

Satan's Tactics in Building and Maintaining His Kingdom of Darkness

Why are the unreached peoples still unreached? Is it because we haven't understood Satan's strategy, his schemes to blind and enslave whole peoples? If so, this article will help us understand our enemy and effectively hold his power in check and to liberate whole peoples on the face of the earth.

By John Robb

Most Christians feel a kind of reticence in considering the operation of Satan and his kingdom. There is a hesitation, a kind of trepidation on our part to delve into this unknown dark area of reality we would prefer to avoid. Nonetheless, it is part of the spiritual warfare with which we must daily contend as believers, and so we would do well to understand as much as we can since, in war, it may prove disastrous to be without accurate intelligence of the enemy and his forces. Granted that we do not want to give way to an unhealthy fascination with this realm, we must still be willing to venture into it with the light of Scripture, the leading of the Holy Spirit and without fear because we have nothing to fear. Jesus said, "I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy and *nothing* shall be able to hurt you" (emphasis mine Lk. 10:19). His disciples returned from their first encounter with the demonic realm joyfully exclaiming, "Even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (Lk. 10:7) And the Apostle John encourages us that "Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world" (1Jn. 4:4). True, we can live in blissful ignorance of our enemy and his tactics like children too afraid to venture into a darkened attic, but with the light of God's word and faith in his guidance and protection, we will discover in a new way the power and prerogatives Jesus has given his followers to joyously and victoriously deal with the forces of darkness. In this article we will endeavor to better understand this opaque dimension in order to more effectively combat it in light of Scripture and the Spirit around the world.

Satan's Overall Program

Satan is a highly organized, intelligent spirit being dedicated to destroying human beings made in the image of the Creator he hates. He is the master deceiver and the author of idolatry, seeking to bring the whole world under his dominion by undermining faith in God, twisting values, and promoting false ideologies. He does this through infiltrating institutions, government administrations, communications media, educational systems, and religious bodies. He seeks to divert humankind from worship of their Creator through substitution of money, fame, power, pleasure, science, art, politics, or religious idols. His three-point agenda is deception, dominion and destruction. The ultimate objective is to gain such control over nations and governments so that eventually he can turn them against one another through the destruction of war and/or to turn them against their own citizens in selective murder. We might think of the genocidal crimes of Hitler, Stalin and Saddam Hussein, or the massive killing of the unborn through legal abortion practiced increasingly in our own and other societies.

Satan Works Through Controlling Spirits

Although Satan is not omnipresent or omniscient, he is a master networker who works through a vast organization of spirit beings who apparently communicate with each other and work in some sense cooperatively to undermine humanity's encounter with the kingdom of God in every way they can. Towards this end evil spirits attempt to get influ-

ence over government leaders, legal systems, educational systems, and religious movements. Admittedly, Scripture is not entirely lucid as to how these spirits are organized or how they operate, but there is enough Scriptural warrant to make some conclusions regarding this.

Both Israel and the early church perceived that God had given his angelic hosts a special role in the administration of human affairs. The Septuagint rendering of Deuteronomy 32:8 says, "He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the angels of God." Biblical scholar F.F. Bruce writes, "The biblical evidence for the angelic government of the world is early: it goes back to the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. . . . This reading implies that the administration of the various nations has been parcelled out among a corresponding number of angelic powers."¹ In Daniel, these powers reveal themselves as both good and evil. Michael the Archangel is "the great prince" who has charge of the people of Israel, looking after their interests in the unfolding of history (Da. 12:1). The messenger of the Lord, presumably Gabriel, is detained by the "prince of Persia" against whom he must fight. The prince of Greece is also mentioned. Apparently these last two high-level angelic powers were standing in resistance against the revelation made to Daniel about the future of God's people Israel. Theologian Walter Wink wonders at the power of these evil beings who are able to hold God's messenger back for 21 days:

The angels of the nations have a will of their own and are capable of

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resisting the will of God. God is perhaps omnipotent but certainly not able to impose the divine will on recalcitrant powers due to God's own self-limitation: God will not violate the freedom of creatures.²

How and why did some of the angels turn against the Lord their Creator? We don't know exactly but may surmise that they joined Satan in his rebellion and since that time have become foes of God and the nations of humankind whom they seek to hinder rather than to help. In much of the Old Testament we probably see their baleful influence as the false "gods" of the nations the gods of Egypt, the Amorites, Canaanites, Edomites, etc. whose worship, Israel was warned, would bring oppression, slavery, foreign invasion and poverty (Judges 6:6 and 10:6-16). The Lord is portrayed as bringing judgement upon the gods of Egypt under Moses (Ex. 12:12) and "driving out nations and their gods" from before Israel during the conquest (2 Sam. 7:23). Of course, in relation to Yahweh, the incomparable Creator, they are not really gods but only demons impersonating deities worshipped through the medium of idols. "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. 96:5), and in 95:3, he is referred to as "... the great God, the great King above all gods." Later the apostle Paul acknowledges the reality of these spirit beings and their deception of the Gentiles (the nations), whose sacrifices to idols are made to demons (1Co. 10:20) and who are "slaves to those who by nature are not gods" (Gal. 4:8). Scripture, therefore, seems to indicate that these corrupted angels have joined Lucifer in seeking to deceive the nations so that they will not recognize the true God.

