded the study on the body with a short section on sexual expression.

The third area covered is the stewardship of one's talents and gifts—both natural and spiritual.<sup>81</sup> Bright correctly noted, “Every Christian possesses both natural talents and spiritual gifts. Our natural abilities come to us at physical birth and are developed through life. Our spiritual gifts are imparted by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to minister to others in behalf of Christ.”<sup>82</sup> He listed the major passages on spiritual gifts such as Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, Ephesians 4:4-8, 11-16, and 1 Peter 4:10-11. He then proceeded with the following instructions: “From these passages make a composite list of spiritual gifts (combine any two that might be identical). Across from each one, give your brief definition of the gift. (You may wish to consult a concordance or a Bible dictionary.)”<sup>83</sup> He further commented, “Though some spiritual gifts seem to be of greater value than others (1 Corinthians 12:28-31), what ideas does Paul stress to keep Christians from personal pride because of those they may possess (Romans 12:4, 5: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; 1 Corinthians 13; Ephesians 4:11-16)? List several principles that describe what your attitude and responsibilities should be toward your spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8).”<sup>84</sup>

However, Bright placed the responsibility of defining spiritual gifts on the

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 315-16.

<sup>81</sup>Helmut Teichert, with Campus Crusade for Christ, stated that Bright did not use a spiritual gifts inventory list in his discipleship material. This information comes from an email from Helmut Teichert, 21 January 2006.

<sup>82</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity*, 320.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 321.

reader rather than explaining his stance concerning the different gifts in the Bible.<sup>85</sup> For instance, how is the new believer to understand what the apostle Paul means by “prophesying” in Romans 12:6? Even still, how is the new believer to comprehend “speaking in tongues,” which Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:28?<sup>86</sup> Moreover, is apostleship still an office or a gift which believers can fill or receive today (1 Cor 12:27)?

This author is aware that there are different interpretations on certain gifts, usually tied to one’s denominational beliefs. He is also aware that Bright more than likely avoided taking a stand on the controversial gifts to allow for grace on the nonessential doctrines within Crusade.<sup>87</sup> However, Bright could have listed the different explanations for the “controversial gifts” such as “prophecy,” “speaking in tongues,” and “apostleship.” By not listing the possible interpretations, it does not equip the new disciple with enough information to make an intelligible decision for himself. Bright should have given further clarification on spiritual gifts.

Bright covered tithing and finances as the final areas of stewardship. He believed tithing accomplished the following for the believer: acknowledges God as the source and owner of all that the believer possesses; is a voluntary act of worship; teaches the believer to put God first; is a practical guideline for systematic giving; and it provides spiritual release and blessing.<sup>88</sup> He recommended giving 10 percent as a beginning point. He realized that one is not under the law, but he believed that one should want to give at

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<sup>85</sup>Bright did suggest for his readers to consult a concordance or a Bible dictionary when studying the gifts. These tools can provide the means necessary to find out more on the controversial gifts. However, these tools do not inform the reader about Bright’s position on the different gifts. In fact, Bright sidestepped the issue rather than having explained the different viewpoints on the controversial gifts.

<sup>86</sup>See footnote 31 from chapter one where I discuss Bright’s decision to allow Crusade staff to pray in a private prayer language (tongues) if they do so privately. Bright previously had a policy which prohibited staff from practicing tongues.

<sup>87</sup>I base this opinion on the fact that Crusade allows their staff to be from different denominations. Hence, they allow grace on the nonessential doctrines.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 324.

least 10 percent. He quoted J. B. Gabrell as saying, “It is unthinkable from the standpoint of the cross that anyone would give less under grace than the Jews gave under law.”<sup>89</sup> Bright further commented, “Measuring their giving by the grace of the cross and not by the legalism of the Law, the early Christians did not limit themselves to the tithe. They gave much more. And they gave in the Spirit of Christ, as a demonstration of His pre-eminence in their lives, to help fulfill the Great Commission.”<sup>90</sup> He also encouraged the new believer to give to overseas and home missions.<sup>91</sup>

### **Small Group Discipleship**

Bright wrote *5 Steps To Making Disciples* to train persons in how to lead small group Bible studies.<sup>92</sup> He included three main objectives for the five-week study. The leader is to help the student do the following: (1) Accept their role in helping to fulfill the Great Commission. (2) Learn how to guide new believers to assurance of their salvation. (3) Challenge Christians to develop a ministry of spiritual multiplication.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, there are five lessons which the leader is to follow during the study.<sup>94</sup> The five steps for

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 324-25. The primary source for Gabrell is not listed.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 325.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 326.

<sup>92</sup>Bright, *5 Steps To Making Disciples: Leaders Guide*, 10.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>94</sup>The steps follow the following pattern: a focus is given which summarizes the topic to be covered; objectives are listed for the given lesson; session Scriptures are also listed which provide an overview for the given lesson; an outline is listed which shows the leader where he or she is headed throughout the lesson; a leader’s preparation is given which tells the leader what to bring to the Bible study; the Bible study session includes a time for sharing in which the leader opens with prayer and then allows the participants to share progress or struggles in applying the previous lesson; the discussion starter allows the leader to ask a question which should cause the group to think about the given lesson; the lesson development offers a guide (suggestions) for the leader as he goes through the lesson; an application section is included to allow the participants to apply what they have learned during the given lesson; closing and prayer follows in which the participants are given the opportunity to ask questions or make additional comments, and a time to prayer for participants’ needs is also given; the follow-up

discipleship are as follows: step (1) Answer God's Call to Discipleship; step (2) Begin a Discipleship Ministry; step (3) Establish Personal Relationships; step (4) Inspire Others to Grow in Their Faith; and step (5) Prepare to Lead a Discipleship Group.

