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SPIRITUAL WARFARE **- by Jewel van der Merwe -**

There is quite a bit of noise about Spiritual Warfare. How much is really being achieved? Is there actually a methodology that is to be put into motion to achieve the desired results? Which book do I follow? Is "warfare prayer" found in the Bible or has it just been popularized by books of that title?

The word "Intercessor" immediately conjures up a certain image in the mind. The word has a very simple meaning which is, "an entreaty in favor of another". In a scriptural context we could say, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ".

However, today we are hearing quite different definitions of even this term. When a young woman arrived at a Tuesday morning "Intercession" prayer meeting she heard: "A serious stronghold is coming against our church. This yoke is strangling the church, so we need to bind the enemy's control. Let's pray the prayer of agreement, loose the will of God and intercede until we have prayed this through." (CHARISMA, Oct. 1993 - The Language of Intercession, Cindy Jacobs)

According to the article mentioned above, God wants us to have a "clear definition of all these new terms so that we can pray with greater clarity and authority." (Ibid.) The understanding that I get is that we need to learn a new terminology in order to "appropriate the language of satanic intercession to resist satanic powers and see God's purposes accomplished in human affairs".(Ibid.)

The first question that comes to my mind is, "Whatever did the church do before they learned all of this new terminology?" And, is this indeed "spiritual warfare" or "war games?"

Scripture leaves no doubt that demonic powers in our environment are manifest through human agents such as false prophets, false apostles and the children of disobedience. It is in this context that the war against the powers of darkness is waged by the Church. The claim that the Church's warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil is fought in the spirit realm in direct combat with spirit powers sounds like science fiction, a "Buck Rogers" novel or a New Age theosophical concept.

The whole idea shifts the responsibility and the blame for the sins of the flesh from the individual to the demonic powers (the devil made me do it). This is pure Gnosticism. In Zoroastrianism (a Persian Gnostic religion),

"...a good god rules the spiritual world and a bad god rules the physical realm. In such a philosophy, the problem of evil is solved by blaming everything that goes wrong on the bad god (the devil); the good god is seen as no more than a counterbalance. One is left with the impression that the two gods each possess equal power both in quality and quantity. Everything that is wrong in the world is the fault of the bad god. And it's up to the initiate or believer to make sure the good god wins." (THE AGONY OF DECEIT, Moody Press, pp.133).

The new teaching holds that warfare is being waged against demonic powers in high places. This is supposedly the solution to all the ills and sins in the world and is the route for revival in our cities and churches. Roberts Liardon in his SPIRIT LIFE JOURNAL, July/August 1990 edition, claims in a word of prophecy that "...these centers are governmental places that will deal with the atmosphere above the territory that they are called to .." This is portraying a mystical form of warfare that also characterizes Greek mythology (human gods doing battle against spirit beings) and Shamanism (controlling or defeating the spirits as a solution to physical, worldly and spiritual problems).

Christians, think before you imaginatively leap into the unknown. Read the Bible for yourself. Don't fall victim to the new wave of sensational fantasy. These false prophets and apostles in the name of "spiritual warfare" are out to control your mind without regard for the written word of God. Resist becoming involved in an abstract warfare that will hold your mind captive and make it a stronghold of Satan over your life. Restrict your spiritual thoughts to the Word of God and restrain your imagination from drifting into Satan's realm of mysticism.

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. " II Cor. 10:4, 5.

A critique on the book, "Engaging the Enemy" questions theories that do not square with Scripture:

"1. No New Testament church was built on the basis of an apostle going into an area and doing spiritual battle with territorial spirits.

2. The assumption is that since the heathen name the spirits ('evil mind', 'infertility', and so on), Christians are to discover names of demons in their territory (city, county, or country) and 'bind' or 'dispossess' these demon spirits in the name of Christ. (Some of the territorial spirits identified by various authors in this book are 'the spirit of religiosity - Nashville', 'the spirit of pleasure - Orlando', the spirit of unrighteous trade - London', 'the strongman of bondage - Annapolis', and the 'spirit of unrighteous greed - San Francisco'.

