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Reformation
& Revival



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Demon Possession and the Christian:

A New Perspective

C. Fred Dickason

Wheaton: Crossway Books (1987).

355 pages, paperback, \$12.95.

I was disturbed as I read Dickason's book because I realized this book could damage a new or weak believer. My mind goes back to a fellow who by promoting this kind of teaching in our area severely disrupted a few churches, then landed in a mental hospital! It is unfortunate that Moody Press originally published this book, thereby promoting its teaching. Certainly Satan is that life-long foe who accuses, tempts and harasses believers externally, but this book goes beyond any such teaching.

It is Dickason's premise that believers can be "demonized," that is, invaded and inhabited by demons (pp. 37-38). And worst of all, his idea is that demons invade us because of our ancestors' sins, which he thinks accounts for 95 per cent of the cases he claims to have handled. In fact, he says ancestral sins are the "chief cause" of demonizing activity (p. 221).

Of course, all he says is extra-biblical. He admits as much: "Thus we cannot conclusively say that the Bible clearly presents evidence that believers can be demonized. Thus we are left to look for other types of evidence that may contribute to answering our question: can genuine believers be demonized?" (p. 127). The other evidence is what Dickason calls "clinical considerations." These considerations include demons speaking to him through the believers he has counseled as well as the testimonies and experiences that take place during the exorcisms. Case studies are given throughout, along with those from Unger, Ensign, Howell and others. His premise is established on the basis of experience and, by his

own admission, not from Scripture. That really is the bottom line.

There are a number of real problems with Dickason's premise and arguments. It would take a book-length treatment to handle all the questions and theological nuances, so I will address just a few.

First and foremost, I have a problem with any offer of "spiritual truth" that is extra-biblical. "We have come to the conclusion that neither the Bible itself nor any logical or theological extrapolation of biblical truth can finally solve the question" (p. 325). So how do we know? Because Dickason claims to have talked to demons and can verify it out of his experiences. The demons told him about ancestral demonic bondage, which they were keeping hidden from Christians to defeat them. How can we be sure demons tell the truth? Isn't Satan the father of lies? Wouldn't demons spawn diversions and confusion? Can we use the testimony of a demon or, what is more likely, a confused counselee to establish doctrine and practice? What makes Dickason so sure that the "demons" were honest with him?

Dickason makes the point that not all truth is in the Bible. Now granted, there are things in the world that are true but of which the Bible makes no mention. Dickason puts it this way: "After all, not all truth that can be known can be found in the Bible" (p. 155). In a qualified way we can agree. However, when it comes to the issue of spiritual truth, i.e., Salvation and Sanctification, all we need is in the Bible. Cars, telephone poles and the like are not mentioned in the Bible because one does not need to know about a telephone pole for Christian growth. However, when Jesus said, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17), He said what one needs for Sanctification and Christian growth is found in the Word. There is not even a hint in the New Testament of a believer being invaded or inhabited by demons, even though the Bible does speak of demons. Something concerning them, so cru-

cial to my growth, my stability and my Sanctification, would surely be there since my Sanctification depends upon that Word.

Consider also that Peter said, "His divine power has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3); connect that statement to the "precious and magnificent promises" in verse 4. All that I need for life and godliness (my Sanctification) is given in the promises of the Word of God. Sure there are things not in Scripture that are true, but Jesus and Peter assure us that when it comes to growth, godliness and Sanctification, all we need is found in the Bible. If truth of such importance has been left out of the Bible, the church has suffered the loss of this vital truth for over nineteen hundred years until Fred Dickason finally discovered it through "clinical consideration." He seems to indicate God used demons to give new revelation! There is a real problem with extra-biblical revelation, especially when it comes through counselees, which raises concern about the ground rules for Sanctification.

The second problem I have is Dickason's insistence that Salvation is only legal and proportional. This teaching is inconsistent with the historical, orthodox view that Sanctification flows out of and is assured because of Regeneration. To disconnect the two in such a radical fashion is to remove one's self far from the Reformation heritage. Even L.S. Chafer (who I am sure is read at Moody College) realizes this when he astutely observes:

The sanctifying work of God for the believer is progressive ... it is accomplished by the power of God through the Spirit and through the Word.... All believers are being sanctified by the power of God through the Word (*Systematic Theology*, 6:184-85).

True, we cooperate in the process as God works in us, but even if that cooperation is feeble and we invite God's loving

chastisement, we still do not find biblical threats of demon invasion. In Dickason's view I am as vulnerable to demons as I was before conversion. In fact, I may have carried the demons on into my Christian life from my pre-conversion days. In his novel and strictly legal view, salvation will get me to heaven, but it is really up to me in the meanwhile to keep the demons out: "He may be especially susceptible if he ignorantly assumes he is exempt from attack or that conversion eliminates ... or excludes invasions" (pp. 232-33).

