

Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

Reference Material

Study 4 Mankind And Original Sin

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The Fall Of Man

Petts, David, *You'd Better Believe It*, Mattersey, Mattersey Hall, 1999.
(Ch.9-11, pp57-73, *The fall of Man*)

The Fall of Man

So far we have devoted most of our attention to the person and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is now time to direct our thoughts to the subject of the Fall of Man. The Bible teaches that when God made man he made him perfect and put him in a perfect creation. In Genesis 1:27 we read that God created man and woman in his own image and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (v.31). In the next chapter we are told that the Lord commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will surely die (Genesis 2:16-17).

Sadly, however, we read in Chapter 3 how Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan and disobeyed God by eating this fruit. This first act of disobedience on the part of mankind is known as 'The Fall of Man' ('Man' here meaning both man and woman of course -- mankind). As we shall see as we examine the subject more closely, however, the Fall is not just something in which Adam and Eve had a part, but was an act of rebellion against God in which we ourselves are all personally involved.

The nature of the Fall

The seriousness of Adam's sin lies not merely in the fact that he ate the forbidden fruit, but in the reasons why he did so. Through the influence of Satan he came first to doubt God's word (Genesis 3:1) and then positively to disbelieve it (3:4). This resulted in his final disobedience (3:6). How clearly his sin typifies those of countless generations of human beings

ever since! We refuse to take God's statement seriously, we prefer not to believe what he has said, and our disbelief, like Adam and Eve's, results in disobedience - and death.

The seriousness of the Fall

The seriousness of sin — both Adam's and ours — is seen when we consider the nature of the commands we have broken. God's command to Adam and Eve, like all the laws he has given to the human race, resulted from God's authority, his goodness, his wisdom and justice, his faithfulness, grace and love. In disobeying, we reject his authority, doubt his goodness, dispute his wisdom and justice, deny his faithfulness, spurn his grace and refuse his love. Adam's sin was the contradiction of all God's perfection. The consequences are hardly surprising.

The consequences of the Fall

The first effects of the Fall are seen in man's attitude to God. Adam and Eve experienced a sense of fear and shame they had never known before. They knew that they were naked (3:7) and were afraid (3:10). Instead of enjoying the presence of God they hid themselves from the Lord (3:8).

So the separation from God which sin causes results partly from our sense of shame. But it is also the inevitable requirement of God's holiness. His eyes are too pure to look at evil. He cannot be complacent towards sin. Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden (3:24) and by their disobedience the entire human race was separated from God. As time went by, man's sinful condition grew worse and worse. Cain slew Abel (Genesis 4:8). Lamech committed polygamy (4:19) and murder (4:23). Mankind's wickedness became very great (6:5). The Fall has had a lasting effect. Even the physical creation was affected. God cursed the ground because of Adam's sin (3:17) and even now the whole

creation is groaning in pain (Romans 8:22). And not only pain, but death. God had warned, When you eat of it you will surely die (Genesis 2:17). In disbelief and disobedience mankind has chosen to ignore God's warning. The consequences were inescapable. The sentence of divine justice must be pronounced: Dust you are, and to dust you will return (Genesis 3:19).

The imputation of the Fall

As we have seen, Adam's sin was to affect not only himself and his immediate family, but the entire human race as well. As the father of our race he represents us all. There is a sense in which when he sinned, we all sinned. By his sin, he brought sin and death to us all. This is something which is made clear in Romans 5:12-14:

When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die, for all sinned. We know that it was Adam's sin that caused this, because although, of course, people were sinning from the time of Adam until Moses, God did not in those days judge them guilty of death for breaking his laws — because he had not yet given his laws to them, nor told them what he wanted them to do. So when their bodies died it was not for their own sins, since they themselves had never disobeyed God's special law against eating the forbidden fruit, as Adam had (Living Bible).

What we are told here is that Adam's sin infected the entire human race. This is proved by the fact that all the people who lived between Adam and Moses had received no specific commandment from God. (Adam had received a specific command from God with regard to the fruit, and Moses had received the Law and the Ten Commandments, but no specific commandments were given to those who lived in

between). Yet all these people died. They could not have died for breaking God's specific commandments, for they had not been given any. Therefore, Paul reasons, they died as a result of Adam's sin. His sin is imputed to us all.

There have been those who have argued that this is unfair. Why should I die as a result of something Adam did? Yet the Bible makes it clear that this is perfectly fair, for I have sinned too. By my actions I have ratified (agreed with) Adam's rebellion, for I too have rebelled against God. The sad fact is that, if I had been in Adam's place, I would have done exactly the same as he did. As a result of Adam's sin death has come to all mankind, but this is perfectly fair, for all have sinned. The Fall is something in which we are all personally involved.

Salvation from the Fall

How grateful we must be, then, that when God passed judgment upon the human race because of Adam's sin, he had already prepared a way by which man might be restored.

Satan had won a great victory over our first parents when his temptations caused their fall. But when the first Adam failed, God had prepared a second 'Adam', one of his descendants, the offspring of the woman who would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).

The first Adam, as the representative head of the human race, was defeated. The last Adam (the Lord Jesus Christ) came that he might conquer. He succeeded where Adam failed. He is the head of a new race, a redeemed humanity, the people of God, the Church. Those who are in Adam (the unsaved) still reap the effects of Adam's sin. Those who are in Christ (those who are saved) are to be rescued from the consequences of the Fall. We still live in a fallen world. Our bodies are still subject to death. But we are no longer separated from God! We have been restored to fellowship! We have eternal life!

And the day is coming — a day for which the whole of creation is longing — when even our bodies will be redeemed! The effects of the curse will be lifted! God will reveal his glory in us. The sons of God will be revealed to the entire universe. Creation itself will be delivered from its bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:18-23).

What a contrast between Adam and Christ! Adam by his sin caused many to be sinners. By his one offence came judgment and condemnation and death. But as by the offence of one man (Adam) judgment came upon all mankind, even so, thank God, by the righteousness of one man (Christ), the free gift of justification became available to all:

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:17-21).

Saved through Faith

In the last chapter we considered the nature and serious consequences of man's sin. But we saw too that, even at the time of the fall of man in the garden of Eden, God promised

that the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent's head. This was a promise of the coming of Christ who was to deliver mankind from sin and its consequences. What was lost for us by Adam's sin has been regained for us by Christ's righteousness (Romans 5).

This deliverance from sin brought about by Christ through his atoning death on the cross is known as salvation. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines salvation as Deliverance from sin and its consequences and admission to heaven brought about by Christ.

As we saw in Chapter 4, salvation is necessary because all have sinned and because the consequences of sin are so very serious. God has wonderfully made salvation possible by sending his Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. All that he requires of us is that we repent and believe the gospel. The scriptures listed on the following pages help us to gain a clear understanding of the nature of our salvation. They are also a useful source of important verses to use in leading others to Christ. You may feel that you want to memorise some of them, or at least to try to remember where to find them.

The need for salvation

a) The Universality of Sin

1 Kings 8:46 There is no one who does not sin

Psalms 14:3 There is no one who does good, not even one

Ecclesiastes 7:20 There is not a righteous man on the earth who does what is right and never sins

Romans 3:23 All have sinned...

Galatians 3:22 The whole world is a prisoner to sin

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves

1 John 5:19 The whole world is under the control of the evil one

b) The Consequences of Sin

Now, in this life, the sinner:

- is sick (Matthew 9:12, Mark 2:17)
- cannot understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14)
- has a blinded mind (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- has a defiled conscience (Titus 1:15)
- is a fool (Romans 1:22)
- is an enemy of the cross of Christ (Philippians 3:18)
- loves darkness (John 3:19)
- is without Christ, hope, or God (Ephesians 2:12)
- cannot cease from sin (2 Peter 2:14)
- is on the way to destruction (Matthew 7:18-19)
- has a lost soul (Matthew 16:26, 18:11)
- is worthy of death (Romans 1:32)
- is dead in sins (Colossians 2:13)

After death, the sinner faces judgment and punishment:

John 3:36... whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him

Acts 17:31... he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed

Colossians 3:6... the wrath of God is coming...

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his powerful angels in blazing fire. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and the majesty of his power

Hebrews 9:27 Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

Jesus described this punishment as:

- hell fire (Matthew 5:22)
- outer darkness (Matthew 8:12)
- everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46)

Jesus said that whoever does not believe stands condemned already (John 3:18).

The means of salvation

a) God's remedy — the death of his Son

Romans 5:6, 8, 10...just at the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ dies for us... When we were God's enemies we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son

1 Timothy 1:15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

1 Peter 3:18 Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God

b) Man's responsibility — repentance and faith

Luke 13:3... unless you repent, you... will perish

Luke 24:47 Repentance ... will be preached... to all nations

Acts 2:38 Repent, and be baptised every one...

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God

Acts 17:30 ... but now he commands all people everywhere to repent

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Acts 10:43 everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins

Romans 1:16 the gospel is the power of God for the Salvation of everyone who believes

Romans 5:1 ... we have been justified by faith

Galatians 2:16... know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ

Ephesians 2:8 By grace you have been saved, through faith

Are you sure that when you die you will go to heaven?

If not, turn from your sin right now and trust Jesus to save you.

The Blood of Christ

We have already considered the substitutionary atoning death of Christ in an earlier chapter. He died in our place so that our sins could be forgiven. In doing so, of course, he shed his blood for us. This is important because we are told in Hebrews 9:22 that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness and in Leviticus 17:11 that it is the blood that makes atonement.

Perhaps the best example of the importance of the blood in the Old Testament is the story of the Passover. God had decreed that all the firstborn of the land of Egypt were to die. The Israelites were to sacrifice a lamb and mark the doorposts and lintel of their houses with its blood. In Exodus 12:13 God said, When I see the blood, I will pass over you. Only those who were marked with the blood of the lamb could escape death. This was an amazing prophetic picture of how today only those who have put their trust in the atoning blood of Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), will escape the death penalty which is the result of sin. Thank God, Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

In fact the New Testament makes it clear that the sacrifices of the Old Testament were only a picture of what was to come. They could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). They were part of the old covenant, whereas Jesus is the mediator of a new and better covenant which is ratified in his blood (Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20). These verses make it clear that the purpose of the shedding of Christ's blood was the remission of our sins. But there are many other benefits which we derive from having our sins forgiven through faith in Christ's blood:

Cleansing

Sin defiles, but thank God, by faith in Christ's shed blood we can be made clean. The blood of Jesus his Son purifies us from every sin (1 John 1:7). Jesus loves us and has freed us from our sins by his own blood (Revelation 1:5). Our robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

Redemption

Furthermore, in Jesus we have redemption through his blood (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14). Redemption means deliverance from evil by the payment of a price. Prisoners of war could be released on the payment of a ransom. We were once the captives of sin, but Jesus has paid the price of our release. He has redeemed us. And the price he paid was the shedding of his blood. Corruptible things — even silver or gold — could never have paid the price for us. Only the blood of Christ was sufficiently precious (1 Peter 1:18-19). And because of the value of that blood, the redemption he has obtained for us is eternal (Hebrews 9:12). Throughout the eternal ages there will be those from every tribe and language and people and nation who will surround his throne in worship and adoration, crying, You were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God (Revelation 5:9).

