

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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The Christian's Armor: The Sword of the Spirit

The BioLogos Foundation is a self-described think tank made up of professing evangelical Christians who seek to harmonize Science with Evangelical beliefs. Well, this is certainly commendable – until we discover that this group gives priority to the findings of Science, particularly Darwinian evolution. With great hubris, they have the impertinence to declare that BioLogos exists in no small part to marginalize the embarrassing belief that Adam and Eve were the first humans. “A fundamental part of our mission is to show that this view (Adam and Eve were historical figures) is not tenable.”¹ But, wait a minute – didn’t the Apostle Paul affirm that Adam and Eve were (Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:45-47; I Tim. 2:13-14)? Did not Jesus himself likewise affirm this (Matt. 19:4)? What about the Biblical genealogies that list Adam? We find this in I Chron. 1:1 and also in the N.T. “In Luke 3:38 Adam is mentioned within the framework of the genealogy of Jesus. The last (or if you will, the first) links in the genealogy, mentioned in verse 38, are: “Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” Besides the genealogy of Jesus which is preserved in Luke 3:23-38, a second is handed down to us in Matthew 1:1-16. In just such a genealogy the name of Adam is now also mentioned by Luke. The name of Adam is on a line with all other men. Given the character of the genealogies and the accuracy with which they are attended, it is inconceivable that Luke would have thought about Adam other than as an historical person. That Adam is called the son of God, as Seth, in turn, is called a son of Adam, is to be regarded as an echo of Genesis 5:1-3, where we read that God made Adam in the likeness of God, while Adam begat Seth in his likeness, as his image.”²

How do the BioLogos folks respond to this? Following Peter Enns, Senior Fellow of Biblical Studies for BioLogos, (who was dismissed from Westminster Theological Seminary for his aberrant views) they embrace what they like to call “The Incarnation Principle.” What is this? Simply put, since Jesus was fully human, he therefore *must* be subject not only to human limitations but that Jesus could and *did* make mistakes. Here is how Kenton Sparks puts it at BioLogos. “Though theologians seldom point this out, the fact that Jesus operated mainly within the horizon of his finite human horizon has other implications. If we assume for the sake of discussion that he was a carpenter like his father, did he ever miss the nail with his hammer? Hit his thumb? Did he think that he left his saw on the bench when, because he was distracted, he actually leaned it against the wall? Did Jesus ever look across a crowded town square and think that he saw his brother James only to discover that it was someone else? And did he estimate that the crowd was about 300 when it was really 200? To confess that Jesus was fully human is to admit that the answer to these questions must be yes. And if yes, then this observation surely has implications for how we think about Scripture. If Jesus as a finite human being erred from time to time, there is no reason at all to suppose that Moses, Paul, John wrote Scripture without error. Rather, we are wise to assume that the biblical authors expressed themselves *as* human beings writing from the perspectives of their own finite, broken horizons.”³

In other words, Jesus and Paul were both culturally conditioned by the times and could not be expected to know that Moses didn’t write Genesis or that what was written was not historical but rooted in Ancient near Eastern myths. R. C. Sproul actually addressed this some years ago. “This

approach to the knowledge and authority of Jesus raises even more serious questions than the Roman Catholic view. Not only does this impugn the integrity of Jesus' understanding of the relationship of the Old Testament Scriptures to his own mission and identity, but it casts a shadow over his sinlessness. *Jesus does not have to be omniscient to be infallible. But he must be infallible to be sinless.* That is to say, if Jesus, claiming to be sent from God and involving the authority of God in his teaching errs in that teaching, he is guilty of sin. The one who claims to be the truth cannot err and be consistent with that acclaim. Anyone claiming absolute authority in his teaching must be absolutely trustworthy in what he teaches in order to merit absolute authority. In light of his claims, Jesus cannot plead "invincible ignorance" as an excuse for error.

