

FOUNDATIONS

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Ministry and Vocation
Jesus Teaching on Money
A Christian View of War
Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare
Lloyd-Jones and Evangelicalism
Princeton Theology
Old Testament Literature Survey

British Evangelical
Council

FOUNDATIONS

Foundations is published by the **British Evangelical Council** in May and November; its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, biblical theology, church history and apologetics—and to indicate their relevance to pastoral ministry; its policy gives particular attention to the theology of evangelical churches which are outside pluralist ecumenical bodies.

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Editor's Notes

This issue contains several articles dealing with different aspects of practical theology. In these notes I would like to draw your attention to a number of recent books that are concerned with one area of practical theology, namely urban ministry.

One of the names most commonly associated with urban ministry is that of the late **Harvie Conn** who served for a number of years until his death as professor of missions at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. I remember hearing Dr Conn speak at a student conference when I was a student in the USA in the 1970s and being deeply moved by his love of the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ, passion for justice and concern for the city. It has been a delight then to read Conn's *Urban Ministry* (IVP/USA 2001) which he almost completed before his death and which was completed by his colleague and successor **Manuel Ortiz**. The book is essentially a manual for urban church leaders. While theological in nature, the book contains a vast amount of historical and sociological material as well chapters on practical aspects of ministry such as spiritual warfare, social transformation, prayer, pastoral care, training, mentoring and much else. Theologically *Urban Ministry* owes much to the redemptive-historical tradition pioneered by Geerhardus Vos. In relation to the city this means that Conn sees it within the unfolding plan of redemption whereby God's ultimate purpose is to bring into being a perfect city in which righteousness dwells. In some measure the peace lost at the fall is to be sought and realised among the redeemed living in the fallen cities of man in this world even as they wait for the perfect peace of the new Jerusalem. He has a wonderful image of churches being model homes in cities of man that demonstrate what God is planning in his city to come. For Conn such peace is not narrowly spiritual but embraces the whole of human life. I strongly urge all readers working in cities to read this book, but even for those who don't this book is a passionate call to preach and live out the gospel of peace in all its richness wherever we are. But we do need to hear Conn's call for evangelicals to give serious attention to urban ministry, which sadly too few do. For Christians cities are not only places where evil is concentrated and to be bemoaned, endured or fled from as too many evangelicals have, but rather places at the heart of God's redemptive purpose in history that are to be celebrated, enjoyed and blessed with the gospel (Proverbs 11:11; Galatians 3:14). When we realise that the nations are coming to cities in ever increasing numbers we can see how missiologically significant cities are. Who doesn't want to be where the action is?

Many of Conn's concerns are found in a book dedicated to his memory entitled *The Urban Face of Mission* (Presbyterian & Reformed 2002) and edited by **Manuel Ortiz and Susan Baker**. This book focuses on urban mission, but not exclusively and contains a number of chapters on challenges and issues facing missions in general today. One of the key issues dealt with in several chapters is ministerial training appropriate for urban mission. A previously unpublished article by Conn deals with this, as do those by Roger and Edna Greenway among others. Is the university model of training so prevalent today really the best way to train effective gospel ministers for

mission in cities or anywhere else for that matter? Manuel Ortiz's chapter helpfully looks at the missionary nature of the church in an urban context and particularly the nature of the leadership it needs. There are other articles by well-known missiologists such as Raymond Bakke (Urbanisation and Evangelism), Samuel Escobar, Tite Tienou, Charles Kraft, Mark Gornik (Doing the Word: Biblical Holism and Urban Ministry). As one would expect in a book like this the articles vary in quality and relevance, but overall they force us to think about mission in the increasingly diverse and fast-changing cultures in which we find ourselves. While not compromising the gospel we must think hard about doing mission today. Another book that can help us do this by **Mark Gornik** who contributed to the previous volume. In *To Live in Peace* (William B. Eerdmans 2002), Gornik offers one the best expositions of the holistic approach to gospel ministry advocated by Conn and others. Based on Gornik's experience in planting the New Song Church a inner city Baltimore, *To Live in Peace* explores how the gospel of peace is to be preached and demonstrated in an urban context. I found the chapter entitled 'The Things that make for Peace' particularly helpful. Here Gornik applies the theme of exile to the church and particularly the call in Jeremiah 29 that is taken up in the NT in 1 Peter and elsewhere for God's people to seek the peace of the cities where they live as sojourners. I find the case he makes for the centrality of social ministry in the life of the church persuasive and compelling. One of the themes of the books that I have mentioned so far is the need to look again at theological education. In *Transforming the City: Reframing Education for Urban Ministry* (William B Eerdmans, 2002) **Eldin Villafane** of Gordon-Conwell Seminary and others do just that. Much of the book consists of case studies of different approaches to theological education. There is some interesting material here, but I think this book will be of interest primarily to theological educators. Again the challenge is to think hard about what training is for and then develop training that is appropriate whether in cities or elsewhere.

In *Through Our Long Exile* (Darton, Longman & Todd) **Kenneth Leech** is as passionate about the city as the above writers, but theologically a long way away. Leech works in my neck of the woods as the Community Theologian of St. Botolph's Church in the City of London. For years he has been doing 'community theology' in the East End, which seems to involve reflecting on life and social and justice issues in the light of the broad themes of Christian theology. In this book Leech paints a fascinating picture of the East End that makes the book worth buying in itself if you have an interest in this wonderful part of London. What is less worthwhile is the theology, which is pretty thin. There is no real attempt to understand and apply Scripture or even the Christian tradition, but instead Leech throws out various theological lines of thought that are left to the reader to do something with. His theological tradition is Anglo-Catholic and I suspect that he would think the theological concerns of this journal and its readers are largely irrelevant to the inner city. Certainly what he says about homosexuality is unacceptable to evangelicals. Interestingly he does not mention any evangelical churches or leaders in his account of religious life in East London and yet evangelical churches of all varieties, past and present, have been and are very much alive and making an impact evangelistically and socially in the community.

continued on page 5

Ministry and Vocation

Bill James

Is the work of the pastor more important or more spiritual than the work of a Christian banker, or builder, or bus conductor, or are all employments equally valuable in the sight of God? Is it only the missionary or the preacher who has received a call to Christian service, or can you be 'called' to be a Christian full-time mother, or say that God has given you a vocation as a school teacher?

Before the Reformation, there was a clear divide between the 'spiritual' and 'secular' vocations. Physical labour was considered to be less than ideal for the truly spiritual life. While a monastic vocation would usually include some practical work—e.g. farming—this was often seen as an exercise in humility, doing something painfully menial to purify the soul. The ultimate activities were prayer and worship, and the copying of sacred texts in the monastic cell.¹

The reformers rejected this distinction. William Tyndale wrote that 'there is difference betwixt washing of dishes and preaching of the Word of God; but as touching to please God, none at all'.² Similarly, the puritan Perkins observed 'The action of a shepherd in keeping sheep ... is as good a work before God as is the action of a judge in giving a sentence, or a magistrate in ruling, or a minister in preaching'.³

Turning to the Scriptures, the apostle Paul teaches the Corinthian church to regard their daily work as their 'calling' (1 Corinthians 7:17, 24). In Corinth the church tended towards an over-spiritualised view of the Christian life and seemed to imagine that natural/physical aspects of life could be set aside. They were ready to cast off the restraints of marriage, slavery, and even Jewish/Gentile identity. The men were indifferent to their physical bodies to the point of using prostitutes. While modern forms of dualistic thinking might not err to such extremes, they suggest that it would be preferable to cast off the yoke of 'ordinary' labour, and embrace the 'spiritual' alternative of 'full-time ministry'.

Paul counters such thinking by exhorting believers not to reject the human circumstances of their lives, but rather to receive these as God's 'calling' to them.⁴ Indeed, his definition of 'calling' embraces all the details of life which God has providentially appointed, including whether they are circumcised or not, or married to a non-Christian spouse. This certainly includes all of our work, whether or not it is paid employment. We may have had some intelligent involvement in choosing our vocation. We might assess our gifts and interests, and think of where we might best serve the Lord. Or like Joseph, Daniel, Esther, or a Corinthian slave, we might simply find ourselves in a work situation which we did not consciously choose. But all is within the sovereign providence of God. We receive this as our spiritual vocation.

Paul's teaching leads us to a balanced view of the Christian life. We still live in the present created order (albeit subject to sin and the curse), and are still called to fulfil the creation mandate. There is nothing 'unspiritual' about physical life and labour;

indeed the new heavens and the new earth will have a distinctly physical character, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15.

Our 'spirituality' is not defined by the work we do, rather by the spirit in which we do it. As Christian believers our overriding call is to do everything to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17, 23–24). Whatever we do to his glory is pleasing and acceptable in his sight.

This article develops the positive view of all work and service as equally valuable 'callings' from God, concluding with some practical applications for church life. To avoid associating work only with paid employment, I use the following definition of work: 'Serving God in those duties and responsibilities to which he has called us for his glory and the benefit of others'.

The Vocation of Work in a Sinful World

Those afflicted by a dualistic mindset would prefer us to be engaged only in occupations which are clearly and distinctly 'spiritual'. Yet Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 takes a different view. Obviously if a Corinthian Christian was converted as a prostitute, or a pagan priest, then clearly their new-found faith would require a change of occupation. Yet Paul encourages believers to remain in situations where there are real issues of compromise at stake. Corinthian church members were serving as slaves in ungodly households. One could argue that their service was facilitating their masters' lifestyle, yet Paul teaches that they must continue where they are.

In our modern society, there will be many Christians working for employers and companies which are far from Christian in their ethos. The profits of their enterprise may go to directors or shareholders who use the proceeds for causes which are far from Christian. So the believing employee may feel like Daniel and his friends, labouring in the civil service of Babylon. Yet this is what God has called them to.

We are reminded of the example of Naaman, converted to the God of Israel after being cleansed of his leprosy. As he set off back to the king of Aram, he asked Elisha for forgiveness because one of Naaman's duties would be to accompany the king into the temple of Rimmon and bow with him to the idol. This may strike us as great compromise, an issue on which Naaman should have been taught to take a stand. But Jacques Ellul makes the perceptive and more positive comment that at least Naaman recognises that Rimmon is an idol and that compromise will be involved. Ellul asks 'Are we so sure, when we serve idols, that we can see they are idols? ... When we choose to serve the powers that employ us, are we so sure we have the discernment of this general?'⁵ Naaman has recognised that there will always be this irreconcilable tension—of carrying Israelite soil back to his homeland to sacrifice and worship there, and yet at the same time to be a loyal servant of a regime which is hostile to Israel and a stranger to the true and living God.

These are the tensions which affect Christian people every day. In our work we seek to glorify God, yet by our faithful and diligent labour we are supporting a company, a system which is far from godly. Our employer may be involved in exploitative labour practices in the third world, promote policies which are unfriendly to the Biblical view of family, and have as their ultimate goal a materialistic and greedy profit motive. Every organisation in this world is shot through with human sinfulness. And the Christian worker has to live with this tension. Like Daniel in Babylon he may faithfully

employ his gifts and support the regime. He may be willing to read all manner of pagan literature and have to submit to training courses which are problematic from a Christian point of view (Daniel 1:4–5). Yet at other points he will take a distinctive stand and refuse to comply—as Daniel and his friends did regarding food from the king’s table, or bowing down before the statue he had made. Sometimes the Bible surprises us with where the faithful draw the lines. You cannot read the account of Joseph in Egypt without at least raising your eyebrows at his willingness to bring the whole nation into slavery to Pharaoh (Genesis 47:20ff).

From this perspective, the work of the pastor or other ‘full-time Christian worker’ is very simple by comparison. We are called to live by the Scriptures and to apply their teaching in our churches as comprehensively and consistently as we can. But our congregations go out into the world where they constantly have to juggle priorities and principles and make wise judgments about drawing lines around compliance and compromise. If we tend towards a secular/spiritual divide, then a ‘purely spiritual’ occupation will of course be more appealing. But that is not the Biblical position. Rather it is the calling of the pastor to teach and preach the word of God so that the principles of truth and practice will be clearly evident, enabling believers to make wise judgments in the tensions and pressures of life in the midst of a sinful world.

The Vocation of Work in a Perishing World

It is a sense of calling which gives to the Christian worker his sense of purpose. Too often have I heard the complaint ‘What I am doing now has no meaning. It is just doing a job, producing goods, which will all finally perish when the Last Great Day arrives. If only I was in Christian ministry ...’

It is possible, of course, to be driven to cynicism by the frustrations of work in this present world. As the writer of Ecclesiastes expressed it:

What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labours under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23 NIV).

But that is not a Christian view of work. Because we are not simply working for perishable things, and mortality and decay. We are working for the Lord. It is that sense of labouring for him that lends dignity and meaning to our labours. This is the work which he has called us to do; he might have called us elsewhere to do other things, but for now he has given us a sacred trust of the job we have at hand. And so we trust that while so much will perish into dust yet he will ‘establish the work of our hands’ (Psalm 90:17). There is a value in all labour done for his glory; in his eternal economy we know that our ‘labour in the Lord is not in vain’ (1 Corinthians 15:58). Even at work we fulfil our calling to glorify God and enjoy him forever—at work, in our work, and through our work.

The Vocation of Work as a Valued Ministry

If we are to reflect Biblical teaching, then we must insist on the equal value in the sight of God of all callings, whether they be as Bible teacher or classroom teacher, whether church planter or farmer, whether international banker or Christian missionary. It is not that one is more ‘spiritual’ than the other, but simply that God has given to each

member of the church distinctive gifts and a particular calling as the sphere in which we are to work out our Christian obedience. Nor is the working life of a Christian to be regarded as an unfortunate necessity, or an inconvenience which limits the time we can give to church activities or reading our Bibles. No—we have been called by God not only to be Christians, but to be Christian office workers, or builders, or lawyers, or full-time mothers, or computer techies, or whatever our vocation might be. That is our spiritual service.

We can be rather attached to the notion of the ‘superiority’ of the calling or vocation of the ‘full-time Christian worker’ (which implies that other Christians are only part-timers?). We say that many of our church members have ‘secular’ employment, whereas the pastor is called to ‘spiritual’ ministry. We can suggest that when someone is ‘called to the ministry’ that involves a special sense of call and vocation which other less privileged believers do not share. Yet the Biblical foundations of such convictions are distinctly shaky. There are clear accounts of supernatural and direct ‘calls’ to the Old Testament prophets, to the apostles and especially to Paul. But at the end of the New Testament age, when the emphasis shifted away from such foundational ministries to the callings of eldership and evangelist, there was no such expectation of direct revelation. Paul teaches Timothy to train the next generation of church leaders by entrusting to them the Gospel tradition ‘... the things you have heard me say ... entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others’ (2 Timothy 2:2). The emphasis is more on the church leadership to select and to train than on the individual to receive a ‘call’ in some sense more mysterious or spiritual than any other.

It is a wonderful privilege to be called to spend your working life studying, teaching and preaching the Word God. It is a great responsibility to be a herald of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a world which needs to hear the message of salvation. Yet in God’s economy these are callings of equal value in his sight with those who have different gifts and work for him in different ways. And we are not to look across at other members of the body and regard them as inferior because they have different gifts or are working in a different sphere to our own. That is precisely what Paul condemns (1 Corinthians 12:21ff): ‘The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”’

We need to consider, very briefly, how we apply these principles to church life. There is space only to make a few practical observations:

We need to strive for balance in urging believers to consider pastoral, missionary or evangelistic work.

Great wisdom is needed here. We can rightly emphasise the needs of the church and of the world. There are sometimes those within our churches who have the gifts for missionary service, and simply have not grasped the desperate needs of the world for preachers, teachers and evangelists, not to mention the host of support ministries required in the missionary enterprise. Some believers might be trapped in materialism, or unwilling to step outside the comfort zone of their present employment and lifestyle.

Yet in making these needs known, the dangers are also clearly evident. We can too easily suggest (implicitly if not explicitly) that the truly spiritual will want to go into ‘full-time ministry’. In our churches it is only the missionaries whose colour photos adorn our noticeboards, and whose prayer letters demand our attention, to pray for their

every need. There is little or no attention given to the Christian accountant, or midwife, or engineer who faces constant tensions and ethical dilemmas in seeking to live out a Christian life in the workplace. Or the full-time mother facing the pressures and frustrations of childcare, and trying to take opportunities to befriend neighbours at the school gate. How much teaching is given to these issues of everyday Christian life in the workplace? And is there any practical support to be found? If we are to follow Paul's teaching and regard every employment as God's vocation for our lives, then we need to help and support each one, as each member of the body plays its part.

In any organisation, it is a tendency of the leaders to recruit people like themselves, and to try and influence their workers to become more like them. So in church leadership the pastor's burden for his own ministry may well translate into a desire to see as many as possible in 'Christian' work. But when the Roman soldiers and tax collectors (hardly 'spiritual' professions!) came to John the Baptist he taught them not to change their job, but to work faithfully, honestly, and with integrity. That is to be our emphasis too.

We need to respect the demands placed on those who are called to high-pressure employment.

Working life today is typically characterised by long hours and stress. This is a cycle which is difficult to escape. An individual believer might choose to change their job or at least refuse a promotion to avoid the all-consuming demands of the office, but then struggle with the different challenge of frustration in doing a job which is well below their capacity.

At church, we too easily measure the spirituality of each member by their attendance at meetings or involvement in church activities. 'He is hardly ever at the prayer meeting.' Or in contrast 'She is so faithful in doing children's work'. We want our members to settle with us for many years, not to move away to make the next step in their career.

It is true that church involvement may simply be a question of priorities or commitment. But what of the believer who is called to work in a job with long hours, or travel which takes him away for one or more nights each week? One church member may have ample time and gifts to serve as a deacon, while another may not be often seen, not even always on Sundays. But is the latter then less spiritual? Or is it that the Lord has given to them a different calling, of equal value in his sight? If so, then his labours in the office are just as much to the glory of God as leading a children's club or preaching on Sunday morning. And he is in great need of our prayers for the Lord to uphold him in the challenging lifestyle he maintains.

We need to affirm the value of work as a Christian calling, not simply as a platform for evangelism.

Without God's wise providence of calling believers to so many different spheres of human activity, how could we operate as salt and light within our world? If Christians are not involved, then we will make no impact. If all the spiritually mature, gifted and zealous believers retreated into 'the ministry', how impoverished our world would be!

