

# **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

*Falsehoods Regarding the Operations of the Spirit  
As Compared to the Reformed View*

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## Experientialism

### ***The Great Contest between Biblical Truth and Personal Experience.***

By William Gross – [www.onthewing.org](http://www.onthewing.org) 12/13/2021

“Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?” Psalm 85:6

The Church in the west experienced Great Awakenings in the 18th & 19th centuries. Church communities need to be “awakened” (revived), when they “fall asleep,” when they decline in **piety** and **devotion**. Piety and devotion are our response to Gospel grace. When we stop responding to it with godly living, when being conformed to Christ is no longer a driving force in our life, we’re in need of resuscitation, of REVIVING.

But *personal devotion* is a necessary forerunner to *godly living*. We first come into the presence of God in our devotions; and then, in drawing near to God, we express the wonder and joy of that *experience*, by living it out in ways that glorify God, and honor Christ’s sacrifice that made us new creatures. It begins vertically with loving God, and then translates horizontally into loving others. This experience of God is real. It’s called “experimental religion” – or “experiential religion.” But it must not become *experientialism*, where the experience is an end in itself.

Our experience of God must not favor His immanence – God *within* – over His transcendence – God *without*. He is *both*. And our experience of God must not rest on any other foundation than sound doctrine. That goes beyond subjective emotion, and it becomes a passionate response to the Gospel truth. Bare emotionalism is where the Great Awakening went awry, as Jonathan Edwards documented in his book, *Thoughts on Revival* (1740).

Therefore, *sound revival* is impelled by a return to *sound doctrine*. Churches and believers in need of reform and revival, have first departed from, abandoned, or ignored sound doctrine. The great truths of Scripture and the Gospel of Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ Alone, have been set aside or minimized. The teaching of such churches needs to be brought back into alignment with those unchanging truths. They need to find true north again, because they’ve strayed off course. And of course, when a church’s *teaching* is off course, its *practices* – the piety and devotion of its people – will likewise veer off course.

What is currently called “spiritual warfare” is more akin to emotionalism than spiritual reality. It’s more likely to *feed* the flesh than *overcome* it. Make no mistake about it, spiritual warfare is *real*. The flesh wars against the Spirit within us, *really* (Gal 5.17). So put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; and against principalities and powers in the heavenlies (Eph 6.11-12). But make no mistake about this either: Christ defeated Satan on the cross, and He triumphed over all those principalities and powers, 2000 years ago (Col 2.15).

Those who believe they are personally waging and winning that war which Christ has already won, deny Christ’s victory. They seek to substitute their own victory for his. They seek to draw attention to themselves, like the seers old, rather than drawing attention to Christ, and glorifying Him for what He has done. They want to make the brooms dance, like Mickey Mouse in Fantasia. He was not the one with the power, but wanted to exercise it in place of his master. He wanted to wear the crown and robe, and wield the instrument, as if they belonged to him and not to another.

The articles which follow, describe the melding of Reformation doctrine with charismatic giftings, as a **mistake**. What drives such melding, and the arguments against it, are the extremes in both camps.

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The **REFORMED** camp goes too far in cessationism, when it strips the Christian life of any spiritual experience — as if to deny the operations of the Spirit. Christianity is reduced to a dry, intellectual understanding of doctrine. Spiritual experience is treated as a psychological delusion. The **CHARISMATIC** camp goes too far in continuationism when it mimics those extraordinary gifts which ceased in the 1st century. Covering spiritualism with a layer of reformed doctrine will not cure that fault.

***The question is this:*** *May we palpably experience the operations of the Spirit, and yet stand on the firm foundation of reformed doctrine?* The answer is, **yes**, within bounds. Here, then, are Jonathan Edwards' cautions against being led by "impressions" alone. These are excerpted from Part IV of his book, *Thoughts on Revival*:

One erroneous principle ... is the notion that it is God's way now, in these days, to guide his saints ... by inspiration or immediate revelation, and to make known to them what will come to pass hereafter, or what is His will that they should do. They are led by impressions that He makes on their minds by his Spirit, either with or without texts of Scripture. By this means, something is made known to them that is not taught in the Scripture as the words lie in the Bible. By such a notion, the devil has a great door open for him. If this opinion were to be fully yielded to, and established in the church of God, Satan would have an opportunity thereby to set himself up as the guide and oracle of God's people, and to have his word regarded as their infallible rule. Thus he may lead them where he would, and introduce what he pleased, and soon bring the Bible into neglect and contempt....

*This is quite different* from the Spirit's enlightening the mind to understand the precepts or propositions of the word of God, and to know what is contained and revealed in them, and what consequences may justly be drawn from them, and to see how they are applicable to our current case and circumstances — all of which is done *without* any new revelation, only by enabling the mind to understand and apply a revelation already made.

There is a more excellent way that the Spirit of God leads the sons of God, that natural men cannot have. And that is by inclining them to do the will of God, and to go in the shining path of truth and Christian holiness, from a holy, heavenly disposition which the Spirit of God gives them, and enlivens in them. This inclines them and leads them to those things that are excellent and agreeable to God's mind — by which they *are transformed, by the renewing of their minds, that they may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*, as in Rom 12.2. And so the Spirit of God, in a gracious manner, teaches the saints their duty; and teaches them in a higher manner than Balaam, Saul, or Judas were ever taught, or that any natural man is capable of. The Spirit of God enlightens them with respect to their duty, by making their eye single and pure, by which *the whole body is full of light*. The sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God rectifies the taste of the soul, by which it savors those things that are of God, and naturally relishes and delights in those things that are holy and agreeable to God's mind. ... He enables them to understand the commands and counsels of his word, and to rightly apply them.

The leading of the Spirit which God gives his children, which is peculiar to them, is teaching them his statutes, and causing them to understand the way of his precepts. This is what the Psalmist so very often prays for, especially in Psalm 119. It is not in giving of them *new statutes* and *new precepts*. He graciously gives them eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand. He causes them to understand the fear of the Lord. And so He *brings the blind by a way they did not know, and leads them in paths they had not known, and makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*. (Isa 42.16)

*Many lay themselves open to a delusion* by expecting direction from heaven, and waiting for it. In such a case, it is easy for people to imagine that they have it. They are perhaps at a loss concerning something — undetermined as to what they will do, or what course they should take

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in some affair — and so they pray to God to direct them, and make known to them His mind and will. But then, instead of expecting to be directed by being assisted in consideration of the rules of God’s Word, and their circumstances, and God’s providence, and enabled to look at things in a true light, and to justly weigh them — they wait for some secret immediate influence on their minds, unaccountably swaying their minds, and turning their thoughts or inclinations the way that God would have them go. They observe their own minds to see what arises there, whether some texts of Scripture may come to mind, or whether some ideas or inward motions and dispositions will arise in a somewhat unaccountable manner, which they may call *divine direction*. By doing so, they are exposed to two things:

*First*, they lay themselves open to the devil, and give him a fair opportunity to lead them where he pleases. For they stand ready to follow the first extraordinary impulse that they have, groundlessly concluding that it is from God. And,

*Secondly*, they are greatly exposed to be deceived by their own imaginations. For such an expectation awakens and quickens the imagination. What is often called an *uncommon impression*, is no such thing. They ascribe to the agency of some invisible being, what is only owing to themselves.

The confidence such people sometimes have that their prayers will be answered, is only a self-righteous confidence, and not true faith. They have a high conceit of themselves as eminent saints, and special favorites of God. They also have a high conceit of the prayers they have made, because they were greatly enlarged and affected in them. ... Experience shows that nothing in the world exposes us so much to *spiritual pride* and *self-righteousness*. — Jonathan Edwards

Here, then, the ordinary operations of the Spirit are clearly distinguished from those excesses which we often see, especially in what is alleged to be spiritual warfare. Beware of those things that feed spiritual pride. We want to be wholly submitted to God. We want to ensure that He receives all the glory. But *spiritual warfare*, misunderstood and misapplied, will instead feed our pride, and steal His glory.

### ***The ceasing of all extraordinary gifts***<sup>1</sup>

The ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God are the *end* (purpose) of all extraordinary gifts, as the apostle shows in Eph 4.11-13... The apostle speaks of these gifts of inspiration as *childish things* in comparison to the influence of the Spirit in divine love. They are things given to the church only to support it in its *minority*, till the church had a complete standing rule established, and all the ordinary means of grace were settled. These were things that would cease as the church advanced to the state of *manhood*. “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things;” 1Cor 13.11 compared with the three preceding verses. When the apostle, in this chapter, speaks of prophecies, tongues, and revelations ceasing and vanishing away in the church (1Cor 13.8) — when the Christian church would be advanced from a state of minority to a state of manhood — he seems to regard its coming to an adult state *in this world*, as well as in *heaven*. For he speaks of such a state of manhood in which those three things, Faith, Hope, and Charity, would remain *after* miracles and revelation had ceased, as in the last verse: “and now abide (*remain*) Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three.” (1Cor 13.13)

The adult state of the church that he speaks of, is the more perfect one which it will arrive at *on earth*, especially in the latter ages of the world. And this was more properly observed about the church at Corinth, on two accounts. First, because the apostle had previously observed to that

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from Jonathan Edwards’ Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Holy Spirit (1741).

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church, that they were in a state of *infancy*, 1Cor 3.1-2.<sup>2</sup> And because that church seems above all others to have abounded with miraculous gifts. When the expected glorious state of the church comes, the increase of light will be so great that it will in some respect correspond to what is said in verse 12, about *seeing face to face*. (See also Isa 24.23. and 25.7.)<sup>3</sup>

Therefore I do not expect a restoration of these miraculous gifts in the approaching glorious times of the church, nor do I desire it. It appears to me that it would add nothing to the glory of those times, but rather diminish from it. For my part, I would rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit — showing Christ's spiritual divine beauty, infinite grace, and dying love, drawing forth the holy exercises of faith, divine love, sweet complacency, and humble joy in God — for one quarter of an hour, than to have prophetic visions and revelations the whole year... It does not appear to me that there is any need of those extraordinary gifts to introduce this happy state, and set up the kingdom of God through the world. I have seen so much of the power of God in a more excellent way, as to convince me that God can easily do without it. — Jonathan Edwards

When we say that the gifts of prophecy ended when the canon was closed, we don't mean that they ended *because* the canon was closed. Rather, the canon was closed because the revelation of God was complete (2Pet 1.21; Rev 22.18). We say extraordinary gifts ended because their purpose was to identify who were apostles and delegates, and distinguish them from those who were not (Mar 16.17-18). That generation having ceased, the need for those gifts ceased with them. The gifts didn't cease because that generation died. They ceased because those men had completed their work (Mat 16.28). The foundation was laid, and now the Church would be built upon it (1Cor 3.10-11; Eph 2.20).

Are there any new prophecies of the Christ? No (Luk 16.16). Are there any new revelations of God's salvific or moral will? No (2Pet 1.3). Do miraculous events and healings still occur? Yes, but they are not guaranteed to all believers. They are by the gracious and discriminating provision of God, through a believer's own faith in Christ (Mar 5.34), not by the work of "healers." Those are the principles by which to gauge and govern our spiritual warfare. We do not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in the heavenlies (Eph 6.12). When spiritual warfare is directed against flesh and blood, or to gain power over temporal things, we can be sure that it is not of the kingdom of light, but of darkness. For we are not to conquer other people or things, but to conquer our own flesh, and be sanctified to God's glory.