Consider Colossians 1:13: "He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." In Dickason's view sin allows demons to come in, if they are not already there, left over from pre-conversion or ancestors' sins. If that is true, then only those who are sinless and perfect can be sure and safe; our position in Christ offers us very little. The fact is, nowhere does Scripture call for "deliverance" when we sin, but rather for repentance, confession and change. You cannot demonstrate Dickason's "deliverance ministry" for Christians anywhere in Scripture.

Does our position in Christ curtail the direct intrusion of demons into our lives? Does it all really depend on human agency? Does God working in me "to will and work for His good pleasure" provide internal fortification? Does the sealing of God's Holy Spirit offer any protection from invading spirits? Or is it just a legal thing? Christ is not only my righteousness and redemption but He is my Sanctification as well (1 Cor. 1:30). Salvation is legal and positional; no one would deny that, but it is much more. Christ's work in me makes me a new creature with a new Father, a new family, new motivation and internal dynamic, and equips me with an indwelling Comforter who is more powerful than demons. If I do not believe that, I slip into a practical dualism which teaches a near equality of God and Satan and always leads to other heresies. (For more on "Dualism" see Baker's *Dictionary of Theology*.) Satan is an external foe. He may harass and tempt the believer,

but God has set his limits. Dickason dismisses 2 Thessalonians 3:3 ("But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the Evil One") by saying, "We cannot take this as an all-inclusive promise for all Christians at all times" (p. 91). Why not? To do so would damage his view of Salvation as only legal and positional. I think it's a valuable promise for any Christian any time, and we must not allow Dickason to erode it.

The third problem I have is with the concept of ancestral demons (for more on this see October-December 1984 Newsletter, *Personal Freedom Outreach*, "Deliver us from Deliverance"). It seems to me that Dickason reads this issue into the Bible. He distorts Exodus 20:5 ("visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations") to mean, "visiting their iniquity with demons unto..." Demons are not mentioned in the verse or chapter; it is a massive interpretive leap to inject them. Certainly saner and simpler views are given by many trustworthy and godly commentators. In Exodus the Israelites anticipated going into a land of idols and household gods which were worshipped in the homes by extended families. Judgment on the household gods would bring calamity to children, grandchildren and great grandchildren in that home. Ungodly influence with all its social consequences was experienced in the extended family. Consider the following:

This passage was spoken in a covenantal context. When God's covenant people break covenant, the penalty of covenant breaking follows (Deuteronomy 28). Because three or four generations lived in the same household, the entire family would suffer. Employing Exodus 20:5 in isolation from its biblical, cultural and historical context, making it a pretext for a particular position, misleads God's people and does violence to the integrity of the Scriptures (*Bethany Christian Services Bulletin*, n.d.).

Dickason makes much of the fact that Jesus talked to and received information from demons. Knowing both who Jesus was and that He knew the answers anyway leads us to believe that He asked not because He needed to know, nor was He establishing a pattern, but because we need to know His power and authority over these malignant spirits. Because He has that power and control and now lives in us, we can feel safe. He demonstrated His power and Messiahship for us; now He serves as our High Priest and Living Head, assuring us we are safe in Him.

To see the extremes (verging almost on a lunatic fringe) to which this teaching takes us, read *Pigs in the Parlor* by Frank Hammond. This author has uncovered a “stink demon” that smells like cooked cabbage and sees, as the evidence for this, expulsion of mucous and vomit that his clients bring up. I am sure that Dickason would take exception to this, but how can he since Hammond has discovered this by “clinical considerations”?

In the interest of space I can mention only one other problem: The exorcisms of Dickason are so unlike the quick, total and complete deliverances in the New Testament. Dickason anticipates this objection and opts for a watered-down version of dealing with demons by asserting that we are not dealing with the miracle power of the apostles or the sign-gifts of the first century. But it is impossible to separate demon expulsion from supernatural gifts. Dickason proposes some kind of derivative power, something in a broad and general way that comes out of God's providence. That is why it takes hours, days, sometimes months for the demons to go; and, of course, some remain or come back! I am at a loss to see where the New Testament ever suggests a lame procedure or calls on us to engage in it. On page 192 we even meet a “she” demon. This sounds more like ethnic and rabbinical demonology than Christian teaching (see *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim, 2: 759-63).

How do we explain the phenomena Dickason has encountered? I don't know that we have to. There may be other ways to look at some of it. I am skeptical of hearing in this book of so many clients and demons phrasing everything in modern psychological jargon. There is so much of “self-image” and “self-acceptance” talk by them, among other things. These concepts are a fairly recent innovation in the psychiatric world (see Paul Brownback, *The Danger of Self-Love*, and Jay Adams, *The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, Self-Image*). For the roots of sexual obsession, a far more biblical view can be found in Earl Wilson's *Sexual Sanity*. His view squares with Scripture much more easily than blaming sexual obsession on demons. On the issue of compulsive habits, a safer, saner and more scriptural approach can be found in Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, pp. 171-215.