3. One writer, John Dawson (of Youth with a Mission and author of TAKING OUR CITIES FOR GOD) insists, 'We must overcome the enemy before employing other methods of ministry among men and women' (emphasis added). Does that square with the Bible? We do not find this in the example of the apostles. In fact, Paul appeared in the midst of the heathen philosophers at Mars Hill and immediately preached Christ. He said to the Corinthian believers, 'I was with you in weakness' (I Cor. 2:3), which is opposite to the approach of today's charismatic power evangelism.

...5. Finally, C. Peter Wagner offers this bit of heresy: 'Pentecostal theologians have made the helpful suggestion of distinguishing the LOGOS word of God from the RHEMA word of God. The RHEMA is regarded as a more immediate word from God which we do not find in the sixty-six books of the Bible'. (pp. 15-16)."

Dr. Morris McDonald - a review article.

Unfortunately, we have those who are using this concept as a new method of "claiming" territory for Christ. Overnight, the words of Jesus, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" are not enough. We have to have some added excitement. Before we go do the words of Jesus, we must enter into warfare and bind the demons that are controlling the city. Rick Joyner says we must become "...a militant church starting to go after the 'gates of hell' (doorways or openings that the enemy is using) and bringing them down with weapons that are not carnal but more powerful than the biggest nuclear device."

Why is the church in America open for everything that is new and sensational? Warfare choruses are being churned out, military slogans are being used and conferences called with militant overtones. Some evangelists are even laying hands on people to receive a "warring" tongue which I am told sounds something like a "machine gun" when spoken. Recently, a Baptist pastor in Kansas City stood up in his pulpit with a gun in a holster to prove his militancy. In a recent CHARISMA there was a frightening article on teaching small children to become involved in the "warfare". So obviously the mindset of even the very young is being set in a militant mold.

Demons are being given identities. Frances Frangipane in THE THREE BATTLEGROUND says, "Intercessors and warfare captains take note: there is a demon whose purpose is to lure one's mind into hell. It's name is "Wrong Focus"...the ultimate goal of this demon is to produce mental illness in saints who move in deliverance." Rick Joyner in THE MORNING STAR focuses on the same thought: "There are principalities and powers committed to the thwarting of God's purposes, but there is a realm of darkness with even greater authority which are called 'world rulers'. One of these, which is actually a basis of authority for the spirit of death, is named 'Racism'." According to the COR (Coalition on Revival) National NEWSLETTER", "...a local church identifies a city block that needs help and then proceeds to pray, cast out demons and clean up the problems in that area." This seems to

be part of the agenda to penetrate the urban areas of a city, (Could this have political overtones?)

I have no doubts about the sincerity of well-meaning Christians who are teaching on these lines. However, something is amiss. Why is the church trying to get into a realm where she does not belong? If this state of affairs continues, there will be madness on an unprecedented scale encouraged by authority figures in the Church.

In the 50's, A.A. Allen made records of demons speaking. As young children we would shut the doors, turn off the lights and listen to these vile sounds of the nether regions. The demons on the record would cough, choke and scream in blood-curdling tones. To a child's mind, this drama was so exciting. It was better than watching a Frankenstein horror show. Attending Allen's services, the demons would identify themselves, speak and indeed send the possessed into raging uncontrollable fits. The audience would be told to close their eyes, bow their heads or else on its way out, the demon might enter one unknowing soul. It was terrifying. Yet the crowds loved it. As a child, I would sit with my eyes tightly closed, terrified that if my eyes weren't tightly closed, one of those "horrible demons" would decide to "enter" me on his way out.

We are now in a new cycle of a repeat of so many things from the last Wave which started in 1948. What are people looking for in these sensationalized public encounters with evil spirits? A new thrill? Here we go again. Only this time, with all our "enlightenment", it is now "cosmic-level" warfare. Today, we are not dealing with just a demon or two, but different tiers of demonic activity. Lo and behold - even a hierarchy. We are so advanced that we can identify characteristics that are assigned to specific geographical locations and geopolitical institutions. We can even give them names according to their regions.

Spiritual warfare, pictured by Gnostic minds, has no foundation other than the imagination. The premise is both abstract and absurd. It hopelessly falls far short of the Scriptures. Spiritual thoughts of this nature lend themselves to the prospect of going from the sublime to the ridiculous.

One article on the subject spoke about "intercessors" climbing mountains so that they were all in "high places" praying together at the same time.

