

# BUCKINGHAM REPORT

**AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE BY AMERICA'S FOREMOST  
CHRISTIAN ANALYZER OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE, &  
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S SPIRIT-LED LEADERS**

## **VATICAN INVESTIGATING APPARITION IN YUGOSLAVIA**

In June 1981, five young shepherds were on a barren hillside near the little town of Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, when they had a mysterious visitation from a young woman who told them she was the Virgin Mary. Later, this same apparition appeared to the same young people in the little Catholic church in the nearby hamlet. Only the five teenagers were able to see the figure who appeared, dressed in peasant clothes, and gave them various instructions. This led the priest and others who heard about the incident to doubt. However, when the young people were separated—immediately after having talked to the mysterious figure—they all gave exactly the same report. They repeated, almost word for word, what she had said and described exactly how she was dressed. Subsequent investigations all confirm these children were indeed seeing and hearing the same thing.

Word has spread. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims are now making their way to the little church where they pray and worship. The Virgin still appears, on an almost daily basis, but only to the young people who then report what she has said.

The message she brings disturbs some traditional Catholics. She tells them to worship Jesus—not her. She tells them to read their Bibles. And she uses Charismatic terminology. This is additional confirmation, of course, since chapters 1 and 2 of the book of Acts seem to indicate that the Virgin Mary was in the upper room speaking in tongues at Pentecost.

Several well-known American Catholics have been to Medjugorje to witness the event. Father John Bertolucci of the University of Steubenville has been, as has Bobby Cavnar, Catholic publisher from Dallas. Cavnar took video tapes of the event and assures me that “these young people are seeing something, for sure.” Recently David du Plessis visited the church. He reports that Catholics, “by the hundreds of thousands,” are flocking to the little church from all over Yugoslavia—“and for the first time they are all carrying and reading their Bibles.” I have seen a video tape made by Austrian scientist Ernst Winter. You cannot see the apparition, of course, but the size of the crowds and the testimonies of the young people are impressive.

In June the Vatican confirmed it has issued a document urging Roman Catholic pilgrims NOT to visit the church. However, Catholic-watchers believe this is merely a prelude to an official Vatican investigation and is not a denunciation by the Vatican. Du Plessis has already spoken to Pope John Paul II of the occurrence, as have several others.



## FEDERAL JUDGESHIPS

It's possible that President Reagan's greatest and longest-lasting legacy will be his appointments to the federal judiciary. Within the next few months Reagan is responsible for the filling of 114 federal district and appeals court judgeships, an extraordinary total that comes to a seventh of the seats on the entire federal bench. This gives the president the greatest opportunity in history to transform the federal judiciary. By the end of his second term, Reagan is likely to have named a majority of the nation's 744 federal trial and appellate judges. This should be a matter of concentrated prayer as we ask God to give the president boldness to overcome the tendencies of political expediency and pork barrel favoritism and wisdom to appoint godly men and women to these crucial positions in our nation's government.

## ROBERTSON FOR PRESIDENT

**Saturday Evening Post** publisher Cory SerVaas was the first to publicly endorse M. G. (Pat) Robertson, president of the Christian Broadcasting Network and host of "The 700 Club," as a candidate for president in 1988. Earlier, **Newsweek** had listed Robertson as one who was being "mentioned" in certain circles as presidential timber—along with Jerry Falwell. Now the powerful **Washington Post**, in a July 5 article on the Christian bloc, has quoted Robertson, the son of a former U. S. senator from Virginia, as saying he would indeed consider a serious run for the presidency. Sources close to Pat confirm his willingness to run and say there are influential forces in Washington who are already at work building a foundation. It will make an interesting race since Bill Bright of Campus Crusade is one of those mentioned by the **Washington Post** as a Robertson supporter. Yet Bright is a close personal friend of New York congressman Jack Kemp, who is also actively seeking the nomination. Then there is Jerry Falwell, who has strangely—and some feel prematurely—publicly endorsed George Bush for president.

My evaluation: If the Christians of America ever get together they can elect whomever they choose as president. That, it seems, may be the real issue.

## WASHINGTON PRAYER BREAKFAST

Pastors and leaders interested in attending the annual National Prayer Breakfast, held in Washington, D.C., in late January each year, may obtain invitations by contacting your congressman or senator. The all-day meeting is composed of various seminars as well as the breakfast at which the president speaks. The Breakfast is worth attending to catch the flavor of the spiritual side of Washington. Now is the time to contact your representative to make certain you are on the invitation list.

Also, you should be on the mailing list to receive the free **Leadership Letter**, published by interested congressmen who are "sharing expressed thoughts of people in public life about spiritual values and the relevance of Jesus Christ." Write: **Leadership Letter**, 2817 Woodland Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008.



## OVERCOMING OVERCOMMITMENT

Perhaps the greatest temptation facing today's Christian leader is the temptation to overcommit himself. It's simply a matter of trying to accommodate too much with too little time and too few resources. James Netters, pastor of the 3,600-member Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, suggests the following ways to avoid the time bind (**Innovations**, Summer '84).

