

The
Vineyard's Response to
The Briefing

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The April 24, 1990 (45/46) issue of *The Briefing*, a magazine published by St. Matthias Anglican Church in Sydney, Australia, examined the ministry of John Wimber and the Vineyard. Dr. Jack Deere's analysis of their claims reveals serious misrepresentations, false reporting, and erroneous methodology.

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Background to this Response

In my 26 year history as a born again Christian I can not remember any Christian brother or sister wishing that I would be accursed from Christ and go to hell. Yet recently some brothers in Christ from Sydney, Australia, have publicly expressed their desire in print that a number of other Christians who belong to the Vineyard Christian Fellowship and I would spend eternity in hell. One of these brothers suggested that his desire for us to go to hell was the kindest thing he could say about us. He wrote,

At this point I am trying desperately to think of something charitable to say about this conference. However, nothing seems to come to mind. It is hard to find anything commendable about a group that abuses the Word of God the way that this group does. And as for their gospel (if they ever work out what it is), perhaps the apostle Paul put it best, "As we have said before, so now I say again. If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed." [The Briefing 45-46 (1990:16)]

Yet every speaker at the conference in question believes that the only way to God is through the substitutionary atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that man is justi-

fied by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the gospel we believe in and this is the gospel that we preach. However, the man mentioned above, presumably with the permission and agreement of his editors, has expressed his desire for us to be accursed that is, delivered up to the judicial wrath of God.* The following is our reply to these men and to the report that they have circulated concerning a number of speakers at a Vineyard conference.

In March of 1990, Vineyard Ministries International held a four-day conference in Sydney, Australia, at the invitation of a large committee of evangelical pastors and leaders representing various denominations and Christian organizations of Sydney. Be-

fore coming to Australia, John Wimber was told that there were a few people attending the conference who were hostile to the Vineyard movement and opposed to his coming. Wimber was told that representatives from this group would like to meet with him. He was under the impression that the purpose of this meeting would be to discuss our theological differences and to clear up any misunderstandings of our beliefs. The day before the conference John Wimber, Paul Cain, Dan Armstrong and I met with three men from the evangelical community in Sydney. These men were Phillip Jensen, John Woodhouse and David Cook.

This meeting and the entire conference were later evaluated in a double issue of a periodical called *The Briefing*, published by Phillip Jensen, pastor of St. Matthias Anglican Church in Sydney, Australia. This is our response to that edition of *The Briefing*, entitled "John Wimber: Friend or Foe" (45-46: April 24, 1990). The articles in that edition seriously misrepresented the views of John Wimber, me, and others teaching at the conference.

The reader may wonder why we have waited almost two years to reply to the misrepresentations contained in *The Briefing*.

Before *The Briefing* it had been John Wimber's policy not to reply to criticism that he regards as significantly unfair and/or inaccurate. Some have understood this policy to mean that Wimber is closed to criticism. Nothing could be further from the truth. He

receives criticism both from within the Vineyard Christian Fellowship movement and from without. However he does not want to spend a significant amount of time defending himself and engaging in unprofitable arguments with Christian brothers and sisters.

Initially Wimber intended to follow this policy in regarding *The Briefing*. However, the criticism contained in *The Briefing* is so unfair and inaccurate and so many people in the body of Christ, including pastors and members of the Christian academic community, have asked us to reply to these charges that at last Wimber felt we were obligated to reply to them.[†]

In saying that our views and teachings were misrepresented, I accuse neither Phillip

Jensen nor the other writers in *The Briefing* of deliberately misrepresenting the truth or of being incompetent. I do not know them well enough to evaluate their moral character or their theological competence. I believe that the source of their misrepresentations

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may be found in their prejudice toward the Vineyard and its teachings. Phillip Jensen displayed this prejudice at the beginning of our meeting. We thought that we were meeting with Mr. Jensen to discuss our differences and clear up possible misunderstandings. However, this was not the case.

At the beginning of the meeting, after introductions, Jensen said to Wimber "We do not want you here. We would like you to go back home." It seemed Jensen had already concluded, without ever having talked to John Wimber, that Wimber was a deceived person and could only have a negative influence on the Christian community in Australia. We were beginning to wonder if Jensen's purpose for this meeting was to gather as much negative information as possible to write the subsequent negative evaluation.

When a man attempts to weigh the truthfulness of an idea, he is influenced by what he needs to see, what he wants to see, and what he expects to see. When one researches data with not only his own bias, but also with prejudice against that data, it will affect his perceptions and interpretations of that data. This would seem to account for the misrepresentations and the selective use of data that occur in *The Briefing* regarding both our teaching and conversations with the writers.

For example, once during a lecture at Dallas Seminary, I mentioned that Galatians 4:4 was not a good proof text for the virgin birth of Jesus. Immediately a student raised his hand and said, "Since you don't believe the virgin birth is important...." I said to the student, "I did not say the virgin birth was not important. I said you could not use Galatians 4:4 as a proof text for it...." If the student had not been corrected he might have left the class and begun to tell people that Professor Deere does not think that the virgin birth is important. I violated one of his

prejudices in his interpretation of the New Testament and this caused him to hear me say something completely different from what I said. We observed the same kind of response with the authors of *The Briefing* on numerous occasions in Sydney.

* See Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1:354) for meaning of "accursed."

† For more information about how John Wimber responds to criticism, read Vineyard Position Paper #1, "Why I Respond to Criticism" by John Wimber.

Wimber's Views Misrepresented

The following are some examples of how John Wimber's views or practices were seriously misrepresented in *The Briefing*. Jensen writes,

We asked about the claims of his books and his previous teaching that the powerlessness of evangelicals lay in their failure to pray for and claim the Signs and Wonders of the Kingdom seen in Jesus and the Apostles. He replied that thanks to the advice of Jack Deere he had come to understand that the current miracles fit into the New Testament not at the point of Jesus and the Apostles and the coming of the Kingdom, but in I Cor. 12-14 and the gifts of healing. This change of mind seriously compromises the stance of the previous Signs and Wonders conferences, Vineyard Ministries and John Wimber's books. (p. 4)

In essence, Jensen is claiming that John Wimber has changed his mind on a foundational point of his theology and that this change of mind invalidates the teaching given at prior Vineyard conferences and in Wimber's books. Mr. Jensen has misunderstood what Wimber was attempting to explain in answering the question put to him. John Wimber still believes that much of the powerlessness in the church today is due to a failure to understand and appropriate the power of the kingdom that Jesus inaugurated. This failure often manifests in unbelief that refuses to pray for miracles of char-

acter transformations as well as physical healings.

Wimber was trying to explain to the men that he himself did not claim to move in the power of Jesus and the apostles, and that he now recognizes that there is a difference between the ministry of the apostles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given to the whole church. The apostles and a few others walked in an extraordinary realm of power in the Holy Spirit. The quantity, quality, and consistency of miracles in their ministries, according to the New Testament picture, is on a different level than the giftings given to the whole church in the first century. John was trying to explain that he no longer was teaching that the whole church could move in the same quality of miraculous ministry that Jesus and the apostles moved in. However, the whole church could move in the gifts of the Spirit. If the church were to do that, much of the powerlessness and deadness in the church would be remedied. This change of mind, therefore, was not about the cause of the powerlessness of the church today, but rather about the precise way in which that powerlessness is to be remedied. This is

not a change of mind that compromises the conferences or Wimber's books.

A second misrepresentation concerns the pastoral consequences of failures in healings. Jensen notes correctly that Wimber said "that he does not promise healing for everyone or blame lack of faith as the sole reason for lack of healing" (p. 5). He responded to Wimber's statement by saying,

However, when asked if he would be open with inquirers and tell them of the *small probability of healing* (emphasis mine), he declined. He wants to encourage people to put their faith in God and call upon him for healing. He wants people to know that God can heal and wants to heal and therefore to ask expectantly. He paralleled this to salvation and forgiveness. He said that we do not say to people that they only have a chance of being saved. We say that God can save and wants to save and so we encourage people to put their faith in God and call for forgiveness. Such confusion of categories is appalling.