Others have spoken about the "incredible force" that is generated when all the people come together to pray.

Also prayer is compared to "electric cables" coming together to form a great force. Obviously, the feeling is that somehow we "tap" into something powerful if we get enough people praying at the same time.

This concept is not scriptural! Why do the New Agers gather on New Years eve at specific "points" around the globe and repeat their mantras! Yes, they believe in a "force" and they believe they can connect with it by the power of numbers and specific places.

As children of God we are warned against this type of witchcraft. God has made us earthly creatures. Jesus came to set us the example of how we can live on this earth! We "connect" with God through His Word and through His Word only.

It is most disturbing when people write angrily to be removed from the mailing list with the explanation, "It works, so it must be true".

Johanna Michaelsen was heavily involved in the occult. When she was to choose a "spirit-guide" she chose "Jesus". Surely, He would make sure everything was all right. As she would go into her altered state of consciousness, this "Jesus" would appear to her. No matter how kind and gentle this "Jesus" looked, he was NOT the Jesus of the Scripture.

Those who engage in warfare in the supernatural realm are opening themselves up to deception on a massive scale. First, they are not willing to let the Word of God be their final authority and second, they are basing their beliefs on new revelations.

Our Commission

The Word of God doesn't tell us to go and research a region, find the spirits that bind and cast them out. This approach turns the attention to the warrior. HE must go into a place and "release" it.

According to the Word of God, the Preaching of the Gospel brings release. The church has been told to go into all the world and PREACH the GOSPEL to every creature. Jesus gave us this ministry. God is reaching out to the whole world through the preaching of the gospel. God is calling out of all peoples a people for His NAME. This is what the Church Age, or the Dispensation of Grace, is all about.

According to the Word, we are exhorted to pray for the government and those in authority - for all men and one another - praying that the gospel will have free course.

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." I Timothy 2: 1-4

We are to evangelize the world. We cannot save the world or Christianize the world. The Great Commission commands us to preach the Word to every creature. The Holy Spirit will do the saving, with God confirming His Word. All comes about by the preaching of the Word of God.

"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the WORD with signs following." Mark 16:20

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." I Corinthians 1:21

People are set free by the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not by BINDING the devil. However, sometimes individuals do need deliverance from demons.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my WORD, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31, 32

The Word of God tells us simply, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7). When we obey the Word we live in victory! Why do we have to complicate the Gospel?

This Earth Will Pass Away

This world and this world system will pass away. This world will be the object of the wrath of the Lamb. In view of this fact, we must fix our gaze on the Kingdom of God that God is preparing. That Kingdom will never pass away. All of the "Redeeming the Land" will come to naught. This whole concept is being promoted by those who are bringing in a "new worldview".

No doubt we are living in the last days. With the rise of false prophets, false apostles and aberrant teachings, demonic activity is escalating - a sure sign of the end time. The Church is engaged in a fierce battle. However, the fight is not against "flesh and blood" or for the possession of a geographical location or the control of the political, secular and material world. It is for the salvation of precious souls by the preaching of the gospel of Christ, in spite of the powers that be. The strategy of the Church is not to save the "soul of a city" as some teach, but rather to set men and women free from the bondage of sin and grip of Satan over their lives.

The Great Commission is to "preach the gospel to every creature", no matter what form of government or principality that prevails at the time, be it the might of Rome, the hoards of hell or Satan himself. The political circumstances, however difficult or impossible, are immaterial. Jesus and His apostles proved this throughout their ministries. For the Church to fulfill the Great Commission is not contingent on who or what principality in heaven or on earth is in power at the time. The mission of the Church is to preach the gospel - come what may! This is the main thrust of the Church's warfare against Satan!!

The Church's Warfare is Fought in the Following Ways:

1. It is fought against the invisible powers of darkness.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6: 12

This text is a graphic description of a warfare against the invisible enemies. According to Scripture, a literal war is being fought in the heavenlies between the host of God and the rebellious host of heaven. (Daniel 10:12-21 & Rev. 12:7-9). The Church, on the other hand, is also engaged in a warfare against the same cosmic enemies, except the battleground is on earth and the spirit enemies are invisible. Essentially, Satan's warfare is against God and His Word. His strategy on earth includes demons and fallen angels. His design is to defeat God's Word by controlling the world, the flesh and the minds of men. The Church's warfare is to

trust God and His Word, in spite of the enemy and adversity. The battle is fought on three fronts: (i) the world (the love of the world), (ii) the flesh (the lust of the flesh), and (iii) the devil (the deceptions, lies, temptations and abuses).