Paul reminds us of the great impact of a faithful Christian testimony at work in Titus 2:9-10. Yet it is interesting to notice that Paul's emphasis is on working hard and

working well. He speaks of being subject to our masters, trying to please them, **not** talking back, not stealing, showing that we can be fully trusted. And by this means the teaching of the Gospel is made attractive. The emphasis is not on verbal witness.

Of course we should pray for, and take, opportunities to speak to our workmates about Christ (1 Peter 3:15–16). But if we see our employment simply as another opportunity for evangelism, then we have slipped back into the secular/spiritual mentality and are thinking of work being worthy only insofar as it is a vehicle for the ‘spiritual’ ministry of evangelism. Rather, Paul speaks of the Christian testimony of the work *itself* being of value and being done diligently to the glory of God. We are to rejoice in doing our work well in the Name of Christ.

I close with the testimony of Calvin Seerveld about his father who was a Christian fishmonger:

I remember a Thursday afternoon long ago when my Dad was selling a large carp to a prosperous woman and it was a battle to convince her. ‘Is it fresh?’ The fish fairly bristled with freshness. It had just come in. But the game was part of the sale. They had gone over it anatomically together: the eyes were bright, the gills were in good colour, the flesh was firm, the belly was even spare and solid, the tail showed not much waste, the price was right ... Finally my Dad held up the fish behind the counter, ‘Beautiful, beautiful! Shall I clean it up?’ And as she grudgingly assented, ruefully admiring the way the bargain had been struck, she said, ‘My, you certainly didn’t miss your calling’.

Unwittingly she spoke the truth. My father is in full-time service for the Lord—prophet, priest and king in the fish business ... When I watch my Dad’s hands—big beefy hands with broad stubby fingers each twice the thickness of mine—they could never play a piano—when I watch those hands delicately split the back of a mackerel ... twinkling at work without complaint, past temptation, always in faith consecratedly cutting up fish before the face of the Lord—when I see that, I *know* God’s grace can come down to a man’s hands and the flash of a scabby fish knife.⁶

Those fish are now long gone. But that fishmonger wasn’t working ultimately for the fish, nor even for his customers, but for the glory of God. So the value of his work endures.

- 1 Alister McGrath ‘Roots that Refresh’ in *Faith in the Everyday World: The Dignity of Human Work* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), pp. 139ff.
- 2 Quoted in Leyland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure*, (Baker, 1995), p. 104.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Amongst the commentators, Gordon Fee in the NICNT series is reluctant to see in this passage a specific affirmation of God’s call to particular circumstances of life; rather our life-situation is the arena in which we are to work out our ‘call’ (i.e. salvation). However his view is not shared by the older commentators, including Calvin. Furthermore it is debatable if the thrust of Fee’s position makes very much practical difference to the application of the text.
- 5 Jacques Ellul, *The politics of God and the politics of man* (Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 37–38.
- 6 Quoted in ‘Christians at Work’ Briefing Paper ‘Thinking Biblically about Work—Part 2—Redemption and Work’.

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Jesus's Teaching on Money

PG Nelson

I have been thinking about Jesus's teaching on money. This is a very important subject, affecting, as it does, the life of every Christian. Yet it is one that is rarely discussed in British evangelical circles, and about which relatively little has been written. There has been more discussion in the US, but with writers taking up widely different positions, and reading the Bible accordingly.¹

I shall take as my starting point Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19–34). He gave similar teaching on other occasions (Luke 12:13–34; 16:1–13). I shall bring this in as appropriate.

Wealth

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his disciples:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19–21).

He went on to say:

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (v. 4).

Mammon is an Aramaic word (*māmôn*) meaning money or wealth (Jesus spoke in Aramaic). Paul expressed the same truth in the saying: 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils' (1 Timothy 6:10).

What Jesus meant by 'lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven' he explained on another occasion (Luke 12:32–34):

Sell your possessions and give alms; provide for yourselves moneybags that do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys (v. 33).

He also told parables to emphasise the folly of holding on to one's money, and the wisdom of using it to help others (the Parables of the Rich Fool, the Shrewd Manager, and the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 12:13–21; 16:1–13, 19–31). In the second parable, although the manager acted dishonestly (he reduced debts owed to his master, vv. 5–7), he is commended for his shrewdness (v. 8), because, by reducing the debts, he made friends who would help him in the future (v. 4). Jesus told his disciples to prepare likewise for the future (by giving to the needy):

I tell you, make friends for *yourselves* by means of unrighteous mammon,² so that when it fails, they may receive you into eternal dwellings (v. 9).

Jesus later told his disciples that he would judge the peoples of the world by how they helped 'the least of these my brothers' (Matthew 25:31–46).

Jesus's teaching was passed on by the apostles. Paul enjoined the rich to lay up treasure in heaven (1 Timothy 6:17–19); James warns what will happen to those who lay up treasure on earth (James 1:9–11; 4:13–5:6).

How far?

A key question is, how fully does Jesus expect disciples to carry out his instruction, 'Sell your possessions and give alms'? This question cannot be answered precisely. He told a crowd that they had to renounce *all* their possessions (Luke 14:25–33):

... any of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple' (v. 33).
He likewise told the rich young ruler to sell all that he had (Luke 18:18–23): 'Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven ...' (v. 22).

But he accepted Zacchaeus, who said he would give half (Luke 19:1–10):

Look, Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have demanded anything from anyone falsely, I restore fourfold (v. 8).

Jesus evidently judged that Zacchaeus had renounced his possessions sufficiently fully to accept him. How incompletely other seekers can renounce their possessions for Jesus still to accept them we do not know. We only know that he is gracious (cf. Mark 9:23–27), but that his grace cannot be presumed (Matthew 7:21–23). For this reason I think we have to take Luke 14:33 ('renounce all possessions') as Jesus's standard, even though he may accept less.³ Zacchaeus illustrates Jesus's teaching that, while it will be very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, with God it would not be impossible (Luke 18:24–30).

Luke records that the early Christians shared what they had so that the poor among them might be provided for (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37, etc.). Later on collections were made at the better-off churches to relieve the poor ones (Acts 11:27–30, 1 Corinthians 16:1–4, etc.). Paul encouraged the Corinthians to give generously (2 Corinthians 8–9): while assuring them that he did not expect them to give more than an equal share of what they had (8:13–15), he reminded them, 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich' (8:9), and 'God loves a cheerful giver' (9:7).

These actions of the early church couple Jesus's directive to give alms with his new commandment, 'love one another ...' (John 13:34–35). But his directive extends to needy unbelievers as well. Paul wrote, 'as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith' (Galatians 6:10). He reminded the Ephesians of the words of Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35).

Financial security

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus went on to apply the principle, 'You cannot serve God and mammon', to worrying about money (Matthew 6:25–34). He told his disciples not to worry about food and clothing, assuring them that, if God feeds the birds and clothes the fields, he will certainly provide for them (vv. 25–30). He concluded:

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" For after all these things the nations seek, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble (vv. 31–34).

Jesus seems to be speaking here, not only to disciples who do not know where tomorrow's food and clothing will come from (the poor), but also to those who want to be *sure* where these will come from, and strive to achieve this (those who want

financial security). Thus he stresses that the birds 'neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns' (v. 26), and the lilies of the field 'neither toil nor spin' (vv. 28,29). He repeated this teaching after encountering a man concerned about a will, and telling the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13–31).

Jesus is not suggesting that disciples should not work. Paul understood him to teach that, if a man can work, he should do so, not only to feed himself and his family, but to have something to give to the needy (Acts 20:33–35; Eph. 4:17–32, vv. 20–21, 28; 1 Thessalonians 4:9–12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12). Christians are to work, but for God not mammon.

Paul understood Jesus as not ruling out all saving. Thus he saved up to visit Corinth (2 Corinthians 12:14). However, he did this to avoid burdening the church (his 'children') there. As his saving was designed to help others, it became 'treasure in heaven'.

Relation to Proverbs

While there are hints of Jesus's teaching on wealth in Proverbs (e.g. 23:4–5), there are also statements that apparently contradict it: 'In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but with the gain of the wicked there is trouble' (15:6). 'There is desirable treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man consumes it' (21:20). There are three ways of resolving this tension, depending on one's understanding of the relationship between Old Testament and New Testament.⁴

View 1: Old Testament wisdom still stands. On this view, Jesus's teaching is *balanced* by Proverbs: Proverbs advocates saving a certain amount, Jesus speaks against saving too much.⁵ However, the proposition that Old Testament wisdom still stands cannot be sustained on all issues (e.g. 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth').

View 2: New Testament teaching supersedes Old Testament wisdom. On this view, Jesus's teaching replaces Proverbs.⁶ This makes his teaching more radical. However, this view contradicts Jesus's affirmation of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17–19).⁷

View 3: Jesus fully accepted Old Testament wisdom, but took it further.⁸ On this view, Jesus accepted the wisdom of laying up treasure rather than wasting it, but in heaven not on earth. This view avoids the problems of the other views, and brings out the radical nature of Jesus's teaching.

On work New Testament teaching follows the Old Testament (Proverbs 6:6–11, 'Go to the ant, O sluggard ...').

Making money

When Jesus spoke to the rich young ruler, he began by reminding him of some of the commandments. These included, 'Do not defraud' (Mark 10:19).

This summarises a number of laws of Moses, e.g. not to withhold a labourer's wages (Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:14–15), use false weights and measures (Leviticus 19:35–36, Deuteronomy 25:13–16), or sell land above its value (Leviticus 25:14–17). James spoke against withholding wages (James 5:1–6).

The commandment 'Do not defraud' thus outlaws a variety of business practices: underpaying suppliers, overcharging customers, exploiting workers, mislabelling goods, and so on. It also outlaws a variety of working practices: demanding excessive pay (cf. Luke 3:14), wasting time, feigning illness, helping oneself to perks, etc.

Thus, a Christian is to make money honestly, 'working with his own hands what is good' (Ephesians 4:28).

Lending money on interest

Under the law of Moses, Israelites were not allowed to charge interest⁹ on loans to fellow-Israelites, but they were on loans to foreigners (Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35–38, Deuteronomy 23:19–20). This distinction contributed to the Pharisees' gloss on Leviticus 19:18, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy' (Matthew 5:43). Here as elsewhere Jesus raised the standard for his disciples (Matthew 5:44–48, Luke 6:27–36). According to Luke, he told them to 'love' their enemies (vv. 27–28), act well to all (vv. 29–31), and do better than those who only do good to their own kind (vv. 32–34). In particular they should not just lend to one another (without charging interest) as 'even sinners lend to sinners to receive back the same amount (*ta isa*)' (v. 34).¹⁰ Indeed, they should lend, 'not worrying about getting anything back' (v. 35).¹¹ The implication is that Christians should not charge interest on loans to anyone).¹²

It is true that, in the Parable of the Talents, the master tells the servant who buried his talent that he should have deposited it with bankers and made interest on it (Matthew 25:14–30). But this is a *parable* (v. 14)—it is a story taken from the world¹³ to illustrate a spiritual truth. How Jesus literally wants his disciples to use their gifts emerges in the next parable, that of the Sheep and the Goats (vv. 31–46). This is to help the needy (vv. 34–40).

Many forms of investment in modern society involve payment of interest. An exception is share-holding: companies pay a share of their profits to shareholders as a dividend. Jesus's teaching permits share-holding, but only in companies that operate according to Biblical principles. Shareholders not only share profits, but also responsibility for how these profits are made. They cannot share one without the other.

Making money by buying and selling shares involves buying them when they are undervalued and selling them when they are overvalued. The first defrauds the seller and the second the buyer.

Letting property for a rent in excess of that required to cover expenses is equivalent to charging interest on a loan. The landlord effectively lends the value of the property to the tenant, and receives the value back with interest.

Supporting elderly relatives

In his interview with the rich young ruler, Jesus also affirmed the commandment, 'Honour your father and mother' (Mark 10:19). He upbraided the Pharisees for teaching that people need not do this if they gave the money instead to the temple (Matthew 15:1–9). Paul taught that Christians should support widows in their own families (1 Timothy 5:3–8).¹⁴ Jesus himself ensured that his mother was cared for after his death (John 19:25–27).

Taxes

Jesus answered the contentious question of whether Jews should pay taxes to the Romans by saying (Mark 12:13–17):

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (v. 17).

This guided the apostles' attitude to the state (Romans 13:1–7, 1 Peter 2:13–17). Paul taught that Christians should pay taxes because governing authorities are 'God's ministers' to society (Romans 13:6). In other words, taxes are in principle a *good* thing: they fund the public services. Avoidance of tax leaves others to pay for these.

Tithes

Under the law of Moses the Israelites gave one tenth of their produce to feed the Levites (Numbers 18:21–24).¹⁵ The Levites were one of the twelve tribes of Israel and served in the tabernacle or temple (Numbers 18:1–7). They themselves gave a tenth of what they received to the priests (vv. 25–32).

The Pharisees took tithing to extremes, to the neglect of other laws. Jesus told them that they should have kept the latter as well as giving tithes (Matthew 23:23, Luke 11:42).

Whether Jesus intended that Christians should follow the Mosaic pattern (one twelfth of families doing Christian work, the others giving one tenth of their income to support them) is an open question. What is certain is that he wanted there to be an adequate number of Christian workers (Matthew 9:35–37; Luke 10:1–2), and wanted them well supported (Matthew 10:9–10; Luke 10:4–7; 1 Corinthians 9:14, 1 Timothy 5:17–18). A tithe is therefore a good starting point.

Questions

My exposition of Jesus's teaching leaves three practical questions:

1. How much money should Christians save?
2. What should they do with this money?
3. How should churches help seekers who are in debt? These questions are very difficult. I offer some tentative answers below.¹⁶

1. The question of how much money to save is one, I think, individual Christians have to answer for themselves, in the light of Jesus's teaching. Jesus dealt with the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus individually. Christians have to ask why they want to save the amount they do. One may have a good reason for saving a certain sum (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:14), another may not. Each will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Christians should not therefore judge one another on this issue. Paul's teaching in Romans 14 applies. Each should be convinced in his own mind that what he is doing is right (v. 5b).

2. There are two things, I think, Christians can do with their savings. The first is to make interest-free loans to worthy causes. For example, the organisation 'Shared Interest' accepts interest-free loans to lend (with some interest added to cover defaults) to business projects in the Third World. The value of money lent in this way depreciates with inflation. However, the Mosaic law on interest applied regardless of inflation, which was sometimes rampant (Haggai 1:6).

The second thing Christians can do with their savings is to invest in companies that operate according to Biblical principles. Unfortunately, there are few companies today in this category. Even so-called 'ethical' investments include companies that do not fully operate to Biblical principles. Dividends from these companies can be relatively high, implying that they are not paying their suppliers or workers enough, or are charging their customers too much. Christians have to choose companies as wisely as they can, and play an active part in shaping company policy, e.g. by writing to directors and speaking at annual meetings.

A major problem relates to pensions. Holders of pension funds invest on the stock market with little regard for Biblical principles. In the New Testament, elderly Christians were supported by their children or church (1 Timothy 5:3–16). If we today

do not adopt this pattern, we must do all we can to influence pension-fund holders in the investments they make on our behalf.

3. Seekers in debt may be genuine or trying to get money. A church should act in the best interests of both. A possible first step is to present the gospel and offer financial counselling ('We want to see how you have got into debt, and what you can do to get out of it'). This will put off those who are just trying to get money while at the same time helping genuine seekers to set their financial affairs in order. Genuine seekers will try to do this without asking for money. Advice, prayer, and encouragement may be enough to help them to succeed. Inquirers who have been put off should be prayed for until they come back with a desire to change.

If a financial councillor decides that a young Christian does need some financial assistance, an interest-free loan, paid back in instalments, may be better than a gift. Most debts arise from financial indiscipline. A loan encourages discipline better than a gift. Close follow-up is required in such cases.

Let me say again that these answers are tentative. I would be pleased to hear from readers who can improve on them.

Notes

- ¹ For a review see Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches* (Apollos 1999), pp. 21–27.
- ² Lit. 'the mammon of the unrighteousness'.
- ³ For a different view (that in Luke 14:33 Jesus was using hyperbole), see John Stott, *New Issues Facing Christians Today*, (Marshall Pickering 1999); Keith Tondeur, *Your Money and Your Life* (Triangle 1996), pp. 274–275.
- ⁴ Cf. Jonathan Bayes and Christopher Bennett, 'The Christian and God's Law: Two Views', *Foundations*, No. 48, pp. 16–25 (2002).
- ⁵ Blomberg, ch. 8; Paul Mills, in Michael Schluter, et al., *Christianity in a Changing World* (Marshall Pickering 2000), ch. 14; Tondeur, ch. 5.
- ⁶ Cf. Bayes and Bennett.
- ⁷ Cf. P.G. Nelson, *What is the Gospel* (Whittles 1997), pp. 7–9.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ Hebrew *nešek*. In the AV this is translated 'usury', but this word is no longer appropriate, having narrowed in meaning from 'interest of any kind' to 'interest charged at an exorbitant rate'.
- ¹⁰ The NIV is misleading here; compare ESV. Note that the verb is *daneizo* not *tokizo*.
- ¹¹ Lit. 'despairing nothing', the precise sense being determined by the preceding verse.
- ¹² Cf. Mills, ch. 13. Mills (an economist) believes that charging interest on debt is responsible for many of the world's economic problems. For a different view of the Biblical prohibition (that it was cultural), see Sider, p. 76.
- ¹³ The master is described as 'a hard man', reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not scattered (vv. 24, 26). Hence his worldly suggestion (v. 27). (Luke 19:11–27 is similar.)
- ¹⁴ Paul seems to have drawn a distinction between children 'honouring' (providing for) parents and 'laying up' for them (2 Corinthians 12:14).
- ¹⁵ For other uses of the tithe, see Deuteronomy 14:22–29. Its use to help the poor (vv. 28–29) supplemented the provision made for them at harvest (Leviticus 19:9–10, Deuteronomy 24:19–22). Most of the tithe will have gone to the Levites, being one twelfth of Israel.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Mills, chs 14–15; Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, 4th edn. (Hodder 1997); Stott, ch. 12.

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A Christian View of War in the 21st Century

Christopher Thomas

The Lord taught his disciples (Matthew 24:6) that wars and rumours of wars would be a feature of the last days. He taught us not to be alarmed by this. Too often in the minds of believers, there is alarm and confusion when we face war. Our evaluations can sound like much secular comment, with a tone of dread which speaks little of faith in the Lord who rules all things.

