

**THE STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE THEOLOGY OF C. PETER  
WAGNER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION IN MALAWI**

by

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# DECLARATION

**I declare that**

**“THE STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE THEOLOGY OF  
C. PETER WAGNER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR  
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**is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated  
and acknowledged by means of complete references.**

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## **THE STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE THEOLOGY OF C. PETER WAGNER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION IN MALAWI**

### **ABSTRACT**

Strategic level spiritual warfare has been an emerging trend within Evangelical missiology ever since C. Peter Wagner published his *Spiritual Power and Church Growth* (1986). The distinctive doctrines of Wagner's SLSW are 1. *The doctrine of territorial spirits*, which entails the belief that powerful demons control specific geographical territories and its human inhabitants. Through a variety of spiritual warfare techniques such demons can be overcome. 2. *The doctrine of territorial defilement*. The assumption here is that a territorial spirit can only hold people in a location in bondage if it has obtained the legal right to do so because of sins and evils committed in that locality in the past. Identificational repentance on behalf of the people living in such territories removes the legal right of the territorial spirits. 3. *The doctrine of Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare prayer*. The underlying assumption is that territorial spirits can only be removed by means of aggressive spiritual warfare in the form of a variety of prayer and exorcism methods for dealing with territorial spirits. (4) *The doctrine of territorial commitment*. This doctrine justifies the exercise of spiritual power and authority by modern apostles in their communities. Wagner's missiology has been largely shaped by the church growth movement. In his quest for better techniques to bring about mass conversions Wagner, impressed by the Latin American Pentecostal churches, embraced Pentecostalism and developed SLSW. However, a thorough biblical study demonstrates that SLSW is mostly unbiblical. A study of SLSW in Church history also demonstrates that SLSW was never accepted in orthodox Christianity. From a contextual point of view SLSW turns out to be a North American missiology with nationalist and political biases. Finally, when looking at the potential effects of a SLSW style missiology in the context of Malawi it emerges that Wagner's SLSW is likely to reinforce rather than diminish the prevalent witchcraft fears in the Malawian society. At the same time SLSW tends to 'demonize' other cultures and thus hinders genuine contextualization. In the final analysis SLSW turns out not to be a commendable strategy for Christian Mission in Malawi.

**KEY TERMS**

Strategic level spiritual warfare; Territorial spirits; Ruler demons; Powers and Principalities; Spiritual mapping; Spiritual warfare; Warfare prayer; Prayer warriors; Identificational repentance; Territorial defilement; Territorial demonization; Territorial commitment; New Apostolic Reformation; Demonic strongholds

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# THE STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE THEOLOGY OF C. PETER WAGNER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION IN MALAWI

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. About this study

##### 1.1.1. The focus of this study

This study is a critical evaluation of the strategic level spiritual warfare theology (SLSW) of C. Peter Wagner and its implications for Christian Mission in Malawi. Wagner is a well-known Evangelical missiologist and a former professor of church growth and Missions at the School of World Missions of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Wagner's main thesis in SLSW is that if the church through prayer can overcome supernatural demonic resistance to the Gospel presented by territorial spirits or demons, world evangelism will be more successful in reaching the lost:

**'The real battle for both world evangelisation and social justice is a spiritual battle and our principal weapon of spiritual warfare is prayer'** (Wagner 1993c:200)<sup>1</sup>.

The subject of spiritual warfare is not new in the history of Christian mission, but its understanding has changed over the ages and rather drastically in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly within the context of the 'AD2000 and Beyond' movement (Hoole 1998:45). The most recent spiritual warfare method is called strategic level spiritual warfare (SLSW) and has made considerable inroads within Evangelicalism, especially among Pentecostals<sup>2</sup>. The proponents of SLSW assume the existence of territorial spirits, a special

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<sup>1</sup> The emphasis expressed by 'bold' print is Wagner's.

<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the differences in understanding concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the necessity of speaking in tongues as a sign of such spirit baptism, I classify so-called 'Charismatics' and so-called 'Third

class of demons, which presumably hold neighbourhoods, cities and other territories in spiritual darkness so that the Gospel cannot penetrate (Wagner 1989:278ff; 1991:130ff). Wagner is the main proponent of SLSW. Though Wagner is not the first person to advocate SLSW style spiritual warfare, he is by far the most prolific author and most influential advocate of SLSW. Wagner's main critics point out that he and his fellow SLSW missiologists have unwittingly incorporated magical and animistic notions of spirit power which are at odds with biblical teaching (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:11-12). Another aspect hardly discussed among Evangelical missiologists is that Wagner's SLSW has remarkable similarities with American war theory and practices. War planners at the Pentagon discussing the war in Afghanistan have reportedly stressed two essentials of accurate intelligence: Ascertain the identity and whereabouts of the enemy. Next accurate intelligence needs to be followed up by the use of superior warfare technology (Steinkamp 2006). Wagner's SLSW relies on these same two warfare principles - specific intelligence of the spirit world and new spiritual methodologies which purport to neutralise or destroy enemies in the spirit world. spiritual mapping provides the accurate intelligence so that a strategic war plan can be drawn like the smart bombs of the USA army and its allies against Saddam Hussein (Beckett 1993:158-159). All of this is designed to ensure victory in evangelism and to transform communities as the sin-causing demons are overcome through SLSW (Steinkamp 2006).

Wagner, as the main architect of SLSW, also called spiritual warfare Evangelism, has become its undisputed leader (Steinkamp 2006). Apart from Wagner there are various other influential players of international reputation in the field of SLSW such as George Otis, Jr, Charles Kraft, Cindy Jacobs, Ed Silvoso and others (Jacobs 1991, 1995; Kraft 2002:13ff; Otis 1993, 1999, 2000; Wagner 2000e:9-11).<sup>3</sup> There is, however, considerable similarity in their approach to SLSW. According to Wagner, they often write and work very closely together and all of them have written contributions in Wagner's SLSW readers (Wagner & Deiros 1998; Wagner 1990; 1991; 1993). Also the various authors frequently quote one another's writings, and consequently most of what can be said about Wagner's approach to SLSW will

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Wave' Evangelicals as Pentecostals (Erickson 1985:836). All of these groups emphasize the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit including healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy and exorcism and there is very close interaction and exchange of ideas and speakers between the groups with C. Peter Wagner being influential in all of them.

<sup>3</sup> See Cindy Jacobs' *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (Jacobs 1991), Charles H. Kraft's *Defeating Dark Angels* (Kraft 1992), Ed Silvoso's *That None Should Perish* (1994), *The Last of the Giants* (Otis 1991), and the *Transformations* video (Otis 1999), by George Otis jr.

also apply to them (Wagner 1991; 1992:163-164; 171; 1997b:116-118). Virtually all of the influential SLSW proponents have been students or participated as co-lecturers in Wagner's courses in School of World Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.<sup>4</sup> For example Cindy Jacobs calls Peter Wagner her mentor and writes that Wagner and his wife assisted her in writing her book (Jacobs 1991:7). Wagner calls Cindy Jacobs a close personal friend and made all his students at Fuller Theological Seminary read her book (Wagner in Jacobs 1991:12-14). Charles H. Kraft has been a close colleague of Wagner and was together with him closely associated with John Wimber, who himself at one time was Wagner's student and then became his associate (Kraft 2002:13-15; Wimber in Wagner et al. 1983:14-15; Wagner et al. 1983:10-11, 40-41). George Otis Jr, was a member of the spiritual warfare network of which Wagner was the coordinator. George Otis Jr, was also hand-picked by Wagner to be his co-coordinator of the AD 2000 Movement United Prayer Track and lead its spiritual mapping division (Wagner 1993:12; 1993:b215-218; 1996a:20-21). For the purposes of this thesis, other proponents and authors on SLSW will occasionally be referred to, but my primary focus is on Wagner as I consider him the chief architect, advocate and most influential proponent of SLSW. In addition, I also consider Wagner's academic prestige, his popular appeal within a large segment of Evangelicalism, and lastly his many books and articles on SLSW subject matter.<sup>5</sup>

The new spiritual warfare movement characterized by SLSW has been increasing in popularity as a new strategy for Christian mission and evangelism among Evangelicals around the globe, including the African continent (Chiundiza 1991:121-127; Gaines 2000:77-80; Freston 2001; Leithgöb 1996). At various major international Evangelical mission events and consultations SLSW was discussed and promoted, particularly through the channels of the 'AD 2000 and Beyond' movement of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation (Wagner 1996a:249-256). Consequently, SLSW drastically changed the way many Evangelicals think about, and get involved in, the spread of the Gospel, with SLSW more and

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<sup>4</sup> Fuller Theological Seminary was co-founded by Dispensationalist theologian and radio evangelist Charles E. Fuller together with Presbyterian pastor and educator H. J. Ockenga in 1947 in order to give graduate students a conservative Christian education in theology and to promote evangelism and world missions (Douglas 1995:146-147; 282).

<sup>5</sup> Wagner has written more than 25 books directly or indirectly related to SLSW (1986, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1997a, 1997b, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2002), and so many articles in journals, magazines and newsletters that Wagner himself could not even recall them as he indicated in an email reply to the author's request.

more taking center stage in mission and evangelism (Hart 1997; Lowe 1998: 11-13; Moore 1998:55).

I became personally acquainted with SLSW in the late 1980's when it was still in its infant stage and have observed its theology and practices increase in popularity, particularly after 1991, when Wagner was appointed coordinator of the AD 2000 United Prayer Track , which provided him with a world-wide platform to promote his ideas (Wagner 1996a:18-21). Consequently, I have been following the development of SLSW and wrote my first paper on the subject in 1994 while doing my undergraduate studies at Harare Theological College. In 1998 I decided to focus my research on spiritual mapping,<sup>6</sup> which is a major aspect of SLSW, for my dissertation of limited scope, while doing my MTh studies with the University of South Africa<sup>7</sup>. I also published an article in the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (Van der Meer 2001:47-70), which also focused on the issue of spiritual mapping. The decision to continue researching SLSW for this present study was partly because it had become an area of interest to me, but also out of a desire to write a more comprehensive critique dealing with some of the excesses of SLSW and at the same time consider possible alternatives. In this study I will research and answer the question:

Is Wagner's strategic level spiritual warfare a commendable strategy for Christian mission in Malawi from an Evangelical Missiological perspective?

The sub questions that arise from this main question are:

- 1) Is Wagner's SLSW a Biblical strategy for confronting the demonic powers?
- 2) Is Wagner's SLSW a strategy which has positive precedents in the history of Christianity?
- 3) Is Wagner's SLSW a truly Evangelical strategy for confronting the demonic powers?
- 4) Is Wagner's SLSW a commendable strategy for Christian Mission in Malawi from a contextual point of view?

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<sup>6</sup> A more elaborate explanation of spiritual mapping is provided in section 3.2.4 of this thesis.

<sup>7</sup> My postgraduate study for a MTh in Missiology was done under the supervision and guidance of JNJ Kritzinger as was this thesis.

The first three of these sub-questions focus on SLSW in general but the last question looks at its application in a specific context. Nevertheless, many of the implications SLSW may have in the context of Malawi will also apply to other parts of Africa and the world.

Because I evaluate Wagner from an Evangelical missiological perspective, I will provide a brief description of Evangelicalism and Evangelical missiology as I understand it. Consequently, in order to answer the main research question and its sub questions, I have studied SLSW largely from a classical Evangelical approach to theology, which usually takes the form of systematic theology drawing upon Biblical and historical theology as well as philosophical theology (Erickson 1985:2ff). Consequently my main sources for evaluating SLSW have been Biblical theology, in the sense of thoroughly studying the contents of the Old and New Testament; historical Theology, in the sense of the historical development of Christian thought; and philosophical theology in the sense of scrutinizing theological concepts and arguments, meanings and terms, especially from an epistemological point of view (Erickson 1985:22-27). However, I must point out that I have somewhat departed from the classical Evangelical approach to theology as described above by adding a contextual evaluation.

### **1.1.2. Relevance of this study for Evangelical missiology**

Before we can consider the relevance of this study for Evangelical missiology, it is necessary to define Evangelicalism and Evangelical missiology. Evangelicalism is difficult to define and there is considerable confusion among Evangelicals themselves concerning who is an Evangelical and who is not (Runia 1997:292ff). Evangelicals are often identified with conservative Protestants as opposed to those who hold a liberal or neo-orthodox position, however, not all conservative Protestants stress a 'born again' experience, which is a characteristic element in Evangelical theology. A 'born again' experience includes an acknowledgment of personal sinfulness, acceptance by faith of Christ's atonement for one's sins and a commitment to holy living (Balmer 1993:xiv). However, I agree with Balmer that 'Evangelicalism' is more than a matter of being 'born again' and living in accordance with the right Evangelical doctrines. It also includes a pietistic type of spirituality which leaves much room for a variety of existential spiritual experience (Balmer 1993:xiv). To come up with a

definition of Evangelicalism which is acceptable to all Evangelicals is probably impossible since Evangelicalism is not a clearly defined religious organization but is rather a movement within Christianity and which in itself is again a diverse coalition of sub-movements (Marsden 1991:1-2). Like conservative Protestantism, Evangelicalism traces its roots to the creeds of the first centuries of the Christian era in which the early Christian church sought to correlate the teachings of Scripture, penetrate its meaning and defend it (Ferguson & Wright 1988:239). Evangelicalism is deeply rooted in the Protestant Reformation and is deeply committed to the Reformation doctrine of the centrality and final authority of the Bible in all matters of doctrine and lifestyle as it is the word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit (Ferguson & Wright 1988: 239-240; Marsden 1991:4). Essential Evangelical beliefs include the real historical character of God's saving work recorded in Scripture, salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ, the importance of proclamation of the Gospel in evangelism and missions and the importance of living a spiritually transformed life in the expectation of Christ's imminent return to judge the living and the dead (Ferguson & Wright 1988:239-240; Marsden 1991:4-5).

In the North American context, and to a lesser extent in Europe and elsewhere, Evangelicalism is closely related to the revival movements that swept back and forth across the English speaking world and beyond (Marsden 1991:2). Evangelicalism sees humankind's primary problem as separation from God which is caused by sin. Sin is a violation of God's will and therefore humankind is in a state of guilt and enmity with God and has an inner inclination or bias towards evil in all aspects of life (Erickson 1985:889; 904). The solution that has come from God is salvation which is attained by an individual putting his faith for salvation in Christ and his atoning death on the cross and his resurrection. Salvation entails that the individual's legal status before God changes from guilty to not guilty which is termed justification. There is also the aspect of God adopting the believers as his children which is part of the restoration of the relationship between God and humankind. Consequently regeneration takes place, that is an inner change of heart brought about by the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer and causes our inner inclination or bias to be changed from being directed to what is evil to being directed to what is good and pleasing in God's sight. As a result of this inner change there is a progressive alteration of the individual's spiritual condition towards becoming holier, more like Christ, which is termed sanctification (Erickson 1985:904-905). Central to the Evangelical Gospel is therefore the proclamation



of Christ's saving work through his death on the cross and the necessity of individually and personally trusting him for eternal salvation (Marsden 1991:2).

Evangelicals are strongly committed to the *Sola Scriptura* credo of the Protestant Reformation, meaning that they want their faith, doctrine and lifestyle to be determined by the teachings of Holy Scripture only and not by human institutions, authorities and traditions. The principle of *Sola Scriptura* places Scripture squarely above and over tradition. It denies that Scripture and tradition are coequal norms for theology. For the Reformers, and their successors in the Evangelical tradition, the Bible is the divine, primary, absolute norm of God's revelation. Tradition, valuable as it might be, was human, secondary, and relative (Clendenin 1995:388-389). This is not to say that Evangelical theologians totally disregard the traditions of the church throughout history, but tradition is not regarded as normative; it is only informative in the sense that seeing how others understood and applied Scripture in the past can help us in our understanding and application in the present. Whenever a teaching or practice is based on tradition rather than Scripture it not considered normative and if it conflicts with Scripture it is rejected. This stands in contrast to the Roman Catholic view which understands both Scripture and tradition as the Word of God, to be interpreted by the Bishops of the Roman Catholic church in communion with the pope, the bishop of Rome who is understood as the successor of Peter (CCC 2008:77-100). Part of this tradition includes holding doctrines such as papal primacy and infallibility as divine revelation and therefore binding for the whole church (Clendenin 1995:385). Luther and other Protestants maintained that while tradition may be informative, it is never normative and pointed at the unbiblical human traditions and works within the Roman Catholic church as examples (Clendenin 1995:389-390). The disagreement between Roman Catholics and Protestants on the issue of revelation is essentially pneumatological. While the Roman Catholic church believes that humanity, and particularly the head of their church, the pope is able to receive divine revelation in a manner that is infallible through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Protestants do not. Consequently, the Roman Catholic church has embraced additional extra-biblical revelation and based on this revelation established new doctrines such as the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary in 1854, papal infallibility in 1870 and the dogma of Mary's assumption to heaven (Rowell 1951:451ff). Luther and the other Protestant reformers accused the Roman Catholic church of having invented traditions without and against

Scripture. They also argued for a clear distinction between the two, whereby Scripture is the divine, primary and absolute norm of God's revelation and tradition is human, secondary and subordinate to scriptural revelation (Clendenin 1995:388-389). This *Sola Scriptura* stance of the Reformation has been continued in the Evangelical tradition and causes them to be very cautious when it comes to additional extra-biblical revelation. It is also probably the main reason why Evangelicals have approached an issue such as contextualisation very cautiously and critically, as by all means they would want to avoid allowing the context to determine their theology and praxis to a point where it is no longer in conformity with Scripture (Hesselgrave 1985:452-453).

Being an Evangelical committed to contextualization, I therefore wrestle with the 'wanting to be faithful to the biblical text', and also 'wanting to be faithful to the context'. I want to take the context in which I seek to live out and apply my theology very serious, but I do not want the context in which I find myself to determine or dictate the content of my theology. However, I do want to take the context serious by giving special attention to issues and questions arising from the context. I also will seek to apply theology in a way that is relevant in context. However, there will always be aspects of my theology which will be considered offensive or appear foolish in the context in which I find myself. In as much as I may try to be contextual, the gospel of the crucified Christ will always be offensive to some or appear foolish to others (1 *Corinthians* 1:23). Nevertheless, I want my theology and praxis to be determined by Scripture as it was understood by the apostolic Christian church. I also want to apply what I learned from Scripture in a contextually relevant manner in any context in which I may minister. This is what I have in mind when I talk of an Evangelical contextual missiology. However, since I do not live in an ideal world, but in a world of fallible and sinful human beings subject to bias, prejudice and error, I cannot get away from the fact that both my understanding of Scripture and my application of Scripture will to an extent be biased. The context in which I grew up, and even the different context in which I find myself today, not only influences me in selecting the questions for which I seek answers in Scripture, but even influences the way I interpret Scripture and formulate my theology. In a way this is a biblical and healthy process as the differences in cultures reflects something of the creativity and wisdom of God as all humanity is created in His image. At the same time the Biblical teaching of the universality of sin (*Romans* 3:9-19) implies that each culture is also tainted by sin as it is endemic in humanity. This calls for critical reflection of all cultures in

the light of Scripture to see which elements agree with scripture, which elements are opposed by scripture and which elements are neutral or at least to be considered innocent until proven guilty of being in opposition to God's revelation in scripture.. However, even 'neutral' cultural elements lose their neutrality if they are exported as part and parcel of the gospel to other contexts as my African colleagues are often quick to point out. Instead of being a Jew with the Jews and a Greek with the Greeks, we may end up imposing doctrines, behaviour, attitudes and customs which have more to do with our cultural background than with the biblical gospel. This danger calls for a critical study of the context in which I have developed my theology as well as of the context where I want to apply my theology. This approach may agree with some aspects of post modern thought, but as I see it, it is also a logical extrapolation of the doctrine of original sin expressed for example by Paul in *Romans* 2:10-18 or *Romans* 7:18-25. I believe on the basis of these and other Scriptures that, even though all humanity has been created in God's image, and has the ability to pursue what is good and right, all humanity is also affected by sin, to the extent of having an inner disposition to sin and depravity. I also believe that a genuine conversion to Christ results in an inner regeneration of the person by means of the work of the Holy Spirit as expressed in *Romans* 8:1-16 and *Ephesians* 1:13-14, which enables the believer to resist the impulses of his sinful nature and choose to follow the impulse of the Holy Spirit to do what is good as expressed in *Galatians* 5:16-25. However, being enabled to resist what is evil and to do what is good does not negate the fact that we may decide not to resist what is evil, and not to pursue what is good, as a result of temptation or deception. Within the community of believers we therefore need one another's help and correction to be able to live by the Spirit in the pursuit of what is good. We need to help each other resist what comes from the sinful nature, including resisting those theological, cultural and other biases which distort the gospel. On the positive side studying our contexts will help us present the gospel of Christ in a manner that is relevant for the people living in these contexts, apply it in their life-situation and address their specific needs, problems and concerns.

It is in this spirit I have embarked in this thesis on a critical evaluation of the North American context in which SLSW originated in order to uncover some of the biases and hidden agendas which may have contributed to its development. I have also looked critically at how SLSW relates to the African context. I am aware that even after 15 years in Southern Africa some western bias will still be reflected in my writings. However, the same we may observe in

Scripture where – in spite of being a Jew with the Jews and a Greek with the Greeks, and being all things to all men – Paul still retained his unique cultural identity as a Jew from Tarsus. Nevertheless, in as much as we may legitimately celebrate our cultural uniqueness and identity, there may also be some less helpful biases in our culture. I have tried to counter some of these by extensively discussing my ideas, beliefs and concerns related to SLSW with many African theologians and colleagues involved in Christian ministry.

As many of Wagner's SLSW assumptions are closely related to the topic of demonology, Biblical teachings on Satan and the demons in the Old and New Testament have received special attention. Looking at the biblical text I have also looked at other ancient Near Eastern literature, which not only shed light on Biblical demonology, but also show that some of the beliefs which resurface in Wagner's SLSW theology have very ancient antecedents in the extra biblical magical and religious traditions within the Indo European and Middle Eastern context. In the same manner in my evaluation of SLSW from a church historical perspective I have studied the theological developments in the area of demonology<sup>8</sup> throughout Christian history. I have tried to be fairly inclusive but for example Coptic sources from Egypt and Ethiopia have proven inaccessible to me. I did not manage to survey the developments in demonology in those contexts but I suspect one may find some interesting material in the history of the Coptic church as Coptic Christianity engaged Middle Eastern and African beliefs related to demonology. My historical evaluation is therefore mainly focused on early church history in Europe and North Africa and on later demonological developments in the European context. In my historical evaluation of SLSW I have looked predominantly at the historical 'evidence' Wagner provides for SLSW, but have also looked at other historical sources in order to get a good grasp of how the Christian church understood the confrontation with the powers of Satan and his demons. I have also looked at SLSW from a contextual perspective first by looking at the context in which SLSW has been developed and secondly I have looked at what SLSW teachings and practices may mean for the contextualisation of the Gospel in Africa, and in particular the context of Southern Malawi<sup>9</sup>. The final conclusion of this thesis entails that for various theological and contextual reasons, Wagner's SLSW is

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<sup>8</sup> I include the study of Satan and his works in Demonology as is common among many systematic theologians (Erickson 1985:445ff) though I am aware of the fact that some Evangelicals make a further distinction between Satanology or Diabology, and Demonology.

<sup>9</sup> I have been working with the Evangelical church of Malawi since 2005 as an ordained minister supported by Africa Outreach (Afrika Zending) in the Netherlands and as project supervisor for projects supported by Hilfe Für Brüder, a Christian development organization based in Stuttgart, Germany.

not the best Evangelical Missiological strategy for Christian Mission in Malawi. Nevertheless, I have appreciated the fact that SLSW highlights the need for an Evangelical missiological response to the presence and activities of the Devil and the demons. An Evangelical missiological response to the concerns of the African believers about the effects of an evil spirit world is very relevant in the Malawian context. Consequently I have made some recommendations on how spiritual warfare can play a helpful role in Christian mission in Malawi. This study has been more than an academic endeavour and has been transformative in my life and the ministry I am involved with in Malawi. Over the past two years I have started to implement many of the insights gained in the process of this study which has enhanced my ministry in the Evangelical church of Malawi (ECOM) and other denominations in Malawi in a very positive manner.

Evangelicalism in the late 20th century has witnessed phenomenal growth, especially in the Pentecostal movement (Henry 1973:92; Keeley 1992:326; Wagner et al. 1983:11), in which I include the so-called Charismatic Movement, which Evangelical systematic theologian Millard J. Erickson properly identifies as a neo-Pentecostal movement (Erickson 1985:836). Pentecostalism has its roots in the Holiness Movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in America and has a distinctive emphasis on a further spiritual experience after conversion, namely the baptism in the Holy Spirit which provides spiritual power for holiness and is signified by speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and upon the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament (Ferguson & Wright 1988:240; 502ff).<sup>10</sup> The Pentecostal movement presently forms the largest constituency within the Evangelical tradition (Edgar 1988:371). For reasons of their own, Wagner and his close associates, do not want to be identified as Pentecostals, yet they embrace virtually all distinctive Pentecostal beliefs and practices (McGee 1997:92). Therefore, for purposes of clarity I have referred to Wagner and his associates as Pentecostals even though they shy away from this themselves and prefer to use their own term ‘Third Wave of the spirit’ (Wagner 1988a:18ff). In the chapter on Wagner’s theological pilgrimage I have discussed the so-called ‘Third Wave’ movement and its affinity with Pentecostalism in more detail.

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<sup>10</sup> The Azusa street revival in Los Angeles of 1906-1909 is often referred to as the birth of Pentecostalism though the characteristic speaking in tongues and emphasis on the supernatural already occurred on many occasions and many parts of the world in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially among millenarian and holiness groups (Ferguson & Wright 1988:503; McGee 1997:72-87).

As mentioned above, in mainstream Evangelical thought, it is considered essential that individuals personally put their trust in Christ and thus receive the salvation He offers for eternal salvation (Marsden 1991:2). Mainstream Evangelical missiology has therefore historically been characterised by a strong emphasis on evangelism in the form of a verbal proclamation of Christ and his Gospel of salvation (Ferguson & Wright 1988:239-240; Marsden 1991:4-5). Consequently, missionary ‘success’ has been measured in terms of how many individuals made a personal commitment to faith in Christ. Because of this emphasis on numerical success in terms of converts, the revivals of the past, which were characterised by mass conversions, are reflected upon as the ‘glory days’ of Evangelicalism and have deeply influenced Evangelicalism (Marsden 1991:2). The longing for revival and mass conversions has influenced much of Evangelical missiology, with some regarding the Pentecostal movement of the 20th century to be a continuing revival movements (Evans 1971:165-171; Ferguson & Wright 1988:588). I personally do believe that the Pentecostal movement was born out of a genuine desire for revival and that many of its characteristic phenomena such as speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing have a missiological intention behind it as people were looking for new and better ways to spread the Gospel and strengthen the church. From this perspective Wagner’s innovative SLSW doctrines and practices stand firmly in the Pentecostal tradition. At this point I would also like to point out that in spite of my critical approach to Wagner’s ideas, I do believe that he developed his SLSW with the same good missiological intention of finding a better way of being involved in Christian mission. Nevertheless, good intentions are unfortunately not a guarantee for good theology and praxis.

The theme of revival is an important theme in much of conservative Protestant Christianity and can be traced to the spiritual awakenings in Europe in the form of German Pietism, Evangelicalism in Great Britain, and in the USA in the form of the “Great Awakenings” (Peters 1979:103-104). This revival hope is clearly demonstrated by the enormous popularity of books about past and present revivals, revival meetings, and the popularity of ‘revival reports’ and other spiritual success stories from around the globe within Evangelicalism (Wagner 1998:7ff; 1999a:7-11). These reports often include narratives about miracles, power encounters with demons and instances of supernatural divine guidance<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> For example the revival classics, *Duncan Campbell, A Biography*, by Andrew Woolsey (1974), Mel Tari’s, *Like a Mighty Wind* (1971), Kurt Koch’s, *The Revival in Indonesia* (1970), and, *God Among the Zulu* (1978) as well as Wagner’s many ‘revival’ reports (Wagner et al. 1983:41ff; Wagner 1986:40ff; 1989:282-284;

The Evangelical dream of revival also played an important role in the Church Growth Movement of Donald McGavran (McGavran 1970:164-167). The main objective of this movement was to identify people groups that are unreached by, but yet receptive to the Gospel and focus evangelisation efforts on these people groups so that revival could occur (McGavran 1970:49, 57-60; 230-232; Wagner 1971b:115-121, 171, 1972:221-227). Revival in this context is also primarily defined in terms of mass conversions and numerical church growth (McGavran 1970:173ff; 216ff; Wagner 1971b:112).

Wagner's SLSW is also deeply rooted in the revival dreams of Evangelicalism. This is not surprising considering the fact that Wagner started his missiological career within the Church Growth Movement as we can observe in my description of Wagner's spiritual pilgrimage. In a sense SLSW was developed as a tool for bringing in revival in the belief that community, city and nation wide reform is possible also in America if the territorial demons are identified and overcome (Hayford 1993:71-75; Wagner 1993a:58ff, 1993b). Societal transformation is precipitated by 'revival' and spiritual warfare (Wagner 1998:25-26; 1999a:13-17, 54-57). The theme even comes back in the titles and contents of two of Wagner's books which among other things promote the use of SLSW: *The Rising Revival* (Wagner & Deiros 1998); *Revival! It Can Transform Your City* (1999a). Because supernatural spiritual gifts play an important role within the context of SLSW, it is primarily within the Pentecostal movement that SLSW has been gaining popularity as the supernatural plays an important role in their theology and practice, but also other Evangelicals have been influenced. In fact, there is ample evidence that SLSW has changed the perspective of many Evangelicals on how they should be involved in Christian Mission around the world, including the continent of Africa (Freston 2001; Leithgöb 1996; Lowe 1998:13). In response to SLSW, several Evangelical missiologists accused Wagner and his associates of 'missiological syncretism' in the sense of internalizing and propagating animistic and magical notions of spirit power which are at odds with biblical teaching, and using such notions as the basis for their new missiological method (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:11-12; Wagner 1996a:64ff).<sup>12</sup> Others have responded to Wagner's SLSW by cautioning against adopting a post modern fascination with spiritual

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1991a:131-137; 1992b:15ff; 154-158; 1997a:57ff; 112-117; 1999a:40-44).

<sup>12</sup> The term 'missiological syncretism' is to my understanding used for the first time by Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995) in the title of their article 'Missiological Syncretism: The New Animistic Paradigm', and use it to describe the syncretism between cultural beliefs about demons with missiological theory and practice. Charles H. Kraft in his response to their article uses the term 'Christian Animism'. Animism in this context is understood as a form of religion which employs the principles of magical thought to interaction with personal spirits and deities (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:13).

power (Van Rheeën 1995:193-198) and again others called for further reflection (IWG 1993). In spite of the criticism levelled at SLSW, Wagner is confident that his SLSW beliefs and practices have come to him from God and that God has called him to do promote them (Wagner 1997a:61). Nevertheless, in spite of SLSW's popularity, there has been relatively little academic interaction with SLSW and critical evaluation of its underlying assumptions. Nevertheless, some Evangelical theologians and missiologists have interacted academically with strategic level spiritual warfare (Moreau 1994:7; Reid 2002:12)<sup>13</sup>. The main academic works interacting with SLSW I have described below in my literature review.

### **1.1.3. Review of relevant literature**

The vast majority of books and articles on the subject of spiritual warfare has been written in popular style and are mostly written by proponents of SLSW.<sup>14</sup> At the same time various articles critical of SLSW have been published, a great number of which are on-line sources accessible via the internet and have been referred to in this thesis though only a few of these are academic articles.<sup>15</sup> Considering the popularity of SLSW within the largest segment of Evangelicalism, it is actually rather surprising that Wagner's SLSW has received so little attention from mission theologians. However, there are some notable exceptions which are described hereafter in more detail:

#### **1.1.3.1. Spiritual power and missions (Rommen 1995)**

In response to rising tension within Evangelical missiological circles, the USA based Evangelical Missiological Society published an entire edition on Spiritual Power and Missions which highlighted several aspects of SLSW from the perspective of both opponents and proponents (Rommen 1995:2ff). The first article is by Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995) and suggests that SLSW, especially the doctrine of territorial spirits and the practice

<sup>13</sup> Walter Wink, writing from a neo-orthodox background, has written extensively on spiritual warfare against the principalities and powers which, like Marcus Barth (1960) and Hendrikus Berkhof (1962), he understands as impersonal powers entrenched in human belief systems, organizational, political and socio-economic systems (Wink 1984, 1986, 1992, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> C.f. Jacobs 1991, 1993, 1996; Otis 1991; Wagner 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1997a, 1997b, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> For example: Freston, Paul 2006. Presentation at a symposium on Christianity and Conflict in Latin America at the National Defense University in Washington DC, April 6, 2006 downloaded on 16 July 2008 from website: <http://pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=102> . Many useful articles related to SLSW which were presented at the 'Deliver Us From Evil' conference in Nairobi, Kenya, from 16 to 22 August 2000, can be found on: <http://www.Gospelcom.net/lcwe/dufe/Papers>



of spiritual mapping are in fact a case of missiological syncretism in the sense of SLSW being based on an animistic paradigm whereby animism refers to a form of religion which employs the principles of magiethought to interaction with personal spirits and deities (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:13). The authors call special attention to the new doctrines that they observed in SLSW and the possible implications such doctrines have:

1. Vulnerability to demons through contact with physical objects
2. Vulnerability to demons through the curses of others
3. Vulnerability to demons through genealogical transmission
4. Vulnerability to demons because of geographical location

In their article, Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995) fail to clearly identify those practices which are truly distinctive to SLSW. The first three of the doctrines, or demonological assumptions, they identify are actually not distinctive to SLSW. These assumptions have been part and parcel of modern Evangelical demonology, especially, Pentecostal and Dispensationalist demonology long before the concept of SLSW was developed in the late 1980s. For example, these assumptions can be found in the widely translated and published writings of Dispensationalist Lutheran German mission theologian Kurt Koch (Koch 1971; 1971a; 1973; 1978), the Dutch Charismatic Reformed theologian W. C. van Dam (1973) and in the spiritual warfare and demonology works of Bubeck (1975), Harper (1970) and Peterson (1972) and others (Van der Meer 2000).

The fourth doctrine identified by Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995), ‘vulnerability to demons because of geographical location’, is the only doctrine mentioned by them which is truly distinctive to SLSW. This doctrine is based on the assumption that there are ‘territorial spirits’ who exercise their power over geographically delimited regions and need to be identified by name through an exercise called ‘spiritual mapping’ and defeated by means of strategic level spiritual warfare (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:19-21). However, this doctrine also builds upon older modern Evangelical spiritual warfare assumptions such as the notion of demons being attached to houses (Harper 1970:105-107; Peterson 1972:25-30) and was already hinted at as early as the 1920s (McGee 1997:83-84). Wagner and associates have developed these concepts further in SLSW and as such they can be considered distinctive.

The main point of contention as expressed by the authors is Wagner's use of extra-biblical religious knowledge and information gained from demons as basis for new doctrine and practice in mission (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:28-36).

Another point of contention is the epistemological question of whether the use of anecdotes is sufficient to establish new doctrine and justify new practices (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:36-41). Unfortunately, the authors only deal with this question very briefly, but their contention that animistic and magical notions can easily find their way into our understanding of spiritual realities if we rely on anecdotes uncritically and without testing in the light of Scripture is a valid point (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995: 38-41).

In addition to questioning Wagner's sources, the authors also demonstrate that some of the testimonies and evidence referred to by Wagner and his associates have actually been twisted out of context. Some of the evidence turned out to be a fabrication. (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995: 38-40; 41-50). Such incidents obviously call into question the reliability of the evidence for the existence of territorial spirits presented by Wagner and associates, and indirectly their personal and academic integrity. This was well understood by Wagner's close associate, and well known Evangelical missiologist, Charles E. Kraft. In his response to Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995), Kraft responds rather viciously and calls their charges 'frivolous' (1995:89). He nevertheless does apologise and admits that he and Wagner at times may have overstated their case with exaggerated claims and the use of poor sources (Kraft 1995:90). He states that he regrets Wagner's abuse of the Sumrall illustration as mentioned by Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995:46-48). He nevertheless adds that he strongly resents the implication that all of the data is of such nature (Kraft 1995:115) but fails to demonstrate on what basis we should accept their other anecdotes as reliable. Kraft also denies that he and his associates have invented new doctrines and asserts that these are simply new discoveries (.Kraft 1995: 90-91). Kraft defends Wagner's willingness to accept information from the spirit world and claims to have received accurate information from demons himself (Kraft 1995: 91). Kraft also defends relying on animist beliefs in dealing with the spirit world and suggests that animists are not as ignorant as some may think and possess reliable knowledge concerning principles that govern the spirit world (Kraft 1995:98).

However, the contention of Priest, Campbell and Mullen is not so much that animists may not

have any knowledge of the spirit world, but their contention is that it is dangerous that such notions are accepted uncritically and without careful testing in the light of Scripture (Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:34-35). In spite of his objections to the issues raised by Priest, Campbell and Mullen, Kraft failed to come up with reliable criteria for ensuring that we separate truth from falsehood in acquiring information from demon possessed people, or confessions of former Satanists and witches and from animist beliefs. Instead, Kraft suggests that the reason for not accepting his, and Wagner's, beliefs is that his critics are captive to a western modernist worldview (Kraft 1995:104-105). Kraft asserts that his critics have no experience with the demonic supernatural, have little experience with what the Holy Spirit is doing in society and also lack spiritual discernment (Kraft 1995: 106-107). Kraft concludes that his critics are therefore unqualified for interpreting the activities of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, and in other cultural contexts (Kraft 1995: 107). Kraft also asserts that not all spiritual principles are indicated in the Bible. Others are to be discovered by means of human exploration in the spiritual realm. Speaking for himself, Wagner and other associates, Kraft states:

‘Our assumption is that God has not revealed all there is to know in the spiritual area any more than he has in these other areas. We, therefore, need to experiment in this area and, like scientists who work in other areas, develop and test theories in order to gain greater understanding’ (1995:113).

With ‘other areas’ in this quotation Kraft means other areas of scientific research. Kraft goes on to state that as long as they do not come up with ideas and practices that are explicitly condemned in Scripture they have the right to experiment and develop theories on the basis of their spiritual experiments, in an attempt to go at things scientifically (1995:114). Kraft repeats his (and Wagner's) belief that accurate information can be obtained from demons as long as one is guided by the Holy Spirit and acts in his authority (Kraft 1995: 117). In addition they rely on supernatural revelation from God (Kraft 1995: 119) and have a mountain of experiential data to support their claims (Kraft 1995:134).

Kraft and Wagner may be able to bully their non-Pentecostal critics into silence by suggesting that they do not have experience with supernatural guidance from the Holy Spirit, but, what about fellow Pentecostals like the author of this thesis or like Charismatic bishop

Michael Reid (Reid 2002) who are equally critical of Kraft and Wagner? For example, what if I state that I believe that the Holy Spirit told me that there are no such things as territorial demons who need to be battled for the Gospel to break through in a certain geographical location. The more I have interacted with Wagner's and Kraft's writings, the more I have become convinced that Wagner and Kraft are misled in their minds by the very demons they seek to battle. However, on what basis would my supernatural inspiration or insight be more valid than theirs or vice versa? Is it a matter of democracy, academic credentials or who is most popular? In the case of Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995), they are equally convinced that in their careful study and interpretation of Holy Scripture they were guided by the Holy Spirit, and yet they come to the conclusion that Wagner and Kraft are in error when it comes to their SLSW theology and praxis. However, Wagner and Kraft continue to claim that the same Holy Spirit assigned and guided them in developing their SLSW theology and praxis (Wagner 1997a:61; Kraft 1995:93-95).

Evangelical missiology is faced with an epistemological crisis: What if two Evangelical camps, in this case Kraft and Wagner on the one side, and various Evangelical scholars on the other side, both claiming to be guided, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, take contradictory positions? With the same Holy Spirit inspiration they come to different conclusions concerning the spirit realm? On what basis do we declare the one side right over and against the other? This is a very important epistemological question and is dealt with extensively in this thesis as part of evaluating SLSW from an Evangelical contextual missiological perspective.

The authors Priest, Campbell and Mullen have done a good job in having exposed the weaknesses of the SLSW theology of Wagner and associates, but in my opinion they have failed to pay sufficient attention to the contextual factors which contributed to both the formulation and the enthusiastic reception of SLSW in the North American context. Probably due to the anthropological background of the authors their contextual analysis does not go beyond discussing traditional cultural beliefs from other cultures which were incorporated into SLSW. The only exception being a very brief reference to the influence of mystical romanticism, existentialism and "new age" spiritualities in the West (Johnstone 1995:138; Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:11).

### **1.1.3.2. The Holy Spirit and mission dynamics (McConnell 1997)**

This reader is a follow-up on ‘Spiritual Power and Missions’ (Rommen 1995). The article by Priest, Campbell and Mullen and the response by Charles Kraft in this volume did little to quiet the debate in Evangelical Mission circles. Consequently the on-going debate concerning SLSW but also the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian mission culminated in the publication of ‘The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics’ by the Evangelical Missiological Society (McConnell 1997:2-3). In this new volume the reliability of supernatural inspiration in the form of a personal word from God as a source of truth, which is one of Wagner’s main sources on which he bases his SLSW theology, is discussed and called into question (Pocock 1997:15-17). In the same reader Wagner’s assertion that territorial spirits need to be overcome by SLSW is questioned from a biblical point of view (Pocock 1997:17ff).

In this reader we do find an interesting survey of the Pentecostal movement and its involvement in missions by a Pentecostal scholar which also highlights its linkage with premillennialist Dispensationalism (McGee 1997). At this stage it suffices to say that Dispensationalism as a theological tradition within Evangelicalism has its origins in the writings of the British Plymouth Brethren founder J. N. Darby and was popularised in the USA by C. I. Scofield by means of the so-called Scofield Bible (Ferguson & Wright 1988:200-201). Dispensationalism divides history in rather distinct dispensations each with their own means of salvation, i.e. through the law under the Mosaic dispensation and by faith in the so called present church-age. Dispensationalism holds to a premillennial eschatology which maintains that before the final day of judgement at Christ’s return there will be a terrible tribulation which will be followed by a millennium of peace on earth under the messianic rule of Christ, followed by a final unleashing of Satan and his final defeat and then the day of judgement follows. There are considerable variations within Dispensationalism with some maintaining the church will be raptured before the great tribulation, in the middle of it, or after the tribulation (Erickson 1985:1211ff; Ferguson & Wright 1988:200ff). A more detailed description of Dispensationalism follows later in this thesis when we discuss Wagner’s theological background and when we discuss Evangelicalism in the USA in the chapter on contextual considerations. What is also significant in McGee article is that as a Pentecostal he places SLSW within the Pentecostal tradition. In this McGee provides support for my assertion that in spite of their protest, Wagner and associates can be legitimately called Pentecostals.

In this reader we also have a contribution from Wagner. In his article he describes his spiritual pilgrimage and discussed his personal paradigm shift from being a classical anti-Pentecostal Evangelical to becoming a main player in the neo-Pentecostal movement (Wagner 1997b:112-119). Other contributions in this volume focus more on epistemological issues related to the post modern context in which Evangelicalism finds itself and needs to come to terms with. In response to Wagner's personal narrative the subjectivity of anecdotal evidence is highlighted and the suggestion is made that as Evangelicals we can never allow personal narratives to replace the investigative methods of history, the social sciences and theology which have stood the test of time (Moreau 1997:124). This is not meant in the sense of returning to Enlightenment thinking, but in the sense of scrutinizing all ideas and theologies from the perspective of a biblical worldview and from the perspective of the larger Christian hermeneutical community in past and present (Moreau 1997: 124-125; 129-132). Of particular concern to Moreau is Wagner's confusing tendency to follow his own rules of academic engagement, his unique reinterpretation and use of Scripture and his selective use of anecdotes in order to convince his readers of the truth of his SLSW assumptions (Moreau 1997:126-129).

Lastly Moreau briefly addresses the unwholesome blend of Enlightenment and magical thought in Wagner's spiritual technology (Moreau 1997:132-133). We also find Priest, one of the principal contributors to the first reader, lamenting Wagner's tendency to avoid honest and transparent discussion of the issues which were raised in the article by Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995). Wagner allegedly wrote his book *Confronting the Powers* (1996a) in response to these issues (Priest 1997:137-138), but does not truly interact with the issues raised by his fellow missiologists. Priest notes with legitimate concern that, in spite of the concerns raised by fellow Evangelical missiologists, Wagner continues to be committed to an epistemology designed for discovering extra-biblical truth about demonic realities (Priest 1997: 141). I agree with Priest's conclusion that the new epistemological principles espoused by Wagner are seriously flawed and its implications are far reaching (Priest 1997: 140ff). The next article in the reader discusses the need for proper exegesis rather than Wagner's revelatory claims as the basis of Evangelical missiological reflection whereby 'one must try to avoid interpretations that may be appealing to the interpreter but are not warranted by the text itself' (Hesselgrave quoted in Orme 1997:151). Of particular interest in this article are

the suggested principles for the cautious interpretation of anecdotes whereby Scripture remains the principal yardstick (Orme 1997:154-155). The last article in this reader starts by briefly looking at Wagner's apparent shift from a modernist to a somewhat post modern paradigm (Van Rheenen 1997:166-169).

The article also discusses the dangers of syncretism between the prevailing worldview and Christianity. The current danger is that just as the demythologizing of the powers by Berkhof (1962) and Wink (1986, 192, 1993) represents a syncretism between Christianity and modernist thought, Wagner's SLSW represents a post modern syncretism between Christianity and New Age spirituality and fascination with spirits and spiritual power (Van Rheenen 1997:193-201) to the neglect of biblical truth. It is clear from the articles discussed above that the main concerns raised in this reader are of an epistemological nature. Consequently in my thesis I have given a lot of attention to the epistemological issues raised and added my own evaluation and suggestions to those discussed in this reader

### **1.1.3.3. Territorial spirits and world evangelisation? (Lowe 1998)**

In 1998 Chuck Lowe of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship published his book *Territorial spirits and World Evangelisation* which is a critique of SLSW from an Evangelical theological, church historical and biblical perspective. Significant is that Lowe identifies Wagner as a leading advocate of SLSW (1998:16) though I would modify this to say that Wagner is the leading advocate of SLSW. My modification seems to be vindicated by the acknowledgement of another prominent Evangelical missiologist and main critic of Wagner who states that Wagner is playing a strategists role in teaching and accrediting the new SLSW ideas around the world (Priest 1995:140). Nevertheless, Lowe does not focus primarily on Wagner but interacts with the various assumptions and practices of SLSW in a more general sense.

Lowe starts out with expressing concern over the uncritical embrace of SLSW by many Christians around the globe who are attracted by the exaggerated claims and promises of revival and advancement of the Gospel by means of SLSW. In spite of the enormous resources consumed by SLSW in the form of time, money and personnel, it may well turn out to be futile (Lowe 1998:10-13). It is very tempting to trade God-given responsibilities, the

hard work of learning local languages, the arduous task of contextualisation and the inconvenience of living and working in uncomfortable circumstances for a quick key to effective ministry and a quick fix for the world's problems (Lowe 1998:13).

Lowe next looks at the fact that the concept of 'territorial spirits' as espoused by Wagner and other SLSW proponents is far from clear and consistent, even in their own writings (Lowe 1998:16ff). Lowe also notes that the principal characteristic of warfare prayer, that is the primary spiritual weapon of SLSW, is aggression and points out that this is a departure from prayer as supplication to God (Lowe 1998:23-24). Lowe then continues to investigate the question whether territorial spirits do indeed exist as distinct from other demons which may possess people or empower occult practitioners (Lowe 1998:26). He also investigates the proposed methods for dealing with such demons such as spiritual mapping, identificational repentance and various prayer methods (Lowe 1998:26). Lowe then embarks on a brief but useful survey of SLSW proof texts from the Old and New Testament and provides alternative interpretations from those by SLSW proponents. In this thesis a similar survey is conducted of proof texts employed by Wagner but this survey is more extensive and more in-depth.

In discussing the Pauline approach to spiritual warfare Lowe points out that Wagner agrees in theory to Paul's insistence that Christ has defeated Satan and all his powers, but in practice he appears to down-play this truth. While Paul portrays the powers as defeated, disarmed and captive, SLSW portrays them as more powerful and dangerous than ever (Lowe 1998:57-58). Lowe rightly concludes that these are two opposing perspectives which cannot be reconciled (Lowe 1998:58). Discussing the excessive speculation related to demonology in the inter-testamental period as well as those of the medieval period Lowe highlights some of the similarities and dissimilarities between SLSW and speculation concerning the demonic in the inter-testamental and medieval periods. He warns against making the same mistakes of the past whereby many differing and confusing taxonomies of spirits, both good and evil, were floating around with no-one having conclusive evidence to prove the one more correct than the other (Lowe 1998:89-90). Lowe also demonstrates that though Wagner is confident that SLSW has historical precedents in Christian history, this confidence is not warranted by the available historical evidence on the ground (Lowe 1998:93). Lowe then goes on to demonstrate that though our contact with animism may raise legitimate questions for which we must seek biblical answers, this does not mean that animism is a reliable and legitimate



source for establishing theological truth (Lowe 1998:104-112). He concludes that whenever a teaching finds more support from animism than from Scripture, Christopaganism looms near. Though Lowe does not explain the term Christopaganism I understand it to describe a syncretism between Christianity and un-Christian religious or magical elements.

Lastly, Lowe rightly questions the pragmatic undercurrent within a section of Evangelicalism whereby the on-going focus is on ever improved techniques to be successful in world evangelisation (Lowe 1998:147-151). Starting in the Church Growth Movement a large section of Evangelicalism has become captive to a mechanical worldview which quantifies things numerically, systematizes, codifies and standardizes methods and procedures in order to produce the desired results (Lowe 1998:147-148). In this context the experts of the latest innovative technology are ready to provide their services for a 'nominal' fee. When a technique fails to produce the desired results it can either be modified or replaced. However, usually the underlying assumptions are rarely questioned and often remain largely the same (Lowe 1998:148-151). It is unfortunate that Lowe spends relatively little attention on this contextual factor in the North American context where SLSW was developed. Lowe also does not seem to have noticed the unhealthy link between SLSW and North American nationalism and right-wing politics. These and other contextual factors underlying SLSW I have discussed in more detail in the chapter dealing with the contextual evaluation of SLSW. Nevertheless, I have found Lowe's book very useful and helpful as an introduction to SLSW. I also noted that in his approach Lowe also went beyond the classical Evangelical approach to theology which tends to look mainly at an issue from the perspective of biblical studies, church history and philosophy, as he included a section, albeit very brief, discussing contextual issues in the North American context which contributed to the development of SLSW.

#### **1.1.3.4. Strategic level spiritual warfare: a modern mythology (Reid 2002)**

An interesting polemic dealing with SLSW and related practices was written by Michael B. Reid who is a Charismatic pastor in Essex, Great Britain and who is also an ordained bishop of the International Communion of Charismatic Churches. Reid wrote a dissertation of limited scope at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma (USA) which was subsequently published in 2002 (Reid 2002). Reid's work is particularly interesting as it emerges from the

same Evangelical tradition in which SLSW was developed, namely from within the Pentecostal tradition. Reid decided to scrutinize the teachings and practices of SLSW in response to the confusion he noticed among pastors, church leaders and individuals who were confused by this new approach to spiritual warfare (Reid 2002:22). Consequently, Reid felt compelled to raise his voice in defense of the truth against the error he perceived in SLSW (2002:23-24). Reid's problem statement can be summarized in two questions (2002:24):

1. Are SLSW teaching and its new methodologies based on a sound biblical and theological foundation?
2. Can it be demonstrated in church history that SLSW teaching had a positive influence and if so, what is its validity today?

In his study Reid narrows his investigation to investigating the writings of the mainstream SLSW leaders in terms of their primary beliefs and practices (Reid 2002:34). In this respect Reid's study is different from this author's in the sense that he does not exclusively focus on Wagner, though he considers Wagner as one of the main proponents and does point out that Wagner is SLSW's most prolific writer (Reid 2002: 14). In similar fashion to Lowe and the author of this thesis, Reid in his dissertation first approaches the topic of SLSW from a Biblical perspective, from both Old and New Testament and in the light of their historical contexts (Reid 2002:38-77) and comes to the conclusion that in contrast to SLSW's emphasis on powerful and violent demons, biblical teaching actually shows that Satan's power lies primarily in his ability to deceive, employing lies, deception, suggestions, misrepresentation and illusion. By such means Satan plays on the weaknesses of human beings and deceives them into doing his bidding (Reid 2002:59-60). spiritual warfare is therefore a matter of truth versus falsehood (Reid 2002: 61ff).

I agree with most of Reid's observations but it seems to me that he is still too much focused on the demonic and the individual to the neglect of the demonic and society whereby deception and illusions of Satan give rise to false ideologies and beliefs which result in oppressive and dehumanizing structures that hold millions of people captive.

In my opinion the church should not just focus on a so called truth-encounter in individuals whereby false beliefs, sinful behavioural patterns, and ideologies are unmasked, challenged

and replaced with biblical truth. Going beyond the individual I believe that the church's calling to be salt and light in the world (Mt. 5:13-16) and to resist the Devil (James 4:7) includes the unmasking and opposing of those false beliefs and ideologies and the societal structures based on them. James himself demonstrates this by applying the truth of submitting to God and resisting the Devil not just to a conflict situation within the community of believers (James 4:7-17) but also to the societal problem of oppression of the poor by the rich (James 5:1-6).

Reid rightly demonstrates from Scripture that the word of God is the primary spiritual weapon at the disposal of the individual and the Church. Its power is demonstrated in mission and evangelism through the simple preaching of the Gospel (Reid 2002:62-67). However, here Reid falls in the common pitfall found among Evangelicals to limit the proclamation of the word of God as primarily a verbal matter and fails to see the significance of Christ being the word of God incarnate (John 1:1ff). The church being the body of Christ on earth (1 Cor. 12:12ff) is to do more than proclamation and also should be the embodiment of the word of God in lifestyle and deed. The church in this sense is the word of God incarnate on earth, albeit imperfectly. By the power of the Holy Spirit we are called to be witnesses not just to witness verbally (Acts 1:8). In his section on the Holy Spirit, Reid also misses this essential aspect of the work and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the church and only stresses the Holy Spirit's involvement in our prayer as the one through whom we pray and who convicts unbelievers in the context of evangelism (2002:67-77). Reid rightly observes that prayer is never used as a spiritual weapon in Scripture but is a matter of communication and part of the individual's and church's intimate relationship with God (Reid 2002:68-72).

Reid also looks very briefly at beliefs and practices concerning Satan and the demonic in the inter-testamental period and in church history until the present era (Reid 2002:77-103) and concludes that history demonstrates that Christian doctrine and experience must be firmly grounded in the word of truth. He also highlights that the Christian church entered its darkest age when it abandoned the supremacy of Scripture and allowed the 'superstition of witchcraft' to enter. He also observes that the same seeds of error have produced SLSW in contemporary Christianity causing it to be in danger of slipping once more into the spiritual dark ages (Reid 2002:103-104). While Reid's historical survey is brief and not much in-depth, as an Evangelical I do agree with his conclusion that SLSW may lead us back to a

situation akin to the late Middle Ages when fear of the Devil, demons, magic and witchcraft took an epidemical form and led to oppression, violence and murder with the backing of the Christian church (Forsyth 1987:7; Robbins 1959:547ff; Schaff 1910:VI.59).

Reid then briefly reviews some of the SLSW related beliefs and concepts found in the literature of its proponents including C. Peter Wagner's books (Reid 2002: 105-110). Reid then identifies several influences or issues underlying SLSW which have contributed to its development. The first issue is a faulty hermeneutic which raises experience to a position of high authority to the point of supplanting biblical truth (Reid 2002:113). The second issue is that of world view. Here Reid interacts with the assumption of Wagner, Kraft and other SLSW proponents that the Western worldview is predominantly modernist, the average Western Christian is unable to comprehend the supernatural and existence of good and evil in spiritual terms and should therefore adopt the SLSW spiritual warfare worldview promoted by them (Reid 2002:115-119).

Reid, rightly points out that Christianity is by definition a supernatural faith but nevertheless firmly grounded in Scripture. Secondly, he points out that God is the creator of humanity's ability to reason, it is not a product of Western culture or the Enlightenment, and even though reason may be at times misguided and in error, this does not invalidate the concept of rationality. Thirdly, Wagner, Kraft and associates ignore the fact that the rationalism of the Enlightenment period delivered the church in the West from captivity to superstition and fear of witchcraft which initially even the Reformation failed to eradicate (Reid 2002:120). I agree with Reid's assessment that Enlightenment rationalism should not be considered all wrong. We may agree that rationalism may to some extent had become an idol to the point of replacing Biblical revelation and setting itself up as an infallible judge of what should be believed in Scripture and what not to the point of demythologising virtually everything that is supernatural, but this does not mean that we should replace rationality with irrationality. As Evangelicals we believe that Biblical revelation is due to the Holy Spirit's supernatural activity in its formation but the revelation itself is not irrational.

Finally, Reid reports on an empirical study he has done among pastors of his church in which he tried to measure the impact of teaching biblical and theological truth about spiritual warfare, applied in both an historical and modern context. Reid had expected that the

outcome would be that if people's understanding about spiritual warfare is refocused on what the Bible actually teaches, individuals would turn away from the concepts and teaching of SLSW which had drawn them away from Scripture. These individuals would then be enabled to live and walk in Christ's total victory over the Devil and the demonic powers and by implication not in ignorance, fear and confusion (Reid 2002:170-171). As an alternative to SLSW Reid taught his pastors that spiritual warfare is always between truth and error, which he bases on 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (Reid 2002:251).

While Reid's dissertation is not primarily focused on Wagner as I do in this thesis, nor directly focused on the African context, his study is certainly valuable in order to gain a good understanding of what SLSW is all about. Reid's study among the pastors of his denomination is also useful as its outcome suggests that Reid's emphasis on biblical teaching on spiritual warfare actually convinced the majority of pastors who were initially positively inclined to SLSW (Reid 2002:250ff). While the outcome of Reid's study does not necessarily mean that in an African context the results will be the same, it does nevertheless demonstrate the necessity of Biblical teaching on spiritual warfare as a way of countering the impact of extra-biblical teachings. Unfortunately, in his evaluation of SLSW, Reid gives little attention to the context in which SLSW was developed and as a result does not uncover some of the underlying assumptions behind SLSW which are highlighted in this thesis.

#### **1.1.3.5. Statements of the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation (LCWE)**

The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation is a ecumenical body of Evangelicals world-wide and has repeatedly affirmed the reality of spiritual warfare in its various writings and declarations such as the Lausanne Covenant, the Manila Manifesto, and the 1993 LCWE Statement on spiritual warfare: We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and Powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of world Evangelisation (IWG 1993). It is within the ranks of the LCWE that at the Lausanne II congress in Manila in 1989 the 'AD 2000 and Beyond movement' was launched which included a 'United Prayer Track' which was led by C. Peter Wagner and provided him with an effective platform to promote his SLSW beliefs and practices (AD2000; Priest 1997:140; Wagner 1996a:16-21).

Nevertheless, four years later Wagner's publications had caused much confusion and arguments about spiritual warfare within Evangelical circles. Within the context of the LCWE it was noted that spiritual warfare had become a matter of concern within Evangelicalism. Consequently, an Intercession Working Group (IWG) was formed to study some of these concerns (IWG 1993). The Intercession Working Group (IWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation met at Fairmile Court in London July 10-14, 1993 and discussed for one full day the subject of spiritual warfare and issued a statement.

The statement by the Intercession Working Group (IWG 1993)<sup>16</sup>, among other things, affirms the Evangelical belief in the existence of a personal Devil and his demons, who oppose the work of world evangelisation which makes spiritual warfare inevitable. The emphasis of the IWG is on spiritual warfare as truth versus falsehood, against false ideologies in the world and false Gospels within the church. The statement also responded to SLSW by issuing several warnings, especially against reverting to a (neo) pagan worldview, a preoccupation with the demonic, and concerning the danger of an adversarial mode of ministry among people of other faiths. The statement also called for careful theological reflection concerning the notion of 'territorial spirits' (IWG 1993).

In addition some of the contextual factors which have contributed to SLSW's popularity were noted such as the sensationalized media approach to occult ideas and practices, with a similar trend visible in the Christian world in the SLSW style novels by Frank Perretti and the spate of "How to..." books on power evangelism and spiritual warfare. Concern was also expressed in respect to SLSW's interest in techniques and methodologies which may overshadow the pursuit of more important matters such as holiness and evangelism. The working group also reported the growing disillusionment with the results of spiritual warfare in unrealized expectations, unmet predictions and the sense of being marginalized if the language and practice of spiritual warfare is not adopted. The antidote suggested is a return to the whole teaching of Jesus on prayer, especially what he says about praying in secret that avoids ostentation. The IWG statement also rightly warned against the use of 'Warfare Language' as it can lead to adversarial attitudes. Lastly, concern was expressed that the subject and practice of spiritual warfare is proving to be a divisive issue among Evangelical Christians (IWG 1993).

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<sup>16</sup> See appendix A for the complete text of the IWG statement

As the debate within Evangelical circles continued about the format and role of spiritual warfare in Christian mission, the LCWE organised a consultation in Nairobi, Kenya, from 16 to 22 August 2000, under the banner 'Deliver us from evil' (DUFE). The purpose of the DUFE consultation was to discuss the issue of spiritual warfare in taking the whole Gospel to the whole world. Thirty practitioners, missiologists, pastors and theologians gathered with the objective to seek a biblical and comprehensive understanding of who the enemy is, how he is working and lastly how we can fight him in order to be most effective in the evangelisation of all peoples. The consultation's point of departure included the Lausanne Covenant, the Manila Manifesto, and the 1993 LCWE Statement on spiritual warfare, all of which state the reality of the Christian's engagement in spiritual conflict (DUFE 2000)<sup>17</sup>.

The DUFE statement again affirms the Evangelical stance that the powers and principalities are ontologically beings, meaning that they cannot be reduced to mere social or psychological structures. Satan and the demons are real personal evil spirit beings. Their primary work is distorting and deceiving and perverting what God has created toward Satan's evil purposes, which are to destroy and devalue life by enslaving individuals, families, local communities and whole societies. Satan contextualizes his efforts differently in various societies and cultures. Satan uses deception in an attempt to redirect human allegiances to anyone or anything other than God. In addition to the personal level, Satan does this with regard to all institutionalized forms of religious or ideological allegiance, including the Church. Satan and "the rulers, authorities, the powers of this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" are at work through:

- Deceiving and distorting
- Tempting to sin
- Afflicting the body, emotions, mind, and will
- Taking (partial) control of a person
- Disordering of nature
- Distorting the roles of social, economic, and political structures
- Scapegoating as a means of legitimizing violence
- Promoting self-interest, injustice, oppression, and abuse

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<sup>17</sup> See appendix B for complete text of the DUFE statement.

The realm of the occult

False religions

Other

A primary purpose of the life and ministry of Jesus was to expose, confront, and defeat Satan and destroy his works. Christ has decisively defeated Satan at the cross and through the resurrection. Jesus confronted Satan through prayer, righteousness, obedience, and setting the captives free. In the way Christ ministered to people, he mounted an enormous challenge to the institutions and structures of the world. The model for spiritual authority is Jesus and his obedience and submission to God on the Cross. If Christians follow Christ in trust and obedience to God, they share in his victory and are given the authority of Christ to stand against the attacks of Satan (DUFE 2000).

The statement also addresses many issues characteristic of SLSW theology and practices which were being promoted by Wagner in the context of the “AD 2000 and Beyond” movement. Disagreeing with SLSW’s suggestion that the spiritual world is a closed system of spiritual laws in which Satan has considerable rights (Kraft 1995:111ff; 2002:98ff; Wagner 1998a: 14; 2000d:13ff), the statement responds with (DUFE 2000):

God remains sovereign over all his creation in history, and nothing happens outside God's ultimate control. Thus, the world cannot be conceived of as a closed universe governed merely by naturalistic scientific laws. Neither can it be considered a dualistic system in which Satan is understood to be equal to God. Because we reject a dualistic world view, the blessings of God and the ministrations of the angelic host, the consequences of sin, and the assaults of Satan and demons cannot be isolated solely to a spiritual realm.

Also the danger inherent in SLSW that people become fearful of the Devil and the demons due to their portrayal of them as formidable enemies who can only be overcome by superior power and the right spiritual techniques (Wagner 1996a:30ff) is addressed (DUFE 2000):

Any teaching on spiritual conflict that leads us to fear the Devil to such an extent that we lose our confidence in Christ's victory over him and in God's sovereign power to



protect us must be rejected. All matters concerning spiritual conflict must be viewed first and foremost in terms of our relationship with and faith in God, and not simply in terms of techniques that we must master. The ministry of spiritual conflict is grounded in the transformative power of relationships, not techniques or methods.

The aggressive and militant tone of Wagner and other SLSW practitioners who talk in terms of confronting Satanic strongholds, warfare prayer and militant intercession (Wagner 1992b:81-84; 1993c: 96ff; 127-226), is also addressed (DUFE 2000):

Working for positive strongholds for God through a "gentle invasion" that overcomes evil with good and wins people by love is as important as breaking down Satanic strongholds. We thus affirm the importance and primacy of the local church and its life of faith. Worship is spiritual conflict. It is not aggressive, spectacular spiritual conflict; not a Strategy, nor a means to an end; but involves mind, body, and spirit responding with all that we are, to all that God is.

Among other things the DUFE statement also calls attention to the fact that spiritual warfare is more than casting out demons or pray against demons and includes recognizing the various social evils in society which are encouraged or supported by human institutions in which the principalities and powers work against God and his intention for humankind. The task of the church in combating the principalities and powers in the socio-political context is to unmask their idolatrous pretensions, to identify their dehumanizing values and actions, and to work for the release of their victims. This work involves spiritual, political, and social actions. While this approach to spiritual warfare may not be denied by Wagner and other SLSW practitioners, nevertheless their emphasis has been more on combating territorial demons by means of spiritual technology.

The DUFE statement also seems to have taken into consideration the call for discernment by Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995) concerning magical uses of Christian terms and caution practitioners to avoid making spiritual conflict into Christian magic (DUFE 2000):

Any suggestion that a particular technique or method in spiritual conflict ministry ensures success is a magical, sub-Christian understanding of God's workings. We

also call for actions that ensure that our approaches and explanations of spiritual conflict do not tie new converts to the very fears from which Christ died to free them. Being free in Christ means being free from fear of the demonic.

Also the tendency common among SLSW practitioners but also among Christians from an African traditional religious background to blame every problem and evil on the Devil and the demons is addressed (DUFE 2000):

We warn against an overemphasis on spirits that blames demons for the actions of people. Demons can only work through people- and people can actively choose to cooperate. Spirits are not the only source of resistance to the Gospel. We warn against confusing correlations or coincidence with causation in reporting apparent victories as well as the uncritical use of undocumented accounts to establish the validity of cosmic spiritual warfare.

Besides the fact that both the IWG and the DUFE consultation were not just responding to Wagner, but also to other SLSW proponents their statements are relevant when evaluating Wagner. Unfortunately, the participants of the DUFE consultation failed to resolve the key issue concerning the existence of and need for battling territorial spirits which was still outstanding from the IWG consultation. The report states that delegates experienced tension over whether there is biblical warrant for warfare prayer against territorial spirits as a valid tool for evangelisation. They only agreed on the invalidity of the claim that warfare prayer against territorial spirits is the only key to effective evangelisation. Further tension was experienced concerning the extent to which we can learn and verify things from the spiritual realm from experiences not immediately verifiable from Scripture in contrast to limiting our understanding of the spiritual realm from Scripture alone. Some have maintained that experience is crucial to understanding spiritual conflict. Also there was no agreement as to whether or how the truths about spiritual realities and spiritual conflict methodologies can be verified empirically. Some engage in active experimentation in spiritual conflict ministry as a means of developing generalities concerning spiritual conflict, while others are not convinced of the validity of this way of learning. How to verify the validity of what is proposed as spiritual truth is a very important epistemological question for Evangelicalism which I have sought to answer in this study.

### **1.1.3.6. An urban mission strategy for reaching entire cities with the gospel. A critical evaluation of the prayer evangelism strategy of Ed Silvano (Mostert 1997)**

This doctoral thesis by Bennie Mostert looks at the prayer-evangelism strategy of South American evangelist Ed Silvano. Even though the main focus of Mostert's thesis is on Ed Silvano, the fact that Silvano is a former student and close associate of Wagner (2000b:109) may shed some light on Wagner and his SLSW beliefs. It is likely that some of Silvano's beliefs and practices reflect those of his teacher. In fact Mostert confirms this as he states that Wagner had a strong influence on Silvano and that they are still in close contact (Mostert 1997:40).

The first part of Mostert's thesis looks at the history and development of prayer evangelism from the Billy Graham style 'crusade'<sup>18</sup> evangelism via saturation evangelism to body evangelism to prayer evangelism (Mostert 1997:30ff). Significant is here that Mostert here follows Wagner's historical evaluation without any question (cf. Wagner 1987:134-150). Mostert then suggests that the concept of spiritual warfare has been developed within the South American context since 1983 and that Peter and Doris Wagner as well as other North Americans like John White and Cindy Jacobs were involved in this (Mostert 1997:34). All these persons are actually closely affiliated to the Pentecostal Vineyard movement which was pioneered by Wagner and Wimber as will be evident in my description and evaluation of Wagner's theological pilgrimage. I do not agree with the notion that spiritual warfare was developed in South America from 1983, but would like to qualify it and say that a certain style of spiritual warfare was developed in North America and then experimented with in South America, namely the strategic level spiritual warfare which was mainly the brainchild of Wagner as I demonstrate in my thesis. Mostert's observation that consequently 'crusade' evangelists like Carlos Annacondia, Omar Cabrera and others started to combine evangelistic crusade with spiritual warfare after the input of the North Americans (Mostert 1997:34) supports this notion.

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<sup>18</sup> I personally think that the word 'crusade' is an inappropriate word to use from the perspective of Christian love and sensitivity for the feelings of others, due to the negative historical connotations of this word as it was used to describe the cruel battles between the 'Christians' and 'Muslims' in the Middle Ages. Anyone who has ever worked closely with Muslims knows how sensitive this word is. Nevertheless as both the Billy Graham association and Mostert use this word I have used it in my thesis whenever referring to the terms they use albeit with reservations.

It is against this backdrop that Mostert studies Ed Silvano's prayer evangelism. Mostert also confirms that Silvano's spiritual warfare emphasis partly results from his studies under Wagner (Mostert 1997:35). Silvano's theology of spiritual warfare and spiritual mapping is identified by Mostert as typically Pentecostal (Mostert 1997:40). Here I have to strongly disagree with Mostert since SLSW style spiritual warfare, which is characterised by a focus on territorial spirits, spiritual mapping, identificational repentance and warfare prayer, has not traditionally been part of Pentecostalism of the neo-Pentecostal Charismatics. In fact, many Pentecostals have not embraced SLSW at all, for example Michael Reid (Reid 1998) and myself as I come from a Pentecostal background. Mostert also points out that Silvano operates from a spiritual warfare worldview which believes that the demonic world influences life in the city in a very definite way by means of existing demonic strongholds. Consequently spiritual mapping and spiritual warfare form key elements in Silvano's strategy for urban evangelism (Mostert 1997:41-42). That Silvano is actually closely linked to Wagner and his SLSW also becomes evident from his close connection with other members of Wagner's inner circle in the La Plata 'spiritual warfare project' in Argentina such as Victor Lorenzo and Cindy Jacobs (Mostert 1997:51-52). The city of La Plata was identified by Wagner as a 'seat of Satan for Freemasonry' by which he means a very powerful demonic stronghold closely linked to freemasonry (Wagner 1993e:90). Mostert's description of the modus operandi of Victor Lorenzo and the other spiritual warriors in La Plata is interesting as it demonstrates how preconceived ideas, assumptions, spiritual mapping style research and legitimate social concerns become all intertwined and together culminate in the concept of a territorial demonic stronghold which is then battled by means of identificational repentance and warfare prayer (Mostert 1997:53-54).

Having taken a closer look at Silvano's strategy for urban evangelism Mostert comes, among other things, to the conclusion that the concept of 'identificational repentance' is not without problems (1997:86). He rightly points out that some of the aims are biblical, that is reconciliation and restitution, but also highlights that confession and repentance should not be reduced to a technique or strategy (Mostert 1997:86). Mostert also acknowledges that the biblical basis is not clear and that more theological reflection is necessary though he agrees with Wagner that Christians do need to deal with the evils of the past in their context (Mostert 1997:86). However, as much as I agree that contextualisation also involves looking at the

evils of the past which may still influence the present, Mostert seems to overlook the underlying SLSW assumption that territorial demons have a stronghold in a certain area because of past sins and evils and that identificational repentance is clearly understood by SLSW proponents as a method for weakening the hold of the demons on that area. Mostert does, however, briefly look at spiritual warfare in Scripture, church history and in the present, and comes to the conclusion that Western missionaries often failed to recognise the deep seated fears of the evil supernatural in the contexts in which they ministered. Consequently, they did not prepare their converts for spiritual warfare by developing a culturally relevant demonology or theology of power encounter for them (Mostert 1997:150).

I do agree with Mostert that Western missionaries often have ignored the deep seated fears of the supernatural among their converts. In my personal experience in Christian mission in Zimbabwe and Malawi I have observed that many Western missionaries still ignore these fears and brush them away as irrelevant superstitions. However, in spite of this I would not recommend that the Western missionaries should develop a demonology or theology of power encounter for their converts as in the case of Wagner's SLSW. A better solution may be found if we theologize together with people from the context in which we minister in order to find pastorally and culturally sensitive ways to address their fear of the evil supernatural. In different contexts this may take different forms. Mostert, drawing on Murphy, (1992:10ff) suggests that we among other things must embrace a spiritual warfare worldview. This worldview understands the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil to be engaged in a fierce conflict one against the other. It is a biblical dualism which recognises that at least for a period, present reality is in a state of dualism. It is also a limited dualism that has a beginning and an end (Mostert 1997:151-153). I agree with Mostert that Scripture indeed pictures life on earth as life in a battle zone, hence Paul's exhortation to stand firm against the wiles of the Devil (Eph. 6:10ff). However, we must be careful not to overestimate the power of the Devil and his demons beyond what Scripture teaches. The battle may appear fierce from our frail human perspective, but one does not get that picture from the Gospels when Christ encounters demons in various demoniacs. In all such cases the demons are extremely fearful and are unable to resist even a simple command from Christ that they should leave their victim. To the believer the Devil and demons may appear powerful, but when Christ comes on the scene they become powerless. This is discussed more elaborately in this present study.

