

BONDAGE TO DEMONS...OR TO SIN? **A Critique of *The Bondage Breaker*, by Neil Anderson**

Neil Anderson's popularity has escalated in recent years, drawing crowds at various churches through his seminars. People are truly in need of counsel in their struggles with sin, and Anderson appears to provide the quick, efficient answers they seek. In his emphasis on spiritual warfare, he appears at first to be a welcome relief from the psychobabble that bombards the church at every side. However, does he truly break with the flawed psychological counseling model that strangles the church? Is his method a genuinely biblical model for sanctification, one that will deliver on its promise of freedom for believers? Let us inquire.

Anderson's Relationship to Psychotherapy

In the opening pages, this author wants us to know that he offers tried and true results based on *experience* rather than mere intellect standing alone:

"This book was not written by an academician who lacks experience on the battlefield. I have stood in the trenches for years, helping the victims of unspeakable abuse find release from the enemy of our souls." (7)

Anderson's experience "on the battlefield" informs us of a methodology that is rooted and grounded in spiritual warfare:

"...over 15 years ago the Lord began to direct me to Christians...who were in bondage to various forms of satanism and the occult...I began to meet many believers who were controlled by thought patterns, habits, and behaviors which blocked their growth.... I have concluded that Christians are woefully unprepared to deal with the dark world of Satan's kingdom or to minister to those who are in bondage to it." (11)

Explaining Ephesians 6:12, Anderson asserts that "...we must experience victory over the dark side before we can fully mature" (12). Indeed, most of this book centers around taking authority over the devil and his associates.

Emotional traumas. Meanwhile, psychotherapy is backstage. The modern psychological emphasis on childhood traumas, borrowed from Freud, returns to haunt us:

"The book deals with the foundational issues of your identity in Christ and outlines practical steps on how to live by faith, walk according to the Spirit, renew your mind, manage your emotions, and **resolve the emotional traumas of your past** through faith and forgiveness." (12, emphasis added)

This is a prime goal of psychotherapy--one we cannot support from Scripture, where the emphasis is on our being conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God.

Integration. The *integration* of psychology and theology is not specifically rejected by Anderson. Instead, his criticism is of the manner in which most of integration is attempted:

"Most attempts at integrating theology and psychology include only God and humanity (fallen and redeemed) and exclude the activity of Satan and demons." (28)

In using the phrase "most attempts," Anderson implies the possibility that *some* attempt at such integration might succeed, if the activity of Satan and demons were taken into account. He ignores the more fundamental question of *whether any attempt at integration should be attempted*. This basic question involves considering whether God's pure, sufficient Word is compatible in any sense with the so-called "wisdom" of godless men (Freud, Jung, Erikson, Ellis, Fromm, etc.) who offer a counterfeit sanctification.

Unconscious determinism. Also lurking beneath the surface is the thought that man's attitudes and actions are in some mysterious manner *determined* in an *unconscious or subconscious* fashion:

"Nothing is more foundational to your freedom from Satan's bondage than understanding and affirming what God has done for you in Christ and who you are as a result. We all live in accordance with our perceived identity.... Your attitudes, actions, responses, and reactions to life's circumstances are **determined** by your conscious and **subconscious** self-perception." (42, emphasis added)

Important as it is to know, understand, and affirm the work of Christ, the focus on an unconsciously determined identity is immersed in the unbiblical presuppositions of psychotherapy.

Self-worth, self-esteem, self-image. How rarely do we escape these concepts! Only in the twentieth century, under the ungodly influence of modern psychologists, has the church become enamored of building up self. Anderson doesn't draw us away from this unbiblical theme. He begins an account of one woman's story by saying that:

"Memories of ritual and sexual abuse that she suffered as a young child have haunted her continually throughout her Christian life. When she came to see me her **damaged self-image** seemed beyond repair.... Satan had deceived her into believing she was worthless and evil, which was a lie."
(41, emphasis added)

This is not an isolated incidence of Anderson's belief in the critical importance of self-worth. He claims elsewhere that pornography will be less a temptation if "your legitimate need to be loved and accepted was met by caring parents who also protected you from exposure to illegitimate means of establishing your identity and worth" (126). This sort of thinking implies that sin and righteousness somehow depend on whether one's "needs" are met. The "need" for self-worth is not one that Scripture upholds anywhere.

Still later in the book, Anderson states his belief that "self-depreciation" is "one of the most common attitudes" he has observed among Christians (141). He is:

"...amazed at how many Christians are paralyzed in their witness and productivity by thoughts and feelings of inferiority and worthlessness.... In Christ we are important, we are qualified, we are good. Satan can do absolutely nothing to alter our position in Christ and our worth to God. But he can render us virtually inoperative if he can deceive us into listening to and believing his insidious lies accusing us of being of little value to God or other people." (141)

"Satan is not your judge; he is merely your *accuser*...when Satan's **accusations of unworthiness** attack you, don't pay attention to them." (144, emphasis added)

Satan is described in the Bible as the accuser of the brethren, but God does not say that he accuses believers of failing to see how good they really are. Rather, he is likely to accuse them of actual sins...but those sins are covered by the blood of Christ, and *that is why* there is no condemnation for those in Him (Romans

8:1). Anderson notes that the believer is not judicially condemned, but also: "You are not worthless; Jesus gave His life for you" (146). He is correct about the lack of judicial condemnation, but it is Christ's work and merit that grounds the believer's justification, not one's own worth. On the contrary, the amazing fact is that *Christ died for the ungodly* (Romans 5:8).

At numerous points, Anderson seems to borrow from the Rational-Emotive Behavior therapy of atheist Albert Ellis, a counseling model that reduces everything to the power of thoughts. Anderson considers deception "a prevailing theme in the New Testament which capsulizes the opposition we face in Satan," but describes that deception in terms of negative self-talk and feelings of worthlessness in believers (153-154). Where does the Bible define deception in this manner? Nowhere. Anderson reads it onto the text.

Finally, lack of self-worth is presented by Anderson as one evidence for demonic attack:

"False self-concepts are very common in people under demonic attack.... Almost all feel unloved, worthless, and rejected. They have tried everything they can think of to improve their self-image, but nothing works." (215)

This is a dangerous substitute for examination of one's life in terms of God's Word, in order to put off sin and put on godliness.

Openness to psychotherapy. Anderson's general approval of psychotherapy can be gleamed from several revealing passages in his writing. For example:

"When we boldly and humbly exercise the authority that Christ has conferred upon us over the spiritual realm, we experience the freedom from bondage which Christ promised (John 8:32). It's **usually a freedom that secular counseling can't produce....**" (72, emphasis added)

Does this imply that secular counseling may *sometimes* provide the freedom that believers are seeking in the spiritual realm? Since there is no further qualification, it apparently does.

Anderson's failure to warn against psychotherapy is even more evident when, prior to enumerating his steps to freedom, Anderson says that:

"Many Christian counseling ministries around the world are using these steps to freedom with their clients **in addition to any personal therapy required.**" (187, emphasis added)

This leaves no room for doubt as to whether or not Anderson approves of professional psychological counseling for Christians. Obviously he does. But he wavers between two opinions when he says that:

"Any activity or group which denies Jesus Christ, offers guidance through any source other than the absolute authority of the written Word of God, or requires secret initiations must be forsaken." (187)

If Anderson were truly consistent with his own statement, he would need to rule out both psychotherapy and 12-step groups, but he does not. Either he is totally ignorant of the roots of these counseling models, or he is highly deceived, or perhaps inconsistent in his train of thought on the issue.

Elsewhere, Anderson not only borrows the Freudian (and highly unbiblical) idea of "defense mechanisms," but blatantly upholds the need for "professional help" while inconsistently, at the same time, claiming Christ is the "one defense" for believers:

"Choosing the truth may be difficult if you have been living a lie for many years. You may need to seek **professional help** to weed out the **defense mechanisms** you have depended upon all this time to survive. The Christian needs only one defense: Jesus." (190-191, emphasis added)

Anderson not only condones psychotherapy as legitimate. He also mentions the 12-step approach without any warning of its unbiblical concepts and practices. After stating that "lying is an evil **defense** prompted by the father of lies, Satan (John 8:44)" (191, emphasis added), he notes the slogan on an AA brochure and says that:

"Satan's lies are at the heart of addictive behavior. The spiritual side of addictive behavior cannot be overlooked." (191)

Alcoholics Anonymous doesn't overlook the "spiritual side" of so-called "addictive" behaviors. However, its teachings are not those of the *Holy Spirit*, and lying is not merely a "defense." Anderson's favorable mention of this pagan program, without

further qualification, leaves the impression that he approves of it.

"Mental illness/health." These are terms that need to be flatly rejected by anyone who desires to address sin and sanctification biblically. But Anderson embraces them wholly:

"A true knowledge of God and our identity in Christ is the greatest determinant of our **mental health**. A false concept of God and the misplaced deification of Satan are the greatest contributors to **mental illness**." (186, emphasis added)

"A **mentally healthy** person is one who is in touch with reality and relatively free of anxiety. Both qualities should epitomize the Christian who renounces deception and embraces the truth." (190, emphasis added)

Truly the knowledge of God is important. However, defining "mental health" and "mental illness" in such terms does not validate these confusing concepts borrowed from the psychotherapeutic medical model that redefines sin as disease.

Psychological forgiveness. Psychologists claiming a "Christian" approach to counseling often speak about the importance of forgiveness. We can agree as to importance, but psychology mutilates the nature and purpose of forgiveness. Anderson, unfortunately, follows suit.

He does so by making *self*, rather than the other person who has sinned, the focal point:

"Forgiveness deals with **your pain**, not another's behavior. Remember: Positive feelings will follow in time; **freeing yourself from the past** is the critical issue." (197, emphasis added)

"You don't forgive someone merely for their sake; you do it for *your* sake so you can be free. Your need to forgive isn't an issue between you and the offender; it's between you and God." (195)

"How do you forgive from the heart? First you acknowledge the hurt and the hate. If your forgiveness doesn't visit the **emotional core of your past**, it will be incomplete." (195, emphasis added)

Scripture never describes the purpose of forgiveness in terms of relieving one's own "pain." Such a view is diametrically opposed to biblical commands to compassionately forgive others as God has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32, for example).

Another error, following in psychological footsteps, is the unbiblical counsel to *forgive self*:

"Why might you need to forgive yourself? Because when you discovered that you can't blame God for your problems, you blamed yourself." (196)

Nowhere does the Bible ever command us to forgive ourselves. When problems have truly resulted from the sins of others, Scripture exhorts us to go and restore those others--not to focus on pain and "forgive yourself."