When we overemphasize the gifts, and turn them from serving the common good, into personal powers and attributes, we pervert the word of God. It slips very easily into the *name it and claim it* heresy, casting out demons, faith healers, and other ways by which charlatans abuse the weak-willed. It's a lust for wealth, power, and control.

The following articles explore those connections and trends in greater depth and detail. Please take heed to their warnings. Guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. *Learn to be discerning* (Heb 5.14).

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<sup>2</sup> **1Cor 3:1-2** And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able.

<sup>3</sup> **Isa 24:23** Then the moon will be disgraced And the sun ashamed; For the LORD of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem And before His elders, gloriously. **Isa 25:7** And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations.

## The Rise of Reformed Charismatics

A 21st-century global movement sets the Word on fire  
with gospel preaching and powerful spiritual gifts.

Written by Brett McCracken | Thursday, January 18, 2018

<https://www.theaquilareport.com/rise-reformed-charismatics/>

*The Reformed tradition has tended to be cessationist, either denying or avoiding the continued practice of charismatic gifts like healing, tongues, and prophecy, believing they were only for the foundational era of the church. Charismatics, on the other hand, are continuationists, believing these gifts are still available and valuable.*

The rollicking worship pulsed for nearly an hour in the humid Sanctuary: energetic singing, hundreds of hands raised, prophetic words referencing the Spirit's flames, and sparks of spontaneous prayer among strangers from different states and nations. When the worship ended, the crowd sat down, opened their English Standard Version Bibles and settled in for a 35-minute expository sermon on Galatians, from King's Church London; teaching was pastor Andrew Wilson, who brought a different kind of fire.

Each night of the Advance church planting network's global conference featured this sort of hybrid—doctrinally rich, gospel-focused, Reformed preaching sandwiched between free-flowing charismatic worship—a combination that would make many a Presbyterian (and a few Pentecostals) squirm. But for the crowd gathered at Covenant Life Church in suburban Washington, DC, including pastors from Kenya, Nepal, Australia, and Thailand, it flowed as naturally as it does in their own Reformed charismatic churches—more than 70 of them across the globe.

ADVANCE is hardly the only group in the middle of this theological Venn diagram, with growing numbers of theologically savvy, Spirit-filled followers in the United States, Britain, and around the world. Five hundred years after the Reformation, Luther's 21st-century inheritors are embracing the Holy Spirit in new and deeper ways.

NEWFONTIERS, a network of global "apostolic spheres," has planted hundreds of churches over the last 30 years, many of which fit the Reformed charismatic mold. The movement's founder, Terry Virgo, a British pastor, serves as a sort of elder statesman of Calvinist continuationists and authored the book *The Spirit-Filled Church*.

ACTS 29, the Reformed church-planting network, has also begun to showcase its charismatic side, holding a conference in London around the theme "Reformed & Revived." Matt Chandler, Acts 29 president and lead teaching pastor of the Dallas-area Village Church, has identified himself as Reformed charismatic. He believes the charismatic gifts are still active and should be pursued, a position somewhat uncommon among Southern Baptists.

Frontline Church, an Acts 29 congregation that has expanded to four locations in the Oklahoma City area over the last decade, combines structured liturgy (creeds, the Lord's Table) with "planned spontaneity," including small groups of prayer during communion, where congregants pray for each other's healing and offer prophetic words to one another (e.g., "I believe the Lord wants to say to you . . ."). Lead pastor Josh Kouri thinks the church's unique Reformed charismatic focus, "100 percent committed to both Word and Spirit," is part of its appeal.

"Some people show up on a Sunday morning and don't know where to peg us, but I think that is actually to our benefit," he said. "It's stretching, but it also feels safe to people. I think that commitment to hold in tension things we typically try to resolve . . . that's been a big part of the unique story of our church."

## Rise of Reformed Charismatics

Wilson (also a [CT columnist](#)), Chandler, and Kouri, along with pastors Sam Storms (author of *The Beginner's Guide to the Spiritual Gifts*) and Francis Chan, spoke in October at the Convergence Conference in Oklahoma City, an inaugural event focused on Word and Spirit.

### **Reformation and Revival**

Historically, evangelicals of the Reformed and charismatic camps have been on separate ends of a spectrum, suspicious of one another's views on the role of the Spirit's miraculous gifts (e.g., the nine listed in 1 Cor. 12:7–10) for today's churches.

The Reformed tradition has tended to be cessationist, either denying or avoiding the continued practice of charismatic gifts like healing, tongues, and prophecy, believing they were only for the foundational era of the church. Charismatics, on the other hand, are continuationists, believing these gifts are still available and valuable.

*Cessationists*, like Reformed heavyweight John MacArthur, accuse charismatics of being light on biblical truth, often elevating spiritual experience above sound doctrine. As he writes in his 2013 book *Strange Fire*, MacArthur believes “Charismatics downplay doctrine for the same reason they demean the Bible: they think any concern for timeless objective truth stifles the work of the Spirit.”

*Continuationists* like Chan believe many evangelical churches neglect the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (the subject of his 2009 book *Forgotten God*) and, out of fear of abuses or unwieldy emotionalism, come close to what Paul warns against in 1 Thessalonians 5:19–20: “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt.”

But in this historic divide, which has tended to pit knowledge of the Word against the experience of the Spirit, is there a third way? Francis Schaeffer thought so. In his 1974 essay, “The Lord's Work in the Lord's Way,” he wrote:

“Often men have acted as though one has to choose between reformation and revival. Some call for reformation, others for revival, and they tend to look at each other with suspicion.”

But reformation and revival do not stand in contrast to one another; in fact, both words are related to the concept of restoration. Reformation speaks of a restoration to pure doctrine, revival of a restoration in the Christian's life. Reformation speaks of a return to the teachings of Scripture, revival of a life brought into proper relationship to the Holy Spirit.

The great moments in church history have come when these two restorations have occurred simultaneously. There cannot be true revival unless there has been reformation, and reformation is incomplete without revival.

### ***The Head and the Heart***

Four decades after Schaeffer's essay, church planter Dihan Lee saw the restoration the theologian called for, first in his own life and then at his church, Renew Church LA. It started in a living room with 15 people. About two years later, the congregation leans on the Spirit and the Word to draw a diverse crowd of more than 400 to weekly services.

“We are card-carrying Gospel Coalition people,” Lee said. “We're big fans of Piper and Keller. I'm a five-point Calvinist. And yet we are also people who engage with Bethel and IHOP, and I love Sam Storms. I don't see a discrepancy between being a covenantal Reformed guy who loves theology and pursuing all of what the Holy Spirit wants for the church.”

As a pastor, Lee doesn't label his preaching Reformed, but it's in his skeleton if not on his sleeve. He preaches God's sovereignty, covenants, and election, but also the prophetic, the gifts, and spiritual warfare.



## Spiritual Warfare – God’s Way

Jun 10, 2009

Article ID: DS230 | By: Elliot Miller

This article first appeared in the From the Editor column of the *Christian Research Journal*, volume 25, number 3 (2003). For further information go to: <http://www.equip.org>

Hank Hanegraaff has done it again. After first providing an extremely concise, accessible, and engaging treatment of prayer (*The Prayer of Jesus*, W Publishing Group, 2001), he has now provided the same service with the topic of spiritual warfare (*The Covering*, W Publishing Group, 2002). In both cases he brings a refreshingly biblical perspective to subjects in which Christians show great interest, but also great misunderstanding. Just as we complemented the publication of *The Prayer of Jesus* in the Journal with Lee Strobel’s dynamic interview of Hank on prayer, in this issue we feature an equally profound discussion between Strobel and Hanegraaff on spiritual warfare.

Like prayer, spiritual warfare is of great practical importance to Christian growth. It is critical to accurately understand and apply what the Bible has to say about overcoming temptation and withstanding the wiles of the Devil. If the Evil One could convince a large enough percentage of Christians to substitute a superstitious<sup>4</sup> approach to doing battle with him in place of the biblical model, he would largely neutralize the witness of the church. This scenario may sound preposterous, but there is good reason to believe it is well underway.

There seems to be no end to the subjective, sensational, and superstitious fare on spiritual warfare that dominates the Christian book market. Pay a visit to your local Christian bookstore. Chances are you will find 10 to 20 books on spiritual warfare themes. Two radically different approaches will be represented. The vast majority of the books will advocate the relatively new *deliverance* model for spiritual warfare. This model affirms the capacity of evil spirits to possess or “demonize” Christians. It assumes the existence of, and need to identify, spirits associated with various sins (e.g., the “spirit of lust”), spirits attached to specific physical locations (e.g., “territorial spirits”) or objects, and spirits of various sins passed down through human blood lines (i.e., “generational spirits”). In any of these cases, it emphasizes that God has given Christians authority to confront these demons directly through rebuking them, verbally “binding” them,<sup>5</sup> and commanding them to leave whatever person or place one believes they inhabit. The use of this authority is considered central to both spiritual warfare and Christian sanctification or victory over sin. This direct confrontation can take the form of “warfare prayer” — in which one primarily addresses the Devil and his legions, not God — as well as deliverance sessions (i.e., exorcisms) performed on Christians, including sometimes oneself.

Unless your Christian bookstore is under unusually discerning and conscientious ownership, you will only find a few books at the most that will not teach these concepts and practices but will rather advocate the historic *discipleship* model for spiritual warfare and sanctification. There probably will be only one book in the latter group that will clearly dissociate itself from the former group and call those recent innovations in spiritual warfare *biblically false*. That book would be *The Covering*.

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<sup>4</sup> By superstitious I mean belief in powers and principles that are more akin to magic than to anything that can be substantiated from Scripture or science.

<sup>5</sup> This practice is based on a misunderstanding of Matt. 18:18, which is actually talking about dealing with sinning Christians (see vv. 15–17; cf. John 20:21–23), not dealing with demons.

## Spiritual Warfare – God’s Way

At CRI we are comforted by the realization that there actually are many Christians who agree with us. In terms of the publishing world, however, we often feel like voices in the wilderness as we continually stand for the largely obscured discipleship model for battling against sin and the Devil, described in detail by Hanegraaff and Strobel in this issue.

In the past this magazine has responded to the deliverance teachings of such authors as C. Fred Dickason, Mark Bubeck, Frank and Ida Mae Hammond,<sup>6</sup> Neil T. Anderson,<sup>7</sup> and Bob Larson.<sup>8</sup> These articles may be accessed at our Web site ([www.equip.org](http://www.equip.org)). Since the publication of these articles, new authors have come to the forefront with best-selling books that spread further into evangelicalism the errant spiritual warfare ideas and approaches of the deliverance model.

