

## Section Five:

### Spiritual Conflict in the North American Context

## Overview

1. World view
2. North American cultural values
3. Myth
4. The shift in world view
5. The impact on the church
6. Magic and magical thinking
7. Wicca
8. Satanism
9. Response

1. World view may be thought of as the complex and interactive sets of assumptions through which we arrange our ideas and images of the world we inhabit.
  - a. It is not a series of consciously thought through axioms possessing a coherent structure, but a belief system that we take so much for granted that we only rarely even recognize its existence.
  - b. It defines the way we "lean into life"; it is both a map *of* life and a map *for* life (Walsh, "Worldviews, Modernity and the Task of Christian College Education," p. 18).
    - i. As a map *of* life it is a lens or window through which to view and make sense of the events we see every day. The kinds of issues with which it is concerned include:
      - (1) Where am I? (What is the nature of reality?)
      - (2) Who am I? (What does it mean to be human?)
      - (3) Why am I? (What is the purpose for people and human history?) and
      - (4) Who is in charge? (What powers control the reality I inhabit?)
    - ii. In addition to being a map of life, world view provides a map *for* life. It informs us as to what ought to be and provides the foundation upon which we build a plan by which to live as well as giving us the grid to see every event in life.
  - c. It serves as a one component of a circular loop in which faith, world view, and way of life interact (Diagram 1; adapted from Walsh, "Worldviews, Modernity and the Task of Christian College Education."). Together these three elements enable us to maintain the perception that we understand reality, help us make sense of all the events of life, and anchor meaning and purpose for the way we live.

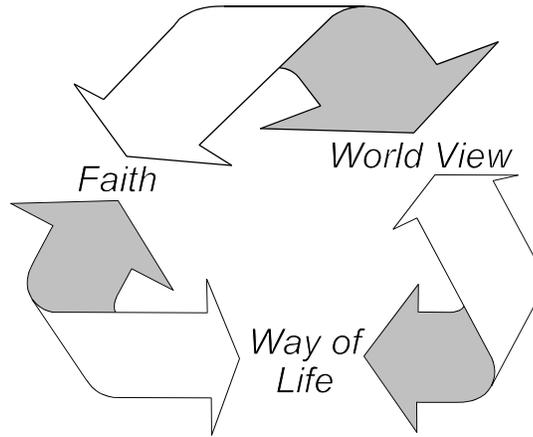


Diagram 1: The Cycle of Faith, World View, and Way of Life

- d. At the heartbeat of world view is the idea of **powers**. Being in the image of God, all human beings have a built in desire to link with the One whose image we bear. As a result of the Fall (Gen. 3:1-24), our direct link was sundered. However, we retained the image of God (Gen. 9:6), and our search for intimate re-connection with the Creator continues, though it is now distorted and is expressed as a deep concern with the powers that govern the world we inhabit.
- i. This concern has resulted in an almost infinite variety of postulated cosmic powers which impact our world. These powers may be ascribed personal status of thought of as non-personal forces (Diagram 2). The types of powers accepted as real by people are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric. They inform every aspect of daily living; there is a culturally defined range of emotional responses and attachments to each power.

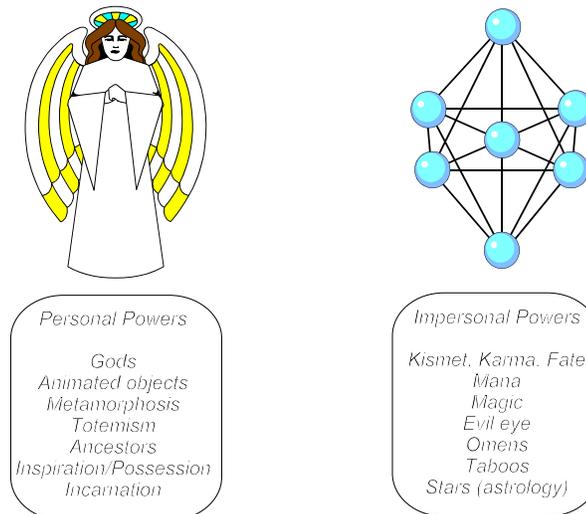


Diagram 2: Personal and Impersonal Powers

- ii. In the case of impersonal powers, relational issues are not as important--but knowledge of how the powers work (folk science) and how they may be harnessed (as we harness electricity) is. This knowledge may require training and is usually guarded closely.
    - iii. In the case of personal powers, the rules for relating found among people in the daily life of the culture will often parallel the rules for relating to the powers, who will require the appropriate respect, means of initiation, methods of supplication and petition, and so on.
2. North American values: There are several significant traditional North American cultural values at the heart of our world view which have molded the church's understanding of spiritual conflict (discussion of these adapted from Stewart and Bennett, American Cultural Patterns; see also Hiebert, Anthropological Insights for Missionaries, pp. 111-137). I recognize that there is no single monolithic North American culture. I use this term to refer to the European-descended North American culture, which forms the single largest section of the evangelical church in the United States.
  - a. Independent individualism as the root:
    - i. **Dimensions of the self:** We naturally assume that each person is not only a separate biological entity, but also a unique psychological being and a singular member of the social order.
    - ii. **Individualism and individuality:** We "pull ourselves up by the bootstraps" to become "self-made men" (and women). Mythic individualism is the dream of becoming "one's own person" ("I just want to be myself.").
    - iii. **Self-reliance and mythic individualism:** We assume that the individual is the biological unit of nature. We are socialized to make decisions early in life ("What cereal do you want?") and to be self-reliant.
  - b. Scientific materialism
    - i. **View of facts:** With the rise of scientific thinking from the 1700s to the 1900s, we have assumed that rational thinking is based on an objective reality where measurable results can be attained. Based on this, we define "facts" as empirical, observable, measurable, reliable so that different observers will agree about them, objective and valid, and associated with measurements using coordinates of time and space.
    - ii. **A mechanistic approach:** We tend to think of "nature" as a machine in which the various actions of each part are determined by external, impersonal forces. Engineering and the physical sciences epitomize this

attitude.