Repressed memories. This topic is a subject of much controversy and has created huge amounts of devastation both in and out of the church. Anderson doesn't warn us about the possibility of creating false memories in therapy, or about the dangers of relying on "recovered" memories. Instead, he views "repression" as a great gift from God:

"I used to think that Satan blocked the memories of sexual and ritual-abuse victims, but now I believe it is God who blocks those memories until the person has progressed to the point of being able to process traumatic past events." (219)

In addition to repressed memories, Anderson also acknowledges the erroneous "multiply personality" concept so often promoted in connection with memories supposedly "recovered" in therapy. He says that most of his counseling is with victims of sexual or satanic ritual abuse (219), explaining that:

"I really don't see how counselors who are ignorant of Satan's strongholds in the mind can have complete success with such a person. Such people often need many counseling sessions before they can walk free of bondage. Their self-concept and belief in God have been severely damaged. Many have the added neurological problem of **an alternate personality which was created as a defense mechanism** to help them cope with the atrocities they suffered." (219, emphasis added)

Both "repressed memories" and "alternate personalities" are concepts inconsistent with a biblical approach to giving counsel.

Conclusion. In view of the selected quotations, we cannot doubt Anderson's openness to psychotherapy, even though his methodology primarily revolves around demonic oppression.

Anderson's Departure from Psychotherapy?

Although Anderson's approval of psychotherapy can be gleaned from a careful reading of *The Bondage Breaker*, there are points at which he appears to depart from it. These points should be noted and read in light of what we have already examined.

In two of his six "misconceptions about bondage," Anderson appears to reject the worldview underlying the practice of psychotherapy. First, he warns against believing that "what the early church called demonic activity we now understand to be mental illness" (19). He rightly rejects the secular worldview that refuses to acknowledge the presence of the supernatural:

"We should not be surprised that secular psychologists limited to a natural worldview supply only natural explanations for mental problems." (20)

But don't get too excited. He doesn't *entirely* reject the worldview and presuppositions of the godless field of modern psychology. He sees it as merely *incomplete*:

"Research based on the scientific method of investigation of human spiritual problems is not wrong; it's just incomplete. It ignores the influence of the spiritual world because neither God nor the devil submit to our methods of investigation." (20)

It is Anderson's critique that is incomplete. We must reject the entire edifice on which modern psychology is constructed. Freud and others presupposed *atheism* in their speculations about the nature of man, who is *the image of God*. The errors that result are not minor! (This topic is beyond the scope of this paper; see "Exposing the Roots" series, particularly the introduction.)

A second misconception is that:

"Some problems are psychological and some are spiritual. This misconception implies a division between the human soul and spirit, which does not exist." (20)

Anderson believes that all conflicts have both psychological (involving the mind, will, emotions) and spiritual dimensions (20). He warns against a sharp division that skews one's counseling ministry to one extreme or another:

"The tendency is to polarize into a deliverance ministry, ignoring the realities of the physical realm, or a psychotherapeutic ministry, ignoring the spiritual realm."
(20)

There are various views on whether one should divide the human soul from the spirit. I agree with Anderson that these should not be divided (see more detailed discussion in Discernment's critique of Charles Solomon). A trichotomous view of man opens a wide door to psychotherapy; it implies a division in man's problems requiring two different solutions (God's Word for the spirit, man's therapy for the soul). This quote, however, implies that a psychotherapeutic ministry might be successfully *integrated with* a ministry that acknowledges the spiritual realm.

In further discussion of worldviews--a critical issue--Anderson describes the "two-tier worldview" of the Western world (28-29), contrasting it with the eastern worldview, where the influence of spiritual forces on everyday, physical reality is recognized (28). The lower of the two tiers is the empirical world of the senses, understood through science. The upper is the transcendent world of God and spiritual forces, known through "religion and mysticism" (28). In between is an "excluded middle," "the real world of spiritual forces active on earth" (29). The two realms are assumed to be unaffected by one another (28). However, Anderson believes that we dare not exclude the "excluded middle" where the kingdom of darkness is active (29). Most Christians, he believes, fail to adequately consider the supernatural in their worldview:

"By doing so they not only exclude God's power from their theology and practice but they also explain all human failure...as the result of psychological or natural causes."
(31)

Anderson even asserts that *many*, though by no means *all*, physical symptoms battled by Christians involve a spiritual element (31).

The separation of physical and spiritual realms is a culprit we can trace back to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. We do, indeed, need to acknowledge God's providential care and

sovereignty over both the physical and the spiritual, the visible and invisible. However, we must reject the pantheistic eastern worldview, where Creator and creation supposedly merge. We must also look carefully at *how* the physical and spiritual interact, along with implications for giving godly counsel. Anderson focuses excessively on how demonic spiritual powers influence the believer. To be sure, the Bible informs us of the existence of these entities. However, Scripture also has much to say about the very real *spiritual* problem of man's sin. Anderson's recognition of the spiritual realm does not necessitate all of the conclusions he draws about how demons may work in the lives of Christians. His particular view of spiritual warfare is not the only alternative to a secular, materialistic psychotherapy. In fact, his focus on demonic activity does not necessarily require a full rejection of the godless systems of modern psychology.

Anderson's View of Sin: Did the Devil Make You Do It?

Anderson, responding to this very question, would answer no:

"I never tolerate someone saying, 'The devil made me do it.' No, he didn't make you do it; *you* did it." (179)

But later on the same page, he says that:

"Many Christians today who **cannot control** their lives in some area wallow in self-blame instead of acting responsibly to solve the problem.... Anything bad which you **cannot stop** doing, or anything good which you **cannot** make yourself do, could be an area of **demonic control**." (179, emphasis added)

Did the devil make you do it, or didn't he? Anderson seems inclined to blame demons as a matter of fault, not wanting to assign responsibility either to God or to the individual:

"Those who say a demon cannot control an area of a believer's life have left us with only two possible culprits for the problems we face: ourselves or God. If we blame ourselves we feel hopeless because **we can't do anything to stop** what we're doing. If we blame God our confidence in Him as our benevolent Father is shattered. Either way, we have no chance to gain the victory which the Bible promises us."
(174, emphasis added)

This statement implies that the only "chance to gain the victory" promised in Scripture is to blame demonic control for the sinful habits in our lives that we struggle to break.

Does this mean that we are defeated by acknowledging *our own sin*, our own responsibility in the matter? Anderson rightly sees that unbelievers are enslaved to sin, but that for Christians, Christ has broken the power of sin through His work on the cross (12). "Satan has no right of ownership or authority over us" (12). He believes, however, that many Christians live lives of quiet desperation, *in bondage* to "fear, anger, depression, habits you **can't** break, thoughts or inner voices you **can't** elude, or sinful behavior you **can't** escape" (14, emphasis added). Has Christ broken the power of sin or not? If so, are these problems of *sin* truly matters the believer *cannot* overcome, or is it a matter of progressive sanctification? Scripture assures victory and power over sin, resulting ultimately in a state of glorification in which the Christian is eternally free of sin and its effects (Romans 8:28-30). Believers are definitely set apart for holiness, no longer enslaved to and under the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14). Nevertheless, growth in godliness is a life-long process, not an instantaneous, easy transformation.

At points, Anderson sees this gradual *process* of sanctification. He recognizes that genuine believers face an ongoing battle, that while sin is no longer master in the life of a Christian, it is "still alive, strong, and appealing...memories, habits, conditioned responses, and thought patterns" are still there (45). Here is one summary of the continuing struggle:

"When you became a Christian...your old fleshly habits and patterns weren't erased; they are still a part of your flesh which must be dealt with on a daily basis." (53)

Repetition of sin, prior to salvation, may leave the new believer with much to be overcome:

"Some fortresses [2 Corinthians 10:3-5]...of bad habits and sinful thought patterns were established when you learned to live your life independently of God." (52)

"Repeated acts form a habit, and if you exercise a sinful habit long enough, a stronghold will be established in your mind. Once a stronghold is established you have lost the ability to control your behavior in that area." (54)

To be sure, sin is *enslaving*, and sinful habits are difficult even for a Christian to break. It is also true that Scripture warns about the reality of spiritual warfare (more later):

"Even though our eternal destiny is secure and the armor of God is readily available, we are still vulnerable to Satan's accusations, temptations, and deceptions." (99)

We can agree with Anderson that the realm of wicked spiritual beings is one major area of concern, along with the world and the flesh. Anderson's focus on demonic power, however, is one that minimizes the other two areas and tends to obscure personal responsibility for sin.

This skewed perspective is evident when we consider how Anderson divides the Christian population in terms of "several levels of spiritual freedom and bondage" (107). He believes that only about 15% of the Christian community lives free of such bondage (107). This leaves the majority of Christian (85%!) enslaved to, or even possessed by, demonic influences. More than one-half (65%) of all believers (107), according to Anderson, are secretly in bondage:

"...a believer may lead a fairly normal Christian life on the outside while wrestling with a steady barrage of sinful thoughts on the inside: lust, envy, greed, hatred, apathy, etc." yet "have no idea that they are in the middle of a spiritual conflict." (107)

Another 15%, he claims, struggle with inner "voices" (107-108):

"Most of these people are depressed, anxious, paranoid, bitter, or angry, and they may have fallen victim to drinking, drugs, eating disorders, etc." (108)

Still another 5% have even more serious spiritual conflict:

"These people stay at home, wander the streets talking to imaginary people, or occupy beds in mental institutions or rehab units." (108)

Note carefully the outward symptoms: sinful thoughts, depression, anxiety, drunkenness, gluttony, and such. Scripture addresses all of these and more, but not as the direct working of demons in the lives of believers. *These are sins*, handled in the Bible through the "ordinary" ministry of the body of Christ, through the study and practice of God's Word, godly counsel of believers to one another, and accountability. Anderson doesn't reject these means altogether, but he discounts their effectiveness in favor of a rather dramatic, quick-fix method where one takes authority over various demons.

In Anderson's lengthy discussion of Romans 7:14-25, he relates a dialogue with a young man struggling with sin. He sees indwelling sin as an *separate entity* dwelling in the believer (50-51). His counsel is not to *blame*, or condemn (Romans 8:1-2) yourself for your inability to live the Christian life (52). While certainly there is no eternal condemnation for those who are in Christ, as Romans 8:1-2 states, Anderson *separates sin from the person who commits that sin*, such that we can almost picture *sin itself* here as some sort of demon. He seems to personify sin in this discussion. This separation of sin from the sinner is not particularly helpful; it merely erases guilt. Only by the introduction of demons, supposedly the culprits when a believer sins, can Anderson make this work. Scripture, however, repeatedly exhorts Christians to *put off* ungodly behaviors and to *put on* the qualities of righteousness...not to put off demons! Personal responsibility is very much a part of the picture. The Holy Spirit, having given new life to the believer (regeneration), provides the power for this ongoing process of sanctification.