Bright offered encouragement for those who might think that only the "theologically trained" can lead Bible studies. He said, "You do not need to be a theologian, Bible scholar, or great teacher to guide a group in studying this material. God uses ordinary people who have a heart for Him and who make themselves available to do His will."<sup>95</sup> In addition, Bright did well to state that the most important step to take in assembling a Bible study group is to "pray for God's leading and blessing."<sup>96</sup> Another important suggestion, regarding the formation of a Bible study, is to look for those who have an interest in "deepening their ministry."<sup>97</sup> Additionally, Bright recommended keeping the group small so that the group can maintain "a feeling of intimacy."<sup>98</sup>

Bright also did well to instruct the Bible study leader that he is to be a "discussion guide, not a lecturer."<sup>99</sup> He continued, regarding the leader's role, "You should be prepared to suggest ideas, give background material, and ask questions to keep the conversation lively and relevant, but do not dominate the discussion. Instead, draw out comments from your students."<sup>100</sup> Bright also said to get involved in the lives of the Bible study members. He further noted an excellent point, "The way you model and

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section offers the leader suggestions for connecting with the participants outside of group time and ideas for fellowship are also noted; and the final section is a student lesson plan which offers the students the opportunity to record answers to the study questions listed. Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

mentor through your personal example will have a far greater impact on your group than any of the words you say in a meeting.”<sup>101</sup>

One final guideline worth noting is that Bright suggested avoiding “controversial theological teachings that could cause confusion among group members.”<sup>102</sup> However, this author believes that at certain times it may be necessary to discuss controversial teachings so that the group members can learn about the deeper doctrines of the faith. Additionally, there is a way to handle such doctrines without causing mass confusion during the group. For instance, if the issue of predestination or paedobaptism were to come up, the leader could explain to the group that not all Christians agree on these doctrines. He then could explain to the group the different stances on the doctrines as well as the passages of Scripture used by both sides, and he could offer to meet individually with group members who still had questions.

### **Advanced Training**

Bright realized that his staff needed to be disciplined on a deeper level than what a new believer would receive from Crusade. Crusade started The Institute for Biblical Studies in 1962 in which staff members could receive formal biblical and theological training.<sup>103</sup> The Institute for Biblical Studies is still functioning today, and Crusade staff are able to receive graduate credit for the seminary classes which they take. New staff members go through a five-week training (New Staff Training) where they complete two seminary classes: A Survey of Biblical Doctrine and Methods of Inductive Bible Study.<sup>104</sup> These two classes are the first in a series of classes which Crusade staff

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Judy Douglas, “A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ” in *Principles of Leadership*, 404.

<sup>104</sup>Taken from an email from Becky Ebersole, 11 March 2005.

complete. Other classes taught in The Institute for Biblical Studies include: New Testament Survey, Biblical Interpretation, Biblical Communication, Old Testament Survey, Bible/God/Holy Spirit, Church History, Apologetics, Humanity/Christ/Salvation, and Christian World View.<sup>105</sup> The staff can choose from which seminary they would like to earn credit: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Reformed Theological Seminary, Bethel Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Talbot School of Theology offer credit for the IBS courses taken through Crusade.<sup>106</sup>

Bright also wanted to start a seminary within Campus Crusade. He said, “[I]n 1978 God impressed us to build a different kind of seminary.”<sup>107</sup> He noted Donald McGavran’s comments at the first commencement ceremony for Campus Crusade’s International School of Theology: “The emphasis and philosophy of the International School of Theology will revolutionize theological training throughout the world.”<sup>108</sup> In 1975, the state of California authorized IST the ability to award master’s degrees. In 1994, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) granted accreditation status for IST.<sup>109</sup> The school is no longer functioning here in the United States due to financial difficulties which accrued under its last president. The school also faced the inability to recruit enough new students in order to offset their financial woes. Overseas campuses,

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<sup>105</sup>For a description of each of the classes offered see Campus Crusade’s website [on-line]; accessed 22 August 2005; available from [http://www.staff.campuscrusadeforchrist.com/summersol/COURSES\\_core.html](http://www.staff.campuscrusadeforchrist.com/summersol/COURSES_core.html); Internet.

<sup>106</sup>See the following website for more information [on-line]; accessed 22 August 2005; available from [http://www.staff.campuscrusadeforchrist.com/summersol/COURSES\\_graduate.html](http://www.staff.campuscrusadeforchrist.com/summersol/COURSES_graduate.html); Internet.

<sup>107</sup>Bill Bright, “A Different Kind of Seminary” *Worldwide Challenge*, Sep/Oct 1989, vol. 16, no. 5, 64.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup>Taken from “History of International School of Theology” [on-line]; accessed 26 February 2005; available from <http://www.leaderu.com/isot/history.html>; Internet.

however, are still operating.<sup>110</sup>

Various ministries were started with the purpose of training persons who might not be privy to advanced theological training. Crusade created the Lay Institute for Evangelism (LIFE) around 1960, with the sole purpose of training laypersons how to share the gospel.<sup>111</sup> Also, Great Commission Training Centers were started, with the first one formed in 1971 in Manila, with the purpose of offering biblical and theological training.<sup>112</sup>

One of Bright's final accomplishments was the founding of the Global Pastors Network with James O. Davis with the intention of equipping the church to fulfill the Great Commission. Pastors, staff leaders, and lay persons can watch numerous sermons on the website by men such as David Jeremiah, John Maxwell, and James Merritt. Bright passed the Global Pastors Network to John Maxwell in March of 2003 before his death.<sup>113</sup>

### **An Analysis of Bright's Discipleship**

A solid discipleship program needs several things. First, the most pertinent question that needs to be asked is whether the material used is contrary to Scripture—is it heretical in the doctrine presented? Bright's discipleship material is indeed biblical. Long time Crusade staffer, Lois Mackey, writes, "Historically, in Campus Crusade for Christ, we always go first to Scripture to investigate the biblical basis for all the transferable materials, methods, and training that we develop."<sup>114</sup> There is no question

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<sup>110</sup>This information regarding IST is taken from a second phone interview by the author with Ted Martin, 20 January 2006.

<sup>111</sup>Michael Richardson, *Amazing Faith: The Authorized Biography of Bill Bright* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2000), 79.

<sup>112</sup>Judy Douglas, "A Brief History of Campus Crusade for Christ," 407.

<sup>113</sup>Global Pastors Network, "Bill Bright Passes The Baton" [on-line]; accessed 16 March 2004; available from <http://www.globalpastorsnetwork.org/articles.asp?ACTION=print&ID=232>; Internet.