2. It is warfare fought with the Word of God - the Sword of the Spirit. Not only does Ephesians 6:12 establish the nature of the warfare, but in no uncertain terms teaches how to defeat Satan without fighting an imaginative warfare in the heavenlies. For the Church to wrestle effectively against the enemies of the cross, she must put on the whole armor of God, i.e., the Word of God.

- a. "Having your loins girt about with truth."
- b. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness."
- c. "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."
- d. "Above all taking the shield of faith."
- e. "Take the helmet of salvation."
- f. "Take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."

The fullness of The Word of God is characterized by the above. It serves as both our defense and armor for conquest. Paul the Apostle, knowing the nature of spiritual warfare and the might of the weapons God has entrusted to His people says to the Church:

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all; to stand." Ephesians 6:13

3. It is a warfare fought with an unshakable FAITH in the Word of God and is characterized by a good conscience.

"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy,...that thou...mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience:..." 1 Timothy 1:18,19

Satan is to be resisted by FAITH.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the FAITH, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." I Peter 5:8, 9

4. It is fought through total consecration to the end.

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." II Timothy 2:3

5. It is a warfare against the world.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." II Timothy 2:4

6. It is a warfare against self.

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" II Corinthians 10:4,5

The Biblical Warfare Strategy

1. Put on the whole armor of God. (Eph. 6:11-18)
2. Know Satan's devices. (II Cor. 2:11)
3. Give Satan no place. (Eph. 4:27; James 4:7)
4. Be sober and vigilant against Satan. (II Pet. 5:8, 9)
5. Overcome Satan by the Word. (Matt. 4:1-11; I John 2:14)
6. Overcome Satan by the blood of Christ and testimony. (Rev. 12:11)
7. Overcome Satan in the name of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:20-22)
8. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. (Matt. 26:41)

The only way to fight and overcome Satan is to fight the "good fight" according to the Holy Scriptures. Fought in any other way, is boxing the air and will prove futile. We must stand firm on the Word of God, fight the "good fight" and faithfully fulfill the Church's mission in the spirit of the following Scripture:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." II Timothy 4:7, 8

Evangelizing the world is the object and burden of the Church. We are strangers and pilgrims because this world is not our home. Although we are part of this world, our interest is not in establishing our presence. Ambition for authority and a presence in the world has and always will be the aspiration of selfish hearts. As believers in the promises of God, we are persuaded of better things. As members of "a royal priesthood", we have no heritage on earth or any claim thereto. As God's own people, we are looking for a city "whose builder and maker is God", and for a kingdom not of this world, whose King bears the Royal Insignia: "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS". To those looking for HIS appearance, His name is: JESUS CHRIST.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE OR WAR GAMES?

BARRY CHANT looks at some popular spiritual warfare concepts in the light of Scripture and the practice of the early church.

The immediate question that arises, however, is what right does one citizen have to speak on behalf of his fellows when they don't even know he is doing so and may not endorse what he is saying, anyway?

Further, and even more importantly, on what basis or authority can we represent the sins of those in the world? Who can bear the sins of a people but Christ the only mediator? (1 Tim 2.5) [emphasis added]

When Moses tried to do this, his offer was rejected by God (Ex 32, 31ff). We may identify with people's sins, as Daniel did, and be willing to share the responsibility (Dan 9.4ff). But even in Daniel's case, remission of sins was not forthcoming for another five centuries, until the presence of the Anointed One who would deal with sin forever (9.24). Even then, there were many who rejected him. In simple terms, there is no remission of sins outside of Christ.

Another popular idea is that before we can evangelise a city, we must identify the territorial spirits in that place. It is impossible to find one New Testament example of this methodology. We search in vain through Acts and the epistles for even a single instance of this kind of approach.

If we argue that before the gospel can be preached successfully, local territorial spirits have to be identified and idols destroyed, we are reversing the order of the gospel.

In Acts 19, the very opposite occurred. It was as a result of the preaching of Christ that idols were smashed.

