

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL WARFARE

FOUR VIEWS

Edited by James K. Beilby & Paul Rhodes Eddy


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Dedicated to Albert C. Bender and Judie O'Brien

Dedicated to Uncle Al, who is the definition of a “lifelong learner.”
Thank you for years of wise counsel and stimulating conversations.—Jim

Dedicated to my aunt, Judie O'Brien.
Your love and encouragement mean more to me than you'll ever know.
You are to me “the aunt than which none greater can be conceived”!
Thank you, Auntie.—Paul

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction, by James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy 1

1. The World Systems Model, by Walter Wink, edited by Gareth Higgins 47
 - Response by David Powlison 72
 - Response by Gregory Boyd 78
 - Response by C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood 84
2. The Classical Model, by David Powlison 89
 - Response by Walter Wink and Michael Hardin 112
 - Response by Gregory Boyd 117
 - Response by C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood 123
3. The Ground-Level Deliverance Model, by Gregory Boyd 129
 - Response by Walter Wink and Michael Hardin 158
 - Response by David Powlison 163
 - Response by C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood 169
4. The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model, by C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood 173
 - Response by Walter Wink and Michael Hardin 199
 - Response by David Powlison 204
 - Response by Gregory Boyd 210

Contributors 217

Index of Authors and Subjects 220

Index of Scripture 228

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Introduction

Introducing Spiritual Warfare: A Survey of Key Issues and Debates

Paul Rhodes Eddy and James K. Beilby

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:10–12 NRSV).

These words of the apostle Paul have echoed down the corridors of church history. For two millennia, they have inspired Christians toward courageous living, wise discernment, engaging prayer, and bold action. They have also served as one of the common sites of exegetical skirmish in a long-running intra-Christian dialogue and debate about the nature and extent, the biblical and theological moorings, and the rational, experiential, and practical implications of what has come to be known simply as “spiritual warfare.”

Some issues of interest and dialogue within the church have their day in the sun and then, for all practical purposes, disappear. Others, however, never really leave us. They may ebb and flow; they may have seasons of higher or lower profile; they may find themselves the subject of a larger or smaller number of books published in any given year. But in one way or another they remain on the church’s radar. Spiritual warfare appears to be one of these issues. From pulpit sermons to religious radio, from internet websites to conference halls to the quarterly catalogs of Christian publishers (both trade and academic; fiction and nonfiction), the topic of spiritual warfare never seems to grow old. This shouldn’t really surprise us. The perpetual interest within the church regarding

the things of spiritual warfare is mirrored by the seemingly insatiable fascination within our wider culture(s) for things mysterious and transcendent, things otherworldly—and things even a bit frightening. But for the church, it is not simply the *interest* in this topic that is perennial. When it comes to the issue of spiritual warfare, the other realities that can be counted on are *disagreement* and *debate*.

Unfortunately, within the contemporary church, much of the disagreement and debate surrounding this topic has been characterized by more heat than light. Often, there has been more double monologue than dialogue, more talking *at* each other or *past* each other than *with* each other. This book provides a forum in which several of the important perspectives and representative voices on spiritual warfare are able to meet and interact. This essay will assist in setting the stage for conversation by offering an introduction to three of the broad issues that inform the contemporary discussion on spiritual warfare: (1) the moral objection to “spiritual warfare” language; (2) the existence and nature of spirit beings, with a focus on Satan and the demonic; and (3) Christian perspectives on the theology and practice of spiritual warfare itself. Along the way, something of a bibliographical map to the terrain will be provided (primarily in the footnotes), which will offer further avenues to those wishing to go deeper on a particular topic. This essay will end by introducing our contributors to this volume, who together offer a host of rich insights on our topic and provide a model of what honest, respectful, challenging, and fruitful dialogue on spiritual warfare can look like.

The Moral Objection to “Spiritual Warfare” Language: A Response

The first issue to be considered involves an important question that threatens to close down the discussion of spiritual warfare before it even begins. It is a question that emerges just as often from outside the church as within. It is the question of whether encouraging Christians to think about and engage in “spiritual warfare” against “evil forces” at work in the world does more harm than good. Simply put, doesn’t the whole idea of “spiritual warfare” ultimately foster things like self-righteousness, intolerance, and even violence? Doesn’t “spiritual warfare” language encourage people to naively imagine that everything and everyone in the world falls into one of two simplistic categories of “good” and “evil,” where “good” is always linked to “us,” and “evil” is always associated with “them”? Hasn’t this sort of thinking and talking led to an endless stream of arrogance, judgmentalism, and suspicion—not to mention inquisitions, holy wars, witch burnings, and genocide? This is an important question, and it comes in different forms from various quarters.

For a relative few, the problem is to be found in appealing to the very idea of “evil” itself. They argue that it would be better if we stopped using this four-letter word, since it encourages us to believe in mythological monsters that do not exist (e.g., Satan) and/or to demonize certain people by categorizing them as “inhuman.”¹ Taking a cue from the postmodern turn inspired by the intuitions of Friedrich Nietzsche, some see the very ideas of “good” and “evil” as “archaic categories” that simply mask bids for power to define and dominate others.² For most people, however, this is a position that is difficult to take seriously, let alone to hold to consistently. Even for the average postmodern materialist/atheist, recent horrors of the last hundred years alone—including two world wars, the Nazi holocaust, the human sex-trafficking industry, and other systems of exploitation and oppression—are usually enough to convince them that “evil” is a fact of human existence.³

And so, for most, the concern over the use of spiritual warfare language is due not to evil’s nonreality but to its all-too-real presence in our world. Not surprisingly, this concern seems to have grown over the last decade. It reflects the growth of a wider concern for any and all forms of religiously motivated hate and violence that has taken place under the shadow of the 9/11 tragedy.⁴ Nahi Alon and Haim Omer have recently argued for an inevitable link between use of the concept/language of the “demonic” and a host of dangerous relational attitudes and practices. They write:

The *demonic view* is a way of experiencing an evolving attitude that begins with doubt, thrives with suspicion, ends with certainty, and aims at decisive militant action. When it seeps into a relationship, a highly negative view of the

1. Reasoning thus, Phillip Cole concludes that “we should abandon the idea of evil.” *The Myth of Evil: Demonizing the Enemy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 23. For further discussion, see David Pocock, “Unruly Evil,” in *The Anthropology of Evil*, ed. David Parkin (New York: Blackwell, 1985), 42–56.

2. Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 56. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago: Gateway/Regnery, 1955).