Like a *politician* (emphasis mine), John Wimber is not promising unequivocally that each person will be healed. But it would seem that his mixture of generaliza-

tion and over-confidence results in all but the wary being misled. (p. 5)

This is a serious misrepresentation of what Wimber believes about the possibility of healing. He never at any time during that discussion stated that he believes that only a small number of people are healed, nor does he believe this. Jensen is using the phrase, "the small probability of healing" to put words in Wimber's mouth, words which lead the reader to believe that Wimber views healing as a rare thing. Jensen's use of the phrase "he declined" and "like a politician" leads the reader to believe that Wimber believes one thing in private but says another in public. Here the charge goes beyond theological inaccuracy to an attack on Wimber's character.

It is certainly true that not everyone who responds to a word of knowledge for the healing of a particular physical condition will be healed. But to stress this before one prays for these people would be pastorally irresponsible. How conducive to faith would it be to stress before you pray for someone that God does not heal all the people who ask for healing?

Wimber correctly paralleled healing with the offer of salvation. Clearly, God de-

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sires to heal. His Son did it; the apostles did it; he gave gifts of healing to the church; and he commands his church to pray for their sick (James 5:14-16). Similarly, it is God's desire to save all men (1 Tim. 2:4 & 2 Peter 3:9). Yet God does not save all men. How effective would it be, or how pastorally responsible would it be, to say to an unbeliever, "Even though God desires to save all men, he does not save all men. Perhaps only a relative few out of the whole history of mankind will ever be saved. And furthermore it is only the elect that will be saved. And it may be impossible for you to tell whether you are a member of the elect or not until you die." In the Reformed tradition, these would be considered true theological statements, but I do not know anyone who would recommend that we evangelize in such a fashion. Later in the report another one of the writers, Andrew Shead, seems to approve of this kind of parallel when discussing why all are not healed. He writes, "Interestingly, this is an exact parallel to the Bible's teaching on God's will that all be saved..." (p. 8).

A third misrepresentation concerns Wimber's book *Power Evangelism*. Jensen claims that Wimber

explained that his book was not written by him, but came from tapes and notes of his seminars. He had not read the manuscript in detail or critically before its publication... The book is wrong and 'needs re-writing' and he was 'wrong' in his address at Canberra, but somehow this is not to be taken as a serious problem. (p. 5)

It is simply not true that John Wimber has changed his mind on cardinal points of his theology.

What Wimber was admitting to Phillip Jensen and the other men was that several things had gotten into his book that he would like to have changed. Part of the reason for this was that he had had a conflict between his own heavy conference schedule and his publisher's deadline for the final draft. Due to an excessively full schedule during this time he did not read the final drafts as closely as he would have liked. There were perhaps five or six details he would like to have changed.

He did not say that he had not critically read the manuscript before its publication, but rather that he had not given the final draft the close scrutiny that he wished he could have. He never made the unequivocal statement that "the book is wrong." He did say that he would like to rewrite the book and correct some of the details and perhaps even a major point or two. (The book has now been revised and was released in April of 1992 in Great Britain by Hodder &

Stoughton.) However, Jensen's summary of that conversation led the reader to believe that John, in that discussion, repudiated the basic tenets of his book if not the whole book.

Jensen concludes this article by saying,

John Wimber has changed his mind on cardinal points of his teaching, yet he will not come clean publicly and denounce his former ideas. Rather, he continues to express himself in a confusing mixture of old errors and new and contradictory insights. The truth that he does teach only further confuses Christian people into following his thoughtless theology. (p. 6)

It is simply not true that John Wimber has changed his mind on cardinal points of his theology. His most serious regret concerning his book *Power Evangelism* is that he wrote about what he terms “programmatically evangelism” in such a way as to make people think that he disparages that form of evangelism. He has corrected this in the new edition of *Power Evangelism*. Neither this correction, nor his acceptance of a distinction between the apostolic ministry of signs and wonders and the gifts of the Spirit given to the whole church, can be used to demonstrate a change of mind on cardinal points of his teaching — a change which Jensen falsely suggests that Wimber insists on concealing from his audience.

However, Jensen leads the reader to believe that Wimber is not only an inept person (that is, one who produces “thoughtless theology”), but also a dishonest person who refuses to say publicly what he really believes, and therefore continues to deceive his audiences. One of the things that John Wimber has been praised for around the world is his transparency, his seemingly limitless ability to admit his mistakes both to private audiences and to thousands while standing on a stage. This was one of the more striking of *The Briefing’s* misrepresentations of John Wimber.

A common theme of the authors, closely related to the previous one, is that Wimber claims to believe something that his practice nullifies. Mark Thompson writes that

John Wimber told pastors at a conference: “I identify as a ‘conservative’ evangelical in my theology. I identify as something other than that in my practice.” For John Wimber, to a greater or lesser extent, theology is to be distinguished from practice. That ought to ring alarm bells as soon as we hear it. Again and again in the New Testament we are called on to live out what we believe. (pp. 11-12)

Thompson interpreted this to mean something entirely different from what John intended. He meant that Wimber holds the same theology as that group of people known as conservative evangelicals: that is, he believes in the inerrancy of the Bible and, therefore, its authority and infallibility; the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus; the deity of the Lord Jesus; the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus; the bodily resurrection; the bodily return of the Lord Jesus, the Trinity, justification by faith, etc. However, in his practice, he both does things and allows things to happen in meetings that many people who call themselves conservative evangelicals would not allow or do.

For example, he will stand on a stage and ask for the Lord to give him words of knowledge about people the Lord may want to heal in that meeting. He also recognizes that sometimes the Spirit’s presence may be manifest by people falling to the ground or trembling in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Many conservative evangelicals would find these practices repulsive and ridicule them as unbiblical.

Wimber permits these practices when he believes that they are of God and because he can demonstrate that these practices have biblical warrant. What he was saying to the pastors on that day was that he does not hold to a Pentecostal theology (e.g., tongues are the evidence of the baptism of the Spirit, the atonement guarantees all Christians healing in this life if they have faith, etc.), but he recognizes that certain experiences that have been part of the Pentecostal tradition are biblical and from the Lord. That is his reason for accepting the practices.

However, the way in which Wimber is quoted here leads the reader to believe that theology is unimportant to him and that the Bible is unimportant in determining practice. Nothing could be further from the

truth. He rejects much of the current charismatic practice and teaching on spiritual warfare against territorial spirits because he believes that it cannot be demonstrated in the Bible. Wimber is the first to admit that he is certainly no theologian, but that fact has not stopped him from attempting to ground all of his practices squarely on the word of God.

More than one author in this report portrayed Wimber as being able to manipulate or direct the work of the Holy Spirit. Mark Thompson wrote that “while on the stage John Wimber *demanded* (emphasis mine) that the Spirit come” (p. 12). Philip Selden writes

the manifestations of the Spirit seem to be less in evidence than in reports of previous conferences, but there were still those who fell over, cried, screamed, laughed, appeared hysterical, etc. The spectacle was not at all edifying, and at times appeared to have been manipulated - by indicating what to expect and encouraging more to join in. John Wimber’s raised voice in the midst of his otherwise quiet prayer – harsh and raucous – ‘let it come, I command release’ was almost frightening.” (p. 20)

Neither I nor anyone else who knows John Wimber has ever known him to “demand” or “command” anything from the Holy Spirit.