In Philippi, Paul seemed almost reluctant to cast out an evil spirit -- it was 'many days' before he attempted it. And then the casting out of the demon actually worked against the ministry of the apostles (16.19fi). It took an earthquake to turn the tide (16.29fi).

Spiritual mapping

A related concept is that of 'spiritual mapping'; that is, of identifying ruling spirits in given areas and then praying against them.

Clearly, there is some basis for this. For centuries people have seen their gods as representing their own area (the Old Testament abounds in examples) and the Apostle points out that behind these gods there are demon spirits (1 Cor 10.19ft).

But when people start to tell us that we must spend hours, even days, in prayer, until these spirits can be identified, again we look in vain for biblical precedent. When did the apostles do such things?

Of course, in many cases, prayer seems hardly necessary, as the demonic spirits are usually clearly identified with well-known idols or equally well-known characteristics of a given place.

To be fair, some writers do point out that sound historical research is also helpful in 'spiritual mapping'. What missiologists call 'cultural anthropology' needs to be carried out, especially in communities which are new to us.

Naturally, this is wise if we are to know best how to communicate the gospel. The NT evangelists did not need to engage in this kind of cultural research as they were already familiar with their environment, just as in our own cultures, today; we usually know the relevant factors.

In venturing into new cultures, however, research into the religio-cultural background is clearly helpful.

On the other hand, we must remember that no matter how powerful entrenched spirits may be, Jesus is still King of kings and Lord of lords.

Praying against spirits

Another recently popular concept is 'praying against' evil spirits. Now if this means asking God to deal with enemy powers, then there can be no argument.

But when people, during prayer, direct statements at the devil, this is a different matter. Is there any biblical precedent for this? Hardly. Prayer is uniquely God-ward. It is a sacred privilege.

How can we use it against evil spirits? We can rebuke them, expel them, command them, denounce them -- but pray against them? Again, this is not biblical language.

Furthermore, Jude has very strong words for those who rush into spiritual encounters without proper knowledge and reminds us that even Michael the archangel was hesitant about confronting Satan and called on the Lord to rebuke him (Jude 9).

When the early apostles ran into opposition and difficulty, they made no attempt to identify or name demon powers, to 'map' their territory or to pray against them.

What they did was to call on God, through the name of Jesus, to do signs, wonders and miracles (Ac 4.23-31).

The result was that 'they spoke the word of God with boldness'. Or, even more surprising, they left and went somewhere else (Ac 13.51; 18.21; 16.40) -- an action which actually has divine approval (Mt 10.14).

Most of us today would probably see this as a confession of failure and be very reluctant to do it. But Jesus commended it as the approach to take.

Preaching the gospel

The proclamation of the gospel has always been the divine method of evangelism and spiritual warfare. It is the Word of God which changes people's lives.

In all of the records of Jesus commissioning his disciples, preaching the Word is given priority. When he first sent out his disciples he told them to 'preach the gospel'. (Mt 10.7; Lk 9.1-6; 10.1ft).

When the 72 returned full of excitement about their success in casting out demons, Jesus brought them back to perspective by reminding them that eternal salvation was still the most crucial thing (Lk 10.17-20).

In the Great Commission, Jesus repeatedly stressed that the good news was of first importance (Mt 28.18-20; Mk 16. 15ff; Lk24.45).

It is significant that, although he also told them to drive out demons and heal the sick, he said nothing about territorial spirits or spiritual mapping or any such concept. In plain terms, he just told them to do it!

Breakthrough prayer

So how did the early church pray? What kind of approach did they pursue when penetrating new areas? If we want to give it a name, 'breakthrough prayer' might be fairly accurate.

The first example occurs early in Acts, when the apostles, having been ordered to keep silent and not to proclaim the name of Jesus, gathered together for prayer (Ac 4.24-31).

There are several notable features of the way they prayed.