Some of these authors, such as Stormie Omartian and Beth Moore, are likable personalities with obviously sincere faith in, and love for, Christ. It is especially hard for me to write critically of Omartian, since she was one of my favorite lyricists in the 1970s when she contributed to her husband Michael’s progressive Christian rock albums. Her series of books on the power of prayer<sup>9</sup> have dominated the Christian nonfiction bestseller’s lists in recent years, breaking records in the process, and they show no signs of abating.<sup>10</sup>

Much of what Omartian has to say about prayer and the Christian life is good, and there’s no disputing that her books have helped many people. What’s the problem, then? Despite Omartian’s good intentions, when she touches on spiritual warfare issues, she repeats the errors she imbibed at her church of 23 years (until she moved to Tennessee), The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California (associated with the Foursquare Gospel denomination).

The Church on the Way, whose pastor, Jack Hayford (Omartian’s “spiritual father”<sup>11</sup>), is highly respected in the charismatic/Pentecostal movement, is a dynamic and in many ways fruitful church.<sup>12</sup> It has, however, embraced, or at least failed to take a stand against, many of the errors that have spread through much of the charismatic movement. It recently has become a leading dispenser of the deliverance model of spiritual warfare through its Cleansing Stream Ministries (CSM). The mission statement of CSM states that it is “committed to partnering with pastors and churches in teaching and training leaders and maturing believers in personal cleansing, *deliverance*, and spiritual warfare so they can be released to serve, minister, and disciple others in the Body of Christ” (emphasis added).<sup>13</sup> All of the distinctives of the deliverance model mentioned above — along with the errors of the

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<sup>6</sup> For a general treatment of Christian deliverance teachings up to 1993, see Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller, “Can a Christian Be ‘Demonized?’” vol. 16, no. 3.

<sup>7</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the teachings of Anderson on spiritual warfare and sanctification, see the four part “The Bondage Maker” series by Elliot Miller and Bob and Gretchen Passantino that appeared in vol. 21.

<sup>8</sup> See Steven Parks, “The Devil Is in the Details: An Examination of the Teachings of Bob Larson,” vol. 24, no. 2.

<sup>9</sup> See *The Power of a Praying Parent* (1995), *The Power of a Praying Wife* (1997), *The Power of a Praying Husband* (2001), *The Power of a Praying Woman* (2002), and *The Power of a Praying Nation* (2002), all published by Harvest House (Eugene, OR). See also Lord, *I Want to Be Whole: The Power of Prayer and Scripture in Emotional Healing* (2000) and *Praying God’s Will for Your Life* (2002), both published by Thomas Nelson (Nashville).

<sup>10</sup> See “Prayer Power: Omartian’s Popular Series Breaks Best-Seller Records,” *Book and Bible News and Reviews*, CBA (Christian Booksellers Association) Web site (<http://www.cbaonline.org/>), [http://204.71.129.243/MarketPlace/\\_sepo2bnr.jsp](http://204.71.129.243/MarketPlace/_sepo2bnr.jsp).

<sup>11</sup> *Parent*, Acknowledgments, v.

<sup>12</sup> At least that was the case when I visited it a few times in the 1970s.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.cleansingstream.org/intro\\_to\\_CSM.html](http://www.cleansingstream.org/intro_to_CSM.html).

## Spiritual Warfare – God’s Way

word of faith movement concerning the creative power of human speech — are taught by CSM in seminars and retreats to local churches across North America and around the world.

Like CSM, Omartian affirms that Christians can be demonized and need to seek deliverance from this affliction.<sup>14</sup> She assumes the existence of, and need to identify, spirits attached to physical locations and objects, generational spirits, and specific demons associated with, and assigned to, specific sins.<sup>15</sup> She further teaches that God has given Christians authority to directly address, rebuke, command, and bind demons, and that using this authority is central both to spiritual warfare and sanctification. Several of these points can be demonstrated from just one quote, taken from *Lord, I Want to Be Whole*:

The first step in renouncing sin is to ask God exactly what you need to be delivered from. If you’re dealing with evil spirits, ask Him to show you which ones. Say, “God, give me revelation. Show me if an evil spirit is causing my fear.” Then speak a Scripture from the Word of God that backs up your authority to cast out this spirit. Choose a Scripture that applies to your own life. For example, say, “God has not given [me] a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). Then cast out the spirit. Speak directly to the evil spirit with confidence and boldness and the full knowledge that Jesus has given you authority to do so in His name. Be specific. Say, “I address you, spirit of fear. I will no longer entertain you. I renounce you and remove your right to stay. I say you have no power over me. I bind you in the name of Jesus Christ and in the authority He has given me. I cast you out of my life and command you to be gone.”<sup>16</sup>

Much of the confusion that exists over spiritual warfare arises from taking Bible passages that have a limited application and treating them as if they have no limits. The Bible does say that Christ has unlimited authority over demons, and He gave His disciples the specific authority to cast demons out of possessed individuals and to overcome any other manifestations of the Evil One they might encounter in the work of preaching the Gospel (Matt. 10:1; Mark 3:13–15; Luke 10:17–20; cf. Acts 13:7b–12). In that context, we do find believers in the Gospels and the book of Acts directly addressing demons, rebuking them (not Satan himself; cf. Jude 8–10), and casting them out of people. Jesus never even hinted, however, that this authority carried over into our personal battles with sin and Satan.

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<sup>14</sup> See *Lord, I Want to Be Whole*, 77–78, 83ff. Like many deliverance teachers, Omartian makes distinctions that are supposed to reassure Christians about the limits of the Devil’s power over them but that, in fact, make little or no difference. She makes a distinction between a demon indwelling a believer’s spirit — which she says can’t happen — and a demon attaching itself to a believer’s life — which she says does happen frequently and is the reason why believers need deliverance. She also qualifies that Christians cannot be possessed, but only oppressed. On the one hand she maintains, “Jesus is in you. Evil spirits are not in you.” (Ibid., 79.) On the other hand, she affirms, “Deliverance, then, is evicting the Devil and refusing to be crippled by him” (ibid., 78; emphasis added), and she instructs believers to “cast out the spirit” and “remove [its] right to stay.” (Ibid., 86.) Omartian is using biblical terminology when she speaks of casting out or evicting a demon, but she fails to realize that this necessarily implies something much worse than attachment to one’s life. Whenever the Bible speaks of deliverance, it is always referring to evicting a demon from a person’s body, which the demon had made its home, and from which the demon was able to exert complete control of, and inflict extreme affliction on, the wretched, lost victim. There is, furthermore, no biblical ministry of deliverance to believers. Christians who are overcome by temptation are consistently instructed to put “to death the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13; NASB); they are never told to cast out the demons of various sins. Omartian teaches that demons can control believers against their will, and this is the biblical doctrine of demon possession by another name. For a fuller development of these points, see Elliot Miller, “The Bondage Maker: Examining the Message and Method of Neil T. Anderson (Part Two: Spiritual Warfare and the “Truth Encounter”),” *Christian Research Journal* 21, 2 (1998): 10–21.

<sup>15</sup> See *Lord, I Want to Be Whole*, 81–82, 85–86; *Parent*, 94–95, 133–34, 174, 176.

<sup>16</sup> *Lord, I Want to Be Whole*, 85–86.

## Spiritual Warfare – God’s Way

Nowhere do we find the apostles or disciples addressing invisible spirits (i.e., spirits that are not inhabiting a human body). We *are* promised victory over the Devil in James 4:7: if we resist him, he will flee from us; but we are never told that we resist him by commanding him to leave us alone. In the larger context of James 4, it is clear that this resistance involves submitting to God, drawing near to Him, becoming serious about repentance, and humbling ourselves in the presence of the Lord (James 4:7-10). The same applies to all other Bible passages that speak of resisting Satan (e.g., Eph. 6:13-18; 1 Pet. 5:5-10). Spiritual warfare does not consist in addressing the Devil but rather in addressing God in prayer; it is not a matter of asserting one’s own authority to use Christ’s name over the Devil but rather of standing firm and unmovable in one’s faith in, and obedience to, God. This sustained commitment in the face of spiritual opposition — a moral exercise that causes us to grow in the image of Christ — is what makes the Devil go away. Satan will be “bound” and cast out of our presence at the Second Coming (Rev. 20:1-3), but in the meantime he serves a purpose in God’s development of our character,<sup>17</sup> and it is only our steadfast resistance of evil that makes him flee — not the mere utterance of words or the assertion of our authority in Christ.

This more restricted view of the believer’s authority over demons does not mean that the believer is less equipped to prevail against “the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12; NASB) than he or she would be in the deliverance model. In this issue’s discussion, as in *The Covering*, Hank Hanegraaff takes the focus off of errant views of spiritual warfare in order to provide a positive presentation of what God has provided to ensure our spiritual victory: the “armor of God” (Eph. 6:11–18), which Hanegraaff calls “the covering.”

One part of this armor, Scripture, is correctly noted by Omartian as playing a critical role in spiritual warfare; it is the “sword of the Spirit,” our one offensive weapon (Eph. 6:17), and Satan must yield to its authority. This happens naturally, however, as we stand in faith upon the Word during times of temptation and trial and use it properly when communicating with both the lost and the saved. There is neither need nor biblical basis for quoting Scripture to the Devil.<sup>18</sup> When Omartian says we should look for Scriptures that apply to our situation, she is right. When she tells us to find Scriptures that will back up *our* authority, she is wrong.

It is the authority of God’s Word and Christ on which we stand. That is more than sufficient.

— *Elliot Miller*

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<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., 2 Cor. 12:7–9. Paul did not rebuke Satan for giving him this “thorn in the flesh” or command him to take it away, but he rather besought the Lord to remove it from him, and graciously accepted the Lord’s answer that “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (v. 9, NIV). Paul was able to appreciate that this satanic affliction served a divine purpose in keeping him humble, despite the great revelations he had received (v. 7).

<sup>18</sup> The one biblical instance in which the Devil was addressed directly, and Scripture was spoken to him, was when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11). It should first be noted that no one is disputing that Jesus has the authority to address and rebuke the Devil (see, e.g., Jude 8–10). Jesus is God and Lord of all creation, including Satan, and so it does not necessarily follow that what was proper for Him is also proper for us, John 14:12 notwithstanding. The very point under dispute is whether all of Jesus’ authority transfers over to us or only that specified in Scripture, and so it would beg the question to use this verse as a proof text without establishing the practice of addressing and rebuking the Devil elsewhere in Scripture. It is clear enough, furthermore, that Satan appeared to Jesus in some sort of visible form. If the Devil visually manifests himself to you, then perhaps you will have a biblical basis to quote Scripture to him! If not, quote your Scriptures to yourself or those who are with you, for the only invisible being you have a biblical basis for addressing is God. If Scripture provides no justification for speaking to angels or departed saints, why should we think it is OK to talk to Beelzebub and his demons?

# A Reformed View of Demons

## Part I – Demons

Kurt Hutchison - Date: July 2007

<http://www.kurthutchison.com/demons.html>

One of the problems people have when coming out of Charismaticism is what about all those demons? Frequently people have seen what appear to them to be legitimate manifestations. Are we to just ignore that when we abandon our Charismania?

Another thing that you will find is if you go looking for reformed literature on demon possession is that you won't find anything. The reason for its absence is that the (true) Church has believed universally for 2000 years that Christians cannot be demon possessed and has pretty much ignored the issue beyond that.

Early church writers talked of deliverance, but always in the context of salvation (salvation is deliverance in their minds). Never did I find any examples of anyone casting out demons in the modern Charismatic sense.