1. Never make an engagement without checking with the person who keeps your itinerary.
2. Never fill up the whole day with appointments. You can't foresee that, on the day you planned to conduct a wedding, you might also have two funerals.
3. Leave part of the morning or afternoon for prayer and study. Two hours enables you to get into your study in depth.
4. If you work at another full-time job and serve as pastor, have an **Activity Night**. One night of the week all the groups meet in the church—the choir, the ushers, the auxiliary, etc. The pastor goes from room to room, sitting in on meetings as needed. That frees up several other nights for study.
5. Schedule meetings in bunches. Example: Schedule all counseling sessions on Wednesday. You know you will have a heavy day emotionally on Wednesday, but you'll be free to pursue other priorities on other days.

## TAKING CHRIST TO THE MARKETPLACE

A new outreach program in Charlotte, North Carolina, is responsible for more than 100 men and women who have come to Christ. The ministry is called Market Share Corporation and is directed by Robert Reccord, pastor of outreach and spiritual development at Charlotte's Carmel Baptist Church. The idea: Business people bring their friends to eat lunch in a non-church setting and hear a secular speaker tell what Christ has done in his life. At the first meeting professional basketball player Bobby Jones of the Philadelphia 76ers spoke to 176 men. Twenty-two accepted Christ. The next meeting was for women. Singer Beverly Terrell spoke to 340 homemakers and businesswomen. Forty made commitments to Christ. The following month former baseball player and manager Alvin Dark spoke at the Park Hotel ballroom and 33 men accepted Christ. Reccord's strategy is, if anyone buys a ticket they have to buy a minimum of two. Now men and women of the church sometimes buy complete tables to bring their friends and co-workers.

Using a different approach, Morris Sheats holds a monthly men's seminar on Saturday morning in North Dallas. More than 300 men, about 70 percent of whom are members of his church, gather at the Harvey House at 8:15 a.m. for light breakfast and heavy teaching. Using the theme "How To Become a Godly Man," Sheats teaches for a while on a particular subject, then introduces a local business or corporate executive who shares. Then Sheats wraps it up and the men are free by 11:30 to leave. Sheats has used such subjects as "How To Make a Covenant With Your Eyes" and "Seventeen Ways to Get Out of Debt and Stay Out of Debt."



## CREATIVITY

Psychologists love to talk about the “needs” of humankind. In doing so they usually list four inherent needs: the need to love, the need to be loved, the need for adventure, the need of security. To that I add a fifth, and perhaps the most God-like of all the needs—the need to create. In women we most often see it in the desire to have a child. Or perhaps in creating a good meal, or a beautifully decorated home, or a lovely garden. In men it takes other forms (forms which are often found in women as well): a set of perfect blueprints, a brick wall built to plumb, a rocket to the moon, a composed photograph, a flawless paint job, a satisfying game of golf or tennis, a Spirit-blessed sermon, or the satisfaction of being used by the Holy Spirit to create an atmosphere allowing a fellow human to receive Jesus Christ.

The story goes that J. R. R. Tolkien was sitting in his study at Oxford one afternoon, correcting a student's thesis. The year was 1926. For some unexplained reason, the student had turned in a blank page. When Tolkien came to it in the stack of papers, he picked up his pen and wrote on the page, “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit,” thus launching one of the most remarkable literary careers of our time. On being asked why he did it, Tolkien replied, “It popped into my head.”

### **Sameness Is the Spirit of Anti-Christ**

Creativity is God-like. It is evidence that a little bit of the Creator is in all of us. It is the part which causes us to look at something we've created and say—as God did when he looked out over the earth—“It is good.”

At the same time, nothing stifles creativity like the spirit of sameness. Especially is this true in a church where everyone is expected to behave, dress and believe alike. The true church is composed of individuals who maintain their individuality—yet cooperate, recognizing each other's gift as valid although not necessarily the same as theirs.

Anything that stifles creativity is anti-Christ. Especially is this true in the church. Remember, each parishioner has a bit of the Creator in him or her. Your task as undershepherd is to create a climate which allows that creativity to flourish—not to quench it because it does not fit your pattern or vision. The military used to be notorious for this. Poets lived out their lives typing forms, cooks dug ditches, singers carried rifles, and scientists wound up driving a car for the general. Let the church be a place where each man and woman can fulfill his creative urge—for God's glory.

### **The Pastor: Keeper of the Gauges**

The church needs to renounce this military mentality and recommit itself to being the place where men and women of God can fulfill the dreams and visions God has placed in each heart. The wise pastor realizes the Holy Spirit does more than bring gifts—He also activates the gifts God has placed in each heart from the creation of time. The church, then, becomes a greenhouse where each Christian can flourish, bloom, and bear fruit. It is not a rose garden where only roses are allowed to grow, nor is it a cabbage patch where flowers are not allowed. In the greenhouse everything is allowed to grow: roses, cabbages, cactus and oak trees. The pastor is the keeper of the greenhouse. His job is to control the temperature and humidity, make sure the weeds don't take over, do necessary pruning to keep the grapevines from intimidating the tulips, and spread fertilizer from time to time. Thus true creativity flourishes and the body of Christ is made complete.