Are all of Dickason's clients Christians? He says so, but could Satan be deceiving him since that is what he does? From the case studies presented in the book it seems that Dickason spent a lot of time preparing and priming clients, explaining what was about to happen. How much was unknowingly or unwittingly staged or created by him?

I do not for a minute doubt Fred Dickason's sincerity or faith; but, you see, I have these problems!

G. Richard Fisher

Brick Town, New Jersey

(This review originally appeared in *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, and is reprinted with permission of the editor, David Powlison.)

Defeating Dark Angels

Charles H. Kraft

Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications (1992).

264 pages, paperback, \$8.99.

Charles Kraft is professor of Anthropology and Intercultural Communications at Fuller Theological Seminary. This is a book about demonized Christians. Some elements of it are sobering. Every person should take several of the leading assumptions with utter seriousness. Satan is a real being, previously angelic in his station and excellence, who has fallen and has been cast out of heaven because of his envy and pride. Satan, along with other previously angelic cohorts, has ranged himself against the purposes of God and the people of God. Some arena of power has been granted Satan for the present time ("the prince of the power of the air"), and he is active in that arena until cast into the bottomless pit forever. Scripture warns Christians that Satan walks around as a roaring lion on the prey, and that he has fiery darts which we must quench.

Given the sobriety of the subject, one must be disappointed in what Kraft has written, not that he hasn't spent a good bit of time thinking about it. Based on his own experience and that of others, Kraft has become involved in ministry of kicking demons out of Christians. Scores of stories about his experiences in those deliverance sessions form the substance of this book, and "prove" as well as illustrate his assertions.

Two serious flaws compromise his underlying thesis. One, he abandons the principle of *sola scriptura* in formulating an elaborate theology of demons—their hierarchy, methods, powers, names, domains, and how various types are to be expelled. He contends that Scripture does not decide the question as to whether demons can live in Christians, and in fact affirms, "Scripture gives no support to the theory that demons cannot live in the regenerate." Ergo, Scripture no longer is our authority in this area. Instead, "Without a clear scriptural position, then we need to consult those with experience in dealing with the problem under consideration" (p. 64). Strangely, the information by which he constructs his elaborate demonology comes from the demons themselves (he includes a chapter titled "Getting Information from De-

mons," 157-75). Kraft is aware of the deceitfulness of demons but gives guidelines as to how their information can be verified. Sometimes "words of knowledge" help (p. 166). We should not be surprised that one who believes in continuing revelation is now building a theology on demonic revelation.

The second weakness of Kraft's thesis concerns his Soteriology. He discusses it precious little in this book, and then only with jargon. The assumptions of decisional Regeneration and free will dominate his (mis)understanding. He mentions several times that demons do not like talk about the blood of Christ and the empty tomb (because by these their final defeat is sure), but he gives no extended reflection on their meaning for the Christian. His subject calls for serious interaction with the doctrines of Christ's completed work, Regeneration and assurance (at least); but Kraft seems uninterested. He only laments that some demonized Christians lack assurance because someone taught them that a Christian can't be demonized. He tells stories of Christians who believed on ostensibly biblical grounds that a Christian cannot be demonized, who changed their minds through observation of demonization in their families (pp. 61-67; see esp. p. 66).

In addition to the fundamental flaws, the aura of mountebankism permeating his anecdotal approach and bizarre treatments gives the book a supermarket tabloid appeal that far outstrips any biblical profit it might contain. His guided tour of self-esteem in which the person visualizes Jesus putting the sperm and egg together all the way to the journey out the birth canal at which time the person holds him/herself (pp. 151-53), his unfortunate vocabulary of encouraging persons to "forgive God" (p. 95), his breaking of intergenerational spirits (pp. 188-89), his consistent reports of visions of Jesus after exorcisms, his encouraging the use of Christian talismans ("anointing oil [empowered by God through blessing it] ... making the sign the cross ... having the person drink water that has been blessed ... use blessed salt giving a

few grains to the person every hour" [p. 231]), his arrogant language toward the demons, plus many other curiosities make the book a model of practical confusion and theological chaos.

The seriousness of this issue does not permit a flippant dismissal simply because it easily gives rise to the bizarre assertions and activities of Kraft. Steadier minds have discussed this subject with a more imposing cache of biblical and theological weapons than this book displays. Among those is William Gurnall in his classic *The Christian in Complete Armour*. While Scripture assures us that "He who was born of God" keeps the Christian so that "the Evil One does not touch him," we also are admonished to "give no place to the Devil." If Kraft reminds us of the necessity of that last admonition, there are more edifying ways to learn the same lesson than by reading his book.

Tom Nettles
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Breaking Strongholds: How Spiritual Warfare Sets Captives Free

Tom White
Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications (1993).
223 pages, paperback, \$8.99.

