



## PART 1: A Friendly Dialogue with Campus Crusaders

In his recent speaking itinerary through the United States, this editor had the privilege of friendly dialogue with some fine Christian gentlemen from Campus Crusade for Christ (C.C.C.) who happened to attend his seminars. The substance of these exchanges, taken from notes, is here reproduced. This editor has had a long acquaintance with C.C.C. through careful reading of most of the available literature and by contact with supporters and advocates of the movement.

The comments in the following discussion, more often than not, deal with general principles and revivalism in general. This is done because it would be unfair to single out C.C.C. for criticism that should be directed to the overall evangelical scene. Although the questions and answers were expressed out of deep conviction and concern, a good spirit prevailed in the discussion, proving that Christians can sometimes disagree without being disagreeable.-R.D.B.

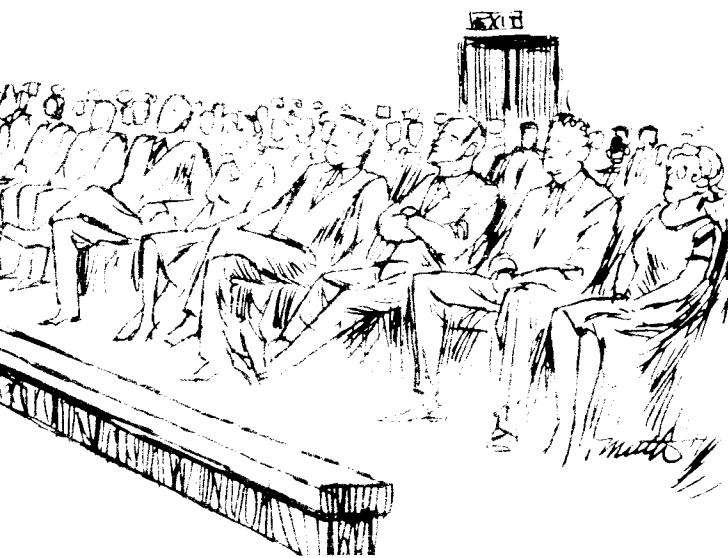
**Q.** What are your impressions of the Campus Crusade movement?

**Ed.** The Campus Crusade movement is one of the most notable expressions of American evangelical revivalism today. It has a superb organization that is going, growing and fantastically successful. The office staff at the world headquarters are young, attractive, charming, gracious and vibrant. They and the mainstream of the movement represent the cream of American youth-educated, idealistic, middle-class. They have an irrepressible zeal and enthusiasm that is contagious. Who wouldn't be impressed!

# Justification by Faith

## and the Current Religious Scene

Editor



Q. Do you agree with the claim that the revivalism seen in Campus Crusade is part of a great spiritual revival?

Ed. Dr. Bill Bright told me personally that we are now witnessing the greatest spiritual revival seen on this earth since the days of the apostles.

I think you would agree with me that numbers and noise are not the only indications of the value of a revival. We need to take into account the basic questions people are grappling with, or what Nygren would call *the fundamental motif* of a spiritual movement.

Consider the two great religious revivals that were so revolutionary that they actually changed the course of history. I am referring to the revivals in the times of the apostles and the Reformers. What was the central concern? The basic question people were

asking was, "How can a man be just with God?" "How can I be acceptable and pleasing before a righteous and holy God?" The question was *theocentric*. Men's earnest inquiry grew out of an overwhelming sense of God's holiness and their own guilty standing and corrupt state.

This is not really the basic question that people are asking in present-day revivalism. This has been a very permissive age, and a lot of it has rubbed off on those of us who call ourselves evangelical. God is cast in the role of an easy-going Benevolence who forgives sin out of sheer mercy. There is very little confrontation with the God of law, righteousness and judgment. Few of us are confronted with Luther's question, "How can I find a gracious God?" We take it for granted that God is gracious. Never have young people had so much time, so much freedom and so many means to run after pleasure. Yet they are bored and unsatisfied. The uppermost question they are asking is, "How can life become an exciting adventure? How can I have a bundle of fun? I have tried sport, sex, pot ... What next?" In the context of this question, revivalists come along and say, "Try Jesus."