In fact, only the false church and the cults have historically dealt with demons. Most of modern deliverance stuff has its roots in Catholic mysticism and exorcism.

So what about those deliverance sessions the Pentecostals do, and the demonic manifestations you hear about? I have seen a lot of strange stuff myself, and was not content with the simplistic reformed answer of "Christians can't be demon possessed." That simply didn't explain all the things I had seen.

In fact I struggled over this issue for quite some time, and I have heard of others struggling over the same issue as they come out of Charismania and the word of faith movements.

**Note:** Let me say that much of the following is my opinion only, I have never read it anywhere, I am not echoing some higher authority like I usually try to do, and thus it is liable to be wrong (except for the part that Christians cannot be demon possessed). Nevertheless, all the pieces here have been assembled from fragments of reformed writers, who usually have very little to say about demons. Only small snippets of references to the false religions having demonic deceptive tricks to keep their converts deceived and a consistent linkage of deliverance to salvation can be found. In fact no description of deliverance as a Christian activity can be found at all in (true) church writings. Salvation and deliverance are the same thing in their minds.

On to my opinions: My best guess is that the Devil is a showman, like Hollywood, and his demons stage a lot of fake acts for the benefit of supporting his false doctrines.

Put another way, how do you know the Devil is lying: when his lips are moving.

One thing that took me a while to understand is that a lot (if not all) of so-called deliverance sessions are performed by people who are unsaved, and the people being delivered are also unsaved. I believe that many Charismatics are in fact unsaved unfortunately. As are most Catholics (they are a fully heretical sect, whereas Charismaticism isn't, although branches of it are such as the word-of-faith movement).

Historically, demonic manifestations aren't that rare, usually they serve to reinforce the false teachings of one or more aberrant viewpoints. And in some cases they seem to serve the purposes of those possessed, that is to obtain attention, fame, or sometimes revenge by casting a false accusation. Often the deliverance is only successful if a Catholic icon is used,

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or non-biblical prayers are used. Blood inscriptions on the body, often in the form of a cross have been reported at the moment of deliverance.

In the mid 1900's, deliverance and the self-help thinking of parts of Pentecostalism merged. Deliverance changed from relief from terrifying manifestations, to relief from immoral behavior and personality defects. It was in this circle that I travelled. We believed that demons were responsibility for every personality defect imaginable, as well as things like poverty or lack of success in love. Virtually anything your heart could desire could be construed to be prevented by demons, which after a brief casting out process, could be yours.

In my mind the key feature is that self-benefit, and/or affirmation of false cultic teachings are the two common threads in the history of demonic manifestations. While the self-help aspect is fairly new, it is simply a redefinition of the self-benefit thread that ran before.

While I write off much of modern deliverance as Anton Mesmer style antics, some of it at least may be real. I have personally met (and know well) several people who experienced undeniable manifestations, such as being pinned by an unseen force (I have met two with this testimony), spontaneous falling down and uncontrolled screaming in individuals who have no history of that kind of behavior (and it never returned either).

Add to this that one out of a hundred people in America claim to have been kidnapped by UFO's (which I believe are a form of demonic manifestations in the cases that aren't false).

In my opinion, these manifestations serve to spread lies and deceit. Put another way, they are a mechanism of controlling the deceived. The key reason why the false churches and the cults have to deal with demons is because their unsaved members can become demon possessed. But they don't successfully deal with those demons however, they are in fact victimized and controlled by the very demons they think they are casting out.

There was a very famous case of demonic possession in the 1600's (a century after the reformation began). It is reputed that a nun became demon possessed after a priest spurned her amorous affections, she eventually accused the priest of being a witch and sending the demons to torment her. Hysteria in the convent followed, with many nuns "manifesting" demonic behavior. The priest was burned at the stake, and the "demon" in the nun proclaimed that only a Bishop or higher authority could cast it out, and indeed, a Bishop was successful by performing a Catholic right of transubstantiation and feeding her the Eucharist. The nun became a celebrated case because protestant ministers were unable (by using prayer alone) to have any affect on the nun. The nun was a celebrity for the rest of her life. She was considered to be proof of the superiority of the Catholic religion and many converted from Protestantism back to Catholicism as a result of her story.

In my opinion it is proof of the power of lies and deceit. God states clearly that false prophets are allowed by Him, to test us to see if we are loyal to His word. And we are warned that even apparent angelic appearances can be false. In the case of the nun, the theory that she was out for fame and revenge seems too obvious to pass up. The only prayer that needed to be made for her was that she repent of her sins and follow Christ.

But whether demonic or not, trickery to deceive those who aren't loyal to God's word alone is allowed by God, to reveal their hearts. I followed after such things (trickery) with great enthusiasm for a while. It was a long time for me to admit that I too was unsaved during my Charismatic period, and was thus just another marionette for the Devil to play with.

The healing evangelists operate in a similar vein, they have a few parlor tricks some probably demonic but much is simple fakery. These tricks string along the easily deceived of which I

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was one. But not one single documentable miracle can be produced (did you know Hinn cannot produce a single one for example)? Put another way, imagine a demon squeezing someone's liver, giving pain, and it lets go on command, but in no way leaves the person, deception is now complete, but no real healing or deliverance occurred.

I used to worry that this viewpoint violated the scripture that the Devil's kingdom is not divided against itself, or that I was in danger of committing the unpardonable sin by calling some so-called healings demonic deception (I had a lot of fear about that one actually). But calling it a staged deception in no way violates those scriptures. The Bible warns us that the Devil is capable of lying signs and wonders, and that these will increase in the latter days.

**Note:** the actual unpardonable sin was that of rejecting the incarnate Jesus, and accusing the Spirit by which He worked of being evil. It could only be committed by that generation, just as Jesus says, they shall bear the full punishment for it, go read it again if you are concerned about it.

On the fakery side of things So-called deliverance ministers can whip up audiences into a frenzy, crying, screaming, shaking, and even vomiting can be seen. Try those tactics on an audience that is not sympathetic to the idea of casting out demons and nothing happens. Does that mean they lack faith? No it means they aren't susceptible to autosuggestion Anton Mesmer style because they know it is hogwash. My belief is the only thing those frenzied audiences are truly being delivered from is their money.

Much of the healing evangelist's work is simple fakery too, soft music, repetitive suggestive phrases, and virtually all the claimed healings are psychosomatic "the pain is gone". The nasty truth is that the pain generally returns a few hours or days later when the suggestion wears off.

People who show up to healing evangelists' meetings with physical problems generally leave as they came. Healings of visible physical conditions are nonexistent in healing evangelists meetings. And yet one is no more difficult for God than another so it doesn't make sense, when Jesus healed He healed them all.

On the less fake side of things, I have read many testimonies of modern Catholic mystics, tales of angels coming and going asking the priests for advice, the priests ministering to a sad God who needs their emotional support, flowers falling from heaven, the sun got brighter (or darker), lights in the sky, pleasing odors appearing from nowhere, the ubiquitous virgin Mary appearances, numerous prophecies from Mary (from spirit mediums, often children), and on and on.

Even as a Charismatic I rejected those as demonic (or just faked) deceptions designed to sustain false Catholic theology, but I accepted the charismatic tales without question, not realizing they had the same purpose.

I eventually concluded, and orthodox Christianity agrees with me that true Christians have nothing whatsoever to fear from the Devil or his demons except deception and temptation.

I am reminded of the kid saying, "my father can beat up your father." And my Father loves me a lot too, enough to sacrifice His firstborn son for me.

**Note:** In fact the Devil is a tool in God's hands, there are many instances of God Himself sending an evil spirit to do His work. And the Bible is clear he can do nothing without permission. This from the moment Jesus said "I have overcome the world, and all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." Think about that statement for a bit, did God lack authority before? In fact He did, the Devil legally (by God's own law) owned the world, and even then still had to ask permission to torment Job for example, but Jesus plundered the strongman, took his possessions, and now the world is back under God's authority legally. It

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was always under God's control in the sense that the Devil could never violate God's plan, but legally it was his for a while, and humanity belonged to him as slaves.

So what about those (few) real demonic manifestations? John MacArthur tells the story of his going over to someone's house to minister, and the kid (6 years old or so) whom he had never met, went berserk, screaming "not him, I hate him", and bit and tore at his leg enough to draw blood. MacArthur didn't bother to complete the story, treating it as if it wasn't even important.

Here is my big profound nugget of wisdom: don't trust any demonic manifestation, I mean never draw the obvious conclusion that the stage act means for us to draw. MacArthur's experience was probably nothing more than an attempt to pump his ego that he is a great man of God, an anointed modern day apostle whom the demons fear and hate. Yeah right. Pride was the real threat that day, and the demon possessed child was the tempter. Notice MacArthur to his credit didn't bite, he treated that manifestation as something that was not particularly important.

I have found testimonies (supposedly from demons) that contradict themselves in the same testimony, and yet the first part (that was contradicted by the second part) was quoted as if it was a great revelation about demons. People have been caught faking it (teenagers mostly) just for fun, to yank the preacher's chain (all this from the many demon and deliverance books I have read which I now believe are nonsense). Other, more sensible Christians, have caught people faking multiple personalities, including modifying their voice. Just watch some cartoons, all those voices are made by voice actors, anybody can make the most outrageous noises if they practice a bit.

The Bible forbids us from communicating with demons, so I figure we are on pretty good ground by rejecting the content of all demonic communication, both the spoken part and the stuff implied by the show.

It is possible to interpret the scripture "and they shall drive out demons" as simply meaning we shall spread the Gospel, thus driving demons out of all who are saved. That also eliminates any warrant for the average Christian to cast out demons. The absence of any Biblical example of an average Christian casting out a demon tends to favor that interpretation. So while demons are real, most so-called manifestations aren't, and if faced with a real manifestation we are protected by our God, not by performing a religious ritual.

I can tell lots of stories that will give you the chills, until you realize that the so-called Christians in the stories are word-of-faith cult members that have about as much to do with Christ as a Hindu or a Buddhist. They are very sincere, and nice lovable people, but lost, and are therefore playthings for the Devil (as much as God allows anyway).

One of the better recent stories I know of is a full-blown demon possessed wife going after her husband with a knife, and having no recollection of it later (and this happened again and again until it was resolved). She was only delivered when the demon was cast out, which was only possible after they removed from the house a pile of voodoo artifacts, that were discovered in her dead mother's suitcase in the closet, which they only discovered because the husband groaned out the single word "suitcase" after an intense (charismatic) prayer session. I have personally met the people with that particular testimony, they go to the charismatic church I used to attend.

There are so many non-biblical parts of that testimony it is a great one to dissect because it covers most of the false doctrines about demons. Cultic artifacts in the house do not give demons a right to possess us. Neither do the mother's sins give demons a right to possess a Christian child. And unless that guy is a true prophet of God (and nobody since the apostles



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has ever passed the test), he has no business assuming his groaning has anything to do with God whatsoever. The fact that it came up out of his throat sounds like classic Hollywood-style demon possession in fact.