- ◆ *They were united as one.*
- ◆ *They recognised the sovereignty of God (v24)*
- ◆ *They recognised the creative power of God (v24)*
- ◆ *Their prayer was based on the word of God (v25)*
- ◆ *They saw what was happening as fulfillment of Scripture (v25) ie, not as unusual or unexpected.*
- ◆ *They saw what was happening as fulfillment of God's purposes (v28)*
- ◆ *They prayed for boldness to preach the Word (v29)*
- ◆ *They prayed for healing miracles (v30)*
- ◆ *They prayed for signs and wonders (v30)*
- ◆ *They prayed in Jesus' name*

The God-centered, Word-centered, Christ-centered nature of the prayer is obvious. They focused on the Lord and his power.

There is no suggestion of rebuking the devil or praying against Satan. In fact, they actually saw humans as the ones responsible for their problems. [emphasis added] They were not afraid to identify the rulers and authorities who opposed them. Furthermore, they had a strong conviction that all that was happening was in God's will.

They did not see persecution or trouble as unusual or even as satanic opposition. Rather, this was God's doing (v28)!

Apostolic prayer

The second great model is found in the letters of Paul. On two occasions he asks specifically for prayer in association with the preaching of the gospel. The first is the well-known Ephesians 6.18-20. In fact, this is the most popular text for those who advocate 'warfare prayer'.

But what does it actually say?

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

A very similar prayer occurs in Colossians 4.2-4:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

If we combine these two prayers, we find a number of common elements.

Again, the whole emphasis is on asking God to help them preach Christ effectively, fearlessly and clearly.

Christ or demons?

There is a real danger that when we depart from biblical models, we may actually be departing from Christ. The shift is subtle, of course, and unintentional, but it can happen.

Even Peter Wagner, who clearly believes that Jesus is Lord and that the gospel is supreme, is found arguing that when pastors come together, the basis for unity is 'mutual agreement as to who the real enemy is'. This is a far cry from the central theme of both the teaching of Jesus (Jn 15. 1ff; 17.1ff) and Paul (Eph 4. 1ff).

The devil is, of course, our enemy (1 Pet 5.8). As C.S. Lewis wisely puts it, 'There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to

disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.'

It is true that many people put themselves at risk by under-rating the influence of Satan. But when we become so preoccupied with spiritual warfare that we see the devil more plainly than we see Christ, we, too, are in danger.

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The following author is being sold in Christian bookstores and promoted by well-known pastors and authors. A careful and prayerful analysis needs to be made of what we read and promote as "Christian".

Just What Is M. Scott Peck? by Ray Yungen

If one has closely followed the New York Times best-seller list over the past ten years one title that has been consistently present is The Road Less Traveled by Dr. M. (Morgan) Scott Peck. *LIFE* Magazine has called it a "national institution" and compared its selling power to that of the Bible (*LIFE*, December 1992, p. 23). That may not be an overstatement considering that the book has sold a whopping 5 million copies and continues to surge forward with a seemingly unstoppable zest.

What has struck such a remarkable chord with so many readers is the book's no-nonsense approach to life's problems. Peck, rather than ear-tickling, proposes that one tackle adverse situations head-on with the goals being psychological and spiritual growth. But what does spiritual growth mean to Peck? On p. 269, he asks the question, "What is it that God wants of us?" On p. 270 he answers it: "God wants us to become Himself (or Herself or Itself)..." On p. 283, he states, "It is for the individual to become totally, wholly God." In familiar New Age fashion he informs the reader (on p. 309) that "these concepts" have been promoted in the past "by Buddha, by Christ, by Loa-Tse, among many others."

I realize that many of Dr. Peck's admirers would be highly offended by seeing the much decried title "New Age" in association with his name. Many would respond with: "Well, he was a Buddhist when he wrote the book but he's a Christian now; besides, there's a lot of useful ideas in that book that don't conflict with Christianity!" Is Peck a Christian or a New Ager? The most effective way to answer this question is to examine his positions on spiritual issues from his baptism in March 9, 1980 to the present. Let you be the judge!

Fact: In an interview with *New Age* magazine, Dec. 1985, Peck revealed that The Road Less Traveled was "dropped" on him from "God" (p. 28) He also said that there are "an enormous number of people who have a passion for God, but who are fed up to the gills with fundamentalism." (p. 30)

His reason for feeling this way are made clear a few lines over where the interviewer divulges that Peck moved from "Eastern Mystical religions toward Christian Mysticism" (p. 30) "Christian" Mysticism is using yogic methods, like a mantra or breath awareness, to reach God.