You may ask, "What is wrong with trying Jesus?" Our reply is this: Man's original sin was to make his own happiness his primary concern. (The Greeks called this *eudaemonism*, which means making the attainment of *happiness* the goal of life.) The ultimate sin is to enlist Christ as a means to this end.

We seriously question the fundamental motif of much of this type of revivalism. It is *egocentric* instead of *theocentric*. It does not change the goal but merely changes the method. Instead of regeneration (the creation of a new motif, a new goal and a new center), it offers sublimation. (Man merely pursues his egocentric goals on a higher level.)

If the current religious fervor is to have any depth or substance, it has to be on a higher plane than *eudaemonism*. We have to stop trying to deal with God as if He were Santa Claus. ("We believe in you, Santa Claus. Now let's get down to the real thing. Where are the toys?")

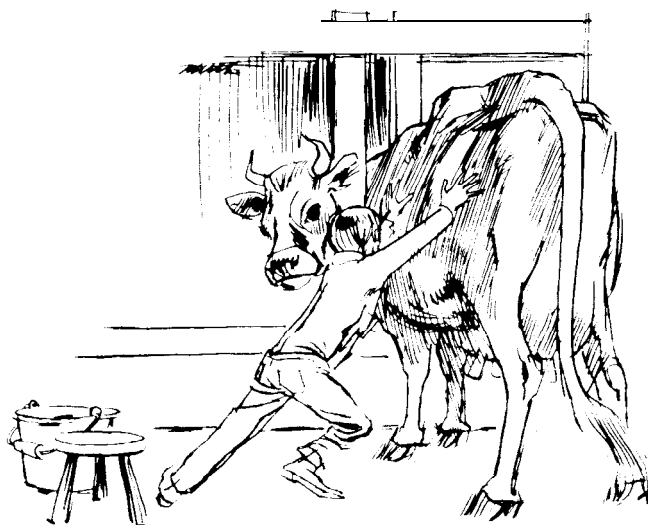
We desperately need to hear the gospel preached in the Biblical context of our accountability before God's law and His judgment seat. Bays the Revelator:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Rev. 14:6,7.

When the demands of God's law and the reality of judgment take hold of the ears of people, they will no longer be asking, "How can Christ satisfy my desire to have a grand ball and a bundle of fun?" but, "How can I satisfy God's righteous claims upon my life?"

**Q. "Present Truth" seems to be knocking experience. Do you discount the need for a real experience?**

**Ed.** On the contrary. What we are saying is this: The only way to get a real Christian experience is to stop making it your focal point of concern. This may sound paradoxical, but divine truth is full of paradoxes. The only way to live is to die; the only way to save your life is to lose it; you become rich by forsaking all; and so on.



When I was a boy, my daily chore was to milk an ornery, old, red cow. Instead of standing in the center of the stall, she had a frustrating habit of standing at an angle. Then there was insufficient room between the wall and her body for me to operate. The more I tried to push her away from the wall, the more she would lean her body toward the wall. Since she was stronger than I was, I had to devise another plan. I found that by going around on the other side and pushing her toward the wall, she would push back until she was standing in dead center—just where I wanted her. So I got the desired result by pushing in the opposite direction.

The surest way to fail in our Christian experience is to join the multitude who are caught up in the frantic pursuit of a satisfying Christian experience. Books on how to find this joyous, satisfying, deeper experience,

fill the land like the frogs of Egypt. A man or woman who can regale other seekers with his own fantastic religious experience is much sought after to revive the saints. The appeal of almost all revivalism is the prospect of discovering a marvelous human experience.

How different is all this subjective revivalism from the objective message of the apostles. These men did not turn the world upside down by telling people about their exciting experience, nor was the burden of their preaching to tell people how to discover the ecstatic experience of a Spirit-filled life. They had something infinitely bigger and more weighty about which to preach. God Himself had visited this planet in the person of Jesus Christ. By the amazing spectacle of a sinless life, He fulfilled the law for all men. By dying on the cross, He took our place, made atonement for all sin and buried our life of failure in the tomb. By the power of His resurrection, He destroyed death, opened Paradise and shut the gates of hell for every believer. Hear Paul proclaim:

"Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over His own head on the cross. And then, having drawn the sting of all the powers ranged against us, He exposed them, shattered, empty and defeated, in His final glorious triumphant act." Col. 2:14, 15, Phillips.