My take: all show, all Hollywood, a demonic deception in two unsaved people designed to take their eyes off the truth of Scripture and onto believing experience and subjectivity (and thus set them up to deny scripture and follow after doctrines of demons). Notice the experience confirms almost every false doctrine about demons in one convenient package, all wrapped up and tied with a bow. The possibility that the wife is totally insane also crossed my mind and I am not ruling it out either, the groaning husband is a bit suspect also. You could argue that they make a good couple. :-)

I have heard stories of poltergeists, that people were convinced were there to kill them. My guess is those poltergeists (if real at all) were there to deceive them, to frighten them, to drive them into the arms of cultists, and so firmly entrench their belief in the cultists that they will obey without question after that.

Much charismatic demonic lore assumes that the Devil is stupid, and that we are smarter than him, it is not so. He is the master manipulator of all time, and without grace we have no defense against him. So think again as to the real purpose of any demonic manifestations you have seen.

And if the manifestation was in yourself, possibly re-evaluate if you were truly saved at the time (and thus under God's protection from demons), did you understand the true Gospel salvation by grace through faith alone? Or were you trusting in the false word-of-faith Jesus for example? Or did you have works thinking, that you had to earn your place with God?

Another thing is that virtually all demon lore is extra-biblical. Charismatics have long abandoned sola scriptura, and ignore the warning in Revelation about adding words to the Bible. Specific revelation (scripture) is explicitly closed, those who add to scripture are false teachers.

Here is another chilling thing, if you believe that a Christian cannot be demon possessed (and I do, along with the rest of orthodox Christianity if I understand correctly), all those having real demonic manifestations of possession, cannot be Christians. But that isn't saying as much as it sounds. How do you judge a true manifestation anyway? Are we even told to worry about that in the Bible? Not really.

The Bible says that God Himself allows false manifestations to test us (Deu 13:3), to see if we really love Him (are loyal to His word or are willing to be swept away by every wind of doctrine). And as scripture says all but the elect will be deceived. I was a professional leaf by the way, adept at catching user-friendly winds of doctrine. :-(

All that stuff about having your home blessed for protection, or anointing your house with oil, or having it cleansed of demons is a bunch of non-biblical hooey. It is the truth of God's word that drives demons out, one person at a time. In goes the Holy Spirit to regenerate someone, and out go the demons if any. It is a singular event, and church writers throughout the ages have written of deliverance solely in that regard to the extent I have read them.

Another common misconception is the idea that involvement in the occult makes one more likely to become demon possessed, and that is thought to be true for the Christian also.

To answer this question, I will pose a question: would a true Christian knowingly do Ouija (assuming they fully understand what it is), or earnestly pray to Artemis or some other false god?

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Put another way, will a true Christian knowingly and deliberately get involved in the occult, deliberately disobey God, and become demon possessed as a result. The answer to those questions is simply: no, no, and no (this is a Calvinistic viewpoint I admit).

Then you will ask, what if I unwittingly do it? The answer is still no possession possible for a true Christian.

If a Christian does become involved in the occult however, chances are God will do something to bring such a person out of it. Don't mistake God's loving discipline for demonic possession however. It can include demonic attacks permitted by God, but demonic possession is simply not possible for a Christian.

Generational curses are another (laughable) idea. I had a whole book on masonic curses (the bad things that will happen to masons and their descendants), there were a bunch of them too. My grandfather was a mason, so I was under a generational curse, and I spent several prayer sessions breaking every one of those curses with the mighty power of God at my disposal.

The end result was no change whatsoever. I have heard about different curses that supposedly follow ancestor involvement in many cults, the curse of Hindus, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholicism, the list goes on almost endlessly, or at least as much as is profitable to put in print.

I sat at the feet of a well known deliverance minister, and even travelled half-way across the continent to attend a bible study at his house. I was such a super-spiritual Christian, and thought I was so privileged to be on the cutting edge of this stuff. Cough.

I don't read any spiritual significance into occultic activity any more. Cult members may all be demon possessed with 10,000 demons each, or none at all, it doesn't matter in the least. And we have no Biblical warrant to worry about it either, other than to preach the Gospel.

I would also mention that shamans, witch doctors, and western mystics have been repeatedly exposed as frauds by people (often non-Christian) who debunk this stuff. If you see something you can't explain, it is far more likely to be something that someone else can explain than actual demonic activity.

The thing that really matters is getting over your fear of demons (I had it for a long time after exiting Charisma). Charisma really preaches a world where the Devil reigns and a feckless weakling God stands on the sidelines hoping we will help Him out a bit. The reality is different, demons may be smarter and more powerful than us, but compared to the all-powerful God who protects us it means nothing.

"Compared to God the power to destroy a planet is insignificant." – *Darth Vader voice*.

Who cares if a demon can levitate a rock, or smack your wall at night, or glow a little bit at night? Recognize an attempt to frighten you for the lame attempt that it is. And know they aren't even allowed to do that unless God lets them. Once you become an orthodox Christian, even if you have a background with a large amount of manifestations, it is unlikely you will ever see one again (unless you have a mental condition), because God simply protects us from such things.

Which leads up to the most important point, nothing happens without God's permission, nothing, so if you ever have another paranormal experience, there is nothing to fear. God is allowing it for some reason or other and that is all you really need to know (that and the

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promise that all things work together for good...). And remember that virtually all apparent demonic manifestations are manipulative and rarely what they seem to be.

So what are all those demons out there doing then?

John MacArthur, one of my favorite preachers, believes that demons primarily energize and assist false teachers, therefore the most energetic attacks are in the Christian church itself. He comments that the lust of the flesh is more than adequate to account for what happens in bars without any demonic assistance.

But the spread of false doctrine is a deliberate concerted attempt to destroy the Church. False teachers are the most likely to receive demonic “assistance” in their activities. The Bible itself never warns us about demon possession, but cautions us against seductive doctrines of demons.

**Note:** I analyzed the theological implications of the deliverance teachers of today, and have concluded it is worse than I have presented here.

### **Part II – Death by Deliverance**

Following is an analysis of modern deliverance teachings, as taught by Derek Prince, Frank Hammond, Frank Marzullo, Glenn Miller (not the musician), and many others.

A classic work on the subject is “Pigs in the Parlor”, by Frank Hammond.

In short, they teach the following:

- Christians can be demon possessed (inhabited by demons).
- When you sin, you give demons legal rights to enter you and your children and torment you and them with various personality defects and tendencies to sin more. Physical ailments are also caused by these demons.
- Demons hate Christians, and so never miss such a “legal” opportunity.
- Old testament scriptures on “generational curses” are used to justify this thinking, believing that all such curses are demon energized.
- Published lists of names of demons for every imaginable “curse” are available.
- The particular sins of your ancestors affect which curses you are under, and you must explicitly pray to break them, and you must identify them correctly to break them effectively.
- Even minor personality defects are caused by demons, large defects take many demons (groups of demons cooperating together).
- Note: frequently you will find Latter-Rain teachings coming from deliverance teachers, such as the Lake Hamilton Bible Camp.

My theological analysis concludes what they really teach is as follows:

- Deficient view of the cross and the atonement.
- Justification by works.
- Deficient view of sin.
- Ignores the fallenness of the flesh and blames it on demons.
- Substitutes “deliverance” for repentance of sins.
- Substitutes fear of demons for fear of God.
- A form of Dualism.

As I shall attempt to make clear, the above are very dangerous, and can lead to eternal death.

**Deficient view of the cross.**

Consider the claim that when you sin, you give demons legal right to enter you (and your children) and torment you.

Our “legal” standing before God with regards to sin is exactly what gets us into heaven (a connection lost on the deliverance teachers), confusion on this issue is life threatening.

The cross declares us to be legally sinless before a righteous and holy God who tolerates no sin at all. Separating our legal standing with regards to entering heaven, and with regards to anything else is not biblical.

Our sins are as scarlet, but are as far from us as the bottom of the sea says scripture.

When we sin we have an advocate (I think they forget this), and if we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive them.

I have also heard it taught that we must do our own advocacy and refute the accuser (Satan) before God’s throne, this is more baloney and is dangerously self-righteous. Jesus is our advocate, and He never tires, and He never fails in His advocacy. His claim to have paid for our sins is 100% effective all of the time. To hear the deliverance teachers, you would think that He is a lot less effective than that.

**Justification by Works.**

Since deliverance teaches your legal standing before God is based on you not sinning, it is essentially teaching justification by works, a fatal teaching that leads multitudes to Hell. They deny this of course, but their theology is clear, you cannot separate your legal standing with regards to demons from your legal standing with regards to salvation. Deliverance teaching is a seductive way to sneak in justification by works.

It must be stressed that you cannot even enter the narrow gate until you abandon all hope in self. Any form of self-righteousness is fatal. This is why deliverance teachings are so dangerous.

**Deficient View of Sin.**

Anyone who believes they can live a relatively sinless life has no understanding of God’s view of sin. A proper study of the law and of sin will reveal that we all sin continually in every way. None of us loves God with all his heart, mind and strength (only Jesus ever did that). None of us are immune from pride. None of us are immune from lust, or covetousness, or can go through life and never lie. Failure to realize this is to be blinded to the true nature of your sin, and is yet another perilous thing indeed.

Consider that a true view of sin would lead us to necessarily conclude that Christians are the most demon possessed of all people. Ridiculous of course.

**Ignores the fallenness of the flesh and blames it on demons.**

The Bible describes the Christian battle with sin as a battle against the flesh, not a battle against demons. Demons tempt, but the culprit is the flesh or the body, as Paul makes abundantly clear in Romans.

**Substitutes Deliverance for Repentance of Sins**

Blaming your sin on demons (instead of the sinful nature or the flesh) essentially absolves one of the struggle against sin, and eliminates the need for repentance of sin. It is the demons fault, not yours. You aren’t a wretched worthless evil sinner in bondage to sin who needs

## A Reformed View of Demons

salvation (salvation is both from sins today and from Hell tomorrow), rather you are a poor innocent victim of the Devil.

While holding out the promise that all of your personality defects can be cured, and your physical ailments removed, the actual effect of these teachings are to lead many to Hell.

### **Substitutes fear of demons for fear of God.**

While less perilous than the other doctrines, it is worth including here. The Bible plainly states we should fear God, not the Devil and his demons. Deliverance teachings turn this on its head.

Much time is spent by deliverance adherents praying to break curses off themselves and their children. They research past sins of their ancestors to see which curses need to be broken, it never ends. This is spinning your wheels and accomplishes nothing but self-deception.

The fear is developed to the point that even symbols of demons are believed to be cursed objects that allow demons into your home. Every unclean thing in the Old Testament Law is reimagined to be a cursed object.

Fear of images of owls, frogs, demons, and talking animals (cartoons) is taught. People are urged to clean their homes of any images of unclean things. One book claims that a picture of an owl caused disease for example, and it was only cured by removing the picture.

### **Dualism**

Dualism is an ancient heresy that taught that only good things come from God, and that only bad things come from the Devil. It saw the Devil and God as equal adversaries at war with each other, and mankind is caught in the middle (and is often the determining factor in the outcome of the war). This view is very popular in Hollywood movies today.

Deliverance doesn't teach full blown dualism, but rather an implied form of it. They would claim God is superior to the Devil, but in practice the Devil reigns supreme, God stands on the sidelines, and is dependent on man's anointed efforts to prevail. So if anything we could label it not dualism, but rather sovereign Devil theology.