- iii. **Human relationship to nature:** Nature (the physical world) should be controlled in the service of human beings. The natural laws assumed to underlie the physical world should be harnessed and hence at the service of people.
3. Myth: A second significant factor for understanding our context is that of myth. For this discussion, I am indebted here to Paul Hiebert, who builds on the foundation of myth in the North American context as an important factor in explaining the current trends in spiritual conflict (Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Perspectives").
- a. No single accepted definition of myth exists, but the general sociological approach is to consider myths to be culturally derived instruments which serve as paradigms of behavior. The primary issue with myth is not whether it is truth, but how it operates in the belief system of the culture.
  - b. Not necessarily tied to any single story, myths are large, controlling images which give meanings to the events of life. They are inculcated in the fabric of our lives through stories, values, morals, etc.
  - c. They provide the frames of reference within which thought is formulated, and serve as both the lens and the blinders of a culture.
  - d. In this sense, the mythic corpus of a culture serves as a significant underlying factor in the total faith/world view/way of life interactive framework (Diagram 3).
  - e. Everyone lives in light of his or her mythic foundations. The corpus of myth in a culture contains and constrains the social and personal values of the culture. These values may be expressed in ritual and ceremony both in daily life and in formal dramatized performances or rituals.

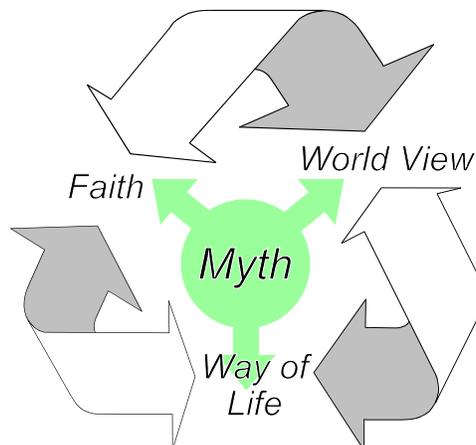


Diagram 3: Myth as an Underlying and Integrating Factor in the Faith/World View/Way of Life Interaction Cycle

4. The shift in world view: Walker does an excellent job of setting the stage for understanding our traditional North American world view. However, it appears that a world view shift in the North American context is underway.
  - a. This shift is seen in diverse ways, including:
    - i. The rise in popularity of magic and New Age thinking;
    - ii. The revival of occult, pagan, and wiccan traditions (Bass, "Drawing Down the Moon;" Adler, Drawing Down the Moon, pp. 41-93); and
    - iii. A heightened interest in angels (Gibbs, "Angels Among Us.")
  - b. At least some of the influence for this must be traced to immigration patterns since the mid 1960s which resulted in a significant influx of Asian religiosity in the American context (Melton and Poggi, Magic, Witchcraft, and Paganism in America).
  - c. With the Bible no longer an exclusive guide to world view, religion has become a consumer item (Walker, Enemy Territory, pp. 136-41) with ever more new and experimental forms being introduced.
  - d. We are returning to not just a more spiritual world view, but to a spiritistic one (Wright, The Satan Syndrome, pp. 6-7). This spiritism borrows from any source, with criteria of appropriateness founded on results rather than appropriate undergirding philosophical or theological roots. Many of these are pragmatic applications of non-Christian spiritualities, particularly from the East.
  - e. This shift has not been limited to the larger culture. The broad popularity of Peretti's novel This Present Darkness (1986), the spate of new spiritual conflict titles from Christian publishing houses, and the wealth of conferences and course offerings in conservative schools addressing the issue demonstrate that the evangelical church has also been impacted.
  - f. We must be aware of the danger of shifting too far into what may be termed a functional Christian animism (Steyne, Gods of Power, pp. 48-53; Burnett, Unearthly Powers), and a corresponding set of practices that move in the direction of Christian magic.
5. The impact on the church
  - a. Christian skepticism:
    - i. George Barna writes: As America has become an ever-more secularized nation, religion has been caricatured. Among the most humorous

caricatures has been one of the most devastating: the repositioning of Satan as a good-natured, hard-working, I-don't-get-no-respect, vilified being. Humorists, social commentators, educators, politicians, even some religious leaders have had a hand in the new portrayal of the devil. To the average man, Satan's new persona has made him less threatening, a character whose struggles we can relate to in a world filled with pain and suffering.

The end result of the new image of Satan is that today, barely one-third of our adult population believes that Satan is a living being. In fact, six out of ten Americans (60%) agree that Satan is not a living being, but merely a symbol of evil. Even among born again Christians, one-third strongly agree that this is the case.

Celebrated generals from past wars have invariably concluded that the only way to fight a war successfully is to know the enemy intimately. In America, we not only lack knowledge of the mind of the enemy; we are more likely than not to deny that the enemy even lives. And how can we take an inanimate, unidimensional enemy seriously? (Barna, What Americans Believe, pp. 299-300)

- ii. It is possible to cultivate an *unhealthy* skepticism (built on Western materialism) which demands proof which would withstand trial proceedings and denies any reality to the claims made.
  - iii. While the skeptical side does not tend to move in an animistic direction, it is not immune from world view informing theological persuasion and faces the danger of having denied the reality of continuing demonic influence because it does not fit a particular theological paradigm.
- b. Christian animism: The recent shift in North American culture towards spiritism has not left the church unaffected. Following are several suggestions of the types of attitudes and practices advocated in spiritual conflict which we feel move in the direction of a new Christian animism.
- i. *Peretti Powerscapes*. The first tendency is what may be termed a Peretti approach to powerscapes. Frank Peretti's broadly popular books did not so much chart a new world view in the evangelical community towards the powers as capture and crystalize the changes that had already taken place (Wink, Engaging the Powers, pp. 7-9; see also Seel, The Evangelical Forfeit, pp. 43-46). In both of his warfare novels (This Present Darkness and Piercing the Darkness) the basic assumption is that demonic and angelic entities are directly involved in every human action. The fact of human choice to rebel against God without demonic coercion is not adequately acknowledged. Angelic strength (and, by implication, God's sovereignty) is portrayed as dependent on our prayers. Demons are literally hiding behind every sin. Further, his reductionism leads people to

develop a paranoid view of reality, keeping the enemy as an external one who is able to infiltrate the highest levels of spirituality without our awareness.

The broad popularity of his books in the church (and in some cases a corresponding ignorance of other spiritual warfare authors) shows at the very least a fascination with the concepts, and at worst the possibility of a world view which is an amalgamation of Christianity and spiritism. One of the significant dangers in dealing with the transempirical is tendency to find what we expect to find (Wright, The Satan Syndrome, p. 112), which is one reason why conspiracy theories such as Peretti's are so difficult to disprove to the satisfaction of those who promote them.