Next, Mostert briefly surveys the understanding of spiritual warfare in the Reformed tradition with its emphasis on the biblical teaching that the powers have been disarmed and defeated (Mostert 1997:154ff). Besides briefly discussing recent Reformed works, Mostert predominantly refers to the writings of Luther, Calvin, Ridderbos and Berkouwer to illustrate that even though in the Reformed tradition Christ's victory is emphasized it has also generally been accepted that there is still a spiritual battle going on, hence Christ's inclusion of the phrase 'deliver us from the evil one' in the Lord's prayer (Mostert 1997:161, 165). Drawing on McAlpine (1991:11-29), Mostert continues to discuss the understanding of the concept of the powers and spiritual warfare in four Christian traditions, namely the Reformed tradition, the Anabaptist tradition, the Third Wave tradition and the Social Science tradition (Mostert 1997:166ff).

In discussing the Reformed tradition, Mostert fails to clearly distinguish between the Evangelical or conservative Reformed tradition and the more liberal and neo-orthodox Reformed tradition. Consequently, Mostert goes along with McAlpine's view that only a minority of theologians in the Reformed tradition will understand the powers and principalities in the Pauline letters as demons in the sense of personal spirit beings (Mostert 1997:171). This may be true if one does not differentiate, but certainly among Reformed Evangelicals the majority of their theologians would understand the powers as personal evil demonic beings. It is, therefore, not correct to suggest that a Reformed Evangelical like Michael Green stands in the Pentecostal Third Wave tradition as he actually stands in the conservative Reformed Evangelical tradition (Mostert 1997:171ff). In fact Mostert himself refers to Calvin (and Luther's) understanding of the powers as personal evil beings (Mostert 1997:154ff), and this understanding has continued to be part and parcel of the more conservative and Evangelical Reformed tradition. In the same manner Clinton E. Arnold's position that warfare against the powers is through resisting the temptation and deceit of the powers by means of the spiritual armour described in *Ephesians* 6, as well as, fearlessly proclaiming the Gospel of truth, while constantly focused on God in prayer, is more reflective of the Evangelical Reformed tradition (Arnold 1992:156ff; Mostert 1997:167ff).

I do agree with Mostert that one does not need to understand the powers as either impersonal oppressive structures or personal demons. I disagree, however, that we should therefore differentiate between two types of powers, one impersonal and one demonic. I would suggest

that it would be better to understand the powers as both impersonal oppressive structures and demonic at the same time. Just as the apostle John did not differentiate between the impersonal power of the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities and the personal Devil in *Revelation 2:9-10*. Behind all oppressive structures, whether political, ecclesiastical, cultural or other, which have been established and are being maintained by human beings, are false ideologies and lies. Just as in the case of false doctrines, such lies are not simply the product of sinful human imagination but have been inspired and encouraged by personal evil spirit beings, namely the Devil and his demons.(1 Tim. 4:1-2). In this thesis I will elaborate more on my point of view.

In his evaluation of spiritual warfare Mostert comes up with a long list of pitfalls and extremist viewpoints. Not all of these pitfalls are related to Wagner's SLSW but some are related such as the caution against the tendency of some to make their spiritual warfare tactics and experiences normative as Wagner certainly does (Mostert 1997:179). Mostert also warns against pre-occupation with names of demonic powers as would be in the case of spiritual mapping, as well as the use of confusing terminology by some Pentecostals (Mostert 1997:179). This would certainly apply to Wagner who constantly coins new terms, re-defines old terms and is often unclear about what he really means. Mostert also warns against the rather magical beliefs and practices among many people who are pre-occupied with spiritual warfare (Mostert 1997:180-181) as well as dubious practices such as having conversations with demons or rebuking principalities who are believed to be the territorial ruling demons over certain cities (Mostert 1997:181-182). I also agree with his assessment that it is futile to command a demon to leave a place or territory as demons can move and according to Scripture roam around, whether a demon is present or not is irrelevant, what is important is that we ought to live in such a way that we do not even give them a foothold (Mostert 1997:181-182).

Mostert, nevertheless, views SLSW related practices such as identifactional repentance, spiritual mapping and warfare prayer in Silvosó's prayer evangelism in a positive light as he believes it brings unity, dealing with sin, confession and reconciliation (Mostert 1997:185ff). However, considering the confusion, controversy caused by such SLSW practices in Evangelical Missiological circles I would conclude that they rather foster disunity. I do agree that considering the confusion about spiritual warfare, Reformed Evangelicals may have been

too passive and need to be outgoing in stressing that we need to resist the Devil and his powers and unmask and undo the evils they have promoted and fostered in human society.

I disagree with Mostert's positive evaluation of spiritual mapping in which he basically downplays how closely the practice of spiritual mapping is interwoven with the belief in the existence of territorial demons and the SLSW emphasis on exorcising these from a territory (Mostert 1997:191ff). spiritual mapping as it is promoted by Wagner and his disciple George Otis junior is not the same as, 'researching a context for the sake of being able to communicate and apply the Gospel more effectively', but it is predominantly focused on 'uncovering' the demonic strongholds in a territory and to discover the nature and names of the territorial spirits in that area. In my thesis I will demonstrate that this is indeed the case from Wagner's own writings. Interestingly enough Mostert to some extent affirms this as he quotes Wagner's spiritual mapping questionnaire and admits that its purpose is trying to determine demonic strongholds and the names of the principalities ruling or active in the area (Mostert 1997:193-194). Nevertheless, I agree with Mostert's conclusion that another study is needed which looks at how to deal with demonic forces and also that Christians need to be equipped with proper biblical knowledge about demons and their activities in the light of Christ's victory (Mostert 1997:198). In my study about Wagner's SLSW I have attempted to address these issues.

### **1.1.3.7. Conclusions from book reviews**

All the works I have mentioned above focus on certain aspects of SLSW as it has been promoted and practiced by its various proponents and do not specifically focus on Wagner. In spite of Wagner's writings featuring prominently in every evaluation of SLSW, no-one seems to have realised that Wagner is the main brain behind this mission strategy. Lowe acknowledges Wagner as a leading advocate (1998:16), but does not dwell on his key-role in the laying the foundation and guiding the further development and promotion of SLSW. Up to date, no one has specifically interacted with, and evaluated, Wagner's SLSW theology and praxis as I have attempted to do in this thesis. Nevertheless, all the works described above have called for further critical study of SLSW, particularly the statements of the LCWE reflect this call (DUFE 2000). By means of this study I have added my contribution to the SLSW debate within Evangelical missiology.



In spite of the controversy surrounding SLSW, most Evangelical missiologists would affirm that historically there has always been a spiritual warfare dimension in Christian Mission (Lowe 1998:100; van der Meer 2001:48ff) which took different forms throughout church history. Actually, the Bible (Eph. 6:10-18) and church history shows that the perpetual combat with Satan and his kingdom is at the core of much Christian belief (Forsyth 1987:3; Kallas 1968: 80; Russel 1981:101-102). Yet, recognising that there is a spiritual warfare dimension in Christian mission, is not identical to endorsing Wagner's SLSW. We need to examine whether Wagner's ideas for Evangelical Christian mission constitute a biblically and theologically sound and contextually relevant vision for Evangelical missiology and whether these ideas indeed are from God as Wagner tells us in his books (Wagner 1995a: 38; 1998a: 14; 2001b: 8-11). For the Evangelical missiologist, such an endeavour entails the uncovering, examination and evaluation of the various assumptions and beliefs which are part of SLSW in the light of Scripture, church historical tradition and from an Evangelical missiological perspective. This I have attempted to do in this study.

## **1.2. Personal considerations**

### **1.2.1. My experiences in Evangelical christian mission and spiritual warfare**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, my familiarity with SLSW goes back to the late 1980s. My first involvement with Evangelical Christian mission was in the late 1980s with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. At that time many of the ideas and practices later incorporated in SLSW were already circulating and they were experimented with by various inner city missionaries of YWAM including myself (Lawson 1991:31; Wagner 1986:41-42; 1996a: 256). At a later stage, my experiences in Christian Mission in Africa, interaction with believers of other cultures, as well as interaction with the global missiological community, led me to reflect more critically on issues of spiritual warfare, demonology, African traditional beliefs, and mission. Theological training at Harare Theological College in Harare, Zimbabwe, and with the University of South Africa in Pretoria, South Africa, has helped me to refine my understanding of Christian mission and of spiritual warfare.

### **1.2.2. Similarities and dissimilarities in my background as compared to Wagner**

As I evaluate Wagner's strategic level spiritual warfare theology, I do so as an Evangelical coming from a Pentecostal tradition. I have in common with Wagner that I take the Bible as God's Word and, therefore, cannot demythologise the evil powers which are identified in the Bible as Satan and his demons and are described in a variety of terms such as evil spirits, principalities, powers, dominions and world rulers (Eph. 1:21, 3:10, 6:12). Jesus Christ, the early Christian church and many Christians throughout church history have viewed these beings as personal spiritual beings (Bavinck 1976:127ff; De Villiers 1987:86ff). Wagner was a missionary in Bolivia for 16 years and similarly I have spent more than 15 years in Christian mission among people with various animist<sup>19</sup> beliefs and practices. The Evangelical mission agency I was affiliated with in Zimbabwe is now part of SIM International just as the Andes Mission with which Wagner was affiliated (Wagner 1997:112). Just as Wagner, I have been exposed to both Dispensationalist theology and Reformed theology. Wagner takes the Devil and the demons serious as spiritual enemies who oppose the Gospel and so do I. Like Wagner, I believe that in the New Testament Jesus made his lordship known by casting out demons and that the rule of the Kingdom of God is demonstrated in His power over the cosmic forces (König 1975:40ff). Like Wagner, I believe strongly in the propagation of the Gospel and the making of disciples of all nations. However, I differ with Wagner in that I grew up in a Pentecostal environment and have become cautious with issues such as supernatural inspiration and extra-biblical revelation due to some of the excesses I have witnessed first hand. Wagner, however, comes from a non-Pentecostal background and became a Pentecostal at a later stage in life due to his experiences in Christian Mission.

The change in my theological outlook has been precipitated by the many unfulfilled or erroneous prophecies I observed. Also the use of psychological techniques to bring about 'divine' healing, and the abuse of 'spiritual' authority to establish, often contradictory, theological 'truth', prompted many questions. As a result of wrestling with these and other issues I consider myself as a cautious moderately Pentecostal Evangelical. I am often more at home in a Baptist or Reformed church than in some of the Pentecostal churches. Wagner, in contrast, coming from a non-Pentecostal background, has gradually embraced most of the

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<sup>19</sup> I am aware the word animist has often been used in a derogatory sense with negative connotations of 'backwardness' or 'uncivilised', but I only use it in the same anthropological sense as Priest, Campbell and Mullen (1995:13) who define 'animism' as a form of religion which employs the principles of magical thought to interaction with personal spirits and deities.

beliefs and practices found in the Pentecostal movement and became one of the founders and leaders of the neo-Pentecostal Third Wave movement.<sup>20</sup> I have highlighted the similarities and differences between Wagner's pilgrimage and my own in order to disclose something of my background and the personal context in which I have developed my understanding of Wagner's SLSW and may have developed some biases.

### **1.2.3. Contours of my missiology**

In Evangelical missiology there are various theoretical and practical approaches and it is therefore important that I clarify my approach which without a doubt has already partially surfaced in the preceding paragraphs. My approach is similar to that which is employed by Evangelical theologians and missiologists such as Harvey M. Conn (1983:7; 1990:51-63), Richard W. Engle (1983:85-107), Stanley Gundry (1979:3-13); David J. Hesselgrave (1985:443ff) and Edward Rommen (Hesselgrave & Rommen 1989). This approach to Evangelical missiology is committed to understanding the biblical text in its historical-cultural context, and seeks to relate this understanding to the present context and its socio-economic, cultural and religious dynamics. Though some of its exponents may not openly acknowledge it, but this contextual approach to missiology has incorporated a lot of insights from other missiological traditions.

The mainstream Evangelical hermeneutic employed by the above mentioned Evangelical scholars differs from the hermeneutic of Dispensationalist Evangelicalism, represented by J. N. Darby, C.I. Scofield and others in various ways. Mainstream Evangelicalism does not take everything in Scripture at face-value but understands Scripture in context. Dispensationalists, however, maintain a rigidly literal interpretation of the Bible, whereby the literal meaning of the words in the text determines its interpretation. This hermeneutic is most clearly visible in the way Dispensationalists treat prophecies in Scripture concerning Israel as for them Israel always refers to ethnic Israel. Therefore, promises about the future messianic kingdom made by God to Israel as a nation, only apply to Israel as a nation and cannot be understood as fulfilled in, or applying to the church as the 'new Israel'. Therefore, such prophecies still must be fulfilled in future (Ferguson & Wright 1988:200-201; 266-268). Mainstream Evangelicals, however, tend to differentiate between ethnic Israel and the 'true Israel' as Paul explains that not all those belonging to ethnic Israel are Israel (Rom 9:6). The true Israel

<sup>20</sup> See the next chapter on Wagner's theological pilgrimage.

consists not of those who are the natural children but of those who are the children of the promise (Rom 9:8-9), those who are children by faith, the genuine believers both in the time of Holy Scripture and throughout the ages to the present age. Therefore, unlike the Dispensationalists who understand Old Testament prophecies as applying to ethnic Israel, mainstream Evangelicals understand many of the Old Testament prophecies as being fulfilled in the church since every true believer is part of the true Israel, a child of Abraham by faith (Rom. 4:16-17). As a result of this difference in hermeneutic Dispensationalists consider ethnic Israel, both in the sense of the Jewish people and in the sense of the political nation of Israel very important. A good example of this bias towards the nation of Israel can be observed in magazines such as very popular 'The Jerusalem Post – Christian Edition' (JP 2008). In contrast mainstream Evangelicals, sometimes labelled Reformed Evangelicals, are not so much focused on ethnic Israel and are more focused on the world as a whole of which Israel is just seen as one equal part.

Most Dispensationalists share a pessimistic view of the world which they believe is on its way to Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16; 20:7-10) and from which people need to be saved. However, before the end comes people can still be saved with their last chance being in an end-time revival. Dispensationalist missiology can therefore be called a 'life boat' or 'wreckers-boat' missiology (Chafer 1914:391; Gundry 1977:51ff)<sup>21</sup>. Dispensationalist end-time revivalism is best demonstrated by the words of Dwight L. Moody who stated that God had given him a lifeboat to save as many souls as possible from the sinking ship of the world on its way to destruction (Gundry 1977:52). There is little or no use for improving a world that is about to be destroyed. In contrast, mainstream Evangelicalism understands salvation more as being saved in the world and for the sake of the world, rather than on being saved from the world. Indeed we must be saved from the world, in the sense of being saved from worldliness, i.e. the sinful and evil ways of the world of humanity, blinded by Satan and the evil and sin he promotes (Eph. 2:1-3). In that sense we are not of the world (John 17:14) as we follow Christ. But, we are also in the world and, like Christ, we are called to lay down our lives for the good of this world as light in the darkness and as the salt of the earth (Mat.

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<sup>21</sup> This view widely held in fundamentalist circles and usually goes hand in hand with a premillennial Dispensationalist eschatology which regards the church or Christianity as a life boat in a sinking world. The church will be raptured at the second coming of Christ prior to the judgement and destruction of the world. One of its most well-known adherents was the famous American evangelist D.L. Moody who believed God had given him a life-boat to save people from the world (quoted in Gundry 1977:52).

5:13). Whereas, Dispensationalist missiology tends to be more separatist and inward looking, contextual Evangelical missiology is more activist and outward looking.

The mainstream Evangelical hermeneutic I employ as well as my missiology has also has same affinity with post modern thought in the sense that I do not believe that anyone can ever claim to have an unbiased understanding of ultimate truth. I do believe ultimate spiritual truth exists in God and that sufficient truth has been revealed and communicated by God in Holy Scripture in such a manner that every human being, anywhere in the world, can get a sufficient grasp of God's truth for personal salvation and for righteous living. I believe that Gods truth can be approximated sufficiently for us to make reasonable value judgements as to what is true or false, right or wrong, good or evil, orthodox or heretical. However, only God is perfectly unbiased, but our understanding of the truth isn't, and consequently we need to counter our biases as much as possible by critical self-evaluation and interaction with others. This interaction should take place in the global hermeneutical community of past and present in order to approximate Gods truth as closely as possible (Bevans 1992:18ff; Pardi 2006). In the next section I explain my position in more detail as this is a crucial topic.

Lastly, my missiology has undoubtedly been shaped by my education, life and ministry in sub-Saharan Africa. Unlike many of my fellow European missiologists, I have been educated theologically in Africa, first at Harare Theological College in Zimbabwe and later at the University of South Africa. Consequently I have been exposed to missiology from both a European and African perspective which has been a very valuable experience. Presently I reside and work in Malawi where I am involved in theological education at grass-root level which in itself is an on-going educational experience for me.

#### **1.2.4. Contours of my Evangelical epistemology in a post modern world**

Though a large segment within Evangelicalism seeks to continue to evaluate doctrine and practice using modernist approaches to epistemology, hermeneutics and theology, others are aware that in the emerging postmodern era we need to find different ways to evaluate doctrine and practice (Perry 2001). For example, Wagner responds to critics who do not agree with his SLSW interpretation of history by suggesting that historians have their own

personal paradigms, special lenses through which they choose to read history (1996a:94). A modernist Evangelical will deny this and refute it on the basis of an Evangelical reading of church history and an Evangelical approach to exegesis and interpretation of Scripture. In fact, the biblical evaluation found in this thesis and the evaluation of Wagner's church historical evidence, would be enough for most Evangelicals to deny the validity of SLSW.

Yet, from a post modern approach refuting Wagner is not so easy. If we take a relativist postmodern approach all we can conclude is that Wagner holds and promotes his own subjective truth and we may hold and promote another subjective truth, simply because we have different interests, biases or preferences. Wagner's statement that we all have our own interpretative lenses (1996a:94) reflects a postmodern approach to reality which suggests that no-one is fully objective in his or her interpretation of reality. In as far as history is concerned, historical writing before Nietzsche was clearly dominated by the values of the European Enlightenment, including a belief in the objective validity of the scientific method and its applicability to historical inquiry (Mesa 2006). Postmodern historiography has questioned these comfortable assumptions and suggests that history is a subjective narrative about the past written in the here and now. History is not an objective reflection on facts and events in the past, but it is a narrative about the past constructed by the historian in the present (Munslow 2001). The historian is unavoidably implicated in the creation of a meaning for the past. This raises important questions as: does the past contain one true meaning or several? Is there one story to be discovered or are there several stories which can be legitimately generated (Munslow 2001)? The same argument can be applied to the theologian who approaches the ancient biblical text or the texts of the church Fathers or others in Christian history. In a very real sense the postmodern challenge forces us to face up to the highly complex question of how we know things about the past and what we, as moral beings, do as a result (Munslow 2001).

However, even if we embrace a post modern approach to reality, this does not mean that every interpretation of reality is relative and equally valid or invalid. Many postmodern Evangelicals will probably agree with the realist fraction within postmodernism which believes that there is ultimate truth, but are sceptical of human ability to fully attain this truth. For realists, truth is something that humans are ever seeking, but never (fully) reaching. Through time, it is possible to better sharpen the ability to approximate truth, but not to fully

attain ultimate truth (Hoffman et al. 2006:12). As Evangelicals we may also concede that no-one can ever know truth as fully as God does, therefore no-one can claim to know absolute truth (Carson 2003). A Christian approach to postmodernism would maintain that ultimate truth is religious truth, or God's truth, and can only be partially understood by humankind because of our fallen nature. This would apply to God's partial self-revelation in nature (Rom 1:18-23), his partial self-revelation in the history of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament writings (Hebr. 1:1) as well as to God's full self-revelation in Christ (Hebr. 1:2-3) which has been recorded in part in the New Testament writings. However, since God, though perfect and holy, considered it sufficient to reveal himself through imperfect and less holy human beings in the context of human history, culture and language, it must therefore be possible to get a reasonable grasp of God's revealed truth. Regardless of the limitations of language, interpretative differences and cultural biases, it must be possible to come to a reasonable understanding of God's truth as we use our human faculties.

Not every understanding of truth is equal to the other. While no-one can claim to have a 100% correct understanding of the truth, there are obviously different approximations of truth. We can determine whether something is a close or a remote approximation to the truth if we carefully study as much available data as possible. For example, if a baby cries because it is hungry and someone would interpret the baby's cries as the baby communicating his or her frustrations over global warming, most people, regardless of their cultural and ethnic backgrounds would consider that person out of his or her mind. If the baby is fed and stops crying most people would take this as evidence that the baby was crying because of hunger. Now, it is very well possible that the baby was both hungry and also frustrated because it wanted more attention. The conclusion that the baby was hungry was therefore possibly not the total truth. Nevertheless it was a much closer approximation of reality than the conclusion that the baby was crying because of its concern about global warming.

In the field of history we may think of the many revisionist theories of the holocaust, some of which deny that it ever took place. Since there are still many witnesses alive today, and since many documents are in existence and since many photos were taken, there is considerably more evidence as 'proof' that the holocaust took place than that there is 'proof' to the contrary. We may agree that no-one is able to give a fully objective and comprehensive

account of what happened during the holocaust, or why it happened, but to state that the holocaust took place is far more true than to deny it altogether.

In Christian theology the same principles apply. We evaluate theology and practice in the light of biblical and church historical evidence, not in a modernist fashion of establishing absolute truth, but in humility seeking to approach truth as close as humanly possible with the means and information at our disposal. Not all Evangelicals will agree. Especially in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles it is common to claim that an interpretation is 'authoritative' because it was 'inspired' by the Holy Spirit. This tendency we have also observed in Wagner's defense of SLSW when he says that the validity of any extra-biblical claim to reality, must be confirmed or rejected on the basis of criteria other than biblical exegesis (Wagner 1996a:66). Wagner applies this to his personal experiences of direct divine revelation and the hearing of God's voice but also to his interpretation of contemporary events, culture, art, history, demonic utterances and spiritual information provided by others (Wagner 1996a:67-71). Wagner claims that God told him to take leadership in the area of territorial spirits (Wagner 1996a:20) and claims to have apostolic authority and a divine appointment to reshape Christianity, which is primarily based on extra-biblical revelation (Wagner 1996a:20, 2000b:80-82, 113-114; 116-119, 127). In addition Wagner claims to receive divine guidance by means of supernatural inspiration (2000b:80-82, 108-110, 113-114; 116-119, 127), and receives divine assignment such as in the case of 'operation icecastle' (Wagner 2000c:29).

However, no individual is at liberty to claim that his new insight applies to the wider church without it being scrutinised by others in that same global church. We should not expect our 'insights' to be received uncritically simply because we claim that the Holy Spirit has given us these 'insights' (May 2006). Even in a postmodern environment such a method to establish 'probable' truth is inadequate. This raises many questions about the place of traditional hermeneutics and the role of the academy; the role of the individual and the role of the community; and the role of the history of interpretation in church history and in the present context (May 2006). Any private interpretation that is put forward for the whole church has to be subject to the whole church community.



Being a community rooted in the Holy Scriptures we do believe that God's Holy Spirit works in individuals, the church and in the world (John 14:26; 16:5-16). But equally we believe that God does not contradict himself and consequently any claim of inspiration, guidance and information given by the Holy Spirit in today's church has also to be set against the activity of the Spirit within the church over the past two thousand years. We must therefore test any claim to spiritual truth first and foremost in the light of the teachings of Holy Scripture. But, because we are aware of our fallibility in interpretation and communication, our interpretation of Scripture must be done in the light of the hermeneutical community of believers both in past and present. In the light of church history and in the light of contemporary theological reflection. Our fallibility does not mean we cannot arrive at any truth at all. Our very belief in the incarnation of Christ, his teachings, his crucifixion and resurrection, presumes that we have sufficient faith in the human ability to understand spiritual truth as recorded in Scripture well enough to understand the Gospel and our need for salvation and repentance and to become disciples of Christ. Our understanding of truth may not be as perfect as God's understanding, but we can understand it enough for God to be able to hold us accountable, to bring us to faith and redemption and to instruct us concerning how we should live.

God provided the Scriptures with the intention to communicate truth, and God gave His people the ability to understand His revelation in spite of their sinful preconditions. He did not communicate in order to bewilder or confuse His redeemed. He was not hindered by fear that His servants would misunderstand His intended message because of their limitedness. Obviously God had full faith in humanity that together with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit it would be able to understand His truth well enough. Therefore, there does not need to be the broad and deep chasm or the disparaging two horizons between God's revelation in scripture and the believers' understanding of the truth God intended to communicate. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand and apply God's truth as it is revealed in Scripture (Shockley 2000).

Using Paul's metaphor in 1 Cor. 13:12 we see as in a dim mirror and though none of us on this side of eternity may see clearly, we can still see. We can understand God's truth and his love especially if we do so together with all the saints (Eph. 3:17-19). If we are in doubt about any spiritual truth we must ask ourselves, 'is what we think we see in agreement with

what was seen by those whose mirrors were a lot less dim than ours, namely the Apostles of the New Testament era?'. Their mirrors were wiped and polished more than any ordinary human beings in history, as they were moulded, trained and educated by the only human ever who had a fully unbiased understanding of absolute divine truth, namely Christ himself. Consequently, there has always been a considerable emphasis on the Christian tradition on the apostolic tradition of the New Testament as these had a clear understanding of spiritual reality having been taught by Christ. There is therefore need to interpret Scripture carefully in the light of the prophetic and apostolic tradition as found in Scripture. Our beliefs and doctrines can only be considered orthodox if they are in conformation with the teaching of Holy Scripture. While methods of interpretation of Scripture have certainly not been uniform throughout Christian history, there is a common understanding that we cannot digress from the teachings of Holy Scripture.

The church has historically wrestled with many heresies, often in a pluralist context not unlike the present post modern context, and sought to establish the boundaries of orthodoxy (Cooper 2004). This development can already be seen in the Pauline epistles where Paul strongly condemns rival Gospels who added Jewish Legal requirements (*Galatians*), Epicurean libertarianism (1 Cor. 6) or proto-Gnostic philosophy (*Colossians*) to the Gospel. This trend set by Paul and the other Apostles to keep the faith pure from external influences was continued by the Apostolic Fathers, in the canon formation and the development of the creeds (Noll 1997:43-46; Wright in Dowley 1990:110ff). It is, therefore, particularly noteworthy how the early Christian church responded to the various new propositions that erupted in their midst. Any existing and new propositions were tested and tried against heresy by a hermeneutical community that spanned from North Africa to Persia and from Britain to Arabia. The theological propositions advanced by the early church were not so much bound in contextual Greek cultural categories, but rather in Moses, Christ, and Paul. The early church attempted to anchor all of their theology in the Apostolic Tradition and as such propagated an orthodoxy that was contextual and transcultural by nature (Cooper 2004). Nevertheless, in the current post modern era we are rightly reminded of our fallibility and subjectivity in our interpretation of reality. In accordance to Scripture I believe that man, even after spiritual rebirth, is unable to understand all aspects of truth. In spite of the regenerating and sanctifying work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we must equally admit and confess that often willingly or unwillingly we close our eyes to the truth and harden our

hearts to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and often construct our own versions of the truth, or modify God's truth rather than faithfully submitting to God's truth as it is revealed in Scripture. We discussed above that our understanding of God's truth is fallible and biased and therefore we need to interact with other believers both locally and globally. This interaction should be done with those who lived in the in past, in as far as we have access to their writings, but also with those who live in the present, so that we may reduce our biases in interpreting Scripture and formulating doctrine in order to get to a closer approximation of God's truth (Bosch 1991:457; Hiebert 1994:98-103). Consequently, any (contextual) theology in order to be truly called Christian, needs to be in continuity and in dialogue with other theological formulations. This means that the validity of any theology, even if it claims to be a localised or contextual theology, rests in its consistency with other contemporary and historical theologies lest we cross the borders of orthodoxy (Bevans 1992:18). While I appreciate the validity of Bevan's argument, as an Evangelical I am of the opinion that the validity of any theology and praxis also rests in its consistency with what we know of Christ, his life and his teachings as recorded in scripture and as taught and applied in the apostolic tradition. Only by remaining firmly focused on Christ in this manner we may avoid succumbing to syncretism and the accommodation of Christianity to prevailing anti-Christian<sup>22</sup> values and concepts (Conn 1983:12).

### **1.3. Method of this study**

This thesis is primarily, but not exclusively, a literature study focused on the strategic level spiritual warfare theology of Wagner. In this we will mainly reflect on Wagner's own writings but also in a few instances on those of his close associates. Wagner's writings include academic and popular books, journal and magazine articles and also some internet documents and email newsletters.

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<sup>22</sup> Conn uses 'non-Christian', instead of 'anti-Christian', however, I am of the opinion that there is nothing wrong with contextualization which incorporates non-Christian elements as long as these are not unchristian or anti-Christian, in the sense of undermining the message of the Gospel, and the essentials of the Christian faith as communicated in the Bible (thereby allowing for differences in interpretation). The underlying issue is that of allegiance. For example the celebration of Christmas in much of Western Christianity incorporates many elements which are non Christian such as the Christmas tree, Christmas decorations and the giving of presents. These things are non Christian, in fact they have pagan roots in European traditional religion which are rather anti Christian, however by having redefined their meaning as festivities celebrating the birth of Christ, these non Christian elements are acceptable for use by Christians, though optional not mandatory. However, if we would still use the Christmas tree and Christmas presents to celebrate our allegiance to Woden or Thor, the elements would be anti-Christian and the festival be syncretistic.

I have made a deliberate effort to go beyond a mere description of Wagner's strategic level spiritual warfare theology and attempted to identify and evaluate the underlying theological pre-suppositions, which are either explicit or implicit in his writings. I have critically examined Wagner's spiritual warfare theology from an Evangelical contextual missiological perspective as described above. I have also drawn on insights concerning the demonic and spiritual warfare from church/mission history and interacted with various theological and philosophical perspectives on these topics from the Christian community at large and particularly the Evangelical missiological community.

Finally, I have also drawn on sociological, psychological and philosophical works where I considered their insights to be useful and relevant. However, generally speaking, theological publications in the form of books and journal articles have been the primary source of information used for evaluating SLSW.

#### **1.4. Delimitation of this study**

The focus of this study is to provide a critical analysis of the strategic level spiritual warfare theology of Wagner in order to establish whether it is a theologically sound and useful strategy for Evangelical Christian mission in Malawi. As part of this analysis I have looked at Wagner's SLSW from a biblical, church historical and contextual perspective. Consequently, I have employed an Evangelical hermeneutic as described earlier to study the biblical teachings concerning Satan, demons and spiritual warfare.

I have also looked at various examples of how the Christian church in history experienced the reality of Satan, the demonic and spiritual warfare. However, I considered an exhaustive treatment of Satan and the demonic in church History to be outside the scope of this study. In fact, such studies have already been undertaken by others such as Forsyth (1987), Gokey (1961), Kallas (1968) and Russell (1977, 1981, 1984, 1986). As part of my reflection on SLSW I have described some of the trends in Evangelical demonology but not exhaustively for this would be enough subject material for another thesis of its own. For the sake of clarifying my Evangelical position in a post modern context I have given quite some attention to Evangelical epistemology and hermeneutics in a post modern context, but this view is certainly not shared by all Evangelicals and should therefore not be understood as the

dominant Evangelical view but as my own. From a contextual perspective I have looked at some of the contextual dynamics in the USA, which I believe provided fertile ground for C. Peter Wagner to develop his SLSW and gave it a popular appeal in the North American<sup>23</sup> context. I have also looked at the link between the political right and Evangelicalism in North America, but a comprehensive overview of the contextual dynamics that influence Christianity in that particular context does not belong to this study. I have looked specifically at the context of Malawi, especially the context in which the Evangelical church of Malawi (ECOM) ministers, which is the Southern region, as this is one of the main churches with which I partner. I have looked at some of the cultural dynamics and issues related to the spirit world in order to study what impact SLSW may have on Christian mission in this context. I also made some observations concerning the impact of SLSW in other contexts, but since my focus is predominantly on the context of Southern Malawi, an in-depth study of the impact of SLSW in other contexts is outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, I have referred to a few examples of SLSW'S impact in other parts of the world to highlight the kind of excesses SLSW can produce.

## **1.5. Survey of coming chapters**

### **1.5.1. About chapter 2**

In this chapter I have traced Wagner's personal and theological pilgrimage from a non-Charismatic Evangelical to becoming one of the most influential Charismatic Evangelical leaders in the so-called 'Third Wave movement', 'strategic level spiritual warfare movement' and recently 'the New Apostolic Reformation' (Wagner 1988a; 1999b). In describing Wagner's theological orientation I have given special attention to his premillennialist Dispensationalist background as well as to his close affinity with the Church Growth Movement. Wagner's missiology was no doubt mostly influenced by the Church Growth Movement. In this chapter I have also looked at Wagner's Pentecostal paradigm shift and his close involvement in the formation of the so-called 'Third Wave of the spirit' movement. This movement with its strong emphasis on supernatural phenomena which they termed 'signs and wonders' led to the Pentecostalisation of many Evangelical churches. In the context of this movement Wagner, together with colleagues such as Charles H. Kraft and

<sup>23</sup> In this study I use North America and USA interchangeably as many citizens of that country do even though I am aware that Canada is also part of North America and that many things which apply to the USA do not apply to Canada.

John Wimber, further developed his ‘power encounter’ missiology which ultimately became known as SLSW.

### **1.5.2. About chapter 3**

In this chapter I closely scrutinize what Wagner’s SLSW is all about. The chapter starts with briefly looking at SLSW’s roots in the power evangelism missiology of the ‘Third Wave of the spirit’ movement. Next the distinctive teachings and related practices of SLSW are identified. This is important because in SLSW many older Pentecostal teachings and practices have been incorporated which are not unique to SLSW and therefore need to be separated from any evaluation of SLSW as the aim of this study does not include a critique of Pentecostalism and its teachings. The distinctive teachings and practices of SLSW are then described in detail together with some evaluation from a biblical perspective in preparation of the more detailed biblical study of key Scriptures found in the next chapter.

### **1.5.3. About chapter 4**

Because strategic level spiritual warfare is primarily concerned with overcoming the power of Satan and his demons by means of warfare prayer it is important to study the biblical teachings concerning Satan, demons, exorcism and prayer. Chapter 4 is therefore devoted to a biblical study of the concept of Satan, demons, exorcism and prayer in both Old and New Testament. While this study is not as exhaustive and in-depth as one may find in specialised books on biblical demonology I have made a serious attempt to avoid making it a superficial survey. The result is a compromise between an in-depth study of the various topics and a general survey. In addition to the biblical study I have also looked at other literature of the Biblical period which may help us understand the biblical teachings. In this chapter I also relate my various observations in Scripture to Wagner’s SLSW with special attention given to those Scriptures used by him to provide biblical support for his SLSW. Besides interacting with the biblical text and Wagner’s SLSW from an Evangelical perspective I also have interacted with interpretations and views from other Christian traditions. This chapter answers the first sub-question posed at the beginning of this thesis, namely, ‘Is Wagner’s SLSW a Biblical strategy for confronting the demonic powers?’.

#### **1.5.4. About chapter 5**

This chapter starts with looking at Wagner's main historical examples of strategic-level spiritual warfare which he puts forward in support of SLSW (Wagner 1996a:91-117). These examples are evaluated critically, in particular the manner in which Wagner uses them. The evaluation of Wagner's examples is followed a survey of spiritual warfare in church history in the pre-modern and modern era. Since spiritual warfare in the post modern era is still being developed I have not included it in this chapter as in essence this whole study includes evaluating spiritual warfare in the postmodern era, and it is my sincere hope that this study will help the church to come up with a wholesome biblically sound and contextually relevant theology of spiritual warfare in a post modern context. This chapter also answers the second sub-question posed at the beginning of this study, namely, 'is Wagner's SLSW a strategy which has positive precedents in the history of Christianity?'

#### **1.5.5. About chapter 6**

This chapter is focused on SLSW in the light of the context in which it was developed in order to get a better understanding of some of the underlying concerns, issues and biases. Wagner's SLSW did not originate in a vacuum, but in the context of the USA. The development, acceptance, rapid spread and popularity of SLSW can not only be attributed to Wagner's strategic position in the 'AD2000 and Beyond' movement or his academic credentials. There are other factors playing a role under the surface. I have started in this chapter with describing the post modern context of North America in as far as I understand it and how I have observed how Evangelicals have responded to the challenges posed by post modernism. While postmodernism is expressed in many forms in the different areas of human existence and experience, the underlying postmodern epistemology is more or less the same and therefore gets my main attention.

This chapter also includes a detailed discussion of Wagner's self-proclaimed paradigm shift. I also look at SLSW within the larger post modern context of North America and have attempted to unearth some of the contextual biases found in SLSW and identify whose interests are being served. Considerable attention has been given to the link between SLSW and American right-wing militaristic politics as well as the common myths which inspire and link them both. I have also looked at some of the consequence of SLSW thought and

practices in relation to other Christian traditions and other religions found in context. Finally I have also looked at SLSW's promises of social transformation by looking at the impact SLSW has had in some contexts and come to the conclusion that in spite of all its promises and publicity, SLSW has had more of a negative rather than positive impact. Based on the preceding chapters I have attempted to summarise by means of employing an analogy why I believe Wagner's SLSW should not be embraced. I consequently answer the third sub-question posed at the beginning of this thesis negatively as I conclude that Wagner's SLSW strategy cannot be considered truly Evangelical. I do however affirm that Wagner is to be credited with putting the issue of spiritual warfare firmly on the agenda of Evangelical missiology. I also outline the need for a biblically balanced and contextually relevant approach to spiritual warfare in Christian mission and which ingredients are important to include.

#### **1.5.6. About chapter 7**

This is the final chapter and focuses on the African context of Malawi as I seek to identify what the possible implications of SLSW theology and practices could have in Malawi. In this I am particularly concerned about the all-pervasive fear of witchcraft which is a major contextual problem in Malawi. Following a general description of some of the problems faced in context which could be exacerbated by SLSW I highlight some issues which need further reflection. In this chapter I also look at other ways we could address the fear of witchcraft in Malawi and make some suggestions for further reflection. Though the focus of this chapter is on Malawi, many of the issues discussed would also apply in other African context.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE THEOLOGICAL PILGRIMAGE OF C. PETER WAGNER

#### 2.1. About C. Peter Wagner

Charles Peter Wagner is a well known Evangelical theologian (Wagner1996a:14), missiologist and author. C. Peter Wagner was born in 1930 to C. Graham Wagner and Phyllis H. Wagner in New York City in the United States of America (Douglas 1995:410). His parents were farmers and in 1950 he was invited by a girl to attend church and became converted to Christianity (Ortlund in Wagner 1976:6-7; Wagner 1993c:68) and became involved with Inter-Varsity<sup>24</sup> at college (Wagner 1983a:128). Consequently, having finished his tertiary education at Rutgers University (B.S. 1952), he went to Fuller Theological Seminary, (B.D./M.Div. 1955; M.A. 1968) and Princeton Theological Seminary (Th.M. 1962). In addition, Dr. C. Peter Wagner obtained a Ph.D. in Social Ethics from the University of Southern California in 1977 (Global 2004a; Wagner 1972:215; Wagner et al. 1983:41). In 1956 C. Peter Wagner got married to Doris in 1956, and from 1956 to 1971 they served as missionaries in Bolivia under the South American Indian Mission and Andes Evangelical Mission, which was formerly the Bolivian Indian Mission<sup>25</sup> (Wagner 1970:249). These mission agencies were under the umbrella of the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (I.F.M.A), which was outspokenly cessationist and non-Charismatic<sup>26</sup> (Wagner 1983a:128; 1999b:16). In Bolivia, Peter and Doris Wagner were involved in church planting, evangelism and theological education (Global 2004b). Dr. C. Peter Wagner also served as a professor of Theology and the director of Emmaus Bible Institute in Cochabamba, Bolivia, now the George Alan Theological Seminary (Wagner 1970:249). He also became the associate general director of the Andes Evangelical Mission (Wagner & McCullough 1966:5; Wagner 1970:xv; 1996a:54). Though the Wagner's spent 16 years in Bolivia (Wagner 1983a:128; 2000d:43), in retrospect C. Peter Wagner describes the results of his ministry as

<sup>24</sup> The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship is an Evangelical students organization, founded in the USA by Stacey Woods, a graduate of the stronghold of premillennial Dispensationalism, Dallas Theological Seminary (Balmer 1993:32; Douglas 1995:430-431).

<sup>25</sup> These mission agencies are now part of SIM International, the mission with whom I have been affiliated in Zimbabwe from 1998-2004.

<sup>26</sup> See next section on Wagner's theological background.

mediocre at best, and attributes this partly to his lack of knowledge concerning the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit, spiritual power and spiritual warfare (Wagner 1983a:128-131; 2001c:53-54). During his time in Bolivia, Wagner was strongly anti-Pentecostal and preached against Pentecostalism's emphasis on miraculous healing (Wagner 2000d:44). After having served as a missionary in Bolivia, Wagner got involved with the School of World Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary where he taught for 31 years<sup>27</sup> until his retirement in 1998 (Wagner 2000b:115-116). Following in the footsteps of Donald A. McGravan (Wagner 1970:xv), Wagner became an important advocate of church growth principles which among other things led him to research Latin American Pentecostal church growth and resulted in Wagner's embrace of neo-Pentecostalism and power evangelism, which employs strategic level spiritual warfare against territorial spirits, in order to achieve further church growth and more effective world evangelisation (Wagner 1986:40ff). Since 1986, Wagner has been the main player in the development and promotion of strategic level spiritual warfare (Lowe 1998:16). After his retirement from Fuller Theological College in 1998, Wagner started his own theological seminary (Wagner 2000b:115). He also continued his worldwide promotion of SLSW and related doctrines through his Global Harvest Ministries which he had founded with his wife in 1992 (Wagner 1996a:249; Global 2004b), through the Wagner Leadership Institute<sup>28</sup> and their publishing company, Wagner Publications<sup>29</sup> (Wagner 2000b:116-120). The Wagner's have three daughters, Karen, Ruth and Rebecca (Wagner 1971a:i; Global 2004b), and have seven grandchildren. They currently reside in Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA (Global 2004b).<sup>30</sup>

## **2.2. Theological background of C. Peter Wagner**

According to Wagner's own words, his basic theological orientation is Reformed and has been educated in two Reformed seminaries, Fuller and Princeton (1998b:11). However, shortly after Wagner's conversion experience he was strongly influenced by the premillennial

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<sup>27</sup> Wagner, was a student at Fuller from 1967-1968, which means that he only became a member of the teaching staff afterwards which means that the 31 years mentioned by Wagner are a little stretched.

<sup>28</sup> This institute provides leadership training with focus on practical ministry experience, anointing, field research, apprenticeship and mentoring. No grades or credits are given, but diplomas and degrees are issued, including post-graduate degrees (Wagner 2000a:87). For more information see website: [www.wagnerleadership.org](http://www.wagnerleadership.org)

<sup>29</sup> All Wagner's books from 1999 onwards have been published by Wagner Publications: [www.wagnerpublications.org](http://www.wagnerpublications.org), a subsidiary of Global Harvest Ministries.

<sup>30</sup> Dr. C. Peter Wagner can be contacted by mail via Wagner Publications, 110005 N. Highway 83, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921, USA, or by email via [admin@publications.com](mailto:admin@publications.com).

Dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible (Wagner 1996a:54), which probably was partly due to his involvement with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Christian students which was founded in the USA by a graduate of the premillennial Dispensationalist stronghold, Dallas Theological Seminary (Balmer 1993:32; Douglas 1995:430-431; Wagner 1983a:128; 1993d:112). Wagner's conservative congregational church background (Wagner 1999b:16)<sup>31</sup>, may also have played a role as America's most influential proponent of premillennial Dispensationalism, Cyrus Ingerson Scofield was a Congregationalist (Balmer 1993:36). At least until the early 1970s when Wagner started moving towards Pentecostalism, Wagner considered himself a cessationist Dispensationalist Evangelical (1983a:1). Cessationists, who may come from a variety of theological traditions, have in common that they believe that supernatural spiritual gifts such as prophecy, divine healing and miracles (Fee 1994:32ff; 158-175) were foundational gifts for the church, and therefore, limited to the apostolic age. Consequently they are no longer operational today (Edgar 1988:371ff). One of the most outspoken cessationists has been Benjamin B. Warfield who according to Wagner, influenced his theology until his Pentecostal paradigm shift (Wagner 2000d:43). Dispensationalism is a theological tradition within Evangelicalism which makes a sharp distinction between Israel and the church in its interpretation of Scripture, and as such stands in sharp contrast with Reformed covenant theology which sees God's dealings with Israel and with the church as part and parcel of God's one program (Erickson 1985:1162-1163; Ferguson & Wright 1988:175-176; Lightner 1986:35). The main proponents of Dispensationalist theology have been J. N. Darby in the UK and Cyrus I. Scofield in the USA (Ferguson & Wright 1988:200-201; Henry 1973:187). In spite of Dispensationalism being declared a heresy by many Reformed theologians, it gained many adherents (Bowman 1956:170-187; Kraus 1958:131). Nevertheless, in spite of major differences in eschatology and hermeneutics, Dispensationalists share with other Evangelicals a high view of biblical authority and usually an inerrantist view of Scripture (Wagner 1996a:51). Their main difference with other Evangelicals is their sharp distinction between Israel and the church, their literalist hermeneutic and the view that God's dealings with humankind have proceeded through seven well-defined time-periods, each of which is characterised by a special purpose and the content of faith (not its essence) differs per age (Ferguson & Wright 1988:200-201;

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<sup>31</sup> Wagner was ordained under the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (Wagner 1999b:16), a theologically conservative denomination made up of churches that are Evangelical, Reformed and congregational in background but which accommodates differing theological view points, for example in eschatology (CCCCUSA 2005).

Henry 1973:187). Dispensationalism's literalist hermeneutic takes the biblical text at face value, though not necessarily ruling out symbolism, typology and figures of speech, but the literal meaning is primary and determinative (Ferguson & Wright 198:200-201). Because of the literalist approach to the biblical text Dispensationalists make their basic hermeneutical distinction between passages relating to Israel and those relating to the church, whereby Israel always is interpreted as referring to national or ethnic Israel, not the church (Erickson 1985:1162; Henry 1973:187-188). Consequently, there are many differences in the interpretation of Scripture between Dispensationalist and non-Dispensationalist Evangelicals, which is most clearly visible in eschatology (Lightner 1986:36-37).

Within Evangelicalism there are various eschatological approaches, ranging from premillennial, amillennial to post-millennial<sup>32</sup>. Dispensationalists however, hold strongly to a distinct premillennial eschatology in which ethnic and national Israel plays a major role (Erickson 1985:1211-1212). They also expect a time of severe tribulation at the end of the church age, the rapture of the true church from earth, while the rest of humanity go through terrible tribulations under the Satanic rule of the Anti-Christ, which will finally culminate in Armageddon, when the messianic Christ will destroy his enemies, followed by a thousand years of bliss in the messianic kingdom (Deere 1978: 60ff; Chafer 1919:92-110; Lindsey 1970; Walvoord 1969, 1971, 1974)<sup>33</sup>. The period towards the end of the church age will be one of extreme deterioration, and will be characterized by a general apostasy in the church and the increase of demonic activity (Chafer 1947:115ff; Erickson 1985:1211-1212)<sup>34</sup>. In the post second world war period many Evangelicals adopted this pessimistic eschatology as it reflected the general pessimistic mood in the period between 1940 and 1989 when the fall of communism ended the cold war (Bube 1972:217). Premillennialist and Dispensationalist assumptions concerning the deterioration of the world and the special role of national Israel, also appeared to be verified by the horrors of the two world wars, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the cold war, and the revival of magic and occultism (Patterson 1988:443-452; Unger 1952:xiii; 1971:17ff). Dispensationalism gained a considerable

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<sup>32</sup> Not all premillennialists are Dispensationalist. For a good explanation of the various millennial views within Evangelicalism see Erickson's *Christian Theology* (1983:1205-1224).

<sup>33</sup> Also see commentary on Ezek. 38-40, (pp. 1299-1305) Dan. 11-12, (pp. 1370-1374), Zech. 14 (p. 1569), and outline of End-Time events Predicted in the Bible (pp. 1319-1322) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, by Walvoord and Zuck (1985).

<sup>34</sup> Dispensationalists point at liberalism in Protestant Christianity, the Ecumenical movement and the Roman Catholic church as evidence of the great apostasy (Walvoord 1969:326-327). The popular 'Left Behind series' of Tim La Haye communicates the same theology in novel form to millions of Christians in the world.

following within Evangelicalism among Baptists, Pentecostals and independent fundamentalist churches (Erickson 1985:1209).

### **2.3. C. Peter Wagner and the Church Growth Movement**

#### **2.3.1. The Church Growth Movement and Fuller Theological Seminary**

The Church Growth Movement was founded by Donald McGavran who was a third generation missionary to India with the United Christian Missionary society. Dissatisfied with the lack of church growth experienced by his mission, he resigned and started to research and analyze church growth around the globe (Whitlock 1995:246). Using the insights of the social sciences such as anthropology and sociology (McGavran 1970:106ff;183ff), McGavran suggested various methods for a more effective propagation of the Gospel and the multiplication of churches. Through books such as *The Bridges of God* (1955), *How Churches Grow* (1959) and his magnum opus *Understanding church Growth* (1970), McGavran's ideas got international attention and by 1972 'church growth' had become a movement in its own right (Wagner 1976:11ff; 1984a:13ff).

In 1961, McGavran established the Institute of church growth in Portland which he moved to Fuller Theological Seminary in 1965 where he founded the School of World Missions (Muck 1993:519; Wagner 1979c:5; Whitlock 1995:246). Key to the Church Growth Movement is the desire 'to convert' people to Christianity in large numbers and make them disciples of Christ in accordance with the Great Commission of *Matthew* 28:19-20 (McGavran 1970:40ff; Wagner 1984:13). Since the emphasis is on conversion and multiplication of churches, the Church Growth Movement seeks to identify people groups that are unreached by, but yet receptive to the Gospel and focus evangelisation efforts on these people groups (McGavran 1970:49, 57-60; 230-232; Wagner 1971b:115-121, 171, 1972:221-227). Sociological and cultural factors which may make people more receptive to the Gospel message are to be identified and exploited since these may result in people movements of non-Christians being converted to Christianity in mass conversions (McGavran 1970:173ff; 216ff; Wagner 1971b:112). The concept of 'revival' in the sense of large groups of 'christianized' people re-dedicating themselves to Christianity, is also an important theme in the Church Growth

Movement and requires prolonged prayer and intercession (McGavran 1970:164-167).<sup>35</sup> One of the foremost historians and advocates of revival, Dr. J. Edwin Orr was part of the faculty at the School of World Missions of Fuller Theological Seminary where he served with C. Peter Wagner for two decades (Wagner 1998:7-8). The theme of revival is an important theme in Protestant Christianity and can be traced to the spiritual awakenings in Europe in the form of German Pietism, Evangelicalism in Great Britain, and in the USA in the form of the “Great Awakenings” (Peters 1979:103-104). The revivals of the past were the ‘glory days’ of Evangelicalism and consequently, the longing for revival and mass conversions<sup>36</sup> has influenced much of North American Evangelical missiology, with some regarding the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements of the 20th century to be continuing revival movements (Evans 1971:165-171; Ferguson & Wright 1988:588). Even among premillennialist Dispensationalists there was a strong sense of expectation for an end-time revival before the decisive struggle of the church with the powers of darkness (McGee 1997:72-74: 80ff).

According to Peter Wagner, church growth is measured in terms of numbers of responsible church members and the increase of the number of organized churches (1971b:146; 1984:21). The focus on numbers by the Church Growth Movement demonstrates its pragmatic, rather than theological, approach to evangelism and mission (Wagner 1972:227-228).<sup>37</sup> Consequently, indigenization and inculturation<sup>38</sup> are less a priority than evangelism and church planting (Wagner 1972:225ff). Also, church development and social action are secondary to evangelism (Wagner 1970a:106-108; 1972:222). An important element in the

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<sup>35</sup> According to former Fuller Theological Seminary president Harold J. Ockenga, who also was the first president of the National Association of Evangelicals (Douglas et al. 1995:282), revivals are expected to occur at regular intervals in church history. Revivals contribute to the conversion of sinners; the growth of the church and a foretaste of the rule of God in society (Ockenga 1947:225ff).

<sup>36</sup> Evans (1971) attempts to differentiate between mass conversions and revivals, others draw lines between revival and spiritual awakenings, but most Evangelicals including C. Peter Wagner (1998; 1999a:10-11) would consider the two closely related as is evident from Evangelical literature about revivals.

<sup>37</sup> Pragmatism as initiated by William James: ‘a theory is true if it works successfully to our liking’ (Henry 1973:524), and the related theory that ‘faith often makes facts’, (Henry 1973:346), which in ‘christianized’ form appears in the ‘word of faith’ or ‘positive confession’ doctrines of Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland (Perriman 2003:30-45), and is cautiously embraced by C. Peter Wagner (1999b:253).

<sup>38</sup> Evangelical missiologists traditionally have preferred to use the term indigenization or inculturation as a way of describing their contextualization efforts of the Gospel and Christianity in a given context, though some Evangelical missiologists do use the term contextualization. The weakness of the indigenization and inculturation models of contextualization is that they often tend to focus much on relating Christianity to traditional culture as it existed in the past without taking new developments in culture and context into consideration (Bevans 1992:20). For a more exhaustive treatment of contextualization and Evangelical missiology and the various models of contextualization I recommend *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* by Hesselgrave & Rommen (1989) and *Models of Contextual Theology* by Bevans (1992).

church growth philosophy is the so-called ‘law of responsiveness’ or ‘receptivity’, which is based on the parable of the sower, and suggests that evangelisation efforts are best spent on those people who are most receptive to the Gospel, therefore such people need to be identified (Wagner 1971b:41-42). Increased receptiveness for the Gospel and church growth takes place in contexts where people are undergoing rapid or radical social and economic change, or when they are uprooted from their familiar surroundings, such as in the case of refugees, immigrants (Wagner 1971b:112ff). Thus, pragmatic considerations, based on the biblical imperative of fulfilling the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) override other considerations and determine where and when evangelisation takes place (Wagner 1972:227-228).

The most controversial law or principle promoted by the Church Growth Movement is probably McGavran’s ‘homogeneous unit principle’ or ‘HUP’ (McGavran 1955:23ff), which has been wholeheartedly endorsed by Peter Wagner. The ‘HUP’ principle promotes the establishment of homogeneous churches in the sense of culture, race, ethnicity and/or class, as opposed to heterogeneous churches, from a pragmatic point of view (Wagner 1976:110ff, 121-122; 1979c:1, 4-5, 21; 1984:132). The rationale behind this principle is that churches which are homogeneous grow faster (Wagner 1976:117ff; 1979c:16ff). The homogeneous church concept was strongly opposed by Latin American theologians René Padilla and Samuel Escobar at the Evangelical Lausanne conference of 1974 (Wagner 1974:22, 1979c:21), and also by other prominent Evangelical missiologists such as John Stott (Wagner 1979c:19) and Raymond Bakke (1987:138). In spite of all the criticism leveled at McGavran, Wagner, sided with McGavran and Wagners book *Our Kind of People* (1979c) is in fact a polemic defending the homogeneous church principle.

In spite of the movement’s increasing popularity in North American Evangelicalism, within ecumenical circles the Church Growth Movement found little support and controversy raged between McGavran’s church growth missiologists on the one side, and World Council missiologists on the other (Verkuyl 1973:97ff; Wagner 1973:130ff). Wagner describes his and McGavran’s position when he says that mission and evangelism are ultimately concerned with saving souls as opposed to the ecumenical movement which to him was primarily concerned with material, social and physical needs of people (Wagner 1970:32, 55, 72ff; 1971b:54, 56-57; 1974:16ff). Consequently, Wagner and his associates were very

critical of those who had social reform high on the agenda like Emilio Castro (Wagner 1970:48). However, a decade later, in church *growth and the Whole Gospel*, Wagner takes a much softer, almost apologetic stance (Wagner 1981:xii).

The Church Growth Movement found fertile soil in United States Evangelicalism because historical developments had already prepared the ground for a pragmatic approach to evangelism and mission, in particular the revivalist movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Muether 1988:350). In the North American context the movement gained many adherents and became a discipline within Evangelical missiology (Wagner 1976:1-3; 1984:14ff). From the 1970s to the 1990s the Church Growth Movement gradually began to dominate North American Evangelical missiology and produced a large body of literature including journals, popular magazines, articles, theses, dissertations, textbooks, popular books, and other printed forms of communication and many Evangelical and mainline denominations have since established officers and/ or positions of church growth (Towns 1986:67; Wagner 1984:14-15; Towns, Wagner and Rainer 1998).

### **2.3.2. The Church Growth Movement and Wagner at Fuller Theological Seminary**

In 1967, Wagner returned to Fuller Theological Seminary where he had studied before in 1955. During his studies at the School of World Missions of Fuller Theological Seminary, from 1967-1968, Peter Wagner joined the Church Growth Movement and became a close associate of its founder Donald A. McGavran and also one of the chief proponents of the movement. Wagner actually studied under McGavran in the School of Missions during this period of study when he completed his M.A. in Missiology (Wagner 1970:xviii-xix; 1971b:11-12; 1979c:5)<sup>39</sup>. Other courses were undertaken under Alan Tippett and Ralph D. Winter, both well-known Evangelical missiologists associated with the Church Growth Movement (Wagner 1970:xviii-xix). It was in this period of study, that Donald A. McGavran's teaching caused a total and radical change in Wagner's view of mission and missiology (1971b:11). His first book on church growth, *The Protestant Movement in Bolivia*, written under the guidance of McGavran, was published shortly after in 1970 and is an evaluation of Christian Mission in Bolivia from a church growth perspective.

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<sup>39</sup> Donald A. MacGavran was the founding dean of the School of World Missions in 1965:5, which was intended to be a training school for career missionaries (Wagner 1979c:5).



In 1971, C. Peter Wagner was appointed to the Donald McGavran chair of church growth at the Fuller Seminary School of world mission and became a Professor of Latin American Affairs (Global 2004a; Wagner 1971b:9-10; 1972:215). In 1972, McGavran and Wagner started co-teaching an off-campus course on church growth which led to the start of the Institute for American church growth (McGavran 1988:92-93). In defense of the Church Growth Movement Wagner says:

church growth strives to combine the eternal theological principles of God's Word concerning the expansion of the church with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioural sciences, employing as its initial frame of reference, the foundational work done by Donald McGavran (in Towns 1986:65).

Wagner considers McGavran's magnum opus, *Understanding church growth* (McGavran 1970), the principal and indispensable textbook of the Church Growth Movement (Wagner 1983:16). He also refers to McGavran as one of the most influential missiologists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Wagner 1983:16). Peter Wagner, in turn, is arguably McGavran's most influential disciple.

### **2.3.3. The influence of Wagner in the Church Growth Movement**

Within the Church Growth Movement of the 1970s and 1980s, Wagner became the most influential defender of McGavran's church growth principles and being a prolific writer, he authored, co-authored and edited at least 23 books<sup>40</sup> dealing with church growth, world mission and evangelisation in the period from 1971-1987<sup>41</sup>. They are as follows:

- *A Turned-On church in an Uptight World* (1971a)
- *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* (1971b)
- *Church/Mission Tensions Today* (1972)
- *Look Out! The Pentecostals Are Coming* (1973)
- *Stop the World, I Want to Get On* (1974)
- *Your church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy church* (1976)

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<sup>40</sup> Excluding the books written in Spanish and publications in the form of magazine and journal articles, newsletters or sections in readers, which are so numerous that even C. Peter Wagner himself was unable to provide the author of this thesis with a list of these publications.

<sup>41</sup> Also numerous articles and newsletters, some can be found on <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/archive.htm>

- *Unreached Peoples '79* (Dayton & Wagner 1978)
- *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your church Grow* (1979a)
- *Your church Can Be Healthy* (1979b)
- *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of church growth in America* (1979c)
- *Unreached Peoples '80* (Dayton & Wagner 1980)
- *The church growth Survey Handbook.*(Wagner & Waymire 1980)
- *Unreached Peoples '81* (Dayton & Wagner 1981)
- *church growth and the Whole Gospel* (1981)
- *Effective Body Building: Biblical Steps to Spiritual Growth* (1982)
- *church growth Bulletin – Consolidated* (McGavran, Montgomery & Wagner 1982)
- *On the Crest of the Wave: Becoming a World Christian* (1983)
- *Signs and Wonders Today* (Wagner et al. 1983)
- *Leading Your church to Growth* (1984)
- *Your church Can Grow* (1984a)
- *Spiritual Power and church growth* (1986)
- *church growth: State of the Art* (1986a).
- *Strategies for church growth: Tools for Planning Evangelism and Missions* (1987).

Virtually all of the books written by Wagner after 1987 continue to reflect his pre-occupation with church growth but the classic church growth principles gradually recede to the background while strategic level spiritual warfare principles and techniques become the dominant themes. However, Wagner's embrace of Pentecostal theology and spiritual warfare theology remains part and parcel of his primary concern for church growth as he indicates regularly in his later writings about strategic level spiritual warfare (Wagner 1986:40-42<sup>42</sup>; 1989:282-284; 1991a:132-133; 1992a:162, 1995:47). Most of Wagner's writings after 1987 are built on the foundation laid in his book *Spiritual Power and church growth* (1986). This book reflects a shift in Wagner's mindset towards a preoccupation with spiritual power. The book, as its title reveals, is devoted to the link between numerical church growth and spiritual power, which takes the form of supernatural healing, exorcism and miracles. It is in this book that Wagner first mentions the concept of territorial spirits which he was later to

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<sup>42</sup> The book, *Spiritual Power and church growth*, is as its title reveals, devoted to the link between (numerical) church growth and spiritual power in the form of supernatural healing, exorcism and miracles. It is in this book that Wagner mentions the concept of territorial spirits for the first time (Wagner 1986:40-42) and as such this reflects the progression in his understanding of demonization and exorcism, from something that involves individuals, to the demonization of geographical locations and the people groups therein.

develop in his strategic level spiritual warfare (Wagner 1986:40-42). This book should, therefore, be considered as the watershed in Wagner's understanding of demonization and exorcism. Demonization is no longer just a problem of demons afflicting individuals to be remedied by exorcism, but there is now the notion of geographical locations and the people groups therein being demonized by a territorial type of demon needing a new type of exorcism.

#### **2.3.4. C. Peter Wagner and the Lausanne Congress for World Evangelisation**

Over the years Wagner has been involved with several mission oriented ministries, committees, and organizations in which he promoted the church growth principles he believed in: The American Society of Missiology; Society for Scientific Study of Religion; Association of Professors of Mission; Evangelical Missiological Society; American Society for church growth (founding president); the American Lausanne Committee and its umbrella body, the Lausanne Congress for World Evangelisation, the World Evangelical Fellowship and the National Association of Evangelicals (Global 2004a; Wagner 1996a:250). Of these organisations the LCWE is by far the most influential Evangelical body. Since its inception, Wagner has been actively involved with the Lausanne movement for World Evangelisation as a member of the executive committee (Wagner 1983:18f) and in various work groups. The LCWE is a large international Evangelical movement which started as a Congress on World Evangelisation in 1974 under the leadership of Dr. Billy Graham but continued as a self-perpetuating movement for world evangelisation (Ferguson & Wright 1988:376-377; Parker 1990:236). The LCWE is closely related to the World Evangelical Fellowship, which is an international Evangelical ecumenical organization of which most Evangelical denominations are a member (Olley 1990:244-246; Utuk 1994:99-112).

After the first Lausanne congress in 1974, Wagner became chairman of the LCWE Strategy Working Group (Dayton & Wagner 1978:9) which gave him an international platform to promote his ideas on church growth and evangelisation. Special attention was given to the evangelisation of unreached people groups (Dayton & Wagner 1978:18-19; 1983:263ff) and it was in his capacity as chairman of the LCWE strategy working group that he co-edited *Unreached Peoples '79* (Dayton & Wagner 1978), *Unreached Peoples '80* (Dayton & Wagner 1979) and *unreached Peoples '81* (Dayton & Wagner 1980). Later in the 1990's,

Wagner used his involvement in the LCWE, to market his strategic level spiritual warfare ideas for church growth and evangelisation (Wagner 1996a:249-262).

## **2.4. The Pentecostal paradigm shift of C. Peter Wagner**

### **2.4.1. Church growth and Pentecostalism**

Wagner's spiritual pilgrimage from cessationist premillennial Dispensationalism to 'Third Wave' neo-Pentecostalism was a gradual one and the shift is visible in his writings from 1971 to 1979. The main contributing factor for this shift was Wagner's involvement with the Church Growth Movement which alerted him to the phenomenal growth of Pentecostal churches in Latin America (Sarles 1988:59ff; Wagner et al. 1983:41). As early as 1971 Wagner takes a non-cessationist view of spiritual gifts (1971a:88ff, 94; 1971b:68ff) and encourages their use as a catalyst for church growth (1971b:68-69). By 1973 Wagner has come to accept the Pentecostal movement's self understanding as a partial fulfilment of Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 (Hodges in Wagner 1973a:9-10). Similar to other Pentecostal apologists, as early as 1971 Wagner advocated the use of spiritual gifts in the life of the church and its involvement in mission. This included issues such as Apostleship, prophecy, discernment of spirits among others (1971b:68-69). In the area of spiritual warfare, Wagner's views changed significantly. In 1970 Wagner described the spiritual struggle with Satan predominantly in pietistic terms<sup>43</sup> as the conflict between church and the (unbelieving) world which is under the rule of Satan (Wagner 1970:104). However, as Wagner came to recognize the important contribution of public exorcism to the phenomenal growth of Latin American Pentecostal churches, the battle with Satan comes to include exorcism of demons (Wagner 1973:134ff). Wagner's observations, particularly in Chile (Wagner et al. 1983:41) and Brazil (Wagner 1973a:133ff), brought him to the conclusion that power encounters with demons in exorcism should be built into Evangelical doctrine and practice in order to be more effective in mission, evangelism and church growth (Wagner 1973a: 136, 154-155). Wagner's description of the exorcism practices of Latin American Pentecostals includes the rebuking and casting out of Satan (Wagner 1973a: 135) from an area, a concept which Wagner later developed in SLSW<sup>44</sup>. In the years that followed Wagner followed his own advice and exorcism became a major ingredient of his doctrine and practice in his SLSW.

<sup>43</sup>For example in the classic works by Bunyan, 'The Pilgrims Progress' and 'Assault on Mansoul'.

<sup>44</sup> The phrase 'power encounters' is commonly used in Charismatic, Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal circles to describe the exorcism of demons from people, objects, buildings or territories.

Demonization, exorcism and the possibility of demonic contamination through objects such as fetishes as well as due to the power of witchcraft now had become part of Wagner's belief system (1973a:154-155).

Wagner continued to be intrigued by the expanding Pentecostal movement with its apparent demonstration of spiritual power and in 1974 he wrote: 'The upsurge of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America is one of the most outstanding demonstrations of God's power in the world today' (1974:8). Wagner, consequently, published a book, which promotes the use of spiritual gifts in church (1979a). The content of the book basically reflects main-stream Pentecostal and Charismatic theology of the spiritual gifts and shows that Wagner by this time, in spite of his assertion to the contrary, had become a (neo)Pentecostal. Wagner's book on spiritual gifts became a classic among Charismatics and Pentecostals. The paradigm which Wagner adopted, is the one operational among the masses in Latin America, and which underlies the Pentecostal revival in the region: It is a pre-Enlightenment worldview which is open to God's intervention in daily experience, biblical confrontation with the demonic, and informal styles of worship (Wagner 2000d:13).

#### **2.4.2. Wagner and the 'Third Wave' movement**

##### **2.4.2.1. Wagner's paradigm shift and the 'Third Wave' movement**

By the 1980's Wagner's theological shift from cessationism to non-cessationism was very clear for all to see and he became instrumental in starting the so-called 'Third Wave of the Holy Spirit movement' (Farnell 1992:301-302; Wagner et al. 1983:11, 38ff; 1988a:13ff). In spite of his shift in theology, Wagner does not like to be called Pentecostal or Charismatic and calls himself a straight-line Evangelical (Wagner et al 1983:4; 1988a:18-19), that is in spite of the fact that he (as well as his close associate Charles H. Kraft) considers 'straight' or mainline Evangelicalism as adhering to a modernist Enlightenment worldview and considers himself as having gone through a paradigm shift embracing a pre-Enlightenment worldview (Kraft 1989:24-35, 73ff; Wagner 1996a:73-77). Wagner's reluctance to identify himself openly with Pentecostalism may stem from fear of criticism and loss of support from non-Pentecostal Evangelicals, but may also have been an attempt to make his ideas (and books) more marketable among non-Pentecostal Evangelicals. Nevertheless, Wagner's theology as

articulated in his writings from 1986 onwards is clearly Pentecostalist as Wagner incorporates many Pentecostal concepts concerning the charismata in his books about spiritual gifts (1979a; 1988b, 2002b). The same trend we see in his books about signs and wonders (Wagner et al. 1983, 1986, 1988a). Wagner's attempt to differentiate between his view of the spiritual gifts and the one held by (classic) Pentecostals (Wagner 1999b:215ff) is rather presumptuous as within the Pentecostal movement from its very beginnings there has always been a variety of opinions concerning the number and nature of the spiritual gifts as mentioned in the Bible as Wagner himself at one time recognized (1979a:229-235). With his listing and sometimes innovative re-definition of the various spiritual gifts, Wagner actually continues in the Pentecostal tradition of researching and experimenting with the charismata. Virtually all of Wagner's books after 1979 have some Pentecostal overtones and certainly those about SLSW. Wagner's spiritual warfare theology is not totally new as it is built on older spiritual warfare concepts found within Pentecostalism (Wagner 1973a:133ff; 154ff). Wagner incorporates for example the common assumptions in older spiritual warfare literature that demons get a point of entry in people through sin, trauma, idolatry, occultism, heredity and curses. Wagner, however, goes beyond the individual and applies these assumptions to people groups and territories<sup>45</sup>. In the same manner, Wagner, incorporates many of their assumptions concerning prayer, worship, prophecy, confession, identificational repentance, binding and loosing demonic power and various other ways of exorcism as a means to combat demonic powers who demonize people and people groups (Wagner 1996a:30-31, 250)<sup>46</sup>. In conclusion we may observe that most of Wagner's insights concerning the supernatural gifts and spiritual warfare are borrowed from a variety of Pentecostal sources and consequently became part and parcel of 'Third Wave' theology.

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<sup>45</sup> For example compare the writings of Anderson (1973:86ff), Bubeck (1975:86ff, 100ff, 147ff), Dickason (1987:162ff, 193-2007), Harper (1970:43-51; 105-107), Koch (1971:104ff) and Peterson (1972:25-30) and compare these with Wagner (1986:40ff, 127ff; 1990:76ff; 1992b:96, 130ff, 1993a:62-65, 224ff; 1995a:135-137, 218-221; 1995b:65ff; 109,170, 1997a:60-61, 151).

<sup>46</sup> For example warfare prayer, which is identified by Wagner as binding the strong man (Wagner 1993b:135-137), which already can be found in the writings of Dispensationalist spiritual warfare author, Martin Bubeck (1975:107, 140-144) and was practiced against territorial strongholds in cities by missionaries of Youth With A Mission (Adams 1987:72,75). In the same way we find praise and worship as spiritual warfare (Adams 1987:60, 72), prophecy in the form of sensing God's leading and speaking (Adams 1987:64), confession and identificational repentance (Adams 1987:58; Bubeck 1975:113-114; Dickason 1987:291), binding and loosing demonic power (Harper 1970:114-115), the breaking of (generational) curses (Bubeck 1975:87, 147; Dickason 1987:278-279; Koch 1961:203-222; 1971:104ff), spiritual (mapping) research of geographical locations (Adams 1987:51-56). All these and other themes we find incorporated in Wagner's SLSW (1986:41-42, 127-128; 1990:89, 1991c:15-16, 1992b:96ff, 129ff; 1997a:80-81, 103ff, 110ff).

#### 2.4.2.2. The Pentecostal roots of the 'Third Wave' movement

Pentecostals, Charismatics and 'Third Wave' adherents all share a similar non-cessationist theology which maintains that the supernatural spiritual gifts (charismata)<sup>47</sup> and spiritual offices mentioned in New Testament passages such as Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4 and 1 Peter 4, are still in operation today and their use should be encouraged (Farnell 1992:277ff; Erickson 1985:876-877; Sarles 1988:62ff, 82; Wagner 2002c:19-23). Among others, these gifts include glossolalia, predictive and discerning prophecy, exorcism, apostolic leadership and supernatural healing, with the corresponding offices of prophet, apostle, exorcist, healer and evangelist/Church planter and others (McGallum in Henry 1973:92; Ferguson & Wright 1988:73, 502-505; Wagner 1979a:102-249; 2002:19-23, 91-95; 2002a:49-55).

The Pentecostal movement came into being at the beginning of the 20th century, within the context of the holiness movement (Erickson 1985:855-856). They consequently faced a lot of opposition from the mainline denominations which forced them to start denominations of their own such as the Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission and the International church of the Foursquare Gospel. Nevertheless, after the horrors of the two world wars and the growing disillusionment with rationalism, Pentecostal teachings found new adherents within mainline denominations, which became known as the Charismatic renewal. New converts generally stayed within non-Pentecostal denominations, calling themselves Charismatics and can be found in almost every mainline denomination, including the Roman Catholic church (Erickson 1985:856; Ferguson & Wright 1988:269)<sup>48</sup>.

The beginning of the Pentecostal movement, Wagner calls the first wave of the Holy Spirit, the Charismatic renewal within non-Pentecostal denominations he identifies as the second wave, and the movement he founded with John Wimber he terms the Third Wave of the Holy Spirit (Farnell 1992:301; Sarles 1988:58, Wagner 1988a:13). Wagner suggests that Third Wave theology differs from Pentecostals and Charismatics as it does not insist on the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a second experience after conversion (Wagner 1988a:18ff)<sup>49</sup>. The Third

<sup>47</sup> For a well-researched and balanced Evangelical study of the 'Charismata' in Pauline theology see Gordon D. Fee's, *God's Empowering Presence* (1994).

<sup>48</sup> In Southern Africa we may think of former arch-bishop of Lusaka, Emmanuel Milingo who became affiliated with the Charismatic renewal within the Roman Catholic church (MacMillan 1984:1, 11).