He will say to the people, “Let the Holy Spirit come,” but he never commands the Holy Spirit. However, it seems that Dr. Sel-

den, and perhaps some of the other writers, were even more distressed over the “un-edifying spectacle” of people falling over, crying, screaming, laughing, etc. Selden says that this “was not at all edifying.” This is not an uncommon response among those who have never before acknowledged that these kinds of manifestations may be the work of the Holy Spirit. The first time I saw anything like this I felt a mild revulsion. What I did not know then was how common these manifestations were both in the Scripture and in revival history during the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

These manifestations occurred in the most unlikely settings. For example, who would have ever thought that these kinds of things would have happened in a staid New England setting in the late 1730s and early 1740s? Yet this is exactly what Jonathan Edwards records happened during his meetings. In describing one of the meetings Edwards

writes

...the affection was quickly propagated throughout the room; many of the young people and children that were professors appeared to be overcome with the sense of the greatness and glory of divine things, and with admiration, love, joy, and praise, and compassion to others that looked upon themselves as in a state of nature; and many others at the same time were overcome with distress about their sinful and miserable state and condition; so that the whole room was full of nothing but *outcries, faintings, and the like.* (emphasis mine)

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(Jonathan Edwards, "An Account of the Revival of Religion on North Hampton in 1740-42, as Communicated in a Letter to a Minister of Boston," in *Jonathan Edwards on Revival* [Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1984] p. 150)

Edwards describes a meeting of young people in his home in the following way,

...many seemed to be very greatly and most agreeably affected with those views, which excited humility, self-condemnation, self-abhorrence, love, and joy. *Many fainted under these affections.* (emphasis mine) (ibid., p. 151)

During that fall Edwards writes that,

It was a very frequent thing to see a house full of outcries, faintings, convulsions, and such like, both with distress and also with admiration and joy.... it was pretty often so, that there were some that were so affected, and their bodies so overcome, that they could not go home, but were obliged to stay all night where they were. (ibid.)

On another occasion Edwards describes the ministry of Mr. Buell who

continued here a fortnight or three weeks after I returned: there being still great appearances attending his labors; many in their religious affections being raised far beyond what they had ever been before; *and there were some instances of persons lying in a sort of trance, remaining perhaps for a whole twenty-four hours motionless* (emphasis mine), and with their senses locked up; but in the meantime under strong imaginations, as though they went to heaven and had there a vision of glorious and delightful objects. But when the people were raised to this height, Satan took the advantage and his interposition, in many instances, soon became very apparent: and a great deal of caution and pains were found to keep the people, many of them, from running wild. (ibid., pp. 153-54)

These kinds of manifestations caused a number of conservative Christian ministers

to criticize Jonathan Edwards and these meetings as works of the flesh or of the devil. These criticisms prompted Edwards to write the classic essay, "The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God." In this essay, Edwards sets forth the criteria for determining what is a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. He asked what can be concluded from these bodily manifestations during a meeting. In essence his answer was that nothing can be concluded from the manifestations themselves. He writes,

A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, tremblings, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength. The influence persons are under is not to be judged of one way or other by such effects on the body; and the reason is because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule. ("The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God," in *Jonathan Edwards on Revival*, p. 91)

In other words, the manifestations themselves prove nothing. The manifestations may be of God; they may be of the devil; or they may be the product of human nature.

Edwards holds to this conclusion even when the people who are "wrought upon" can be shown to be guilty of error and sin in some instances. He argues,

It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God that many who seem to be the subjects of it are guilty of great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct. We are to consider that the end for which God pours out His Spirit is to make men holy and not to make them politicians. It is no wonder that in a mixed multitude of all sorts — wise and unwise, young and old, of weak and strong natural abilities, under strong impressions of mind — there are many who behave themselves imprudently...

We have a remarkable instance in the New Testament of a people that partook largely of the great effusion of the Spirit in the apostles' days, among whom there nevertheless abounded imprudences and great irregularities; viz., the church at Corinth. There is scarcely any church more celebrated in the New Testament for being blessed with large measures of the Spirit of God, both in his ordinary influences, and convincing and converting sinners, and also in his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; yet what manifold imprudences, great and sinful irregularities, and strange confusion did they run into at the Lord's Supper, and in the exercise of church discipline...

And if we see great imprudences, and even sinful irregularities, in some who are great instruments to carry on the work, it will not prove it not to be the work of God. The apostle Peter himself, who was a great, eminently holy, and inspired apostle — and one of the chief instruments of setting up the Christian church in the world — when he was actually engaged in this work, was guilty of a great and sinful error in his conduct; of which the apostle Paul speaks, Galatians 2:11-13, ...if a great pillar of the Christian church — one of the chief of those who are the very foundations on which, next to Christ, the whole church is said to be built — was guilty of such an irregularity; is it any wonder if other lesser instruments, who have not had the extraordinary conduct of the divine spirit he had, should be guilty of many irregularities? (ibid., pp. 101-102)

Some failed to see these meetings as a work of the Spirit of God because they said that God is a God of order, not of confusion, and that these meetings were filled with confusion. Edwards replied to this by saying,

But if God is pleased to convince the consciences of persons, so that they cannot avoid great outward manifestations, even to interrupting and breaking off those public means they were attending, I do not think this is confusion or an unhappy in-

terruption, any more than if a company should meet on the field to pray for rain, and should be broken off from their exercise by a plentiful shower. Would to God that all the public assemblies in the land were broken off from their public exercises with such confusion as this the next Sabbath day! We need not be sorry for breaking the order of means, by obtaining the end to which that order is directed. He who is going to fetch a treasure need not be sorry that he is stopped by meeting the treasure in the midst of his journey. (ibid., p. 127)

In other words, Edwards is saying that God may use chaotic means to cause the result of order. Watching a person writhing on the floor while he is being delivered of a demon may not appear very orderly to an audience. However, if the person is truly delivered of that demon, the result will be the establishing of God's order in that person's life.

Edwards saw just this very thing on a number of occasions in his meetings. He wrote,

There have been some instances very much like those (Mark 1:26, 9:26) of whom we read that "when the devil had cried out with a loud voice, and rent them sore, he came out of them." And probably those instances were designed for a type of such things as these. Some have several turns of great agonies, before they are delivered; and others have been in such distress, which has passed off, and no deliverance at all has followed. (ibid., p. 126)

Note that Edwards saw both effective demonic deliverances and then what appeared to be demonic struggles without seeing the person delivered.

Thus, according to Edwards, we are to make no judgment about the nature of the work based on bodily manifestations, even when these manifestations occur among a people who were guilty of "imprudences" or "even sinful irregularities" and in meet-

ings with a significant amount of confusion. All of these things occurred in New Testament times in meetings and churches that were part of a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Edwards concluded that when the Scriptures do not speak directly to a particular issue, the only test that is truly effective to determine whether a work is a product of the Holy Spirit or not, is whether that work manifests the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And the two most important things to look for in this regard are love and humility (ibid., p. 18).

This is the test that Jesus gave us to discern between true and false prophetic ministry:

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (Matt. 7:16-18)

In other words, were one to see a man who was a drunkard, a wife beater and a God hater shrieking at the top of his voice and then falling down motionless for twenty-four hours during a religious meeting; then were that man to arise never again to drink and never again to hit his wife, but rather to love her as Christ loved the church and to love God and his word, we should conclude that this is a work of the Holy Spirit. Neither the devil nor the flesh produces love for God, love for one's family and freedom from addictions.

Thus, when Selden says, "The spectacle was not at all edifying," the question is really "Edifying to whom?" Edifying to spectators who have never seen such things? Or edifying to people who are being delivered and healed by a work of the Spirit of God? Without a sharply trained gift of discernment, a person could only tell in the

aftermath, by observing the fruit, whether the work was edifying or not.

Misrepresentation Of Jack Deere's Teaching And Views

One of the most troubling distortions in *The Briefing* is Graham Banister's report of a conversation with me on Friday morning. Banister had apparently been assigned to my seminar. It was regrettable that he came to these meetings not only prejudiced against them, but also exhibiting a belligerence and rudeness that was even noticed by the participants of the seminar. In private, after a seminar, I mentioned his rude behavior to him and asked, "Couldn't you tell that the people in the workshop were angry with you for your rudeness?" He replied, "Sure, but that's because they agree with you."

On Friday morning I had just finished giving a talk in one of the plenary sessions and at 11 o'clock I stepped out of the auditorium for a moment. Mr. Banister approached me and asked for an interview. I declined because by now it seemed to me that no productive interchange would come out of an interview with him and because I literally did not have the time. However, he would not take "no" for an answer and began to ask me about the gospel. I then told him that I would speak briefly with him, but that my remarks would be off the re-

cord. I said this because, based on his hostile attitude, I feared that he was gathering information against the Vineyard, and that anything I said would be misinterpreted and used against us later. He agreed to my conditions and said, "OK, off the record."