<sup>114</sup>Lois Mackey, "Transferable Training" in *Principles of Leadership*, 169.

that Bright utilized Scripture throughout his *Ten Basic Steps* and his *Transferable Concepts*. He even included sections on exploring the Old and New Testaments as well a section which deals with the authority of the Bible in *Ten Basic Steps*. Hence, Bright placed a high priority on God's Word, and this priority is conveyed to the disciple. His inclusion of a section on how to study the Bible in *Ten Basic Steps* as well as *Transferable Concepts: You Can Study the Bible Effectively*, shows the disciple that studying God's word is necessary for growing in one's faith.

Not only is Bright's discipleship material biblical, but it is also written in a systematic manner. For instance, he covered the deity of Christ in *Ten Basic Steps*, starting with Jesus' identity and his death, burial and resurrection. He also explained the need for Jesus in the believer's life on a daily basis.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, he covered the identity of the Holy Spirit as well as his role in a believer's life<sup>116</sup> He covered how one can be sure he or she is a Christian.<sup>117</sup> Finally, Bright placed a strong emphasis on evangelism in his discipleship material. The disciple is taught to share one's faith while he or she is in the process of building it through learning new things about Christianity in discipleship lessons. Bright admonished new believers, "Learn how to present the distilled essence of the gospel so that the one with whom you are sharing will be able to make an intelligent decision for Christ as Savior and Lord."<sup>118</sup>

Regarding the systematic nature of Bright's discipleship material, Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty

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<sup>115</sup>Bright, *Ten Basic Steps: A Handbook for Christian Maturity*, 42-45.

<sup>116</sup>See Bright, *Ten Basic Steps*, 127-50, Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be Filled with the Holy Spirit* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1995, 1998) and Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Walk in the Spirit* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1998).

<sup>117</sup>Bill Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be Sure You Are a Christian* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1995, 1998).

<sup>118</sup>Bright, *Transferable Concepts: How You Can Introduce Others to Christ* (Orlando: NewLife, 1971, 1981, 1991, 1998), 12.

Commission, comments on his experience with Crusade's training,

The experience revolutionized my spiritual life and did much to determine the future direction of my ministry. Although I had already surrendered to full-time Christian service at the time I encountered Campus Crusade's ministries, my exposure to their thematic study of Christian doctrine enabled me to learn more about my faith in a month of extensive study at the Leadership Institute than I had learned in the previous 19 years of daily Bible reading and near-perfect attendance in my Southern Baptist church.<sup>119</sup>

Bright's discipleship material is biblical and systematic, and another strength of his methodology is its simplicity and transferability. Bright did not write material which is too complex for the new believer, but his material is at a level which most new believers should find beneficial and user friendly. It is also put together in such a way that one can easily train another how to disciple a new believer—transferability which results in spiritual multiplication. Robert Coleman advocated discipleship which would result in multiplication. He said, "For as individuals learn of Him and follow the pattern of His life, they will invariably become disciplers, and as their disciples in turn do the same, someday through multiplication the world will come to know Him whom to know aright is life everlasting."<sup>120</sup>

The structure of one-on-one discipling is the final strength of Bright's discipleship methodology. It is much easier to be intentional with a new believer when the discipler works with a new Christian one-on-one. The new believer can ask numerous questions of the discipler, and the new believer's spiritual growth can be more easily gauged in a one-on-one structure. Keith Davy says that Crusade still uses one-on-one discipleship, but they also encourage a triad model in which two Crusade persons, which could consist of a staff member or a college student volunteer, work with a new

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<sup>119</sup>Richard Land, "Statement by Richard Land on the Passing of Bill Bright" [on-line]; accessed 16 March 2004; available from <http://www.../1,,PTID313086|CHID590694|CIID1603700|CPATHL3BhcnRuZXIvQXJOaWNsZV9EaXNwb>; Internet.

<sup>120</sup>Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, 10. Coleman also added, "The early church grew by evangelistic multiplication, as witnesses of Christ reproduced their lifestyle in the lives of those about them." *Ibid.*, 30.

believer. Davy also points out that on the college campus Crusade staff encourage new believers to join a Crusade small group so that one may grow in the faith in community.<sup>121</sup> This structure of one-on-one, triad, and small groups is simple, but new believers need simplicity. Greg Ogden, an author on Christian discipleship, adequately states, regarding the necessity to keep discipleship models simple, “What I propose may sound insultingly simple. Yet it has been my experience that if our ministry schemes are overly complex, they will either never get off the ground or will eventually collapse under their own administrative weight.”<sup>122</sup>

### **Discipleship and Fasting**

Bright disciplined others to fast and pray so that one could experience genuine revival. Because of the emphasis placed on revival and fasting by Bright in the latter years of his life, it is important to determine whether his views were orthodox. This section will cover Bright’s beliefs on fasting and revival.

Bright defined revival as:

a sovereign work of God—in answer to sincere, prevailing prayer—in which He: Grips His people with deep conviction, repentance, forgiveness, and deliverance from personal sins; Fills His people with the Holy Spirit and manifests in them the fruit and graces of the Holy Spirit; Fills the Church and community with His presence and power; Causes non-Christians to earnestly seek Him; Ignites in His people, young and old, a passion to bring the lost to Christ at home and around the world.<sup>123</sup>

Bright prayed for a revival that would help fulfill the Great Commission by the

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<sup>121</sup>The information from this paragraph is from a second interview, by the author with Keith Davy 30 September 2005, Louisville, Kentucky.

<sup>122</sup>Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 176.