<sup>49</sup> However, this doctrine does not truly distinguish the 'Third Wave' movement from Pentecostalism and the so called Charismatic Movement. I grew up within the Pentecostal movement and have also been closely involved with the Charismatic Movement in the Netherlands. Yet, when it comes to the Pentecostal doctrine of Baptism in the Spirit I hold the same view as that of the 'Third Wave movement', namely that it is an ongoing process

Wave movement also puts less emphasis on glossolalia and more on signs and wonders in the form of miraculous healing, prophecy and power encounter in exorcism and spiritual warfare together with the offices of Intercessor (prayer warrior), Prophet and Apostle (Wagner 1988a:18ff, 2002a:14-15). However, as similar variations of Pentecostal theology were common within sections of the Pentecostal and the Charismatic Movement long before the ‘Third Wave’ movement came into being, the latter is simply one variety of Pentecostalism and cannot be considered a new movement as such<sup>50</sup>. Wagner, in his 1986 book on ‘Spiritual power and church growth’, refers mainly to Pentecostal practices and assumptions in Latin America as the source of many of his ideas concerning spiritual power, including the notion of territorial spirits and the practice of overcoming these by spiritual warfare (1986:40ff). The Third Wave movement, and its denomination, the Vineyard movement, can be legitimately called (neo) Pentecostal or Charismatic (Farnell 1992:302). In the same way, characteristic Third Wave practices have been adopted by many Pentecostals and Charismatics.<sup>51</sup>

The theological pilgrimage of C. Peter Wagner also highlights the Pentecostal roots of the Third Wave movement and the pragmatic influence of the Church Growth Movement. This is very clearly seen in the movement’s main thesis: ‘The Gospel is spreading most rapidly where supernatural signs and wonders are involved’ (Wagner et al. 1983:11). Ecclesiologically speaking, ‘Third Wave’ churches such as the Vineyard churches are not much different from other Pentecostal churches in theology and practice, however, in the area of missiology, the Third Wave movement is a synthesis of Pentecostalism and the Church Growth Movement. It is indicative, that at this stage, even the founder of the Church Growth Movement, Donald McGavran, embraced the idea that signs and wonders are an important means for church growth (McGavran in Wagner et al. 1983:36). From the movement’s main

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rather than a single distinct event. The same applies to Pentecostal theologian Gordon Fee (1994:180-181;863-864) and many other Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal Evangelicals. The ‘Third Wave’ movement and its Vineyard denomination can, therefore, not be separated from Pentecostalism, at most we can call it a sub-movement within the larger Pentecostal movement.

<sup>50</sup> It is rather common in African Pentecostalism to find that someone refers to himself as apostle or prophet. In other parts of the world this is less prevalent in Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement but not uncommon. For example the father of the author of this thesis, Rinke van der Meer is a well-known prophet in the Pentecostal movement in the Netherlands. Similarly the author’s uncle, a Pentecostal pastor and church planter, Jan van der Meer, calls himself an apostle.

<sup>51</sup> Especially, the practice of people being ‘slain in the spirit’, ‘leg lengthening miracles’, ‘laughing in the spirit’, which featured in the so-called ‘Toronto Blessing’, coming from Vineyard Airport church in Toronto (Hannah 1996:168ff), and other ‘miracles’, such as people receiving golden teeth miraculously, gold dust on their hands and similar reported phenomena (Kraft 2002:76; Wagner 1995b:164ff).



thesis, it logically follows that supernatural signs such as healing and prophecy get a lot of attention, yet the most important demonstration of God's power in Third Wave missiology is exorcism (Brougham in Wagner et al. 1983:52ff; Gibbs in Wagner 1986a:195ff). In the words of Wagner's co-founder of the 'Third Wave' movement, John Wimber, the primary evidence of Signs and Wonders being manifest is the power encounter and that when these occur in the context of mission and evangelism, the church grows' (in Wagner 1986a:215-225). The emphasis on exorcism in Wagner's 'Third Wave' missiology consequently led to his development of the concept of strategic level spiritual warfare.

#### **2.4.2.3. Contours of 'Third Wave' spiritual warfare missiology**

In the preceding paragraphs, we have observed that within the Third Wave movement, supernatural signs and wonders, and particularly exorcism, play a dominant role (Wagner 1981:4-6; 1984:28-29; Wagner et al. 1983:44ff). We have also observed that Wagner's research of supernatural signs and wonders and the growth of the church world-wide, was one of the main contributing factors to his supernaturalistic shift in theology and missiology. Consequently, his new 'power' missiology was taught and practiced by John Wimber and C. Peter Wagner in their courses at Fuller's School of World Missions which Wagner terms 'Teaching Power in the Seminary Classroom' (Wagner 1983:130-132). The new 'power' missiology was also put in practice in the Vineyard church in Anaheim, California, which signaled the start of the 'Third Wave movement' (Wagner 1984:30-31), with Fuller Theological Seminary's school of world mission at the center (Powlinson 1995:33).

Third Wave 'power' missiology, as formulated and practiced by Wimber, Wagner and Kraft, became known as power evangelism (Wagner 1986:40). The conflict between the kingdom of God and that of Satan is the central idea in power evangelism (Wimber 1985:27ff). Since, the 'God of this age', Satan, blinds unbelievers so that they do not come to repentance (Wagner 1970a:104), resistance to the Gospel is overcome by the demonstration of God's power in supernatural events of healing and exorcism, and consequently, receptivity to the Gospel message is very high (Wimber 1985:47ff). The conflict between God and Satan is reenacted in power encounters which demonstrate the superiority of God's power, particularly in exorcism, supernatural healing and in receiving direct information, instruction and guidance from the Holy Spirit (Wimber 1985:29, 47). Among people groups who are not

yet reached by the Gospel, power encounters with demons provide a practical demonstration to the people in that area that Jesus Christ is more powerful than the false gods or spirits they fear of worship (Wagner 1986a:215ff). Consequently it is imperative that those who enter the kingdom of God through conversion learn to correctly understand power and authority in this conflict. Wagner and Wimber are much more optimistic in their missiology than the pessimism of their premillennial Dispensationalist background would dictate. As opposed to traditional Dispensationalism, Wagner's Kingdom theology is influenced by the already-not yet understanding of the Kingdom of God, which common among Reformed Evangelicals (Berkouwer 1972:110-115; Cartney 1994:20-22) as well as progressive Dispensationalist Evangelicals (Blaising & Block 1993:97-98). On the one hand, Wagner affirms that Satan is still the God of this world, and that the full manifestation of the kingdom of God is still a future reality, but he also believes that in the present, the power of the coming kingdom can already be experienced:

The Kingdom of God is both future and present. Its fullness is future: there will be no more sin, sickness, poverty, demon possession, tears, oppression, or death. In the present, however, there is a mixture. The powers of evil are still active (Wagner 1984:28).

The power of the Kingdom of God is experienced in gaining victory over Satan which is chiefly visible in the casting out (exorcism) of demons but also in healing and other signs and wonders (Wagner 1981:4-6; 1984:28-29). However, Wagner's approach is distinct, in that it emphasizes the already aspect of the kingdom of God in terms of power encounters with demons and Satan in exorcisms, and temporary victories which last for a season, rather than in terms of the rule of Christ being established on earth in the lives of believers, the church and in society.

The power encounter with demons is then the visible demonstration of the kingdom of God breaking through in the world which is occupied by Satan, just as it was in the ministry of Jesus (Lk. 11:20; Acts 10:38). In the same way supernatural healing is a sign of the Devil's defeat (Acts 10:38). It follows that the supernatural demonstration of God's power through signs and wonders of exorcism and supernatural healing, becomes central in evangelism and mission (Wagner et al. 1983:44ff). In power evangelism, resistance to the Gospel is overcome by the demonstration of God's power in supernatural events of healing and exorcism, and

consequently, receptivity to the Gospel message is very high (Wimber 1985:47ff). The missiology formulated by Wagner and adopted by the Third Wave movement can be described as: Mission is power evangelism. Power evangelism is characterized by, visible supernatural phenomena especially exorcism and results in numerical church growth. Wagner, therefore, disagrees with Newbigin and others that the mission of the church incorporates everything for which the church is sent into the world to do, as this dilutes mission from disciple-making to simply doing good works in the world (Wagner 1971b:54).

The primacy of evangelism, in Wagner's missiology, is similar to that formulated by the Evangelical Lausanne movement which states that mission and Christian witness is both social involvement and evangelism, but that the latter has priority (Wagner 1999b:25; 195). However, Wagner's missiology is distinct from mainstream Evangelical missiology in its method of evangelism, which is the insistence that evangelism must be empowered and validated by exorcism and signs and wonders in order to be effective. As Wagner develops his conflicting kingdoms missiology, the emphasis is more and more on exorcism and spiritual warfare focused on territorial spirits, 'ruler demons', which hold territories in spiritual bondage (Powlison 1995:33; Van Rheenen 1997:168-169; Wagner 1986:40ff, 1990:85; 2001d:17ff, 34). In Wagner's writings from the late 1980s onward, less and less emphasis is put on social involvement and more and more on exorcism and strategic level spiritual warfare as essential for evangelism, church growth and societal transformation in mission. Social involvement, or social service as Wagner calls it is not done away with, but it becomes a means to an end, that is the conversion of people to Christianity (1999b:196ff). This is a departure from the Manila Manifesto of the LCWE movement which states that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty (Oley 1990:244). In other words within mainstream Evangelicalism as represented by the LCWE movement, socio-political involvement is not understood as an evangelistic tool, but stands in its own right. Wagner also states that societal transformation is the result of 'revival' and spiritual warfare and by implication suggest that these should be our main focus rather than socio-political involvement (1998:25-26; 1999a:13-17, 54-57).<sup>52</sup> In contrast the Manila Manifesto states that 'we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are

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<sup>52</sup> Presently, Wagner no longer talks about the Third Wave movement and Third Wave churches, but talks about the New Apostolic Reformation and New Apostolic churches, or post-denominational which incorporates several of the Vineyard churches of the Third Wave movement (Wagner 1999b:199) but is also applied to describe other innovative new (mega) churches which are led by Charismatic leaders whom Wagner identifies as Apostles (Wagner 1999b:30-31, 38ff, 103-123).

deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter’, and ‘the prophetic witness denounces all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural’ (Olley 1990:246). Social-political involvement, from an Evangelical perspective is therefore not a means to an end, but a worthy cause in itself as it is a witness to the love of Christ for all humankind and reflects our biblical mandate to be salt and light in this world.

#### **2.4.2.4. The Founders of the 'Third Wave' movement**

In 1975, John Wimber, a pastor of an Evangelical Friends church enrolled for Wagner’s church growth course and they soon became friends and after some time Wagner got Wimber involved in teaching as an adjunct professor in the School of world mission at Fuller Theological Seminary (Wagner et al. 1983:40-41; Wimber in Wagner et al. 1983:14). In 1976 Wagner wrote the book: *Your Church can Grow*, and on its title page it says that John Wimber wrote its study questions (Wagner 1976:3), so it is obvious that Wimber and Wagner started working hand in hand as early as 1976 with Wagner clearly taking the lead. John Wimber also became involved in the Charles E. Fuller institute for evangelism and church growth (1979-1995). It is during this time that Wimber, as a result of getting in contact with Pentecostals, underwent a similar paradigm shift as Wagner, and came to believe that supernatural gifts and signs and wonders are not only for the New Testament era but also for today (Wagner et al. 1983:5-6).

It is likely that John Wimber’s paradigm shift was largely precipitated by his classes under Wagner which highlighted the role of signs and wonders in church growth in Latin America. Wimber got in contact with Wagner in 1975, but already as early as 1971 Wagner was promoting the use of spiritual gifts in mission and in 1973 he was already expressing what became the main thesis of the Third Wave movement and strategic level spiritual warfare, namely that power encounter and exorcism contribute to rapid church growth (1973a:136, 154-155). In fact, Wimber refers to Paul Hiebert, Charles H. Kraft and C. Peter Wagner as the teachers who influenced him the most (Wimber in Wagner et al. 1983:14-15). Wagner in turn states that he and Charles H. Kraft are disciples of John Wimber (in Wagner et al. 1983:10-11; 2000b:83-87), which may be true for Kraft, but Wagner is probably much less a disciple of Wimber than Wimber being a disciple of Wagner. In 1983, Wagner writes that in the year before (1982) John Wimber suggested to do a course in Signs, Wonders and church

growth and that he agreed to co-sponsor the course (Wagner 1983:130-131), which means that in this instance, Wagner may have followed Wimber's lead. Nevertheless, we must remember that Wagner was first Wimber's teacher at Fuller Theological Seminary and his 'employer' (Wagner 2000b:83). Consequently, Wagner was certainly in a position to exert much influence over Wimber. For example, it was Wagner who advised Wimber to start the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in 1977 (Wagner 2000b:84) which became mother of the Vineyard movement and from which the Third Wave movement spread through the United States and beyond (Wagner 1984a:19)<sup>53</sup>. Under Wagner's tutelage Wimber started the Vineyard Christian Fellowship which became the center of the 'Third Wave movement'. Nevertheless, initially Wimber did most of the 'signs and wonders' teaching at Fuller's School of World Missions (Kraft 2002:14; Wagner et al. 1983:5-7). Wagner thus emerges as the main brain behind the Third Wave and Vineyard movement and was also its most influential promotor. Wagner's close involvement with Wimber in the Third Wave movement and his continuing leadership role in the theological formulation of the beliefs and practices of the movement, is also affirmed by some of the prophecies Wagner recalls and believes in (Wagner 2000b:125-127). Wagner was also influenced by Wimber, for example in the area of prophecy (Wagner 2000b:83-87). It is therefore legitimate to credit both Wagner and Wimber with the emergence of the 'Third Wave Movement' which is also known as the 'Signs and Wonders Movement' (Sarles 1988:58).

#### **2.4.2.5. The 'Third Wave' movement and Fuller Theological Seminary**

In 1981 John Wimber, who after being recruited by Wagner in 1975 (2000b:83-84), had been teaching classes in church growth in the School of world mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, now started lecturing on 'Signs and Wonders and church growth' at Fuller Theological Seminary (Wagner et al. 1983:5-7, 14). This course was the brain child of John Wimber and C. Peter Wagner (Kraft 2002:14) and became a full fledged course in 1982: MC 510, The Miraculous and church growth, in which John Wimber was an adjunct instructor along with C. Peter Wagner and Charles H. Kraft, the latter two being responsible for the course (Hubbard in Smedes 1987:14-15). The course proved to be a huge success and an advanced course was added: MC 511 (Hubbard in Smedes 1987:15). The course, however, also caused a lot of controversy and in 1986 the School of world mission declared a

<sup>53</sup> Including South Africa and Zimbabwe where the Vineyard churches are predominantly white-led middle class churches.

moratorium on the course until the Seminary faculties could examine some of the issues that had arisen from a biblical, theological, psychological and scientific perspective (Hubbard in Smedes 1987:16). The report 'Ministry and the Miraculous' (Smedes et al. 1987) does not dismiss the possibility of miraculous healing, exorcism and supernatural guidance and discernment, but cautions against a pre-occupation with the supernatural and denies that power encounters or other miraculous signs are essential for evangelisation (Smedes et al. 1987: 60-61, 72-76). Wagner and Kraft were later allowed to reinstate and continue the course but under a different format (Kraft 2002:15).

Wagner and his associates were not deterred by the critical evaluation of their colleagues and continued to promote the miraculous in evangelism and missions. However, Wagner's dislike of theological education in the form of academic theological seminaries and theological scholarship, which he expresses rather morbidly in church *Quake* (1999b:224-235), may well have its roots in this period of controversy. Wagner's books, *Signs and Wonders Today* (1987), and *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit* (1988a), are polemical works defending the Third Wave movement's emphasis on miraculous healing, exorcism, prophecy and supernatural guidance. Another book, *How to Have a Healing Ministry Without Making Your Church Sick* (1988b), also promotes the concept of miraculous healing in the church.<sup>54</sup> In the mean time Wagner was developing his even more controversial theology of strategic level spiritual warfare. In SLSW, exorcism in evangelism now goes beyond casting out demons from individuals and is applied to territories:

A part of power evangelism, not too well known as yet, deals with the territorial assignment given by the enemy to high ranking evil spirits in the demonic hierarchy. Certain 'powers of the air' (Eph. 6:12) may be in charge of certain geographic regions such as countries, provinces, towns, cities, sections of cities and so forth (Wagner 1986:40).

In the next section we will look at this development in more detail.

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<sup>54</sup> The title was later changed to: *How to Have a Healing Ministry in Any Church*, (Ventura: Regal, 1988).

## 2.5. The strategic level spiritual warfare movement

The personal pilgrimage of C. Peter Wagner did not end at the founding and expansion of the Third Wave of the Spirit movement, which Wagner calls ‘the season of signs and wonders: 1980-1988’ (Wagner 1997b:115), but continued in the developing and promoting strategic level spiritual warfare in what he calls ‘The Season of Prayer and spiritual warfare: 1987-1996’ (Wagner 1997b:116), which was followed by Wagner’s ‘Season of the New Apostolic Reformation: 1993 Onward’ (Wagner 1997b:120), which is primarily focused on those leaders, churches and ministries who embraced and successfully implemented technical church growth principles and the spiritual church growth principles of SLSW and its related doctrines (Wagner 1997b:121). In the preceding paragraphs we were able to see how Wagner’s ideas concerning the miraculous and the demonic were largely inspired by (Latin American) Pentecostals, which is also true for the concept of evil territorial spirits (Wagner 1986:40-42; 1989:279, 282-284). Several Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic writers had suggested the existence of such beings based on their understanding of Eph. 6:10-18 and other Scriptures.

Already in the 1920s it was suggested that intercessory prayer could bind and remove the demonic strongman (Mark 3:27), such as ‘A prince of China’,<sup>55</sup> in order to pave the way for more effective evangelism (McGee 1997:83-84). A year before Wagner mentioned the existence of territorial spirits, Bill Subritzky, suggested in his book *Demons Defeated* (1985:12-13), that Satan places unseen princes and powers of the air over every nation and city with descending orders of authority all the way down to demons which walk on the ground and seek a home. These evil spirit beings are believed to rule over countries, cities, and even over churches, by bringing with them hordes of demonic powers such as envy, jealousy, unbelief, pride, lust and ambition.<sup>56</sup> Wagner incorporated these and similar ideas concerning the demonic hierarchy and spheres of influence in his spiritual warfare theology (Wagner 1986:38-42; 1990:83-102). That these ideas and concepts were already floating around within Pentecostalism is also demonstrated by novelist Frank Peretti, who crafted novels *This Present Darkness* (1986) and *Piercing the Darkness* (1989) using the concept of

<sup>55</sup> The idea of a demonic ruler or strongman keeping a nation under its hold is based on Daniel 10:12-20, as well as *Deuteronomy* 32:8 and Matthew 12:29. In chapter 3 of this study these concepts are discussed more elaborately.

<sup>56</sup> The tendency to demonize or personalize the vices goes back at least to the inter-testamental period. Some examples can be found in the writings of the Qumran community such as 1 QM Col. xiii.11-12, 4Q510.5-6 (frag.1), 4Q286 frag.7 col. II. (in Martinez 1996). Also in Gnostic literature such as *The Teachings of Silvanus* and the *Apocryphon of John*. (in Robinson 1988).

territorial spirits controlling territories and also many older ideas from the spiritual warfare movement. The novels of Frank Peretti did not so much chart a new direction in thinking, but they described what many were already experimenting with, although Wagner believes they providentially prepared the ground for the proponents of SLSW (Moreau 2000; Wagner 1996a:73-75). Prior to these developments, Pentecostal leaders such as John Dawson of YWAM, Larry Lea, Omar Cabrera and other leaders within the Pentecostal movement had already been applying as fact, the principles Peretti used to craft his novels (Lawson 1991:31; Wagner 1986:41-42). For example, in the 1980s the concept of demonization of houses, neighborhoods, cities and other territories, could already be found among the missionaries of the Charismatic organization Youth With A Mission (YWAM). Some of them had studied at the School of world mission while others were familiar with the writings of Subritzky, Wagner and others on the subject, including YWAM's founder Loren Cunningham. Loren Cunningham who also authored a book on hearing God's voice (1984) relates the story how in 1973 he and other YWAM workers prayed for the downfall of the (demonic) prince of Greece which resulted in a political coup that provided the opportunity for them to preach the Gospel in the streets (Wagner 1989:283).

In 1986 the author of this study participated in one of the many groups of intercessors wandering throughout Amsterdam in so called prayer-walks organized by YWAM, claiming the soil on which they walked in prayer so that the kingdom of God may break through. These practices and their underlying assumptions concerning demonic attachment to places, territorial spirits and spiritual warfare are reflected in the 1987 publication by Peter Adams of YWAM-UK (Adams 1987:40-82). Next, an international YWAM leader, John Dawson, published his book *Taking Our Cities for God* (1989) which calls for spiritual warfare through intercession against demonic spirits on behalf of cities and neighborhoods. Another international leader, Floyd McClung, who was one of YWAM's regional directors, based in Amsterdam at the time, published his book *Spirits of the City* (McClung 1990) in which he suggests that there are demonic spirits which control cities.

There is no doubt that C. Peter Wagner has been well-acquainted with YWAM and has in fact been working very closely with George Otis jr., a former missionary with YWAM with whom Wagner worked very closely in the spiritual warfare Network of the LCWE (Wagner



1992b:149; 1993c:29). It is not surprising that Youth With A Mission (YWAM)<sup>57</sup> was the first international mission agency in which SLSW was practiced and promoted worldwide. Among other things this included sending out prayer journey teams around the world to pray that the demonic strongholds over the continents would be pulled down (Wagner 1996a:31, 112 1993c:202-203, 222). Wagner's incorporation of spiritual warfare against territorial demons in Third Wave theology is a natural consequence of his emphasis on exorcism as a way of making the kingdom of God visible (Wagner et al. 1983:44ff). In 1990 Wagner published his book *Wrestling with dark angels* which deals with exorcism in the context of evangelism in general but already reflects the new emphasis within the Third Wave movement on spiritual warfare against territorial spirits (1990:57ff, 83ff). In 1991 Wagner published *Engaging the Enemy: How to fight and defeat territorial spirits* (Wagner 1991) which is almost totally devoted to territorial spirits and how to overcome them through spiritual battle. In Wagner's theology, the power encounter with the kingdom of Satan is no longer just a matter of power evangelism through the healing and exorcism of individuals, but now also includes spiritual warfare against territorial demons through powerful intercessory prayer or strategic intercession (Wagner 1989:279-280, 282; 1991a:132-133).

Prayer plays a major role in Wagner's understanding of SLSW, even though it differs from ordinary prayers of worship and supplication and instead is described in terms of militant, aggressive, powerful, intercessory prayer undertaken by prayer warriors (Wagner 1992b:81-84; 1993c: 96ff; 127-226). Intercessory prayer or strategic intercession can be traced back to the prayer movement of the 1980s which has its roots in the LCWE (Wagner 1996a:15-16). Wagner refers to the World Prayer Assembly in Seoul, Korea (1984) and his association with John Wimber as the main influences that made him take prayer more seriously, especially praying for the lost or unevangelized (Wagner 1996a: 16). Consequently, Wagner began to research, write and participate in the world prayer movement from 1987 onwards (Wagner 1997b:116-119; 1996a:16-17). Wagner then organized an intercession team to pray during the LCWE Lausanne II conference in Manila in 1989 (1996a: 17-18).

At the Lausanne II congress of the LCWE in Manila, 1989, the AD2000 and Beyond movement was launched with the goal of establishing a church for every people and making

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<sup>57</sup> In spite of claims to the contrary, YWAM is clearly a Charismatic/neo-Pentecostal organization. This fact can be observed in the books of its international and national leaders and also in the worship and mission practices at all their centers.

the Gospel available to every individual by the year 2000. The movement's coordinator, evangelist Luis Bush, asked Wagner to become the coordinator of the United Prayer Track of the movement (Wagner 1996a:20-21; 2000:1). Wagner agreed but on condition that he could bring with him the international spiritual warfare Network (SPN) which under his leadership was experimenting with and promoting, SLSW (USSPN 2003; Wagner 1996a:20-21). Other key-players in the SPN were Charles H. Kraft, Cindy Jacobs and Gary Clark (USSPN 2003). At this point in time Wagner and his wife also started Global Harvest Ministries (Wagner 1996a:249) to facilitate his involvement with the United Prayer Track but which basically meant the promotion of SLSW and related practices as evidenced by numerous of their newsletters and other publications<sup>58</sup>. The mandate of the United Prayer Track was to mobilize and equip the multiple prayer movements around the world to focus their prayer ministries at least in part on accomplishing the AD 2000 movement's goal (Wagner 1993:12; 1996a:252). However, the linking of the International spiritual warfare network and Global Harvest Ministries with the Prayer Track, gave the Prayer Track a strong neo-Pentecostal, pro-SLSW character, both in its philosophy as developed by Wagner (Wagner 1996a:249) and in praxis, particularly by its spiritual mapping division under the leadership of George Otis jr. (Moore 1998:55; Wagner 1993:12-15; 1995:47).

Following Wagner's publication of *Spiritual Power and church growth* (1986), in which he first suggested the existence of territorial spirits, the concept of battling territorial demons became the dominant theme in Wagner's missiology in the 1990s and he became the most prolific and most influential writer on territorial demons, spiritual mapping, strategic intercession and related concepts which together came to be known as strategic level spiritual warfare as is evidenced in his books:

- *Wrestling with Dark Angels* (Wagner & Pennoyer 1990)
- *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (1990a)
- *Engaging the Enemy* (1991)
- *Prayer Shield* (1992a)
- *warfare prayer* (1992b)
- *Churches That Pray* (1993c)

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<sup>58</sup> For example the Global Prayer news letters in which Global Harvest Ministries is defined as Global Harvest Ministries for Strategic Prophetic Intercession which is another term for SLSW (Wagner 2000:1). Also the Praying Through the Window I and II publications and that of the Joshua Project 2000 (Wagner 1995:45).

- *Breaking Strongholds in Your City* (1993e)
- *Spreading the Fire: A New Look at the Book of Acts* (1994)
- *Lighting the World* (1995a)
- *Blazing the Way* (1995b)
- *Praying Through the 100 Gateway Cities of the 10/40 Window* (1995c.)
- *Confronting the Powers* (1996a)
- *The Healthy church* (1996b)
- *Praying with Power* (1997a)
- *The Rising Revival* (Wagner & Deiros 1998)
- *The New Apostolic Churches* (1998a)
- *Confronting the 'Queen of Heaven'* (1998b)
- *The Every church Guide to Growth – Part 1* (1998c)
- *Radical Holiness for Radical Living* (1998d)
- *Revival! It Can Transform Your City* (1999a)
- *Churchquake* (1999b)
- *Hard-Core Idolatry: Facing the Facts* (1999, 2001)

Wagner considers SLSW as one of the three areas of spiritual insight which are necessary for the completion of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20), together with spiritual mapping and identificational repentance (Wagner 1995c:119), the latter two, however, are part and parcel of SLSW practice. Frequent references to spiritual mapping can be found in the literature of the Prayer Track of the 'AD2000 and Beyond' movement,<sup>59</sup> which was coordinated by C. Peter Wagner. The 'AD2000 and Beyond' movement provided Wagner with a strategic platform to market his new ideas and will potentially influence millions of people for better or for worse (Greenlee 1994:507; Priest 1997:140). The AD2000 and beyond movement is officially linked to the Lausanne Congress for World Evangelisation (LCWE), one of the major ecumenical vehicles of Evangelicals world-wide (Van Rheenen 1997:169).

In spite of the Prayer Track falling under the LCWE umbrella, the Intercession Working Group (IWG) of the LCWE responded to the new spiritual warfare trends with a statement

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<sup>59</sup> The AD 2000 and Beyond movement was an initiative by various evangelistic organizations and was started at the Lausanne II congress in Manila in 1989. For a brief history of this movement one can view their website at [www.ad2000.org/histover.htm](http://www.ad2000.org/histover.htm) (15 July 2000).

containing several warnings. Among other things they warned against reverting to a (neo) pagan worldview, a preoccupation with the demonic, and the danger of an adversarial mode of ministry among people of other faiths. The statement also called for careful theological reflection concerning the notion of 'territorial spirits' (IWG/LCWE 1993).<sup>60</sup>

## **2.6. The New Apostolic Reformation**

In 1997, Wagner started discussing a newly observed phenomenon, which he calls New Apostolic Reformation (Wagner 1997b:120). The New Apostolic Reformation is Wagner's description of a group of successful ministries, church leaders and churches which successfully implemented both the older traditional technical church growth principles as espoused by McGavran and Wagner prior to his Pentecostal paradigm shift, and the spiritual church growth principles as espoused by Wagner after his Pentecostal paradigm shift (Wagner 1997b:121). In his own words, Wagner's writing about the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) is a culmination and synthesis of all that he has done in the missiological academy (Wagner 1997b:121). Though mentioned in passing in other books (Wagner 1996b:34; 1997:44-45; Wagner 1998:19ff; 1998d:8-9), Wagner's first book which exhaustively discusses the NAR is the *New Apostolic Churches* (1998a) which he edited. Wagner's interest in the NAR, as it was with SLSW, is derived from his preoccupation with church growth (Wagner 1998a:13). Wagner includes under the umbrella of New Apostolic Reformation churches those churches, who according to his observation, have combined the technical aspects of the traditional Church Growth Movement of McGavran and Wagner, as well as the so-called spiritual principles of church growth (Wagner 1998a:14). The churches selected by Wagner as reflecting the paradigm for being church in the 21st century have among other things the following characteristics (Wagner 1998a:19-24):

1. They do not have a firm commitment to denominationalism but instead are firmly committed to individuals who are perceived to have been given (apostolic) authority by the Holy Spirit.
2. There is a shared suspicion of doctrine and theological education and academic requirement for ordination, which are scrapped for personal relationships, character

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<sup>60</sup> The text of this official statement on spiritual warfare can be found on the website of the LCWE on <http://www.Gospelcom.net/lcwe/statements/spwar.html>

and practical ministry skills as criteria for church leadership. Additional training may come in the form of seminars, conferences and retreats.

3. A pre-occupation with numerical growth.
4. A Pentecostal style worship.
5. New prayer forms, many of which are part and parcel of SLSW.
6. A strong emphasis on giving and tithing to the local congregation.
7. Aggressive evangelistic and social outreach.

Note the dominant themes here: Individual authority, suspicion of doctrine and theology, numerical growth, Pentecostal style worship, SLSW, tithing and aggressive evangelistic and social outreach. It is in this same frame of mind that Wagner decided to retire from Fuller Theological Seminary and subsequently started his own ‘seminary’, the Wagner Leadership Institute (WLI) which issues Diplomas for associate, Bachelor, Master and Doctor of Practical Ministry, based on practical ministry, anointing<sup>61</sup> and impartation of anointing, vision and ministry skills through mentoring (Wagner 2000a:87; 2000b:115, 119)<sup>62</sup>. Even though terms are used that normally are indicative of certain levels of academic ability and knowledge, Wagner’s school provides ‘earned’ diplomas at associate, bachelor, masters and doctoral levels without academic requirements, nor exams, nor grades, nor academic entry qualifications (2000b:119).

At the core of Wagner’s teaching at WLI are the four spiritual power concepts or principles which he developed within the ‘Third Wave’ movement (Wagner 2000d:75-81):

1. strategic level spiritual warfare
2. spiritual mapping
3. identificational repentance
4. Territorial Commitment of Apostles

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<sup>61</sup> The concept of ‘Anointing’ is a rather ‘fluid’ concept (I don’t mean this literally) in Evangelical Christianity and may refer to anointing with oil of the sick (Ja. 5:14), the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit in understanding biblical truth (1 John 2:20, 27), (Zuck 1984:121ff), or the possession of a powerful charisma which makes one speak boldly and confidently so that people listen and follow, which is a common Pentecostal understanding which also appears to be adopted by Wagner (Wagner 1995a:174; 2000a:38-39; 2000b:119).

<sup>62</sup> The faculty members are successful ‘Apostles’, and ‘prophets’, evangelists, pastors and teachers who impart vision and anointing for ministry to the students, rather than knowledge (Wagner 2000b:119).

These four concepts I understand as being so closely inter-related that they are all part and parcel of SLSW. In addition to the Wagner Leadership Institute<sup>63</sup>, the Wagners also started their own publishing company, Wagner Publications<sup>64</sup> (Wagner 2000b:116-120).

Whatever one's theological position may be in as far as Wagner's theology is concerned, one must admit that he is very committed to his cause, not just because his livelihood may depend on it, but his whole life and self-understanding is intertwined with his theology and praxis. Unfortunately, Wagner's self-understanding does not agree with his earlier self-confessed state of being an objective observer and researcher<sup>65</sup> (1999b:8-9, 33-53). Wagner is an insider, a self-styled apostle<sup>66</sup> who believes that he is called by God to promote the ideas of SLSW and its related doctrines through Global Harvest Ministries and WLI, through his books, and in other ways (Wagner 2000b:108-125; 2002a:94-96). Unfortunately, the negative side-effect of this will be that in evaluating and critiquing Wagner's theology, one unwillingly finds oneself also critiquing the man behind the theology. Be that as it may, as we evaluate Wagner's theology, we do so in humility, bearing in mind that apart from Christ, no-one's theology in the history of the church has been completely without error.

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<sup>63</sup> For more information see website: [www.wagnerleadership.org](http://www.wagnerleadership.org)

<sup>64</sup> All Wagner's books from 1999 onwards have been published by Wagner Publications: [www.wagnerpublications.org](http://www.wagnerpublications.org), a subsidiary of Global Harvest Ministries.

<sup>65</sup> As I explained in chapter 1, I am personally not convinced that real objectivity exists apart from the mind of God as on earth we see as in a dim mirror (1 Cor. 13:12). Nevertheless, I do not subscribe to relativism either. We may see dimly but we are able to see and understand within the limits of human ability. Consequently, I believe we can still speak of truth and error, of being subjective or being objective. However, not in terms of absolutes for no-one can be 100% right but rather in terms of approximation. In such a framework, objectivity means attempting to approximate the truth about a subject as well as possible, by trying to be as honest, detached and open as possible, thereby trying to be unbiased and open for the critique and input of others.

<sup>66</sup> Wagner calls himself a horizontal apostle who convenes (and chairs) meetings of other Apostles like James of Jerusalem in Acts 15 (Wagner 2002a:94).

## CHAPTER 3

### STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

#### 3.1. Background of SLSW

##### 3.1.1. Power evangelism and SLSW

In the previous chapter we have observed that SLSW is rooted in the power evangelism theology of the Third Wave movement, which in turn has its roots in Pentecostalism. The power evangelism promoted by C. Peter Wagner and John Wimber initially emphasised the exorcism of demons from demonised individuals by means of exorcism sessions which they termed power encounters (Wagner 1973a:154-155; 1979a:104-105; 1984:30ff; 1986a:215ff). By 1986 Wagner had come to believe that power evangelism also includes dealing with high ranking evils spirits in the demonic hierarchy, who may be in spiritual charge of geographic locations such as countries, provinces, towns, cities, sections of cities and so forth (Wagner 1986:40). At this stage Wagner does not yet recommend specific ways of dealing with such territorial demons, but simply assumes their existence and suggests that their power needs to be broken with greater power (Wagner 1986:41). Wagner cites various experiences from the mission-field, which are meant to support the notion of territorial demons who exercise their influence over people in a certain geographical region.

One such an example speaks of Gospel tracts being readily received on the Brazilian side of the Brazil-Uruguay border, but on the Uruguayan side the tracts were refused (Moreau 2000; Wagner 1986:41).<sup>67</sup> Wagner attributes the difference in response to the Gospel tracts to the binding of the demonic strongman of Brazil, which had not been done in Uruguay. After quoting this example Wagner refers to the binding of the strong man in the Gospel of Mark (3:27). Wagner also refers to the successful Argentinean Pentecostal evangelist Omar Cabrera who practices spiritual warfare through prayer and fasting against the demonic territorial hierarchy until he identifies the demonic strong men who rule over that territory.

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<sup>67</sup> Priest, Campbell and Mullen have investigated this event and discovered it was a certain Rev. R. Edward Miller who reported this experience during tract evangelism one afternoon while he was on a four month' mission trip to Uruguay in 1947, though he could not remember the name of the town (1997:40ff).

He, reportedly, then wrestles with them in prayer and binds them in the name of the Lord (Wagner 1986:41-42). Miraculous healings, mass conversions in his evangelistic meetings, as well as the rapid growth of his movement, are attributed by Wagner to Cabrera's unusual spiritual warfare activities. Wagner believes that the power shown in Pentecostal ministry is available to all believers (1986:42). Wagner, himself, during this period, repeatedly stresses he is not a Pentecostal (in Wagner et al. 1983:4; Wagner 1988a:18-19). Nevertheless, in his writings Wagner clearly endorses and adopts most Pentecostal doctrines and practices such as glossolalia, prophecy in the form of words of knowledge and wisdom and the hearing God's voice individually. Wagner also endorses a Pentecostal style of exorcism which includes the verbal binding and loosing of perceived demonic powers. Wagner also adopted the belief in the power of curses and proclamations as well as a variety of other distinctive Pentecostal beliefs and practices (in Wagner 1979a; 1988b; 1996a, 2001e). It is, therefore, a bit misleading when Wagner claims not to be a Pentecostal. In fact, Wagner, by means of his writings, and through his leadership in the Charismatic Vineyard movement (Third Wave), did in fact become a major instrument in the 'Pentecostalisation' of many non-Pentecostal Evangelicals. Wagner also Pentecostalised a large section of Evangelical missiology, incorporating Pentecostal practices and teachings in his strategic level spiritual warfare theology (Wagner 1973:133ff, 154ff; 1979a:102-103; 229ff; 1987, 1988a, 1989:283-284, 1991a:130ff, 2000d:13).

Wagner ascribes his interest in SLSW to a long-time friend of the Wagner's, Cindy Jacobs, in the early 1980s (Wagner 1997a: 59-61). Wagner's statement, however, is doubtful, because Cindy Jacobs actually attributes her first book on SLSW (Jacobs 1991) to the encouragement and help of Wagner (Jacobs 1991:7; 1995:32-33). Cindy Jacobs also mentions Wagner as her mentor for several years (1995:112). As a matter of fact, as early as 1973, Wagner was intrigued by the exorcism of demons as he observed that this played a major role in the Latin American Pentecostal churches and concluded that it could be the most important key to Pentecostal church growth in Brazil (Wagner 1973a: 135-136). When Wagner first postulated his ideas concerning the existence of territorial spirits, he never acknowledged Cindy Jacobs, but did mention several Latin American evangelists (Wagner 1986:40-42). There is little doubt that Wagner's interest in the so-called Argentine revival influenced many of his beliefs and practices. These beliefs he has popularised in SLSW and he refers many times to the Argentine revival and Latin American Pentecostalism in his writings (cf. Wagner



1986: 41-42; 1991a: 130-137) and even devoted a whole volume to it (Wagner & Deiros 1998). However, Wagner does not simply report his observations in an objective manner. He tends to report selectively and positively on those events, statements and beliefs which are in agreement with his supernaturalist worldview and power evangelism missiology (Wagner 1987; 1988a; 2000d:13).

### **3.1.2. Distinctive teachings of SLSW**

strategic level spiritual warfare as formulated and promoted by C. Peter Wagner is to a large extent part and parcel of the Pentecostal ideas which Wagner has been promoting in his writings. At face value it may be difficult to differentiate between what is specifically part of SLSW and what is simply part of the larger Pentecostal framework and their spiritual warfare theology. The same is true in the writings of Andrew Walker (Walker 1987) who fails to differentiate between SLSW and Pentecostalism. In a way this is understandable as SLSW is rooted in older Pentecostal and spiritual warfare beliefs and practices. However, upon closer scrutiny SLSW emerges as a distinct spiritual warfare theology which, while developed within the context of Pentecostalism, differs from other spiritual warfare theologies found within the movement. Nevertheless, Walker's warning against excessive pre-occupation with the demonic and against the horror-genre approach to the Devil and the demons is certainly applicable to both SLSW and the earlier spiritual warfare movement (Walker 1987:32-33). In as much as part of Pentecostalism has embraced Wagner's SLSW beliefs and practices, a large section has not. Many Pentecostal leaders and theologians are committed to an Evangelical hermeneutic and theology are unable to embrace the extra-biblical doctrines and practices of SLSW. Examples of this are influential Pentecostal leaders and theologians such as T.L. Osborne (in Reid 2002:2ff), Michael B. Reid (2002) and Gordon Fee (1994)<sup>68</sup>. By studying their writings, as well as examining non-SLSW spiritual warfare books by Pentecostal authors, we can identify the specific doctrines and practices of SLSW as they differ from traditional Pentecostal spiritual warfare theology and praxis. At the same time there is a link between the classic spiritual warfare theology and practices found within Pentecostalism and SLSW, with the latter building upon the former. In fact Charles Kraft, an important SLSW proponent, and close associate of Wagner, admits having gained many

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<sup>68</sup> In fact Pentecostal biblical scholar Gordon D. Fee in his monumental work on the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul does affirm the importance of Holy Spirit inspired prayer which should accompany the preaching of the Gospel in spiritual warfare against the powers, but not in binding demonic powers or SLSW style practices (1994: 866-868).

insights from Pentecostal books on this subject matter (Kraft 1992:14ff). In the section on spiritual warfare in church history we will examine this link more closely.

Wagner is not unaware that in SLSW he has departed from the traditional Pentecostal spiritual warfare theology and describes his insights as new. He initially lists 3 distinctives as primary issues in his new insight (Wagner 1997b:118-119):

1. strategic level spiritual warfare;
2. spiritual mapping
3. identificational repentance

Wagner also identifies 5 essential issues in spiritual ‘technology’(Wagner 1996a:30-31):

1. Hearing the Lord through prophecy
2. Engaging the enemy through SLSW
3. Targetting our prayers through spiritual mapping
4. Remit corporate sins through identificational repentance
5. Invading the community through prayer evangelism against demonic strongholds

As Wagner further developed his ideas concerning SLSW he describes its distinctives in a later work as 4 newly revealed power-principles (Wagner 2000d:75-81). :

1. strategic level spiritual warfare
2. spiritual mapping
3. identificational repentance
4. Territorial commitment

Incorporating the above and combining some of these, the doctrines which I have identified as truly unique and distinctive in SLSW can be identified and classified as:

1. *The doctrine of territorial spirits* (Reid 2002:131ff, 143ff; Wagner 2001d:17-19), which provides the rationale for the practice of spiritual mapping (Wagner 1993c:193-197; 1997b:119).

2. *The doctrine of territorial defilement*<sup>69</sup> (Reid 2002:147ff; Wagner 1997b:119), which provides the rationale for practices such as reconciliation walks, prayer walks, and identificational repentance (Wagner 1993c:177-184; 188ff; 1997b:119).
3. *The doctrine of strategic level spiritual warfare prayer*, which provides the rationale for a variety of prayer and exorcism methods for dealing with territorial spirits (Wagner 1992b; 1993c:200; 1997a:70-72, 228-229).
4. *The doctrine of territorial commitment*, which paves the way for Charismatic leaders to assert that they have been given extraordinary spiritual power and apostolic authority in their communities or territories (Wagner 1999:112; 2000d:80; 2000e:44).

Wagner's own emphasis on hearing the Lord through prophecy as an essential ingredient of the new spiritual technology (Wagner 1996a:30ff), while important from an epistemological point of view, is not really a new doctrine or practice, but simply one of the methods by which spiritual mappers arrive at their conclusions concerning the state of affairs in the spirit world. This practice is not unique to SLSW as the style of prophecy Wagner talks about, 'hearing a voice in one's mind', or, 'visualising a vision in one's mind', is common in the Pentecostal movement and was popularised by Loren Cunningham, the founder of Youth With A Mission (YWAM) by means of his book *Is this really you Lord?* in 1984. Wagner has been closely acquainted with YWAM over the years. He refers to Cunningham's book in one of his first articles on territorial spirits Cunningham (Wagner 1989:283) as well as in some of his other writings (cf. Wagner 1992b:149). However, one could say that the way Wagner uses prophecy is unique in its application. Wagner uses prophecy in SLSW to establish new beliefs and practices as well as to uncover the names of territorial spirits and the causes of their presence in a territory.

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<sup>69</sup> I use the term *territorial defilement* to refer to Wagner's assumption that territorial spirits can operate in a location because of the evil or sins which have been committed in that location and allegedly provide Satan with a legal right to perpetuate evil in that location (Wagner 1992b:129-130; 1993c:194-197, 202-203; 1997a:102-116).

## 3.2. Wagner's doctrine of territorial spirits

### 3.2.1. The Nature of territorial spirits according to Wagner

The strategic level spiritual warfare theology stands or falls with the doctrine of territorial spirits. The assumption that there are ruler demons that control certain geographical territories is the main distinctive characteristic of SLSW, which distinguishes it from other forms of spiritual warfare in church history.<sup>70</sup> In 1986, Wagner's research of the South American Pentecostals led him to conclude there may be high ranking evils spirits in the demonic hierarchy, who may be in charge of certain geographic regions such as countries, provinces, towns, cities, sections of cities and so forth (Wagner 1986:40ff). Initially, Wagner, called his 'new insight' a matter of 'hypotheses' rather than conclusions (Wagner 1989:278). However, it is clear that he is not just postulating a possibility, but truly believes in the existence of territorial spirits. For example, Wagner states that he agrees with Timothy Warner<sup>71</sup> that Satan has delegated high-ranking members of the hierarchy of evil spirits to control nations, regions, cities, tribes, neighbourhoods, and other social networks. They seek to prevent God from being glorified in their territory and try to do so by directing the activities of lower-ranking demons (Wagner 1989:279-280; 1990:85). Wagner says that if his hypothesis about territorial spirits is correct, and we learn to break their control, we should see an increased receptivity to the Gospel (1989: 280). However, terminology such as 'hypothesis' should not mislead us into thinking that Wagner is simply researching and discussing possibilities objectively. In the same article, when discussing the *Septuagint* (LXX) rendering of Dt. 32:8, Wagner states that it is 'a fact' that there are evil spirits dominating territories (Wagner 1989:280). We must note that here he does not use the word 'hypothesis' or 'possibility', but 'fact'. In this article, Wagner also states that, if he was called to be a leader in the evangelisation of Japan, he would among other things look to God for ways to identify, engage and break the power of territorial spirits (Wagner 1989:287-288). In other words, Wagner had already come to the point of believing that SLSW is essential for the evangelism of Japan and other places in the world which are difficult to reach with the Gospel. Wagner's hypothesis consequently was not a true hypothesis, at least not in his own mind, he clearly had already firmly embraced the belief that territorial demonic spirits exist as a matter of 'fact'. He asserts that they must be identified, engaged and broken to make

<sup>70</sup> See chapter 5 of this thesis: Survey of Approaches to spiritual warfare in church History.

<sup>71</sup> Even though Wagner is quoting Warner's statement made at a lecture at Fuller Theological seminary in 1988, Wagner had already suggested two years previously that territorial spirits exist (1986:40), and it is, therefore, more likely that Wagner is the one who influenced his colleague Warner, rather than vice versa.

evangelism more effective. At a later stage, when SLSW started to grow in popularity, Wagner feels more secure and admits that he believes that God had actually instructed him to take leadership in the area of territorial spirits (Wagner 1996a:20, 2000b:80), as well as, promoting the New Apostolic style of leadership (Wagner 2000b:81-82, 113-114; 116-119, 127).<sup>72</sup> According to his own admission Wagner seeks to reshape the face of Christianity, SLSW style. In his mind this is an assignment given to him by God (Wagner 2000b:108-110).

### **3.2.2. Theological assumptions underlying the concept of territorial spirits**

#### **3.2.2.1. Satan is not omnipresent and needs a hierarchy of spirits under his control**

The theological foundation of Wagner's belief in territorial spirits is that Satan, unlike God, is not omnipresent or omniscient, so Satan can only be in one place at a time (Wagner 1991:17). However, though Satan is not omnipresent, the apostle Paul writes in 2 Cor. 4:3-4 that Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers around the globe, and it is obvious that he still very successful in doing so (Wagner 1990:85ff; 1993a:50; 1997b:118).<sup>73</sup> Wagner concludes that Satan must have many demonic helpers at his disposal otherwise he would not have been able to keep over 3 billion people blinded to the Gospel (Kraft 1992:20; Wagner 1990:84ff; 1997a:84). Only with the help of myriads of demonic spiritual beings Satan is able to exercise control in this world. Wagner also suggests that the more people are grouped together in a location, the more demons will be assigned to these places, who in turn will be under the command of higher-ranking demonic territorial spirits whose responsibility it is to blind the minds of unbelievers to the light of the Gospel (Wagner 1986:40; 1997a:86-87). Wagner points out that in Mt. 12:29 Jesus refers to a house controlled by Satan, and concludes that it is therefore reasonable that this can also be the case with a people group, a city or a nation (Wagner 1990:89). Wagner, however, does not present any convincing biblical evidence for such an inference.

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<sup>72</sup> In his writings on power evangelism, strategic level spiritual warfare and the New Apostolic Reformation, Wagner, cites many anecdotes about mass conversion which according to him took place as a result of SLSW. He hardly refers to any successful church growth or mass conversions which took place in human history without SLSW, but selects those events which appear to support his position.

<sup>73</sup> Wagner's close associate Charles H. Kraft starts from the same premise of Satan lacking omnipresence and his need for a hierarchy of demons to carry out his schemes for the universe (1992:20).

In addition to his assertion that territorial spirits are attached to certain geographical localities, Wagner also suggests that they could also be assigned to religious, voluntary or vocational associations (Wagner 1997a:84-85). These may include churches and denominations under a high-ranking demon called 'spirit of religion' (2005:8-10). Inevitably, all Christians and denominations which refuse to follow the new doctrines of Wagner and his associates are demonised in this manner. They are identified as unanointed leaders of the 'old wineskin' and all their criticism is taken as coming from demons and Satan himself who oppose the new revelations from God. This is not just anti-ecumenical but is also a philosophical fallacy in the sense of 'argumentum ad hominem' and a hardly veiled attempt to prevent all honest discussion and scrutiny of the new doctrines proposed by Wagner (2005:8-9, 14-16, 20-24).

Based on Scriptures such as *Ephesians* 6:12, Wagner suggests that Satan's demonic helpers must be organised in some kind of hierarchy. The higher-ranking spirits in such a hierarchy would be the territorial spirits. These ruler demons are also called strongmen (Mt.12:22-29) and their hold over a territory is called a stronghold (Wagner 1997a:70ff, 86-87). Wagner ignores verses such as 1 *John* 5:19 which states that the whole world lies in the evil one.<sup>74</sup> If like Wagner we take Scripture verses literally at face value, then from this verse we must conclude that, Satan may in terms of human experience be omnipresent in the created order since the whole *kosmos* lies in him. At the same time we may agree that Satan is not omnipresent in the divine sense of being omnipresent in heaven and earth and beyond the created order. To conclude that Satan needs a hierarchy of demons to carry out his schemes on earth since he is not omnipresent may have been an unnecessary inference by Wagner and his associates.

It is important at this junction to point out that Wagner's concept of territorial spirits is radically different from the concept of territorial spirits in the context of the rain making cults found in Malawi and other parts of Southern Africa. Among the Chewa who are found in Malawi, parts of Zambia, and Mocambique, territorial spirits are ancestral spirits of important forefathers such as deceased chiefs. These spirits act like guardians of the land and its people and are believed to be close to God (*Chauta* or *Chiuta*). They have a mediatory role and may approach God and request rain on behalf of the living (Amanze 2002:146). Such territorial

<sup>74</sup> The KJV translation says 'wickedness' instead of 'evil one', which is clearly in error as a personal pronoun is used in the Greek text of all available manuscripts (Aland et al. 1983:825).

spirits are understood to be good and not evil in nature. We will get back to this when we discuss the cultural and religious context of Malawi.

### **3.2.2.2. Exorcism of demonic spirits is more effective if we know their names**

An important theological assumption found in SLSW is the belief that exorcism is more effective if the name of a demon is known. It is assumed that knowing the names of the spirits makes them more vulnerable (Wagner 1997a:85). Anyone who knows the name of a being can exert power over it (Wagner 1993a:18; 1997a:86-87). Since the territorial spirits are considered to be the main obstacles to the accomplishment of God's will in certain territories (Wagner 1997a:83), and exercise extraordinary power over the behaviour of local people, they need to be identified by name so that our prayers against them can be targeted like smart bombs (Wagner 1992b:148ff; 1997a:76; 78-79; 85ff). In this way we move from ordinary prayer to Strategic- Level-Spiritual-warfare prayer which removes the demonic armour of the territorial demon and spiritually binds him, and releases his captives (Wagner 1997a:70). In this way it is believed that the Gospel can break through and millions can be saved (Wagner 1997a:67-68). The process of uncovering the name of the territorial spirits is called spiritual mapping and usually goes hand in hand with Charismatic gifts such as 'discernment of spirits' and 'revelations from God' in the form of 'prophecy' (Wagner 1992:176-178). The assumption that we need to know the names of demonic spirits in order to exorcise them, implies humans as the agents of exorcism. Its success or failure then depends on our knowledge, or lack of knowledge of the right spiritual parameters. Exorcism then no longer is dependent on God's omniscience and power. Consequently, demons are no longer cast out through the omniscient and omnipotent spirit of God (Mt. 13:28), but by the efforts of human agents who claim to have uncovered the right spiritual knowledge through spiritual mapping and other extra-biblical means.

### **3.2.3. Biblical evidence for territorial spirits as presented by Wagner**

The biblical evidence presented by Wagner in support of the assumption that territorial spirits exist, is rather flimsy and mainly consist of a few 'proof texts'. Wagner concedes that 'spiritual territoriality', that is the belief that territories can be under demonic control, has not been a prominent issue for biblical scholars. Wagner, however, claims that in spite of their

failure, he has discovered biblical evidence for the existence of territorial spirits in various Scripture passages where other biblical scholars found none. The main Old Testament passages referred to in Wagner's writings are *Deuteronomy* 32:8 (Lowe 1998:86; Wagner 1989:280-281; 1992:90; 1996a:173); and *Daniel* 10:10-21 (Wagner 1989:280-281; 1993c:44; 1995a:181-182; 1996a:173ff; 1997a:83-84), the latter passage being referred to most frequently. The main New Testament passages are *Matthew* 12:22-29 (Wagner 1996a:149-155) and *Ephesians* 6:10-18 (Wagner 1990:85, 89-102; 1990a:16ff). These need closer scrutiny before we discuss other Scriptures.

### 3.2.3.1. Territorial spirits in Deuteronomy 32:8

In several of his writings, Wagner refers to *Deuteronomy* 32:8 as proof for the existence of territorial spirits whereby he prefers the *Septuagint* (LXX)<sup>75</sup> and the Qumran rendering (Wagner 1990:89; 1992:90; 1996a:173) which replaces the phrase 'to the number of the sons of Israel' with 'to the number of the angels of God'. However the Hebrew word for angel *malak* is not used in the text. Referring to Dt. 32:8, Wagner states, 'it is a fact that there are evil spirits dominating territories' (Wagner 1989:280).

Wagner suggests that what is implicit in Dt. 32:8, becomes explicit in Dan. 10:10-21, namely, that some of the angelic powers have become the hostile principalities, powers and world rulers of this darkness that are mentioned by the apostle Paul in Eph. 6:12 (1989:280-281; 1990:89-90; 1995a:131ff; 1996a:173-174; 244-245). Wagner is not alone in interpreting Dt 32:8 as referring to territorial spirits. Peter Adams of Youth With A Mission, interprets the verse the same way (1987:21-22) as do Wagner's close associates Thomas B. White (1991:60) and Cindy Jacobs (1991:229-230). However, the phrase 'sons of Israel' is likely to be the original rendering. The rendering 'sons of God' in the *Septuagint* may reflect the Hellenistic concept of guardian deities who guard the nations. The Qumran writers, in spite of being separatist and isolationist, may also still have been influenced by the same Hellenistic bias which influenced many Hebrew writers in the same era such as the authors of *I Enoch*, *Jubilees*, *the Testament of the 12 Patriarchs*. They would have preferred the LXX

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<sup>75</sup>The LXX reading of Dt. 32:8 is as follows: "When the most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all humankind, He set up boundaries for the peoples, according to the number of the sons of God".



rendering in order to evoke the concept of guardian deities (Knight 1995:39; Newman 1984:16ff). The different renderings of *Deuteronomy 32:8* are thoroughly investigated and discussed by Stevens (1997:131-141). He suggests that the dualistic angelology of Judaism, influenced by Zoroastrian and Hellenistic thought, in the inter-testamental period, is likely to have influenced the *Septuagint* and Qumran renderings of *Deuteronomy 32:8*. He also concludes that 'Sons of Israel' is more likely to be the original rendering (Stevens 1997: 134-141). In any case both renderings do not justify Wagner's conclusion that the Bible justifies the concept of territorial demons which need to be defeated so that the Gospel can move forward. At most one could infer that the author of *Deuteronomy* may have believed in guardian deities, who may be perceived as good and not necessarily as evil, just as some people in Malawi today still believe in benevolent territorial guardian spirits who are considered to be the spiritual guardians of the land.

In discussing *Deuteronomy 32:8* Wagner also fails to pay attention to the genre of literature and the context in which the passage occurs. The passage occurs in a section of poetic literature in what is called the song of Moses and is set in the context of Moses' final exhortations to the Israelites (Carson et al. 1994:228-229). Besides coming in the form of a song the literary patterns follow the structure of the so called 'declarations of guilt', which were drawn up when a vassal state violated the agreement. Documents of this kind pre-date Moses and having been raised and educated in an Egyptian court setting he would have been familiar with them (Brown 1993:291ff). This is not the place to go into debate about the date of *Deuteronomy*, but certainly the style and content of the Song of Moses reflects pre-exilic material and may well be from the hand of Moses. The text reflects God's complaint about the violations by the Israelites of the covenant. The list of violations and subsequent declaration of judgment (Dt. 32:15-43) is preceded by a section which stresses the good God had done for Israel (vs. 1-14). It is within this section that the verse under discussion occurs. The emphasis in this passage is not on demons or guardian deities. The concept of guardian deities may have been in the back of the mind of the author but he certainly does not attempt to establish any doctrine or teaching about them. If they are mentioned, it is only in passing as the author is trying to stress that God gave Israel a privileged position among the nations as his special people and took special care of them (Dt. 32:9-14). If guardian deities are to be identified in the text, the emphasis remains the same, other nations are taken care of by lesser guardian deities, or angels, but Israel is taken care of by the Most High himself (Brown

1993:296-297). Because of God's goodness to them, Israel's disloyalty, shown in idolatry and sin, is abhorrent and will result in punishment (Deut. 32:15-43). If there is a lesson to be drawn from this for our contemporary context we could, with reference to the New Testament say: Other people may be under the evil guardianship of the evil one who has blinded their minds (Eph. 2:1-3), but as Christians we are God's special people, chosen by Him and being taken care of by him in the midst of a hostile world (Rom. 8:28-39). Consequently we should be living in a manner that shows our loyalty to Him and not be side-tracked by the idols of the present world.

### **3.2.3.2. Territorial spirits in Daniel 10:10-21**

*'But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the prince of Persia' (vs. 13).*

*So he said, 'do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the book of truth' (vs. 20-21).*

The description of what appears to be an angelic battle in *Daniel* 10:10-21 has inspired many Evangelical theologians to take the concept of spiritual or heavenly warfare seriously. They have observed that angelic warfare between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, between the angels of God and those of the evil one, appears to be clearly reflected in this passage. Such warfare is also a common theme in the apocalyptic writings of the inter-testamental period with antecedents in Zoroastrian, Canaanite, Babylonian and Greek mythology. (Forsyth 1987:12; Gokey 1961:34ff; Kittel 1966:15; Thompson 1903:xiv). The church Fathers, Hippolytus and Origen, refer to *Daniel* 10:10-21 when they discuss the demonic powers that oppose Christ and his church (Origen, *De Principiis* 3:2; Hippolytus, *Scholia On Daniel* 10:20). Nevertheless, *Daniel* 10:10-21 has never received more attention than in the last decade of the 20th century in the context of SLSW.

In Wagner view *Daniel* 10 is a key passage and is evidence that the Bible teaches that territorial spirits exist as ontological realities (1996a:172-173). Wagner interprets the 'Prince of Persia' and 'Prince of Greece' as territorial demons which if correct would make this

passage in *Daniel* Wagner's strongest biblical evidence for the existence of territorial spirits. Aware of this, Wagner refers to this passage very often (Wagner 1989:281;1990:85, 89-90; 1991b:48-49; 1991c:18-20; 1992b:91, 93; 1996a:172ff; 1997:83-84)<sup>76</sup>. It is unlikely that Wagner and his associates would have ever developed SLSW if *Daniel* 10 had not been in the Bible, it is the *Locus Classicus* for territorial spirit advocates (Priest et al. 1995:73).

Wagner refers to *Daniel* 10 to provide evidence that the Bible teaches that territorial spirits exist and ought to be battled (1996a:172-173). Wagner clearly interprets the 'Prince of Persia' and 'Prince of Greece' of *Daniel* 10 as territorial demons (Wagner 1989:281; 1990:85, 89-90; 1991b:48-49; 1991c:18-20; 1992b:91, 93; 1996a:172ff; 1997:83-84)<sup>77</sup>. Wagner is not alone in interpreting the 'Prince of Persia' and 'Prince of Greece' of *Daniel* 10 as referring to demonic forces at work behind the scenes of earthly conflict, several other commentators do so as well, though without further developing the concept of territorial spirits (Box 1932:216; Paul 2002:37-39; Wallace 1979:178-181; Wood 1973:272ff). The church Fathers Hippolytus and Origen also understood *Daniel* 10 as referring to a battle between God's angels and demonic spiritual powers, similar to the demonic powers that oppose Christ and his church (Origen, *De Principiis*: Ch. 3:2; Hippolytus, *Scholia On Daniel*: Ch. 10:20).

On the basis of the biblical evidence I concur that the angelic beings in *Daniel* 10 with the names 'prince of Persia' and 'prince of Greece' could indeed be interpreted as demonic powers. I do not agree with Wagner that *Daniel* 10 constitutes proof for the existence of the kind of territorial demons he identifies in SLSW who allegedly hold a territory in demonic bondage and need to be battled by means of warfare prayer. The context of *Daniel* 10 shows that at the time the human ruler of Persia was being influenced, by the Samaritans against the Jews, who were rebuilding the temple (Calvin 1966:252ff; Priest et al. 1995:72; Wood 1973:273). The battle of the angels of the Lord against the 'Prince of Persia', therefore, is likely to have been a battle for the mind of Persia's ruler against the adverse influence of the Samaritans (Priest et al. 1995:73). Such an understanding does not rule out the demonic

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<sup>76</sup> Also in many other of Wagner's writings, for example in his commentary on Acts (Wagner 1995a:131-132) or his book *Churches that Pray* (Wagner 1993c:44), as well as those of his close associates (Dawson 1991:xii; Green 1991:179; Jacobs 1991:229-230; Kraft 1992:19; Warner 1991:52; White 1991).

<sup>77</sup> Also in many other of Wagner's writings, for example in his commentary on Acts (Wagner 1995a:131-132) or his book *Churches that Pray* (Wagner 1993c:44), as well as those of his close associates (Dawson 1991:xii; Green 1991:179; Jacobs 1991:229-230; Kraft 1992:19; Warner 1991:52; White 1991).

element. The 'Prince of Persia' and the 'Prince of Greece' may refer to some influential demons who were involved in inspiring the Samaritans and other nations against God's people. These demons can indeed be understood as evil guardian spirits, who were a source of inspiration behind the false beliefs and ideologies which influenced nations such as Persia and Greece (Longman & Reid 1995:82). Nevertheless, there is no indication to suggest that their rule should be understood as geographical, but rather as the influence they have over the people of those nations, particularly their rulers (Priest et al. 1995:72). However, even if we concur with Wagner that the spirits in *Daniel* 10 are territorial in nature, nowhere in the text do we see Daniel pray against them, map, bind or exorcise them from the territory (Priest et al. 1995:73).

Some commentators suggest a relation between Daniel's prayer and the cosmic battle, involving angels and evil powers, as described in *Daniel* 10 (Forster & Marston 1973:16-17; Piper 1992). Yet, a closer look at the passage in its context shows clearly that Daniel was not praying against any demonic powers, and that the spiritual battle described in the passage had already taken place before Daniel was informed about it. The reference to the first year of Darius the Mede appears to imply that Cyrus' decision to let the Jews return to Jerusalem had been accomplished through God's angels who were engaged in warfare (Wood 1973:277-279). Daniel, however, is not presented as one of the warring parties. The context shows that the account of the battle is given to Daniel to explain the delay of three weeks before the angel got to him with God's response to his prayers. Later, in the verses 20 and 21 we see the angel once again informing him that he will be going back to fight the prince of Persia and that after that the prince of Greece will come. Daniel is not asked to pray for this purpose, he is simply being informed so that he may not be anxious but understand that God is in control of history (Wood 1973:277-279). The spiritual battles referred to in *Daniel* 10 as well as the visions in the preceding and following chapters, are directly linked to the God of Israel, who is working out his plans in human (political) history, regardless of any spiritual opposition, whether human or supernatural (Baldwin 1978:181-182; Wood 1973:273, 277-279). God can foretell to his servant Daniel and all the faithful what will happen in the future, so that they know that, in spite of the exile, their God is the sovereign Lord over all the nations of the earth. The fact that Israel finds herself in exile, the fact that they face opposition from the Samaritans and others does not mean God is powerless, he is still in control and the day of Judgment set by God for all nations is coming (Dan. 12:1ff).

Notwithstanding Wagner's suggestions that we need to fight territorial spirits who rule over the kingdoms and peoples of the world through strategic level spiritual warfare, Daniel shows us that not Satan, but God is in control of all the nations. All He requires is that we are faithful to Him in the midst of all the world's turbulence and trust Him in spite of the circumstances, believing that He will work out His purposes. In spite of Satan's petty claims to the contrary (Lk. 4:5-6), God is portrayed in Scripture as sovereign over the kingdoms of humankind, and he gives them to anyone He wishes (Dan. 4:25-26; 32). We do not have to worry about demonic opposition for with the powers of heaven the Lord does as he pleases (Dan. 4:35). Daniel's visions then are not about near equal powers of good and evil, but about the all-powerful God who has the ultimate victory despite human and supernatural opposition (Longman & Reid 1995:82). The praying Daniel in *Daniel* 10 is therefore an example, not of a spiritual warrior involved in spiritual warfare, but of a faithful believer who in the midst of adverse circumstances puts his trust in a sovereign God and in answer to his prayers God shows him a little of what will happen in the future. The purpose of this glimpse into the future is not to enlist Daniel in spiritual warfare against the 'Prince of Persia' and the 'Prince of Greece'. The purpose is to instruct many so that they may be refined in the midst of adverse circumstances (Dan. 11:33-35) and to strengthen Daniel in his faithful obedience and to encourage him to keep going in his obedient way of life (Dan. 12:13). Daniel provides us with a good example of what our priorities should be in the midst of adverse circumstances: submit to God in repentance and humility and turn to Him in prayer, and remain faithful and obedient, trusting that He will take care of all opposition, whether human or supernatural.

### **3.2.3.3. Territorial spirits in Matthew 12:22-29**

*'Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.'*

The story of the strongman who is bound and robbed of the possessions in his house is found in all synoptic Gospels. Traditionally the passage has been understood as Christ having bound Satan and is now taking people out of his clutches. This interpretation is found in

Irenaeus,<sup>78</sup> Augustine,<sup>79</sup> and other church Fathers. It has been the prevailing view throughout church history. Nevertheless, Wagner postulates a new interpretation of this passage, namely that the strong man named Beelzebub is not Satan, but a high-ranking principality, a territorial spirit, just under Satan in the demonic hierarchy. This territorial demon was bound by Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit so the unsaved souls in his possession could be saved (Wagner 1991c:14ff; 1996a:149-155; 1997a:69-70,86-87; 2001b:33-34). Wagner suggests that Christians are to do the same works Jesus did on earth (Jn. 14:12). They also can bind the various strongmen in the cities and territories of our world through strategic level spiritual warfare (Wagner 1986:41-42, 1989:279; 1990:89;.1991c:15-16; 1996a:149-155; 1997a:69-70, 86-87). To support the concept of binding the strongmen, reference is often made to the verse in *Matthew* where it says that whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven (Mt. 16:19) and to a lesser extent the passage in Mt. 18:15-18 where the same phrase occurs. The concept of binding and loosing were terms normally used for tying up or imprisoning versus freeing or releasing, and metaphorically for condemning or acquitting in court (Keener 1993:94). In rabbinic usage the term was commonly employed as referring to the rabbis' legislative authority in interpreting Scripture and on that basis allowing or disallowing conduct in the community (Green 2000:180; Keener 1993:94). Binding and loosing is also described in Mt. 16:19 in the context of the building of God's church upon the confession of Jesus as the Christ and the son of God. The usage of the rabbinic term 'binding and loosing' may refer to Peter's authority in declaring what behaviour is permissible and in agreement with the kingdom of heaven and what is not (France 1994:925). In my opinion this is not clear from this passage but considering the fact that Peter did play this role in getting gentiles accepted into the early Christian church in Acts 10, this may be a legitimate understanding. In any case, it is not Peter who determines who gets into heaven or not. It is the confession of Peter which reflects the key by which men may enter the kingdom of heaven. The confession 'Jesus is Christ and Son of God' is the basis on which a sinner may be saved and can enter heaven. Binding and loosing in this context should not be understood exclusively in terms of its rabbinic usage as referring to moral conduct, but also in terms of how judgement takes place when Christ is preached. These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive, for example *John* 3:19-21 implies that those who love moral darkness will not be attracted to Christ and vice versa. To some the

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<sup>78</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Bk. 3, Ch.8:2; Bk.5, Ch. 22:1.

<sup>79</sup> Augustine, *Expositions on the Book Psalms*, Ps. 35:12; *The Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin*: Bk. 2, Ch. 45. Sermons on selected lessons from the New Testament, Sermon 21:3.

confession of the church that Jesus is the Christ and the son of God is a fragrance of life, to others it is repugnant as the smell of death (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

The second occurrence of binding and loosing in *Matthew* 18:15-18, does clearly refer to conduct among believers and is similar to the rabbinic usage of the term. The focus is on discipline and forgiveness with the aim of restoring those who are wayward as the larger context of *Matthew* 18:12-35 suggests (France 1994:928). Wagner, however, states that Jesus instructed us to overcome and bind the strongman and engage proactively in SLSW (1996a:159). Binding (the strongman) is restricting the power of evil at all levels (Wagner 1991c:15). However, we can only bind on earth what God has already bound in heaven, and we can know what he already bound in heaven by means of God speaking to us in a ‘rhema’ word, that is an immediate word from God which we do not find in the Bible (Wagner 1991c:15-16; 2000b:98ff). There is little support for Wagner’s interpretation of binding the strongman as a matter of restricting the power of evil and of territorial spirits in Scripture. Nevertheless, he could find some support in the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha: In *Tobit* the evil demon Asmodeus is unbound from its victim by means of burning the heart and liver of a fish, and is consequently bound by the angel *Rafael*<sup>80</sup> (*Tobit* 8:1-3; Langton 1949:120-121). In the same vein we read in *1 Enoch* that the fallen angels Senjaza and *Azazel* are bound by Michael until their final judgement. Also in *Jubilees* we read of the demon Mastema being bound and imprisoned (Langton 1949:124-125). Nevertheless, in all these instances, the binding and imprisoning of the evil spirits was done by the angels of God, not by human agents.

In spite of the metaphorical usage of binding and loosing in *Matthew* 16:19 and 18:15-18, it is unlikely that we should understand ‘binding’ in the binding of the strongman as meaning anything else than binding in the sense of tying up. Jesus is giving an illustration, he is telling a story in which a powerful man is overcome in a burglary by someone stronger than himself. The story itself is meant metaphorically since Jesus is illustrating his superior power over Satan. However, Jesus’ illustration does not provide a theological basis for Christians going around ‘binding’ Satan or his demons. By doing so, they actually demonstrate that they do not believe what Christ is saying. If we believe that Christ truly bound Satan, why should we still try to bind him? Even if we would go along with Wagner’s interpretation that not

<sup>80</sup>The name *Rafael*, meaning ‘The Lord heals’ is probably not accidental. In the New Testament the word ‘healing’ is also used in connection with exorcism (Mt. 12:22).

Satan, but a powerful territorial demon called Beelzebub is in view, it is still Christ who binds him and not his disciples.

One may argue that we should follow Christ's example. But, while we are exhorted to live in imitation of Christ, there are many things Jesus did on earth we need not to do. For example we do not need to die on a wooden cross to provide atonement for the sins of the world, or ascending to heaven on the clouds, that we are not expected to try and imitate. The same way we do not have to bind Satan or his demons, they have already been disarmed by Christ when he triumphed over them on the cross (Col. 2:15). Through Him, God achieved total victory over the powers of evil, and He leads us in triumphal procession in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). He is actively destroying all dominion, authority and power that stands in opposition to God until He has put all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:24-25). He is the victor, He is above all powers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Eph. 1:19-23), and He seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ (Eph. 2:6). He is the all-powerful conqueror who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18). We, his former enemies (Rom. 5:10), have been shown mercy, and have now joined Him in his triumphal procession (2 Cor. 2:14). We, are objects of God's mercy, and in the knowledge that He has all authority in heaven and on earth, spread the news to all other enemies of God that they can also receive mercy (Mt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 2:14). For those who continue in their rebellion, this message is as abhorrent as the fragrance of death, to others it is attractive as a fragrance of life (2 Cor. 2:14-16). Having been saved by His grace we now serve Him as his workmanship in doing what is good in the midst of an evil world (Eph. 2:1-10). As his disciple we are sent as sheep among wolves (Mt. 10:16), to live like shining stars in the midst of a depraved generation (Phil. 2:15). It is in the very fact that sheep can live among wolves and that we can be light in the darkness that the victory of God over the powers is evident. It is by living Christ-like lives, suffering from and the resisting of the Devils temptations and schemes (Eph. 6:10-18), that we are a living sign to the powers (Eph. 3:10), a vivid reminder that they are defeated and their final destruction is near. The followers of the lamb who is the lion (Rev. 5), are more than conquerors by being faithful and obedient even in the midst of suffering, persecution, hardship and death, in the firm knowledge that nothing can separate them from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).



### 3.2.3.4. Territorial spirits in Ephesians 6:10-18

Paul's reference to the demonic spirits in this passage has often led to speculation concerning the nature of the rulers, authorities and powers mentioned in the text. Reference is often made as well to *Colossians* 1:16 which mentions thrones in addition to powers. These and other passage have provided a variety of terms which are being employed to describe the demonic hierarchy, even though some of the terms are the result of differences in translation.<sup>81</sup> Unlike his colleague Thomas White (1991:62-63), Wagner does not suggest that the terms used by Paul are arranged in such a manner as to refer to authority or jurisdiction in descending order, however, he does deduct from this passage that there is a demonic hierarchy and that the powers and principalities mentioned here are actually territorial spirits with whom we wrestle (Wagner 1990:85, 89-102; 1990a:16ff)<sup>82</sup>. Already, in 1986, Wagner suggested that the powers mentioned in *Ephesians* 6:12 may be in charge of geographic regions such as countries, provinces, towns, cities and so forth, with one of their aims being the blinding of the minds of the unbelievers so that the light of the Gospel may not shine in (1986:40; 1989:279-281). The principalities and powers mentioned in *Ephesians* 6 are thus identified by Wagner as territorial spirits, who are described by him as extremely pernicious and dominating demonic personalities that demonize socio-political structures (1992b:96; 1996a:244-245). It is clear from the *Ephesians* 6:11-12, that Paul is referring to the schemes of the Devil and his evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realms who oppose the church, and influence human agents against the church. There is no indication in the passage whatsoever that Paul is referring to a special class of demons who are assigned to demonize a specific territory in order to blind the unbelievers against the Gospel. Paul's variety of terms when describing the spiritual powers in *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, appears more of a shorthand to stress that Christ is above all the powers and every name that can be named (Eph. 1:21). The *Ephesians* and *Colossians* may have been familiar with the terms Paul uses from the magical tradition and may still have been somewhat apprehensive or fearful of these powers (Fee 1994:667-668, 680, 725). In other words, Paul is being contextual in his teaching by using terminology familiar to his audience. Paul stresses that in the power of Christ they can stand strong in the face of opposition and persecution, which though executed by human beings, has been inspired by demons. At the same time, by explicitly stressing that the battle is not against flesh and blood Paul may have intended to communicate a certain measure of

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<sup>81</sup> Compare for example Eph. 6:12 and Col. 1:16 in the NIV and NASB translation.