Yet war is terrible, its effects incalculable. Human life is precious, and it is right for us to be deeply concerned about the courses of action proposed by our leaders. A complacent ignorance dishonours God too. So what is a Christian view of war in the 21st Century? This article aims to review key Biblical doctrines which should inform Christians as we seek to think God's thoughts after him in today's world, before making special reference to considerations which may govern a Christian's response to 'rumours of war' in the 21st Century.

Key Biblical Doctrines

Human Life

What is human life worth? Genesis 9:6 is a key verse. *'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.'* The context is significant, in that the value of human life is stated after an almost mass extinction (Noah's Flood). Despite the Lord's warfare against, and destruction of, countless people a few months previously, human life is immensely valuable—its value deriving from the *imago Dei* borne by every human being. This immense value is enshrined throughout the Mosaic Covenant made with Israel by the 6th Commandment, and many other provisions which reminded God's people of the value of all humanity. No wonder that it is the Judaeo-Christian world-view which has generated the highest respect for human life and rights. Human life is immensely precious. War is an evil to be avoided if at all possible.

But human life is not absolutely precious. As much as Genesis 9:6 protected human life, it also required that human life be taken—just as the Lord himself had so recently done in the Flood. It required judicial killing of murderers, which was also enshrined in the Mosaic Covenant where a retributive death penalty was extended to a number of other offences. Retribution was not to become vengeance, which was reserved to God alone. This authority was to be exercised with great care by the leaders of God's nation: the elders and priests (Deuteronomy 17; 2–13 cf. 19:1–13). Further, just as human life could be taken to implement justice within Israel, so there was provision for and regulation of the taking of human life in war—both 'Holy War' in the promised land, and campaigns outside it (Deuteronomy 20:1–18).

These are the twin poles of the OT view of human life; it is immensely precious—for we bear God's image. It is not absolutely precious, for under certain circumstances,

it may be forfeit in war or just retribution. Judging this awesome balance was delegated by the Lord to the governing authorities of his nation.

Governing Authorities

We find in the NT that governing authorities of all nations also have power over life and death. Romans 13:1–7 states:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law.

In passing, it's worth noting that the preceding context (12:19ff.) also prohibits personal revenge. Some significant points arise from these verses:

- 'Governing authorities' in v. 1 cover the *national authorities* whom the Roman empire left in place (such as the Jewish rulers of Jerusalem), the *local Roman governors* (such as Pilate, or Gallio in Corinth) and the *Imperial authorities* in Rome itself (Nero, when Paul wrote Romans). None of these was necessarily elected by the people, and none were obviously righteous in their conduct—yet all were established by God. These three levels coincide with our current world, where we have local, national and supra-national authorities, each just as surely established by God.

This is highly significant; not only local and national authorities are established by God, but bodies such as the EU and UN (see Excursus) are also governing authorities within the meaning of Romans 13. The provisions of their founding treaties or charters, and the rulings they may make, are part of their authority over those nations under them. In Romans 13 terms, a Security Council resolution or a ruling from the European Union comes from a God-established authority. However, it is possible that as individual Christians must reserve the right to obey God rather than man for conscience's sake (Acts 5:29—see below), nations may also reserve such a right with respect to supra-national authorities, especially as the development of such authorities is relatively immature.

- Rebellion against such Governments (v. 2) is likely to incur judgement. We should not be surprised when those who resist their rulings receive their comeuppance. There is a simple way for them to avoid this fate—it is to *do what is right* (v. 3)—*to submit to the authorities* (v. 5).
- So why has all this power and authority been delegated by God to Governments? There is a 2-fold reason in v. 4: to do (us) good, and to bring punishment on the wrongdoer—the latter a synecdoche for the exercise of justice. This is the job of

Governments, and they are to be assessed by us (and will be judged by God as his servants) in relation to their calling to benefit those governed and to exercise justice among them. In these ways, governing authorities in general are one of the many common-grace blessings God has given our race.

Exercising Justice

Proverbs 17:15 states, 'Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the Lord detests them both', from which we can deduce that God requires justice to control the work of Governing authorities. A blind eye to the crimes of one nation—including one's own—is detestable. It is also detestable for a powerful nation to benefit its people at the expense of those of a weaker one. The final criterion controlling the exercise of power must be *justice and justice alone* (Deuteronomy 16:20).

In the great governmental issue of 'using the sword', justice must control the taking of human life. Christians have historically adopted the provisions of the Just War theory¹ to determine whether a state may go to war (*jus ad bellum*), and how war should be prosecuted (*jus in bello*). Since Augustine, Christians appear generally to have assumed that the only just cause for resort to war is self-defence. Yet if we take Romans 13 seriously, may not supra-national Governing authorities (e.g. the UN) authorise action with 'the sword' to benefit the weak and exercise wider justice, just as a state may take police action for the same reasons? Surely some wars of intervention to benefit the weak (e.g. the work of NATO in the Balkans in the 1990s)—or wars to bring justice (e.g. the campaign to oust the Taliban in 2001) to are not only permitted, but are required of Governing authorities established by God?

In sum, we can concur with the Teacher in Ecclesiastes 3:1, 8 who declared that 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: ... a time for war, and a time for peace.' But how is the Governing authority to know whether to make war or peace at any particular juncture? The Bible knows that a Government needs Wisdom if it is to rule and wage war justly ...

Wisdom

Justice, wisdom and prudence are intertwined, as pictured in Proverbs 8: 12–16 'I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion. To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behaviour and perverse speech. Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power. By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth. I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.' Here the Bible points us to the divine origin and moral character of the Wisdom which is to inform the rule of all human authorities from kings to nobles. Wisdom's character is cautious, informed, discreet, humble: in a word, prudent. The wise ruler will consult, and not embark on doomed enterprises (Proverbs 24:6, Luke 14:31).

True Wisdom is available to those who need it, especially to rulers, and it may come through advisors and other means of grace. But the best of these is not infallible (2 Samuel 17:14), and ultimately, the ruler must obtain counsel from God. Wisdom has no human origin (Job 28); it comes from the Lord (cf. Proverbs 2:1–11)—specifically, from the fear of the Lord. It is denied to the self-seeking (cf. James 1:5f): those who want to be really wise must seek the Lord's Kingdom before their own status. Those

who wonder if they are really wise to make war would do well to ponder James 3:17f '... the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.' For a war to be just and wise not only demands objective decisions to be made about *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*: it also searches out the subjective *motives* of those who govern.

The Church's Role

So how well equipped is 21st Century secular government to discharge its responsibility for determining whether a war is just and wise in Biblical terms? We are uneasy, for wars have been conducted for very mixed motives—self interest, fear, greed, prejudice, ambition and so forth. These motives are incompatible with true Wisdom. We also know that those in power are all too likely to forget the primacy of justice.

For these reasons, the rise of kingship in the OT was accompanied by the prophetic movement. Prophets were at the right hand of kings to remind them of the covenant under which they operated. Their ministries were full of rebuke for kings who wielded their governing power unjustly. Prophets also prayed for their kings. We see both ministries in 1 Samuel 12:23.

Surely it is the job of God's church in our day to perform a similarly prophetic role, praying for Governments to be given wisdom, and reminding them that justice and wisdom must control and inform the exercise of their power. (Perhaps we see a faint foreshadowing of this in Acts 16:37ff.?) In doing so, we shall encounter times when governing authorities will clearly be acting unjustly—or failing to act at all. They have not lived up to their God-given authority. Then churches and individual Christians may have to say with the apostles 'We must obey God rather than men!' (Acts 5:29). Such a stand is likely to be as costly for us now as for them then (v. 40).

In sum, God's church should not back-seat drive the government. Neither do we unthinkingly bless or oppose every war. Our proper role is at the side of the king, praying and prophesying (whatever the cost).

Christian Citizens

Christians have at least 3 responsibilities to the Governing authorities under which they live:

- Romans 13 not only enjoins submission to, but also a whole-hearted support of, governments (v. 6f., cf. 1 Peter 2:13–17). We should be model citizens, supportive of Governing authorities in their difficult task. We should be supportive of the servicemen and women who bear the sword on our behalves.
- In a democracy, we have been given authority to choose our leaders. We shall have to answer to God for the way in which we have exercised this power, just as the leaders will have to answer to Him for the way they have exercised theirs. Christians should be politically aware and involved—both vocal and voting!
- We should pray for our leaders 'I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.' 1 Timothy 2:1–4. We should pray for leaders to

act according to justice and wisdom, which is God's way to the peace and quiet we all long for. Yet peace and quiet is not an end in itself. Paul explicitly states that we should use the absence of war to pursue godliness and holiness—and he implicitly links all this to the progress of the Gospel (v. 4).

Conclusions and Deductions for the 21st Century

There is much that could be said and argued over in applying these principles to current events. In summarising the above doctrines, we can deduce some elements which surely should be present in the prophetic ministry of the Evangelical church, and the prayers and political participation of Christian citizens:

- **Conclusion:** Whilst Biblical Christianity properly values human life more than any other creed, it recognises too that there are times when lives may justly be forfeit. Judgment in these matters has been committed to Governing authorities.
 - **Deduction:** We recognise that war may be necessary in inter-state relations, but only with reluctance. Vengeance is never a legitimate ground for war.
- **Conclusion:** Governments are instituted by God to benefit those under them, and exercise justice. Supra-national bodies may also have such authority, responsibilities and sanctions.
 - **Deduction:** The UN is a Supra-national Governing authority, established by God.
- **Conclusion:** We thank God for the governments that He has established and unless they seek to compel us to clearly unjust ways, we willingly submit to and support them.
 - **Deduction:** We respect and support our government and Armed Forces. We are well-informed about current affairs and pray for those to whom weighty judgements have been committed. We fully participate in the political process.
- **Conclusion:** Justice alone controls and wisdom informs the right exercise of governmental power.
 - **Deduction:** We are alert to the sinful human tendency to take advantage of power for base motives. We are vocal in insisting on justice in the resort to and conduct of war. We are prepared for the possible evil consequences that may pursue us.
- **Conclusion:** The absence of war is a gift from God for our godliness and holiness. It affords great opportunity for the work of the Gospel.
 - **Deduction:** Wars and rumours of war should stir us up to pursue God's will and to give ourselves to the work of the Gospel.

'As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no-one can work.' John 9:4

The United Nations—an excursus

The signing of the United Nations Charter in 1945 marks a turning point for the Christian consideration of war. For the first time in history, there is a genuine and legitimate human authority over all independent nation states. This authority is exercised in detail through the Resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly.

The Charter generally prohibits the use of force [Article 2 (4)], except for:

- self defence [Article 51]
- collective enforcement action to restore international peace and security [Chapter VII]

We should also note that:

- a sort of 'case law' seems to be developing to legitimise the use of force to prevent an overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe [humanitarian intervention]. This seems to accord with the concerns of Christian Justice. Such 'case law' development is untidy and disturbing, but has always been a feature of human law codes. Christians will want be alert to the direction of such developments, but as long as they are compatible with the aims of Government in Romans 13, we need have no great fears about this process in itself.

Clearly, the exercise of the UN's authority will be subject to many variables, just like the exercise of any other human authority. But the UN is nonetheless an authority established by God. It should therefore be submitted to and supported. Its Charter and Resolutions will be substantial in determining the justice of many different causes, and so the development of its influence should be a matter of keen interest to all Christians. We will also be aware that other supra-national authorities are established, such as the European Union, International Court of Justice and so forth. Christians will insist that their powers should be wielded justly too. As has been recently stated:

The (governing authority) does not have a chaplain at his side, but a lawyer. There is therefore a much greater need for statesmen, generals and lawyers to have a Christian mind to make the law work in a Christian way.

Surely it is the role of God's church to equip His people to think in such a way in these days.

The author acknowledges the help of Lieutenant Commander Rupert Hollins, Royal Navy, in compiling this article.

¹ This is well summarised in the article 'Just War Theory' by Prof. AF Holmes "New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology" (IVP, Leicester 1995) pp. 521f

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More biblical than Leech's book is ***Urban God*** (Bible Reading Fellowship 2002) by **John Proctor**. The book is made up of short chapters each of which is a meditation on a biblical passage or passages related to the theme of the city. I found the book very helpful for reflecting on what the Bible has to say about the city. The book is not a biblical study, but it does open one's eyes and heart to the centrality of the city theme in Scripture, which is something that evangelicals need to rediscover. Let me end on a lighter note. If anyone had a passion for the city and especially its poor it was William Booth. **Jim Winter's *Travel with William Booth*** (Day One 2003) is a short and well-illustrated biography of the founder of the Salvation Army that is also a travel guide. May the Lord raise up more people like Booth with a love for the cities of our world.

God in Eternity and Time (part 2)

Douglas Vickers

God in time

In our discussion to this point we have considered the relation between God's transcendence above all created reality and his immanence in time, and the implications that that has for God's salvific purposes and for our human condition. If, in our doctrinal formulation, we were to sacrifice the transcendence of God, we would be in danger of falling into one or the other of forms of polytheism or pantheism. And if we sacrificed the immanence of God, we would be in danger of shipwreck on the rocks of deism.¹ We hold, therefore, to both the transcendence and the immanence of God. We hold to the position stated by the prophet Isaiah, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, [and] with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit' (Is. 57:15). The relations that we bring into view in that manner may be understood in terms of the names by which God has made himself known. His name of *Elohim* declares his transcendent, independent, eternal, unchangeable, omnipotent being and nature. But his name of *Jehovah* is his covenant name that declares his immanent presence with his people to save them in grace and mercy and faithfulness.

As we move now to consider God's immanent entrance into time, the focus of our thought falls on four issues. *First*, we shall note that in all of the works of God external to the Godhead, the *opera ad extra*, each of the three Persons of the Godhead is engaged. *Second*, before the incarnation of the Second Person of the Godhead he appeared in this world in the likeness of man in order, on several occasions, to communicate data and information regarding his purposes. *Third*, God has entered this world for our redemption in the Personal incarnation of his Son. And *fourth*, in his spiritual presence he has come to his people in fulfillment of the promise of our Lord on the night on which he was betrayed.

On the cooperation of the Persons of the Godhead in the *opera ad extra* of God, we state, in the interests of brevity, the following relevant paragraph from Herman Bavinck's previously cited *Our Reasonable Faith*. 'While the Father gives the Son to the world (John 3:16), and while the Son Himself descends from heaven (John 6:38), that Son is conceived in Mary of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20 and Luke 1:35). At His baptism Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit, and is there publicly declared to be the beloved Son of the Father, the Son in whom he is well pleased (Matt. 3:16-17). The works which Jesus did were shown Him by the Father (John 5:19 and 8:38), and they are fulfilled by him in the strength of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28). In His dying He offers Himself to God in the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14). The resurrection is a raising up by the Father (Acts 2:24) and is at the same time Jesus' own act by which He is greatly proved to be the Son of the Father according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:3). And after his resurrection He, on the fortieth day, ascends in the Spirit which quickened Him on high in heaven and there He makes the angels and authorities and powers subject to Himself'.²

The appearances of God to man in the preincarnate Person of the Son are well-known and do not call for extended comment. We understand that the preincarnate Son

walked and talked with Adam in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen.3:8), and that he appeared to the patriarchs on numerous occasions. He appeared to Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:1ff.), he wrestled with Jacob before he bestowed his blessing on him (Gen. 32:24ff.), and he appeared to Joshua as he entered the land of Canaan (Jos. 5:13ff.).

But it is in the incarnation of his Son that we have God's entry into time in order to bring to full realization the objectives of the Covenant of Redemption that issued from the predeterminate council of the Godhead before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23, Acts 4:28, Rom. 8:28–30, Eph. 1:4, 1 Peter 1:2). We turn now to consider the fact and the mystery of the incarnation, not now to explore the full redemptive accomplishment to which it pointed, but to inspect the relevant doctrinal locus within the orbit of our present discussion of God in eternity and time. While the *Savoy Declaration* gives in later chapters a relatively full treatment of Christology, Soteriology, and the doctrines relevant to God's covenantal commitments, in chapter 2 that occupies us at present it does point unmistakably to the redemptive presence of the Son of God in this world.

The incarnation of Christ in historical time

No more profound mystery deserves our contemplation than that of the incarnation of the Son of God. If there is any point at which we stand in awe and wonder and amazement at the 'mystery of godliness' (1 Tim. 3:16), surely it is here. At this point we 'see through a glass, darkly', we 'know in part', and we hold to the hope of the fuller revelation that is yet to come (1 Cor. 13:12). But we assent to the statement of the apostle John that here we confront the very touchstone of Christian confession. 'Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God' (1 John 4:2). We know that the Word, who was with God and was God 'was made flesh, and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth' (John 1:1, 14). The atonement that accomplished our redemption was a real-time, definitive, historical atonement.

Who was it that walked in this world as the Messiah and Redeemer, who healed the sick and the lame, who wept with compassion at human distress, and who pursued the dusty and often derisive way to the cross? We have said, on the basis of more abundant Scripture than we need to recall, that this was the Son of God.

But let us look closely again at Jesus Christ of Nazareth as he makes his messianic claim. Here is one who clearly partakes of our full, though sinless, humanity. We say that here is the Son of God, and we say, too, that here is the man Christ Jesus. What are we to say of the Person of Jesus Christ? Was he, then, a human person? We have already looked briefly at the answer. To say that he was a human person would be to say that not only did he come from the eternity that he knew with the Father and the Spirit, but that by a transformation about which the Scriptures do not speak, he ceased to be God. Such a claim, moreover, would belie the necessity of his coming and the respect in which that necessity determined the very possibility and definition of our redemption. For it was impossible that a human person could have wrought our redemption. The realities of the Fall and of sin, the damning inheritance that Adam's dereliction projected to all his posterity, stand in the way of any possibility of our redemption by a human person.

Are we to say, then, that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was, in some sense which we should then endeavor to unravel, a divine-human person? Presumably, the meaning of such a claim would be that he was a person in whom the divine and the human natures were commingled or blended together in a manner that, by virtue of their

interpenetration, rendered it impossible to say that the one confronting us was either uniquely divine or uniquely human. Again our answer must be in the negative. Jesus Christ was not a human person. He was not a divine-human person. We are required to say that Jesus Christ was a divine person.