3. A point argued by the well-known Marxist/atheist Terry Eagleton in his recent book *On Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

4. For a representative sampling from among the many publications on religion and violence over the last decade, see Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 2005); J. Harold Ellens, ed. *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 4 vols. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007); R. Joseph Hoffmann, ed., *The Just War and Jihad: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2006); Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); James K. Wellmann Jr., ed., *Belief and Bloodshed: Religion and Violence across Time and Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Jeremy Young, *The Violence of God and the War on Terror* (New York: Seabury, 2008).

other evolves, which in turn may lead to symmetrical counter accusations. Thus a vicious cycle arises in which both sides become more and more entrenched in their negative positions.⁵

The wider concern regarding religiously motivated violence has become a common plank among proponents of the “new atheism,” who argue for an inherent relationship between religion, intolerance, and violence.⁶ But in the post-9/11 world, it is usually not just “religion” in general that falls under suspicion—more particularly it is the three monotheistic, “Abrahamic” faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that are regularly charged with inciting such evils. With regard to Christianity in particular, arguments include monotheism’s inherent intolerance and oppression; the long history of the church’s involvement with hatred, bloodshed, and warfare; and the presence of divinely sanctioned violence throughout the Bible itself, in both the Old and New Testaments.⁷

This is not the place to offer a full-scale response to these charges, of course, but it is important to note that each line of argument here has been thoughtfully considered and convincingly answered by scholars who, although equally concerned about the misuse of religion (or Christianity in particular) to justify intolerance and violence, see the evidence quite differently.⁸ For instance, a

5. Nahi Alon and Haim Omer, *The Psychology of Demonization: Promoting Acceptance and Reducing Conflict* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2006), 1 (emphasis in original).

6. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2005); Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007). Defenders of the new atheism, however, conveniently ignore the fact that all worldviews, including atheism, have sought to justify evil and oppressive violence. The atheist writer David Steele has reminded his fellow atheists: the “history of the past one hundred years shows us that atheistic ideologies can sanctify more and bigger atrocities than Christianity or Islam ever did.” *Atheism Explained: From Folly to Philosophy* (Chicago/LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 2008), xi.

7. E.g., regarding the claim of inherent intolerance within monotheism: Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism*, trans. Robert Savage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Carol Delaney, *Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). E.g., regarding intolerance and violence through church history: Toby Green, *Inquisition: The Reign of Fear* (New York: Dunne, 2009); M. Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics and the Modern West* (New York: Vintage, 2008). E.g., regarding the violence of the Bible: John Barton, “The Dark Side of God in the Old Testament,” in *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament*, ed. K. J. Dell (New York: Clark, 2010), 122–34; John J. Collins, “The Zeal of Phinehas: The Bible and the Legitimation of Violence,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 3–21; Gerd Lüdemann, *The Unholy in Holy Scripture: The Dark Side of the Bible*, trans. J. Bowden (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

8. See David Martin, *Does Christianity Cause War?* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); J. G. McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology, Genesis–Kings* (New York: Clark, 2006), chap. 2; Alister McGrath, “Is Religion Evil?,” in *God Is Great, God is Good: Why Believing in God Is Reasonable and Responsible*, ed. William Lane Craig and Chad V.

number of studies have demonstrated that monotheism per se is not more inherently intolerant or oppressive than any other worldview.⁹ Clearly, monotheistic religions—including the Christian religion—can and have been used by people and groups over the centuries to legitimize their own political aspirations and justify violent agendas. But it is important to distinguish empirical *correlation* from *causation*—and many critics of monotheism regularly confuse the two.¹⁰ As Miroslav Volf has argued, “Neither the character of the Christian faith (its being a religion of a monotheist type) nor its most fundamental convictions (such as that God created the world and is engaged in redeeming it) are violence inducing. The Christian faith is *misused* when it is employed to underwrite violence.”¹¹

With regard to the intolerance and violence that have attached to the Christian religion, no one can seriously deny the many instances of correlation through history. Many Christians themselves have regularly pointed this out and mourned the tragic pattern.¹² But, once again, careful consideration has

Meister (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 119–33; Meic Pearse, *The Gods of War: Is Religion the Primary Cause of Violent Conflict?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007); William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

9. See Rainer Albertz, “Monotheism and Violence: How to Handle a Dangerous Biblical Tradition,” in *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort*, ed. Jacques van Ruiten and J. C. de Vos (Boston: Brill, 2009), 373–87; Miroslav Volf, “Jehovah on Trial,” *Christianity Today*, April 27, 1998, 32–35. Some Christians themselves argue that “monotheism” tends toward imperialism, domination, and violence, but then go on to distance Christianity from monotheism by contrasting it with Christian “trinitarianism”; e.g., Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 197. However, others have effectively argued that, rightly understood, Christian trinitarianism is a version of monotheism and that monotheism per se is not the problem. Rather, the problem is with certain monarchical visions of monotheism, which are quite unlike the *agapē*-oriented vision of the trinitarian God offered in the New Testament. See Randall Otto, “Moltmann and the Anti-Monotheism Movement,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 3 (2001): 293–308; Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 224–48. Colin Gunton has suggested that Augustine’s Neoplatonically influenced approach to the Trinity helped shape Western Christianity’s trinitarian speculation in a neomodalist direction, which rendered it more susceptible to political misuse, etc. See his “Trinity in Modern Theology,” in *Companion Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. P. Byrne and L. Houlden (New York: Routledge, 1995), 940–42.

10. A point emphasized in a recent article found in a notoriously antireligious journal: Benjamin G. Purzycki and Kyle Gibson, “Religion and Violence: An Anthropological Study on Religious Belief and Violent Behavior,” *Skeptic* 16, no. 2 (2011): 22–27.

11. Miroslav Volf, “Christianity and Violence,” in *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. R. S. Hess and E. A. Martens (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 15.

12. Just to take two examples from among our contributors to this book, see Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 98–103; and Walter Wink’s discussion of the “myth

demonstrated that this common correlation is not a sign of Christianity's inherent intolerance and proneness to violence but rather a sign of the fact that *any* religious or philosophical system can be used—and *misused*—for self-centered ends and political gains.¹³ Even the vast majority of the critics of Christian violence readily acknowledge that the original vision and movement inaugurated by Jesus was one of remarkable inclusiveness, principled nonviolence, and self-giving *agapē*-love.¹⁴

And here is where the moral objection to spiritual warfare is most clearly seen. Some will grant that Christian monotheism is not inherently oppressive. But they will argue that it is the segments within Christian theism that traffic in spiritual warfare language that tend to become oppressive. The concern is that using the biblical language associated with “spiritual warfare” will lead Christians to embrace and imitate the whole range of biblical texts on “warfare,” including the intolerance and divinely sanctioned violence in the Bible itself. Even more pressing is the concern that Christians who take spiritual warfare seriously will reframe their own human enemies as “God’s enemies”—enemies who, perhaps, are today no less deserving of violent judgment than the Canaanites were in the time of the ancient Israelites.

To the ears of many, “spiritual warfare” sounds uncomfortably close to the language of “holy war.” And holy war—with its “warrior God,” Yahweh, and its divinely authorized violence against the “enemies” of God’s people—is a common theme found throughout the Old Testament.¹⁵ Critics remind us that the Old Testament holy war tradition always included a component of “spiritual

of redemptive violence” (including Christian participation) in *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 13–31.