Propitiation

Another great benefit that results from the shedding of Christ's blood is that by it God's holy anger has been appeased. This is known as propitiation which means the removal of wrath by the offering of a gift. Romans 3:25 teaches us that Jesus is an atoning sacrifice to turn aside God's anger and take away our sins. This is through faith in his blood which was shed for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). God was

justly angry at the sins of the world, but his anger has been appeased by the offering of the blood of his Son.

Reconciliation

And resulting from propitiation is reconciliation. Once we were enemies of God, but when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son (Romans 5:10). He made peace through his blood shed on the cross (Colossians 1:20) because, by Jesus, God wanted to reconcile all things to himself. Thank God, we are no longer enemies, but sons, redeemed that we might receive adoption as sons and even as heirs (Galatians 4:4-7).

Justification

One of the reasons that God has been able to adopt us into his family is that we have been justified. This means that he has declared us righteous. He will not have sinners in his family, but by Christ's blood we have been cleansed. God counts us as righteous. He looks on us as though we had never sinned at all! Amazing grace! Being justified by faith we have peace with God (reconciliation) through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom.5:1). And because we are justified by his blood we shall also be saved from wrath through him (Rom.5:9).

Sanctification

Yet another aspect of our salvation which relates to the blood of Christ is our sanctification. This refers to our actually becoming righteous (holy) in practical everyday terms. But this is such an important subject that we shall devote an entire chapter to it later.

Access

As sinners, God would not allow us to enter his holy presence. But now, through Christ's blood, we have been cleansed, reconciled, justified, sanctified! Now he bids us enter.

*We have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13).
Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place
by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near (Hebrews 10:19).*

The veil of the temple has been split from the top to the bottom. Sinful man may enter the presence of a holy God, for Christ has shed his blood and died. It cost Jesus so much for us to be able to enter God's presence. Ought we not to draw near to him more often?

Victory over the devil's false accusations

Finally, we notice that we may overcome the devil's false accusations by the blood of the lamb (Revelation 12:10-11). It should be noticed at this stage, however, that some Christians have taken this thought too far. There is in the Bible no justification whatever for 'pleading the blood' against demons, or asking God to 'cover with the blood' the building, the car, or our loved ones for their protection (as we sometimes hear some Christians pray). Jesus told his disciples to cast out demons in his name (not with his blood), and it is important to realise that the blood of the Passover lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts to avert God's judgment, not an attack of the devil.

In fact, the Bible teaches very clearly that the blood speaks to God. Revelation 12:11 needs to be read in its context, and as we do so we see that the blood of the lamb is used to overcome the daily accusations of the devil (v.10). Satan will constantly seek to remind us that we are sinners. But by the blood of the lamb we have been cleansed, redeemed and justified. By that blood we are in right standing with God. We need not surrender to the constant accusations of the enemy. Jesus has shed his blood for us. We are his and his forever. And nothing that Satan can say can alter that.

SLSW: A Modern Mythology?

Reid, M., *SLSW: A Modern Mythology?*, Fairfax, VA, Xulon Press, 2002
(*Biblical, Theological & Historical Bases pp38-56, 296-298*).

Old Testament Basis

Genesis has often been described as the "*book of beginnings*," or "*origins*." This is the introductory section to the entire body of Hebrew sacred literature and of revealed truth in general. In the early chapters, it narrates those events which form the basis for the great history of human redemption: namely, the Creation, the nature of sin and the Fall, and the promise of the coming Redeemer.

The stage is set in the Garden of Eden where mankind, the pinnacle of all God's creation, becomes the target for Satan's attack. The devil presents himself as a serpent, and is described as being "more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made" (Gen. 3:1). However, it is clear that man's supremacy over the animal world was God-given in its origin and comprehensive in its scope (Gen. 1:26). The First Adam had dominion over the serpent as long as he remained in obedience to the commandment of God.

God gave one commandment to man. He said, "you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen.2:17). The serpent introduced an opposing thought. He said, "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5). Thus not only did the serpent accuse God of lying, but he claimed that the reason for the lie was a deliberate intention to deprive man of equality with Himself. The battle was to be fought in the mind.

Man's response to these statements was essentially an intellectual process, based on a choice as to whom to believe. Grudem suggests that this process brought into question three distinct concepts, namely, "what is true?", "what is right?", and "who am I?" The first dealt with the basis for knowledge, and Eve chose to believe the serpent's misrepresentation of the facts. The second related to the basis for moral standards; God had forbidden man to eat of the fruit of one tree, and it was therefore wrong to do so (Gen. 2:16-17). The serpent postulated an alternative rule, suggesting that it would be right to eat of the fruit and that in so doing mankind would become as "gods" (Gen. 3:5). Eve elected to trust in her Satan-inspired evaluation of the moral code, rather than accepting God's direction. Thirdly, was the question of identity; Adam and Eve had been made in the image of God, to be dependent on Him for all things as He was both Creator and Lord. Now Eve asserted her independence and aspired to be like God, to elevate herself from the position of the creature to that of the Creator. It is clear from this process that the attack centred on the mind. Berkhof gives a slightly different appraisal of the temptation process. He states:

The course followed by the tempter is quite clear. In the first place he sows the seeds of doubt by calling the good intention of God in question and suggesting that his command was really an infringement of man's liberty and rights. When he notices from the response of Eve that the seed has taken root, he adds the seed of unbelief and pride, denying that transgression will result in death, and clearly intimating that the command was prompted by the selfish purpose of keeping man in subjection. He asserts that by eating from the tree man would become like God. The high expectations thus engendered induced Eve to look intently at the tree, and the longer she looked, the better the fruit seemed to her.

Finally, desire got the upper hand, and she ate and also gave unto her husband, and he ate.

It could also be argued that when the serpent suggested that by partaking of the fruit Adam and Eve could become "as gods" (Gen. 3:5), he provoked the woman's imagination to consider this possibility. Ignoring the fact that the statement was totally deceptive for, as Genesis 1:27 teaches, man had been made in the very image of God Himself, Eve chose to accept Satan's opinion and resentment arose in her heart that God should deprive her of this great privilege. She looked and saw three things, namely that "the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6). Finally, she succumbed, took of the fruit and gave some to her husband who was with her. The serpent had gained entrance via the senses, by appealing to "For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does" (1 John 2:16). Thus Eve was beguiled in her imagination to disregard the commandment of God and to make an independent decision based on her own judgement; incited by the serpent she chose to abandon rational thought.' However, in summary, it is clear that whatever analysis is adopted, the focus of the attack was the mind of man.

Satan had a definite strategy in view, namely to induce disobedience. His first attack was launched against the woman as she was perceived to be the more vulnerable. Berkhof suggests that Eve was the initial target of the serpent for three reasons, ". . . (a) she was not the head of the covenant and therefore would not have the same sense of responsibility; (b) she had not received the command of God directly but only indirectly, and would consequently be more susceptible to argumentation and doubt; and (c) she would undoubtedly

prove to be the most effective agent in reaching the heart of Adam."

The process for Adam was slightly different in that he made a definite and wilful choice to take of the forbidden fruit. He was not deceived by the serpent but chose to accept the lie because it appeared to be to his advantage to do so: "The essence of that sin lay in the fact that Adam placed himself in opposition to God, that he refused to subject his will to the will of God, to have God determine the course of his life; and that he actively attempted to take the matter out of God's hand, and to determine the future for himself." As George Fox observed: "So they both forsook God's Voice and Commandment; and then that brought them into Sorrow, by hearkning to the Serpent, who was out of Truth, and disobeying the Voice and Command of the God of Truth." Man chose independence from God and in so doing he lost fellowship with the Creator. Man also lost his dominion over the enemy and was driven out of the Garden under the curse of a brief and difficult life. Satan was the apparent victor in the first round of the battle and it was all on the basis of deception. The attack had focused on the mind and man had disregarded his only protection against the wiles of the enemy--obedience to the express will of God. The real problem was not the power of the devil, but man's willingness to disobey the commands of the Creator. Disobedience was the key issue (Rom. 5:19) and man was led astray only because he had abandoned the truth and accepted the lie. Subsequently, the Old Testament refers very little to the Fall. "Nevertheless, the Fall is the silent hypothesis of the whole Bible doctrine of sin and redemption; it does not rest on a few vague passages, but forms an indispensable element in the

revelation of salvation." Thus Adam and Eve's fall was representative of the entire human race (Rom. 5:12-21). The noun "Satan" appears only twenty-four times in the whole of the Old Testament and he is never depicted as a direct opponent of God. The word "demon" is not used in the KJV; "devils" appears in four places; and "evil spirit" occurs on eight occasions, all of which shows clearly that the evil spirit was sent by, and consequently, under the control of God.

It might be logical to conclude, therefore, that there is little indication of demonic activity in the Old Testament.

However, the children of Israel often sinned by serving false gods. Deuteronomy 32:16-17 states: "They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God— gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear." The same terminology is found in Psalm 106:34-37 where the people of Israel stand accused of sacrificing "their sons and their daughters unto demons" in accordance with the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites. Some scholars claim that these references demonstrate that God viewed the worship offered to idols in all the nations surrounding Israel as worship of Satan and his demons. On that basis, the battles that the Israelites fought against pagan nations were essentially battles against peoples who worshipped demonic forces. In that sense, it could be argued that they were as much spiritual as physical battles.

However, the actual meaning of the Hebrew word *shedim* (or *shedim*), which is translated as "demons" in both Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37, is not entirely clear. "Shedim was understood by the translators of the Septuagint as demons, but, as it is made parallel with 'foreign gods' (see

Deut. 32:16), and is the equivalent of the Assyrian *sedu*, or bull deity, it is probable that it is used here as the name of a foreign deity. The fact that the root *shed* became in later Judaism the general term for 'demon' . . . does not prove this inference wrong. Whether "demons" or "foreign gods" is the correct translation, there is certainly no record or indication that God's people were instructed to engage in confrontation with unseen spiritual forces. God merely commanded them to destroy heathen practices--"Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles" (Ex. 34:13),--and heathen people.'