- ii. *Demonomania*. Closely tied to Peretti powerscapes are evidences of what Lewis called an unhealthy interest in the demonic. The essence of this is "an over-inclination to explain things in terms of the demonic" (Wright, The Satan Syndrome, p. 114). Demons are seen as the cause of a multitude of problems ranging from reinforcing compulsions (Kraft, Defeating Dark Angels, pp. 109), being the driving force behind all rock music (Brown, He Came to Set the Captives Free, pp. 63), to the demonization of whole cultures (Bubeck, The Satanic Revival, pp. 45-46). Some even list demonic names as an aid to understanding how they work and what we may face (Kraft, Defeating Dark Angels, 123-5). Others suggest that we must discover the names of demons at the head of hierarchies of demons and expel them if we hope to be successful in casting the whole network out (MacNutt, Healing, pp. 226-7). I do not have a problem with understanding the reality of demonic influence in the lives of believers and cultures, but the danger in such methodologies is an inappropriate attention being given to the demonic at the expense of the needs of the person seeking help.
- iii. *Functional Dualism* (Warner, Spiritual Warfare, p. 28; Anderson Living Free, p. 249). Another trend evidenced in the spiritual conflict literature is a sort of functional dualism in which God's sovereignty is dependent on our prayers or Satan is controlling every event and organization that exists on Earth (displayed in authors such as Hammond and Hammond, Pigs in the Parlor, and Brown, He Came to Set the Captives Free). He is ascribed an almost omnipotent capability, seen especially when those who have been involved in Satanism come to Christ and have their testimony published (Warnke, The Satan Seller, Stratford, Satan's Underground, Brown, He Came to Set the Captives Free). Recent exposes have demonstrated the problem with giving too much credence to published stories (e.g., Lauren Stratford's testimony discredited by Pasantino and Pasantino, "Satan's Sideshow"; Mike Warnke exposed by Trott and Hertenstein, Selling Satan, see also Wright, The Satan Syndrome, pp. 99-123). Satan would have us believe that he and God are equal opposites, but the fact remains that

Satan is only a creature and God is the Creator. The problem with a functional dualism is that people tend to be frightened away from appropriate involvement in spiritual warfare. While I doubt that many Christians would answer a theological exam with the idea that Satan is as powerful as God, many appear to approach spiritual warfare with that as their presupposition. Books that show Satan as an invincible sleuth who is able to defeat all but a few super-spiritual counter sleuths (e.g., Brown, He Came to Set the Captives Free; Ensign and Howe, Bothered, Bewildered, Bewitched, p. 27) move in the dualistic direction, as do books that give strong and explicit warning to potential ministers (Ibid., p. 271). As Schlier noted, Christ has left the devil only whatever power unbelief allows him (Schlier, Principalities and Powers in the New Testament, p. 58). Our goal is to *disbelieve* in Satan (Wright, The Satan Syndrome, 25); to believe *against* him rather than to believe *in* him (Weber, Foundations of Dogmatics, p. 489).

- iv. *Mousetrap Mentality.* An animistic world view focuses on pragmatic approaches to truth. If something works, it is methodologically true. An area in which this is seen in the recent advocacy of warfare prayer against territorial spirits as the single most important strategy we can utilize in reaching the unreached. This claim is made about a strategy that is nowhere taught in the Bible and cannot be substantiated in church history. Most of the literature in spiritual warfare addresses issues relevant to the battle of powers (i.e., power encounter) rather than the battle of axes (i.e., theological formulations or truth encounter). To date few major theologians have written extensively or deeply on spiritual warfare. Unless more theological reflection is given, the potential for moving too far in the experiential directions remains high. For example, Charles Kraft, in promoting inner healing, proposes a form of ante-natal therapy, in which people are invited to ask God to reveal traumatic events that their mothers experienced while they were in the womb so that strategic warfare prayer may be made against the long term impact of those events (Kraft, Defeating Dark Angels, pp. 150-3). He also defends visualization on the basis of technique being neutral and capable of producing results, implying that success is the necessary and sufficient criteria for evaluation (Kraft, Christianity with Power, p. 211 n. 1).
- v. *Doctrine Discovered in and Substantiated by Case Studies.* An animistic world view focuses on pragmatic approaches to truth. If something works, it is methodologically true. A similar tendency may be seen in at least two areas of spiritual warfare.
  - (1) First is the teaching dealing with ancestral bondage in which demons are thought to be passed along generational lines. Dickason writes that over ninety-five percent of those he ministers to are demonized

through ancestral involvement with the demonic (Dickason, Demon Possession and the Christian, p. 221). This whole idea has been noted so frequently in the literature (e.g., Anderson, The Bondage Breaker; Kraft, Defeating Dark Angels, p. 74; Warner, Spiritual Warfare, pp. 106-9; White, The Believer's Guide) that it has almost taken on a doctrinal life of its own, even though there is no explicit statement of this in Scripture. Further, no significant commentary dealing with Exodus 20 even mentions the possibility that the passing of God's wrath to the third and fourth generations involves demonic attachments (Moreau, The World of the Spirits, p. 9). While logical arguments are made for this (Dickason, Demon Possession and the Christian, pp. 219-21), the origination and continued substantiation of the idea appears to have come from the sheer number of deliverance counselors hearing the claim from the demons themselves. I do not think that we have a final conclusion on this issue yet, but my suspicions are aroused when we formulate doctrinal positions as a result of ministry case studies and demonic claims. This becomes especially important when people begin to believe that the key to their own Christian life is to be found through having to discover and renounce every occultic activity of their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents. At times the impression received is that attendance by a grandparent at one ouiji board party seventy-five years ago is the means through which a person is oppressed (or worse) today. At best, this is naive. At worst, it encourages the victim mentality so prevalent in our culture today and enables people to deny the responsibility for their own choices in life. In this discussion I am not denying that conscious, deliberate occult involvement by our parents is not an important factor in the spiritual life of the children. Rather, I am trying to avoid the never-ending chase of picayune matters that take energy and focus away from more significant considerations in spiritual conflict.

- (2) A second area in which this is seen in the recent advocacy of warfare prayer against territorial spirits as the single most important strategy we can utilize in reaching the unreached (Otis, The Last of the Giants and "An Overview of Spiritual Mapping"; Dawson, Taking Our Cities for God; Jacobs, Possessing the Gates of the Enemy; Lea, The Weapons of Your Warfare; Wagner, Breaking Strongholds in Your City). At stake is not the existence of such spirits; that seem clear from biblical data (especially Daniel 10:4-11:1). The question is whether God calls us to engage in direct prayer against these spirits as a key strategy in reaching the world for Christ. Such a strategy that is nowhere taught in the Bible and cannot be substantiated in church history (Arnold, "A Biblical/Theological Perspective on Territorial Spirits" and "What About Territorial Spirits?"). At the very least we

ought to be extremely cautious about emphasizing such a strategy as the key to reaching the world for Christ (White, Breaking Strongholds and "Handling Spiritual Warfare").