13. For a cogent argument that the increasing rise of intolerance and violence within the fourth-century church was a result of ecclesiastical and governmental political ambitions, rather than the inherently violent tendencies of the early Jesus movement itself, see by H. A. Drake, “Lions into Lambs: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance,” *Past and Present* 153 (1996): 3–36; H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). Similarly, see John Derksen, “Why Did Early Christians Turn Violent? The Case of Early Egyptian,” *Theological Review* 31 (2010): 60–91.

14. E.g., Lüdemann, *Unholy in Holy Scripture*, 48; Paul N. Anderson, “Genocide or Jesus: A God of Conquest or Pacifism?,” in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion*, 4:31–52. Thus Harold Ellens’s claim of a “violent Jesus” is as rare as it is wrong; “The Violent Jesus,” in Ellens, ed., *Destructive Power of Religion*, 3:15–37. On the predominance of a commitment to nonviolence within the early church in the first few centuries, see P. Brock, *Varieties of Pacifism: A Survey from Antiquity to the Outset of the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 3–8.

15. For helpful introductions to the Old Testament “holy war” and/or “Yahweh as warrior” traditions, see Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*, ed. and trans. M. J. Dawn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Trygve N. D. Mettinger, “Fighting the Powers of Chaos and Hell—Towards the Biblical Portrait of God,” *Studia Theologica* 39 (1985): 21–38.

warfare.” As the Old Testament itself reveals, the Israelites believed that the spiritual and physical worlds were deeply interwoven, such that as they conducted war against human enemies, God and his angels led the way in the spiritual realm (2 Sam. 5:24; cf. 2 Kings 6:15–17; 1 Chron. 12:22). Both Jews and Christians have wrestled with the themes of divinely sanctioned warfare and violence in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament for centuries.¹⁶ Within recent scholarship, responses include the following: (1) emphasizing that Israel’s role in warfare is downplayed, as God commands them to trust in him rather than in their military might;¹⁷ (2) proposals that the depiction of Israel’s violent conquest of cities in the Holy Land may represent attacks on military forts, or are instances of political propaganda and, perhaps, never really happened at all;¹⁸ (3) reminders that Israel was itself an oppressed group and that the themes of violence are part of a “survival strategy” of a traumatized people;¹⁹ and (4) suggestions that, for example, “divine judgment” in the Old Testament is essentially enacted through the natural consequences of sin (which can include war), or that the “final form” of the violent book of Joshua is actually a protest against war itself.²⁰ Some have even argued that we have simply missed the ironic “beauty” of some of the terrible and grotesque realities associated with God’s warrior-like nature in the Old Testament.²¹ However they explain it, most Christians see the holy war tradition in the Old Testament as one of the many things that have changed for the people of God with the coming of Jesus Christ and the new covenant.

But it is not just the Old Testament and its holy war tradition that raises concerns. As mentioned above, elements of the New Testament itself have also come under scrutiny as inspired sources of intolerance, bigotry, and violence. The most common culprits here—including the claim of being the one, true

16. For a particularly thoughtful recent treatment, see Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011). See also David T. Lamb, *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011); Gregory Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God: A Cruciform Reinterpretation of Divine Violence in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, forthcoming).

17. Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1980).

18. See, respectively, Richard S. Hess, “War in the Hebrew Bible: An Overview,” in *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. R. S. Hess and E. A. Martens (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 29–30; and Lori L. Rowlett, *Joshua and the Rhetoric of Violence* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

19. E.g., Kathleen M. O’Conner, “Reclaiming Jeremiah’s Violence,” in *The Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets*, ed. J. M. O’Brien and C. Franke (New York: Clark, 2010), 46–49.

20. See, respectively, Terence Fretheim, “God and Violence in the Old Testament,” *Word and World* 24 (2004): 23–24; Janet Tollington, “The Ethics of Warfare and the Holy War Tradition in the Book of Judges,” in Dell, ed., *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament*, 86–87.

21. E.g., Corrine Carvalho, “The Beauty of the Bloody God: The Divine Warrior in Prophetic Literature,” in O’Brien and Franke, eds., *Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets*, 131–52.

religion and the threat of divine judgment and eternal torment in hell for all outsiders who reject the faith—often are traced back to a common villainous source: namely ancient Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, particularly its exclusivist and militant attitudes fueled by violent images of imminent divine judgment upon outsiders.²² And here is where critics of “spiritual warfare” make the connections explicit: the Old Testament “holy war” tradition fed into the Jewish apocalyptic eschatology that developed during the intertestamental period. Next, Jesus and the early church affirmed and embraced apocalyptic eschatology with its “spiritual warfare” language.²³ It is this apocalyptically influenced “spiritual warfare” language that the church continues to use today. In this light, critics can see apocalyptic eschatology as little more than “a pathological state of the religious mind,” and an impetus to a number of religious and moral ills fueled by intolerance toward, and demonization of, the “Other.”²⁴

Over the last two centuries, a range of scholarly reactions have emerged in response to the question of the relationship of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology to Jesus and the early church. At one end of the spectrum, some have interpreted Jesus as a full-on apocalyptic Jewish prophet in the traditional sense. That is to say, Jesus expected and preached the imminent end of the present world order through the in-breaking of God’s decisive judgment. The point of debate within this perspective is whether Jesus believed that he and

22. For a well-known introduction representing the dominant contemporary North American interpretation of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology in the Second Temple period, see John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). But two other contrasting perspectives—emerging from Britain and Italy—offer important correctives. See, respectively, C. C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); and Gabriele Boccaccini, “Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Contribution of Italian Scholarship,” in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 33–50.

23. While the Jewish background is vital, it should be noted that military terminology similar to what we find in early Christian texts is also found in Greco-Roman authors of the day. See Edgar M. Krentz, “Military Language and Metaphors in Philippians,” in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity*, ed. B. H. McLean (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 105–27.

24. Randel Helms, “The Dangers of Apocalyptic Thinking,” *Free Inquiry* (Summer 1984): 37. Examples of scholars who identify apocalyptic eschatology (or certain elements of it) as a primary instigator of intolerance and violence within Christianity include Warren Carter, “Constructions of Violence and Identities in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Violence in the New Testament*, ed. S. Matthews and E. L. Gibson (New York: Clark, 2005), 98–102; Michel Desjardins, *Peace, Violence and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 83–92; Ellens, “Violent Jesus,” 30–31; John Gager, with E. Leigh Gibson, “Violent Acts and Violent Language in the Apostle Paul,” in *Violence in the New Testament*, ed. S. Matthews and E. L. Gibson (New York: Clark, 2005), 17–18; Burton Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 368–76.

his followers were to take an active (i.e., military action) or a more passive (i.e., trust and wait for God to bring the judgment) role. While a few have proposed the former view—i.e., a “zealot Jesus”—most within this broader camp have assumed the latter.²⁵

At the other end of the spectrum—and at least in part to avoid associating Jesus with the attitudes of vengeance and violence connected to Jewish apocalyptic thought—some have argued that, although the Judaism he emerged from and the church he gave birth to were both apocalyptically oriented, Jesus himself was not. This has the effect of “saving” Jesus from his apocalyptic Jewish context, only to transform him into something like a Greco-Roman Cynic philosopher or a nonviolent rabble-rouser whose only real ambition was to encourage communal living while challenging the oppressive elites associated with the empire.²⁶ This approach also has the strange effect of removing Jesus from his historical setting and raises the question of why his early followers maintained crucial aspects of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology if Jesus himself rejected them.

