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**“Navigating between Scylla and Charybdis: Soundings on a Middle Course of Christian Resistance to Human and Demonic Evil.”**

David William Joseph Di Ienno

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**Abstract.**

This paper seeks to map a middle course between two distinct worldviews of Christian resistance to evil, each of which is found to present some measure of truth in regards to the nature of evil that confronts 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australian Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians. For illustrative purposes, these two worldviews are called ‘Scylla’ and ‘Charybdis’ since they, like the mythic dangers that threatened homeward-bound Odysseus and his crew, tempt the unwary into either a dualistic cosmic warfare paradigm or a perspective of evil that is seen as solely the product of the human psyche. Both these worldviews, seen through the lens of the work of their advocates who exert an influence in the Australian Pentecostal/Charismatic scene, are analysed and evaluated using a variety of exegetical methods, including historical grammatical exegesis. These findings are then compared with the results of

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a test-case cultural analysis of Ephesians 6.10-12. The cultural analysis of the Ephesians text was filtered through William Webb's redemption movement hermeneutic so as to provide some initial 'soundings' on a Christian resistance to evil that pays due respect to the dangers that lurk upon 'Scylla' *and* within 'Charybdis'. The paper concludes that Christians face opposition from both preternatural, non-human beings that are hostile to God's purposes as well as a systemic evil that is projected from the human psyche. An effective middle course of Christian resistance to both forms of evil was found to lie in matching the style of resistance to the nature of the confronting evil. Lastly, some pastoral implications for the middle course are briefly explored.

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## **Chapter 1: The Need for Balance When Resisting Human and Demonic evil.**

The ancient myth of the two non-human beings that were said to inhabit opposing ends of the narrow Straits of Messina has an enduring quality about it. Both Scylla and Charybdis were once in the form of beautiful women and were transformed into hostile monsters as 'collateral damage' in the wars that were reported to have raged amongst the gods of the Greek pantheon. Both jealously guarded their territory from intruders, as Homer's hero Odysseus found out when he had to travel between Sicily and the Italian mainland on two occasions. He first foundered on Charybdis, and later suffered loss by Scylla. One source says that to be "between Scylla and Charybdis means to be caught between two equally unpleasant alternatives".<sup>1</sup> Along these lines, one does not have to commit to the Christian faith for very long before it becomes clear that, like Odysseus of old, the way home forces one to edge between 'the devil or the deep blue sea'.<sup>2</sup> The image of ancient sailors navigating the treacherous Straits of Messina offers me a convenient metaphor from which to introduce the debate surrounding the ways and means in which evil is perceived to impact upon the lives of Pentecostal, Charismatic or Neocharismatic Christians in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australia<sup>3</sup>. More specifically, I am attempting to take Biblical soundings within these

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<sup>1</sup> "Scylla and Charybdis (Greek mythology) -- Britannica Online Encyclopaedia," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/530331/Scylla-and-Charybdis> (accessed June 4, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> 'Between the Devil and the deep blue sea' is a saying that may have been born out of the legend of Scylla and Charybdis.

<sup>3</sup> I shall use the words 'Pentecostal', 'Charismatic', and 'Neocharismatic' interchangeably to reflect the entire milieu of those writers or organisations who commonly accept these descriptive titles. According to New

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turbulent waters in order to play a part in charting a middle course between two different cosmologies. The one looks out on evil primarily through the lens of a non-human, ontologically distinct, quasi-personal Character of a devil and his demons,<sup>4</sup> and the other has its gaze drawn inwards to the evil resulting from the social projections of the human psyche<sup>5</sup>. Pentecostal scholar Barry Chant has referred to the middle way between these competing cosmologies as the balance between 'gullibility and scepticism'.<sup>6</sup>

In order to keep within the boundaries to which I am subject, I have narrowed my gaze to focus on those writers and sources that most closely address the concerns of my own Pentecostal Christian tradition. Even so, for anyone that is familiar with the breadth of thought in Australian Pentecostal Churches, this is a challenging task because until relatively recently, Pentecostal and Charismatic teaching was contained within an oral and narrative culture which has not interfaced well with the more longstanding academic traditions.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, some common themes are evident in contemporary and historical Australian Pentecostal thought, amongst

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International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements (cited below), there are approximately 2.4 million Christians satisfying this description within Australia. By weight of numbers alone, their beliefs are likely to exert a significant influence on Christian practice in Australian communities. Pentecostals share an openness to supernatural gifting and miracles sourced from the Holy Spirit, as well as a spirituality that is expressed in experiential, more so than theological terms. See 'Australia' by Mark Hutchinson in the following: Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> I have borrowed the term 'quasi-personal' from Graham Twelftree: Graham H. Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (London: Hodder And Stoughton, 1985). p149.

<sup>5</sup> This concept is dealt with in detail by Walter Wink in his trilogy: Walter Wink, *Naming The Powers: The Language Of Power In The New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2004). Walter Wink, *Unmasking The Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2004). Walter Wink, *Engaging The Powers: Discernment And Resistance In A World Of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004). Wink's influential work will feature later in this discussion.

<sup>6</sup> Barry Chant, "Spiritual Warfare" (Sydney, Australia, 2000). p79.

<sup>7</sup> See Frank Macchia, "Theology, Pentecostal," *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Movements* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002). p1120. Also, Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit* (Zondervan, 2009). p51.

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which are a belief in the Bible as the authoritative, revealed word of God<sup>8</sup> and a cosmology that, generally speaking, accepts the ontological reality of a preternatural Devil and demonic spirits.<sup>9</sup> These themes, amongst others, give sufficient substance to the Pentecostal identity for it to be addressed as a distinct Christian tradition.

I have chosen to adopt a primarily historico-grammatical approach to Biblical exegesis since this method has a substantial basis of acceptance within the Pentecostal academic community<sup>10</sup>, and it allows for a sharpening of the focus on ancient Biblical texts by means of non-canonical literature.<sup>11</sup> This is especially important when the subject under scrutiny is addressed by the Biblical authors from a worldview that is somewhat removed from the 21<sup>st</sup> century Australian mainstream popular culture, although not necessarily as distant from some contemporary non-western communities.<sup>12</sup> Speaking of non-canonical literature, it is worth mentioning R.T. France's qualification on the weight one can place on extra-canonical texts at this point, since these texts offer a wealth of insight into 1<sup>st</sup> century cosmological understandings that are useful when attempting to reconstruct Ancient Near Eastern thought on the subject of evil: France prudently cautions against allowing an external

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<sup>8</sup> Although the Australian AOG developed independently from the United States AOG, they hold many similar doctrines. Gary B. McGee, "Historical Background of Assemblies of God Theology," from Stanley M. Horton, *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, Missouri: Logion Press, 1994). p21.

<sup>9</sup> Macchia, "Theology, Pentecostal." 1136. Also Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. p174.

<sup>10</sup> Macchia situates the relevance of Historical Grammatical exegesis for the Pentecostal. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*. p53.

<sup>11</sup> I acknowledge that Historico- Grammatical Exegesis is but one of many methods of textual analysis, some of which, for example Narrative Criticism, may, at times, choose to bracket out Historical data almost entirely (cf. David M. Gunn, "Narrative Criticism" from Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie, *To each its own meaning: an introduction to biblical criticisms and their application* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999). p202. I have selected it as my primary exegetical method because of the broad respect it engenders within the faith tradition of my target audience.

<sup>12</sup> For contemporary cultures with a worldview with a closer affinity to that of first century Ephesus, see M. Fape and Michael Olusina Fape, *Powers in Encounter with Power: Paul's Concept of Spiritual Warfare in Ephesians 6:10-12: an African Christian Perspective* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003). Also, Gerrie ter Haar, *How God became African: African spirituality and western secular thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).



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source to dictate a NT author's meaning. Rather, he suggests that these external sources help clarify the concepts with which the Biblical author builds his intended meaning within the written text.<sup>13</sup> All this is not to say that my efforts will rely exclusively on historic-grammatical exegetical methods, but that my choice of exegetical method is, in a sense, a 'default' to be understood as operative unless stated otherwise.

I am convinced that the pastoral implications of my soundings on a balanced approach to personal and institutional evil are of a serious nature. It is of crucial significance for this paper to adopt an appropriate hermeneutic so that Australian Pentecostal Christians will avoid the confusion and fear of evil spirits that goes hand in hand with animistic tribal cultures.<sup>14</sup> They will also need to beware of the suction of a social-scientific vortex that cannot adequately engage with certain manifestations of human evil, and in the process, forcibly sets aside the metaphysical categories that are foundational to the Biblical text.

