

Spring 2002 ^{LBC} Review

Spiritual Warfare

Whose battle,
whose agenda?

God's special forces

Northwood, the home of LBC, hit the headlines after September 11. The newspapers drew attention to it several times as the allied forces poured into Afghanistan. It was nothing that LBC had done. But, just up the road and around the corner from the college is a key military base.

The base has had various incarnations over the years – HMS Warrior, Western NATO Command, C & C Fleet, Joint Forces HQ and now the Army is there and it's known simply as the 'Northwood Headquarters'. Both the Falklands and Gulf wars were conducted from there and now the declared, yet unconventional, war on terrorism is being masterminded on the British side there.

Northwood, then, is the host to not one but two significant institutions of warfare: the 'Northwood Headquarters' and LBC; one deals with conventional warfare and the other spiritual warfare.

The two came together for me when I listened recently, courtesy of the

Christian Research Association, to Major General Richard Dannatt CBE, MC*, Assistant Chief of General Staff, lecture on Strategic Leadership. During the lecture he gave us many fascinating insights into how the army plan campaigns and he gave his testimony to Christ. At one point he stated that as Christian leaders, 'Our strategic aim must be to promote a biblical expository ministry in every parish in the land and especially in our university cities.' He saw that as the key to defeating the spiritual enemy who stalks Britain. LBC exists to contribute significantly to the fulfilment of that aim, and to fulfil a similar strategic aim around the globe.

The Northwood Headquarters and LBC, share some things in common. They are both involved in training and commissioning troops for combat in various theatres of war around the world. Both are preparing people to engage an enemy strategically. Both are

aiming to ensure the victory of their sovereign. Both, have a goal of bringing about peace, but there the similarities end.

The nature of our warfare is totally different from theirs. The arena of our warfare is the arena of the spiritual and the unseen. The enemy we engage is not flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). We face the enemies of the world, the flesh and the devil. Spiritual

warfare is, therefore, an integral part of all our Christian experience and requires us to give as much attention to the enemies within and to those without.

'The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world' (2 Cor. 10:4).

They are the weapons of love, grace, self-giving, truth and prayer. The resource we have is faith. The objective we have is to release people from the rule of darkness and to bring them into the kingdom of the Son who gives freedom. We fight for 'the prince of peace' who did not conquer by the use of military might but by voluntarily surrendering himself to indignity and death on the cross.

As soldiers of Jesus, then, there can be no possible excuse for the militant fundamentalism that bombs abortion clinics, nor for the crusades of yesteryear which engaged in conversion by the sword. Such approaches are simply incompatible with our commander-in-chief. But the conflict is no less real for all that.

In today's church, spiritual warfare is a live issue. Territorial spirits, intelligence gathering, spiritual mapping, strategic-level spiritual warfare, aggressive prayer strategies, breaking

strongholds, confronting the powers, taking the land, marching to victory has become familiar language in some Christian circles and in much Christian worship.

Yet we must ask if this language is appropriate in the current climate. It sounds aggressive, especially to those who hear it through the filters of poverty, minority status, or of colonialism and of acts of oppression by so-called 'Christian' countries. In talking of spiritual warfare we must make every effort not to come over as a Christian counterpart to the militant wing of Islam, which is prepared to kill others for the cause. It is strange, even reprehensible that some branches of our evangelical family seem insensitive to this in the language they use.

This issue of the College Review addresses some of the questions of spiritual warfare. It is no more than a taster. So much more could be said. So much more is explored by those studying in the college. But we hope it will prove useful to your own thinking and ministry. We hope it helps towards victory in the spiritual battle.

Derek Tidball Principal and Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Religion

**Major General Dannatt is the son of Molly Dannatt who used to teach at LBC in its early days. His father, Anthony, was a member of the LBC Board of Governors and a Company member.*



Different Faces of Islam

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world...” (Ephesians 6:12)

How are Christians to interpret Ephesians 6:12 with regard to other faiths, and especially in the context of the current “War against Terrorism”? Two risks present themselves. The first simply ignores such a verse as irrelevant. The second, in contrast, too readily applies it to the world around. Neither of these approaches is satisfactory.

The first risk typically derives from an uncritical acceptance of other faiths as equally valid variations on a divine theme. This is a product of our post-modernist context, where subtle but powerful pressures are put on us on a daily basis to accept all forms of diversity without question. Thus approaches which are most ‘kosher’ in terms of the current received wisdom are those which are multi-faith, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-sexual etc.

Furthermore, it is a cop-out. To regard such a verse as irrelevant ignores certain phenomena found in other faiths which our instincts tell us may derive from forces for evil. A clear example is the al-Qa’ida phenomenon within Islam, which plans and rejoices at atrocities such as those carried out in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001.

There is something very dark about the following excerpt of a recorded conversation between Osama Bin Laden and two of his colleagues:

Bin Laden: After a little while, they announced that another plane had hit the World Trade Centre. The brothers who heard the news were overjoyed by it.

Shaykh: ...we stayed until four o’clock, listening to the news every time a little bit different, everyone was very joyous and saying “Allah is great,” “Allah is great,” “We are thankful to Allah,” “Praise Allah.” And I was

happy for the happiness of my brothers. That day the congratulations were coming on the phone non-stop. The mother was receiving phone calls continuously.

Shaykh: “Fight them, Allah will torture them, with your hands, he will torture them. He will deceive them and he will give you victory. Allah will forgive the believers, he is knowledgeable about everything.”¹

Christians should be willing to view adherents of other faiths as fellow travellers on a spiritual journey.