However, a sizable number of scholars argues that things are far more complex than either of these first two views suggests. It appears that the most plausible interpretation of the historical and biblical data leads to the conclusion that both views are simultaneously right—and wrong! The “apocalyptic Jesus” advocates are correct that Jesus and the early church were in fact deeply shaped by much of the basic theological narrative and some of the essential features of Second Temple apocalyptic eschatology.²⁷ However, the “non-apocalyptic Jesus” proponents are also correct that, in a number of ways, Jesus’s eschatology does not represent the common apocalyptic thinking of his day. This both/and interpretation has been articulated by a number of scholars over the years and is commonly referred to as an “inaugurated,” or “already—not yet,” eschatology.²⁸ As such, and unlike

25. E.g., see, respectively, H. S. Reimarus, *Reimarus: Fragments*, reprint ed., ed. C. H. Talbert, trans. R. S. Fraser (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Collier/Macmillan, 1968).

26. E.g., John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

27. See, e.g., Archie T. Wright, “Evil Spirits in Second Temple Judaism: The *Watcher Tradition* as a Background to the Demonic Pericopes in the Gospels,” *Henoah* 28 (2006): 141–59.

28. For several examples of the wide range of scholars who hold to a form of this view, see J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 404–65; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 289–454; Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 209–10; Ben Wiebe, “The Focus of Jesus’ Eschatology,” in *Self-Definition and Self-Discovery in Early Christianity: A Study in Changing*

typical ancient apocalyptic theology, it displays a firm conviction that God's transformative kingdom has *already broken into this world*. However, it also aligns with apocalyptic thinking in displaying an eager anticipation of future dimensions of God's eschatological kingdom *that have not yet arrived*. In other words, the "already—not yet" interpretation recognizes that, while Jesus and the early church borrowed much from apocalyptic eschatology of the times, they also modified crucial aspects of it so as to arrive at a unique, even paradoxical, vision of the kingdom of God.

This intriguing modification of Jewish apocalyptic thought not only makes the most sense of the New Testament data in general. But when considered alongside Jesus's *agapē*-love ethic, it also provides a key for understanding the distinctive, even surprising, features of the early Christian approach to apocalyptic eschatology in general, and "spiritual warfare" in particular.²⁹ Among other things, it provides important insights into the early Christian use of spiritual warfare categories that serve to provide answers for those who rightly are concerned about how this type of language has been used to fuel intolerance and violence throughout history. A key factor is made explicit in the apostle Paul's important statement that "our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the . . . cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12 NRSV). Unlike every other known instance of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, the version held by Jesus and much of the early church viewed the hostile forces they struggled against as composed entirely of spiritual beings—*not fellow human beings*.³⁰ As N. T. Wright has correctly observed:

Horizons, ed. D. J. Hawkins and T. Robinson (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990), 121–46. Even N. T. Wright, who is commonly known for his antagonism toward certain images of an apocalyptic Jesus, argues for an already—not yet eschatology that stems from Jesus into the early church; see *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 322, 467–72.

29. On this remarkable development, see William H. Brownlee, "From Holy War to Holy Martyrdom," in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, ed. H. B. Huffmon et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 281–92. For some contemporary reflections on the benefits—ethical and otherwise—of early Christian apocalyptic thought, see J. Christiaan Beker, "The Promise of Paul's Apocalyptic for Our Times," in *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck*, ed. A. J. Malherbe and W. A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 152–59; Nancy J. Duff, "The Significance of Pauline Apocalyptic for Theological Ethics," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. J. Marcus and M. L. Soards (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 279–96; David N. Scholer, "'The God of Peace Will Shortly Crush Satan under Your Feet' (Romans 16:20a): The Function of Apocalyptic Eschatology in Paul," *Ex Auditu* 6 (1990): 53–61.

30. On fellow human "gentiles," in one way or another, as the primary eschatological enemy within all other forms of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, see Lawrence H. Schiffman, "War in Jewish Apocalyptic Thought," in *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition*, ed. L. Schiffman and J. B. Wolowelsky (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2007), 477–95.

One of the key elements in Jesus' perception of his task was therefore his *re-definition* of who the real enemy was. . . . The pagan hordes surrounding Israel [including Rome] were not the actual foe of the people of YHWH. Standing behind the whole problem of Israel's exile was the dark power known in some Old Testament traditions as the satan, the accuser. The struggle that was coming to a head was therefore cosmic.³¹

This fact explains a number of otherwise mysterious features of Jesus and the early Christian faith, including the fact that, on one hand, Jesus presented himself in terms of a "messianic" warrior-king, and yet, on the other hand, he refused the use of the sword and both modeled and taught *agapē*-love and forgiveness toward human "enemies."³² As Paul Middleton has recently demonstrated, unlike other forms of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, "[early] Christianity had no temporal outlet [i.e., they refused to identify human enemies and/or participate in earthly war and violence] . . . and so Christian apocalyptic war was conceived in wholly cosmic terms, with a cosmic enemy, a cosmic outcome and a cosmic stage on which martyrs lived and died: nothing less than cosmic conflict."³³ In fact, especially prior to its post-Constantinian affiliation with the Roman Empire, the early church was commonly known not for inciting intolerance and violence but for its spirit of inclusiveness, principled nonviolence, and what Middleton refers to as "radical martyrdom"—a willingness to die rather than do violence to others.³⁴ Importantly, even the practice of *spiritual* warfare, as exemplified by Jesus and his early followers, was characterized not by self-righteous and aggressive bravado toward the demonic in the spirit realm (e.g., Jude 8–10) but by humility of spirit, trust

31. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 450–51 (emphasis in original).

32. On the complete reidentification of "enemy" from the human to the spiritual realm as a key to understanding Jesus's self-understanding as "messiah," see Paul Rhodes Eddy, "Remembering Jesus' Self-Understanding: James D. G. Dunn on Jesus' Sense of Role and Identity," in *Memories of Jesus: A Critical Appraisal of James D. G. Dunn's Jesus Remembered*, ed. R. B. Stewart and G. R. Habermas (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), esp. 249–53. On this unexpected twist to the Jewish "divine warrior" motif, see Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, "*Put on the Armour of God*": *The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). Relatedly, see Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Killing Enmity: Violence and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

33. Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 134. In light of this observation, contemporary American Christians are called to avoid the all-too-easy comparison of early Christian martyrs with fallen national warriors. On this comparison, see Jon Davies, *The Christian Warrior in the Twentieth Century* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1995).