In order to pay due respect to the value of modern medical approaches whilst at the same time noting their categorical shortcomings, I have adopted the redemption movement hermeneutic of William Webb.<sup>15</sup> Webb's Redemption Movement Hermeneutic promises to be a fruitful means of minimising the distortion that will almost certainly occur when ancient texts speak in contexts that are distant from their original occasions and settings. Webb's commitment to Scripture as the 'authoritative

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<sup>13</sup> For an excellent and succinct outline of NT Exegesis that adopts a 'high view of scripture' see "'Inerrancy and New Testament Exegesis' by R. T. France", n.d., [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article\\_inerrancy\\_france.html](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_inerrancy_france.html) (accessed March 27, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, "Direction: Spiritual Warfare and Worldviews," *Direction Journal*, 2000, <http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?1052> (accessed June 19, 2012). Look under the heading 'Tribal Worldview'.

<sup>15</sup> See Webb's illuminating and practical work William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

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basis for Christian life and faith'<sup>16</sup> and his passion to see those same Scriptures project their author's pastoral, pedagogical and missional intent are likely to resonate with the Pentecostal quadrant.<sup>17</sup> However, I must confess that to adopt a Redemption Movement Hermeneutic, as over against a Static Hermeneutic<sup>18</sup>, will require some explanation, as it is not widely articulated within Pentecostal circles in Australia. Before I go ahead and sketch an outline of this hermeneutical method, some comments regarding authorial intent are in order, since a redemption movement hermeneutic hinges on one's capacity to situate the author's purpose in writing a text within in the surrounding culture in which he or she wrote.

### **1.1 Why is there a need to establish Biblical authorial intentionality?**

The importance of the operation of one's hermeneutic is, in my opinion, analogous to the function of the rudder on the exegetical ship. Depending on the hermeneutical stance one takes, one's exegesis may be steered in such a way as to cause one to land upon vastly different practical shores. For example, consider the way in which some Pentecostal communities anchor their teaching in a normative contemporary experiential interpretation of Acts 2:1-4<sup>19</sup> in comparison to, say, the cautious, and even at times, cessationist approach of the Sydney Anglicans to the same passage of scripture.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p56.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example Thomas' summation of the American Pentecostal leanings, which are very similar to those of the Australian Pentecostal communities, p315.

<sup>18</sup> See Paragraph 1.2 for definitions of these terms.

<sup>19</sup> When Scripture is quoted directly, the NIV translation will be used, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>20</sup> For example, for a Sydney Anglican position on the charisma of praying/speaking in tongues, see By Joe Towns, "Speaking in Tongues: Barnett & Jensen," *Talking Pentecostalism*, n.d., <http://talkingpentecostalism.blogspot.com.au/2009/12/speaking-in-tongues-barnett-jensen.html> (accessed June 19, 2012).

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Given that interpretive horizons can, at times, appear controversial, it seems best to introduce the subject of redemption movement by referring to a respected voice in Pentecostal circles, that of Gordon Fee. When Fee spoke about finding a 'radical middle' ground in evangelical hermeneutics,<sup>21</sup> he referred to the nature of Holy Scripture as 'God's word spoken in human words in history'.<sup>22</sup> This phrase was adapted from G. E. Ladd, and Fee used it to contain the tension between the 'eternal relevance'<sup>23</sup> of God speaking to all humanity through the pages of Scripture, and the 'historical particularity' of the Biblical authors, who addressed real people in a specific time and space. Fee argues that some attempts to resolve this tension in times past have triggered theological stances that have emphasised the divinity of the word over against its humanity and vice versa.<sup>24</sup> He posited that the divinity and humanity of scripture harmonise when the text mates with 'authorial intentionality', which, as Fee notes, "by its very nature we would insist is also thereby the Holy Spirit's intentionality".<sup>25</sup> Those who, like many Pentecostals, adopt this interpretive stance acknowledge that, given the limits of human communication, one cannot know completely the situation the Biblical authors were addressing, but by showing due diligence in research, in most cases one can know enough to accurately describe the author's intention in penning most of the Biblical texts.

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<sup>21</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and spirit: issues in New Testament hermeneutics* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991). 25.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Fee, *Gospel and spirit*.31. Fee notes the Apollinarian and Docetic heresies have emphasised the Divinity of the word, to the detriment of its humanity, whilst Arius and his followers highlighted the humanity of Christ as over against his divinity. It is interesting to note the parallels in the tensions between the dual nature of Divinity and humanity present in Scripture and that of Christ himself. Attempts to resolve this tension by drifting towards the absolute imperatives of fundamentalism or towards the shoals of liberalism both yield an equally pallid and jaundiced view of Scripture.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p35.

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## 1.2 How does a Redemption Movement Hermeneutic (RMH) work?

Once one has arrived at a conclusion regarding the author's likely intention, one must decide whether to view that intention in isolation to other texts, be they canonical or extra-Biblical, or whether to let the Biblical text speak amongst the competing voices that comprised the socio-rhetorical landscape of the time. If those who hold to the high view of scripture analyse the text in isolation from other texts, there will be a tendency to interpret the text as an absolute ethic for all time. Webb calls this a 'Static' or 'Stationary' Hermeneutic.<sup>26</sup> He uses the example of Deuteronomy 23:15-16, which would '...permit ownership of slaves today, provided that the church offers similar kinds of refuge for runaway slaves'.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, a Redemption Movement Hermeneutic will look at the text in its Biblical context and the context of its surrounding culture in order to trace the 'redemptive spirit' embedded in the text. A RMH will seek to determine if the author's intent shows signs of variance, or 'movement', with respect to the surrounding pagan culture and, on that basis, develop a current ethic, or 'spirit', that is moving in the same direction as that of the original authors. In the example I have quoted above, a RMH would note that the provisions made for slaves were generous in comparison to that of the surrounding culture, and **further gleanings** from the canonical records **will adumbrate** the eventual abolition of slavery altogether as a social institution (Gal 3:27; Philemon.16). What then, you may ask, is the modern application of the ancient instruction on slavery with reference to a RMH? The RMH yields a Christian ethic which will *seek to resist all forms of human slavery*, which is reflective of the final ethical state of the

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<sup>26</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*. p33.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*.

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eschatological kingdom (Rev 21:3-8) - the practical end-point of God's trajectory in his dealings with redeemed humanity.

It seems appropriate at this early stage in the development of my argument to introduce what Webb calls a 'redemptive better'.<sup>28</sup> The term is the natural consequence of adopting a redemption movement hermeneutic. It means an action or event that seeks to change a person or situation in such a way as to make them or it conform more closely to the final ethic of the kingdom of God. To determine a redemptive better is no simple matter. However, Webb has not left us as orphaned in our ignorance, but has come to us with eighteen criteria to assist in discerning the direction of the winds of redemptive movement. Thus, hoisting the sails of authorial intent, Biblical interpreters can with some measure of confidence, bring the spirit of the text into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and, in so doing, produce a Biblically and culturally credible ethic of Christian resistance to the demonic within Australian Pentecostalism.

### **1.3 Resistance: The Christian's Response to Evil**

I think it is important to flag two points here: firstly, the notion of Christian 'resistance', which I have introduced in the slavery example quoted above, is a central theme of most of the NT authors when describing the Christian response to evil in all its variegated forms.<sup>29</sup> Walter Wink, who has provided a significant contribution to my research on the 'social-scientific Devil', has coined the phrase 'aggressive non-violence' to describe a modern-day ethic of resistance to evil. Wink's

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p48.

<sup>29</sup> Here one of the chief words used is ἀντιστῆναι, which, in its various forms can mean to 'be in opposition to someone, or to oppose them' (Matt 5:39; Acts 13:8; Gal 2:11; 2 Tim 3:8; James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9) or to be resistant to power, in the passive sense (Esther 9:2; Ephesians 6:13; Rom 13:2). William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). p80.

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descriptions of the practical expression of ethical Christian response to evil provides one of my vital soundings in the mapping of a middle course through the shoals and reefs. Taken as a whole, Pentecostals value the praxis that results from theological reflection, and Wink's approach does provide a practical application that has proven historically effective<sup>30</sup>.

Before we begin to test these winds, I think it prudent to define the dangers that lie ahead. Scylla and Charybdis are, for my purposes, metaphors for ancient, and yet still living, heresies upon which Christian men and women have suffered a great deal of loss and, in some cases, 'shipwrecked'<sup>31</sup> their confidence in the Scriptures. Before analysing the difficulties of those who have been drawn into the extremities of the Charybdis of human evil or the Scylla of the Warfare paradigm, it appears prudent to firstly define what I mean by 'The Devil' and Evil spirit/s' and then introduce the **context** of my working definition of 'heresy'. I will use the term 'devil', 'devils', 'Evil Spirits', 'Demons', 'Satan' and 'The Satan' to all refer to real, ontologically distinct, personal, non-human created beings that are hostile to God's revealed purposes.