Fact: In Dr. Peck's most recent book, A World Waiting To Be Born, he states that if one wants to "more directly hear the voice of God calling" one must engage in "emptying the mind". (pp. 88-89) If there is any doubt about what he means by this he clears it up on p. 87 where he explains that "true meditation" is the "Zen Buddhist meditation practice called 'No Mind'".

Peck also conveys his notion that Jesus was "an example of the Western Mystic" who "integrated himself with God." Peck believes that Jesus' message to us was that we should "cease clinging to our lesser selves" and find "our greater true selves." (p. 21)

On page 78, Jesus is listed next to "Mohammed" as being one of the "great prophets over the millennia." (It should be noted that Vice President Al Gore has his endorsement on the book's back cover where he praises it as being "extremely important" and an "invaluable guide". He also feels that the book's teachings have given us "powerful new reasons for hope".)

Fact: In 1988, a book entitled, The Coming Of The Cosmic Christ, was published in which author Matthew Fox put forth the idea that "mysticism" should become the praxis around which all the world's religions can unite. He refers to this as "deep ecumenism". The "cosmic christ", Fox explains, is the "I AM in every creature" and that Jesus was someone "who shows us how to embrace our own divinity." (p. 154)

Dr. Peck apparently agrees with these statements since in his endorsement on the book's back cover he testifies that Fox is offering "...values and practice required for planetary salvation." This is significant since on page 232 Fox advocates that there should be a "shift away from the historical Jesus" and more attention given to the "cosmic christ". I don't believe Peck would give such an endorsement to a manuscript he hadn't read or didn't totally agree with. He must have known about this statement.

Fact: Perhaps the best source for finding Scott Peck's .curr.ent spiritual mindset is a audio cassette entitled, "Further Along: The Road Less Traveled", on a lecture giving his personal views on the New Age Movement. In the tape he reveals:

- He spent 20 years in Zen Buddhism which "prepared" him for Christianity. 'Zen Buddhism should be taught in every 5th grade class in America.
- Christianity's "greatest sin" is to think that other religions are "not saved".
- The New Age Movement can get flaky but is "potentially very Godly" and that its "virtues are absolutely enormous".
- If the New Age can "reform society" rather than just adversely challenge it then it can be "extremely holy and desperately needed."

- He presents the question to his audience: "Is Scott Peck a New Ager?" and then answers "yes" and adds that he is "proud to be listed as an Aquarian "Conspirator."
- His Foundation For Community Encouragement is "very much a New Age organization."

The gist of this lecture is that Peck wants a New Age Movement with integrity and realistic approaches to our social/political problems. He rejects what he considers foolish and accepts what he feels is "good stuff".

It is not surprising then, that in his book about the New Age Movement, Heaven On Earth, secular journalist Michael D'Antonio saw Scott Peck as "...becoming the Billy Graham of the New Age," (p. 342) and that he was "the first major New Age leader." (p. 352) Devoting an entire chapter to Peck, it is clear that D' Antonio sees him as someone who has enormous influence among a key element in society.

In conclusion, to answer the question, "What is Scott Peck? Christian or New Ager?", one just has to read or listen to what he says.

On September 19-22, 1992, Peck gave a seminar, at the openly New Age Omega Institute, geared toward appreciating "the divinity within" all humanity.

On November 12-14, 1993, Dr. Peck will appear as a featured speaker along with more than a dozen other popular and acclaimed New Age leaders and teachers at a conference with the theme: Nourishing the Soul.

Dr. M. Scott Peck is doing a very good job of redefining what Christianity is perceived as. His impact on the mainline religious denominations is tremendous and growing. It is time for those who name the name of Christ to start examining this man's teachings in light of "the preaching of the cross" (I Cor 1: 18) rather than through the appeal to their intellect or emotions.

In conclusion, to answer the question, "What is M. Scott Peck? Christian or New Ager?", it is apparent where he stands on these spiritual issues.

Although Dr. Peck offers a panoply of attractive approaches to life's problems and presents himself as someone who truly embodies Christian virtue, it is also true that he preferred that "Zen Buddhism" be taught to America's schoolchildren rather than "the preaching of the cross." Hence he is trying to redefine what Christianity is perceived as. He was right on the money when he admitted that he is "an Aquarian Conspirator".