There are a number of incidents in the Old Testament, however, which may be interpreted fundamentally as clashes between good and evil. It is necessary to examine some of these in order to assess the nature of the warfare. First Samuel 17 recounts the well-known history of David and Goliath. Daily the Philistine champion presented his challenge to Saul's terrified troops: "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other" (1 Sam. 17:10). David recognised this provocation for what it was, an affront not only to the Israelite people but to "the armies of the living God" (1 Sam. 17:26). Goliath invoked "spiritual" help by cursing David in the name of his god. However, David's faith was in the One who had delivered the lion and the bear into his hand; he saw beyond the size of the giant to the infinite greatness of his God. There was no warfare prayer or binding of spirits, just a total confidence that God would give him the victory: "This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head ...the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. ...for the battle is the Lord's" (1 Sam. 17:46-47).

Similarly, the prophet Elijah was a man of confrontation, and nowhere is this better portrayed than in his contest with, and subsequent victory over, the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kin. 18). The time had come for the people of Israel to make a choice between their idolatry and the true worship of Jehovah. The biblical account is extremely dramatic as the man of God waited for the priests of Baal to complete their increasingly desperate sacrificial rites: "So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed" (1Kings.18:28). Elijah showed no sign of fear but openly mocked them and ridiculed their god, suggesting he was talking, pursuing, on a journey, or asleep (1Kings 18:27). Once again, there was no reference to, or necessity for, a spiritual conflict in order to bind unseen demonic powers. When the pagan priests finally conceded defeat, having produced nothing other than their own blood, Elijah made his own preparations in obedience to the word of the Lord (1Kings18:30-36). To the waiting congregation his actions must have appeared totally self-defeating but they served to reinforce the impact of what was to be an incontestable miracle. "Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!" (1Kings 8:38- 39). Elijah's final act of the day was to kill all the 450 prophets of Baal, who had effectively demonstrated the total powerlessness of themselves and their god.

The account of the fall of Dagon (1 Sam. 5) is also interesting in respect to the implications for spiritual warfare. The Philistines had defeated the men of Israel in battle, and the

Ark of the Covenant, symbolic of God's presence with His people, was taken captive. At that time, it was customary in all nations to dedicate the spoils of war to the gods. This was for two reasons; firstly, as a show of gratitude to the deity who had supposedly given them the victory; and secondly, as a proof that their god was more powerful than the god of the conquered nation. To place the ark of God in the temple of Dagon was, therefore, intended to insult the God of Israel, and to terrify His people. However, this action had unforeseen consequences because the following morning the idol was found to have fallen on its face--the first indication of the superiority of the God of Israel. It was replaced, but on the subsequent day was found again face downward "before the ark of the LORD" (1 Sam. 5:4), only this time the head and hands of the idol had been severed from the body." This was the final proof of Jehovah's power and authority and was followed by His judgement upon the men of Ashdod and the consequent release of the ark of the tabernacle. It was also the culmination of a series of sovereign acts of Almighty God without the requirement for a spiritual battle or involvement of any human agency.

Old Testament Summary

On the basis of the above analysis, two clear principles relating to spiritual warfare may be established. The first relates to the location and nature of the battle. Adam and Eve had a choice as to whom to believe and whom to obey, and their assessment involved a mental process. Both David and Elijah faced a similar decision.' They could respond to an apparently hopeless situation on the basis of the facts presented in the natural realm; alternatively, they could allow their thoughts and actions to be governed by obedience to God and His word.

Secondly, it is apparent that warfare in the sense of engaging demonic forces in a spiritual conflict was a complete non-issue. There is no foundation in the Old Testament for this practice, nor any indication that the devil has any intrinsic power or authority. No Dagon or any other idol can survive in the presence of the Living God and all powers must bow before Him. Too often, Old Testament stories have been allegorised to accommodate extra-biblical theories which have been devised without any real scriptural foundation." The battlefield is in the mind. The issue is obedience to the King of Kings. Satan's only weapon is deception; his only sphere of operation is that which God permits within His own eternal purposes.

New Testament Basis

The Gospels: The temptation of Jesus

The purpose of Jesus in coming to earth was to do the will of the Father (Heb. 10:7). The disobedience of the First Adam had brought death and destruction to mankind. Conversely, by His obedience, Jesus came to bring reconciliation between God and man (Rom. 5:19), to reinstate the potential for every man to repossess that which was lost through sin, namely his inheritance as a child of God.

The earthly ministry of Jesus was ushered in at the time of His baptism with the proclamation from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Directly after this experience, Jesus was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4:1).

Clearly, therefore, this encounter was within the purposes of God, for Jesus, the Second Adam, had to face and win the same battle which the First Adam had lost so many years before.

Satan waited his opportunity until forty days and nights had passed and Jesus was weak with hunger. Once again the devil's aim was to induce disobedience to the will of the Father. There were three prongs to his attack, two of which called on Jesus to prove His position as the Son of God (Matt. 4:3, 6). In response to these, Jesus consistently refused to use the power He knew He possessed in order to benefit Himself or demonstrate His own authority. He held that power in sacred trust to be used only as the Father directed; His role was to do only what He saw the Father do (Jn.5:19-20). In the third temptation, Satan offered the kingdoms of the world in return for worship, but this was not to be the method of redemption. Jesus had come to earth because "God so loved the world" (John 3:16). Death on the cross at Calvary was the only way and there could be no easier alternative; that was the truth to which He adhered for, as Isaiah prophesied, He had set his face like a flint (Isa. 50:7) for what lay ahead.

In response to each temptation Jesus answered with the word of God: "it is written," "it is written," "it is also written" (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). The word was His only weapon and it was used in a defensive, as opposed to an offensive, fashion. He did not engage in "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare" (SLSW), He did not bind Satan or evict him from the territory; He simply stood in truth and an attitude of obedience to God the Father. The Scripture teaches that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Just as with Adam, the battle was fought in the mind," for Satan's approach to Jesus targeted "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does" (1John 2:16). The choice once again was based on whom to believe and whom to obey.

How Jesus dealt with the spirit powers during His earthly ministry

Throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus the gospels record many clashes between Him and spirit powers. This is in marked contrast to the apparent inactivity of the demonic world in the Old Testament. What then was the reason for this dramatic shift? The answer lies in the Inter-Testamental era. Most of the Old Testament writings are rooted firmly in a deep-seated conviction as to the sovereignty and dominion of Jehovah. However, in the latter part of the Old Testament era and during the 400 "silent years" prior to the opening of the New Testament, there had been a significant shift in Judaic thought in respect to demonic power and activity. The fall of Jerusalem and the Diaspora had forced the Jews to re-evaluate their understanding of the nature of evil. It was convenient to shift the blame for their misfortunes away from the problem of sin and disobedience to God, and on to the malevolent interference of unseen devilish powers. The Inter-Testamental literature reveals a fascination with angels in particular and there are many references to exorcisms. For example, the Pseudepigrapha, which offer a variety of techniques for deliverance from evil spirits, although it is doubtful as to how effective these practices really were?' However, many Jews had adopted such teachings as authentic and it is against this background that the apparent prevalence of demonic activity in the gospels must be understood.

Mark records that Jesus "preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils" (Mark 1:39). His authority over the spirit world was absolute and demons were banished "with his word" (Matt. 8:16). In this He completely broke with the then current Judaic traditions because He used no ritual, no sacrifice, and no incantation. He just spoke the

word with authority. In the synagogues the Jews had been diverted from the word of God and coached in the precepts of man and legalistic ritualism. This had resulted in a highly superstitious attitude in respect to the spirit world and how to deal with demons. In contrast, the way in which Jesus dealt with demons was both simple and effective. He had no need of methodology because He was the incarnate word of God. The people were amazed, saying, "What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him" (Mark 1:27). The common people recognised the difference between Jesus and the hypocritical pedantry of the scribes and Pharisees. However, Jesus rarely appeared to take the initiative in His encounters with evil spirits. On many occasions, He was approached by relatives of the possessed person (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30; 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43), but frequently the demons themselves provoked His attention (Matt. 8:28-29.; Mark 1:23-24; 5:2-7; Luke 4:33-34; 8:27-28). There was certainly no consistent *modus operandi* which characterised His approach. He simply commanded the demons to leave without requesting any detailed information either from God or from the spirit powers. In many instances He prohibited the demons from speaking (Mark 1:34; 3:12; Luke 4:41). They never resisted Him, but often screamed for mercy (Mark 1:24; 5:7, 10, 12), begging only for another host in whom to dwell (Mark 5:12). As Chuck Lowe comments, "This is not spiritual warfare; this is abject surrender." Lowe also argues that "the casting out of demons carries two broader and interrelated messages: the kingdom of God has come; (Matt. 12:28); and, Satan has been dethroned as ruler of this world" (Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:21-22).

How the Apostles Dealt with the Spirit Powers in the Book of Acts

Some SLSW protagonists explain the demonic activity of the New Testament as a direct result of the manifestation of Jesus Christ. However, they fail to note that Calvary spelt the end of the Old Covenant and the final defeat of the devil. Only after the ascension, did Jesus take on His High Priestly office, and the Holy Spirit was sent forth ten days later so that believers would be endued with power to become witnesses to the total victory in Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-42). The apostles lived and taught in a society that was essentially pagan. First century historians record the continued syncretism of heathen influences into Jewish thought and religious life. For example, Josephus recounts the assimilation into the Jewish religious tradition of pagan rituals designed to ward off evil spirits? He also records the accepted use of Solomon's names of spirits in ritualistic practices because of the latter's reputation for healing and exorcism. Even the ascetic Essene community at Qumran, who were extremely critical of the laxness of Jewish religious life in general, incorporated curses against Satan and the demonic realm into their worship of God. In some liturgical curses, these worshippers addressed Satan directly. Clearly, dualistic philosophy had penetrated to the heart of the Jewish faith, and there was a fascination with the spirit realm which had not been evident in early Judaism. Accordingly, manifestations of demonic activity had to be faced and dealt with by first century Christians.

The book of Acts provides the record of the first twenty years of the early church and its pioneer evangelistic campaigns. The ministry of Peter dominates the first twelve chapters of this book; the ministry of Paul characterises the remaining

sixteen. The approach of both to the spirit world largely follows the model set by Jesus, and was both simple and effective. Acts 5:16 shows that all the needy who came to Peter were healed of their diseases or freed from unclean spirits. In Acts 19:11-12 the reader is informed that contact with one of Paul's handkerchiefs or aprons was sufficient to effect both healing and deliverance. Once again there was no need for sophisticated spiritual warfare techniques. The power of God at work via the apostles overcame the powers of darkness.