- vi. *Reductionism.* The final world view issue is the tendency to reduce problems to the demonic and neglect psychosocial realities. In contrast to secular anthropological literature evangelical literature tends to focus so intensively on the demonic that the psychosocial is often not given sufficient attention. This has been carried over to evangelism, in which the more recent literature on territorial spirits implies that we need to discover the name of the spirit(s) in control of a territory, pray it (or them) into submission, and only then we will reap a great harvest for Christ (e.g., see many of Wagner's recent books). This neglects the reality of dehumanizing social structures, and reduces social factors to personal ones (discussed in Wink, Engaging the Powers, pp. 74-77). One mark of competency in intercultural communication, cognitive complexity, is the ability to recognize the complexities of life issues and avoid simple dichotomies (Gudykunst and Kim, Communicating with Strangers, p. 147). The cognitively complex person is less likely to be ethnocentric and more likely to recognize inconsistencies in his or her belief system than the cognitively simple person is. The same should also serve as a mark of competency in developing models of spiritual warfare. Rather than simply externalizing an enemy (e.g., a demon) on which we place all blame for our wrong choices or denying that the enemy exists, we must develop integrated models which acknowledge the truth in both spiritual and psychosocial perspectives.
- c. *North American Myth.* What are the mythic frameworks and metaphors on which we operate, and how are they evidenced in recent spiritual warfare discussion? The following suggestions may be noted.
  - i. *The Joy of the Fight.* The first mythic framework is the way we focus on the actual *fight* as opposed to the outcome of the fight (Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Perspectives"). Our myth structure glorifies violence and demands that the hero fight the villain--compromise is never possible, surrender unthinkable. The hero and the villain never learn--they are doomed to fight the same fights over and over throughout eternity (Wink, Engaging the Powers, p. 18).
    - (1) *War Story Argumentation.* One way this shows up in the church is an overreliance on war stories to prove assertions or buttress arguments. One way this shows up in the spiritual warfare literature is in the reliance on war stories to prove assertions or buttress arguments. I once attended a conference in Kenya in which an evangelical who is prominent in spiritual warfare circles was the featured speaker.

Though he gave out a set of detailed outlined notes, the whole first day was given over to recounting war stories without even moving into the content of the material. The impression received is that those involved in spiritual warfare ministry simply live from one confrontation to the next. There are some who are moving away from this approach. This is one reason I appreciate Neil Anderson's approach. Even though he does tell war stories, and has a whole book devoted to the testimonies of people set free (Anderson, Released from Bondage) his primary focus is on the theological truths such as our identity in Christ as the critical issue in spiritual warfare ministry (e.g., Anderson, Living Free in Christ) rather than on extended descriptions of the battles used to set people free.

- (2) Full Speed Ahead. Another way in which this is seen is what may be called a "full speed ahead" or a "put the pedal to the metal" mentality, in which it is assumed that the demonic should always be the first consideration to be examined. As surprising as this sounds, the feeling I sometimes have in reading the literature is that for the authors it is easier (and more fun) to expel a demon than to walk through the realities of broken, shattered lives built on the foundations of relational disfunctionality.
- ii. *The Chess Game*. A second mythic framework is that the battle between the hero and the villain is like a chess game (Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Perspectives"), with the better strategist winning. In the warfare literature we often see the successful deliverance counselor portrayed as the person who is able to overcome the demons because of a superior strategy (and authority, though the strategy is often the focus; see Ensign and Howe, Bothered, Bewildered, Bewitched). We see this in at least three different ways.
- (1) Binding Fetishes. Some use binding terminology as a sort of fetish (Wright, The Satan Syndrome, p. 185, 195; MacArthur, How to Meet the Enemy, pp. 146-7). We may rely on a familiar term ("bind") rather than the theological idea behind the term. If all the binding prayers I have heard have been answered according to the requests as spoken, then Satan would not have any influence in any area on earth! The tendency appears to be a reliance on a familiar term ('bind') rather than an understanding of the theology of Jesus binding Satan throughout His ministry and finally on the cross. It is not inappropriate to use binding language, but when we rely on it as a type of "power word" we are practicing Christian magic.
  - (2) Ritual Approaches. A second form of the chess game mentality is seen in the way so many of the strategies and techniques used are

ritualistic in orientation. Unwittingly, some reproduce the pagan practices of NT times (Arnold, Powers of Darkness) by thinking that they must know the names of demons to have power over them. This applies to personal ministry (Dickason, Demon Possession and the Christian) as well as to territorial spirits (Sterk, "Territorial Spirits and Evangelization in Hostile Environments"). Though the danger of reliance on a ritualistic attitude is noted (e.g., Ensign and Howe, Bothered, Bewildered, Bewitched, p. 271), at the same time pattern prayers are printed. These include prayers to cleanse our homes (White, The Believer's Guide, pp. 106-7), to test tongues (Ensign and Howe, Bothered, Bewildered, Bewitched, pp. 294-300), to enable the conversion of unbelievers (White, The Bondage Breaker, pp. 123-4), to renounce involvement in satanic rituals (Anderson, Steps to Freedom in Christ, p. 5), and so on. There is nothing inherently wrong with pattern prayers or even with rituals, but if they are used as rituals in which every word must be spoken correctly and in the appropriate order, then we are moving towards a pagan world view in which patterns of words replace a living relationship with a loving Father. This is not seen just in patterned prayer, but also in Christian phrases such as "In Jesus' Name" and "The blood of the Lamb," which some use as an almost means of protection and deliverance (Ensign and Howe, Bothered, Bewildered, Bewitched). Hints of attributing power to formula or ritual also appear in the attitudes occasionally displayed towards verbal blessings (Kraft, Christianity with Power, pp. 130-32) and curses (Warner, Spiritual Warfare, pp. 103-4). If the curse is seen to have power in and of itself, and is viewed as outside of the control of God, then one unintended implication is that we must know the curse to break its effects.

- (3) Spirit Interrogation as a Means of Discovering Truth. The chess game mentality also appears in the form of counselors obtaining (strategic) information from spirits speaking through the demonized (see Kraft, Defeating Dark Angels, pp. 157-75, for more extended discussion). Though they generally note the tendency of spirits to lie, some feel that this can be overcome by appropriate use of oaths including phrases such as "Will it stand as truth before Yahweh?" (Ensign and Howe, Bothered, Bewildered, Bewitched, p. 21; see also Koch, Demonology Past and Present and Dickason, Demon Possession and the Christian for transcripts of demonic encounters where formulas are used to force demons to speak the truth). Certainly the NT presents Jesus asking a demon's name (Mark 5:1-20), but this is not a warrant for spirit interrogation. The problem with this whole approach is that we have no scriptural indication to think that a formula will force demons to speak the truth. Demons certainly want us to think that they are reliable sources of truth when in fact they

manifest the lying character of their leader.