<sup>82</sup> Also in Kraft 1992:19.

pacifism in the sense of trying to avoid that the persecuted Christians would physically fight back against their oppressors. This is a point which I have not come across in any commentary but considering how in some contemporary interreligious contexts oppressed Christians have taken up arms against their oppressors, it may be a legitimate consideration. In the context of Malawi where I minister, fear of the evil spirit world regularly results in people taking the law into their own hands as they punish alleged witches and sorcerers. Such form of spiritual warfare against enemies of flesh and blood is clearly not what Paul had in mind. Instead, Paul in *Ephesians 6:10-18* suggests that Satan and his demons seek to influence socio-political and other human structures by means of deception and deceit and that the right response is to stand firm and not be swayed by it. Lastly, there is no clear indication in *Ephesians 6*, or elsewhere in Scripture that demons have a specific territorial jurisdiction.

### **3.2.4. Spiritual mapping of territorial spirits**

#### **3.2.4.1. Spiritual mapping and names of territorial spirits**

The practice of spiritual mapping is linked to the assumption that territorial spirits exist (Wagner 1993c:193-197; 1997b:119; 2001d:60-65). spiritual mapping is about discovering the names of demons so that one may exert power over them (Wagner 2001d:63-64). spiritual mapping refers to all those practices by which SLSW proponents seek to identify the demonic spirits who rule a territory. They seek to identify them by functional or proper name so that these demonic strongmen may be consequently bound or cast out by means of targeted prayer and (symbolic) actions.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, the heavens may be opened and the Gospel may break through in that particular location (Wagner 1996a:236-238; 2001d:64-65). Wagner states that spiritual mapping is to intercessors as an X-ray is to a surgeon. It is a tool to help us spiritually understand our communities so that our prayers can be targeted properly like ‘smart bombs’ rather than ‘scud missiles’ (1996a:236; 1999a:26). The rationale behind spiritual mapping is that the more pointed and specific our prayers are, the more effective they are, this requires skilful spiritual mapping (Wagner 1996a:30). The assumption that pointed and specific prayer is more effective than general prayer is based on the belief that exorcism is more effective if the name of a demon is known (Wagner 1992b:149ff). The

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<sup>83</sup> Such as in the experiences of YWAM missionaries in Cordoba, Argentina quoted frequently by Wagner (2001d:65).

spiritual principle of gaining power over a demonic being by getting to know its name is illustrated by the fairy tale of Rumpelstiltskin (1992b:148-149): Anyone who knows the name of a being can exert power over it (Wagner 1990:95ff; 1993a:18; 1997a:85-87). The biblical justification for ‘spiritual mapping’ is found in *Mark* 5:9 where Jesus asks for the name of the demoniac and receives the reply ‘legion’. Wagner concludes from this Scripture and from personal experience that, if asking for names of demons is done frequently with demons inflicting individuals as part of the exorcism ritual, it might be reasonable to postulate that it could be done also with territorial spirits (Wagner 1990:95). Wagner, then concludes that, although it is not always necessary to name the powers, getting to know these names, whether functional or proper names, is helpful for focusing warfare prayer (1992b:150). In Wagner’s mindset, naming the powers helps to bind the strongman and weaken his powers over a territory and the people living in it so that they can be saved (1992b:158).

spiritual mapping is done in various ways. It includes historical and cultural research. It involves identifying places of idolatrous worship, of entertainment and of power. It also includes taking note of embedded occult symbols in the architecture and any other observations which may indicate an association with sin, evil or with the evil spirit world (Wagner 1992b:153-158; 1993b:224-232).

#### **3.2.4.2. Spiritual mapping and causes of territorial demonization**

In Charismatic demonology it has been a common practice to try to uncover the names of demons and find out what gave them the ‘legal right’ to gain entrance to their victim (Bubeck 1975:147; Dickason 1987:193-207)<sup>84</sup>. Wagner applies this practice to territorial demons who rule in certain locations. The name of the territorial demon may be either a proper name such as ‘Wormwood’, ‘Abaddon’ or ‘Beelzebub’, or a functional name such as ‘spirit of witchcraft’ (Wagner 1997a:20). spiritual mapping is an important exercise if one believes that territorial spirits indeed exist and that they hinder the progress of the Gospel in locations around the world. spiritual mapping then becomes the logical starting point for Christian mission and evangelism (Wagner 1997a:83). Though spiritual mapping the enemy can be

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<sup>84</sup> A rudimentary version of the concept of giving demons legal entry rights can already be found in Jessie Penn-Lewis’ Evangelical classic *War on the Saints* (1915, 1973:69ff) and is derived from Scriptures such as Eph. 4:27 which warns against giving the Devil a foothold in our lives by indulging in sinful conduct.

identified by name, and next effective action can be taken against the powers (Wagner 1992b:148ff;1997a:76; 78-79; 85ff). In Wagner's own words: 'to the degree that the powers, or territorial spirits, can be identified and unmasked, our prayers for a city, or a neighbourhood, or a region, presumably can be more accurately targeted'. An important underlying assumption in spiritual mapping is that territorial spirit can only hold people in a location in bondage unless they have obtained the 'legal right' to do so. Quoting Gwen Shaw, Wagner writes 'The ruling spirits have no authority to move into an area without permission. Certain conditions give them authority to set up the base of their kingdom from whence they rule over the people of that area (in Wagner 1992b:129). This concept is derived from the common assumption within Pentecostalism that demons are able to demonise people because they have gained a 'legal' right due to spiritual garbage in their lives (Bubeck 1975:147; Dickason 1987:193-207; Kraft 1992:8). This garbage can among other things consist of a traumatic experience, heredity in the form of a generational curse, involvement in the occult, involvement in non-Christian religions and habitual sin which have opened them up for demonisation (Anderson 1973:86; Dearing 1976:104-105; Forrest and Sanderson 1982:82-84; Irvine 1979:84-89). The underlying assumption here is that since God is sovereign the devil and the demons cannot do anything unless God allows them. Consequently, there must be sin or other evil in a person's life or ancestry for God to allow demons to harass him or her. The Charismatic counsellor therefore practices a kind of spiritual mapping or research in order to find out what may have caused the demonization in a person (Anderson 1973:90-92; Koch 1971:104-107; Ten Boom 1968:9-11, 23-24; Van Dam 1993:53-61). Such a form of spiritual mapping may include the questioning of the demons themselves, though this is not considered essential (van Dam 1973:104-112)<sup>85</sup>.

Extrapolating the assumptions and practices from individual application in Charismatic counselling to a community or territory, Wagner assumes that territorial demons are present in a territory because of collective sin, past atrocities (societal trauma), false religions, curses and other evils which have become strongholds which provide Satan with a 'legal' right to perpetuate evil in a location (Wagner 1992b:129-130; 1993c:194-197, 202-203; 1997a:102-116). Because in Pentecostal demonology the root cause of demonic harassment is sin and evil, repentance is a prerequisite for exorcism. The victim has to repent of his or her sins, including the sins of one's forebears. In the process any curses, covenants and other evils in

<sup>85</sup> Former arch-bishop E. Milingo of Zambia, a well-known Roman Catholic exorcist, warns against gleaning information from Devils as the Devil always prophesies for his own interest (1984:44).

the individuals past or that of his or her family must be renounced (Koch 1961:203-222; Watson 1972:62-68). If there are emotional problems that may have opened up an individual to demonization, the healing of these problems is believed to banish any demons that may have been feeding on them (Kraft 1992:8ff; Wagner 1992b:130). Consequently, in (warfare) prayer the counsellor may break the demonic bondage and may command the demons to leave their victim (Bubeck 1975:86-87, 100-101, 140-151; Dickason 1987:162-163, 278-279; Koch 1971:104ff; McNutt 1995:101ff). In SLSW Wagner takes these ideas from traditional Pentecostal spiritual warfare and applies these to territories and people groups when he says: 'A similar phenomenon frequently prevails in SLSW. Nations as a whole can harbour 'garbage' that needs to be cleaned up before principalities and powers can be weakened' (Wagner 1992b:130).

spiritual mapping, besides uncovering names of territorial spirits also seeks to uncover the legal attachments of territorial spirits to a territory which may be in the form of a collective trauma, idolatry, sin, and pacts with the spirit world. The latter are believed to be renewed by means of religious and cultural festivals (Wagner 1995b:108-109; 122-124). In Charismatic counselling, in order to determine the factors which may have led to someone's demonization, the counsellor may interview the counsellee about himself and his family background. The Pentecostal counsellor often relies strongly on supernatural inspiration and spiritual intuition in what is called 'discernment of spirits' or 'prophecy', or 'revelation'. This practice of 'discernment' usually takes place in prayer whereby the counsellor tries to hear the voice of God, but it may also involve a vision, a sudden hunch, inner conviction or revelation on the part of the counselor (Dearing 1976:100-101). It goes without saying that such practices are open to abuse and the power of suggestion. Nevertheless the same Pentecostal methods are used in SLSW as spiritual warriors seek divine inspiration to target their spirit enemies. After the spiritual warriors have gathered sufficient spiritual 'intelligence' by means of spiritual mapping identificational repentance is practiced on behalf of the territory and the people living there takes place. Once identificational repentance has taken away the legal right of the territorial spirits to hold the people in a territory in spiritual bondage the strategic level spiritual warfare prayer assault takes place. The prayer assault or warfare prayer involves verbally confronting the high-ranking territorial spirits (Wagner 2001b:17). Often it also includes the verbal breaking of any curses and demonic attachments. spiritual mapping is thus a precursor to identificational repentance and to warfare prayer.

### 3.2.4.3. Spiritual mapping and Pentecostal style prophecy

The process of uncovering the name of the territorial spirits and their legal hold over a territory by means of spiritual mapping usually goes hand in hand with Charismatic gifts such as: 'discernment of spirits', and revelations from God in the form of Pentecostal style prophecy (Wagner 1992:176-178). In fact, this kind of prophecy is an essential aspect of Wagner's SLSW theology. One of the assumptions underlying spiritual mapping is that the territorial spirits can only be bound on earth, if they are first bound by God in heaven (Wagner 1991c:15). But, how will the spiritual warrior know that a territorial spirit has been bound in heaven, before he starts engaging himself in SLSW? It is by means of supernatural inspiration, a so-called 'word of knowledge' in the Pentecostal jargon, also called a 'rhema' word, an immediate word from God not found in the Bible (Wagner 1991c:15-16; 2000a:14-16; 2000d:35-40). A 'rhema' word allegedly provides spiritual information in addition to the word of God, the 'logos' in the Bible but should not be in variance with it (Pocock 1997:15). Wagner, strongly relies on prophecy in his personal life, either through others or as he hears for himself directly from God (Wagner 1993c:59-66; 2000b:100, 108-120). Wagner even keeps a prophetic journal in which he records important prophecies (Wagner 2000b:58, 78ff, 112).

Wagner believes that God has many things to tell us that are not in the Bible (Wagner 1993c:63). He admits that mistakes can be made, but he is very confident of his own ability to accurately hear and convey God's 'immediate word' to the point that he can say 'I quote' (Wagner 2000d:36). Consequently, Wagner lists 'hearing the voice of God in prophecy' as one of the spiritual technologies that are necessary for the completion of the Great Commission. The other technologies are spiritual mapping, identificational repentance, and warfare prayer (Wagner 1996a:30). Wagner calls himself a strong advocate of hearing from God and acting on what we hear from Him today (1995b:53). Wagner defines prophecy as 'the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His people through a divinely anointed utterance' (1995a:146; 2000d:37). Upon closer scrutiny of the various reported SLSW cases, it appears that supernatural inspiration by means of hearing God's voice in prophecy, supernatural discernment, revelation, hunches and the like, are the main determining factor in

the spiritual mapping of a territory (1996:54-55). Wagner states that some have been given the gift of discernment of spirits in the form of inner spiritual Geiger counters to detect demonic presence and are able to reveal detailed and accurate information of the demons' identity and intentions (1996:68). Wagner emphatically states 'God speaks directly to his people today' (2000d:32) and devoted two books to modern day prophets and various forms of prophecy (2000a; 2000b). According to Wagner the prophets should guide strategies and tactics for city-taking programs as a prerequisite for success (Wagner 1999a:23). The prophetic dimension is extremely important in SLSW otherwise God's plan of attack or timing may be missed, so it is essential to hear from God what he wants us to do and when he wants it (Wagner 1992b:178).

Wagner suggests that prophets and Apostles form the foundation of the Church. He doesn't mean this in the biblical sense of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament Apostles, but in the sense of modern day prophets and Apostles (Wagner 2000a:28; 2000b:6-9, 17ff; 97). Wagner's assumption is that God prefers to use contemporary prophets to guide contemporary Apostles like himself and to receive divine revelation concerning where God wants the church to go (2000b:37, 97ff). An important aspect of Wagner's understanding of prophecy is that, even though it may officially not be in contradiction to Scripture, he asserts that there are many things that God wants to tell us today that cannot be found in Scripture (2000d:38). Whenever these things do contradict scripture as in many aspects of SLSW, Wagner reinterprets scripture until it agrees with what he asserts. Prophecy, therefore, plays a major role in Wagner's epistemology in that it authenticates the extra-biblical revelation on which he builds his new doctrines. Wagner has consistently applied Pentecostal style prophecy in his own life and has based many of his decisions on such prophecy, including his decision to take lead in the arena of SLSW (2000b:58, 108ff) and later to shift his focus to the 'New Apostolic Reformation' (2000b:114). It falls outside the scope of this thesis to explore the so-called 'New Apostolic Reformation', which Wagner considers Protestantism's new look (1999b:33) and the paradigm for 21st century Christianity. It suffices to note that in the apostle, Wagner believes he has found a new way to confront the Devil as he believes 'the enemy dreads the apostle' (1999b:111). In Wagner's mind it is now no longer the spiritual technology of SLSW, but the apostolic office which will make the difference between heaven and hell for multitudes and will fulfil the Great Commission (1999b:112). Wagner's emphasis on the role of the apostle is not unrelated to SLSW. The apostle is a new addition to

Wagner's SLSW as he has come to believe that the apostle has unusual spiritual authority in a community or territory, which he calls 'territorial commitment' (1999:112; 2000d:80; 2000e:44). It is particularly noteworthy that in explaining his switch of focus Wagner tacitly admits that SLSW has failed to achieve its goals of city-taking for God. Wagner writes:

'It looked to many of us as if the 1990s would see tangible answers to the prayer 'Thy kingdom come' in city after city. But it didn't happen' (Wagner 2002a:106).

Wagner, however, did not give up on SLSW, even when it became clear that it did not deliver the anticipated 'mass conversion' and 'social transformation' he had hoped for. Instead of discarding SLSW as a strategy he adds a new dimension in order to make SLSW work. The new solution entails the recognition and role of so-called 'territorial Apostles' who are presumed to be the spiritual gate keepers of the city (Wagner 2002a:108, 116-119). Nevertheless, the justification for SLSW has been primarily on pragmatic grounds as the many anecdotal 'success stories' in favour of SLSW reflect (1993a:66-72; 1996a:57-63; 1997a:64ff; 1999a:54-56). Wagner himself asserts that he is a pragmatist when he says:

'The theories I like the best are the ones that work' (1996a:47). 'I try to be as pragmatic in my ministry as the apostle Paul' (1996a: 48).

Wagner admitted earlier on that he relies largely on narrative proof to demonstrate SLSW's effectiveness (1996a:56ff). Consequently, Wagner's admission several years later, that so far no cities have been taken for God (1999a:16-17; 2002a:106), should be taken very seriously. It is a tacit admission that from a pragmatic point of view SLSW has failed to deliver. It appears that the SLSW spiritual technology (Wagner 1996a:30ff; 91, 96), trumped up as a pragmatic shortcut to city-wide revival and social transformation is flawed as it has failed to deliver (Wagner 1999a). Consequently, Wagner was forced to come up with some explanation why SLSW didn't work. However, instead of admitting that he may have been wrong his diagnosis that mission is mostly hindered by territorial demons, he now focuses on the so-called 'New Apostolic Reformation' as an additional ingredient for SLSW to work (1998a:13ff; 2002a:9ff). The future will tell whether this new solution will usher in the desired spiritual revival and instant social transformation in the city Wagner and his associates are looking for but I personally doubt it. Wagner's admission of the failure of



SLSW, however carefully worded, costs him a lot of credibility especially as he repeatedly asserted that God told him! From an Evangelical point of view Wagner's SLSW needs to be rejected as his arguments are mostly based on 'God told me' which does not agree with the Evangelical emphasis on 'what does the Bible teach'. We also must reject SLSW from a pragmatic point of view as it has failed to deliver on its promises.

### **3.3. Wagner's doctrine of territorial defilement**

#### **3.3.1. Territorial defilement and identificational repentance**

The doctrine of territorial defilement goes hand in hand with the practice of identificational repentance. The doctrine is based on the idea that territories and nations as a whole can harbour spiritual garbage that needs to be cleaned up before principalities and powers can be weakened (Wagner 1992b:130). The main assumption is that territorial spirits can only hold people or a location in bondage if they obtained the legal right or permission from God to do so (in Wagner 1992b:129). The legal right is obtained by the territorial demons due to idolatry, paganism, shedding of innocent blood through murder, abortion or war, witchcraft, sexual perversion, substance abuse, occultism and many other evils (Wagner 1992b:130; 1995b:108-109; 122-124). Cultural or religious ceremonies may also contribute to the strongholds which hold a territory in demonic bondage. Wagner suggests that through these ceremonies territorial spirits have been invited to intentionally take control over whole cities or people groups or nations (Wagner 1996a:239).

It is important to note that in Wagner's spiritual warfare theology God remains sovereign, Satan and his demons can only occupy a territory and perpetuate evil in it if strongholds of evil provide him with the 'legal' right to do so (Wagner 1992b:129-130; 1993c:194-197, 202-203; 1997a:102-116). The territorial spirits thus only have authority in places which are harbouring 'spiritual garbage' (Wagner 1992b:130-140; 1993c:147-150; 170-173; 183-184; 1996:260). A variety of terminology is used by SLSW practitioners such as: 'legal entrances', 'legal attachments', 'property rights', 'curses', 'corporate sins', 'strongholds', 'territorial jurisdiction', and other terms to describe the 'legal right' Satan allegedly obtained to perpetuate evil in a territory (Wagner 1992b:131ff; 1993c:194-197, 202-203; 1995b:108-109; 122-124; 1996a:240; 1997a:102-116). Evil spirits succeed in controlling a territory and

blinding the people to the Gospel because of the strongholds of evil on which they base their legal right to control that area and its people (Wagner 1997a:112). Quoting Kjell Sjoberg, Wagner writes: "Guilt that has never been dealt with is an open invitation to demonic powers". In addition he states: "Before we can bind the strongman we need to deal with sins that have given the enemy a legal right to occupy" (Wagner 1997a:206). Through accurate spiritual mapping attempts are made to identify the strongholds rooted in unremitted sins of past generations (Wagner 1992b:176ff; 1996a:158-159; 1997a:112-117). In order to deal with territorial defilement by sin and other evils, Wagner clearly extrapolates concepts developed in traditional Pentecostal demonology and spiritual warfare, and writes:

‘Just as in the case of demonised individuals, if sin is present, repentance is called for, if curses are in effect they need to be broken. And if emotional scars are causing pain, inner healing is needed’ (Wagner 1992b:130-131).

The proponents of SLSW are primarily concerned with world evangelisation, but also about the moral decay and social problems in society such as racism and violence (1997a:103-105, 112-113). However, the solution for such problems is not so much sought in social action. Based on Scriptures such as 2 Chron. 4:4, they believe that the land can only be healed if God’s people repent and call upon the name of the Lord. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to get all Christians in a city or nation to confess their sins and repent for them. identificational repentance is the solution. By repenting on behalf of others the sins of people groups and nations can be remitted (Wagner 1992b:131ff). identificational repentance takes place when someone identifies him or herself with a people or people group and confesses their sins and repents on their behalf. This practice is supported predominantly from the Old Testament which teaches that God brings the sins of people into judgement even to the third generation (Ex. 20:5). The assumption is that due to sin, idolatry and other evils, God in His wrath may hand over people groups and the territory in which they live to demonic bondage (Wagner 1992b:140). Referring to Croatia, Wagner writes:

Croatia, along with the other republics of Former Yugoslavia, has experienced centuries of blood-shed. Much bloodshed and the massacre of civilians took place in Croatia during the recent war making it a ripe place for powerful magic and curses of Satanism (2001e).

Only if such sins are repented of can the people in such places be delivered from the territorial spirits, which hold them in bondage. Wagner, points at the billions of Muslims whom he understands as being under powerful forces of darkness, and suggests that by means of identificational repentance during a reconciliation walk, whereby Christians repent of the Crusades, the powers can be neutralised and the Gospel may break through (Wagner 1997a:204-207). About the identificational repentance for the Crusades, Wagner writes:

‘There is no bigger stronghold keeping the full blessing of God from being poured out on Muslims greater than that caused by the Crusades. The Reconciliation Walk, through public actions of humility and repentance, helped to tear down this ‘ongoing stronghold of darkness’ (Wagner 2001b:40).

In support of identificational repentance, Wagner points at David, who remitted the sins of Saul against the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21), at Nehemiah (Neh. 1:6) and at Daniel (9:11, 20). In each of these cases the men in prayer confessed the sins of their forefathers (Wagner 1992b:131ff; 1996a:79ff). On the basis of these Old Testament examples, combined with contemporary anecdotal evidence, Wagner suggests that if identificational repentance takes place the hold of territorial spirits are loosened. Consequently, White Americans need to repent of the slave trade, so that the healing of racism will begin. Also, if the Japanese repent of their bombing of Pearl Harbor, the grip of the territorial spirit over Japan, the sun goddess, will loosen, and if the Christians repent of the crusades, doors will be opened for the evangelisation of Muslims and Jews (Wagner 1992b:132ff; 1996a:239). Wagner, therefore, calls identificational repentance an extremely vital ingredient of SLSW (1996a:79) and describes it as a way to deal with the roots of many present-day social and spiritual sicknesses, and as a way to address causes rather than symptoms (1996a:31). Nevertheless, in the process of attributing virtually all evils in a territory to territorial spirits who are rooted there because of historical evils Wagner appears to commit the fallacy of reducing very complex social, cultural and political issues to one, or a few alleged spiritual causes.

Wagner himself was actively involved in identificational repentance when he repented publicly at a meeting in Tokyo in front of four victims of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and

Nagasaki and begged for forgiveness for his sins and the sins of his fathers (1992b:137-138). Referring to this event, Wagner states:

‘I feel sure the territorial spirits over Japan received a significant setback’ (1992b:139).

It is worth noting that Wagner uses ‘I feel sure’ as it reflects his way of measuring spiritual successes. It is intuitive and subjective rather than measurable and verifiable. Convinced of the efficiency of identificational repentance Wagner believes that the prayer of identificational repentance has the greatest potential for opening a way to spread the Gospel (Wagner 1997a:111-112). He also calls identificational repentance the most important aspect of warfare prayer (1996:260).

### **3.3.2. Evaluation of the doctrine of territorial defilement**

As mentioned above, the main assumption underlying the doctrine of territorial defilement is that a territorial spirit can only hold people or a location in bondage if through sin or evil he has obtained the legal right or permission from God to do so (in Wagner 1992b:129). identificational repentance is then the tool used for the cleansing of the land from territorial defilement so that the land will be healed (Wagner 1993c:177-184; 188ff; 1997a:102-103; 1997b:119). The key Scripture Wagner refers to is 2 Chron. 7:14 which he interprets as teaching that identificational repentance is a prerequisite for divine intervention in a nation’s social and spiritual problems (Wagner 1997a:103-116):

*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Wagner pays no further attention to the context in which this passage occurs, namely in the Lord’s words to king Solomon regarding the conduct and welfare of the nation of Israel. The preceding verse talks about God withdrawing rain, or sending locusts or other plagues. The general principle reflected in this passage is a recurring theme in *Chronicles*, namely that sin brings punishment and humble penitence leads to forgiveness and restoration (Wilcock

1987:152). This passage is all about the relationship between God and his people and there is no reference whatsoever to demons or evil spirits at all.

Equally questionable is Wagner's use of other biblical passages in support of his doctrine of territorial defilement (Wagner 1992b:131ff; 1996a:79ff). For example the passage in 2 *Samuel* that Wagner refers to does not mention anything about demons (2 Sam. 21:1-14). Instead the passage stresses that because of Saul's sins God was withholding his blessing from the land and after the situation was rectified verse 14 states that 'God answered prayer on behalf of the land'. Not the demons were withholding God's blessing, but the sovereign God who does not condone social evil among his people withheld his blessing until an evil situation was dealt with.

In the same way it is doubtful that Nehemiah (Neh. 1:6) and Daniel (Dan. 9:11, 20) confessed the sins of their nation because they were concerned about any territorial spirits or demonic strongholds. In their prayers they identified with the sins of their nation and their forefathers. However, this identification was part and parcel of their intercession as they were imploring God to act on behalf of his people for they knew the problem of sin was a problem between their nation and God. There is no indication that their confession was intended to remove demonic strongholds to which territorial spirits were attached.

Public repentance for sins committed by our forefathers in the past may be helpful in order to pave the way for better international, intertribal and interracial relationships. However, this should not be reduced to a technique, but come from the heart (Mostert 1997:86). Nevertheless, this is not really what identificational repentance in Wagner's SLSW theology is all about. His focus is on loosening the hold of territorial spirits which really finds no basis in Scripture as we have just observed. Ultimately, Wagner's identificational repentance is based on personal experience, anecdotal evidence and alleged supernatural revelation received by himself and his associates. For Evangelicals such an epistemological base for any doctrine or practice is unacceptable and it marks a clear departure from Evangelicalism's Reformation stance of 'Sola Scriptura' as the standard for doctrine, faith and conduct (Frame 1997:291).

### **3.4. Wagner's doctrine of strategic level spiritual warfare prayer**

#### **3.4.1. The doctrine and practice of warfare prayer**

strategic level spiritual warfare prayer, also called warfare prayer is the most militant aspect of SLSW. In Wagner's words: 'The real battle for both world evangelisation and social justice is a spiritual battle and our principal weapon of spiritual warfare is prayer' (Wagner 1993c:200). warfare prayer concerns itself with the exercise of spiritual power against territorial demons they seek to temporarily bind or even remove from a territory. warfare prayer is a term used for a variety of prayer and exorcism methods for dealing with territorial spirits. We have seen previously that the prayer of identificational repentance is an important aspect of warfare prayer. It allegedly prepares the ground for the assault on the territorial spirits as their stronghold of sin and evil is removed or weakened by identificational repentance. However, it is the verbal binding, and exorcism of the territorial spirits that is the most important aspect of warfare prayer. Wagner, however, makes it clear that there is not one method which can be used universally. He believes God will show leaders, city by city, what action is most appropriate for their particular situation and what God's plan of attack and timing is (Wagner 1993b:230-231). As a result, the methods used to liberate a territory from the power of territorial spirits, may range from quasi-symbolic actions such as driving stakes in the ground, which are called prophetic acts, to mass prayer initiatives (Wagner 1997a:115, 194ff). Nevertheless, whatever outward forms warfare prayer may take, it always includes the verbal proclamation that the demonic strongholds are broken and the verbal binding of the territorial spirits. In this manner they are taken in spiritual captivity, and/or exorcised from a territory (Wagner 1997a:70-72; 228-229). Wagner makes it clear that SLSW is not simply an exotic prayer option. He states:

It is our duty to 'bind the strongman' (1997a:70).

The ultimate aim of SLSW and warfare prayer is to enable people to hear the Gospel. The underlying belief is that through powerful prayer against powerful demons the demonic blinders are removed and the captives are loosened so that people are free to make their decision to accept or reject the Gospel (Wagner 1997a:72). A related assumption is that since Satan has blinded the minds of people (2 Cor. 4:4), they are unable to freely choose for or against the Gospel (Wagner 1997a:72). Aware that such a statement may be understood as

undermining the concept of the sovereignty of God which would be the case if we suggest that the salvation of people depends on the prayers of Christians, Wagner suggests that God may have a plan A and a plan B available, and that he has chosen to implement plan A when believers pray fervently and effectively, which by implication means prayer in SLSW style. But, if Christians do not pray in this manner, God will implement plan B which may result in less conversions (Wagner 2000d:65). It is difficult to reconcile Wagner's position with Scriptures such as Philippians 2:13, which state that God works in us both to will and to act. If God in his sovereignty decides that his people should pray more then surely he can inspire them to do so.

#### **3.4.2. The SLSW assault on the territorial spirit 'Queen of Heaven'**

In the AD 2000 movement, and through his organisation Global Harvest Ministries, Wagner has been active in rallying support for prayer initiatives against territorial spirits (Wagner 1996a:249-251, 258-260). That Wagner's involvement clearly goes beyond observing and writing is clear from his involvement in battling what he considers one of the strongest territorial spirits his team has identified, the so called "Queen of Heaven". Wagner considers the "Queen of Heaven" to be the demonic principality most responsible under Satan for keeping unbelievers in spiritual darkness (Wagner 2001b:24). The "Queen of Heaven" is believed to have virtually unchallenged control of the nations in the so called 40/70 window as well as the 10/40 window (Wagner 2000c:34ff; 2001b:50, 55, 57). The "Queen of Heaven" is considered to be a prominent principality among the territorial spirits that dominate Islam and keep more than one billion people in spiritual darkness (Wagner 2000c:25). She is also considered the demon who is behind the veneration of the virgin Mary in Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, keeping millions of Christians from becoming saved (Wagner 2000c:37-42; 2001b:43-47) and the fertility goddesses of the classic world, including Diana of Ephesus (Wagner 2001b:41-42). The "Queen of Heaven" is also associated with other deities and semi-deities around the globe, including the Sun Goddess of Japan (Wagner 2001b:55). The "Queen of Heaven" is identified by Wagner in Scripture as the "Queen of Heaven" in *Jeremiah* (7:16-18; 44:2-17). Wagner calls the queen 'a demonic principality of very high rank', and, 'responsible for sending more people to hell than any other idol.' (Wagner 1999c). Wagner also sees the 'Queen's' presence in the New

Testament in the great Babylon, the harlot over many waters of *Revelation 17* (Wagner 2001b:49).

In order to break the 'Queens' power, intercessors travelled to Mt. Everest. They chose this mountain because Mt. Everest in Nepal is called 'Mother of the Universe' in the local languages. Wagner's close friend Ana Mendez, identified by means of divine revelation that the mountain was the major stronghold of darkness of the 'Queen'. From this the 'Queen' exercises control over the predominantly Muslim nations of the 10/40 window. The revelation of Ana was confirmed by Wagner's team, and they agreed to send her with a group of intercessors to Nepal, including Wagner's wife Doris. The aim of the team was to take down the foundations of 'The Great Babylon, the harlot over many waters, who supported the false religions of the world' (Wagner 2000c:17-18; 2001b:50-52).

Next, Wagner was involved in Operation 'Queen's Palace' in which he lead teams of intercessors to 'invade' the 'Queen's' palace. This operation culminated into 'Celebration Ephesus' in Turkey where 4000-5000 believers from 62 nations celebrated victory over the 'Queen of Heaven' and powerful prayers were made aimed at exalting God and releasing his blessings on the unreached peoples of the world (Charisma 1999; Wagner 2000c:18-20; 2001b:53-56)<sup>86</sup>. Turkey has Wagner's special focus because of his identification of the 'Queen of Heaven' with the 'Moon Goddess' and the 'moon' symbol of Islam, suggesting that the 'queen' is the key power behind Islam:

'The moon goddess is one of the 'Queen of Heaven's most flexible and adaptable identities. That is why we see her symbol, the waxing half moon, on all mosques and on the flags of many Islamic nations. Another strong hypothesis from our research is that the 'Queen of Heaven's centre of geographical operations lies in Turkey, in the old Ephesus' (Wagner quoted in Simpson 1998).

Wagner, in line with his tendency to understand himself as in direct contact with God and hearing His instruction clearly, calls his involvement in 'Operation Queen's Palace', a divine assignment (Wagner 2000c:29)<sup>87</sup>. From Wagner's involvement in the assault on what he

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<sup>86</sup> For an eye-witness report see: Confronting the 'Queen of Heaven', A Missions Trip Report, by Jay Hopson: <http://www.do-you-love-me.org/wsomers/contq.html>.



perceives as one of the main territorial spirits, the “Queen of Heaven”, it is clear that Wagner is not just involved in advocating SLSW, he also practices it.

Nevertheless, the basis on which the “Queen of Heaven” was identified, both from Scripture and in today’s world remains highly questionable. Firstly, there is little or no evidence that the Astarte idols referred to as “Queen of Heaven” in *Jeremiah*, and Artemis (Diana)<sup>88</sup> of Ephesus in *Acts* 19:26-28, as well as the harlot of *Revelation* 17, all refer to the same being. Nevertheless, even if the Scriptures mentioned by Wagner refer to one and the same goddess, which is doubtful, there would still be no biblical evidence to identify this goddess as a territorial demon. In the final analysis we have to rely on Wagner’s re-interpretation of Scripture and the anecdotes he forwards as proof for his interpretations, as well as his ability to hear God accurately as he proposes new doctrines and practices (Wagner 2000c:36).

### **3.4.3. Evaluation of the doctrine and practice of warfare prayer**

Wagner’s assertion that prayer is a weapon (1993c:200) is a common misunderstanding of prayer but does not have any support in biblical teaching on prayer. Prayer in Scripture is a means of communication with God. We may concede that prayer plays an essential role in spiritual warfare as we ask God for intervention, reinforcement and help, but it remains a matter of communicating. If we would use a military metaphor then prayer is like the field telephone which is used to make contact with the army headquarters. In the case of an emergency a request for reinforcements, materials or an air raid may be passed on to head quarters. The communication itself is not a weapon against the enemy, but it still plays a strategic role in the battle. If communication is the aim then terms like aggressive prayer or militant intercession make little sense as it would be rather improper and disrespectful to communicate to God in an aggressive manner. Christ’s own practice in prayer (Mt. 26:39, Jn 17) as well as his teaching on prayer is quite the opposite from what we see in noisy public mass prayer meetings with its loud verbal declarations and violent prayer against demons. Christ teaches that prayer is better placed in the privacy of one’s room rather than in public (Mt. 6:5-6). Christ also teaches that we should not use many words trying to convince God,

<sup>87</sup> A 9 page document describing the Turkey project is available directly from Dr. Peter Wagner on request via e-mail: 74114,570@compuserve.com, or by post: Global Harvest Ministries, PO Box 63060, Colorado Springs, CO 80962, USA.

<sup>88</sup> Diana is the name of the goddess of the Roman pantheon which was matched with Artemis of the Greek pantheon. Her temple in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Marshall et al. 1996:86-87).

as He already knows our needs (Mt. 6:7-8). Christ teaches that our prayer should consist of a humble acknowledgement of God in Heaven, and an expression of our desire to see his kingdom come and his will be done, and humble request to God for our daily needs to be met, forgiveness of sin and protection against temptation brought by the evil one (Mt. 6:9-13). Christ's teaching on prayer is a certainly far cry from the warfare prayers of Wagner and his associates.

warfare prayer in praxis is accompanied by bold proclamations, statements and commands aimed at binding or exorcising the territorial spirits (Lorenzo 1993:190-192; Wagner 1997a:229). Territorial demons are cast out from places such as temples, cities or nations (Wagner 1992a:76) and taken into spiritual captivity (Wagner 1997a:229). Wagner justifies this by stating 'the spirits are addressed with authoritative commands and rebukes just as the apostle Paul rebuked an evil spirit in Acts 16:18 and commanded it to leave the slave-girl it possessed' (Wagner 1996a:199ff). There is nevertheless no indication in Scripture that Paul considered his rebuke of the demon a form of warfare prayer. warfare prayer is described in rather aggressive, sometimes military terms which are totally alien to biblical teaching on prayer, such as: violent prayer, power prayer, confronting the powers, violent intercession, prayer invasion, spiritual take-over, infiltrating, attacking and destroying Satan's perimeter, praying aggressively against demons, spiritual battle and 'holy war in the invisible realm' (Lorenzo 1993:182ff, 190ff; Wagner 1997a:210-211, 220-221; 227ff). Such terms may be reminiscent more of indo-european warrior traditions and North American militarism than of the Gospel of love. We will discuss this in more detail in the chapter 6 when we look at the context in which SLSW was developed.

Wagner, probably aware that his ideas will stand and fall with how authoritative we consider his 'divinely' inspired ideas, and his claim to a divine assignment, begins to call himself an apostle in the late 90s (2000b:50, 75). He compares himself with the apostle James of Jerusalem who convened the Acts 15 apostolic meeting (Wagner 2000b:48-52). Wagner's claim to Apostleship, according to himself, started in 1995 when his close friend the 'prophetess' Cindy Jacobs declared that God had anointed Peter Wagner as apostle of prayer (Wagner 2000b:80). Wagner, had already been considering the possibility that he might be an apostle some time before this (Wagner 2000b:81). Consequently, the prophecy fell on fertile ground. When other 'prophets', who happen to be all close associates of Wagner,

confirmed his Apostleship, Wagner became more confident and started to refer to himself as an apostle (Wagner 2000b:80-83). Not, surprisingly, Wagner postulates that the apostle possesses and exercises unusual authority (1999b:112). Using himself as an example, Wagner goes on to explain how based on the revelation from God and his apostolic authority, he established the Apostolic Council for Educational Accountability, as opposed to academic accreditation, for Bible colleges and leadership training institutions (2000b:51-52). Quoting, Bill Hamon, Wagner writes:

‘Apostles have the delegated authority to represent the kingdom of God in a governmental official capacity.’ (1999b:115).

Obviously Wagner does not believe that all believers are Christ’s ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). According to Wagner, the modern Apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church (2000b:62). The apostle is first, and the highest in authority and the prophets submit to him (Wagner 2000b:75; 92ff). Wagner, suggests that the recognition of modern day Apostles means nothing less than a Reformation and a New Apostolic Christianity, where authority is no longer in the hands of presbyteries, boards or committees. According to Wagner, the Holy Spirit now delegates the authority to modern Apostles (1998a:19-20; 1999b:103).

The authority of the modern apostle is first and foremost over his followers and they must believe that every decision made by the apostle is for their ultimate benefit, thus releasing authority to him (1999b:119). Consequently, Wagner emphasises that Apostles must be trusted and obeyed (Wagner 1999b:74-78; 116-117). Obedience is especially important in the area of finance (Wagner 1999b: 245ff). Apostles do not like their authority to be questioned and certainly not the new doctrines and ideas they allegedly received from God. They are consequently very suspicious of theological education in the form of seminaries and Bible schools (1999b:222-234). They seek to replace (church) historians, theologians, Biblical exegetes and other critical scholars by likeminded visionaries, cultural exegetes, spiritual entrepreneurs and dynamic pastors who follow the new doctrines and practices (1999b:235ff). The apostle, exercises a parental role over his followers and is not accountable to them (1999b:120ff). Apostles are only accountable to God, their fellow apostles and to the local church that originally sent them out as an apostle (Wagner 1999b:122-123). The apostle also has authority over the prophets that speak to him.

Whenever a prophet has a message it brought to the apostle and the apostle judges what is valid or not (Wagner 2000b:96-103). The authority of the apostle is not only over their followers, or the prophets, but also over their community or territory. This aspect of the modern apostle's authority is called 'territorial commitment (Wagner 1999:112; 2000d:80; 2000e:44). In a city they may also be called the 'spiritual gate keepers' of the city (Wagner 2002a:108, 116-119). Churches who have embraced the paradigm of the 'New Apostolic Reformation' are power oriented in spiritual warfare, demonic deliverance, spiritual mapping, prophecy and other 'supernatural' activities (Wagner 1998a:25).

According to Wagner, supernatural power opens the way for applying truth rather than vice versa. The emphasis is therefore more on the heart than on the mind (1998a:25). If supernatural power opens the way for the application of truth, and prophecy establishes extra-biblical truth (Wagner 1996a:66), and the prophets are accountable to the apostle who establishes what is right or wrong (Wagner 2000b:96-103), then it follows that ultimately the modern apostle determines the truth. Indeed the modern day apostle is given extraordinary power and authority. However, this authority may not come from the Holy Spirit, but is attributed to them by their followers. The modern apostle's power to establish what is truth or falsehood, both in doctrine and in practice, is indeed a dangerous weapon. However, the weapon may not be dangerous for the enemy, but dangerous for the gospel as there are insufficient checks and balances to minimise bias and abuse of power. Wagner still affirms the Bible as the major source of revelation, but in his mind the apostle has the authority to determine which interpretation is the correct interpretation of Scripture. At the same time the apostle is guided by another source of spiritual truth, namely prophecy which provides contemporary revelation from God to tell the apostle many things that cannot be found in the Bible. As we saw above, the authenticity of prophecy is established by the apostle (Wagner 2000b:96ff). Thus, after, having realised that the extra-biblical doctrines of SLSW cannot be defended from a biblical or church historical perspective, Wagner ends up establishing its 'truth' on the basis of his own apostolic authority.

By establishing 'doctrinal truth' on the basis of his own apostolic authority, Wagner has decisively moved away from Evangelicalism, and conservative Protestant Christianity which is deeply committed to the Bible as the final authority in all essential matters of faith, doctrine and practice (Bavinck 1976:424ff; Bloesch 1994:65, Erickson 1985:79-80, 256-259;

Ferguson & Wright 1988:239). The modern apostle has become a spiritual dictator who can infallibly establish new doctrines such as found in SLSW on the basis of his supreme apostolic authority (Renwick & Harman 1999:191). In a sense Wagner has assumed the same position as the pope in the Roman Catholic church who allegedly can infallibly dictate divine doctrine concerning faith and morals by the power of the Holy Spirit when he speaks 'ex Cathedra' (Rowell 1951:449). Certainly, the Roman Catholic church will not recognise Wagner's apostolic authority to establish doctrine and it is also unlikely that the larger Christian hermeneutic community, whether Evangelical, Ecumenical, Orthodox or other will ever recognise Wagner's apostolic authority to establish doctrine. The World Council of Churches, which to the concern of many Evangelical and conservative Protestants has been rather open to a plurality of beliefs, confessions and theologies, still affirms that what we confess must be in accordance with the Scriptures (Verkuyl 1992:23).

Wagner's attempt to self-authenticate the doctrines and practices he promotes on the basis of his apostleship collides with all major theological traditions in Christianity. As we will also observe in the next two chapters Wagner's extra-biblical revelation neither finds support in Scripture, nor in the historical tradition of the church<sup>89</sup>. No wonder the modern apostle (read Wagner) feels the need to dismiss biblical exegesis and critical theological study. Wagner's claim to apostolic authority and his divine appointment to reshape Christianity by means of extra-biblical revelation (Wagner 1996a:20, 2000b:80-82, 113-114; 116-119, 127) is a matter of him trying to avoid critical biblical scrutiny of the doctrines and practices he is promoting in SLSW. Such an approach to essential matters of faith not only places himself outside Evangelical Christianity, but also outside all the main traditions of Christianity.

### **3.5. Wagner's doctrine of territorial Commitment**

The doctrine of what Wagner terms 'territorial commitment' is one of the more recent doctrines expounded by Wagner in the late 1990s. The concept of 'territorial commitment' is closely related to Wagner's introduction of the contemporary apostle in the so-called New Apostolic Reformation. The doctrine of territorial commitment is based on the premise that pastors or apostles can rise to a level of spiritual authority in their community only if they commit themselves to their church and community for life (Wagner 2000d:80). The spiritual

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<sup>89</sup> See the next chapters in this thesis on Biblical and church historical survey.

authority of a committed pastor or territorial apostle is a crucial power principle for city transformation (Wagner 2000d:80). The local church pastors are understood as the spiritual gatekeepers of the city or community in which they serve and exercise spiritual authority in these places (Wagner 2000e:13). Having recognised that the other doctrines of SLSW did not produce any city transformations, Wagner suggests that there must have been some flaws in what they have been doing (2000e:16). Being unwilling or unable to look for the flaws in the basic assumptions of SLSW, Wagner blames the practitioners: One of the problems observed by Wagner is an egalitarian mindset among pastors in a given location, which prevents strong leadership from being recognised, by which he means an aggressive SLSW style leadership based on personal authority (Wagner 2000e:25). Wagner complains that many of the pastors who want to work together for city transformation are of a peace loving, consensus building, status quo maintaining kind of leadership. Wagner dismisses such meek, loving and kind leadership as in his opinion it lacks the ability to spearhead an aggressive, bold, powerful movement that will literally shake a city (Wagner 2000e:33-34). Basically Wagner is explaining that SLSW has failed in many places because it was handled by such meek, loving and kind leadership. By claiming that SLSW was a divine assignment and regularly claiming 'God told me' Wagner has made it impossible for himself to reject SLSW's doctrines and practices for failure to bring revival and social transformation. Forced to come up with another explanation Wagner's solution is not to fault SLSW but to fault those who applied it without success. Instead of abandoning SLSW, Wagner has added a new ingredient, the aggressive Charismatic and authoritative individual who can 'make it happen': The apostle of the city.

According to Wagner, the apostle of the city has authority over a certain segment of God's people in a particular geographical area (2000e:43). If the 'Apostles of the city' are not recognised and empowered to lead as they believe God has anointed them to do, the divine government of the city will not be in its proper place and city transformation is retarded and God will not give revival until the apostles are in place (Wagner 2000e:43-44). In other words, unless the apostle is not allowed to rule his little kingdom or empire the way he believes God wants it, God will not give his blessing. Wagner's preoccupation with numerical church growth again comes through when he suggests that we should look for the apostles of the city among the pastors of mega-churches (Wagner 2000e:48-49). The apostle should be mentoring the pastors in his location and they are accountable to him, regardless of

denominational background, as his authority is geographical, not denominational (Wagner 2000e:54). The apostles of the city will together form a design for city transformation and appoint administrators, raise funds, gather the local pastors and make decisions without committees (Wagner 2000e:56-57).

Wagner's suggestions provide the ideal environment for those who want to lord it over others. The pastors are encouraged to make a territorial commitment for life to a city so that they do not keep moving from place to place when they are dissatisfied (Wagner 2000d:80). Consequently, the pastors are to recognise and submit to the apostles of the city. The apostles then become the kings or emperors of city-based inter-denominational ecclesiastical hierarchies. The combination of the centralising of authority in the contemporary apostle and their authority in establishing extra-biblical doctrines and practices creates a very dangerous environment in which heresy and abuse of power can flourish. It is, therefore, understandable that they are suspicious of seminaries and Bible schools (1999b:222-234), and of (church) historians, theologians, Biblical exegetes and other critical scholars (1999b:235ff), because these represent a threat to the power they exercise over their followers.

## CHAPTER 4

### WAGNER'S SLSW AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE BIBLE

#### 4.1. Introduction to spiritual warfare in the Bible

In the previous chapter we have examined C. Peter Wagner's strategic level spiritual warfare theology and identified and described its distinctive components. We have also evaluated the main doctrines and their underlying assumptions of SLSW in the light of Scripture. However, in this chapter we will take a much closer look at the biblical teachings concerning Satan, demons and spiritual warfare. In the process I have given special attention to the Scriptures used by the proponents of SLSW as proof for their assumptions. In order to get a good understanding of the concept of spiritual warfare against Satan and his demonic forces in Biblical history, we will also have a closer look at the concepts of Satan, demons, prayer and spiritual warfare in the Old Testament, the inter-testamental period<sup>90</sup> and in the New Testament era.

#### 4.2. Satan, demons and spiritual warfare in the Old Testament

##### 4.2.1. Satan in the Old Testament

The student of demonology in the Bible<sup>91</sup> will soon discover that the Old Testament, in contrast to the New Testament, hardly contains any notions of Satan, demons or evil spirits (Gokey 1961:1-3). The first indirect reference to Satan is in the narrative of the fall of humankind where we encounter the serpent that seduces Eve and leads humankind into sin (Gen.3:1ff). Nevertheless, it is only in the apocalyptic literature of the inter-testamental

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<sup>90</sup> The phrase 'inter-testamental period' is used by various New Testament scholars (Gundry 1994:21; Marshall et al. 1996:54), to refer to the period between the end of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the New Testament period. This period approximately spans from 400 BC – 4 BC and most of the literature from this period is of an apocalyptic genre (Marshall et al. 1996:53-54; Tenney 1985:117-119), hence this period is also called 'apocalyptic period'. Nevertheless, the apocalyptic period in Judaism extends into the second century AD (Tenney 1985:117), hence I prefer to use 'inter-testamental', rather than 'apocalyptic' when referring to the period and apocalyptic when referring to the genre of literature.

<sup>91</sup> In this study demonology, the theological study of demons, is used inclusive of Satanology, the study of Satan or the Devil, since in Holy Scripture Satan is portrayed as the chief of demons. Evangelical systematic theologians usually treat both together, often as part of angelology (cf. Boice 1986; Conner 1988; Erickson 1985).



period (Forsyth 1987:233) and in the New Testament that the serpent is identified with the Devil and Satan (Kidner 1967:70-71)<sup>92</sup>. The word Satan is used several times in the Old Testament, but as the basic meaning is accuser or adversary (Kittel 1966:73) it does not always refer to the Satan or Devil of the New Testament. Satan in the Hebrew sense could be used to indicate anyone acting as an adversary. Such is the case in 1 Sam. 29:4 where the Philistines fear that David will turn out to be ‘a Satan’, or in Numbers 22:22 where the angel of the Lord stands ‘as a Satan’, on the road on which Balaam was traveling with his donkey.

Several commentators see the personal Devil in Job where the Satan is pictured as appearing among the ‘sons of God’<sup>93</sup> and proceeds to accuse Job (Andersen 1974:82; Waters 1997:439ff; Zuck 1978:15ff)<sup>94</sup>. The concept of the sons of God appears to refer to the heavenly council of God’s holy ones (Craigie 1976:379). That this council works with God, rather than against him is clear from passages such as Dt. 33:2, 1 Kings 22:19, Ps. 89:5-7, Jer. 23:18, 22. There is, therefore, insufficient evidence to assume that ‘a satan’ in Job 1 and 2 refers to a demonic being, and not simply one of the angels acting as ‘a satan’ just as in the case of Balaam (Carson et al. 1994:462). The word ‘satan’ also has the legal connotations of a prosecutor. In Job, the Satan appears to be the official prosecutor whose job involves testing and examining people (Kittel 1966:73). In questioning Job’s integrity he does not oppose God, but rather acts in His interests and only does so with divine permission (Kittel 1966:73). Nevertheless, Job may be hinting that the Satan was not just any angel of God, but was in fact a wicked angel, when he is accused in Job 1:3 for having incited God against Job without any reason. It appears that in Job’s case the Satan may have overstepped his boundaries as the official prosecutor and had become an instigator of injustice.

A similar scene we encounter in Zechariah (3:1ff) where we see the Satan as the heavenly prosecutor at the trial of Joshua the High Priest (Kittel 1966:74; Ackroyd 1970:225). Nevertheless, even in Zechariah the Satan is rebuked by God (Zech. 3:2), again indicating that the heavenly prosecutor may not be always acting in accordance with the will of God. However, both in Job and in Zechariah we are not presented with the totally wicked Devil of

<sup>92</sup> Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:9, 20:2.

<sup>93</sup> Anderson suggests that the language used here may also imply that God and the sons of God were in council and Satan came among them as an intruder and that he is not one of the sons of God (1974:82). While Anderson’s novel suggestion may have some merit there are no other instances in Scripture that confirm this reading of the text. Several commentators identify Satan here as one of the sons of God, the ‘Bene ha’Elohim’ which is usually (but not exclusively) understood as referring to angels (VanGemeren 1981:340; Zuck 1978:15).

<sup>94</sup> Job 1:6, 2:7.

the New Testament whom Jesus calls the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Only in 1 *Chronicles* 21:1, Satan is used without article, which indicates that by that time Satan has become a proper name rather than a mere designation of office possibly due to Persian influence (Kittel 1966:74-75; Ackroyd 1970:343). In *Chronicles* Satan is no longer just a prosecutor but he is presented clearly as an instigator of sin and evil (Myers 1965:147).

Old Testament Judaism is careful to avoid the dualism common in other religions of that period by demonstrating that in spite of Satan's evil activities God is still in charge. He is the one who rebukes Satan and also the parallel passage in the book of Samuel (2 Sam. 24:1) shows that God himself is behind the events described in 1 *Chronicles* 21:1<sup>95</sup>. This does not mean that Satan and God are to be equated, but it means that God allowed or even used Satan to test David. God's plans cannot be thwarted and there is no power to which man might turn outside the control of the one God of Israel (Kittel 1966:11). Nevertheless, in the light of the use of 'Satan' in the Old Testament we must conclude that Satan is not of central importance at all in Old Testament Judaism (Kittel 1966:74). There is certainly no indication that Satan was regarded as the opponent of God or as the chief of the demons or fallen angels (Kittel 1966:74). The Old Testament writers have a predominantly monistic outlook. Everything, including sickness, suffering and disaster is portrayed as having its ultimate origin in the will of God.<sup>96</sup> To see a personal devil in the Old Testament may require stretching the meaning of the biblical text well beyond what the original authors intended to communicate.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Satan as a noun may still carry the same meaning of 'an angel of God acting as a satan' who uses something which we would understand as sinful to bring about God's purposes as is the case in 1 Kings 22:19. The absence of the article may be the result of an editorial 'correction' in the post-exilic period because he could not in his time attribute the source of evil to God (Myers 1965:147).

<sup>96</sup> For example suffering in Job, the destruction described in Is. 54:16 and the disaster in Amos 3:6.

<sup>97</sup> For example Evangelical commentators who employ a Dispensationalist literalist hermeneutic framework interpret Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 as referring to Satan and his angels (Dyer in Walvoord & Zuck 1985:1061, 1283-1284). This view is not without historic precedent as several non-canonical narratives about a rebel angel appeared in commentaries on Ezekiel and Isaiah in Origen, Tertullian and other church Fathers and have thus become part of the Christian tradition (Forsyth 1987:13-15). However, the historical context of the original audience makes it highly unlikely that either Isaiah or Ezekiel intended to teach Satanology/demonology in these chapters (Ramm 1955:141).

## 4.2.2. Demons and evil spirits in the Old Testament

### 4.2.2.1. A general overview of demons and evil spirits in the Old Testament

Demons are not mentioned in the Old Testament even though the *Septuagint* (LXX) in a few instances has translated Hebrew words such as *sa'ir* and *sedu* with the greek *daimonion*, commonly used in the New Testament for evil spirits. However, these words normally refer to idols (Harrison 1980:180; Kittel 1962:11ff).

We do, however, come across clear references to evil spirits in the Old Testament, for example in *Judges* 9:23, 1 *Samuel* 16:14-23, 18:10 and 19:9. Nevertheless, these are not identified in the Old Testament as being the same as demons<sup>98</sup>. We also read about a lying spirit in the mouths of Ahab's prophets in 1 Kings 22:22. Nevertheless, we are told that these evil spirits come from the Lord. In other words, they may be evil in the way humans experience it, but they are actually God's angels executing judgment. The idea of angels being involved in the judgments of God is common in the Old Testament as they were involved in the law giving and the mediation of the law (Dt. 33:2ff; Acts 7:32, Gal. 3:19, Heb. 2:2). They execute judgment on the enemies of God and his people (2 Kings 19:35) and even upon the people of God themselves (2 Sam. 24:16) when they sin (Erickson 1985:444).

It may be argued that the Old Testament warnings against sorcery, divination and spiritism (Lev. 19:26, Dt. 18:9-13) reflects a belief in demons, but these practices are not explained as getting in contact with demons but rather as getting in contact with the spirits of the departed (1 Sam. 28:1ff). To the faithful Jew consulting the dead was tantamount to apostasy and idolatry (1 Sam. 15:23, Is. 8:19-20). In the Torah itself not much further explanation is given why such practices are forbidden and no link is made with demons. The only further explanation found in the text is that in place of such divination practices God will provide prophets to speak to his people and thus there is no need to listen to anyone else (Dt. 18:14-21). To then continue to put one's trust in other 'spiritual' voices would be tantamount to disobedience, disloyalty and lack of trust in the Lord. In later times, the sect of the

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<sup>98</sup> In post-exilic Judaism and in the New Testament evil spirits are generally understood as demons though in the Old Testament they are simply part of God's host of angels. Josephus also consistently refers to evil spirits as 'daimonia' (Kittel 1966:10). In Pseudepigraphal Judaism evil spirits are also identified as demons and as Satan's angels which was later incorporated in the theology of the early Christian church (Kittel 1966:14-15).

Sadducees, which came into being after the return from the Babylonian captivity, could therefore maintain belief in the Torah, and yet vehemently deny life after death and the existence of angels and demons (Tenney 1965:94ff).

The Hebrew word *shedim*<sup>99</sup> occurs several times in the Old Testament and is used in reference to idols or ‘strange gods’ (Dt. 32:17, Ps. 106:37), but is also understood by some to refer to demons (Kittel 1966:11; Langton 1949:143). However, it is highly unlikely that the Old Testament authors when using the word *shedim* had demons or evil spirits in mind, but instead it is more natural to understand *shedim* as referring to the idols who competed with the belief in Yahweh (Kittel 1966:11ff).<sup>100</sup>

Another term found in the Old Testament which is translated by various English bible translations as ‘demons’ (NASB), ‘satyrs’ (RSV) or ‘Devils’ (KJV) is the Hebrew term *sa’ir* (*se’ir/se’ir’im*) which means hairy one or he-goat.<sup>101</sup> The *Septuagint* (LXX) translates *sa’ir* usually as ‘*daimonion*’ but also as ‘*eidolon*’ (Lev. 17:7, 2 Chron. 11:15)<sup>102</sup>. In Lev. 17:7 and 2 Chron. 11:15 the ‘sa’ir’ are references to goat-idols that were being worshipped. In *Isaiah* 13:21 and 34:14 the term may simply refer to wild desert goats. On the basis of a careful exegesis of the biblical text<sup>103</sup>, it is rather difficult to insist that *sa’ir* would have been understood by its original audience as referring to demons or evil spirits, rather than to idol worship of the goat-idol with which the Israelites would have been familiar with in the Eastern delta of lower Egypt (Harrison 1980:180). The *Septuagint* (LXX) translation of *sa’ir*

<sup>99</sup> From ‘shedu’ a word borrowed from Assyrian where it has connotations of a protecting spirit (Genesis 1907:993) but in later Babylonian usage also connotations of demon or evil spirit (Thompson 1903:xxiii).

<sup>100</sup> It may be that the *Shedim* as well as *Lilith* and *Azazel* are poetic imagery describing demons (Smith 1907:441) but there is little evidence that they reflect a belief in demons in pre-exilic Judaism. While ‘*shedim*’ in Babylonian mythology could be used for evil spirits (Langton 1949:143) it could also refer to benevolent guardian spirits (see ft. 38). It is equally hard to determine with any certainty whether ‘*shedim*’ is used contemptuously of idols or of real demons in pre-exilic Judaism (Kittel 1966:11). Other considerations such as the dating of the Pentateuch play a role here. A late (exilic/post-exilic) date favours the understanding of ‘*shedim*’ as referring to ‘demons’ since this is often the case in the writings of post-exilic Judaism, an earlier date, which most Evangelical scholars hold, is in favour of the translation as ‘idols’.

<sup>101</sup> *Seirim* literally means goats, and the ‘satyr’ meaning is an extension of that primary meaning. There is no cause to assume it means demons as in the Biblical context the *Seirim* are often mentioned together with other wild desert animals (Mot 2004). It may be that there were underlying popular beliefs concerning the abode of demons in the desert but these are not accepted in the Old Testament (Kittel 1966:11).

<sup>102</sup> The NIV translates in both cases ‘goat idols’.

<sup>103</sup> With this I mean a serious attempt to understand the text as it was intended to be understood by the biblical writers and how the original audience would have understood it in their context. I agree that we can never reach this goal completely and without bias, but by studying the passage in the light of what we know about the history, culture and tradition of its original recipients we can come close enough to make an authoritative statement on the meaning of the text. Also see the section on my Evangelical beliefs and epistemology in section 1.2.4.

as *daimonion* does not really shed any different light, as even the word *daimonion* during this period was not used by the Greeks to describe evil spirits, but were merely thought of as (lesser) gods.<sup>104</sup> The scant references to Satan, demons and evil spirits in the Old Testament indicates that the Israelites at that stage did not yet have a clearly developed demonology.

Evangelical hermeneutics among other things seeks to uncover what the Bible writers tried to communicate to the original audience. From such a perspective it is difficult to understand how one could ever discover territorial demons in the Old Testament, as Wagner does in *Deuteronomy* 32:8 (1989:280-281; 1992:90; 1996a:173), *Jeremiah* 7:16-18; 44:2-17 (1999c; 2001b:23-25), as well as *Daniel* 10 (1989:280-281; 1993c:44; 1995a:181-182; 1996a:173ff; 1997a:83-84). The only way one could discover territorial demons in the Old Testament would be by disregarding the cultural and religious context of the time and impose a contemporary SLSW understanding upon the text.

Once one starts using Scripture in this manner, why use Scripture at all? If the meaning of Scripture is not uncovered and discovered by means of careful exegesis and instead any meaning is imposed upon it, why bother? We can then just as well re-write the Bible or write our own version of Scripture. In my opinion there is a certain measure of dishonesty in trying to make the Bible writers say and teach things that they never intended to teach. Discovering territorial demons in the Old Testament text would have been a totally alien concept to both its authors and its original audience.

#### **4.2.2.2. Names of demons and evil spirits in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament provides us with incidental references to creatures with names which later played an important role in post-exilic demonology, such as *Azazel* or *Azazel*<sup>105</sup> (Lev. 16:8) and *Lilith* (Is. 34:14) which some scholars believe are demonic figures (Kittel 1966:11)<sup>106</sup>.

<sup>104</sup> While it can be argued that a basic 'animism' underlies the Greek 'daimon' concept, it was used mainly for minor deities and/or intermediate spiritual beings who were superior to man but still imperfect beings. They were capable of causing misfortune, evil and even sickness and possession, but they were not understood as innately evil (Kittel 1966:1-2, 6-7). It appears, however, that the *Septuagint* (LXX) narrowed down the Greek concept of 'demons' to that of heathen gods and spirits dreadful to man (Kittel 1966:12).

<sup>105</sup> See *I Enoch* which identifies *Azazel* as one of the demons and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* where *Azazel* is described as the one who caused the fall of the guardian angels (watchers), as the serpent who tempted Eve who has dominion over much of the created world and who is like a dragon.

<sup>106</sup> In Qumran literature there is a passing reference to *Lilith* similar to Isaiah 34:14 (Songs of the Sage: 4Q510-11) which clearly classifies her among the demons. Also, in the Babylonian Talmud *Lilith* is identified as a (female) demon.

The reference to *Azazel* in *Leviticus* (16:8) may indeed be linked to the goat-idols (*seirim*) mentioned in *Leviticus* 17:7, but to equate this with the Devil-like *Azazel* of apocalyptic literature may be a matter of reading an intertestamental understanding into the text. The book of *Leviticus* is generally dated as being compiled at the end of the Babylonian exile or just after. Critical biblical scholarship has argued the book comes from priestly circles and represents their prescription for the second temple of the post-exilic period (Carson et al. 1994:121). Evangelical scholars generally date *Leviticus* before the exile, while non Evangelicals generally consider *Leviticus* as having been compiled during the exile at the earliest but they also concede that much of the material found in *Leviticus* is of much older origin than the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (Carson et al. 1994: 51-53, 121). Nevertheless, both Evangelical and non Evangelical biblical scholarship agree that the text of *Leviticus* pre-dates the pseudepigraphal writings of the intertestamental period. There is considerable linguistic evidence for *Azazel* to have originally meant, ‘one who removes by a series of acts’. Such a translation leaves the text without any demonic connotations and would simply provide a description of what the animal was used for, namely as the scapegoat of *Leviticus* (16:8) who is sent into the desert to make atonement for the sins of the community (Feinberg 1958:330-332). Yet, to identify *Azazel* as a territorial demon in the Old Testament as Wagner does (1992b:146) is rather difficult to maintain in the face of biblical and historical evidence.

The reference to *Lilith* in *Isaiah* 34:14 is understood by some as referring to a demon (Kittel 1966:11). However, ‘the *Lilith* calling to the other *Lilith*’ in *Isaiah* 34:14 may not be about demons at all, it is possibly a reference to night creatures calling to each other as in NIV. Just as we have problems identifying many Biblical creatures, this might be some nocturnal animal called *Lilith*, which may come from the same root as *Layla* which is night (Mot 2004). However, as *Lilith* sounds very similar to the Babylonian (and Sumerian) *Lilitu* which refers to a female evil ghost (Thompson 1903:xxiii; xxxviii), some will conclude that *Lilith* refers to a night-demon. Also, the neighbors of the Israelites, the Nabateans in South Palestine and Syrians in the north worshipped a goddess called *Állat* (or *Alilat*) as the sun and mother goddess, a name etymologically related to *Lilith* (Al-Saleh 1985:28). *Lilith* may then refer to a foreign goddess rather than a demon. It is clear from the many theories that identifying *Lilith* as a demon is not without counter arguments. Nevertheless, even if we prefer to understand *Lilith* as a demon, this in itself does not provide enough evidence for a developed demonology in pre-exilic Judaism. In such a case the use of *Lilith* in *Isaiah* only shows that

the prophet incorporated concepts from surrounding cultures in his poetic imagery but not that he attached the same (theological) meaning to it. In my personal opinion '*Lilith*' in *Isaiah* did originally not refer to a demon as the majority of Evangelical biblical scholars and an increasing number of non-Evangelical biblical scholars date the first 35 chapters of *Isaiah* before the Babylonian exile (Walvoord & Zuck 1985:1029-1031; Marshall et al. 1996:514-516; Ramsay 1994:184ff; Webb 1996:33-36). The context of *Isaiah* 34:14 presents us with a picture of the ruins of Edom inhabited by unclean animals (34:8-15). In light of the context to understand *Lilith* as a nocturnal animal appears to be the most appropriate reading of the text. Lastly, it has been suggested that Leviathan (Job. 41:7, Ps. 74:12-17, Is 27:1) and the monsters of the deep in *Daniel* (7:3) are symbolic representations of Satan (Parsons 1981:220) or the force of chaos, who opposes the creative, ordering power of God (Ackroyd 1970:343ff, Longman & Reid 1995:74ff). However, granted that Leviathan and the monsters of the deep may represent forces of chaos, it is unlikely that the writer or the original audience would have interpreted the concerned passages as referring to Satan or demons.<sup>107</sup> The emphasis appears to be on the power of God who controls all the forces of nature (Zuck 1978:177ff; Andersen 1974:288ff). In conclusion we may say that there is hardly an undisputed reference to demons in the Old Testament.

#### **4.2.3 spiritual warfare and prayer in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament prayer is offered to God in penitence and petition and not against the demonic power. Even in the face of enmity, opposition and war, prayer remains focused on God in petition, penitence, worship and thanksgiving, as is evident throughout the Old Testament.<sup>108</sup> The Psalmist presents us with many examples of such prayers,<sup>109</sup> but many other examples can be cited: In Gen. 20:17 Abraham prays to God for the healing of Abimelech. In Gen. 32:9-12 we find Jacob faced with the prospect of meeting Esau prays for deliverance of Esau's wrath and in prayer he reminds God of His promise to made him in Gen. 28:13-15 so that God may honor his promise of some twenty years before (Curtis 1987:133). In Ex. 2:23-25 we read how God responds to the cries for help of his enslaved people as he elects Moses for his task. In 1 Kings 8:22-54 we see Solomon's prayer of dedication of the temple in which he thanks God for the promises He has kept and reminds

<sup>107</sup> In the Babylonian evil spirit texts we do find references to powerful evil spirits who are somehow connected with the deep ocean, the strong south wind, the dragon and other forces of chaos and evil (Thompson 1903:42, 99)

<sup>108</sup> Cf. 'Prayer in the Old Testament outside the Psalms,' and, 'Prayer in the Psalms,' (Carson 1990).

<sup>109</sup> Ps. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 etc.

him of the other promises made to David. He also prays for mercy and forgiveness for Israel, so that righteousness and justice may prevail in the land. Yet, when Solomon or anyone else prays for forgiveness and mercy, they do not do so in order to remove demonic strongholds by identificational repentance so that a territorial demon can be bound. Forgiveness of sin is sought because sin affects the covenant relationship between God and his people. The psalmist states in Ps 66:18 that if he had cherished sin in his heart, God would not have heard his prayers. In the same vein Isaiah writes in Is. 59:1-20, that the sins of the nation prevent God from saving them and intervening on their behalf. The remedy is not the breaking of curses or the exorcism of demons, but God will be a redeemer to those who repent of their sins.

Prayer plays a major role in the Old Testament, but nowhere is prayer described or used as a weapon against supernatural enemies in a spiritual battle unlike Wagner suggests (1993c:200ff)<sup>110</sup>. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the Old Testament does contain any teachings about prayer as a weapon, does not mean that prayer did not play a major role in the dealing with the enemies of God's people. The Old Testament presents us with lots of examples of prayer for deliverance of one's enemies and for divine intervention in the context of warfare. In the context of warfare, God was often petitioned to deal with the enemies of his people and give His people victory over their enemies. These enemies were, however, not supernatural enemies, but human foes (2 Sa. 22:7-20, 48-51, Ps. 18:29-50, 1 Ki. 8:44-45). It is in the context of warfare that the prophet Elisha prayed that his servant's eyes might be opened so that he might see reality as God sees it and at the same time prayed that the human enemy be struck with blindness (2 Ki. 6:17ff).

There is no doubt that prayer for deliverance, help and guidance played an important role in relation to Israel's holy wars against their enemies. Related to this are the so-called victory prayers or hymns which thank God for the victories He has brought about (cf. Ex. 15:21, Nu. 10:35, Ps. 144:9-10), (Longman & Reid 1995: 44-45). spiritual warfare in the Old Testament thus takes the form of a holy war against the enemies of Israel who are, by being Israel's enemies, also the enemies of God (Longman 1982:290ff; 1984:267ff). However, in most

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<sup>110</sup> The concept of prayer as a weapon against Satan, territorial demons and other evil spirits is so frequently found in Wagner's writings that it is impossible to refer to all of them: (c.f. Wagner 1992b:148ff; 1996:30-31; 1996a:236-238; 1997a:70-79; 2000d:77ff; 2001d:64-65).



instances<sup>111</sup>, even in the case of the battle of Jericho the Israelites had to use their physical strength and weaponry to overcome physical enemies of flesh and blood. No battles are recorded at all in the Old Testament between God's people and supernatural enemies or spirits. It is through holy war that God's judgment is executed on earth, from the plagues of Egypt until Armageddon on the Great Day of the Lord (Larondelle 1985:25ff).

An important motif in the Old Testament, closely linked to the holy war concept, is that of the divine warrior (Longman & Reid 1995:31-47). The emphasis is on God Almighty, the divine warrior who fights with and on behalf of the people of God, but he is presented as fighting against human rather than supernatural enemies (Ex.15:1-18; Dt. 3:22, Jos.23:10, Ps.24:8, Ps. 135:10-11).<sup>112</sup> The exercise of the divine war in the OT is frequently termed the 'Day of the Lord', depicting calamity, upheaval and distress transpiring at a particular juncture in Israel's history but involved other nations as well (Charles 1989:201). The Lord is the mighty one who (in battle) will bring judgment upon all nations (Longman & Reid 1995:61-71). In Nahum we read about God bringing judgment upon the Assyrians, because of their excessive cruelty and wickedness, by raising other nations (the Babylonians) against them (Charles 1989:190ff). It is important to note that the central principle in the holy wars is that God is present in the battle with his people as a warrior which required faithfulness on their part (Dt. 28:7; (Longman & Reid 1995:46-47). Unfaithfulness to the Lord resulted in defeat and captivity as God not only turned away from Israel but also against Israel (Dt. 28:25ff; Jos. 7:1ff, 1 Ki. 8:46ff; 2 Ch. 36:15-17). The divine warrior is pictured as fighting his own people who have gone astray in which case he also uses foreign armies to execute judgment on his people (Charles 1989:200ff; Longman & Reid 1995:48-60)<sup>113</sup>. In *Isaiah* we read of God putting on his armor (59:17) in order to bring deliverance for those suffering from injustice (vs. 14-16) and to execute vengeance upon his enemies (vs. 18), but bring redemption for those who repent of their sins (vs. 1ff, 20).<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Exceptions are found in Judges 7:22 where the initial 'battle' did not involve any Israelites as the Midianites were attacking each other, even though the following pursuit did involve Israelite soldiers. Another exception is found in Isaiah 37:36-37 where the angel of the Lord put to death 185000 men in the Assyrian camp, probably by means of a deadly disease such as the bubonic plague (Webb 1996:153-154).

<sup>112</sup> Especially in connection with the conquest of Canaan (Dt. 7:22-24, Jos.6:2, 10:42, 11:20-23, Ps. 135: 10-11).

<sup>113</sup> For example Is. 31:4, Ezek. 14:21, Hab.1:5-12).

<sup>114</sup> Note both the striking similarity and contrast with Eph. 6:10-18. The armor is very similar, but in Isaiah not the people of God, but He himself puts on the armor. Also in Isaiah (59:1ff) the enemies are humans involved in sin, evil and injustice while in *Ephesians* (6:10-18) we are told that the enemies are not flesh and blood.

In the Old Testament we do not see the concept of God at war with Satan or even humanity at war with Satan. The divine warrior deals with people, not demonic entities. The combat myths of surrounding cultures, such as the Gilgamesh and Huwawa (Humbaba) myth (Forsyth 1987:21ff) and the creation combat myths (Waltke 1975:33), do not seem to have had much influence on Old Testament theology. Possibly, the references to Yahweh subduing the monsters Rahab and Leviathan<sup>115</sup> may reflect the borrowing of combat myth imagery to clothe the ideas of the biblical writers (Smick 1986:147-148; Waltke 1975:25-36), but this does not mean they also incorporated the underlying ideas. The only exception in the Old Testament is the angelic battle referred to in *Daniel* 10, where the enemy appears supernatural rather than human, but as we have seen above, even in *Daniel* 10, prayer is directed at God, not against the enemy, supernatural or human.