In terms of evangelism, revival in the early church was always directly connected with the word of God; the apostles lived the life and preached the word. On the day of Pentecost, the expectation of the Old Testament was at last fulfilled, for the Holy Spirit came to fill the waiting disciples just as their Lord had promised (Luke 24:49; John 14:26). These human vessels had already been prepared, and their strategy of evangelism developed spontaneously from this point because He who was the incarnate word of God was now alive within them. Peter, who had denied his Lord, was transformed into a bold and courageous evangelist. His sermon on the day of Pentecost set the work and life of Jesus in the context of the prophecy of Joel, and the result was, "Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:41). Throughout the book of Acts the same pattern emerges. Revival was birthed by the preaching of the word, in the power of the Holy Ghost: "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Rom.10:17).

The disciples had a simple gospel--they were convinced that Jesus, the promised Messiah, had come and they faithfully

declared this truth. They had no gimmicks but they both proclaimed and lived what they believed. Persecution merely increased the geographical area covered by these early Christians as they went "every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Initially, the main thrust of their witness was to the Jews but it was not long before the Gentiles also received "the word of God" (Acts 11:1). For example, at Antioch in Pisidia, when Paul and Barnabas visited, almost the whole city came "together to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:44). Similarly, as a result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:20). Wherever the apostles ministered, whether to Jew or Gentile, the word was the weapon that was used to destroy the works of darkness and establish the reality of the gospel in the hearts and minds of men. The real battle was the battle for truth (John 8:31-32).

The Teaching of Paul on Spiritual Warfare in the Epistles

There is very little space given to discussing demonic activity in the Pauline epistles. Rather, the primary focus, in respect to both evangelism and the growth in maturity of individual Christians, is on the choices and actions taken by people themselves (for example, Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 4:1-7; Col. 3:1-2, 8-9). Many of Paul's writings deal specifically with problems within the church context.

His first letter to the Corinthians refers to the dissension which had arisen amongst them (1 Cor. 1:11) because of misunderstanding in respect to the nature of the body of Christ, the message of the gospel and the nature of ministry (1Cor. 1-4). Later in the epistle he deals with other problems of immorality, legal wrangling and licence (1Cor. 5-6). Paul

did not attempt to identify and rebuke the "spirit of dissension" but methodically set out corrective teaching aimed to bring them back into an understanding of their status in Christ Jesus and the impact this must have upon their lives and relationships (1Cor. 6:11-12, 19-20).

Similarly, in Paul's letter to the church at Galatia, one of his aims was to uncover the erroneous teaching of the Judaisers (Gal. 6:12-13), in order to prevent his readers from embracing a false gospel. The Galatians had lost their focus. They had forgotten that salvation is all of faith and made the deadly assumption that there was something they had to do to merit it (Gal. 3:1-3). Again, the great apostle deals with the issue systematically, explaining how he received the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1-2) and then defining the true message of the gospel (Gal. 3-4). Throughout this process Paul's aim was to re-establish the truth in the hearts and minds of his readers, not to evict some demonic enemy. His real warfare was not against spiritual powers, but against the wrong thinking and wrong believing which had taken these Christians into bondage.

However, Paul was not unaware of the influence of idolatrous practices and the fascination with the demonic realm in the world of the New Testament. Many of the cities in the ancient Mediterranean were full of temples devoted to the worship of idols. He warned "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth" (1Tim. 4:1-3).

Adam Clarke comments on this as follows: "They will apostatize from the faith, i.e. from Christianity; renouncing the whole system in effect, by bringing in doctrines which render its essential truths null and void, or denying and renouncing such doctrines as are essential to Christianity as a system of salvation. A man may hold all the truths of Christianity, and yet render them of none effect by holding other doctrines which counteract their influence; or he may apostatize by denying some essential doctrine, though he bring in nothing heterodox." It is interesting to note, that the basis of this apostasy is clearly a matter of erroneous belief induced by deception, and leading to the choice of a wrong lifestyle. These features are the hallmark of the devil's mode of operation. The method of escape is "by repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2Tim. 2:24-26).

The sixth chapter of Ephesians is probably the most well known source of Paul's teaching concerning spiritual warfare. Arnold contends that the spiritual warfare imagery was because of Paul's need to address those converts from a background of occultism. Before examining the passage itself, it is necessary to look at the overall context and underlying message of the letter as a whole.

The first three chapters of Ephesians deal with the great fundamentals of the Christian faith. Paul informs his readers "who they are, what they are, and how they have become what they are." He explains that believers have been blessed "in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). He wanted them to understand "the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Eph. 1:18-19). He teaches that Jesus is exalted "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every

title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come." (Eph. 1:21). He prays that they may "know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:19). In other words, Paul's desire was that the Ephesians should comprehend the immense privileges of the Christian life, for such understanding could not but revolutionise their walk of faith. Having set out the facts, Paul then goes on to plead with them to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Eph. 4:1-7). He points out the vital necessity of a mind which is alive to the truths of God and the importance of the will in this process (Eph. 4:18-27).

It is against this background that the sixth chapter of Ephesians must be understood. Believers operate from a position of blessing and of victory. They are those who have been made heirs to the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8), and the gift of life within (Eph. 2:1) is to be protected from every assault of the enemy. At one time they were "children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2), but now by God's great love and grace they have been raised up and made to sit together "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph.2:6).

So the epistle closes with the following exhortation, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). The strength of the believer is in God, the Almighty, All- conquering One, and because of their relationship with Christ, each and every child of God has access to His power. Paul then goes on to explain that the armour is God's, emphasising that this will enable them to stand against the best devised schemes and strategies of the devil (Eph. 6:11). The instruction to "stand" is repeated in verses 13 and 14, and, as Lincoln comments, it involves "holding one's position, resisting, not surrendering to the

opposition but prevailing against it" (compare 1 Thess. 3:8; 2 Thess. 2:15; Gal. 5:1).⁴⁷ The underlying emphasis is that the decisive victory has already been accomplished by God in Christ Jesus. Believers, therefore, are not required to go on the offensive but to stand, preserving and maintaining the victory that has been won. This is a dramatically different situation from that described in Ephesians 2:2-3, where resistance was impossible because the enemy held them in bondage. Lincoln concludes, "So the call to the readers to stand against the powers is also a reminder of their liberation from the tyranny of these powers."

In Ephesians 6:12, the nature of the enemy is described, and it is noteworthy that this is the only place in the Pauline writings where believers are said to be in conflict with evil powers. "Although the opposing forces are formidable, the fact that they are in the heavenly realms need no longer pose a threat to believers, because they are not fighting to break through the hold of such powers . . . but are to see themselves as fighting from a position of victory, having already been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (see also Eph.2:6). Divine resources are available to enable every Christian to withstand spiritual attack, simply by taking up the "whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:13), which provides all that is needed to prevail. The various protective elements of this armour include truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation. The only offensive weapon is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). This is the gospel of good news (John 3:16-17; Rom. 1:16). Significantly, it is as believers lay hold of and proclaim this gospel, that they are enabled to overcome in the battle. The gospel conquers all hostile powers and brings about salvation by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul's use of the battle imagery assists him in conveying

the urgency and challenge of their task as he calls for courage, determination, prayerfulness, alertness and perseverance. "At the same time, his focus on Christ's strength and God's full armour enables him to leave them with a sense of security and confidence."

New Testament Summary

There is no evidence in the New Testament to suggest that Christians are called to engage in an ongoing conflict with spiritual forces in the cosmic realm. There is, however, real evidence of a spiritual battle for truth. Jesus came to establish His truth in the hearts and minds of men; this was the promise of the New Covenant as foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). The apostles understood that truth alone brought freedom and life (John 8:31-32). Contending for truth, whilst standing in truth is the New Testament pattern of spiritual warfare.

Appendix C Biblical, Theological and Historical Bases

The Old Testament demonstrates that the battlefield is in the mind and the only issue for a Christian is obedience to the King of Kings. There is no foundation for the practice of engaging demonic forces in a spiritual conflict, nor any indication that the devil has any intrinsic power or authority over believers. Satan's only weapon is deception and his only sphere of influence that which God permits for His own eternal purposes.

The New Testament shows how Jesus dealt with spirit powers in the Gospels, how the Apostles dealt with spirit powers in the Book of Acts, and the teaching of Paul in the Epistles showed a similar picture; there is no evidence to suggest that Christians are called to engage in an on-going conflict with

spiritual forces in the cosmic realm. The Scripture is quite clear in its teaching that Christ defeated Satan completely at Calvary and that Christians have been freed from his power. He is a conquered enemy, he is bound, he is already judged, and he is to be cast out of this world and into the lake of fire. He is not a rival of equivalent power to God; rather, he is totally subordinate.

In terms of evangelism, revival in the early church is always directly connected with the Word of God, spoken and applied to hearts in the power of the Spirit of God. There is very little space given to discussing demonic activity in the Pauline epistles; the primary focus, in respect to both evangelism and the growth in maturity of individual Christians, is on the choices and actions taken by people themselves. In his opposition to this process, the operation of the devil is to blind the minds of men. It is, therefore, the great fight of faith, in which the Christian's only weapon is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Its purpose is to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Prayer, however, is not a spiritual weapon, nor is it an accompaniment to spiritual warfare; it is an expression of the Christian's intimate relationship with the Father

History demonstrates that Christian doctrine and experience must be firmly grounded in the word of Truth. It could be argued that the church entered its darkest age when it abandoned the supremacy of the authority of scripture, thus allowing the entrance of superstition and witchcraft.

Unfortunately, the weakness of the recent Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition has been the paucity of associated biblical exegesis and doctrinal understanding. Increasingly,

experience-based analysis rather than truth has become the touchstone of the Charismatic world, and Christendom today is in danger of slipping once more into the spiritual dark ages.

Review of the Contemporary Teaching Associated with SLSW

The practice of SLSW concerns strategies for unseating or "pulling down" territorial spirits as a pre-requisite to the successful advancement of the gospel. Supposed biblical validation for the concept of territoriality and the various techniques which are advocated to depose them (including naming the spirits, spiritual mapping, identificational repentance and warfare prayer/intercession) are given by various authors. On the basis of a systematic appraisal of the relevant literature, the rationale for SLSW stands on extremely shaky biblical and theological foundations. Where scriptural authority is claimed, this tends to be on the basis of proof texts which are manipulated to support the various hypotheses, and scripture itself is viewed through the subjective lens of experience. Most of the validation for SLSW is drawn from extra-biblical sources and empirical evidence which is largely unconfirmed.