<sup>123</sup>Bill Bright, *The Coming Revival: America’s Call to Fast, Pray, and “Seek God’s Face”* (Orlando: NewLife, 1995), 15. For a good summary of Bright’s views on fasting for world evangelization, see Kerry Batchman, “Fasting for 40 Days” *Pentecostal Evangel*, [on-line]; accessed 19 February 2004; available from [www.ag.org/Pentecostal-evangel/conversations2001/4531\\_bright.cfm](http://www.ag.org/Pentecostal-evangel/conversations2001/4531_bright.cfm); Internet.

end of the year 2000.<sup>124</sup> He declared, “On the basis of His Holy Word and divine assurances He has placed in my heart, I am absolutely convinced that our Sovereign God is going to send a great revival to our nation and world so that the Great Commission will be fulfilled.”<sup>125</sup>

Bright also said that the revival which he believed would come was conditional. He pointed out, “Shortly before I reached the fortieth day of my fast, the Holy Spirit spoke to me in another tone. It seemed that God was now saying that His promise of revival was conditional.”<sup>126</sup> He believed the conditions were that millions of believers must fast and pray according to 2 Chronicles 7:14, and he began to pray for two million believers to fast and pray in forty-day fasts.<sup>127</sup>

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, Yahweh answers King Solomon’s prayers as he dedicates the temple in Jerusalem (for Solomon’s prayer, see 2 Chr 6:22-40).<sup>128</sup> Solomon pleaded for Yahweh to answer his people’s prayers for forgiveness, and Yahweh promised to do so if they humble themselves, pray, and seek his face. One can see that Yahweh does not explicitly promise to send a “revival” if his people meet his expectations, and fasting is not mentioned in the context of 2 Chronicles 7:14. Nonetheless, one of the implications of the text is that Yahweh will bless his people if they meet his requests. Hence, it is safe to say that God can send “revival” if the conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 are met.

The catalyst which would help fulfill God’s requirements in 2 Chronicles 7:14 was fasting, according to Bright. He noted, “Only fasting meets the criteria of each

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<sup>124</sup>Bill Bright, *The Transforming Power of Fasting and Prayer: Personal Accounts of Spiritual Renewal* foreword Bill McCartney (Orlando: NewLife, 1997), 8.

<sup>125</sup>Bright, *The Coming Revival*, 16.

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>128</sup>Andrew E. Hill, *1&2 Chronicles: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 400.

aspect of 2 Chronicles 7:14. When you humble yourself and pray and seek God's face and turn from your wicked ways, something happens to you and you get excited about the Lord in a way that you do not through any other means."<sup>129</sup> Lest one misrepresent Bright by suggesting that he used fasting as the reason God brings revival, he qualified his beliefs. He pointed out, "Fasting does not make one a member of the spiritually elite. One does not have to fast to be used of God. . . . But there is no doubt in my mind—gained from Scripture, history, and experience—that those who fast with pure motives will be drawn closer to the great heart of God and experience a quality of life in the Spirit that is not possible apart from fasting."<sup>130</sup>

Bright hosted a special three-day fasting and prayer meeting in Orlando, Florida, December 5-7, 1994. More than 600 Christian leaders from more than 100 denominations and religious organizations convened for the meeting.<sup>131</sup> Men such as Adrian Rogers and Jim Henry of the Southern Baptist Convention; Thomas Trask, former General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God; Paul Cedar, former President of the Evangelical Free Church of America, and Chuck Colson attended.<sup>132</sup> In 1995, Bright

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<sup>129</sup>Bright, *The Transforming Power*, 22. Bright continued, "When one fasts, he humbles himself; he has more time to pray, more time to seek God's face, and certainly he would turn from all known sin. One could read the Bible, pray, or witness for Christ without repenting of his sins. But one cannot enter into a genuine fast with a pure heart and pure motive and not meet the conditions of this passage." Bright, *The Coming Revival*, 17. Bright further declared, "America and much of the world will, before the end of the year 2000, experience a great spiritual awakening. This divine visit of the Holy Spirit from heaven will kindle the greatest spiritual harvest in the history of the Church. But before God comes in revival power, the Holy Spirit will call millions of God's people to repent, fast, and pray in the spirit of 2 Chronicles 7:14. . . . The scope of this revival depends on how believers in America and the rest of the world respond to this call. The Holy Spirit gave me this assurance during a forty-day fast. I have spent fifty years studying God's Word and listening to His voice, and His message could not have been more clear. *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, 28. Bright further noted, "Fasting without recognizing God's sovereign control and Lordship is, at the least, empty." Bright, *The Transforming Power*, 28.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>132</sup>Adrian Rogers commented, regarding the meeting, "This is one of the most exciting days of my life. And I mean that, knowing that God is listening to what I say."

went through a second 40 day fast. He also organized another prayer and fasting meeting in 1995 with more than 3,500 Christian leaders in attendance.<sup>133</sup> In 1996, Bright hosted Fasting & Prayer '96 in St. Louis, Missouri, during his third 40 day fast.<sup>134</sup> Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church in Springdale, Arkansas, gave the opening call to worship.<sup>135</sup>

### **Analysis of Bright's Beliefs on Fasting and Revival**

Was Bright's understanding of revival biblical? He did believe that revival is a sovereign work of God. He declared, "Revival is a sovereign act of God, a divine visitation of His grace. Throughout history, revival has come in response to the Lord's stirring of His people."<sup>136</sup> Bright further noted, "The Holy Spirit . . . is the author of revival. Ultimately, no Christian is going to fast and pray for a spiritual awakening unless the Spirit calls him."<sup>137</sup> Third, Bright said, "revival is a time of personal humiliation, forgiveness, and restoration in the Holy Spirit."<sup>138</sup> Fourth, he declared, "during revival, preaching is fearless under the anointing of the Holy Spirit—as in Acts

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Chuck Colson said, "I have really sensed a real sincere commitment to seek not ourselves but to seek God. And when you get leaders together doing that, then there is hope for a change. This is the greatest experience of my life; I will never be the same." Bright, *The Coming Revival*, 20-22.

<sup>133</sup>Bright, *The Transforming Power*, 18.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 122. Floyd said, regarding his first 40 day fast in 1995, that he shared with his 9,000 member congregation about his recent fast. He commented, "As a result, God came on that Sunday morning. On June 4, 1995, I saw the greatest movement of God that I had ever seen up to that point in my life. Our morning worship service lasted two-and-a-half hours and was filled with the holiness of God and deep spiritual brokenness." Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>137</sup>Bright, *The Coming Revival*, 68.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 84.