The idea that most if not all bad things are from the Devil and demons is well developed in deliverance theology. There are spirits of poverty, spirits causing bad marriages, bad relationships, trouble at work, one for just about every imaginable trouble. There are ruling spirits that darken nations so the Gospel cannot penetrate (this openly denies the omnipotence and sovereignty of God). All these things are overcome by only one method, the saints have to go to war.

The truth is that God reigns supreme, and the Devil was defeated on the cross. The Devil is only a tool in God's hands and can only do what he is allowed to do. And even then the Devil will end up (albeit unwillingly) serving God's purposes. God can and does send discipline and judgement against people and nations, which includes hardening their hearts against the Gospel. God can and does allow suffering, we are not greater than our master, He did not spare Him, and neither is He going to spare us (in this life).

Whatever happens to you, know that it pleased God to allow it, and that if you are truly a Christian, He will make some good out of it in your life. Deliverance denies this of course, and ends up unwittingly spitting in God's face for every trouble that He allows, in direct disobedience to the Bible's command to praise Him in all things.

### **Conclusion**

Several damnable heresies are here in embryonic form, not enough on their own to be declared full apostacy, but several steps in that direction are taken. Once confusion is sown about your “legal” standing before God, it is very easy to fall into full apostacy or works righteousness without even realizing it.

Since such confusion is only possible where a weak understanding of the cross vs. self-righteousness is already present, these teachings are quite dangerous and are likely leading many to Hell by furthering works righteousness and dualistic thinking.

A Biblically based commentary on current issues that impact *you*.

## **How Deliverance Ministries Lead People to Bondage**

*A Warning Against the Warfare Worldview*

by Bob DeWaay

*The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2Tim 2:24-26)*

In 1977 I was in a ministry that specialized in inner healing and deliverance. People came to us from all over the country seeking release from hearing voices, addictions, emotional trauma due to past hurts and abuses, and many other forms of spiritual bondage. At the time our ministry was considered “cutting edge” in the world of spiritual warfare. Ours was a Christian community where people could come and live with other Christians to find healing.

About that time a woman from another state came to stay at our ministry center for a few days to receive prayer and deliverance. She had grown up in a family that was deeply involved in the occult and had been named after a Greek goddess. When she called us she was trying to get out of her occult bondage and was being attacked by evil spirits who did not want to let her go. They manifested themselves through her taunting us and making hissing sounds. We soon found out that the demons that tormented her were powerful and had no intention of leaving. Two of us took on the responsibility of ministering to her. After we had led her in some prayers, confronted some of the demons, and demanded them to leave in Jesus' name, she found some relief.

The most dramatic event in our ministry to her came after one of our Tuesday night meetings. After most people had left she stayed for more prayer. Before we even got to her, she was taken over by a violent evil spirit. Her countenance changed, her voice altered, her face contorted and her hands became like claws. She let out a loud scream and charged at me, intending to gouge my face with her fingernails. As she screamed and raced across the room, I and the other man who had been ministering to her stood our ground and said, “Stop! in the name of Jesus.” When she got two feet from us she hit what seemed like an invisible wall and fell to the floor whimpering. We prayed with her and asked God to set her free.

We had encountered many cases of demonic manifestations in our ministry, but this was the most dramatic. As I look back on this incident now, what is most significant is not what happened that night, but what happened the next day. The next day she felt much better and asked to talk to us before leaving for home. She told me, “Bob, Satan is very scared of you. You have much power and authority.” What that statement and the event that led to it meant to me then was very different from how I understand it now. The difference is due to the “warfare” worldview I held then and the “providential” worldview I hold now. The way we interpret events is determined by our worldview. In this article I will discuss exorcism from the perspective of each of these worldviews.

### **Exorcism in the Warfare Worldview**

The warfare worldview holds that the battle between good and evil, God and Satan, is played out in human history, with an uncertain outcome. By uncertain I mean that God does not

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sovereignly determine the outcome.<sup>1</sup> There are casualties in this battle. The battle to free individuals from spiritual bondage is carried on by people of faith who have learned the tools of battle and become mighty warriors for God. According to many who hold the warfare worldview, even the destiny of nations is in the hands of human spiritual warriors who will capture nations for the Kingdom of God. My fondest hope in 1977 was that I would become one of these mighty warriors who would plunder Satan's kingdom on the field of battle.

So in that context I interpreted the woman's statement to mean that I was succeeding. At age 27 I had become a mighty warrior who was equipped to go to battle against anything Satan could throw at me. I was so charged up by that incident that I spent the next couple of years dealing with dozens of hurting people, many who were in horrible spiritual bondage. Day and night I was casting out demons, confronting the powers of darkness and helping people escape from the clutches of demons. That woman went back home and I do not remember hearing from her again. Others who lived closer, I ministered to time and time again over a period of years.

According to many exorcists who embrace the warfare worldview, demons possess their victims because they have discovered a "right" to do so. For example, a person might be under an unknown curse that gives the demon a right to torment him or her. Famous exorcist Bob Larson explains how he sees this working: "Curses are exacting, legal arrangements of the spirit world. Just like human contracts contain fine print and carefully crafted language, satanic curses are often filled with minutia that require detailed voiding."<sup>2</sup> To get free requires the counselor to ferret out the exact wording and nature of the curse and then formulate a renunciation to break it.<sup>3</sup> When I was a deliverance counselor holding the warfare worldview it was my job to find out what may have given the demons the right to enter and to close that entrance. I taught that if the demons found a legal "right" to stay they would, and that if they had no legal right, they would try to stay anyhow because they are nasty deceivers.

Those who hold to this view of the spiritual universe see the battle as being fought on all levels. On the level of the heavenlies, they enlist troops of "prophetic intercessors" to identify, bind and cast down rulers over cities and nations.<sup>4</sup> Warriors are enlisted to take spiritual control over cities by conducting prayer walks around areas of the city. In the warfare worldview, the deliverance counselor is the foot soldier who does hand to hand combat on the spiritual battlefield. He or she fights the forces of darkness that have captured individual souls. In 1977 I was a deliverance counselor and had just found out through a powerful experience and the testimony of one who had been deeply in Satan's camp that I was a powerful warrior whom Satan feared. My sails were set to spend the rest of my life as a career spiritual military man freeing captives. Exorcism was where the battle got personal and I was chosen to be there.

To continue to improve in my counseling ministry, I read the books of those who had more experience. This increased my understanding of how demons worked. Many of the people I

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<sup>1</sup> Greg Boyd, *God at War*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1997) 13. Dr. Boyd defines the "warfare" world view: "Stated most broadly, this worldview is that perspective on reality which centers on the conviction that the good and evil, fortunate or unfortunate, aspects of life are to be interpreted largely as the result of good and evil, friendly or hostile, spirits warring against each other and against us." The worldview that Dr. Boyd rejects he calls the "providential blueprint worldview." 292. He categorically rejects the idea that the forces of wickedness are ultimately serving God's greater purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Larson, *In the Name of Satan — How the forces of evil work and what you can do to defeat them*; (Nashville: Nelson, 1996) 109.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 109, 110.

<sup>4</sup> See *Critical Issues Commentary* Issue 48 "The dishonoring of God in Popular Spiritual Warfare teaching" for documentation of these teachings. <http://www.cicministry.org/commentary/issue48.htm>



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counseled, however, continued to struggle with demons in spite of many exorcism sessions. This required fine tuning and the development of further strategies. Battles are never easily won. In a war there are always set backs. Some of the teachings I used were very Biblical: repentance, forgiveness, the study of God's word, and getting one's self in right relationship to the body of Christ. Also, my counseling involved helping people make wise choices in their lives.

During those years I visited people in the lock up wards of most of the mental hospitals in our area. I had ministered to so many troubled people that one time when I went to the largest lockup ward in our county, I knew three of the patients personally.

### Secret Spiritual Laws

During those years of believing the warfare worldview, I noticed that the same people kept having the same problems. As part of my study to fine tune my approach I read a book written by a famous Christian that claimed to be given to him by divine revelation. In the book he said that there are spiritual laws that govern the spirit world. One of these has to do with "passivity." Demons are able, according to him, to move in and take over when a person has a passive will.<sup>5</sup> For a long time I incorporated this "truth" into my counseling, figuring that passivity was why these people kept falling back into demonic bondage. I worked out techniques for people to use to strengthen their passive wills so that the demons would no longer be able to influence them. *I no longer believe that what I was doing is valid.*

This type of teaching is still around. Bob Larson writes, "If the core of a person's identity is strong willed, it seems harder for a demon to take over, no matter what that person does."<sup>6</sup> In this scheme of things, the human will is crucial: "I always tell those bound by demons to call upon that small portion of their will that is not dominated by the devil."<sup>7</sup>

The problem I saw was this: "passive" people seemed to be not strong willed by nature — no process changed that. They continued to feel oppressed by demons and lamented their inability to overcome "passivity." At the time I did not realize that by telling people their will had to be stronger, I was throwing gas on the fire. The warfare worldview had led me so far astray that I did not see the relevance of the simplest of Scriptures, "*blessed is the man who trusts in God . . . cursed is the man who trusts in man*" (Jer 17: 5, 7). According to the theory I taught, the "spiritual law" of the universe is such that passive wills get demonized, even if one is a Christian. To keep free one must gain a strong will. A person could not trust God for freedom unless the person had a strong enough will; otherwise God's hands were tied by the spiritual law He had created.<sup>8</sup> Bob Larson writes, "The will of the victim is the spiritual battleground on which the war of exorcism is fought. The slightest reluctance can mean

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<sup>5</sup> Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man Vol. 3*, (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1968 – first published in 1928) 125. Nee identifies "passivity" as a key way demons influence Christians. His chapter "The Path to Freedom" is original material that is very similar to what is being taught today. Nee was teaching these things many decades before those who are doing so today. His influence on me during my years of doing deliverance was extensive.

<sup>6</sup> Larson, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 80.

<sup>8</sup> Op. Cit. Nee 90. "All actions are governed by laws . . . Should anyone fulfill the conditions for the working of evil spirits (whether he fulfills them willingly, such as the witch, the medium, or the sorcerer – or unwittingly, such as the Christian), then he has definitely given ground to them to work on him." 90. As with modern versions of this teaching, the only way we can know about these laws is through extra-biblical revelations such as those provided in Nee's book.