#### **1.4 Heresy is 'Imbalanced Doctrine'.**

Paul the Apostle made frequent reference to the impact of wrong teaching on the life and even the very existence of the church. He often linked the source of these teachings to the work of the Satan.<sup>32</sup> Francis Schaeffer has furnished some insight

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<sup>30</sup> Wink, *Engaging The Powers*. 190.

<sup>31</sup> Paul cements the two elements of Christian life, Faith and Practice together in such a way that the welfare of the Christian life is governed by the Christian's conscience, informed as it is by the instruction in the scriptures (1 Tim 1:18). To abandon the warnings of a well-instructed Christian conscience is to risk shipwrecking one's faith.

<sup>32</sup> See Neil Forsyth's comments on 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 3:3, 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12, John 12:31, 16:11; 14:30 Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989).

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on the dangers of wrong teaching, or, to put it more bluntly, heresy. He notes that heresies are a kind of 'imbalanced doctrine', in that they over-emphasize one aspect of the truth in such a way as to eclipse another equally valid aspect of the same truth<sup>33</sup>. For example, consider Paul's harsh rebuke to the Colossians<sup>34</sup> for their pandering to the influence of the spirits (angels) associated with their local folk religion as over against the supremacy of Christ who is Lord over all creation.<sup>35</sup> In this instance, the truth of the ontological reality of the deceptive spirits is not denied by Paul, but the Colossians' over-emphasis of their significance by including Jewish and/or pagan worship rites such as new moons and dietary regulations alongside their Christian practice had launched a heresy which Clinton Arnold has termed 'the Colossian syncretism' (Col 1:27).<sup>36</sup> Paul roundly criticizes this syncretism!<sup>37</sup> Similarly, I am arguing that there is a pressing need within some quadrants of the church community for a restoration of balance in understanding the extent of the influence of the demonic realm on the Christian. CS Lewis had this to say on the topic:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally

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<sup>33</sup> Francis August Schaeffer, *The new super-spirituality* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1972). 27,28.

<sup>34</sup> I am aware that the identity of the author of the letter to the Colossians is a matter of debate, but I have chosen to credit this letter to Paul in line with Clinton Arnold.

<sup>35</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> See Clinton Arnold's exegetical analysis of the situation at Colossae. I have adopted his conclusion that Paul is the likely author of Ephesians and Colossians and so use Paul's name as the author. Ibid. 310-312.

<sup>37</sup> See Colossians 2:4; 2:8; 2:16-19. It is clear that Paul sees this theological 'cancer' as a serious threat to the life of the church community. Note also 1 Tim 1:19, where Paul is encouraging Timothy to resist the pressure of those who have rejected the faith and are devoid of a good conscience toward God. Presumably, these are they who occupy Paul's attention in vs3 -7 of Ch1. I am reassured that Paul uses the term 'shipwreck' to describe the serious nature of the results of the Colossian heresy.

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pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.<sup>38</sup>

Lewis does not spell out clearly what he means by a 'Materialist' who disbelieves or a 'Magician' who displays 'an excessive and unhealthy interest' in the demonic. However, to judge by the content of his novel, and assuming that Lewis was not writing a satire, it seems that he saw his surrounding society drifting towards the 'Charybdis' social-scientific vortex as they fixed a wary weather eye on the demonic 'Scylla'. I hope what follows will go some way towards illuminating that elusive 'middle path' of resistance to the various facets of demonic evil that are often alluded to, but rarely mapped out in useful detail.<sup>39</sup> In order to achieve this, I propose to arrive at some soundings through evaluating the thought of some popular exponents of the social-scientific worldview and follow this with an analysis of others whose worldview is chiselled out of a dualistic cosmic warfare paradigm.

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<sup>38</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters: Letters from a Senior to a Junior Devil* (London: HarperCollins UK, 2009). Preface page 1.

<sup>39</sup> For a comment on moderation for those who move towards the Scylla of the spiritual warfare paradigm, Karl Barth has this to say: "...the theologian...must not linger or become too deeply engrossed [in the demonic, as]...there is the imminent danger that in so doing we ourselves might become just a little or more than a little demonic" Quoted from Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*.175. Barth was dismissive of those who accepted the ontological reality of the demonic realm, which, I will later argue, led some who hold similar views into a reductionist framework that presents significant exegetical, hermeneutical, and pastoral difficulties.



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## Chapter 2: Evil that comes from a Human Source.

### 2.1 Tom Wright's 'Nothingness' of Evil.

Tom Wright is known as a 'best-selling' author, which is rather a rarity for a Christian academic in recent times. His numerous publications, including his popular '...For Everyone' series have served to confirm his reputation as a writer who is seen to straddle the chasm that all too often exists between the halls of Academia and the general public<sup>40</sup>. The popularity of Wright's books, driven, I believe, in large part through his clear and accessible style of writing, do not mean that the topics he addresses are of little consequence. On the contrary, in my experience, Wright's perspectives represent a growing influence on the Pentecostal Church, at least in Australia<sup>41</sup>. In a recent book<sup>42</sup>, Wright goes some distance towards a 'via media' between tripartite views of the cosmos. In the first instance, Satan and God battle it out for supremacy, in the second, the Devil is dismissed as a medieval caricature in red tights and horns, and in the third instance, Satan and his demons are Jungian metaphysical projections. In the first instance, he cites those Christians who see 'direct Satanic influence and activity behind every problem and all suffering and

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<sup>40</sup> See the preamble for Wright's 'Simply Jesus' at <http://www.amazon.com/Simply-Jesus-Vision-What-Matters/dp/0062084399>.

<sup>41</sup> I say 'direct' in the sense that his thought directly influences those who read his books, and I use the adjective 'indirectly' to include all those who are taught by those who have embraced Tom Wright's view on matters to which he has directed his attention. For example, the largest Pentecostal Academic institution in Australia, Alphacrucis College, has nominated Tom's book 'Jesus and the Victory of God' as the required text for a recent course that focuses on the Synoptic Gospels. See Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003). This is not to say that Wright's views are accepted uncritically by Alphacrucis college, but rather that the extent of his influence merits a critical examination of his work.

<sup>42</sup> N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God (with DVD)* (London: SPCK, 2006).

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misfortune’;<sup>43</sup> and then goes on to say that those holding to such a view see ‘much pastoral work, and indeed much practical work for the healing of nations and societies, in terms, more or less, of exorcism’.<sup>44</sup> In the second instance, he refers to that section of the community that is intellectually opposed to the concept of a Devil, and merely uses the medieval image as a convenient target for their ridicule. In the third instance, Wright addresses those who ‘cherish the insights of Carl Jung’ by acknowledging the value of including Jungian concepts in ‘*the language of the Demonic*’ discourse on the nature of evil, and, to that end, he makes mention of one of the most prominent exponents of this point of view, Walter Wink.<sup>45</sup> Wright owns Wink’s insights as a subset of his own, but adds that Wink’s view is incomplete. He notes that evil, which takes its form as the absence of the good, ‘is the moral and spiritual equivalent of a black hole’, and, idolatrous human practices, which ascribe to created things that power and honour which is realistically due to God, create those ‘black holes’ into which humans ‘stumble head-first into evil’.<sup>46</sup> Wright then admits that all three attempts to define evil, and his own additions, are ‘no doubt mysterious’ and yet must all play a part in Christian thinking, since all contribute in some way towards the reality of evil. He sums up his description of evil opposition to the ‘Project of God’<sup>47</sup> as ‘negative forces, perhaps we should say A Negative Force

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<sup>43</sup>N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (with DVD) (InterVarsity Press, 2009). p70.

<sup>44</sup> Wright goes on to say he is not opposed to exorcism per se, and does see a place for this practice in the church. However, he can be forgiven for not describing what that place may be, since it is not the purpose of his thought, which is to sketch out his own version of Scylla and Charybdis – the extremes of approaches to the Demonic.

<sup>45</sup> Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (with DVD). 71.

<sup>46</sup> One can be forgiven for hearing echoes of Karl Barth’s ‘nothingness’ of evil, which caused him to accept the existence of holy angels, and yet deny the reality of evil spirits. Thus, it seems that Tom Wright’s ‘bigger picture’ of evil includes Walter Wink’s Jungian archetypes, but is, in the final analysis, a mysterious and impersonal ‘nothingness’. Ibid, p72.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p72.

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which will be working against us and for which we must allow'.<sup>48</sup> If I have grasped Tom Wright's position accurately, then it boils down to the nature and function of evil as a mysterious non-human 'opposing force'<sup>49</sup> that seeks to thwart God's will. This conclusion leaves one wondering how to resist such an all-pervasive and ill-defined foe. Wright advocates the Christian response to such forces of evil ought to involve engaging in the 'unending struggle of the mystery of prayer', holiness of life, creating just laws in society on a national and international scale and to fire one's Christian imagination with visions of the eschatological future<sup>50</sup>.