Banister did not keep his word to me about these remarks being kept off the record. He did exactly what I had hoped he would not do: he misunderstood my remarks, fabricated other remarks, and left out critical comments, so that the whole

conversation — as it is reported — falls drastically short of the truth.

At the outset of our conversation I stated explicitly to Mr. Banister my belief that the gospel that saves a person is contained in passages like 1 Corinthians 15:14. I explained to him my belief that the gospel is that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, was buried and was raised the third day according to the Scriptures. I added that a statement of justification by faith alone would make a complete presentation of the gospel.

Moving to a slightly different issue, I told him that I had not made up my mind yet on the gospel of the kingdom preached by Jesus in the early sections of the Gospels. For instance, in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 we are told that Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of diseases. I said that I am not prepared to define what Jesus meant by the gospel of the kingdom at this point. This “good news” may have included reference

to the kingdom power as evidenced in healing and exorcisms because of its close association with those things in the Gospels. However, I was sure that, at this point, it did not include the message about Jesus’ death and resurrection, since Jesus does not begin to teach his own apostles about his death until Matthew 16:21.

Mr. Banister then showed some exasperation over the fact that I did not know what “the gospel” was. Again I stressed that the gospel that saves a person is Jesus’ sub-

stitutionary atonement and justification by faith in Christ alone. Mr. Banister failed to understand that I was making a distinction between the fully formulated version of the gospel found in the Pauline writings and the form of the gospel of the kingdom preached by Jesus in the early part of His ministry. In retrospect, the reason for Banister’s failure to grasp this distinction is now clear: he was not intent on communicating or understanding my point of view that morning, but rather on gleaning some information from me that he could use against the Vineyard.

Even if Mr. Banister was truly convinced that I had said that I did not know what the gospel was, he could have at least indicated my belief in substitutionary atonement and justification by faith. I repeated these things to him several times during our discussion. However, Banister did not report accurately what I said, but was highly selective, creating the impression that the Vineyard is theologically

Banister did not report accurately what I said, but was highly selective, creating the impression that the Vineyard is theologically unorthodox.

unorthodox.

Because many may have read this report, it is important for me to reaffirm publicly my position on the gospel. On many occasions, both before and after my conversation with Banister, I have clearly stated the contents of the gospel. For example, on December 7, 1988, the Anaheim Vineyard Christian Fellowship tape recorded a training session for several hundred of our home-group leaders in which I led a discussion revolving around the question “How

do you get to heaven?" On that particular occasion, after discussing various texts of Scripture on substitutionary atonement and justification by faith, I summarized the content of those passages by saying:

Believing in the Lord Jesus means that he is the Son of God, that he died on the cross in our place, but now we stop trusting ourselves and our good works to get us into heaven and trust a person. And that's why I can know I'm going to heaven, because I know whether I'm trusting myself or the Lord Jesus to take me there. I trust in a person who died on the cross in my place, for my sin and I no longer have to pay that penalty. I know I don't have to pay it because He has paid it for me... I can trust him. Why? Because he died on the cross in my place for my sins. They've been atoned for, they've been paid for. So God can still be righteous and forgiving.

This tape can be ordered through the tape ministry at VCF-Anaheim. This tape is not an isolated example. One year after my conversation with Mr. Banister, I gave a sermon on March 3, 1991, at VCF-Anaheim, with the same orthodox explanation of the gospel, substitutionary atonement, and justification by faith. These things are not a matter of debate; they are public record.

Finally, regarding this portion of the article, I find it very disturbing that, on something as controversial as this, the editors of *The Briefing* did not exercise sufficient professional responsibility or Christian cour-

tesy in attempting to verify Banister's statements. No one ever asked me, "Did you really say that you did not know what the gospel was?" No one ever asked my opinion about the record of this conversation.

However, more is at stake here than the simple objectivity of *The Briefing*. Graham Banister's report accuses a church leader of a very serious sin. This accusation is based only on the word of one man. The Scriptures are clear that a charge is not to be brought against an elder on the basis of one

witness: "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (1 Tim. 5:19). Yet this is exactly what *The Briefing* has done. In violation of Scripture, they have brought a serious charge against a church leader on the word of only one witness. And many others have perpetuated this violation of Scripture by distributing this accusation around the world, and all on the basis of a ten-minute

private conversation with one very prejudiced person.

In Jensen's report of his conversation with Wimber, Cain, and myself there was a second significant misrepresentation. Jensen writes, "John's advisor, Jack Deere, assured him and us that he did not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture" (p. 5). As mentioned earlier in this response, we had come prepared to have a theological discussion with these men. However, Jensen began leading the meeting, and immediately the

Graham Banister's report accuses a church leader of a very serious sin and he based his accusation only on the word of one man.

meeting took on the character of an interrogation, with Jensen being the interrogator. He had six questions that he wanted to ask us. The fourth question concerned the sufficiency of Scripture. Paul Cain was asked, "Do you believe in the sufficiency of Scripture?" Paul said, "Yes, I do." Then Wimber was asked, "Do you believe in the sufficiency of Scripture?" "Yes, I do," was John's reply. Then I was asked and, feeling some frustration with the atmosphere of interrogation, I said, "No, I don't." To which one of the men immediately replied, "I didn't think you did." I said, "I really don't believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. I think it would be helpful to have Jesus Christ in residence in your heart in order to benefit personally from the Scripture. Moreover, it wouldn't hurt if you had the Holy Spirit to illuminate the meaning of the text." To which our interrogators replied, "well, so do we." Then I said "What do you mean by the sufficiency of Scripture? I personally don't think the Scriptures are sufficient apart from the ministry of Christ and the Holy Spirit in our lives." There is, of course, a good reason for saying this. Our Lord himself said it to the Bible scholars of his day:

And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life;

and it is these that bear witness of Me and you are unwilling to come to Me that you may have life. (John 5:37-40 NASB)

Mr. Jensen seems to believe that anyone who believes that God can speak today apart from the Bible must not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture.

Jesus was talking to men whose vocation was to study the Scripture, but the Scriptures apart from Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit are of no benefit to anyone. So I asked the question, "When you say 'sufficient' you need to define it. Sufficient for what?" Unfortunately this term was never defined in our discussion. Jensen tacitly acknowledges this part of the discussion when he says, "This topic was more difficult to discuss because of the need for precise terminology to avoid misunderstandings" (p. 5).

I made it very clear at that point that I believed in the infallibility and inerrancy of the word of God. I also said that I believed in words of knowledge and that God can and does give personal words of direction to believers today that cannot be found in the Bible. I do not believe that he gives direction that contradicts the Bible, but direction that cannot be found in the Bible. I might also add that I believe that the canon of Scripture is now closed and that no further writings will be added to the Bible. Any claims to contemporary revelation must be tested by Scripture and are subject to Scripture.

Mr. Jensen seems to believe that anyone who believes that God can speak today apart from the Bible must not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. I strongly disagree with this view. However, for the sake of ar-

gument, let us suppose that, according to Mr. Jensen's theological system, anyone who believes in the word of knowledge cannot believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. Had Jensen wanted to be objective in his reporting he still would have had the Christian and journalistic responsibility to report my full statements on the inerrancy, infallibility, and the plenary inspiration of the word of God. Why would he not report that if he wanted to be totally objective? Again, it appears to us that this omission is further evidence of *The Briefing's* prejudice through selective reporting and obvious misunderstandings of our explanations.