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defeat.”<sup>9</sup> So where is our hope — in our own will? Larson says of one of his clients, “Her initial unwillingness to admit what happened gave the demons legal grounds for remaining.”<sup>10</sup>

Evidently we need a spiritual “lawyer” to figure out the spiritual contracts of the universe by which the demons operate, and the laws that apply. In the warfare worldview the battle is between humans and wicked spirits. The humans are at a huge disadvantage because the spirits have been navigating the spirit world for thousands of years and only they know all the “rules.” The exorcist must query the demons to find out needed information and then beat them at their own rules. Bob Larson forces demons to tell him the truth under threat of being punished by angels and sent to the pit (I had never thought of that strategy when I was a deliverance counselor). Having done so, he makes the demons tell him what he needs to know to deliver the person. He gives this advice to those who would do exorcism: “Someone should be designated to keep a log of the information received while interrogating the demons. As the internal structure of the victim’s demonic system is revealed, list the spirits according to their ranking, cite their right and occasion of entry, and note their legal ground for remaining.”<sup>11</sup> How do we know this in reliable? — “The demons will be forced to give you this information because they must submit to the name of Jesus and His authority.”<sup>12</sup>

When I believed the warfare worldview and did exorcisms, I believed that what I was doing was valid because the reality of demons manifesting themselves was so vivid and people were being set free in the name of Jesus. There were many who felt much better after the sessions. They came in miserable and left our ministry session with a sense of love and freedom. So I believed they were being helped. I do not doubt the sincerity of Bob Larson and others like him, nor do I doubt the reality of the stories. What I am questioning is whether the worldview that under girds their ministry is Biblical. Is it true that there is a whole unseen legal world that governs demons and other levels of Satan’s hierarchy that must be discovered and exploited to gain victory over Satan? Is it true that we need trained exorcists who have this knowledge in order to see captives freed? Later I will tell you how my ministry changed for good when I came to doubt the premises that provided the basis for what I was doing.

### **Secret Knowledge and Deliverance**

Those who hold to the warfare worldview claim that knowledge about Satan, his emissaries, and their hierarchical structure is important in winning the battle. This is true on all levels, from battling principalities over nations to casting demons out of individuals. For example, when I was in this movement we were seeking to purchase property in one of the suburbs here in the Twin Cities. Because of difficulties with the purchase, we decided to hold an all night intercessory meeting. During the middle of the night, someone got a revelation that a principality called “Manitou” was ruling over the city, keeping us from buying the property. This principality supposedly ruled because Native Americans had practiced their religion there at one time. So we were instructed by our leaders that we needed to cast down the spirit of Manitou over the city so that we could claim it for God. The successful finishing of the purchase “proved” that our prayers had been effective which consequently reinforced the idea that we needed special revelations to cast down principalities over cities.

When one holds the warfare worldview such practices make all the sense in the world. Everything one wants to accomplish is tied up in the complex interaction of curses, demons,

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<sup>9</sup> Larson 190.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 208.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

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principalities, and the legalities that control the spirit world. There is no part of life that does not operate in this realm. Individual exorcism is the micro level of the battle, cities and nations the macro level. On every level it is necessary to gain knowledge if one wants to win battles. The necessary knowledge is usually the names of demons or principalities, the nature of the curse invoked, or the structure of the spiritual hierarchy in Satan's kingdom. Bob Larson tells about performing an exorcism when one of the demons was away on another mission and had been missed during the procedure.<sup>13</sup> He learned to "lock out" these demons. Larson writes: "If I had ended the procedure prematurely, I would never have known about this spirit, and he would have come back later."<sup>14</sup>

One might ask what role God plays in the warfare worldview. The answer is that He commissions us to the battle, equips us for the battle, and gives us the tools we need. God gives the exorcist knowledge and power for battle. However, it is up to the exorcist to use his toolbox to cast out the demons. The exorcist must use the tools properly or the demons will stay. For example, Larson tells how he taught a pastor why demons kept coming back: "You probably never found the gatekeeper demon. It didn't matter how many demons you cast out, they don't have to go to the pit because the gatekeeper kept the door open for them to return."<sup>15</sup> The arrangement and locations of the spirits are determined by the knowledge and ability of the exorcist. Larson claims the right to assign demons to the pit if he does everything right.

What we must keep in mind is that the information needed to do effective spiritual warfare according to the warfare worldview is **not revealed**. What I mean is that it is neither found in God's specific revelation (the Bible) nor in general revelation (what may legitimately be learned about the creation using our natural senses and rational mind). The knowledge that is required is secret knowledge. God has not revealed the names of demons over nations, cities, neighborhoods, or in demonized persons. The only source of such information is from some other type of revelation, either extra biblical divine revelation or revelation gained from demons themselves. Those who hold to the warfare worldview believe that it is their role to gain this knowledge and use it in the battle. Since the knowledge is "secret" it is of the realm of the occult. They have to somehow justify gaining forbidden knowledge in the name of helping the victims of evil spirits.

### **Spiritual "Geek Squad"**

In our city there is a company called "The Geek Squad" which will come to your home or place of business and solve your computer problems. They are very good at what they do and fix most hardware or software problems promptly. The reason they can do so is that they understand the nature of computers and computer software. They have technical knowledge. How is this possible? It is possible because humans created computers. Detailed manuals are available or computers can be reverse engineered by experts. Having complete knowledge of a computer is possible because computers are human creations.

The problem with the warfare worldview is that it has created the perceived need for a "Geek Squad" for souls. Not only must the demons and curses that are affecting the person be understood in detail, but the human soul must be also. The complex relationship between all the spiritual factors affecting the person and the nature and inclination of his or her soul, must be discerned and diagnosed by a skilled spiritual "technician" (they call themselves

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 91

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 133.

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counselors) who can do the proper “fix.” Computers are complex, but they are exponentially simpler than the human soul and the spiritual world it inhabits.

For example, consider Bob Larson’s description of his ministry to a person in bondage. The person in question had numerous “alters” (multiple personalities) as well as demonic bondage. This person with “dissociative identity disorder” had a demon called “Gatekeeper” who kept letting demons back in after they had been cast out.<sup>16</sup> Larson describes the causes of such disorders and how he learned to speak to different identities within a person.<sup>17</sup> He was dealing with a person who had alternate personalities called “Facilitator” and “Regulator.” Larson theorized that in this person demons could possess an “alter.”<sup>18</sup> Larson explains:

In the realm of multiple personalities, there are good alters and bad alters. Good alters are the part of the person’s consciousness that has acknowledged Christ as Savior. Bad, alters, for one reason or another, refuse to make that spiritual surrender.<sup>19</sup>

This complex situation leads to this task for the spiritual technician: “Our task is to sort through the maze to gain the assistance of the good alters. Then we can attempt to win the bad alters to God.”<sup>20</sup> Larson proceeded to have the alternate personality within his client help him identify the “dark ones” and went through an incredibly complex task of sorting out the demons and “alters” within this person. He even leads “Facilitator” to Christ.<sup>21</sup> Larson uncovers hidden memories, legal ground that the demons had, and the names of obscure demons.<sup>22</sup> This is one prayer he used to help the victim find freedom: “I command that angels of God search out and torment the spirit of pain. I bind Pain to Regulator the demon, and command that both of them experience all the torment they’ve put on Randall. I increase that torment seven times greater.”<sup>23</sup>

The complexity of this process is mind-boggling. How can we be sure we are talking to demons, alters, or a real person? How does one know that a person can be saved but some of his alter egos still need to accept Christ? Do we really have authority to command angels to torment demons so that they will decide to leave? The problem, in my opinion, is that the complexity Larson is describing is actually **underestimating** the complexity of the bondage and neediness of the human soul. The reason there can be no ultimately successful “Geek Squad” for souls is found in the difference between computers and humans. Computers were created by man, souls are created by God. Only God truly knows the heart of man. Only God knows the details of the spirit world and its interaction with the human soul.

The Bible tells us why no human spiritual technician can solve the problems of the inner person: “*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind*” (Jer 17:9, 10a). That only God knows the heart is a claim found throughout the Bible.<sup>24</sup> Those holding to the warfare

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 135-137.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 138.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 138, 139.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 142-144.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 142.

<sup>24</sup> For example, consider 1Kings 8:39: “then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, **for Thou alone dost know the hearts of all the sons of men**” See also: Psalm 44:21; Acts 15:8; and 1John 3:20.

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worldview see a pressing necessity to train a cadre of spiritual technicians who can free human souls from the complex psycho-spiritual situation that torments them. These technicians by whatever name they are given must rely on techniques and knowledge that are not revealed in the Bible. Furthermore, they must gain information about human souls, secret curses, hidden or forgotten memories, demons, names of demons, relationships between demons, relationships between alter identities within a soul, and relationships between demons and alter identities. All of this is probably just the tip of the iceberg. The “Geek Squad” for souls has no reverse engineering capabilities, no detailed record of the process by which a soul came to be, and no objective tools for examining the soul and the spirit world it inhabits.

Not only this, but the spirit entities that they interview to gain information share at least one attribute with their leader Satan — **they are liars**. This does not stop the priests of the warfare worldview from interrogating demons for secrets. For example, Bob Larson tells this story:

Step by step I cornered the adversary until he could no longer resist. Before his final doom was pronounced, the demon looked at me quizzically. “Who taught you the rules?” he asked curiously. “What do you mean by that?” I asked. “The spiritual rules that determine what we can and can’t do. Someone from our side must have taught you. I’ve never met anyone who knows the rules as well as you do.”<sup>25</sup>

It seems to me that if this warfare worldview is true and the claims of its technical “priesthood” are true, then we are all in very serious trouble with no clear way out. One must interview demons for years to figure out the “rules” since the information necessary to deal with them is neither revealed in Scripture nor accessible by any ordinary means.

In my case I was to run out of energy in trying to “tweak” the details of the warfare worldview to make it work. I would find out that what was necessary was a conversion to an entirely different view of the world God has created and governs. This conversion changed me from a spiritual technician to a gospel preacher. The rest of this article will describe how that happened.

### Converting to the Providential Worldview

Two years after that encounter where I learned that Satan was afraid of me, I was wearing down from the long days and nights of helping people in bondage. There were late night phone calls from troubled people and the burden of the sheer number of ministry cases. Some individuals were in constant need of help. One very troubled person could sap the emotional and spiritual energy out of a counselor. I was dealing with up to 15 of them every week.

About that time one of these people was going off the deep end. She was running off late at night leaving her husband and children behind to go to bars and meet men. She had been through all of the various ministries we had to offer. Her husband would call me desperately needing help because she was destroying him and the children. One night after a 3:00 am call from this woman in which she blamed me for her problems because I was a bad counselor, I felt I could take no more. I cried out to God, praying something like this, “Dear Lord, I really want to help this lady and the others. I have prayed for her, ministered to her, helped her and her family in practical ways, and cast out demons, I have done everything I know how to do. I cannot take this anymore. If I do not get some better answers I cannot stay in the ministry.”

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<sup>25</sup> Larson, 205.

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The answer to that prayer came in the form of a Scripture. It changed my life and ministry from that day on. I did not know it at the time, but what resulted from that situation was my conversion from the warfare worldview to what I am calling the providential worldview.<sup>26</sup> The passage that the Lord brought to my mind is this one:

*And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2Tim 2:24-26).*

The first thing that struck me about the passage is the description of the bondage the people are in: "having been held captive [by the devil] to do his will." I reasoned that no one could be in more bondage than that. It definitely fit the description of the woman whose situation drove me to question everything I was doing.

The second thing that came to my mind about the passage was how applicable it was to my situation. Paul was telling Timothy how to deal with people in the church who had serious problems and were causing problems for Timothy. That was precisely what I was dealing with. Later, after I was able to look more objectively at the Scriptures without my mind being influenced by the warfare worldview, I realized that this is the key passage in the New Testament that tells about dealing with people in the church who are in bondage to Satan. Most of the passages I looked to for support of my ministry of exorcism were either from the Gospels which were before the church came to be as a result of the cross and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The others were in Acts where the apostles were confronting demonized people who were unsaved. Exorcism was never used in the New Testament as a therapy for born again Christians.