The second risk is equally unsatisfactorily, but for different reasons. It leads to a knee-jerk dismissal of other faiths as lost in every way, often extending to a view of other faiths as instruments of Satan per se. This attitude ignores the fact that adherents of other faiths are driven by a sincere desire to seek, know and please God. We might disagree with them about the extent to which we respectively find God. However, to dismiss them automatically as being on the path of “the rulers of the darkness of this world” seems to be taking issues of disagreement too far.

Such an attitude is also a cop-out because it avoids us having to think about the degree to which Godly truth may be found in other faiths. To do so might make us feel vulnerable. However, Christians should have sufficient confidence in our own faith to be prepared to be a little vulnerable in the challenges we tackle.

Let us ground such comments in a live case study. It concerns my Indonesian friend Zayn ud-Din. He was brought up a Muslim and was imbued with the values of his faith by observant parents. He was the eldest of nine children in a poor Javanese family. At 21 he set out for Australia in search of work to assist with the support of his family. We met as he began his journey.

Over the last 28 years Zayn ud-Din has become perhaps the most faithful friend I have

ever had. He was devoted to my parents, who helped him when he was struggling on arrival in Australia. He is a dedicated son, brother, husband and father to his own family.

Zayn ud-Din’s name means “The beauty of the Faith”. He has always exhibited a quiet faith. He prays at home. He attends mosque on significant occasions. He never attempts to proselytise. He finds great sustenance in his faith in times of trouble and sorrow.

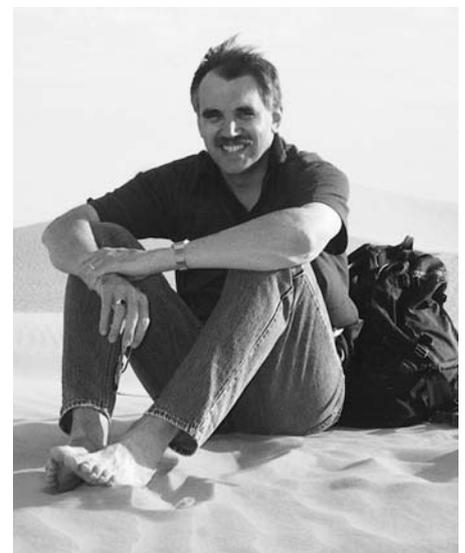
Zayn ud-Din is not under the control of “powers and principalities”. Like many other ordinary Muslims, he manifests most, perhaps all, of the qualities called for by the apostle Peter: goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love.²

Christians should be willing to view adherents of other faiths as fellow travellers on a spiritual journey. At the same time, we should be prepared to ask hard questions of other faiths, and have hard questions asked of Christianity in return. In short, Christians should be willing to live with difference. This is far better than either seeking a trite compromise formula based on the lowest common denominator of all faiths, or automatically dismissing adherents of other faiths as being controlled by “the rulers of the darkness of this world.”

Peter G. Riddell Director of LBC Centre for Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations and Senior Lecturer in Islam and Linguistics.

1. <http://www.cnn.com/2001/UIS/12/13/tape.transcript/>

2. 2 Peter 1:5-7



The Christian 'Band of Brothers' and their Armour

A home-group in a local church recently split on issues of 'spiritual warfare'. One side wanted prayerfully to 'discern' or 'map' all the spirits around both individuals and communities, in order to 'bind' the evil influences, rout them, and so deliver the 'oppressed': the strategic focus consisted in direct engagement with the 'powers' in the claimed authority of the Lord.

The other party fully acknowledged individual and corporate oppression by evil, but considered that prayer should instead be primarily directed to the Lord in the form of petition that he bring light to (particular) dark places, that he should heal and/or free (specified) individuals and communities, and protect them with his transforming presence.

I think both 'sides' would fully agree that where an evil spirit begins to 'manifest' in a person, the appropriate response is to bring it under control in the authority of Christ, and charge it to leave without further harm. That was clearly Jesus' quite regular practice. When we are told Jesus 'rebuked' evil spirits (Mark 1.25, etc.), this does not mean he 'crossly reprimanded' them (far less cursed them: cf. Jude 9-10; 2 Peter 2.11-12): the word 'rebuke' in this connection is a technical term for 'bring under control'. Jesus thus 'bound' individual spirits in this sense, and released their captives (see, e.g., Luke 13. 11-2, 16).

In another context, Jesus explains his power to deliver men and women from evil powers on the grounds that he had first 'bound the strong man'

(Satan) and so is now free to plunder his household (Mk 3.22-27, and parallels). The Gospels do not explain how Jesus bound Satan, but it is probably a reference to Jesus' contest with Satan in the wilderness. By failing to tempt Jesus into disobedience,

Satan began to lose his own grip on power. Interestingly, there is no hint that Jesus on that occasion, or any other, attempted to 'rebuke' Satan, or adjure him with some formula to bind him. Far less is there any hint that he had a programme of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare (SLSW) against 'territorial spirits': indeed, he does not appear to have sought out spirits at all.

The disciples share in and extend his ministry of deliverance (cf. Lk 10.17-20), but receive no encouragement to press the spiritual warfare deeper into the enemy camp. Jesus does indeed give the authority to 'bind' and to 'loose' (Mt 16.19; 18.18), but as the contexts show this is not primarily (if at all) about dealing with demons: it is the authority to make decisions binding in the community.