The main influences which undergird SLSW methodology are hermeneutical approach, worldview and personal observation and experience. Although its proponents would claim it to be a new methodology, it is but a recurring phenomenon. For example, study Frank W. Sandford, who in the early 1900s purchased ships to sail around the seven continents engaging in intercessory prayer to break the stranglehold of Satan's power over the nations. Today, Wagner has published a 6-book "Prayer Warrior" series and, together with Ted Haggard, he is the co-director of the World Prayer Center in Colorado which holds a 24-hour prayer vigil. Ambulatory prayer has

resulted in planes being chartered to engage in warfare prayer as they fly above supposed territorial spirits, to bind and pull them down. All this is strikingly similar to Sandford's activities, including the restoration of apostles to the Church. Christians have actually been translated from the authority of Satan and birthed into the very family of God. Christ's finished work at Calvary provided us with redemption. The new creation is a reality; this includes righteousness in Christ, the indwelling Christ making the believer a conqueror in every situation, and fellowship with the Father.

Know Your Disease! Know Your Cure!

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John Wesley's doctrine of original sin

In the journal of the Revd John Wesley (1703–91), founder and leader of the Methodist societies, there is an unexpected and interesting hiatus for the eight-week period of December 1756 and January 1757.

Since the beginning of his 'field preaching' in Bristol in April 1739, Wesley had been fully occupied with itinerant evangelism and almost every week found him travelling the roads of Britain and Ireland in his non-stop gospel ministry. Now, however, in late 1756, he took an unexpected break and used the time to write a theological treatise. Entitled *The Doctrine of Original Sin according to Scripture, Reason and Experience*, it ran to 522 octavo pages and was Wesley's single longest publication. It was intended as a page by page rebuttal of a book published 17 years earlier by Dr John

Taylor of Norwich, *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination*. Wesley confessed that he had waited sometime in the hope that others would reply to Taylor. When this did not happen, he took up his pen because he could no longer be silent. ‘Necessity is laid upon me to provide those who desire to know the truth with some antidote against that deadly poison which has been diffusing itself for several years through our nation, our Church and even our Universities.’

John Wesley was deeply disturbed and concerned about the spread of Socinianism in England and its corollary denial of the doctrine of original sin. Named after the Italian rationalists, Lelio Sozzini (1525–62) and Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604), Socinianism advocated a belief in God, but rejected other traditional Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the divinity of Christ and repudiated the traditional doctrine of original sin. Wesley’s concern was both doctrinal and practical; theologically he viewed Socinianism as destructive of the very foundations of the Christian doctrines of incarnation and redemption, and evangelistically he saw it as a very real threat to the proclamation of the gospel and the work of bringing men and women to Christ.

John Wesley’s interest in the doctrine of human sinfulness had begun much earlier than his encounter with John Taylor’s book in the 1750s. In 1725, as he prepared for ordination in the Church of England, he carefully examined the Thirty-Nine Articles so that he could swear his allegiance to them without quibble or reserve. In particular he had studied Article IX, entitled ‘Of Original or Birth Sin,’ and in subsequent years he would quote from it approvingly as an expression of Scripture doctrine: ‘Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it

is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil ... and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.'

Two weeks after his ordination in September 1725, Wesley preached his first sermon at Fleet Marston. The sermon was entitled 'Death and Deliverance,' based on the words of Job, 'There the wicked cease from troubling' (3.17). In the opening paragraph the 22 year old preacher reminded his listeners that the miseries of life hardly needed proof. "The words of Job, "few and evil have been the days of the years of thy servant," may be justly applied to the whole race of mankind. Such is the inheritance which the sin of our first father has entailed on his whole posterity.'

¹

Five years later John Wesley preached two sermons in November 1730 that indicate his ongoing concern with universal sinfulness. The first, entitled, 'The Promise of Understanding', was preached in All Saints, Oxford, and the second, 'The Image of God', two weeks later in St Mary's, Oxford. The importance of this latter sermon is that it was his first 'university sermon'. The leader of the Oxford 'Methodists' took for his text the words of Genesis 1.27, 'God created man in his own image'. The sermon gives a vivid description of Adam before and after the 'Fall', and both sermons enlarge on man's sin and ignorance and spiritual declension. While neither sermon deals directly with the subject of Adam's sin corrupting the human race, the whole

¹ J Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley* (The Bi-Centennial Edition; 16 Vols. published so far; editor-in-chief, F Baker; Oxford/Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975–2008), 4.206

argument presupposes the Fall in a very orthodox way, as summarised in Article IX of the Articles.

Later, in 1730, in correspondence with his father Samuel Wesley, John Wesley wrote about his concerns over a recently published book dealing with original sin. In 1729 Archbishop William King published *An Essay on the Origin of Evil* and John reported to his father his deep dissatisfaction with King's doctrine. King argued that evil arises from matter as all creation must be inferior to the Creator. Wesley dismissed King's thesis as a revival of Stoic thinking and pointed out that King made no use of Genesis 3, nor did he account for fallen humanity, as in Article IX of the Articles. It is very clear that from 1725, the year of his ordination, John Wesley was deeply concerned about how the doctrine of original sin was being marginalised even by Anglican theologians. Well before his evangelical 'heart-warming' in May 1738, Wesley was already convinced of a doctrine of original sin as summarised in Article IX of the Articles. When he convened the first Conference of 'Methodist' preachers in 1744, it was significant that they engaged in a discussion on the doctrine of original sin. The consensus arrived at in 1744 represented the understanding of human sinfulness that John Wesley firmly held and defended for the rest of his life: **Question.** *In what sense is Adam's sin imputed to all mankind?* **Answer.** *In Adam all die; that is,² our bodies then became mortal.³ Our souls died; that is, were disunited from God. And hence,⁴ We are all born with a sinful,*

² Ibid., 4.206.

³ Ibid., 8.277.

⁴ Ibid., 3.520.

devilish nature. By reason whereof,⁵ We are children of wrath, liable to death eternal. (Romans 5.18; Eph. 2.3).⁶

Ten years after John Wesley began his itinerant preaching ministry across the British Isles, he encountered Socinianism first-hand. In his Journal for Sunday, August 28, 1748, he recorded a preaching visit to Shackerley in Lancashire: ‘Abundance of people were gathered before six, many of whom were disciples of Dr. Taylor’s, laughing at original sin and, consequently, at the whole frame of scriptural Christianity. Oh, what a providence it is which has brought us here also among these silver-tongued Antichrists. Surely a few, at least, will recover out of the snare and know Jesus Christ as their wisdom and righteousness.’

Three years later he was back in Shackerley and recorded: ‘Being now in the very midst of Mr Taylor’s disciples, I enlarged much more than I am accustomed to do on the doctrine of original sin, and determined, if God should give me a few years life, publicly to answer his new gospel.’³ Two more examples of Wesley’s fear of the destructive influences of Dr John Taylor’s doctrine can be cited. Preaching in Belfast on April 6 1769, Wesley related: ‘I stood in the street and strongly declared, “All have sinned and are come short of the glory of God.” But this many of them had no ears to hear, being faithful followers of Dr. Taylor.’ But even more pointed was a paragraph in a letter from Wesley to Augustus Toplady in December 1758. ‘I verily believe no single person since Mahomet has given such a wound to Christianity as Dr. Taylor. They are his books, chiefly that upon original sin, which have poisoned so many of the clergy and indeed the

⁵ J Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley* (8 Vols; ed. J Telford; London: Epworth Press, 1931), 4.48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.277

fountains themselves – the universities in England, Scotland, Holland and Germany.’⁷

Who was this John Taylor whose teaching John Wesley opposed so vehemently? Taylor (1694–1761) was born at Lancaster and spent the greater part of his life as a Nonconformist minister in Norwich where he built the famous Octagon Chapel in 1756. An ardent disciple of the anti-Trinitarian Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), he steadily moved to a Socinian position and in 1740 he published *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination*. In 1757 he was appointed to teach theology at Warrington Academy, a stronghold of Socinianism and not far from Shackerley where Wesley had confronted Taylor’s disciples in 1748. Taylor’s book had been hugely influential and in 1758, Jonathan Edwards lamented the harm it had done in New England. It was this work from the pen of Taylor that Wesley set himself the task of answering in December 1756. His *Doctrine of Original Sin*, together with a later summary sermon, *Original Sin*, sets out his teaching.

Opening his treatise, Wesley quickly came to the point. He could no longer remain silent ‘against that deadly poison which has been diffusing itself for several years through our nation, our Church and even our Universities.’ He judged Taylor’s book more dangerous than ‘open Deism;’ indeed it is ‘old Deism in a new dress,’ sapping the foundation of ‘all revealed religion, whether Jewish or Christian.’ Framing an overall view of human history from Genesis 3 to the present, he painted a stark and realistic picture of fallen man through the ages, dealing, in turn, with the Israelites, the Romans, the Heathen, the Mahometans and, finally, the whole Christian

⁷ Ibid, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*

world, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. Everywhere and in every age Wesley found evidence of human pride, malice, envy, hatred, fear, lying, treachery and murder. ‘Universal misery is at once a consequence and a proof of this universal corruption. Men are unhappy because they are unholy.’ How can we account for universal human wickedness? Wesley’s answer was to quote from Genesis 3, 1 Corinthians 15.22, and Romans 5.12. ‘In Adam all die’, by the first man came both natural and spiritual death, by ‘this one man sin entered into the world ... and death passed upon all men in that all have sinned.’ John Taylor had argued that it was unjust of God to punish others because of Adam’s sin. The only consequence of Adam’s sin that affected the human race was physical death. Wesley replied that since Adam’s posterity was punished with death therefore all men were justly punishable. By ‘punishment’ Wesley said he meant ‘suffering consequent upon sin. All mankind suffer death consequent upon Adam’s sin ... Adam sinned, his posterity suffer and that in consequence of his sin.’ Along lines similar to the arguments for original sin found in the writings of Augustine, Luther and Calvin, Wesley saw Adam as the federal head of the race. In the ‘Fall’ of Adam, all men and women are represented: ‘In and through their first parents all Adam’s posterity died in a spiritual sense and they remain wholly “dead in trespasses and Sins” till the second Adam makes them alive. By this one man sin entered into the world and passed upon all men. And through the infection which they derive from him, all men, are, and ever were, by nature entirely alienated from the life of God, without hope, without God in the world.’⁸ John Taylor asserted that it was inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture to say that because of Adam’s sin all of us have

⁸ Wesley, *Works*, 9.258.

been put in the hands of the devil. Surely God, in all his dispensations, has been working to deliver us from the devil? Wesley read Taylor's argument as a specimen of Enlightenment optimism about human nature that ignored the plain teaching of Scripture. 'What can be made clear from the Scriptures is this: That from Adam sin passed upon all men, that hereby all men, being by nature dead in sin, cannot of themselves resist the devil and that, consequently, all who will not accept help from God are taken captive by Satan at his will.'

