

## UK BIBLE STUDENTS NEWSLETTER

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*Scripture citations are to the British-English version of the New International Version (NIV-UK), unless noted..*

### THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

*'Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Corinthians 9: 6, 7).*

**The quest for wealth** has during the past half-century dug its roots deeply into the soil — and into the soul — of mainstream Christianity. The 'Prosperity Gospel' is based on the idea that God bestows material blessings on those He favours, and His favour is sought by the confession of faith and the payment of tithes or other offerings for the support of the gospel ministry. There is no defined 'Prosperity' denomination, but the belief has been embraced by the Pentecostal Churches and by many other charismatic and mainstream evangelical churches. Originating in the United States, the doctrine has permeated Christianity worldwide, with varying intensity.

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### Q&A

*Question:* Is there a contradiction between Proverbs 26 verse 4 and verse 5?

**4** Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.

**5** Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

*Answer:* These verses seem to refer to one's speech and conduct when responding to an an ill-informed adversary. Looked at from the Christian viewpoint, the principle is similar to that found in 1 Peter 2: 23, in connection with Jesus:

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

When vilified or accused unjustly, the Christian ought to respond with self-control and good grace, in imitation of the Master. We must not stoop to the same level of diatribe or the ill-temper of our opponent. As a general rule, we should be slow to stand up in our own defence, letting the Lord be our shield and protector, but there are occasions when it is necessary to counter accusations against us, if only to correct a misunderstanding and thus reprove our accuser. In such instances, we should reply with reason and germane arguments, not straying into counter-accusations, sarcasm or character assassination.

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## MARTIN LUTHER'S VIEW OF WARFARE

*Behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire (Psalm xli. 8-9).*

When I look at war, how it punishes the wicked, slays wrongdoers and makes such desolation in the earth, it appears to be a very unchristian thing and altogether contrary to Christian love. But when I consider how it defends the godly and protects wife and child, house and home, earthly possessions and honour and keeps them in peace, it is seen to be a good and godly thing. For if the sword did not defend and maintain peace, everything in the world would go to rack and ruin. Therefore such a war is nothing but a short absence of peace to prevent everlasting and unbounded strife; a small misery preventing a great misery.

What is said and written about war as a terrible plague is all true, but it should be remembered at the same time how much greater is the plague which war prevents. If people were saintly and willing to keep peace, then war would be the greatest plague on earth. But do you not see that the world is evil, that people do not desire to live in peace but want to rob and steal, and kill and abuse your wife and child, and take away your honour and possessions? All over the world man fights man. No single person could save himself from this unending strife unless the little strife which is called war should check it. Therefore God has honoured the sword so highly that He calls it His own ordinance, and does not will that we should say or think that man has invented it and ordained it. For the hand which holds this sword and kills with it is no longer a human hand, but the hand of God, so that it is not man but God that hangs, breaks human limbs on the wheel, hacks off heads, slays, and makes war. It is all His work and judgement.

Martin Luther, *On whether soldiers can be saved* (1526. W.A. [Weimar Edition] 19.626; repr. in *Day by Day We Magnify Thee*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1982, p. 307).

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**Hmm . . .**

‘I have never met a biology undergraduate who has read *The Origin of the Species*. Even scientists, familiar as they are with its contents (or what they believe them to be), tend to honour it in the breach rather than the observance. It is, though, much studied by students of the humanities as an element of a philosophy or an English literature course. . . . Evolution is to the social sciences as statues are to birds: a convenient platform upon which to deposit badly digested ideas. It has been debased since it began by those who use the idea to support their own creed. Darwinism was not the first (and will probably not be the last) science to be abused for political ends.’

Steve Jones, *Almost Like A Whale: The Origin of Species Updated* (London: Anchor, 2000), xxxiv.

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## IN THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR: 1938

‘**A Blast at Old Britain:** British-worshiping spat-and-cane boys of the State Department will throw cat-fits when they read Securities and Exchange Commissioner Jerry Frank’s new book, “Save

America First.” He lambastes the “tight little isle” with the heaviest load of brickbats heaved at it in a long time. Frank declares the British are attempting to use the U.S. as a catspaw in international relations; that if they really wanted to pay their defaulted war debt they could readily do so. Backing that up, he says: “British citizens own several billions of dollars of securities in American corporations, and the British Government could easily acquire and utilize those investments to reduce its debt to us. It could do substantially what it did during the [1914-18] war: It could buy those American securities from British citizens, giving them British Government bonds in payment. . . . Then it could deliver those American securities to our Government at a price which would be applied in part payment of the British debt to our Government . . .”.’

*Philadelphia Record, June 10, 1938 [newspaper]*

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## **DRAGNET**

*Items of interest from the World Wide Web*

### **Britain**

[More students taking Religious Education GCSE](#)

[Richard Dawkins: Faith schools should teach all religions](#)

### **United States**

[Expedition to film wreck of the Titanic will be broadcast live online](#)

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