When we turn to Acts we encounter the same sort of picture: the apostles and others take action where people are discerned as being affected by malignant spirits (5.16; 8.7; 16.16-18; 19.12), but there is no attempt at seek-and-destroy missions. Nor is there any word about the apostolic church attempting to identify and bind higher level spiritual powers or territorial spirits as (on SLSW assumptions)

we might have expected them to do in, say, magic-ridden Ephesus (cf. Acts 19-20). Perhaps the nearest 'sounds' to that come in Paul's talk of divinely empowered weapons of war to demolish strongholds (2 Cor 10.4); but the citadels in question turn out to be arguments and other proud obstacles to the knowledge of God (10.5), not celestial castles brimming with enemy forces. There may be war in the heavens (Rev 12.7), but such is between angelic powers, and we are not called to participate in that particular fray. We are also warned that Satan will carry that war to earth, and will even prevail for a while against God's people (Rev 13.7; cf. Dan 7).

There may be war in the heavens (Rev 12.7), but such is between angelic powers

But believers are called to a victory of endurance and faithful witness in these periods of testing persecution, not to try mounting a counter-offensive on the powers.

A number of passages in Paul's letters use warfare imagery to depict

the Christian life. In addition to 2 Cor 10.4 (see above), four in particular use the language of weapons and armour: Rom 13.12; 2 Cor 6.7; 1 Thess 5.8 and Eph 6.10-18. In the first two, however, the context makes clear that the 'armour of light' and 'weapons of righteousness' respectively are spiritual/ethical qualities, and the enemy identified in Rom 13.12-14 is the flesh, and its desires, not hostile spirits. The same is true of 1 Thess 5.8, where the only armour mentioned is the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation (note no weapons are in view here, nor any concrete enemies).

Ephesians 6 at first sight looks very different, with its roll-call of powerful rulers of darkness (v.12), and its exhortation to don the full armour of God (including, now, a sword), and so to withstand the enemy offensive.

The passage is often mistakenly regarded as some kind of ‘appendix’, advising specialists engaged with unusual levels of demonic oppression. The advice here is certainly relevant for such situations, but in reality, 6.10-18 is a fitting and challenging conclusion to the main themes of the letter: an exquisite final exhortation from ‘General Paul’ to the whole ‘army’ of the church.

What then are the lessons it has for us about the nature of our spiritual warfare? From v.12 we learn that the battle in question is not with individual petty-pillaging demons, nor with territorial powers, but with the whole confederacy of the worldwide powers of darkness. Paul had every reason to know that the major ‘regional’ power of Asia was the great goddess Artemis/Diana of Ephesus (cf. Acts 19.23-29!), queen of the zodiacal powers and over the realm of the dead. Yet he does not even mention her, far less suggest that believers should combine in prayer to confront her, bind her influence, and depose her. He keeps his language about the powers very general because, for Paul, any such local entities are merely tributaries of the one – the Devil (6.11), or, as 2.2 describes him, ‘the ruler of the realm of the air; the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience’.

That should remind us, too, of the nature of the main battle. The Devil’s foremost aim (according to 2.1-3, and 4.18-31) is quite simply to tear humankind from God and from each other. The big word there is ‘alienation’. By contrast, God’s wonderful purpose (1.9-10) is the opposite: namely to gather up all things in Christ, and so bring them into the total harmony and unity of love that streams between Father, Son and Spirit (thereby making them one God, not three!). The church is called to be the place where that unity of love is displayed to the universe and its powers (2.11-22; 3.5-10; 4.1-16, etc.)

From all this it becomes clear where the front-line of the spiritual warfare lies. Not

with the SLSW experts and exorcists, but with all of us, as we stand together in Christ. On that point we need to remind ourselves that 6.10-18 is not primarily about how the individual should fight his or her ‘own’ spiritual warfare: it is about how we fight together. Solitary soldiers obviously stand no chance against a whole army, and anyway individualism is probably one of the key sins of ‘alienation’ from which God seeks to save us!

From the repeated exhortation to stand and withstand (6.13-14), it is clear too that the battle is viewed mainly as a defensive one (not a charge into the enemy ranks). The army of the church holds the strong high ground by virtue of its union with Christ ‘far above’ all the powers (1.21; 2.6): it must not allow the enemy to dislodge it from that strategic position, but repel the invader.

In this conflict, believers should take every encouragement. Not only are they to be empowered by God (6.11), but they wear God’s very own armour. It is the armour of the Divine Warrior (of Isaiah 59.17 and Wisdom of Solomon 5.17-20) and that of his Messiah (Isaiah 11.1-5). So here the belt of truth and breastplate of righteousness must be the ethical qualities of integrity and holiness of life taught

earlier (cf. esp. 4.24-25; and 5.8-9), or, to switch the metaphor, the ‘fruit of the Spirit’. The helmet of ‘salvation’ is the full spiritual understanding (prayed for in 1.17-19) of the great truths announced in 1.20-23 and 2.5-8. The shoes we are to don (5.15), in order to give us firm footing in the fight, are paradoxically the ‘gospel of peace’: i.e. the good news of reconciliation and unity taught in 2.11-18, and which we are eagerly to guard according to 4.3.