In conclusion we may say that while the Old Testament demonstrates a strong belief in the efficiency of prayer, it is God who decides whether the answer is favourable or not, and this is normally related to the faithfulness of his people.<sup>116</sup> The main actor in spiritual warfare in the Old Testament is God himself and his enemies are perceived in human terms rather than supernatural. The people of God did also have a role to play in the battles of the Lord but they were not the main players but in a sense executed God's judgment.<sup>117</sup> The Israelites fought the battles of the Lord, but these were against enemies of flesh and blood rather the supernatural demonic powers we meet in *Ephesians* 6.<sup>118</sup>

Wagner postulates that the idols in the Old Testament represent territorial spirits who dominate the nations as he interprets Dt. 32:8 and 17, using the Septuagint (LXX) rendering (Wagner 1989:280; 1990:89; 1992:90; 1996a:173). However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the concept of the gods of the nations being their guardian angels is predominantly a Hellenistic concept and even if one takes a relatively late date for

<sup>115</sup> Job 3:8, 26:12-13, 40:12, Ps. 74:14, 89:10, Is. 27:1, 51:9.

<sup>116</sup> Sometimes the prayer of one faithful man is enough to save the whole nation as in the case of Moses's prayer on behalf of the people (Ex. 32:11-14) or Samuel's prayer which brought victory over the Philistines (1 Sa. 7:5-11).

<sup>117</sup> For example the conquest of Canaan is understood in terms of Judgment upon the Canaanites (Armerding 1961:57; Ryrie 1972:216). We are also told on many occasions that the battle belongs to the Lord (1 Sam. 17:47, 2 Chron. 20:15) and the battles against Israel's enemies are the battles of the Lord (1 Sam.18:17, 1 Sam 25:28).

<sup>118</sup> For example in Joshua 6:1-27 where we are told that the Lord has delivered Jericho into Joshua's hands (vs. 2), but despite God's miraculous destruction of the walls of Jericho the Israelites still had to use their weapons to deal with their enemies. Also in 1 Sam. 17:47 where David confronts Goliath. The battle is the Lord's but David is his instrument used to defeat Goliath and the human enemies of Israel.

*Deuteronomy* in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century BC it is unlikely that the authors of *Deuteronomy* got in contact with these ideas, let alone absorb them (Carson et al. 1994:51-53). Nevertheless, we may agree that the war between the God of Israel versus the idols was a kind of spiritual war. It was a war in the sense of a conflict between competing religions and ideologies. It was also a war for the loyalty of God's people. Yet, even if we decide to understand the idols of the nations as territorial demons, still the Old Testament provides no examples of prayer against them: The passages, which narrate God's victory over the idols, never mention prayer against them. The Philistine God Dagon falls on his face before the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam. 5:1ff) and Baal is ridiculed by Elijah and proven to be powerless when the God of Israel answered with fire. In both cases no prayer meetings are held against presumed demonic realities behind the idols (Reid 2002:43-45), the God of Israel simply exposes the idols for what they really are: powerless man made creations to whom no allegiance is due (Is. 40:19, 41:7, 46:13; Hab. 2:18-20).

### **4.3. Spiritual warfare in inter-testamental Judaism**

#### **4.3.1. Satan in inter-testamental Judaism**

The phrase 'inter-testamental period' is used by various New Testament scholars (Gundry 1994:21; Marshall et al. 1996:54), to refer to the period between the end of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the New Testament period. This period approximately spans from 400 BC – 4 BC and during this time a lot of literature in Judaism was of an apocalyptic nature (Marshall et al. 1996:53-54; Tenney 1985:117-119), hence this period is also called 'apocalyptic period'. Nevertheless, because the so-called apocalyptic period in Judaism extends into the second century AD (Tenney 1985:117), I prefer to use 'inter-testamental', rather than 'apocalyptic' when referring to the period between the completion of the last canonical book in the Old Testament, and the events surrounding the birth of Christ in the New Testament.<sup>119</sup> During the Babylonian exile<sup>120</sup> and the period thereafter, much more attention was given to Satan, the Devil, evil spirits and demons than in earlier Judaism which is evidenced by several of the Apocrypha, many Pseudepigrapha and various other writings

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<sup>119</sup> Evangelicals generally consider Malachi to be the last canonical book of the Old Testament written around 450-400 BC (Blaising in Walvoord & Zuck 1985:1573).

<sup>120</sup> That is if we accept that at least part of Daniel was written during the exile as most Evangelical scholars do. Also Zechariah 3:1ff.

of this era (Lowe 1998:77ff).<sup>121</sup> In the multi-cultural and religious context of the Babylonian captivity and in the Diaspora, Judaism interacted with Babylonian and Persian dualism and was to an extent influenced and stimulated by it (Kittel 1966:15; Thompson 1903:xiv). The events of the exile led to the re-appreciation and affirmation of the religious and cultural heritage of Judaism. At the same time Judaism had to wrestle with new questions about the cosmos and spiritual realm raised by Babylonian-Persian religious beliefs and practices<sup>122</sup> in particular the teachings of Zoroaster. Zoroastrianism emphasized the ongoing war between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, which included demon forces (Howlett 1957:178). Interaction with Zoroastrianism may have been the one of the major causes of Jewish reflection on angels and demons in the exilic and post-exilic period (Gokey 1961:34, 42).<sup>123</sup> Though, some of the concepts about Satan and the demonic in the inter-testamental period may have roots in Babylonian and Canaanite mythology (Forsyth 1987:12), this does not mean that everyone embraced those ideas.

The priestly party of the Sadducees who identified themselves with the high priest Zadok of the Solomonic era (1 Kings 1:32-45), and the sons of Zadok during the exile (Ezek. 40:46; 44:15ff), were notorious for their anti-supernaturalism (Tenney 1965:94-95). The apocalyptic pseudepigraphal writings of this period, therefore, reflect the popular theology at grassroots, rather than official theology. However, popular theology did influence official theology. The writings of the Essenes found at Qumran (Vermes 1962), and also the New Testament, demonstrate that the concepts of Satan and demons had become well-known subjects in Judaism by that time. The same development is also visible in the Talmud and the Midrash.<sup>124</sup><sup>125</sup> Interestingly, we do not find any reference to Satan in the writings of historian

<sup>121</sup> For example: *1 Enoch*, *Book of Jubilees*, *Testament of the 12 Patriarchs*, *Tobit*, Qumran literature and *Josephus*. Some other apocrypha and pseudepigraph which are sometimes referred to in relation with SLSW such as *2 Esdras*, *2 Enoch* and the *Testament of Solomon* (Lowe 1998:81ff; Reid 2002:79) are believed by many to belong to the post NT period (after 100 AD). It can be argued that they are based on earlier sources but there is insufficient evidence to support this.

<sup>122</sup> Many religious concepts were borrowed from the primitive Turanian quasi-dualism of the pre-Semitic Accadian period (Newman in Schaff 1910: Iff).

<sup>123</sup> See for example the war scroll (war rule) which depicts a war which symbolizes the struggle between the spirits of light and the spirits of darkness which finally leads to divine intervention and the destruction of Satan and all the host of his kingdom (col. XVIII), (Vermes 1962:123-124, 146-147). Judaism borrowing from Zoroastrianism is the use of the Zoroastrian demon 'Aeshma' in the apocryphal book of Tobit in the form of the demon 'Asmodeus' (Ferguson & Wright 1988:736).

<sup>124</sup> Though the writing of the Talmud as well as the Midrash took place between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, most of their content is based on oral tradition dating back many centuries before (Tenney 1985:104).

<sup>125</sup> See for example the *Lilith* references (Eserver 2004). Also Yoma 67b refers to the scapegoat being called *Azazel* because it atones for the "affair of Uza and Aza'el," probably a reference to the Shamhazai and Azael of *1 Enoch* (Newman 1984:26ff). In the commentaries on the Old Testament in the Midrash of later Judaism, 'Satan the Accuser,' is a frequent figure with a clearly diabolical nature. He reveals the sins of Israel to God

Flavius Josephus, but we do find several references to demons and evil spirits (VII:6.3; VIII:2.5, in Whiston 1960). As one of Josephus' aims was defending Jewish monism to a Gentile audience he likely sought to avoid any hint of dualism and therefore, left out any reference to Satan. Nevertheless, Satan and Satan-like figures frequently appear in pseudepigraphal Judaism and with it we observe a departure from the concept of Satan being one of God's prosecutors to that of God's enemy, the chief of a hostile kingdom who needs to be resisted (Kittel 1966:75). Powerful evil angels and demons under the names Mastema, *Azazel*, Beezebul, Beliar, Belial, Belchar, Sammael, Semyaz tempt angels and humans alike to rebellion and sin against God and one another (Bellshaw 1968:25; Gundry 1983: 53; Reicke 1987:355; Russell 1977:188ff).<sup>126</sup> These are finally amalgamated in the one evil personality called Satan or the Devil with his demon armies (Brown 1978:468-469; Kittel 1966:76-77, 79). The LXX translation of 'Satan' in the Old Testament with '*diabolos*' (Brown 1978:468) is probably due to these developments in demonology.<sup>127</sup> Also in the apocrypha of this period it is hinted that the serpent of Genesis is to be identified with the Devil, a concept which is picked up later in the New Testament in *Revelation* 12:9 and 20:2 (Schofield 2003:73)<sup>128</sup>.

In conclusion, we may say that the development of the concept of Satan as the chief opponent of God was mainly developed in the inter-testamental period. This was probably largely, but not exclusively, the result of interaction with Zoroastrianism. However, in spite of the similarities with Zoroastrianism inter-testamental Judaism never fully succumbed to its dualism, though the battle between good and evil is fierce, and the powers appear to be near equal, the outcome of the battle is never in doubt: God is supreme and He has the victory (Howlett 1957:178).<sup>129</sup> As we will see later on in this thesis, the New Testament, while avoiding much of the speculations of pseudepigraphal Judaism nevertheless affirms the existence of Satan as the chief opponent of God and his people. The New Testament also affirms the existence of demons and the need to exorcise or overcome them, albeit using different methods from pseudepigraphal Judaism in the inter-testamental period.

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(Midrash Ex. 31) and is particularly likely to make such accusation in time of danger (Yer. Sab. ii, 5b; Midrash Gen. 91:9; Midrash Eccl. 3:2), (Feinberg 1959:217).

<sup>126</sup> See 1 *Enoch* 6:3, 15, 19, 85-90. *Jubilees* 4:15, 22, 7:21-22, 10:8-9.

<sup>127</sup> Various biblical scholars have concluded that the LXX reflects the realities and sentiments of its time including its angelology (Stevens 1997:136).

<sup>128</sup> Wisdom of Solomon 2:24.

<sup>129</sup> Besides Canaanite, Babylonian and Persian mythology also Greek and later Roman influences may have played a role (Forsyth 1987:12).

#### 4.3.2. Demons and evil spirits in inter-testamental Judaism

In contrast to the scarce references to evil spirits and demons in the Old Testament, in the writings of pseudepigraphal Judaism demons and evil spirits suddenly take center stage: They are behind sin, temptation, illness, possession and all kinds of evil and calamities. In contrast with the Old Testament, evil spirits are no longer understood as angels of God, but are generally understood as fallen angels which have become demons (Kittel 1966:10). They were gradually understood to be Satan's angels (Kittel 1966:14-15). It is debatable whether this was mainly due to Persian influence or the influence of Hellenism (Ackroyd 1970:343). Most likely both Persian and Greek thought influenced Judaism but also other cultures which they encountered in the Diaspora. A clear case of Judaism borrowing from Zoroastrianism is the use of the Zoroastrian demon 'Aeshma' in the apocryphal book of *Tobit* in the form of the demon 'Asmodeus' (Ferguson & Wright 1988:736). Many of the names for Satan and demons can be traced to known deities or spirits of surrounding cultures (Russell 1977:188ff)<sup>130</sup>. The concept of guardian angels or watchers presiding over the nations is developed in the pseudepigraphal writings. The concept of guardian deities was certainly a Hellenistic concept (Knight 1995:39) but may have Babylonian antecedents (Ferguson 1994:327).<sup>131</sup> The watchers are mentioned many times in the Pseudepigrapha such as *I Enoch*, *Jubilees* and the *Testament of the twelve patriarchs* (Newman 1984:16ff) as well as Qumran literature (Genesis Apocryphon in Vermes 1962:215ff). This watcher concept is likely to have influenced the way the *Septuagint* (LXX) and the Qumran community understood (and translated) references in Scripture to the 'sons of God' or 'sons of Israel' (Dt. 32:8, Ps. 82:1, 89:5-8) and also the equation of the gods of the nations with demons (Ps. 95:5).<sup>132</sup> Wagner in a way places himself in this tradition when he builds his argument for the existence of territorial spirits over nations largely on the LXX rendering of Dt. 32:8 (Wagner 1990:89; 1992:90; 1996a:173).<sup>133</sup> Also in his interpretation of *Daniel* 10 in terms of guardian

<sup>130</sup> The word 'daiva' which meant "god" in early Iranian and Avestan (early Hindu) texts, became degraded to the status of "demon" in Zoroastrian and Hebrew texts and magical texts of the Sassanian period (Yamauchi 1980:110).

<sup>131</sup> The Babylonians also believed in supernatural night watchers who control destinies on the earth. These Deities were in charge of watching the night while the great gods slept (Ferguson 327).

<sup>132</sup> For a discussion of these concepts see chapter 3.

<sup>133</sup> Both the LXX and Qumran contributors are likely to have been influenced by the concept of guardian deities which was a prominent Hellenistic concept which also influenced the writers of the pseudepigrapha such as *I Enoch*, *Jubilees*, *the Testament of the 12 Patriarchs* and others in preferring to translate the Hebrew as 'sons of God' rather than 'sons of Israel', in order to evoke the concept of guardian deities (Knight 1995:39; Newman 1984:16ff). The different renderings of Dt. 32:8 are thoroughly investigated and discussed by Stevens

spirits of the kingdom (1996a:173) and territorial spirits (Wagner 1989:280-281; 1990:89-90; 1995a:131ff; 1996a:173-174; 244-245), Wagner places himself in the pseudepigraphal tradition. Once Satan, demons and evil spirits are identified as the main cause of misfortune, sickness and evil, it becomes logical that means and methods are identified to ward them off. Judaism, in the inter-testamental period, incorporated elaborate formulae and measures to ward off demons or to exorcise them (Kittel 1966:528)<sup>134</sup>. Many such formulae were already in use among Babylonian exorcists who called upon the benevolent powers of heaven to exorcise demons and other evil powers who were the cause of various diseases, disasters, death and other problems.<sup>135</sup>

In inter-testamental Judaism, exorcism was usually done by calling upon greater spirits or angelic beings to cast out the lesser, but material means such as herbs could also be used (Brown 1978:476; Kittel 1966:7). In the apocalypse of Elijah we read of a demon cast out by fasting and in *Tobit* we come across the practice of exorcism (8:2-3) by magical means. Josephus the historian also speaks highly of prescriptions for the exorcism of demons and attributes these to Solomon (Book VIII, Ch II,5; see Whiston 1960). Not just names of powerful spirit beings, but even names of well known biblical persons were used in exorcism, charms and incantations. For example a silver bracelet with an engraved Aramaic text says, “And with the rod of Moses, and the signet ring of Solomon and the crown of David, I will drive out the Unclean one (Beyer in Rogers 1993:300).

Apart from Josephus and many of the magical formulae, also the apocryphal book Wisdom of Solomon states that Solomon had the “powers of spirits” (7:2). The much later pseudepigraphal work, the Testament of Solomon, which was most likely produced after 100 AD, (Bundrick 1991:359), begins with the opening statement: “Testament of Solomon, Son of David, who reigned in Jerusalem, and subdued all the spirits of the air, of the earth, and under the earth”, (Rogers 1993:299). The Testament of Solomon, however, forms a bridge between pre-NT and NT Pseudepigraphal demonology as well as later Gnostic demonology, for it develops the theme of divine wisdom (or knowledge) necessary for exorcism in a

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(1997:131-141), who also comes to the conclusion that the dualistic angelology of Judaism in the inter-testamental period is likely to have influenced the LXX and Qumran renderings of Dt. 32:8 and that 'Sons of Israel' is more likely to be the original rendering (Stevens 1997:134-141).

<sup>134</sup> Examples of Jewish exorcism can be found in ‘The Prayer of Nabonidas’ (Vermees 1962:209) and the apocryphal book *Tobit* (8:1ff).

<sup>135</sup> This is evidenced in many of the incantations against evil in the evil spirit texts of Babylonian cuneiform texts translated and published by R. Campbell Thompson (1903).

manner very similar to Gnostic notions of special knowledge necessary to deal with demonic spirits.<sup>136</sup>

We must take note that Judaism did not uncritically incorporate new concepts from surrounding cultures, it was mainly influenced in those areas where there was already a point of contact in the worldview (Ackroyd 1970:343). In general, Judaism did not fully succumb to Persian dualism neither did they accept the common concept that demons were spirits of the dead (Kittel 1966:8). Instead, Judaism generally stressed that demons were evil spirits and fallen angels under Satan's command (Kittel 1966:15).<sup>137</sup> Josephus, however, does equate demons with the departed spirits of the wicked (VII, 6:3). Also some traditions within of Islam maintain the notion that some Jinn are spirits of the dead while others are spirit beings created out of fire, some of whom can even become believers (Al-Saleh 1985:100; Zwemer 2009), while others maintain the Jinn are all demons and Devils and created by Allah from smokeless fire (Al-Ashqar 1998:5-8). In the Testament of the 12 Patriarchs we observe a tendency to understand demons in terms of the personification of vices such as the spirits of fornication, fighting, pride, lying and other evils (Gokey 1961:16-17), which is similar to the concept of vice promoting demons in Zoroastrianism (Gokey 1961:42).

In conclusion we may observe that Pseudepigraphal Judaism marks a clear departure from the reserved attitude of the Old Testament and contributed largely to the New Testament understanding of evil spirits as demons and fallen angels subject to Satan (Kittel 1966:14-16)<sup>138</sup>. The New Testament, however, corrects the excessive speculations of pseudepigraphal Judaism by emphasizing the absolute subjection of all the powers to Christ, and in so doing takes away the need for elaborate ritual, secret knowledge and special incantations to exorcise Satan and the demons. However, while in the New Testament the Devil and his demons play an important role, Jewish thought in later Judaism opted for almost total monism. Having rejected the dualistic tendency of the apocalyptic writers, the rabbis also rejected the notion of a personified being, Satan, leading the demons or forces of evil (Russell 1980:28).

<sup>136</sup> Also the concept of angelic watchers over the nations common in the Pseudepigrapha reoccurs in Gnosticism (Wink 1993:20).

<sup>137</sup> One class of spirits in Babylonian demonology are the 'utukku' and the 'ekimmu', who represent the spirits of the departed. The 'utukku' were consulted in necromancy just as Saul tried at Endor (1 Sam. 28:7) but the 'ekimmu' were spirits of the departed who for some reason did not enter into the Underworld (Hades) and now wander the earth in search of someone whom they can possess (Thompson 1903:xxiv-xxxii).

<sup>138</sup> Also see section XII of the Damascus rule: 'Every man who preaches apostasy under the dominion of the spirits of Satan shall be judged according to the law relating to those possessed by a ghost or familiar spirit', (Vermes 1962:113).



However, in folk-Judaism, especially the Jewish magical/mystical movement and the Hebrew amuletic tradition the Devil and demons continued to play a major role (Eserver 2004; Russell 1980:28-29)<sup>139</sup>.

#### 4.3.3. Prayer and warfare in inter-testamental Judaism

In the preceding sections we have noted that in the inter-testamental period Judaism had been exposed to many different cultures, especially Persian and later Greco-Roman culture. Most, if not all, of these cultures believed in hostile supernatural beings and malignant spirits which threatened human life, and acts of propitiation, ritual incantations, banning formulas, and appeals to the benevolent deities were practiced (Ackroyd 1970:343; Bolt 1996:87-91; Walton 1988:281).<sup>140</sup> In Persian culture, Zoroastrianism was the dominant official religion. Prayer, in Zoroastrianism, was not only ceremonial, liturgical and petitionary as it was in Old Testament Judaism, but was also an essential weapon against the evil forces and included incantations against the demons which were generally speaking personified evils (See footnote 125 in Gokey 1961:42).<sup>141</sup> The five daily prayers were a binding duty on every Zoroastrian, part of his service to God, and a weapon in the fight against evil: ‘He prays to Ahura Mazda, [and] execrates Angra Mainyu...’ (Walton 1988:282).

In inter-testamental Judaism we observe similarities in the incantations against evil in Qumran literature (Rogers 1993:285ff) where Satan is excreted by means of various curses (Vermes 1962:140ff). These incantations against Satan which are pronounced by the high priest in the preamble of his prayer to God (col. xiii), come close to the idea of prayer as a verbal weapon against Satan or his demons as proposed by Wagner (1993c:200), that is if we define the curses against Satan as a form of prayer.<sup>142</sup> Also in Qumran literature we see a

<sup>139</sup> Among the greek magical papyri (PGM) some incantations of Hebrew origin can be found (Betz 1986)

<sup>140</sup> We may think of the Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Egyptian religions whose animistic beliefs are reflected in numerous cuneiform, magical papyri and other documents (Cunningham 1997; Thompson 1903).

<sup>141</sup> The Babylonian word for demon or evil spirit ‘she-du’, which is related to the Hebrew ‘shedu’, has two different but related meanings, depending upon its context. When it is grouped with another word, ‘Lamassu’, the two words denote protective deities or guardian spirits. When ‘she-du’ occurs alone (without lamassu), it often denotes an evil spirit or demon whose presence is undesirable and who must be confined in the depths of the netherworld by means of spells and incantations. There is some interesting archeological and linguistic evidence that ‘she-du’ may be equated with the Hittite word ‘tarpis’, “evil demon,” (which is related to the Hebrew word ‘tera,phîm’, and is commonly used in the OT to denote ‘idols’ and pagan deities (Hoffner 1967:235-236).

<sup>142</sup> the use incantations in the War Scroll of the Qumran community against Satan and his demons are not only reminiscent of Zoroastrian practices but are also very similar to Babylonian and Assyrian incantations against demons and other evil spiritual powers found in various cuneiform texts (Thompson 1903:5ff).

similar approach to prayer in the battle liturgy of the war rule where both demonic enemies as well as their human counterparts are in focus (col. x-xiii, in Vermes 1962:136-140; Forsyth 1987:205): God is asked to glorify himself by leveling the hordes of Satan (col. xi, in Vermes 1962:136-140). We thus observe that prayer in itself was not used by the Qumran community as a weapon against the demons or Satan, but rather as a means of communicating to God so that He may destroy the enemy. Wagner's warfare prayer against Satan and his demons in order to bind and exorcise them from a territory (Wagner 1997a:70-72; 228-229; 2001d:37-38), should therefore be understood as incantations against evil rather than as prayer to God.

We observed above that even in inter-testamental Judaism prayer is not presented as a weapon, but as an appeal to God for help and a way of communicating to Him. However, the concept of binding Satan and demons can be found in the Pseudepigrapha. However, in the Pseudepigrapha the binding is done by God and not by human agents as in the case of Wagner's SLSW. In the pseudepigraphal book of Jubilees we are told that God bound the angels (demons) who sinned in the depths of the earth (Jub. 5:1-10). We are also told that Noah prayed to God to imprison the demons that were leading his family astray (Jub. 10:5). We also find Mastema, who in the same chapter is identified as Satan, pleading with God not to imprison all the demons but to leave some under his control (Forsyth 1987:184ff). Demonic enemies are clearly in mind, but Noah does not cast them out of the territory where he lives, nor does he bind them, rather he requests God to imprison the demons. Satan is not pictured in terms of a powerful dark Lord on near equal terms with God, he is a rather pitiful character who needs to beg God to be left with some power and authority. The picture, which emerges, is that God is in full control over the demonic world, He binds or loosens demons and puts limits to Satan's authority and power (Forsyth 1987:188).

The Apocryphal literature of the inter-testamental period prayer in the context of (spiritual) warfare generally follows the Old Testament concept of petitioning God for help against human enemies (II Macc. 10:25ff, 15:26-27), but in *Tobit* we also encounter prayer for help against a demon (8:4ff). Nevertheless, as in Jubilees, the prayer is not addressed to the demon but is addressed to God in order that He may show mercy. The demon is not expelled by prayer, but by the ritual burning of a fish heart and liver after which he is bound by the angel Rafael (8:2-3). Unlike, Zoroastrianism, prayer in *Tobit* is not seen as a weapon, but

rather as a means to ask God for help against the demon. The fact that an angel binds the demon serves to stress the fact that a demon is too weak an enemy for God to deal with, he leaves it to one of his servants.

From the above examples it is rather clear that prayer in inter-testamental Judaism in the context of (spiritual) warfare remains a matter of petitioning God for deliverance and help against the foe, just as it was in the tradition of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, no prayer battles are fought with demons, no territorial demons are exorcised from territories. The only new development in prayer is that not just protection and help against human enemies is sought in prayer, but also against Satan and the demonic powers. In addition to prayer rituals and incantations appear to have been used on occasion against Satan and his hosts.

#### **4.4. Spiritual warfare in the New Testament**

##### **4.4.1. Satan in the New Testament**

In the New Testament Satan is portrayed as the chief opponent of God and of his people. The absolute antithesis between God and Satan is very clear: God is the God of love, goodness, righteousness and truth, while Satan is presented as evil, murderous, deceptive and dangerous. Satan is called the evil one (Mt.6: 13, Jn. 17:15), a murderer from the beginning (Jn. 8:44), a liar and the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). His dominion is over humankind and to some extent over the realm in which they live: Satan is identified the prince of this world (Jn 12:31), the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the prince of darkness (Eph. 6:12), the God of the present age (2 Cor. 4:4) who even boasts that all the kingdoms of the world have been given to him (Lk. 4:6)<sup>143</sup>. New Testament demonology has a lot in common with that of the inter-testamental period but unites all the different powerful demons and evil angels such as Mastema, *Azazel* and Belial in one personality, that is Satan, the living principle of all evil (Brown 1978:468-469; Kittel 1966:76-77, 79).<sup>144</sup> The Greek word for Satan (Satanas) is a transliteration from the Hebrew 'Shatan' and is exclusively used to denote the Devil, the serpent and the chief of demons. His other New Testament title, which is used

<sup>143</sup> It is sometimes argued that Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim to ownership of the world because it was a legitimate claim (Kraft 2003). However, this is really an argument from silence as Jesus may have chosen not to dispute Satan's claim because it was so preposterous, or because he saw no merit in arguing about it at that particular time. Satan may simply have been lying (Page 1995:98). Satan may also have been deluded himself and concluded that since he rules much of humanity and creation in general, his rule has become legitimate.

<sup>144</sup> See section 4.3.1 on Satan in Inter-testamental Judaism.

interchangeably with Satan in Scripture, is ‘Devil’ and has similar connotations of accuser, adversary or opponent (Erickson 1985:448).<sup>145</sup>

The enmity between God and Satan is most evidently seen in the life and ministry of Christ who came to destroy the works of the Devil (1 Jn 3.8) and to deliver all those oppressed by him (Acts 10:38).<sup>146</sup> The life of Jesus was threatened right from its very beginning when Herod tried to kill him as an infant (Mt. 2:13ff). It is as if Satan through his human agent reacts to the invasion of what he considers his realm. Satan claims blatantly that all the authority and splendour of the world’s kingdoms have been given to him and he can give it to whom he wants (Luke 4:5-6). This statement should not be considered as entirely true, as Scripture states that the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it (Ps. 24:1) and that God’s kingdom rules over all (Ps. 103:19). At the same time it is true that God has handed people over to their sins (Rom. 1:18-32) and as such handed them over to the influence of the evil one (Eph. 2:1-4). But the fact that God has allowed Satan to continue to influence humankind does not give Satan property rights. His claim to ownership is not justified. Throughout Jesus’ ministry Satanic opposition comes to the surface as in the temptation in the desert (Lk 4:1ff), in the opposition Jesus gets from some of the Jews (Jn. 8:44-47) and even through the mouth of Peter (Mt. 16:23). At the core of these narratives we find attack and counter attack (Kallas 1968 101).<sup>147</sup> Jesus casts out demons and so heralds the coming of the Kingdom of God, but time and time again the demonic strikes back. Satan is also portrayed as influencing the people who hear Jesus’ message so that they do not respond to it (Mk 4:15). He attempts to sift Jesus’ disciples (Lk. 22:31) and possesses Judas in order to set in motion the events that led to Jesus death on the cross (Lk. 22:3).

The Gospels portray both the victorious Christ who triumphs over the forces of darkness, and the suffering Christ who bears his cross in a world dominated by Satan and his forces. Yet, it is in and through his suffering that Christ wins the ultimate victory over the Devil and his demons (Heb. 2:14-18). The rulers of the age, even Satan himself did not understand or

<sup>145</sup> The word ‘diabolos’, Devil, is probably the most familiar of the designations for Satan. It occurs more frequently than any other term 38 times in the New Testament and has connotations of accuser and slanderer, one who brings false accusations (Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich 1952:181; Bellshaw 1968:26). In three instances (1 Tim 3:11, 2 Tim 3:3, Titus 2:3) the same word is used to refer to human slanderers.

<sup>146</sup> The context of in this text shows that the works of the Devil are equated with sin (Thomas 2004). It is through sin that Satan enslaves and controls people and through Jesus we can be set free from sin’s dominion (Jn. 8:34).

<sup>147</sup> There is no reason to assume that these were the only occasions when Satan opposed, hindered or tried to tempt Jesus. Hebrews 4:15 states that Jesus was tempted in every way, just as we are, yet without sin.

anticipate the victorious outcome of Christ's suffering and subsequent death (Mk. 8:33; 1 Cor. 2:8). It is in his suffering that Christ was made perfect (Heb. 2:10, 5:7-9) and brought salvation to all humankind by providing forgiveness of sins (Col. 2:13; Heb. 9:26-28). Through the forgiveness of sins made possible by Christ, the powers are disarmed as there is no more law, regulation or anything that stands in between God and his people (Col. 2:14-15), nothing can separate them anymore from God's love (Rom. 8:31-39).

In the engagement between Christ and Satan, Satan and his demons suffer defeat, fear, and turmoil as their power over humanity is challenged by Jesus and his followers (Mk 9:25-26; Lk. 8:28-29; 10:17-18). All the Synoptic Gospels testify to this fact by relating the parable of the burglary of a strong man's house (Mt. 12:22-30, Mark 3:22-27, Lk 11:14-23). Jesus is the one who ties up the strong man Satan, and ransacks his possessions; taking from him the humans he enslaved (Powlison 1995:130; Taylor 1993:49ff; Wenham 1995:42). Jesus delivers those oppressed by the Devil (Acts 10:38). In the Gospel tradition Jesus is portrayed as astonishingly effective in exorcism of demons which are understood as a sign that the Kingdom of God is breaking in (Mt 12.28; Lk 11.20). In *Luke* we read that Satan has fallen from heaven (Lk 10.18) and John points out that now on earth God's judgment is being executed and Satan shall be cast out (Jn 12:31). Already, heaven has been cleansed from Satan's influence but the earth is not yet free from his scourge, hence Jesus taught his followers to pray: 'may your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven', and 'deliver us from evil' (Mt. 6:9ff).<sup>148</sup> Also Jesus' prayer for his followers includes the aspect of protection against evil and the evil one (Jn 17:11-15).

In Pauline theology both Jesus and Satan dwell in the heavenly realms (Eph. 1:20-21; 2:2). In addition we find the spiritual powers in general (3:10) and the demons (6:12) inhabiting this realm. The church is seated with Christ in these realms (Eph. 2:6-7). That 'heavenly realms' cannot be identified with heaven can be deduced from Jesus' assertions that in heaven God's will is already being done, which would not be the case if Satan and the demons inhabited heaven. Also the reference to Satan's fall from heaven affirms this distinction between 'heavenly realms' and 'heaven' (Lk. 10:18; Rev. 12:12ff). Probably

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<sup>148</sup> It is not incidental that the version of the Lord's prayer in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts (Carson et al. 1994:913) ends with the phrase 'deliver us from evil'. The followers of Christ are in the world dominated by Satan and his forces and need deliverance and protection as they look forward to the day that the kingdom of God is fully realized on earth as it is in heaven.

‘heavenly realms’ is best understood as the spiritual dimension of creation. This realm is apart from heaven itself which is the exclusive dwelling place of God and his angels from where Satan was expelled and thrown on earth (Rev. 12:7-9). It is this unseen aspect of the created order, the invisible world of spiritual reality (Stott 1979:81) where the spiritual battles takes place (Eph. 6:10ff), and where the church seated with Christ (Eph. 2:6) needs to stand firm against the schemes of the Devil (Eph. 6: 11). Christ, however, has all the power in heaven and earth and is therefore firmly in charge (Mt. 28:18) and is subduing all his enemies (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

Satan, though disarmed on the cross (Col. 2:15) is still a threat not to be underestimated (1 Pt. 5:8). Being disarmed, Satan is restricted in his activities and cannot do as he pleases, unless permitted by God, for example in the case of Paul’s affliction (2 Cor. 12:7). Yet, Satan is also portrayed as having the intention to bring destruction. Through temptation, heresy and deception he still influences the minds of many people (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1-2) and even in and against the church. The church is therefore called to stand firm in the faith and perseverance in living the Christ-like life, and doing so resists the Devil and his demons (Eph. 4:27ff; 5:1ff; 6:10ff). In addition to standing firm, believers are also involved in the assault on the Kingdom of Darkness, by shining as stars in the darkness (Philip. 2:15), by being the salt and light of the earth (Mt.5:13) and by being living testimonies in this world to the truth of the Gospel, in word, deed, character and lifestyle (Eph. 6:17-20; Jn. 5:1-5; Rev. 12:11). The church, the community transformed through faith in Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, lives contrary to the world which is blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:14-17). The church thus is a living sign and witness to the powers that indwell the heavenly realms (Eph. 3:10)<sup>149</sup>. The church is also a witness and sign to the human beings that are still under the influence of the evil one (Acts 1:8; Eph. 2:2), for some unto salvation, for others unto condemnation (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

The writer of Revelation, like Jesus in *Luke* (10:18) also speaks of Satan’s fall from heaven and stresses the fact that the whole earth is now in jeopardy (Rev. 12:12ff). The followers of Christ bear the brunt of Satan’s fury (Rev. 12:17, 13:7), which is not surprising as they are

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<sup>149</sup> ‘Heavenly realms’, here as well as elsewhere in Pauline literature (Eph. 1:29, 2:6, 6:12) is best understood as the spiritual dimension of the earthly creation. In the New Testament world the higher levels of the air and atmosphere were understood as an invisible in-between world separating God and man which was inhabited by various intermediate beings some of which malignant demons which could cause harm, illness, misfortune or demon possession (De Villiers 1987:28ff).

part of Christ's triumphal procession (2 Cor. 2:14), who by their witness in the world remind Satan and all the powers that Christ has all authority in heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18). New Testament demonology, then presents the Devil as being decisively defeated on the cross (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14) and it is precisely because of this victory which gave Christ all authority in heaven and earth that the church goes out into all the world in order to make disciples of all nations. Unlike the assumptions of SLSW, the New Testament does not stress the need to overcome the power of Satan and territorial demons by means of exorcism to be able to evangelize effectively. The biblical emphasis is on the fact that Christ has decisively defeated Satan. Because Christ has all the power in heaven and on earth we are able to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:18-20). However, we do not go into all the world as mighty spiritual warriors spectacularly subduing demonic foes, instead it is written 'for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered' (Rom. 8:36). And yet, the very fact that we can serve Christ in an evil world in spite of our apparent weakness, demonstrates the fact that Satan is defeated, since nothing can separate us from the love of Christ and so in all our weakness we are also more than conquerors (Rom. 8:35-39). There is no need to take away the legal authority which Satan and his demons exercise over a territory, for they have none. Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth and therefore church may walk and minister confidently in that knowledge, even in the midst of adversity, resistance to the Gospel and persecution.

We have seen earlier that God, for his own purposes, still allows Satan limited influence on earth and so the church faces suffering and persecution while on earth (Jn. 15:20, 16:33).<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, Christ's promise, that the gates of Hades will not overcome the Church, reminds us that, however fierce the opposition, Christ watches over his church (Mt. 16:18). He is the head over all the powers and is given to the church, who is also seated in Christ in the heavenly realms above all the powers (Eph. 1:21-23; 2:6). Satan, his demons and the human agents under their evil influence will continue to harass the followers of Christ until the very end (Mt. 10:17ff; Lk 21:12-19; Jn 15:18-20, 2 Tm. 3:12) even causing death and imprisonment (Rev. 2:10). The assault on the church does not only come from without but also from within the church in the form of false teachings (2 Cor. 10:3-6; Col. 2:8). False

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<sup>150</sup> Demons and evil spirits, just as Satan and Devil are equated in the New Testament, for example in Rev. 16:13-14 where demons and evil spirits are depicted as coming from the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. These three different pictures of cosmic evil are linked to the one called serpent, Devil and Satan in Rev. 20:2.

teachings are not just the product of the human mind but are identified as having been inspired by demons (1 Tm 4:1). Its proponents are portrayed as having fallen in the Devil's trap (2 Tm. 2:25-26). False teachings may also be accompanied by miracles performed in the power of Satan (2 Th. 2:9ff).

Satan also is behind the assault on the heart and mind of the believer in the form of sinful passions and desires (Eph. 4:27ff, Jm. 3:14-15). Such passions may be coming from within the human heart (Mt.15: 19) and be encouraged from without by the things of the world (1 Jn. 2:16-17), but ultimately they are recognized as coming from the Devil (Jm. 3:14-15, 4:1-10; 1 Jn 3:8). The New Testament church recognized that the existence of the Devil is a reality, one which calls for constant alertness (1 Peter 5:18) and vigilance (Eph.6: 10ff) as he schemes against God's people (Eph. 6:11). Satan will continue to fight until his final end when he will be confined in the fire<sup>151</sup> that has been prepared for the Devil and his angels (Rev. 20:10). Until that time he will continue to lead the world astray into sin and transgression (Eph. 2:1-3) and even lead some in the church astray (1 Tim. 5:15). He will continue to harass and hinder God's people (2 Cor. 12:7; 1 Th. 2:18). However, whatever victory Satan may achieve, it does not negate God's grace, which is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:8). Even if someone is handed over to Satan it works out for his own good (1 Cor. 5:5) for there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). In the meantime the Church's defense is a matter of standing firm, resisting Satan's temptations, avoiding evil, promoting good, unmasking and exposing the works of darkness, and proclaiming the Gospel in word, deed and lifestyle (Eph. 5:8-16; 6:11ff).

In what appears to be the worst kind of scenario, the church can find itself in a place so much under the influence of Satan that it is called a place where Satan has its throne (Rev. 2:13). We read that in this place believers are put to death. Yet no strategic-level-warfare-prayer meetings are called for to remove Satan from his throne. No special spiritual warfare techniques are recommended nor the employment of spiritual warriors. Instead the church simply stands firm in faith and is commended for having remained true to Christ and

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<sup>151</sup> I do not take the reference to 'fire' literally as elsewhere Scripture talks of the place of judgement in terms of 'blackest darkness' (2 Pet. 2:17, Jud. 13). I understand 'fire' in the context of judgement as referring to total destruction. Jesus speaks of the fire of hell on various occasions (cf. Mt. 5:22, 18:9) as well as it being a place of destruction of body and soul (Mt 10:28). The word used in the New Testament translated as hell is *gehenna* (Latin) or *geena* (Greek) which is derived from the Hebrew *gé Hinnôm*, a valley near Jerusalem where dead animals and rubbish used to be burned (Douglas et al. 1996:475).



steadfast. The church is rebuked, but not for having failed to exert the right spiritual (prayer) weapons against Satan. They are exhorted to repent from having allowed false teachings within the church which led believers into sin (vs. 14ff). The only mentioning of spiritual warfare here is that of the word of Christ against those who refuse to repent (vs. 16). In other words, the battle is not against Satan's influence in the context in which the church finds itself, but against the influence of Satan within the church through false teachings and sin. This influence of Satan is not cast out by means of excorsistic rituals but by repentance and doing the right things, in this case that means resist the false teachings rather than tolerating them.

The picture Paul paints of the church in *Ephesians* 6 is that of a fortress assaulted from without and within, but yet not overcome by the Devil and his schemes (Eph. 6:10ff). That is if as a community she stands firm in faith and righteousness. In order to stand strong the Devil should not be given any foothold within the community of faith (Eph. 4:27). This means we must no longer live in sin and according to deceitful desires (Eph. 4:17-24), but become imitators of God (Eph. 5:1) in the pursuit of righteousness, holiness and love (Eph. 4:24; 5:2) and whatever pleases the Lord (Eph. 5:10).

#### **4.4.2. Demons in the New Testament**

The New Testament refers to demons in a variety of terms such as evil spirits, unclean spirits, angels of Satan and the Devil's angels. These terms are frequently used interchangeably (Mt. 8:31ff; 25:41; Mk. 1:23 Rev. 16:13-14). The demons are presented as the cause behind a variety of physical and psychological ailments in individuals (Mk 1:23ff; 5:1ff; 9:17ff; Lk. 9:37ff; 2 Cor. 10:7-10). Demons also play a role in divination (Acts 16:16ff), idolatry (1 Cor. 10:20), heresy (1 Tim. 4:1-5). They can perform deceptive miracles (Rev. 16:13-14). The Devil and his demons encourage sin and evil individually, and corporally, in the world at large by means of lies, deception, evil inspirations and delusions, blinding humanity to the light of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1-2, 4:17-19; Rev. 20:8-10). Except in *Hebrews*, we find references to demons in every book of the New Testament. This indicates that the New Testament church did not take the existence of demons for granted. The response of the church was, however, not one of fear or a of a frantic search for spiritual power to overcome their demonic opponents. Instead Paul encourages the church to focus on Christ's victory

over Satan and his exalted position above all powers (Eph. 1:20-21). In His strength the Devil and his demons are resisted (Eph. 6:10-12) and by obedient faith in Christ all their attacks thwarted (Eph. 6:16).

Jesus devoted a lot of his ministry to the exorcism of demons. This was not new and various scholars have pointed to the similarities between Jesus and the ‘divine men’ of the New Testament era who also did miracles and cast out demons (De Villiers 1986:21ff). The Gospels themselves mention other exorcists (Mt. 12:27), who were apparently successful and one even cast out demons in the name of Jesus (Mk. 9:38). However, while other exorcists cast out demons by calling upon stronger spiritual authorities and by the use of sacrifices, rituals and special formulae or prayers (Brown 1978:476; De Villiers 1986:28; Kittel 1966:7), Jesus cast out demons in his own authority without any additional help from sacrifice, ritual or formulae. In fact the Gospel accounts portray the demons as being in abject fear of Christ. There is no sense of spiritual battle at all, but rather a picture of enemies begging for mercy (Mk. 5:7, 10).

In the Gospels we come across demons who inhabit individuals and cause harm to their minds and bodies. In the Pauline letters, particularly *Ephesians* and to a lesser extent *Colossians*, Paul goes beyond the concept of demons afflicting individuals. He also identifies them as world rulers, thrones, dominions, authorities, powers and principalities (1 Cor. 15:24ff; Eph.1: 19-21, 6:10ff). Paul does not deny that demons afflict individuals, but he goes beyond the individual and observes that Satan and his demons influence the whole world of humanity. They spiritually blind humanity and enslave them by sin and evil (Eph.2:1-2; 4:17-19). It is not accidental that Paul’s letter to the *Ephesians*<sup>152</sup> speaks more about the powers and demons than any other letter of Paul. Paul’s ministry in Ephesus as recorded by *Luke* was characterized by casting out demons from individuals. In the same place we see the humiliation of Jewish magicians, the conversion of many magicians and fierce opposition by adherents of the cult of the goddess Artemis or Diana (Acts 19:11-41).

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<sup>152</sup> Many ancient manuscripts have *en Efesw* ‘at Ephesus’ (Aland 1983:664), but the earliest Pauline papyrus omits ‘at Ephesus’ as do several others (Stott 1979:23). The letter was probably a circular letter to the church in Ephesus and those in its vicinity such as Laodicea, Colosse and Hierapolis. Marcion’s reference to this letter as being addressed to the Laocideans, its close similarity with the letter to the *Colossians* and internal evidence affirms that the letter was addressed to the churches in the region (Stott 1979:23-24).

In light of the apparent proliferation of occult activity in Ephesus it is easy to understand that even after conversion, many Christians would still worry about the spiritual powers in their vicinity. It is possible that the world-view of the Christians in Ephesus and its neighbouring towns such as Laodicea and Colosse was still much influenced by the context. Consequently they may still have attributed much power and importance to the spiritual powers. In his letter to the Colossians Paul stresses the pre-eminence of Christ, there is no being more divine or more powerful than Him no matter what their nature, position or title may be (Col. 1:15-20, 2:8-10). According to Colossians 1:13 it is God who through Christ has set the believer free from the dominion of darkness (Lucas 1980:42). The strong polemic against having too much awe for the various powers suggests that the conversion of many in the church may not have been complete in the sense that their worldview was not yet fully transformed by the Gospel (Rom. 12:1-2). Paul therefore emphasizes that their conversion to Christ meant a total break with the dark past, a transfer from the kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan and the powers, to the kingdom of Christ (Eph. 2:1ff; Col. 1:13). With Christ we are now above the powers (Eph. 1:18-23; 2:6), and a testimony of God's superior wisdom to them (Eph. 3:10), and empowered in Him to stand firm against the Devil's schemes and the evil activities of the powers in this world. We can stand firm against all the powers for He has disarmed them and triumphed over them on the cross (Col. 2:15). Consequently, He is fully in charge over every power and authority (Col. 2:10). All is subdued under his feet (Eph. 1:22). Consequently, in spite of the schemes of the Devil and the evil activities of the powers (Eph. 6:10ff), the church is empowered in Christ's power to resist what is evil and proclaim the word of God and so doing fearlessly reach out to the lost (Eph. 6:17-20). In the midst of an evil world in which the Devil is at work (Eph. 2:2; 5:16), and evil powers still oppose us (Eph. 6:12), we are being build up as a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:20ff). We are also empowered by the Holy Spirit to live godly lives in imitation of Christ (Eph. 4:17-6:9; Col. 3:1-4:6). Paul's theology of the powers clearly stresses that they are defeated, disarmed and subdued by Christ. At the same time the Devil and the powers are still allowed to scheme against the church and to rule and influence the disobedient outside the church (Eph. 2:1ff; 6:10ff). This is why Paul advises the church to stand firm in Christ through faith and obedience in day to day godly living. At the same time we assault the powers by means of the proclamation of the Gospel.

Paul's theology of the powers is not so much focused on how the demons are at work in the world, but rather on how the church can resist them by standing firm in Christ and His power, through faith and right living (Eph. 6:10ff). With Paul we do not encounter any speculation as to the names, hierarchies and spheres of influence of various demonic spirits under Satan. For Paul it was enough to observe that demons influence people, both individually and corporately. At the same time he affirms that Christ is positioned high above all the possible powers (Eph. 1:21) and the church is seated with Him (Eph. 2:6). The church's position with Christ gives her the strength and authority to resist the schemes of the Devil and his demons (Eph. 4:27, 6:10ff). Therefore the church can live as children of the light (Eph. 5:8). Paul does not instruct the church to fight territorial spirits with spiritual technology to release unbelievers under demonic control. Instead Paul teaches that the church should resist the Devil by not giving in to sin (Eph. 4:27-31) and by living a positive lifestyle in imitation of God (Eph. 4:32; 5:1ff). Paul, however, is aware that living a godly life in an evil world is not easy and likens it to a battle with the Devil and his powers (Eph. 6:10ff). It is a battle for the hearts and the minds of God's people. This battle is not fought by means of breaking curses, spiritual warfare techniques and exorcism. Instead, the battle of the church with the powers is 'fought' by standing firm in Christ. It is a matter of holding on to the truth of the Gospel. It is a matter of living righteous lives. It is a matter of walking in accordance with the Gospel of peace. It is a matter of putting our faith in Christ and in the salvation He has accomplished (Eph. 6:10-17). On the offensive we proclaim the word of God, and present Christ and his Gospel to the world. At the same time it is important for our minds stay alert and remain focused on God in prayer, both for ourselves and for our fellow believers, so that we may receive power to fearlessly make known the Gospel in word and in lifestyle as ambassadors for God (Eph. 6:17-20).

Paul's employment of a variety of terms, when he describes the powers in *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, appears to be more of a shorthand to stress that Christ is above every power and above every name that can be named (Eph. 1:21). His audience may have been familiar with a variety of powers, powerful names and titles from the magical tradition, and may still have been somewhat apprehensive or fearful of these powers (Fee 1994:667-668,680,725). Hence Paul stresses that Christ is superior to all powers, names, titles and authorities (Eph. 1:21). It is important to note that Paul does not call upon the believers to identify demons by name or function. Nor does he encourage the church to defeat the powers by means of strategic level

spiritual warfare. He consistently portrays Satan and the powers as already defeated and disarmed. We are seated above them in Christ (Eph. 2:6) so that we are both recipients of His grace and kindness and agents of this grace as as his workmanship we live out the Gospel and preach it fearlessly (Eph. 2:10). We do so in the face of the last bit of opposition the defeated powers may muster against the victorious Christ and His church. Though we suffer as sheep among wolves, ready to be slaughtered, yet we are more than conquerors through Christ (Rom. 8:35-39). Christian mission then results from the defeat and subjugation of Satan and the powers: The victorious Christ who defeated and disarmed the powers on the cross (Col. 2:15) now has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18-20) and therefore we can reach out to all nations with the Gospel, calling them to repent and surrender their lives to Christ as Lord for salvation, and become his disciples.

#### **4.4.3. Prayer and spiritual warfare in the New Testament**

The New Testament teaching on prayer as well as the examples of prayers we encounter continues in the tradition of the Old Testament. Prayer is always focused on God in petition, penitence, worship and thanksgiving. However, whereas in the Old Testament petitions for deliverance clearly have human enemies in mind, the New Testament adds cosmic enemies from which we need deliverance. The New Testament follows the trend set by inter-testamental demonology, but apart from employing various terms to describe Satan such as Beelzebub or Appolyon, the New Testament writers do not speculate about the names, titles or spheres of influence of the various demons.

As stated earlier, in the Gospels we see that the ministry of Jesus was characterized by his struggle against Satan and his kingdom. This is clearly evident in the temptation in the desert and in the expulsion of demons from people whom they were afflicting. In such an environment it is hardly surprising that the Lord's prayer concludes with the phrase 'deliver us from evil'.<sup>153</sup> The followers of Christ are in a world, which is still dominated by Satan and his forces. They are in enemy territory sent as sheep among wolves (Mt. 10:16) and need deliverance and protection in the present age while they wait and pray for the coming of the age when the kingdom of God is fully realized on earth as it is in heaven. In the same manner Jesus prayed for protection from the Evil one for his disciples (Jn. 17:11, 15). He was aware that he had to leave them behind in a world that hates them (Jn 17:14). In his

<sup>153</sup> That is in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts (Carson et al. 1994:913).

teachings on prayer, Jesus clearly taught that prayer was a means of presenting our petitions to God the Father who loves us and will give us what we need (Mt. 6:5ff, 21:22; Mk. 11:24; Lk. 11:1ff; 18:1ff; 22:40; Jn. 16:23-28). Prayer is not only for receiving favour, blessings or gifts from God but it also includes deliverance from the Devil, evil, sin and temptation. It also includes prayers on behalf of others, including our human enemies (Mt. 5:44; Lk 6:28). In addition, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane shows that in prayer our deepest emotions and fears may be expressed and that God in response can provide us with the strength to endure (Mt. 26:39; Lk 22:41ff). Prayers could also take the form of thanksgiving, expressing gratitude to God for His provisions, for example in giving thanks at meals (Lk. 22:17; 24:30). Only on one occasion prayer is clearly linked to demons and exorcism (Mk. 9:29). In this case the disciples failed to cast out a demon in spite of having been given authority by Jesus to cast out demons (Mk. 3:15, 6:7, 13). When the defeated disciples asked why they had failed to cast out the demon, Jesus replied that this kind can only come out by prayer. Matthew's account of the same incident omits any reference to prayer or fasting and suggests that the cause of failure was lack of faith (Mt. 17:19-20). The words 'this kind' in Mark's account (Mk. 9:29) could be understood as referring to different kinds of demons and that this particular kind does not depart on command but requires more prayer. However, in the light of Jesus' statements concerning unbelief and belief (Mk. 9:19, 23), prayer in this instance, may refer to the disciples' need to pray more so that they can come to the point that they truly put their faith in Christ rather than their own ability or past successes. Matthew and Luke's accounts of the same event support this understanding. In other words, not prayer in the sense of a spiritual technique or spiritual weapon will cast the demon out, but prayer will help the disciples to put their faith in Christ so that they can truly cast out demons in his authority. The case of the Syrophenician woman is a good illustration. The woman pleased Christ by her faith in Him and in response He granted her request, and cast out the demon (Mk. 7:24-30). The power to cast out demons is not inherent in the exorcist but comes from Christ and requires faith and dependence on Him. The narrative of the sons of Sceva in Acts 19:13-16 illustrates this. Not those who use Christ's name as a spell or powerful formula have power to overcome demons. Only those who truly belong to Christ can stand in his authority.

Exorcism, or the casting out of demons, is a term most frequently used in the New Testament. It appears to have taken place simply by the word of command, either from Jesus (Mk. 1:25; 5:8; 9:25) or from his disciples who commanded demons in His name with delegated

authority.<sup>154</sup> Even some other exorcists managed to drive out demons in the name of Jesus (Mk. 9:38-40). In the case of the demon-possessed daughter of the Syrophenician woman Jesus does not even command the evil spirit to leave the child, he simply states that the demon has left (Mk. 7:24-30). Matthew in his account of the same incident he adds that Jesus told the woman that her request was granted because of her great faith in him (Mt. 15:28). In the exorcism of a demon from a blind and mute man Matthew speaks of the healing of the demoniac which is probably a reference to the disappearance of physical symptoms after exorcism. Contrary to SLSW assumptions and practices concerning warfare prayer, none of the Gospels provide us with any example of prayer being a spiritual weapon to wield against cosmic enemies. Neither do we encounter exorcism of demons involving the demonic occupation or control of houses, cities, regions or other territories. The only example of demons possessing anything else from human beings is the case of the possession of the wild pigs in the region of the Gerasenes and, the account tells us that this was a far from permanent affair (Mk. 5:11-13). In fact, the only teaching Jesus gave about the dwelling place of demons actually suggests that they do not attach themselves to the places where they roam around, but seek to inhabit human beings (Lk. 11:24-26). It is obvious that Jesus did not care about demons inhabiting or roaming around territories, as He only concerns himself with the exorcism of demons from individuals. Jesus issued no prohibitions to demons that they should not enter any territories or inanimate objects. He only tells them not to enter their human victim anymore (Mk. 9:25). Lastly, in all the exorcism accounts we observe that no connection is made between the moral state of a person and the demon who possesses him or her. Unlike some apocalyptic writings of the inter-testamental period, in the New Testament demon possession is never connected with certain vices, such as a demon of lust, lying, murder and the like.<sup>155</sup> Confession and identificational repentance for sin as a prerequisite for being able to cast out a demons has no precedent in Scripture. The casting out of vice-causing demons from individuals or territories does also have any precedent in the New Testament.

#### **4.5. Evaluation of SLSW from the perspective of biblical theology**

From the preceding study of spiritual warfare related Scripture in its historical-cultural context, it is clear that SLSW with its distinctive doctrines concerning territorial spirits,

<sup>154</sup> Mt. 10:1; Mk. 6:7; Lk. 10:17-18.

<sup>155</sup> In the *Testament of the 12 Patriarchs, 1 Enoch and Jubilees*.

territorial defilement, strategic level spiritual warfare prayer and territorial commitment have no clear precedent in Scripture. Even apocalyptic Judaism with all its speculations concerning the angelic and demonic powers did not develop any spiritual warfare doctrines as they are found in SLSW. Consequently, from a biblical point of view SLSW's identification of a special class of powerful territorial demons as the main obstacle to Christian mission cannot be considered truly biblical as it is neither explicitly or implicitly taught in Scripture. Also the need for strategic level spiritual warfare methods to overcome territorial spirits or any other kinds of demons cannot be defended. Consequently, our first sub-question 'is Wagner's SLSW a Biblical strategy for confronting the demonic powers?' must be answered with an emphatic no. If the question had been 'does Wagner incorporate some biblical teachings in his SLSW theology and practices', we could have answered 'yes' for Wagner does use and incorporate various biblical elements in his SLSW. Yet from our biblical study we can only reject the distinctive doctrines of SLSW as not truly biblical.

Besides SLSW not being fully biblical in its teachings and practices it also undermines clear biblical teaching. For example its emphasis on powerful ruling demons who need to be overcome with new, innovative spiritual weaponry, SLSW, does not only promote a new and unbiblical doctrine but even undermines the clear biblical message that the powers were fully defeated and disarmed on the cross (Col. 2:15) and that therefore Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18-20) and therefore we can make disciples of all nations. Consequently, Wagner's reshaping of Christianity is a departure from biblical Christianity not unlike some of the hetero-orthodox beliefs of the inter-testamental period. Wagner's new doctrines and proposed methods for more effective Christian mission may in fact become the proclamation another the Gospel composed of both biblical and unbiblical beliefs which may be rooted in his context rather than in Scripture. This is not just a danger found in SLSW or anything new. Ever since the Judaizers of the New Testament tried to proclaim the Gospel plus a whole set of Judaistic teachings the church has always wrestled with the issue of the human tendency of proclaiming the Gospel plus the beliefs and preferences of one's culture as universal biblical truth.

Hermeneutically speaking, the way Wagner re-interprets Scripture and applies it in such a manner that it attributes more authority to him is questionable. Wagner's interpretation of *Ephesians 2:20* that the church is not just built on the prophets and apostles of the biblical era



but also on modern day apostles as himself is certainly innovative and if we indeed accept his high status and authority we question his 'ex-cathedra' doctrines to our own peril for Wagner calls himself a horizontal apostle who is accepted by the other apostles as their leader and has the authority to convene and chair meetings with other apostles just as James of Jerusalem in Scripture (Wagner 2002a:94). It is ironic that in the same year Wagner devoted a whole book to the theme of humility while his praxis in usurping apostolic authority is rather contrary (Wagner 2002b). In spite of Wagner's self-proclaimed apostolic authority it is nevertheless unlikely that the global community of believers will accept Wagner's unbiblical teachings on such an arbitrary basis.

In as far as the text is concerned, it is unlikely that Paul in *Ephesians* 2:17 meant that the office of the prophet or apostle constitutes the church's foundation. He most likely was referring to the content of their instruction (Stott 1979:106-107). The power and authority of an apostle was not so much in his apostleship, but in the message he carried and whose message he carried. The apostle, like the Old Testament prophet, was in a sense a divinely appointed postman or messenger who communicated Christ and His Gospel to the best of his ability under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The power and authority of the apostle was derived from the fact that he was sent by God, with a message from God. That message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not accidental that apostles and prophets are grouped together in Paul's mind for the prophets of the Old Testament had a similar function in Israel. They were divinely appointed messengers of God and their authority and power was based on the message they communicated and on the One on whose behalf they communicated the message. This view is affirmed by Paul's statement in 1 *Corinthians* 3:10-11 that as an apostle he has laid the foundation of the Corinthian church, namely Jesus Christ. It is Christ and his Gospel who was being communicated by the apostle in word and deed, in lifestyle and proclamation. Again in *Ephesians* 3:5-7, Paul teaches that the mystery of the Gospel, that Jew and Gentile are alike saved in Christ, has been revealed to the prophets and apostles. The prophets who form the foundation of the church include the Old Testament prophets who predicted the coming of Christ and testified about the salvation Jesus would bring (Acts 10:43). The term prophets may also include the New Testament prophets who proclaimed Christ and his Gospel to Jew and Gentile as the church was being founded in the New Testament era.

The apostles are the twelve mentioned in Acts 1:26, but Paul and several others were also recognized by the twelve as genuine apostles. From Paul's words in 1 Cor. 15:8-9, we realise that Paul considered his apostleship as unique and a lesser than the other apostles. He realised that he was not part of the group that had lived closely with Jesus and experienced with their own eyes, and heard with their own ears, the majesty of Christ (2 Pet. 1:16-18). Nevertheless, Paul and his message was authenticated by the other apostles when they recognized that he was indeed called by God to be an apostle to the gentiles (Gal. 2:6-10).

In terms of apostolic authority, no other apostle today or in church history can make the same claim that his ministry and theology was accepted by those who had intimately known Christ during his incarnation on earth. Consequently, normative apostolic teaching is limited to the New Testament. At the same time I believe that the church is apostolic in nature in the sense that Mt. 28:18-20 applies to all believers, we are all called to be witnesses of Christ in this world and proclaim his Gospel in word, deed and lifestyle. To be able to do this faithfully it is important that we do not deviate in our theologies and practices from the Gospel as proclaimed and taught by the first apostles. If we would do so, then we would no longer stand in the apostolic tradition. In the same way I believe prophecy is not a matter of some specially anointed individuals who have a clearer 'hotline' with God than others. On the basis of Scripture I believe that the whole church is prophetic. Paul states in 1 Cor. 14:22-24 that prophecy is for all believers to exercise so that unbelievers may come to repentance. And again in verse 29 Paul says that all can prophecy so that we may be instructed and encouraged. Not certain specially anointed individuals, but indeed the whole church is called to communicate the good news of the Gospel and on God's behalf implore people to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20). I would therefore define prophecy as being commissioned by God to faithfully communicate His Word to the audience He sends us and encourage them to apply its truth to their life situation. As Christ sent the whole church into the whole world to teach his word and make disciples, I believe the whole church is both an apostolic and a prophetic community (Mt. 28:18-20).

Evangelicals affirm that the teaching of the apostles was faithfully recorded in the New Testament and therefore the New Testament Scriptures are the Church's foundational documents. Any additions, subtractions, or modifications by teachers who claim to be modern day prophets and apostles cannot be allowed to violate the Church's foundations

(Stott 1979:107). Yet, this is exactly what Wagner has done by reinterpreting and adjusting biblical teachings according to his own hermeneutical rules and by adding new extra-biblical spiritual truth. The doctrines of SLSW must therefore be rejected as unbiblical and unEvangelical. Such a rejection does not mean we should reject the notion of the demonic altogether. Indeed, Wagner and his associates are right when they assert that modernism has influenced Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals alike as they rejected much of the supernatural in favour of rational theological systems (Wagner 1996a:76).

In the pre-modern context of the New Testament and in most of the history of the church the powers were understood as personal beings in the form of angels or demons. However, it is in the context of modernism that the powers became demythologized as impersonal forces and simply became shorthand for impersonal evil forces and oppressive systems in the universe (VanRheenen 1997:180-181). This demythologized interpretation of the powers is found in the writings of Marcus Barth, Hendrickus Berkhof, Walter Wink and several others (Barth 1960:80ff; Berkhof 1962:25, 41ff; Wink 1993:37ff; 50-52). Their modernist interpretation of the powers became dominant in ecumenical missiology but also influenced other Christian traditions, including the Evangelical tradition (cf. Bosch 1991:433; Verkuyl 1970:53-54; 1972:5-6; 1992:270). Agreeing with Berkhof, Kelley links the structures of life with the powers in the sense that they are the invisible dimension of the created order, the invisible underpinnings or support structure of the visible (Kelley 2003:9). Paul's warning to the Galatians not to put themselves under the regulations of the Mosaic law (Gal. 4:1-11) is put forward as evidence that the powers can be equated with the regulating principles of this world (Kelley 2003:7ff).

Wink, still affirms that the devil is an autonomous spirit that rises out of the depths of mystery in God but suggests that the devil is not fully evil: 'by our choices we determine which side Satan is on. God's side as our watcher, or as an enemy (Wink 1986:34). This, from a biblical point of view I cannot agree with. In the Gospel of *John* Jesus calls the devil a murderer from the beginning and a liar and the father of lies in whom there is no truth but the desire to destroy Christ (John 8:44). Elsewhere the devil is called the evil one from which we need to be delivered (Mt. 6:13). The devil is called our enemy (Luke 10:19) who prowls around seeking to destroy (1 Pet. 5:8). As intriguing as it may sound, that Satan turns against us when we do wrong and becomes a servant of God when we do what is right, it does not

agree with the teachings of Christ and the New Testament writers. In the same way the demons are called evil spirits (Mt 12:43), spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm (Eph. 6:12). Nevertheless, I agree with Wink's assertion that many human made political, economic, cultural, ideological and even ecclesiastical structures instead of serving humankind actually dehumanize and destroy and can be labelled as demonic or satanic (Wink 1986:28, 1993:37). However, these evil structures do not constitute the powers or the devil, they remain the product of human intellect and energy. However, when some of these structures promote, or facilitate, evil, oppression and dehumanization it becomes evident that behind the human mind there has been a demonic or satanic source of inspiration. Let me elaborate on this further and look at Kelley's reference to *Galatians* 4:1-11, as indicative that the powers are to be equated with the regulating principles of this world (Kelley 2003:7-9).

In *Galatians* 4 Paul refers to both the regulations of the Mosaic law, as well as Gentile religious regulations, as being part of the basic principles of this world. Nevertheless, calling these regulations part of the basic principles of this world does not automatically mean that these principles are to be equated with the powers which may have inspired them. The preceding chapter states that the law was put into effect through angels who functioned as a mediator (Gal. 3:19). In other words Paul clearly considered that there was a personal source of inspiration behind the Mosaic law, namely, angelic beings. So even when Paul considers the law as being part and parcel of the basic principles of this world, he still believes in a personal source of inspiration behind these principles. The same view is worded by Stephen:

*You who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it (Acts 7:53)*

And again in Hebrews 2:2

*...the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment.*

Therefore, the law, the regulations, the basic principles of this world are not to be equated with the powers who inspired them. Instead the law was a product of both inspiration by angelic powers and human participation. We can agree that the basic principles of this world

can be understood as the invisible underpinnings of visible structures in society, but these do not constitute the powers, they only reflect the inspiration of the powers.

All human made structures reflect both human intelligence and creativity and as such something of the creator in whose image we have been made. At the same time since no-one is righteous, not even one (Rom. 3:10) there is always a sinful, imperfect element which has its ultimate source in the devil and his demonic angels. Sometimes human structures reflect more good than evil, at other times these structures can reflect more evil than good as for example in Nazism or Apartheid. In such instances when ideologies and societal structures result in evil, oppression and dehumanization, it is legitimate to call these demonic. We recognise the evil inspiration and destructive intentions of Satan in these ideologies and structures. It is a matter of recognising the tree by its fruits (Mt. 7:15-20). The horrors of Nazism rightly woke up the western church to the fact that the powers and principalities are not just in the heavenly realms but in some sense are incarnate on earth (Bosch 1991:433). However, by agreeing that the powers are incarnate on earth I do not mean that they physically or spiritually inhabit dehumanizing ideologies, or the human structures and actions based upon such ideologies. What I mean is that behind the dehumanizing ideologies and dehumanizing visible structures in society there is the inspiration of evil spiritual powers under the leadership of Satan.

Using Nazism as an example, we should not equate Nazism with the powers which are mentioned in the New Testament, but in Nazism we do see evidence of their existence and evil activities by means of deception and evil inspiration. Paul treats the visible human structures, rules and behaviour based on Gentile idol worship in a similar manner. He affirms that an idol is nothing in itself (1 Cor. 8:4) even though the weaker believers may still attribute some importance to an idol which means that the stronger believers must display charity and sensitivity as they handle food dedicated to idols (1 Cor. 8:7-13). However, Paul does have a problem with believers taking part in idolatrous worship and sacrifices because behind these practices he discerns demonic inspiration (1 Cor. 10:20-21). Paul strongly warns about participating in practices which are tantamount to participating, working with the demonic. Since God is a jealous God he does not want us to show loyalty to any demonically inspired systems (1 Cor. 10:21-22). In the same way we cannot be loyal to a racist system or

any other system and ideology which does not agree with the teachings of Christ (Verkuyyl 1972; 1973).

While initially the powers were created by God for His purposes (Col. 1:16) and as ministering spirits to serve the believers and inspire what is right and good (Hebr. 1:14), Scripture shows that some of the powers became evil. Some of these powers, who are clearly referred to as personal beings, are put in prison and held for the final judgement (2 Pet. 2:4), but others have been thrown on earth together with their master the devil (Rev. 12:9). On earth the devil and his demonic angels inspire all kinds of sin and evil, including oppressive structures and need to be resisted (Eph. 6:10ff).

One example of their activities we find in the form of heresy in the Ephesian church. Paul interprets the attempts of false teachers to force people to live under oppressive and unbiblical behavioural regulations as inspired by demons (1 Tim. 4:1-5). The regulations themselves, or the so-called basic principles, are not equated with the powers but Paul certainly understands the heresy which gave rise to these basic principles as being inspired by the demonic powers. Heresy just as idolatry and any other false ideology is more than the product of human ingenuity and effort, there is also the element of inspiration by the demonic powers, whether sin and evil is perpetrated by an individual or corporately. On the one hand there may be the temptation and inspiration of the devil and his angels, on the other hand there is the human being, individually or corporally, acting upon the temptation. Scripture portrays humanity as responsible for its actions and yet also as deceived and blinded in their minds by the devil and his angels. Human beings are perpetrators of evil and responsible for their actions, but they are equally victims of deception. . Therefore our battle is not against flesh and blood, but instead we ought to fight against the evil sources of inspiration by unmasking and resisting their deception in light of the word of God. According to Paul (Eph. 6:10-18) we are able to resist the personal powers by being strong in Christ. He explains by means of an analogy that this entails among other things living righteously in agreement with Gods word, putting our faith in God rather than their lies, being guided by the truth of our salvation and not the bondage their lies offer. We counter them by being ready to live out and proclaim the Gospel of peace. We also frontally attack the powers when we proclaim the word of God boldly in the world countering the lies of the devil with the truth of Christ and his Gospel. In this we work hand in hand with the Spirit of God who empowers us

to be faithful witnesses in a world still suffering the presence of the evil powers until the final day of judgement when they will be destroyed.

With the modernist theologians I concur that the personal Devil and demons are part and parcel of the worldview of the New Testament (Verkuyl 1970:50) but that doesn't make it false as many modernist theologians assume<sup>156</sup> (Kallas 1968 79, 95; Spalding 1880:83). The fact that demons were part of the worldview of the New Testament context, does not mean that they do not exist in the present, or that the New Testament writers were wrong in their interpretation of reality. At most we can say that such an understanding does not fit in our own worldview. It is true that the worldview of the New Testament fails to take into consideration our modern medical, psychological, sociological and other scientific insights, but this does not mean that we can outrightly dismiss the existence and activities of demons. I, therefore, concur with Wagner that the modernist and demythologized interpretation of the powers by Barth, Berkhof, Wink and others ignores the clear supernatural understanding of the powers in the mind of Paul and the other NT writers (Barth 1960:80ff; Berkhof 1962:25, 41ff; Wink 1993:37ff; 50-52). While this view has been largely endorsed in ecumenical circles (Bosch 1991:433; Verkuyl 1970:53-54; 1972:5-6; 1992:270), its implicit anti-supernaturalism is not warranted from the Pauline corpus, or the rest of the New Testament<sup>157</sup>. Jesus, as he is portrayed in the Gospels, affirms the existence of a personal devil and his demons, though without the excessive speculations which was common in those days (Verkuyl 1970: 50-51). The same we observe in the other New Testament writings (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). It is therefore unlikely that Paul would have understood the demonic powers as impersonal when he referred to them as evil spiritual forces and part of the scheming of the Devil. Marcus Barth admits that Paul himself does not demythologise the powers but still goes on to call it superstition (Barth 1960:16). Using the loaded word 'superstition', Barth basically admits that he prefers to demythologise the powers. Consequently, the demythologising of the powers by Berkhof, Barth, Wink and others we may attribute to the modernist worldview of the Enlightenment which shaped much of the theology of the 19th

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<sup>156</sup> Illness and misfortune in the Graeco-Roman world in the time of the New Testament was seen as the work of evil spirits and demons. The world was understood as inhabited by demons in every place: rivers, mountains, deserts, trees, caves - all of them had their own evil spirits. The air and atmosphere was crowded with malignant demons which could cause harm, illness, misfortune or demon possession. Only those who had access to a stronger power could exorcise demons from an afflicted person (De Villiers 1987:28ff).

<sup>157</sup> See Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* (1994): pp. 661, 667-668, 679-680, 690, 723, 726-733. Also, see John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (1979): pp. 263-275.

and most of the 20th century and had no category for the supernatural beyond calling it 'superstition' (VanRheenen 1997:178-181; Wagner 1983:10-11).

Ironically, not only liberal Christians but also conservative Evangelicals have been deeply influenced by the modernist mindset with many of them pre-occupied with building a watertight theological framework explaining all of (spiritual) reality in accordance with divine laws, decrees and principles, not much unlike the Newtonian understanding of the universe. While Van Rheenen's statement that most Evangelicals have been paying lip service to biblical supernaturalism, yet in practice they have been deists (1997:175ff) is too much of a generalisation, it does apply to many. The influence of modernism is also found in Pentecostalism which, while affirming the supernatural, sought to harness it in terms of spiritual laws and divine principles of cause and effect. If you pray the right spiritual formula, undertake the correct spiritual ritual, pray the right spiritual prayers, break or bind the hindering spiritual obstacles, then you will get the desired result, whether the baptism of the spirit, blessing, prosperity, success, health or anything else (cf. Kraft 1995:111ff, 2002:98ff; Wagner 1998a:14, 2000d:13ff). Wagner's attempt in SLSW to explain and harness supernatural power, including the work of the Holy Spirit, in terms of spiritual laws and divine principles of cause and effect. Such an understanding of the universe is in many ways reminiscent of an Enlightenment understanding of the universe as a closed system of cause and effect which can be manipulated if we develop the right method and techniques: If one prays the right spiritual formula, undertakes the correct spiritual ritual, prays the right spiritual prayers, break or bind the hindering spiritual obstacles, then one will get the desired result, whether mass conversion or societal transformation. In a way Wagner's SLSW is a modernist attempt to harness supernatural power.