The eternal Son of God did, in fact, come into this world and take unto himself a truly human nature, being born of the virgin and thereby truly man. He took into union with his divine nature a truly human nature, assuming to himself all of the faculties of human soul. But in combining the two natures in his one person, that person was, and continued to be, a divine person. The failure to hold clearly to our doctrinal position in this matter, or to suggest that a communication of properties between the divine and human natures of our Lord occurred or that the human nature was personalized, has given rise to heresies of which that of *monothelitism* is an example. That heresy, which claimed that only one will existed in the person of our Lord, 'a will that was not solely divine, nor human solely, but divine-human',³ was rejected by the early church.

We say that the second Person of the Godhead became, at his incarnation, Jesus Christ. His human name was Jesus, connoting that he came to 'save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21). He was the Christ, the anointed One who came into the world to fulfill all of the messianic prophecies that pointed to the fulfillment of the covenantal promises of redemption. He has been called the theanthropic person, combining the Greek words '*theos*' meaning God and '*anthropos*' meaning man. He was the God-man. The designation is appropriate, provided it is understood to imply the careful distinctions that orthodox theology has found it necessary to make. The biblical doctrine of the Person of Christ was brought to clear formulation in the early church, following the heresies that had developed in relation to it. That doctrine quickly came under attack even in the apostolic times. In his letter to the Colossian church Paul was concerned to refute certain heresies that were akin to what later became a more fully developed Gnosticism, and John in his epistle was very much concerned with the same problem. Gnosticism in its many expressions and aspects was essentially a heresy that denied the reality of the deity and the divinity of Christ. It argued, for example, that there could not have been a true union of spirit with matter. Divinity, in which essential goodness inhered, could not come into union with humanity and matter in which, as it was supposed, evil inhered. It was impossible, therefore, it was claimed, that Jesus Christ could be both divine and human. One expression of Gnosticism argued that Jesus Christ was a man on whom and to whom the Spirit of God came at an early stage of his life, but that the Spirit departed from him before his death.

The many-sided aspects of such heresies as these need not detain us. The important fact is that at an early stage in the history of the Christian confession attacks were made on the biblical revelation of the Person of our Redeemer. It is understandable that this should have occurred. For if the reality of the Person of Christ is destroyed, then the reality of our redemption is destroyed, and the entire Christian gospel and the hope that it holds for our eternal security is also destroyed.

In the post-apostolic age similar problems arose. The Sabellians, named after their founder Sabellius, argued that the Son and the Father were not distinct persons, but only different aspects or emanations of the one Being. The Arians followed their founder Arius, an Alexandrian priest, in maintaining that the Son was not equal with the Father, but that he was created by him. Orthodoxy was thus forced to articulate the

doctrine of the Person of Christ in such a way as to avoid the Sabellian heresy on the one side and that of the Arians on the other.⁴

The Arian heresy was condemned by the church at the Council of Nicea in the year 325 A.D.⁵ An important figure in the early history of the church, Athanasius who became Bishop of Alexandria in 328, argued strongly for the Nicene orthodoxy. The church steadily adhered to that position. The continuing problems surrounding what we can refer to as the church's Christology, or its doctrine of the Person of Christ, were confronted and settled definitively at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. That Council has become justly famous for its achievement of what has become referred to as the Christological settlement.⁶

In its judicious formulation, the Creed of Chalcedon expressed the doctrine of the Person of Christ by stating that the divine and the human natures were so related in him as to be 'two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation'. In the first two of these explanatory statements, without confusion and without change, a safeguard is erected against the idea that the two natures are in any sense intermingled. The last two explanatory statements assert, on the other hand, the full reality of the union of natures that existed.

We have spoken previously of the attributes of God. It follows from that discussion that the Person of Jesus Christ, as he walked in this world as the eternal Son of God, remaining as he did very God of very God, did not lay aside his divine identity and glory. He did, as the Scriptural data make clear, lay aside in many respects the insignia or the demonstrable signs of his glory. But he was, and continued to be, one with the Father. Staggering as the realization is to our unpracticed ears, we may observe something of the significance of it.

It has been claimed that when our Lord came into the world he did, in some sense, lay aside his divine attributes. That false doctrine has gone under the name of the *kenotic* theory. It has acquired currency, unfortunately, in the well-known hymn that states that when Christ came he 'emptied himself of all but love'.⁷ But such a teaching is in no sense supported by a sound exegesis of the paragraph in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians on which it is supposedly based. Our Lord, as Paul there says, 'made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself ...' (Phil. 2:7-8). Where both the KJV and the NKJV state that Christ 'made himself of no reputation', the Greek text has the word 'ekenosen' in the aorist tense, which means literally, 'emptied' himself. The 'kenotic' theory derives its claim from that Greek word. It would not serve any purpose to discuss further the various degrees in which different forms of the kenotic theory imagine Christ to have 'emptied himself' of his deity, or his divine attributes. Suffice it to say that the Philippian passage does not address such a conception. That text is plainly concerned with the manner in which the Second Person of the Godhead humbled himself that he might be our redeemer.

Many aspects of the life and experiences and actions of our Lord that are clearly and uniquely attributable to his human nature are attributed in the Scripture to his Person. Similarly, many actions and expressions and realizations that are as clearly and uniquely referable to his divine nature are also attributed to his Person. But what should be understood in considering those facts is that his Person, in all its uniqueness and individual identity, was determined essentially by his divine nature. By this we mean that the divine nature dominated and determined and controlled the human nature.

That becomes clear from the inspection of only one point of fact in relation to him. We know that he was sinless. We know that as to his human nature he grew, that he was ignorant of certain things, and learned, and developed to maturity. How, then, could it have been true that in his human ignorance he remained free from sin? Are we to say that he was not humanly ignorant of anything? We should contradict the Scriptures if we were to do so. And yet we say that he did not sin. Do we say, then, that he was impeccable, meaning by that that it was impossible for him to sin? On the basis of Scriptural testimony as to his Person we have to say that that was so. It was impossible for him to sin.

The claim of impeccability is a claim that is made of the *Person* of Jesus Christ. He was an impeccable Person whose human nature was tempted and was in itself capable of sin. But in Christ the human nature was in no sense the isolated human nature in which Adam's posterity as created entities exist. In Christ the human nature was joined in union with a divine nature. And the divine nature so dominated and determined the scope of action of the human nature that it was impossible that *in his Person* Christ could sin. What the human nature might have been capable of in and of itself, it was incapable of when it was joined with the divine nature in the divine Person of Christ. We observed in an earlier context that while our Lord took unto himself a human nature, that nature was not in him personalized. In his very valuable discussion of 'the unipersonality of Christ', Berkhof has made the same point.⁸

That important doctrinal issue can be considered further. We have said in effect that the divine nature did not permit the human nature to sin, not even as Jesus of Nazareth, in whom the natures were combined, grew and learned until his maturity. But there did, of course, come a point in time at which the divine nature permitted the human nature to suffer in a unique and eternally significant sense. In his human nature Christ suffered for us when he bore the penalty for our sins on the cross. At that point he knew, in his cry of dereliction, that he was bearing the wrath of the Father, that he was thereby satisfying divine justice on behalf of the sinners for whom he died. It was only thus that their redemption could be secured.

God the Holy Spirit in time

A final consideration follows from all we have said to this point. We have addressed, adequately for our present purposes but in brief and inadequate terms when considered against the weight of their theological import, issues relating to God as he exists in his triune majesty and glory, transcendent outside of time; and we have taken similar brief note of certain of God's immanent entrances into time, notably in the incarnation of his Son. But if we are to reflect in any minimally adequate sense what we have advanced as the consubstantiality of the Persons of the Godhead, it must be noted that the third Person of the Godhead, the blessed Holy Spirit, is in a sense that is highly significant for our salvation also immanently active in time. That is, in many respects, the highest implication of our redeemed status in Christ. For he has fulfilled the promise he gave on the night of his betrayal and has sent his Holy Spirit to be with us.

It would take us beyond the scope of our present study to attempt even a summary of the critical issues of *pneumatology*, or the doctrines of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. But two final comments should be made, as following from the *theology*, or the Doctrine of God, that is included in the *Savoy Declaration* and has provided the context of our discussion to this point.

First, in the immanent works of God that *Savoy* contemplates, the Holy Spirit is clearly the executive agent of the Godhead. Christ, having completed impeccably the work of redemption, has come to us by his Spirit, and we can say that the ultimate salvific effect of the obedience that he accomplished on our behalf is that we are now joined to him by his Spirit in an organic, vital, spiritual, and indissoluble union. No categories of explanation are now adequate finally to describe and define the Christian person except defining that individual as joined to Christ. If we say, as we must, that Christ is the mediator between us and the Father, it is correspondingly necessary to say that the Holy Spirit is the mediator between Christ and us. That is clearly established in terms of the distribution of redemptive offices among the Persons of the Godhead. For ‘when he, the Spirit of truth, is come’, our Lord said, ‘he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak ... he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you’ (John 16:13–14).

Finally, we should be delinquent if we did not allow our study of the doctrine of God to impact, not only on our theological consciousness, but on the life that we live as God’s people in the world. We do well to bear in mind that the objective of God’s provision of redemption is that we should be renewed in the likeness of his image, and that we might again become the agents of the glory of his Name. We concur with the Pauline reminder that God has ‘chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy’ (Eph. 1:4). And Peter argues that God has made us ‘a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation ... that [we] should show forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1 Peter 2:9).

In short, God has again entered into time in his immanent working in the Person of his Holy Spirit in order to accomplish our conformity to his image that he has destined for us. He has given us his Holy Spirit to be the agent of our sanctification. We do well to be sure that we heed the Pauline injunction and ‘grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby [we] are sealed unto the day of redemption’ (Eph. 4:30). May God give us grace to understand and to be true to the obligations that his gracious redemptive covenantal commitment has imposed upon us.

This article also appears on the website of the Reformed Congregational Fellowship of New England.

1 Cf. Herman Bavinck, *op. cit.*, 133ff.

2 Herman Bavinck, *op. cit.*, 151.

3 See W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d., Vol.2, 328.

4 See William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth [1862] 1960, Vol.1, 307ff.

5 See Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, Revised by David S. Schaff, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, Vol.1, 24ff.

6 See Philip Schaff, *ibid.*, 29ff.

7 Charles Wesley, ‘And can it be ...’.

8 L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 321–22.

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A Biblical Evaluation of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare

Errol Wagner

Spiritual Warfare is the hot topic on the evangelical 'circuit' today. This can be seen in the large number of books published, seminars and meetings held, dealing with this subject over the past few years. There is a preoccupation with the spirit realm and its influence on the world and lives of individual Christians. This has given rise to a sense of urgency in certain groups that the church needs to do something to deal with these forces of evil. As a result many churches are becoming caught up in practices like 'spiritual mapping', 'prayer walks', 'on-the-spot praying', etc.

Perhaps no books have affected the thinking of Christians on the subject of Spiritual Warfare more than Frank Peretti's *This Present Darkness*, and its sequel *Piercing the Darkness*. In his novels, Peretti depicts spiritual warfare against the backdrop of New-Age globalism. A strong impression is created that believers are in constant combat with the forces of evil. Although Peretti did not intend his books to be taken as anything other than fiction, nevertheless, as Dr Kim Riddlebarger points out, 'People have in many cases, actually redefined their views of the supernatural based upon a fictional novel'. He asserts further: 'Cumulatively, this has produced a whole new generation of Christians who now see the world through a supernatural grid that has more in common with Greek and Persian mystery religions than with Christianity.'¹

This does not mean there are no serious books on this subject available. We have books written by Dr Rebecca Brown who has worked out a whole system of rebuking and binding Satan and the demonic forces. Then there is Dr Neil Anderson who has written extensively about spiritual warfare as it manifests itself in the life of the individual believer. Among his books are *Victory Over Darkness* and *Walking Through Darkness*. Mark Bubeck in his *Overcoming the Adversary* takes the spiritual armour of Ephesians 6:11–18, and turns it into a prayer formula.² He urges believers to pray the protection of the armour for each family member every day. Then there is a proliferation of books by Dr Peter Wagner, like *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*, *Praying with Power*, *Confronting the Powers* and *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*. Charles Kraft has written a book about demonised Christians entitled *Defeating Dark Angels*. In his book *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing*, Kraft seeks to explicate the connection between spiritual warfare and inner healing. Tom White in *Breaking Strongholds: How Spiritual Warfare Sets Captives Free*, instructs believers in the techniques necessary for breaking Satan's hold on our age. Others who have written serious teaching books on the subject are George Otis, Peter Lundell, and Dick Eastman etc.

This interest in spiritual warfare among evangelicals Christians should be seen as part of a growing recognition of the existence and reality of the spiritual realm, which is clearly evident in the increased interest in Western societies in the occult and the world of spirits in the media, films, books, television and magazines. Dave Hunt and

TA McMahon, authors of America *The Sorcerer's New Apprentice* stress that today 'we are witnessing far and away the greatest occult explosion of all time'. They point out that, 'Primitive pagan religious practices that were generally confined to undeveloped Third World countries (and were regarded in the West with suspicion and ridicule only a few years ago) are now being embraced by increasing millions of enthusiasts worldwide'.³ Similarly, Clinton Arnold in his book *Powers of Darkness*, states that there is a 'burgeoning interest in the occult [which] is not a local fad but a trend in Western society'.⁴ He too speaks of an 'occult explosion'.

Initially, the study of spiritual warfare among evangelicals focused on its cosmic manifestations, i.e., between God and his angels, and Satan and his forces, and also on the way it manifests itself in the lives of individual believers. More recently another level of spiritual warfare has been getting attention, known as Environmental spiritual warfare. By this is meant demonic influences in our environment. This has nothing to do with our ecosystems or natural resources. Rather, it refers to demonic influences in society and the world around us. In particular, it is claimed that cities, regions and nations are bound over to Satan and his underlings. These are identified as territorial spirits who are seen to be responsible for communities being given over to crime, poverty, violence, immorality etc. One aspect of their power is to keep unbelievers from believing the gospel and coming to faith in Christ.

Dr Peter Wagner and George Otis are leading promoters of this concept. They have written extensively on this subject. Peter Wagner is Head of Global Harvest Ministries with their offices in the World Prayer Centre in Colorado, Springs, USA. George Otis is president and founder of the research group called the 'Sentinel', and head of AD 2000 United Prayer Track's Spiritual Mapping Division. His main contribution is to help with research on the spiritual history of cities and regions. The objective is to identify social bondages and demonic strongholds in these areas.

Peter Wagner believes that Satan controls countries, regions, tribes, communities, residential areas and social networks in the world. It is these territorial spirits and demonic strongholds that are responsible for the domination of evil in society. In his book, *Warfare Prayer*, Wagner says that Christians are to expel territorial spirits from cities. He asserts that the only way we are going to liberate these areas is through united prayer. People cannot respond to the gospel until we liberate the cities and nations. He believes that God saves society only after the church smashes the demonic strongholds.⁵

A whole strategy has been worked out to deal with the territorial spirits. This teaching is known as *Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare*. Prof. Johan Malan of the University of the North, South Africa, in a research article referring to the popularity of this teaching amongst evangelicals, states, 'Many people are looking for solutions to the spiritual decline of our time. One of the solutions is that a "new" kind of revival should be promoted, which is based on ecumenical unity and strategic spiritual warfare. Demons must be driven from towns, cities and entire countries to set people free to serve the Lord'.⁶

This concept of spiritual warfare is being promoted in South Africa through NUPSA (Network For United Prayer in Southern Africa), under the leadership of an ordained Dutch Reformed minister, Dr Bennie Mostert. Recently this concept of

spiritual warfare praying was brought into prominence when a united prayer rally was held in Newlands, Cape Town with more than 40,000 Christians from all denominations attending.

In this article we are going to look at this new teaching on Spiritual Warfare and in particular we will give attention to the concept of Strategic Level Prayer. We will attempt to evaluate it in the light of the Scriptures.

Description and Main Features of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare

Strategic level spiritual warfare against territorial spirits is a relatively new emphasis. It focuses on discerning, naming of and praying against demonic spirits over cities, regions and nations, who are then rebuked, bound, and evicted, thus allowing the work of evangelism to proceed. What are the main features of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare?

- The existence and influence of territorial spirits or dynasties on communities, cities and nations.
- The need for strategic level prayer.
- The goal—revival and the total transformation of communities—the Christianising of communities.

The existence and influence of territorial spirits or dynasties on communities, cities and nations

Peter Wagner, in his book *Praying with Power*, asks the question, 'How can we make certain the cities of our nations and of the world are open to receive the Good News of Jesus Christ?'⁷ He allows John DeVries of Mission 21 India to answer: 'The devil has created "sound barriers" around every city and every people group; spiritual sound barriers which can only be torn down through prayer'.⁸

What are these 'sound barriers'? They are 'demonic, spiritual walls which keep people from hearing the gospel',⁹ Dr Neil Anderson referring to the link between binding Satan and evangelism insists, 'He will hold on to these people until we demand their release on the basis of our authority in Christ. Once Satan is bound through prayer, he must let go'.¹⁰

Similarly, Rebecca Brown, using Ezekiel 22:30–32 asserts that God looks for those who are willing to stand and fight Satan and his demons to stop them from blinding the people so that they can see their need for a saviour. She maintains, 'We as Christian warriors must be willing to stand in the gap and fight in the spiritual realm to break the demonic forces blinding the unsaved'.¹¹

According to Wagner, Satan sends senior demons to control countries, regions, communities, residential areas and social networks to keep people from believing the gospel. They keep these areas in bondage through spiritual strongholds.

How are these strongholds established? From his research, George Otis confidently believes that, '... strongholds are born wherever cultures welcome evil powers into their midst through unambiguous pacts ... and ... strongholds are extended when the provisions of these pacts are honoured by successive generations'. What happens is the demonic spirits secure 'lease extensions' over these areas through religious festivals

and pilgrimages, cultural traditions like initiation rites and ancestor worship, syncretism and unresolved social injustices. These things 'release significant power'.¹²

These strongholds have been established where people were involved in pagan and ancestor worship, sorcery, superstition, prostitution, gambling, abortion, poverty, crime etc. They also include historic war battlefields where men killed each other giving rise to hostile feelings and racial intolerance. It includes sins committed in the past, rumours and legends that can act as a curse over a community. According to Alistair Petrie, 'these geographical strongholds result from the "defilement of sin", which serve as "feeding troughs" for demons and their followers'.¹³ These sins bring defilement to a land and place it under the judgment of God. According to NUPSA newsletter: 'Because of the defilement of the land through sin, the people who live in the land, even though they were not the ones to commit the original sin that caused the defilement, are under God's judgment.'¹⁴

How are these strongholds identified? Through a process called *Spiritual Mapping*. By means of a map of the respective area and following a special procedure, possible strongholds used by the enemy are identified. Extensive research is also conducted into the history of the area. According to Otis: 'The best mappers are people who have made a conscious commitment to the land and community'.¹⁵ It is to them that God reveals his secrets. Armed with this intelligence one can proceed to smash these strongholds. This brings us to the heart of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare.