Self. Anderson notes, rightly, that "the center of the secular worldview is self" (32). Accordingly, "...Satan's primary aim is to promote self-interest as the chief end of man" (33). Christianity turns this self-centered focus upside down:

"But the Christian worldview has a different center. Jesus confronts our humanistic, self-serving grids and offers the view from the cross." (33)

"Satan's ultimate lie is that you are capable of being the god of your own life, and his ultimate bondage is getting you to live as though his lie is truth." (39)

Anderson traces man's self-serving motives back to the fall of Adam and the influence of Satan:

"Adam was the first mortal to entertain the notion that he could 'be like God' (Genesis 3:5), which is the essence of the self-centered secularistic worldview that Satan promotes.... The diabolical idea that man is his own god is the heartbeat of the Satan-inspired secularistic worldview and the primary link in the chain of spiritual bondage to the kingdom of darkness." (34)

It seems a welcome contrast with many of today's self-esteem teachings when Anderson says that:

"If you desire to live in freedom from the bondage of the world, the flesh, and the devil, this primary link in the chain must be smashed." (35)

Here Anderson cites the words of our Lord in Matthew 16:24-27, calling for the denial of self to follow Christ and build up His kingdom.

These quotes seem to place Anderson well outside the popular self-esteem movement that ravages the church today. However, look back at the first section of this paper. There it is evident that Anderson emphasizes "damaged self concept," feelings of unworthiness, self-deprecation, and the like. This emphasis, inconsistent with the comments above, seriously weakens Anderson's view of sin.

Self-deception. Anderson notes, from Scripture, several common patterns of sinful self-deception:

(1) Hearing God's Word but not doing it; see James 1:22 and 1 Peter 1:13 (155). Anderson notes that sometimes people publicly condemn the very sins they commit in private (155). Then he asks: "Why are we so afraid to admit it when our lives don't completely match up to Scripture? I believe it's because many of us have a perfection complex." (155)

(2) Saying we have no sin; see 1 John 1:8 (156). "We are not sinless saints; we are saints who occasionally sin." (156) "Unacknowledged sin is like a cancer which will grow to consume us." (156)

(3) Thinking we are something that we are not; see Romans 12:3 and Galatians 6:3 (156). Anderson says that the Christian is "very special in the eyes of God" but his life, possessions, and accomplishments are all "expressions of God's grace" (157).

(4) Thinking we are wise in this age; see 1 Corinthians 3:18-19 (157). "Whenever we think we can outsmart Satan on our own, we are prime candidates to be led astray by his craftiness. However, Satan is no match for God." (157)

(5) Thinking we are religious but not bridling our tongue; see James 1:26 (157). "There is nothing that grieves God more than when we bad-mouth people instead of building them up with our speech." (157)

(6) Thinking we won't reap what we have sown; see Galatians 6:7 (157). We have to "live with the results and consequences of our thoughts, words, and actions" (158).

(7) Thinking that the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God; see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (158). "Living a brazenly sinful life is strong evidence of an unrighteous standing before God. This is not a works gospel; it is a manner of identifying true disciples by their fruit." (158)

(8) Thinking we can associate with bad company and not be corrupted; see 1 Corinthians 15:33 (158). Although we need to minister to unbelievers, it is dangerous to "immerse ourselves in their environment" (158).

These are indeed sinful patterns. Unfortunately, however, Anderson's overarching focus is on the power and influence of demonic powers rather than on assuming responsibility for sinful acts and the attitudes he describes here.

Temptation. Anderson notes that many believers struggle with the distinction between *temptation* and *actual sin* (125). He explains further that:

"When we were born again we became spiritually alive, but our flesh, that collection of ingrained, self-centered habits and patterns which we learned when we were spiritually dead, remains to contest our commitment to walk in the Spirit. The essence of temptation is the enticement to **have legitimate human needs** met through the resources of the world, the flesh, and the devil instead of through Christ (Philippians 4:19). Every temptation is an invitation to live independently of God." (126, emphasis added)

Sometimes, a legitimate need, such as food, may escalate into a sin, such as gluttony. However, the author of James would disagree with Anderson about the essential character of temptation as an attempt to meet legitimate needs through illegitimate means. Rather, James tells us that each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by *his own lusts* (James 1:13). The difference here is not minor.

Concerning Satan's temptations, Anderson says that:

"He treats us like the proverbial frog in the pot of water: gradually turning up the heat of temptation, hoping we don't

notice that we are approaching the boundary of God's will, and jump out before something good becomes sin." (127)

Anderson talks here about taking what is basically good and lawful, but allowing it go to excess and become sin (127). He notes the "three channels of temptation" as listed in 1 John 2:15-17, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life (129). These appeal to: physical appetites, self-interest, and self-exaltation (129). Satan is watching you, Anderson says:

"...looking for soft spots of vulnerability in your physical appetites for food, rest, comfort, and sex. Temptation is greatest when hunger, fatigue, and loneliness are acute." (131)

Anderson says that the lust of the flesh "is designed to draw us away from the will of God to serve the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17)" (131). As an example, eating is legitimate, but it can become sinful gluttony; Adam ate what God had forbidden him to eat.

"When Satan tempts you through the channel of the lust of the flesh, he will invite you to fulfill your physical needs in ways that are outside the boundary of God's will." (132)

Again the focus is on *needs*. Some physical needs are related to a particular sin (food/gluttony), but this is not always true. Sexual immorality involves a lust of flesh but not a physiological *need*. Drunkenness is another fleshly lust, but again, no physical *need* is present.

The lust of the eyes can subtly lead one into an idolatrous trust in something or someone other than the Lord:

"The lust of the eyes subtly draws us away from the Word of God and eats away at our confidence in God. We see what the world has to offer and desire it above our relationship with God. We begin to place more credence in our own perspective of life than in God's commands and promises." (132)

It may well involve greed, coupled with a view that makes God into a servant subject to our command:

"Wrongly assuming that God will withhold nothing good from us, we lustfully claim prosperity... The righteous shall live by faith in the written Word of God and not demand that God prove Himself in response to our whims or wishes, no matter how noble they may be." (133)

Finally, temptation involves pride:

"The third channel of temptation is at the heart of the New Age movement: the temptation to direct our own destiny, to rule our own world, to be our own god." (134)

Anderson says that when Adam and Eve yielded to Satan's temptation:

"They fell from their position of rulership with God, and Satan became the god of this world by default--exactly as he had planned." (134)

Our disobedience is often similar:

"The temptation of the pride of life is intended to steer us away from the worship of God and destroy our obedience to God by urging us to take charge of our own lives." (134)

Adam's sin certainly involved the pride of life, as well as the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes. Satan is sometimes called the "god of this world" in Scripture. Meanwhile, a look at the first two chapters of Job reveals clearly that the devil remains always in subjection to the sovereign rule of God; he needed *permission* to afflict Job, and God allowed it--and strictly limited it!--solely in order to accomplish His purposes. Anderson is not always clear about the role of *God*, His sovereignty and His ability to use *even evil* (while never the author of sin) to accomplish His purposes. He did this most magnificently at the cross.

Some of Anderson's comments about temptation are biblical. The primary problem, however, is to tone down actual sin by suggesting that it is an attempt to meet *legitimate* human needs. That is not necessarily so, and a weak view of sin is the result.

Anderson's View of Sanctification

Anderson describes man as composed of two major parts, the physical body and the soul or spirit (43). He correctly notes that every person is born physically alive but spiritually dead (43). When regeneration occurred, "your soul/spirit was united with God and you came alive spiritually" (43). The believer thus possesses eternal life right now (43).

Anderson states his central theme in *The Bondage Breaker* to be *freedom* (12), as promised to believers in Galatians 5:1. In context, this freedom is from a salvation attained through keeping of the law, as well as freedom from sin (5:13-14). The freedom Anderson promotes is a freedom from demonic oppression. Of course, Christ did set believers free from the power of Satan; He transferred them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13). But sanctification is described in Scripture as freedom from the power of *sin*.

Saint or sinner? Anderson notes that Christians often describe themselves as "sinners saved by grace" (44), but he believes this perception contributes to defeated living (44):

"The Bible doesn't refer to believers as sinners, not even sinners saved by grace. Believers are called saints--holy ones--who occasionally sin." (44)

Anderson's emphasis, in the area of sanctification, is *how we see ourselves*. Here is a brief summary of his view:

"We become saints at the moment of salvation (justification) and live as saints in our daily experience (sanctification) as we continue to believe what God has done and as we continue to affirm who we really are in Christ." (44)

Furthermore, he states that, as a believer, "you are a partaker of the divine nature" (44). He correctly notes that Christians are neither divine nor sinless (45), yet are *new creations* according to 2 Corinthians 5:17, "primarily the work of Christ on the cross" (53).

"You had a sinful nature before your conversion, but now you are a partaker of Christ's divine nature.... You sin when you choose to act independently of God." (45)

Anderson distinguishes between biblical promises (to be claimed), commandments (to be obeyed), and truths (to be believed). He places Romans 6:1-11 in the category of *truth*, saying that:

"You cannot die to sin because you are already dead; you can only believe it." (46)

Many, he says, struggle fruitlessly "to do something that has already been done" by attempting to die to sin (46). Romans 6:12-13 gives instructions based on truths stated in verses 1-11 (47).

One of the major problems with Anderson's view of sanctification is his emphasis on who-you-really-are and how-you-see-yourself. For example, he brings this in when he speaks about conviction:

"Every Christian is faced with the choice of walking by the Spirit or by the flesh on a daily basis. The moment you choose to walk according to the flesh, the Holy Spirit brings conviction because what you have just chosen to do is not compatible with **who you really are**. If you continue in the flesh you will feel the sorrow of conviction." (146, emphasis added)

The biblical focus is on who *Jesus Christ* is and how we see *Him*, along with the fact that we are *in Christ* and now live *for Him*. The believer's conviction is based primarily on the fact that sin dishonors God rather than incompatibility with his own identity. Today's psychological mindset turns things upside down, with self at the center instead of the Lord. While Anderson rightly identifies some of the problems associated with self, he doesn't affirm a fully biblical view here.