Wright is not without his critics. For instance, when reviewing 'Evil and the Justice of God', Don Carson points out that Wright paints sin as 'the absence of Shalom', and this picture whitewashes the prominent Biblical theme of the personal nature of the wrath that God displayed against sin –it is a personal offence against a God who is personal<sup>51</sup>. This criticism bears on the personal nature of God who is described ontologically as Spirit<sup>52</sup> and, by implication, begs the question concerning the existence of the personal and spiritual nature of non-human evil. That is, if God, who is described in the Scriptures as 'spirit', is treated personally in Wright's cosmology, then on what grounds is 'The Satan', or 'demons', who are similarly described, denied the same personal existence?<sup>53</sup> Wright has left his readers in doubt on this point, preferring to hint at 'grains of truth' within the various perspectives he surveys, and concluding that evil is a nebulous force that at best can be defined as resistant to

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<sup>48</sup> Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God (with DVD)*. p73.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p72.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.82,83.

<sup>51</sup> D. A. Carson, "Evil and the Justice of God - Book Review," *Society of Biblical Literature*, no. 4 (n.d.): 1–10. 7.

<sup>52</sup> See John 4:24.

<sup>53</sup> A similar criticism is made of Barth's angelology, which refutes evil angels but accepts the good. Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically About Angels, Satan, and Principalities* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2003). 24.

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God's revealed will. Evil also manifests itself in concrete terms by means of human suffering and confusion in the wider created realm<sup>54</sup> and thus Don Carson is justly critical of the absence of significant Biblical support for Wright's reasons for denying the devil personhood. The devil is certainly viewed in a personal light by Biblical authors, and the foremost example that comes to mind occurs during the temptation of Christ (Matt 4:3-11) and, in unmistakable terms, throughout the synoptic gospel exorcisms<sup>55</sup>. Although Wright avers that he does see a place in church practice for exorcism (p70), he is silent on the way in which the Biblical description of exorcism implies the objective personal nature of the evicted demonic presences, as over against the uncertain nature of an undefined 'quasi-personal' evil. Although I am not convinced by Tom Wright's description of the nebulous nature of evil<sup>56</sup>, I nevertheless resonate with his desire to find a *via media* through the opposing emphases and appreciate the way in which he has situated his theory within a broad historical context. From the standpoint of Biblical exegesis, Wright's definition of evil appears unnecessarily blurred and is inadequate to act as a beacon from which to navigate between 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'.

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<sup>54</sup> For an analysis of a different work of Tom Wright ('Colossians and Philemon'), yet arriving at a similar conclusion to my own, see Keith Fedinando "Screwtape Revisited," in *The Unseen Realm: Christian Reflection on Angels, Demons, and the Heavenly Realm*, Editor: Anthony N. S. Lane. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Paternoster Press, 1996).

<sup>55</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the early Christian world* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1984). 4. See also Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. 162.

<sup>56</sup> Wright writes '...it is wrong to think of the Satan as 'personal' in the same way that God, or Jesus, is 'personal'. That is not to say that the Satan is a vague or nebulous force; quite the reverse. I prefer to use the term 'sub-personal', or 'quasi-personal', as a way of refusing to accord the Satan the dignity of personhood while recognizing that the concentration of activity, its subtle schemes and devices, can and does strike us as very much like that which we associate with personhood.' All of this leaves the reader without a clear understanding of what Wright means by his new categories of 'sub-personal' or 'quasi-personal', which he admits, look 'personal' to us. All that I can make of this is that Wright thinks that Satan is personal, but in some different way to what we are used to thinking of personal. In effect, Wright has not clarified what he thinks about the nature of Satan. Reminds me of a twist to a well-known song...'its personal, dear reader, but not as we know it...'

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In contrast to Wright, Graham Twelftree has also suggested three broad categories of approaches to the Demonic<sup>57</sup> that offer the promise of sharpening the focus on the nature and working of evil, and are more familiar to Australian Pentecostals:

1. The Biblical Model that sees Demonic influence as an 'objective power' the church is authorised to exorcise.
2. Exorcism is a psychological means of dealing with those who believe an evil spirit oppresses them.
3. The devil and demons do not exist. There are psychological explanations for all behaviours or conditions associated with the demonic influence<sup>58</sup>.

Since I am chiefly writing for the benefit of the Pentecostal/Charismatic community, most for whom option three is not a serious consideration, I will firstly evaluate the argument of Walter Wink who advocate a position that can be understood to span across Twelftree's second and third categories. Wink differs from those who take the view that modern psychology and medical science **has** adequate explanations for all categories of behaviour that the Bible calls 'demonic', to the extent that, as Rudolph Bultmann put it: "It is impossible to use electric lights and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of Spirits and miracles"<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 14,15.

<sup>59</sup> Rudolph Bultmann Hans Werner Bartsch and Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *Kerygma and myth: a theological debate* (Harper & Row, 1961). Quoted from Richard H. Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil: Interpreting the Redemption from the Power of Satan in New Testament Theology* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007, 5). Bultmann's seminal work that introduced his form critical analysis of the New testament was an essay entitled 'The New Testament and Mythology' published in 1941. The term 'demythologisation' has come to denote the process of stripping away

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Rather, Wink sees the Biblical language constructed around personal evil, such as 'Satan' and 'evil spirits' as a kind of linguistic amphorae used to convey personal expressions of evil distilled from the collective human psyche. To attempt to push the term 'personal' through the eye of 'collective' seems as difficult to imagine as Jesus' camel going through the eye of the needle, however, Wink manages to ingeniously suggest this is possible by using Jung's theories of a 'collective unconscious' which allow human organisations to form a personality which is distinct from the individual members. I will analyse Wink's concepts further in chapter 2.

Following a review of Wink's trilogy on the 'powers', I will survey several writers who fall into the category of viewing the demonic as comprising hostile, non-human personal objective beings. This is the stance most familiar to Australian Pentecostal/Charismatics, if I may be so bold as to speak with authority over such a broad constituency, and its distinctive flavour is recognizable in the words of Charles Kraft:

We [Christians] are at war against "the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world" (Ephesians 6:12). It is also clear...that the context in which we are to operate authoritatively is one of warfare between the kingdoms...we have at least two enemies, not one. Satan and his demonic helpers, of course,... the other enemy is his chief weapon: ignorance.<sup>60</sup>

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beliefs 'myths' to arrive at the 'facts'. See the introduction by Robert Morgan in Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 1951).

<sup>60</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *I Give You Authority: Practicing the Authority Jesus Gave Us* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2012).295.

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## **Walter Wink and Systemic Nature of Human Evil.**

In the wake of Rudolph Bultmann, the writing of Walter Wink has been noted in the halls of Pentecostal academia<sup>61</sup>, and although his view of the 'principalities and powers' is not monolithic in the more evangelical liberal circles,<sup>62</sup> although it has certainly been influential for many, including Tom Wright.<sup>63</sup> For the sake of brevity and so as to avoid sailing into the mists of many nuanced opinions, I have chosen the viewpoint of Wink's trilogy on the Powers<sup>64</sup> as an exemplar of the theological interpretive school that emphasizes the 'Charybdis' of an evil that is sourced from a purely human origin. This evil may, nonetheless, express itself in such a way as to transcend the individual nature of human persons and become a sum that is greater than, and different to, the parts.

Walter Wink applauds the demythologising of Bultmann and German critical scholarship, adding a proviso, in saying that whilst the European scholars correctly threw overboard outmoded superstitions of the ancient worldview, he believes that the modern critics have stopped short of uncovering the true nature of the projection of human power. Wink says:

I will argue that the Principalities and Powers are the inner and outer aspects of any given manifestation of Power. As the inner aspect, they are the spirituality of institutions, the "within" of corporate structures and systems, the inner essence of outer organizations of power. As the outer aspect, they are

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<sup>61</sup> For the sake of the reader, I do not believe the phrase 'Pentecostal Academia' is any longer an oxymoron.

<sup>62</sup> For example, Both Rudolph Bultmann and, more recently, Johan Christiaan Beker have slightly different takes on the substance behind the Biblical language of the 'Powers'.

<sup>63</sup> Wright mentions Walter Wink, amongst others, as a foundational voice in 'Evil and the Justice of God' p72.

<sup>64</sup> Wink, *Naming The Powers*. Wink, *Unmasking The Powers*. Wink, *Engaging The Powers*.

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political systems, appointed officials, the “chair” of an organisation, laws – in short, all the tangible manifestations which power takes<sup>65</sup>.