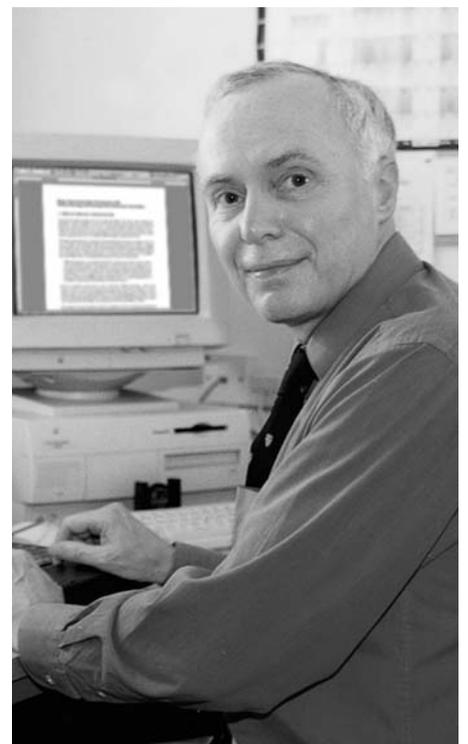
At two points the image of the Isaianic Divine Warrior merge into that of the

Roman soldier. The word for ‘shield (of faith/faithfulness)’ in v.16 denotes the big door-like Roman shields, which could be locked together to form a wall in front of you and a roof over your heads, converting your cohort into a fortress. (Of course, solitary soldiers, even with such a shield, would not be protected from an encircling enemy! It is only the church united together that benefits). And the ‘sword (of the Spirit)’ – God’s word – is the short stabbing weapon that keeps the enemy at bay, not the longer and more offensive battle blade.

If Paul were thinking along anything like SLSW lines, he would

naturally have gone on to mention the two deadly javelins the Roman soldier carried, to hurl at the enemy, and slay them. But the armour of God here, as in the earlier passages, is essentially equipment for a defensive spiritual/ethical contest, a battle that is won by a holy and prayerful people, living in fullest conformity with the Gospel of peace and reconciliation. Not quite what Stephen Spielberg imagined, but yes, indeed, armour for a ‘Band of Brothers’.

*Max Turner Professor of
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The army of the church holds the strong high ground by virtue of its union with Christ

The Devil’s foremost aim is quite simply to tear humankind from God and from each other

Burglars? Spirits? or..?

Imagine having an Al Jihad mosque down the road from you, or seeing a book entitled 'Judas Iscariot, Hero of Mankind' in your local bookshop. Even in a friendly, tolerant South East Asian community it still makes you feel insecure and threatened.

Suppose, you are from another faith; the existence of the Salvation Army, the publicity for a March for Jesus, Warfare Prayer or a Crusade for Christ is similarly unsettling, even frightening. Even assurance from friendly neighbours does not entirely remove the sense of insult, the threat and the historical resonance behind the words.

In June 2000 eminent theologians and mission leaders meeting in Pasadena, USA sent out a plea for Christians to re-examine the metaphors we use in witness. Words like *target, army, advance, enemy* are not only misleading when read by those who are not Christians, they also foster a militant spirit rather than loving, incarnational service to others. Their appeal should lead to action, particularly since September 2001: 'We encourage Christian mission agencies and local churches to re-examine scripture and restate their global task in terms consistent with the teaching and mission of Christ'¹.

"I'm afraid, being in that big house alone at night"...'Of course you are, we'll come and stay with you if you like'

They understood the missionary to be afraid of ghosts and demons like them. She assumed the locals were thinking of burglars like her. She valued the local people's understanding, other missionaries seemed so joyful, fearless and unrealistic. The result was peace and security, but no real communication took place.

Since John Wimber popularised the distinction between a western world view (afraid of burglars) and the eastern world view (afraid of spirits) there has grown an appreciation that the world-view of non-western peoples might have more in common

with the biblical cultures, and possibly be nearer the truth. It is now frequently argued that people with backgrounds in the occultic practices of primal religion can teach the western Christian from their experience about the demonic world and enable us to evolve strategies for mission that will release the oppressed in a new and more effective way.

God is 'at war', they say, encouraging believers to adopt a 'warfare world-view'. This leads to a Christian ministry claiming spiritual deliverance for individuals and release of communities from territorial spirits. By spiritual mapping, identificational repentance, discernment of spirits and warfare prayer it is claimed that the door will be opened for the nations to come flooding to Christ.

'Don't lean on that sarcophagus, the last man who did that died mysteriously four days later. And don't get too near to that banyan tree, it's got special spiritual power from ancestral spirits. And when you get in the boat to go home, make sure you tell no lies or you'll capsize and drown..'

Just a tourist guide's spiel, but he was a Christian! The way he saw the world, every little step, touch or action would lay people open to the powers. For him the old and the new were so mixed up together that his faith imprisoned him and frightened others. Such a world-view, oriented to power and the powers, is not likely to motivate a person to go for a life of cancer research, for the care of AIDS orphans or for activism in politics.

In contrast, the first New Testament Christians lived with a sense of freedom, assuring everyone that Jesus Christ has defeated

the powers, transferred his people from the realm of darkness and that he is the victorious, exalted Saviour. With this good news they had the power to love the stranger, the neighbour, even the enemy and they stood firm against Satan as a defeated foe. (Colossians 1:13-14; Eph. 1:18-23). Scripture gives us such evidence without any taxonomy of demonic powers or strategy for aggressive warfare.

Professor J.E Sahetapy is a leading Indonesian Christian, a lawyer who has consistently campaigned against corruption, for justice and the maintenance of freedom of religion where Christians are a minority. He wrote, 'We are not soldiers of Christ, we are ambassadors for Christ. The war has been won on Golgotha. Now we carry forward the proclamation of that salvation message'. A year later Christians went out to attack local Muslims in his home province, singing 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. So Sahetapy organised a fund to assist in the rebuilding of a mosque they had destroyed.

