



From the

VICAR

*[The following is a review on John Eldredge's book, *Waking the Dead: The Glory of a Heart Fully Alive*]*

by Father Anthony Holder

Whether or not we are cognizant of it, “things are not what they seem” (26), for we live daily in the midst of ongoing spiritual warfare. It is against this background that John Eldredge moves into the basic premise of his book, “*Waking the Dead: The Glory of a Heart Fully Alive*,” which is that we are alive in Christ, and our heart, which is “the deep center of our life” (50), is good by nature but we have allow the devil to influence it. Using references to scriptures, quotes from authors like G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis, and movies including *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, *Wizard of Oz*, *The Matrix*, *Gladiator*, *The Lion King* and others, Eldredge shares “eternal truths” (26) to demonstrate the state of Christians in this world. He also shares personal stories, relating how God has worked in his life and ministry.

Eldredge’s reference to “the heart is good” (69) speaks specifically to “a new heart” (66) ‘the redeemed heart,’ which God has transformed through Christ and made good according to His image. For the author, the heart, is not the same as the flesh, (a Pauline position in Romans 7), neither is it about emotionalism. The writer sees the heart as that primary source from which our life, our thoughts, our motives, and our creative nature originates. Eldredge states that the heart reflects God’s glory for “we were created to reflect God’s glory, born to bear his image, and he ransomed us to reflect that glory again” (75). He argues that most people fail to live as if their heart is redeemed. In his opinion, people need to begin living a spirit-filled life in which they recognize that their hearts are good and that it is the flesh that struggles with sin.

In developing his premise Eldredge quotes second century Christian writer Irenaeus: “the glory of God is man fully alive” (10). God wants His people to be fully alive so that they can live from their renewed hearts and his plan for our lives. The problem, Eldredge says, is that Christians fail to recognize that the sufferings and stress of this world, which they experience, are as a result of the lies of the “Enemy,” who is battling for their hearts by “trying to steal [their] freedom, kill [their] heart, [and] destroy [their] life” (151). The writer warns us that the devil will seek to convince us that our hearts are not good and as a result we are at war with him over the strength and liveliness of them. It is when people are aware that they are at war with the devil, they are better able to live fully in Christ and experience a richer life.

The emphasis of the book is on four streams – “Walking with God,” “Receiving His Intimate Counsel,” “Deep Restoration” and “Spiritual Warfare” - which the author believes allow Christians to live a full life in the way God has called them. By acknowledging the goodness of our heart and opening ourselves to Jesus’ offer of life through “Discipleship, Counseling, Healing and Warfare,” we are able to experience God’s presence and the ultimate reward, which is eternal life. Eldredge expands the

discussion of the four streams by focusing on the freeing of the heart, the needs and blessings of Christian fellowship and offering a prayer to assist us in dealing with spiritual warfare.

This book speaks to the reader on a number of levels. First, the writer's view that the heart is good gives one a different perception of it in light of the fact that one may think that the heart is evil since "out of [it] come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander" (Matthew 15:19). Eldredge's position is to think of the heart as being inherently wicked is unbiblical.

Second, Eldredge allows us to examine the heart in the context of a new, redeemed heart. Believing that the heart is evil since it is the center from which an individual functions and responds in evil ways, yet it causes the reader to ask the question, if the heart is inherently evil why would Christ want to live in an individual's heart that is evil? Such a premise would be contrary to scripture in that the nature of the cross and forgiveness would have been unnecessary since it would appear that Christ was satisfied with evil. However, it is within the redeemed heart of a person, who by accepting Christ is transformed into "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17) that Christ is willing to dwell and to fill the individual with the Holy Spirit.

A third point that the book articulates, which was an important point in the *Yes These Bones Can Live* program, is the notion of spiritual warfare. Eldredge expresses a perception that is seldom mentioned in churches particularly mainline churches like the Episcopal Church. I believe that Eldredge is on target in his claim that God's children are at war with evil forces on a daily basis and without living from our heart we cannot fight back. Having dealt with this subject in the *Yes These Bones Can Live* program, and reading Eldredge's book have influenced me to become more aware of spiritual warfare in my life, my family, my friends, my parishioners and that of my ministry and to use the prayer that Eldredge provided in his book on a daily basis. This has helped me to widen my prayer life.

I would highly recommend "*Waking the Dead: The Glory of a Heart Fully Alive*" to Christians who are mature in their faith, seeking a deeper relationship or closer walk with God and a greater understanding and desire to love God and their neighbor.

*(The numbers in parentheses are the page numbers in the book).*