Breaking Strongholds is yet another in a fairly new genre of Christian books designed to instruct believers in the techniques necessary for breaking Satan's hold on our age. Like so many others, it employs the "argument from anecdote" method to prove a host of strong assertions regarding the power available to all Christians to bind Satan and plunder his realm. Ironically, this book on spiritual power itself lacks the power of persuasion due to the absence of clear biblical thinking and

textual support. Unfortunately, this absence will not hinder the sale of the book, for those inclined to accept the author's position will find his experiences ample proof of his conclusions. This is the greatest danger of this work and others like it: It promotes conviction and practice based on something other than inspired Scripture.

The book suffers greatly from a lack of focus. There is considerable overlap among the chapters, and the scope of topics covered is entirely too large (this book could be considered a treatise on prayer, Sanctification, dealing with sin, revelation, evangelism, church life, etc.). Despite this, or perhaps because of it, there are several devotional thoughts scattered throughout which have value. The author correctly stresses the value of prayer, and the necessity of weaving personal prayer into every part of the fabric of life. Those who relegate prayer to official moments only could learn from White on this point. His stress on the priority of personal holiness is also refreshing, as is his zeal for the salvation of souls, though in this last point his theological understanding of the sovereignty of God in salvation is woeful.

White's primary point is that the power of God in both the salvation of sinners, and the Sanctification of believers is held at bay by strongholds. These strongholds, defined without reference to any biblical text as "entrenched patterns of thought, ideologies, values, or behaviors which are contrary to biblical truth, and which emanate from human nature," are the mechanisms through which Satan and his hordes carry out their work. Until they are broken down, the power of God will not accomplish its end. Fortunately, these strongholds can be smashed through offensive and relentless prayer offered at the right time, in the right way, by believers whose spiritual sensitivities have been carefully sharpened so as to discern the presence of demonic forces.

Breaking Strongholds abounds with theological errors. To address them all would take more than the allotted space and

would, in the long run, merely be addressing the fruit of a diseased tree. At the root lies a theological cancer. Despite some isolated and conspicuously placed statements to the contrary, this book is decidedly man-centered. White's theology places a sovereign God third in line: first the sinner, then the believer, then the Lord. God saves souls only after the believer smashes the demonic strongholds, and the sinner chooses to take advantage of the new-found freedom and comes to Christ. This book is fundamentally a manual intended to motivate and instruct believers to get busy smashing strongholds so that God can redeem sinners. Statements like this abound: "I believe the following suggestions for practicing redemptive prayer will revolutionize your thinking and enable you to *reap a greater harvest*." Despite all his zeal for the kingdom and his championing the power of the Spirit to aid believers in overcoming satanic opposition, White's failure to glory in the sovereignty of God in Salvation undermines his effort.

Finally, White fails to think historically. He presents his material as though the subject has never been treated before. Had he taken the time to research the themes of spiritual opposition to saving grace, and the victorious power of saving grace, he would have found that the problems he presents have been clearly defined numerous times in the past. What he defines as strongholds has long been understood as human depravity, the ruinous effects of sin on every member of the human race. This is not new! And the fact of satanic opposition to the grace of God is a frequent topic of the New Testament (2 Cor. 4:3-6; 1 Peter 5:8-9). But most important, White has failed to recognize that while God may choose to work through obedient, praying believers, He will not share His glory with another, nor will His power be withstood. We must never forget that it is not technique which makes the salvation of souls possible; it is wholly and only the sovereign grace of God.

While *Breaking Strongholds* contains some encouraging devotional thoughts, especially in the area of prayer, it is not a reliable study on the role of believers in the salvation of souls, nor on the theme of satanic oppression.

David W. Hegg
Corona, California

Satan Cast Out: A Study in Biblical Demonology

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Frederick S. Leahy
Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust (1975).
181 pages, paper, \$7.95.

A crowd packed the sanctuary of the conservative and sizable evangelical church in Atlanta that Thursday evening in June 1991. Hundreds had gathered to hear Frank Peretti, at that time the hottest-selling author in American Christendom, speak to benefit a local Christian ministry to the homeless. Probably the overwhelming majority of the audience had read Peretti's two recently published, best-selling works of fiction concerning spiritual warfare, *Piercing the Darkness* and *This Present Darkness*. One could sense palpably the anticipation as the audience waited for Mr. Peretti to appear. Would he outline some heretofore unknown strategy in spiritual warfare? Would he disclose some remarkable new insight concerning demonology?

Peretti in one sense sorely disappointed the audience that evening. He did not dwell on some exciting new revelation concerning spiritual warfare. Instead he read Genesis 3. He spoke compellingly of the fall and the advent of the sin nature. He described the battle Christians wage with temptation, not only the sort generated by Satan and the world, but the sort that dwells in our hearts because we are born with fallen natures. Peretti spoke eloquently and appropriately of that

aspect of Sanctification our Puritan fathers would call the “mortification of the flesh.”