4:31 when ‘they spoke the word of God with boldness’ (NKJ).”<sup>139</sup> Fifth, he said, “the presence of the Holy Spirit is powerful.”<sup>140</sup> Sixth, he pointed out that “revival changes communities and nations.”<sup>141</sup> These statements are all true for God is the one who is the author of revival. Richard Owen Roberts adequately defines revival as “an extraordinary movement of the Holy Spirit producing extraordinary results.”<sup>142</sup>

Bright ties revival and fasting together by suggesting that fasting can produce revival in one’s life. He wrote, “Fasting is a primary means of restoration. By humbling our souls, fasting releases the Holy Spirit to do His special work of revival in us. This changes our relationship with God forever, taking us into a deeper life in Christ and giving us a greater awareness of God’s reality and presence in our lives.”<sup>143</sup> Bright does not suggest that fasting is a commandment, but rather he pointed out Jesus’ example of fasting 40 days and nights.

Former Crusade staffer Craig Parton and theologian Michael Horton, however, have criticized Bright’s views on fasting and revival.<sup>144</sup> Horton believes Bright did not place a proper emphasis on the preached Word, sacraments, and on Christ. Horton pointed out, referring to Bright’s views on revival and fasting, “So here we have a revival without Word, without sacraments, and even, as he implies, without Christ.”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>142</sup>Richard Owen Roberts, *Revival* (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1997), 16

<sup>143</sup>Bright, *The Coming Revival*, 94.

<sup>144</sup>For Parton’s criticisms of Bright on revival and fasting, see chapter 1, footnotes 27 and 28.

<sup>145</sup>Michael S. Horton, “Contemporary Revivalism” Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals [on-line]; accessed February 18, 2004; available from [http://www.alliancenet.org/CC/CDA/Content\\_Blocks/CC\\_Printer\\_Friendly\\_Version\\_Utility/1,,PTID307086/CHID561434/CIID141...](http://www.alliancenet.org/CC/CDA/Content_Blocks/CC_Printer_Friendly_Version_Utility/1,,PTID307086/CHID561434/CIID141...); Internet.

Parton and Horton's criticisms are not warranted for the following reasons. First, Bright's beliefs on revival, particularly his definition of it, are biblical. He believed that true revival is a sovereign work of God. He said, "Revival is a sovereign act of God, a divine visitation of His grace."<sup>146</sup> Second, Bright emphasized the Word, and he also pointed to Christ's example in Matthew 6:2, 5, 16, where Jesus says not if, but when you fast.<sup>147</sup> Not only did Bright go to the Word to support his beliefs on revival, but he also pointed people to the movement of God which began occurring in the mid 1990s as an example of God sending revival according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Revival began to break out at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church in Brownwood, Texas, and it spread to Howard Payne University in Texas to numerous other campuses such as Southwestern Baptist Seminary and Wheaton College in Illinois.<sup>148</sup> These movements are best described as seasons of awakening.<sup>149</sup> It is evident that God's Spirit moved upon these churches and campuses with an unusual or extraordinary sense of repentance. Yet these movements in no way compare to extended movements of God such as the Great Awakenings or the Welsh Revival in the early 1900s when thousands were converted.<sup>150</sup> Nonetheless, these movements should be defined as the beginnings of true revival.

It seems that Parton is making pejorative statements against Bright's views on fasting. For instance, Parton suggested the following in a sarcastic tone: "In any event, an eleventh commandment was apparently given to Bill and Vonette Bright, and the rough

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<sup>146</sup>Bright, *The Transforming Power*, 155.

<sup>147</sup>*Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>148</sup>For a full account of the revival movement, see John Avant, Malcolm McDow and Alvin Reid eds., *Revival!: The Story of the Current Awakening in Brownwood, Ft. Worth, Wheaton, and Beyond* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996).

<sup>149</sup>Alvin Reid labels the movement in Brownwood, Texas as a "season of awakening," but he also refers to the movement as "genuine revival." Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism*, 81.

<sup>150</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.

translation from the Greek is as follows: ‘Thou shalt build a university. Real fast, too. And even better, thou shalt be on worldwide radio and television with thy wife.’”<sup>151</sup> There is nothing wrong with suggesting that fasting can help the “Holy Spirit to do His special work of revival in us.”<sup>152</sup> Ronnie Floyd, a prominent Southern Baptist pastor leader, suggests that prayer and fasting are means for God to send revival. He points out, “This gateway to God’s supernatural power is prayer and fasting. The Body of Christ must recognize these disciplines for what God has created them to be. Then I’m confident that a coast-to-coast, north-to-south spiritual revival will sweep across the United States and throughout the world when multitudes of Christians begin to engage in the spiritual disciplines of fasting and prayer.”<sup>153</sup> Lewis Drummond also advocated prayer and fasting in preparation for revival. He said, “I recommend that days of prayer, even fasting, be observed in the homes and churches of all concerned believers.”<sup>154</sup> Robert Coleman says, regarding fasting:

This voluntary discipline of abstinence from food was commonly practiced in Israel and had been observed by Jesus. Though the custom must not become and end in itself or be relied on as a means of earning divine favor, as it did with the Pharisees, properly followed, fasting permits one to have more time for prayer and reflection upon the things of God. When this purpose is clear, the discipline can help bring the body and mind into subjection to the Spirit, increasing sensitivity to nonmaterial reality. It is given particular prominence in Acts when in prayer individuals and congregations were seeking special guidance of the Lord (9:9; 10:30; 13:2-3; 14:23). We would do well to follow the admonition.<sup>155</sup>

The aforementioned quote lists several passages in Acts which serve as biblical evidence that fasting was a common practice in the New Testament. In addition, Jesus also supports fasting in his Sermon on the Mount (Matt chapter 6). He said, “And

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<sup>151</sup>Parton, “From Arrowhead to Augsburg,” 7.

<sup>152</sup>Bright, *The Coming Revival*, 94.

<sup>153</sup>Ronnie Floyd, *The Power of Prayer and Fasting*, 6.

<sup>154</sup>Drummond, *Eight Keys to Biblical Revival*, 210.