Is the Christian a saint...or a sinner...or both? Certainly the New Testament refers to all believers as saints, set apart to belong to God and to be sanctified through the work of His Spirit. There is indeed a radical break from the sphere and dominion of sin. Sanctification thus has a definitive, once-for-all aspect as well as the progressive element we see so often in Scripture. In eternal glory, sin will be fully eradicated and believers will no longer be sinners; glorification is a promised blessing (Romans 8:29-30). In this life, however, the term "sinner" still applies. It is *sinners* whom Christ came to save, and the apostle Paul referred to himself as the *chief of sinners* (1 Timothy 1:15). We must guard carefully against tipping the balance to one extreme or the other. On the one hand, we cannot expect anything close to sinless perfection in this life. At the same time, we need not despair; progress may be joyfully anticipated and realized.

Denying self. Earlier, we saw how Anderson describes man's sin problem in terms of *self*. He devotes some space to the subject of Christ's call to deny self and follow Him. Anderson distinguishes between denying self and self-denial:

"Denying yourself is not the same as self-denial." (35)

"...the ultimate purpose of self-denial is self-promotion."
(36)

It is true that some forms of "self-denial" do nothing for the cause of Christ, but rather tend to puff up self (Colossians 2:20-23). The motives of the heart, not merely the outward actions, are critical to the distinction.

Anderson goes on to describe denying oneself in terms of submission to God:

"Jesus was talking about denying yourself in the essential battle of life: the scramble for the throne, the struggle over who is going to be God.... When you deny yourself, you invite God to take the throne of your life, to occupy what is rightfully His, so that you may function as a person who is spiritually alive in Christ." (36)

"The cross we are to pick up on a daily basis is not our own cross but *Christ's* cross" (36). Anderson notes our union with Christ in His death and resurrection, that "we are both justified and sanctified as a result of the cross" (36). Picking up the cross means "to acknowledge every day that we belong to God," and to "affirm our identity is not based in our physical existence but in our relationship to God" (36).

The power to deny oneself must come from God, not from fleshly efforts:

"Seeking to overcome self by self-effort is a hopeless effort. Self will never cast out self, because an independent self motivated by the flesh still wants to be God." (37)

Much of this we could agree with. *Self*, indeed, is a major problem; Jesus calls the Christian to deny himself and to be willing to lose his own life for the sake of the kingdom. However, Anderson also states that while Jesus has already won the battle and occupies the throne, He "graciously offers to share it with us" (36). Some Scriptures *do* speak about us ruling and reigning with Christ (Revelation 20:6). Anderson's interpretation of our position is one that calls for taking authority over demons, even to the point of giving *verbal* commands to the devil and his hosts. As we will see later, this is a questionable application of the biblical texts about our position in Christ. Yet another problem is the excessive focus on *identity*. While Anderson talks about the need to deny self for Christ, this dethroned self sneaks in through the back door when he centers so heavily on affirming one's identity.

Forgiveness. This critical area is one that Anderson rightly emphasizes. Considering Paul's warning in Ephesians 4:26-27, we could agree with Anderson's statement that:

"Much of the ground that Satan gains in the lives of Christians is due to unforgiveness." (194)

Anderson make some good comments about God giving us mercy, rather than what we deserve (194), and rightly says that His promise to "remember no more" means He "will never use the past against us" (194). He appears to improve on much modern psychology when he says that:

"Forgiveness is a choice, a crisis of the will. Since God requires us to forgive, it is something we can do. (He would never require us to do something we cannot do.)" (195)

"Don't wait to forgive until you feel like forgiving; you will never get there. Feelings take time to heal after the choice to forgive is made and Satan has lost his place (Ephesians 4:26-27)." (197)

Contrary to most psychologized views of forgiveness, we need not wait until we "feel like it" to forgive others as God commands. (Beware of the comment that God would never require us to do something we cannot do. That subject is beyond the scope of this paper, but Scripture teaches [Romans 8:7-8] that unbelievers are both unwilling and *unable* to do what God requires. The Christian, however, has the Holy Spirit providing the power to obey.)

Anderson points out the need to bear the consequences of another person's sin, whether or not you grant forgiveness:

"Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin...you're going to live with those consequences whether you want to or not; your only choice is whether you will do so in the bitterness of unforgiveness or the freedom of forgiveness. That's how Jesus forgave you--He took the consequences of your sin upon Himself. All true forgiveness is substitutional, because no one really forgives without bearing the penalty of the other person's sin." (195)

This statement should be viewed with caution. Only Jesus Christ can bear the penalty for our sin, in terms of eternal consequences. We do live with the temporal consequences of the sins of others, but that is far different from the *penal*

substitution (bearing of sin's *penalty*) accomplished by Christ. Although our forgiveness of others is modeled in some sense after God's forgiveness, we never bear the *penalty* for another person's sin.

In another area, Anderson departs altogether from modeling human forgiveness on what God has done for us. The forgiveness of others that he recommends does not necessarily involve any actual contact with those persons. Rather, he asks the reader to pray for names to come to mind, of persons one needs to forgive:

"Make a list of all those who have offended you. Face the cross; it makes forgiveness legally and morally right. Since God has forgiven them, you can too." (196)

First of all, if the individual is an unbeliever, God *has not* forgiven him. Perhaps even more serious, however, is the failure to involve the person who has sinned. When God forgives, the person is always involved! Biblical teachings about forgiveness never focus on the benefits to self, as Anderson does, but rather focus on the gracious kindness extended to the sinner as well as reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24). This departure from biblical forgiveness characterizes the popular psychologized view. Anderson fails to improve on it.

Who is responsible? Earlier we saw some inconsistency in Anderson's view of responsibility. Sometimes he blames demons, other times he opts for individual responsibility. In describing the path to freedom, he highlights the responsibility of the person being counseled:

"Freedom lasts because, as in any counseling procedure, if the counselee makes the decisions and assumes personal responsibility, the results are far better than if the counselor attempts to do it all." (210)

At times, Anderson even makes the individual more responsible than God:

"God protection is conditional on your willingness to respond to God's provision." (179)

In Scripture, God's role is far stronger than this. Believers are *protected by the power of God* (1 Peter 1:5), yet exhorted to an active, responsible obedience (1 Peter 1:13-17). We are called to action *because* God is actively at work within us (Philippians

2:12-13). The agent for sanctification is the Holy Spirit, but He enables Christians to obey the commands of Scripture.

At points, Anderson gives more recognition to God's role, but again makes God dependent on man's initiative:

"God has not only declared us righteous, but He has removed our filthy garments of unrighteousness and clothed us with His righteousness. Notice that the change of wardrobe is something that *God* does, not we ourselves. In ourselves we don't have any garments of righteousness to put on that will satisfy God. He must change us in response to our submission to Him in faith." (144)

Sanctification is God's gracious work, a blessing promised to those He has called and justified. Indeed, it is *God* who makes the "change of wardrobe." However, Scripture does not represent sanctification as an *obligation* that God *must* perform in response to human initiative. Though not equal in all, nor perfect in this life in any one believer, sanctification is a blessing guaranteed to all those who are truly in Christ. Also, the biblical passages about being clothed with Christ's righteousness (Isaiah 61:10) are not so much about progressive sanctification as about the imputation of Christ's righteousness, an aspect of our justification.

How does it happen? Anderson focuses on resisting Satan, something that Scripture mentions in James 4:7. He wants to help believers break the vicious cycle of sin and confession:

"People who are caught in the sin-confess-sin-confess-sin-confess cycle eventually begin to lose hope that they can experience any real victory over sin.... We are correct in confessing our sin, but we have failed to follow the biblical formula which breaks the cycle: sin-confess-resist. We must resist Satan and command him to leave if we are going to experience victory over sin." (139)

The resistance to Satan in James 4:7 is preceded by a command to *submit to God*, and followed by a command to *draw near to God*. Anderson's focus on the demonic is somewhat truncated. Resistance must be accompanied by submission. Also, other passages of Scripture instruct the believer to *put off* the characteristics of the "old man" and to *put on* the qualities of Christ (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10). This disciplined practice of righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17) received far less attention from

Anderson than commanding the devil and his demons. Thus we have a poorly balanced view of the believer's sanctification.

Truth Encounter or Power Encounter?

Noting that many people have considered him an exorcist, Anderson replies:

"Helping others to freedom does not require the exercise of a special gift; it merely requires the application of **truth**." (205, emphasis added)

There are a variety of deliverance ministries to be found within the church today. Anderson distinguishes himself from many of them with his insistence on a **truth encounter** rather than a **power encounter**. He considers the following statement one major *misconception* about spiritual warfare:

"Freedom from spiritual bondage is the result of a power encounter with demonic forces." (22)

Anderson's "truth encounter" approach admittedly represents a change in direction from an earlier time in his ministry:

"Previously when I exposed a demonic influence in a counseling situation it would turn into a power encounter." (23)

"...the ultimate responsibility for spiritual freedom belongs to the individual believer, not an outside agent. It's not what you do as the counselor that counts; it's what the counselee believes, confesses, renounces, forgives, etc." (207)

"I no longer deal directly with demons at all, and I prohibit their manifestation. I only work with their victims.... Helping people understand the truth and assume personal responsibility for truth in their life is the essence of ministry." (208)

Anderson again points out that we are not looking for a power encounter, but truth:

"The Christian is to pursue the truth because power and authority are already inherent in him. Truth is what makes an encounter with Satan effective.... I will do everything I can to prevent Satan from manifesting himself and glorifying

himself through a power encounter. We are to glorify *God* by allowing *His* presence to be manifested in our encounters with demons." (209)

Much earlier in the book, Anderson emphasizes that "*truth* is the liberating agent...we are to pursue *truth*, not power" (23). It's what the person being counseled believes, not what the counselor either does or believes (23). Anderson cites John 8:32, 14:6, and 16:13 for support. We must not miss this emphasis on God's truth, even though Anderson's ministry is in many ways similar to numerous deliverance ministries that do utilize "power encounters."

Anderson acknowledges that behavior patterns can be *unlearned* through Bible study and counseling, but adds that:

"Some strongholds are anchored in demonic influences and spiritual conflicts from past and present mental assaults which lock their victims in bondage. These people need to be freed from the shackles of Satan's lies by **God's truth.**" (54, emphasis added)

Aside from the issue of counseling (whether Anderson refers to godly counsel based on Scripture or the ungodly methods of psychotherapy), Anderson implies that the "ordinary" means God has provided--through His Word, His Spirit, and His body, the church--are not really enough. If God's truth is truly sufficient (and it is--see 2 Peter 1:3-4), then why belabor the focus on demons? Has Anderson truly rejected the power encounter approach, or do remnants of it survive in his counseling methods?