Peretti’s focus on Scripture was a pleasant surprise that evening. American evangelicals need to hear in such straightforward terms the teaching of God’s Word concerning temptation, sin, the work of the Devil and Sanctification. By even taking to account the fact that *Piercing the Darkness* and *This Present Darkness* are works of fiction, one still wishes Peretti had been as carefully biblical in writing on spiritual warfare as he had been in speaking before his Atlanta audience about temptation and sin.

Best-selling books like *Piercing the Darkness* and *This Present Darkness* notwithstanding, there is an excellent resource available to pastors and teachers which does deal directly with the biblical teaching on spiritual warfare. In *Satan Cast Out* Frank Leahy, writing under commission from the Foreign Mission Board of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, approaches in a systematic way the scriptural teaching concerning demons and their work. He analyzes carefully the biblical evidence concerning the nature of good and bad angels, the role of our chief adversary the Devil, and the witness to demonic activity of the Old and New Testaments. In a particularly important chapter Leahy investigates the Gospels’ witness to Christ’s dealing with demons. He makes the insightful observation that Christ without exception practiced exorcism only in the context of his ministry of the Gospel (p. 105).

The author debunks various modern liberal theories which seek to undermine the clear Gospel witness to Jesus’ encounters with demons. Our Lord’s works of exorcism were not mere instances of therapy-induced healing. Leahy shows, instead, that Christ cast out real demons who were doing real harm to real people. Demons had actually seized control, at least in part, of the physical and mental faculties of these wretched souls. Moreover, Jesus seems to have encountered

more of this sort of demon possession in His earthly ministry, Leahy suggests, not so much because more demonic activity existed at the time in a quantitative sense but simply because Christ’s light was so great that He “exposed the activity of sinister forces preferring the cover of darkness” (p. 142).

Satan Cast Out also contains a valuable chapter detailing historical Christian views on and experiences of demon possession, with special emphasis on eyewitness accounts of possession recorded by foreign missionaries from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Leahy concluded this smaller tome with his own biblically based suggestions of how the modern evangelical church might confront demon possession. He warns against exorcism divorced from the preaching of the Gospel and conversion, in light of Jesus’ warning about the return of demons to a heart into which the Holy Spirit has not come (Luke 11:24-26).

Satan Cast Out is particularly valuable to the evangelical church today because so few writers approach the topic of spiritual warfare from the clear perspective the Bible offers, rather than from a perspective influenced by merely anecdotal evidence or even the popular media. Leahy has been constantly biblical at every turn, and though the reader may not agree with all of his conclusions, he will appreciate the scholarship and concern for careful exegesis of applicable texts. For example, this writer disagrees with Leahy’s conclusion that John 12:32; Hebrews 2:14; Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4 teach “[t]he binding of Satan does not belong to the ‘not yet’ of eschatology” (p. 25). Even so, one must concede that Leahy has made his case carefully, based on sound exegesis of the relevant texts.

Leahy wrote *Satan Cast Out* in 1975, so the book does not engage some issues of demonology which have cropped up in the last two decades, both in evangelical circles and the secular media. For example, some commentators, especially Pentecostals, now argue that 1 Corinthians 12:10 identifies a

specific spiritual gift of exorcism, and it would be helpful to know Leahy's exegesis of this verse.¹ In addition, the pastor in 1994 would also find practically helpful suggestions on dealing with the influence of movies, television programs and books which misrepresent or even promote the demonic.

Evangelicals often tend to fall into one of two traps concerning demonic activity. On the one hand even some conservatives scoff at the reality of demon possession or dismiss it practically as no real threat, given the psychological insights we have discovered.² Other believers become so obsessed with the demonic that they begin to excuse their own evil desires by attributing those desires externally to the temptation of the devil. Just as it is dangerous either to become obsessed with snakes or ignore them altogether, so Satan is victorious when he convinces the Christian that he does not exist or that he is behind every bush.

Leahy in *Satan Cast Out* avoids both these pitfalls. He presents the evangelical with a well-balanced biblical framework within which the reader can develop a solid theology of demons and demon possession. If the sword of the Spirit is indeed the key offensive weapon in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:17; Matt. 4:1-11), then *Satan Cast Out* acts as a sort of sword sharpener, helping the evangelical to use God's Word better as he daily battles the wiles of his great adversary.³

¹ Cf. Gordon Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 595, n.69—citing authors who believe 1 Corinthians 12:10 describes a gift of exorcism, and Charles Hodge, *1 & 2 Corinthians* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 247. 1 Corinthians 12:10 describes a gift for performance of a wide variety of miracles.

² Some Christian counselors and psychiatrists acknowledge the theoretical possibility of demon possession but then never seem to encounter an actual case. For example, one

well-known team of Christian psychiatrists writes that "we have not observed an actual case of this rare occurrence [i.e., demon possession] in our psychiatric practice" (Frank Minirith and Paul Meier, *Ask the Doctors* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991), 201).

