

Editorial: Spiritual Warfare and the Frontiers

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Eph. 6:10,11) This well known Scripture indicates that the apostle Paul had first hand knowledge of the exigencies of spiritual warfare for the church. He pointedly reminds his readers of “the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). He exhorts them “not to give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27), and urges the whole church that “the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places,” all of this was in accord with “the eternal purpose which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph. 3:10,11) Best of all Christians must know that the Lord “disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them...” in the cross. (Col. 2:15).

These and other passages of Scripture clearly indicate that spiritual warfare is not only a fact of life but that it is a very serious matter which we as Christians need to heed lest we fail to stand. For this reason Paul mandates believers to “take up the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.” (Eph. 6:13)

The Schemes of the Devil

One of Satan’s deadliest tactics according to E.K. Simpson’s commentary is by “shamming dead,” as he says by “eliminating the frontier-lines of truth and falsehood under colour of broadmindedness, and in securing the ascendancy of ‘scientific thought’ or rather its counterfeit, that has paved the way for his most signal inroads of unbelief on the pale of true religion in modern times.” (*Commentary of the Epistle to the Ephesians*, E.K.Simpson, 1957:145)

Few can doubt that Satan has made great inroads in our modern world, including infiltrating our churches and playing havoc with our world view. This has been accomplished largely by means of a slow but persistent shift of

thinking regarding our view of reality, through the so called “scientific thought” that would see our world as a closed, self-contained natural system which would postulate Satan’s nonexistence, along with other supernatural beings, and somehow reduce our problems and the battles we face to a natural plane of reality.

It must be stated clearly, that this is *not* Paul’s view nor is it in anyway in line with his theology, nor consistent with biblical theology generally. Paul would want to correct many of us in our “modern times” and show us that we do “not contend with flesh and blood,” that our conflict is not in the natural—with people and forces in the visible realm of things—but rather is with spiritual beings in the supernatural and invisible plane of reality. Paul understands this spiritual reality and the battle fought there. What many of us do not see—perhaps because we cannot see— Paul clearly sees. It is none other than the startling fact that we as Christians individually, as well as the Body of Christ corporately, are in a war, doing battle against the principalities (rulers), against the powers (authorities), against the world rulers of darkness, against the spiritual hosts of evil and wickedness in the heavenlies. (Eph. 6:12)

A Fierce Ensuing Battle

We could safely conclude that we in the West stand in need of a major shift of perspective regarding ultimate world and life view issues. We along with Paul, in accord with the whole biblical record, need to see the invisible non-empirical reality of our existence and the relentless battle in which all of us as God’s people are in fact involved, whether we like it or not. Also the warning stands: That unless we do experience a radical supernatural “paradigm shift” of a deep proportion, we are in for serious trouble. What trouble? Great portions of the church stand to loose the war! How? Because it will further erode our faith even to the degree that the Lord’s warning may well apply in our times. He warned “Will the Son of Man find any faith on the earth at his coming.” (Luke 18:8) If the secular world view condition prevails, who can

deny that we have lost the war?

And what about world missions? It would be safe to deduce that if the battle rages fierce for even the “normal Christian,” how much more in the arena of world missions as we seek to penetrate areas and peoples held in bondage for centuries by “the prince of the power of the air.” World missions, and in a special sense frontier missions, must know as none other, and as never before, that we are at war, that it is a conflict with “principalities and powers” of evil supernatural world-ruling spirit beings that must be taken seriously by all engaged in world missions. This systemic evil needs to be disarmed in the authority and power of our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished by the full armored soldiers of the cross who know how to wield the sword of the Spirit.

The Theme of This Issue

Because of the great import of this subject and its significance for world missions we are dedicating this entire issue to spiritual warfare. Virtually every article is focused on this theme. In this light we could ask ourselves the question why so many peoples are still unreached even in this late hour? Could it be because we today, and those who have gone before, have misunderstood the spiritual nature of our mission and supernatural conflict of the task? Have Western missionaries been influenced for secularism among many peoples of the world as some Christian anthropologists claim? Whatever our answer, the truth is that we today, undoubtedly as never before, will be involved in warfare with rulers and powers and authorities of wickedness that must be conquered in order to finish the task of world evangelization and plant the church of Christ among every unreached people on the face of the earth.