Today in an emerging postmodern world we are no longer pressured by a modernist worldview to re-interpret and modify biblical teaching by demythologising everything which appears implausible from its anti-supernaturalist viewpoint. Equally we should no longer seek to come up with a system of spiritual laws and principles to explain the supernatural in modernistic terms of cause and effect. We also need to avoid the danger of returning to a pre-modern mythologising of the cosmos as has for example happened in the Wicca and New Age movement<sup>158</sup>. In a postmodern context we may experience a pendulum swing from anti-

<sup>158</sup> See for example *The Celestine Prophecy* (Redfield 1993), which is a classic New Age novel including a study guide, which relates various spiritual and semi-religious experiences very similar to some of the



supernaturalism to an uncritical supernaturalism (VanRheenen 1997:193ff) and consequently a new danger faces Christianity in the form of the uncritical re-mythologising or re-enchantment of the cosmos that goes beyond the boundaries of scriptural revelation. Such an approach may result in the church embracing the supernatural to an extent that goes beyond the boundaries of scriptural revelation. In contexts such as Malawi where the pre-modern traditional worldview is still strong we find churches embracing beliefs and practices in relation to the evil supernatural which are in conflict with biblical teaching (Kanyangira 2007). We will discuss this in more detail when we get to the last chapters of this thesis.

It is essential for the Christian to hold fast to biblical revelation which gives us a balanced approach to the supernatural. Evangelicals cannot agree with the quasi-scientific modernist alternative of demythologising the demonic powers (Imasogie 1983:46-53). But also we cannot allow pre-modern or postmodern myth-making to dictate a super-naturalism to us that goes beyond the boundaries of Scripture. It is crucial for the church to re-appreciate the biblical teaching about the powers, the demonic realm, from the perspective of Christ's victory on the cross. Scripture affirms the existence of the evil supernatural, yet shows it as subdued and brought under the Lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-25; Eph. 1:21-22). At the same time biblical revelation de-mythologises the idols of this world by showing that, while they may be demonically inspired against God and his people (Dt. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:20), they are also the product of sinful humanity (Is. 44:12-22; 1 Cor. 8:4). The power of the demons who inspire idolatry and other evils is dependent on the influence they manage to get on people's minds and consciences through false teachings, ideologies and other forms of deceit (1 Cor. 8:7; 1 Tim. 4:1-5). In this process their human agents play a major role in spreading the false teachings and beliefs. Not only idolatry, which is religious opposition or competition with the kingdom of God, but even political opposition is understood in Scripture as inspired by Satan and his demons (Rev. 17-18). Yet, our battle is not against them as beings of flesh and blood, our battle is against the falsehood they spread. The battle then is for the minds which are blinded by Satan's deceit (2 Cor. 4:3-4; Ef. 2:3). Through the word of truth we then appeal to every human conscience (2 Cor. 4:2), as we preach Christ as Lord (2 Cor. 4:5). In this manner we wage warfare as we wield the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). It is a matter of making every deceitful argument captive and obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5). The Devil, our adversary, with his demonic hosts continues to scheme against us and God's

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experiences described by Pentecostals.

Kingdom (Eph. 6:10-12), in order to deceive and lead people astray from sincere devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; James 3:13-16). We, therefore, need to resist his deceptions by choosing obedience and submission to God (James 4:7-10). This includes holding firmly to the truth and doing what is right. We ought to be ready at all times to live out the Gospel of peace, living by faith in Christ and the salvation that comes from Him (Eph. 6:13-17). With this in mind we have to be alert at all times, focused on God in prayer for ourselves and our fellow believers so that we may remain fearless in the proclamation of the Gospel in word, deed and being (Eph. 6:18-20).

I do agree with Barth, Berkhof, Wink and Kelley that we need to address the oppressive human made structures in society and need to unmask the deception and falsehood underlying them. However, as I explained above, I do not equate the powers with the structures or the false ideologies and beliefs underpinning these structures. I understand the powers as a personal source of inspiration behind these false ideologies and beliefs. I do agree, however, that the best way to confront these powers is to disarm them by exposing their deceit and substituting their lies with the truth that is in Christ. I understand this as part of the mandate flowing out from the fact that Christ has all the power and authority in heaven and on earth, namely that we must make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey everything Christ commands us (Mt. 28:18-20). In this we do not use worldly weapons or human force, but we make every false thought and ideology captive in obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Lastly, Wagner's concern to overcome resistance to the Gospel in certain parts of the world is a legitimate concern. It is also understandable that from a church growth and revivalist perspective it is difficult to accept that after all the church growth methods and techniques have been implemented success is still elusive in many parts of the world. However, in as much as we may share Wagner's concern for people to be converted to Christ, we must not fall into the trap of his reductionism whereby resistance to the Gospel is reduced to one or a few factors such as the presence of a territorial demon or spiritual defilement of the territory. For example tough resistance to the Gospel in Muslim areas cannot be reduced to the territorial spirit "Queen of Heaven". Many contextual factors play a role; these may be cultural, social, psychological as well as historical prejudices and other biases. Research needs to be done in the context to uncover such factors and find meaningful ways of

overcoming them. In fact there has been considerable progress in Muslim dominated areas with many people becoming followers of Christ without strategic level spiritual warfare whereby culturally sensitive missionaries have sought to bring a biblical Gospel with as little western cultural packaging as possible.

In Christian mission we may also reflect on the teaching of Christ that the road to destruction is wide and many will enter through it, but the narrow is the road to life and few find it (Mt. 7:13-14). This should not deter us from doing our utmost in faithfully and effectively communicating the Gospel and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:18-20), but it should make us realise that, whatever effective methods we develop, it is not realistic to expect mass conversions. The Evangelical Church of Malawi (ECOM) experienced rapid numerical growth between 1964 and 1980 with many new congregations planted (Mbandambanda 2007). However, if I observe the shallow Christianity in the church, I am not impressed. As long as traditional witchcraft fears and beliefs are still more vibrant than trust in Christ, and xenophobic and tribalist attitudes will continue to surface regularly. I wonder, therefore, whether such mass conversions are to be preferred. I would rather see a smaller amount of in-depth conversions followed up by thorough discipleship, which would focus on a deep change of heart and of one's inner convictions. It could even be argued that the spiritual decline in the Roman Catholic church as more and more unchristian elements were incorporated in its beliefs and practices, were partly the result of mass conversions which were rather superficial. This can also happen to Evangelical denominations today. The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and its aftermath should not be ignored by Evangelical missiologists. The events of 1994 have demonstrated that even if the majority of citizens of a country profess to be Christians, it does not mean that has had a measurable impact on cultural prejudices. In Rwanda Christians were being both perpetrators and victims (Chidester 2006:353; Kritzinger 1996:351). In this respect personal discipleship is essential whereby we teach new converts to obey all that Christ commanded us (Mt. 28:18-20), not just in terms of personal piety but also in terms of social responsibility. We must ask ourselves in Evangelical Christian mission that if Christ preferred teaching only 12 disciples over a period of three years, even though they had a religious background favourable to the Gospel, is it then not rather arrogant for us to assume that we can handle mass conversions in terms of teaching them to be faithful followers of Christ?

## CHAPTER 5

### STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND CHURCH HISTORY

#### 5.1. Wagner's examples of strategic level spiritual warfare in church history

In his book *Confronting the Powers* (1996a), which to date is still his main and most exhaustive work on SLSW, C. Peter Wagner devotes a single chapter (1996a:91-117) to historical examples of strategic-level spiritual warfare. Depending on secondary sources, such as Ramsay MacMullen and Kenneth Scott Latourette, Wagner provides several examples that appear to him as historical instances of strategic-level spiritual warfare from the first eight centuries of Western Christian history. Wagner's examples are quite different from those found in the standard church history books used in Evangelical circles such as Cairns (1996), Noll (1998), Walker (1986) and others, as one SLSW proponent comments:

These examples come not from patristic and medieval discourses on theology but from the lives of the saints, sources generally ignored by modern historiography because of their supposed mythic and legendary elements (Ediger 2000:125).

Wagner's method of historiography boils down to selecting narratives which appear to support his SLSW theories and ignoring those that would undermine his theories. We will discuss Wagner's approach to historiography in chapter 6 and for now just look at his various arguments.

Wagner seeks support for his SLSW theories in historian MacMullen's thesis that the exorcism of demons was the primary factor in Christianising the Roman Empire (Wagner 1996a:100). MacMullen's thesis, however interesting, mainly discusses the casting out of demons from individuals to support his assertion that exorcism was the primary factor in Christianising the Roman Empire (MacMullen 1984). Besides drawing on McMullen's work, Wagner also refers to Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian in order to find support for his SLSW (Wagner 1996a:115-116). However, each of Wagner's examples simply talk about exorcism of demons from individuals and not from cities or other territories.

We have observed earlier that Wagner subdivides spiritual warfare into 3 categories: Namely ‘ground level’ spiritual warfare for dealing with demons in individuals, ‘occult-level’ spiritual warfare for dealing with demons related to magic and witchcraft, and ‘strategic level’ for dealing with territorial spirits (Wagner 1995a:154;1997a:61; 2000c:12; 2001d:18-22). It is important for Wagner to make this distinction between SLSW and traditional forms of spiritual warfare as he promotes new spiritual technology for a newly identified type of demon, the territorial spirit (Wagner 1996a:30ff). At the same time, Wagner’s insistence on a new class of demons that need to be battled by SLSW, makes it also impossible for him to rely on examples of other categories of spiritual warfare to support his assumptions concerning territorial demons. Yet, in seeking support from church history for the existence of territorial spirits and the need for SLSW, Wagner consistently refers to evidence that would be appropriately be more fitting in his own categories of ‘ground level’ and ‘occult level’ spiritual warfare and do not fit his category ‘strategic level’ spiritual warfare (Wagner 1996a:103ff). Besides the very brief references to Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian (Wagner 1996a:115-116), Wagner’s main examples come from the third to the eight centuries A.D. (Wagner 1996a:103-117). Since these examples constitute Wagner’s primary church historical evidence, they need to be examined carefully. These are, Gregory the Wonderworker (Wagner 1996a:103-105), Martin of Tours (Wagner 1996a: 105-108), Saint Benedict (Wagner 1996a:108-110), and Saint Boniface (Wagner 1996a:110-112). In addition we will look at other church historical material to gain insight in how spiritual warfare has been understood in the history of Christianity.

#### **5.1.1. The example of Gregory the Wonderworker**

Wagner, refers to Gregory, known as a wonderworker (Thaumaturgus) to support the idea that territorial spirits were recognised and battled in early church history (1996a:103ff). Gregory was a disciple of Origen in 3rd century AD and a very zealous missionary (Schaff 1910:2, XIII:189). Wagner re-tells a story about Gregory where he orders a demon to leave a temple dedicated to Apollo. Upon finding that he can no longer get in contact with his ‘god’, the shaman begs Gregory to allow the demon to return – which he does. Consequently, the shaman was converted to Christianity. Wagner also refers to an incident recorded by MacMullen (1984:60-61) about a demon who inspires a prostitute to falsely accuse Gregory

of being her lover. The demon was apparently enraged by the fact that countryside and city were no longer in the grip of demons due to Gregory's ministry. In response Gregory exorcised the spirit from the prostitute. Gregory is not reported to have used any strategic level spiritual technology, but simply cast out the demon with a simple word of command, just as Paul did in Philippi (Acts 16:18). If we go along with Wagner's three categories of spiritual warfare, then Gregory's example cannot be used in support of SLSW. Since 'ground level' spiritual warfare is about dealing with demons in individuals, 'occult-level' spiritual warfare for dealing with demons related to magic and witchcraft, and 'strategic level' for dealing with territorial spirits which had been identified by spiritual mapping as ruling the territory (Wagner 1995a:154; 1997a:61; 2000c:12; 2001d:18-22). Gregory's casting out of a demon from a prostitute is about 'ground level' spiritual warfare as a demon is cast out from an individual. Also, Gregory's casting out of a demon from an idol temple fits in the category of 'occult-level' spiritual warfare. Nevertheless, Wagner does not stick to his own proposed categories and concludes from Gregory's ministry that strategic level spiritual warfare was a chief part of his ministry. Yet, all the evidence is in support of 'ground level' and 'occult level' spiritual warfare as Gregory casts out demons from individuals, and from an idol temple instead of casting out demons from territories. In addition Gregories' focus, just as many of the church fathers', was on demonstrating the powerlessness of the demons and not on strenuously overcoming powerful ruling demons with special SLSW techniques. In any case the historical reliability of the reports is somewhat questionable, but even if we take them at face value, they do not in any way prove that Gregory believed in the existence of territorial spirits or that he used spiritual mapping or any SLSW technique to overcome them.

It is possible for Wagner to reinterpret the reported event in the idol temple as spiritual warfare with a territorial demon. However, there is no indication whatsoever that Gregory himself considered the demon he confronted in the temple of Apollo to be a territorial spirit ruling over a city or territory. It is more likely that he identified Apollo as a demon simply based on Paul's assertion in 1 Cor. 10:20-21 that sacrifices to idols are in fact sacrifices to demons and that Christians should have nothing to do with such matters. Lastly, it must be noted that the miracles attributed to Gregory were recorded a century after his death by Gregory of Nyssa in his hagiography of Gregory Thaumaturgus and surpass all the miracles that are recorded of the apostles in the New Testament (Schaff 1910: 2, XIII:189).

Consequently, this part of Wagner's church historical evidence cannot be considered very reliable.

### **5.1.2. The example of Martin of Tours**

In a further attempt to find evidence in church history for the assumptions and practices of SLSW, Wagner also refers to Martin of Tours (1996a:105-108). Martin of Tours was a fearless missionary who would go into idol temples and command the demons to leave and demolished their temples (Wagner 1996a:106-108, 117). Wagner, interprets the spirits associated with 'pagan idolatry' as being territorial spirits. When Martin escapes death from a falling tree which was cut down by the idol-worshippers in an attempt to kill him, Wagner interprets this as strategic level spiritual warfare (Wagner 1996a:106ff). However, even according to Wagner's own record, Martin did not do anything even reminiscent of the strategic level spiritual warfare techniques which are promoted by Wagner. As a matter of fact, Martin did nothing at all, except standing still in faith with his hands raised, trusting that God would protect him. It is puzzling then that somehow Wagner can still speak of bold and aggressive strategic level spiritual warfare which dislodged the territorial spirit (Wagner 1996a:108), when the evidence presented by him is quite to the contrary. Standing firm in Christ, in quiet trust in his power and protection, rather than aggressive warfare has been the tenet of New Testament Christianity (Eph. 6:10ff), and of the majority of those holding the Evangelical faith ever since. Wagner's record of Martin presents more evidence against SLSW than in favour of it. Lastly, it must be noted that the miracles of Martin of Tours were recorded by Gregory of Tours in the 6th century AD in his ecclesiastical history of the Franks. According to Gregory's own confession, in writing about Martin of Tours, he was directed by his dead mother who appeared to him in a vision (Schaff 1910: 4, Ch. XIV:154). To many Christians, and certainly the majority of Evangelicals, the directions of a dead mother would not be considered as a reliable source of information.

### **5.1.3. The example of Benedict**

In his attempt to find some historical precedent for SLSW, Wagner also refers to Benedict of Nursia (Wagner 1996a:108-117). Wagner reports that when Benedict was given a mountain to build his monastery, Monte Cassino, the mountain was a place of pagan worship (Wagner 1996a:109). Benedict fasted for 40 days, evangelised the people, destroyed the pagan shrines

and the idols found there and built his monastery. Wagner interprets the actions of Benedict in terms of SLSW as decisively breaking the powers of darkness that had held that region in captivity for ages (Wagner 1996a:109). However, there is nothing in the record to suggest that any SLSW activity took place: No territorial demons are bound, no aggressive warfare prayers are prayed, no sins are remitted by means of identificational repentance and no territorial curses are broken. Instead, pagans are converted to Christianity by means of preaching and only after their conversion are the shrines destroyed. The evidence presented by Wagner in favour of SLSW, as well as other church historical evidence, undermines SLSW instead of supporting it (Lowe 1998:86), as it becomes abundantly clear that without SLSW the missionaries of old were astonishingly effective in dealing with the demonic.

#### **5.1.4. The example of Boniface**

The last example of SLSW in church history Wagner refers to is that of Boniface. The well known account of Boniface's<sup>159</sup> cutting of the holy oak dedicated to Wodan<sup>160</sup> at Geismar in Hesse (Latourette 1953:348; Paas 2004:137), is re-interpreted by Wagner as a strategic-level spiritual encounter with a territorial spirit called Thor (Wagner 1996a:111). Wagner concludes that through the courageous ministry of Boniface, the demonic strongman over the territory had been bound, and the way was opened for effective evangelism and church planting (Wagner 1996a:111). However, just as in the other examples cited by Wagner, no distinctive SLSW activity took place in the ministry of Boniface. There is certainly abundant evidence in church history for the confrontation between the pagan culture and its underlying demonic powers on the one hand, and the Christian God, as represented by the emissaries of the Church, and Christian culture. The cutting of the holy Wodan's oak by Boniface and the spirit pine tree by Martin of Tours are good examples (Wagner 1996a:105-112). We may agree that in such 'power encounters' the missionaries of the early Christian church demonstrated their strong faith in Christ and their lack of fear for the idols and the demons they may lurk behind them. However, the examples cited by Wagner do not constitute evidence that these trees were strongholds of territorial spirits who controlled the surrounding territory, nor is there any evidence that there was any big breakthrough or revival following this event. A stronger case could be made that the demonic strongholds were in the minds of the people who were deceived by Satan and his demons into believing in gods that are not

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<sup>159</sup> Also called Winfrith, Boniface is his Latin name bestowed on him by the church (Latourette 1953:348).

<sup>160</sup> I use 'Wodan' rather than 'Thor' as Wagner does, but both refer to the same Germanic god (Paas 2004:137)..



gods. The cutting of the trees dedicated to idols was a powerful object lesson to the audience that their gods are not true gods and made them willing to listen to the truth of the Gospel preached by the missionaries. Boniface wanted to help the people get free from their emotional bond to the 'pagan' cults and fear of their former gods and decided to fell the oak at Geismar in Hesse (Sladden 1980:69). However, symbolic actions and object lessons in support of the preaching of the Christian Gospel, is quite different from assuming that there are territorial demons which need to be identified, bound in SLSW style prayer and exorcised from a territory.

The examples of Boniface, Martin of Tours and many similar examples provide evidence that the Christian missionaries of that era were concerned with unmasking the powers behind idolatry by demonstrating that they are powerless so that the people may embrace the Gospel. The unmasking of the idols by exposing them as powerless human institutions which are inspired by the lies of demons, is a biblical concept found in the ministry of the Old Testament prophets and in the ministry of the apostles of the New Testament. This biblical concept of unmasking and exposing the lies and deceptions of the devil, rather than SLSW, needs more attention as we formulate our strategies for Christian mission in Malawi.

#### **5.1.5 Wagner's brief references to Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian**

Wagner concludes his defense of SLSW in church history by quoting Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian (Wagner 1996a:115-116). However, the first three talk about the demons possessing individuals, which is not a matter of SLSW. Wagner, therefore, says that Cyprian relates more to SLSW when he talks about demons in idols, when being exorcised from people, admitting that they now also have to leave the bodies (objects) they have invaded. Disregarding the fact that demons are not the most reliable source of information, Cyprian's example shows that no strategic level spiritual warfare took place. The demons were exorcised from individuals and not from the idols. It is only as the demons are being exorcised from people that they assert that they were also in the idols and now have to leave them. Such presumptuous confessions by demons under the control of the father of lies surely does not constitute evidence for territorial demons occupying regions, countries, cities and other territories, preventing the Gospel from breaking through.

## **5.2. Evaluation of Wagner's examples from church history**

As we have observed above, none of the examples cited by Wagner, provides church historical evidence for the assumptions and practices of SLSW. Even if we ignore the unreliability of hagiography when it comes to historical data, Wagner's interpretation, rather than the content of the narratives he quotes, form the basis of his evidence. In essence this is a matter of Wagner self-validating his SLSW theology, rather than it being validated by Scripture or in the history of the church. The assertion by one of SLSW's proponents that in the self-understanding of the historical figures and authors mentioned by Wagner, there existed attitudes and beliefs, which are similar to SLSW (Ediger 2000) is only partially true. The agreement is only through in the sense that these authors also accepted Satan and the demons as personal and evil spiritual beings which need to be overcome by exorcism. However, when it comes to the distinctive doctrines of SLSW we do not find support for them in church history, not even among the most speculative groups such as the Gnostics (Wink 1993).

Many missionaries in past and present have believed in Satan and the demons as spiritual opponents and even engaged in exorcism and prayers for protection against the evil one, but without ever embracing SLSW. None of SLSW's distinctive doctrines and practices has ever been formulated and practiced in church history until the emergence of SLSW in the late 20th century. The only examples which have some remote similarity with SLSW, are those of Gregory and Martin of Tours who would go into idol temples and command the demons to leave (Wagner 1996a:104, 106-108). However, their intentions are likely to have been similar to those of Boniface when he cut the Wodan tree, namely to symbolically demonstrate the powerlessness of the idols and their lack of fear for the demons behind it. Also, the identification of idols in terms of demons should be understood a polemic against pagan idolatry: It shows that the gods of the nations are not gods at all, but pitiful deceiving spirits who have been conquered by Christ and are powerless in the face of his emissaries. Nevertheless, even though Gregory's and Martin of Tour's actions of exorcising demons from idol temples appear to be somewhat similar to some SLSW practices, their actions are still a far cry away from the present-day SLSW activities and can hardly be considered strong historical evidence for SLSW in church history. In spite of all their militant rethoric most SLSW proponents today do not go into idol temples or places of worship devoted to other religions to cast out demons from there. This is probably not because they wouldn't like to do

it, but because they know that this would invite too much criticism and opposition. However, it is not uncommon to find SLSW proponents praying against the spirits behind Islam, Bhuddism and other religions, our earlier example of the SLSW assault against the “Queen of Heaven” is a case in point. In spite of evidence to the contrary, and lack of historical data to support SLSW, Wagner continues to assert that Gregory, Martin, Benedict and Boniface understood and practiced strategic-level spiritual warfare (Wagner 1996a:112).

Wagner his SLSW against church historical critics by stating that, even if we do agree with the hypothesis that SLSW did not happen in the past, we must He may have decided to provide us with a new spiritual technology for completing the Great Commission in our generation (Wagner 1996a: 95-96). It is interesting that Wagner calls the observation of his critics, namely that there is no example of SLSW in church history, a hypothesis. In addition, Wagner forward that the primary reason for lack of further historical data about strategic-level spiritual warfare is because historians have their own personal paradigms, special lenses through which they choose to read history (1996a:94). It is clear that Wagner is of the opinion that there are many interpretations possible of church historical data. We will discuss the historiographical method of Wagner in more detail in the next chapter. Nevertheless, even if we agree that church historical data is open to interpretation, it does not mean that every interpretation is equally valid. Wagner fails to convince why his method of interpretation is better than others.

Wagner asserts that God can and may do new things in human history, but this does not legitimise SLSW. On what basis do we believe that SLSW is indeed one of those new things God is doing in history. Wagner would probably agree with me that not all new things originate from God. Innovation is not by definition good or useful, it simply is new and needs to be evaluated on its own merits. The argument that God may be doing new things can too easily be abused to justify unchristian and even inhuman beliefs and practices. Apart from SLSW, the same argument could be used to support New Age philosophy, Mormonism, the Islamic revolution, or any other new ideology or movement. Wagner does not sufficiently address this issue.

Historically speaking, it was mainly in response to all the new ideas and ideologies which were floating around in the form of pseudepigrapha and other extra biblical documents that

the early church realised they needed a standard, a measuring rod for orthodoxy. The historical development of the biblical canon was the result of such concerns. The early Christian church recognised that neither church tradition, nor contemporary consensus seeking in the larger hermeneutical community is a safe enough criterion for orthodoxy. Consequently, they sought to root orthodoxy in the Jewish prophetic and the New Testament apostolic tradition but at the same time sought ecumenical consensus. This did not mean that later church tradition was totally rejected as invalid but it was a way of securing that after the apostolic Christian tradition, every subsequent tradition must be evaluated in its light as either a continuation of that orthodox tradition or standing outside of it (Dowley 1990:18). Even if one maintains a non-cessationist view as I do, once modern day apostles and prophets deviate from the Holy Spirit inspired teachings of the New Testament apostles and prophets, they become false apostles and false prophets. The Holy Spirit does not change or contradict himself. Deviations from orthodox apostolic Christianity such as Montanism, Mormonism and Islam all claim additional revelation which differs from the revelation found in Holy Scripture. These deviations were therefore rightly rejected as unorthodox (Dowley 1990:19). Missiological innovation, can be useful and good, but when new doctrines and practices are promoted as having universal application, as in the case of SLSW, they need to be first and foremost carefully evaluated in the light of the biblical theology of the prophets and apostles as recorded in Scripture. Secondly they need to be evaluated in the light of historical theology, as well as the hermeneutical community of the global Christian church both in the past and present. In this process the biblical and apostolic tradition as reflected in Holy Scripture is normative. The confession of the church is that she is build upon the foundation of apostles and prophets with Christ, his person, example, ministry and teaching, as the corner stone (Eph. 2:20).

### **5.3. Survey of other examples of spiritual warfare in church History**

A survey is by definition limited and deals with broad generalisations and oversimplifications. Therefore, the following survey by no means pretends to give a complete overview of spiritual warfare in church history but is a limited description of the various forms of spiritual warfare that can be observed in the history of Christianity. Many of these forms have continued to resurface throughout history in all traditions of Christianity and also inform present day conceptions of spiritual warfare. In looking at church History I have

divided it in three broad categories, namely pre-modern , modern and post-modern . Further divisions are certainly possible but for the purposes of a historical survey I trust these will suffice.

### **5.3.1. Spiritual warfare in the pre-modern era**

I broadly define the pre-modern era as the period of church history, from the events described in the book of *Acts* to the Reformation. I use pre-modern rather than pre-Reformation to also capture the idea that Christian thought and practice in this era had not yet been exposed to modernist thought. From the available church historical data of this period we may conclude that spiritual warfare in this era was mainly concerned with the following three issues:

1. The exorcism of demons from individuals after the example of Christ (Arnold 1979:40ff; Stevenson 1987:200; Lightfoot & Harmer 1992:417).
2. Overcoming demon inspired sin and temptation in the individual soul (Russell 1981:41-43; Stevenson 1987:200; Lightfoot & Harmer 1992:417).
3. spiritual warfare by means of polemics and apologetics on the basis of Paul's teaching (1 Tim.4:1-2) that Satan is the source of inspiration behind heresies and false doctrines (Stevenson 1987:60, 93; Gokey 1961:70-71).<sup>161</sup>

In the following paragraphs we will look at each of these 3 categories of spiritual warfare in more detail.

#### **5.3.1.1. Spiritual warfare as exorcism in the pre-modern era**

In the first centuries of Christianity it was understood that every believer was able to deliver people who suffered from demonization from the demons that oppressed them. This ability was attributed to the power of Christ living within them. Their success was appealed to by the early Apologists as a strong argument for the divine truth of the Christian religion as opposed to the pagan religions of the Roman Empire (Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, 6; VI, 453; Origen, *Against Celsus.*, I:25; VII: 4, 67; XI:705, 1425; Tertullian, *Apol.* 22 & 23, etc). Unlike with Jewish or pagan magical practitioners, no magical or mystical means were employed. Mostly

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<sup>161</sup> Justin, *Apology*, 1.26. See also Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, 4-7; Chrysostom, *Letters of Chrysostom*, 31; Gregory of Nyssa, *Answer to Eunomius*'-2.

a simple and authoritative command was addressed to the demon in the name of God, or Christ crucified, in a manner similar to such exorcisms reported in the New Testament. Sometimes in addition to words some symbolic action was employed, such as breathing (*insufflatio*), the laying of hands on the subject, or making the sign of the cross (CE 2001). However, gradually some people were recognised as being more effective in exorcism than others and as early as the 2nd century AD there were official exorcists in the church who cast out demons from individuals. This tradition has continued in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches (Latourette 1953:133).

Besides exorcisms, it was also common practice to renounce Satan and his angels at baptism as a way of making the conversion from Satan to Christ sharp and clear in the minds of the new believers (Russell 1981:101-102). This practice was incorporated into the missionary endeavour of the church and believers were not only to renounce Satan, but also the false gods they had previously believed in which were understood as lies or works of the demons: 'Do you renounce the Devils, and all their words and works; Thonar, Wodin and Saxenote?' was part of the form of recantation administered to the Scandinavian converts (Spalding 1880:23-24). One could consider these renunciations as a form of ritual exorcism. In the Eastern Orthodox church the practice of renouncing the Devil after baptism is still practiced today (Hayes 2003:44). Before baptism the convert is prayed for by the presiding clergy for restoration and re-orientation of his or her life, but also prayers of exorcism are made for deliverance from bondage to the enemy (Hayes 2003:42-43). Only after baptism the convert now prays his own prayer of renouncing the Devil which can be understood as his or her first act of true freedom after being liberated by Christ (Hayes 2003:44).

The identification of idols with demons is based on Paul's statement that sacrificing to idols was in fact sacrificing to demons (1 Cor. 10:20). This identification has its roots in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition which unmasked and humiliated the gods of the nations as demons, hence many demons in pseudepigraphal literature bear names of pagan deities such as Belzebub, Moloch, Ashtaroth and Belial (Spalding 1880:20-21). This trend was continued by the Christian church throughout history. In discussing the use of images in the church, John of Damascus states: "The heathens dedicate their images to demons, whom they call gods; we dedicate ours to the incarnate God and his friends, through whom we exorcise demons." (Schaff 1910: IV, 14:144).

When Wagner identifies idols as demons he stands in a long Christian tradition, however when he attributes official territorial jurisdiction to these demons and the enormous power of preventing the Gospel to break through in that area, he introduces a new concept alien to what we observe in church history. To view the demons of idols and other religions as powerful demonic rulers over territories who can only be battled if we use the right spiritual knowledge, technology and power is a new trend. The missionaries of the pre-modern Christian church did not view the demons as being so powerful. Not a large scale prayer assault but a simple renunciation was considered enough for the new converts to break with the demon they had previously worshipped as a god (Russell 1981:101-102).

We may consider the demon named Diana, identified by Wagner as one of the most insidious members of Satan's hierarchy of darkness and most responsible under Satan for keeping unbelievers in spiritual darkness and who allegedly holds the whole of the Middle East and other parts of the world under control (Wagner 2000c:8: 2001b:22-25). Large and costly mass prayer events were organized world-wide by Wagner and associates against this demon, with prayer warriors flying across the world (Wagner 2001b:49-58). In spite of this the battle was not yet completely won (Wagner 2001b:58). In contrast, we read that in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, bishop Caesarius casts out the demon Diana from a girl without any difficulty (Walzel in Levack 1992:91-92). Both linked the demon with the ancient goddess Diana, but Wagner felt the need to make it into a huge battle event, while Caesarius goes about it in an almost off hand manner. The difference is one of perception. Wagner considers the territorial demons as formidable foes and attributes lots of power to them, while the early Christian church was so convinced of Christ's victory over the powers and that these powers had been effectively disarmed, that they contemptuously treated the demons as troublesome but otherwise defeated foes. Some of the church fathers were so adamant in demonstrating Christ's victory over the powers that they deliberately went to stay in the desert or among ruins, which were places traditionally considered the main abode of demons and other evil entities ever since Babylonian times. The presence of Christian monks in the desert was a sign to the powers present that they were defeated (Brakke 2006:27). It is interesting that the monk's focus was not on exorcizing the demons from the desert but rather on demonstrating their powerlessness by going to live in the demons abode and firmly enduring their temptations and attacks. The monk's ability to persevere in righteousness and reach a high level of virtue in the middle of

the desert was a sign of the triumph of Christ over the false gods and demons and a powerful object lesson to those who lived in fear of those powers (Brakke 2006:33, 37). As much as the demons appeared strong and powerful in their appearances '*phantasai*' (Brakke 2006:40), they were in fact shown by the monks to be weak and defeated (Brakke 2006:37ff). The very presence of a saint persevering in faithfulness and obedience to God despite all the Devil's attacks resulted in the desert no longer being the domain of the Devil but by the virtue of the saint it became the domain of God (Brakke 2006:33). Not special spiritual exorcism techniques to cast a demon from an area, but standing steadfast, firm in the faith, in virtue and righteousness even to the point of martyrdom was understood as the ultimate humiliation of the Devil and the demons. It was a celebration of Christ's victory and a reminder to the powers that they were completely defeated by Christ, even death itself could not stop the advance of the kingdom of God (Brakke 2006:41). While there may have been too much emphasis on the saint as a spiritual hero, nevertheless as part of the Christian church and in some sense as its representative, the saint demonstrated powerfully how the church by its very presence in the world as a light shining in the darkness is a sign to the powers that they are defeated.

Some of the demon-fighting monks went to extremes in demonstrating that the demons and idols were powerless and went around violently smashing idol temples (Brakke 2006:214). Other monks entered into practices not unlike Wagner's spiritual mapping and hid in idol temples at night, which they considered to be enemy headquarters, in order to gather intelligence. In the temples they overheard the discussions between the demons who were plotting evils, or reporting their evil successes with their demonic commander (Brakke 2006:216). The monks would then thwart the plans of the demons by praying to God. In spite of some of the extremes, Satan was believed to be so thoroughly defeated and disarmed that he had only tempting and deceiving thoughts left as his main weapons and for the rest the worst he could do was cause physical (psycho-somatic) pain and damage (Brakke 2006:226).

### **5.3.1.2. Spiritual warfare as overcoming demonic temptation in the pre-modern era**

The Apostolic Fathers, such as Polycarp of Smyrna, Ireaneus and others, most frequently described the spiritual struggle, against the demons and evil spirits, in terms of individual souls wrestling with sinful passions and temptations (Stevenson 1987:200; Lightfoot &



Harmer 1992:417; Russell 1981:35, 41-42). spiritual warfare in this sense was primarily concerned with living a holy life by resisting sin and evil in one's own life, overcoming temptation and avoiding contamination by the sinful world through discipline, faith and common liturgical worship and prayer (Brakke 2006:226ff; Gokey 1961:71-72; Stevenson 1987:211). The desert father, Anthony, overcame the demons by setting his pious thoughts over and against the filthy ones of the demons (Brakke 2006:40). In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, John Chrysostom identifies the arrows of the Devil as mentioned by Paul in *Ephesians* (6:16) to be evil or sinful suggestions and temptations (Braun 1991:27). In the battle with the Devil and his demons, the early Christians showed absolute fearlessness. The Christians did not deny the existence or evil intent of the demons but did not succumb to the pervasive fear of them which possessed the pagan world for Christ already defeated the powers on the cross and is above them, seated at the right hand of God, but is also present in the life of the believer, ever waging a victorious war over very power of evil (Walzel in Levack 1992:83-84). Salvation was both individual and cosmic, it was the rescue of the whole world. The Christians are marching with Christ in triumphant procession bringing salvation and liberation (2 Cor. 2:14). Ignatius states that through Christ every form of magic began to be destroyed, every malignant spell to be broken and ignorance to be dethroned (Walzel in Levack 1992: 84-85). Being redeemed and delivered from the forces of darkness, the lives and (martyr) deaths of the Christians were a continuation of the warfare against the demons whereby the weaponry employed was salvation, faith, righteousness, the spirit, the word of God and prayer (Walzel in Levack 1992:86ff).

Initially in the early church there was not much speculation as to the precise nature and names of the demons though within the Gnostic movement this became more commonplace (Wink 1993:vii; 20). However, in some of the writings of the early church we see vices being personified as demons, while the virtues are portrayed as good angels, either residing in, or affecting, the heart, or the soul who need to be overcome by prayer, discipline and doing good (Gokey 1961:16-17, 109; Hall 1968:181).<sup>162</sup> The discipline of the body to resist sin and avoid temptation was sometimes taken to extremes and led to various forms of asceticism and withdrawal from the world which may be partially due to the influence of

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<sup>162</sup> See for example *The Shepherd of Hermas-command 5,6*, (in Arnold 1979:281) or, *Testament of the 12 Patriarchs*. The figure of speech which describes vices as demons residing or inspiring evil inclinations of the heart is also found in Zoroastrianism and in inter-testamental Judaism, and may have influenced the demonology of the early church.

Gnosticism and (neo) Platonism which considered the material or physical world evil (Noll 1997:90ff; Renwick & Harman 1999:32-34). This may have been a major contributor to monasticism (Noll 1997:90ff). The battle with Satan and the demons who were besieging the human soul was an important theme in monasticism from its earliest beginnings. In early monasticism we find hermits withdrawing in the desert to grow in spiritual awareness of God and to battle demons and Satan (Dowley 1990:212-214). In the solitude of the desert temptations of sensuality, pride, and ambition were externalized and personified and projected in the minds of monks as hellish shapes, which appeared in visions and dreams. They saw themselves as besieged by swarms of winged demons and all kinds of hellish monsters. Monastic spiritual warfare and demonology is a strange mixture of extra-biblical cultural and religious beliefs combined with deep spiritual experiences. In some excessive cases this led to madness, despair and suicide and contains much material for the history of ethics, psychology, and pathology (Schaff 1910:Vol.3, Ch. 4:32). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that no binding of demons, no strategic level spiritual warfare techniques were employed, even by the more extreme hermits. An interesting example we see in Anthony who reports how the Devil appeared to him in visions and dreams, or even in daylight, in all possible forms, now as a friend, now as a fascinating woman, now as a dragon, tempting and threatening him (Schaff 1910:Vol.3, Ch. 4:35). However, Anthony's approach in his warfare with demons is indicative 'Fear not Satan and his angels for Christ has broken their power', and 'The best weapon against the demons is faith and piety' (Schaff 1910:Vol.3, Ch. 4:35). He makes it clear that the Satan and the demons have only as much power as we give them as they answer to the state we are in and are the reflex of our thoughts and fantasies. If one is carnally minded one easily becomes their prey; but if one rejoices in the Lord and is occupied with divine things, the demons are powerless (Schaff 1910:Vol.3, Ch. 4:35). It was believed that the Devil is afraid of fasting, of prayer, of humility and good works (Schaff 1910:Vol.3, Ch. 4:35). In later monasticism the miraculous continued to belong to the monk's daily food. He was surrounded by evil spirits and visions and revelations occurred by day and by night. Single Devils and Devils in bands were roaming about at all hours to deceive the unwary and to shake the faith of the vigilant. Outside the mainstream of Christianity at the time, the Gnostics were particularly interested in nomenclature and hierarchies of rank in the demonic kingdom or army, with Satan as the supreme commander, under him demonic emperors and princes, under them the common demons (Greenfield 1988:234, 312). Such demonic rulers could directly be affected by

human actions against them, provided that those involved in the battle had the right knowledge concerning the demonic nomenclature, systems and hierarchies at their disposal (Greenfield 1988:316).

Arguably, no-one made more of the concept of principalities and powers than the Gnostics who developed one of the most radical views of evil ever propounded (Wink 1993:vii). However, unlike present day SLSW the focus of the Gnostics was not on defeating territorial demons for the sake of loosing their captives so that mission could be more effective. Also, unlike SLSW which is closely aligned with the ruling political powers in the USA as we will see in the next chapter, Gnosticism was actually a protest against the socio-political and religious powers that ruled the world in their time (Wink 1993:5-13). At the same time Gnosticism may have been a form of escapism to other-worldliness that considered evil to be too utterly entrenched, endemic and ineradicable in the world (Wink 1993:25). Instead of striving to improve things in church and society, the battle was projected upon the supernatural plane and fought spiritually. This kind of mysticism constitutes a denial or refuge from the realities on the ground and it is probably not accidental that these movements flourished in a politically turbulent era. The Christian hermits of the 3rd and 4th century understood themselves as taking part in the cosmic struggle between Christ and Satan as spiritual athletes resisting the demonic hordes. The higher one rose on the spiritual ladder, the more impressive the attacks of the enemy (Russell 1981:166-167). Gnosticism had more in common with Zoroastrian dualism and Manicheanism than with biblical teaching about the powers (Greenfield 1988:234, 312; Hiebert 2000:248).<sup>163</sup> Later Gnosticism however became more interested in personal spiritual advancement through the acquisition of special knowledge and passwords (Wink 1993:38).

In the Medieval period the Devil and his evil spirits continued to be very real to believers and they tried to ward these off by making the sign of the cross (Latourette 1953:535). Generally the response of the church to the demonic in this period may have been marked more by gross superstition and speculation (Unger 1952:4, 85) than by careful theological reflection. For example, on the day of Rogations, priests would lead processions through the neighbourhood and the fields, carrying a cross, waving banners and ringing bells, in order to

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. The Gnostic works: Hypostasis of the Archons (II,4); On the origin of the world (II,5 and XIII,2), The Testimony of truth all from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (Robinson 1988:160-189).

ward of evil spirits and demons (Lowe 1998a:92).<sup>164</sup> In this period many popular legends of spiritual battles with Satan and his demons were circulating (Schaff 1910:Vol.5, Ch. 8:61). The mix of fact and fiction continued well into the modern era and promoted and perpetuated an atmosphere of fear among the general population, probably not unlike similar fears of the supernatural found in Malawi and other African contexts today. This fear combined with the many extra-biblical beliefs, strongly contributed to the witch hunts of the 15th and 16th century in Western Europe (Schaff 1910: Vol. VI: 59; Engelsviken 2003).

In the Anglo-Saxon world the native deities had also been reduced to the ranks of evil spirits in the form of elves, brownies, gnomes and trolls, many of whom were at one time Celtic gods (Spalding 1888:26ff). Hierarchies of demons were well known in 16<sup>th</sup> century Britain where they were classified as greater and lesser Devils under various titles. The greater Devils passed under titles of kings, dukes, marquises, lords, captains, and other dignities. Each of these was supposed to have legions of the latter class under his command. These were the evil spirits who appeared most frequently on earth as the emissaries of the greater powers, to carry out their evil designs. Among the lesser demons one could find the bad angel who was supposed to be assigned to each person together with a good one. The demon tempting the human to sin, the angel warning against temptation. Other classifications were in accordance with the localities which the demons were presumed to inhabit: Devils of fire in the vicinity of the moon, Devils of the air who hover around the earth, Devils of the earth who are allied with the fairies, Devils of the water and others (Spalding 1880:26-36). Nevertheless, there was no notion of conducting spiritual warfare against these powers except for personal protection by means of making a cross or a special prayer for personal protection against the evil spirits.

### **5.3.1.3. spiritual warfare as a matter of polemics and apologetics**

From its earliest beginnings the church wrestled not only with sin and temptation but also with false teachings and heresies, which the apostles understood as a threat to the true Gospel of Salvation in Christ. Heresies were not only understood as the products of human beings with depraved minds (1 Tim. 4:2) but also as at least in part inspired by the deception of demons (1 Tim 4:1). Hence we observe a lot of polemics against false teachings in the

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<sup>164</sup> The Rogation days are the three days before Ascension day.

writings of the apostles, for example *Galatians*, *Colossians*, *1 John*. The defence of the Gospel against heresy was continued by the Apostolic Fathers such as Polycarp (Russell 1981:41-43), Irenaeus and others (Russell 1981:81-86), who like Paul (1 Tim. 4:1ff) attributed their origin to the work of Satan and the demons (Ferguson & Wright 1988:292). The Gospel was not only defended in response to heresies within the church, but also to counter philosophical and religious attacks from outside the church (Cairns 1996:97ff; 105ff). These attacks, though coming through human agents, were attributed to the work of Satan and his demons. In a fashion similar to present-day SLSW, Origen interprets *Daniel* 10 as teaching that there are demonic princes who rule over nations. However, unlike Wagner, Origen does not see the need to exorcise them from their territories. Origen understands the power of the demonic powers as being exercised by means of false ideologies and philosophies that deceive the nations (Origen, *De Principiis* 3:2-3). The demons who influence the nations encourage paganism, idolatry, sorcery, blasphemy, heresy and apostasy (Russell 1981:86). These false ideologies and philosophies are confronted by the wisdom of God, which inspires to heavenly and divine things and encourages people towards a holy life. However, according to Origen, it remains the responsibility of the individual, either to be willing or unwilling to follow God's call rather than that they are passive victims under the influence of the demonic princes (Origen, *De Principiis* 3:4). Falsehood is thus confronted by God's truth. Origen, Athanasius and other early church Fathers strongly opposed both heresies within the church and attacks from outside the church, in polemics and apologetics. However they stuck to the use of spiritual weapons in the sense of correcting, instructing, teaching and preaching and did not resort to either casting out of heretical demons or to physical violence, orthodoxy could persuade faith, not force it (Schaff 1910:III, 1:136). Unfortunately, as the church and state became more closely aligned, the church resorted to violence and intimidation to defend the faith. A former heretic himself, Augustine of Hippo (4th-5th century AD) was one of the first church Fathers who moved away from the New Testament emphasis on winning heretics by instruction and conviction and encouraged the state to persecute and punish heretics by violent means and soon afterwards Pope Leo the Great proposed the death penalty for heretics (Schaff 1910: III, 3:27).

The punishment of heresy in the ante-Nicene church had been purely ecclesiastical, and took the form of reproof, deposition, and in the most extreme cases excommunication. It had no effect on the civil status. But as soon as church and state began to be united, temporal

punishments, such as confiscation of property, exile, and death, were added by the civil magistrate with the approval of the church, in imitation of the Mosaic code, but in violation of the spirit and example of Christ and the apostles (Schaff 1910:II, 12:137). The Justinian code (Schaff 1910:III, 3:27), having defined as heretics all who do not believe the Catholic faith, declares such heretics, as well as Pagans, Jews, and Samaritans, incapable of holding civil or military offices and subjected them to penalties and other injustices (Schaff 1910:IV, 9:89). Consequently, the transition from punishing and killing heretics to punishing and killing those of other faiths was easily made. spiritual warfare thus moved from moral persuasion of truth versus error to inflicting physical violence and even death upon the heretics and non-Christians.

The execution of Priscillian, the Bishop of Avila in 385AD for heresy and the execution of some of his followers, the Priscillianists, was the first of many bloody punishments of heretics and non-Christians. In spite of some notable exceptions, violent measures against heresy was thenceforth vindicated even by the best fathers of the church (Schaff 1910:III, 3:27). Consequently we witness in church history the bloody crusades against Muslims and Jews as well as severe persecution heretical of groups, such as the Albigenses and the Cathari (Gonzalez 1987:192; Latourette 1953:411). Following Augustine's just war theory, spiritual warfare became a matter of physically fighting against evil on behalf of the church and Christianity. Nevertheless, more often than not, the battle was fought, not just on behalf of Christ and the Church, but also for an earthly ruler and his kingdom as for example in the case of Charles Martel and Charlemagne (Hayward 1994:440-441; Latourette 1953:353). Peoples resistant to conversion, such as the Wends, Saxons and Prussians were subjected to the sword (Latourette 1953:413; Sladden 1980:144-149). In Europe we find Bernard of Clairvaux as the motivating force behind what is known as the Second Crusade (Latourette 1953:411). He justified the use of physical force against the enemies of Christianity, Muslims and heretics (Gonzalez 1987:225) and so did many other spiritual leaders. In the same spirit suspected witches, pagans and individual heretics were punished throughout the entire Medieval period, and were tortured and often executed (Gonzalez 1987:226-227). The repression and extermination of heresy within the Roman Catholic church culminated in an organised system, known as the Inquisition and probably presents the most revolting spectacle in the annals of Christianity with its horrible torture and execution of its victims (Schaff 1910: V, 10:86). In the Medieval period spiritual warfare had become a bloody affair

claiming the lives of millions of innocent victims. However, the older notion of spiritual warfare in terms of resisting vice and purifying one's soul, did not totally disappear and was kept alive by Roman Catholic mystics, such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Francisco de Osuna and Miguel de Molinos (Latourette 1953:853; Dowley 1990:423ff).

### **5.3.2. Spiritual warfare in the modern era**

#### **5.3.2.1. Spiritual warfare and the Protestant churches in the modern era**

In the wake of the Renaissance, the leaders of the Protestant Reformation rejected many of the extra-biblical beliefs and speculations inherited from the medieval period. Martin Luther strongly condemned speculations concerning evil spirits and demons, without denying their existence or maliciousness (Lowe 1998a:94-95). John Calvin also rejects the speculations of his day and age and portrays Satan and his angels as being permitted by God to tempt and war against believers with sinful temptations and inner disturbances, but they can be resisted by being steadfast in the faith (Calvin 1845:1, 14:13-15). John Calvin, more than Luther, emphasised that the believer is engaged in a constant spiritual battle against Satan who, with God's permission, attacks the church with temptations, heresy and persecutions (Hall 1968:132ff). The weapons in this battle are obedience to God, rejecting the Devil's temptations, prayer to God (Hall 1968:60, 91-92, 160).

Calvin also viewed the winning of people and nations for Christ as a prime objective in spiritual warfare, yet, not much effort was made concerning world missions outside of Europe (Hall 1968:191-192) which was probably more a matter of priority than unwillingness, as the primary focus at that time was on winning Europe for the Reformers cause. The main contribution of the Reformation in the field of spiritual warfare was the rejection of fanciful speculations concerning the Devil and the demons, and a renewed emphasis on the scriptural teaching concerning personal holiness and resisting sinful passions and evil temptations coming from Satan and his demons (Hall 1968:136-140). That is not to say that the reformers were not guilty of some unwarranted speculation concerning Satan and his schemes. For example both Luther and Calvin believed that the Pope was the Antichrist (Calvin 1845:4.7:24-25). Luther is also reported of having thrown an inkwell at what he thought was a manifestation of Satan (Christenson 1990:17). Calvin was less prone to

fanciful speculation than Luther but still believed in the existence of visible demonic creatures such as Fauns and Satyrs (Hall 1968:63-64). Nevertheless, Calvin describes spiritual warfare predominantly in spiritual terms rather than the use of physical force as in the case of the Roman Catholic inquisition (Hall 1968:136ff), he still was ruthless when it came to people he viewed as heretics. He called them deserters, traitors and the most dangerous foes of all (Hall 1968:26). Consequently Calvin did not refrain from the use of physical force and called for the execution of Servetus, the punishment of the Libertines and others he perceived as heretics (Hall 1968:157-159). The 'witch craze' of the Dominicans also influenced some Protestants and several witches were burned in Protestant controlled areas including the towns of Wittenberg and Geneva (Schaff 1910:VI, 7:59). Nevertheless, due to the reformers' dislike of extra-biblical speculation, the persecution of witches was not as wide-spread and long-lived in Protestant areas as in the Roman Catholic areas. Later Reformed writings, such as those of the 17<sup>th</sup> century English writers John Bunyan and Downham, building on the theology of the Reformers and partly of Augustine, described the Christian life as a life of perpetual inner warfare against the evils and temptations of the Devil, the world and the flesh (Muller 1980:319; Powlison 1995:35). Though, in contrast to Augustine a transition had been made from the more objective imagery of two cities, the City of God versus the City of the World, to the subjective sense of personal pilgrimage and inward warfare against the Devil and his schemes. The world is still the place of battle, but the protagonist is the human soul (Muller 1980:320), and the warfare is understood as spiritual and moral. spiritual warfare at this point in time had become a highly individualistic affair, whereby each individual soul fights its own battle with temptation and sin. This attitude may have contributed to the increased withdrawal by Evangelical Christians from the world and involvement in its affairs. There is little doubt that the individualism of the Renaissance, as well as a (Romanticist) reaction to Enlightenment rationalism, influenced Evangelical Reformed theology in this respect (Henry 1973:322-323).

After the Reformation the spiritual warfare emphasis within mainline Evangelicalism has been predominantly on keeping one's soul holy by resisting sin and worldly temptations. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially within ecumenical circles linked to the World Council of Churches, the emphasis has been on unmasking and resisting the oppressive political and socio-economic powers in society (Barth 1960:81ff; Berkhof 1962:25, 41ff; Verkuyl 1992:268ff). The turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the birth and expansive growth of the



Pentecostal movement with a strong emphasis on supernatural experiences in the believer's life and Christian ministry. The resulting revival of mysticism within Evangelicalism in combination with the influence of Dispensationalist eschatology led to a gradual shift in spiritual warfare, from primarily resisting sin and temptation, to the 'binding' of demonic influence and the exorcism of sin-promoting demons from individuals (Chapman 2001:2; Van der Meer 2001:58-63). Though some of the 20th century Evangelical demonology was initially developed within the conservative Reformed and Anglican traditions in Britain (Leahy 1975; McNutt 1995; Nevius 1968) the main influence has been from North American Dispensationalism as we will examine more closely in the next chapter.

### **5.3.2.2. Spiritual warfare and the Roman Catholic church in the modern era**

The Roman Catholic Church, in the mean time continued in the tradition of the medieval period and initially still encouraged spiritual warfare by physical means against heretics, especially the Protestants. The Jesuits, the *Compania de Jesus*, were confirmed by Pope Paul III in 1540 for mission and evangelism, became major players in the Counter Reformation, often waging a war of flesh and blood against the followers of the Reformation (Hall 1968:122ff; Renwick & Harman 1999:148). However, the worst atrocities took place under the auspices of the Dominican order, which was in control of the Spanish Inquisition. The Spanish Inquisition was established in the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella by papal sanction in 1478 and was zealous to exterminate Moors, Jews, Protestants and other (suspected) heretics.

After the Reformation the inquisition was still employed in trials of sorcery and witchcraft until due to the rise of humanism in the eighteenth century it came to an end. During the Spanish Inquisition over thirty thousand suspected heretics, Jews, Protestants and witches were tortured, burned alive or murdered in other gruesome ways (Schaff 1910:IV, 6:80; VI, 7:60). The rise of humanism, pietism as well as nationalist developments led to the separation between church and state and brought an end to most religiously inspired persecution (Dowley 1990:508-517). The loss of political power led the Roman Catholic church to emphasise their spiritual power by strongly renouncing all non-conservative Roman Catholic ideas, movements and practices in the Syllabus of Errors and by the establishment of the dogma of papal infallibility in 1870 (Dowley 1990:514-517). After Vatican II, the Roman Catholic church has, however, been much more tolerant to other Christian traditions

(Renwick & Harman 1999:232-235) as well as to the Jews and other adherents of non-Christian religions (John Paul II 1991:94ff). In the context of political tensions in the Middle East and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the pope has repeatedly called for an end of hostilities and for dialogue and negotiation, rather than war as a solution. In spite of all the medieval excesses, extra-biblical speculation and the use of violence in spiritual warfare, the old rites of exorcism never died out in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches (Van Dam 1993:35-36). These rites were rediscovered in the 20th century when the Charismatic Movement became one of the significant forces in the Roman Catholic church (Dowley 1990:650). Consequently there has been a renewed interest in spiritual warfare through spiritual means such as prayer, exorcism and other methods in the Roman Catholic Church, similar to the methods of pre-Medieval church history (MacMillan 1985:13; Milingo 1984; Renwick & Harman 1999:249ff).

#### **5.4. Some conclusions concerning SLSW based on the survey of church History**

Our survey of spiritual warfare in church history shows the validity of spiritual warfare for the purity of the believer, the church and as part of reaching out to the lost. However, church history also demonstrates the dangers of spiritual warfare mixed with political and nationalist interests. The moment spiritual warfare gets mixed in with political interests it moves away from fighting spiritual enemies to battling flesh and blood in clear contrast with biblical teaching (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:12). Biblically we can no longer call such spiritual warfare 'spiritual' as Scripture labels such practices as unspiritual and as belonging to the sinful nature (Gal. 5:16ff; Jam. 3:13-16). The torture, killing, imprisonment and oppression of human enemies does not reflect the presence and work of the Holy Spirit which according to Scripture is shown in Christ-like love, righteousness, peace and joy (Rom. 14:17, Gal. 5:22). Instead we ought to be kind to everyone even to the heretic, so that with gentle instruction he may escape the trap of the Devil (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Without the love for our human opponents (Mt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:17-21), including for unbelievers or heretics, our spiritual warfare becomes ungodly. church history also shows that our spiritual warfare theology and practice should be informed and guided by the word of God rather than extra-biblical speculation and religious beliefs. We cannot allow unchristian beliefs and practices from the context to determine our theology or praxis. Medieval church history shows that the use of

extra-biblical sources of information in context about the Devil, the demons and their works can be very dangerous. Using extra-biblical information as a source of theology and practice is not an innocent matter as it inspired some of the most hideous acts in the history of Christianity against witches and all others thought to be on the side of the Devil. The use of extra-biblical cultural elements and extra-biblical revelation in SLSW can lead to abuse of power and other unchristian practices (Moreau 1995:166ff; Priest, Campbell & Mullen 1995:11-12). This has already been the case as we will see later in this study when we look at the dubious role SLSW played in the Guatemala and several other contexts. Coming back to the second sub-question posed at the beginning of this paper ‘Is Wagner’s SLSW a strategy which has positive precedents in the history of Christianity?’ we must answer with a ‘no’. There are no examples in church history of powerful territorial demons ruling an area who are identified by spiritual mapping, whose hold is weakened by identificational repentance and who are exorcised by warfare prayer. There are many examples in church history of other forms of spiritual warfare, some of which are biblically grounded and can even be of use today. However, wherever demonology and spiritual warfare theology incorporates a lot of extra-biblical thought and insights, as in the case of Wagner’s SLSW, church history shows that this more often than not results in promoting evil rather than overcoming it.

Besides Wagner’s SLSW incorporating extra-biblical beliefs from other cultures and insights gained from extra-biblical revelation it also appears to have been informed by the Indo-European battle myth (Hiebert 1994:200ff). In addition we find elements of the American nationalist mythology, which views America as God’s own country (Caldwell 2005; Renwick & Harman 1999:154). This myth also sees America as God’s vehicle for his will to be executed in the world (Ahlstrom in Noll et al. 1983:434-435; Hankins in Caldwell 2005). This myth goes hand in hand with the North American fascination with power, rather than love, as a means to overcome evil, as is exemplified in America’s foreign politics (Carroll 2004). Similar mixtures of nationalist thought and Christianity have in the history of the church often led to serious abuses of power. Such syncretism compromises the Gospel of salvation and should also be a cause for suspicion and critical contextual evaluation. It is therefore important that we examine SLSW in the North American context where it was developed and from where it is spread around the globe. This is done in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### STRATEGIC LEVEL SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN CONTEXT

#### 6.1. Evangelical christianity in post modern America

##### 6.1.1. The Evangelical crisis in the post modern America

In this chapter we look at SLSW in the American context. When I refer to America I primarily mean the North American context of the USA though some issues may apply to Canada as well. In current academic circles, the global paradigm shift from modernism to post modernism is an important topic which deals with a shift in global meta-narratives<sup>165</sup> (Bosch 1991:350ff; Hiebert 1994:21ff; Turnau 1994:347ff). Such a paradigm shift deals with a major philosophical shift in the perception of reality by a large segment of the human population and society as is the case of the emerging post modern approach to reality. While many debate whether the post modern era has officially begun or if we should simply call this the late modern era, others argue that the post modern era has already passed. Nevertheless, the emergent consensus is that these are postmodern times and much of contemporary Western culture and academia is beginning to embrace a post modern paradigm (Hoffman et al 2006:1ff). Post modernism is largely a reaction to the failures and limitations of modernism and is in many ways still an emerging paradigm (Bosch 1991:4). In the latter half of the 20th century scientific developments, especially in the field of quantum mechanics, have progressively shown that nature is not the orderly closed system of cause and effect science has assumed it to be, and that it becomes increasingly impossible for man to grasp

<sup>165</sup>A metanarrative being the informative narrative which seeks to explain all of reality to us, it is a philosophy which explains how things are, how they were and how they should be (Tomlinson 1995:76ff). A “meta-narrative,” is a great story that explains all other stories and formulates a metaphysics, a theory of reality. Most “isms” (e.g., Platonism, rationalism, Marxism, etc.) reflect such meta-narratives (Vanhouzer 1995:5).

<sup>166</sup>Postmodernism, in spite of its suspicion of meta-narratives and emphasis on local narratives (Turnau 1994:347), in itself comes suspiciously close to a meta-narrative itself since it is often presented as universally valid (Edgar 1995:380). Deconstructive postmodernism’s intolerance of absolutes is actually a veiled absolute in itself (Edgar 1995:381). In its early deconstructive phase the contours of postmodernism are very similar to relativism and many early postmodern writers do not distinguish between the two (Hoffman et al. 2006:10). Relativist forms of postmodernism are reminiscent of the 5th century BC philosophy of the Sophists, such as Protagoras, with their relativistic view of morality and (empirical) epistemology, whereby reality is reduced to the subjective experience of the individual (Bunting in Archard 1996:73-76). However, the more recent realist forms of postmodernism believe absolute truth may exist and though we may never understand or communicate it fully, we can approximate it (Hoffman et al. 2006:12). It is this author’s suspicion that the realist form of postmodernism will turn out to be the most viable and is also the most compatible with Christian thought.

what he is observing (Hoyt 1961:4; Bosch 1991:350; Hoffman et al. 2006:8). Moreover, historians and philosophers of science such as Michael Polanyi, Thomas Kuhn and Larry Laudan exposed that science is not an objective, unbiased, cumulative and exhaustive endeavor, but rather a matter of competing paradigms or models of reality (Hiebert 1994:21). Similar developments took place in other fields such as art, architecture, economics, psychology, theology and more (Carson 2003; Hoffman et al. 2006; Keunzli-Monard & Kuenzli 2004). The modernist notion of the universe as a closed system of cause and effect, which can be understood and manipulated by man, seems no longer tenable. Such developments seriously undermined the optimistic notion of scientific progress and the making of a better world (Adam 1995:1-2). There is an increasing awareness concerning the 'dark' side of science and industry, such as pollution and the uncontrolled and irresponsible exploitation of the earth's resources (Bosch 1991:355). These concerns as well as the unequal distribution of the earth's resources (Sider 1977:33-38) caused many to doubt the so called blessings of science and technology. modernist optimism had already received some severe blows as a result of the two global wars (Bosch 1991:350) and from the 1970's onward, people became increasingly aware of the fact that the world has not become a better place as we face the devastating implications of global warming and industrial pollution. Poverty and the gap between the poor and the rich seems wider than ever (Bosch 1991:361). We have witnessed the ethnic wars in Rwanda, Burundi and the Balkan, gross human rights abuse, international terrorism, and the abuse of power by rich and mighty nations, just to name a few evils. We live in a shrinking global village with limited resources and an increasing interdependency (Scherer & Bevans 1994: xi).

With modernist positivism largely discredited, postmodern thought has in various ways affected science, architecture, theology, psychology, historical studies and many other fields. However, all the different fields share a common postmodern epistemology (Carson 2003). Postmodernism in itself is not a completely new phenomenon and it can be argued that ways of knowing now labeled modern and postmodern existed during pre-modern times while many pre-modern philosophies are still influential today. However, for the sake of clarity we may go along with the concept of three historical epochs or paradigms, namely the pre-modern, modern, and postmodern paradigms. Within the context of history, cultures tend to privilege one of the three over the other and Western societies are currently transitioning from the modern to a postmodern paradigm (Hoffman et al 2006:3). However, for the sake of

clarity we will define the pre-modern era in Western society as spanning more or less from ancient history until the 16th century. In this period truth or reality was conceived as being revealed by God to humankind. In the modern era, ranging approximately from the 16th to the mid 20th century A.D., humankind believed that the universe is a closed system of cause and effect, of natural laws and processes and aimed to discover such laws and control such processes by means of reason and science (Adam 1995:1-2). However, since the mid 20th century A.D. postmodernism has emerged with a very different stand on the nature of truth, namely that ultimate truth cannot be accessed by human beings and some even deny that ultimate truth exists (Hoffman et al. 2006:10-12). In place of metanarratives that provide a comprehensive explanation of reality, postmodernity only has temporary "domains" of experience, where the economic and political powers determine both the nature and methodology of knowledge, what can be known and how one can know it (More 2006).

To early postmodernists such as James Berlin and Michel Foucault, there are no objective facts, only "subjectivities," which are interpretations or perceptions of reality created and sanctioned by the ruling episteme. Foucault is especially concerned with what is invisible in any given episteme, with what is missing because it has been left unsaid or unwritten (More 2006).

Evangelicals have responded in various ways to postmodernism, some outrightly condemning even the slightest hint of post modern accommodation (Shockley 2000), while others cautiously welcome the postmodern liberation from the shackles of modernism (Pardi 2006). Other Evangelicals cautiously affirm some aspects of post modern thought without accepting the more extreme forms of post modern de-constructivism which deny the existence of absolute truth and/or the ability to understand and communicate truth in a manner which is understandable to human beings everywhere (Carson 2003). Consequently, Evangelicalism, and in fact Christianity and Christian mission at large, find themselves in a period of crisis (Bosch 1991:4). Partly, this crisis stems from Christianity's attempts during the modern era to re-define or defend itself in modernist terms, using modernist methodology and categories (Perry 2001). Though, they made use of a different vocabulary, theologians developed hypotheses (e.g. sola scriptura, limited atonement) and tested them on the basis of logic and methodological analysis of ancient texts. The study of Christian apologetics, the rational defense of faith, is another excellent example. During the modern period, theological

emphasis was on the development of systematic theologies which were considered to be objective and universally applicable (Hoffman et al. 2006:7ff). This trend can still be observed in most Evangelical theological colleges in Africa and other parts of the world where Louis Berkhof, Millard J. Erickson and other systematic theologies are taught as objective and universally applicable Christian theology. These modern theological movements either attempted to integrate science or to use science to reformulate aspects of theology (Hoffman et al. 2006:7-8).

In the present era the majority of Evangelicals probably do not spend much time thinking about Evangelicalism's future in the post modern era, but in its modernist form it has not much chance of surviving, let alone of being relevant (Edgar 1988:37ff). A small minority is already experimenting with new forms of being church in the world in the form of post-Evangelical churches (Tomlinson 1995:7ff), while others lean towards New Age style mysticism (Pearse & Matthews 1999:168-170). Probably the most promising trend is that of neo-Evangelicalism which seeks to maintain the core of Evangelical doctrine which is rooted in the canon of Scripture and the apostolic tradition, but seeks to express this in new forms which are contextually relevant in postmodern society (Pears & Matthews 1999:177ff). At the same time such neo-Evangelicals are willing to concede that even if we consider Scripture inerrant and infallible as most Evangelicals do, in our interpretation of scriptural truth we are not infallible and inerrant and thus can only approximate its true meaning.

The current developments in the postmodern world also impact the mission of the church as increasingly the church comes into contact with the pluralism of religious beliefs (Bank 1994:41) which requires sensitivity and respect in our approach to mission. Yet, we must also keep in mind that at times pluralism has almost assumed the character of an ideology which considers itself superior above others (Duraisingh in Newbigin 1989: vii). Careful reflection is necessary. On the one hand we cannot afford to ignore what other religions and competing ideologies are saying, but on the other hand we must seek to show the uniqueness of the Christian faith and seek to demonstrate the validity of its message. In this endeavor we should not overlook our own cultural and contextual biases, nor those of the people we seek to serve. In other words, contextualisation needs to be regarded as an essential discipline in the church and Christian missions, not only in communicating the Christian message across (sub)cultural borders, but also for our own understanding of Christianity, which might not be

so objective, unbiased and free from other interests as we may have assumed, and thus our understanding may need to be liberated from bias (Bosch 1991:384).

## **6.2. Wagner's partial paradigm shift in post modern America**

### **6.2.1. Wagner initial shift from cessationism to non-cessationism**

Wagner and his colleagues describe their embrace of non-cessationism as found in the Charismatic Movement and in Pentecostalism in terms of a paradigm shift (Kraft 2002:80ff; Wagner et al. 1983:5-6, 16ff; 1989:282-283; 1997b:112ff; 2000d:10-11). Wagner's use of the term paradigm shift, combined with his criticism of his critics as being influenced by the Enlightenment (Wagner 1996a:53-55; 76-77), is somewhat misleading because it may give us the impression that he has left modernism behind him and has now embraced postmodernism. Wagner is in fact a good example of where many Evangelical theologians and missiologists find themselves. During his early academic years Wagner drew heavily on his modernist heritage and focused on laws, principles, methods and techniques for church growth (Van Rheenen 1997:164-201). In this period Wagner relies mainly on empirical academic research, statistics as well as the works of other academics and missiologists to support his ideas.<sup>167</sup> However, in his later years Wagner starts to rely more and more on supernatural inspiration to justify his opinions (Wagner 1996a:14, 16, 20). In his book *Confronting the Powers* (1996a), Wagner still resorts to biblical studies and historical research, albeit selectively, to support his SLSW theology, but in the final analysis relies heavily on anecdotal evidence.

In an almost postmodern fashion Wagner complains about the modernist Enlightenment bias of the western worldview which affects Evangelical hermeneutics to the extent that Evangelical scholars attempt to explain everything in rational terms and leave no space for the supernatural. Confronted with the allegation that SLSW has no clear precedent in Scripture, Wagner suggests that the reason for this conclusion is that many Evangelical scholars have not distanced themselves enough from the Enlightenment worldview as they interpret Scripture (Wagner 1996a:76-77). This is in contrast with Wagner and his colleague Charles Kraft who, relying on their own personal hermeneutics, claim to find enough justification in Scripture for SLSW to be able to confidently state that SLSW is not a heresy but a good working hypothesis (Wagner 1996a:88-89). When it comes to lack of historical

<sup>167</sup>See Wagner's books prior to 1990.



evidence, Wagner states that historians also have their own paradigms and biases which makes it impossible for them to accept references to the supernatural and demonic in historical Christian literature (Wagner 1996a:112ff). Wagner, however, has developed his own 5 principles for doing historical research which he obviously considers superior (Wagner 1996a: 92-96). Wagner strongly distances himself from Enlightenment rationalism (1996a: 49-50, 76-77) and from what he calls 'rationalist Christianity' which is blind to the supernatural (in Wagner et al. 1983:11).<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, Wagner's writings still reflect a strong modernist bias as can be observed in the language and practices of SLSW where Wagner speaks of spiritual technology (Wagner 1996a: 30ff), spiritual science (Kraft 1995:112-114; 2002:104ff), spiritual laws and principles, (Wagner 1998a: 14; 2000d:13ff), spiritual research and mapping of geographical locations (1993b:223ff; 1999a:25-26; 2000f:1, 12) and numerical church growth (Wagner 1996b:9-24; 1998a:16-17, 21-25; 1999b:14, 27). If we add to this Wagner's direct and indirect suggestions that his SLSW beliefs are universal principles which should be accepted by the whole church (cf. Wagner 1996a:30, 2000a:8-12; 2001:7-16; 20), it is clear that while adopting some aspects of postmodern thought, Wagner is still a modernist at heart. Wagner embraces the supernatural but still seeks to harness it in universal spiritual rules, laws and principles and master the supernatural by spiritual technology. Wagner's supernaturalist spiritual power paradigm should therefore be considered as a more modest narrative within the larger modernist worldview. In the final analysis Wagner and his colleague Charles Kraft still behave in a modernist manner when they attempt to categorise and map out the supposed cause and effect principles which apply in the spirit world, allegedly using scientific research methods (Kraft 2002:98-114).

In spite of their claims to scientific research of the spirit-realm in order to uncover its governing principles and laws (Kraft 1995:111ff; 2002:98ff), the aversion displayed by Kraft and Wagner to a critical investigation of their assumptions and practices (Kraft 1995:88ff; 118ff; Wagner 1988b:240; 1993:19-20), demonstrates they are not truly committed to scientific research. Actually, Kraft goes as far as suggesting that only sympathetic people should test their SLSW practices and assumptions (1995:114) which is tantamount to saying that self-authenticating is the only acceptable way to authenticate any truth claim. In

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<sup>168</sup>Calling one's opponents Enlightenment rationalists has often been a successful, but fallacious argument against many who dared to question or test the validity of supernatural experiences or of so-called spiritual laws (Kraft 1995:95-96; Perriman 2003:31-32; Wimber 1985:84ff).

discussing SLSW Wagner also states "By nature I find myself more goal oriented than process oriented. Application seems more important to me than theory. The theories I like the best are, frankly, the ones that work" (1996a:47). It appears then that Wagner's underlying epistemology is mainly pragmatism: what works is right. Wagner's Charismatic shift also appears to have been prompted by pragmatic considerations as Wagner observed that rapid church growth was linked to the operation of the supernatural charismata (Wagner 1988b:197ff; 1991b:44ff). Wagner was a Dispensationalist Evangelical prior to his supernatural paradigm shift just as many Pentecostals are Dispensationalist Evangelicals (Erickson 1985:1209). The step was therefore not as big as it may sound when Wagner talks of a paradigm shift. Wagner's paradigm shift was initially a minor theological shift from a cessationist to a non-cessationist position concerning the supernatural spiritual gifts such as prophecy, divine healing, exorcism and miracles (Fee 1994:32ff; 158-175). Wagner's spiritual warfare technology (Wagner 1996a:30ff, 96) should therefore be understood as modernist rather than postmodernist, prompted by pragmatic considerations, to harness spiritual power in order to manipulate the spiritual world in order to get the desired results of church growth and mass conversions (Wagner 1996a:89; 1997b:120-121). However, even after concluding that Wagner's SLSW is a rather modernist attempt to exercise control in the spirit world, the understanding of the cosmos as an enchanted world full of demons, curses and supernatural phenomena underlying SLSW thought is too similar to the mystical romanticism, existentialism and "new age" spiritualities which also saw a revival in the post modern era (Johnstone 1995:138; Priest, Campbell and Mullen 1995:11). Therefore, we may conclude that SLSW is modernist in its methods and techniques as well as its understanding of the universe governed by spiritual laws, but at the same time is also partly post modern in its understanding of the world. In that sense it is legitimate to suggest that SLSW partly reflects a syncretism between Christianity and New Age spirituality (Van Rheenen 1997:193-201).

### **6.2.2. Wagner's epistemological shift**

However, having stated that Wagner's initial shift was a minor one this does not negate the fact that as Wagner continued to develop his SLSW there is a major shift in his epistemology to the extent that it cannot be truly considered Evangelical. Wagner suggests that in order to appreciate SLSW we need the right interpretative lenses (Wagner 1996a:94) which seems to

mean that we ought to see things the way Wagner does. From an epistemological point of view, Wagner's defense of SLSW by means of selected narratives from church history and selected contemporary anecdotes of supernatural experiences agrees with the approach of postmodern historiography. Post modern historiography recognises that the historian does not so much as give an objective account of what he or she discovered in history, but instead selects, edits and presents historical materials in such a way that it suits his or her interests (Munslow 2001). Wagner clearly does this as well as in his defence of SLSW from church history, he selects some anecdotes from church history and re-interprets and presents these in support of SLSW. We have observed that Wagner approaches the Scriptures in a similar manner as he selects several passages and re-interprets them in favour of SLSW. It is in his treatment of church history and Scripture that Wagner departs from the traditional Evangelical approach to theology which maintains that all Christian doctrine and theology should be based on truth that is explicitly taught or clearly implied in Scripture which is the inerrant word of God. This was the *Sola Scriptura* stance of the Reformation. church history as well as contemporary contextual reflection is only a commentary and an aide to trying to understand the truth as God has revealed it in Scripture. By implication no doctrine or theology, or elements thereof, can be accepted as orthodox from an Evangelical perspective if it is not firmly rooted in Scripture in accordance with the above criteria.