<sup>155</sup>Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, 94. See also Wayne Grudem’s defense for fasting in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 390-91.

whenever you fast,” which implies that fasting by his disciples is assumed (Matt 6:16 NAS). Jesus offers further support for the discipline of fasting in his response to John the Baptist’s disciples’ question on why they and the Pharisees fasted but his disciples did not (Matt 9:14-15 NAS). Jesus answered John’s disciples, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast” (Matt 9:15 NAS). In other words, Jesus’ disciples would fast once he ascended into heaven. Moreover, all true disciples today are still able to continue the practice of fasting. Therefore, Bright was correct for encouraging believers to practice fasting today.

The only legitimate critique regarding Bright’s views on revival would be that the type of revival which he predicted, one that would help fulfill the Great Commission by the year 2000, did not occur. Pockets of revival certainly were notable; however, one which Bright predicted did not last.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has noted that discipleship is a necessary part of the Great Commission, and Bright was committed to the mandate to make new disciples. The author has also concluded that Bright’s discipleship methodology is biblical, and those who desire a solid curriculum to disciple new believers can use his material today. Bright’s views on fasting and prayer for revival are also biblical. The following chapter will summarize the findings regarding Bright’s theology of evangelism and methodology of discipleship.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize this author's conclusions regarding the research problem. As noted in chapter one, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine Bill Bright's theology of evangelism and methodology of discipleship. Bright has received criticism in several areas. I noted numerous criticisms throughout chapters one, three, and four; and it is not the intent of this chapter to restate all of them. A summary of my conclusions, however, is noted for each of these areas of criticism: absence of scholarly thinking, faulty gospel presentation, carnal Christianity, and questionable practices: spiritual breathing and fasting. Additionally, I conclude this chapter by noting areas for further study.

#### **Absence of Scholarly Thinking**

Is Bright guilty of a lack of scholarly thinking? Joel Sherer comments, "Bright shows little interest in scholarly thinking or theological investigation."<sup>1</sup> Richard Quebedeaux also writes, "Bill has founded and directed a Christian organization that is remarkably *nondoctrinal* in character. It is extremely difficult to find systematic doctrinal formulations of any kind in his writings. And this is one reason many theologians term Campus Crusade's theology as simplistic or superficial" [emphasis mine].<sup>2</sup>

Are Bright's critics accurate in their assessment of Bright? One should find,

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<sup>1</sup>Joel Sherer, "Bill Bright" in *Twentieth-Century Shapers of American Popular Religion* ed., Charles H. Lippy (Connecticut: Greenwood, 1989), 54. In addition, Joel Sherer points out that historian Nathan Hatch "groups Bright with Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell, and Jim Bakker as representative of the failure of conservative evangelicals to sustain serious intellectual life." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Quebedeaux, *I Found It!*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 90.

after reading chapters 3, 4, and 5, that these critics are not accurate in their allegations. Bright was not a systematic theologian; however, he did not claim to be one either. In Bright's writings, one will find an explanation of many of the major doctrines of the faith in a systematic manner. Furthermore, he wrote numerous books, such as *God: Discover His Character* and *Discover the Book God Wrote* which are on a level which even a more learned believer should find useful.<sup>3</sup> These books, as others which he wrote, do deal with deeper theological issues by covering the attributes of God, dealing with verbal plenary inspiration, and explaining the doctrine of the Trinity and Christ's hypostatic union. One should not expect to find a detailed systematic theology in Bright's writings, such as one would find in Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*.<sup>4</sup> Bright's purpose was not to be a theologian, but it was to train men and women in the basics of the faith in order to help fulfill the Great Commission.

### **A Faulty Gospel Presentation**

Bright is accused of presenting a faulty gospel. As noted in chapter 1, Walter Chantry said:

Today, we are told that witnessing is to begin with, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.' Love is set before sinners as the foremost characteristic of God. But Jesus didn't begin that way. And the Bible as a whole speaks more often of God's holiness than of His love. This is probably because men readily remember all attributes that might favour themselves and totally forget those which threaten or alarm them.<sup>5</sup>

In chapter 4, I deal with the criticisms of Bright's gospel presentation. I concluded that Bright did not present a heretical or faulty gospel; however, there is room for critique. First, Bright did not include the word "repentance" in his original version of

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<sup>3</sup>Bright, *God: Discover His Character* and Bright, *Discover the Book God Wrote*.

<sup>4</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

<sup>5</sup>Walter J. Chantry, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* (Great Britain: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 28.

the *Four Spiritual Laws*. However, he did include it in his updated version of the *Four Spiritual Laws* and in *Would You Like to Know God Personally?* A second conclusion is that Bright, in his 1965 original version of the *Four Spiritual Laws*, would have done well to have begun with something about Creator God—while maintaining the “God loves you” language. People need to know who God is in today’s postmodern society. The original version and the updated version of the *Four Spiritual Laws* were written in language which assumed people would be familiar with the God of the Bible. These tracts are not sufficient for today’s postmodern culture—not that they are heretical or unbiblical, but Law One assumes a Judeo-Christian worldview which many people do not have. Keith Davy, with Campus Crusade for Christ, adequately suggests, “To begin a discussion with ‘God loves you’ can leave unanswered the critical question of ‘Which God?’ or ‘Who is God?’ Is it the infinite and personal Creator of the Bible or the impersonal force of the movies that pervades the cosmos?”<sup>6</sup>

Paul Tassell also criticized Bright for not including anything on hell in the *Four Spiritual Laws*. Tassell’s criticism is valid, because Bright should have included something on the eternal destiny of those who fail to accept Christ. However, if one looks at more than just the *Four Spiritual Laws*, Bright does elaborate on the judgment of God through the reality of hell.<sup>7</sup>

### **Questionable Practices**

Bright was criticized for certain practices for which he was passionate. He encouraged believers to practice spiritual breathing. In spiritual breathing, one confesses his sin through exhaling and receives God’s forgiveness through inhaling. As mentioned earlier, Craig Parton suggests, regarding spiritual breathing, “Bill Bright’s approach to

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<sup>6</sup>Keith A. Davy, “The Gospel for a New Generation” in D.A. Carson, ed., *Telling the Truth: Evangelizing Postmoderns* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 360.