34. See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), chaps. 4 and 5; Brock, *Varieties of Pacifism*, 3–8; Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict*.

in the liberating power of God, and the giving of one's own life for the sake of others on earth.

The moral objection to spiritual warfare language is motivated by very important concerns regarding the propagation of intolerance and violence in the world. But as it turns out, the New Testament concept of spiritual warfare—rightly understood—not only does not contribute to these evils but goes even further by offering a vision of reality where, ultimately, no fellow human is recognized as “enemy” when viewed from a kingdom perspective. Of course, Christians can agree on this broad perspective of spiritual warfare while still disagreeing on whether, with regard to the human geopolitical realm, war and violence are ever justified in the face of certain evils. And although the “just war” and “pacifist” traditions within the Christian family diverge here, members of both traditions can be found embracing the language of spiritual warfare.

Of course, one might still object that, while this is all well and good on a theoretical level, when real people begin to consistently resort to such language, problems follow. A recent study by David Durst of six contemporary American churches where the language of spiritual warfare is used consciously and freely is helpful here. At least with regard to the six churches under investigation, Durst found that

the use of militant language does not determine how believers participate militarily or politically, how they imagine eschatological events, or how they attempt to influence society. . . . The language of conflict is an integrated rhetorical type in each of these churches, but does not overshadow other types of speech. In human-divine and interpersonal relationships, as well as in approaches to organizational leadership, the language of love and family are more prominent, and many participants are concerned with what the militant language communicates to outsiders.

Observations of these churches do not validate the worst fears of those who advocate the elimination of exclusive salvation claims and belief in cosmic conflict. . . . These churches have many beliefs and values that reflect a warfare worldview, but also display great love and compassion, both for one another and for their communities and the entire human family. They are missional without being imperialistic.³⁵

However, as Durst also reminds us, it is absolutely crucial that Christians who employ spiritual warfare language take responsibility both for explicating

35. David M. Durst, “Fighting the Good Fight: Missional Use of Militant Language” (PhD diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2010), 243.

its meaning and for maintaining constant sensitivity to situations and contexts wherein the use of such language can be easily misunderstood.³⁶ Again, Christians must remain vigilant lest they subtly—even unconsciously—shift New Testament spiritual warfare language from its original context of the spirit realm to the world of fellow humans. For example, as Rick Love observes:

In contrast to modern missions literature and strategy, the New Testament does not use military metaphors to describe the task of evangelism. Missions in the New Testament is not portrayed in military terms. Paul does not put on “crusades,” “mobilize,” “establish beachheads,” or “target” a people. In other words, evangelicals have “extended” the meaning of military metaphors beyond the intent of New Testament authors.³⁷

The Existence and Nature of Angels and Demons

The Biblical Data and the Christian Tradition

The existence of spirit beings, both benevolent and malicious, has been accepted in the vast majority of human cultures and religions across time and place.³⁸ This was clearly the case for the ancient Near Eastern world of the

36. *Ibid.*, 244.

37. Rick Love, “Muslims and Military Metaphors,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 37 (January 2001): 67. For similar words of caution, see Richard Beaton, “New Testament Metaphors and the Christian Mission,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 37 (January 2001): 60–64; John Gilchrist, *Our Approach to Islam: Charity or Militancy?* (Benoni, South Africa: Jesus to the Muslim, 1990). Similar warnings appear in the statements from the Consultation on Mission Language and Metaphors (held at Fuller Theological Seminary, June 1–3, 2000, available at <http://www.ad2000.org/re00620.htm>) and the Lausanne-related “Deliver Us From Evil” Consultation (held in Nairobi, August 16–22, 2000, available in *Deliver Us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau et al. [Monrovia, CA: MARC, 2002], xxiv, 312). Clearly the question of metaphor is central to this discussion. There is strong evidence concerning the inherently metaphorical nature of human conceptual systems; see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Some critics of the Christian use of the concept and language of spiritual warfare use this observation to suggest that the notion of a cosmic conflict in the spiritual realm is *merely metaphor*—i.e., as simply a phenomenon of language, lacking any objective reality. But as even Lakoff and Johnson (who are themselves wary of a strong objectivist definition of truth) make clear, identifying something as a “metaphor” does not mean it is removed from the world of “real things, existing independently of us, which constrain both how we interact with them and how we comprehend them” (226). For Christians, this is an important point to remember if we are to talk of spiritual warfare as a “metaphor”—i.e., “metaphor” does not mean “mere metaphor.”

38. While this volume focuses on perspectives within the Christian tradition regarding spirit beings and spiritual warfare, it should be noted that parallel considerations are found in a wide range of human religious systems. See, e.g., Umar Sulaiman Al-Ashqar, *The World of the Jinn and Devils*, trans. Jamaah al-Din M. Zarabozo (Boulder, CO: Al-Basheer, 1998);

Old Testament.³⁹ Intriguingly, when it comes to the Old Testament itself, while mention is occasionally made of “demons” and “evil spirits” (e.g., Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17; Judg. 9:22–25; 1 Sam. 16:14; 1 Kings 22:21–23; 2 Chron. 11:15; Ps. 106:37), they are comparatively rare.⁴⁰ Similarly, “(the) Satan” (i.e., “the adversary”) is mentioned by name/role in only three passages of the Old Testament (Job 1–2; Zech. 3:1–10; 1 Chron. 21:1).⁴¹ However, many scholars have highlighted other, more common themes in the Old Testament that point to a cosmic conflict in the spiritual world between forces of good and evil, including the sinister, chaos-related themes of hostile waters (e.g., Job 7:12; 9:8; 38:8–11; Ps. 29:3–4, 10; 74:10, 13; 77:16; 104:6; Prov. 8:29; Isa. 51:9–11; Nah. 1:4; Hab. 3:8, 15) and sea monsters such as Leviathan and Rahab (e.g., Job 3:8; 9:13; 26:12–13; 41:1–34; Ps. 74:13–14; 89:9–10; Isa. 27:1; 30:7; 51:9–10; Ezek. 29:3–5), the themes of Yahweh’s divine council, the “angels of the nations,” and the

Winston Davis, *Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980); Graham Dwyer, *The Divine and the Demonic: Supernatural Affliction and Its Treatment in Northern India* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009); Peter G. Riddell and Beverly Smith Riddell, eds., *Angels and Demons: Perspectives and Practice in Diverse Religious Traditions* (Nottingham: Apollon, 2007); Gail H. Sutherland, *The Disguises of the Demon: The Development of the Yaksa in Hinduism and Buddhism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991); Richard von Glahn, *The Sinister Way: The Divine and the Demonic in Chinese Religious Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

39. On views of the demonic, etc., in the ancient Near East, see Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), chaps. 1–2; Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992); Otto Böcher, *Dämonenfurcht und Dämonenabwehr: Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte der christlichen Taufe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970); Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger, and K. F. Diethard Römheld, eds., *Die Dämonen: Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977); and the numerous relevant entries in Karel van der Toorn, Pieter W. van der Horst, and Bob Becking, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, 2nd ed. (New York: Brill, 1999).