The question is whether the spiritual power paradigm to which Wagner and his associates have shifted (2000:34) will help us to get a better interpretation of spiritual reality. Are the interpretive lenses used by Wagner superior to our lenses and if so why? Using the mirror metaphor, we must wonder what kind of mirror Wagner holds out to us for seeing spiritual reality. Is it a mirror that is more dimmed or less dimmed? Is his mirror more blurred by extra-biblical biases or less blurred? When we evaluate any theology it is not sufficient to only evaluate it in terms of biblical theology and historical theology, we also need to understand it in the light of the context in which it was developed and also look at the context where we want to apply it. It is inevitable, that Christian theology is influenced by its context even though we often only see it in retrospect (Van Rheenen 1997:190). Nevertheless, as we have seen in the previous section, such a recognition does not mean that every (contextual) theology is equally valid. Wagner's SLSW may be to some extent a contextual North American approach to Christian mission, however, it also appears to be a

missiology captive to North American militarism and superior power ideology and may be more a contextualist rather than contextual approach to mission.

Nevertheless, even if we understand SLSW as a contextual North American approach to Christian mission, a contextual theology still needs to meet certain criteria in order for it to be considered orthodox. Bevans describes five checks: First, a contextual theology must have continuity with other theological formulations. This means that the validity of a contextual theology rests in its consistency with other Christian theologies, both of the past and the present (Bevans 1992:18). Secondly the way we worship should not contradict what we believe (Bevans 1992:18). Thirdly what we believe ought to be demonstrated by what we do. There should be no discrepancy between orthodoxy and orthopraxis (Bevans 1992:19). Fourth, a contextual theology must submit itself to verification by the hermeneutical community. To this I would add, the community of both past and present as our interaction should not be limited to those living in the present. We are part of a long tradition and by interacting with the writings of our forebears in the faith we can also verify some of our beliefs and practices in the present. The fifth criterion is whether or not the contextual theology can constructively challenge other theologies (Bevans 1992:19). The idea here is that authenticity of a contextual theology is measured by whether or not it moves other theologies to reflect on “unthought of areas” (Cooper 2004). While these criteria are by no means universally accepted, they do appear to be quite similar to those employed by the early Christian church when it encountered heresy and novel ideas (Cooper 2004).

Using the criteria suggested by Bevans and others, and also based on my historical study, I do not consider SLSW as in continuity with other theological formulations in Christian history. Secondly, SLSW’s militant worship and aggressive prayer stands in contradiction to the meekness, gentleness and love I see exemplified in Christ and his teachings. The only occasion where Christ appears somewhat aggressive or militant is when addressing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees or when cleansing the temple. However, in these instances, Christ was dealing with hypocritical believers, which is rather different from SLSW’s focus. Thirdly, while there is consistency between what SLSW proponents believe and practice, this does not apply to their treatment of local cultures. Wagner affirms that it is legitimate to gain spiritual insight based on spiritual information directly received from the spirit world by non Christians, including cultural and religious insights (Wagner 1996a:66-67). In other words,

Wagner is quite happy to accept cultural and religious beliefs that agree with his SLSW. However, at the same time Wagner fosters an antagonistic attitude towards other cultures and religions by suggesting that territorial demons are linked to cultural and religious beliefs, practices, art, architecture and artefacts (Wagner 1993a:62-72; 2000c:19; 23-25; 2001b:43-47; 2001c:34-35; 39-40; 51-52, 54-56). In this respect there is an inconsistency in Wagner's SLSW missiology.

The fourth criterium suggested by Bevans is scrutiny of the contextual theology by the hermeneutical community. This is a criterium outrightly rejected by Wagner who as we have seen above has rejected theological reflection and interaction in favour of asserting his apostolic authority on which basis we ought to accept his SLSW. Lastly, does SLSW challenge other theologies to reflect on "unthought of" areas? In a way the answer should be yes as SLSW challenges us to think in terms of territorial spirits as the man obstacles to world evangelisation. However, the challenge is not necessarily constructive as the concept of territorial spirits does not stand in the biblical and apostolic tradition, nor are there any positive precedents of SLSW in the history of the Christian church. Consequently, we cannot consider SLSW as a valid contextual theology. In any case, Wagner himself does not view SLSW as a particular and limited contextual narrative but presents SLSW as having universal application to the whole church (cf. Wagner 1996a:30, 2000a:8-12; 2001:7-16; 20). However, such a universal truth claim is in the final analysis based on Wagner's apostolic credentials which already insufficient for validating SLSW as a contextual theology are certainly insufficient for validating a universally applicable theology. Nevertheless, even though we have already rejected SLSW as a valid contextual theology it may still be prudent to study SLSW in its context to uncover which interest and biases it may serve to the exclusion of others. In the next section I would like to highlight some of the interests and biases of the North American context<sup>169</sup> which may be observed in SLSW.

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<sup>169</sup>When I use North America, or America, I use it to refer to the USA excluding Canada, in the same way as Wagner and most other citizens of the USA do. I am aware that this in itself reflects a bias, but for simplicity's sake I have decided the same terminology as Wagner.

### **6.3. The development and spread of SLSW in the North American context**

#### **6.3.1. A brief survey of Evangelicalism in North America**

To understand the development of SLSW in the North American context it is necessary to have a brief historical overview of Evangelicalism in North America and how this relates to spiritual warfare in general and later to the development of SLSW by Wagner and his associates. My aim in this section is to highlight how some of the themes found in SLSW have been developed within American church history. It needs to be stated up-front that any such overview necessitates many overgeneralisations and oversimplifications. North American Evangelicalism can be traced to the separatist non-conformist Puritans in England who suffered severe persecution from state and state-aligned church (Paas 1995:194ff; 218ff; 393; Renwick & Harman 1999:152-155). The separatist Puritans, many of whom were Congregationalists, but also Presbyterians, concluded under King James I that God's new Israel could only be established in America (Ahlstrom 1983:434; Renwick & Harman 1999:153). In December 1620 A.D. the first of many Puritan emigrations to New England arrived in Plymouth (Renwick & Harman 1999:154). Consequently they founded several Bible commonwealths and shaped the spiritual self-understanding of the USA as God's own country, a concept that is still alive in America today (Caldwell 2005; Renwick & Harman 1999:154). Until deep into the 19th century New England continued to dominate the American Protestant scene and its influence continues to be felt in Evangelicalism (Marsden 1980:22).

In the late 19th century, however, due to evolutionary naturalism and the higher criticism of the Bible being imported from Europe, conservatism waned, and liberalism flourished. A counter movement, though equally modernist, in the name of New Theology reacted against liberalism and posited a strong dualism between the spiritual and material, the natural and supernatural (Marsden 1980:26). The material world was left to science and logic and the spiritual and moral domain became that of the church. Evangelicals in this period focused on the spiritual world, particularly on practical morals and ethics both individually and in society through social reform (Marsden 1980:26).

In line with the optimistic modernist notion of progress and cultural advance, Postmillennialism was common among Evangelicals in 19th century America, at least until

the late 19th century. The postmillennial belief that Christ is already establishing his kingdom (at least partly) on earth goes back to the first Puritan immigrants who sought to establish the new Israel. The revivalism of the Great Awakenings, the successes of the anti-slavery movement and of the social reform movements fostered this optimism for the gradual general improvement of society (Balmer 1993:33; Noll 1997:260-161). However, postmillennial optimism within Evangelicalism dwindled due to the modernist attacks on Evangelical perceptions of Christianity and much idealism was lost due to the cruelty witnessed in the civil war (Wolf 2003) and increasing urban social problems which made social reform seem a utopia (Balmer 1993:34ff). It is in this context that modern Dispensational premillennialism found fertile soil in the USA and many Evangelicals embraced its eschatology with the exception of conservative Reformed Evangelicals who continued to hold on to either a amillennial or a conservative postmillennial eschatology (Balmer 1993:34ff).

modern Dispensational premillennialism originated in the 1820s in the circle of Edward Irving in Britain and was popularised by J. N. Darby in Britain. However, in the USA it was the 1909 publication of the Scofield Reference bible which led to the rapid spread of modern premillennialism and in the inter-war period it became the dominant eschatology among American Evangelicals (Rawlyk & Noll 1993:192). Postmillennialism waned among Evangelicals as in the mind of many postmillennialism became synonymous with liberal theology (Ferguson & Wright 1988:429). In reaction to higher criticism of the Bible common among liberals, premillennial Dispensationalists take the Bible as absolute truth to be taken literally at face-value, though allowing for symbolism, figures of speech and typology (Erickson 1985:1162-1164; Ferguson & Wright 1988:200-201). Because of their literalist approach to the biblical text Dispensationalists make a basic hermeneutical distinction between passages relating to Israel and those relating to the church, whereby Israel always is interpreted as referring to national or ethnic Israel, not the church (Erickson 1985:1162; Henry 1973:187-188). Dispensationalist eschatology fostered a negative view of the world as it expected the imminent coming of the antichrist with his evil world government. It put a lot of emphasis on Satan and an increase of demonic activity throughout the world, which would lead to tribulation and Armageddon. However, as revivalism had been an important trend in American Evangelicalism, some optimism for a temporary revival of the faith and moral reform remained (Marsden 1980:224-225).

Many Dispensationalists believed that before the second coming of Christ there will be a world wide revival, giving people a last chance to repent since Jesus predicted that the Gospel would be preached to all nations and then the end would come (Mt. 24:14). Dispensationalist end-time revivalism is best demonstrated in the ministry of Dispensationalist evangelist Dwight L. Moody at the beginning of the 20th century (Marsden 1980:38; 219ff). He believed God had given him a lifeboat to save as many souls as possible from the sinking ship of the world which is about to be utterly destroyed. Moody's revivalism was very similar to the postmillennial revivalism of the American Western frontier with its fundamental Gospel message of individual sin, conversion and a holy life, but the notion of reforming society along the lines of the kingdom of God was largely discarded as the end of all things was at hand. The "Great Reversal," as it came to be known, meant that Dispensationalists Evangelicals increasingly withdrew from the sinking ship of mainstream American culture. It was pointless to hope for any lasting cultural renewal at the end of the church Age (Wolf 2003). On the one hand, their revivalist roots meant that Dispensationalist Evangelicals were on the look out for signs of the (temporary) end time revival, on the other hand they were ever on the look out for emergence of the antichrist and his world domination.

Though increasingly withdrawn from public life, the vast majority of Dispensationalists remained patriotic Americans (Marsden 1980:221) as the strong cultural belief among Protestant Christians that America is a vehicle for God's will," persisted among American Evangelicals (Ahlstrom in Noll et al. 1983:434-435; Hankins in Caldwell 2005). It was therefore rather natural for them to demonise America's political enemies and see the emerging antichrist manifest in them. The antichrist was identified as the German Kaiser during the First World War, Hitler or Mussolini during the Second World War (Amerding 1963:50ff), The European Union (Scofield 1951:107), Soviet Russia and communism during the cold war years (Amerding 1963:56; Gundry 1977:54-55; Tanner 1996:44; White 1971:146-159) and more recently Iraq (Wagner 1993:224-225; Walvoord 1990).

The onslaught of Darwinism and liberalism on traditional Bible believing Christianity, the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and the horrors of the two world wars seriously undermined Evangelical optimism. With the cold war and the fears of an imminent third world war



convinced many Evangelicals that the end was truly at hand and that premillennial Dispensationalism was right in its pessimism. As a result Dispensationalism became even more entrenched in the North American Evangelical mind (Buber 1972:217; Marsden 1980:143-153; Sizer 2006).<sup>170</sup> The deterioration of morality in the Western world as a result of the ‘sexual revolution’ as well as the revival of magic and occultism also confirmed Dispensationalist belief in a Satanic conspiracy preparing for the coming of the antichrist and also won conservative Protestants to their views (Chafer 1947:115f; Patterson 1988:443-452; Unger 1952:xiii; 1971:17ff)<sup>171</sup>. Consequently, Dispensationalism gained a considerable following within Evangelicalism among Baptists, Pentecostals, Charismatics and independent fundamentalist churches (Erickson 1985:1209). It would be wrong to suggest that the majority of Evangelicals in America are Dispensationalist, but they have become the most influential group in American Evangelicalism and their influence even among non-Dispensationalists should not be underestimated. Radio and Television have probably played a major role in this as well as the majority of tele-evangelists have been Dispensationalist such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Oral Roberts and Jimmy Swaggart (Wolf 2003).

### **6.3.2. Dispensationalism in North America and the political right**

Initially premillennial Dispensationalists, who also called themselves fundamentalists as they considered themselves uncompromising on the fundamentals of Christianity, were isolationist in many aspects and stayed away from the political arena (Fowler 1985:94; Marsden 1991:100-101). However, as they grew in number, they could no longer effectively isolate themselves from the world of politics. While some Dispensationalists continued to argue that since the world is doomed Christian political involvement is futile, another section became increasingly involved in the political arena (Marsden 1991:101ff). This emergence from isolation unto the political arena was partly due to the popularity and growth of Dispensationalism as they capitalised on the decline in prestige of the liberal-scientific-secular establishment in the upheavals of the 1960s (Marsden 1991:104). It was also due to Dispensationalist getting increasing influence in the media by means of radio and TV evangelism. However, Dispensationalists were mainly drawn into the political arena due to

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<sup>170</sup>Premillennial Dispensationalism has lost much of its credibility among Evangelicals in the period after 1989 as their traditional interpretation of communist Russia as the great Satanic power of the North who threatens ‘Christian America’ (Marsden 1980:143-144, 156, 208-211) no longer seems plausible.

<sup>171</sup>Books such as Harold Lindsay’s, *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*, (London, Lakeland, 1973), capitalised on these fears and became best-sellers.

their belief that the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 is a fulfilment of biblical prophecy and that the Jews are still God's chosen people and will play a significant role in the end-times (Erickson 1985:1162-1164; Marsden 1980:51; Sizer 2006).

America's national interests in Israel found a strong ally in Dispensationalism's religious interests. Ever since the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957, Washington supported Israel with aid and weapons, in an effort to counter the Soviets' influence on the Arab states of the Middle East. It was argued that the spread of communism throughout the region could lead to the cutting off of the essential oil supply from Arab states (Wolf 2003). The Dispensationalist Evangelical's special interest in the nation of Israel was noticed and further exploited by Republican politicians under Ronald Reagan. With the aid of key Dispensationalist Evangelical leaders and popular televangelists, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Oral Roberts and Jimmy Swaggart, Reagan was able to bring the Evangelicals into the Republican Party, securing his victories in 1980 and 1984. Consequently, prominent Dispensationalist Evangelicals in America such as Donald Grey Barnhouse, Charles E. Fuller, M. R. DeHaan, Jerry Falwell, Jim Bakker, Paul Crouch, Pat Robertson, Jimmy Swaggart and Billy Graham gave their support to the Republican cause (Sizer 2000:145ff). The underlying idea was that the United States, upholding her godly puritan heritage, would be the protector of God's chosen people the Israelites. In the meantime the Soviets and even the nations of Europe conspired against the USA and Israel, bringing the world to the brink of the rapture and Armageddon (Lindsey 1970:153-163, 184-185; Walvoord 1974; Wolf 2003). The evidence at hand suggested that Satan was attacking Protestant America on all fronts, in the material world Satan attacked by means of communism and other economic or political threats to America and the nation of Israel under its protection (Ober 1950:74-83; Patterson 1988:450; Wolf 2003). The combined political and spiritual interests are exemplified in the title and content of Dispensationalist theologian John F. Walvoord's book 'Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis' (1974).

### **6.3.3. Dispensationalism in North America and spiritual warfare**

Through spiritual warfare against Satan and his demons in the form of exorcism, special prayers, renunciation of Satan has many precedents in church history, Dispensationalists

made more of it than any other tradition in Christianity, possibly with the exception of the Gnostics (Wink 1993). Dispensationalist spiritual militantism against Satan and the demons is derived from their eschatology which expects a satanic conspiracy against the true church in the end-times. It also fits well in their essentially dualist and Manichean worldview which divides reality into neat categories of good and evil, true believers and false believers, moral and immoral, saved and lost <sup>172</sup> (Marsden 1980:210-211). Satan was not only active in the communist threat to America but also in eroding the moral fabric of society and by spreading apostasy within Christianity in the form of liberalism, Roman Catholicism and other non-Protestant traditions. The revival of occultism, magic, the New Age movement, proliferation of non-Christian religions was understood to be part of the Satanic assault (Barnhouse 1965:242-243; Livesey 1989:86ff, 124ff; Lutzer & DeVries 1989:113ff; 156ff; Patterson 1988:451ff; Ryrie 1964:50-52). Consequently, books and reports abounded about demonization and Satanic activities and how to fight and overcome demons, occult bondage and other satanic evils (Blankenship 1972; Dickason 1987:187-213; Ernest 1970; Henderson 1972). The end-time assault of the Devil, however, was not passively accepted, as God expects the believers to play a part in His warfare against Satan (Mathews 1978:9). spiritual warfare against demons demonizing, harassing or hindering people, dividing the church, spreading false teachings and ideas, became a common concept within Dispensationalist Evangelicalism (Bubeck 1975; Koch 1961:202-222; Dickason 1987; Robinson 1991:53-72; Unger 1971).<sup>173</sup>

In the area of spiritual warfare, Pentecostal and non-Pentecostals found much common ground and contributed to each others' views on demonology (Powlison 1995). New concepts and practices were incorporated into much of Dispensationalist Evangelicalism such as casting out demons from demonized individuals (Bubeck 1975:143-144), the breaking of

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<sup>172</sup>The developments within 20th century Evangelical Dispensationalism is very similar to the events in the third and fourth century AD, when part of the Christian church bought into the dualism and excessive speculations concerning the nomenclature of angels and demons in Manicheanism, Gnosticism and other peripheral movements (Cf. The Gnostic works: Hypostasis of the Archons (II,4); On the origin of the world (II,5 and XIII,2), The Testimony of truth in Robinson 1988:160-189). This movement had more in common with Zoroastrian dualism than with biblical teaching (Greenfield 1988:234, 312), yet this dualism has persisted as a theme in Indo-European culture to the present (Hiebert 1994:209ff; 2000:248). spiritual warfare in this context became almost totally an otherworldly affair, with its focus on angelic beings, demons, secret names and knowledge, with little or no bearing on day to day realities people faced in the world. It constitutes a denial of, or refuge from the realities on the ground. It is probably not accidental that such movements flourish in a politically turbulent times.

<sup>173</sup>German pietist Lutheran theologian Kurt Koch is a popular Dispensationalist author whose books on demonology (1960; 1971a, 1971b, 1973, 1978) were bestsellers among both non-Pentecostal and Pentecostal Evangelicals.

generational curses by confessing, and renouncing one's sins or those of one's ancestors (Bubeck 1975:86-87, 100-101, 113, 148-151; Dickason 1987:162-163, 278-279, 291; McNutt 1995:101ff). Prayer became a weapon of spiritual warfare by which victory was gained over demonization, demonic affliction and opposition (Bubeck 1975:104-107; Christenson 1990:93-99; 105-106). The verbal binding of Satan or his demons by means of proclamation or command also became a common weapon of spiritual warfare (Bubeck 1975:112; Christenson 1990:157-164, 171; Dickason 1987:343; Harper 1970:114-115). Initially, spiritual warfare was primarily focused on winning the war against demonic influence in the believers thought life and behaviour and collectively in the church (Robinson 1991:18ff), avoiding sin, occultism and other evil influences, and if necessary included exorcism (Bubeck 1975:143-144). However, gradually the focus of the spiritual warriors went beyond afflicted individuals and also incorporated the demonic attachment of buildings, places, objects and symbols, and the need to spiritually cleanse these places (Christenson 1990:111; Harper 1970:105-107; Peterson 1972:25-30; Burnett 1991:268-269). These ideas were further developed within praying against demonic influence in the city, especially at places associated with vices such as greed (Adams 1987:71-76), lust and occultism (YWAM 1986) which paved the way for the concept of territorial demons occupying cities, countries and regions as was further developed in SLSW. The Dispensationalist concept of nations being under satanic influence was now combined with the possibility of cleansing these nations just as buildings, objects and other things could be cleansed from demonic attachment.

Dispensationalist Bill Subritzky (1985) in his book on demonology was one of the first to develop the concept of the demonization of territories. He suggests that Satan places unseen princes and powers of the air over every nation and city with descending orders of authority all the way down to demons which walk the ground seeking a home. These evil spirit beings are believed to rule over countries, cities, and even churches by bringing with them hordes of demonic powers such as envy, jealousy, unbelief, pride, lust and ambition (Subritzky 1985:12ff). The demonic princes therefore need to be removed by prayer and spiritual warfare so that people can be saved (Subritzky 1985:12ff). Wagner who by this time was already part of the Pentecostal Third Wave of the Holy Spirit movement incorporated the same concept of demonic powers ruling territories into his church growth missiology as is evidenced in his book *Spiritual Power and church growth* (1986:40-42; 127-128). However, initially these new ideas only found fertile ground among some Charismatics and

Pentecostals and were applied and promoted in other contexts by the Charismatic para-Church organisation Youth With A Mission (Adams 1987; Dawson 1989; YWAM 1986). However, SLSW only gained momentum in the 1990s.

#### **6.3.4. Dispensationalism in North America and SLSW**

As we have seen SLSW developed within the context of Dispensationalist demonology and spiritual warfare theology. However, this Dispensationalism faced a severe credibility crisis after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. Prior to the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of communism as a world power, in the minds of premillennial Dispensationalists the world was rigidly divided between the evil communist followers of the anti-Christ led by Satan, and the good Christian Americans and their allies on the other side. The Soviet Union and other nations, opposed to America, were under Satan's control and part of a Satanic conspiracy against America (Chafer 1919:68ff; 92; 109-110; Chafer 1947:117ff; Unger 1952:xiii; 190-200).<sup>174</sup> It was quite clear who the enemy was, where one could expect the anti-Christ and how one should respond theologically and politically. The vast majority of Dispensationalist books, bible commentaries, quasi-academic theological works and popular works were riddled with predictions about a communist anti-Christ who will lead a Soviet invasion of Europe and Israel (Lindsey 1970; Walvoord 1971:316-326; 1974).

After the fall of the Berlin wall, Dispensationalist predictions suddenly seemed improbable and undermined their credibility and confidence. The Dispensationalist's 'knowledge' of whom and where the enemy was provided some sense of security and control. Now, the enemy was no longer that visible in the physical realm it is rather natural that the focus shifted to the invisible realm. Consequently, more emphasis was put on the enemy's activities in the unseen world. This shift in focus has interesting parallels with the 3rd and 4th century Gnostic focus on overcoming demons and other evil spiritual powers which emerged amidst the confusion and sense of powerlessness in the context of the Roman Empire, which at the time was clearly showing signs of weakness and moral decline (Wink 1993:vii, 2ff). The Church Growth Movement with its techniques for bringing in revival and millions of converts and discipling whole nations, once paraded by McGavran, Wagner and other church growth proponents, was also in a crisis as it had failed to deliver both abroad and at home.

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<sup>174</sup>All these elements are interwoven in the famous Dispensationalist novels *The Fourth Reich* (Van Kampen 1997, Grand Rapids: Revell) and those of the left behind series by Tim LaHaye (1993).

It is in the midst of this crisis that Wagner came to the conclusion that church growth had been unsuccessful because it had overlooked the spiritual aspects and explored the link of church growth, Pentecostalism and spiritual warfare (Wagner 1986). Consequently, Wagner took the pragmatic concepts of church growth thinking a step further and linked them to the spirit world. So doing Wagner removed the battle from earth to the heavenlies and made church growth dependent on defeating territorial spiritual rulers (Steinkamp 2006). Wagner is convinced that in all this God guided and directed him. He states repeatedly that God assigned him to be a leader in the area of territorial spirits and how to fight them by means of SLSW (Wagner 1996a:16, 20). Due to his background, Wagner incorporated many traditional Dispensationalist concepts in SLSW. Among these we see a pre-occupation with end-time revival, Satanic conspiracies and the syncretism of American patriotism and Evangelicalism (Wagner et al. 1983:41ff; Wagner 1986:40ff; 1989:282-284; 1991a:131-137; 1992b:15ff; 154-158; 1997a:57ff; 112-117; 1998:7ff; 1999a:7-11, 40-44).

The popularity of SLSW in the 1990s can be partly explained by referring to Wagner's strategic and influential position in the AD 2000 and beyond movement, but also because part of American Evangelicalism was ready for his ideas. Faced with the uncertainties of the post modern era, some choose to seek refuge in an Evangelical 'parallel universe', which is largely isolated from the real world (Tomlinson 1995:124-125). For the Dispensationalist Evangelical in crisis SLSW provides a compelling narrative: A 'new' enemy in the form of demonic rulers who dominate the world and a new spiritual technology to make the church growth and revival dream come true. Community, city and nation wide reform is possible also in America if the territorial demons are identified and overcome (Hayford 1993:71-75; Wagner 1993a:58ff, 1993b). The old puritan dream of the moral and spiritual restoration of America as God's own country is also incorporated in Wagner's SLSW theology.

In the 20th century, white Evangelicals have taken conservative positions on almost every socio-economic and political issue and for a long time there has been a visible alliance between center and right wing Evangelicals, who dominate American Evangelicalism, and the Republican Party (Quebedeaux 1978:84). The 2000 election victory of George W. Bush was credited to white, right-wing Evangelicals many of whom in the months leading up to the election were praying and fasting, in an effort led by Intercessors for America, to assist in

Bush's re-election (Caldwell 2005). In his book *Destiny of a Nation*, Wagner (2001a) and several of his SLSW associates explain how through SLSW the 'right' president got elected, being George W. Bush. Its subtitle 'How Prophets and Intercessors Can Mold History' is telling and reveals an underlying desire to influence the destiny of America.

#### **6.4. SLSW and North American right-wing political interests**

We already noted that Dispensationalist Evangelicalism has had a long history of identifying the enemies of the USA with the satanic enemies of God (Amerding 1963:56; Gundry 1977:54-55; Tanner 1996:44), but also the ecumenical movement and the Roman Catholic church were believed to be part of the anti-christ conspiracy against Christ and the true church (Walvoord 1969:326-328). These suspicions are still alive and well within American Evangelicalism and have also affected SLSW theology.

In the recent context of America's war on terror and Muslim extremism, it is hardly surprising that the present enemy identified by many Dispensationalist Evangelicals is Islam. One Dispensationalist comments: 'The spirit of Islam is none other than Satan himself', and 'America and Israel are engaged in a war whose foundation is spiritual. It is a spiritual war, that manifest's itself in the physical realm' (Artman 2003). Wagner's follows the same trend when he identifies the 'Queen of Heaven', one of the most powerful demons under Satan, as the principal demon behind Islam (2000c:25). He also suggest that she is behind the veneration of the virgin Mary in Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, keeping millions of Christians from becoming saved (Wagner 2000c:37-42; 2001b:43-47). Wagner's statements do not only have implications for ecumenical dialogue, but also have political implications for the adherents of Roman Catholicism in the USA have traditionally tended to support the democrats and are often opposed to, or critical of, Bush's militarism (Charisma 1999; Lucia in Wagner 2000c:108-109; Wagner 2000c:25, 41-42; 2001b:22-23; 45-47).

As some critics of SLSW have pointed out, the informative myth of SLSW appears very similar to the ancient Indo-European myth of violence for redemptive purposes (Jørgensen 1998). This myth is deeply entrenched in Western culture and stories and throughout western history (including history of Christianity) tales abound in which the hero opposes a ferocious enemy and saves its victims by violent means (Hiebert 1994:204ff). Even in most of the

movies on television or in the cinemas the vast majority of our heroes are warriors. Jørgensen, drawing on the work of Walter Wink actually traces this myth to Babylonia around 1250 BC (1998), while Neil Forsyth traces it even further to the Huwawa and Gilgamesh myth of about 2100 BC (1987:21). Regardless of its exact origins, there does appear to be a pre-occupation with military heroism in Western culture and many films, books and television programs reflect this trend. The Indo-European combat myth has continued to resurface throughout human history and in the history of Christianity. It has surfaced in the form of the 'just war' theory, the crusades, knighthood tales, the inquisition, nationalism, militarism, 'Reagan-ism' and more recently the 'pre-emptive war' and 'axis of evil' theories of G. W. Bush (Jørgensen 1998).

Many Dispensationalist Evangelicals believe America is involved in a kind of Holy war in supporting Israel. They understand the struggle for Israel's survival in a Muslim world as a spiritual war that manifest's itself in the physical realm (Artman 2000). The hardly veiled support SLSW proponents give to the 'war president', George W. Bush, only serves to re-enforce this perception (Wagner 2001a:7-8, 12, 23-25, 56-57, 85ff). In fact, there are many who fear that Dispensationalist Evangelical ideas have influenced self-proclaimed Evangelical George W. Bush in his physical war against terror (Saunders 2003; Weissman 2004). As recently, Bush has been replaced by Obama and a government lead by the Democrats, it is to be hoped that a more peaceful Middle East policy will be pursued.

President Bush's comments after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade centre of being chosen by the grace of God to lead are rather worrisome (Caldwell 2005). Tim Goeglein, Bush's liaison to Evangelicals, said "President Bush is God's man at this hour," (Apello 2004:12). Bush also spoke in similar terms to the National Association of Evangelicals Convention under the leadership of Ted Haggard, one of the SLSW proponents and a long time associate of Wagner (Wagner 1997a:189, 193-194). Bush used Evangelical terminology talking about America as a nation with a mission, called to fight terrorism and other evils around the world (EST 2004). Bush concluded his speech with: "Together, Americans are moving forward with confidence and faith. We do not know God's plan, but we know His ways are right and just. And we pray He will always watch over this great country of ours" (EST 2004).



The link between SLSW and American politics is also seen in Iraq where many U.S. Evangelical missionaries are active in a "spiritual warfare" campaign to convert the country's Muslims to Christianity (Rennie 2003; Saunders 2003). President Bush has stated that the war on terrorism is not against Islam but against evil, and insisted that this was not a religious war. Islamic fundamentalists, however, do interpret the war in religious terms and have proclaimed *jihad*, holy war, on America. They openly state that they are fighting against the Great Satan, which they define as the United States of America (Ward 2002). Ironically, as we observed, Dispensationalist Evangelicals, describe the war in similar terms when they call the war on terrorism a spiritual war (Ward 2002). This potentially dangerous syncretism between American military power and Evangelical spiritual warfare is even found in US military circles. According to US army general, Lt. Gen. Boykin, the U.S. military is recruiting a spiritual army that will draw strength from a greater power to defeat its enemies (Yurica 2004). America's war on terror he described as a Christian battle against Satan (Reuters 2004).

The intermingling of spiritual and physical war is also demonstrated in the ministry of the Dispensationalist Pentecostal tele-evangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson who have no reluctance to claim God's sanction for President Bush's war and the Republican platform (Harrington 2004). One important indicator of two cultures mingling together is the common language shared by both. The same we observe in the interaction between US rightwing politics and certain sections in American Dispensationalist Evangelicalism<sup>175</sup>, especially in SLSW. The report by the Christian media in November 2003 that president Bush set millions of dollars aside for SLSW to be conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq (LarkNews 2003) may not be entirely accurate as neither the Pentagon nor the White house could confirm the story when I contacted them. However there may be a kernel of truth in it as SLSW terminology may have some propaganda value for the Pentagon, paving the way for American Evangelicals to support the war in Iraq.

There is certainly considerable evidence that the interest of SLSW proponents, the political right and the US government often intermingle. Wagner's close SLSW associate George Otis Jr. stated that one of the goals of his Issaschar ministries is to make themselves attractive to

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<sup>175</sup>Not all American dispensationalists supported Bush, or the war in Iraq or the republican party, Many of them also voted for Obama in the recent elections. Also I do not want to give the impression that I am against teh American right, but it is the militant and militarist section within the American right that I am concerned about.

recruiters of the CIA and the state department (Diamond 1989:229), a worrisome development, particularly when one considers the active use of Evangelical missionaries as informers by the CIA (Diamond 1989:207ff). The spiritual mapping organisation, Sentinel, of Otis is also run along very secretive lines which reinforces the suspicion of under cover activities (Otis 2000). In private conversation Otis actually admitted being in the employ of the CIA (Reimer 2008). To what extent Wagner is linked with the CIA is unclear but he would have surely been aware of some of the activities of his close friend and disciple Otis. In any case spiritual warfare has often been used to foster a right-wing political agenda (Diamond 1989: 1ff, 141ff, 166, 206ff, 241).

Military terms have been converted to and co-mingled with religion (Yurica 2004) by SLSW proponents using militaristic gulf war terminology such as 'smart bombs', 'scud missiles' (Tinker 2000:71), targeting co-ordinates and infiltration (Beckett 1993:158; Wagner 1992, 1993b:230; 1993c:217). Wagner's SLSW should therefore not be dismissed as a matter of playing rather harmless spiritual war games by an Evangelical missiologist out of touch with the realities of the world as some of his critics suggest (Wagner 1996a:35). Instead, SLSW thought, practice and terminology tap into the same myths that informs much of American right-wing militarism: The ancient Indo-European warrior myth and the myth of America as God's own country (Caldwell 2005; Renwick & Harman 1999:154) as well as the myth that America is a vehicle for God's will to be executed in the world (Ahlstrom in Noll et al. 1983:434-435; Hankins in Caldwell 2005). The combination of these myths, both in SLSW and in American politics may well have devastating consequences for the world in which we live (Dodgins 2005). There is evidence of an "end times" interpretation of events within the White House, whereby unconditionally backing Israel will lead to Armageddon, which will lead to the Second Coming of Christ (Wallerstedt 2004). Jesus is being depicted as pro-war (Falwell 2004). The 'accidental' use of the word 'crusade' by Bush when describing the war on terror, may be significant. It was in the time of the crusades that violence and 'a just war', instead of being a last recourse or a necessary evil, was established as the appropriate, even chivalrous, response to what is wrong in the world (Caroll 2004).

Both Bush's war on terror and SLSW appear to be informed by an underlying ideology or myth which promotes the concept of dealing with enemies by the use of superior force. This warrior myth is a far cry from the Gospel of love for one's enemies, giving one's life on a

cross to save sinners, forgiveness and doing unto others as you would want them to do to you. Another equally dangerous myth is the belief that the USA has a peculiar place in God's promises and purposes for the world (Diamond 1989:151). Such a notion cannot be defended biblically, nor from history, nor from America's present political, social, cultural, and ethical track record. The licentiousness, inequality, injustice and self-centeredness that characterize much of American society hardly justify the notion of the USA being God's special nation. In fact the very notion of being God's special nation ignores clear biblical teaching on the universal nature of the kingdom of God comprised of people from all nations (Gen. 12:1-3; Mt. 28:18ff; Gal. 3:8; Rev. 7:9ff) and that joined together we are part of a new spiritual nation which is inclusive regardless of national, ethnic, social background or gender (Eph. 2:14ff; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:10-11). American Evangelicals may as part of their national bias like to believe they have a special place in God's program for this world, but there is no evidence for this notion in Holy Scripture. To the contrary history shows that when Christian and political interests intermingle, Christianity is compromised. Religious violence, 'Jihad' and 'talibanization' are not unique to Islam as we may like to believe. History shows many occasions where the Christian faith and political interests were intermingled and as a result many innocent people were oppressed and horrible wars were fought (Armstrong 2003). In the context of North America the 'Jesus' of America's 'Evangelical' President may not be the Jesus who died on the cross to save his enemies, but a pseudo-Christ whose cross is wielded against his enemies as a sword (Carroll 2004).

In as far as American foreign politics is concerned, Christians must on the basis of the great commandment of love, condemn the use of billions of dollars for the American war machinery while hundreds of thousands of people in America are in dire need of adequate health care, nutrition, employment (Yunt 2004). In the same vein we must also question the use of millions of dollars for SLSW activities, prayer journeys and SLSW propaganda around the world<sup>176</sup>, while with the same funds many struggling churches in the developing world could be assisted. Instead of collaborating with the American political right, it would be better for SLSW proponents to overcome evil in the world by doing good and to spread the Gospel message of the God who so loved the whole world that He gave his only son (Jn

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<sup>176</sup> For example one initiative of 248 intercessory prayer journeys to 62 countries at a cost of 10000,- - 25000,- US\$ (Wagner 1993c:216-218) would have required between 2,5 to 6 million US\$ and there have been many such initiatives (c.f. The Reconciliation Walk, Operation Queen's Palace and Celebration Ephesus in Wagner 2000c:16-20).

3:16). From a contextual point of view the political interests that SLSW willingly or unwillingly serves and promotes in the American context, makes SLSW rather un-Christ like and therefore unchristian.

Christ demonstrated on the cross that God's victories are not won by the battles and superior power of human (Jn 18:36) or spiritual armies (Mt. 26:53). It is by love and self-sacrifice for the sake of saving one's enemies that the powers were disarmed and defeated (Col. 2:14-15). In the current postmodern era the focus has shifted from truth to power as in a rather Sophist fashion many believe that truth is a social construct which is imposed on others by means of power rather than true conviction (VanRheenen 1997:198ff). Yet, Scripture teaches that God's power is interwoven with the truth of his Gospel (Rom.1:16-17) and his truth cannot be truth without it being embedded in love (Eph. 3:14-21). It is through the Gospel, proclaimed, taught and lived out in love, by the church in the world, that God rescues people from the dominion of darkness and brings them into the kingdom of the Son he loves where there is redemption and forgiveness of sins (Mt. 28:18-20; Col. 1:13-14). Consequently, we may conclude that with the scant biblical and church historical support, its questionable epistemological foundations, as well as its contextual biases, SLSW does not provide us with a better understanding of Christ and his Gospel for the present postmodern world.

### **6.5. SLSW and other Christian traditions**

As we have discussed earlier Wagner and other proponents of SLSW are very critical of their Evangelical colleagues who question its validity. They castigate their critics as modernists, biased against the supernatural, closed to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and so forth. It appears that one of the side effects of SLSW is a rejection and a negative attitude towards those who think differently. Unfortunately SLSW also fosters similar and even worse attitudes towards those coming from other Christian traditions. For example the identification of the veneration of Mary with the worship a high ranking demon named 'Queen of Heaven' is tantamount to saying that Roman Catholics are demon worshippers, albeit unknowingly. While as Evangelicals we may have problems with the veneration of Mary which almost borders on worship, or with doctrines such as the immaculate conception of Mary, nevertheless, to suggest that they are taking part in worshipping demons is a very serious allegation. We may agree that Roman Catholics are misguided in some of their

beliefs and even concede that some of this is due to deceptions promoted by the Devil, but to suggest that the Roman Catholic church is under the control of a territorial demon called 'Queen of Heaven' goes way beyond what can be substantiated. Such allegations are reminiscent of the period following the Reformation when Protestants labeled Roman Catholics as being demonized and vice versa. These kinds of suggestions militate against any form of co-operation, ecumenism and a mutual respect on the basis of Christian love and charity.

### **6.6. SLSW and other religions**

We have observed earlier that the transition from the modernist paradigm with its disbelief in the supernatural to a post modern paradigm which affirms a plurality of beliefs has also led to a fascination with the supernatural (Pearse and Matthews 1999:169-170; Tomlinson 1995:79ff). The issue of supernatural power is of interest to many people in the post modern era, both Christian and secular (VanRheenen 1997:193ff). This so-called re-enchantment of the cosmos, in the sense of recognising a supernatural dimension in reality, is not all negative. Evangelicals may well find that acknowledging the supernatural, both divine and diabolic, proves to be a healthy and biblically justifiable anti-dote to modernism's (unsuccessful) attempt to demythologise all that is supernatural (Edgar 1995:376; Wink 1984:4). On the other hand we may become so much focused on the supernatural that we end up with a pre-modern or animist worldview characterised by excessive speculation concerning the supernatural (Priest, Campbell & Mullen 1995:11-13). In church history we observe many examples of extra-biblical speculation about the supernatural which led to unchristian teachings and heresy, as in the case of Manichaeism (Spalding 1880:17); Gnosticism (Wink 1993), fanciful speculation in early and medieval Christianity (CE 2001), and gave rise to unchristian attitudes and practices such as excessive fear of the Devil, demons and magic as well as witch hunts.

It is not accidental that this came to a culmination during the turbulent and uncertain time of Europe's paradigm shift from pre-modernism to modernism is a case in point. Whenever, there is a shift of paradigms there is uncertainty, frustration and fear as people try to adjust. This can be observed in an African rural context where a traditional African worldview comes in contact with a modern scientific worldview, or in an Arabic migrant community in

Europe, or in the context of North America where the population is subjected to the challenges of postmodernism. Wherever there are major changes, socio-economical, political, cultural or philosophical, one can expect uncertainty, insecurity and often hardships and suffering. Often the insecurity, suffering and hardships people experience is translated into aggression. Such aggression can be repressed and may take the form of depression, suicide or withdrawal, but all too often it is expressed aggressively by means of intimidation, violence and war. This is what psychologists term 'displaced aggression', whereby the frustrations of an individual or group are projected onto other individuals or groups of people who have nothing or very little to do with the actual cause of the frustrations (Vasta, Marshall and Miller 1992:468; Wright & Sanford 1975:449). Displaced aggression often takes the form of scapegoating whereby a person or a group is blamed for conditions not of their making. Many minority groups, the weak, the disabled and other social outcasts have suffered the hostility based on scapegoating (Coon 2003:421).

In the African context it appears that such societal scapegoating often takes the form of witchcraft allegations which is often accompanied by severe human rights abuses, unjust incarceration, loss of property and even murder (Bourdillon 2002:10-11). A similar situation could be observed during the turbulent time of the transition from the pre-modern to modern era. In this period of Renaissance and Reformation there was at the same time a renewed interest in the supernatural and the demonic which also affected the theologians and spiritual leaders of that period. Not just the Devil and his demons were held responsible for society's evils, but in particular their alleged human agents, the witches, sorcerers and heretics. The Roman Catholic church played a major role in the witch hunts by linking witchcraft with heresy, with pope Alexander IV in the papal bull of 1258 allowing the inquisition to execute sorcerers and witches (Robbins 1959:547-548). Instead of recognizing the dangers of excessive speculation about the Devil, demons and magic, the church and many of its theologians went along with such false beliefs and provided guidance and suggestions for how to hunt and punish witches, sorcerers and heretics (Forsyth 1987:7; Kraemer & Sprenger 1486).

The medieval association of associating diseases, natural disasters and other evils with the Devil and demons, as well as the association of magic and paganism with the Devil may have played a major role in shaping the world view of both the populace and the theologians of the

day and led them to come up with an elaborate stereotype of the witch who worked in pact with the Devil (Levack 1992:x). Just as in the case of SLSW, selected anecdotal evidence from church history, but mostly contemporary anecdotes formed the primary source of inspiration and justification for Kraemer and Sprenger's allegations and proposed fight against witches in their 'Malleus Maleficarum', witches hammer, which provided both the justification for and suggestions for how to conduct witch finding (Kraemer & Sprenger 1486:51ff; 66ff; 91ff). The work of Kraemer and Sprenger, together with similar works at the time, provided a huge impetus to the practice of witch hunting. As a result witch hunt hysteria swept Western Europe and led to the murder of at least 60.000 people (Schaff 1910: Vol. VI; par. 59; Engelsviken 2003).

While the Reformation did a lot to counter many of the pre-modern beliefs by its emphasis on Scripture rather than tradition and extra-biblical speculation as a reliable source for faith, morals and behaviour. Unfortunately, many of the Protestant churches did not manage to shake off this evil delusion. Various anti witchcraft laws became enshrined in civil regulations and there was little difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant authorities in the treatment of alleged witches and sorcerers (Robbins 1959:548-551). It was only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that clergy, theologians and humanists, both Roman Catholic and Protestant started to strongly oppose the witchcraft delusion. Holland was the first country which stopped the execution of witches with the last execution of a witch in 1610 while Roman Catholic Poland was the last country in 1793 (Robbins 1959:551). Nevertheless the Dutch pastor and theologian Belthasar Bekker still faced stiff opposition within the Dutch Reformed church and was put under discipline when in his book *De Betoverde Wereld* he opposed the still prevailing witchcraft delusion and suggested that such notions had crept into Christianity from paganism (Robbins 1959:45-46).

The above mentioned examples demonstrate how easily non-Christian extra-biblical beliefs can creep into the church and mix with biblical beliefs concerning the demonic and together produce a dangerous cocktail which poisons society. So when Wagner suggests that it is legitimate to gain spiritual insight based on spiritual information directly received from the spirit world by non-Christians, and then incorporates non-Christian magical notions in his SLSW theology, we must treat it with extreme caution (Wagner 1996a:66-67). The strategic level spiritual warfare movement may not actively promote individual witch hunting since its

focus is on possessed territories as opposed to individuals<sup>177</sup>, but it still does foster an antagonistic if not militant attitude to other religions as well as other cultures by suggesting that territorial demons are linked to cultural and religious beliefs, practices, art, architecture and artefacts (Wagner 1993a:62-72; 2000c:19; 23-25; 2001b:43-47; 2001c:34-35; 39-40; 51-52, 54-56). Wagner's SLSW theology fosters an antagonistic attitude towards the non-Christian world and its various cultures and religions. This would also affect mission in Africa as Christianity relates to the traditional religions of its peoples.

While most Evangelicals will concur that there is much ignorance, deception, sin and idolatry in non-Christian religions and cultures around the world, this should not be a cause for ignoring the fact that human beings are created in the image of God and therefore all cultures and religions reflect in various degrees some of God's glory and wisdom. For God's revelation has been visible in creation (Rom. 1:19-20) and in the human heart (Rom. 2:14-15), and while this revelation may be limited as compared to God full-self disclosure in Christ (Hebr. 1:3-3), it is enough for all humanity to have become aware of God's presence, power and moral nature (Rom. 1:20; 2:14-16). Also the biblical teaching that by nature we are all alike under sin and that no-one is righteous, not even one, and all are equally in need of salvation (Rom. 3:10-27) which excludes any arrogance on our part. In fact, if we consider these Biblical truths seriously we will approach people of other cultures and religions with humility. We will then humbly present biblical truth in love which is supposed to be characteristic of God's people and a true sign of spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:15), rather than arrogantly approaching other religions and cultures with notions of 'superior knowledge' and 'superior power' as is one of the unpleasant by-products of SLSW (IWG 1993; DUFE 2000). Speaking the truth in love is way more important than tackling demonic bondage and possession by 'power encounters' for it is the truth that sets us free (LCSW 1993:3).

In the current postmodern context we must try and avoid embracing a pendulum swing from the modernist critical disbelief in the spiritual and supernatural to an uncritical embrace of the spiritual and supernatural (VanRheenen 1997:193) which results in unchristian militant attitudes. In the transition period from a modern to post modern world, like in the transition period from the pre-modern to modern period, the boundaries between reality and fiction may

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<sup>177</sup> However, there is some danger of 'witch hunting' if we observe the focus on overcoming human strongmen who are believed to be in league with Satan (Caballeros 1993:134) and individual witches in some of the anecdotal evidence given in support of SLSW (Silvoso 1998:217-218).



be increasingly blurred as people attempt to (re)construct their own reality which can sometimes lead to violence and aggression. The fascination we see in SLSW with its focus on spiritual power and its demonization of vices, social problems, other cultures and religions may also be more based on fiction than on a proper understanding of spiritual reality.

### **6.7. SLSW and social transformation**

Though Wagner states that ‘social justice is a spiritual battle and our principal weapon of spiritual warfare is prayer’ (Wagner 1993c:200) in reality SLSW has failed to deliver on its promises. The situation in the Latin American country of Guatemala can serve as a case in point as Wagner has been very closely involved with SLSW in Guatemala through his friend Harold Caballeros (Caballeros 1993:123ff; Wagner 1993a:15; Wagner 1993c:208-210; 1996a:217ff). In spite of Wagner’s positive evaluation of the use of SLSW in Guatemala in casting out the so-called territorial demon ‘Maximon’ and achieving spiritual revival and social transformation in the city of Almolonga, the facts on the ground do not agree (Wagner 1996a:217-220; 1999:54-57; 2000d:54). Interestingly enough in spite of Wagner’s published defeat of the territorial spirit ‘Maximon’, another missiologist describes that he saw the cult figure called ‘Maximon’ with his own eyes in 1995 (Orme 1997:159). The same missiologist describes how in other parts of Guatemala the Gospel has made significant advances without any SLSW being employed.

In contrast to Wagner’s positive evaluation, the effects of SLSW in Guatemala as a whole are a whole lot less rosy. Wagner reports that Serrano Elias was prayed into power in Guatemala by means of spiritual warfare (Wagner 1993c:208-210). However, Guatemala has become a good example of how quick-fix solutions presented by SLSW for dealing with society’s complex socio-economic, cultural and political problems can be very harmful. Sociologist Paul Freston studied among other things the effect of SLSW related thought and practices in Latin America, Asia and Africa and comes to the conclusion that the reduction of complex social and political problems to ritualism related to territorial spirits fails to take into consideration the complex power relation embedded in political systems (Freston 2001:318). In the case of Guatemala the militantism which is inherent in SLSW got out of hand when political opponents Espina and Serrano Elias both used spiritual warfare as an ideology through which to gain command of society (Freston 2001: 276-277). This is something one

will not find in Wagner's books though he will selectively talk about the alleged successful societal transformation in Almolonga in Guatemala (Wagner 1996a:217-220; 2000d:54).

In Guatemala political opponents ended up using prayer as a weapon against one another (Wagner 1993c:208) and even used prophecy to establish and legitimize their right to rule the nation (Freston 2001:275ff). Corruption and serious human rights abuses were perpetrated under the rule of Serrano who got into power using a SLSW style spiritual warfare project of national exorcism (Wagner 1993c:208-210; Freston 2001:274-276). The excesses of SLSW in Guatemala demonstrate how easily its inherent militantism can change from the Devil being the enemy to focusing on the human beings as enemies, as they are believed to be in league with the Devil. This is not unlike what happened in the context of the witchhunts in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In Guatemala, the same militantism or 'talibanization' led to excesses at grassroots whereby vigilantes started a process of 'social cleansing' which included harassment, intimidation and in several instances the execution of alleged sinners in their crusade to repudiate the evils of society in Guatemala (Freston 2006).

Another area worthy of further investigation would be to what extent a SLSW 'informed' worldview in Guatemala caused Charismatic Evangelical general Rion Montt to be heavy handed with the predominantly Catholic and 'pagan' indigenous Indians to the extent that 450 villages were destroyed and over 60000 people killed in a scorched earth campaign dealing with Indian liberation fighters (Freston 2006). It is telling that in each nation where SLSW has been heralded as the panacea for society's social ills and became part of the presidential campaign, the Charismatic Evangelical presidents who got into power all ended up involved in corruption, human rights abuses and other evils (Freston 2001:308-318). In the case of Zambia the idea of a 'Christian nation' free from demonic attachment by means of SLSW led to serious excesses. Political opponents were literally demonized and when the government failed to rule the country properly it passed the blame to the Christian community for not praying enough (Freston 2001:307).

In the light of the excesses observed in Guatemala and other contexts, one wonders how SLSW can help us to be a relevant and positive witness of Christ? Surely our witness is not enhanced by a conquest theology which uses militant language and divides the world in categories of territories already exorcised and those that are still in need of exorcism. The

call of Christ to discipleship and witness (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) is about practically living a life of love for God and one's neighbour in an uncertain, self-centred, confused, fearful and fallen world. Not superior power, but caring love is the key concept in the Gospel of Christ. It was the love of God for the entire world (Jn 3:16) that prompted him to exercise his power in the Gospel for the salvation of all who believe (Rom. 1:16-17). In the same way God calls his saved people to be rooted in love and to live a life of Godly love (Eph.3:14-21; 4:15-16; 5:2; 1 Cor. 13). This love will prompt us to address both individual and structural sin and evils in society, destroying the works of the Devil by promoting what is good. We should focus on presenting God's truth in love, which was embodied in Christ, in every sphere of life. Love has no place for militantism as it is humble, gentle and longsuffering (1 Cor. 13). Any theology and practice must therefore be scrutinised in the light of Christ's love, his example and his teachings. This is actually part and parcel of what I consider biblical spiritual warfare as it entails making every thought and ideology captive in obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). This also applies to SLSW or any other spiritual warfare theology and practice. Love is patient; it recognizes that people and societies do not change overnight. It takes hard work, suffering and sacrifice as we strive to be salt and light in society. There is no quick fix for struggle in this fallen world. There is no short cut or quantum leap to either individual or societal spiritual and social well being (Pocock, Mc Connell and Van Rheenen 2005:205). Whether it is in evangelism or in addressing social evils in society, we need to carefully investigate what are the obstacles we are confronted with, what kind of evils and oppressive structures are keeping people in bondage. The need is not so much for us to discover which particular demons may have inspired the evil we are confronted with, but how to counter, undo or replace the evils which they have promoted with what is right from a loving Christian perspective. This should be done in humility, in respectful co-operation with other believers, in righteous action and in a manner that reflects that we are followers of Christ.

## **6.8. Some conclusions concerning SLSW and Christian mission**

### **6.8.1. Why SLSW is not a wholesome strategy for Christian mission**

A great deal of evaluation has already taken place as we studied Wagner's strategic level spiritual warfare theology and practices from various angles. From an Evangelical

perspective I have demonstrated that SLSW is neither a biblical imperative nor does it have any precedent in Scripture. We have also observed in the history of the Christian church that SLSW as Wagner promotes and practises it has never been practised before, despite some practices that have some similarity. In addition, we observed in history that whenever the church succumbed to a worldview which was overly concerned with the demonic, it regularly led to serious excesses and what we would call human rights abuses today and were themselves sinful and opposed to the Gospel. In our contextual evaluation we observed that SLSW does not only have the potential of fostering a similar negative worldview but that it has already led to similar excesses in places such as Guatemala. Also the close link between SLSW and American rightwing politics is very worrisome. As I pointed out earlier, Evangelicals cannot directly or indirectly support a war against flesh and blood, nor provide spiritual justification for such a war as Scripture clearly teaches that our warfare is not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12).<sup>178</sup> From what I have read and observed, I believe that Wagner's intentions were noble and peaceful when he developed his SLSW to accelerate world evangelisation. However, I fear that some of SLSW's roots are in an unbiblical warrior mythology which lends it easily to abuse. This is exemplified in Wagner's merging of SLSW and right-wing politics in his reader 'Destiny of a Nation' (2001a). Also the relationship between Wagner's close associate George Otis jr. with the CIA is to say the least worrisome. I personally find it hard to believe that Wagner would have been unaware of his close friend George Otis jr.'s link with the CIA but one could still give him the benefit of the doubt. Also the unwholesome role SLSW has played in Guatemalan politics as described earlier (Freston 2001:275ff; 2006) must have come to the attention of Wagner, yet one does not find a single reference or warning in his writings concerning such abuse of SLSW.

As I have looked at Wagner's SLSW from various angles the following analogy came to mind which illustrates what I have observed and concluded. Wagner appears to me like a doctor who on the basis of very flimsy evidence and by means of questionable diagnostic practices concludes that humankind is threatened by a new disease. Not only does Wagner identify the new disease but also promotes a new line of medicines and techniques to combat this new disease. Other doctors who use commonly accepted diagnostic techniques do not come to the conclusion that there is a new disease threatening humankind and therefore do not embrace the new line of medicines and techniques to combat the disease. Instead they

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<sup>178</sup> Though I consider myself a peace loving person, I am not a total pacifist, I believe in self-defense, both individually and as a nation, however I do not consider America's foreign wars a matter of defense.

point out that the symptoms observed by Wagner point at another much older disease for which there have been effective medicines around. Consequently, controversy erupts with Wagner and followers on one side over and against the other doctors. Wagner in his frustration then concludes that the long accepted diagnostic techniques are outdated, the medicines ineffective and that his medicines and techniques are better. He then concludes that he is a better doctor with more authority than others and therefore they must listen to him and he is not accountable to the other doctors. In the meantime Wagner does not get any poorer as he sells many books describing his findings and he also enjoys a certain prestige from going against the flow and appearing to be cutting edge and innovative. This does not make it easy for him to admit that he might have been wrong and so whenever his medicines and techniques fail to deliver, he discovers an additional essential technique or medicine or identifies other inhibiting factors which need to be combated and so the process goes on and on and never ends. In the meantime those who follow Wagner fail to recognise the real disease they are dealing with and consequently do not prescribe the necessary medicine and as a result increase rather than alleviate the suffering.

This illustration without a doubt has its flaws and limitations but it does highlight the problem of someone from the Evangelical tradition suggesting a new spiritual problem based on new spiritual diagnostic techniques and promoting new spiritual solutions and techniques to overcome this problem. At the same time others, standing in the same Evangelical tradition and at least equally educated and experienced as Wagner, point out that his diagnostic methods, his evidence, and his new spiritual solutions do not fit the criteria that are commonly accepted in the Evangelical tradition. They also point out that both the diagnostic methods and the spiritual solutions and techniques proposed by Wagner do not only cause confusion and controversy but have actually harmful effects in the contexts in which they are applied. Nevertheless, having critically examined Wagner's SLSW in the preceding chapters from a biblical, church historical and contextual point of view I cannot consider Wagner as still standing in the Evangelical tradition. This impression is also re-enforced by Wagner's attempts to put himself forward as an important apostle who has a hotline with God and whom we should therefore obey and believe. The *Sola Scriptura* of the Protestant Reformation as well as the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, which are also central to Evangelical thought, preclude anyone from putting himself or herself forward as a new 'pope' whom we should obey and follow on the basis of their alleged apostolic authority. In

the final analysis I have to answer negatively to the third sub-question posed at the beginning of this thesis: 'Is Wagner's SLSW a truly Evangelical strategy for confronting the demonic powers?'

### **6.8.2. The need for a biblical approach to spiritual warfare in Christian mission**

However, the abuses of SLSW do not necessarily mean that there is no place for spiritual warfare in the context of Christian mission. We may disagree on the question whether territorial spirits, in the sense that Wagner identifies them, exist, but this does not mean that we then conclude that the Devil and the demons do not exist. We have seen earlier on that belief in the personal Devil and his demons have been part of the Christian tradition throughout the ages and that spiritual warfare has always been part and parcel of biblical Christianity. Consequently, while disagreeing with Wagner's SLSW we may give him the credit of having put spiritual warfare on the Evangelical missiological agenda. We cannot ignore the Devil as we are involved in Christian mission in the world. The writers of the New Testament did not consider the Devil a peripheral concept. In fact the New Testament picture of Christ and the church wrestling with the Devil and the demonic powers cannot easily be discarded without doing violence to the essence of Christianity. The New Testament teaching is clearly that the kingdom of God is at war with the kingdom of the Devil and has defeated the latter (Russell 1977:222).

In the 21st century there is really no reason to assume that our understanding of spiritual reality is superior to the 1st century understanding of reality. Just because we have made tremendous progress in industry, engineering, medical science and other fields of study, this should not make us proudly assume that we therefore are also superior in our spiritual understanding. In this respect Wagner is ambiguous as on the one hand he is suggesting that after 2000 years of Christianity he has discovered new doctrines and new spiritual principles and techniques while on the other hand he is saying that we should not have a superior attitude and should consider spiritual insights from other cultures as a valuable source of information for the development of better spiritual techniques. I do not disagree with Wagner that we should carefully listen to what other cultures have to say about the spiritual realities they face, but the way I would process, interpret and filter such information is different from him. Where Wagner uses a SLSW grid to filter cultural information and select what he

considers valid or not, I would prefer to stick to Scripture only as the standard by which to accept or reject the validity of cultural beliefs and assumptions. However, in my interpretation of Scripture I will also seek to hear from both the hermeneutical community of the past as well as the present as I am aware that everyone has some bias in interpreting and applying Scripture. Christian humility requires that we listen seriously to how other believers understand Scripture and also how our forebears in the faith understood Scripture. Evangelical Christianity has often erred by affirming its belief in authority of the Bible to such an extent that it excluded the insights of Christian tradition throughout history (Russell 1986:172). Ironically, those who ignore the lessons of history are often the ones repeating the errors made in history. Throughout the ages the church has recognized that behind the social, religious and political structures of society Satan and his demons are active in the background, opposing Christ and his church by means of temptation, persecution and false teachings and ideologies. In traditional Christian Satanology or diabolology, the Devil works through illusions, lies and deception (Russell 1986:285). Therefore, even today his illusions, lies and deception needs to be unmasked and exposed for what it is. Only if we carefully unmask the lies and deceptions of the Devil we can resist them in truth and love. Christianity is deeply rooted in the tradition of Holy Scripture. Therefore, taking the observations and understandings of the tradition of Holy Scripture serious, helps us to stay balanced. We will then not go overboard in fanciful extra biblical speculations about the evil supernatural as a result of cultural or religious biases. On the other hand we will also not deny the evil supernatural in an attempt to demythologize the Devil and his angels, as has been the case in some contexts due to modernist influence. Since the New Testament is permeated with the Devil, it follows that any other belief expressed by the New Testament, including the belief in the incarnation and resurrection will be subject to the same treatment and be demythologized and in the end we only have an empty shell of Christianity with no normative value at all (Russell 1986:263-264). In fact, Christianity cannot do without the Devil. If Satan does not exist, ultimately God becomes solely responsible for evil (Russell 1986:300). This does not mean that we have to subscribe to the extreme kind of dualism as found among the Gnostics and similar groups, but we may allow a limited dualism.

Limited dualism affirms that on the one hand there is the omnipotent sovereign God, while on the other hand there is an evil spiritual being, Satan, who though powerful from a human perspective is no match in any way for the power of God. To illustrate this let us for example

assume that I decide to build a fish tank. Once I have finished creating the fish tank I put everything in place for fish-life to be able to flourish. Consequently I place some fish in it. The fish have the ability to freely decide where they want to swim in the fish tank, however, their free will in no way infringes on my free will or power for at any time I can interfere and pluck one of the fish out or even destroy the tank. In the same way Satan is confined to the created order. As infinite creation may appear to us, as compared to God in all his fullness the whole of the created order may not be more to Him than what a fish tank may be to me. Whatever rebellion, power games and evils may take place in the fish tank among the creatures I placed in it, they do not pose a threat to me at all. In the same way Satan as being part of and dependent on the created order is no match for God. The only reason why God hasn't destroyed the 'fish tank' of the created order and removed Satan and all his followers, is that because of His love for his creation He decided to be patient and long suffering and wait with the final judgement. Satan's present existence and strength within the created order is therefore in essence parasitic. All his attributes and power were initially created by God for the purpose of good. Since a good God can have no evil purposes in mind, Satan by necessity must have become evil as a result of his own choice to disobey God and somehow managed to convince a host of spiritual powers, the demons, to join him in his rebellion. Consequently, Satan's God-given attributes and those of his demonic are now deployed for purposes of evil, but this does not negate the fact that for their existence they depend on God's patience and long suffering until judgement day.

Humanity is described in Scripture as thoroughly corrupted (Rom. 1:18ff; 3:10ff) and knowingly or unknowingly lives in rebellion against God. The Genesis 3 account gives us a poetic though deeply tragic account of how Satan managed to seduce humankind into rebelling against God, resulting in the whole of creation being tainted by sin and evil. An omnipotent God could have easily destroyed Satan. Yet by seducing humankind, the crown of creation, the image bearers of God, the objects of God's special love and attention, Satan managed to postpone his destruction. A loving God will not easily destroy the objects of his love as long as there is still a chance of them turning back to Him. The Genesis 6 narrative is a moving poetic account of how the whole of creation was so tainted by sin and evil that it actually hurt God deeply. God in response demonstrated his power and ability to bring judgement swiftly and decisively in bringing about the flood. Yet at the same time in his love he promised and provided salvation for those who were righteous, not righteous in a perfect



sense, as Noah and his sons demonstrate shortly after the flood, but righteous in the sense that they believed God and demonstrated this faith by going into the ark. This picture is invoked by Peter as he reflects on the divine patience in the third chapter of his second letter (2 Pet. 3): Judgement is coming with the total destruction of all that is evil, a complete Reformation of the universe is at hand, but for now God is holding back as his patience means salvation! The present battle is not a matter of power, or a matter of still needing to overcome Satan's evil stranglehold on the nations of the world. No, Satan is defeated, and his final judgement is at hand. However, the 'flood' of the final judgement will also affect all those still outside of the kingdom of God, which is like the new 'ark' open for admission to anyone. Like Noah, the church preaches the coming judgement and invites people to join the community of the redeemed. 'lifeboat' missiology in this sense, meaning a lifeboat as a visible sign of the coming judgement as well as God's provision of salvation in the midst of a watching world is a biblical concept. Not in the sense of being saved from the world – as we observed in the 'wreckers boat' missiology of the premillennialist Dispensationalists – but as being saved in the world and for the sake of the world. Just as in the days of Noah it appeared foolishness, even offensive to some, for him to be building an ark while there wasn't the slightest indication that a flood is coming. In the same way participating in building the kingdom of God by means of living a godly life in imitation of Christ in a sinful world may appear foolishness and even offensive to some. Nevertheless, just as Noah warned people of the coming flood and encouraged them to join him in the ark, so God's people ought to proclaim that God has set aside a day in which he will judge the world and therefore we cannot continue to live in ignorance and folly but should repent and turn to Christ (Acts 17:30-31).

Just as in the days of Noah the evil of the present is of a temporary nature and is soon to be wiped out by the final judgement of God. In the meantime the sense of the battle is for the hearts and minds of people so that they may repent and be saved. It is a matter of people still being given a chance to hear the good news of salvation and the kingdom of God. All power and authority is already with Christ, therefore, we need to go into the world and spread the good news (Mt. 28:18-20). Attributing too much power to Satan and his demons, as if they can undo God's will through their power and actions, is a denial of the reality of Christ's victory and of his present superior position, power and authority above the powers (Eph. 1:20-22). Such a denial does not just make people unnecessarily worried or fearful but it has other inherent dangers. We have seen in our survey of church history that once Christianity

embraces extra biblical ideas concerning Satan and the demonic world it often results in violence and abuse. Sometimes this violence and abuse is introvert in that it affects only the one who is too preoccupied with Satan's power as people suffer fear, depression and even delusions, and/or resort to various forms of ascetism, self-mutilation or other unwholesome activities. However, too often the fear of Satan and his demons have prompted people to external violence as illustrated by violence against other religions and heretics in the Middle Ages, the witch hunts of the 16th and 17th century in Europe and those common in Southern Africa in present times<sup>179</sup>.

### **6.8.3. The need for a contextual approach to spiritual warfare in Christian Mission**

The way forward for a contextual Evangelical approach to spiritual warfare with the powers is that we must reject both the fanciful speculation of the Middle Ages, as well as the demythologizing of the modern era, and return to a biblical understanding of Satan, the demons and spiritual warfare. Such an approach carefully reflects on the lessons of history and seeks to be both biblically faithful and contextually relevant in the context in which we theologize and minister today. History also has shown the dangers of Christianity being used and adapted to suit a political or nationalist agenda as is for example the case with the crusades of the Medieval era, the attacks on Zürich by Roman Catholic cantons shortly after the Protestant Reformation (Renwick & Harman 1999:119). We may also think of the way British colonial powers in Zimbabwe made use of Christianity and Christian missionary work to gain control of the valuable lands and lord it over the local population (Vambe 1970:135). We have also observed how the American political right has made use of SLSW for its political agenda as we observed above. We must therefore be very self-critical when we construct a spiritual warfare theology for today and ask ourselves: 'Whose interests are we consciously or sub-consciously promoting?' It is imperative that we interact with the wider hermeneutical community when we construct our theology so as to limit our biases. With this in mind we should avoid satanic conspiracy theories, avoid promoting political and nationalist interests, and first and foremost base our theology and practice on Christ and his Gospel, the teaching and practices endorsed by the church in the New Testament, and be further informed by biblical theology, historical theology as well as contemporary theology.

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<sup>179</sup> See chapter 7 of this thesis

It is important to keep in mind that Biblical demonology does not put the sole responsibility for sin and evil with the Devil and the demons. They are identified as the ultimate source of evil inspirations, temptations and illusions, but it is the human agent who is held responsible by God for preferring darkness above the light (Jn. 3:19ff). The Bible shows that much (natural) evil is simply the result of the fall (Gen. 3) which led to creation being in bondage to decay, weakness, suffering, sickness and death, including our own bodies, until salvation is fully consummated (Rom. 8:18-27). While Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve precipitated natural evil, he has no power over it, God is the one who subjected creation to this bondage to natural evil and decay in the hope of future liberation (Rom. 8:20-21), not unlike a parent may subject his children to punishment with the aim of freeing them from bad behaviour and worse consequences. At the same time Scripture makes human beings solely responsible for moral evil. Regardless of the speculations of inter-testamental Judaism, which at times ascribed moral evil to the activities of demons, making humans almost helpless victims, Christ puts the responsibility back on humankind's shoulders when he states that all moral evils come from the human heart (Mt. 15:18-19). This is equally true in the context of Malawi in which I work where moral evil and other evils are often uncritically ascribed to the activities of evil supernatural powers. The remedy for moral evil is to become a disciple of Christ who lived a life of sacrificial caring love for God and for humankind. Evil is overcome by a lifestyle of goodness inspired by godly self-giving love. However, given the condition of the human heart, only an act of God, a regeneration by the Holy Spirit, can change our wicked hearts and produce the fruit of true love (Gal. 5:22). Being born-again, is then not so much a one-time event resulting from making the right confession, but an ongoing process of regeneration, being transformed in mind and heart by the Spirit of God who teaches us to love all, even our enemies, and overcome evil by doing good (Rom. 12:1ff; Gal. 5:22-23).

The central figure in New Testament demonology is the triumphant Christ in whose authority we can go into all the world as witnesses of the Gospel, calling people to faith and repentance, and teaching them in the ways of Christ, making disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:18-20). It is in his power that we can stand strong and courageous when confronted by evil in the world (Eph. 6:10) and continue to hold out the word of truth (Eph. 6:17), for the salvation of everyone who believes. From a biblical point of view we can recognize any spirit and power opposed to Christ and his teachings as from the Devil and his demons.

Christ saves us from the Devil and consequently the Devil seeks to draw our focus away from Christ in any way possible (Russell 1977:239; 1981:35ff). We must therefore be alert (1 Pet. 5:8). Yet Satan and the demons are not to be feared excessively, nor do we need to look for sophisticated weaponry, for he and his demons are defeated enemies, disarmed on the cross (Col 2:15) and can be easily resisted in Christ's power (Eph. 6:10ff; James 4:7). We are not so much confronted by impressive demonic power and weaponry, they are already defeated and disarmed. However, though disarmed by Christ, Christian theology throughout history has affirmed that Satan retains his intelligence and consequently we are confronted by his cunning lies, deception and delusions. These lies and deceptions do not only affect individuals, leading to individual sin and evil, but can lead whole people groups and nations astray after false gods and ideologies and result in collective sin and evil, as in the case of Nazism, Apartheid, tribalism in Rwanda and the Balkan. However, as we have observed in church history, Christians and the church can also be led astray by false beliefs and ideologies, which calls for humility and careful biblical reflection on all that we believe, tolerate and do.

To confront the Devil no human weapons are needed or special spiritual technology, but the truth of the word of God spoken, applied and lived out in love for God and humankind is all that is needed. This was illustrated by Christ when he was tempted in the desert (Luke 4:1-13) where he did not simply speak the word of God to the Devil, but also lived and acted in obedience to the truth of God's word. The truth sets free, it brings freedom, with Christ being the most perfect witness of God's truth in word, lifestyle and deed. The phrase "what would Jesus do" is not just a popular phrase, but a truly Christian call for careful reflection, contemplation and imitation of Christ. In the case of individuals being influenced, deluded, harassed by demons to a point that they are virtually in control, we can on the basis of Christ's authority and power tell them to leave their victims. At the same time counselling and instruction is needed so that the delusions, lies and false teachings they promoted can be demolished in the light of the knowledge of God, making every thought obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-6).

However, one should not rush into exorcism, as living in a fallen world means that there are also many psychiatric and psychological disorders which may appear to be the work of demons, yet may have physical causes. Such disorders may be genetically determined or be

the result of neurological problems, or of a chemical imbalance in the human body. They could also be the result of psychological problems or trauma (Twelftree 1985:135-170). By referring to possible natural causes I do not mean that everything should be explained in naturalistic terms. However, as Scripture does not attribute all illness to demonization, whether mental or not, and also allows for natural causes and natural treatment. When Timothy suffered from stomach problems, Paul did not try to cast out a demon of sickness, but he suggested that Timothy take some wine (1 Tim. 5:23). It is therefore prudent to be cautious before concluding that an affliction is demonic. This is not to exclude the possibility that Satan and his demons may capitalise on such physical and psychological weaknesses as well. From a pastoral point of view, and also because we do not always have the discernment to know whether there is some demonic influence involved, it is always good to pray for deliverance from evil, for God's protection and help, while at the same time give any natural treatment available.

In the case of psychological and psychiatric afflictions there also may not be a clear dividing line between demonization and such disorders. As Satan is the father of lies and a master of deception it is plausible to assume that by means of such means he could literally drive a person to despair and madness. Saul's mental affliction may well have been partly due to natural causes and partly due to delusions inspired by the evil spirit that is mentioned in Scripture (1 Sam. 19:10). We must be careful to avoid an either/or mentality when it comes to spiritual and natural causes of affliction, misfortune and problems, often it may be both/and. I personally believe that demonization of individuals as described in the Bible can be explained in terms of pathological thought patterns which influence and control someone's mind which are ultimately inspired by Satan and his demons. In some severe instances of demonization someone's mind may be so influenced by demonically inspired thought patterns that Satan and the demons literally speak through such a person as we see often happening in the gospels (cf. Mark 1:23-26; 3:11-12; 5:1-20). However, all people are subject to thoughts inspired by the devil and his demons and if they believe them and act upon them may do the devil's bidding as in the case of Peter when he opposed Christ's impending suffering, death and resurrection (Mt. 16:23). Consequently we need to be alert and resist any thoughts opposed to Christ and his teachings (2 Cor. 10).

In a similar manner demonically inspired thought patterns may take the form of false beliefs or ideologies. When people believe in these ideologies and act upon them institutions, people groups, indeed whole societies can be considered partially demonized. In this respect, Wink's definition of exorcism as an act of deliverance of a person, institution or society from its bondage to evil is helpful (Wink 1986:59). Nevertheless, while in Scripture exorcism from individuals often included a word of command from Christ or his followers that the evil spirit must leave a person, there is no indication at all in Scripture that the same can be done with institutions, people groups and societies. In fact there is not a single occurrence in the whole of Scripture where demons are exorcised in this manner from more than one person at a time. While in some Christian circles individual exorcism is often rushed into and is the order of the day, we see that both Christ and the church in the New Testament were much less focused on exorcism and gave primacy to proclamation and teaching. It is significant that the apostle Paul who had a lot of experience with exorcism, did not rush into exorcizing the demon that was troubling the slave girl in Philippi. Instead, Paul focused on his preaching and teaching ministry. It is only after a few days that Paul commands the spirit to come out of the girl (Acts 16:16-18). Paul's practice is in line with his teaching. Throughout the Pauline epistles Paul talks about people getting free from the power of Satan through the preaching of the Gospel (2 Cor. 2:14-17; Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 1:13-14). The Gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom.1:16-17). In Paul's mind it is the bringing of the message of salvation to the ends of the earth that the most important act of spiritual warfare (Acts 14:47).