The gospel is the good news of what God has done outside of us in the person of Christ. It is the proclamation of a historic, objective reality. It is not about our experience but about Christ's experience. This was the central affirmation of the apostles.

The New Testament message of justification by Christ's *imputed* righteousness means that we are accepted by a life lived and a work done outside of ourselves. The focus is not internal but external. It is Christ's experience that is of supreme importance to us. "By His knowledge [His experience of bitter suffering and death] shall My righteous Servant justify many." Isa. 53:11. "We shall be saved by His life." "By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." Rom. 5:10, 19. All that is necessary for our acceptance and fellowship with God has been done. There is no need to chase after some elusive, mystical experience to give me status with God, with my fellowsofwith myself. Faith looks up and says, "Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, His suffering and dying; mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, and suffered, and died as He did."—Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), Vol. XXXI, p. 297. Does this do away with Christian experience?



To learn that my acceptance with God is grounded on something entirely outside my own experience, brings the joy of sheer freedom. When faith grasps that my righteousness, security and real life are outside and above my own poor experience, I am liberated from all this internal groveling. Christ, my Representative, is accepted at the right hand of God; my Substitute is pleasing to God; His righteousness satisfies justice. By faith I am accepted, pleasing and righteous before God "in the Beloved" (Eph.1:6).

**Q. Then you are not against Christian enthusiasm?**

**Ed.** Many stuffy, old churches need the youthful enthusiasm of people like the Campus Crusaders. But we need to be careful that our enthusiasm is in the objective gospel rather than in our own subjective experience.

Mary Magdalene was certainly enthusiastic when she ran to the disciples with the news of her risen Lord. But she didn't regale them with details of how she felt. Peter did not bore his listeners on the Day of Pentecost with a dry, theological discourse, nor did he tell them about his exciting experience of being filled with the Spirit.

I read in a recent paper, "The kids are very excited about what Jesus is doing in their lives." I met one of them—a fine, nineteen-year-old co-ed. Asked to tell what she was so enthusiastic about, she said, "I am excited about what Jesus is doing in my life. It is just like being in love. At times I am so excited I could lie down on the ground and scream." Six months later she added this: "I have not yet recovered from the awful after-depression of it."

If a ship keeps its anchor within its own bosom, it will be tossed to and fro by every wind. To avoid

being driven onto the rocks, it must cast the anchor to something outside of itself.

There are two aspects of God's work—His work *for us* and His work *in us*. Faith must be grounded on His work *for us*. That is the gospel. It is the only thing big enough for security. Ten thousand ecstatic experiences won't save us or give us any status with God. The essence of God's work within us is to teach us to rely wholly on His work without us.

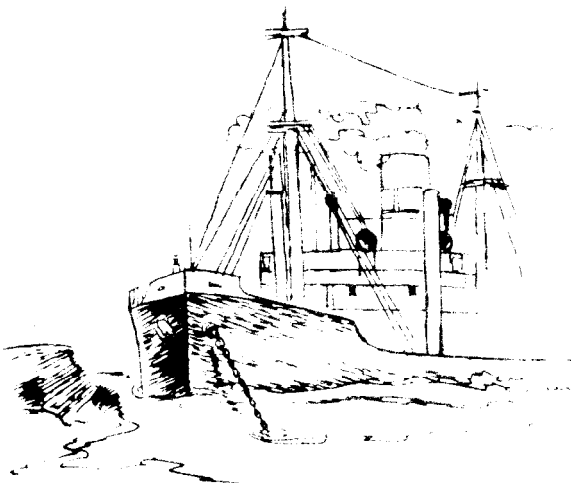
Paul sent Timothy to discover the state of the church in Thessalonica. "I sent to know your faith," he wrote in his letter to the church (1 Thess. 3:5). When we ask one another, "How is your experience?" we tend to direct our attention to the ups and downs of human experience. When we ask, "How is your faith?" we direct attention to the changeless reality of God's finished work in Jesus Christ.