James Orr summarized the matter as follows: 'Does this acknowledged limitation of the human knowledge of Christ, and ignorance of earthly science, imply *error* on the part of Jesus? This is a position which must as strongly be contested. Ignorance is not error, nor does the one thing necessarily imply the other. That Jesus should use the language of His time on things indifferent, where no judgment or pronouncement of His own was involved, is readily understood; that He should be the victim of illusion, or false judgment, on any subject on which He was called to pronounce, is a perilous assertion. If the matter be carefully considered, it may be felt that even sinlessness is hardly compatible with liability of the judgment to error. False judgment, where moral questions are involved, can hardly fail to issue in wrong action.'"⁴

The Sword of the Spirit is unique when compared to the rest of the armor in that (1) the sword provides protection in that it is directed against the enemy himself, and (2) the sword not only repels, but it can attack. It is the only weapon given the Christian soldier - there is no other. A weaponless soldier cannot fight, therefore, despite the rest of his armor. Without his sword, he cannot stand.

I. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

The verb used of the helmet of salvation, DEXASTHE, aorist middle imperative, lit. to receive or take, is used here with the sword; *and the sword* (MACHAIRAN, a short sword) *of the spirit* (TOU PNEUMATOS, genitive of source or origin, thus lit. the sword which the Spirit provides or gives *which is the word of God* (HO ESTIN RH \square MA THEOU, the expression, "HO ESTIN is explanatory without regard to the gender of the antecedent"⁵).

A. The Nature of the Armor The ancient soldier, i.e., Roman, carried two swords, a large broadsword called a RHOMPHAIA (mentioned in Lk. 2:35; Rev. 1:16; 2:12; 19:15) and a somewhat smaller sword (actually a dagger-like weapon) called a MACHAIRA. This sword measured from twelve inches to eighteen inches and was carried in a sheath or scabbard attached to the soldier's belt. Its primary function was in close hand-to-hand combat. The word is used of Peter's sword in Matt. 26:51. "This MACHAIRA was not only a symbol of jurisdiction over life and death (Rom. 13:4), but also of persecution and senseless bloodshed (Rom. 8:35; Rev. 6:4)."⁶

B. The Nature of the Metaphor Paul's language, as indicative in previous studies, is drawn directly from the O.T. The "Sword of the Lord" is a well-known O.T. expression (Judg. 7:20; Isa. 34:5,6; Jer. 47:6; Ezek. 21:3, 14-16; 32:10). It is here declared to be "the Sword of the Spirit." Some have taken this to be a genitive of apposition, thus making the sword the spirit. But this is incorrect. Grammatically there is no other parallel in Scripture for this interpretation. "In Eph. 1:13; 2:17-18, and elsewhere in the N.T. where 'the word' and 'the Spirit' are mentioned in one breath, the two are never used as synonymous or interchangeable terms."⁷ Charles Hodge agrees and states, "The Spirit is not the sword; this would be incongruous, as the sword is something which the soldier wields, but the Christian cannot thus control the Spirit."⁸ The Spirit is the source of the sword or provides it. The sword is declared to be "the word of God." The word trans. "word" is not LOGOS, but RH \square MA, which refers to specific utterance (same as in

Eph. 5:26). It is a term that has its foundation in the LOGOS, the complete and comprehensive Word of God, but it is specific and definite. In other words, it has reference to the manifold expressions of the LOGOS (cf. Heb. 4:12; Matt. 4:4; Jn. 6:63). “The term ‘sword’ I repeat, in this context, does not refer to the general knowledge of the way of salvation, but rather to the ability to use the Scripture and to give the appropriate answer at any point.”⁹

- C. The Importance of the Armor The Christian soldier’s only weapon is the sword of the Spirit - not truth in general revelation or in any sphere of man’s knowledge - but only truth as stated in special revelation. Notice that the Word of God is declared to have the properties of a sword (comp. Heb. 4:12). In and of itself the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, can cut asunder, penetrate and destroy. Notice that it is the Sword provided by or given by the Holy Spirit. He is its source (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:19-21) and the One who gives the Word its cutting edge, and it is only by Him that it can be apprehended and understood (I Cor. 2:12). The relationship between the Word and the Spirit is very important. If we attempt to focus upon the Spirit apart from the Word or with little concern for really understanding the Word, we will lapse into a dangerous form of pietistic mysticism that is entirely too subjective, and we will be easily deceived by the “angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14). In the other extreme, if we approach the Scripture merely from an academic or rational point of view, only concerned with information and facts, we are in danger of becoming a theological carcass (cf. James 18:22-25).