Misrepresentation also occurred in the area of Vineyard teaching on demonology. Apparently, that we in the Vineyard, as well as other orthodox Christians, believe that Christians can be demonized offends the writers of *The Briefing*. Again, they misrepresented the teaching that I gave on this subject in my seminar. For example, Mark Thompson writes,

However, the message of the Bible was repeatedly confused and distorted (emphasis mine) during the week. At times it was made to say what it did not. In Jack Deere's workshop on Friday afternoon the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant was used to establish the points that anger and unforgiveness are entry points for demonization in the Christian. The master hands the unforgiving servant over to the jailers when he discovers what he has done. But where are demons mentioned? Nowhere in the parable – indeed nowhere in the chapter! (pp. 1S11)

Likewise, Graham Banister writes,

The exegesis of the 'Unmerciful Servant' (Matt. 18:21-35) was equally as fanciful. We were told that handing over to the jailers (v. 34) was the Christian being demonized. The first and most obvious problem is that such a conclusion relies heavily on an allegorical interpretation of the parable

where the jailers conveniently become demons. Furthermore, it misses Jesus' intention completely. Jesus is using the parable to teach about God's forgiveness and the consequences of not responding to His forgiveness. That is, He is speaking of God's final judgment on those who fail to forgive rather than somehow demonization of Christians here and now. It would seem that Dr. Deere has problems with his eschatology at this point, translating the end time events to the present. (p. 16)

Again, the reader who did not attend that workshop or have the tapes of that workshop would be seriously misled by these comments. First, I never used the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant to establish that anger and unforgiveness are demonic inroads for the Christian. The texts I use to establish this are Ephesians 4:26-27 and 2 Corinthians 2:9-11. These two texts by themselves do not unequivocally establish that Christians can be demonized – I referred to other texts for that idea. But they do establish that suppressed anger and unforgiveness are tools which Satan can use to gain influence and control in a person's life. This makes perfect theological sense: the kingdom of heaven is founded on forgiveness, even as Jesus said from his cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). There is no forgiveness in hell – only undiluted hatred and violence. When one's behavior and thoughts agree with the realm of hell as over against the kingdom of heaven, one comes under the influence of that sphere.

My primary use of Matthew 18:21-35 was to demonstrate the importance of forgiveness. I suggested that the jailers/torturers in verse 34 may ultimately represent demons that may be allowed to afflict Christians who persist in unforgiveness. I said that, at the very least, they represent things like frustration, anxiety, guilt, condemnation, etc. Mr. Banister called this

fanciful and allegorical. However, parables are a form of allegory. It is appropriate to interpret an allegory allegorically or a parable parabolically. Whoever or whatever the jailers/torturers are in this passage, they are not literal. Since we know that neither Christians nor non-Christians are imprisoned and tortured for unforgiveness, this obviously has a metaphorical or allegorical reference. Any responsible interpreter must decide what the jailers/torturers represent.

Mr. Banister asserts that Matthew “is speaking of God’s final judgment on those who fail to forgive rather than some demonization of Christians here and now” (p. 16), but offers no support from the text for this view, nor support from other texts for the view that the final judgment of unbelievers is addressed here. From verse 1 of chapter 18 the context has been a discussion of the kingdom of heaven, and the parable of the Unforgiving Servant also concerns the kingdom of heaven (see v. 23). Why should we assume that this parable is not meant to teach us the consequences of unforgiveness in this present life? Would anyone want to maintain that there are no consequences to unforgiveness in this life? There is certainly nothing in the text that would cause us to relegate all consequences of unforgiveness to the future.

Mr. Banister alleges that Ephesians 4:26-27 and Matthew 18:21-35 were the primary texts used to establish that Christians could be demonized. These were not the primary texts that I used. Mr. Banister asserts, “Yet a careful study of Ephesians 4:26-27 leaves one wondering how such a doctrine could possibly be established” (p.

15). Such a careful study is not found in Mr. Banister’s report, nor does he allude to anyone else’s careful study. Banister’s simple assertion that my study was not careful is considered sufficient refutation.

At the end of the session on demonic inroads I gave time for questions and answers where my views could be challenged and where I could clear up points that might have been communicated poorly. To the best of my knowledge, none of the detractors who wrote in *The Briefing* and were present in that session asked me any questions face to face.

Mark Thompson accused me of another misuse of the Scriptures in regard to a prophetic word Paul Cain had given. He writes,

No one in the Vineyard, to my knowledge, teaches that God heals solely in miraculous ways.

The team was being questioned about “words of knowledge” which seemed to go way beyond what the Bible was teaching. One such “word” had been given two nights before: those parents who had watched their children leave

home and abandon the faith would see them come home. “Some of you will receive a message from your long-lost child by this time tomorrow night.” Jack Deere suggested this was not beyond the Bible’s message. It was found in Malachi 4:6. He started to read it: “And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers...” A courageous voice called out from the floor, “Please read verse 5!” He did, “Behold I will send Elijah the Prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes and he will turn the hearts...” The point was made, but sadly lost on most who were there. (p. 11)

Although Mr. Thompson does not state how this is a misuse of the Bible, I assume he would say I took Malachi 4:6 out of context and that it only referred to Elijah's ministry at the second coming of Jesus. What Mr. Thompson does not tell the reader is the context in which Paul Cain gave that prophetic word, and the context in which I explained it on the next day in a lunch meeting with the pastors attending the conference. Here is the context.

On Weekday night Paul Cain felt that the Lord was giving him permission to tell the people that the Lord would bring back some (not all) of their children who had wandered from the faith and were estranged from their parents for one reason or another. He said that God would do this as a token of what he would do on a much larger scale in the ministry of the last days. In other words, God would grant a number of parents that night a small sign of what he would do on a much larger scale in the future. Paul said that within twenty-four hours some parents would receive calls from estranged children and children who had left the faith, indicating their willingness to be reconciled to their parents and to the faith.

I have seen Paul do this on several occasions in different parts of the world, and I have always seen this word fulfilled. Paul did not say "every parent"; he said "some" parents would see this happen in quite an unexpected fashion. We had a number of people the next night testify that this had happened to them. In Anaheim, on one occasion, Paul gave a similar word and we saw it fulfilled in a very magnificent way. We saw children who had been on cocaine call their parents for seemingly no reason at all, and express their desire to come back and to abandon the immoral lifestyle in which they had been trapped.

The next day, on Thursday, in a noon meeting for pastors only, a young man questioned this prophetic word. He said words to the effect, "The ministry last night was unbiblical. The Bible nowhere states that children will return to their parents." In this case, he was not accusing Paul Cain of misusing the Bible. He was saying that the Bible had no such statement in it. He did not say, "To my knowledge the Bible has no such statement in it." He simply declared that the Bible did not have such a statement in it. I then quoted Malachi 4:6. My point in quoting Malachi 4:6 was to illustrate that there is a passage in the Scripture that talks about children's hearts being turned back to their fathers. At that point I was not attempting to defend Paul Cain's use of this text, although that could have been done. I was correcting a false statement that the Bible contained no such passage in it. Before I could give an explanation, someone yelled from the audience "Read verse 5." I was happy to read verse 5, which associates the turning of the hearts with the ministry of Elijah. Before I could explain Paul Cain's use of that passage, I was interrupted and the discussion was discontinued.

Had I continued, I would have explained that the ultimate fulfillment of Malachi 4:6 will come in the very last days. There is nothing, however, to prevent God from giving us a foretaste of that blessing before that time. I believe that is what he has done. The Lord has given us small examples which point to and encourage us to believe in the ultimate fulfillment of that passage. This was exactly what Paul Cain was claiming when he said that God would give us a "token" of Malachi 4:6.

Another misrepresentation of my teaching is found in the article by Dr. Philip Selden. He writes,

The first of these doctrines was assessed by a group of five Christian doctors who definitely agree that God *does* (emphasis mine) heal today – but not *solely* (emphasis mine) in the miraculous ways implied by Dr. Deere. (p. 19)

Anyone who has heard the Vineyard's teaching on healing knows that Dr. Selden is completely misrepresenting our teaching. Neither Wimber, I, nor anyone else in the Vineyard that I know have ever implied or taught that God solely heals in miraculous ways. John Wimber has been very open about his own heart condition: God did not choose to heal him in a miraculous way, but rather by medicine, a proper diet and physical exercise. No one in the Vineyard, to my knowledge, teaches that God heals solely in miraculous ways.

A final example of the misrepresentation of my teaching is found in Andrew Shead's article, where he seems to have completely misunderstood the teaching that I gave on intimacy with Christ. Shead writes these comments:

In this doctrine [ed., the doctrine of intimacy with Jesus] the shift from the Jesus of history (and of the cross) to the Jesus of intuition is complete, and we are cast adrift onto the seas of our inner beings. (p. 9)

The main point of my talk described counterfeit strategies used by Satan to defeat and deceive Christians. During the last 15-20 minutes I talked about loving Jesus Christ with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength. I talked about not being satisfied with a cold, religious, correct orthodoxy, but desiring passion for the Son of God. The main point of the message was that intimacy with Jesus and loving Jesus is more than the possession of biblical knowledge or an understanding of orthodox theology.