Anderson does warn against excessive interest in evil:

"We are not to be demon-centered; we are to be God-centered and ministry-centered." (102)

However, Anderson *does* focus on the demonic, not only in helping people change, but in his view of the origin of their struggles with sin. There is quote after quote concerning Satan's use of the *mind* and *thoughts* to keep people in bondage. Satan supposedly:

"...can block your effectiveness as a Christian if he can deceive you into believing that you are nothing but a product of your past, subject to sin, prone to failure, and controlled by your habits." (12)

"You are free in Christ, but if the devil can **deceive you into believing you're not**, you won't experience the freedom which is your inheritance. I don't believe in instant maturity, but I do believe in instant freedom, and I have seen thousands of people set free by the truth." (12, emphasis added)

"Romans 7:23 and 8:5-7 show that the center of all spiritual bondage is the mind." (52)

"Satan is the ruler of this world, but he is no longer *our* ruler [Colossians 1:13, Philippians 3:20], for Christ is our ruler. But as long as we live on the earth, we are still on Satan's turf. He will try to rule our lives by deceiving us into **believing that** we still belong to him." (99, emphasis added)

Although "he [Satan] can do nothing to disrupt your position in Christ," Anderson says that:

"...if he can get you to **believe that** you are not in Christ, you will live as though you are not in Christ, even though you are secure in Him" (83, emphasis added).

According to Anderson, control over thoughts means control over behavior as well:

"Satan's perpetual aim is to infiltrate your thoughts with his thoughts and to promote his lie in the face of God's truth. He knows that if he can control your thoughts, he can control your behavior.... He can introduce his thoughts, tempting you to act independently of God, as if they were your own thoughts or even God's thoughts." (53)

Anderson cites 1 Chronicles 21:1 (David), John 13:2 (Judas), Acts 5:3 (Ananias) (53). He notes the example of a young man who was listening to *his own subjective thoughts* as if they were God's thoughts (54).

Anderson uses the power of thoughts not only in explaining the origin of sin, but also in achieving freedom from its power. For example, he claims that the "way of escape" promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13 is specifically *in the mind* (138):

"The first step for escaping temptation is to apprehend every thought as soon as it steps through the doorway of your mind." (138)

Anderson describes three ways of responding to demonic influence. One way is to believe the lies (108). A second, but also unproductive, response is to argue with the demons (109). The third way is to ignore them, to "choose truth in the face of every lie" (109). This sounds biblical, but Anderson's whole methodology is so demon-centered that he can hardly claim to *ignore* the demons.

Where do emotions fit into this whole scheme? At times Anderson, unlike so many psychologists, places truth and action above feelings:

"Believe the truth and walk by faith according to what you believe, and then your feelings will line up with what you think and how you behave." (192)

Elsewhere, however, he gives emotion the upper hand:

"Most people in spiritual conflict have a distorted concept of God. **Mentally** they may have embraced correct theology, but **emotionally** they embrace something different...true concepts of God are filtered through a grid of negative experiences to produce false thoughts of God." (213, emphasis added)

This sounds like what we hear all too often from psychologists. Anderson is inconsistent. Part of his problem is seeing man as the primary agent for effecting change, *rather than the Holy Spirit* who creates a new heart in the believer, giving him both the desire and the ability to obey. Another problem is in too sharply dividing the inner man (thoughts, emotions, will, desires), such that one aspect or another is given priority and distortion results. There is a greater unity among these various aspects than Anderson is willing to grant.

We ought to turn once again to James 1:13, noting that we are tempted when we are carried away and enticed by *our own lusts*. Anderson's excessive focus on *thoughts*, and on what might be implanted by demonic powers, fails to give adequate consideration to other aspects of the inner man, such as the will and desires. It is true that Scripture is necessary and sufficient to correct our thoughts, to discern whether or not those thoughts are consistent with God's Word. Anderson rightly notes Philippians 4:8 as a biblical standard for evaluation of our thoughts, to determine which ones to act on and which ones to dismiss (138). We dare not bypass the intellect. However, thoughts are not the

only means of initiating sin, nor is the mind the sole arena of spiritual battle. Thoughts are also not the solitary means of overcoming sin but are rather part of a bigger picture.

Vocal commands to Satan? Anderson makes the following observation about the devil:

"The two most common misconceptions about Satan are that he can read your mind and that he knows the future." (84)

Since Satan cannot read your thoughts, Anderson says "you must defeat Satan by speaking out," giving a *vocal* command (85). Otherwise, he cannot hear you, and is not obligated to obey:

"...Satan will be defeated only if you confront him verbally. He is under no obligation to obey your thoughts. Only God has complete knowledge of your mind." (186)

Here is one prayer that Anderson recommends:

"I believe that Satan and his demons are subject to me in Christ because I am a member of Christ's body (Ephesians 1:19-23). I therefore obey the command to resist the devil (James 4:7), and **I command him in the name of Christ** to leave my presence." (193, emphasis added)

Where does Anderson find biblical support for his insistence on a *vocal* command directed to Satan? He claims it from Ephesians 6. In discussing the sword of the Spirit (verse 16), Anderson believes that "the Word of God" refers to the *spoken* Word rather than Jesus Christ as the personified Word (84). He bases this on the use of the Greek *rhema*, rather than *logos*, for word. Thus it is important, he states, to *speak* God's Word rather than merely *believing* and *thinking* it (84). He notes that Satan cannot perfectly read your thoughts, but can observe your behavior and have some idea of what you are thinking. Anderson believes that Satan "can put thoughts into your mind, and he will know whether you buy his lie by how you behave" (84).

This is a monumental conclusion to be drawn from a verse that never specifically says we are to give vocal commands to Satan. Nor is such an idea presented anywhere in the immediate context. Anderson bases his conclusion on one Greek word: *rhema*. Since most English readers don't read Greek, and would not be able to distinguish *rhema* from *logos*, Anderson seems to derive from this text an important theological conclusion that would be inaccessible to anyone who doesn't read Greek. Study of the

original languages is vitally important, but we must beware of conclusions, like this one, that would be wholly unknown by readers unfamiliar with those languages. This is particularly critical when the conclusion, like this one, has monumental implications for our growth in godliness! Let's look at this Greek word, *rhema*, and see if it in fact supports Anderson's theology.

The Greek word *rhema* certainly *may* be used of the spoken word, but is not necessarily *always* verbal in nature. *Both* *rhema* and *logos* can refer to the spoken word or a speech, to God's revelation as a whole (God's Word), or to a subject matter. (Both also have other uses not relevant to this discussion.) It should be noted that in at least one place where *rhema* is intended to reference verbal expression, the phrase □□□□.□□□□□□□□ (the *sound* of words) is used (Hebrews 12:19). 2 Peter 3:2 exhorts us to remember the words *spoken* by the prophets and apostles; in this context the word (*rhema*) is both verbal *and* written in the Scriptures. In 1 Peter 1, both *logos* (1:23) and *rhema* (1:25) are used with reference to the preached gospel. In Romans 10:8, the word (*rhema*) is in your mouth *and* in your heart, not one or the other. At times, translating *rhema* as spoken word would be absurd. In Ephesians 5:26, for example, Paul speaks of Christ cleansing His bride by the washing of water with the word (*rhema*). (This is the only other use of *rhema* in Ephesians.) We could go on for pages with this study. The point is that Paul's use of *rhema* rather than *logos* in Ephesians 6, with no further qualification and no specific exhortation (here or anywhere else) to give verbal commands to Satan, does not support Anderson's conclusion. He hangs his thesis on a thin thread.

An important insight on this issue is found in the book of Jude. Even the archangel Michael, disputing with Satan over the body of Moses, would not directly rebuke Satan. Instead, he said, *may the Lord* rebuke you (Jude 9). Michael was far more hesitant than Anderson in rebuking demonic entities, and Scripture commends his attitude. Also, a look at the Lord's Prayer, given by Jesus as instruction on *how* we are to pray, reveals that we are to ask *God* to deliver us from the evil one rather than giving direct commands to Satan.

Discernment. This important topic is one of Anderson's concerns, as it should be. We might agree with him that discernment is sadly lacking in the church today:

"True spiritual discernment is nearly a lost practice in evangelical churches. But in reality discernment should be our first line of defense against deception." (166)

We might also agree that the purpose of discernment is not self-serving:

"...discernment is never to promote self...discernment has only one function: to distinguish right from wrong so the right can be promoted and the wrong can be eliminated." (166)

"Satan's counterfeit for discernment is motivated by the desire to serve self instead of edify the church." (167)

Mere human reasoning is insufficient for discernment, and it is possible to be deceived yet not even know it:

"We are more vulnerable to Satan's deception than to any of his other schemes...when he deceives you, you don't always know it.... You cannot expose Satan's deception by human reasoning; you can only do it by God's revelation." (168)

So far, so good. Note carefully the last two words: God's revelation. Indeed, we need the infallible, sufficient Word of God to carefully discern between truth and error. But Anderson leads us in quite another direction:

"In the Western world our cognitive, left-brain orientation all but excludes discernment as our essential guide for navigating through the spiritual world." (168)

"Discernment is **not a function of the mind**; it's a function of the Holy Spirit which is in union with your soul/spirit." (166, emphasis added)

Anderson discusses the "deceiving spirits" mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1, claiming that they make "an inward impression" on our spirit just as God's voice does (165). He suggests a prayer that includes commanding the deceiving spirits to leave (165).

This bypassing of the mind, in favor of subjective inner impressions, is a dangerous substitute for truly biblical discernment. It is also inconsistent with Anderson's own emphasis on our thoughts! In Acts 17, the Bereans were commended for their discernment, because *they searched the Scriptures*. The human heart, corrupted by sin, *must* have the corrective revelation of God's Word in order to discern between truth and error. Human

reasoning by itself is insufficient; however, we understand God's Word using our *minds* in subjection to the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth. Anderson's perspective is an irrational substitute that can (and probably will) lead to grievous error.

False teachers and prophets. Anderson warns against counterfeit gifts of prophesy and tongues, urging believers to *test* them according to Scripture:

"I believe that false prophets and teachers flourish today simply because Christians accept their ministry without testing the spirits behind it." (160)

True prophets, he notes, always call people to godly living:

"If you come across someone who claims to be a prophet, but who is not involved in calling people to a righteous walk with God, you may be dealing with a counterfeit." (160)

"The voice of a prophet should be like a consuming fire and a shattering hammer." (161)

Anderson also notes that God warns about prophets "who value their dreams above His Word" (161). He says that "dreams must be validated and squared against God's Word; it's never the other way around" (161). He also warns against personalized messages claimed to be from God:

"If someone says to you 'God told me to tell you...' that person is functioning as a medium." (162)

Further caution is given, and rightly so, about the *false* "signs and wonders" spoken of in Scripture (Mark 13:22) (163). False teachers and prophets may arise even *within* the church, Anderson warns, based on 2 Peter 2:1:

"These people are in our churches right now, disguised as workers of righteousness." (163)

According to Anderson, the lure of false teachers is not doctrine, but outward appearances and charm (163). He states that false teachers are revealed by immorality, often involving sex and/or money (164). They may be antinomian, claiming that their sins do not matter because of God's grace (164). These people are also identified by their despising of authority and their independent spirit (164).