Their Agenda: Achieving Dominion

Domination and control appear to be the main objectives of these demon "gods" which the apostle Paul appropriately calls "principalities," "powers," "thrones," "dominions." The acquisition of power and influence over human beings and their societies seems to be their obsession. This dominating nature may be revealed in their very names. For example, the

meaning of Molech, god of the Ammonites, is "ruler." He managed to get such control over the people of Ammon that they offered their first-born children to him as sacrifices by fire.³ Chemosh, the national god of Moab, possibly means "subduer," perhaps a reflection of the degree of dominion he had obtained over this people, as well as of the successes he gave Moab in wars against their enemies.⁴ Heinrich Schlier writes of these fallen spirit beings:

Principalities do not merely possess power; they are power. . . pure power. . . capacity, dominion in person. . . these principalities exercise their being by taking possession of the world as a whole and of individual men, the elements, political and social institutions, historical conditions and circumstances, spiritual and religious trends.⁵

In referring to Paul's teaching in Romans 8, Hendrik Berkhof concurs with the idea that the principalities and powers seek a totalitarian form of control:

Paul observes that life is ruled by a series of Powers. He speaks of time (present and future) of life and death; of politics and philosophy; of public opinion and Jewish law; of pious tradition and the fateful course of the stars. Apart from Christ man is at the mercy of these Powers.⁶

Missionaries of today can also give testimony to the kind of control that these spirit beings have over pagan peoples. The late Ernest Heimlich, formerly a pioneer missionary to the Hmong tribe in Thailand, described for me how the chief spirit of the tribe dominated it for centuries, using the fear of sickness, death, attack by evil spirits, and also opium addiction to keep the people in his grip.⁷

Lest we think these demon gods, or these controlling spirits, these principalities and powers are only still operative in far off pagan tribes, we need to take a hard look at our own society and culture. Aside from Charles Manson, Jim Jones and the Branch Davidians which seem more obvious examples of demonic deception, what about our own national policy and culture? Theologian Walter Wink urges us to discern the demonic installed at the heart of our own national policy, infiltrating the CIA, government administration, and

armed forces to ensure continued American political and economic dominance over weaker nations. Commenting on the blind allegiance so many citizens give to their national self-interest, he writes,

What makes nationalism so pernicious, so death-dealing, so blasphemous is its seemingly irresistible tendency towards idolatry. In the name of this idol, whole generations are maimed, slaughtered, exiled, and made idolaters. One hundred million lives have been offered on the altar of this Moloch, thus far in the 20th Century.⁸

Wink, Berkhof and others help us to see that the powers of evil are still very much with us, injecting their influence upon and in our culture, public opinion, ideology, coloring our assumptions, worldviews, values, and behavior. As Christians who want to rightly discern the activity of the powers of darkness in our society, Berkhof helpfully suggests "The church's great question is always which Powers are now attempting to get life under their control."⁹

Are They "Territorial Spirits"?

We might ask whether these spirit powers are "territorial spirits" as they have been described in current literature. Certainly geographical territoriality is part of how Scripture describes their influence. The Canaanite god, Baal, who was a continual scourge to Israel because of Israelite involvement in Baal worship, had several localities named after him, e.g., Baal-Peor, Baal-Gad, Baal-Hermon, etc. "The etymology suggests that Baal was regarded as the *owner of a particular locality*. . . . [Since] these local Baals were believed to control fertility in agriculture, beasts and mankind. It was highly important to secure their favor"¹⁰ (emphasis mine). This was accomplished through ritual prostitution, child sacrifice and other detestable activities. (Ju. 2:17; Jer. 7:9 and 19:5)

Continually the Lord warned Israel through his prophets to forsake worshipping foreign gods like these if they wanted to remain in their land, otherwise God would bring the peoples against them in judgment "against this land and its inhabitants. . . this whole country will become

a desolate wasteland” (Jer 25:9). When judgement finally came upon them, a primary reason God gave for this judgement was that “*they have defiled my land* with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols.” (Jer. 16:18) Other nations who were guilty of enshrining false gods on their territory also incurred his wrath. The prophet Zephaniah mentions how God will be awesome to the Moabites and Ammonites when he “destroys all the *gods of the land*” (Zep. 2:11). Philistine lords were told that if they returned the Ark of the Covenant to Israel, the Lord might “lift his hand from you and *your gods and your land*” (1Sam. 6:5). At least in the understanding of Yahweh’s prophetic spokesmen there was a link between the “gods” and the land which was activated by or reinforced by the worship of false gods.

In the New Testament geographical territoriality is only hinted at. The mob of demons speaking out of the Gadarene demoniac begged Jesus that they “not be sent out of the country,” perhaps because that was the territory to which they had been assigned. (Lk. 8:26-39) In Acts 19:35 the Ephesian city clerk attempted to quiet the screaming mob by affirming: “The city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image which fell from heaven.” The fact that the mob had been shouting in irrational unison for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians,” may indicate some kind of collective possession by a “territorial spirit” though Scripture itself does not make this analysis.

Other cities mentioned in the Bible are described as having connections with Satan or demonic gods. Pergamum, location of one of the seven churches of Revelation, was “where Satan has his throne” and “where Satan lives” (Rev. 2:13). It was a known center in the ancient world for the worship of the spirit of Rome. In declaring allegiance to the emperor, citizens burned incense at the foot of his statue. Also, Dionysius, god of vegetation, and Asklepios, god of healing, were worshipped locally.

Snakes and the handling of reptiles were associated with the cults of both these gods. An ancient coin from Pergamum shows the emperor, Caracalla, standing before a great serpent twined around a tree and saluting it in the manner for which the Nazis later became known.¹¹ Spiritual territoriality probably does take an urban form but a more subtle form than is often recognized in the spiritual warfare movement. Whether we can identify the spirits over cities as “greed” for New York City, “power” for Washington, or “pornography” for Los Angeles, as one American evangelist recently did, is

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highly questionable. After all, aren’t these just the sins of some of the people who live in those places? Couldn’t greed be equally applied to Los Angeles as to New York? Or pornography to Washington as well as to Los Angeles? Undoubtedly, much of the discerning of “territorial spirits” is both oversimplified and naive. Satan may be having a good laugh on us!

Are They Organized Hierarchically?

I believe we must be careful of making unwarranted assumptions about the way in which the principalities and powers are organized. One of the most frequent of such assumptions is that they compose a hierarchy in a pyramidal sense with Satan at the top and various gradations of spirit beings ranked in descending order down to “ground-level” spirits, the kind that oppress and possess individuals. The idea of a possible hierarchy stems from attempts to decipher the apostle Paul’s understanding of the principalities and powers. Berkhof argues that the apostle was influenced by Jewish apocalyptic writings which conceived of classes of angels on

higher and lower levels who influenced events on earth. He also points out that Near Eastern nature religions of Paul’s day also believed in a hierarchy of demonic beings arrayed at various levels between God and the world. But he stops short of identifying a definite hierarchical structure in Paul’s depiction of the powers since the functions and names of the various terms Paul uses (“principalities,” “powers,” “thrones,” “dominions”) are never clarified: “We rather have the impression that Paul means to suggest broadly by the variety of expressions the number and diversity of the powers.”¹³ F.F. Bruce agrees.