40. Michael J. Gruenthaner, “The Demonology of the Old Testament,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 6 (1944): 6–27; Dennis F. Kinlaw, “The Demythologization of the Demonic in the Old Testament,” in *Demon Possession*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1976), 29–35; Robin Routledge, “‘An Evil Spirit from the Lord’—Demonic Influence or Divine Instrument?,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 70 (1998): 3–22; Edwin Yamauchi, “Magic or Miracle? Diseases, Demons and Exorcisms,” in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6: *The Miracles of Jesus*, ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 115–20.

41. For several perspectives on (the) Satan in the Old Testament, see Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 143–67; Derek R. Brown, “The Devil in the Details: A Survey of Research on Satan in Biblical Studies,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 9 (2011): 203–5; Peggy L. Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Marvin E. Tate, “Satan in the Old Testament,” *Review and Expositor* 89 (1992): 461–74.

motif of the rebellious gods/fallen angels (e.g., Exod. 32:8; Ps. 82:1–7; 89:5–10; Isa. 24:21; Dan. 10:3–20), including the sinful “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1–4.⁴²

The various cultures of the Greco-Roman period also commonly held to convictions about a well-populated spiritual world.⁴³ Theological developments within Second Temple Judaism, including the rise and growth of apocalyptic eschatology, led to an increasing emphasis on angelic and demonic forces, including Satan.⁴⁴ This set the context for the significant role played by these spiritual entities in the thought of Jesus and the early Christian movement, as witnessed by the New Testament documents.⁴⁵

42. On hostile waters/sea monsters themes, see Boyd, *God at War*, 73–113; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); John Day, “God and Leviathan in Isaiah 27:1,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998): 423–36; Mary K. Wakeman, *God's Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1973). On divine council and/or rebellious gods/fallen angels, see Boyd, *God at War*, 114–42; Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994); Michael Heiser, “The Divine Council in Second Temple Literature” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004); R. A. Johnson, “The Old Testament Background for Paul's Use of ‘Principalities and Powers’” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004); Christoph Auffarth and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, eds., *The Fall of the Angels* (New York: Brill, 2004); Hugh Rowland Page, *The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion: A Study of Its Reflexes in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature* (New York: Brill, 1996). On the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1–4 as rebellious angels, see Rick Marrs, “The Sons of God (Gen. 6:1–4),” *Restoration Quarterly* 23 (1980): 218–24; Robert C. Newman, “Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4,” *Grace Theological Journal* 5 (1984): 13–36; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1–4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation: Reflections on the Posture of Early Apocalyptic Traditions,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7 (2000): 354–77.

43. Frederick E. Brenk, “In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (New York: de Gruyter, 1986), II. 16. 3, 2068–145; Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1984), chap. 2; Soren Skovgaard Jensen, *Dualism and Demonology: The Function of Demonology in Pythagorean and Platonic Thought* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1966); Yamauchi, “Magic or Miracle?”

44. Maxwell J. Davidson, *Angels at Qumran: A Comparative Study of I Enoch 1–36, 72–108 and Sectarian Writings from Qumran* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Archie T. Wright, *The Origins of the Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6.1–4 in Early Jewish Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

45. For various perspectives on the New Testament concepts of “principalities and powers,” demons, and/or Satan, see Clinton Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992); Otto Böcher, *Christus Exorcista: Dämonismus und Taufe im Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972); Boyd, *God at War*, chaps. 6–10; Brown, “Devil in the Details,” 209–14; Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Kabiro wa Gatumu, *The Pauline Concept of Supernatural Powers: A Reading from the African Worldview* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2008); James Kallas, *The Satanward View: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966); Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993); Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

Prior to the modern era, the Christian tradition by and large interpreted the New Testament as representing angels and demons as personal spiritual agents. From the early church through the Middle Ages to the Reformation era, leading scholars and writers of the various streams of the Christian tradition continued to affirm, speculate on, and significantly develop the general New Testament conceptions of Satan and the demonic.⁴⁶

Skepticism toward Spirit Beings in the Modern Era

Since the rise of the modern era, the question of the existence of angels and demons has provoked a wide range of responses in the Western world. In the eyes of many modern scholars—and reflective of a deistic or naturalistic worldview—the very idea of such creatures is commonly linked to such things as “mythology,” “superstition,” and a “primitive” mind-set.⁴⁷ From this perspective, it is believed that modern science has put to rest any notion of taking such things seriously. This view is well captured by the title of Carl Sagan’s last book to be published before his death, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*.⁴⁸

Following in the train of this skeptical thought, much of modern, liberal Christianity has tended to see angels and demons as outdated ideas that are

46. Regarding the early church, see Gerald Bonner, *The Warfare of Christ* (London: Faith, 1962); Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, chaps. 4–5; Francis X. Gokey, *The Terminology for the Devil and Evil Spirits in the Apostolic Fathers* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1961); Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, “Angels and Demons in the Eastern Orthodox Spiritual Tradition,” *Sourozh* 20 (May 1985): 32–41, and 21 (August 1985): 28–41; Elizabeth Ann Leeper, “Exorcism in Early Christianity” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1991); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981). Regarding the medieval world, see Alain Bureau, *Satan the Heretic: The Birth of Demonology in the Medieval West*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); R. P. H. Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1988); Antonio Moreno, “Demons According to St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross,” *Spirituality Today* 43 (1991): 258–70; Paul M. Quay, “Angels and Demons: The Teaching of IV Lateran,” *Theological Studies* 42 (1981): 20–45; Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). Regarding the Reformation era, see Adrian Hallett, “The Theology of John Calvin. Part Three: The Christian’s Conflict with the Devil,” *Churchman* 105 (1991): 293–325; Heiko A. Oberman, “Luther and the Devil,” *Lutheran Theological Seminary Bulletin* 69 (Winter 1989): 4–15; Jeffrey Burton Russell, “The Reformed Devil,” in *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 25–76.

47. On the progressive growth of skepticism regarding Satan and the demonic in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European thought, see Jonathan I. Israel, “The Death of the Devil,” in *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 375–405; Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 128–67.

48. Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Ballantine, 1996).

best left behind (except, perhaps, as poetic metaphors for expressing the idea of evil).⁴⁹ This sentiment was famously captured by Rudolf Bultmann: “It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.”⁵⁰ Naturalistic explanations of human belief in and/or experience of spirit beings appeal to a range of purely natural phenomena, including sociological, psychological, and even nutritional factors.⁵¹ Commonly, Western academics dismiss contemporary belief in angels and demons as an unfortunate idiosyncrasy associated with such questionable belief systems as the New Age movement or religious “fundamentalism.”⁵² Some, while retaining a place for the linguistic categories of “Satan” and/or the “demonic,” do so only in a thoroughly reinterpreted form, reducing them without remainder to metaphors for purely naturalistic forces.⁵³ For others, study of the development of the concepts of Satan and/or the demonic over time is a matter of purely historical interest, or can actually serve an ethical purpose today by exposing the dangers of framing the Other as diabolical.⁵⁴

Beyond Skepticism: Entertaining Angels in the Modern World

For a sizable number of scholars in modern times, however, the naturalistic approach has not been the final word on the subject. Their motives for taking

49. E.g., Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. MacKintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: Clark, 1928), 161–70; Don Cupitt, “Four Arguments against the Devil,” *Theology* 64 (1961): 413–15.

50. Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. H. W. Bartsch, trans. R. H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1953), 5.

51. E.g., Mansell Pattison, “Psychosocial Interpretations of Exorcism,” *Operational Psychiatry* 8 (1977): 5–19; Pow Meng Yap, “The Possession Syndrome: A Comparison of Hong Kong and French Findings,” *Journal of Mental Science* 106 (1960): 114–37; Alice B. Kehoe and Dody H. Giletti, “Women’s Preponderance in Possession Cults: The Calcium-Deficiency Hypothesis Extended,” *American Anthropologist* 83 (1981): 549–61.

52. E.g., Stephen Hunt, “The Devil’s Advocates: The Function of Demonology in the World View of Fundamentalist Christianity,” in *Fundamentalism: Church and Society*, ed. M. Percy and I. Jones (London: SPCK, 2002), 66–91.

53. E.g., Howard K. Bloom, *The Lucifer Principle: A Scientific Expedition into the Forces of History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995); Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1995).

54. Paul Carus, *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil* (New York: Bell, 1969); William A. Glasser, *The Autobiography of Satan (Authorized Edition)* (n.p.: CreateSpace, 2011); Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Christopher Nugent, *Masks of Satan: The Demonic in History* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1983); Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random, 1995); Miguel A. De La Torre and Albert Hernandez, *The Quest for the Historical Satan* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011); William Tremmel, *Dark Side: The Satan Story* (St. Louis: CBP, 1987); T. J. Wray and Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil’s Biblical Roots* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

seriously the concept of the angelic or demonic, not surprisingly, range widely. Some reject a naturalistic stance based on their suspicions that a reductive naturalism obscures as much as it explains. For example, in the early twentieth century, William James raised a question about the closed-mindedness of the “enlightened” worldview of his day and anticipated a time when Westerners would once again be open to the reality of such things as spirits:

The refusal of modern “enlightenment” to treat “possession” as a hypothesis to be spoken of as even a possibility, in spite of the massive human tradition based on concrete experience in its favor, has always seemed to me a curious example of the power of fashion in things scientific. That the demon-theory . . . will have its innings again is to my mind absolutely certain. One has to be “scientific” indeed to be blind and ignorant enough to suspect no such possibility.⁵⁵

More recently, the effects of such things as sociology-of-knowledge studies, postmodern epistemologies, and convictions of cultural relativism have led to a relativizing of the naturalistic assumptions of the Western academy. Peter Berger, a leading voice for sociology-of-knowledge theory, clearly states the implications for the question of the existence of spirits:

We may agree, say, that contemporary consciousness is incapable of conceiving of either angels or demons. We are still left with the question of whether, possibly, both angels and demons go on existing despite this incapacity of our contemporaries to conceive of them.

One (perhaps literally) redeeming feature of sociological perspective is that relativizing analysis, in being pushed to its final consequence, bends back on itself. The relativizers are relativized, the debunkers are debunked—indeed, relativization itself is somehow liquidated. What follows is *not*, as some of the early sociologists of knowledge feared, a total paralysis of thought. Rather, it is a new freedom and flexibility in asking questions of truth.⁵⁶

In light of this turn, it becomes an important datum for social scientists that belief in the existence of spirit beings appears to be ubiquitous among humans both through history and across cultures.⁵⁷ Erika Bourguignon has

55. William James, “Report on Mrs. Piper’s Hodgson-Control,” *Proceedings of the English Society for Psychical Research* 23 (1909): 118. Some of the data and bibliography in this section are drawn from Paul Rhodes Eddy and Gregory A. Boyd, *Apology for the Devil: A Case for the Reality of Spirits*, unpublished manuscript, 2004.

56. Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 52–53.

57. On belief in spirit beings in various cultures/religions, see Felicitas D. Goodman, *How about Demons? Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University

reported the “striking finding” that of 488 societies sampled, drawn from all of the “six major ethnographic regions into which the *Ethnographic Atlas* divides the world,” spirit-possession beliefs appeared in no less than 74 percent (i.e., 360 of the 488).⁵⁸ And so, in the last few decades, it has become increasingly common for social scientists and other scholars to tread lightly when discussing spirits and possession/exorcism, often deferring judgment on the ontological status of such phenomena.⁵⁹ Interestingly, a number of scholars operating within a naturalistically oriented model of psychology have found that using exorcistic practices with those who resonate culturally with the idea of spirit possession often provides an effective treatment for such phenomena.⁶⁰

Still others within the ranks of contemporary academics and professionals take a further step and make a positive case for the existence of spirits.⁶¹ In doing so, they join a significant majority of the American populace today who, despite enjoying the sort of advancements in science and technology mentioned by Bultmann above, continue to find the existence of spirit beings (i.e., angels and/

Press, 1988); F. V. Reiterer, T. Nicklas, and K. Schöpflin, eds., *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development, and Reception* (New York: de Gruyter, 2007); Riddell and Riddell, eds., *Angels and Demons*. Craig Keener has recently collected a good amount of evidence for the transcultural phenomenon of “spirit possession.” See Keener, “Spirit Possession as a Cross-cultural Experience,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20 (2010): 215–36; Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), esp. appendix A and B. Keener’s book on miracles is a truly impressive work and now appears to represent the most exhaustive treatment of spirit-possession phenomena from a scholarly Christian perspective.

58. Erika Bourguignon, “Spirit Possession Belief and Social Structure,” in *The Realm of the Extra-Human: Ideas and Actions*, ed. A. Bharatic (Paris: Mouton, 1976), 19.

59. E.g., Graham Dwyer, *The Divine and the Demonic: Supernatural Affliction and Its Treatment in North India* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Carl Goldberg, *Speaking with the Devil: A Dialogue with Evil* (New York: Viking, 1996), xii; Goodman, *How about Demons?* 123–26; Gavin Ivey, “Diabolical Discourses: Demonic Possession and Evil in Modern Psychopathology,” *South African Journal of Psychology* 32 (2002): 54–59; Jeffrey Burton Russell, “The Evil One,” in *Facing Evil: Light at the Core of Darkness*, ed. P. Woodruff and H. A. Wilmer (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1988), 58, 61.