CONCLUSION: Towards the end of life the great Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, spoke these words in a sermon on Eph. 6:17, “You may be of a very quiet spirit, but your adversaries are not so. If you attempt to play at Christian warfare, they will not. To meet the powers of darkness is no sham battle. They mean mischief. Nothing but your eternal damnation will satisfy the fiendish hearts of Satan and his crew. You must take not so much a flag to unfurl, or a drum to beat as a sword to use, and a specially sharp sword too. In this combat you will have to use a sword such as even evil spirits can feel, capable of dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. If you are to live through this fight, and come off victorious, no form of conflict will suffice less sharp and cutting than sword-work. Depend upon it that in this struggle you will be forced to come to close quarters. The foe aims at your heart, and pushes home. A spear will not do, nor bow and arrow; the enemy is too near for anything but hand-to-hand fighting. Brethren, our foes are not only of our house, but of our heart. I find an enemy within which is always near, and I cannot get away from him. I find that my antagonist will get his hand on my throat if he can. If our foes were far away, and we could play upon them with artillery which would kill at six or seven miles’ distance, we might lead a pretty easy life. But no; they are here! at our door! Yea, within us; nearer than hands and feet.” It is not merely knowledge of the Scriptures per se that constitutes the Sword, for most of the cults appeal to the Bible for their beliefs. G. Campbell Morgan has so put it, “Every dirty heresy has hung its filthy clothes on some peg of Scripture.”¹⁰ Indeed, the Devil can quote Scripture! However, his chief line of attack is to undermine confidence in God’s Word. In other words, make the sword into cardboard! To insinuate, as the BioLogos people do, that the Bible is full of mistakes and contradictions – but no worry – even Jesus and the Apostles were subject to these same limitations raises serious questions about the very nature of Scripture and its trustworthiness. The BioLogos crowd doesn’t appear in the least troubled by this. On the contrary, this, they claim, is an aspect of Scripture’s humanity after all, *to err is human* and that applies to the Bible as well. So how do we know what parts of the Bible are trustworthy? Well, according to BioLogos, only those parts that Science cannot disprove... yet. But the stakes for adopting this view are high indeed. Why? Because Science is constantly changing. The impact that this distorted view of the Bible has drastic implications.

“Logically, if the Bible is *not* inerrant, though Jesus thought it was, He can hardly be the incarnate God. He claimed to be and for whom the same claims are made by His Apostles. Had He been

mistaken on this point, the church could well ask whether any single teaching of Jesus on any subject (including the way of salvation) might not also reflect His sincere misunderstanding. A “God” of this kind (even if He were indeed divine) would do us not more good than a non-God, for in neither case could we ever confidently rely on his teachings. If--to avoid the force of this argument--the liberal evangelical says that Jesus *did* know that the Bible wasn't inerrant, but dealt with it in terms of the mind-set of His day, “so as not to create unnecessary barriers to faith,” we must emphasize that such a Jesus would be no more worthy of an attribution of deity than the Jesus who was mistaken about the Bible's reliability. For a Jesus who would let the end justify the means, allow His followers to be deceived on such a vital religious question (the extent of revelational reliability), and promote confusion and unnecessary strife in the subsequent history of the church through His equivocation, could hardly stand as a divine model for man's ethical emulation.”¹¹

ENDNOTES

¹ <http://www.biologos.org.missionstatement>.

² “Is Adam A Teaching Model” *In The New Testament?* J. P. Versteeg (P & R, 1978) pp. 30-31.

³ <http://biologos.org/blog/after-inerrancy-evangelicals-and-the-bible-in-a-postmodern-age-p...> 6/28/2010.

⁴ R. C. Sproul, “The Case For Inerrancy: A Methodolical Analysis in God's Inerrant Word”, ed. W. Montgomery (Bethany Fellowship 1974) p. 253.

⁵ Robert Hanna, *A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament* (Baker, 1983), p. 357.

⁶ M. Barth, *Ephesians II, The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, 1960), p. 803.

⁷ H. Schlier, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* eds. G. Kittel, G. Friedrich (Eerdmans, 1976), p. 271.

⁸ C. Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (rpt. Revell, 1978), p. 388.

⁹ M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Soldier: an Exposition of Eph. 6:10-20* (Baker, 1977), p. 325.

¹⁰ G. Campbell-Morgan, *Living Message of the Books of the Bible II* (Revell, 1939), p. 162.

¹¹ J. W. Montgomery, “God's Inerrant Word”, p. 29.