I never denied the Jesus of history or the importance of his Cross. I never denied

the importance of theology and correct doctrine. I never attempted to create a Jesus of the intuition. My sole purpose in that sermon was to stir longings in the believer for intimate communion with and passion for the Jesus of history who died on the Cross for our sins. I wanted to impress them with the fact that he is more than a doctrine, more than a principle, more than a ministry – he is a Person who deserves all of our love and all of our attention.

I do not believe that we can love the Bible or theology too much, but I believe that we can love Jesus too little. There is a tendency among us who are very serious about the Bible and theology to put these things above the Lord Jesus in our affections. This was the error I was attempting to correct in my comments on that morning. I have given similar talks about having passion for the Lord Jesus all over the world. I have never had it questioned or attacked except in *The Briefing*. A theological professor from Sydney, who was and is to my knowledge anti-charismatic and certainly anti-Vineyard and anti-John Wimber, approached me after this talk and said that the talk was right and that he agreed with it.

Four Errors in Methodology

The authors of *The Briefing* have committed a number of methodological errors that, in any reporting, would lead to the loss of accuracy, objectivity, and credibility.

1. *The first of these errors is the refusal to grant legitimate differences of interpretation between the views of the Vineyard and theirs.* If the Vineyard holds a different view from *The Briefing*, then they have concluded that our view must be unbiblical. If we attempt to defend our view with the Scriptures, then it must be that we have not made a serious or careful study of the Bible. Rather we have distorted and confused the message of the Bible with our allegorical interpretation and fanciful exegesis.

On the other hand, when we express a view that the writers of *The Briefing* also hold, they accuse us of insincerity. We are like dishonest politicians who deliberately deceive their audiences. In other words, if we disagree with our opponents it is due to an intellectual deficiency, to our ineptness as interpreters. But if we agree with our critics, it is due to our defective character; we are being deceptive, hiding what we really believe.

2. A second methodological flaw is the scarcity of appeal to the Scriptures for the contentions and criticisms by *The Briefing's* writers. They rarely cite the Scripture. For example, in Andrew Shead's article, "Spiritual Warfare: The Critical Moment," there is not a single reference to a specific biblical text among his criticisms. If I am wrong on a point, I would like to be shown my error in light of the Bible's teaching. The severity of the criticism in *The Briefing* requires a basis in biblical teaching rather than human opinion.

3. A third methodological flaw is that most of the reports in *The Briefing* are based on the writers' summaries of our teaching, rather than on direct quotes. This is important for the reader who has little or no direct acquaintance with Vineyard teaching. Misleading summaries or quotes taken out of context enable critics to construct straw men that can, in turn, easily be brought down.

For example, when Dr. Selden wrote, "The first of these doctrines was assessed by a group of fine Christian doctors who definitely agree that God *does* (emphasis his) heal today—but not *solely* (emphasis mine) in the miraculous ways implied by Dr. Deere" (p. 19), he has attributed to me a position that I personally find objectionable and easy to refute. I stated clearly in my workshop that God heals in a variety of ways and that sometimes He chooses not to heal at all. However, Dr. Selden leads the uninformed reader to believe that I teach that God only heals in miraculous ways. Dr. Selden's conclusion was drawn from a biased and inaccurate summary of my teaching.

4. Another basic methodological flaw of *The Briefing* is the refusal of any of the authors to contact us to insure that they had represented our views accurately and clearly. This is a common and expected courtesy in professional secular journalism. How much more

should this be true of Christians who are disseminating such a sharply negative evaluation of other Christians?

The kind of journalism practiced by *The Briefing* can only lead to unnecessary division, bitterness and confusion in the body of Christ. Rather than promoting correction or openness to rebuke, this kind of criticism could make any Christian teacher afraid to grant interviews or even admit a fault, lest his words be distorted.

Yet those Christians who disagree with one another ought to be talking to one another, seeking to understand one another and even to receive correction where necessary. However, if the practice of *The Briefing's* writers becomes normative in Christian circles, no one who risks the slightest openness or trust would be safe from slander.

The Major Issues

At the bottom of most of the charges in *The Briefing* are five issues:

- continuing revelation (this is presented under the rubric of the sufficiency of the Scriptures);
- the use of Scripture;
- whether any real healings take place in Vineyard meetings;
- whether Christians can be demonized;
- and the centrality of the Cross.

I want to examine these issues briefly considering the charges contained in *The Briefing*.

1. Continuing Revelation

Throughout *The Briefing* Vineyard teachers are charged with not believing in the sufficiency of Scripture and somehow relegating the Bible to a minor role in the Christian's life because we also believe that God continues to give revelation today. Mark Thompson is representative of this these when he writes,

The claimed acceptance of the authority of the Bible was further undermined by an attack on its sufficiency. Jack Deere made the most explicit statements in this regard. His teaching notes for Workshop II, headed "A Demonic Doctrine Illustrated," began this way:

"In order to fulfill God's highest purposes for our lives we must be able to hear his voice both in the written word and in the word freshly spoken from heaven... Satan understands the strategic importance of Christians hearing God's voice, so he has

launched various attacks against us in this area. One of his most successful attacks has been to develop a doctrine that teaches God no longer speaks to us except through the written word. Ultimately, this doctrine is demonic [even though] Christian theologians have been used to perfect it.”

Those who believe in a sufficiency of the Scriptures for Christian faith and life were caricatured as those who believed in a God who writes rather than a God who speaks. It is hard not to conclude that Wimber and his team have lost confidence in the Scripture itself. They would not be happy to endorse Luther’s evaluation of his ministry: “the Word did it all.” The Scriptures clearly are not enough — more is needed, namely the word freshly spoken from heaven. (p. 11)

This quote is typical of the rest of *The Briefing* and of our discussion with Phillip Jensen when the subject of the sufficiency of the Scriptures came up. Not one time in *The Briefing* do any of the authors define “the sufficiency of Scripture.” This whole discussion in *The Briefing* makes no reference to what the Scriptures say about their own sufficiency. All one can conclude from their discussion is this: the one who believes that God speaks today apart from the Bible (not in contradiction to the Bible) must be either a theological liberal or one who thinks that the Bible is not really important.

One does not do the Bible a service by claiming more for the Bible than God does. For example, to claim that the Bible provides us with eternal life dishonors both God and his written word (John 5:39-40). The Bible does not teach that the written word replaces the necessity of hearing God’s voice for personal direction or ministry directions. In fact, the Scriptures teach exactly the opposite.

When one turns to the Bible to consider the various ways God has spoken to his children, one will find that during the Old

Testament period God spoke to his children in a variety of ways. He spoke to them in an audible voice, in dreams and visions, through circumstances and fleeces, through inner impressions, through prophets, through angels and through Scripture. When one comes to the New Testament, one finds God communicating in similar ways in the Gospels and Acts.

One of the basic keys to the ministry of Jesus was that he only did what he saw his Father doing and he only spoke the words that his Father gave him to speak. This is a major theme regarding the ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of John (3:34, 5:19, 7:16, 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 24, 31). One may object that this was only true of Jesus because of his unique relationship to God and that this aspect is not to be copied by other Christians. Yet the same principle is true of the apostles’ and others’ ministry also.

The Book of Acts is replete with references to special guidance given to the apostles and others by visions, angelic voices, the Holy Spirit, etc. (see Acts 8:26, 29; 9:1-19; 10:3ff; 12:7ff; 13:2; 14:9; 15:28; 16:6-10, etc.). Nor are these various types of divine communication confined only to the Gospels and Acts.

Paul gave detailed instructions to the Corinthians concerning the use of the revelatory giftings of prophecy, tongues, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, and discernment of Spirits (1 Cor. 12:14; Cf. 1 Thess. 5:19 and Rom. 12:6). The author of Hebrews even underscored the importance of hospitality by reminding his readers that “some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). He believed that an angelic visitation was still possible in his day. Thus, on a prima facie reading of the Scriptures, one would expect God to continue communicating to his children throughout the church age with the same variety of methods he has always used.