## **NEW BIBLE READING PLAN ENDORSED**

Enclosed with this issue is your free copy of a new and workable personal Bible reading plan designed by James McKeever of Omega Publications. While most pastors have their own Bible reading plan (I do), very few of our church members are as disciplined. The **Victory Bible Reading Plan** is for them. Our church ordered 2,000 of these and gave them out at the morning service to all who would pledge to use it for a year. Already we are beginning to notice the difference as our people systematically read the Word. This particular plan is different in that the Old Testament readings are in chronological sequence, plus each day you read a Psalm or a chapter in Proverbs. My wife, Jackie, has been using it for three months—keeping the plan in her Bible and reading each night before she turns out the light. Check it out, then do as we've done—order in bulk for your entire church. If you order 200 or more, prices are \$.40 each. Order from Omega Publications, P. O. Box 4130, Medford, OR 97501.

IN THIS ISSUE I AM SPOTLIGHTING...

### **TRAINING YOUNG PASTORS**

Our church is at the place of making a major decision concerning future growth. We have three options: 1) Stay where we are and enlarge our present facilities. However, because of parking restrictions we will be severely limited as to numerical growth if we do. 2) Relocate our entire operation to new land and start over. If we do this it will cost us a minimum of \$5 million to buy land and build to meet the future—which would mean a 4,000-5,000 seat auditorium. 3) Stay where we are, upgrade slightly, and birth satellite churches around the area—using our own people as the core ministers.

The last alternative is perhaps closest to God's heart, for it would mean involving many more people in ministry—especially young men. Jesus did not build buildings—or even organizations. He invested Himself in the lives of men. The finest program of ministerial discipleship calls for a church to establish satellite churches with pastors who submit to the apostolic leadership of the mother church. There, under the tutelage of seasoned leaders, these young pastors can learn as they minister—not in an academic setting but in the laboratory of a growing church.

### **Preparing to Be Unprepared**

One of the sad lacks in most seminary (and Bible school) programs is the fact many young people leave school without realizing that much of what they need to know was left untaught. More often than not, if a man emerges from school as a good communicator, it is because he was a good communicator when he entered school. This gift, for example, is not gained in school, it is only polished.

I was reminded of this recently when I read a quote by an MBA graduate who said, "What helps me most in my job is the ability to express myself—an ability I brought to business school and somehow managed to preserve." Most seminaries teach analysis, but not synthesis—the ability to combine disparate elements into a whole. Nor do they teach the sophisticated interpersonal skills and psychological background that today's pastor needs—not to mention the ability to use "discernment of spirits" in their ministry.



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I now believe that on-the-job training, either while attending seminary or shortly afterward, is essential to becoming a successful pastoral leader. I am not talking about a student church. These abominations do little more than give the student a lab in which to experiment his various theories, a place to practice preaching the sermon he heard in Tuesday's chapel, and perhaps a place to live and draw a small income while working his way through school. They foster dead institutionalism. A far better plan would be for the student to work with and under a competent pastor as an intern or a resident in a satellite church—looking on the pastor of the mother church as his mentor in practical things. There he can ask the pastor "Which important skills and abilities didn't you learn in school? Where did you learn them? How did you develop them?"

## **The Need for a Mentor**

I was impressed on a recent visit to Oral Roberts University to discover that Oral Roberts handpicked Billy Joe Daugherty—a graduate of Oral Roberts University—as his "disciple," to instill in him his concepts of pastoral ministry. Roberts advised Billy Joe against going ahead with a seminary degree, although ORU has an excellent seminary. Instead, Roberts felt Daugherty would be better off sitting at his feet rather than attending classes and learning theory. Roberts then became to Daugherty a true mentor, a personal tutor. Daugherty, on the other hand, has emerged—since he had basic gifts which Roberts early recognized—as a man of God in his own right. The growth of Victory Christian Center—while helped and enhanced by Roberts' presence and the use of the facilities at ORU—is due primarily to Billy Joe's own dynamic leadership.

In a wider sense, students should not expect seminary or Bible school to prepare them. This is not to minimize the importance of seminary training. If a young person feels called to enter the ministry, I strongly recommend a college degree (usually it is best to major in some subject other than Bible) followed by a seminary degree. Of course, if college and seminary are impractical, then a good Bible school is next best. However, while the seminary teaches theory, it is only in the school of hard knocks that one learns practicality. The best place to start, therefore, would be as the skilled workers of the past learned their trade: first as an apprentice to an experienced tradesman, then as a journeyman, still under supervision but working on your own project, and finally as an established tradesman. Today's medical doctors follow this same procedure, moving from internship to residency to the day they hang out their own shingle. I encourage young pastors to serve as an intern to some qualified pastor who would be willing to tutor, evaluate and establish them in ministry.