John Wesley was convinced that Taylor's rejection of the doctrine of original sin held by the Christian Church from New Testament times resulted in his corollary rejection of the biblical doctrine of grace. Taylor described the new birth and regeneration as merely 'the gaining those habits of virtue which make us children of God'. Wesley expostulated that if that is what regeneration is, then Paul should not have written, 'You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3.26), but 'You are all the children of God by gaining habits of virtue.' Wesley's doctrine of regeneration was built on the foundation of universal sin: he saw regeneration as a radical transformation of our fallenness by God's almighty grace: 'According to the whole tenor of Scripture the being born again does really signify the being inwardly changed by the almighty operation of the Spirit of God; changed from sin to holiness, renewed in the image of Him who created us. And why must we be so changed? Because without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and because without this change, all our endeavours after holiness are ineffectual.'⁹

⁹ Ibid., 9.308.

Two years after his *Doctrine of Original Sin* was published, Wesley wrote a personal letter to Taylor. His style was polite and courteous but he pulled no punches when he described the chasm between their respective doctrines: ‘It is Christianity or heathenism! for, take away the scriptural doctrine of Redemption or Justification and, that of the New Birth, the beginning of sanctification, or (which amounts to the same) explain them as you do, suitable to your doctrine of Original Sin, and what is Christianity better than heathenism? wherein, save in rectifying some of our notions, has the religion of St. Paul any pre-eminence over that of Socrates or Epictetus? Either I or you mistake the whole of Christianity from the beginning to the end! Either my scheme or yours is as contrary to the scriptural as the Koran is. Is it mine, or yours? Yours has gone through all England and made numerous converts. I attack it from end to end. Let all England judge whether it can be defended or not!’¹⁰

In taking time to refute John Taylor’s book, John Wesley was attempting to answer one of the most erudite and popular Socinian publications of the eighteenth century. His knowledge of Scripture and his ability with the biblical languages are well demonstrated in these pages, as is his close acquaintance with the classics, the Church Fathers and the English Puritans. But the real reason for Wesley’s long reply to Taylor was his conviction that Taylor’s denial of the doctrine of original sin threatened the whole gospel message. He warned against this danger in his 1759 sermon, *Original Sin*: ‘*All who deny this, call it original sin, or by any other title, are but Heathens still in the fundamental point which differences Heathenism from Christianity ... Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted?*

¹⁰ Wesley, *Letters*, 4.67,68.

*Allow this and you are so far a Christian. Deny it and you are but a Heathen still ... O beware of all those teachers of lies who would palm this upon you for Christianity. Keep to the plain, old faith, "once delivered to the saints," and delivered by the Spirit of God to our hearts. Know your disease! Know your cure! You were born in sin: Therefore "ye must be born again," born of God."*¹¹

The Reality And Origin Of Evil

Wright, Nigel, *The Reality And Origin Of Evil*, The Bible in Transmission, Summer 2008

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(Note how different the liberal views of Wright are from our beliefs!)

Evil is real

Christians are clear enough that evil is real. But what might the word 'real' signify in this regard?

In this article I intend to put forward two versions of the reality of evil. It will become clear that I favour the second version. Both accept that the encounter with evil is a fact of life. The central evidence for this is not first of all human history or personal experience, although these are compelling enough. Rather, it is the testimony of the New Testament to Jesus. Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Lk4.1–13). He exercised a ministry as a highly effective exorcist (Mk 1.21–28; 5.1–20). He understood his own death as an overcoming of 'the prince of this world' (Jn 12.31). And

¹¹ Wesley, *Works*, 6.63–5.

his mission is summed up as being ‘to destroy the works of the devil’ (1Jn 3.8). The redeeming work of Christ is understood against the backdrop of the reality of evil, and the negative presupposition of the positive work of redemption cannot be omitted without changing radically the nature of Christian faith. But in what does this reality consist?

A traditional perspective

The first version of its reality, which has a good claim to be the traditional and majority view, locates evil supremely in supra-human realities of a ‘spiritual’ kind, specifically in a being identified as ‘satan’ or ‘the devil’. As all things ultimately derive from a good God who is the Father of lights, it is deduced that satan must have been created as a good angel, named Lucifer, who by an act of rebellion fell away from his vocation, persuaded other angels also to rebel, and so became the fountainhead of evil in all its forms. It is satan who is in view in the Garden of Eden, taking form as a serpent in order to tempt Adam and Eve away from their primeval devotion to God (Gen 3; cf. Rev 20.2). It is the devil who acts in concert with ‘principalities and powers’, ‘cosmic powers of this present darkness’ and ‘the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places’ to make ‘war against the saints’ (Rev 13.7). Evil, then, following this version, is the ontological reality of an intensely evil being, surrounded by cohorts of lesser beings, that operate in a spiritual dimension to distort, negate and oppose the purposes of God. As God’s creation is good these beings were not created in their present state but assumed their condition by the misuse of free will. This posits a fall or catastrophe in the created sphere at some point prior to the creation of human beings. Humans have fallen prey to evil by yielding to temptation and have become implicated in the rebellion and responsible for their part within it. Human

life is thereafter defined by the struggle between good and evil, God and the devil. Indeed, for many Christians belief in a personal devil amounts to an article of faith, despite the absence of any such statement in the Church's historic creeds. Yet, to balance this, it is firmly believed that in Jesus Christ God has decisively reclaimed the creation and overcome evil through his death and resurrection. The fruits of that victory are currently only partly felt and their full effect awaits the consummation when God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor 15.28). The coming of this glad day is assured, even if it is delayed. This account of evil will be familiar to anyone who is acquainted with Christian history or those cultures that have been influenced by Christian faith. It is to be found in classics such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* or the works of Dante and has multiple references in works of sacred art. In theological writings it first appeared in Tertullian (160/170–c. 215/220)¹² and Origen (c. 185–c. 254)¹³ and was given normative expression by Augustine (354–430).¹⁴ It is often supported by reference to Ezekiel 28.1–17 and Isaiah 14.12–21, and it is from the latter that the name 'Lucifer' ('Day Star, Son of Dawn') is derived. However, both these passages refer to identifiable historical persons (the king of Tyre and the king of Babylon) and the interpretative process that refers them on to a supra-historical spiritual power is by no means clear. For most of those who use these passages as proof-texts the association is simply assumed, with no attempt to justify how. Furthermore, where satan is identified in the Old Testament it is not with the same nature and role as he was later to assume. In Job, satan is God's servant, God's 'holy sifter', agent

¹² Apology 22

¹³ De Principiis 1.6

¹⁴ City of God 11.11

provocateur or ‘enforcer’.¹⁵ Only later does his career take a turn towards the irreducibly sinister. Even the New Testament texts concerning satan’s, the devil’s or the fallen angels’ origins are less than clear. Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2.4 are more likely to relate to the enigmatic passage in Genesis 6.1–5, which refers to the ‘sons of God’ taking wives, than to a pre-mundane fall. Jesus’ reference to satan falling from heaven ‘like a flash of lightning’ (Lk 10.18) and the ‘war in heaven’ of Revelation 12.7 clearly apply to the mission of Jesus and of his followers rather than to the pre-historical origins of evil. So although securely ensconced within the history of Christian imagery and thought, it is by no means clear that there is a solid biblical basis for this first version of the reality of evil.¹⁶ There remain, of course, good theological reasons for finding the origin of evil in some kind of creaturely aberration through the misuse of freedom within a good world. But the doubts about its biblical anchor may also mean that the second version of the reality of evil can provide an illuminating alternative.

Non-ontological realism

This second version may be described as ‘non-ontological realism’ in that it fully accepts the reality of evil as a force within human social and spiritual existence whilst denying that there is an ontology of evil underlying it.¹⁷ In other words, evil in itself does not consist of structured form or being. This amounts to a claim that the language used in the

¹⁵ W Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 15.

¹⁶ SHT Page examines the biblical texts in *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Leicester: Apollos, 1995) and is similarly cautious.

¹⁷ For a fuller exposition of non-ontological realism see my book, *A Theology of the Dark Side: Putting the Power of Darkness in its Place* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003).

Scriptures and in the traditions of Christian thought and practice to describe evil is narrative and mythic in nature even though the reality to which it refers is far from being mythical.¹⁸ Otherwise put, the devil is a product of sinful human society rather than the other way round, a construct of godless corporate human existence. In the language of Walter Wink, ‘Satan thus becomes the symbol of the spirit of an entire society alienated from God, the great system of mutual support in evil, the spirit of persistent self-deification blown large, the image of unredeemed humanity’s collective life’.¹⁹ Evil is literally godlessness, the destructive spirituality that is created when God, the beneficent source and sustainer of life, is excluded from human communal existence by multiple human choices to be godless. It is ultimate emptiness. Although a minority voice within the long history of Christian thought, this position is not one that has been unrepresented. Drawing from Plato, Augustine advanced the idea of evil as *privatio boni*, the absence of the good. Traces of it can also be found in Athanasius. It experienced a distinctive and creative revival in Karl Barth’s concept of *das Nichtige* (Nothingness) to describe the essence of evil and his accompanying assertion that nonetheless ‘Nothingness is not nothing’.²⁰ As Paul Fiddes expresses it, ‘Like the darkness which comes when the light is turned out, it is what happens when God’s creation slips away from the divine aims. To call evil “non-being” or “the nothingness” (nihil) does not therefore deny that it is powerful, or pretend that it is some

¹⁸ 7. T Noble, ‘*The Spirit World: A Theological Approach*’, in ANS Lane (ed.), *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), p. 219.

¹⁹ Wink, *Unmasking the Powers*, pp. 24–5.

²⁰ Barth’s discussion of this theme can be found in *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation Volume III/3* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), pp. 289–368, 519–31.

kind of illusion. It simply has no power of its own: it is a parasite, drawing its vitality from the life-giving trunk of a tree. Evil always perverts what is good, and twists what is full of life into what is destructive.²¹ A significant parallel can be drawn here with death, an association that is often made in the Bible itself. To turn to evil is to die (Ezek 18.4,20; Rom 6.23). Death is a powerful reality that casts its shadow over all of life. We feel its encroachment and fear its power to turn all things to bitterness. Death is real, but death is not something in itself; rather, it is the absence of life. It can be personified and reified as though it were itself something, the 'last enemy' (1 Cor.15.26;55) but actually it has no ontology, no being-in-itself.