Because he assesses the NT descriptors of ‘Power’ as ‘imprecise, liquid, interchangeable, and unsystematic’,<sup>66</sup> Wink has adopted the approach of fitting the first century language categories into those of ‘modern sociology, depth psychology, and general systems theory’.<sup>67</sup> I will comment on this approach a little later, but for now, I want to highlight that Wink is not satisfied with the ambiguity he perceives in the Biblical author’s use of language that describes power, and requires that the Biblical data match modern socio-psychological knowledge categories. Why choose these categories, and their implied scientific materialistic world-view? In the absence of any other reasons, it appears they may be *a priori* assumptions. Wink soon turns to the Genesis account of the Fall of Adam and Eve in search of an explanation for the presence of the variety of power terms scattered about the literary decks of the Biblical vessel. He locates the reason in Christian theodicy: Wink maintains that the postexilic Rabbinical schools realised that ‘Adam and Eve could not bear the weight of all human tragedy’.<sup>68</sup> So much so that that Wink sees the purpose of many of the intertestamental apocalypses, such as ‘The Book of Jubilees’ and ‘Ecclesiasticus’, are to create an ‘Angelic Fall’ in order to preserve Jewish Monotheism, which has at its foundation the Sovereignty and Goodness of God.<sup>69</sup> So it can be argued that a source of evil that was ontologically separate from God had to be invented, or the integrity of Israel’s God would be called into question, and along with that, the identity

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<sup>65</sup> Wink, *Naming The Powers*. 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*



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of the entire Jewish nation. From the cosmic causes of misfortune (fallen angels rebelling against God), Wink turns to the particular causes: He notes that 1 Enoch expressly lists the causing of illnesses and spirit-possession as among the activities of the hostile spirits that came forth from the dead giants killed during the Flood.<sup>70</sup> Further, Wink sees a demythologising process taking place in Paul's personification of Sin, law, death and the flesh.<sup>71</sup> The implication is that suffering and calamity that were once seen by the intertestamental writers as the work of fallen angels, are now more realistically interpreted by Paul as the dominating effects of sin working through the twin forces of law and distorted human nature. These two entities produce physical and spiritual decay. Equipped with this understanding, Wink is sailing close to Johan Christiaan Beker's explanation of Paul's use of 'Powers and Authorities' as terms which he understands to bring home to his listeners the full ontological reality of sin, law, death and the flesh.<sup>72</sup> In other words, both these men see the four destructive elements mentioned in the previous sentence as composed of a mosaic of negative psychological expressions of individual human psyches, and nothing more than that.

Some comments are in order here: It is clear that it was not the immediate intention of the Biblical authors to present these 'forces' in this modern psychological form. When one applies Ockham's razor to these explanations, the clear meaning of the

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<sup>70</sup> 1 Enoch 15:11-12, 16:1. There are three books of Enoch, often know by the language of their earliest translation. 1 Enoch is often called 'Ethiopic Enoch' for this reason. 1 Enoch gives an extended summary of the events surrounding Genesis 6, and is agreed by most scholars to be quoted in Jude :14.

<sup>71</sup> Walter Wink cites Romans 3:9, 6:15 and 8:5,7. Wink, *Naming The Powers*. 62. [Check font size.](#)

<sup>72</sup> Beker finds 'the coming triumph of God over all the power structures of this world which resist and rebel against God's redemptive plan for his created world...' to be the central theme of Paul's presentation of the Gospel. Beker sums up the forces that the church must resist as 'death...in whatever form that enemy reveals itself', and there is a notable absence of Biblical terminology of the Devil, Satan and Demons. Johan Beker, "The Challenge of Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel for the Church Today," *JRT* 37 (81 1980): 9-15. *Ibid*, 12.

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text, read in its historical/grammatical context, suggests that the Biblical authors viewed the Devil and his angels as non-human, distinct, metaphysical beings whose purpose was hostile to God's revealed will,<sup>73</sup> and not human psychological projections. The question arises, "Why does Wink dismiss the ontological reality of evil spirits as an a priori assumption?" It seems clear that Rudolph Bultmann, Walter Wink, Johan Beker and many others can only explain their hypotheses in terms of a twentieth century social-scientific language which presumes a more 'enlightened' understanding of human anthropology, one which marries in well with the prevailing world view of a largely western, educated, wealthy and white elite. Ironically, this stance may, in Wink's own terms, be seen as 'demonic' in the sense that it arrogantly assumes to possess all the necessary categories of knowledge that are needed to encompass human experience, and by definition silences, or deems as 'absurd', any other worldview. Keith Ferdinando accurately describes the logical conclusion one is likely to arrive at by choosing to adopt such non-Biblical categories to evaluate Biblical writers<sup>74</sup> when he says 'The reduction ad absurdum of demythologisation is the proclamation of the 'death of God' and the consequent self-destruction of theology'.<sup>75</sup> This pithy prediction may find some substance when weighing Wink's work on the scales of historic orthodoxy. For example, at the conclusion of his

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<sup>73</sup> Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*.17, Clinton Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001). 69. John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 1998). Richard Bell notes that the ontological status of Satan is on par with that of Adam, and is significant since Satan is that being from whom Christ delivers us. Bell does appear to favour a cosmology that has similarities to Cartesian dualism, but his point regarding the ontology of Satan and demons stands. Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil*. 351.

<sup>74</sup> When I speak of 'non-Biblical categories', I do not mean that **the Walter** et al do not use the language of the Biblical text such as Satan, Demons and so forth, but rather they empty the words of their historical freight, and fill them with new content, which the Biblical authors never intended. *Thus, they violate the basic building block of the transfer of meaning – authorial intentionality.*

<sup>75</sup> Keith Ferdinando, "Screwtape Revisited," in *The Unseen Realm: Christian Reflection on Angels, Demons, and the Heavenly Realm*, Editor: Anthony N. S. Lane. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Paternoster Press, 1996). 107.

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second volume, 'Unmasking the Powers', Wink encourages the reader to not 'go back to the Bible, but only forward, by means of the Bible'. His next sentence expands on this: 'ours must be an "animism no longer anthropocentric"; we must find soul in matter without simply projecting into it our own souls'.<sup>76</sup> One may view as significant in this statement of Christian mission that there is no mention of the historical reality of the person of Jesus Christ, viewed through the lens of scripture, as the Christian's prime source of self-understanding, but rather, 'finding soul in matter'. I appreciate Wink's emphasis on the beauty of creation as a mediation of the nature of God, but it is, in my understanding, no substitute for the knowledge of fully divine and fully human person of Jesus.<sup>77</sup> One more observation on this point before we move on: In his epilogue in Book 2, Wink describes the duty of the believer to engage the 'Powers' in the spirit and power of 'the truly human being incarnated by Jesus'. This last sentence is significant, for it appears to portray Jesus as the pattern of true humanity, which in one sense He is. But surely that is only half the story, since he is also some things that we can never be, such as the 'image of the invisible God, The first born over all creation...the head of the body, the church...'<sup>78</sup> This dimension of Christ is notably absent in Wink's thought. Keeping in mind Francis Schaeffer's definition of heresy as the overemphasis of one truth to the detriment of another, it appears Wink leaves his readers with a strong impression that the future of the world is in human hands. It is up to humanity to transform the world by finding the spirit at the very heart of matter, as he puts it. In view of this diminishing of the

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<sup>76</sup> Wink, *Unmasking The Powers*. 170.

<sup>77</sup> Stephen Noll sees Walter Wink's theology as 'pantheistic' in that 'God and the powers are enmeshed in the flux of a closed cosmos'. He notes that Wink's views silence any angelic witness to humans about God since angels 'cannot witness to a sovereign God who acts because God and they are partakers in the dance that we choreograph' (emphasis is Noll's). Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness*. 25.

<sup>78</sup> Colossians 1: 15-20.

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activity and providence of God, and the concomitant rise in the determinative nature of human responsibility, Wink's readers may suspect that the God of the Bible who claims to have acted towards, and spoken to, real men and women in history will be relegated to a 'two dimensional universe'<sup>79</sup> by Wink. He has, in his own words, 'set sail in pursuit only of scholarly thoroughness and the desire to leave no stone unturned... and quite sailed off the map of our two-dimensional universe, *into a universe that is alive*' (emphasis is his own). One cannot escape the inference that all those who have understood things differently to Wink are, more or less, perceptually 'deadened', and living 'two-dimensional' lives, which simply does not square with the personal experience of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements who both *do* accept the ontological reality of spirit-beings, **and** also have a robust experiential faith.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, David Instone Brewer, whose thinking has been shaped by 'modern psychiatric theory and practice',<sup>81</sup> analyses the gospel records of Jesus' healings and exorcisms and concludes that many of these could now be solved through medical science, though at the time, Jesus' ability to heal without the aid of medical technology would indeed appear to be miraculous. However, Brewer's own pastoral experience led him to write concerning the exorcism passages in the gospels 'These passages [the exorcisms] make the most sense when they are read as literal descriptions of exorcisms which are paralleled in the experience of many

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<sup>79</sup> Wink, *Unmasking The Powers*. 170.