The Need for Strategic Level praying as a prerequisite for evangelising and revival

According to one of the local mapping documents: 'Fervent and focused prayer can bind spiritual strongmen to effect the deliverance re captives (Matthew 12:24-30) and open the minds of unbelievers which are blinded by the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), but must be sustained by intimate knowledge of the enemy's deployments and strategies. Hopefully, as Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 2:11, 'we are not unaware of his schemes'.¹⁶ Strategic level focused prayer takes several forms. Churches are called to unite in mass prayer rallies. During these prayer meetings the demons are rebuked, bound and cast out in the name of Jesus. The area is then claimed for Jesus and 'Gatekeepers' are appointed to guard all entrances to the city to prevent the demons from returning.

Christian unity is seen as a precondition for bringing down the strongholds of an area. Peter Wagner believes that a major starting point in bringing down strongholds is for pastors in a specific area to pray together. He states: 'My rule goes like this: Secure the unity of the pastors and other Christian leaders in the area and begin to pray together on a regular basis.'¹⁷ He gives his reason: 'Pastors are the divinely designated spiritual gatekeepers of a given city ... When I use the term 'spiritual gatekeepers', I am raising the issue of authority. When the gatekeepers link together in one accord ... the realm of darkness ... becomes seriously threatened.'¹⁸

According to Peter Wagner, it is also important to pray in the area where strongholds are located. What is his justification for this practice? He claims that God gave Joshua 1:3 as a 'prophetic word' to the church. God promised Joshua that 'Every place that the sole of your foot will treat upon I have given you'.¹⁹ He is adamant that although this promise was made to Joshua for a particular situation, nevertheless, God

has given it to the church as a prayer principle. On the basis of this 'prophetic word', he insists: 'If we want to have our communities transformed by the power of God we must pull down the walls. We must place the soles of our feet out into the community itself by employing our principal weapon of spiritual warfare: namely prayer.'²⁰

Although Wagner admits that the power of prayer knows no boundaries, yet, '... on-site prayer is almost always more effective than distant prayer'.²¹ He bases his reasoning on healing prayer and examples of this principle working in other areas. This is also the basis of 'Prayer Walking', which Wagner defines as: 'praying on-site with insight. It is simply praying in the very places that we expect God to bring forth his answers.' 'Marches for Jesus' fall in the same category. It is believed that these marches have the effect of opening up the atmosphere over a town or area.

Also important, according to Chuck Pierce, who is Vice President of Global Harvest Ministry, is to pray with 'apostolic authority'. He insists that, 'Praying with apostolic authority is a real key to breaking open territories. Apostolic praying is more pioneering, birthing, and penetrating than normal communal prayer.'²² Apostolic authority obviously belongs to special gifted men who exercise an apostolic and prophetic ministry over the church.

The Goal—Revival and Transformation of the Community.

The goal of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare is nothing less than the total transformation of society through revival following the expulsion of the territorial spirits and the breakdown of the demonic strongholds. It is claimed that this results in the Christianising of society as Christians are appointed to positions of authority at national and local government level. There is a strong expectation that by the end of 2003 many societies will be transformed and many key positions will be occupied by Christians. This is seen as the only solution to the problems of our country and the world. Proponents of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare are confident that this is God's will for the Church at this time. God is waiting to bring about transformation. The Church must hear what God is revealing through his 'anointed' leaders.

Apparently there are places around the world that have been transformed after Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare prayer. A video has been released in which four communities that have allegedly been transformed are portrayed. However, according to Prof. Malan, 'Since the release of the video, various groups have conducted research in these areas to verify the claims made. They found many of the claims exaggerated and often false.'²³

Evaluation of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare

There are features of this movement that should be welcomed by all Christians. Firstly, its reminder that the Church is involved in a spiritual conflict must be heeded. According to Robert Lescelius: 'Without a recognition of the spiritual warfare between God and Satan history will be as "confusing as a football game in which half the players are invisible". This conflict is magnified when it comes to the matter of revival.'²⁴

In the second place, if this movement has done nothing else, it has alerted us to the desperate condition of the world at this present time and our need for revival. Therefore its emphasis on prayer is a healthy one. Both the Bible and history show that there is

an inseparable link between revival and prayer. Their call to Christians everywhere to pray is one that should be taken seriously if we are going to see a change in our society.

However, although the Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare movement has drawn in many Christians from all over the world, both Charismatic and non-Charismatic, particularly in the United States, many evangelicals are disturbed by some of its key teachings which they believe have no biblical support but are based rather on experience, extra-revelation and pragmatism.

The position taken in this evaluation is that any teaching must be tested by Scripture alone. This has always been the standpoint taken by historic evangelicalism. Regarding the current teaching on spiritual warfare, Fred Leahy insists that, 'There is a crying need for an examination of this whole subject in the light of Scripture alone, bearing in mind that the Scriptures are our only rule of faith and practice'.²⁵ And Clinton Arnold contends that, 'In recent years despite the flood of popular publications dealing with "spiritual warfare", very little has been written from a biblical-theological perspective'.²⁶

It is the thesis of this article that much of this teaching is spurious and is predicated upon non-biblical and thus theologically weak premises. It is therefore our purpose to evaluate the key features of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare in the light of the Scripture.

What the Old Testament discloses regarding the existence and influence of territorial spirits.

We begin in the Old Testament because advocates of this view base much of their theology on the reference to the celestial warfare between God's angels and the angelic prince of Persia in Daniel 10. From this passage they draw the principle that angelic agents are apparently assigned to sponsorship and control of certain cities or regions.

There is no doubt that the book of Daniel presents us with a fascinating picture of this. We are told about a vision that God gave to Daniel. In this vision, which was mediated by an angel, he learns about the activities of the angels set over the nations of Persia, Greece and even Israel. The first part of the vision is taken up with descriptions of angelic war and conflict. Yet this heavenly conflict was closely tied to the fate of nations and peoples.

Further support for this view is the references to the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14 and the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28, which seem to transcend human kings and move into the heavenly realm. Revelation 2:13 where we read about Pergamos as 'the place where Satan's throne is' further confirms the angelic assignment to geographical regions.

Although Daniel, especially chapter 10, discloses the reality of angels who have some kind of territorial authority over nations, it does not support any sort of human involvement in angelic warfare. Far from finding Daniel involved in warfare prayer, discerning and praying against regional spirits, we find him frustrated in the absence of response to his prayer to God. In fact, he is totally unaware of angelic warfare until the angel explains the reason why God did not respond to his prayer sooner.

When one turns to the vision in chapters 11–12 we see that Daniel is not given information of warfare in angelic realms. What he sees is the emergence and disappearance of evil world kingdoms until the eventual victory of God. Daniel is given

the vision not in response to a request or by means of spiritual discernment but in response to his personal faith and obedience. In any case, Daniel stands in the line of specially chosen men who were 'were carried along by the Holy Spirit' as they wrote Scripture (2 Peter 1:21). Through Daniel God encouraged his people by prophetically reminding them that he remained faithful to his covenant and that he would overcome the forces of evil at the appointed time. This victory would occur when God's messiah destroyed the evil kingdoms as a rock crushing a statue and filling the whole earth (Daniel 2:34–35), when one like a Son of Man annihilated the dominion of the evil one forever (Daniel 7:10–28). In all this, there is no hint of discerning, binding or praying against cosmic evil spirits.

Even that often quoted passage Ezekiel 22:30–32 which is interpreted to mean that we must 'stand in the gap' so that unbelievers can be saved, does not apply to spiritual warfare. It related to a particular occasion in the history of Judah. Ezekiel bemoaned the fact that corruption was so ubiquitous that there was not even one man who was willing to stop the national ruin. There 'was no-one with the moral courage to stem the tide: the leaders were ungodly and those who should have been godly had compromised their position'.²⁷ In other words there is no indication in the text itself that this was a normative prayer principle. As Gerry Breshears points out, 'One searches in vain ... for the work of strategic spiritual warfare in these or indeed anywhere in the Bible'.²⁸ It is also significant that the Old Testament reveals no details on discerning information about demons, including their names, hierarchies and functions.

Another key concept of the Spiritual Warfare movement based on the Old Testament, is the idea that curses can be passed on from generation to generation and that it is necessary for us to repent of the sins of our ancestors. Reference is made to Exodus 20:4–5 and 34:6–7 where God tells Moses that he would 'not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation'. Reference is also made to Nehemiah where the returned exiles confessed not only their own sins but also the sins of their fathers (Nehemiah 9:1–2). Using these passages for support, Rebecca Brown comments: 'The sins of our ancestors do have a grave effect upon our own lives and the doorway of inheritance must be closed by prayer, confession, and the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ. Specific abilities and demons are passed down from generation to generation'.²⁹ It is assumed that this principle is applicable under the new covenant.

Neil Anderson likewise suggests that demonic afflictions may be passed within a family from one generation to another.³⁰ With this in mind Anderson uses a 'confidential personal inventory' with counselees to uncover possible 'occultic, cultic, or non-Christian religious practices of parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents'.³¹

However, the reference in Exodus should be understood as a description of severe judgment in which an individual's line is cut off; not a transference [demonic or otherwise] of particular sins to the next generation. Brown and Anderson ignore the focus on individual responsibility in Jeremiah 31:29–30 which occurs in the context of the promise of a new covenant that, 'In those days people will no longer say, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge". Instead,

everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes—his own teeth will be set on edge.’ We have a similar statement in Ezekiel 18:18–22. This is incompatible with the idea of inheriting demonic curses.³² David Moore and Robert Pyne maintain that, ‘This doctrine rests on the assumption that our vulnerability to demonic influence derives from physical or symbolic contact or contiguity with some object, word, or person rather than on moral, spiritual and doctrinal grounds—an assumption which is at the heart of magic and animism—but which Biblical Christianity nowhere propagates’.³³ Aside from this, surely the question we have to ask is whether the New Testament teaches that the principle of generational curses applies to Christians? The answer is clearly, no. Nowhere in the Gospels or the Letters are Christians told to repent for the sins of their ancestors.

Clinton Arnold points out that it was only during the intertestamental period that Jewish literature began to develop an undue interest in the realm of angels, spirits and demons.³⁴ Details were given of the number of angels, their names and their hierarchies. For example, some of the names by which demons were identified were Asmodeus, Semyaza, Azazel, Mastema, and Beliar. All of the detail went far beyond what was revealed in the Old Testament. Arnold makes an interesting observation: ‘Much of this burgeoning curiosity about the spirit realm can be attributed to a growing tendency to distance God from direct involvement in daily life’.³⁵ In other words, they had lost their view of God’s sovereignty over all things.

What this proves is that the present preoccupation with identifying territorial spirits and the names of demons is not something new. It goes back to before the New Testament and went beyond biblical revelation. But to what extent do we see this understanding of the spiritual powers reflected in the New Testament?

A New Testament perspective on Spiritual Warfare

One cannot read the gospels without an awareness of the reality of the spiritual powers and their opposition to the presence and ministry of Jesus Christ. One suspects that Satan directly inspired Herod to command the murder of all babies two years and under (Matthew 3:16, Revelation 12:4). At the very commencement of Jesus’ public ministry Satan tried to draw him away from his mission (Matthew 4:1–11). He faced opposition from the Pharisees and Jewish leaders whom he identified as belonging to their father the devil.

So the gospels in no way ignore the presence of the spiritual powers. Yet it is never portrayed as an equal conflict. At the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus declared that he came to set prisoners free, an obvious reference to those who were in captivity to Satan. He did not only come to deal with sin, but with God’s prime supernatural enemy, Satan himself.³⁶ We see him confronting the evil powers that had to give way before him. What is striking is the fact that in contrast to the intricate methods used by the exorcists of that time, Jesus merely uttered a simple command. These exorcisms foreshadowed Jesus’ victory over Satan on the cross.

Mark records that ‘Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God”’ (Mark 3:11). Mark also records that unclean spirit cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!’ (Mark 1:24). After Christ directly and openly rebuked the spirit, Mark says that the people were amazed, so that

they debated among themselves saying, 'What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him' (Mark 1:27). The terrified response of the demons was to Christ's unique authority.

He sent out his twelve disciples to both preach about and demonstrate the presence of the kingdom through healings, exorcisms, and raising the dead. His presence was proof that the kingdom had come. He claimed to be the one who had entered the house of the strong man. He was the one who bound him and who freely plundered his possessions (Matthew 12:22–29). It was at the cross that Jesus, having defeated Satan, in some way tied him up. In other words, the binding of the strong man does not refer to the individual Christian's confrontation with the devil or demons, it refers to a historic, unique, once for all event that took place on the cross. On the cross Jesus atoned for the sins of the world and defeated Satan and bound him. As we are beneficiaries of the atonement, so we are beneficiaries of Satan's defeat. As we do not have to apply the atonement personally, so we do not have to bind Satan personally. It has been done, once for all. We are to live in the light of what Christ did for us.

As a consequence, God gave Jesus absolute authority both in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:16f., Ephesians 1:21f). It was on that basis he gave his disciples authority to make disciples of all nations. In other words, to plunder Satan's kingdom through the church's evangelistic outreach. What is important to note is that Jesus never cast out territorial spirits or attributed the resistance of Nazareth or Jerusalem to such entities.³⁷ Neither is there evidence that he instructed his disciples to expel territorial spirits or to bind the demons. He told them simply to make disciples of all nations on the basis of the authority that was already his. In this connection Robert Lescelius notes, 'Christ has already vanquished Satan. It is his work to bind Satan, not ours. Ours is simply to preach the Gospel' (2 Corinthians 4:5).³⁸ This is true even in the debated longer ending of Mark. Our work is not to reclaim territory, but to proclaim the good news. It is in the midst of the world under the control of the evil one that we are commanded to proclaim the Lordship of Christ and to invite all people to submit to him, to be reconciled to him. Thus the authority Jesus gave his followers was connected to evangelism, making disciples.

Acts shows how this authority was exercised as the Holy Spirit empowered the Church to spread the gospel from Jerusalem, the capital of the Jews, to Rome, the capital of the Gentiles. Luke records an activity of Satan with each new advance of the gospel (Acts 5, 13, 16, 19, 1 Thessalonians 2:18). He can be seen behind the persecution and opposition of the religious leaders. What is again significant is that in spite of satanic opposition, there is no description about the inner workings of the demonic world. The church did not engage in spiritual mapping, prayer walks or any strategic level spiritual warfare tactics.

When they faced opposition, the church met together in prayer. Those prayer meetings stressed the Sovereignty of God and the Lordship of Christ. Even the conspiracy to put Jesus Christ to death was not something just motivated by the devil, 'They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen' (Acts 4:28). Nothing is said about Satan, who obviously was behind the Jewish leaders' opposition to the preaching of Christ. Why? Because that would have been totally irrelevant in the light of our Lord's victory over Satan and all the powers of darkness.

They had no alternative but to give way in the face of the preaching of the gospel. The gates of Hell cannot resist the onslaught of a church that proclaims the gospel. Again Lescelius reminds us that, 'We do not have to tell Satan he has been overpowered. We simply must act like it! Evangelism does not involve commanding Satan to remove his blindness.'³⁹

Paul teaches and Spiritual Warfare

One cannot deal with the subject of Spiritual Warfare without reference to the apostle Paul. Perhaps he more than any other writer in the New Testament gives us the most insight into the spiritual powers. It is not unreasonable to assume that Paul must have been familiar with the intertestamental literature. It is important to see how much of this popular belief was accepted by Paul. Clinton Arnold observes: 'What the apostle Paul has to say about the powers of darkness should be formative for our thinking as Christians. Paul's teaching on the powers should shape and refine our world view.'⁴⁰

To understand Paul's position on the powers of darkness, we have to begin with his understanding of Christ's complete and absolute victory over them. Without this perspective one will not understand his teaching on the powers of darkness. Nor will we understand his practice. Here is the starting point of understanding Paul's view of the powers of darkness.

Although Paul wrote extensively about the powers of darkness, there is no hint that he was influenced by popular Jewish beliefs that developed during the intertestamental period. He used the terms 'principalities [archai] and authorities [exousiai]' with reference to both good and evil angels. However, in contrast to the teaching popular at that time, Paul showed no interest in knowing the names of demons or their precise authority. Neither does he give information about their respective ranks and orders. For Paul '... the Lord Jesus Christ alone [is] the source of the believers' authority over the powers of darkness'.⁴¹

How do they influence the world? We learn very little from Paul. He views Satan as the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). However, he never connected the powers of darkness with any specific country or territory. Arnold points out that, '... for Paul, it was not a matter of great importance for a believer to identify precisely the evil angel wielding the supreme authority over a territory in the demonic hierarchy. What Paul stressed is the recognition that there are powerful demonic emissaries who attack the Church and hinder its mission and that they can be overcome only through reliance on the power of God.'⁴²

For Paul, the matter was quite clear; when God raised Jesus from the dead he gave him complete authority over everything, including the powers of darkness (Ephesians 1:15–23). Christ's death and resurrection deprived the evil forces of any effective power against himself or those joined to him. Before the cross, the powers were able to maintain a Kingdom and hold humanity in slavery. The cross changed all that. It was at the cross that Christ defeated Satan, disarmed him and gave ample evidence of his defeat by redeeming people from captivity (Colossians 2:15). Just as God delivered Israel from slavery, Christ has rescued believers from Satan and the powers of evil (Colossians 1:12–13).

This does not mean that Paul underestimated Satan's ability to hinder his mission to take the gospel to the Gentiles. In Acts we see, for example the opposition he faced

in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–9). Later, in his letter to the Thessalonians, he specifically states; ‘Satan hindered us’ (1 Thessalonians 2:18). However, he does not explain in what way Satan hindered him. Even when he states, ‘We are not ignorant of his [the devil’s] schemes’ (2 Corinthians 2:11) there is no list or description of Satan’s schemes. The clear emphasis is not what Satan is doing but on doing what we are commanded to do.