Non-ontological realism attempts to go behind the mythic language in which evil is described in order to ask more penetrating questions about its nature and form. Inevitably this takes us into areas of some complexity, but evil is complex, being made up of 'the world, the flesh and the devil'. One of the advantages of the first version of evil's reality is its apparent simplicity, although this could be characterised as naivety. Perhaps this is a distraction, however, looking for too easy an account of our predicament, drawing our thinking away from the seat of the problem which is to be located not in some heavenly realm beyond us but in the world of human actions. Counting in favour of a non-ontological view is the evident fact that in describing the world's condition the Bible does not offer a narrative about a fall of angels but of human persons. It is from this that sin and death are said to have come into the world (Rom 5.12). It is this that gives rise to depraved human societies and cultures

²¹ 10. PS Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), p. 166.

which distil their own godless spiritualities, otherwise known as idols. More significantly, in the purposes of God to redeem the world it is not into the world of angelic spirits that the Son of God enters but into the world of flesh and blood. The Word of God is made flesh because it is here that the problem is primarily located and here that it must be addressed. It is as a human being that the Son of God works redemption and reconciles the world to God. This surely relativises and subordinates the power of darkness to being an outcome rather than a cause of human actions. In the work of redemption the incarnate Son repairs and restores a broken world because it is in the failure of humankind to respond to God's grace and fulfil its divinely given mandate that the heart of the world's problem is to be found.

Engaging evil

Non-ontological realism therefore seeks not to deny the reality of the power of evil but to reinterpret it. This is not simply because the mythic version of the majority Christian tradition does not resonate with much contemporary thought but because the different perspective it offers is more satisfying theologically. What is irreducible is the fact that there is a spiritual dimension to life. When it becomes alienated from its creative source this becomes a negative power and not just a neutral one. Growing out therefore of human decisions, corporate and individual, to turn away from God and resist the wooings of the Spirit this godlessness takes progressive form in human communities, institutions, societies and civilisations. It creates a dynamic away from the living God and towards death which rapidly overpowers and dominates the human beings with whom it originated. Humans are now imprisoned within a power of darkness of their own making but beyond their control. It takes actual

form in a variety of unpredictable ways: in distortions of people's mental and spiritual health, in the fracturing of their inner selves, in their imprisonment within addictions and compulsions, in the breakdown of wholesome relations, in institutional systems of power and domination, in the inequities between nations, in dehumanising ideologies and false religion. The language of 'evil', 'the demonic' and even the 'satanic' can quite rightly be applied to the ways in which the power of darkness, of godless emptiness, manifests itself. From all of these things we need to be saved and preserved. Within this perspective the devil is not an individual being but a power, a dynamic which takes on the appearance of agency and intelligence and chaotically wars against God. It issues out of collective human resistance to God and holds in thrall the very beings on which it parasitically draws. It is immensely powerful but is at the same time a power that is negated and overcome in Jesus Christ. This is where hope is to be found. For God's saving action has also taken form in a human being who has come to destroy the work of the devil. His first calling is to live faithfully for God, embodying fully what it means to love God and neighbour. He does not fall prey to temptation but resists it and in so doing lives the life that all other humans have failed to do. He lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and chooses obedience to the Father so as to achieve what all others have failed to achieve, a life of supreme devotion to the Father. Having done this for us and in our place he also endures in our place the judgment of death and god-forsakenness, bearing and absorbing in his own person the fate that we bring upon ourselves. He does this as the agent of God's forgiving and reconciling grace, God acting through him to reconcile us to the divine life. By enduring evil, hostility and hatred he

negates it. By refusing to submit to evil even at the cost of his own life he overcomes evil on the cross and this victory is revealed in the resurrection. He also establishes around himself a community that participates by faith and the Spirit in his own victory, establishing a free people who can work in his name to free the world from its bondage to false gods, ideologies and spiritualities.

The calling of the Church is to be a free community, liberated by Christ through his Spirit. We are not to be naïve about a world in which evil is an active power, nor surprised by its strange mutations, nor overcome by its assaults or its temptations, nor discouraged in our struggle. We are called in the strength of Christ to stand.

Who Can I Blame

Corbett, Andrew, *Who Can I Blame*, www.andrewcorbett.net

Everyone is Influenced By Ideas...

The idea that responsibility is a lost art...

Hurling into a no-blame culture has serious theological implications...

The Australian public is currently being teased with excerpts from the "Latham Diaries" where the former contender for the top office in Australia at the last election has now revealed that he was being constantly undermined and sabotaged by his colleagues. Never before has Australia witnessed such a public demonstration of blame-shifting and victim-identity-swapping! What may not be immediately obvious is the cultural shift that this is symptomatic of, and how seriously this affects the Christian's task of communicating the true identity of God...

The Origin Of Blaming...

When God visited Eden just after the rebellious betrayal by Adam and Eve, He asked Adam why he had succumbed to sin (Genesis 3). Adam blamed Eve. When Adam's two sons brought their offerings to God, Abel excelled by giving his best, and Cain was lack-lustre because he gave a second-rate offering. But what was Cain's response to Abel's success and his failure? He blamed Abel. This is astounding. Even today we see this type of blaming- when someone else does well they become the object of blame for others who aren't doing so well. God had a very direct rebuke for Cain when he felt this way, and an even stronger rebuke when he acted on this misguided notion.

Blaming occurs throughout the Bible. When Samuel challenged King Saul in 1Samuel 15 about his lack of obedience to the Lord's directives, Saul immediately blamed the people he was leading. For this, he received one of the severest rebukes in all of Scripture. It appears that God demands of His appointed leaders the highest embracing of responsibility for the tasks to which He has assigned them.

When Blame Goes Too Far...

There are of course some instances where it is reasonable and appropriate to apportion blame where it is due, and where it is clearly levelled at the source of failed responsibility. But there is a form of blame which is gaining in popularity. This is where the innocent victim of an injustice is blamed for the injustice by the perpetrator of the wrong! For example-

* A school bully intimidates another student who in turn reports the bullying. When the bully is dealt with by the relevant authorities, he immediately seeks his victim out and further harasses him. When asked why, he claims that since

the victim had reported him to authorities he deserved what was coming to him.

* A rapist claims that if his victim were not so attractive he would not have been so compelled to violate her. Blame-shifting says that women should make themselves less attractive (responsibility says that men should control their urges and not act out every lustful thought they have!).

And this type of blaming carries over onto the international stage when terrorists blow up public buses in London and blame England's involvement in Iraq as the cause for such terror!

While I strongly questioned and even disagreed with the right of the Coalition of the Willing regarding their invasion of Iraq, I regard the acts of terror which they are trying to eradicate in Iraq as quite a separate issue. To accept that acts of terror in Iraq are justified because, as the terrorists claim, the United States is a "foreign invader/oppressor" is totally unacceptable blame-shifting. To similarly claim that the answer to the terrorist attack problems in Iraq would be resolved if the United States and its allies pulled out of Iraq is to seriously confuse issues, and reward blame-shifting and confuse who the real victim is. Regardless of whether there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or not, there can be no doubt that the former Iraqi Dictator was guilty of crimes against humanity, especially against the Kurds. Despite public perception, most of the carnage post-Sadam in Iraq appears to be the result of militant ideologues rather indiscriminate American killing. Let's be careful who we blame for the present state of Iraq!

Hurricanes In Louisiana...

Perhaps some of the most ridiculous blame-shifting occurring at the moment is the claim by some that America is being

Divinely punished with hurricanes because they supported Ariel Sharon's Gaza pull-out! This raises issues about how we understand the New Covenant and the place of Israel post-Calvary, and the heart and nature of God in dealing with people and nations today. I have written much on this and recommend readers download my free e-commentary of the Book of Revelation where I have chapters dedicated to these topics.

Before we go blaming God for such natural disasters, we need to ask whether we knew such an event was inevitable due to the natural mix of factors (seasonal weather patterns, below-sea level coastal population centres, etc.).

Theologically...

As Christians we need to be a people who accept responsibility. This especially needs to apply to our own lives. It also applies to our walk with the Lord. We cannot blame someone else for our lax spiritual condition. There are enough examples of godly people in Scripture and history who had every reason not to be spiritually strong, but managed to be so.

If we allow to go unchallenged the idea of blame-shifting we will make out task of sharing the greatest news mankind could ever hear, potentially unintelligible to the modern Western hearer. That's why there is a major theological challenge in the current trend to blame someone else. Mark Latham's release of the "The Latham Diaries" only perpetuates this dangerous trend. In it, he blames nearly everyone else for his own failures. In his interview with Australia's premier interviewer, Andrew Denton, he stood by his allegations that he wasn't to blame for his demise. He particularly had some stinging criticism for his former colleague Kevin Rudd, who is very good and highly competent man.

I hope that in everyday conversation we can correct and challenge such blame shifting whether it comes from former Prime Minister contenders or our next door neighbours! Ultimately, people's acceptance of their own moral culpability need for a Saviour depends on it!

Andrew Corbett, 16th September 2005

Canty's "I Was Just Thinking".

What? The Devil?

Canty, G., www.canty.org.uk (*IWT 11, What the devil?*)

Lately, I keep hearing about Job, mostly because Job puzzles readers. Well, like people who climb mountains because "they are there", I used to preach on Job as it was there, in the Bible, a challenge intellectually and philosophically, but an excuse to wrangle on about suffering. My congregation suffered more from my problem of suffering than from their all ailments. We talk of the patience of Job, but what about my congregation's patience?

The Job drama starts with the devil. There'd be no story plots at all if he retired, like the newspapers keep in business by people breaking the Ten Commandments. A lady complained about the expression "What the devil!" saying the devil is mentioned in Scripture so is a sacred personage. I fancy however, that Job would have been less squeamish about taking satan's name "in vain" if he had known what satan had to do with his misery, but Job didn't know.

His Infernal Majesty Satan appears 14 times in the first two chapters of Job engineering all the calamities, but doesn't have even a walk-on part in the rest of the drama. In 38 chapters Job's friends discuss his troubles but never once suggest satan had anything to do with it. In fact 42:11 speaks of "all the trouble the Lord had brought upon him." This is a contrast to

naïve Christian ideas today that even if a fuse blows it is the devil.

So though the five characters in Job never once mentioned satan, the drama names him in the prologue, which was quite novel. In the Old Testament despite his activity from the Garden of Eden forwards, trouble is rarely attributed to satan. In people's minds then, God was behind everything, good and bad. God sends sickness and God heals, sends plagues and droughts and then forgives and brings better times, takes away a man's breath and restores it, sends armies against Israel and defends Israel. *"I bring prosperity and create disaster"* *Isaiah 45:7*. *"Is there evil in the city and the Lord has not done it?"* The speeches of the three 'comforters' make up most of the drama. It is the Old Testament theological book. Oddly it never quotes other Scriptures, perhaps being written before the Bible. At the end, the Lord tells the three 'comforters' that they had not spoken that which was right, but that Job had. (42:8). Quite! They had no Bible then.