The third thing I learned from the passage was the means of escape. This was what led me away from the warfare worldview toward the providential worldview. People in bondage to Satan escape only when God grants repentance! This shocked me when I first read it. It says, "*if perhaps God may grant them repentance.*" The view I held before was that if things did not change either: a) I am a bad counselor or better get some better counseling techniques or b) the person is messing things up by not following my prescriptions and thus letting in seven worse demons. We went around and around trying to see which was the case. I finally came to see that if God grants repentance they will escape from the devil, and if He does not they will not. That was the key! Why He does in some cases but not others is part of God's secret will (Deu 29:29) that I cannot know.

However since I did not know if God would grant repentance, it was always possible that He would in any given case. This gave me encouragement in the fourth thing I learned from this passage — how to counsel such individuals. Paul wrote, "*Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition.*" We used to be up a 2:00 am with three elders holding down a screaming, writhing demonized person as we shouted, "Come out of him you foul spirit in the name of Jesus." I thought later, "That is hardly teaching and correcting with gentleness." Since now I realized that the means God uses to deliver people from their

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<sup>26</sup> The process was immediate in that I followed the teaching of the verse from then on when I counseled people. It was slow in the sense that my conversion to the providential worldview was not complete until 1986 when I saw that my Arminian (free will) thinking was unbiblical and embraced God's comprehensive sovereignty. This happened through a detailed study of the Book of Romans. The providential worldview holds that God is always in control of His own universe and is guiding it toward His decreed purposes (Eph 1:11).

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bondage to Satan is the gospel and all of its implications, I could patiently teach the truth, trusting that God will use it to change lives. God can deliver the most demonized sinner from the clutches of Satan through the power of the gospel (see Col 1:13 and Eph 2:1-5). What I had been doing wrong before was assuming that because the people I was counseling all said that they had met Christ, and yet they were still in bondage, that therefore the gospel does not deliver people from darkness unless special techniques and processes are added to it. Now I believed in the power of the gospel.

The great thing about gospel truth is that it can be delivered at other times besides 3:00 am when people are freaking out! I never again went running out to cast out a demon when someone was having a late night melt down. I began to correct the troubled woman by telling her she needed to repent, to trust God and by His grace obey Him. It is a sin to run off from your family to live in drunkenness. She ended up divorcing her husband and spending the next twenty years going from one bad situation to a worse one. But I knew it was not my fault. She either embraces the gospel or lives in bondage. There is no plan “B” that can fix the human soul. She still may repent and escape from the devil, but if she does it will be by God’s grace through the gospel, not through the spiritual Geek Squad.

### **How we Evaluate our Experiences**

I now believe that God is in sovereign control of everything in the universe He created, even all wicked spiritual powers. Satan can only do what God allows him to do. The issues between freedom and bondage, blessing and cursing are clear and simple from this perspective. It all boils down to one’s relationship with God through the gospel or lack thereof. The Bible says, *“blessed is the man who trusts in God . . . cursed is the man who trusts in man”* (Jer 17:5-8). I now believe that calling for spiritual technicians to manipulate the soul and the spirits that influence it constitutes “trusting man,” no matter how much Christian lingo is attached to the process.

I believe that the things that happened to me when I was a deliverance counselor were very real. I believe that demons were definitely involved. In the case of the woman who was taken over by demons that wanted to claw my face, I now interpret the event differently. When I believed the warfare worldview I was energized and excited to learn that I had great authority and that Satan respected it. I believed that the incident proved how badly hurting people needed me to be there with my experience with deliverance and demons to help them find freedom. That is what led me to years of working day and night fighting the powers of darkness that were afflicting Christians.

Now I see the same incident in a totally different light. I believe that Satan put on that show for me to get me and the others involved to trust man rather than trust only in God through the gospel. As hard as it was for me to see at the time, Satan had a reason to make me think that what I was doing was “scaring” him. Doing so diminished my confidence in the gospel by getting me to think that not the gospel but deliverance ministers like me delivered people from the hostile powers.

### **Satan’s Protection Racket**

The bondage and deliverance process is very much like a cruel, spiritual “protection racket.” The devil is working both ends of the game like one would in a protection racket where bullies threaten you and other bullies protect you from them for money. Satan does everything he can to get people into demonic bondage through overt occultism and other means. He then entices those who hold to the warfare worldview to think that their unbiblical teachings and

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practices are the key to freedom. Both ends of the game serve his purposes. The devil puts on a convincing show to make it all so very real.

He has one of his demons tell the Christian counselor “secrets” regarding how demons afflict their victims and then leave at the counselor’s command. The demons respond to threats of being tormented in the pit by angels for a very simple reason — the demons want to get Christians to think that Christian counselors and not God have power over angels and power to pass judgment before the time on the hostile powers.<sup>27</sup> This serves Satan’s purpose in promoting “the lie” which tells us we can be like God. It makes us think we have power that only God has.

For example, when I was told that Satan was afraid of me, in as much as I believed that I embraced the lie and lost confidence in the truth of the gospel. The issue is whether we fear God and escape His judgment through the gospel, not whether Satan thinks we have great power and authority. The woman’s demon induced attack and her subsequent deliverance showed both ends of the protection racket. Through her, Satan attacked (the threat) and then withdrew at my command (the protection). The result was that I had more confidence in my spiritual power and was diverted from the gospel.

The warfare worldview drastically diminishes our hope through the gospel. It tells us that putting our hope and trust fully in God through Christ’s finished work on the cross **does not** deliver us from Satan and demons nor assure us that God will ultimately conform us to the image of Christ. Everything we are trying to do could be thwarted if we lack the special knowledge and techniques to fight the battle. Apparently the gospel does not really “work” for those who consult the spiritual “Geek Squad” unless many things are added to it. They teach that the gospel only potentially delivers us. After believing the gospel we now need professional curse breakers, exorcists, prophetic intercessors, inner healers, psycho-spiritual counselors, and others who constitute a new class of priestly technicians. These specialists mediate the “middle ground” between the soul and God. These are the “good” guys in the racket who keep the bad ones from beating us up.

The middle ground is the secret world of spirits that is hidden from our view. According to their view, our spiritual and material well being is determined by what goes on in this world, and they have the secrets to guide us to freedom and prosperity. Neil Anderson claims that many Christians are in spiritual bondage because they have a defective worldview with an “excluded middle.”<sup>28</sup> Thus they see no reason for spiritual warfare because they have “Western,” rationalistic premises. What Anderson fails to realize or address in his book is that there are two different world views within Christianity that both accept the Biblical teachings about the reality of spirits and their influence on people. Anderson promotes the warfare worldview and simply calls it the “Christian” worldview.<sup>29</sup> I say this because he never addresses the perspective of the providential world view and provides his readers with “steps to freedom” that go beyond the gospel and the means of grace provided in Scripture.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The incident in the Gospels shows that Jesus is God and thus the One who will execute the final judgment: “*And behold, they cried out, saying, ‘What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’*” (Mat 8:29). Any human teacher who claims the power to do this is claiming something that is a divine prerogative and thus trying to be like God. This is sinful.

<sup>28</sup> Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*; (Eugene: Harvest House, 2000) 30-33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 199-252. These steps include prescribed prayers, confessions, renunciations, checklists, ancestral curses to be broken, etc. The implication is that the gospel fails to deliver us from curses, demons, or other spiritual maladies



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I do not doubt the motives of the spiritual technicians. When I was one I sincerely wanted to help people. I was working day and night, without salary or benefits. I wanted to serve God fully and advance His kingdom. I sincerely believed I was doing so. However, my deception caused me to put people in more bondage rather than to deliver them. I was unwittingly a bondage maker.

For example, I taught that if a demon was cast out, and the person went back to whatever sin was deemed to have opened the door for the demon, then seven worse ones would enter (based on a misinterpretation of Matthew 12).<sup>31</sup> This put those seeking deliverance into bondage. If the person came for deliverance from a spirit of lust (which commonly happened) and then later lusted after a woman, he then became exceedingly agitated and fearful because he knew he gave Satan a right to send demons to torment him. Then he would come back for more deliverance.

What this teaching does is make people think that their freedom is dependent on them living a nearly sinless life. Any mess up and the demons come back. To show how much this depends on man rather than God's grace, consider what Bob Larson says: "I've known people whom I refused to help until they matured in the Lord to the point Satan didn't want them any longer."<sup>32</sup> Evidently if you are not a good enough Christian you have to keep your demons. This worldview can only result in fear or pride. Fear if you believe that you cannot behave well enough to keep the demons from getting you, or pride if you think that you are such a powerful, sinless Christian that Satan fears you and cannot touch you. These outcomes (fear or pride) are the result of trusting man rather than God.

### Conclusion

The key issue is the underlying worldview that one holds. The warfare worldview claims that history is played out as a battle between the forces of evil and believers. According to this view, God works through believers as much as they allow Him to. The more knowledge and power believers gain the better they can defeat the forces of darkness. If believers lack knowledge and techniques for spiritual warfare they will be victims and not victors. There are casualties in this battle and God does not assure the outcome.

The providential worldview believes in God's sovereignty over all the forces of darkness. Spiritual forces of darkness cannot harm believers without first getting permission from God. What He allows them to do always is for our greater good. The key issue is not our knowledge **about** the forces of evil but our knowledge **of** God through the gospel. The battle is between the lie of Satan that man can be like God and the truth of the gospel.

Those who promote the warfare worldview mislead us by claiming that the options are only between a worldview that believes that there are demons, curses, and real Satanic activities and a "western" worldview that effectively denies that spiritual activity, good and bad, exists. This is a false dilemma. Do not be misled. The providential worldview also believes very much in the reality of demons, fallen angels, curses, principalities and powers as well as good angels and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The options are whether one believes in God's sovereignty over all of these spiritual beings and realities or whether one believes God is allowing the battle to run its course on its own.

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unless certain techniques are applied. Rather than the simple, Biblical means of grace, Anderson offers techniques and canned prayers that "work." Thus he has adopted the warfare worldview and not the providential world view.

<sup>31</sup> I explain the passage on this audio: [demons.mp3](#)

<sup>32</sup> Op. Cit. Larson, 191.

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Those who hold to the later view see God there to help if we figure out and use the right techniques but not sovereignly keeping us and carrying us to glory. Does God determine the outcome or is the outcome determined by humans and demons?

I believe that God uses the gospel to deliver people from the hostile powers and that the gospel effectively accomplishes all God intended to do from all eternity to save sinners. Those who believe are “saved to the utmost” (see Heb 7:25) and need not fear the hostile spiritual forces of the universe. The means of grace provided in the Bible are sufficient to cause us freedom and growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

Those pushing the warfare worldview want us to think otherwise. They want us to believe that teachings, techniques, and spiritual processes that were not even conceived until the 20<sup>th</sup> century are necessary for us to be free from Satan’s bondage. This means we must believe that Christians throughout the centuries lived without freedom because the gospel they believed was insufficient. By convincing us of the insufficiency of the gospel they become bondage makers. I used to be one. I thank God He freed me from that condition through the truth of the Scriptures.

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For more on this topic please read [Issue 123 Cursed by Works or Blessed by Faith.](#)