As far as unbelievers are concerned, he associated supernatural beings with non-Christian religions (1 Corinthians 10:20–21). Unbelievers live under the dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:12), they are held captive by Satan to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26, Ephesians 2), he has blinded their minds to the gospel (1 Corinthians 4:4).

In the light of this, what strategy did Paul adopt to deal with these demonic forces that held unbelievers in bondage? In contrast to the super apostles in the Corinthian church, Paul did not use the weapons of the world. The weapons he used were spiritual. They were so powerful that they could demolish strongholds. The strongholds were not literal territories ruled by demons, but Satan’s lies and deception that captivate the minds of unbelievers. It is through the preaching of the gospel that every thought is taken captive. In this connection Riddlebarger insists: ‘From my reading of Scripture, the best method of binding Satan is still the preaching of the gospel (Luke 10:18, Revelation 20:1–3).’⁴³ Alan Morrison concurs: ‘There is ... no need to pray demons out of geographical areas in order to “reclaim the territory for Christ”. It is over unregenerate men and women’s hearts that Satan now reigns, not over plots of land where they live: the greatest weapon by far, in this instance, is the good old fashioned [but never outdated] gospel of Jesus Christ.’⁴⁴

In the face of paganism with its idolatrous practices motivated by the powers of darkness, Paul never refers to the territorial spirits nor does he attribute power to them. From the moment he and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey, Paul preached and taught the gospel. He did not do prayer walks or first cast out and bind territorial spirits. In Pisidian Antioch we are told that, ‘When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region’ (Acts 13:48). At Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, he continued to preach the Good News (Acts 14:7). At Athens where it distressed him to see the city filled with idols, we see ‘Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus Christ and the resurrection’ (Acts 17:18b).

At Ephesus, a city steeped in the occult, we are told that Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God (Acts 19:8). It was in this city after they believed that we read that, ‘Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power’ (Acts 19:18–20). It is striking that Paul said his mission was ‘to open their [the Gentiles] eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me’ (Acts 26:18). How did Paul turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God? Through the preaching of the gospel. It is not possible to deal with Paul’s understanding of the

powers of darkness without looking at his teaching on the spiritual armour in Ephesians 6:10ff.

Paul's understanding of the Spiritual armour

When we come to Ephesians 6:10–18 it is important to note that Paul was not dealing with a different subject. The very phrase with which he introduces this passage, translated 'Finally', shows that it serves to bring Paul's previous discussion to a conclusion. In fact, one will not understand the spiritual armour unless one puts it in the context of Paul's discussion. Much of the confusion regarding the spiritual armour is the result of taking this passage out of its context.

In chapters one to three Paul explains the role of the Church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, in implementing God's plan to unite all things, in heaven and on earth, in Christ (Ephesians 1:9f). In other words, through the Church, God has planned to restore the whole of creation cursed through sin. The church is God's new society, the kingdom, the new creation, which is the sign to the principalities and authorities of the salvation accomplished in Christ.

Supporters of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare argue that Ephesians 3:10 teaches that the Church must proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ to the principalities and powers by asserting his authority over the demonic forces hindering his work. But a careful study of this passage will show that this is not the correct interpretation. The key verb 'should be made known' is passive. Instead of active involvement in warfare against the spiritual powers, the very existence of the Church testifies to the authority of Christ as Head over all principalities and powers and the realization of salvation despite anything they can do. As Dr Jerry Breshears puts it: 'The work of God's grace in calling out a people for himself, making Jews and Gentiles fellow heirs of the promise, demonstrates to the powers that they are powerless to destroy the work of God even in their own realm.'⁴⁵

Having dealt with that, Paul shows how those who belong to this new society are to live. For example, from chapter 4:17, he shows how this works itself out in our personal behaviour and in chapters 5 and 6, in marriage, family, and work. Every part of our lives must reflect God's new society created in Christ. It is in this context that Paul deals with the spiritual armour. The point Paul makes is that as we live in this way we will be up against powerful forces that try to tempt us, deceive us, confuse us and cause us to sin.

In other words the battle takes place in the midst of our daily lives. It is not something separate from the whole context of daily living. While recognising the reality of demonic activities, nevertheless it should be stated that spiritual warfare is not about confronting the occult and casting out demons, but about living in obedience to the Word of God. It is woven into our everyday lives. This means is that every time we aim to obey the Lord we are involved in a spiritual battle. We see this for example in the fourth chapter where Paul writes, 'In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold' (Ephesians 4:26–27). As Morrison states: '... the footholds he envisages are the various sins and sinful situations into which we can so easily fall, such as lying (4:25,15a), a lack of kindness, compassion and forgiveness (4:32), the merest hint of sexual immorality, uncleanness or covetousness (5:3,5), drunkenness (5:18), the wrong choice of

associates (5:6ff.), failure to discern false doctrine (4:14), a lack of humility and submission (4:2, 5:21), and the fostering of sectarianism or divisiveness (4:3–6).⁴⁶

It is in this situation that we need our spiritual armour. When we live in obedience we are in effect doing God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. In other words, we are witnessing to the Kingdom of God in this present age. Thus it is wrong to interpret spiritual warfare as binding demons, rebuking the devil and casting him out. It is significant that Paul gives no hint or encouragement that we should discern the hierarchies. The battle of Ephesians six is not territorial but personal. Furthermore, as Breshears remarks: 'Extending the armour imagery in Ephesians 6:12–17 to praying against demons falls on two fundamental accounts: (1) the armour is primarily defensive resistance, not offensive praying against; (2) prayer is the confident attitude of believers that God's power will be sufficient for them to stand against the wiles of the enemy'.⁴⁷

James emphasis the same point when he writes, 'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (James 4:7). Scott Souza makes the point that 'Submitting to God and resisting the Devil are equivalent concepts'.⁴⁸ He further points out that in the context, 'setting aside lust and pride is the proper means of submitting to God, and since submission to God is equivalent to resisting the Devil, he is to be resisted by the same setting aside of lust and pride'.⁴⁹ Peter warns, 'Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith' (1 Peter 5:8–9). Clearly, we resist him not by rebuking him, binding him, but by standing firm in the faith, persevering and remaining self-controlled and alert.

What about the spiritual armour? As we have seen, Mark Bubeck turns the spiritual armour into a prayer formula where believers are urged to pray the protection of the armour for each member of their family every day.⁵⁰ Some take the armour literally so that upon rising in the morning, one visualises oneself being kitted out with a real suit of armour in a ritual exercise. Rebecca Brown in her book 'He came to set the Captives Free' tells of a visit she received from an angel who revealed that the reason we cannot see the spiritual armour is because it is spiritual and is put on our spirit body. As we put it on we must say: 'Father, would you please put your complete armour on me now. I ask and thank you for it in the name of Jesus'.⁵¹

What exactly is the spiritual armour? Bearing the context in mind, the spiritual armour protects us from Satan's attacks as we seek to live in obedience to God. We notice that there are six items of armour. As the literal armour covered the vital parts of the soldier's body, so the spiritual armour protects us from every kind of attack that Satan wages against the individual Christian. That is why Christians are to take the 'full armour of God'. Paul stresses that as every part of the Christian's personality is under attack, the mind, the emotions, the will etc.⁵²

Now how do we put on this armour? How do we use this armour? Here Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones makes a helpful observation. He writes, 'that the order in which the pieces are mentioned is of very great importance and significance'.⁵³ The first item of armour is the clue as to how this armour is 'put on' and used. The belt used by the Roman soldier tied his whole armour together. In fact, it held his armour in place and also enabled him to move without any hindrance. What Paul was stressing is that if we are

going to stand against the attacks of Satan, what we need more than anything else is truth. Lloyd-Jones asserts that: 'Without it we are completely lost. It means to have a settled conviction with regard to the truth ... there must be no lack of clarity ... and that means nothing less than that we should know whom we have believed, and we should know what we believe'.⁵⁴ It is truth that will enable us to use the other items of armour. What truth? The truth of what we believe, the truth of the gospel. Unless we know the truth, we will be vulnerable to Satan's attacks.

Paul wanted the Ephesians to understand that Satan attacks us from all sides. Thus each item of armour refers to a specific kind of attack he had in mind. For example, Lloyd-Jones points out that the breastplate protected the Roman soldier's vital organs, the heart, the liver, stomach etc. These organs are used in the Bible to symbolise the inner being of the person, the so-called psychological. Lloyd-Jones therefore interprets the breastplate of righteousness as a protection against Satan's attacks on the Christian's conscience, the emotions, affections and will.⁵⁵ What this specifically means, for example, is that there are times when Satan brings accusations against us in our conscience. He points to our failures and weaknesses. The result is that we lose our joy and our assurance of salvation. How do we deal with this? We take the breastplate of righteousness. This is the righteousness that is from God. It is not our righteousness. We do not rely on our works or achievements. We remind ourselves that we are covered with the righteousness of Christ given to us freely by his grace through faith.

In other words, putting on the armour refers to the application of biblical truth concerning who we are in Christ. We do not put on the armour in some sort of ritualistic prayer or on a spiritual body. Putting on the armour is standing on the truth and applying the truth of our identity in Christ and our resources in him. Here is really a truth confrontation.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the position taken in this evaluation is that any teaching must be tested by Scripture alone. This has always been the standpoint taken by historic evangelicalism. From this stance one can come to no other conclusion than that the Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare teaching lacks scriptural support. When scripture is referred to, invariably the texts are taken out of context, for example Old Testament references applicable in a particular situation are taken as normative for Christians, sometimes on the basis of nothing more than a so-called 'prophetic word'. More often than not, the only justification for a course of action is pragmatism, i.e., that it works. In addition, anecdotal evidence is heavily drawn on which the Christian community is expected to accept without much documentation. Wayne Detzler asserts that, 'most of the literature available on spiritual warfare seems preoccupied with minimal references to Scripture and maximum reference to experiences'.⁵⁶ And John H Armstrong comments that, '... this teaching must be impressed upon Scripture, for Scripture clearly does not teach it. This is done through relating personal experiences and then drawing logical conclusions from them ... In this way, Scripture is not the authority of this teaching, rather personal experience is.'⁵⁷

In addition, this teaching also raises other serious concerns:—

In the first place, fundamental to the methodology is the belief in the power of the spoken word as promoted by the Word of Faith movement leaders like Kenneth Hagin,

Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn. To attribute power to words is akin to magic and superstition.

Secondly, this teaching lacks historical perspective. The impression is given that spiritual warfare is a truth that has only recently been revealed or recovered from the ancient church. This is, of course quite incorrect. There is a wealth of literature on spiritual warfare available that is insightful and Scriptural. One just needs to think of that massive volume of William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, dating back to 1655. Dating back to 1652 we have, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* by Thomas Brooks. More recent we have two volumes of *The Christian Soldier* by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Thirdly, this teaching, contrary to its intended motive, hinders evangelism. The focus moves from sharing the gospel with unbelievers to the involved procedure of mapping, prayer walks etc. This holds the church captive from carrying out its function of evangelism until it discovers the correct spiritual formula for neutralising Satan's power. Wayne Detzler notes that it, 'Turns the task of evangelism into a magical confrontation with demonic forces'.⁵⁸ There is also a danger that procedure, even prayer, becomes a substitute for evangelism.

Another concern is the way prayer has become highly organised. It is not enough for a small group within the church or even for a group of local churches to get together to simply pray for change and revival. Prayer is organised into local, regional, national and international networks. It is also surrounded with a certain mystique, as only special people with insight can pray effectively. As we saw, Chuck Pierce believes that it is 'Apostolic prayer that unlocks regions'. The ordinary Christian must rely on the experts. Furthermore the focus of prayer moves from the sovereign God and his Son to whom he has given all authority, to Satan and his demons. Gerry Breshears voices his concern: 'I am ... troubled when prayer stops being family fellowship and becomes warfare weapons. Christian prayer brings communion and intimacy with God as well as unity to the body. It is never a weapon of warfare against some person, ideology or demon.'⁵⁹

Of course we long for revival and the total transformation of our society and the world. That is our best hope. But we cannot organise revival. That is the sovereign work of God the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us so and history confirms this to be true. So, what must we do? We do not need to discover the schemes of the devil. That is irrelevant. We must do what the people of God have always done; we must repent and seek God's face. Like the psalmist in Psalm 85 we must cry to God; 'Restore us again, O God our Saviour, and put away your displeasure toward us. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?' (Psalm 85:4-6). Or like the prophet Isaiah who prayed: 'Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble' (Isaiah 64:1). Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones commenting on this verse in Isaiah encourages us: 'Seek him, stir yourself up to call upon his name. Take hold upon him, plead with him as your Father, as your Maker, as your Potter, as your Guide, as your God. Plead his own promises. Cry unto him and say, "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down".'⁶⁰

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Review Article: Prophet of the Lord or Troubler of Israel? DM Lloyd-Jones and British Evangelicalism

Stephen Clark

Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) and Twentieth Century Evangelicalism by John Brencher (Paternoster Press 2002, 267pp).

Let me begin by articulating some biblical principles upon which all Bible believing Christians are (at least in theory) agreed. First, there is not a perfect man on the earth. 'In many things we all stumble.' Second, while we are to respect all people as God's image bearers and all Christians as brothers and sisters, we are to call no man 'lord' and no man 'father'. In the third place God alone is lord of the conscience and, while we are to give careful thought to the views and counsel of godly leaders, we must, nevertheless, be fully persuaded in our own minds and must neither formulate our beliefs nor frame our behaviour out of fear of men or out of desire to win their favour.

Let me now do what all preachers must do and apply these principles to the matter in hand. It is taken as read that Dr Lloyd-Jones was not perfect nor was he infallible. He would have been the very first to have admitted as much. So his views are to be weighed on the balances of Scripture just the same as the views of anyone else. It is a pity when some of those who highly esteemed him say, 'The Doctor said ...', as if that could settle an issue. It cannot and does not. Such an attitude is a betrayal of biblical principles and is hardly fair to the memory of a man who, more than most, was quite prepared to differ from fellow evangelicals when he believed that Scripture demanded this.

But if Lloyd-Jones has had his acolytes, he also has his detractors. Unhappy with what they regard as the hagiolatry of the official biography by Iain Murray, they mean to give a more critical appraisal of the life of one who was a major influence on twentieth century evangelicalism. This seems to be the approach of Dr Gaius Davies in one of the two new chapters which he has added to his *Genius, Grief and Grace*, and it is also the approach of the volume now under review. Indeed, given the size of Iain Murray's biography, and given the broadly positive, though not entirely uncritical, assessment of Lloyd-Jones in the more 'homely' accounts given by Christopher Catherwood of his grandfather, first in *Five Evangelical Leaders*, then in *A Family Portrait*, there would be little point in more being written unless it approached the subject in a more critical way. So Brencher is not to be faulted for seeking to do what he has set out to do. As a work which began life as a doctoral thesis submitted to the History Department of Sheffield University, one expects the author to evaluate his subject with a critical eye. His work must be judged by ascertaining the extent to which he has achieved his objective.

As a former President of FIEC and as one who first attended Westminster Chapel in the early 1950s, Dr Brencher shares Lloyd-Jones's evangelical beliefs. The treatment of his subject is, therefore, a sympathetic one. As a work which began life as a doctoral thesis for the History Department of Sheffield University, the material is well researched

and fully documented. The bibliography bears witness to the amount of material that has been studied and the nine chapters which form the core of the book cover the main areas of Lloyd-Jones's influence and deal with the key issues with which he was involved. Dr Brencher's sympathies with his subject do not prevent him from assessing some aspects of Lloyd-Jones's life in a negative way. It is a considerable achievement to have compressed so much into 267 pages, and the book is warmly commended on the 'blurb' by evangelical historian David Bebbington and by Derek Tidball.

Although the book began life as a doctoral thesis, there are indeed some surprises in such a work. Amongst the letters listed in the primary sources of the bibliography there are four sources of information referred to in the text as 'Personal Information' 1, 2, 3, 4, whose authors do not wish to be identified. To put it mildly, this is unfortunate in a book of this nature, particularly since some of these references touch somewhat controversial issues. It smacks more of journalese and of journalists protecting their sources than of serious doctoral work and of scholars giving references for others to evaluate. It is obviously right to respect people's desire to remain anonymous. But then their observations ought not to be included in a work of this nature.

One also wonders to what extent an author can adequately deal with *Martyn Lloyd-Jones and twentieth century evangelicalism* when there is very little about the state of evangelicalism when Lloyd-Jones came on the scene and the historical background to that scene. We look in vain for the effects of the Oxford Movement upon nineteenth century Anglicanism and for the reason for the founding of The Evangelical Alliance in 1846. Given the seriousness of the public disagreement between John Stott and Lloyd-Jones in the 1966 meeting organised by The Evangelical Alliance, and the amount of space which Dr Brencher gives to this issue, this is a serious omission indeed. A major change was taking place in the way that evangelicals responded to those whose beliefs were inimical to evangelicalism. But to see that shift in perspective one has to consider the historical background. Moreover, in view of the fact that the parting of the ways between Packer and Lloyd-Jones was occasioned by Packer's co-authoring of *Growing Into Union* with another evangelical and two Anglo-Catholics, Dr Brencher's treatment of this issue, like that of many others who have been fairly critical of Lloyd-Jones's stance, is, to say the least, somewhat myopic.

Again, there is precious little about the impact of liberalism in the nineteenth century nonconformist churches and the effect that this had upon the religious scene in the twentieth century. There is nothing, for example, about Spurgeon's involvement in 'The Down Grade Controversy'. This inevitably leads to the impression that Lloyd-Jones's disagreement with evangelicals who were committed to their denominations owed more to his personality type, or even his nationality, than it did to theological principle. But nothing could be further from the truth. He was heir to a tradition that stretched back through Spurgeon to the puritan forefathers of nonconformity. It was precisely because the nonconformist denominations were moving from the theological convictions with which they had begun, that Lloyd-Jones charged them with denying their origins. But you would not learn that from Dr Brencher's book. There is nothing about Gresham Machen and the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary. In other words, the book suffers from a failure to set the subject in his historical context and, as a consequence, there is a lack of perspective.