The proclamation of Christ and his gospel is in a way an act of exorcism, for when people respond to the gospel they are transferred from being bound under the influence of the kingdom of darkness to becoming part of the kingdom of Christ (Eph. 2:1-6). This is not just a matter of human endeavour; it is part of the work of the Holy Spirit as he empowers us in being witnesses of Christ (Acts 1:8). In the context of his teaching in *Ephesians 6* on spiritual warfare with the demonic forces, Paul's focus is also on the standing firm against temptations of the devil in faith and righteous living, together preaching the Gospel fearlessly. The Gospel and truth of Christ is the sword of the spirit (Eph. 6:17, 19-20). It is also significant that in none of the epistles of Paul, nor of the other apostles, do we find any exhortation to exorcism in the form of casting out demons from individuals. While exorcism took place in the ministry of Christ and of the apostles, it appears to have been peripheral rather than at the core of their warfare against Satan. Not superior wisdom or

power overcomes the kingdom of Satan, but the spirit of God is at work through the preaching of Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23), and yet in the midst of this apparent weakness and folly, God's wisdom and power is revealed unto the salvation of those who believe.

It is in being witnesses to Christ and His Gospel, in word and deed, in a lifestyle of Christ-like love, that the devil is overcome (Eph. 5:1-2). The devil's work in sin, evil and enmity is countered by doing good (Rom 12:20-21), blessing those who persecute us and loving our enemies (Mt. 5:44-45). It is by living Christ-like lives, as sheep among wolves, that God's power is revealed. It is in living a godly lifestyle in imitation of Christ and in holding out the word of life (Eph. 5:1ff; Phil. 2:14-16) that we are shining stars in a dark world and demonstrate that the kingdom of God has broken through. The very existence of a body of committed believers is a living sign that Satan is defeated and Christ rules. It is a vivid reminder that the night of darkness engulfing the world is almost over and total liberation of all of creation is at hand (Rom. 8:18-25). Therefore, compelled not by power or might, nor by the desire to win and dominate, but in humility and love we hold out the truth, inviting others to join our procession in following Christ. In love we hold out the truth of Christ and His kingdom to individuals, people groups, institutions and societies, exposing what belongs to the kingdom of darkness (Eph. 5:11-13) and promoting what belongs to the kingdom of Christ. We do this not from a position of the strong warrior with superior weaponry, but rather as unarmed emissaries, ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20), whose only 'weapons' are their words, the message they carry, through which God implores the world of humanity to be reconciled to Him.

In the process of being witnesses we may be persecuted and even be ambassadors in chains (Eph. 6:20). Yet, because of the importance of our ministry of reconciliation we are encouraged to patiently endure suffering, hardship, ridicule and danger, as sheep among the wolves, knowing that in the end God will work out all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28-39). We are weak and yet in spite of our frailty we are carrying a treasure, the message of salvation (2 Cor. 4:7-18; 5:14-15). In spite of our very weakness, we are also instruments of God's judgement on earth. We are a fragrance of life for those who respond to the Gospel as they witness it in our lives, words and actions. Unfortunately, we are also a

fragrance of death for those who prefer evil and darkness instead goodness and light (John 3:16-21; 2 Cor. 2:14-16).

To Satan and his demonic powers our very existence as sheep among wolves is a vivid reminder that Christ is victor and that their doom is near. spiritual warfare then is about caring love, the teaching of the truth of Christ and his gospel and the overcoming evil by good. It is not a matter of being fascinated with supernatural power. spiritual warfare as part of Christian mission is then a matter of being motivated by God's love to live a Christ-like life, and from that basis preach and teach the truth of the Gospel in love. This love is not abstract or philosophical, but it is practical, shown in kindness, gentleness, self-control, peace, patience, joy, self-giving, humility, forgiveness, longsuffering and other practical expressions and acts of goodness (1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22). This way of self-giving, sacrificial love may appear weak and vulnerable, yet it is powerful and uncompromising, as it refuses to accommodate anything that is contrary to Christ and His teaching, but exposes evil for what it is, regardless of the consequences. The early Christians gave a good example of this when they obeyed the government of the time but also refused to participate in any activities or rituals which recognized the emperor as divine (Alderson 1997:10-11). They also refused to stop preaching Christ when the (religious) authorities considered it offensive (Acts 5:27-40). In love for Christ and their neighbour they obeyed the government, but the moment the government required obedience which compromised obedience and love for God, the early Christians were uncompromising and willing to suffer the consequences of their loyalty to God.

In the same way we must resist evil in society today by living godly lives of Christ-like love, but also by preaching the truth. This includes unmasking falsehood and evil and expose it (Eph. 5:11). Whether it is in a family setting, church, business, organization or society, we must refuse to participate in what is evil and promote what is good in the light of Christ and his teachings even in the face of opposition. In this way we are a salt and light in the world, resisting decay and making the darkness flee (Mt. 5:13-16). In this approach to spiritual warfare there is no place for the Christian to wield any other weapon but that of the spirit, namely, the word of God, wielded in love. Love does not kill one's enemies, but seeks to win them over by kindness and goodness.



To the millions of people who live in fear of the spirits, demons and other supernatural powers, the Gospel is good news to the powerless, for Christ has defeated the powers and openly exposed their weakness and disarmed them. In this way, the Gospel is a powerful weapon for it takes the sting out of the fear of supernatural evil for those who embrace the victory of Christ over the powers: 'Death where is your victory' (1 Cor. 15:55), 'if God is for us who can stand against us' (Rom. 8:31). With Paul we can then be convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities.....nor any created thing can ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 8:38-39). We may be spiritually powerless and subject to sin and evil by virtue of our fallen human nature, but God's power is revealed in Christ and his Gospel and He is the head of the church and fills her with His presence (Eph. 1:18-23). By faith we can partake in Christ's victory over the powers and instead of being subject to them, being blinded by sin and evil (Rom. 2:1-5), we can through Christ sit above them in the heavenly realms so we can fearlessly live a life of good works in the midst of an evil world (Eph. 2:6-10). If by faith we belong to Christ, God's plans for our lives cannot be thwarted, for if God is with us, who can be against us (Rom. 8:28-39)? Any spiritual warfare theology needs to emphasise the biblical truths as outlined above and incorporate these truths in word and deed or it may become a hetero-orthodox theology which either overemphasizes Satan's power and fosters fear and uncertainty, or neglects Satan's power to the point that we may deny his existence and no longer being alert, we may easily be led astray by the sins and evils he promotes. Wagner's SLSW fails to emphasize the biblical teachings concerning the powers and their defeated state. At the same time it has incorporated many extra-biblical concepts and beliefs which serve other interests than those of Christ. Finally, upon closer scrutiny the epistemological foundations of SLSW are flawed as it is established on the basis of Wagner's assumed apostolic authority rather than biblical teaching. On these and other grounds we must reject Wagner's SLSW as a strategy for Christian mission in Africa and anywhere else in the world.

## CHAPTER 7

### SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN MISSION IN MALAWI

#### 7.1. The Need for a contextually relevant approach to witchcraft in Malawi

All over the world, particularly in the so-called third-world or developing world, but also elsewhere, many people are aware of the existence of supernatural evil and they seek protection and deliverance. The African continent is not an exception and probably most of its people understand evil supernatural powers as the main threat to human prosperity and health in the present (Morris 1987:191ff; Pretorius et al.1987:127). The country in which I live and minister, Malawi, is not an exception. On a weekly basis there are articles in the newspapers about witchcraft, Satanism, magic and demonic activity.<sup>180</sup> While some beliefs may appear to be irrational and can be partially explained by science, not all events can be explained away scientifically.

We have observed earlier in this study that the Bible affirms the existence of supernatural evil in the form of Satan and demons. They are the source of inspiration behind all kinds of evils such as sinful temptations, heresy, false beliefs and ideologies which lead to oppressive and dehumanising structures in society and so forth. Therefore, from a biblical understanding we should affirm some of the Malawian cultural understandings of supernatural evil where they agree with biblical teaching. Nevertheless, we cannot accommodate the cultural or religious background of the people we minister to in Malawi to the extent that their context dictates to us what we should or should not believe. Scripture, not culture, must dictate our theology. At the same time, theology in order to be contextually relevant needs to respond to the issues and dynamics of the host culture and so in a sense culture does at least partially dictate the theological agenda. From an Evangelical point of view Contextualization is a dynamic process of the Church's reflection on the interaction of the Text as Word of God and the context as a specific human situation in obedience to Christ and His mission in the world

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<sup>180</sup> For example Malawi News, vol. 45, no. 2801 of July 28-August 3, 2007, pp. 1,3.

(Nicholls 1987:101). However, in as much as theology needs to be contextualized in order to be relevant, we must avoid the kind of relativism which assumes that the Biblical teachings are not supra cultural and universal and that the context determines both content and form of local theology. Such a dogmatic contextualism assumes that contextual biases, either in Scripture or in contemporary theological reflection preclude any form of objectivity (Dembsky 1994). Such an approach would be false contextualization or contextualism rather than genuine contextualization of the gospel and biblical teaching (Bosch 1991:428). However, an equally false approach to contextualization would be the dogmatising, absolutizing and universalising of one's own particular theology and impose this upon people living in another context. In essence this is what Wagner does when he presents his SLSW as a God-given universal solution to overcoming resistance to the gospel in various parts of the world. Hiebert, coming from an Evangelical background, identifies three steps in critical contextualization (1994:88ff):

- (1) Exegeting the culture
- (2) Exegeting Scripture
- (3) Calling the people to make a critical response as they evaluate their cultural customs in light of their new biblical understandings.

However, this process should not be done by foreign missionaries for the local believers, but rather should be undertaken by foreign missionaries together with the local believers, whereby it is primarily up to the latter to evaluate and respond to their cultural beliefs and customs in the light of their new found understandings. In fact, from a Biblical understanding all Christians are called to participate in God's mission to the world (Mt. 28:18-20). Also Scripture affirms the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Therefore, contextualization should involve both foreign and local missionaries in a given context. We must also be careful not to take culture as only referring to traditional culture but rather take culture in a very broad sense as referring to all assumptions, beliefs, knowledge, norms, and values in a context, which may be expressed in behaviour, attitudes, language, dress, customs, rituals, art, religion as well as socio-economic and political structures. Consequently, when we talk of customs, we must go beyond the concept of traditional customs and look at all behavioural patterns and practices in a context. Nevertheless, in this study have I singled out the problem of the fear of witchcraft in Malawi as a major contextual

problem which has been brought to my attention on hundreds of different occasions in Malawi. Many Malawian pastors, church leaders and ordinary church members have pointed out to me that they feel that missionaries, pastors and theologians have not dealt with this issue properly in both past and present and that they still live their lives in fear of witchcraft and of evil spirits. That witchcraft and fear of witchcraft is a serious problem in Africa has also been acknowledged by African theologians in other African contexts (Khathide 2007:340-341). However, to my knowledge the problem of the fear witchcraft in modern Malawi has not been the subject of much theological reflection and certainly not among Evangelicals. The few Charismatic/Pentecostal works I came across dealt with the subject superficially and also contain a lot of speculation about the spirit world (Child s.a.; Child s.a. A; Howard 2001). However, the main reason I single out the problem of the fear of witchcraft is that it is an area where Wagner's SLSW will do more harm than good.

## **7.2. The problem of the fear of witchcraft**

In the context of Malawi, as well as in other African contexts, witchcraft is not clearly defined but broadly speaking it refers to magical power used by human beings to inflict harm on other human beings by supernatural means. There is little use in trying to distinguish between witchcraft and sorcery as some have tried as these terms are often used interchangeably (Khathide 2007:338-339; Westerlund 1985:37). It is nevertheless generally agreed by anthropologists and sociologists that witchcraft is one of the most enduring and pervasive elements of African traditional religion (Isichei 2004:285). However, most African traditional religions are not constructed around magic (Westerlund 1985:37) but focus on ancestor veneration (Zahan 1974:1). It is, therefore, better to view witchcraft beliefs and practices as a pseudo-religion alongside the 'official' religion (Van Bruegel 2001:271-272). Nevertheless, witchcraft is an important and widespread concept in African religious beliefs (Isichei 2004:281). Among the Shona of Southern Zimbabwe any kind of misfortune can be attributed to witchcraft, but most frequently sickness and death (Daneel 1971:168-169). The same I have observed among the Lomwe and Chewa peoples of Southern Malawi. Consequently the fear of witchcraft is pervasive in society and also affects Christians (Van Bruegel 2001:211). Natural explanations as well as human anxiety, negligence and other human weaknesses are routinely overlooked in favour of supernatural explanations (Oosthuizen 1979:9).

Since everyone is potentially a witch or wizard, the fear of witches creates an environment of mutual suspicion, envy and hatred. Whenever thoughts of witchcraft arise, human relations are at stake, and people are liable to be badly hurt (Bourdillon 2002:12). In recent years witch hunts in Africa, often led by westernised Africans, resulted in the punishment and even execution of people who were innocent of the witchcraft charges against them (Hayes 1995:339; Isichei 2004:285). There are many press reports from Malawi and other Southern African countries which reflect such happenings (BBC 2004; CSFC 2006; Kandiero 2007a, Nkosi 2007; Stickler 2005). In Malawi I came across a 6 year old little boy who is slightly retarded due to lack of oxygen at birth. Consequently, he is often a source of disruption in class. His teachers at the primary school in Namiyango in Blantyre interpreted his disruptive behaviour as proof that the boy is a wizard and publicly accused, humiliated and scolded him (Kyangira 2008). This is just one example of dozens that I encountered personally during Christian ministry in Malawi. In other parts of Africa we find many similar cases (Bigirimana 2002:3ff). Witchcraft and allegations of witchcraft have also played a role in rebellions, fighting wars, gaining independence and is often a prominent issue at election time (BBC 2005). As such we can agree with Mbiti and other African theologians that the fear of witchcraft is a serious African problem (Westerlund 1985:35-36).

It is not only the poor, the uneducated and the rural Malawians who live in fear of witchcraft. The same fear is prevalent among well to do Malawians. They commonly fear that those who are poor will try to bewitch them out of envy and jealousy. Consequently there is also a strong felt need for protection against supernatural evil among modern Africans. Regardless of their official religious adherence, people still feel the need to protect themselves against supernatural evil and often resort to magical means. Traditionally the diviner prescribed magical medicines (*mankhwala*) or charms for protection against supernatural evil (Soko 2002:19; Van Bruegel 2001:222-223; 230-231). Many urbanised Malawians also obtain charms from the *diviner* but this is found less among those who embraced Christianity and have become fearful of traditional charms (Kyangira 2007).

The fear of witchcraft is a disturbing factor in Malawian society and is leading to all kinds of excesses. Several people were convicted by the courts in Malawi on the basis of witchcraft

allegations by children and the testimony of a diviner (Phiri 2007). Another recent case is that of a 72 year old woman who was convicted of having killed a 14 year old through witchcraft (Kandiero 2007). Another old woman was accused of teaching witchcraft to small children and beaten up severely with a metal rod and the newspaper article commented that many under 10s have come forward in the media with claims that they had been practicing witchcraft under the spells of 'teachers' (Nkawihe 2006:2). A man in Ntchisi was put behind bars for 5 years after being accused of flying on a magic plane; in his ruling the magistrate referred to the allegations that children are being taught magic (Kandiero 2008:4). The recent witchcraft convictions in court are debated seriously in the Malawi legal fraternity (Sekeleza 2007), but too little is done to counter the public's fears and beliefs concerning witchcraft. Earlier the parliament's health and population committee ordered the national research council of Malawi to conduct a research on witchcraft following the confessions of children in the media (Kashoti 2006:3). Nevertheless, the focus of the media and the various debates are mostly on the amendment of the laws of Malawi so that it is made easier to send someone to jail for being a witch, there is too little emphasis, if any on the problems and dangers of witchcraft beliefs as a framework for interpreting reality.

Witch hunting is not limited to Malawi, it is a common phenomenon in Africa as in many developing societies and is very open to abuse and often a matter of scapegoating (Schoeneman 1975:529ff). Witchcraft allegations are rarely constructive and are usually an unwholesome way of resolving social tension (Bourdillon 1990:203-204, 212). The belief in the power of witchcraft and magic has led some people to defiant and criminal behaviour (Bourdillon 1990:194) as in the case of a Mchinji man who was arrested after cutting off his wife's private parts for the purpose of making a magical charm (Chisakasa 2007:1ff). There have been abundant other cases reported in the media in Malawi of murder and mutilation of people for preparation of charms, and while all parties, both secular and spiritual agree that such acts need to be severely punished by law (CSFC 2006; Kandiero 2007a, Nkosi 2007), many of the same parties have contributed to these acts by failing to question the witchcraft allegations and dubious confessions in the media and the underlying worldview or philosophy. The church in Malawi has generally supported rather than questioned public opinion concerning witchcraft as is evidenced by the way they handled alleged witchcraft cases (Mmane 2007). In the words of one newspaper reporter Malawi has indeed become a witchcraft-infested society where even the most incredulous reports are believed at face value

and reported in the media without thorough critical investigation (Chandilanga 2008:4-5). Consequently Malawian society continues to be in serious danger of an increase of violence, human rights abuses and often even murder in relation to witch hunting, as the old sayings rightly states 'evil thrives when good men do nothing'.

One of the major problem with witchcraft allegations is that they are often used to cover up all kinds of social tensions, power struggles, and other social problems, ranging from tension between gender, young and old, rich and poor, as well as tension due to tribalism, political differences and many other issues (Bigirimana 2002:4-8). This is not to deny that genuine witchcraft may occur. In all societies we may find some deviants who genuinely try to harm other by supernatural and other means (Bourdillon 2002:13). In that sense Idowu is right when he dismisses witchcraft as a perversion not worthy of serious theological reflection (Westerlund 1985:36). However, when large numbers of people are being accused of witchcraft, especially the elderly and the (mentally) disabled, as is currently the case in Malawi, such accusations reflect a serious problem in society (Bourdillon 2002:14). In Malawi, witchcraft fears, accusations and witch hunts may well represent the general feeling of socio-economic insecurity, unhappiness and helplessness in society. The rapid modernization of Malawian society has brought with it new socio-economic and political problems, this combined with inter-tribal ethnic tensions, adverse climatic conditions and natural disasters in the form of floods and droughts, may be the cause of a lot of frustration in society. As throughout the world witchcraft allegations proliferated in times of crisis and social tension (Bourdillon 1990:195) this may explain the recent revival of witchcraft beliefs and allegations in Malawi.

### **7.3. Various approaches in addressing the problem of the fear of witchcraft in Malawi**

#### **7.3.1. An evolutionary approach**

From a modernist 'evolution of religion' perspective we may understand human societies as evolving from the belief in ghosts and demons to a belief in God, and from spells and incantations to prayers (Cox 1965:22). Some anthropologists, sociologists and missiologists may therefore be inclined to view the problem of witchcraft as a normal and passing

phenomenon reflective of an intermediate stage in the transition from magic to religion. Such a view can be traced back to the influence of Max Weber's theory of the evolution from religion along the lines of magic to organized religion, and from organized religion to a scientific and secular worldview (Morris 1987). In Weber's thought the world would be gradually disenchanted in a process whereby magic and mystery is driven from the world and nature is managed rather than enchanted. In such a world the spiritual loses social significance and institutions and laws no longer depend on religion for legitimisation (Partridge 2004:39).

There is little doubt that modern Christianity has been a major secularising force in recent history, that is if we define secularisation in terms of disenchanting the world by the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols (Cox 1965:15). There is also little doubt that the developments we associate with western culture such as natural science, democratic political institutions and cultural pluralism could hardly have been developed without the contribution of Christianity (Cox 1965:31). However, whether this is a legitimate consequence of the biblical faith on history as Cox asserts (1965:31) rather than the product of modernist thought is a matter of debate. Nevertheless, the mixture of Christian theocratic thought combined with Western technocratic thought in much of Christian mission did promote 'secularisation' in non-western contexts as their cultures and religious beliefs were desacralized (Van Leeuwen 1964:251). Apart from the modernist influence, biblical monotheism has done a lot of 'secularisation' in its own right in biblical and church history as by nature it opposed and undermined magical thought. Monotheism and magical thought do not comfortably mingle. Frazer is probably right in his observation that the magician's presumption to control or influence higher spiritual powers, even God, would revolt any priest or practitioner of a religion which has an awesome sense of the divine majesty (Frazer 1969:34-35).

Christian mission in Africa has also been a secularising force, not only due to the nature of the biblical message but also because it was delivered together with western education, technological progress and modernist thought. This combination credited Christian mission with being the greatest secularising force in Africa (Samarin 1966:288ff). According to Kraft, Western Christianity as it was exported to Africa failed to deal with people as spiritual beings and did not properly address what they felt were their main spiritual problems (Kraft 2000).



The fear of witchcraft is a major spiritual issue which appears not to have been addressed effectively. Many Western missionaries and theologians simply ignored the issue and considered it as something which would naturally die out as Africans embrace Christianity and Western civilization (Isichei 2004: 286; Khathide 2007:340-342). The colonial governments voiced similar sentiments but as witchcraft accusations and witch trials caused so much death and injury, they outlawed the traditional witch hunting and punishing of alleged witches (Isichei 2004:285). For example the witchcraft act of Malawi of 1911 prohibits any witchcraft trials by means of the *muabvi* poison ordeal or any other ordeal which is likely directly or indirectly to result in the death of or bodily injury to any person (LOM 1911:7:02.2). The same act among other things prohibits accusing people of witchcraft and outlaws the profession of witchfinder or witchdoctor (LOM 1911:7:02.8).

Many African theologians appear to have been influenced by secular Western thought, probably due to their Western oriented education. It is interesting to note that apart from a special conference in Ghana on the topic of witchcraft (Verkuyl 1955:385), African theologians generally have shown little interest in the matter (Westerlund 1985:36). Idowu simply dismisses the matter as the kind of perversions which can be found in any religion. Nevertheless, in spite of the belief of many African theologians in the reality and power of witchcraft they did not come up with viable solutions (Westerlund 1985:38). However, considering the gradual disenchantment of the world as a normal evolutionary process, or considering witchcraft as a perversion, it does not take away the fact that in the Malawian context people live in real fear of witches. According to Mbiti the fear of bad magic and witchcraft is perhaps one of the most disturbing elements in African life (Westerlund 1985:36-37).

The West which has been more secularised than the African context is currently experiencing a revival of alternative spiritualities, including the belief in witchcraft. In as much secularisation and disenchantment has shaped Western society, religion and spirituality has turned out to be resilient and able to reinvent itself (Partridge 2004:56-59). If this can happen in the highly secularised West, there is little hope that the belief in witchcraft and the resulting fear of witchcraft will disappear by itself in Malawi. Obviously education and secularisation are not enough. We may also consider that in the African context the concept

of witchcraft and the African traditional religions have been co-existing for centuries. However, where in the modern context, African traditional religions are losing their significance in the lives of many Africans, the belief in witchcraft is not only resilient, it is actually on the rise (Isichei 2004:281). Due to the belief in witchcraft people in Africa have a strong felt need for spiritual power to overcome the power of witchcraft and to ensure fertility, health, prosperity, and security (Kraft 2000).

Finally, in as much as Christianity by its monotheistic nature tends to ‘secularise’, at least in the sense of opposing and exposing magical thought and idolatry, this should not be overstretched to the point that we embrace total secularisation as the legitimate consequence of the biblical faith (Cox 1965:31). Partial secularisation may be natural and even biblical whenever Christianity encounters magical thought as in the case of witchcraft beliefs. But, if the content of Christianity itself is secularised, desacralized and demythologised, it loses all plausibility in the consciousness of its adherents (Berger 1980).

### **7.3.2. The approach of African Pentecostalism**

In the African traditional religions found in Malawi, the fear of witchcraft led people to employ the services of a diviner (*sing'anga*). The diviner is believed to have the spiritual power and ability to sniff out the witch or wizard who caused the misfortune and therefore holds the enormous power to accuse or acquit someone of witchcraft (Soko 2002:19-20). The significance and power of the traditional diviner was not lost on African Christian leaders and some of them ‘christianized’ and usurped the role of the traditional diviner. Similar developments have occurred among the African initiated churches (AIC’s) such as the Aladura and Zionists as well as Afro-Pentecostal churches (Hoskins 2004:49-50; Oosthuizen 1979:1ff; 6ff). While in the African traditional religions there is no devil-concept, due to the influence of Christianity, witchcraft is now often linked with the Devil and his demons (Khathide 348-349).

In Malawi many Pentecostal pastors and other Charismatic leaders have become ‘christianised’ diviners who by means of supernatural revelation diagnose illnesses and reveal

hidden sins (Strohbehn 2005:55-56). This may be considered part of legitimate contextualization and certainly does meet a felt need in Malawi. However, when the same method is used to sniff out the witches and sorcerers innocent people can easily be accused and punished as there are no other criteria but the revelation received by the 'prophet'. The well documented life and ministry of the 'Christian' spiritual healer *Nehimi Chikanga* is a good example of such a christianised diviner and witch finder (Soko 2002). In some parts of Africa such 'Christian' witch hunting has gone totally out of hand and led to torture and murder (Bourdillon 2002:11). A Charismatic leader can use his position and power to name and shame people and even publicly accuse people of witchcraft without any evidence (Hoskins 2004:59). This is a powerful means of social control which instils fear in church members and keeps them behaving well, unfortunately it can also be used to perpetrate all kinds of abuses (Hoskins 2004:59). Another problem from a theological point of view is that the alleged 'supernatural insight' of the pastor, prophet or other Charismatic leader takes the place of the Bible as the source of revelation (Oosthuizen 1979:22).

Nevertheless, many Malawian Christians are attracted to Pentecostal forms of Christianity precisely because they address felt needs such as the need for healing, the need for prosperity and most importantly the need to overcome the supernatural evil which may prevent healing and prosperity in life (Strohbehn 2005:56-60). Exorcisms, protective prayers and various forms of spiritual warfare are used to overcome the spiritual powers who prevent health, wealth and success in life (Schofield 2003:121). At the same time these obstacles are often believed to have been put in their way by jealous, envious or plain evil human agents who use witchcraft against other people. This emphasis differs with that of Paul in the New Testament who emphatically states that our battle is not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). In its confrontation with supernatural evil the traditional African focus has always been on the human agent who has been the instrument by which such evil affected the community. As several African theologians have pointed out, the witch is the human embodiment of evil and takes the place of the devil in the African context (Khathide 2007:344). Another problem is that the traditional preoccupation with overcoming spiritual obstacles to one's health, wealth and prosperity has close affinity with the health, wealth and prosperity Gospel of Hagin, Copeland and others (Perriman 2003:30-45; Pretorius et al. 1987:127). Its focus is predominantly on material success and often ignores Christ's demands of discipleship, of

carrying one's cross, of faithful humble obedience and trust in Christ in the midst of suffering and hardship. In such an environment Christ is easily reduced to becoming a means to an end. Christ then becomes the means to bring about prosperity, rather than being Lord and God who is to be followed. A Roman Catholic missionary in Malawi described it as follows: 'Today some seek prosperity, while others seek protection, but what Christ offers is "not as the world gives"' (Schofield 2003:123). It is understandable that spiritual warfare in such a context is also understood as a means to overcome spiritual obstacles to health, wealth and prosperity. Unfortunately such a pseudo-Gospel also strengthens the traditional fear of supernatural evil and confirms the traditional belief that witchcraft is at the root of all suffering (Van Bruegel 2001:230).

Many Pentecostal leaders play an ambiguous role in Malawi. On the one hand they rightly emphasize that Christ is more powerful than Satan and the demons by means of public exorcisms. This does meet the felt need among the Malawian people for power and protection against supernatural evil. On the other hand they often unquestioningly accept all that the alleged demonized people or former witches and Satanists confess. In addition they publicize these things in the media thereby validating and reinforcing the traditional fear of witchcraft. By uncritically reinforcing the fear of witchcraft the church may be an agent of fear, mistrust and hatred rather than an agent of liberation, love and peace. One regularly finds media reports by Pentecostal exorcists who eagerly spell out the details they got from those they exorcized. There is for example the confession of a Pentecostal convert that he magically turned his t-shirt into an owl and used to steal and carry cattle hidden magically in a towel (Chibaya 2007:15). Also a certain pastor Loyce Kamunidi reported the story of a 5 year old boy who (allegedly) killed his two sisters through witchcraft. Other widely published stories include the report of the 8 year old boy who confessed that he was 50 million kwacha in debt to Satanists for the human blood he allegedly drank when introduced to the cult (ST 2006a). The Charismatic Roman Catholic bishop Thomas Msusa of Zomba also revealed chilling witchcraft confessions by children aged 3 to 10 years (Mmana 2007:1,3). These and other similar widely published stories led to scores of children confessing that they had been taught in witchcraft nursery schools and 'revealing' that they had been sent by neighbors and family friends to kill others by means of magic (Chandilanga 2008:4). The danger of such

unverified anecdotes is that they lead to both an excessive fear of the Devil and the demonic and continue to reinforce the traditional fear of witchcraft.

It appears that the 'christianisation' of witchcraft beliefs, divination and other related concepts has done little to reduce the fear of witchcraft and supernatural evil in the context of Malawi. In fact it appears to have further contributed to the current revival of such fears. In the history of the Christian church, similar mixtures of magical thought and Christian elements led to the execution of hundreds of thousands of innocent people for being witches, during the transitional period from a medieval magical worldview to a modern worldview (Jenkins 2004:223-226). It is a scenario that could happen in Malawi as well. Already there are examples of such contextualism having led to human rights abuses and other evils. For example in Uganda a healing and unifying society with the aim of overcoming witchcraft eventually became the infamous Lord's Resistance Army, well known for its cruelty and many atrocities (Clarke 2006:337-338).

### **7.3.3. Wagner's SLSW approach**

Wagner's SLSW has many similarities with the Christian-magical approach of African Pentecostalism and has reinforced it in various African contexts (Chiundiza 1991; Opoky 2008). This can probably be attributed to Wagner's incorporation of various insights from magical traditions around the world in SLSW. In the Malawian context of belief and fear of witchcraft, Wagner's SLSW is therefore likely to cause more harm than good. For example in Wagner's reports of a SLSW style battle with an alleged African witch Momma Jane, which resulted in the death of the witch (Wagner 1997a:86ff).

The story of Momma Jane affirms the existence of powerful witches and legitimises fighting against them. Wagner probably would not agree that witches should be tortured, imprisoned or killed, but his triumphant report that the witch Momma Jane died in the process affirms the common perception in Malawi that death is the proper punishment for such people. It certainly does not communicate much compassion, love and concern for the accused. Wagner's anecdote also affirms the traditional belief that spiritual battle is not only against the supernatural powers but also against human enemies. In Malawi not much love is lost on

anyone suspected of witchcraft. Consequently, SLSW will do little to counter the scapegoating of the elderly, the mentally retarded, foreigners and other social outcasts.

Wagner's SLSW is likely to reinforce the common perception that supernatural evil is extremely powerful and that only with special protection and weaponry one can overcome supernatural evil and their human agents. Such a magical worldview will foster fear, suspicion and mistrust rather than counter it. Wagner's SLSW may be accepted by some Christians in Malawi as offering more superior spiritual weaponry than the traditional exorcism and spiritual warfare methods but is unlikely to deal effectively with the underlying fear prevalent in Malawian society and its resultant social evils. Opoky discusses the 'witch-demonology' of African Pentecostalism in Ghana and also highlights the influence of Wagner's redefining of African ancestral spirits and deities as territorial demons (2008). After discussing the various aspects of such a 'witchdemonology' his final conclusion is that it cannot bring the African out of the fear of witchcraft (Opoky 2008).

In as far as social problems are concerned, SLSW reinforces the idea that powerful supernatural evil powers are the main cause of sin, misfortune, poverty, corruption and other social problems. The SLSW belief in the existence of powerful territorial demons can therefore easily be accepted in Malawi and become incorporated in the traditional witchcraft belief system. As in the case of the prevailing witchcraft beliefs, such an approach would cover or mask the real causes and human responsibility for such problems. Both the traditional witchcraft concept and SLSW provide a powerful distraction from the real causes of sin, poverty, inequality, corruption and other evils which dehumanise Malawians. The two concepts also downplay everyone's responsibility for what is happening in society. The Christian church should be at the forefront to address the evils that afflict society in a constructive manner and oppose the scapegoating of society's evils and frustrations upon a small, weak and marginalized minority who are labelled witches (Bourdillon 2002:11). However, at the same time there is need for a theological and pastoral response to the fear and anxiety found among the people.

#### **7.3.4. An alternative approach to the fear of witchcraft**

The fear of bad magic and witchcraft is perhaps one of the most disturbing elements in

African life (Westerlund 1985:36-37), including African life in Malawi. The Christian church in Malawi therefore needs to discuss and address the fear of witchcraft which holds its people in emotional and spiritual bondage. Neither ignoring the issue, nor absorbing and 'christianising' it, can effectively address this fear. We need to be a positive transformative power in society. From a pastoral point of view, counselling, prayers for protection and prayers of exorcism may be very helpful and alleviate some of the fears in individuals. However, we should discourage the use of a 'christianised' kind of 'divining' or 'diagnosing' of witches in the community. Both in Malawi and other African contexts this has often led to the accusation and punishment of innocent people (Bourdillon 2002:10-12). Theologically speaking we need to affirm the biblical teaching that the battle is not against flesh and blood, but that we wrestle with the spiritual powers. This is a crucial element, because otherwise we cannot counter the scapegoating mentality which blames all evil on the human witch.

In our teaching, preaching, bible study, HIV/Aids ministry, community service, relief work and counselling we must emphasize the biblical truths that Christ has overcome and disarmed the powers. This can be done by means of story telling, as well as in song and dance as this fits so well in the African context. Among African Christians the often ridiculed Nigerian Pentecostal movies which often address the themes of witchcraft, magic, Satan and spiritual warfare are hugely popular though not always true to Scripture (Meyer 2006). This may also be a useful method of addressing the fear of witchcraft among modern Africans. In terms of proclamation we may also change our emphasis from the Western emphasis on salvation from sin and guilt, to a more African emphasis on Christ bringing salvation from the demonic powers. Both are biblical truths but a spiritual liberation emphasis would certainly be more contextual. At the same time some measure of 'secularisation' needs to be done in terms of educating and explaining how some of the evils we encounter in the world have natural and material causes which can be addressed naturally. However, the natural does not need to rule out the spiritual and vice versa. For example if someone appears to suffer from Malaria we can both pray for the person, for protection from the evil one, for healing, but at the same time take them to the hospital to get treated as we affirm that God provides both supernaturally and naturally.

The fear of witchcraft also causes many Christians to participate in traditional religious practices that are less than wholesome. This participation is usually not from conviction, but is done out of fear. If one fails to participate in a certain ritual and misfortune befalls the family or community, the Christian may be accused of having caused it by failing to participate. For example non-participation in certain funeral rites can easily lead to witchcraft allegations which is also one of the greatest fears of any African person in Malawi for it can lead to isolation, sanctions, suspicion and punishment for being the witch who caused the death of the person who died (Van Bruegel 2001:223).

In spite of 75% of Malawians belonging to a Christian church (Amanze 2002:12), many harmful traditional cultural and religious practices<sup>181</sup> are still practiced by most of them. As I mentioned before, I believe many traditional beliefs and practices are compatible with scripture for in my understanding every religion and culture reflects divine elements and elements of human creativity and genius which can and should be affirmed. However, I also believe that every culture and religion has harmful and even evil elements due to human sinfulness but also due to the deceiving influence and inspiration of Satan and the demons. In Malawi we come across some harmful practices, particularly at puberty initiation rites, and in cases of illness, misfortune and death. Some of these practices are dangerous from a medical point of view but also potentially damaging from a psychological point of view. For example the ritual de-flowering of girls at their puberty initiation rites (Van Bruegel 2001:188fff) and the similar ritual for their male age-mates is dangerous in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The same applies in the case of the sexual cleansing of widows and widowers, and the practice of widow inheritance (Chimombo 2006:I). We can also include the sexual cleansing of those affected by a spiritual illness or unwanted spirit possession as in the case of the *Nantongwe* spirit possession ritual among the Lomwe (Nazombe 1988:18). Churches in Malawi, like their counter-parts in Africa, have responded in a variety of ways to such traditional cultural and religious practices, ranging from ignoring them, fighting them, substituting or even incorporating them (Chakanza 1995:37; Chingota 1995:8-13; Fiedler 2000:38-39). If the church in Malawi is to be a constructive transformative force it will have to address the fear of witchcraft which forces many believers to participate in harmful practices, and also suggest ways to transform such practices so that they still meet the

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<sup>181</sup> I actually do not want to distinguish too much between culture and religion in an African context as there is no clear dichotomy between the sacred and the secular in the traditional African context, and even in modern Africa this distinction is not all that clear.



underlying social and emotional needs but in a manner which is not harmful to the participants.

In addressing the fear of witchcraft we must be careful to avoid demonising all African traditional religious beliefs and practices. Pentecostals have at times uncritically understood ancestral spirits as demons (Strohbehn 2005:56). While such ‘demonising’ may be effective in the short-term in helping believers to sever ties with their traditional religions, in the long term it is usually not as it prevents all honest reflection on those things that are good and helpful in the traditional religions and were meeting important social, psychological and spiritual needs.

There is also need for the Christian church in Malawi to interact with the traditional concept of territorial spirits found among the Chewa peoples. Although the terminology is similar, the traditional understanding of territorial spirits is radically different from Wagner’s SLSW understanding. Whereas, Wagner considers territorial spirits to be demons who control nations through sin and evil, the Chewa understand them as benevolent guardians of the land who administer justice on behalf of God and who can approach God on their behalf in times of draught (Amanze 2002:147; Schoffeleers 1978:1ff; 160-161). Nevertheless, the introduction of world religions such as Christianity and Islam in Malawi as well as the influence of modernization has resulted in a significant decline of these territorial cults in Malawi and the Southern African region (Schoffeleers 1978:43; Strobehn 2005:124ff).

However, the decline of the territorial cults does not mean that we may not find valuable insights and resources in them for the contextualization of the gospel in Malawi. Unfortunately, SLSW by its aggressive and uncompromising stance towards other religions would prevent such an approach. We see a clear example of this in the case of Wagner’s disciple and former student Richmond Chiundiza in Zimbabwe (1991:121ff).

In Chiundiza’s contribution to one of Wagner’s first books on territorial spirits he redefines the Mhondoro, the spirits of the heroes Chaminuka, Kaguvi and Nehanda, as territorial demons (Chiundiza 1991:121ff). The Mhondoro are believed to be ancestral spirits of chiefly lineage that order natural things such as rain, wind, pests, diseases and other natural phenomena (Chandomba 1986:77). The Mhondoro are territorial spirits in the sense that area where its descendants live is under the spirit’s jurisdiction (Gelfand 1973:112-113), however

their rule is understood as benevolent. The territorial spirits were understood as playing a mediatory role between God and the people and as such they were highly regarded (Ncozana 2002:21). However, under the influence of Wagner, Chiundiza labels them territorial demons who rule Zimbabwe (Chiundiza 1991:123-124). Such an approach does not help the genuine contextualization of the gospel. As various African scholars have pointed out, in the African context the ancestors were never considered to be evil spirits (Khathide 2007:337).

In the Malawian context, the Chewa, Lomwe and Tumbuka tribes traditionally understood their territorial spirits as benevolent guardians of the land who administer justice on behalf of God and who can approach God on behalf of the people in times of draught (Amanze 2002:72ff, 147; Schoffeleers 1978:1ff; 160-161). As such from an Evangelical missiological point of view it may not be warranted to demonise such spirit beings. Evangelicals believe Paul's teaching that in nature the people of this world can see something of God's divine nature and his greatness (Rom. 1:19-23). He also teaches that non-Christians in their consciences naturally understand something about God's justice and moral requirements (Rom. 2:14-15). And while Evangelicals usually regard such general revelation is insufficient for salvation, all cultures and all religions are believed to reflect some of this divine knowledge. In addition there will be elements that reflect human creativity and as such indirectly the creator in whose image we have been created. Nevertheless, Evangelicals also affirm that all human beings are affected by sin, and blinded in their minds by the evil one so that each human culture and religion has sinful, evil, dehumanising elements which have been inspired by the devil. With this in mind we must avoid broad generalizations and rather do in-depth in-context research, careful biblical reflection, and theological evaluation before we pass any judgment on cultural and religious matters.

Ncozana, writing from the perspective of the *Tumbuka* tribe in Malawi writes 'Ancestors are not evil, neither are they saving powers, but they are loved departed lineages' (Ncozana 2002:180). Instead of labelling all traditional religious beliefs and practices as demonic, a better approach for the Malawian church will be to study how much of it actually agrees with biblical teaching and biblical concepts such as for example the concept of the mediator and the spiritual guardian. In this manner the church may consciously and deliberately incorporate and absorb many positive elements from the traditional religions and better meet both felt and real needs of the people. On the other hand such an approach will also help in

unmasking and exposing those elements that are negative and we can reflect on ways to transform these. For example an inherent xenophobia can be detected in the belief that alien spirits are evil. Only the ancestral spirit of one's own lineage is benevolent, but when an ancestral spirit possesses someone outside its own lineage, it is considered a malevolent power that will bring misfortune (Ncozana 2002:23). While this may have been a 'healing' process for the community to come to terms with the presence of foreigners (Ncozana 2002:24) it also reinforces suspicion of foreigners and contributes to xenophobia. This would be an area where the church can bring reconciliation and genuine healing by stressing the concept of Jew and Gentile, different nations, being brought together in one new caring family. Failure to enter into a genuine inter-religious dialogue with the traditional religions would result in missing out on tapping into valuable cultural resources, and at the same time miss out on a chance to transform those elements that are less positive, unchristian and dehumanising.

Most of the rain cults of Malawi and Zimbabwe and to a lesser extent Zambia and Tanzania, have been territorial in nature with a supreme deity or spirit such as Chisumphi, Mbona or Mwari in charge of the spirit world affairs in their particular constituency which, however, have a direct impact on people living in those territories, ecologically, socially, morally and religiously (Schoffeleers 1978:15ff). In the context of the territorial rain cults<sup>182</sup> of Malawi it is believed that sin, in the sense of social deviation, can anger the ancestral spirits so that they withhold the rains. When droughts occur they are usually attributed to instances of public immorality, particularly sins such as murder, incest and other forms of immoral behaviour (Amanze 2002:72ff; Schoffeleers 1978:5). In this context there is a clear link between human morality and the spirits who may be angered by human pride, jealousy and misbehaviour with dire consequences for the state of affairs in the territory, especially as the spirits may withhold rain fall which is so essential for an agricultural society. If in such a context we would demonise the territorial spirits and other ancestral spirits we overlook the fact that they play a constructive role in society in terms of preserving the environment, morality, peace and order. A better approach would be to present Christ as the fulfilment of all the roles played by the ancestors (Ncozana 2002:180ff). Ecologically we can present

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<sup>182</sup> The name 'rain cult' though commonly used is actually a misnomer as the territorial cults are concerned with much more than patterns of rainfall and have many ecological and social dimensions (Schoffeleers 1978:1ff), however, since rain fall is a foremost importance in a agro-based society it is inevitable that 'rain' and 'rain making' are dominant themes in the territorial cults of Malawi.

Christ as the ultimate guardian of the land as he is the one through whom and for whom all things were created, and he expects us to take good care of his creation. We can present Christ as the ultimate ancestor, the first born of all creation. We can present Christ as the mediator between God and humanity. We can present Christ as the powerful spiritual guardian who has all authority in heaven and on earth. We can present Christ as the embodiment of true morality and we can present Christ who brings peace, reconciliation and order to society based on mutual love. In this manner Christ enters into the experience of the Malawian and vice versa and an oasis is created in the spiritual desert, a safe haven in a hostile world, a foretaste of the kingdom of God which has come and is still coming.

The Christian church in Malawi also needs to identify the underlying social issues and tensions in Malawian society and culture which cause people to scapegoat other people as witches. The traditional fear of witchcraft and the tendency to ascribe all evils to witchcraft is only one part of the story. Why are so often the elderly, the orphans and the aliens singled out as witches? What kinds of frustrations are present in individuals and society as a whole which lead to the torture and often cruel methods of killing those that are accused of witchcraft? This needs more in-depth investigation so that the church can also prophetically address these areas and be a positive force for transformation as salt and light in the Malawian context.

The Christian church in Malawi also needs to critically examine its liturgy, the content of its songs, stories and sermons as well as the images which we emphasize. Oosthuizen has pointed out that the image of Christ as the good shepherd carrying a lamb does not appeal in Africa (Oosthuizen 1979:7). However, Christ the good shepherd who protects his sheep, even in valleys of darkness, and chases any spiritual predators may be a more appealing image. In soteriology we may want to stress Christ as the liberator from Satan and the demonic powers. It does not necessarily mean that other images and concepts should not be used at all, but we should emphasize those that are relevant to the context.

Also in Christian discipleship it is important to go beyond the usual Evangelical emphasis on personal piety and holy living. We also must talk openly about issues such as misfortune, sickness and death. These are issues faced by the believer and if they are not reflected upon biblically they will be reflected upon in unbiblical ways. It is necessary to affirm that the

Bible does acknowledge that illnesses, misfortune, temptation, heresy and other evils, may at times be the result of the work of evil spirits called demons. However, we must also stress that the Bible also acknowledges other explanations. In some instances we may discover that evil actually is the result of human error such as in the case of cholera or other diseases due to lack of proper hygiene. Acknowledging that we are also responsible for some of the evils in the world opens the door for change and improvement. At the same time we must stress such biblical truths as love, forgiveness and patience in order to avoid scapegoating and persecution of those who knowingly or unknowingly caused some of the problems we encounter. I believe that a biblical emphasis on dealing with supernatural evil as well as responding to natural evils will be more understandable and acceptable among Christians in Malawi rather than downplaying their supernatural concerns by saying that the powers they fear do not exist

We need to emphasize God's sovereignty in the universe and Christ's superiority over every possible evil spirit beings. While God's sovereignty does not mean that everything that happens in the universe has God's approval and is his will. Christ, by teaching us to pray to God 'may your kingdom come, and may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' clearly implies that the kingdom of God has not yet fully come and that God's will is not yet fully done on earth as it is in heaven. However, at the same time Christ affirms that he will be with us all the days of our lives (Mt. 28:20). We need to strongly affirm Christ's ability to protect us and in this manner undermine the pervasive and dehumanizing fear of evil spirits and witches that holds many people in its grip.

In as far as genuine witchcraft is concerned, we may affirm that like African traditional culture and religion, the Bible teaches that God condemns magical practices such as witchcraft, divination, mediumistic activity, spiritism, consulting the spirits of the dead and the like (Dt. 18:10ff; Acts 8:9ff; 13:4ff; Rev. 21:8). However, the condemnation of such acts does not mean that we have to affirm that those practices are the main cause of all evil, sin, disease, death or misfortune as this is not what the Bible affirms. Also the Bible does not teach that those who engage themselves in witchcraft and magic should be punished or killed. On the contrary, Paul, who certainly had his share of encounters with witchcraft and magic in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-22) and other places, still writes to the Ephesians that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the evil spiritual powers in the heavenly realms (Eph.

6:12). All human beings are the object of God's grace and should be approached with love, compassion, forgiveness and goodness, including those we may perceive as witches, sorcerers and other enemies. Simon the magician was received in the community of faith, he was warned against his evils and urged to repent, but he was not punished by the community of believers (Acts 8:9-24). In Ephesus we see the same happening as many magicians turn to the Lord but they are not punished for whatever they had done (Acts 18:18-20). The gospel is truly a gospel of love, even love for our enemies. We may condemn the practices of witches on the basis of Biblical teaching and call them to repentance and faith, but we must still love the sinner. As a church we cannot take part in witch hunting, extra judicial punishment and other such practices.

There is also a need for addressing the issue of witchcraft and the fear of witchcraft in theological education in Africa (Bourdillon 2002:14-15). Unfortunately, within Evangelical theological education most theological and church historical textbooks are coming from the West and rarely touch on such issues. To make things more complicated, there is also very little attention given in theological and church historical works from the West to the problem of witchcraft and fear of witchcraft in the history of the Western church. There appears to be a tendency to highlight the positive developments and achievements in the Western church and downplay its failures. Nevertheless, if African Christianity is to learn from its Western counterparts it may just as well learn from its failures too and end up doing better. Together with a study of witchcraft in the African context, a study of how the church dealt and failed to deal properly with the issue and fear of witchcraft in the West in the period of say 1350 to 1700 AD may be helpful in avoiding some of the pitfalls they fell into and for coming up with better solutions for this problem in the contemporary African context.

Finally in developing an Evangelical contextual theology of spiritual warfare in Africa it is good to incorporate insights from other theological traditions. Non Evangelical theologians such as Barth (1960), Berkhof (1962), Cox (1965:161ff; 202ff), Wink (1984; 1986) have rightly pointed out that the demonic can also be manifest in oppressive or dehumanising socio-economic, ideological, cultural, political and even religious structures in society. While we do not affirm the traditional cultural belief that every disease is caused by evil spirits, we must not overlook that there is a demonic element even in the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the sense that there are many false demonically inspired beliefs and practices in

the African context which facilitate the spread of this disease. We could also think of those beliefs and practices which foster suspicion, jealousy and hatred among different families, clans and tribes and hinder co-operation, development and progress in society. We may not agree that the demonic powers are impersonal forces as some non Evangelicals appear to suggest, but we may agree that the demonic can also be discerned in societal evils. Evangelical Christianity has often focused too much on the demonic in the sphere of individual morality and ignored the work of the demonic in the unjust and dehumanizing structures, ideologies, beliefs and myths in society. However, SLSW style verbal exorcism of demons from society does not work. A better alternative for the Christian church may be prophetically exposing the fallaciousness of such ideologies, myths and beliefs in society which perpetuate the evils and injustices in society (Cox 1965:167) and provide the world with an example in our own lives and actions by doing what is just, to love mercy and walk humbly with our God (Mic. 6:8). In making every thought, both individually and corporally, captive to Christ we can truly wage a just war against the powers (2 Cor. 10:5).

## **Appendix A**

Statement on spiritual warfare issued by the Intercession Working Group (IWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE)

### **A Working Group Report**

The Intercession Working Group (IWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization met at Fairmile Court in London July 10-14, 1993. We discussed for one full day the subject of spiritual warfare. It had been noted at our IWG Prayer Leaders' Retreat at The Cove in North Carolina, USA, the previous November, that spiritual warfare was a subject of some concern in the Evangelical world. The IWG asked its members to write papers reflecting on this emphasis in each of their regions and these papers formed the basis of our discussion.

We affirmed again statement 12 on "Spiritual Conflict" in The Lausanne Covenant:

"We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of evangelization.

"We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armor and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put man in the place of God.

We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical gospel. We acknowledge that we ourselves are not immune to worldliness of thought and actions, that is, to surrender to secularism..."



We agreed that evangelization is to bring people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17). This involves an inescapable element of spiritual warfare.

We asked ourselves why there had been almost an explosion of interest in this subject in the last 10 years. We noted that the Western church and the missionary movement from the West had seen the remarkable expansion of the church in other areas of the world without special emphasis being given to the subject of spiritual warfare.

Our members from Africa and Asia reminded us that in their context, the powers of darkness are very real and spiritual warfare is where they live all the time. Their families are still only one or two generations removed from a spiritist, animist or occult heritage.

This led to a discussion of the effects of one generation on another. We noted that in the context of idolatry, the Bible speaks of the sins of the fathers being visited upon their descendants to the third and fourth generation.

Likewise, the blessing of God's love is shown to successive generations of those who love him and keep his laws. We wondered if the time we have had the gospel in the West has made us less conscious of the powers of darkness in recent centuries.

We noted, also that the influence of the enlightenment in our education, which traces everything to natural causes, has further dulled our consciousness of the powers of darkness.

In recent times, however, several things have changed:

Change in Initiatives: The initiative in evangelization is passing to churches in the developing world, and as people from the same background evangelize their own people, dealing with the powers of darkness has become a natural way of thinking and working. This is especially true of the rapidly growing Pentecostal churches. This has begun to influence all missiological thinking.

**Increased Interest in Eastern Religions:** The spiritual bankruptcy of the West has opened up great interest in Eastern religions and drug cultures and brought a resurgence of the occult in the West.

**Influx of Non-Christian Worldview:** The massive migrations of peoples from the Third World to the West has brought a torrent of non-Christian worldviews and practices into our midst. Increasing mobility has also exposed developing countries to new fringe groups, cults and freemasonry.

**Sensationalization of the Occult:** The secular media has sensationalized and spread interest in these occult ideas and practices. This was marked by the screening of the film "The Exorcist." In the Christian world the books by Frank Perretti and the spate of "How to..." books on power evangelism and spiritual warfare have reflected a similar trend.

**Lausanne's Involvement in the Process:** We in Lausanne have been part of the process, especially in the track on spiritual warfare at Lausanne II in Manila and in the continuing life of that track under the aegis of the AD2000 and Beyond movement.

We recognize that this emphasis will be with us for the foreseeable future. Our concerns are:

To help our Lausanne constituency to stay firmly within the balanced biblical teaching on prayer.

To provide clarity, reassurance and encouragement to those whom the emphasis is causing confusion and anxiety.

To harness what is biblical, Christ-exalting and culturally relevant in the new emphasis to the work of evangelization so that it yield lasting fruit.

We noted the following dangers and their antidotes:

**Reverting to Pagan Worldviews:** There is a danger that we revert to think and operate on pagan worldviews or on an undiscerning application of Old Testament analogies that were, in

fact, superseded in Jesus Christ. The antidote to this is the rigorous study of the whole of Scripture, always interpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New.

**A Preoccupation with the Demonic:** This can lead to avoiding personal responsibility for our actions. This is countered by equal emphasis on "the world" and "the flesh" and the strong ethical teachings of the Bible.

**A Preoccupation with the Powers of Darkness:** This can exalt Satan and diminish Jesus in the focus of his people. This is cured by encouraging a Christ-centered and not an experience-centered spirituality or methodology.

**The Tendency to Shift the Emphasis to "Power" and Away From "Truth":** This tendency forgets that error, ignorance and deception can only be countered by biblical truth clearly and consistently taught. This is equally, if not more important, than tackling bondage and possession by "power encounters."

It is also the truth that sets us free, so the Word and the Spirit need to be kept in balance.

**Emphasis on Technique and Methodology:** We observed the tendency to emphasize technique and methodology in the practice of spiritual warfare and fear that when this is dominant it can become a substitute for the pursuit of holiness and even of evangelism itself. To combat this there is no substitute for a continuous, strong, balanced and Spirit-guided teaching ministry in each church.

**Growing Disillusionment:** We had reports of growing disillusionment with the results of spiritual warfare in unrealized expectations, unmet predictions and the sense of being marginalized if the language and practice of spiritual warfare is not adopted and just general discomfort with too much triumphalist talk. The antidote to all of this is a return to the whole teaching of Jesus on prayer, especially what he says about praying in secret that avoids ostentation.

**Encountering the Powers of Darkness by the Peoples Themselves:** While recognizing that someone initially has to go to a people to introduce the gospel, we felt it was necessary

always for the encounter with the powers of darkness to be undertaken by Christian people within the culture and in a way that is sensitive in applying biblical truth to their context.

Caution Regarding territorial spirits Concept: We are cautious about the way in which the concept of territorial spirits is being used and look to our biblical scholars to shed more light on this recent development.

Warfare Language Can Lead to Adversarial Attitudes: We heard with concern of situations where warfare language was pushing Christians into adversarial attitudes with people and where people of other faiths were interpreting this as the language of violence and political involvement.

We saw that the language of peace, penitence and reconciliation must be as prominent in our speech and practice as any talk of warfare.

We are concerned that the subject and practice of spiritual warfare is proving divisive to Evangelical Christians and pray that these thoughts of ours will help to combat this tendency. It is our deep prayer that the force for evangelization should not be fragmented and that our love should be strong enough to overcome these incipient divisions among us.

In his cross and resurrection, Jesus triumphed over all the powers of darkness; believers share in that triumph. We would like to see evidence of this in our unity in prayer.

## **Appendix B**

### **Deliver Us From Evil Consultation Statement**

#### **Introduction**

Spiritual conflict is an emerging, yet uneasy, frontier in taking the whole gospel to the whole world. Enthusiasm and concern rest side by side. Trying to come to grips with the many complex issues, thirty practitioners, missiologists, pastors and theologians gathered in Nairobi, Kenya from 16 to 22 August, 2000. Together we discussed issues of spiritual conflict in a consultation, "Deliver Us From Evil," convened by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. The consultation objective was to seek a biblical and comprehensive understanding of 1) who the enemy is; 2) how he is working; and 3) how we can fight him in order to be most effective in the evangelization of all peoples.

Our group included practitioners of deliverance and prayer ministries from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and the United States; pastors and Evangelical leaders from Africa and North America; an executive of a relief and development agency; an African psychologist working in North America; theologians from Asia, Europe and North America; missionaries working in Africa and Latin America; mission executives from Europe and North America; and missiological educators from North America and Europe. Among us were Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Baptists, and members of the Evangelical church of West Africa, church of South India, Berachah Prophetic Church, Evangelical Covenant Church, Brethren Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Bible church (United States).

We noted with interest that most of the consultation participants from Western societies had come to recognize the realities of the unseen or spiritual realm as a result of their cross-cultural experience. Those from the Two Thirds World frequently reported their experiences

with Western missionaries, who were unaware of these spiritual realities, and were thus unable to minister to the spiritual realities that Two Thirds World people experience on a day-to-day basis.

As we have met in Nairobi, we have learned from the insights of sisters and brothers from East Africa and the East African revival. We particularly affirm how our East African sisters and brothers lift up Jesus and him crucified in the face of spiritual conflict. We realize afresh that the only way to break the power of Satan in everyday life, in society and in culture is by walking in the light so that Satan may not bind us in the darkness.

As we pray the prayer "Deliver us from evil" we pray to be delivered from personal sin, natural evils, evil spirits and powers, and evil in society.

### **Origins**

Our point of departure includes the Lausanne Covenant, the Manila Manifesto, and the 1993 LCWE Statement on spiritual warfare, all of which state the reality of our engagement in spiritual conflict: We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. (Lausanne Covenant, 1974)

We affirm that spiritual warfare demands spiritual weapons, and that we must both preach the word in the power of the Spirit, and pray constantly that we may enter into Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of evil. (Manila Manifesto, 1989)

We agreed that evangelization is to bring people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17). This involves an inescapable element of spiritual warfare. (Lausanne Statement on spiritual warfare, 1993)

The Consultation and participants recognize the relevance of spiritual conflict to world evangelization. We are not trying to side with any particular view but to expand Evangelical thinking in an emerging area that has controversy. This statement indicates areas of common agreement, areas of unresolved tensions, warnings, and points to areas needing further study

and exploration. Our intention is to encourage churches of all traditions to use this statement to stimulate forthright discussion, serious reflection, and practical ministry on spiritual conflict to the glory of God.

## **Common Ground**

### **Theological Affirmations**

We affirm the biblical witness that humans were created in the image of God to live in communion with him, in fellowship with other humans, and as stewards of God's creation. The relationship between God and humankind was broken through the mysterious entry of evil into God's creation. The Fall of humankind into evil has influenced all aspects of the created world and human existence. It is God's plan to redeem and restore his fallen creation. God's redemptive purpose is being revealed and realized in the history of salvation, and fully in the Gospel of the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of his son, Jesus Christ. We are called to participate in God's mission of fighting evil and the evil one in order to restore what was destroyed as a result of the Fall. We live in a world with tension between the Kingdom that has already come in Christ and the continuing realities of evil. God's mission will be completed when Christ returns, the Kingdom of God comes in power, and evil is destroyed and eliminated forever.

Calling people to faith in Christ, inviting them to be delivered from the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of God, is the missionary mandate for all Christians. We affirm a holistic understanding of evangelization that finds its source in our relationship with Christ and his call to us to become intimate with him in the fellowship of believers. The Holy Spirit empowers us for world evangelization through the interrelated ministries of word (proclamation), deed (social service and action), and sign (miracles, power encounters) all of which take place in the context of spiritual conflict.

Satan is a real, personal spiritual and created being. Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, sought to destroy him, and yet in light of the resurrection morning found himself defeated. Satan continues to oppose actively God's mission and the work of God's Church.<sup>1</sup> The

powers and principalities are ontologically real beings. They cannot be reduced to mere social or psychological structures.<sup>2</sup>

Satan works by taking what God has created for human well-being, and perverts it toward his purposes, which are to destroy and devalue life by enslaving individuals, families, local communities and whole societies. Satan contextualizes his efforts differently in various societies and cultures.

Satan uses deception in an attempt to redirect human allegiances to anyone or anything other than God. In addition to the personal level, Satan does this with regard to all institutionalized forms of religious or ideological allegiance, including the Church.

Satan and "the rulers, authorities, the powers of this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" are at work through:<sup>3</sup>

Deceiving and distorting

Tempting to sin

Afflicting the body, emotions, mind, and will

Taking control of a person

Disordering of nature

Distorting the roles of social, economic, and political structures

Scapegoating as a means of legitimizing violence

Promoting self-interest, injustice, oppression, and abuse

The realm of the occult

False religions

All forms of opposition to God's work of salvation and the mission of the church.

A primary purpose of the life and ministry of Jesus was to expose, confront, and defeat Satan and destroy his works.

Christ has decisively defeated Satan at the cross and through the resurrection.



Jesus confronted Satan through prayer, righteousness, obedience, and setting the captives free.

In the way he ministered to people, he mounted an enormous challenge to the institutions and structures of the world. Christians share in Christ's victory and are given the authority of Christ to stand against the attacks of Satan in the victory we have in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

The model for spiritual authority is Jesus and his obedience and submission to God on the Cross.

While we acknowledge that God is sovereignly in control of his creation, the biblical evidence indicates a variety of causes of illness and calamity: God, Satan, human choices or trauma and a disordered universe are all cited. We understand that we may not know with certainty the exact cause of any particular illness or calamity.

The elements of a world view that is Christian within our respective cultural contexts must include:

God is the creator and sustainer of all that exists, both seen and unseen. This creation includes humans and spiritual beings as moral creatures.

People were made in the image of God, in which the aspects of the human person are inseparably connected. Body, soul, emotions and mind cannot be separated.

God remains sovereign over all his creation in history, and nothing happens outside God's ultimate control. Thus, the world cannot be conceived of as a closed universe governed merely by naturalistic scientific laws. Neither can it be considered a dualistic system in which Satan is understood to be equal to God.

Because we reject a dualistic world view, the blessings of God and the ministrations of the angelic host, the consequences of sin, and the assaults of Satan and demons cannot be isolated solely to a spiritual realm.

Any teaching on spiritual conflict that leads us to fear the Devil to such an extent that we lose our confidence in Christ's victory over him and in God's sovereign power to protect us must be rejected.

All matters concerning spiritual conflict must be viewed first and foremost in terms of our relationship with and faith in God, and not simply in terms of techniques that we must master.

The return of Christ and the ultimate consummation of his victory over Satan gives us confidence today in dealing with spiritual struggles and a lens through which we are to interpret the events in the world today.

The person and work of the Holy Spirit are central in spiritual conflict:

The empowering of the Holy Spirit, the exercise of spiritual gifts, and prayer are prerequisites for engaging in spiritual conflict.

The exercise of spiritual gifts must be accompanied by the fruit of the spirit.

The work of the Spirit and the Word must be held together.

### **Spiritual Conflict in Practice**

We listened to reports on the history of the church's dealing with Satan and the demonic and noted:

There are striking similarities between what happened from the history of the ancient church to what is happening in demonic encounters and deliverance today.

Deliverance from Satanic and demonic powers and influence in the ancient church was used as proof of the resurrection and the truth of the claims of Christ by the church fathers.

Preparation for baptism included the renunciation of the Devil, the demonic and prior religious allegiances from the life of the convert as well as repentance. This practice continues in some churches to this day.

The unwillingness/inability of the contemporary western church to believe in the reality of the spiritual beliefs and engage in spiritual conflict arose out of a defective Enlightenment-influenced world view, is not representative of the total history of the church in relation to spiritual conflict nor has it been characteristic of Christianity in the Two Thirds World in contemporary history.

Every Christian has access to the authority of Christ and demons recognize Christ's power when exercised by Christians.

The history of evangelism is replete with examples in which the response to the Gospel was accompanied by power encounters, but power encounters in and of themselves are never a guarantee of a positive response.

Church history also points to a link between idolatry and the demonic.

Working for positive strongholds for God through a "gentle invasion" that overcomes evil with good and wins people by love is as important as breaking down Satanic strongholds. We thus affirm the importance and primacy of the local church and its life of faith.

Worship is spiritual conflict. It is not aggressive, spectacular spiritual conflict; not a strategy nor a means to an end; but involves mind, body, and spirit responding with all that we are to all that God is.

Spiritual conflict is risky and often costly. While there are victories, there is often a backlash from the Evil One in various forms of attack such as illness and persecution. Nonetheless we do not shrink from spiritual conflict since to avoid it is costly to the Kingdom of God.

The ministry of spiritual conflict is grounded in the transformative power of relationships, not techniques or methods.

The point of departure for spiritual conflict is our relationship with Jesus and listening to the Holy Spirit.

We affirm the complexity of the human person. We need to distinguish the psychological from the spiritual when it comes to ministry and counseling. Deliverance ministries and psychological counselors often fail to recognize this distinction. Failure to do so can do harm.

Holiness is central to the Christian response to evil:

In the exercise of spiritual authority those who do not give adequate attention to character and holiness truncate the whole biblical picture of spiritual growth and sanctification.

To practice spiritual conflict without adequate attention to personal holiness is to invite disaster.

The pursuit of holiness applies not only to the individual, but to the family, the local church, and the larger community of faith. While holiness includes personal piety, it applies to social relationships as well.

Engaging the Evil One is not the work for heroic individuals. Those engaged in this ministry must seek the support of a group of intercessors.

Following up on individuals who have experienced freedom through spiritual conflict must be an inseparable part of the ministry. The local church must be encouraged to incorporate people into the Christian community and to disciple them. Not to arrange for this is sin.

We were saddened by stories of people, emboldened by self-assured certainty and money, who come from outside and overwhelm local Christians and carrying out hit-and-run ministries of spiritual conflict 1) that presume superior knowledge of the local reality; 2) that treat local Christians as inferior or unaware, 3) that claim credit for things that local Christians have been praying and working toward for years, and 4) that leave uneven results

and sometimes pain, alienation, and even persecution of the local church, while claiming great victory.

Spiritual conflict involves more than one enemy; it must engage the flesh, the Devil and the world:

We view with alarm social evils such as injustice, poverty, ethnocentrism, racism, genocide, violence, environmental abuse, wars, as well as the violence, pornography, and occult in the media. These social evils are encouraged or supported by human institutions in which the principalities and powers work against God and his intention for humankind.

The task of the church in combating the principalities and powers in the socio-political context is to unmask their idolatrous pretensions, to identify their dehumanizing values and actions, and to work for the release of their victims. This work involves spiritual, political, and social actions.

We fail to find biblical warrant for constructing elaborate hierarchies of the spirit world.

## **Warnings**

We urge caution and sensitivity in the use of language when it comes to spiritual conflict. While biblical, the term "spiritual warfare" is offensive to non-Christians and carries connotations that seem contradictory coming from those who serve a Lord who died on a cross. Additionally, there is a large range of meanings attached to various spiritual conflict terms such as healing, deliverance, power encounters, possession, demonization, powers, and so on. Additionally new terms are constantly being coined (e.g., strategic level spiritual warfare, deep-level healing, etc.).

We call for watchfulness to avoid any syncretism with non-Christian religious beliefs and practices, such as traditional religions or new religious movements. We also affirm that new believers are reasonable when they expect the Gospel to meet their needs for spiritual power.

We call for discernment concerning magical uses of Christian terms and caution practitioners to avoid making spiritual conflict into Christian magic. Any suggestion that a particular technique or method in spiritual conflict ministry ensures success is a magical, sub-Christian understanding of God's workings

We encourage extreme care and the discernment of the community to ensure that the exercise of spiritual authority not become spiritual abuse. Any expression of spiritual power or authority must be done in compassion and love.

We cry out for a mantle of humility and gracefulness on the part of cross-cultural workers, who having recently discovered the reality of the spirit realm, go to other parts of the world where people have known and lived with the local realities of the spirit realm world and the struggle with the demonic for centuries.

Because spiritual conflict is expressed in different ways in different societies, we strongly caution against taking ideas, methods, or strategies developed in one society and using them uncritically in another.

Because we must resist the temptation to adopt the devil's tactics as ours, we warn practitioners to take care that their methods in spiritual conflict are based on the work of Christ on the cross:

Submitting to God through his substitutionary death on the cross, Christ deprived Satan of his claim to power;

Christ's willingness to sacrifice himself in contrast to fighting back is a model for spiritual conflict;

When we separate the cross from spiritual conflict, we create a climate of triumphalism.

We call for actions that ensure that our approaches and explanations of spiritual conflict do not tie new converts to the very fears from which Christ died to free them. Being free in Christ means being free from fear of the demonic.

We warn against an overemphasis on spirits that blames demons for the actions of people. Demons can only work through people-and people can actively choose to cooperate. Spirits are not the only source of resistance to the Gospel.

We warn against confusing correlations or coincidence with causation in reporting apparent victories as well as the uncritical use of undocumented accounts to establish the validity of cosmic warfare.

We warn against using eschatology as a excuse not to fight against all forms of evil in the present.

### **Areas of Tension**

In the early church, demonic encounters were most often seen where the church encountered non-Christians. The history of evangelization frequently links power encounters with the evangelization of non-Christian people. The biblical text reveals that while it is possible that a believer may be afflicted physically by a demonic spirit,<sup>6</sup> there is no direct evidence that demons need to be cast out of believers. On the other hand, we also heard the testimony of brothers and sisters in every continent to the contrary. This raises the question of how we are to understand the effect of the demonic in the lives of Christians. We were unable to resolve this tension in our consultation, but believe the following are helpful to note:

We are aware that in many cases new Christians today have not gone through processes of renunciation of pre-Christian allegiances, processes that have been normative in the pre-Enlightenment Church. Some Christians may have lost their faith; there are others who call themselves Christians but are only Christians in a nominal sense. Some claim that these might be reasons that Christians might appear to be susceptible to the demonic.

While affirming that being in Christ means the Christian belongs to Christ and that our nature is transformed, just as with sin and our need to deal with sin in our body, mind, emotions and will, we wonder if the demonic, while no longer able to claim ownership of Christians, may not continue to afflict them in body, mind, emotions, and will unless dealt with.

While it is possible that Satan manifests himself more strongly in certain places than in others, and that some spirits seem to be tied to certain locations, we agreed there seems to be little biblical warrant for a number of the teachings and practices associated with some forms of spiritual conflict which focus on territorial spirits. We experienced tension over whether there is biblical warrant for warfare prayer against territorial spirits as a valid tool for evangelization. We agreed, however, on the invalidity of the claim that warfare prayer against territorial spirits is the only key to effective evangelization.

Tension exists concerning the extent to which we can learn and verify things from the spiritual realm from experiences not immediately verifiable from Scripture in contrast to limiting our understanding of the spiritual realm from Scripture alone. Some have maintained that experience is crucial to understanding spiritual conflict; this is a point to be explored in ongoing dialogue.

We are not agreed as to whether or how the truths about spiritual realities and spiritual conflict methodologies can be verified empirically. Some engage in active experimentation in spiritual conflict ministry as a means of developing generalities concerning spiritual conflict, while others are not convinced of the validity of this way of learning.

### **Frontiers That Need Ongoing Exploration**

While affirming the Lausanne position on the Bible, there is an urgent need for a hermeneutic that:

Allows culture and experience to play a role in the formulation of our understanding and theology of spiritual conflict. The basis and test of such a theology is Scripture as faithfully interpreted by the Spirit-guided hermeneutical community of the global church.

Allows an examination of issues which arise in Christian experience not directly addressed in Scripture.

Accepts the fact that the Holy Spirit has surprised the church by acting in ways not explicitly taught in Scriptures (Acts 10 and 15) and may be doing so again.



There is an urgent need to incorporate the study of spiritual conflict into theological curricula in schools and training centers around the world.

There is an urgent need to develop criteria and methods that allow us to evaluate ministry experience in a verifiable way.

The emerging understanding of the complexity of the human person needs significant exploration and examination. Specifically we call for:

A sustained dialogue between those engaged in deliverance ministries and those in the medical and psychological professions.

Urgent sharing worldwide with deliverance practitioners of the current state of knowledge of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly called Multiple Personality Disorder.

A diagnostic approach that allows practitioners to discern the difference between DID personalities and spiritual entities.

A dialogue between theologians and the medical and psychological professions that develops a holistic understanding of the human person, inseparably relating body, mind, emotions, and spirit as they function individually and relationally.

We call for a more interdisciplinary approach to the description of spiritual conflict drawing on the insights of relevant disciplines.

We call the churches to develop an understanding of sanctification that addresses all of the human person: our spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical selves. Such a holistic understanding of sanctification will include the development of spiritual disciplines, inner healing, and deliverance. All need to become tools supporting the sanctification of Christians through the Word by the Holy Spirit. (7)

There is a need to explore the role in spiritual conflict of the practices of baptism, holy communion, confession of sin and absolution, foot-washing, and anointing with oil.

We would like to see a serious examination of the deception and seductive power of advertising in terms of its role in fostering envy, consumerism, and false gods.

We praise God, that, while we represented various theological, cultural and church traditions and positions on spiritual conflict, we have been blessed and inspired by learning from each other. This encourages us to believe that it is possible to develop an understanding of spiritual conflict and its practice within the Christian community so that in time it becomes part of the everyday life of the Church. We invite the church to join us in continuing study and incorporation of appropriate ministries of spiritual conflict into the life of the Church. We particularly call the churches in the West to listen more carefully to the churches in the Two Thirds World and join them in a serious rediscovery of the reality of evil.

**Notes:**

1. Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1f; 1 Chron. 21:1; Matt. 4:1-11; Matt. 12:23; Luke 8:12; Luke 22:3; John 13:2; 12:31; 16:11; Col 2:15-22.
2. Mark 3:22; 1 Cor. 2:6-8; 15:24-26; Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:10-18.
3. 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Tim. 2:14; Rev. 12:10; Matt. 8:16; Matt. 9:32; Mark 5:1-20; Mark 9:17; Luke 8:30; Job 2:7; Matt. 9:32-33; 12:22-23; 15:22-28; Job 1:16-19.
4. John 12:31; 16:11, 33; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Rev 5:5; Eph 6:10-18; Jas. 4:7; Luke 9:1; Matt. 28:18; cf. Matt. 12:28f; Eph 6:11,13.
5. Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 6:17.
6. Luke 4:38-39; 13:10-13; 2 Cor. 12:7-9.
7. John 15:3; 17:17.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

DUFE	Deliver Us From Evil
ECOM	Evangelical Church of Malawi
IWG	Intercession Working Group
LCWE	Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization
NAR	New Apostolic Reformation
NIV	New International Version (Bible translation)
PGM	Greek Magical Papyri
SLSW	Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare
YWAM	Youth With A Mission