Focus and Direction

The direction of this issue is set by a fresh look at the letter of Paul to the Romans and how the whole letter, including its weighty theology, is focused on missions, specifically frontier missions, of reaching the unreached peoples of the world. Although Shirmacher’s presentation is

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not specifically focused on spiritual warfare, his article nevertheless sets the tone as we begin to look at the exigencies of spiritual warfare vis-a-vis the unreached nation-peoples and their evangelization.

Two articles by Murphy and Van Rheenen concentrate on the foundational concern of the world view issue, including a comparison of Western and non-Western world views, and comparing them with the biblical Christian one. Truly there is a "world view clash" of deep proportions. We need to make every effort that our world view as Christians be aligned with a thorough-going Christian-biblical-theistic view of reality.

Subsequent articles by John Robb and Viv Grigg take up the subject of the tactics and schemes and organizations Satan uses to advance and maintain his kingdom of darkness here on earth, including his tactics in controlling the urban centers of our world. We need to know our enemy and his ploys at every hand engaged "to steal, kill and destroy." (John 10:10)

A major article is written by Howard Brant on SIM's position on spiritual warfare, power encounter and the miraculous as it pertains to missions. SIM realizes that by the very nature of their task as a mission they will inevitably enter enemy territory, a virtual war zone, as Brant sees it, to engage in combat with the evil one. SIM realizes this to be of vital importance to them both individually and corporately. We might add that the same is true for every other missionary and mission agency involved in world missions.

Towards the end of this issue we are challenged by Charles Laughlin's article on the question whether spiritual warfare should be included in a mission

curriculum or training program. This article, as well as the article by Van Rheenen were originally presented in March of this year to the Evangelical Missiological Society, at a Southwest Regional Conference in Dallas, Texas. Laughlin makes the case for including spiritual warfare in a mission curriculum since, among other things, in our day there is a marked increase in demonic activity. He reminds us of Paul's warning "that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons." (II Tim. 4:1) Laughlin concludes that for this reason alone we should provide curriculum on spiritual warfare in our theological as well as missiological training programs.

Concerted Prayer and Intercession

Last but not least, we will be challenged to pray and intercede for another people still unreached with the gospel—the Bihari of India—deceived and held in bondage for centuries by the false religious powers and authorities. The full color photo (front cover) of this issue represents two young boys of the Bihari people who are waiting for the liberating gospel. We are indebted to Caleb Project for the use of this great photo. For the data on the prayer profile in the article on the Bihari we are indebted to the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse in Colorado Springs, CO.

As editor I wish to encourage every subscriber of the IJFM, and every Christian who receives this special issue of the Journal, to pray in an extraordinary concerted effort for the Bihari people with the view that they may be reached in this decade with the gospel, it being the very power of God unto salvation for them as well as for

all the other peoples of the earth.

The Adopt-A-People Consultation

Frank Kaleb Jansen, the director of the Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse, writes the final article giving a report on the Second Adopt-A-People Consultation held this Summer in Colorado Springs. It is worthy of note that this Conference was a huge success and of significant influence, advancing the Adopt-A-People concept. Though the number of actual participants of this conference may seem small, compared to former meetings of the past, in which thousands gathered, the truly significant feature of this conference was that all the participants were leaders in the mission industry focused to a large degree on the final frontiers of reaching the remaining unreached peoples of the world by the year 2000. David Dougherty present a response to Jansen in the form of a second perspective on this same consultation.

It is with much prayer and confidence that we send out this very special issue on spiritual warfare. We pray that it may find wide dissemination in the Body of Christ, both at home and internationally. May it help us all to understand the nature of the cosmic spiritual war in which we are all engaged as well as to provide authentic support and strategy direction to all world mission efforts. May we all remember that although we are at war, perhaps as never before, nevertheless, we are not alone for the battle is the Lord's.

*Hans M. Weerstra
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El Paso, Texas*