**Q. Is it a mistake to look for a satisfying experience of inner fulfillment?**

**Ed. Yes,** it is a terrible mistake! Yet the search for inner fulfillment is the fundamental motif of most evangelical revivalism. "Accept Christ into your heart and experience the satisfaction of a fulfilled life," is the Campus Crusade sales pitch. There are going to be a lot of frustrated people about soon. History has furnished us with two great experiments in seeking internal fulfillment. First, the medieval church demonstrated the results of trying to find fulfillment in an internal experience. (In classical theology this was called *gratia infusa*.) The result was some of the greatest ignorance, superstition and religious corruption that the world has ever seen. Second, the Renaissance has demonstrated the results of trying to find fulfillment in humanism, rationalism, and material and scientific idealism. The age in which man has reached the moon is the most bewildered, disillusioned and frustrated age in civilized history.

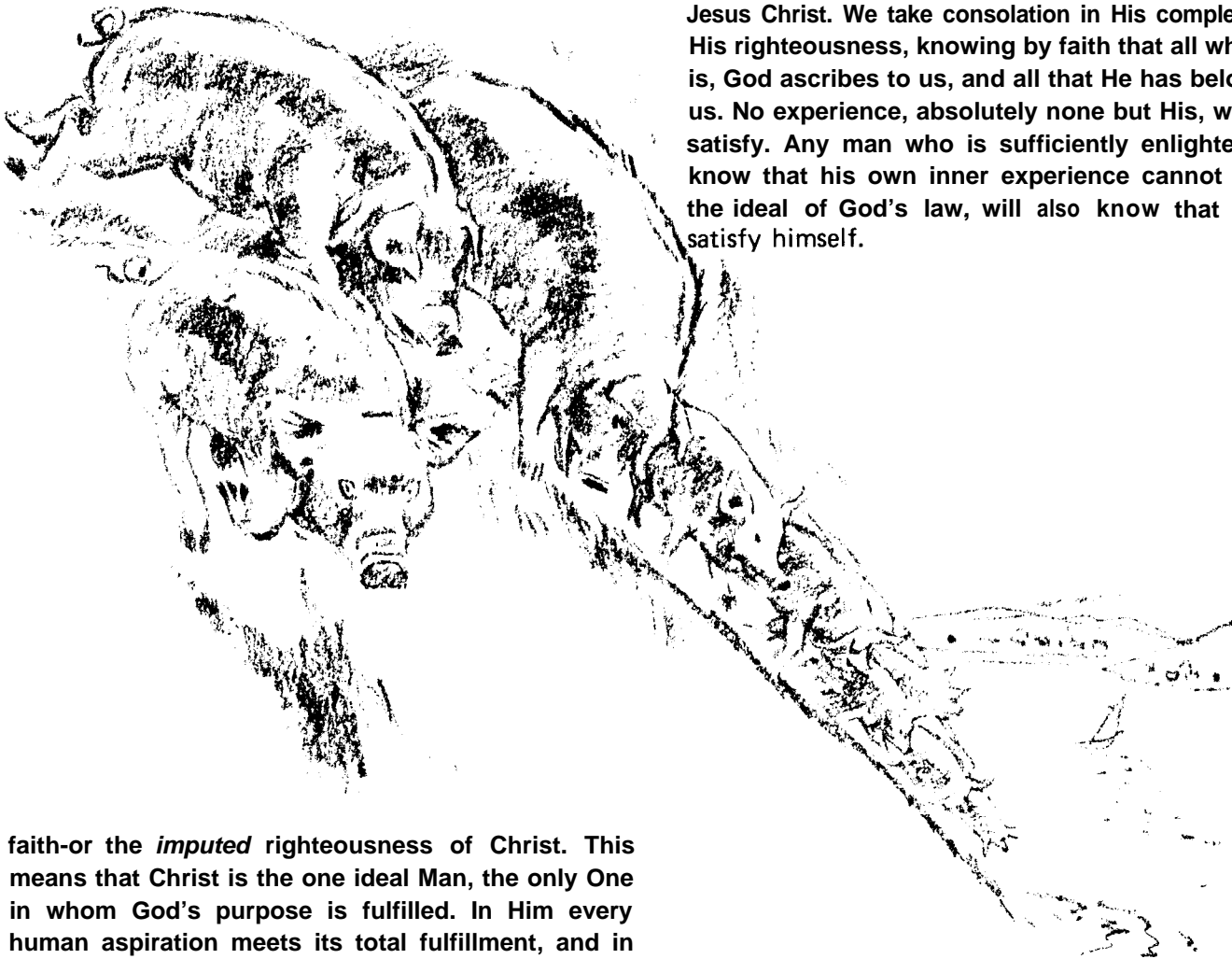
Shall we now return to the medieval principle of seeking fulfillment and satisfaction in internal, spiritual experience? This is where popular revivalism is now headed.