<sup>7</sup>See Bill Bright, *Heaven or Hell: Your Ultimate Choice* (Orlando: NewLife, 2002).

the Christian life appears to be, strangely enough, classically medieval.”<sup>8</sup> Michael Horton, referring to spiritual breathing, believes “the Spirit is viewed less as a person than as a quantity of divine substance, poured into the believer in varying degrees, depending on how closely one followed the rules for ‘appropriation.’ This infusion-centered rather than imputation-centered doctrine of salvation exactly parallels the medieval system.”<sup>9</sup> In chapter 4, I pointed out that “spiritual breathing” does have some similarities with the Jesus Prayer. However, Bright used metaphorical language, which indicates that he did not intend one to physically practice in spiritual breathing—that is, the physical act of exhaling and inhaling. Moreover, Horton’s criticism is not warranted regarding Bright’s views on spiritual breathing because Bright referred to the Holy Spirit as a person, and this wording is in line with orthodox teaching. He said, referring to the Holy Spirit in spiritual breathing, “Trust that He now directs and empowers you.”<sup>10</sup>

Bright’s approach to spiritual breathing is not found in Scripture; that is, the words “spiritual breathing,” with exhaling and inhaling, are not present. Nevertheless, he merely found a way, or a method, for individuals to follow when they feel like they are struggling with sin and being “filled” with the Spirit.

In chapter 5, I cover Bright’s views on fasting and revival. Bright received criticism for his views on fasting and revivalism as well. Yet I concluded that Bright’s views on fasting and revival are not unbiblical. Fasting is a good spiritual discipline to practice, and it can help make one ready to receive from God, as Bright noted. He pointed out, “Fasting is a primary means of restoration. By humbling our souls, fasting

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<sup>8</sup>Craig A. Parton, “From Arrowhead to Augsburg: Bill Bright in the Light of the Lutheran Confessions” [on-line]; accessed 16 February 2004; available from <http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissar58.htm>; Internet, 2.

<sup>9</sup>Michael S. Horton, “The Higher Life at the Orlando Prayer Summit” *Modern Reformation Magazine* Jan/Feb vol. 4, 1995 [on-line]; accessed 25 April 2005; available from <http://www.modernreformation.org/mh95summit.htm>; Internet.

<sup>10</sup>Bright, “Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Holy Spirit?”, 15.

releases the Holy Spirit to do His special work of revival in us. This changes our relationship with God forever, taking us into a deeper life in Christ and giving us a greater awareness of God's reality and presence in our lives."<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Bright defined revival as "a sovereign act of God, a divine visitation of His grace."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, a revival is an act of God which he brings in his own timing. He also was able to point to the revival movement in the mid 1990s, which started at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church in Brownwood, Texas, as evidence that God was sending revival. The only legitimate critique of Bright's views on fasting and revival is that the type of revival which Bright predicted would help fulfill the Great Commission by the end of the year 2000 did not last.

As noted in chapter 1, I also wanted to determine whether Bright's beliefs on carnal Christianity were biblical. Before investigating Bright's beliefs, from what I had read, I was convinced that Bright did believe in two types of Christians—one carnal and the other living for God. In fact, Paul Schaefer believes, as noted in chapter 4, that Bright advocated one could accept Christ as Savior without accepting him as Lord. Schaefer suggests, "Bright's overall presentation corresponds well to that of the dispensationalist Chafer [Lewis Sperry] and the Keswick proponent Barabas on the issues of two types of Christians and the doctrine of sanctification."<sup>13</sup> Yet, as R. C. Sproul notes, it seems that Bright is not talking about two types of Christians when he used the carnal Christianity language. Christians will always struggle with sin in their fleshly bodies this side of heaven. Sproul says it well, regarding Bright's views, "All Christians are 'carnal' insofar as we continue to struggle with the old nature of flesh. But no true Christian is carnal in

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<sup>11</sup>Bill Bright, *The Coming Revival: America's Call to Fast, Pray, and "Seek God's Face"* (Orlando: NewLife, 1995), 94.

<sup>12</sup>Bill Bright, *The Transforming Power of Fasting and Prayer: Personal Accounts of Spiritual Renewal* foreword Bill McCartney (Orlando: NewLife, 1997), 155.

<sup>13</sup>Paul Schaefer, "An American Tale" in *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation* ed. Michael Horton (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 173.

the sense that the flesh totally dominates his life.<sup>14</sup>

Bright's theology of evangelism is indeed biblical, and it does not contradict the Lausanne Covenant's definition of evangelism.<sup>15</sup> However, a criticism regarding Bright's theology of evangelism is that Bright sometimes is inconsistent in some of his theological statements. For instance, as noted in chapter three, Bright made statements concerning the Holy Spirit's role in regeneration which make it hard to determine when he believed regeneration takes place.

Bright is also inconsistent in that he listed both God's love and his holiness as God's main or preeminent attributes. As it stands, these two statements contradict each other. Bright needed to explain how both God's holiness and love are equally important as his attributes.

Bright also used a few analogies to describe some theological concepts which were not completely accurate. Specifically, he attempted to describe God's holiness compared to how he viewed his own sinfulness. He used an analogy of a soiled, white suit to describe his sin. This analogy sounds good at first; however, when examined closely, it fails to picture the depravity of man biblically. Man is not born with a white suit, and without Christ his "suit" is black, symbolizing the deadness of his soul. He is not just soiled and dirty. Furthermore, Bright used his description of a snake bite's antidote to explain how Christ's blood saves individuals. However, as I pointed out in chapter three, this analogy fails theologically. In order for Bright's analogy to be theologically accurate, the stallion would have to die and rise from the dead like Christ.

### **Areas for Further Study**

This dissertation has not covered every detail concerning Bright; hence, there

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<sup>14</sup>R. C. Sproul, *The Pleasures of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), 159.

<sup>15</sup>See J. D. Douglas, ed., "Lausanne Covenant," *Let The Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland Official Reference Volume: Papers and Responses* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 4.

are several areas still to research. First, the ecumenical nature of Campus Crusade is evident in that Bright worked closely with numerous denominations as well as with Catholics for fulfilling the Great Commission. However, did Bright cross any doctrinal boundaries by working with other denominations and with Catholics? Did his belief in the ecumenical movement compromise the gospel at any point?