Commenting on Colossians 1:16, he says, “They probably represent the highest orders of the angelic realm, but the variety of ways in which the titles are combined in the New Testament warns us against the attempt to reconstruct a fixed hierarchy from them.”¹⁴

Walter Wink has demonstrated that the terms Paul used in describing the powers were the same ones used to describe human authority in the New Testament.¹⁵ Because human authority is generally organized in a hierarchical manner, perhaps Paul also conceived of the spirit world in an hierarchical manner, but we must not categorically assume this to be the case. Are there other models which may give us a better handle at understanding their organizations? Given their anarchic self-centeredness and total depravity as fallen spirit beings, could they instead operate like a band of unruly guerrillas or an urban street gang, terrorizing, vandalizing, and running on to the next place where an opportunity presents itself to vent destruction? In this case they would be constantly deploying and redeploying to take advantage of unfolding situations. Just as terrorists or vandals’ activities are affected by the arrival of soldiers or the police so these roving bands of evil spiritual forces are put to flight by the intervention of God in answer to the prayers of his people. Does not this fit more with the apostle Peter’s description of Satan as “prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1Pe. 5:8-9)?

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Clearly, as Heinrich Schlier has demonstrated, the apostle Paul had no interest in speculating about the spiritual powers' organization and operation. (Perhaps that should serve as a caution to us as well.) He finds that the names Paul gives to the powers are "to a large extent interchangeable," that is, principalities, spirits, demons, gods, princes, etc. are all used of one another. Schlier finds only one distinction emphasized among them. Whether demons, spirits or principalities, they are all subordinate to Satan and manifest his power: "The numerous powers all derive from one fundamental power which is called Satan; they may be regarded as emanations and affects of that power."¹⁶ He may be right. Perhaps we should think of Satan and the demons as being more closely joined together. Most likely, given their extradimensionality, they can be both many and one at the same time. How else could up to 6,000 demons (the size of a Roman legion) inhabit the Gadarene demoniac and speak with one voice "My name is Legion for *we* are many" (emphasis mine, Mk. 5:9)?

Though we must be careful of constructing a theology of the spirit world based on pagan belief systems, the possibility of a hierarchy of spirits may be borne out by the perceptions of animistic peoples. Animists believe in a hierarchy headed by a supreme god, who is remote and unknown, and in a pantheon of lesser deities, superior spirits who exercise great power over a wide range of affairs. Beneath these are the lesser and the more immediate spirits of their ancestors, and finally, the evil spirits.¹⁷ The Burmese, believe in *nats*, supernatural beings arranged hierarchically with control over natural phenomena, villages, regions, and nations.¹⁸ The cult of guardian spirits in northeast Thailand involves both village and regional spirits, the village ones being subordinate to the regional.¹⁹ In India, Hindu goddesses serve as "guardians" of villages and regions. They are often associated with disease, sudden death and catastrophe.²⁰ Kali, goddess of destruction, is a regional deity widely recognized to be over West Bengal and the Bengali people.

A missionary in Thailand believes he

has identified the national principality that reigns over the whole country. It is a being known as Phra Sayam Devadhiraj, which means "greatest of the guardian angels of Siam." It is believed this deity has kept Thailand from being overrun by invaders. The king and queen preside over a royal homage-paying ceremony, with the whole nation joining in the worship of this spirit, whose image resides on a throne in the royal palace.²¹

We can conclude that Satan works to exercise dominion through a vast organization of other spirit beings. But whether he and his spirit henchmen operate as a network, hierarchy or a more free-flowing operation, we cannot definitively surmise from Scripture, though the beliefs of animistic peoples support a hierarchical point of view. Certainly, they are "territorial," but I prefer to use the term "controlling" since the achievement of control is the essence of their purpose and since they seek control not primarily over geographical areas, but first and foremost over *people* and all that concerns them politically, institutionally, culturally, religiously, etc. In other words, they do not care about real estate per se, but are extremely interested in those who own and live on it. Both as many and as one, they participate in the destructive agenda of the one Jesus said was a "liar and murderer from the beginning." For this reason alone we need to gain a better understanding of how they get control over individuals and societies and peoples.

Active Compliance of Human Beings

Since the original episode in the garden (Gen. 3) where the original humans allowed Satan to get control over them through deception, sadly the whole history of our race attests to human cooperation with Satan and his evil spirits to gain control over individuals and societies. Indeed, one theologian places the blame for the fall of angels on humanity rather than the other way around: "The fall of angels must not be seen independently from the sin of man. . .the two are interwoven. The angels fell because they were tempted by man

who was prepared to sell his soul to authorities other than Yahweh."²² Instead of saying "the devil made me do it," we may need to change the saying to "we made the devil do it!"

The Israelites not only forgot their God and served the Baals and Ashteroth, the gods of other nations, they refused to listen to God's prophets, despised His statutes and covenant and stubbornly opened the door for satanic occupation of their society. The Bible lays the blame squarely upon the Israelites themselves rather than on Satan:

All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God.... They worshipped other gods and followed the practices of the nations.... They did wicked things that provoked the Lord to anger. They worshipped idols though the Lord had said, You shall not do this. They would not listen and were stiff-necked.... They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made.... They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless.... They forsook all the commands of the Lord their God.... They bowed down to all the starry hosts.... They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and *sold themselves to do evil* in the eyes of the Lord (2 Ki. 17:7-17 emphasis mine).