An ambassadorial world-view seems a more appropriate, less dangerous image for Christian mission. Like Paul, the messenger of the Lord comes to offer reconciliation and the benefits of his rule (2 Cor. 5:20-6:2). Reconciliation for and with the peoples who so often cry out, 'Don't talk of love, show me'.

Ailish Eves Lecturer in Missiology and New Testament

1. Evangelical Missionary Quarterly, October 2000



Daniel & Spiritual Warfare?

Did Daniel engage in Spiritual Warfare? The short answer is, “No.” But what are the reasons for saying so?

Firstly, the book, like the Old Testament, is so positively focused on the Most High that by comparison lesser powers scarcely get a look in. The spirituality of Daniel as a character is worked out in his exclusive loyalty to the God of heaven, in doing his job faultlessly, and in prophetic confrontation with Nebuchadnezzar over issues of justice and the oppression of the poor (Dan 4:27). Solidarity with his people is the other side to Daniel’s service in Babylonia. This solidarity expresses itself in his prayer and fasting, and his pondering of the writings of Jeremiah. He fasts and prays and reads with hope for the future. He talks to God while facing Jerusalem. Meanwhile, his focus in the stories and the visions, as well as in his day-to-day responsibilities, is with political powers at ground level.

Given that the book of Daniel is focused on monotheism and justice, covenant loyalty and the vindication of God’s people, can we not squeeze territorial spirits and spiritual warfare in between the lines? Well, some would say, no need to squeeze. It’s writ large – just turn to Dan 10. Who is the ‘the prince of Persia’ if not the equivalent of Gabriel, Michael and other superpower spirits? And if it’s Persia, then that’s geographical. It’s territorial. Fair point? Well, maybe it’s not that straightforward.

The question that often pops up in the Old Testament is one of the culture-specific and engaged nature of its theology. It borrows vocabulary and concepts from its antagonists and turns this imagery against them. Thus, Yahweh is a storm deity who outguns Baal (Psa 29) . Yahweh is a dragon-slayer who outchampions Marduk (Psa 74 and Isa 51). The seas and mighty waters that Yahweh subdued and rules over and has founded the earth on are the symbols of chaos or rebellion, not actual wet stuff or Loch Ness

monsters (Pss. 24 and 29 or Job 26). Now, we are quite happy to understand the empires emerging from the sea in Dan 7 as borrowing from the associations of sea with raging waters, and even with a rebellion against the Celestial Court. The relation between imagery, symbol and reality is trickier and literalism is often unhelpful. Spirit powers there may be behind the scenes, but tying them into territorial or national politics is another matter.

If angels don’t carry literal swords, if record-keeping is more advanced in heaven than a large library of books, then we might do well to be wary of literalising the imagery of the seventy sons of God each being assigned to a nation-state or territory while Yahweh himself retains Israel as his personal patch (Deut 32:8f). In Daniel Michael has the key role as ‘the great prince, the protector of your people’ (12:1). However, if we push too hard on Michael in Daniel, then we would turn him into a territorial spirit. This allocation would conflict with the undelegated rule of Yahweh over Israel and over the world in the psalms and in Deuteronomy.

There is no need to deny the reality of Michael, Gabriel or of spiritual powers hostile to God but

Daniel is actually enormously restrained in what it says about transhuman powers – compared with what we could read in 1 Enoch, for example. Daniel says nothing much about ‘the prince of Persia’ and how this figure fits into the celestial scheme of things. In the Mesopotamian world, the gods who meet in the Divine Assembly are not evil—they have differences of opinion and strategy and various vested interests, and need to come to consensus or be overruled by the

president. The Celestial Court in the Old Testament likewise engages in lively debate with various options put forward until Yahweh closes proceedings with his ruling (2 Kgs 22; Isa 6; Job 1-2).

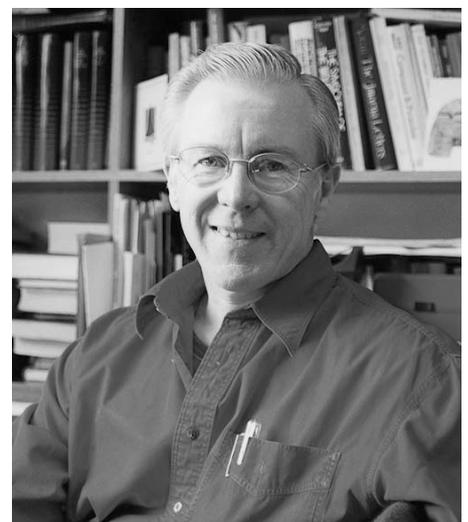
The scheme of power in Daniel 10 seems to have elaborated on the Celestial Court imagery of the rest of the Old Testament without embracing the exotic developments of intertestamental apocalyptic. It would be precarious to erect from Dan 10 a doctrine that each nation-state literally has a fixed boundary or a specifically assigned celestial representative. It’s wiser to accept the reality of undocumented powers and their effect on political history without elaborating it in detailed territorial and rank theories.

Daniel talks to God in prayer. He does not engage in a prayer war with the ‘prince of Persia’. That’s not his business. Nor is there the slightest hint that Daniel should have asked for the disclosure of more specific information and then engaged in adversarial address, rebuking or binding this ‘prince of Persia’. Gabriel and Michael will take care of things. That stuff is behind-the-scenes stuff. It’s Gabriel’s business (Dan 10:20). If we use Daniel as a model, that’s where it leads.

Deryck Sheriffs MA Course Leader and Lecturer in Old Testament

Daniel is actually enormously restrained in what it says about transhuman powers

The spirituality of Daniel as a character is worked out in his exclusive loyalty to the God of heaven



Demons in Counselling?