³ The reader should be aware that another resource which takes a biblical approach to spiritual warfare is *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, written in 1652 by the English Puritan John Brooks. This work, like *Satan Cast Out*, is available from Banner of Truth Trust.

Steven Farish

Libertyville, Illinois

Deep Wounds, Deep Healing

Charles H. Kraft

Ann Arbor, Michigan, Servant Publications.

295 pages, paperback, \$8.99.

Any true Christian, biblically minded and spiritually alive, recognizes that the battle he faces is not merely against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, powers, and spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. In combination with the damage done by sin and the consequences that remain, Christians have attempted to develop a theology of spiritual warfare that addresses both the presence of sin and the influence of Satan in an individual's life. Recent years have seen a number of books addressed to these aspects of the Christian's struggle.

The present volume is among that genre. *Deep Wounds* seeks to explicate the connection between spiritual warfare and inner healing. Accordingly, it seeks to develop a theology of grace in dealing with the impact of sin, both positionally with respect to our Justification, and progressively with regard to our Sanctification. As the focus of the book is on how

that grace helps man in overcoming the presence and power of sin in his life, a biblical Anthropology (doctrine of man) is also formulated. These two areas are then integrated with a theology of the demonic. The goal intended is a spiritual tonic that will give the believer victory over the presence of sin, and spiritual savvy to deal with the ever-present assault of Satan who would keep us in bondage to our past and not allow us the joy of our deliverance in Christ.

Kraft attempts to steer a middle course between the anti- and pro-psychology movements by placing emphasis on both the power of God and the use of psychological technique to bring about inner, deep-level healing (defined as "a ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit aimed at bringing healing to the whole person" [p. 37]). Surface problems are also indicative of something deeper; diagnostic treatment for these problems is to be done in conscious dependence on God for the needed spiritual wisdom to ascertain the real source and hidden roots of emotional disturbance and spiritual inability. Contributing factors include people's attempt to bury or ignore past pain, wrong views of the character of God and the ways He deals with us, an unwillingness to forgive when one has been wronged, an inadequate understanding of the new freedom from guilt and shame that we have positionally in Christ, a refusal to forgive oneself or God (*sic!*) for the choices we've each made, and demonization (i.e., the presence [residentially!] and influence [emotionally] demons have in, on, and through believers!).

Kraft rightfully distinguishes between sinners and those who have been sinned against, i.e., victims who may wrestle with the impact of the evil done against them during their lifetime. At this point, Kraft cites a number of Scriptures dealing with God's interest in bringing healing to the hurting, and deliverance to the captive. He has helpful insights dealing with the ways in which Satan attacks our self-image, reinforcing bad memories so as to spiritually debilitate ourselves, and

weakening our physical condition to leave us lying in the Slough of Despond.

This matter of bad memories is given a great deal of attention throughout the book. Choices for sin, or a wrong response when sinned against, often prove the avenue for demonic accessibility into one's spirit, in turn giving or gaining ground for the "Enemy's right to the person" (p.114). Whether it's sin we've done, or the way we've reacted to events that can't be undone, Kraft urges the importance of taking responsibility for our behavior, encouraged by how we may now face our past with Jesus at our side. By allowing Him to show us the ways He loved us even while we were sinning or being victimized, we will learn how his power can break the chains which hold us in bondage to our memories of the past. Through confession and repentance, there will be spiritual healing that will help to restore spiritual wholeness so that life might be lived in the fullness of the Spirit.

While there is useful material interwoven throughout portions of this book, there is much with which we must disagree. Some is controversial, some merely provocative, the rest biblically inaccurate and therefore wrong. Like a term paper a former professor once had to grade, he said he found it difficult to know where to start as there was so much to criticize!

Readers of this journal will immediately identify an inadequate understanding of the character of God and purposes of grace. For all the discussion about God's interests in healing the effects and consequences of sin and the power of God to do this, one is troubled at times both by what is said as much as by what is left unsaid. While it is true that unbelief may be a barrier to block the presence of God in a person's life, can we uncritically accept the statement that "human free will is so precious to our Lord that He will not let the efficacy of the cross be applied to us without our consent" (p. 18)? Or, similarly, "as a general rule we can assume that not even God

will work against people's will" (p.187)? Grace is greater than an unregenerate sinner's will. It is, after all, the Lord who makes people willing in the day of His power.

By what appears to be an overemphasis on the love of God and the inherent ability of man to sovereignly determine his own destiny, Kraft argues that the thrust of Christ's ministry was more on pity than punishment, of helping people who had stumbled and been overpowered than condemning those who had rebelled. Jesus, we are told, didn't condemn or blame those ill or demonized. But is this the whole story? While we would not deny the intent of His redemptive work while on earth in not coming to judge the world *at the time* in the final sense of that great Day when we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, surely He spoke against both perpetrators of sin as well as compassionately to those who were victims of another's sin and who were yet equally hell-deserving themselves!