In other words, there are solid scriptural grounds for believing that God will still speak to us today apart from, but not in contradiction to, the written word. One who believes that God speaks today does not believe anything different from Jesus or the apostles. They were able to hear God speak in a variety of ways along with the Scriptures. It is they who demonstrate that it is possible to hear the voice of God outside the written word and without being cast adrift on a purely subjective sea of one's feelings.

It's possible the writers of *The Briefing* may agree with this, though they never give any indication that they believe God speaks in any other way than through the written word. This is true both in their written report and in the private conversation that we had with Mr. Jensen.

It is simply unfair to accuse the Vineyard of being either unbiblical or led by our feelings because we believe in the biblical model of hearing God practiced by Jesus, the apostles and others. If it could be proved that this model is no longer valid for today, then we would obviously stand in error. However, this is precisely what *The Briefing* does not do. Nor do I believe that such a position can be successfully defended.

In summary, we believe that the Scriptures are the primary way that God speaks to his children. We believe in the verbal, inerrant, plenary inspiration of the word of

God. We believe that when the Holy Spirit illumines the heart of man, the Scriptures are sufficient to lead man into salvation and godly living (2 Tim. 3:15-17). We also believe that God never intended that his communication with man be exhausted by his written word; such a doctrine is not taught either by example or by precept in the Old or New Testament.

2. *The Use of Scripture*

The Briefing accuses us of using Scripture in an allegorical way and of only giving lip service to the Scripture in our teaching. *The Briefing* does not demonstrate this, but merely asserts it. The fundamental hermeneutical presupposition of the writers of *The Briefing* seems to be that if we hold a different interpretation from theirs, it could not possibly be based on Scripture. It must rather be based on experience. For example, Mark Thompson writes,

The teaching notes gave the *impression* (emphasis mine) that each talk attempted to be a careful explanation of what the Bible had to say. Yet the talks themselves were dominated by anecdotes. Constant appeal was made to the speaker's own experience, or that of some well known figure. (p. 11)

This charge could be leveled, and in fact has been, at most of the great preachers in the history of the church. Whitefield and

It is simply unfair to accuse the Vineyard of being either unbiblical or led by our feelings because we believe in the biblical model of hearing God practiced by Jesus, the apostles and others.

Spurgeon are primary examples of great preachers who liberally used anecdotes and personal experience in their messages and were criticized for it. Spurgeon and Whitefield knew what all great preachers know instinctively: although Scripture establishes doctrine, personal experience and anecdotes are vital for the effective communication of that doctrine. The role of personal experience is to illustrate, clarify, support or confirm the teaching of Scripture; that is why the Scripture is filled with biography and historical writings.

The writers of *The Briefing* should agree with this. It seems to me that the real problem is not our appeal to experience but rather our interpretation of the Scripture. What the writers of *The Briefing* must do, if their criticism is to be valid, is to demonstrate that our teaching contradicts Scripture. This is precisely what they do not do. They are content with asserting that our teaching is based on experience or that our exegesis is “fanciful.”

3. Is Anyone Actually Healed at Vineyard Conferences?

Mr. Jensen answers this question negatively. His opinion is that

The evidence so far suggests that John Wimber heals in the ‘sugar pill area.’ The

area where the NT speaks of healing and where he talks of healing seem to be wholly resistant to his ministry. That is, to put it bluntly, it is to be seriously doubted that any miraculous healings are taking place at all. The failure so far to provide Christian doctors with cases to verify from the Sydney Conference only contributes to the growing doubt over any genuine miracles. (p. 4)

The real problem is not our appeal to experience but rather our interpretation of the Scripture. What the writers of *The Briefing* must do, if their criticism is to be valid, is to demonstrate that our teaching contradicts Scripture.

When Jensen speaks of the “failure... to provide Christian doctors with cases to verify” he is alluding to a request that he made earlier in the week for us to let a team of physicians assembled by him examine any alleged healings that might have occurred during the week. The prejudice towards our views demonstrated by Mr. Jensen and some of the young men that he had recruited to write against us was so obvious by the middle of the week that we decided we would probably not get a fair evaluation from any team of physicians organized by Mr. Jensen.

Therefore, we declined his request in this matter.

Curiously, one of the other authors in *The Briefing* contradicts Jensen’s negative assessment. Mr. Shead writes,

Many who went to the conference experienced healing to varying degrees on the physical, emotional or spiritual planes, and have since felt a new depth of commitment

to Jesus. These blessings are not to be thrown out. Instead, we must strive to interpret them along Biblical lines so that they will result in increasing godliness and not in falsely grounded faith. (p. 9)

For those who desire an in-depth analysis of the accuracy of words of knowledge and the effectiveness of the healing ministry at a typical Vineyard conference, Dr. David Lewis, a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, has made a rather exhaustive study of a Vineyard conference held in fall of 1986 in Harrogate, England. The results of his study appear in the book, *Healing: Fiction, Fantasy or Fact?* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989). Dr. Lewis concluded that

Of 862 cases of prayer for physical healing, 32% (or 279) reported a "great deal" of healing or "total healing." Another 26% (or 222) reported a "fair amount" of healing. The remaining 42% (or 366) reported "little" or "no healing." (pp. 21-22)

Many case studies are reported in detail, in several instances with medical reports quoted at length. All the physical problems prayed for are listed in a detailed appendix (pp. 276-283). (These physical problems are distinguished from prayer for spiritual problems such as inner healing and deliverance, which are tabulated separately by Dr. Lewis.)

4. The Demonization of Christians

This issue has been hotly debated among evangelical Christians. In the Vineyard we believe that the Bible teaches that Christians can be demonized. By "demonized" we mean coming under the influence or control of demonic power, whether that power is exercised externally or internally against the victims. Our reasons for believing this may be briefly summarized:

1. *There is no text in the New Testament or Old Testament that says Christians cannot be*

demonized or have a demon. The most commonly used argument against Christians being demonized is theological rather than biblical. The question is usually asked, "How can Christ and a demon inhabit the same home?" or "How can light and darkness dwell together?" The answer to this may also be stated in the form of a question, "How can Christ and sin dwell together?" Jesus dwells with sin any time he inhabits the heart of a new believer. If he can dwell in a sinful person why could he not dwell in a demonized person?

2. *In the Old Testament Saul is described with language that is appropriate for a believer.* The "Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul," he "was changed into another person" and "was given a new heart" (1 Sam. 10:6-9; 11:6ff); and even in his rebellion the Spirit still came upon him and he prophesied (1 Sam. 19:23ff). Yet the Lord gave Saul an evil spirit to torment him (1 Sam. 16:14 and 1 Sam. 18:10-11).

3. *The crippled woman in Luke 13:10-17 seems to be a believer for Jesus calls her a "daughter of Abraham" in verse 16.* The expression "daughter of Abraham" seems to designate a believer. Jesus used this phrase to refer to Zacchaeus' salvation experience when he said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9). Yet an evil spirit bound this daughter of Abraham for eighteen years.

4. *The man in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 was delivered over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh.* This man was going to die or suffer significantly as a direct result of demonic activity. Yet he is clearly a believer because Paul refers to his spirit being saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse five.

It also stands to reason that prolonged, voluntary sin could remove the protection of the Lord and open one up to some form of demonic influence. These are the main

reasons why we believe that Christians can be demonized. Our experience in ministering to the demonized also confirms our interpretation of the biblical texts.

However, these texts do not conclusively demonstrate that Christians can be demonized. There are other possible explanations for each text mentioned above. An internationally known and respected theologian, Charles Ryrie, has evaluated the evidence of both positions and found it to be inconclusive for either side (*Basic Theology*, [Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1987], pp. 167-68). What Ryrie does not do, however, is ridicule either position as unbiblical or the product of fanciful exegesis. We may be wrong in what we believe on this point, but we sincerely believe it because we think the Scripture teaches it and our experience confirms it.

5. The Centrality of the Cross

The writers of *The Briefing* allege that the Cross is not central to the ministry of John Wimber or the Vineyard. The evidence for this charge is as follows.