- iii. *Good Is Obvious.* A third mythic theme is that right and wrong will always be clearly seen and easily judged (good guys wear white, bad guys wear black). Linked to this is the notion that good will always triumph simply because it is right.
  - (1) *Uncritical Acceptance of Testimonies.* The testimonies of those previously involved in satanic works are often assumed to be true, even though the whole framework of Satanism is founded on lies. Such testimonies are then used as proofs of world wide satanic conspiracies. This may be seen, for example, in the uncritical acceptance of Rebecca Brown's friend Elaine, who was purported to be one of the top brides of Satan (Brown, He Came to Set the Captives Free, p. 30). This appears to follow the general tendency--people whose testimonies are published almost always appear to have been at the top of the satanic hierarchy! I am not intending to demean them, but such stories cannot be naively accepted without careful consideration of the nature of the organization from which these people escaped. Brown's whole story and her own character have since been exposed (Fisher, Blizard, and Goedelman, Drugs, Demons, and Delusions), a reminder of the danger of uncritical acceptance.

The general problem with any satanic conspiracy theory is that God is sovereignly in control of everything that happens on earth. Any Satanic conspiracy, therefore, can only exist within God's sovereign control. On the pragmatic side, those who buy into such theories typically want to identify targets on which to vent their wrath (e.g., the United Nations, governments, the Brotherhood, the Illuminati, anti-conspiracy writers such as Hicks [In Pursuit of Satan], the organized church, and so on; see Cumbey, The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow; Marrs, Dark Secrets of the New Age, and Wagner, Breaking Strongholds in Your City). Any approach to spiritual warfare must be grounded in the fact that God is in control of history, not Satan.

On the opposite side of naive acceptance is an *unhealthy* skepticism which demands proof which would withstand trial proceedings and denies any reality to the claims made (Underwager and Wakefield, "The Christian and Satanism"; moving in this direction are stage illusionists Korem and Meier, The Fakers; Korem, The Powers; Kole and Janssen, Miracles or Magic; Powlison, Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare, Ice and Dean, A Holy Rebellion; and MacArthur, How to Meet the Enemy). While the skeptical side does not tend to move in an animistic direction, it is not immune from world view informing

theological persuasion and faces the danger of having denied the reality of continuing demonic influence because it does not fit their theological paradigm. The best argued authors on the skeptic side are Passantino and Passantino, "Satanic Ritual Abuse in Popular Christian Literature" and "Sad Facts about Satanic Ritual Abuse".

(2) Anecdotal Argumentation. Anecdotes are used far too often used to buttress theological positions that are difficult to justify from Scripture. One often quoted example is that of the border town straddling Brazil and Uruguay in which people are responsive to the Gospel on one side of the street (in Brazil) and unresponsive on the other (in Uruguay), which is attributed to the power and influence of territorial spirits (Warner, "Territorial Spirits", p. 136). While there is solid biblical evidence for territorial spirits (Arnold, "A Biblical/Theological Perspective on Territorial Spirits"), this type of fine tuning in their control over their territories cannot be proven from the Scriptures. Even if the story is true (see the discussion in Priest, Campbell, and Mullen, "Missiological Syncretism"), the assumption that territorial spirits is the best explanation confuses contemporaneity with causation.

(3) Unquestioned Assumptions of Heroism. Overlooked too often is the possibility that it is the counselor, through the use of inappropriate methods, who is the real enemy. The danger of a form of 'spiritual rape' in extended sessions during which a counselor abuses power or poses questions to demons simply to satisfy personal curiosity is not adequately treated. Instead, too much focus is given on the length of the battles fought and the ultimate triumph of the counselor (as the hero) in delivering the oppressed. As in our mythic structure, authors rarely question their own motivations and integrity. The trap we may fall into is loving power rather than using the power of love (Wright, The Satan Syndrome, pp. 173-86).

iv. *The Saga of the Hero*. A fourth theme is the myth of the hero (see Wink, Engaging the Powers, pp. 18-20). The hero, though tempted, *always* makes the right choice in the end. He (and only rarely she) *always* snatches victory from the very jaws of defeat so that chaos will not overcome us. He never questions his motivations. Enemies are defeated through "good" violence (which is good simply because the hero uses it). We may note two ways in which themes related to the myth of a hero mentality appear:

(1) Outwitting the Enemy. It is not difficult to find in the literature graphic transcriptions of demonic confrontations in which the counselor is portrayed as the hero who is able to outwit the enemy and set the

captive(s) free (Bubeck, The Adversary, pp. 90-92; Ensign and Howe, Bothered, Bewildered, Bewitched, p. 20-24; Dickason, Demon Possession and the Christian, pp. 194-97). Just as Superman never fails, it is exceedingly rare to read in the literature or hear in a conference of a case which remains unresolved. Final failures are not allowed, though the reality is that they happen all too often.

- (2) Externalization of the Enemy. In concentrating on finding out the various forms of demonic attachments and focusing our attention on them, we ignore the fact that all too often the enemy is us. Some explore this reality (White, Changing on the Inside, Wink, Engaging the Powers), but by and large the enemy is externalized, enabling us to avoid responsibility for our sin. If the enemy is both inside (e.g., we need to repent) and outside, methodologies that ignore the inside are doomed to failure in the long run.

## 6. Magic and magical thinking in North America

- a. Defining magic: use of this-worldly, supernatural power to achieve one's desired goals. "A system of conceptual laws of cause and effect, operating regularly through spell and ritual, handed down by tradition, and manipulating the impersonal supernatural power of mana" (Grant, "Folk Religion in Islam," 28)
- b. The division of magic as defined by practitioners:
  - i. White magic: used to achieve good goals (bringing rain, victory in battle, success in group ventures)--estimated that 90% of all magic is "white"; can be used privately, but it is not necessary to keep it a secret, since in most cultures it is socially acceptable.
  - ii. Black magic: to harm or destroy someone in the society. Used in secret (an anti-social activity!)
- c. Folk magic and witchcraft came to the US with the first colonists in the 1600s, and practiced (at least individually) ever since.
  - i. Persecution arose as early as 1648, culminating with the Salem incidents in 1692. Occasionally other trials occurred (as late as 1721), but the Salem events were so gruesome that even the perpetrators were shocked.
  - ii. After Salem, intellectuals began to downplay the real power of witchcraft, thinking of it as silly superstition. The witches, in the meantime, had fled. Today, witches of all types (see next page) can be found across the country.