The same principle is operating today. John Dawson writes:

Satan is an invader and usurper operating in our territory. God did not give demons authority over your city. Demons have infested the earth's atmosphere since before the creation of mankind, but they can only extend their authority into a town or institution when people sin.²³

One Christian worker who served in Mauritania thinks the people there have opened the door to a "spirit of divorce" through serial polygamy and adultery. The tragic result is child abandonment, leading to severe malnutrition and death of many children. The main obstacle to spiritual growth for the tiny number of Christians is temptation through divorce and adultery. Three national believers of the estimated twenty in the country have already fallen away from the faith for this reason, and the marriages of expatriate Christians have also been troubled.²⁴

After World War II, German pastors mentioned the role of the demonic in the events which befell

their fatherland: “You cannot understand what has happened in Germany unless you understand that we were possessed by demonic powers... *We let ourselves be possessed.*” (emphasis mine.) Theologian Walter Wink believes that demons became “the actual spirituality of Nazism manifested in the political forms of the Hitler Youth, the SS [Hitler’s bodyguard], Gestapo, the unwitting cooperation of churches, the ideology of Aryan racial purity, and the revival of Norse mythology.” He also mentions the “collective possession” prevalent in modern times in which “the demonic has taken the form of mass psychosis,” when humankind en masse gives itself up to evil.²⁵

The reverse of the above is also true. McCandlish Philips writes: “Fidelity to God and his Word breaks the power of evil spirits and erects barriers to Satan. This can be true in a life, in a home, in a nation.” He relays the story of the failed attempt by the Theosophical Society in 1926 to bring the Hindu guru, Krishnamurti, to prominence in America as a “world teacher” who would combine all religions into one and make radical changes in American civilization. After he arrived in New York harbor, he complained of “electrical atmospheric intensity” and said he doubted he would be able to meditate successfully. Plans to speak throughout the country were cancelled when he became incoherent, stripped of the powers that had worked for him in India, and complained of “bad atmospheric conditions prevailing in this country.” He ultimately went into seclusion and renounced his pretensions as a new messiah. God had put a hedge about America with his people’s faithfulness and general commitment of the wider society to keeping His ways.²⁶

Would that this were still the case in our society! Unfortunately the general unfaithfulness and disobedience to God’s ways have opened the way for a literal invasion of evil spirits in various forms of Eastern mysticism, the New Age Movement, and especially through declining moral standards relating to honesty, integrity and sexual purity.

Through Deception And False Mindsets

In keeping with his character as the arch liar and the father of lies, Satan’s major strategy for the world involves massive deception. “He has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” (2Co. 4:4) His most pernicious attacks are directed at the minds of people, and in this effort he “masquerades as an angel of light” (2Co. 11:14). *Time Magazine*, in reviewing the film *The Exorcist*, observed that the devil

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presented therein was an “easy devil.”²⁷ Far more dangerous and destructive are the shared wrong notions about reality with which hundreds of millions of human beings live. The apostle Paul warns both the Galatians and Colossians about being “taken prey” by deceptive philosophies and becoming slaves again to the “elemental spirits” (Gal. 4:3 and Col. 2:8-9). The book of Revelation depicts worldwide Satanic deception which results in gathering all the nations for that last great battle of Armageddon. (Rev. 16:12-14)

Richmond Chiundiza describes how in Zimbabwe the demonic powers came to inhabit the Shona people’s legends concerning the Nehanda and Chaminuka, two of their heroes from the past. Through the phenomenon of spirit possession, the spirits of these heroes are now being consulted by Zimbabwean government officials. Other demonic spirits inhabit the legends of the Shona clans requiring animal sacrifices, festivals and the possession of individuals to

speak their will. Clan members fear to leave the clan territory without asking the permission of these spirits and must wear charms for protection, and continue appeasing them daily wherever they happen to be living.²⁸

Referring to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Francis Frangipane says, “There are satanic strongholds over countries and communities. There are strongholds which influence churches and individuals. Wherever a stronghold exists it is a *demonically induced pattern of thinking* (emphasis mine)... a ‘house’ made of thoughts which has become a dwelling place of satanic activity.”²⁹ Culture is made up of many commonly held patterns of thinking, developed through generations and passed down to children as the normative way in which a society operates. For example, the Japanese, though outwardly highly technological and materialistic, are still bound up with occultism. Two-thirds of the population attend Shinto shrines, every school child carries an amulet, and Shinto priests dedicate each new building.³⁰ The recent coronation for the new emperor called for ritualized intercourse with the sun goddess, the national deity of the country.³¹

The Bozo people of Mali believe it is necessary to sacrifice animals and deformed people, such as albinos, to ensure the blessings of the spirits for abundant harvests. When twins are born, they kill one or both of them since, in their belief system, two people cannot share one spirit. An animistic Bantu population in Somalia believe the land will not yield an abundant harvest without the shedding of human blood. To guarantee the fertility of a field, all the men rush to meet each other at its center to beat each other with clubs. Thus, numerous injuries and deaths provide enough blood to bring a good harvest.³²

Cindy Jacobs, a noted intercessory prayer leader, characterizes the Western mind-set as being:

a stronghold that Satan has built within the culture of the United States and other countries that denies the supernatural and relegates reality to what can be proven scientifically or what can be known by the physical senses. The result upon the Western church is one of disbelief of the

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work of territorial spirits, thus Satan's kingdom is protected from attack by disbelieving Christians.³³

Indeed, this may be one of the devil's most effective subterfuges, blinding Western Christians to the way he operates by getting us to buy into an unbiblical, materialistic worldview valued by the rest of our culture.

Specific Ways Satan Maintains And Strengthens His Control

1. *Through Animistic Practices*

Animism, which Philip Steyne calls the "basic underpinning of all non-biblical religions," is the search for power sources by which man may manipulate the spirit world to get what he wants and to control his environment and destiny so that he becomes, as it were, his own god (cf. Gen.3). In all religions and cultures animists manipulate spirit beings to make rain, get abundant crops, get a new job, get healed, become fertile or pass school exams. Employing shamans, charms and rituals, they seek protection from disease, evil spells, catastrophes, and witchcraft. Baal worshippers of old, and modern-day New Agers alike, seek success, happiness and security through the involvement and manipulation of spirits, often not realizing they are the real ones being manipulated.³⁴

2. *Through Human Intermediaries*

Satan uses political leaders to carry out his agenda for a whole society. Leaders of Israel such as Jeroboam "drove Israel from following the Lord and made them commit great sin" (2 Ki. 17:21-22). On the part of his people he created an idolatrous cult involving the worship of two golden calves which launched the northern state of Israel into a downward spiral, culminating in its destruction by Assyrian invaders. It was widely known that Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos of the Philippines were deeply involved in the occult through daily consultations with a soothsayer and that Cory Aquino did not want to live in the same palace because she felt there were evil spirits there. Is it any wonder then that the Marcoses exploited their own people of billions of dollars, intensifying the poverty and suffering of millions.

