

BOOK REVIEW

McConnell, C. Douglas, ed. 1997. *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series, Num. 5. Pasadena: William Carey Library. Reviewed by David Greenlee

In this work, Douglas McConnell draws together papers from the 1996 Evangelical Missiological Society meeting which focused on the role of the Holy Spirit in missions. American scholars contributing to the work include Pentecostals and Evangelicals such as Michael Pocock (Dallas Theological Seminary), Robertson McQuilkin (Columbia International University), Peter Wagner (Fuller School of World Missions), Gary McGee (Assemblies of God Theological Seminary), Scott Moreau (Wheaton College), and Robert Priest (Columbia International University). One chapter is a reprint of a work of Roland Allen from the early 1900's.

The book is divided into three main sections: **biblical theological issues**, **historical issues**, and **contemporary issues**.

The **biblical theological section** is solid and, like many sermons or Bible studies, refreshing and well worth reading even though it adds little new to the debate.

The **historical section** lacks breadth, as admitted by the editor. Gary McGee's contribution from a Pentecostal perspective is interesting but the book would be better served if balanced by a complementary piece from a non-

Pentecostal. While McGee illustrates from history how diverse missions of the 1800's and 1900's sought sanctifying from the Holy Spirit, including healing and immediate (or anticipated) language learning, I found something of a distraction from the central issue debated, that of spiritual warfare.

On the other hand, the book is valuable just to read the chapters reprinted from a little-known work of Roland Allen. Central to Allen's perspective is the concept that the apostles, arriving at a decision in a question of doubt² were guided solely by the sense of the Spirit behind the action, not by any speculations as to consequences which might ensue." If they had heeded the perceived consequences over and above the source of guidance, many times they would have failed to carry out God's purpose. "Nowhere is the Spirit revealed as the Spirit who guides men by enabling them to anticipate the results of their action."

The **contemporary issues section** is the most important part of the book. (However, the biblical and historical sections are important too, since issues discussed there have too often been glossed over in books on spiritual warfare.) Peter Wagner, invited to give an overview of his position on spiritual warfare, does so in the form of a biography. Scott Moreau, Robert Priest, John Orme and Gailyn V. Rhee respond in turn to various aspects of Wagner's presentation.

do so with respect for Wagner as a brother in Christ, but each vigorously pursues key weaknesses in Wagner's approach.

Moreau first challenges Wagner for mixing up reporting and advocacy with scholarship. Wagner too often responds to his critics without identifying them, short-circuiting the process of letting readers study both sides of an issue. Further, he suggests significant new interpretations of Scriptures in support of his views on spiritual warfare, admitting that they rarely find support in existing commentaries. Wagner has "gone public" in a very influential way, without first submitting his ideas for the reflection and correction of biblical scholars and missiologists. Finally, Moreau challenges the use of "spiritual technology" as presenting not the best but the worst of Western and non-Western thinking.

Robert Priest in part revisits his 1994 article which presented a major challenge to Wagner and his followers. Priest is concerned with Wagner's avoidance of dealing with issues appropriately (that is, appropriate scholarly debate) and his insistence on "new" truths and understandings. Priest says that, in fact, it is not the specific spiritual warfare teaching, but the epistemology that allows "truth" to be discovered from demons and occult practitioners and to supplement biblical truth with such "truth," that is of the greatest concern. This is heightened by the very public platform available to Wagner for his teaching.

Much of John Orme's article deals with hermeneutics. He fears that on issues such as identificational repentance Wagner has resorted to a "canon within the canon," that is, a select group of passages, rather than considering the whole body of Scripture. He questions the theological assumptions linking Old Testament "models" and the covenant structure of Israel to the issues facing us today. Further, Orme says, "even Wagner admits that the New Testament contains no outright or explicit teaching about 'identificational repentance' and that we find relatively little about it in the New Testament." Orme suggests that Wagner's repeated use of assumptions results in "a hermeneutical grid without sufficient substance to construct a doctrine."

Gailyn Van Rheenen's concluding chapter, dealing with modern and postmodern syncretism, provides a thought-provoking and appropriate closure to the book (although it should be read understanding that he is addressing a Western audience). He points out that syncretism has been a challenge to the Church in every age and that we should expect the same now. He warns against two dangers, that of redefining Christianity in terms of New Age spirituality, and that of an excessive fixation on the demonic realm. Wagner, he fears, falls into the second trap as he develops "spiritual technology" to obtain a "power boost" for missions. Demons in the Bible, Van Rheenen argues, are cast out by the power of God, not human intelligence.

Seedbed XIII

Finally, according to Van Rheezen, we must avoid a focus on power over truth. He shows how this shift in emphasis can be linked to postmodernity as opposed to modernity. God's power is based on love and builds up; Satan's power is debasing. "When Christianity is reduced to power, the Christian message is always significantly distorted." How do we respond when God, who has all ultimate power, decides not to act? How do we understand God's leading? Increasingly, he says, emotions and intuition are seen to be the working of the Holy Spirit. "When I have an intuition it is the Holy Spirit speaking to me. When I have an emotion, it has been generated by the Holy Spirit." Biblical language is used, but formed out of popular narratives. Such "guidance" is becoming common in the Church and is too often seen in the writings of men such as Wagner.

I have waited many years for a book like this! Although there have been occasional papers published critiquing the "prayer warfare" movement's theology and practice, this volume finally provides a broad response to the issues raised. Let us increase intercession, but let us do so grounded in God's Word!