It seems that what Kraft affirms in one place he takes back at another. Other examples of this theological "doubt speak" occur where we are told that although we know the counselee needs to make a decision to forgive another's sins, it is not always advisable early on to tell them unforgiveness is a sin itself. This would only compound their guilt or create further resistance in dealing with their problems.

Instead, we see that the approach Scripture takes is to confront people with the reality of their need, no matter how painful. While we are to speak a word in season, this in no way detracts from the responsibility to speak the truth in love, even if it comes by way of reproof or rebuke as necessary, even in the *beginning stages* of spiritual help.

When addressing the subject of a counselee's anger toward God for some perceived injustice, Kraft urges us to be willing to "forgive" Him (p.18) for allowing it to happen, a perceived "right" God supposedly allows us (cf. p. 158). While it is true that individuals and nations mentioned in Scripture did ques-

tion the activity of God (the problem of theodicy) in relation to pain and suffering, at no point does Scripture use, warrant, or justify such language or concept as this. But that's to say not all that passes as theology originates with Scripture.

More provocative is the use of visualization, or faith-picturing, to facilitate healing. This is understood as a God-given ability (p. 118) to employ the creativity of one's mental faculties to use mental pictures of our past life stages (any month or year of your development) to discover the sources from which varying emotional problems had their beginnings. Kraft encourages a back-to-the-womb exercise, whereby you begin to remember all the events and experiences of your post-conception life. This may, as it usually does, lead to the discovery of the "inner-child" within you, a subpersonality of sorts, often within a wounded spirit. By discovering these parts of our true inner self, we'll be able to speak to them about their hurts and fears. Ultimately, our dysfunctional self will be reintegrated into our whole person. Fragmentation and personality disorder will be healed, and we will enjoy wholeness. This "wholeness" finds a good portion of its integrative core in recovery of the "Biblical" mandate to love ourselves. By doing this, we are assured, our subpersonalities will be fused, so that Me as Me will not be fractured by other me's in opposition to the Me we are and should be.

Clearly, Kraft has, by his own admission, incorporated aspects of transactional analysis into his technique for recovery of spiritual wholeness. One questions the legitimacy of such recovered memories of prenatal experience, speaking to the eight-year-old counselee, etc. While we all have memories of different stages and hurts, we recognize the biblical mandate to speak to each according to his age, not according to some "perceived" child within. Scripture places emphasis upon behavioral practice commensurate with our age, i.e., speaking as a man, acting as a man, putting away childish things (perceived "subpersonalities"?). Nowhere in Scripture

do we find warrant for a reason to pursue the approach Kraft advocates; rather, we find just the opposite emphasis.

Even more disturbing is Kraft's teaching that demons can inhabit a Christian's spirit (p. 259). Whether they were there before the person was regenerated, or came after he believed, Kraft teaches that a true Christian indwelt by the Holy Spirit can just as truly be indwelt by unholy spirits. These demons come through family inheritance or curse, or often through the individual's attachment to some specific sin. Demons thus have a "legal right" to attach themselves to the individual or family members. This is referred to as "demonization." To deny that Christians can have demons is to believe a mistaken myth not taught in Scripture.

Unfortunately, for this point, as well as several others we've highlighted, Kraft has little theological exposition to support his position. Again, the emphasis on Scripture is on the complete deliverance from the presence of demons within (Kraft suggests they may leave our spirit [heart] but attach themselves to other parts such as our mind, body, emotions or will). The freedom Christ effects delivers not only from possession, but also any supposed "legal right" these spirits claim for themselves (cf. Rom. 8). While legal right terminology has gained acceptance through the writings of Kraft, Bubeck, and others, their teaching is not true to the clear statements of Scripture regarding what we've been given through Christ. Kraft presents opinion as fact, and his experience as truth; the purposes of the book would have been better served with careful study of the relevant biblical data.

As written, *Deep Wounds* is clearly not "a complete guide to inner healing." It incorporates wholesale various secular psychological theories and technique without subjecting them to the judgment of Scripture. Select Scriptures are brought in to support Kraft's theories and experience. A careful reading of the book will expose the superficial treatment of all the relevant biblical data as well as the shallowness of the "pop"

theology being preferred. It's perhaps more useful as a statement of what we don't believe rather than what we do!

One thinks I feel the inner child within arising to ask my adult forbears where I might find again the faith once delivered to all the saints.

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A Holy Rebellion

Thomas Ice and Robert Dean, Jr.

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers (1990).

195 pages, paper, \$7.95.

Should Christians rebuke the Devil? Can Christians be demon-possessed? Can spirits of lust, murder, and anger cause Christians to sin? These are among the questions which Thomas Ice and Robert Dean, Jr., seek to answer in their book, *A Holy Rebellion*, a compact, popularly written summary of the biblical teaching concerning the nature of the believer's spiritual warfare. A central goal of the authors is to expose and biblically critique various contemporary errant teachings and approaches toward demon activity—a goal which they very effectively achieve.