Pol Pot exterminated two million of his own Cambodian people. Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, Jonas Savimbi, Slobodan Milosevic and many others could also be mentioned.

Spirit mediums are Satan's "hatchet men," human instruments by which he extends his dominion and tightens his control in a society. Simon the sorcerer was an instrument of Satan to get control over the people of Samaria. "All the people both high and low gave him their attention and exclaimed 'this man is the divine power known as the great power' as he amazed them with his magical powers" (Ac 8:10). Elymas, a sorcerer and false prophet, used his influence to oppose proclamation of the Good News to the proconsul of Paphos by Paul and tried to turn him from faith in Christ (Ac 13:6-11).

Peter Wagner mentions the case of a former high ranking occult leader in Nigeria known as "St. Thomas the Divine" to whom Satan assigned control of 12 spirits, each of which controlled 600 demons, a total of over 7,000. Occult practitioners played a part in the early rise of Hitler and Nazism. Erik Hanussen was a dealer in astrology who ran "The Palace of the Occult" and was known as the "prophet of the Third Reich" because of his influence over its development.³⁶ Filipino shamans or *babylon* are experts in things relating to spirits. They claim the power to heal or kill, to prepare amulets for warding off evil spirits and procuring blessings.

According to Cindy Jacobs, Satanists and witches, a Western form of spirit mediums, send people to purposefully seduce pastors and leaders of Christian churches. In so doing they use spells, love potions and charms. They use magic to "hunt the souls of men" (Eze 13:17-23) through divination. They also use the tools of unholy intercession and the unholy fast to unleash demonic powers to distress Christians. Very dedicated to their lord, they serve him either through fear or a desire for power. The higher their rank in the satanic church the more demonic powers they control. In cooperation with the spirits they can bring curses upon the unsuspecting, even harming the physical body.³⁷

Ed Silvano mentioned a spiritist group in Argentina who made a pact to break up a church by praying for strife among its leaders. In my own community of Upland, California, efforts have been made by spiritists connected with a New Age cult to curse local churches and their pastors in order to bring division or other harm to the congregations in this area.

Fortunately, the presence of praying Christians interrupts, or breaks altogether, the link of mediums with their controlling occult powers. Mediums in the Malaysian town where I served as a missionary were unsuccessful in calling the spirits to possess them during the period a Chinese Christian worker was waiting for the bus outside their festival grounds. The mediums eventually came out and appealed to her to leave the area so that the spirits could come into them! A Ghanaian pastor told me that the witch doctor in the area they were evangelizing lost his occult abilities once the local Christians began to pray in unity for the area. More will be said about the power of this kind of praying.

3. *Through Places or Objects Set Apart for Infestation by Spirits*

A missionary friend from Thailand, Joy Boese, described the increasing spiritual oppression she felt, accompanied by an inexplicable apathy on the part of the people with regard to the gospel. "Spirit pillars" had just been erected in her town. She writes,

From our local people I've learned that many cities have a protective and ruling/controlling spirit residing in a recognized pillar. The provincial governor decides to erect a pillar and invites a spirit to come and inhabit that pillar to protect his city or province.³⁹

Pam Seaward, another missionary friend from Nepal working among Tibetan Buddhists, described her confrontation with a "god" of Tibetan Buddhism, who appeared to her as she was praying for the people. She rebuked its ugly image, but it remained because as it explained, "My things are here." Seaward discovered Tibetan Buddhist religious paraphernalia which her landlord had left in a nearby closet. Until she got rid of the demon's "things," it would not leave.⁴⁰

An Argentine woman during a deliverance session revealed how spirits had obtained a right to control her. Her doctor had sewed microscopic fetishes inside her flesh through which spirits connected with the Brazilian Macumba temple influenced her by “spiritual remote control.”⁴¹ Peter Wagner concludes, “Real demons do attach themselves to animals, idols. . . trees, mountains, and buildings as well as to any number, or variety of manufactured and natural objects.”⁴² If spirit beings are “extradimensional” as we saw above, attaching themselves to any number of objects at the same time because they have been set apart for this purpose, should present no problem to them.

No wonder God through Moses commanded Israel not to bring any detestable things into their homes because of the destructive effects they would bring upon them. The ruthless actions of reformer kings like King Josiah to rid the land of the high places, shrines and other occult objects used in the worship of foreign gods now become fully understandable. (Dt. 7:25-26 and 2Ki. 23)

4. *Through Rituals of Worship—At Times Involving Human Sacrifice*

Rituals of worship to the spirits are one way their control is strengthened. In parts of West Africa, human sacrifice is sometimes used to gain stronger power with the spirits. The Lebu of Senegal are believed to make such sacrifices on an island off the coast. They are perceived by other tribal groups as having, as a result, inordinate degree of political, economic and spiritual power. The Dionka tribe of Mali worship Komo, the god of killing. Local Christian workers told me that in some areas strangers have been killed in sacrifice to this god.⁴³

Lest we think that our culture is more advanced or immune from such practices, Dianne Core, founder of Child Watch, writes of Devilfish, a coven of satanists connected with the Ordo Templi Orientis, a national organization in the United States with over 40 branches. Their book, the *Secret Rites of OTO*, gives instructions on how to do human sacrifice in

order to increase Satanic power.⁴⁴

Ted Gunderson, former FBI director for Los Angeles, shocked the participants of a seminar on occult crime with his claim that the FBI has over 100,000 “missing persons” in their files, half of which he estimates have ended up as victims of occult sacrifice.⁴⁵ Even if he is only ten percent correct, it is cause for grave concern.