<sup>80</sup> The Editors of "*The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*" state 'The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the emergence and phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Neocharismatic movements. These three waves of Pentecostalism, which constitute one of Christianity's greatest renewals, have impacted every segment of the church in virtually all countries of the world with new vitality and fervour. Participants in this renewal share exuberant worship, an emphasis on subjective religious experience and spiritual gifts, claims of supernatural miracles, signs and wonders...". Burgess and Maas, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. – Introduction, 1.

<sup>81</sup> David Instone Brewer 'Jesus and the Psychiatrists' from Anthony N. S. Lane, *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1996). 133.

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Christian Pastors', Instone Brewer underscores this statement with examples from his personal pastoral experience.<sup>82</sup>

In summary, Walter Wink envisions the demonic as 'a single realm, personal and collective, inner and outer, archetypal and institutional. It is the unity of the forces of fragmentation, and not religious obscurantism that requires us to acknowledge the Prince of demons and his kingdom of death'. Despite the size of the waves of paradox in this statement (single realm/personalized collective, inner/outer, unity/fragmentation), and the confusing personalised collective tag he gives them – 'Prince of Demons and his kingdom of death', Wink *does* have some practical suggestions on how to resist the human socio-cultural dimension of evil. He cites the Greek verb form 'ἀντιστηναι', translated as 'resist' in Matt 5:39 as having its roots of usage in the LXX in terms of warfare. His translation of preference for Matt 5:39a is "Don't react violently against the one who is evil".<sup>83</sup> Wink notes the similarity of the verb 'ἀντιστηναι' used in Ephesians 6:13 to that of Matt 5:39 and draws a theological parallel that nuances the meaning of the verb to encompass non-violent resistance to human oppression. Wink's experiences in non-violent resistance during the Apartheid regime in South Africa command respect, and offer valuable insight into the practical ways and means of resisting the various expressions of institutional, systemic evil. For example, Wink presents some interesting exegetical background and conclusions to the Biblical injunctions to 'turn the other cheek',

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<sup>82</sup> David Instone Brewer 'Jesus and the Psychiatrists' from Anthony N. S. Lane, Ed, *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm* (Paternoster Press, 1996). 148

<sup>83</sup> Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be*, New ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1999). Kindle Version, under the heading 'Jesus' Third Way'.

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'Hand over your cloak and 'Go the second mile'.<sup>84</sup> He goes the extra exegetical mile himself in order to show that 'the oppressed' can 'seize the initiative' and 'discomfit their oppressors'<sup>85</sup> by offering his own cultural analysis of the text. He wisely cautions against using the technique of exposing the inhumanity of the oppressor with a vengeful heart, noting that Jesus' command is to love one's enemies, which, he says, 'opens up the possibility of the enemy's becoming just also. Both sides must win'.<sup>86</sup> It seems to me that that Wink offers a practical ethic of protest against societal injustices that mirrors Jesus' own example in dealing with human exploitation and, in so doing, sails between his own version of a 'Scylla' of passive compliance to oppression, and a 'Charybdis' of 'Just War theory'<sup>87</sup> with its resulting cycle of violence and oppression. It is well to note, in line with Instone Brewer's caution, that however valuable Wink's ethic of non-violent resistance may be, it is still an incomplete expression of opposition to some of the forms of evil that Jesus encountered, such as spirit-possession. It is my intention to return to Walter Wink's ethic of non-violent resistance at a later stage in this paper when it is time to gather together my 'soundings' on the possibility of a 'via media'<sup>88</sup> between the two extremes of Christian resistance to evil.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. Location 1381.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Wink, *The Powers That Be*. Location 1442, Kindle version.

<sup>87</sup> Wink refers to Augustine's argument for a 'Just War' - see Augustine, *City of God* (London: Penguin Books Limited, 2003). 861

<sup>88</sup> Via Media means 'the middle path' in Latin.

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## Chapter 3: The Dualistic Warfare Paradigm:

### 3.1 A brief history of the warfare paradigm.

The dualistic worldview, envisaging as it does a cosmological duel between God and the Devil, in which people must pick sides and fight to the death, lies at the heart of what I shall call the 'dualistic warfare myth'.<sup>89</sup> The notion of the 'warfare myth' was not bequeathed to Christianity by the Pentecostal/charismatic movement, but has a much longer history. Neil Forsyth has shown that cosmological warfare beliefs are nothing new to humanity. For example, speaking from a narrative critical standpoint, Forsyth quotes the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp's notion that all plots require a 'lack' or 'villainy'. He observes that sin neatly slots into the category of 'lack' and Satan fits the bill as the cosmic villain. At this point, Forsyth notes that strict monotheism requires a sovereign creator who is without equal in the cosmos<sup>90</sup>. Along these lines, Graham Twelftree tells us that Persian beliefs in angels and demons influenced the post-exilic rabbis with the likely result that the character of Satan operates increasingly in an autonomous fashion, particularly in the intertestamental literature.<sup>91</sup> Twelftree cites Philo of Alexandria, Pseudo Philo, Josephus and the contents of the Magical Papyri, amongst others, as evidence of the widespread ancient belief in the battle between humanity and hostile, non-human,

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<sup>89</sup> I have adapted this term from Neil Forsyth's use of 'The combat Myth' in his book titled 'The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth'. Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*. I use the word 'myth' in the sense that it represents a belief system that may, or may not, be anchored in reality.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 436.

<sup>91</sup> Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. 32. See also Wink, *Naming The Powers*.23.

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personal spirits<sup>92</sup>. Thus, if it is true that YHWH, the God of the monotheists, is supreme as creator, then the question must be asked: 'From whence come the villain and his evil?' Augustine of Hippo was aware of this issue in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE, and offered a solution by positing that God, in his sovereign power, is using the sinful pride resulting from the rebellion towards God by created beings (both angelic and human), to bring good out of evil.<sup>93</sup>

Martin Luther took up this theme when he wrote that the purpose of combat with the Devil and his forces was to gain salvation.<sup>94</sup> Luther went on to say that the battle between Satan and God stems from the former's 'contrary will' which has its earliest expression in the angelic fall in Genesis 6, in which the offspring of some angelic beings and human women became the 'giants' that filled the earth with violence, and who died in the flood at time of Noah.<sup>95</sup> Walter Sundberg records that Luther agreed with Justin Martyr, who was in turn was influenced as to the detail and results of the Angelic fall of Genesis 6 by post-exilic rabbinical literature.<sup>96</sup> Luther also believed in the ontological reality and character of Satan, and his ability to take a 'frightening physical shape', however Satan can only 'ape and deceive our senses. He can cause one to think he sees something when he sees not'.<sup>97</sup> This statement is significant because it shows the limits placed on Satan, and in so doing preserves

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 34-41.

<sup>93</sup> See Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*. 483. For a nuanced modern philosophic argument that buttresses Augustine's conclusion, see Plantinga's proof of the viability of a possible set of circumstances in which God, assumed to be consistently logical and good in nature, creates a humanity endowed with an operative moral capacity, may only be able to effect good in his creation by allowing the possibility of evil. Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974). Kindle Edition under the heading 'The Free will Defence'.

<sup>94</sup> Walter Sundberg, "Satan the Enemy," *Word and World* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 29–37.

<sup>95</sup> See Jubilees 4.22, Testament of Naphtali 3.3.4-5, 2 Enoch 12:1-6 location 612-627, Dr A. Nyland, *Complete Books of Enoch* (Kindle version: CreateSpace, 2010). Locations 612-627 (Kindle Edition).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid 33.



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the monotheism that is a distinctive of historic Christianity and Judaism. It is also noteworthy that whilst Luther placed an emphasis on the Sovereignty of God in drawing men to himself, he emphasised that the Christian life, and in particular that the Christian's resistance of the Devil involved a great effort of the will. He imaged the human will as a beast that had to be under the control of God or of the Devil. The importance which Martin Luther attached to the exercise of the will in resisting Satan lies in its ability to display the working of God in the believer's life.<sup>98</sup> The power to resist evil comes as the direct result of the work of Holy Spirit in the believer's life, and not because of fear of punishment, or even desire for reward.<sup>99</sup> The significance of the part played by the exercise of the human will in what appears to be dualistic warfare between God and Satan becomes significant shortly, when we begin to discuss popular contemporary approaches to 'spiritual warfare' within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement.