Most of this is good, although the lure of false teachers often *does* involve doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3). As noted earlier, discernment is crucial in our times. *That includes exercising discernment about Anderson's teachings.* Note Anderson's warnings about false teaching and his counsel to test everything against the Scripture. This warning should also be applied to his teachings. Some of what he says is biblical, but not all of it. It's a mixture requiring the careful exercise of biblical discernment.

Spiritual Warfare

We can agree with Anderson that believers are engaged in a spiritual battle, and that the devil and his associates are very real, personal entities at work in the world. We would also be in agreement that the work of Christ on the cross secured victory over Satan and his demons, even though the full, final victory remains in the future when Christ returns to usher in the eternal state.

Furthermore, Anderson rightly warns against involvement in the occult, consultation of mediums and spiritists, horoscopes, and the like (115ff). He sees the deceptive, counterfeit nature of the occult:

"The lure of the occult is almost always on the basis of acquiring knowledge or power.... We want to experience a power that is spiritual and supernatural in origin. In a sense these are God-given desires, but they are intended to be fulfilled by the knowledge and power which comes from *God*. However, Satan is busy trying to pass off his counterfeits for God's knowledge and power as the real thing." (114)

We can also agree with Anderson when he warns:

"When a psychic claims to have contacted the dead, don't believe it. When a psychologist claims to have regressed a client back to a former existence through hypnosis, don't believe it." (122)

The Bible does indeed issue strong warnings against occult activities such as divinization and attempts to contact the dead.

Despite these fundamental points of agreement, however, Anderson promotes many questionable ideas and practices in the arena of spiritual battle.

One of the basic problems is his use of anecdotes. Building a theology around personal counseling experiences is a dangerous venture. Such experiences are subject to *interpretation*. Anderson is rather quick to interpret problems of living in terms of demonic influence rather than personal sin. What results is an alluring methodology that promises speedy results, rather than the progressive, ongoing work of sanctification found in Scripture.

The nature of the devil and his demons. Anderson rightly affirms that Satan is "a created being" who "is not omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent" (100). However, he has demons to assist him (100).

Based on Luke 11:24-26, Anderson draws several conclusions about the nature of demonic entities:

1. "Demons can exist outside or inside humans." (103) Anderson also believes that they "may take territorial rights and associate with certain geographical locations" (103).
2. "They are able to travel at will...not subject to the barriers of the natural world." (103)
3. "They are able to communicate....with each other...to humans through a human subject." (103)
4. "Each one has a separate identity." (104) They are personalities rather than impersonal forces.
5. "They are able to remember and make plans." (104)
6. "They are able to evaluate and make decisions." (104) "Demons gain access to our lives through our points of vulnerability." (104)
7. "They are able to combine forces." (104)
8. "They vary in degrees of wickedness." (104)

Anderson also believes in a "four-level hierarchy of demonic rule under Satan mentioned in Ephesians 6:12" (101). These are: rulers (royal court), powers (host-level priests), world forces (legion-level priests), and spiritual forces (covens) (101). The text here doesn't rule out such a hierarchy, which *might* exist, but it also doesn't drive us necessarily to presume its existence. Scripture doesn't ever make a point of instructing us about differing levels of authority and power in the demonic realm. The

broad terminology (rulers, powers, forces) of Ephesians 6 leaves room for overlap. Many of Anderson's conclusions about the nature of demons are compatible with Scripture, but some of what he says is pure speculation, not to be taken as absolute truth.

How do demonic powers influence believers? Anderson says that before you came to know Christ, the devil "didn't bother with you because you were already part of his kingdom" (76). But now:

"He is still committed to foul up your life through his deception to 'prove' that Christianity doesn't work, that God's Word isn't true, and that nothing really happened when you were born again." (76)

Certainly, believers have been transferred to the other side of an ongoing spiritual battle (Colossians 1:13). Anderson is also correct when he acknowledges the uneven nature of the power in combat:

"Remember: You are not the helpless victim of a tug-of-war between two nearly equal heavenly superpowers.... Sometimes the reality of sin and the presence of evil may seem more real than the reality and presence of God, but that's part of Satan's deception." (186)

Indeed, God's ultimate victory is certain (see the entire book of Revelation!). Meanwhile, we must examine Anderson's view as to how demonic powers function in the lives of God's people today.

Anderson relates the story of a young woman who asked God for a "thorn in the flesh" such as Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 12 (30). He points out to her that this thorn was a "messenger of Satan," and thus the prayer was unscriptural (30). Perhaps it was, but we must also note that God *did not* remove the thorn. While we need not ask God for "thorns" or other trials, we cannot agree with Anderson's assumption that every "thorn" can necessarily be removed through his counseling methods. If God, in His wisdom, ordains the "thorn," as He did with Paul, it could be His will to let it be, so that His grace is magnified in our weakness. Furthermore, the nature of the thorn is not specified in the text, but we can safely assume that it was not *sin*, because we are promised both forgiveness and cleansing from unrighteousness when we turn to the Lord (1 John 1:9). Anderson believes that demons are the cause of *sin* in the lives of believers. Thus his view of the nature of the "thorn" (*sin*) differs from what is present in this passage. More likely, the "thorn" is similar to the trials inflicted on Job. God allowed

but also limited those trials. Sin is a *response* to trials, not an actual trial in and of itself.

The focus of Anderson's writing is on *sin* in the lives of believers, sin supposedly brought about by demonic influence. Anderson acknowledges that demons are not the only cause of sin:

"I'm not saying that every spiritual problem is the result of demonic activity. But you may be in bondage because you have overlooked or denied the reality of demonic powers at work in the world today." (14)

However, Anderson attributes certain types of sin to demonic activity. He speaks of individuals in counseling hearing conflicting voices inside their head, which he believes are demonic in origin (217). He insists that counselees always share with him what is happening to them internally during counseling (218). He assures counselees that such voices are *not their own* (218). In discussing suicidal individuals he has counseled, he states that "nearly all of them admitted to the presence of 'them'--inner urges or voices which badgered them, tempted and taunted them, accused them, or threatened them" (17). Other persons experience a lower level of oppression:

"Many other Christians I deal with don't complain about hearing voices as such, but their minds are filled with such confusion that their daily walk with Christ is unfulfilling and unproductive." (18)

Scripture does inform us of the presence and activity of demonic powers in the world. It would be fruitless to deny the reality of such personal, wicked beings. However, we also contend with the world and the flesh. It is not always possible to distinguish the origin of a particular problem. Scripture focuses more on our progressive sanctification, on putting off ungodliness and putting on the qualities of Christ, rather than identifying demons as the culprit. Centering excessively on the working of Satan draws us away from this important process of sanctification. Personal responsibility for sin is blurred when assurance is given that "internal voices" are not those of the person being counseled; sin arises from the *heart*.

"Demonized" or "demon-possessed?" It is interesting to note how Anderson views the working of demonic forces on an individual:

"It is important to understand that demonic influence is not an external force in the physical realm; it is the **internal**

manipulation of the central nervous system." (111, emphasis added)

Where is this in Scripture? This easily reduces sin to a physiological dysfunction rather than the moral problem that it is.

When Anderson enumerates what he considers misconceptions about spiritual warfare, he lists the following statements:

"Christians aren't subject to demon activity...Christians cannot be severely oppressed by demons." (21)

"Demonic influence is only evident in extreme or violent behavior and gross sin." (21)

Instead, Anderson claims, demonic oppression of believers is a rather common cause of problems, even among Christians leading fairly "normal" lives:

"...most Christians suffering from demonic activity lead relatively normal lives while experiencing serious personal and interpersonal problems for which no cause or solution has been found." (21)

He poses the following challenge to those who might question his tactics:

"If Satan can't touch the church, why are we instructed to put on the armor of God, to resist the devil, to stand firm, and to be alert?" (21)

Anderson claims that "if it is impossible for Satan's arrows to penetrate us, there would be no need for us to put on the armor" of Ephesians 6:10-17 (175). He argues for much more than mere *external* demonic influences or oppression:

"We generally agree that Christians are vulnerable to the enemy's temptation, accusation, and deception. But for some reason we hesitate to admit that Christians can lose their freedom and can surrender to demonic influences. However, the evidence of Scripture is abundant and clear that believers who repeatedly succumb to temptation, accusation, and deception can lose control." (172)

Nevertheless, Anderson affirms that control is not *ownership* (172), as the believer has been purchased with the blood of Christ (173).

In response, we must do two things. First, we need to examine Anderson's view of the New Testament Greek terminology for "demonized." Second, we must consider the other passages he cites for support of his position.

Anderson addresses the issue of whether a Christian may be demon-possessed:

"Can an evil spirit and the Holy Spirit occupy the same space in a human life? The god of this world occupies a place in our atmosphere, and so does the Holy Spirit. And Satan presently has access to our Father in heaven. So it should not be thought impossible that demonic influence can partially control the life of one in whom the Holy Spirit also dwells." (173)

The Greek, Anderson claims, uses the term "demonized" or "to have a demon" rather than "demon-possessed" (173). Then he offers us a definition:

"To be demonized means to be under the control of one or more demons. Demonization is not a matter of extremes...it's a matter of degrees." (174)

The Greek does sometimes say that an individual "has a demon." Other times, the verb □□□□□□□□□□ is used. Standard Greek lexicons translate this verb as meaning to be demon-possessed. This is consistent with the context whenever the word is used, because in each case Jesus *casts out* the demon or demons (Matthew 4:24, 8:16, 8:28, 8:33, 9:32, 12:22, 15:22; Mark 1:32, 5:15, 5:16, 5:18; Luke 8:36; when used in John 10:21, verse 20 equates it with the phrase, "to have a demon"). We would hardly expect Christ to cast demons out of an individual who was *not* demon-possessed! Thus Anderson's distinction between "demonized" and "demon-possessed" is without scriptural support.

Next, let us consider other passages referenced to argue that believers can be demon-possessed.

Anderson cites Luke 13:10-18, where a woman had been sick for 18 years as the result of a spirit's activity (174), to support his contention that Christians can be demonized. He admits, however, that this occurred prior to the cross (175). Thus the

woman cannot properly be called a Christian in the same sense that we understand that term today.