5. *Through Blocking God’s People from Interfering With His Dominion*

As we have already noted in passing, the prophet Daniel faced a “great conflict” as powerful spirit

the lives of several of his first converts.⁴⁶

In order to keep us from interfering with his dominion, Satan seeks to neutralize the power of God’s people by attempting to “wear out” the saints through discouragement, infirmity, discrediting ministers and ministries, and especially bringing division in the church. He also seeks to destroy our family relationships. As Hector Torres, an Arizona pastor puts it, “I believe Satan’s tactics are to destroy the three institutions established by God: the family, the church and the nation.” Torres especially emphasizes Satan’s attack on families since they are “the foundation for all relationships.”⁴⁷

Prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit are used by God to overthrow demonic forces seeking to gain or maintain control over individuals and societies.

beings sought to prevent his receiving a revelation which would cast a spotlight on the purposes and plans of the principalities and powers in their future interaction with political realms. It was a word which also revealed God’s sovereignty over all these future events, as well as a warning to his people Israel regarding the dangers of deception and the need to prepare for persecution (Da. 10-12).

As we have already intimated, the controlling principality of Ephesus worshiped as Artemis may have stirred Demetrius the silversmith and his trade union members to provoke a riot in order to hinder the spread of the truth. Also, Satan is spoken of as hindering Paul’s mission plans (1Th. 2:18) and throwing Christians into prison and tribulation (Rev. 2:10). And in 1 Peter 5 he is portrayed as the roaring lion, who brings suffering to the saints.

A YWAM missionary from Principe, Sao Tome reported an encounter with a demonic prince. This spirit being threatened him and the fledgling church to stop their missionary activities in his area. Subsequently, an outbreak of cholera tragically claimed

Ways to Overcome Satan and His Tactics

More than one Biblical expositor has interpreted the book of Joshua as portraying in the physical realm what the church is to do in the spiritual. Just as Joshua and the people of Israel took the “territory” which God had given them in the land of Canaan, so God’s people today are to take back “territory” from Satan and the forces of darkness. Jesus has told us, “Occupy till I come.” The implication is that we are to be an influence for him in our jobs, in our communities, wherever we find ourselves. As Kraft has put it:

We are involved in the battle. Jesus enlisted us to fight taking territory away from the evil one. This fight is, however, primarily on the individual level. There is also territory to take relationally, socially, organizationally, geographically, and perhaps in other transindividual areas.⁴⁸

Joshua’s question could well be asked of us also, “How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the Lord has given you?” There are at least four ways which we as Christians can overcome Satan and his tactics in order to take back territory from his domain.

Through Intercessory Prayer

There is considerable evidence both biblical and in the history of the

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church that prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit are used by God to overthrow demonic forces seeking to gain or maintain control over individuals and societies. One key to Joshua's victory over Israel's Canaanite enemies, all of whom relied upon demonic gods, was his prayerful dependence on the Lord's intervention on Israel's behalf at Jericho, Ai and in other crucial battles. It was the intercession of Samuel that brought God's thunderous response against the Philistines, throwing them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. The territory the Philistines had captured from Israel as well as neighboring territory was restored to God's people (1Sam. 7:7-14). Judges like Gideon, and kings such as David, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah experienced God's deliverance and the reclamation of territory due to their dependence on God through prayer.

Prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit always undergirded and extended the missionary outreach of the early church. In the book of Acts alone prayer is mentioned over 30 times, usually before major breakthroughs in the expansion of the first church. Looking back over the history of Christianity, Robert Glover observed, "All the mighty spiritual revivals which constitute the mountain peaks of missionary annals had their roots in prayer."⁴⁹ Jonathan Goforth, missionary to China, described the powerful spiritual awakenings which brought many tens of thousands to Christ in Korea and China during the early part of this century. It was "intense believing prayer that had so much to do with the revival which in 1907 brought 50,000 Koreans to Christ. We are convinced too that all movements of the Spirit in China which have come within our own experience may be traced to prayer." He relayed how one missionary remarked to him, "Since the Lord did so much with our small amount of praying, what might he not have done if we had prayed as we ought?"⁵⁰ Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, wrote to Goforth, as he was planning to launch a new work in Honan Province in China, "Brother, if you are to win that province, you must go forward on your knees."⁵¹

Wesley Duewel described to me the agonizingly slow work of his mission's church-planting efforts in India during its first 25 years. Only one church per year came into being as a result of all the missionaries' efforts. As a result of heart-searching evaluation, the mission recruited 1,000 people in their home countries to pray 15 minutes per day for the work. He reports that this prayer effort turned the tide, and in the next few years, the number of churches went from 25 to 550 and the number of believers from 2,000 to 73,000. One national leader told him afterwards, "All of us are seeing results beyond anything we could have imagined!"⁵²

The great revival and ingathering among the Telugu "outcastes" of India is linked with what happened on "Prayer Meeting Hill," an elevated area overlooking the city of Ongole. In 1853, when their mission board was on the point of abandoning the work for lack of response, a missionary couple and three national coworkers spent the night in prayer for the Telugus. They battled through to a sense of shared assurance that their prayers had prevailed. Gradually the opposition to the gospel broke and when the outpouring of the Spirit took place, 8,000 came to Christ in a six-week period. In one day over 2,000 were baptized and the church there became the largest in the world.⁵³

David Yonggi Cho, pastor of the world largest church, recounts the demonic oppression over the Korean village where he pioneered during his early ministry. The key to the breaking of spiritual bondage was months of prayer, culminating in the casting out of a demon from a woman who had been paralyzed for seven years. With her healing and deliverance, the church exploded with growth. As he puts it, "The sky above the village was broken open and the blessings of God began pouring down."⁵⁴

Why does God Require Prayers?

We learn from Scripture that the prayer of intercession is key to the fulfillment of God's gracious purpose for the peoples of the earth. He

invites us, "Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession" (Ps. 2:8). Ezekiel reveals that God looks for someone to "stand in the gap" for the land. (Eze. 22:30) And through Isaiah the Lord says he has posted watchmen on Jerusalem's walls who will "never be silent day or night," giving themselves and the Lord no rest "till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth" (Isa. 62:6-7).