As we leave behind the epoch of the reformation and approach the twentieth century, other influential voices continue to affirm the reality of hostile evil spirits which can, at times, require exorcism. One such voice comes from the Catholic Church, which defines demonic exorcism as 'directed at the expulsion of demons or

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<sup>98</sup> "Thus the human will is, as it were, a beast between the two [God and Satan]. If God sit thereon, it wills and goes where God will...If Satan sit thereon, it wills and goes as Satan will. Nor is in the power of its own will to choose, to which rider it will turn, nor which it will seek; but the riders themselves contend, which shall have and hold it' ( emphasis mine). Luther was a strict monotheist, taking a high view of the sovereignty of God, however, he allowed that God may, and does, choose to work out his purposes in such a way as give human spectators the appearance of dualistic cosmic battle. Martin Luther, *Martin Luther on the bondage of the will, written in answer to the diatribe of Erasmus on free-will, tr. by H. Cole, 2009 vols.* (Digireads.com Publishing, 1823). 57.

<sup>99</sup> "...the [unregenerate] will cannot change itself, nor give itself another bent...on the other hand, when God works in us, the will, being changed and sweetly breathed on by the Spirit of God, desires and acts, not from compulsion, but responsively, from pure willingness, inclination, and accord; so that it cannot be turned another way by anything contrary, nor be compelled or overcome even by the gates of hell; but it still goes on to desire, crave after, and love that which is good; even as before, it desired, craved after, and loved that which was evil...In a word, if we be under the god of this world, without the operation and Spirit of God, we are led captives by him at his will' Ibid. For a further development of this theme, see Appendix 3.

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the liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church'.<sup>100</sup> Although the Roman Catholic Church has not made public or widespread use of its capacity to exorcise evil spirits in the western church context, by including exorcism in its arsenal of spiritual weaponry, it affirms, at least in theory, that there are human contexts in which the first century understandings of demonic possession and exorcism are required for healing.<sup>101</sup> The influential Catholic thinker Karl Rahner has written 'the existence in the world of evil which is not absolute and which cannot be identified with human evil...the existence of finite, related powers of a personal kind which are, because of their own fault, evil, and have been rejected, and which cannot be restored to a state of perfection". But Rahner himself has a different view...

in this sense [that which man experiences in Christian anthropology when he is liberated from his powerlessness by the Gospel message] demonology is an expression of the personal basis of our guilt and mortality which is not within our power to control or reach by any action in human history...this is, in relation to us and our salvation, the essential subject matter of demonology.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Anthony Finlay, *Demons: The Devil, Possession and Exorcism* (Blandford: Vega, 2002). 200.

<sup>101</sup> **Catholic Priest Francis Macnutt** puts forward that 'the early Christian preaching presented the Gospel primarily as an active struggle between the Kingdom of God and kingdom of Satan...' He has been involved in a healing ministry that commonly includes exorcism, amongst other types of healing. Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Chosen Books, 2009). 104. MacNutt is convinced of the pre-eminence of the cosmic battle between the forces of Good and the Forces of evil taking place on legal terms, with rules of engagement, which draw primarily from the personal experience of the Exorcist. He too operates from a static ethical stance, in which the Bible worldview becomes paradigmatic for all people in all times. See, for example, his chapter on Cursing and Blessing.

<sup>102</sup> Karl Rahner, *Encyclopaedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1975). p334.

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So it seems clear that Rahner is a proponent of the 'social scientific' devil who is a projection of human powerlessness.<sup>103</sup> In contrast to Rahner, then-Cardinal Ratzinger adopted a more traditional stance on the nature of the devil: 'For Christian believers, the Devil is a mysterious, but real, personal and not symbolic presence'.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.2 Australian Pentecostals and the Warfare Paradigm.

I have attempted to give a brief history of some influential Christian thinkers who believed in the need for Christians to resist/battle hostile preternatural beings, and thus to approximate the Australian Pentecostal zeitgeist within the traditional orthodox worldview held by the wider church body from its inception until more recent times. If battling personal evil spirits was path for the course for large sections of the church for thousands of years, why then, you may ask, do such luminaries as Bultmann, Wink, Barth, imply the dualistic warfare myth as a dangerous 'Scylla' upon which one's faith can run aground? Why not rather, in the manner of **Luther** , embrace it as *the* guiding metaphor?

Australian Pentecostal churches have indeed, by and large, displayed zeal for the reformers' view of ontologically distinct spirit beings and for the comprehensive nature of the warfare metaphor. Chris Baker **describes** **early 20<sup>th</sup>** century Australian Pentecostal Cosmological beliefs as:

... since there existed a conceptual dualism between the spiritual and the material worlds, "spiritual" entities – such as God, angels and demons – belonged to the spiritual realm and had access to the physical world. The

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Quoted from Marina Warner, *Monsters of Our Own Making: The Peculiar Pleasures of Fear* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2007). p389.

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demonic was a cosmological reality that impressed itself upon the lives of those committed to the gospel, such that life entailed spiritual struggle, and the believer engaged in spiritual warfare through prayer and the preaching of the good news.<sup>105</sup>

A writer of an article in the popular early Australian Journal 'Pentecost Evangel' in the 1930's speaks about the causal link between demonic evil and sickness and disease within the context of divine healing:

...sickness and death formed no part of life's original programme; that they both gained a foothold by means of man's fall from that original state of innocence; that they sprang from a malignant evil outside of the original constitution of nature...if human physical diseases result-primarily- because of an invasion of supernatural forces of evil into the realm of the human, and if back of certain bodily infirmities there is a definite manifestation of demon power.<sup>106</sup>

Although the writer later mentions some sicknesses and disease spring from poor lifestyle choices, the greatest cause for alarm comes from the 'invasion of supernatural forces of evil'. Small wonder if not brushing one's teeth or exercising regularly pales into insignificance when compared to a demonic invasion force that can inflict diseases upon humans!<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Chris Baker, "07 Next Generation Essay: Experiencing the Supernatural • Australasian Pentecostal Studies • Webjournals", 2007, <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/journals/aps/issue-9/07-next-generation-essay-experiencing-the-supernat/> (accessed June 16, 2012).

<sup>106</sup>"Is Divine Healing Reasonable?," *Good News* 21 (April 1, 1930), <http://webjournals.alphacrucis.edu.au/journals/GN/gn-vol21-no4-april-1930/05-divine-healing-reasonable/> (accessed June 16, 2012).

<sup>107</sup> Refer to my later comments on the teaching of Andrew Evans, Bob Larson, Neil Anderson

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A more recent writer, influential Australian Church leader Andrew Evans,<sup>108</sup> wrote the following in another popular Pentecostal circular in 1987:

...these are also days of great spiritual attack on Christians and the Church...We have an enemy-Satan, the devil, and he literally hates us... make no mistake- you have an enemy who is constantly against you, your family, our Christian growth, your church, and everything you seek to do for Jesus Christ... [After quoting Ephesians 6:12]...we are not opposed by human beings but rather we are fighting demonic forces and supernatural powers. Many times things go wrong in our lives and our churches and behind it, all are opposing, evil forces seeking to destroy. We need to learn to move in spiritual warfare and to understand how we can overcome our enemy, the devil.<sup>109</sup>

Evans goes on to say that the sovereignty of God is the key to 'repelling' the devil's attacks.<sup>110</sup> He then deftly transfers to the church the authority over the demonic realm inherent in the sovereignty of God under the sub-heading 'The Church has God's power'. Since the 'Church is the body of Christ and because He, the head, is in complete authority over every Satanic force, it is logical to expect that the Church can also exercise great power over the works of the devil and demons'.

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<sup>108</sup> Andrew Evans was Commonwealth Superintendent of the Australian AOG at the time of the writing of his article.

<sup>109</sup> Andrew Evans, "From the Commonwealth Superintendent: Spiritual Warfare," *Australian Evangel* 44, no. 10 (October 1987), <http://webjournals.alphacrucis.edu.au/journals/AEGTM/1987-october/17-commonwealth-superintendent-spiritual-warfare/> (accessed June 16, 2012).

<sup>110</sup> He cites Ephesians 1:18-19, Job 42:2; Genesis 18:14; Nahum 1:3-6; Daniel 4:1 (To illustrate God's power over men such as Nebuchadnezzar); John 19:11; Job 1:12; 2:6; Luke 4:2; the exorcisms of Jesus and Acts 10:38. Jesus status of authority is cited in [Ephesians 1.20-21](#).

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Local, united bodies of believers have ‘tremendous power and authority’ when they believe in, and use this authority, according to Andrew Evans. He expresses this most clearly when he says ‘this [God raised us up (Ephesians 2:6)] means that you, not just the church as an institution, are seated with Jesus in the place of authority over all principalities and powers’. What is then required, to quote an earlier statement of Evans’, is that when ‘things go wrong in our lives and in our churches’ to boldly say, ‘Satan, get your hand off this situation. I rebuke you in Jesus’ name. I have authority over you, because you are under my feet too and you will not touch me or my family...’ He concludes by noting that ‘Satanic attacks come from many different directions and in various ways. Be daily on your guard, exercise your own authority and Christ-given power and move into spiritual warfare when the occasion requires it’ (Emphasis mine).