In early chapters the authors address such topics as Satan, worldliness and the flesh. The writers attempt to demonstrate that true spiritual warfare for the believer finds its focus primarily on the world and the flesh, not on a preoccupation with demons. This is followed by a treatment of our Lord's encounters with the Devil and demonic activity (and the uniqueness of His ministry in this regard), and the concepts of "binding" and "loosing" in their biblical context. A chapter is devoted to the question of demon possession and the nature and extent of demonic influence

in the lives of God's people. The author argues that since Christians cannot be demon-possessed, they do not need to be "delivered" from the demonic. Thus modern deliverance ministries whose constant aim and almost sole purpose are the deliverance of Christians from various demons are not only useless, but entirely misleading. Indeed, the authors argue that such preoccupation with the demonic, in fact, plays right into the hands of the enemy, diverting the people of God from their real warfare, promising deliverances from sins which finally prove empty and fruitless, and fostering irresponsibility where believers should instead be taking responsibility for dealing with their own sins.

Subsequent chapters give an overview of true spiritual resistance—the use of the whole armor and weaponry of God, the primacy of prayer, and the place and necessity of suffering and discipline in the Christian life.

An underlying thesis of the book is that God has called believers to what is essentially a defensive strategy for spiritual warfare. God's people are to "stand firm" rather than to mount any offensive attack. It is along these lines that the authors' eschatological position comes through very clearly. Victory over Satan then comes in two phases: At the cross victory was secured, but will not be substantially realized until the Second Coming. Although the individual believer's Sanctification in time is progressive, the prospects for the church in history are regressive, ending in apostasy (so much for the new covenant glories, Romans 11, and reformation and revival). In other words, if you are postmillennial, you will not enjoy this feature in the book.

Some final observations: There is no bibliography included nor is there any attempt to point the reader to other helpful or solid material on the subject of spiritual warfare. This is perhaps a deficiency. There is also one minor editorial "bug." Since the work was co-authored, in those places where the authors write in the first person, identifi-

cation of authorship is indicated by insertion of the author's first name in parentheses, e.g., "when I (Thomas)" or "I (Robert)". This seems unnecessary and clumsy and could easily have been edited out. Witness especially this awkward example: "My mother (Robert)."

Those who have already read Lloyd-Jones and Gurnall on spiritual warfare will not find this book profitable reading. Nonetheless, since the book is more popularly written, it has value primarily for the popular reader, and offers a fine service in this regard.

Bruce Hollister

Joliet, Illinois

Whoever brings an affliction, it is God that sends it.

Thomas Watson

There is no cross or misery that befalls the church of God or any of His children, but it is related to God.

Samuel Rutherford

The devil, that great peripatetic.

John Trapp

Satan has three titles given in the Scriptures, setting forth his malignity against the church of God; a dragon, to note his malice; a serpent, to note his subtlety; and a lion, to note his strength.

Edward Reynolds

Satan is God's ape.

Stephen Charnock

The devil's war is better than the devil's peace. Suspect dumb holiness. When the dog is kept out of doors he howls to be let in again.

Samuel Rutherford

Satan doth not, like God, warn before he strikes.

Vavasor Powell

Our corrupted hearts are the factories of the devil, which may be at work without his presence; for when that circumventing spirit has drawn malice, envy, and all unrighteousness unto well-rooted habits in his disciples, iniquity then goes upon its own legs; and if the gates of hell were shut up for a time, vice would still be fertile and produce the fruits of hell. Thus, when God forsakes us, Satan also leaves us; for such offenders he looks upon as sure and sealed up, and his temptation then needless unto them.

Sir Thomas Browne

God sets the devil to catch himself.

William Gurnall

We are tempted both by adversity and by prosperity.

John Calvin

As long as we are not tempted, we have a strong faith; but if any temptation comes our way, we soon become aware of what kind of faith we have.

Martin Luther

For the Christian this world is an arena, not an armchair.

John Blanchard

I cannot govern and sustain myself for a solitary hour. Therefore, I will pray God for His Holy Spirit that through Him He may govern and guide me aright and either protect and guide me against trials and temptations or graciously assist me and not permit me to fall.... We have the bad habit of becoming wanton when we are well fed, as do cattle.... Then it easily happens that a man walks into the snare of the devil before he is aware of it. Therefore these three things should be conjoined; that you fear God, that you watch and are sober, and that you pray without ceasing.

Martin Luther

Unless we are daily sharpened by various temptations, we immediately gather rust and other evils.

John Calvin

It is impossible to be a true soldier of Jesus Christ and not fight.

J. Gresham Machen

There can never be peace in the bosom of a believer. There is peace with God, but a constant war with sin.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground.

Warren W. Wiersbe