Why does God, the Almighty, "limit" himself by reliance on his people's prayers? Admittedly, it is a mysterious matter, but I believe it goes back to his giving humankind dominion of the earth. This dominion, as we have seen, both at the fall of man and subsequently, has been surrendered to Satan and his demonic cohorts. But through Christ's redemption, this dominion is being restored. And through prayer, we as his redeemed people, reassert our God-given dominion over the world, ruling and reigning with Christ "far above all authority and dominion" (Eph. 1:21 and 2:6). Through believing prayer, we open the door for God's intervention in our troubled world. The Holy Spirit shows us how to pray, indeed, prays through us in accordance with God's will. (Rom. 8:26-27) Indeed, Jesus has given us a virtual blank check to exercise through united prayer with other believers: "Again I tell you, that if two of you on earth agree about *anything* you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." And "I will do *whatever* you ask in my name. . . . You may ask me for *anything* in my name and I will do it" (Mt. 18:19 and Jn. 14:13-14, emphasis mine).

In Mark 9, when confronted by the need to exorcise an evil spirit, Jesus told the disciples, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but by prayer." (v. 29) If this holds true for the demonization of individuals, does it not also hold true for the spiritual oppression of societies? That is why united, believing prayer by God's people is so important for the breaking of demonic bondage over cities and nations. In this connection, Hendrik Berkhof speaks of the gift of the discerning of spirits which God gives to his people as they pray:

“This involves especially the discerning of the Powers which hold the hearts and actions of men under their sway in specific times and places.”⁵⁵

Dick Eastman described the part focussed prayer played in a literature distribution effort which Every Home for Christ carried out. In one community where they distributed literature, they experienced a ten percent response without prayer.

Another place where the staff prayed for the community as a whole, there was a 55 percent response rate. In a third community, where the staff prayed for each home as they distributed the literature, eight out of ten families responded.⁵⁶

A Word of Caution and Critique

Though we mention the importance of the discerning of spirits in connection with intercessory prayer, we need to exercise caution when it comes to focusing offensively against or “binding” principalities and powers. Scripture never explicitly teaches that we do this nor do we see examples of this in the ministries of Jesus, Paul or other biblical figures. Tom White, a writer on “spiritual warfare,” shares his own hesitation about this aspect:

I am aware of no explicit model from Scripture that depicts a servant of God moving in direct confrontation with a high-level supernatural power. In light of this, I come at the topic with more questions than answers.⁵⁷

B.J. Willhite, of the National Prayer Embassy, has written:

It does not seem that the apostles spent much time teaching people about these unseen forces. Not once that I am aware of did Peter, Paul, James, or John . . . instruct that Christians were to identify these spiritual forces and command them to be bound. . . . How can we account for this lack of understanding on the part of the early disciples? Had Jesus left them in the dark about such things? Were they too immature for the Holy Spirit to reveal things of this nature to them? Or did they perhaps believe that Satan’s power had been broken

by the cross of Jesus? . . . that when a person turned to Jesus the power of Satan was bound in that person’s life. That when a city experienced revival Satan could no longer rule in that city.⁵⁸

It seems reasonable that such an exceedingly important matter would have been taught more openly and modeled clearly for us somewhere in the New Testament. Instead we see Jesus and the early disciples focusing their energies on ministry to *people*

Spiritual warfare for Paul meant a battle for the souls and minds of human beings that they might be saved, brought from darkness to light and made into all that God meant them to be.

and only when necessary dealing with demons as they manifest themselves, normally in individuals. Their focus is never intentionally on the demonic. It always seems incidental to their main mission, the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom to human beings. Paul urges that the subject of prayer be people, especially for kings and others in authority so that “all men will be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1Ti. 2:2,4). As we have seen above, this kind of praying has brought astonishing results in terms of spiritual revival and the reclamation of individuals and whole societies from the dominion of darkness.

The pain-free, easy approach to putting “territorial spirits” to flight advocated by some Western, especially American, prayer leaders who see themselves as operating on the “strategic level” can be presumptuous and dangerous. Presumptuous because we can make unwarranted claims for a one-to-one correlation of our prayers and a specific political or historical change, taking credit for that change, when in reality the dynamic interplay between Divine, human and demonic factors involved in every such change is much more inscrutable. And the danger of spiritual pride, the very sin of which Lucifer was guilty, is always present. For example, some American intercessors have declared that they

bound territorial spirits over Russia during special prayer meetings at Red Square and, by implication, made possible *glasnost*, *perestroika* and the great Russian revival! Glamorous stories of this kind often appear in glossy newsletters usually sent out to raise funds for the activities they describe.

The downfall of Communism in the former Soviet Union and the

amazing spiritual openness involving millions is, I am convinced, God’s sovereign answer to the prayers of tens of thousands of Russian Christians who suffered and prayed for decades while imprisoned in Stalin’s gulags.

One of these, Pastor Nikolai, told me of his many long years in a cell without sunlight and without a Bible or book to read. When I asked what he spent his time doing, he said, “I prayed for this city.” Is it any wonder that the city for which he poured out intercession is now an epicenter of spiritual revival?

Of course, the Lord can and will use the prayers of American jet-setters as he will those of any of his people who pray. However, let us not be guilty of oversimplifying the deliverance of spiritual bondage, providing instant, easy solutions so in keeping with our American culture of convenience when local believers have not only travailed in prayer but also suffered great hardships over many years.

We should also carefully heed Jude’s warning about those who “slander celestial beings” (Jude 8). Even the Archangel, Michael, spoke respectfully to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you,” not daring to “bring a slanderous accusation against him” (v.9). If God leads us to bind principalities of evil in prayer, it must be done carefully and respectfully. The safest posture in the absence of clear Scriptural warrant is to take a cue from the Archangel. Like him, ask the Lord to do the binding and the rebuking. After all he is “Lord of hosts,” the only one whom Satan and the demons fear and must obey.