The great Reformation of the sixteenth century grew out of an awakening to the fact that life cannot be fulfilled within the historical process—with or without grace. This is the very substance of what the Reformers discovered in the doctrine of *original sin*. Human nature is radically corrupt, and this corrupt nature remains even in Christians until they die. "Every good work of the saints while pilgrims in this world is sin," declared Luther when writing against Latomus



from the Wartburg—meaning that because of the taint of human imperfection, no saint could satisfy the demands of God's law. Even the good deeds of holy prophets are filthy rags when compared with the righteousness which the law demands (Isa. 64:6). "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). Such was the confession of a Spirit-filled apostle. All continue to fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23), and not even the best saint at his best state with his best deed, can satisfy the righteousness demanded by God's law. So the fact of *original sin* means that no man can experience fulfillment within the historical process.

The Reformers found the solution to the human dilemma in the Pauline doctrine of righteousness by



faith—or the *imputed* righteousness of Christ. This means that Christ is the one ideal Man, the only One in whom God's purpose is fulfilled. In Him every human aspiration meets its total fulfillment, and in Him the law finds entire satisfaction. In Him human nature is perfected, accepted and restored to fellowship at the right hand of God. He is our Man, His humanity is ours, and His righteousness is ours. Instead of trying to find fulfillment in ourselves, faith finds it outside of ourselves in the person of Christ. Says the apostle Paul, "Your own completeness is only

realized in Him." Col. 2:10, Phillips.

Within the historical process, this fulfillment is ours only by faith, never by empirical reality until Christ shall come again. In the present gift of the Holy Spirit, we have but the down payment and first fruits of that inheritance (Eph. 1: 13, 14; Rom. 8:23); and instead of gloating in smug satisfaction about the enjoyment of spiritual fulfillment, "we ... groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

Again we say, the principle of imputed righteousness teaches us that we can find no internal fulfillment within the historical process. Sin dwells yet in the best of saints (Eccl. 7:20; 1 John 1:8). Within there still remain things to perplex, discourage and frustrate. Our fulfillment is outside of ourselves in the person of Jesus Christ. We take consolation in His completeness, His righteousness, knowing by faith that all which He is, God ascribes to us, and all that He has belongs to us. No experience, absolutely none but His, will ever satisfy. Any man who is sufficiently enlightened to know that his own inner experience cannot satisfy the ideal of God's law, will also know that it can't satisfy himself.

It is a sad spectacle to see this mad, Gadarene stampede after a satisfying inner experience. Yet crusaders and revivalists tell people that they can have it, deluded enthusiasts proclaim that they have attained it, and books spell out secret formulas about how to get it. It is sheer "evangelical" Romanism.

In fact, some Roman Catholic scholars are very critical (and rightly so) of the extreme subjectivism manifested by Protestant revivalism.

**Q.** Didn't Jesus tell us that He came to give us an abundant life?

**Ed.** Yes, it is a life filled with all the fulness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9) and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). That life is laid up for us at the right hand of God, and we are directed to wait for Christ's coming for the empirical possession of it (Col. 3: 1-4). Meanwhile, it is ours by faith alone; and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, we now enjoy only the "firstfruits," or down payment, of it (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14).