There are, in my experience, two major perceptual errors into which Christian Counsellors fall with regard to the presence and operation of demons in the lives of their clients. Those who see demons where they are not and those whom, it seems, would find it hard to recognise the devil even if he were standing in front of them.

To what extent do clients' problems and issues presented by clients in counselling reflect the consequences of spiritual warfare? If the Fall is seen as the outcome of the first act of spiritual warfare against humanity, and this warfare is understood as continuing throughout the present church age (Eph. 6:12), it may be argued that every problem experienced by humans, both at a personal and collective level, is either a direct or indirect consequence of spiritual warfare. If this position is accepted, then spiritual warfare is a reality that the Christian Counsellor cannot afford to ignore.

As counsellors engaged in a "battle for the health of souls", we need to recognise the fact, and learn how to fight. To fight effectively requires that we know our enemy and are aware of the nature, forces and strategies of Satan. As Clinton E Arnold concludes in his book 'Powers of Darkness'¹, "The powers of darkness are real, we need to be conscious of their influence and we need to respond to them appropriately" (p.182).

This is not to say that we develop an unhealthy or exaggerated concern for the dark spiritual realm. The equal and opposite dangers of under- or over-emphasising the power and activity of the enemy should be avoided, as should the tendency to a reductionism that ascribes every sneeze to demons of influenza.

One of the greatest challenges we face as we seek to respond to the reality of spiritual warfare in counselling is that of making an accurate diagnosis. How can we recognise and accurately assess the nature and extent of demonic influence in the experience and behaviour of the client?

Central to accurate diagnosis is an awareness

of the many and varied ways in which demonic influence may be expressed. It is possible to describe these expressions in terms of three broad categories: demonic ideation, oppression and control. These headings represent three levels of demonic activity, with each successive level reflecting a stronger degree of influence. They should not however be taken to represent discrete categories.

Demonic ideation refers to thoughts of demonic spiritual origin, and involves the suggestion of ideas to an individual temptation by a demon. Such thoughts can vary significantly in strength, frequency and duration. Demonic oppression refers to the personal distress experienced at a physical, psychological or spiritual level and induced partially or wholly by demonic influence. Some of the many states that may result from demonic oppression are obsession, compulsion, addiction, fatigue, stress, anxiety, depression and physical illness (cf. Lk. 13:10-16). Demonic control represents the most extreme example of spiritual 'pathology', and refers to the submission or subjugation of the human will to the authority and control of a demon. It may be accompanied by symptoms such as the presence of a different voice in the individual, superhuman strength, the appearance of a separate personality, or the occurrence of unwanted, forced behaviour.

Knowledge of the varieties of demonic influence must be combined with an appreciation of the complex ways in which dimensions of personal being interrelate. The issues of each client reflect a complicated mixture of spiritual, psychological, physiological and contextual factors, making it imperative that the counsellor is equipped with

an adequate framework of understanding for the difficult task of making a differential diagnosis. Some symptoms are found in more than one condition. For example, the appearance of a separate personality is not merely a possible evidence of demonisation, but also a criterion for the diagnosis of Dissociative Identity Disorder². In response to such challenges, it has been suggested that statistical research into deliverance ministry (of which there has been very little) may help us to refine our diagnostic criteria for more severe cases³. It may also be suggested that accurate diagnosis requires of Christian Counsellors a view of individual symptoms that is not only intellectually but also spiritually informed. Of all the cases of demonic oppression and control in which I have been involved, there have been none in which the gift of discerning of spirits did not play a significant role.

Accurate diagnosis prepares the way for effective intervention. Repentance and renunciation of occult involvement (where appropriate), prayer for deliverance, encouragement, counselling, teaching and fasting (in more severe cases), represent some key elements.

Where are the demons in counselling? Ask those with knowledge and discernment.

Simon Gibson Lecturer in Counselling and Theology and Counselling third year course leader

1. Clinton E Arnold, Powers of Darkness (IVP, 1992)
2. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th ed., DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, 1994)
3. Christopher H Rosik, When Discernment Fails: The Case for Outcome Studies on Exorcism (Journal of Psychology & Theology, Fall 1997, Vol.25, No. 3, pp. 354-363)



Evangelism & Spiritual Warfare

“The change in him is amazing, he’s been telling people he has just become a Christian and is witnessing to others about his faith”

I’d just given one of the main addresses at Oxford Christian union’s mission “As good as it gets?” when a former student now working in HM Young offenders institution Feltham told me about an inmate. Lee had become a Christian at the end of last year on the penultimate week of an Alpha course I had been running there with a team of LBC students. It was encouraging news and I was keen to feed it back to the students. The spiritual climate in Feltham had been tough. This was the prison where a much-publicised murder had taken place of one inmate by another. It was Feltham that had housed Richard Reid, the infamous ‘shoe bomber’, before his conversion to Islam. Feltham still struggles with a higher than average suicide rate and has a track record for not retaining governors or indeed chaplains for any length of time.

It would be fair to say the LBC team had found the whole experience tough. Some had commented about the ‘oppressive atmosphere’ and others had speculated whether a spate of headaches and ailments when we first went in were a symptom of spiritual attack. The encouragement was all the more welcome since our ministry seemed to be hallmarked by ‘struggle’. This is not surprising since we were engaged in spiritual warfare.

Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus ‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’ It was the late John Wimber who commented “this verse applies to every aspect of the Christian life, including evangelism.”¹

I suppose the controversial question when

we consider evangelism and spiritual warfare is ‘Can anything be done to lessen the aggravation of the fight?’ There are those who would argue yes and have proposed all manner of methodologies for routing the troops of Satan including diagnosing the particular demons of a region or institution and personally confronting them in prayer.

Leanne Payne raised disquiet about some of the dubious extra biblical practices of expelling demons from a region to liberate the task of evangelism. She comments concerning one group of spiritual warriors “they had drawn the attention of dark powers toward the body of Christ in that place by praying to them and through pride-fully seeing themselves as ‘binding’ them... the way they pray assures that the people they are involved with will have dramatic and terrible confrontations with evil powers and that some of them will come under serious demonic deception. This is dangerous error.”²

Recent years have seen some proponents of a particular brand of spiritual warfare amend their theology and thus their methodology on the subject. 1999 saw John Paul Jackson publish ‘Needless Casualties of War’ in which he declares “I have adopted a more conservative perspective on spiritual warfare”. The essence of the book is explained in the preface “It is my belief that unless you understand the parameters of our delegated authority and some practical guidelines on how to properly engage in spiritual warfare there is a strong possibility that you could become an unfortunate victim of war”³

So what should our response be? Some have suggested that to ignore the dimension of spiritual warfare is to do nothing. It is my

conviction that the question ‘evangelism and spiritual warfare?’ misses the point that evangelism is spiritual warfare – at least one important expression of it. In the words of Terry Virgo “Paul’s attacks on the demon-infested cities of his day seem very simple and uncomplicated. He preached the gospel of Christ, healed the sick and cast out demons when they manifested their presence... The whole operation was spiritual warfare”⁴

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians “the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor 10: 4-5).

So we go in his name and pray for protection, recognising that we are in a spiritual battle and we preach with boldness in the power of the spirit, knowing that the battle belongs to the Lord!

Greg Downes Tutor in Evangelism

1. John Wimber ‘The Dynamics of Spiritual Growth’ (Hodder & Stoughton 1990)
2. Leanne Payne ‘Listening Prayer’ (Baker book House 1994)
3. John Paul Jackson ‘Needless Casualties of War’ (Streams 1999)
4. Terry Virgo ‘No Well worn Paths’ (Kingsway 2001)



A Cosmic Battlefield?

The Warfare Theology of Gregory Boyd

One of the most substantial attempts to elucidate an evangelical-charismatic theology of spiritual warfare has come, in recent years, from Greg Boyd, Theology Professor at Bethel College, Minnesota and pastor of Woodland Hills Church. But it is controversial.

His two most important books on the subject are: *God At War: the Bible and Spiritual Conflict* and *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (both American IVP, 1997 and 2001).

Boyd argues that spiritual warfare motifs pervade the entire language of both the Old and New Testaments; indeed, acceptance of the reality of “war in heaven” (Rev.12:7) is the only way to make sense of it. God is the “king above all gods” (Ps.95:3); he and his people are in conflict with “the heads of Leviathan” (Ps.74:14). The crucifixion itself is a triumph over the “powers and authorities” (Col. 2:15). In this, the biblical outlook is at one with virtually all pre-modern worldviews. As he says (GaW, 11) “It is we modern Westerners who are the oddballs for thinking that the only free agents who influence other people and things are humans”.

After discussing with Boyd and listening to his talks, I found it hard not to agree with him that, when reading the Bible, we tend simply to ‘screen out’ massive amounts of biblical language: references to the gods of the nations, or to heavenly beings, or to cosmic monsters, are simply metaphorical, or allusions to beliefs of pagans in the cultures that surrounded Israel. Or whatever. But by using such a strong rationalistic filter on our reading of Scripture, we jettison also the reality of spiritual conflict between God and His enemies (both spiritual and earthly) to which such allusions invariably refer. In a word, we emasculate the message of

Scripture by our mental rejection of such fundamental elements in the worldview of the biblical writers. The biblical language is left threadbare, as so much metaphorical verbiage overlaying a spare, rationalistically defined reality.

There are several important objections to Boyd’s view. In the first place, such a strong emphasis upon ‘spirit’ and spiritual realities has often had the effect of sidelining ethical and doctrinal considerations as somehow... well, un-spiritual. This may indeed be the effect among many who subscribe to popularised theories about ‘strategic level spiritual warfare’ etc., but Boyd himself is no anti-intellectual intellectual, and engages at length with a variety of heavyweight theological and philosophical thinkers, both past and present.

He is also careful to keep the issue of discipleship well to the fore. For him, it is never permissible to conclude that a ‘cosmic warfare’ theology minimises personal responsibility for sin. Boyd wishes to emphasise from the outset (GaW, 13) that “evil is a reality of the human heart and of human society” and that “no biblical author suggests that warfare prayers or exorcisms are cure-alls for all that is wrong in the world”.

The second objection that could be made is that the ‘warfare’ motif itself is offensive, or at least profoundly unhelpful to Christian evangelism and public relations, especially in the light of the historical experience of the Crusades and the present global ‘clash of civilisations’ in which Islam is heavily

implicated. Yet the New Testament is stuffed full of military metaphors, and the very life of Christians is described in such terms: “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” (2 Cor. 10:4) An argument for pacifism could even be built upon this basis! The abhorrence of military metaphors owes more to political correctnesses of various kinds than to biblicist – even pacifist-biblicist – concerns.