- d. Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) is a major name in magic and witchcraft in the twentieth century. Raised in a conservative Plymouth Brethren home, he rebelled against everything in his background. His own mother called him the most wicked man in the world--and he accepted the label. In 1898, he joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a group that pioneered much of the magical revival.
- e. Two other systems of magic have been in dominance since the middle ages
  - i. Hermetic (alchemical), built on the principle, "As above, so below" (correlating the cosmic with the earthly), in which the magician sought to learn the mundane correspondences to cosmic reality and use those correspondences to contact the cosmic world.
  - ii. Kabbalistic (number and letter) magic practitioners believe that the world can be represented symbolically through number and letter.

## 7. Wicca

- a. Even witches do not agree on what they are! The essence seems to be calling on a power that predates humanity, though practitioners steadfastly deny that this power is satanic. Most say Satan is a Christian fable and that they do not subscribe to belief in such a creature.
- b. Margot Adler, a practitioner, writes: The story of the revival of Wicca is--whatever else it may be--the story of people who are searching among powerful archaic images of nature, of life and death, of creation and destruction. Modern Wiccans are using these images to change their relationship to the world. The search for these images, and the use of them, must be seen as valid, no matter how limited and impoverished the outer forms of the Wiccan revival sometimes appear, and no matter how misrepresented this revival is in the press. (Adler, Drawing Down the Moon, pp. 44-5)
- c. The flowering of paganism
  - i. In the 1960s, Gardner's ideas were introduced to the US, though wiccans feel free to be creative in trying out new magical practices and ideas. At the same time that Gardnerian Witchcraft was growing, so was a vision of Mother Goddess-based neopaganism that combined elements from anthropology, history, and science-fiction. The Missouri-based Church of All Worlds was based on *Stranger in a Strange Land*, and was one of the largest neopagan groups in the country.
  - ii. In the 1970s, a wide variety of neopagan groups appeared, including Druid, Norse, Egyptian, Sterge, Welsh, and Celtic. By 1974, regional and national

Witchmeet festivals were organized. In 1980, the Chicago Pan-Pagan Festival attracted 500 people.

- iii. The feminist movement led to the development of exclusively female covens. Initially controversial, feminists now occupy key leadership positions on the national level. Starhawk wrote the single most popular text of the past decade, The Spiral Dance.
- d. Most neopagan groups hold to the hermetical principle.
  - i. The magical operations they perform usually start with the creation of a sacred space (circle, pentagram, etc.) in which the mundane and the cosmic may meet and be confined (to protect the practitioners).
  - ii. Within the circle, two approaches are used:
    - (1) The cosmic power is invoked. Witches call this "drawing down the moon," and in it the witch is possessed in a form of mystical oneness with the gods.
    - (2) The cosmic power is evoked (brought out from within the witch) as spirits and sent on to perform certain tasks.
- e. The possibility of persecution keeps most groups secret, which also lends an air of elitism to the groups. Christian attack on the pagan community perpetuates a certain level of paranoia within the pagan community. This community feels very misunderstood by Christians (e.g., as noted above, they maintain that they do not worship Satan and do not believe the Christian teachings that he exists). This form of witchcraft must be distinguished from outright Satanism, which rose to prominence in the 1980s.
- f. Modern practitioners of wicca may be divided into several categories (Bonewits, Real Magic; 1971):
  - i. Classical: a person who is adept in using herbs, roots, barks, etc. for the purposes of both healing and hurting and who is familiar with the basic principles of both passive and active magical talents, and can use them for good or evil, as she chooses. Witchcraft was more *practice* than *religion*.
  - ii. Neo-classical: modern witches which focus more on religion than practice
  - iii. Gothic: the church fiction which included pacts with the Devil, devouring babies, etc.
  - iv. Familial: people who follow occultic family traditions--Each family has its

own traditions; families are not organized into larger hierarchies.

- v. Immigrant: traditions imported from the 'old country'
- vi. Ethnic: voodoo, hoodoo, mucumba, santeria, etc.
- vii. Feminist: witches with a feminist orientation and agenda
- viii. Neo-Pagan: Wicca in the US, attributable to Gardner's influence

## 8. Satanism

- a. Is there a world-wide satanic conspiracy? At the outset, we will note that our discussion must be severely limited. Many books and innumerable articles have been written on this topic, and a full presentation of the material is beyond our scope. With that in mind, several points may be made.
  - i. Theologically, we must found any thinking of satanic conspiracies on God's ultimate sovereignty and control over every affair in the universe. Satan's best efforts have been known by his all-knowing Creator from the foundation of time, and our investigation must avoid a paranoid outlook that ascribes to Satan any form of omniscience or omnipresence.
  - ii. Further, Satan is the father of lies, and his own kingdom is not as monolithic as he would have us believe. Further, it is doubtful that he has revealed his strategy to any human being.
  - iii. There is little doubt that Satanism has seen something of a revival, at least in the press. In the 1980s and 90s, articles on the rise of Satanism have appeared in newspapers all over the US. A significant question is whether this revival is the result of a type of copy-cat dabbling or a genuine conspiracy. A second issue is the fact that if the press reports a crime as satanically linked the actual linkage is not proven--only reported.

Some note that many of the articles and reports have become circular ones offering on real evidence of actual conspiracy. Rather, they show strong evidence of being self-fulfilling in that they imply causal relations among circumstantial pieces of data. The actual connecting of Satanism to crime is rare in court testimony.

- iv. Law enforcement officials are reportedly being forced to spend more time (including special training) in dealing with the phenomena of Satanism. In itself, this does not prove anything except that more activity recognized as satanic is taking place than before.

