

# BUCKINGHAM

## REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE &  
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS

### A TRIBUTE TO CHARISMATIC PIONEER DENNIS BENNETT

He died, appropriately, seated at his word processor. Since he retired as an active Episcopal priest, Dennis Bennett had continued to minister through the written word. His earlier books, especially *Nine O'clock in the Morning*, literally set the charismatic movement in motion. While the movement didn't start with Bennett (it was a sovereign movement that ignited like so many wildfires in hundreds of areas across the United States), it was the prayer meetings in Bennett's Van Nuys, California, church that gave it national publicity.

*Nine O'clock* was one of the earlier books published by Logos Publishers. I helped Dennis with some of the editing and rewriting. I was struck by his insistence on detail. He was the only writer I knew who used Liquid Paper to white out his mistakes. Fellow writer/editor Bob Slosser simply x-ed out his mistakes and kept writing—as most of the old newspaper writers did. Me—I would insert a new sheet of paper if I made a serious error. Then I would back up and take another running start. But Dennis used white-out.

Later, word processing changed all that. Dennis was again a pioneer—the first Christian writer I knew to purchase a computer. His huge Wang computer, he said, seemed to fill the room. But just as he mastered flying an airplane, he mastered the computer. He would call, often, insisting I shift from typewriter to computer. "It's the way of the future," he said.

"But are you writing anything?" I would ask.

"No, but this thing sure is fun to play with."

It's amazing how those little details come back when you sit and think about the loss of a dear friend.

Dennis, along with Slosser, David du Plessis, Gen. Ralph Haines, other early charismatic leaders and I served with Dan Malachuk on the original board for Logos International Fellowship. Those were the golden years of the charismatic movement. We would meet quarterly—sometimes

more frequently—at Dan's big house in New Jersey, planning world conferences, discussing book publishing and trying to figure out where the Holy Spirit was going. When crises arose in the kingdom—such as the shepherding crisis or the fuss over charismatics rebaptizing Episcopalians—we served together on "summit committees." We never did settle any of the crises, but the fellowship was sweet.

I quoted from him extensively in the last issue of the *Buckingham Report*. At age 74, he was one of the clear voices speaking about the dangerous direction his own denomination was taking. "My own conscience will not let me stay unless I make my position clear and can do something to help," he had written.

Now that voice is stilled. His wife, Rita, found him slumped in his chair at his word processor, where he had been working on an article. He had died instantly of a heart attack. What a wonderful way to exit!

Like a number of people from his generation, Dennis felt the Lord had given him a "life verse"—a personal vision statement. His verse was Acts 26:19, from Paul's statement before King Agrippa. He lived it out until he drew his last breath: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (NKJV).

### TRY A MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE

For the last three years, our church has held a communion service on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter. The term "maundy" is an English corruption of the Latin word *mandatum* (from which we get our word "mandate"), which means "commandment." Although it is an ancient church tradition carried on primarily in liturgical churches, it has become more popular in all



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churches over the last several years.

Maundy Thursday is a celebration of the institution of Holy Communion and a commemoration of the events of the upper room on the night before Jesus' crucifixion. The "commandment" referred to in the liturgical name is from John 13:34ff ("a new commandment I give to you..."). The *mandatum* later became the name of the act of foot washing that began the sacred service.

This year, Maundy Thursday comes on April 16. If you decide to hold such a service, you need to start planning now.

The service our church uses is a much shortened version of the Office of Tennebrae ("darkness"), used by the Greek Orthodox to celebrate the "royal hours." Traditionally, the passion passages are arranged in 12 readings and are read or sung on the hour throughout the night, followed by the rite of darkness (to commemorate the darkness that veiled the cross at Jesus' death).

In our modified service, we clear the platform, except for a long table draped with a floor-length white cloth, which is set perpendicular to the congregation. There are 12 chairs at the table, arranged so there are five men sitting on one side facing six men on the other, with the pastor at the head, facing the congregation. A single, unlit candle sits in front of each man. The auditorium is darkened with only a spotlight on the table.

The content of our service was designed by pastor Michael Thompson:

## THE OFFICE OF TENNEBRAE

Prelude music—organ and/or piano

Opening Explanation and Invocation

### Congregational Call to Worship:

*"Behold the Lamb" (chorus)*

Lighting of Candles—12 on stage table; 6 at communion stations around the room.