Furthermore, another area which warrants further research is Bright's leadership. He and Vonette Bright founded Crusade, but it since has grown into an organization with thousands of employees and volunteers. Are there any leadership principles which drove his ministry? Bright transferred the leadership of Crusade to Steve Douglass before his death. Has Douglass made any changes since Bright's death which are notable? Does he have a different leadership philosophy from Bright?

A final area of research deals with Campus Crusade being a parachurch organization. Are parachurch organizations necessary for the task of fulfilling the Great Commission? How has Bright and Crusade affected the local church in matters of discipleship and evangelism? Do people use the *Four Spiritual Laws* or any other evangelism tool from Crusade in their witnessing? Do local churches feel like Crusade has helped or hindered their college ministries, single's ministries, and youth groups?

### **Conclusion**

A biblical theology of evangelism must begin with a proper view of the Bible—anything short of it being fully inspired and inerrant is unacceptable. Bright certainly began with a proper view of God's Word. He believed that it is "God-breathed" and that it is without error. A proper theology of evangelism must also hold to the exclusivity of the biblical Christ. Again, Bright also believed that all persons must have explicit faith in Christ. He declared, "It is *by believing* that Jesus Christ died for man and *by receiving Him personally* that one becomes a Christian" [emphases mine].<sup>16</sup> A

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<sup>16</sup>Bright, *Revolution Now!* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ,

biblical theology of evangelism must also teach that persons are depraved and in need of the gospel. Even still, Bright believed that persons without Christ are separated from God and will be spend an eternity apart from God in hell. He pointed out, “Jesus does not say that we can determine who enters the kingdom and who does not. Nevertheless, we can declare that someone has been forgiven of their sins if they have truly placed their faith in Christ. We can also say with certainty that anyone who has not received Christ will spend eternity in hell.”<sup>17</sup> A biblical theology of evangelism also upholds the Great Commission as a mandate, not an option. Bright was committed to telling others about Jesus as well as making disciples of those who accept Christ. In addition, his discipleship material is biblical and worthy to be used in discipling new believers in the faith.

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1970), 31-32.

<sup>17</sup>Bright, *Living Supernaturally*, 111.

## APPENDIX

### CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST: STATEMENT OF FAITH

The sole basis of our beliefs is the Bible, God's infallible written Word, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. We believe that it was uniquely, verbally and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit and that it was written without error (inerrant) in the original manuscripts. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks.

We accept those areas of doctrinal teaching on which, historically, there has been general agreement among all true Christians. Because of the specialized calling of our movement, we desire to allow for freedom of conviction on other doctrinal matters, provided that any interpretation is based upon the Bible alone, and that no such interpretation shall become an issue which hinders the ministry to which God has called us.

1. There is one true God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each of whom possesses equally all the attributes of Deity and the characteristics of personality.
2. Jesus Christ is God, the living Word, who became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. Hence, He is perfect Deity and true humanity united in one person forever.
3. He lived a sinless life and voluntarily atoned for the sins of men by dying on the cross as their substitute, thus satisfying divine justice and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone.
4. He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died.
5. He ascended bodily into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Father, where He, the only mediator between God and man, continually makes intercession for His own.
6. Man was originally created in the image of God. He sinned by disobeying God; thus, he was alienated from his Creator. That historic fall brought all mankind under divine condemnation.

7. Man's nature is corrupted, and he is thus totally unable to please God. Every man is in need of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.
8. The salvation of man is wholly a work of God's free grace and is not the work, in whole or in part, of human works or goodness or religious ceremony. God imputes His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justified them in His sight.
9. It is the privilege of all who are born again of the Spirit to be assured of their salvation from the very moment in which they trust Christ as their Savior. This assurance is not based upon any kind of human merit, but is produced by the witness of the Holy Spirit, who confirms in the believer the testimony of God in His written word.
10. The Holy Spirit has come into the world to reveal and glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to men. He convicts and draws sinners to Christ, imparts new life to them, continually indwells them from the moment of spiritual birth and seals them until the day of redemption. His fullness, power and control are appropriated in the believer's life by faith.
11. Every believer is called to live so in the power of the indwelling Spirit that he will not fulfill the lust of the flesh but will bear fruit to the glory of God.
12. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body, which is composed of all men, living and dead, who have been joined to Him through saving faith.
13. God admonishes His people to assemble together regularly for worship, for participation in ordinances, for edification through the Scriptures and for mutual encouragement.
14. At physical death the believer enters immediately into eternal, conscious fellowship with the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to everlasting glory and blessing.
15. At physical death the unbeliever enters immediately into eternal, conscious separation from the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to everlasting judgment and condemnation.
16. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth—personally, visibly and bodily—to consummate history and the eternal plan of God.
17. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to disciple men of every nation. The fulfillment of that Great Commission requires that all worldly and personal ambitions be subordinated to a total commitment to “Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Campus Crusade for Christ, “Statement of Faith” (2005) [on-line]; accessed 21 February 2005; available from [http://www.ccci.org/statement\\_of\\_faith.html](http://www.ccci.org/statement_of_faith.html); Internet.

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## ABSTRACT

### AN ANALYSIS OF BILL BRIGHT'S THEOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY OF EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006  
Chairperson: Dr. Charles Lawless, Jr.

This dissertation evaluates Bill Bright's theology of evangelism and methodology of discipleship to determine whether he was orthodox in his beliefs. Chapter 1 introduces criticisms made regarding Bright's beliefs and practices. Chapter 2 looks at the life of Bill Bright by covering his life—pre-conversion, his conversion, his marriage to Vonette, the founding of Campus Crusade, and his death in 2003. Chapter 3 examines Bright's theological beliefs regarding the key components of the gospel. Chapter 4 covers Bright's use of evangelistic tools such as the *Four Spiritual Laws* and the *JESUS* film to evaluate his beliefs. Additionally, this chapter covers Bright's apologetic approach to establish how he defended the faith. Chapter 5 describes Bright's methodology of discipleship to determine whether his methodology is both biblical and useful for discipling new believers today. Chapter 6 summarizes my conclusions regarding the criticisms of Bright's theology of evangelism and methodology of discipleship, and areas for further study are noted as well.

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