- v. To date, no irrefutable evidence of a nationwide conspiracy has been found.
  - (1) The recent expose of Mike Warnke (Trott and Hertenstein, "Selling Satan: The Tragic History of Mike Warnke," see also Wright, The Satan Syndrome, pp. 99-123) serves as a sobering reminder that even testimonies of those who come to Christ may not be the proof many think they are.
  - (2) In coming to grips with the reality of Satanism, critics of the conspiracy theories are just as important to read as the conspiracy theorists themselves. For example Robert D. Hicks In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult is a well-reasoned skeptical discussion of the issues. Even when we do not agree with the presuppositions of the authors (Hicks is published by Prometheus press, a publisher which does not have a reputation of Christian orthodoxy), we must come at the evidence more fair-handedly than many Christian authors do.
  - (3) All too many simply recirculate the same stories using the same causal assumptions. Repeated often enough but enough people, such stories take on a mythic authenticity unrelated to actual events.
- b. There are reportedly four levels of Satanism (taken here from Bubeck, The Satanic Revival, pp. 30-31, though readily found in the literature; for a critical review of these four, see Hicks, In Pursuit of Satan, pp. 43-61):
  - i. Dabblers (Usually youth, these are people who dabble in occultic activities, often displaying satanic symbols and activities such as satanic graffiti, bizarre dress, and some animal mutilations.)
  - ii. Self-styled Satanists (small groups who develop their own doctrine and liturgy based on whatever materials they can find; Jeffrey Dahmler appears to have been of this variety.)
  - iii. Organized Satanists (publicly known Satanists such as Anton LeVey and the Satanist Church). Often put into this category are groups such as Michael Aquino's Temple of Set, though Aquino denies that he is a Satanist (describing himself as a Setian who does not believe in Christian cosmology).
  - iv. Traditional Satanists (reportedly the most secretive and dangerous--breaking the secrecy vow is punished by death; this is the group that conspiracy theorists consider the most dangerous). These are said to be multigenerational groups which breed babies and kidnap children for ritual sacrifice, though evidence that would stand up in court has not been

available to substantiate these claims (and those who ask for evidence are vilified; see Rogers, "A Call for Discernment," pp. 179-80).

- c. Satanic ritual and abuse
  - i. Satanic ritual is worship of Satan in an organized, liturgical setting. Essentially it is an attempt to desecrate the Christian worship service through an anti-service. Reported elements may include animal or human sacrifice, invocations of demons, anti-communion (using human blood and urine), blood rituals, and so on. On occasion, these purportedly take place in churches (in bathrooms which can be cleaned up, etc.), though are generally said to take place where noises will not create any disturbance (e.g., in abandoned buildings or isolated outdoor areas).
  - ii. Since the 1980s, victims of abuse from satanic rituals have been reported in increasing numbers in both the press and psychological literature. Dealing with Satanic ritual abuse (SRA) has become a full-time occupation for some pastors and counselors. Types of abuse reported include:
    - (1) Confinement or isolation (in cages, sometimes with animals such as rats or snakes-- Implanting of children in animal carcasses has been reported.)
    - (2) Sexual torture (e.g., rape with symbolic Christian objects, such as a crucifix)
    - (3) Physical deprivation (food and water; even air)
    - (4) Forced participation in abuse/murder
    - (5) Psychiatric abuse (even including false counselors who use psychological techniques, including drugs, to damage the victims)
    - (6) General physical torture (mutilation, drawing blood, hanging by arms or feet, electrical shock, etc.)
    - (7) Forced eating of flesh, excrement, or other fetid material
    - (8) Staged birthing of "bad babies" (rats, snakes--the children think they have given birth to these and are told that they are rotten children who give birth to rotten things)
    - (9) Teaching cognitive confusion (opposites such as sex must come with pain; love and hate are the same, etc.)
- d. Dissociative Identity Disorder (or Multiple Personality Disorder; MPD)
  - i. The diagnostic criteria for DID is defined by The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-4) as:
    - (1) The existence within an individual of two or more distinct personalities, or personality states (each with its own relatively enduring pattern of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and self).

NOTE: These are not distinct people, but dissociated components of a single core personality (Ross, "Twelve Cognitive Errors," American Journal of Psychotherapy, 44:3 (July 1990), p. 349).

- (2) At least two of these personalities or personality states recurrently takes full control of the person's behavior.
- ii. There is still great debate within the secular psychological community as to the reality of DID and its prevalence. Literally hundreds of articles have appeared in the psychological literature, including popular and academic as well as secular and Christian. For an overview of Christian thinking in psychological circles, see the Fall 1992 Journal of Psychology and Theology (the whole issue is devoted to discussions on Satanic Ritual Abuse).
  - iii. What gives rise to DID?
    - (1) The ability to dissociate as a defense mechanism--this usually is seen in highly intelligent and creative people (estimated at 15% of the population; Fraser, "A Cause of Multiple Personality Disorder," Journal of Child and Youth Care, Special Issue 1990, p. 58). The average DID sufferer has 15 to 18 personalities, though SRA victims would seem to average many more personalities.
    - (2) Severe shock on the child, usually before the age of five. In one study, 97% of the children had experienced sexual abuse (25% to 60% of DIDs under treatment are known to be victims of SRA [van Benschoten, "Multiple Personality Disorder and Satanic Ritual Abuse," Dissociation 3:1 (March 1990), p. 24).
  - iv. How can it be treated?
    - (1) Therapy should have as its goal the fusion of all the personalities.
    - (2) Long-term professional treatment is necessary (a minimum of two years in most cases; this is from the time of a correct diagnosis). I would like to suggest that the professionals must be sensitive to the spiritual realm, and have the basic skills necessary to distinguish alternate personalities from demonic agencies.
  - v. What is the role of the lay person? The following thoughts may be noted (adapted from Larson, "A Layperson's Look at Multiple Personality Disorder"):

- (1) Lay people and pastors should note the following:
  - (a) Multiples are **survivors**--they would not be alive now if they weren't.
  - (b) Multiples can be extremely **manipulative**--they are able to manipulate situations to their benefit (it is one of their survival skills).
  - (c) Multiples require **professionally trained therapists** who can utilize the non-professional.
  - (d) A recent trend is false claims to be multiples simply because of the resulting attention they receive or as a revenge device against parents.

**Caution: Avoid the idea that you are somehow to be their savior!**

- (2) **Study and Prayer:** With the wealth of articles written on this issue, we would be remiss if we did not read several to try to come to understand what is happening. One recommended book is James Friesen Uncovering the Mystery of MPD (Here's Life Publishers, 1991). Use the information you gain to pray more intelligently that God would be moving in the healing/restoration process.
- (3) **Be a trust-builder:** Multiples have never had anyone they could really trust before. Note, however, that there will be destructive personalities whose task is to destroy trust, and you will face trials in building it.
- (4) **Help them to make good decisions:** This is important if they face critical (and possibly disastrous) decisions in their therapy (e.g., to confront their parents) and are willing to talk with you about it.
- (5) **Help them network into a healthy community:** They have not been exposed to a healthy community framework before. You also need the support of others who are aware of the situation and can pray or help you process your own reactions and thoughts.
- (6) **Provide stabilizing, unconditional, tough love:** You may be the first stable relationship (outside of a therapist) they have ever had. They may have never seen true Christian love that is both tough and tender, and healthy doses of it will be important in their recovery process.

How do we respond to these spiritual conflict issues? How are we to maintain balance when dealing with the intersection of the transempirical with the empirical?