Reading #1 .....Jeremiah 31:31-34

Reading #2 .....Isaiah 42:1-4

*(Each man will light his candle when it comes his time to read, then read his assigned passage. A portable mike is passed from man to man.)*

### Congregational Hymn:

*"And Can It Be?"*

Reading #3 .....John 13:1-5, 12-17,  
34-35

Reading #4 .....Matthew 26:20-30

## Holy Communion:

*(Piano solo while people get up and move to various stations throughout the darkened auditorium, then return to seats in silence.)*

Reading #5 .....Matthew 26:31-35

Reading #6 .....Mark 14:32-41

## Responsorial Psalm:

*(Solo chant with response by men at table.)*

Reading #7 .....John 17:1-6

Reading #8 .....John 17:5-22

## Congregational Hymn:

*"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"*

Reading #9 .....John 18:1-5

Reading #10 .....Mark 15:16-20

## Congregational Hymn:

*"O Sacred Head Now Wounded"*

Reading #11 .....Isaiah 53:1-6

Reading #12 (Pastor) ..Psalm 22:1-2, 6-7,  
14-18, 23-24, 29-31

## Moment of Darkness and Silence:

*(All candles and house lights extinguished.)*

## Relighting of 12th Candle:

*(Pastor relights his candle, reads John 1:4-5.)*

## Sacred Dance:

*(Spotlight follows solo dancer interpreting "Embrace the Cross.")*

## Benediction & Threefold Amen:

*(Leave in silence.)*

**Note:** The service may be preceded by a time of voluntary foot washing in another room(s) in the building.

## A DAY WITH RICHARD DORTCH

The man reminds me of Adoniram Judson, the first missionary to Burma. When he emerged from the Burmese prison dungeon, the power of God was on him. The cuffs and shackles had left his wrists and ankles badly scarred. But the heathen witch doctors were scared of him. "It's okay for the people to listen to the other missionaries," they said. "But when the man with the scars speaks, things happen."

After 16 months in a federal prison, Richard Dortch is scarred. He went from being one of the most respected leaders in the Assemblies of God to one of the most powerful men in Christian television. But as second-in-command to Jim Bakker at PTL, he got caught in a web that destroyed many and wounded thousands who had invested money.

Speaking to a small group of pastors in

Lakeland, Florida, recently, Dortch told some of his story. Unlike Bakker, who maintained his innocence throughout his trial, Dortch says he pleaded guilty to the government charges because he was guilty. He served his time at the federal prison at Egland Air Force Base in northern Florida. While he was there, doctors discovered cancer in his left kidney. He went through radical surgery. Yet, through it all, he says, the sustaining presence of God was sufficient.

"I am a better man for having gone through this," he told me. His theme in prison was: "Whatever it takes, Lord, to be more like You."

"The day that is etched in my mind," he said, "is the day I entered prison. Mildred [his wife], my daughter and her husband were with me at the gate. Mildred squeezed my hand and said, 'We're at the top of the mountain. It's all downhill from here.'"

And things do seem to be turning around. The North Carolina district board of the Assemblies of God, prodded by superintendent Charles Cookman, voted unanimously to receive Dortch back into fellowship. He has recovered from the cancer operation and is growing stronger each day. His ministry, Life Challenge, based in Clearwater, Florida, is designed to help professionals who have failed in life. He is traveling extensively, speaking on the subject of "integrity." This, by the way, is the subject of his book about to be released by New Leaf Publishers: *Integrity: How I Got It, Lost It, and the Journey Back*.

He may be contacted through Life Challenge, Box 15009, Clearwater, FL 34629. Phone: (813) 799-5433. People everywhere need to hear this man with the scars.

## A PLACE OF HEALING AND RESTORATION

I've often listed places around the nation where pastors and leaders can find emotional and psychological help. Recently Marjorie Lee Chandler, wife of *Los Angeles Times* religion editor Russell Chandler, wrote me about Marble Retreat, high in the Rockies in Marble, Colorado. Run by Louis McBurney, a Christian psychiatrist, it has been in operation for nearly 20 years, providing "help for stress-worn Christian workers." The program at this miniature L'Abri is two weeks long. McBurney and his wife, Melissa, work together with

four couples at a time. Melissa also hosts weekend counseling sessions specifically for ministers' wives. Contact: Marble Retreat, 139 Bannockburn, Marble, CO 81623. Phone: (303) 963-2499.

## GOOD NEWS FROM THE KINGDOM

With all the news about scandal among the shepherds, it's good to hear of genuine Christian behavior among the sheep.

Last year, Florida police arrested a 35-year-old woman suspected of being a serial killer. Aileen Wuornos had admitted to posing as a prostitute, often hitchhiking, who would then lure middle-aged men to their deaths along Florida highways. She had been indicted in the deaths of five men and was suspected in the death of one more, whose bullet-ridden body, clad only in tube socks, was found alongside a rural road. She was being held without bail in Citrus County Jail.