- First, the Vineyard songbook printed for use in the Australian conference had only one song out of a total of 53 that mentioned the Cross (p. 6).
- Second, there seemed to be a serious failure throughout the various sessions of the conference to give adequate attention to the message of the Cross. This was apparent at the Thursday night evangelistic rally where Wimber spoke a great deal about healing, but gave little attention to the Cross or repentance, although he did issue an evangelistic invitation to unbelievers at the end of the meeting (p. 6).

- Third, some of the messages seemed to shift emphasis away from the Cross to other things (p. 9).
- Fourth, Jack Deere, who is identified in *The Briefing* as Wimber's "theological advisor," allegedly said that he could not define the gospel (pp. 14-15).
- A final point that was not clearly stressed in *The Briefing*, but was mentioned in a number of private conversations that week, merits discussion here, i.e., Wimber's *Power Evangelism* does not give a clear statement of the gospel.

These are the five lines of evidence that enable our critics to charge us with a failure to give the Cross of the Lord Jesus its proper place in our ministry. Some of these criticisms have been very helpful to us and we are grateful to the writers for pointing them out.

It completely escaped Wimber's attention that the printed song selection had such scant reference to the Cross. He was ashamed before the Lord and embarrassed before the men who pointed this out to him. Even though we sang other songs about the Cross at the conference that were not in the printed material, we still felt that this criticism was valid for the conference. If Vineyard worship songs as a whole had been surveyed, many works on the Cross could have been found. This criticism, however, has born positive fruit in the Vineyard. When Wimber returned home he gathered all the writers of Vineyard music and confessed to them that he had been remiss in not stressing the Cross enough to our writers. He asked all of them to begin concentrating on the Cross in their work and meditation, and to begin reading or re-reading some of the classic theological works on the Cross. He made it clear that it was his desire to see us reach a new depth of worship mu-

sic in reference to the Cross. We now have a number of new worship songs that have the Cross for their central focus.

Wimber has acknowledged that he did not do an adequate job in presenting the message of the Cross at the Thursday night meeting. He spent the majority of the message talking about healing in the New Testament. He issued the evangelistic appeal after we had begun praying for the sick in the midst of several distractions. John admits that he did a poor job of communicating the gospel that night, and that Mr. Jensen's criticisms in this regard are well taken.

We agree less with the remaining three criticisms. I've already stated that my conversation with Mr. Banister was significantly misrepresented in *The Briefing*, and that I do know and embrace the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Regarding the other two points, that our conference talks seemed not to give proper place to the Cross nor did *Power Evangelism* contain a clear statement of the gospel, it needs to be pointed out that a failure to mention or stress a particular belief does not mean that one doesn't hold that particular belief in the highest esteem. There may be other reasons why a central belief was not stressed on certain occasions. In our case the nature of the meetings in which our messages were given explains the perceived lack of emphasis on the Cross.

The messages on spiritual warfare were given to a Christian audience. Our speakers were assuming that the audience shared our basic conviction that the Cross of Christ is the basis for all of life and ministry. Everything the Christian possesses, every blessing, and all power, originates in the blood-bought sacrifice of the Son of God (Rom. 3:21-26 and Eph. 1:3ff). This is the working assumption in all our conferences. Some of the speakers were very clear in stating this — some of them referred to the

Cross nine or ten times in a single message; others assumed this knowledge of the audience. In the future we are going to insist that all our speakers make their convictions regarding the Cross evident rather than taking our hearers' understanding of these matters for granted.

Concerning his book *Power Evangelism*, Wimber has said that it was his first book and that he was very naive in anticipating both the widespread audience that the book would have, as well as the critical scrutiny that would be given to the book. He readily admits that he is not a theologian; he had no idea that in his first book he was walking through a theological mine field. He took for granted his readers' familiarity with the basics of the gospel message and the fundamentals of the Christian faith and, therefore, did not offer explanations of these fundamentals nor stress his belief in them. He had no idea that some critics would challenge the orthodoxy of his faith. This deficiency has been corrected in the revised edition of *Power Evangelism* that will be released in April of 1992.

Wimber now more carefully states these matters clearly, rather than assuming his readers' acquaintance with them. This is especially evident in his latest book *Power Points* (e.g., see pp. 107 - 14 for clear statements on the meaning and implications of substitutionary atonement). Furthermore, all Vineyard pastors are required to believe these fundamentals. For example, the Association of Vineyard Churches' Statement of Faith says,

We believe in the full humanity and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His substitutionary atonement, in His bodily resurrection... We believe that all men and women are sinners and can only be justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ... (paragraphs 2 and 5)

Besides these statements both Wimber and I have made a series of tapes on the Cross that clearly set forth the substitutionary and propitiatory nature of Christ's death. These facts should correct the false impression created by *The Briefing* that we do not give the Cross a central place in our ministry.

Postscript: The Briefing's Response

Our purpose in writing this paper has been to give evidence that the Vineyard does not believe or teach the erroneous doctrines attributed to us by *The Briefing*. We are saddened that such erroneous reporting has been carried out by evangelical Christians and we hope that St. Matthias and the Anglican diocese of which it is a part will take steps to correct the misunderstandings caused by *The Briefing* and to insure that such misrepresentations do not occur in the future.

After we completed this response, we sent it to the editors of *The Briefing* to give them an opportunity to correct any misrepresentations or misunderstandings on our part of their criticisms. We wanted to extend a courtesy to them that they felt compelled to deny us. We wrote to them that we would be happy to change anything in our report that confined them where they could show us that we had not treated them fairly. The following is Phillip Jensen's response after having received a copy of our report.

9 March 1992

Dear Jack

Thanks for your letter of 2 March and for the manuscript of your reply to *The Briefing*.

Unfortunately, it seems we continue to be at variance over some of the events and facts in question. We maintain that our version of the various conversations and events is accurate and that we faithfully recorded and reported the facts as we saw them. If these conversations do not represent your views (then or now), then we are glad for you to publicly clarify that situation. We do not agree with you, however, that we misrepresented you or John Wimber. You may have misrepresented yourself, and there may be inconsistencies in your views, but we reported (and reflected) only what we heard and observed.

We substantially disagree, therefore, with your manuscript in ways that are too

numerous to detail. Here are just a few examples:

- The meeting at your hotel was arranged on the instigation of some of your Australian supporters, not on our initiative (cf. pl of your ms).

- There was no recruiting of people to do a hatchet job on the conference; no assigning of people to various seminars to gather ammunition, etc. (cf. pl3 of your ms and elsewhere.) It all happened fairly spontaneously.

- I think you may have misunderstood Philip Selden's grammar (on your p22). The 'solely' refers to his own position and not to yours. In other words: "We agree that God does heal today, but not solely in miraculous ways (Dr. Deere advocates such miraculous ways)." The sentence does not attribute the 'solely' position to you; it simply cites you as an advocate of miraculous healing.

- You accuse us of being prejudiced before the event. This is true in as much as we did have an opinion of John Wimber's ministry before we met him on the basis of his public teaching and writing (writing which you are at pains to suggest still essentially reflects his theology).

On reading your manuscript, and especially your response to Graham Banister's article, I think I have begun to see some possible theological reasons for our continued misunderstanding. I think I can understand how both accounts of the conversation can be accurate given your possibly differing views on eschatology. If you wish to pursue that matter I would be happy to see if we can find a way forward together.

Yours sincerely
Phillip Jensen.

About the Author...

Jack Deere was converted to Christ when he was 17 years old through the prayers and witness of a friend. After graduating from Texas Christian University, Jack attended Dallas Theological Seminary where he received a Th.M and Th.D. He began teaching in the Old Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary in 1976. In the fall of 1980 he started a Bible church in Fort Worth, Texas, while continuing for the next seven years as a Professor at Dallas. In the fall of 1987 Jack helped George Malone start the Grace Vineyard Church in Arlington, Texas. In December of 1987 he left Dallas Seminary and became a member of the full-time staff at Grace Vineyard. In September of 1988 until April 1992 Jack served as an associate pastor at the Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Anaheim. In June of 1992 Jack returned to Fort Worth Texas with his wife Leesa and three children in order to pursue a conference and writing ministry.