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Proclaiming Christ's Good News

It is clear from the Gospels that the primary purpose of Jesus' ministry was the itinerant proclamation of the Good News of the kingdom. He was always hastening to move on to other towns which had not yet heard his message for, as he explained to the disciples, "That is why I have come" (Mk. 1:38-39). It was only in the course of preaching and out of compassion for their victims that he took on the demonic realm. His work of exorcism usually happened in a reactive, responsive way when demons manifested themselves and in order to free those who were held in bondage. His focus was clearly on liberating people, not getting embroiled in a "strategic level" confrontation with the powers of darkness. The Indian missionaries of the Friends Missionary Prayer Band told me they never go looking for the demonic, it always finds them as they busy themselves with proclaiming the Good News. When it confronts them, as it invariably does, they deal with it in the course of their evangelism efforts. B.J. Willhite agrees:

What is this war about? Is it not taking souls which have been held captive by Satan? We do not release them by speaking to Satan. We release them when we tell them the truth about Jesus... . It seems to me that there is a danger in making the binding of such spirits the prerequisite for harvest. Jesus did not tell his disciples to go into all the world and bind demonic powers in the heavenlies. He said preach the Good News to every person.⁵⁹

The apostle Paul had a similar approach to ministry. He spent two years in preaching and teaching at Ephesus until "all the Jews and Greeks living in the province had heard the word of the Lord" (Ac. 19:10). This preaching led to deliverance of people from the power of darkness when many burned their sorcery books and articles publicly. Only later, when Demetrius and the other craftsmen felt threatened and were provoked into rioting against the Christians was there anything approaching a confrontation with a "high-level spirit" (vs. 23-41). The apostle's concern was to proclaim the gospel of Christ and spread the knowledge of him everywhere.

Spiritual warfare for him meant a battle for the souls and minds of human beings that they might be saved, brought from darkness to light and made into all that God meant them to be (Ac.26:17-18 and 2Co.2:12-15). In this pursuit, the aim of Paul's preaching was to demolish "strongholds," wrong patterns of thought in his hearers which were due to Satanic deception (2Co. 10:3-4). This task involved persuading people through reasoning with them from God's truth.

Jesus made it clear that filling the vacuum in a person's life after an evil spirit is evicted must happen to avoid worse demonization in the future (Lk.11:24). Tom White reflects,

What good does it do to push back the enemy if the territory is not occupied? Penetration of strongholds that loosens the grip of false gods and proclamation of the truth that leads to salvation must go hand in hand.... Before we plunge into active resistance and weakening of 'territorial spirits' (in the hopes that success here will inevitably result in a positive change in the human populous), we must consider that the greatest point of bondage may rest with the wickedness of the human heart itself.⁶⁰

Charles Finney, the American revivalist, often insisted that prayer together with the sharing of Christ's truth is the combination that God uses to bring spiritual revival. God uses our prayers to restrict forces of evil and our proclamation of Christ's Good News to fill the vacuum left by their departure.

It is through preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ that the principalities and powers are exposed for what they are. Their power of illusion by which they seek to control humanity is broken. As Berkhof states:

Unmasked, revealed in their true nature, they have lost their mighty grip on men. The cross has disarmed them; wherever it is preached, the unmasking and the disarming of the Powers takes place. Though they are still present, where Christ is proclaimed and believed in, they are limited in what they can do.⁶¹

Richmond Chiundiza agrees that our focus must be on reaching people: "The mistake churches sometimes make is to attack the system and struc-

ture of the territorial spirits. . . The church must preach a liberating gospel and be involved in the subsequent power encounter."⁶²

Living God's Way

Obedience to God and his standards is a potent part of spiritual warfare. Often we define spiritual warfare in too narrow a sense. Actually, Scripture seems to take a much broader, more holistic view. The apostle Paul looked back on his entire life as a servant of Christ as being a "good fight" (2Ti. 4:7). He describes his struggle to serve God as requiring "great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights, in hunger; in purity, understanding, patience, and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; *with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left* (emphasis mine); through glory and dishonor; bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors. . . beaten and yet not killed; having nothing and yet possessing everything" (2Co. 6:4-10). Spiritual warfare for Paul encompassed all these things as all were necessary in his war against the prince of darkness to win the peoples to Christ.

The apostle enumerates here in 2 Corinthians, and elsewhere in his epistles, his manifold struggles. These demonstrate the costliness of true spiritual warfare as opposed to the very narrow idea that has recently been promulgated by some American prayer leaders who have it down to essentially a "no fuss, no muss" approach. In their thinking spiritual warfare consists only of "strategic level" praying against spirits. But in taking this line, could we be guilty of oversimplifying and overspiritualizing the matter of spiritual warfare in a way it was never meant to be? Isn't it strange that we hear of no "high-level intercessors" being dispatched to the areas of the world which are being most ravaged by the murderous schemes of the principalities and powers, namely Somalia, Sudan, Angola, or Bosnia? These are the kind of difficult places where the apostle

Paul would have been found in his day. Rather we hear much about warfare going on in safe, easy areas such as Argentina, North America, and other relatively comfortable, secure environments.

Israel was continually told their primary responsibility was to obey the Lord, to be careful about following his ways, and he would take care of their enemies. "If my people would listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes" (Ps. 81:13-14 cf Ex. 14:14 and Dt. 1:30). McCandlish Phillips believes that obedience to God and his word is the main bulwark of defense Christians have against the devil. He notes that satanic takeover of a nation begins with its people being drawn away from faith in God and his word. Secondly, it moves on to increased indulgence in sin; thirdly, false worship and supernaturalism; and fourthly, tyranny and dictatorship. He suggests that America is in the third stage now. How important it is for us as Christians to live as God would have us live. It may be the most potent form of spiritual warfare we can practice! As Heinrich Schlier puts it:

The struggle against the principalities fundamentally begins with and in myself. If I am to resist and drive out the devil and not merely to strengthen his power, the struggle can only be waged by denying myself to him, and choosing and abiding in truth, justice, peace and hope.... The evil one is powerless against the sacrifice of ourselves in godly living and, if necessary, in death for Christ's cause.⁶⁴

Conclusion

In C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, four children crawl timorously through a wardrobe into a whole new dimension of reality they were not aware of before. It is a world dominated by the evil White Witch, who holds all its creatures in bondage through the cold winter of fear. The four children themselves initially feel intimidated by her dominion. But later they realized that Aslan, the great lion, has the ultimate power and is their friend, ready to deliver them and to gift them so that they can join him in the battle against the witch

and her cohorts.⁶⁵

Like the children of Lewis' imaginative series, we also have nothing to fear because our Lord has "all power in heaven and on earth" and gifts and enables those who join the fray against the dark powers of our world. There is no doubt who has ultimate power and control and where true victory lies in spite of the tactics employed by the evil one. May God give us true discernment and childlike boldness in taking up these weapons he has put at our disposal. Hallelujah! Christ is Victor!

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