Shortly after she was arrested, she started receiving visits from a Pentecostal couple in Ocala. Robert and Arlene Pralle discovered Wuornos had been abandoned by her mother when she was an infant, raised by grandparents and living on her own since she was 16. The Pralles, who own a farm where they breed show horses, began writing her. "You're going to think I'm crazy," Arlene Pralle wrote, "but Jesus Himself told me to write you."

The communication intensified—daily letters, weekly visits and two phone calls a night. "It makes no difference to me or my husband whether she's guilty or innocent," the 44-year-old Pralle said. "She is still a human being and deserves to have a friend."

Today she has more than a friend. Robert and Arlene Pralle have adopted Aileen Wuornos and are now her legal mother and father.

Aileen Wuornos may go to the electric chair, but she'll not be alone. Her Christian mom and dad will be with her all the way. And since she accepted the Lord last March, so will her heavenly Father.

## CHRISTIAN WRITERS CONFERENCES

For the last six years, author/editor David Manual and I have directed an annual four-day workshop for Christian writers. This year, because of increasing popularity, we will have two—one in Arizona, and the other on Cape Cod. The first workshop will be April 7-10 at the Community of

Living Water in Cornville, Arizona. The second will be October 6-9 at the Community of Jesus in Orleans, Massachusetts. This is an intense time for serious writers. Registration is \$295 and is limited to 60 participants in each location. Prior manuscript submissions are required. We'll cover fiction, non-fiction, magazines, books and newsletter writing—plus separate workshops on poetry. For registration and information contact: Lee Brownson, Box 443, Cornville, AZ 86325. Phone: 602-634-4421. Fax: 602-443-8299.

## VINEYARD DISCIPLINES PROPHETIC LEADER

The moral fall of a respected leader is one of the saddest events in Christendom. Over the past few years, we've been inundated with news of leaders—evangelical, Catholic and Pentecostal—who have fallen before the fiery darts of Satan.

The recent problems in Jimmy Swaggart's life, just when some of us were so hopeful he was making progress, have devastated many—and perhaps spell the end to another tower of Babel rising, as was PTL, to man's glory.

Now news has come that one of the high-profile prophets in the Vineyard ministry has fallen. Bob Jones, for a number of years associated with the Kansas City Fellowship (now Metro Vineyard Fellowship) is being disciplined by his superiors. Pastor Mike Bickle and the elders of the Kansas City church—as well as the elders of Vineyard International—have acted with commendable dispatch and compassion to police the matter. Under ordinary circumstances, we would not report this—feeling it was being handled properly in-house. However, because Vineyard leader John Wimber has distributed an explanation to all Vineyard pastors and other leaders, we feel it is proper to commend his example and, with sad hearts, to publish his letter:

*"Dear Friend of the Vineyard,*

*When a leader falls into sin, the Word tells us that elders 'who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning' (1 Tim. 5:20, NIV). We, the national Vineyard leadership, believe that the rebuke of a leader discovered sinning should be published at a level commensurate with his visibility and ministry. Therefore, with much sorrow, we are writing this letter to you.*

*It has been discovered, confirmed and confessed to that Bob Jones, a recent associate of the Vineyard, and with a nationally recognized prophetic ministry, has been involved in serious sin. His actions have necessitated his being removed from all ministry at this time. The sins for which Bob has been removed from ministry include using his gifts to manipulate people for his personal desires, sexual misconduct, rebelling against pastoral authority, slandering leaders and the promotion of bitterness within the body of Christ.*

*Regarding our pastoral concerns, our goal at this time is not Bob's restoration to ministry, but his restoration to his walk with Christ. Presently, Bob is fully cooperating with honesty and humility, and we are choosing to believe that his repentance is sincere. We ask you to pray for Bob and his wife and for us as we work together with them. A second, just as significant, pastoral concern is for those who have been sinned against. They are receiving pastoral counseling and are being helped in every way possible.*

*With any moral failure—whether it's done by a home-fellowship leader, pastor or evangelist—it's important to distinguish the ministry from the sin. In this instance, we encourage those of you who have been positively ministered to by Bob to hold onto those good things God has done in you.*

*We encourage you not to make judgments against the value of the prophetic based on this incident, but would rather ask you to rejoice with us as we obey the words of the apostle Paul, 'Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourselves or you also may be tempted. Carry each others' burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ' (Gal. 6:1-2).*

*Sincerely in Christ,*

*John Wimber*

*for the National Board and Council"*