Peter is also cited as an example of "a believer who temporarily lost control to Satan" (Luke 22:31-34) (175). Certainly, this disciple would be considered a believer. However, his experience was prior to the resurrection and prior to Christ sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Also, the Bible never says that Peter was *possessed by* a demon. Rather, Jesus states that Satan had asked permission to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31). This phrase does not equate with actual *possession*, and Peter assumes full responsibility for his sin when he later repents.

Using 1 Timothy 4:1-3, Anderson states that:

"...if Satan can deceive your mind, he must be working on the inside, where you are vulnerable to his control" (176).

However, this text speaks of people falling away from the faith; *these cannot be true believers*, as true believers persevere, kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5; John 10:28). Furthermore, this text does not mention demonic *possession*, but rather the *doctrines* of demons.

There is also the man in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, living in an incestuous relationship. Anderson assumes that he was a true believer who had allowed himself to become trapped in sin, because otherwise the church would not have disciplined him (176). However, being a member of the visible church does not necessarily mean the person is a genuine believer. He may or may not have been; only God knows the heart in such a case. The discipline was designed to restore him if indeed he was a true believer (verse 5). Nothing in this text indicates that he was actually *demon possessed*, either before or after the church discipline. After being removed from church membership, he was no longer under the care of the church, and thus in Satan's territory, subject to his influence but not necessarily demonic *possession*.

The most convincing passage for Anderson's position is Acts 5:1-11, where Satan is said to have filled the heart of Ananias so that he lied to the Holy Spirit (177). Some claim that Ananias and Sapphira may not have been true believers (178), but Anderson disagrees because "this event took place within the context of the Christian community, of which Ananias and Sapphira were obviously members" (178). Once again, membership in the *visible* church does not always equate with genuine salvation. Jesus explained that unbelievers would slip into the visible church (Matthew 13:24-30),

and John spoke about such persons leaving the church because they did not truly belong (1 John 1:19). But Anderson continues:

"If God were judging someone *outside* the church, why would great fear come upon those *within* the church? There was great fear among *believers* because God had dramatically displayed His attitude toward *believers* who live a lie."
(178)

Great fear may have filled believers to think that perhaps unbelievers had slipped into the church. Some may also have examined their own faith and life, as Paul exhorts believers in 2 Corinthians 13:5. It is quite possible, despite Anderson's protests, that these two were not true believers. Furthermore, the text does not state that Ananias and Sapphira were *demon possessed*. The language differs from that used in the Gospel accounts for demonic possession, and it differs from Luke's account of Satan *entering into* Judas (Luke 22). Anderson discusses the language here in Acts, noting that the Greek word *pleroo* for "filled" in Acts 5:3 is the same word used in Ephesians 5:18 (178), where the filling of the Holy Spirit is set against being drunk with wine. He explains his view that:

"It is possible for the believer to be filled with satanic deception or filled by the Spirit. To whichever source you yield, by that source you shall be filled and controlled."
(178)

However, Romans 8:9 makes it clear that whoever does not have the Spirit does not belong to Christ. Believers may be deceived and may sin, even seriously for a time, but by definition they have the indwelling Holy Spirit. That Spirit is not going to share His dwelling place with demons! We must conclude that true believers cannot be demon possessed.

Gospels vs. epistles. Ephesians 6 is a key New Testament passage for the area of spiritual warfare. Before considering it more closely, we need to consider a question that Anderson raises as to whether we should look at the Gospels or the Pauline epistles for instruction about surviving the battle.

Anderson discusses the prevalence of demonic encounters in the earthly ministry of Jesus, noting that about one-fourth of the miraculous healings of Jesus involved deliverance from demonic activity (31). Elsewhere he implies that demonic activity has *not subsided* since the time of Christ on earth (19), asking:

"If dark spiritual powers are no longer attacking believers, why would Paul alert us [Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5] to them and insist that we arm ourselves against them?" (19)

Nevertheless, Anderson insists that the epistles of Paul, rather than the Gospels, provide guidance for us today:

"We have mistakenly formulated our methods for dealing with demonic powers from the Gospels instead of the epistles." (206)

Anderson says this is wrong because these events occurred prior to the cross (206). Acts, meanwhile, is transitional (207). Thus Anderson says:

"Therefore I stress caution in translating examples of demonic expulsion from Acts into doctrinal absolutes." (207)

So far, we might agree. The miracles of Jesus, and those of His apostles in the initial stage of the church, were often performed to attest that He was truly God incarnate. We cannot expect to be casting out demons in the same manner. However, Anderson's methods seem much closer to the Gospels and Acts than he wants to acknowledge. His stress on the role of demons, particularly in the area of *sin*, gives us reason to pause and carefully consider his strategy. When we do look at the Gospel accounts, we never find Jesus casting out a demon *in order to solve a moral problem*. Instead, He gave *relief* to individuals who suffered from demonic oppression (Matthew 4:24, 8:16-17, 8:28-34, 9:32-33, 12:22, 15:21-28; Mark 1:32-34, 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39). Anderson wants to give vocal commands to the devil and his hosts *in order to solve moral problems*. This is not a minor issue! Anderson's approach stands in contrast to the New Testament accounts.

Ephesians 6. This is a key Scripture concerning the issue of spiritual warfare for believers. Anderson points out that God's people are not passive in this ongoing battle:

"The Christian's Magna Charta of protection is Ephesians 6:10-18. The first thing you should see in this passage about receiving God's protection is that our role is not passive." (77)

Anderson notes that:

"When we put on the armor of God, we are really putting on Christ (Romans 13:12-14). And when we put on Christ we take ourselves out of the realm of the flesh, where we are vulnerable to attack, and we place ourselves within the dominion of Christ, where the evil one cannot touch us." (79)

The armor of God in Ephesians 6 outlines several distinct elements: truth, righteousness, peace, and God's Word. According to Anderson, the belt (of truth), breastplate (of righteousness), and shoes (of peace), in verses 14-15, have *already* been put on (79). He bases this on the use of the Greek aorist tense. The aorist has several uses, but when used as a participle, as it is here, the action occurs prior to the main verb. The primary exhortation here is to *stand firm* after you have put on the belt, breastplate, and shoes. Anderson explains this instruction in terms of the truth of God's Word, as opposed to the lies of Satan:

"You stand firm in the truth by relating everything you do to the truth of God's Word. If a thought comes to mind which is not in harmony with God's truth, dismiss it.... Remember that if Satan can deceive you into believing a lie, he can control your life in that area." (80)

Certainly, God's Word is the authoritative standard for discerning the nature of our thoughts. We do need to remember, however, that sin involves much more than thoughts alone. It also involves the will, desires, and emotions. God's Word deals with all of these.

The breastplate of righteousness is one piece of the armor. Anderson correctly notes that it is *Christ's* righteousness that justifies the believer, not one's own righteousness (80). His righteousness is what provides the ultimate protection, such that no one can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35-39). Probably this Scripture is a reference to His perfect righteousness, which alone satisfies divine law and justice. Our own growth in righteous living (sanctification) is important in the arena of spiritual battle, but only the righteousness of Christ can enable the Christian to *stand firm* against the onslaught of evil and accusation.

Anderson also rightly affirms that it is never too late to turn to God in repentance and faith, that God never erases the name of a believer from the book of life:

"He [Satan] will try to convince you that it's too late for confession, that God has already erased your name out of the book of life. That's another one of his big lies." (81)

In examining the "shoes of peace," Anderson interprets in terms of resolving disputes between believers:

"The shoes of peace become protection against the divisive schemes of the devil when you act as a peacemaker among believers (Romans 14:19).... Too many Christians require common doctrine as the basis for fellowship.... But common doctrine isn't the basis for fellowship; common heritage is. We're all children of God, and that's enough to bring us together in peace." (82)

Certainly, it is important for believers to live in unity with one another. However, some comments are needed here. Doctrine is not so unimportant as Anderson assumes. Some fundamental doctrinal agreement is necessary in the very definition of who *is* a fellow Christian. Also, *peace* in this particular context refers to the peace with *God* enjoyed by believers because Christ's work has provided reconciliation. It is the *gospel* of peace, alluding to the beautiful prophecy in Isaiah 52:7, where our salvation is foretold. Ultimately, it is this peace with God that protects against the schemes of Satan.

Anderson notes, in discussing the "shield of faith," that "there is nothing mystical about faith" (82). He goes on to explain that:

"Biblical faith is simply what you believe about God and His Word. The more you know about God and His Word, the more faith you will have." (82)

Biblical, saving faith includes knowledge about God and His plan of redemption, but it is much more. Also included is a personal assent to the knowledge of Christ's saving work, a conviction that He died *for me*. It further includes the element of trust. The *object* of our faith is Jesus Christ. Intellectual knowledge is necessary, but so are conviction and trust.

Anderson's emphasis on the mind continues to overshadow other important aspects of the inner man. Here is how he explains the "flaming missiles" of Ephesians 6:

"These flaming missiles from Satan are nothing more than smoldering lies, burning accusations, and fiery temptations **bombarding our minds.**" (83, emphasis added)

Anderson has this to say about the helmet of salvation:

"...be confident that the helmet of salvation guarantees your eternal victory...the helmet also secures coverage for the most critical part of your anatomy: your mind, where spiritual battles are either won or lost." (83)

The mind is certainly one arena of spiritual battle, but again, we are tempted by our own lusts (James 1:13), and Jesus stated that sin arises out of the heart, a term that includes but is not limited to the realm of the mind.

Anderson urges fervent prayer as the best strategy against the powers of evil, expressing our dependence on God (86). He warns, however, that "until we express our dependence on Him in prayer, God will not act" (86). However, although prayer is an important means ordained by God, we must affirm that God is constantly, and sovereignly, at work in His creation and in our lives.

Ephesians 6 is a critical passage for spiritual warfare. We can agree with Anderson about its importance. However, it does not support the emphasis on the demonic that Anderson maintains in his counseling. Rather, it gives us a broad view of the spiritual armor that must be worn at all times while living in this sinful world. That "full armor" drives us to the cross of Christ at every point, and focuses our eyes on Him.