60. Jaime Bulatao, “Local Cases of Possession and their Cure,” *Philippine Studies* 30 (1982): 415–25; S. C. Cappannari et al., “Voodoo in the General Hospital: A Case of Hexing and Regional Enteritis,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 232 (1975): 938–40; M. G. Kenny, “Multiple Personality and Spirit Possession,” *Psychiatry* 44 (1981): 338; E. Schendel and R. F. C. Kourany, “Cacodemomina and Exorcism in Children,” *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 41 (1980): 119–23.

61. E.g., Stafford Betty, “The Growing Evidence for ‘Demonic Possession’: What Should Psychiatry’s Response Be?” *Journal of Religion and Health* 44 (2005): 13–30; Terry D. Cooper and Cindy K. Epperson, *Evil: Satan, Sin, and Psychology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008); Richard E. Gallagher, “A Case of Demonic Possession,” *New Oxford Review* 75 (March 2008): 22–32; W. O. Mundia Jr., “The Existence of the Devil” (PhD diss., Boston University School of Theology, 1994); Phillip H. Wiebe, *God and Other Spirits: Intimations of Transcendence in Christian Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

or demons) quite plausible.⁶² Now and then, unexpected personal experiences have led members of the naturalistically inclined academic guild to undergo a paradigm shift with regard to belief in spirits. Noteworthy examples in recent years include psychologist Scott Peck's personal involvement with two exorcisms and anthropologist Edith Turner's experience of visibly witnessing a spirit entity in Africa.⁶³ Naturally, within this group of scholars, there are substantial differences of opinion on how best to conceive of these spiritual phenomena.

A Personal Devil: The Traditional Christian Perspective in Contemporary Context

Many contemporary scholars who work from within a worldview indebted to historic, orthodox Christianity have had no trouble believing in angels—both good and evil—as real, personal spirit beings who have influence within creation.⁶⁴ Here, they find themselves in continuity with much of the Christian

62. The 2005 Baylor Religion Survey found that 75 percent of Americans believe in Satan, while 73 percent believe in demons. See Joseph Baker, "Who Believes in Religious Evil? An Investigation of Sociological Patterns of Belief in Satan, Hell, and Demons," *Review of Religious Research* 50 (2008): 211. This remarkable level of belief in spirit beings among contemporary Americans was reflected in the "angel craze" of the 1990s. See Kenneth L. Woodward, "Angels," *Newsweek*, December 27, 1993, 52–57.

63. M. Scott Peck, *Glimpses of the Devil: A Psychiatrist's Personal Accounts of Possession, Exorcism, and Redemption* (New York: Free Press, 2005); Edith Turner, "A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia," in *Being Changed: The Anthropology of Extraordinary Experience*, ed. D. E. Young and J.-G. Goulet (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview, 1994), 71–95; Edith Turner, "The Reality of Spirits: A Tabooed or Permitted Field of Study?," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 4 (1993): 9–12. (We are grateful to Edith Turner for her personal correspondence and for sharing with us a substantial bibliography of related anthropological sources.)

64. This view is commonly held within both evangelical Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. Representative of evangelicalism, see Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); Ed Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: Nelson, 1992); Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Robert V. Rakestraw, "New Dimensions in the Study of Angels and Demons," in *New Dimensions of Evangelical Thought: Essays in Honor of Millard J. Erickson*, ed. D. S. Dockery (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 270–86; C. Peter Wagner and F. Douglas Pennoyer, eds., *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990); Peter S. Williams, *The Case for Angels* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2002). For examples of more traditional Roman Catholic approaches, see "Christian Faith and Demonology," in *Vatican Council II: Postconciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello, 1982), 456–85; Fr. Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Tells His Story*, trans. N. V. MacKenzie (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999); James McManus, *The Ministry of Deliverance in the Catholic Tradition* (London: National Service Committee for Catholic Charismatic Renewal, 1980). Some who espouse a traditional view of Satan and demons as real spiritual agents also warn that these evil creatures have chosen a path that renders them subpersonal in some sense, and that, while they do possess independent consciousness and will, they should not be dignified with the unqualified title of "personal" in the full and positive sense of the term. See, e.g., Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*,

tradition going back to the earliest church, as reflected in the theology and/or preaching of those such as Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, William and Catherine Booth, C. S. Lewis, and Pope Benedict XVI.

From this traditional Christian perspective, Satan and the other fallen angels/powers are understood as having been originally created by God as good creatures, designed for fellowship. But, similar to the first humans, Satan and his cohorts chose the path of self-assertion and rebellion. With regard to the nature of “demons” per se, most who hold to a traditional view today understand demons as equivalent to fallen angels. However, in both ancient Judaism and the early church, this was only one of two perspectives on this question. Other ancient Jews and Christians held that demons are the spirits of the deceased “giants” (the *Nephilim*) mentioned in Genesis 6:1–4, who were the hybrid children produced by sexual liaisons between evil angels (the “sons of God”) and human women.⁶⁵ In either case, in the traditional view demons are understood to be personal spirit beings intent on fostering evil throughout the earth. In this present volume, three of the four viewpoints under consideration affirm and build on this traditional understanding of angels and demons (Boyd, Powlison, and Wagner and Greenwood).

Those who hold to this sort of traditional Christian view today usually do so for reasons beyond “tradition” alone. First and foremost, appeal is made to the Christian Scriptures, where both angels and demons are interpreted as personal spiritual agents possessing self-consciousness, intelligence, and will, as well as the ability to influence/interact with the physical creation (e.g., 1 Kings 22:19–21; Dan. 10:5–21; Matt. 4:3–11; Mark 5:6–13).⁶⁶ Theological coherence is a second factor. In the words of Carl Braaten:

True Christianity is stuck with the Devil, like it or not. . . . The decision for or against the Devil is a decision for or against the integrity of Christianity as such. We simply cannot subtract the Devil, along with demons, angels, principalities, powers, and elemental spirits, without doing violence to the shape of the Christian faith, as transmitted by Scripture and tradition, our primary sources.⁶⁷

2 vols. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1985, 1989), 2:163; Nigel Wright, *The Satan Syndrome: Putting the Power of Darkness in Its Place* (Grand Rapids: Academic, 1990), 28–31.

65. Interestingly, the book of *1 Enoch* can serve as the basis for both of these understandings of demons (compare *1 Enoch* 15:8–16:1; 19:1–2). For an example of the “giants” interpretation of demons in early Christianity, see Justin Martyr, *Second Apology* 5.2.

66. E.g., Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan and Principalities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998); Page, *Powers of Evil*.

67. Carl E. Braaten, *That All May Believe: A Theology of the Gospel and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 109–10.