Possibly the most thorough theological presentation of the case for which Lloyd-Jones contended was presented by Klaas Runia in his book *Reformation Today*, to

which Lloyd-Jones wrote the foreword. The book does not get a mention. Written by a Dutch Presbyterian serving in Australia, it gives the lie to the suggestion that it was Lloyd-Jones's Welshness and congregationalism, not to mention his temperament, which made him so critical of the evangelical scene. As for 'guilt by association', Dr Brencher's book, like other critical treatments of Lloyd-Jones's stance on church issues, does not seriously consider the practical implications of passages like Galatians 1:8-9 or 2 John 10-11.

Dr Brencher shows greater understanding of Lloyd-Jones's belief of the work of the Holy Spirit, though even here there is a lack of perspective. He rightly sees Lloyd-Jones's views as essentially those of the eighteenth century. What he fails to communicate is the fact that what had become evangelical orthodoxy in the mid-twentieth century was so far from older emphases. It was this almost breathtaking ignorance of historical theology that led many to regard Lloyd-Jones as unorthodox and, indeed, Pentecostal or charismatic. A quick read of his foreword to his wife's translation of William Williams's classic *The Experience Meeting* would demonstrate that his emphasis was *not* upon spiritual gifts but upon a God centred, Christ honouring, Spirit empowered spirituality. A read of Williams's book would quickly demonstrate that Lloyd-Jones's view of the witness of the Spirit was main-line Welsh Calvinistic Methodism. A trawl through Thomas Brooks's *Heaven Upon Earth* would confirm that there were Puritans who shared this view, while Smeaton on the Holy Spirit, Spurgeon's sermons, and Kenneth Macrae's *Diary* will amply demonstrate that Lloyd-Jones's understanding of Holy Spirit baptism and revival was not the theological eccentricity which some have assumed it was.

Dr Brencher, like Gaius Davies, thinks that Lloyd-Jones, while undoubtedly humble, was of such a personality that he was always convinced that he was right and found disagreement with his views difficult to handle. His dominance in the pulpit at Westminster Chapel was such that his belief in spiritual gifts was inevitably 'theoretical', while the authority with which he spoke and the reverence with which he was treated inevitably meant that his leadership was severely lacking in certain respects. Furthermore, his anti-English feelings limited him somewhat. Are these criticisms fair and well grounded? Not really. Let me explain why.

While Lloyd-Jones was passionately committed to the 'primacy of preaching', throughout his years at Sandfields, Aberavon he held a weekly fellowship meeting (the 'experience meeting' or *seiat* of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism). He also held a weekly men's discussion meeting. At Westminster he introduced a Friday evening discussion meeting. My guess is that these types of meeting were certainly not widely held in evangelical circles in England at that time. The ministers' conference of the Evangelical Movement of Wales always has two discussion sessions and it is no secret that Lloyd-Jones had urged the need for such sessions that men might *confer*. Meetings like these, in his view, gave far more expression to the 'body' element of the church than simply having people to lead in prayer or read the Scriptures at a Sunday meeting. Men who cannot tolerate deviation from their views are not normally happy with the kind of free ranging discussion which 'the Doctor' encouraged.

The church and its meetings are greater than the Sunday services. While he did not believe in the cessation of the charismata (though he did believe in the cessation of the offices of apostle and prophet and did believe in the sufficiency of Scripture), this is not

to say that he believed that in every gathering of God's people the charismata should all be in evidence. Nor did he believe that much that was claimed as authentically of God's Spirit was of God.

That men treated him with exaggerated veneration was hardly his fault. It may, rather, be a symptom of the puerility of twentieth century evangelicalism that there is this constant tendency to look for evangelical 'champions'. (Can it be denied that, in a lower key, the same thing has been done with Carson, Clements, and Lucas?) That he had the courage of his convictions, none can deny. Is not this a virtue? Might one of the reasons why he was so often regarded as right was precisely because he could be brilliantly clear in expounding his position and devastatingly effective in demolishing a contrary view? One has to raise the question as to why some have become so critical of his views *after* his death. With respect to his views on gospel unity, one has far more respect for Packer and Stott (for both of whom he continued to have a warm personal admiration), who had the courage of *their* convictions and 'took him on', than one does for those who meekly followed him when alive but have, since his death, become some of his most vocal critics.

I have a fear that in dealing with Lloyd-Jones's Welshness, Dr Brencher is again a bit myopic and fails to see what was patently obvious. Lloyd-Jones had many close links with Englishmen: one thinks especially of his close link with that quintessential Englishman, Douglas Johnson. What he objected to was the attitude epitomised in the words of Richard Cox to John Knox that the church of the exiles at Frankfurt-on-Main was 'to have the face of an English church'. He agreed with Knox's response that it should have the face of Christ's church. Sadly, Cox's views are not a thing of the past. In an age that lauds multiculturalism in society, was not Lloyd-Jones years ahead of his time in contending for the principle of indigeneity for the church both within the UK and throughout the world? That he could be very firm on this kind of issue was essential if he was to break through the colonial type attitudes that persisted even in many missionary societies until not so long ago. Brencher notes Lloyd-Jones's enormous influence on IFES and the strength and vigour of that movement. It is a simple fact that the English public schools and Oxbridge colleges have, over the years, bred a 'For God, Queen, and country' mentality, that, in former years, emphasised activity over against theology, was suspicious of the intellect in theology and the emotions in religion. Would things have changed had Lloyd-Jones and a handful of others (some of them themselves English) not stood against this? I doubt it.

None of this is to deny that, like any other saved sinner, Lloyd-Jones was imperfect. But it is to say that Dr Brencher has mostly targeted the wrong areas for criticism. Lloyd-Jones's influence has been greatest on those who were persuaded of what he taught and, therefore, who shared his convictions because they saw them in Scripture rather than just 'followed my leader'. And that is what Lloyd-Jones most wanted. He really was not interested in his own reputation and what posterity would make of him. Like Whitefield before him, it was Christ's honour with which he was concerned and was content to let the Great Day declare what manner of man he was. Happy shall we be if we do likewise!

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Review Article: Two Worlds Collide— Postmodern Christianity and Princeton Theology

John W. Stewart and James H. Moorhead Eds. *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work*. (Cambridge, Eerdmans, 2002).

Princeton versus the New Divinity: The Meaning of Sin, Grace, Salvation, Revival. Articles from the Princeton Review (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001).

Few ideologies better demonstrate the evolution of Protestantism than those of Nineteenth Century and Twenty-first Century Princeton Theological Seminary. Nineteenth Century Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) pioneered the development of a robust Reformed American Calvinism, based on what became known as Inerrancy, the unapologetic Federal Theology of Calvin's successors and evangelicalism. The school's premier scholars, Archibald, A.A. and J.A. Alexander, B.B. Warfield and Gresham Machen formed one half of Reformed, conservative Presbyterianism along with Southern Presbyterians such as Thornwell, Dabney, Palmer and Girardeau. Perhaps more significantly for the church, they drove the development of American fundamentalism as a response to the surging tide of liberalism within mainline Protestant churches and established the ecclesiastical battleground through the present.

No single member of the Princeton faculty had a greater impact on Nineteenth Century American Reformed evangelicalism than Charles Hodge. Hodge's mastery of Biblical languages, Continental European training, theological acuity and combativeness made him a formidable opponent both to secular and religious modernism. The editors of *Charles Hodge Revisited* have attempted in this useful, uneven work, as leaders in the vanguard of surging postmodern Christianity to disinter Hodge from his tomb of perceived irrelevancy. All of mainstream Protestantism and much of Protestant evangelicalism has apparently moved beyond Hodge. They no longer fight the same battles, and on the rare occasions they do, they fight with completely different weapons. To put it plainly, Hodge seems, in light of the issues of the age to be hopelessly out of date and irrelevant. He fought liberalism with tools of modernism they find defective and aspects of modern liberalism they have long since taken for granted. Theirs is a Christianity fresh from its self-proclaimed victory over the excesses of the Enlightenment and modernism. Hodge, rooted in the Christianity of Turretin and what some of the contributors to this work loosely term Protestant Scholasticism evidenced a confidence in his beliefs not simply foreign, but offensive to postmodern sensibilities. He had a certainty which grates on postmodern ears used to reader response and Derrida. Hodge is out of touch with the world out there and the church in here.

Fortunately, postmodern overconfidence (in postmodern interpretation of course) has not relegated Hodge and his stalwart fellow-warriors to the rubbish bins

of triviality. In a sense, Hodge was far too formidable a scholar and saint for that. His life demands study and confrontation. Ours is a world that equates old ideas with old technology. They are simply not useful any longer, like typewriters and AM radios. How arrogant and how wrong. AM radios may be the stuff of jumble sales and quaint collections, but Hodge is still here, demanding to be read. It is greatly to Stewart and Moorhead's credit that they did.

The work is a confusion of different perspectives on his life and work. Some of articles confront Hodge's seminal works, others his often troubling personal life and politics, and still others which seem to me to be trivial, banal treatments such as his views concerning women. Must works concerning men or women of great weight and significance contain little offerings to political correctness? This work would have been better served by excising some of this. On the other hand, several contributors' observations concerning Hodge's troubling tolerance of slavery and his vigorous American whiggery proved highly illuminating.

Stewart's article, "Introducing Charles Hodge to Postmoderns" focuses on the underpinnings of Hodge's systematic theology. He mentions four primary sources and one work. The sources include Scottish common sense realism (truths are both self-evident and universal), the Bible mediated through the Westminster Confession of Faith as well as other statements of Reformed tradition, American Presbyterian ecclesial communities and the socio-political tradition of American whiggery. The work was Francis Turretin's *Elencitic Theology*, the standard text at Princeton. Stewart differentiates between Hodge's "scholastic" Calvinism and Jonathan Edwards' Lockean modernist tendencies. The latter Hodge deemed to flirt dangerously close to innovation and philosophy. Stewart uses the contrast to profile Hodge as an 'incisive and broad-ranging thinker,' rather than as an innovator. Stewart also addresses usefully the contrast between fragmentary postmodernism and Hodge's absolute commitment to the visible church.

E. Brooks Holifield of Emory University picks up the contrast between Hodge and Edwards to show that Hodge cemented a tradition for the Nineteenth Century that largely overlooked Edwards. Holifield largely casts the intellectual relationship between Edwards and Hodge as one of disapproval and dissent. "He found a few redeeming qualities in the Edwardsean tradition, but for the most part saw it as a series of mistakes. Like Sherlock Holmes's dog that did not bark, what is not said here matters most. Postmodern scholars have done a great deal to revive theological interest in Jonathan Edwards. Hodge's general disapproval seems to confirm the appraisals of him as anachronistic and marginal. The difference expressed itself largely in a more severe Calvinism that saw as the end of creation the glory of its creator rather than the happiness of the created.

David Kelsey of Yale focused his attention on Hodge as an influential interpreter of Scripture. Kelsey views Hodge's approach to the development of Christian doctrine as fundamentally ahistorical. Every doctrine finds its uncontaminated origin in Scripture, particularly Romans Chapter Five. Scripture clearly and boldly reveals a redemptive plan in the folds of its propositions. He notes Hans Frei's contrast between Calvin's typology emerging from a narrative approach to Scripture

and the early Enlightenment's eclipse of just such a narrative. The Enlightenment was about immutable laws not unscientific stories. Hodge, though he strongly opposed much that the Enlightenment promoted was himself a child of the same. He then, according to Kelsey, viewed Scripture scientifically. The one thing that differentiates spiritual knowledge from any other is the need for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the truth personally for the believer. Though Hodge may have summarized Christianity as simple, propositional truth, he believed that personal devotion accompanied by the intercession of the Holy Spirit was necessary for people to fully apprehend this truth. This intercession served to renew the entire person, including the intellect, and linked the church together in common understanding.

Wheaton historian Mark Noll provided far and away the most valuable contribution to the work. Noll, in his own words, frames Hodge's life as a 'sympathetic account of a failure.' The failure Noll notes was Hodge's inability to coherently describe Christianity as both objective reality and subjective experience. It forced him to explain Christianity to an increasingly skeptical world in two seemingly contradictory ways. It was both a system of propositional doctrines testified to by Scripture which had to be personally affirmed and personal experiences expressing the presence of an infilling Holy Spirit. The dissonance made Christianity's appeal less persuasive. How does one become a Christian? Hodge seemed to say two things at once, believe the record God provided in the Bible concerning his son and trust in Jesus alone for his or her salvation. Part of this appeared direct and impersonal. The Scripture is a definitive, clear recitation of facts to believe. On the other hand, the faith is ultimately personal and relational. It means loving someone and trusting him more than anything else in life. Noll does not seem to insinuate that either is wrong in itself. Rather, he contends that Hodge's inability to integrate effectively the two muddled his message and blunted its impact on society and the church as both struggled with the onset of imperial modernism. There is, perhaps more than anything else in this work, real substance with which for us to contend. What exactly is the evangelical message?

While Noll views Hodge's theological promotion of Christianity as less than successful, there is a great deal that he appreciates, some of which serves to balance the more detrimental effects of his methodology. Hodge, unlike his evangelical adversary Charles Gradison Finney, glories in the role of the Holy Spirit. His dependency on the mysterious outworking of the Spirit modifies his overweening reliance on reason to explain the work of God. Noll, in other words, views Hodge's theological formulas as far too pat and clinical. Noll also points out that any tendency to scholasticism was more than offset by Hodge's passionate personal piety. In other words, Charles Hodge loved God. He loved him with fire, not ice. Noll alone of the contributors seems to see Hodge as a full-blooded follower of Jesus Christ, not just a professor espousing a discredited ancient art like alchemy. Even though Hodge had a definite propensity for casting Christianity in the guise of Enlightenment philosophy, his deep well of devotion never allowed God to be

obscured behind the words. It was always about God, Hodge knew it, and more to the point, we know it because Hodge did.

All in all, *Charles Hodge Revisited* attempts to present the current evangelical mainstream with a view into its own antecedents. The results, though of often uneven quality, are worthy of sober reflection, not least because Hodge now seems so strange to so many of us now. The work gives valuable insights into the political, social and economic factors contributing to Hodge's theological understanding as well as his impact on Nineteenth Century America. In a sense, it goes beyond Hodge's time and helps us understand our own beliefs and our struggle with the alien theological climate of today. In other words, we often seem to feel out of step with the times. This may be perfectly appropriate. On the other hand, it may mean we have inadvertently crafted a view of Christianity which more resembles historical anachronism than timeless truth. Perhaps what it says most clearly about evangelicalism is that it has changed. Hodge's commentaries and his magisterial *Systematic Theology* fed generations of conservative evangelical Christians. These same texts now often seem antique to our eyes. Have we learned so much that we have left those such as Hodge and Alexander in the dust? Perhaps, we are just reflecting the arrogance of our youth and the seduction of the world. If the editors of *Revisited* are correct, Hodge reflected the worst of modernism's excesses, particularly with its love affair with the unambiguous appropriation of objective reality and rejected the best, its growing understanding of history. Perhaps. On the other hand, perhaps much of our own response to the Princeton School is reflect the external values of our own post-Christian age. Hodge's muscular optimism seems like arrogance to us. It may seem so, however, because we are reflecting life in a postmodern world cut loose from its solid, propositional underpinnings. We are a people adrift and may resent anyone who thinks solid ground still exists. My hunch is that both perspectives are probably true, at least in part.

Princeton Versus the New Divinity certainly stands a world apart from the previous offering. The editors of Banner of Truth Trust have in its pages presented the core of Princeton theology as it encountered the 'New Divinity' of Finney and Oberlin revivalism as it was expressed in the 1830s. The editors summarized the issues characterizing the movement as 'a revision of the teaching on the fallen condition of man, the nature of the atonement, and the extent of dependence on the Holy Spirit for regeneration.' Generally speaking, this meant a retreat from the Calvinism that developed as a result of the Protestant Reformation. The stress between these older and newer perspectives led to a division with American Presbyterianism in 1838. The work is not intended as a Twentieth Century critique of Hodge and other Princetonians. Rather, in reprinting articles of the Princeton divines, it adopts their views uncritically. Clearly *Princeton* stands as the Trust's endorsement of its opinions.

The book is a selection of articles that appeared in the *Princeton Review* between 1837 and 1842, several of which were contributed by Charles Hodge. In a critique of Dr. Samuel Cox, Hodge takes aim at Cox's understanding of regeneration. He reduces Cox's understanding to two points. The first point is that

regeneration is a moral rather than a physical change. In other words, regeneration is a choice you make. It is something initiated by the individual. The second point is that regeneration occurs 'accordant with the active powers of the soul.' Regeneration is activated in an individual by that person's active unassisted or unforced choice. Hodge is trying to say that the 'New Divinity' believed that man had within himself the capacity to choose a salvation found in Christ alone, without first dealing with a heart and will that Hodge believed were totally set against God. In this case, Cox believed that God did not have to overcome any barrier in us before we responded in faith and Hodge believed that God had to change our inner disposition before we could. This inner change was the work of the Holy Spirit. Hodge quotes John Owen, stating that the Spirit 'removes all obstacles, overcomes all oppositions, and infallibly produces the effect intended'. The article is interesting juxtaposed with *Charles Hodge Revisited*, in that it asserts with confidence a doctrinal perspective that strikes directly at the difference between traditional Calvinism and evangelicalism in dialogue with postmodernism. The traditional view, while being careful to distinguish in God's actions between force and influence (a non-coercive work of God which does not violate a natural freedom of the will-J. Owen), still proclaims a salvation accomplished and applied to quote John Murray. This is manifest as an irresistible grace which infallible overcomes our natural resistance through perfect persuasion. This is imperialism and tyranny imposed on free moral agents to the postmodern. It is a relief to the Calvinist. The impasse makes compromise problematic to say the least.

Interestingly, Hodge makes comprehensive use of Jonathan Edwards to prove his point, calling into question conclusions drawn by *Charles Hodge Revisited*. He observes that Edwards couches the issue of regeneration in terms of 'divine affections'. These arise from changes that must take place in the soul so that it can 'perceive the beauty of divine things'. In other words, God must work in advance of man by giving us new spiritual senses with which to perceive his goodness.