The third objection to Boyd’s view is a doctrinal one. Certain kinds of theology, often prominent within evangelicalism, like to picture God as the sole mover behind all events, making everything that happens happen: the devil is on a chain; nothing occurs outside of God’s providential ordering of all affairs. As a result, any ‘spiritual warfare’ spoken of in Scripture is more apparent than real, for its details as well as its end are preordained. “By contrast,” Boyd argues, “the warfare worldview is predicated on the assumption that divine goodness does not completely control or in any sense will evil; rather, good and evil are at war with one another” and so “God is not now exercising exhaustive, meticulous control over the world”. (GaW, 20) If He were, Boyd would argue, the latest natural disaster or tragic accident really would be God’s fault. But He’s not, and it isn’t.

Instead, our apparent freedom is real, and the apparent state of warfare between good and evil is real too. If God’s omnipotence ensures final victory, the battles along the way are nevertheless no mere charades. The call to discipleship, then, is a call to participation on the side of the (good) angels.

All of this, of course, will be like a red rag to a Calvinist bull. But then, I stated at the outset that this was controversial stuff. Though having no truck with details like ‘territorial spirits’, I nevertheless finds the broad contours of Boyd’s arguments persuasive. If we really are in a war-zone, then recognising the fact is an essential first step.

Meic Pearse BA Course Leader and Lecturer in Church History

When reading the Bible, we tend to ‘screen out’ massive amounts of biblical language

Cruisin' for Demons

You can imagine the scene: scrambling into the pick-up truck on a Saturday night, squeezing ourselves into the seat around the gunrack. "Yee-ha, we're gonna get ourselves some demons tonight – cruise around till we find 'em and then let 'em have it. We'll teach 'em to mess with us and our women-folk."

So-called strategic level spiritual warfare as practised by some extremists is a Christian discipline for the video-game age. It was bound to be popular, for it embodies so much of the culture of our time. There is a fascination with the occult and with spiritual battles. Tolkien, Peretti, Tim LaHaye, JK Rowling and Buffy the Vampire Slayer all play to the popular desire to hear tales of ordinary people slogging it out against terrible supernatural evil.

But this is real: Satan and his minions are involved in a spiritual form of terrorism, and that makes get-up-and-go people want to declare war against somebody – give 'em a taste of their own medicine.

And what can be wrong with that – especially in the face of all the New Testament talk about armour and fighting the good fight and so on? Jesus himself, after all, clearly was in a spiritual battle, clearly waged war on demons wherever he found them. And are we not called to imitate him and to be transformed into his likeness? Well, perhaps not in this regard. Nor are we called to imitate him in choosing a band of disciples to follow each of us around. Nor are we called to imitate him in travelling to Jerusalem and attaining the cross, though there have been Christians, in another era, who did seek martyrdom for its own sake.

Yes, we are called to fight the good fight. But that's a picture about life – it's intended to illustrate the truth, not form a blueprint for further action. The Christian life is like a fight; it's also like a race: run the good race. I daresay in a different culture, Christians might have constructed ways of waging

spiritual competition rather than spiritual warfare, for the Scriptures are full of that kind of imagery as well: races not always to the swiftest, training your body, straining toward the finish line, and crowns that don't wither as rewards.

But the spiritual warfare mentality is more than just an over-emphasis of certain phrases and pictures in Scripture. As it is "waged" today against "territorial spirits", it involves mis-reading and bending Scripture to suit our own cultural tastes. And most dangerous of all, it involves a mis-placing of our focus. We should be focused on Christ, the Perfecter and Finisher of our faith, calling his name and practising his presence. Instead we find ourselves

We too easily become like the Ephesian "Sons of Sceva"

focusing our attention and energies on evil things, naming their names and practising their presence, even if only in order to banish it.

We too easily become like the Ephesian "Sons of Sceva" in Acts 18:13-16. They used the name of Jesus, yes, but their focus was casting out demons, not bringing Jesus to people. The description in 2 Peter 2:10-12 of the bold and arrogant who dare to confront spiritual beings that other angels fear is a powerful warning against the Sons of Sceva and their heirs, the modern spiritual rambos.

In the passages where we Christians are urged to don spiritual armour or be involved in a spiritual struggle (Ephesians 6:11-18, 1 Thess. 5; Romans 13:12-14), we are not called upon to seek out or vanquish even the lesser demons. Our goal is merely to stand firm, to resist the devil (1 Peter 5:8-10, James 4:7). The main confrontation is Jesus' fight. The deciding battle is one that he's already won for us. Our job is to stand firm in his victory, not head out with the boys on a Saturday night, or even early some morning, cruisin' the streets for demons.

Conrad Gempf Lecturer in New Testament

THEOLOGICIANS AT WAR?

There are literally hundreds of books written about spiritual warfare some of which are sensationalist and have very shaky theological foundations and others which are not. In highlighting the selection of books below we have tried to present a balanced flavour of the differing theological opinion which abound on the subject.

Spiritual Warfare,

C. Arnold, Marshall Pickering, 1997

A leading NT scholar on the 'powers' gives a balanced charismatic view.

The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective

K. Ferdinando, Paternoster, 1999

A discussion of the issues from a former LBC student and experienced missionary.

God at War:

the Bible and Spiritual Conflict

G A Boyd, IVP, 2000.

Much discussed and disputed, espouses an 'openness' view of God.

Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation?

C. Lowe, Monarch, 1998

An outstanding discussion from biblical and mission perspectives.

Spiritual Power and Missions

E. Rommen ed., W. Carey, 1995

Three different views explored, including Wagner's. Very stimulating discussion.

Confronting the Powers

C. Peter Wagner, Regal, 1996

The leading exponent of the Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare movement.

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