- a. Addressing issues in the church: Paul's epistle to the Ephesians serves as a foundational case study in developing an appropriate theology and practice of spiritual conflict.
  - i. The Ephesians were steeped in a magical world. Their city was a center for powerful magic, and people came from all over the known world to buy the amulets produced in Ephesus. Paul knew that he was writing to a church living in the midst of the reality of spiritual conflict. He wrote a spiritual conflict primer or treatise in light of their context. His approach was to lay a solid theological framework before moving into the practical application (see chart):

Theological Foundation (Chapters 1-3)	Practical Application (Chapters 4-6)
<p><b>Theme: You are believers in Christ</b></p> <p>1:3-14: God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.</p> <p>1:15-2:10: We who were dead in our sins were saved by grace through faith, made alive in Christ, seated with Him and delegated His matchless authority in order that we might do the good works God prepared in advance for us to do.</p> <p>2:11-22: All humanity now has been made one, and those in Christ are now fellow-citizens with God's people (the Jews).</p> <p>3:1-13: Paul was made a servant of the Gospel so that through the church God's wisdom would be made known to the spiritual rulers and authorities.</p> <p>3:14-21: Paul prays for strengthening in the inner being--that they have the power to grasp God's inexhaustible love and be filled to the fullness of Christ. To our infinite God be the Glory!</p>	<p><b>Theme: Live lives worthy of your calling</b></p> <p>4:1-6: Live a life worthy of the calling; kingdom living involves humility, gentleness, and patience.</p> <p>4:7-16: <i>Corporate living</i>: God gifted the church through Christ so that it would grow into unity in faith.</p> <p>4:17-5:21: <i>Relational living</i>: Live as children of the light by putting off the old and putting on the new by being filled with the Spirit.</p> <p>5:22-6:4: <i>Family living</i>: Submit to each other as imitators of Christ.</p> <p>6:5-9: <i>Business living</i>: Work and manage as those who will give an account to God for your actions.</p> <p>6:10-18: Be strong by prayerfully standing: Against Satan's schemes In God's power Clothed in His armor.</p>

- ii. Also of significance to note are the omissions.
  - (1) Paul does not fall into the trap of focusing on the enemy; he chooses to focus on our identity and blessings in Christ.
  - (2) He does not call the Ephesians to make a prayer march around the city, and come against the territorial spirits controlling it; he does tell them to live a corporate life that displays God's wisdom to the world.

- (3) He does not play the hero who must endlessly face the cycle of fighting; he does call them to growth to the full stature of their measure in Christ.
  - (4) He does not become preoccupied with demons of particular sins, or with unnecessary demonic interrogation, or with finding out the names of demons; he tells them to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
  - (5) Paul neither focuses exclusively on power nor neglects it. His focus is on power to know the truth and appropriate Christian living in light of that knowledge.
- b. What can we learn in light of Paul's response to a church coming out of an animistic world view steeped in magic? Two general directions and several more specific suggestions may be noted.
- i. We must develop a world view that acknowledges the powers without capitulating to them or being captivated by an unhealthy interest in them.
    - (1) We must give Satan and demons what might be called a selectively appropriate inattention.
    - (2) The best means for doing that is to keep our attention on God's sovereign control, and to use His sovereignty as a lens through which we examine demonic activities.
  - ii. Another general direction is the discovery of appropriate Christian "myth" (not in the sense of fairy tales, but in the sociological sense of controlling images found in Scripture).
    - (1) This is just as difficult as developing a Christian world view, especially if the myth of redemptive violence is as pervasive as Wink maintains (Wink, Engaging the Powers, p. 13).
    - (2) The issue is not developing a new Christian "mythic framework" as much as it is discovering the mythic framework God has already given us in His Word. Again note that we are using myth in the sense of controlling images or pictures, not in the sense of untrue stories.
    - (3) The core metaphor for spiritual conflict should not be that of conflict, but that of God's rule and our resulting ethos of *shalom* built on the foundation of Kingdom ethics (Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Perspectives").
- c. Within this broad sketch pattern, several more concrete suggestions may be

- made.
- i. First, in our dealings with spiritual conflict, the lens through which it is examined must be God's love and mercy, not Satan's tricks and traps. The best training for identifying what is counterfeit is intimate knowledge of what is true.
  - ii. Second, we must enable our students to see that anyone who responds to the Western theology of a vacuum of powers by promoting a triumphalistic theology of power encounter must be willing to balance it with a solid understanding of the potential of power failure. Not every encounter follows the mythic framework of the hero's victory, and we need to understand our failures as opportunities to focus once again on God's love and mercy towards His creation.
  - iii. Third, there is a foundational need to integrate the classical Christian disciplines into the modern spiritual conflict discussion. These two areas of discussion have been unnaturally separated in the recent emphasis on spiritual conflict, and must be reunited. No matter what our experience or use of power, we cannot escape the need for daily Christian discipline if we are to grow in our relationship with Christ.
  - iv. Fourth, and finally, we need to rebalance our focus on both the psychosocial and the spiritual. In applying the theology of identity in Christ to the Ephesians, Paul exhorted them to live in light of the kingdom ethics of humility, patient endurance, forgiveness, lovingly speaking the truth, and mutual submission in a variety of social contexts. Without using the terminology, he called them to recognize both Satan's activities and their responsibilities in the psychosocial sphere.
- d. *Conclusion:* I have been greatly encouraged by the recent heightening of interest in spiritual conflict within evangelicalism as evidenced by the explosion of literature, conferences, and courses.
- i. Satan and demons are real, ontological beings (and not just the interiority of structures, contra Wink, Engaging the Powers) who seek to wage war against the Creator by influencing His created order in any way they can.
  - ii. Every believer, whether acknowledged or not, is called to participate in this conflict and stand against Satan's attacks (Eph. 6:10-18).
  - iii. At the same time, however, I am concerned about the potential dangers in the recent development of a kind of spiritual conflict industry.
    - (1) We must avoid the sensationalism that wins audiences at the expense

of biblical integrity.

- (2) We must also avoid the entrapment of delighting in power for power's sake, and keep our eyes firmly fixed on the issues Jesus said were of higher priority (e.g., our salvation; Luke 10:20).
  - (3) We must not allow our world view to move into an unbiblical animism, and we must exercise caution in advocating techniques and strategies that resemble magic more than biblically responsible ministry.
- iv. God *has* given Christians a significant role to play in spiritual conflict, but He calls us to wage this conflict on His terms, not ours. May He enable us to maintain our integrity and sensitivity as we seek to engage in the works He prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:10).