In a separate article by Hodge, 'The New Divinity Tried', the author reviews a pamphlet of Charles Finney concerned with the making of a new heart. The core of Finney's argument seemed to be that a nature cannot be holy. It and the entire person are morally neutral until moral choices are contemplated and made. Therefore, Adam's original disposition was neither sinful nor holy. Hodge counters Finney with an observation gleaned from Edwards noting that a disposition to love or not love exists prior to its voluntary exercise and indeed determines its character. Original sin, therefore exists as 'an innate sinful depravity of heart'. People are said to be sinful, not simply as a description of concrete choices that they have already made, but as an acknowledgment of internal dispositions which invariably drive their choices. Hodge implies that Finney's revivalism is driven by a belief in man's unimpeded ability to choose. Salvation, therefore, is about providing good information and packaging it persuasively enough to draw the listener. An article by Albert B. Dodd reinforces this understanding of Finney's view concerning human nature and the will. Dodd claims that Finney teaches that it is an insult to God to even pray for the ability to repent. This view is only possible without admitting the

comprehensive and debilitating nature of sin which always clouds judgments and frustrates decisions. It also limits the role of the Holy Spirit to presenting the truth to the mind, just as any good preacher would. One is struck throughout *Princeton versus the New Divinity* with the work's devotion to an active and powerful work by the Spirit. For that matter, the Calvinists recognized a robust role for each member of the Trinity. This seems in keeping with their proportionally less optimistic view concerning natural human ability. Finney, his colleagues and successors, by contrast, had, at the center of the debate concerning regeneration, human beings largely unimpeded by the Fall and, therefore, capable of exercising autonomous choice, aided only by good information.

Along the way, Hodge accused Finney of purely philosophical argumentation as well as playing 'fast and loose' with the Scripture he does provide. I suspect Mark Noll would enjoy the irony of the first part of that charge.

Revisited issues a cautionary note that is worth listening to. Reformed Christianity has not done its job simply because it has explained itself to its own satisfaction. The audience for its ideas is not meant to be those already converted, but a world, which hates it. Reformed Christianity emerged from a close association with prevailing authorities and culture. There was, even in its confrontations with Renaissance papacy, a common point of view over which to contend. We are facing a very different situation. We are in a post-Christian world that often resembles the pre-modern one. We do not share frames of reference with that world. Our presuppositions are different and largely mutually exclusive. Yet, we are commanded by God to speak and make his truth heard by those who no longer speak the same language. *Princeton versus the New Divinity* has much to commend it. Its pages evidence what it originally intended, clear thinking, cleansed hearts and transformed lives, but is it enough?

Is it enough to reprint these time-tested but also well worn pages? To whom do these words speak? Banner of Truth does indeed do us all a great service by publishing this work, but I cannot help but think that more is required. Let us be clear. Individuals such as the reviewer already accept a traditional Reformed view concerning soteriology. To whom is the book published? It seems to me that the vast majority of readers are already convinced of the truth of its arguments. In this sense, it seems to be preaching to the converted. Reformed truth must be reborn to confront postmodern man with an alternative to the watered down non-propositional faith it now endures. We need new voices to assist the old. We do not need a new love affair for the church. We have had more than enough of infatuation with and the yielding to fashion. On the other hand, we are not served well by insularity and nostalgia. We need to find new ways of expressing what we know and what we trust, absolute truth and an absolute King.

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Old Testament Literature Survey

(2001–2003)

Philip H Eveson

The following books have come to my attention and I have had the opportunity to dip into them and sample their contents. They are but a small fraction of what is published each year on the Old Testament that would keep me from doing nothing else but reviewing books! The selection mainly covers authors who claim to be of a conservative evangelical background but one or two from other traditions are also included.

Dictionaries

For those with some knowledge of Hebrew, the new-look **Koehler-Baumgartner Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament**, Study Edition in two volumes, revised by Baumgartner and Stamm, translated and edited by M.E.J. Richardson (3rd edition, Brill, 2001) is a must for those who can afford it. Though expensive it is an important reference tool in reading the Old Testament in the original languages. It has a number of advantages over older lexicons like Brown-Driver-Briggs. For one thing it is more user friendly in that words are arranged in strict alphabetical order, instead of being placed under their verbal roots. It also takes account of the advances in Semitics studies that have occurred during the 20th century. In the German original it has been an indispensable tool in the scholarly world for many years and in its new form will greatly assist pastors and students.

Long-suffering Hebrew students who began collecting *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* edited by **Botterweck & Ringgren** (and more recently **Fabry**) with volume 1 published by Eerdmans in 1974, will be pleased that volume 12 is now available. While we are on the subject of Hebrew, **A.P. Ross's** *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Baker 2001), a traditional grammar, provides a clearly laid out, modern guide to those wishing to acquire a basic understanding of the language in preparation for studying the biblical text.

The Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch edited by **T.D. Alexander & D.W. Baker** (IVP, 2003) is the first in a four-volume series on the text and background of the Old Testament. It follows a similar series on the New Testament. Old Testament scholars from around the world, the majority from the USA, give informative and detailed information on almost every aspect of Pentateuchal studies. Each of the 158 articles has at least a thousand words with some articles exceeding ten thousand words. The longest articles are 'Sacrifices and Offerings' and 'Historical Criticism'. Other substantial pieces include 'Covenant', 'Creation', 'Religion', 'Theology of the Pentateuch', 'Exodus, Date of' and 'Authorship of the Pentateuch'. Beside the Article Index there is a useful Subject Index for cross-reference that includes items not given special treatment in the main articles, and an invaluable Scripture Index.

Commentaries

Some interesting publications on the Pentateuch have appeared recently. These include three commentaries on Genesis in the same year. **B.K. Waltke's** *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan, 2001) provides pastors, teachers and students with a well-researched, lucid work that expounds the message of this crucially important biblical book. This is a commentary worth obtaining. As the author makes his way through the various sections of Genesis exegeting the text he pays particular attention to the development of the big story line, to the literary techniques that make up this artistic masterpiece and to the theology of the book. What liberal scholarship destroyed, a new generation of scholars are now appreciating, namely, the unity of the book with its 'patterns of structure' and 'plot development'. Waltke desires to be true to the text as God-breathed Scripture but many will be unhappy with his thoughts on science, history and theology in relation to the creation account in Genesis one.

The Book of Origins: Genesis simply explained (Welwyn Commentary, Evangelical Press, 2001) by **P.H. Eveson**, keeps the big picture before the reader throughout, opens up the meaning and theology of the text and seeks to apply its message in a natural and contemporary way.

J.H. Walton's *Genesis* (The NIV Application Commentary; Zondervan, 2001) is an expensive publication for what it is. The author seeks to demonstrate how Genesis shows God's mastery in creation covenant, and history. There is no detailed treatment of the text but a large amount of space is given to application, some of it providing some useful insights into how the Genesis message speaks to today's world. My main criticism is that the application rarely brings us to Christ. This is in large measure due to him not seeing the importance of Genesis 3:15 and the theme of the royal 'seed' that runs through the biblical text.

Very different is the work of **D. Fortner** *Discovering Christ in Genesis* (Evangelical Press, 2002). In this book the author finds types of Christ everywhere. For instance, God's creative work on the first day is 'a type of the incarnation of Christ', 'the cross of Christ is foreshadowed' on the second day and 'our Lord's resurrection is foreshadowed' on the third day, and so on. He compares and contrasts the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the tree on which our Lord was crucified. The work is not intended to be an exposition of the text of Genesis, but seeks to comment on the main characters to whom God revealed himself in order to give the reader a greater appreciation of Christ and to encourage believers in their service for him. He assumes the so-called 'gap' theory in his treatment of Genesis 1:2. While not always a safe guide to interpreting the first book of the Bible messianically, the author's knowledge of the Scriptures and evangelical convictions will enable many to find good food for their spiritual health.

There has also been some significant work done on Leviticus. **J. Milgrom's** massive work on the third book of Moses comes to a close with his third and final volume *Leviticus 23–27* (The Anchor Bible; Doubleday, 2002). This Jewish scholar's commentary is described by Walter Kaiser as 'the benchmark for all studies on Leviticus for the foreseeable future'. **M.F. Rooker** on *Leviticus* (The New American Commentary; Broadman & Holman; 2000) provides one of the best modern

commentaries on this important yet neglected biblical book. He argues for the Mosaic authorship and is particularly helpful in his treatment of the sacrifices.

A close second is the work by **A.P. Ross**, *Holiness to the Lord. A guide to the exposition of the book of Leviticus* (Baker Academic, 2002). Preachers will find many useful hints. Each chapter of the book is divided along similar lines, giving the theological ideas, a summary and outline of the passage, an expository outline, concluding observations and a bibliography. He is well abreast of all the scholarly literature relating to Leviticus and the subjects covered and what is more he directs the reader to Christ and to New Testament parallels.

T. Longman III has produced a most readable and reliable exposition of the Old Testament's priestly work with the aim of showing its relevance for Christians today. The book is entitled, *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001). It is the first in a series on *The Gospel According to the Old Testament* that is designed to help preachers and Christians generally to read and preach the Old Testament in a Christ-centred way. Longman's book is divided into four parts: sacred space, sacred acts, sacred people and sacred time with nineteen chapters in all. At the end of each chapter there are questions for further reflection. This is a most helpful study, worth buying and consulting alongside V. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (reprinted by P & R, 1996).

W.H. Bellinger in his commentary on *Leviticus, Numbers* (New International Biblical Commentary; Hendrickson/Paternoster, 2001) presents the reader with a very clear account of scholarly views on disputed issues and is generally helpful in his treatment of the text. On Mosaic authorship of these books Bellinger is disappointing. For him they merely preserve 'ancient traditions carrying the authority of the Mosaic covenant' and are the product of unknown priests living toward the end of the Babylonian exile.

After expounding Deuteronomy and Nehemiah in the same series, **R. Brown's** latest contribution to *The Bible Speaks Today* is *The Message of Numbers* (IVP, 2002). Sprinkled with many apt illustrations this book, based on sound scholarship, helpfully expounds the text and presses home the message(s) of this fourth book of Moses.

Unlike Ralph Davis in his contributions to the same series, **A. Harman** on *Deuteronomy* (Focus on the Bible; Christian Focus, 2001) does not make the book live with modern illustrations and application. Nevertheless, it is a careful exposition of the text with a useful introduction setting out the significant teaching of this final book of the Pentateuch.

A new series of scholarly commentaries on the Old Testament has begun with **J.G. McConville's** *Deuteronomy* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary; IVP, 2002). The volume is the fruit of a lifetime of study and writing connected with this biblical book. In many respects this is a fine piece of work. The author's exegesis of the text displays fine scholarship and the insights into the theology and message of Deuteronomy are most helpful. How the book can be applied to our contemporary situation is not forgotten. In reviewing the introductory issues of date, authorship and sources, he disagrees with many of the conclusions of scholars committed to some variation of the documentary hypothesis. McConville's 'A Fresh Approach To Deuteronomy'

unfortunately is not so fresh in that he works within a world of liberal criticism that means he cannot hold to the book's Mosaic authorship.

R. Ellsworth's *Apostasy, Destruction and Hope: 2 Kings simply explained* (Welwyn Commentary; Evangelical Press, 2002) is the sequel to his earlier book in the same series on First Kings. Original sermon material has been reworked to produce this readable and pastorally helpful exposition.

S.S. Tuell's *First and Second Chronicles* (Interpretation; John Knox Press, 2001) is not as rewarding as some of the other commentaries in a series that aims to help teachers and preachers. Aware of recent scholarly work on the Chronicler the author seeks to bring out the theological message of Chronicles. While there are some helpful insights, it fails to stress such important themes as prayer and the Chronicler's concern for 'all Israel'. The book is much more positive in its approach to the historical reliability of Chronicles than a previous generation of scholars but it still betrays some liberal hang-ups. For Tuell, 'Chronicles is a Bible study'. It is 'an extended meditation on the Hebrew Scriptures' in much the same way as 'we come to Scripture... in search of guidance and strength'.

R.S. Fyall has produced an exceptionally fine piece of work called *Now my Eyes have seen You. Images of creation and evil in the book of Job* (New Studies in Biblical Theology; Apollos/IVP, 2002). He considers the book of Job to be primarily about creation, providence and knowing God and how these are to be understood in the context of human suffering. There are many helpful insights and his handling of how the book points us to Christ is superb. The reader does not have to agree with all his conclusions to gain much benefit from this volume.

This commentary by **I. Provan**, *Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs* (The NIV Application Commentary; Zondervan, 2001), has much to commend it. In his treatment of Ecclesiastes he does not pit the 'editor' of Ecclesiastes against the 'Preacher' as some modern commentators do. Furthermore, it was gratifying to see that Provan does not go along with the almost universal idea that the 'Preacher' (Qohelet) is speaking about the meaninglessness of life (The NIV has a lot to answer for by rendering the Hebrew consistently as 'meaningless'). Provan rightly observes that this is not its normal meaning in other parts of the OT. The point that Qohelet is making is that life is fleeting. Interpreting the Hebrew to mean 'meaninglessness' or 'absurdity' is, says Provan, '(perhaps unknowingly) too much indebted to an influential modern French existentialism and insufficiently grounded in biblical texts.' His exposition of Song of Songs has that balance which E.J. Young encouraged. He shows how the Song 'celebrates the dignity and purity of human love' while at the same time speaking of God and his people.

While **T. Longman III** in *Song of Songs* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Eerdmans, 2001) criticises the allegorical approach, arguing instead that the book is a collection of poems 'that celebrate and caution concerning human love', he does show the legitimacy of a theological reading of the text within the context of the canon of Scripture. More debatable is the way in which he views the Song against the background of Genesis 2 and 3. Like Provan, Longman argues against Solomonic authorship and translates the introductory words as 'concerns Solomon' rather than 'belonging to Solomon'.

The Prophetic Literature by **D.L. Petersen** (Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002) provides a refreshingly new introduction to the study of the four great canonical works: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Book of the Twelve. It is not an evangelical work but it will be particularly useful to students wishing to have a systematic and comprehensive introduction that takes into account current critical research.

J.A. Dearman's *Jeremiah/Lamentations* (The NIV Application Commentary; Zondervan 2002) begins to fill a noticeable gap in commentaries on these books of the Bible. The comments on the text are judicious and the message and theological themes are helpfully drawn out. Compared with other commentaries in this series the application is more succinct and generally quite useful although the illustrations continue to betray the American stable from which the series comes.

A valuable addition to The Bible Speaks Today series is **C.J.H. Wright's** *The Message Ezekiel* (IVP, 2001). This difficult prophetic book is opened up and explained in a most helpful and judicious way.

In the same series as McConville's commentary on Deuteronomy is the one by **E.C. Lucas** *Daniel* (Apollos, Old Testament Commentary; IVP, 2002). It has been written primarily for those teaching and preaching the Bible. After presenting introductory matters relating to the text, interpreting the narratives and visions and the historical context for understanding the book, the author then provides his own translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic text with notes on points of grammar, syntax and textual criticism followed by comment on the text. He leaves to an epilogue any discussion of the date and authorship of the book. While he shows a conservative bent in upholding the historical accuracy of sections often assumed by liberal scholars to be suspect, unlike trusted commentators of the calibre of R.D. Wilson and E.J. Young, Lucas encourages belief in a second century date for the book by arguing that pseudonymous quasi-prophecy is compatible with belief in God-breathed Scripture.

P.S. Johnson's *Shades of Sheol – Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Apollos 2002) is a comprehensive study of an important yet often neglected Old Testament issue. Nothing is assumed and each passage relating to the subject is examined carefully and competently. His reasons for coming to so many negative conclusions with regard to the afterlife will need to be taken into account in any future study of the subject.

Conclusion

Every commentary should be read and used in a wise and discriminatory way but a further cautionary word is necessary. Looking at the helps emerging from within scholarly conservative circles, there is some very fine scholarship and helpful theological reflection that is satisfying and refreshing. Unfortunately, it is too often accompanied with the baggage of a rationalistic approach to Scripture that seeks to win the approval of the academic world. It impresses no one, least of all those whose acceptance is coveted.

Rev. Philip Eveson is Principal of the London Theological Seminary and Director of Studies at the John Owen Centre.

The Valley of Vision

This collection of Puritan prayers and devotion was first published by the Banner of Truth in 1975. It has now been reissued in a leather binding. Here are two examples of its contents.


The Valley of Vision

LORD, THE HIGH AND HOLY, MEEK AND LOWLY,
Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,
where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox
that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
and the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;

Let me find thy light in my darkness,
thy life in my death,
thy joy in my sorrow,
thy grace in my sin,
thy riches in my poverty,
thy glory in my valley.

 continued on next page

The Gift of Gifts

O SOURCE OF ALL GOOD,

What shall I render to thee for the gift of gifts, thine
own dear Son, begotten, not created, my redeemer,
proxy, surety, substitute, his self-emptying
incomprehensible, his infinity of love beyond the heart's grasp.

Herein is wonder of wonders: he came below to raise
me above, was born like me that I might become like him.

Herein is love;

when I cannot rise to him he draws near on wings of grace, to raise me to
himself.

Herein is power;

when Deity and humanity were infinitely apart
he united them in indissoluble unity, the uncreate and the created.

Herein is wisdom;

when I was undone, with no will to return to him, and no intellect to devise
recovery,

he came, God-incarnate, to save me to the uttermost, as man to die my
death,

to shed satisfying blood on my behalf,
to work out a perfect righteousness for me.

O God, take me in spirit to the watchful shepherds, and enlarge my mind;

let me hear good tidings of great joy,
and hearing, believe, rejoice, praise, adore, my
conscience bathed in an ocean of repose,
my eyes uplifted to a reconciled Father;

place me with ox, ass, camel, goat,
to look with them upon my redeemer's face,
and in him account myself delivered from sin;

let me with Simeon clasp the new-born child to my heart,
embrace him with undying faith, exulting that he is mine and I am his.

In him thou hast given me so much that heaven can give no more.

David Ford

As most readers of *Foundations* know, David Ford, the General Secretary of the BEC, is soon to take up a new appointment with the Free Church of Scotland as a missionary in Colombia. I would like to take this opportunity to thank David for his support and encouragement of this journal and to express on behalf of its readers our gratitude for his work with BEC. Our prayer is that the Lord will bless him in his new work for him.

EDITORIAL POLICY

1. To articulate that theology characteristic of evangelical churches which are outside pluralist ecumenical bodies.
 2. To discuss any theological issues which reflect the diverse views on matters not essential to salvation held within the BEC constituency.
 3. To appraise and report on contemporary trends in theology, particularly those which represent departure from consistent evangelicalism.
 4. To stimulate interest in contemporary theological matters among evangelical churches by the way in which these topics are handled and by indicating their relevance to pastoral ministry.
 5. To keep our readers informed about the contents of new books and journals, as a means of encouraging their stewardship of time and money.
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