Generational curses. Anderson requires a great deal of background information from those he counsels, including much family history. He explains that:

"One reason I want background information on the counselee's family and personal life is to determine if his or her problem is the result of spiritual or natural causes." (211)

Family history that Anderson inquires about includes any occult involvements, divorces, incest, adulterous affairs, moral climate, "mental illness," abuse of drugs or alcohol (211-212). The reason for his extensive inquiry is his belief that the sins of ancestors, along with your own past involvement in the occult, may directly impact your own spiritual life and therefore need to be renounced:

"The first step to freedom in Christ is to renounce your previous or current involvements with satanically inspired occultic practices or false religions." (187)

"The last step to freedom is to renounce the sins of your ancestors and any curses which may have been placed on you." (201)

Even if you didn't directly participate, Anderson warns that:

"...if anyone in your family was involved, you may want to put it on your list of activities to renounce just in case you unknowingly gave Satan a foothold." (189)

The curse of ancestral sins, accordingly to Anderson, extends even to adopted children who had no knowledge of or experience with the sins of their relatives:

"Adopted children can be especially subject to demonic strongholds because of their natural parentage. But even an adopted child can become a new creation in Christ, and must actively renounce old strongholds and embrace his or her inheritance as God's child." (202)

This view is one that denies the tremendous power and privilege of being *adopted* as God's own child (Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:17-17). Anderson, however, insists that satanic strongholds established in past generations continue their insidious influence and are difficult to demolish:

"When you tear down a satanic stronghold which has been established in your family, expect resistance." (201)

He also affirms the necessity for professional counseling:

"If you are the victim of ritual abuse, seek the help of a skilled counselor who understands demonic strongholds." (202)

Where does Anderson find biblical support for all of this? No Scripture instructs us to renounce the sins of our ancestors. Nowhere are we warned about generational curses. The only passage Anderson can locate is Exodus 20:4-5, which speaks of the sins of the fathers being passed to the third and fourth generations. Here is what he says when he cites that text:

"The fact that demonic strongholds can be passed on from one generation to the next is well-attested by those who counsel the afflicted. This is not to deny that many problems are transmitted genetically or acquired from an immoral atmosphere. All three conditions can predispose an individual to a particular sin." (201)

This Scripture has nothing to do with the passing on of demonic strongholds. The emphasis here is on God's covenantal faithfulness, His compassion to *thousands* of generations of those who love Him. God's overwhelming kindness in this instance is compared to only the third and fourth generations of those who sin against Him. Even in that instance, *God* is the subject of the statement. *He* visits the iniquities of the fathers on those third and fourth generations. Sometimes the consequences of sin impact younger generations. However, that is not the subject of this text, nor does it speak of generational curses. Also, Ezekiel 18 is a passage that clearly *separates* the sins of the father from the sins of the son, with no mention of demons. There is plenty of genuine spiritual warfare to be concerned about, without hunting down demons in places where they are absent.

"Taking authority" over demons. Anderson teaches that Satan took authority over the world at the time of man's fall into sin, but that Christ secured authority for Himself, and defeated Satan's reign, at the cross:

"He [Satan] took authority when Adam abdicated the throne of rulership over God's creation at the fall. Satan ruled from Adam until the cross. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ secured forever the final authority for Jesus Himself (Matthew 28:18)." (99)

Further explaining his view of the time between the fall and the cross, Anderson says that:

"Prior to the cross, divinely empowered agents--such as Jesus and His specifically appointed apostles--were necessary to take authority over demonic powers in the world." (24)

Christ defeated Satan at the cross, removing the authority he supposedly exercised prior to that time:

"Because of the cross Satan is a defeated foe, and he has no authority over those who are in Christ." (25)

Anderson moves from this defeat of Satan to discussing the present position of believers in Christ:

"...every believer...is now seated with Him in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:5-6)...you now reside in God's special agent, Jesus Christ, who has all authority." (25)

He concludes that the believer needs to understand his heavenly position in order to resist the devil and his schemes:

"In order to resist the devil, you need to understand and appropriate your position and authority in Christ." (25)

Anderson emphasizes the believer's position in Christ and his "position of authority in Christ as it relates to the spiritual realm," citing James 4:7 (58). Although deliverance has already been accomplished at the cross, Anderson warns:

"...it is your responsibility to exercise your authority and resist the devil. From your position in Christ, you must resist the devil, renounce participation in his schemes, confess sin, and forgive those who have offended you." (26)

Anderson cautions the reader not to become overly focused on the powers of evil or to see demons around every corner:

"...it's *truth* which sets you free, not the knowledge of error. You would have no authority at all if it weren't for your identity as a child of God and your position in Christ. *Who you are* must always take precedence over *what you do*." (59)

Anderson notes that Jesus gave both *authority* and *power* over demons to His disciples (59). Explaining the difference, he says:

"Authority is the *right* to rule; it's a positional issue." (59)

"Power is the *ability* to rule." (60)

In the spiritual arena, Anderson explains the nature of authority and the struggle that occurs:

"Spiritual authority is not a tug-of-war on a horizontal plane; it is a vertical chain of command." (61)

It is especially important here to recognize the surpassing authority that God has over all spiritual powers of wickedness. He is *far* more powerful than Satan and his demons, who by comparison are impotent. Anderson teaches that although Satan is a defeated foe, he deceives believers into thinking that he has more power and authority than *they* do (61). Here we see the beginning of a problem with his perspective. In an important sense, spiritual entities *do* have more power than believers. That

is exactly why Ephesians 6 emphasizes the full armor of God in such detail, with each piece driving us to the cross--faith in *Christ*, the gospel of *Christ* bringing peace with God, the righteousness of *Christ* justifying the believer. Anderson certainly acknowledge the believer's utter dependence on God's power. However, he gets off track in his focus on the *authority of the believer himself*.

That authority, contrary to some of the faith healers we see today, is seen as spiritual in nature:

"This passage [Ephesians 1:19-23] does not teach that we have authority over all diseases as the apostles did.... Our authority seems limited to the spiritual realm." (65)

While God has the power to heal our diseases and sometimes does so in response to our prayers, this is a good word of caution. Excessive emphasis on physical healing can easily minimize the importance of the gospel.

Anderson, meanwhile, asserts a high level of authority for the believer over spiritual powers of wickedness:

"...when God seated Christ at His right hand and conferred on Him all authority (Ephesians 1:20,21), He also seated us at His right hand and conferred on us through Christ all authority (2:6) because we are 'together with Christ' (2:5).... **You possess all power and authority over the kingdom of darkness right now.**" (66, emphasis added)

Also in Colossians 2:10, Anderson notes that "we *have been* made complete" (66). He reasons that, since this is past tense, and since Christ is clearly head over all rule and authority, *therefore* "we are privileged to exercise His rule and authority" (66). Satan, according to Anderson "is just faking Christians into defeat" (67). The reason believers are granted such incredible authority is explained as something of a demonstration to Satan and his legions:

"The very reason Christ conferred His authority on us was to demonstrate to the kingdom of darkness who is really in control in this world." (67)

Anderson believes there are "four qualifications for demonstrating authority over rulers and authorities in the spiritual realm" (68). These are: belief (in your authority), humility (placing confidence in Christ), boldness, and dependence.

In praying for unbelievers, Anderson again centers on the believer's position of authority. He advises prayer for their spiritual eyes to be opened, since they are blinded (87). He also recommends prayer for the binding of Satan:

"By faith we lay hold of the property in Satan's clutches which rightfully belongs to God, and we hold on until Satan turns loose. He will hold on to these people until we demand their release on the basis of our authority in Christ. Once Satan is bound through prayer, he must let go." (88)

"God has not only equipped you with everything you need to ward off the attack of the strong man, but He has also equipped you and authorized you for search and rescue in the lives of those who are in the devil's clutches." (91)

All of this requires a careful analysis and critique, because it is a mixture. The believer has a powerful position in Christ that should not be underestimated. However, there are some problems concerning the subject of authority. At points, Anderson has some good biblical comments to make in this area. He says, for example, that:

"We live in a rebellious generation of individuals who feel it is their right to sit in judgment of those in authority over them. Christians are no exception.... Rebellious against God leads to nothing but trouble." (197)

He also is aware that God has established human authorities (in the home, state and church) for specific purposes:

"We have two biblical responsibilities in regard to authority figures: pray for them and submit to them. The only time God permits us to disobey earthly leaders is when they require us to do something morally wrong before God." (198)

Yet Anderson's primary emphasis is on taking authority over *demons* rather than properly exercising, and submitting to, authority in human spheres that God has ordained. If authority structures in the home, church, and state were properly respected, many of the counseling matters Anderson deals with would be moving toward godly solutions.

Furthermore, it is *Christ* to whom all authority on heaven and on earth has been given (Matthew 28:18). It is *Christ* who now reigns until the last enemy, death, has been placed under His feet

(1 Corinthians 15:25-26). It is the *Father* who draws believers to faith in Christ (John 6:44), and the *Holy Spirit* who causes regeneration (John 3:1-8; Titus 3:5). The believer must pray for unbelievers but does not have the power to cause their salvation, which rests solely on *God's* initiative (Ephesians 1:4-5, 11). Anderson has taken the believer's position *in Christ*, important as that is, and run too far afield with it. No Christian should claim to be powerless against the forces of evil, but at the same time, Scripture does not teach that we *take authority over* and issue verbal commands to demonic powers, in the manner that Anderson advocates.

Resist the devil. Anderson holds the individual believer responsible for obeying God's command to resist the devil:

"Resisting the devil in your life is your responsibility based on the authority you possess in Christ." (58)

"Choosing truth, living a righteous life, and donning the armor of God is each believer's individual responsibility. I cannot be responsible for you, and you cannot be responsible for me." (181)

Anderson rightly recognizes, however, that power in the spiritual realm is only through Christ, never in self:

"...while in yourself you don't have the ability to resist Satan and his demons, *in Christ you do.*" (60)

Commenting on the specific command to resist the devil, in James 4:7, Anderson draws the following conclusion:

"What if we don't resist him? Is he required to flee from us if we don't take our stand against him? No, if we don't resist him, he doesn't have to go." (180)

These particular comments on resisting the devil are not objectionable. Scripture does give this command, along with instructions for spiritual battle in Ephesians 6 and other texts. If these brief comments were included within a comprehensive, biblical framework for helping people grow in godliness, no critique would be needed. The problem is with the system as a whole. It is unbalanced in its focus on the power of Satan in the lives of believers. It is unbiblical at certain points, such as the demonization of Christians and generational curses. Progressive sanctification, and the "ordinary" means of grace that God has provided in His Word and church, are minimized. Personal

responsibility, while acknowledged by Anderson, is blurred as blame *for sin* is shifted onto demonic beings.

Neil Anderson is rapidly gaining popularity within the church community. His ministry is part of a dangerous shift in emphasis that has occurred since the Reformation, with the *church* and its regular ministry being pushed to the sidelines, while "special" meetings, seminars, groups, and such grow like weeds. Instead of *pastors* instructing their congregations and caring for the souls of members, this responsibility has shifted to special speakers, authors, and *counselors* outside the discipline and oversight of the church. This trend should be noted with alarm. More than ever, believers need to test what they hear against God's eternal, sufficient, inerrant Word.

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