Our complaint against the popular "deeper-life" movement is not that it makes this "abundant life" too wonderful. It does not present it as wonderful enough. It reduces it to the imperfect state of Christian experience here below, where "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5: 17).

Those who reduce the "abundant life" to the life here and now, have no true perspective of the hope of Christ's coming. They are like a bride who wants to have her honeymoon without the personal presence of the bridegroom. The New Testament focuses on two great events-the first coming of Christ and His return in glory. Faith is directed to the finished work of His first advent and possesses that abundant life by faith alone. Hope is directed to the second advent,

"when Christ, who is our life, shall appear" and bestow that life upon us by empirical reality. If we try to bring the "not yet" into the "now," we will have a very poor substitute for the real thing-as well as lose the eschatological tension of the New Testament message.

Besides looking to the wrong life, this "radiant Christian experience" mentality gives a romanticized coloring to Christian sanctification. Bible sanctification is not a mystical, spiritual rapture. It is not a happy flight of feeling. It is not taking off on some mystical, spiritual trip. Bible sanctification means trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is consistently obeying every word from the mouth of God and steadfastly doing His will. In other words, it is not measured by the state of religious feelings and is quite different from some kind of spiritual euphoria. True Christian experience does not always appear to be a spectacular adventure. But to fusslessly trust God and keep His commandments is worth more than all the noise of Christendom.

**Q.** On what basis do you say that most of today's evangelical revivalism is more akin to Romanism than to the Reformation?

**Ed.** The main difference between the Reformers and Rome was a matter of emphasis. The Reformation doctrine of justification by an *imputed* righteousness meant that the sinner's faith was directed to a work of grace outside of himself. The fundamental emphasis





was on the objective reality of Christ's experience on the sinner's behalf. The Roman doctrine of justification by an *infused* righteousness meant that the sinner's attention was directed to an inward work of grace. The fundamental emphasis was on the subjective experience of Christ's indwelling in the heart.

Although most Protestant revivalism may give lip acknowledgment to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, the fundamental motif is subjective experientialism. It is therefore more in harmony with the non-Reformation tradition.

Groups like Campus Crusade will find that they are more at home working in common cause with Roman Catholics than with Protestants who return to the objective Reformation emphasis of law and gospel. In fact, this is already beginning to be clearly demonstrated.

**Q.** We would like to see a true revival. In what direction should we move?

**Ed.** 1. In order to steer clear of shallow, sentimental revivalism, we need a strong, virile emphasis on law and gospel. The righteous demands of God's law need to be set forth in such a way that men may start crying out, "How can I be just in the sight of God?" rather than asking, "How can I escape the boredom of life and have a bundle of fun?" If the gospel is not preached in the context of God's judgment (Rev. 14:6, 7) and the deep conviction of the sinfulness of sin, it will have no real power to move people from death to life.

2. The doctrine of justification by an *imputed* righteousness must be moved to the center of attention (see article, "The Centrality of Justification by an Imputed Righteousness," this issue). This will prevent the language of Christian experience from becoming too loud and confident.

3. Campus Crusade should abandon its "second blessing" theology, evidenced in its doctrine of "carnal Christians" and "Spirit-filled Christians" as well as its liberal quoting from "holiness" authors in its literature. Its doctrine of sanctification completely swallows up justification just as Pharaoh's lean cattle swallowed up his fat ones. Campus Crusade doctrine is decidedly holiness-Pentecostal, although it eschews speaking in tongues. This explains why many in the movement keep gravitating into Pentecostalism.

4. The doctrine of "Christ in you" needs to be delivered from serious distortion by placing the greatest emphasis where the New Testament places it-on God's work *in Christ* and the believer's position *in Christ*.

5. The New Testament has far more to say about Christ's intercession in heaven than His indwelling in the heart. Christ will never be truly on the throne of the heart until faith sees Him exalted on the throne at the right hand of God.

If the revival is based solidly on the New Testament, it can end in glorious fulfillment at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, it will lead millions to unite in fulfilling Revelation 13:13, 14. Protestantism is clearly headed for the crisis.