The author put into the mouth of his characters a theme with variations, namely that sin brings retribution. They wanted to 'comfort' Job by fathoming his afflictions. Seeking an explanation for suffering is cold comfort, especially as these comforters concluded it was all his own fault, he must have sinned. Why knowing 'why' should be thought a comfort, I do not understand. Is it ever? We all ask why, and it is ridiculous really. A philosopher with the toothache wants a dentist, not an explanation. If God told us why, little good would it do us. The explanation would be infinitely complex and leave us with a headache. God is running eternity, not a pie shop. His thoughts are not our thoughts.

One thing Job does get right, that he needs to know God properly. *"Oh that I knew where I might find him"*. Knowing God

is always the answer. Job could and could not answer God 'one time out of a thousand', but He was sure of God "*He knows the way that I take. Though he slay me yet will I trust him*". 23:3,10. 13:15. 9:3. In that long-ago world of impenetrable spiritual darkness, before the Greek wise men were born, Job already had penetrated the deeps of true knowledge. The fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom. We play around with useless intellectual conundrums, trying to fathom God's reasons, but all we need is to know Him. Then we can heave a sigh of relief and find rest.

In all my hours of flying, I've never questioned a pilot about his control of the plane. Pilots are well qualified and I confidently suppose they can manage without my advice, and get me where I want. The Lord God is surely well qualified to do the same! Every aeroplane pilot comes on the intercom with the same strong, assuring, educated English voice. Seat belts fastened, we settle back and leave it all to him. No back-seat drivers at 35000 feet. Those who know God, and hear His voice, do the same, leave it all to Him. He can run my life better than I can.

Israel believed God ran all creation and was responsible for afflictions, even sending enemies into their country. Yet it was Israel, the most troubled nation on earth, that exhorted us to have faith in God. That was not Israeli' religious genius, but God's revelation gift, long before the age of great thinkers who never found God. We read them, say Aristotle's '*Ethics*' but find no sign of feeling or comfort,

The message of Job is the message of Israel. If it is God who is behind events, then it is all right, like children with parents. Fear God and no fear is fearful. I recall mother pushing me out on the doorstep, when I was four, and shutting the door exasperated. I stood there, commiserated by my playmates

who agreed she surpassed all cruelty. But it was mother, not some villainous stranger, so I knew the door would open again. If our Father lets a lion loose in our garden, then as Psalm 4 says "*I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety*". When it comes to understanding everything, it is honest, not humble to admit we don't, and it is not pride to declare we know God. That is everything. Now Job's comforters argued he must be guilty seeing he suffered so much. That was the current outlook. Sin and suffering stood as cause and effect. Job protested he was innocent, but they concluded he must be a secret sinner. How comforting for Job! That was their one-track thinking, and largely what the book is about, The author, putting words into the mouth of his characters, was daring to challenge popular ideas. He was brilliant, and described the three friends as toning down their accusations to make their theory fit that sin brings retribution. Job was innocent and it upset their theology. It never was satisfactory that God sends pain on sinners, but Christ bore it for our sins.

We hear of today's 'thinking man'. They think they think, but it is one-track, limited within the frame of the present world-view. People really astonish me. They criticise God, why doesn't He do this or the other? God! They really kid themselves they know better. When 'thinkers' boast they don't believe in God it doesn't prove they think at all. Any moron can be an atheist. Nobody knows enough to be sure God doesn't exist, but even a child can know He does.

In the end of the drama, God comes into the scene. He simply challenged these too cocksure comforters with a score of zoological questions. If they didn't understand a crocodile, how could they understand God? Job said "*Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?*". (40:2) I still remember

one remark of the college Principal to us as students which surprised me. "When man fell, he fell on his head and has been cracked ever since". The world's wisest man might argue that elephants are impossible, but a schoolboy could contradict him if he has seen one.

Christians 'see!' Jesus liberates thought. "*You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*" Believers can think straight. "*We have the mind of Christ*". The common philosophy has always been that suffering and wrong are complementary. "What have I done to deserve this?" The answer is that our deserts have nothing to do with it. We happen to live in a fallen world. "*He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities, For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love...*" Psalm 103:10. His love explains everything.

The disciples saw Jesus looking at a born-blind man. They could not resist saying something and asked whether the blind man had sinned or his parents. How could he sin before he was born anyway? Jesus changed thousands of years of thinking, and answered the riddle of the book of Job, replying "*Neither has this man sinned nor his parents*". John 9:3.

Now the book of Job portrays five characters trying to solve the riddle of Job's sufferings. They failed. There are no answers in Job, only questions. However they do ask some right questions, the real questions of life, and these are answered in Christ in the New Testament. The drama of Job brings Satan on stage challenging God to test Job. It was a new insight then, but it seems it still would be new now in the world. People ask why God allows this or that. Have they never heard of the devil? "*Jesus Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil*"

Job said something very right. "*When he has tested me I shall come forth as gold*". This is much misunderstood. Trials will not give you a golden character, only show it. Job's testing did not make him gold. He was gold in the first place and trial simply brought it out. Putting lead into a crucible will not transmute it into gold as the old alchemists hoped. Lead comes out as lead, and gold as gold. It does not evaporate. At the start of my ministry my church was invaded by malcontents thrown out of other churches. They brought me close to a breakdown. Then an old Anglican friend said "Well, I know you are a bigger man than to let them upset you". Was I? It challenged me as wise comfort.

That is why we read about the patience of Job. Chapter three doesn't sound as if Job was patient at all. He cursed the day he was born with eloquently lurid protest. Job was positively very furious over what had happened. Why not? Sickness is no blessing. Ministering to the sick as God called me, I rage within me and often scream rebukes against physical torments. I'm sick of sicknesses, I attack them in Christ's holy name as the unholy work of the devil like Jesus did (Acts 10:38), an offence and insult in God's creation. So, the patience of Job? What? Well, yes, but not patient with his calamities. He was patient with God. Job uttered no word against the Almighty, nor shook a fist at heaven.

Job's wife said "*Curse God and die*" but Job refused such suicidal unbelief. He didn't want to die and so didn't curse God. He could have done and died, but He knew God.. I remember a woman saying to me "God has not answered my prayer so I'm not going to church any more. I'll show Him!" I never heard that God sat down worried about it, but the Lord did remember Job's trusting patience.

In one speech Job asked how God could possibly be affected by an earthling, 'a maggot' as Bildad said. (25:6) But God is affected and chose to bless us 'maggots' and take upon Himself to care, passionately.

Calvary shows that. Fathom that deed if you can, but I can't. Preaching, aged 23, I could explain everything. Today I'm sure I never will. God is too big for our small minds, but I know Him, and that is everything.

Can The Devil Tell The Truth?

Canty, G., www.canty.org.uk (*IWT 12, Can the devil tell the truth?*)

A demon-hunter demanded "Lying spirit of the devil, what is your name?" I imagined that spirit creasing his brow in a dilemma: Tell the truth?

IWT 11 pointed out that Job's friends never attributed his troubles to satan, though he appears 14 times in chapters 1 and 2. In the rest of the OT he is on stage only 5 times, and in the New Testament 34 times. Otherwise his gang of fallen spirits are called 'the devil', operating at the satanic will.

Satan himself personally troubled Jesus and others, buffeting Paul, for example, with a thorn in the flesh. He is capable of inciting endless mayhem, including murder (John 8:44).

Some teach that satan wished to displace God. He had no such insane idea, knowing himself to be a limited creature and that God filled heaven and earth. His ambition was no more than lord of the Earth, this planet being the vital battle ground between good and evil. He installed himself as 'the god of this world'. Human beings are capable of resisting or of falling in with satanic scheming. We were created vulnerable, precisely so that the victory of God will be evident through our weakness as agents of God's strategy. He will rid creation of all evil through us. Angels and heavenly intelligences serve us as we battle here against entrenched evil.

From the Garden of Eden, satan had the world pretty much to himself. The invasion of his territory by God the Son was a shattering blow to the kingdom of hell. The devil could not anticipate that the Son of God would take flesh and suffer death and go to such extreme lengths to overcome evil. Love, such love especially, is a mystery to Satan.

The devil knows he can't win, so why carry on? Quite simply, he can't help himself. The embodiment and personification of evil can't stop being what he is, evil. Knowing he has but a short time, the devil is filled with greater fury (Revelation 12:12).

I am amazed by, but do not admire, the faith many have in the devil. Half the Christian world believes the devil is active in their everyday life, yet have difficulty accepting that God is equally active. They believe the devil makes them sick but not that God can cure them. The devil appears to be at ease creating trouble, but people clatter on God's door for a week to get His help. Need they? Prayer is often an expression of unbelief. Why ask God to do what He said He would do? Is He such a reluctant character? They take the devil for granted as up and doing, reliably being a bad devil, but believe that God must be persuaded and blandished with fasting to be a good God. Yes?

Most troubles and evils, including temptations, come from ourselves (James 1:14) and from the imperfect world which environs us. Satan is not another God. He has no Divine attributes, no omnipresence, omniscience or omnipotence. He is the anti-God. God is good, full of iridescent light and joy. Satan is the negative, limited, evil, full of darkness.

Few have dealings with satan himself, but we all have indirectly through the medium of demon spirits. Once in my life, God let me see satan as a warning of the impossible

situation he would engineer around me. Normally he does not stay with us but does what he can and leaves us. His targets are people dangerous to him in the war. "Mighty men around us falling" sang the hymn writer - of course! Satan creates pressures on leaders that others know little about. They may go down in the battle and we should pick them up not kick them down.

Christ emptied Satan of his power. Heb. 2:14 "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death". The word "katargeo", used 27 times in the NT, means of 'none effect'. Satan seeks whom he may destroy, to bring about their death or their ruin. How, if he is evacuated of power? Satan has only the power we concede when we give way to him. We can resist him, for in Christ we have the upper hand. Jesus told the disciples "I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy". The 'enemy' had power, but not after the victory on Calvary.

Some teach that demonic forces can control us. They ascribe erratic or wrong behaviour to controlling demons. But surely anyone not responsible for what they do should be sectioned under British law? Believers should never lay their sins at the devil's door. God has given us "the power of a sound mind", 2 Timothy 1:7, and power over the evil one. That is what salvation is (Acts 26:18).

Telling believers they have a demon is dreadfully wrong. To rid them of the idea is something I have found well nigh impossible. Exorcism again and again achieves nothing simply because there is no demon to expel, but each time it drives the idea deeper into their consciousness. Eventually they 'learn to live with it', like a bent nose, which is hardly the glorious freedom of the children of God.

The ABC of the Gospel is being set free from the devil. Otherwise the mighty work of Christ has failed. We shall be troubled by satanic attention, but in Christ we are stronger than he is. It is time to live that way and not give way. To think he is all powerful is the deceit of the devil. We are the masters, not he.