Andrew Evans resolves the tension that is inherent between the sovereignty of God, present in the monotheism of Christianity and Judaism, and the activity of Evil spirits by metaphorically presenting the lived world as a theatre of war to Pentecostal Christians, in which the combatants are the believers pitted against Satan and his forces. Jesus has already left his blood on the sands of the arena, and departed to heaven in a cloud of Glory, and the believers must now don his **armour**<sup>111</sup> and continue the fight against the devil and his minions by using authoritative words. Following on from this point, I note that the key determinant in this form of the dualistic warfare worldview is the exercise of the believer’s will, informed by the detailed knowledge of one’s spiritual authority. This authority stems directly from the power of the risen Christ that Evans has *unconditionally* transferred to the church,

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<sup>111</sup> See Ephesians 6.10-20.

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and, by logical progression in much of Australian Pentecostalism whose ecclesiology emphasises the cultivation of personal charismatic gifting, to the individual believer. Evans' perspective, reflective of many in the Pentecostal tradition, has an Achilles' heel. The weakness of this interpretation lies in its propensity to elevate the regenerate human will to a status that is almost determinative. God, Jesus and the Spirit appear to fade somewhat into the background as the exorcist battles with the unseen might of the devil and his hordes, with uncertain results, largely because of the weakness of the human will (Luther's donkey), or the presumed ignorance of the Christian combatant to the cosmic 'laws' under which the demonic realm operates. Robert Guelich has criticised this approach by noting the lack of Biblical evidence that substantiates a personal warfare motif between Jesus and Satan. Although exorcism was an integral part of Jesus' ministry, the Biblical record shows that Jesus' power was never contested during the exorcisms.<sup>112</sup> Guelich observes that the use of the term 'warfare' is misleading when describing the Christian's response to spirit-possession. He also notes that the gospels illustrate that not all sickness and suffering is attributed to evil spirits<sup>113</sup>, and that Jesus never directly accused Satan of impeding anyone with a desire to access the kingdom of God.<sup>114</sup> Guelich's observations indicate that the dualistic cosmic warfare worldview presented by Andrew Evans and popular author Frank Peretti is lacking insofar as it purports to explain the full breadth of Biblical data. Further, Guelich states that there is no

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<sup>112</sup> Robert A. Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti," *Pneuma* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 33–64. This point is debated by Twelftree, who sees the words cried out to Jesus by the Gadarene demoniac as best understood as an attempt by the demoniac to mount a defensive curse upon Jesus". Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. p63. Nevertheless, it is evident from the evil spirits' responses that they are clearly the lesser power in the confrontation.

<sup>113</sup> See Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti." 41 cf. Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. p175. Thomas agrees with Guelich, and his study is an excellent Biblical summary of the data on the topic. Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance*. p314,315. . [I don't think I cote this article by Guelich.](#)

<sup>114</sup>Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti." p42.

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mention by Paul the Apostle of warfare in Galatians 1.4, Colossians 1.13 and Ephesians 2.3, all of which clearly describe the current status of the believer living in the world, and where one would expect Pauline authorship to make mention of such an important cosmological dynamic. Rather, the emphasis that the biblical writer uses to reassure Christians under pressure from demonic, human and institutional opposition centres on what Christ has done to guarantee the eschatological terminus of Christian hope, rather than emphasising warfare with the demonic, in which the believers war-cry cry is 'Fight for your life, for the kingdom hangs in the balance!' Paul's reassurance is even starker when contrasted with the cosmology of Jewish apocalyptic warfare thinking that circulated amongst the Qumran community, who lived in Judea during that epoch.<sup>115</sup>

Another high-profile proponent of the warfare worldview who throws great emphasis on the human will and knowledge of the devil's use of legal eddies and shoals that threaten the Christian's progress is American exorcist Bob Larson.<sup>116</sup> In stressing the role played by the human will in defeating Satan, Larson says: 'If the core of a person's identity is strong willed, it seems harder for a demon to take over, no matter what that person does...I always tell those bound by demons to call upon that small portion of their will that is not dominated by the devil'. He also states that 'Curses are exacting, legal arrangements of the spirit world. Just like human contracts contain

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<sup>115</sup> For example: '...The mighty hand of God shall bring down [the army of Satan, and all] the angels of his kingdom, and all the members [of his company]...(1QM 1:15). For commentary and detail on the this Qumran text, and the 'stop/ start' Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, see Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. 33. By 'stop/start' eschatology, I am referring to the present evil age 'stopping' with the coming of Messiah and the defeat of evil, followed by the 'start' of the Kingdom of God. This is in contradistinction to the 'now but not yet' eschatology that is now more generally accepted as being in keeping with the preaching of Jesus and of Paul.

<sup>116</sup> Other more recent practitioners of this worldview include Bob Larson, an American exorcist and author, whose profile was raised in Australia recently when he was interviewed by Australian media identity John Safran, with the resultant documentary, including Larson exorcising a demon from Safran, was aired on Australian television. Craig Melville, *John Safran vs God*, Documentary (SBS TV, 2004).



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fine print and carefully crafted language, satanic curses are often filled with minutia that require detailed voiding'.<sup>117</sup> He thus implies that a person's will and the exorcist's knowledge of the intricate details of the spiritual 'legal system' that is tied in to cursing are both key ingredients in a successful exorcism. Surely, however, the 'core of a person's identity' is related to the social setting in which they live. For example, an African will see himself as part of an extended clan with a well-defined set of ancestors that often feature in his/her name. In contrast, most white Australians with a European heritage emphasize the rights and responsibilities of the individual. Likewise, I argue that the cosmology of each society is foundational to its theology, which, in turn, circumscribes the boundaries of its acceptable practices. Thus, a tribal worldview that embraces the warfare paradigm engenders a belief in the power and influence of evil spirits that is markedly different from that experienced by most 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australians. The worldviews of Larson and Evans are popular amongst Australian Pentecostals, and they do express some valuable truths. The synoptic gospels writers' record of demonic opposition encountered by Jesus and his followers<sup>118</sup> do indeed point to the reality of the personal, ontologically distinct, hostile nature of demonic opposition that is convincingly argued by some scholars,<sup>119</sup> and which agrees with the interpretive stance I have outlined at an earlier stage in this paper. However, those who interpret the warfare metaphor seen in Ephesians 6.10-

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<sup>117</sup> Here exorcist Bob Larson is quoted by Bob De Waay, "How Deliverance Ministries Lead People to Bondage," *Critical Issues Commentary*, October 2003, <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue78.htm> (accessed July 22, 2012).

<sup>118</sup> See Mark 1.32-34; 3.7-12; Luke 4.39; Matthew 9.32; 12.22-30; 16.23; Luke 11.14.

<sup>119</sup> See Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*.174; Arnold, *Power and Magic*.132; Lane, *The Unseen World*. 123; Ed Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare: Revised and Updated* (Thomas Nelson Incorporated, 2003). xi; Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999). p468

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20 and the intertestamental literature<sup>120</sup> as a 'static ethic'<sup>121</sup> have neglected by omission the balancing Biblical statements that treat human sinful nature and the world system as equally real, and ontologically distinct, opponents of the Christian life.<sup>122</sup> The results of neglecting the full breadth of the Biblical response to sickness and disease, particularly in the Gospels,<sup>123</sup> means that practitioners of the dualistic warfare paradigm will 'drift into imbalance at some point'<sup>124</sup> and may be drawn into ministry practices that are likely to leave many confused and disappointed.<sup>125</sup>

### **3.3 Reprise: Beware of the Beguiling Voice of Heresy.**

I appreciate the efforts of some writers to focus on the role of the demonic in causing human suffering as a means to correct perceived inadequacies of a western social-scientific worldview. However, in keeping with Schaeffer's definition of heresy, steering towards the final destination the best way to bring a vessel back on course, rather than shifting the helm to travel in an opposite direction and, in so doing, exchanging one imbalanced emphasis for another! The letter to the Ephesians offers a good example of a Biblical helmsman correcting a church that has drifted off course. In an effort to steer the church away from its fear of the demonic, the author introduces the supremacy and power of God in predestination (Ephesians 1.4, 10, 11). He underlines the power of Christ in creating and upholding the existence and

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<sup>120</sup> The reflection of the warfare paradigm in the intertestamental literature such as Jubilees, Ethiopic Enoch and The Wisdom of Solomon etc. would surprise many Pentecostal readers. There is irony here, since many Pentecostals pride themselves on basing their faith on the true canon, as opposed to those who have compromised their doctrines by giving too much authority to apocryphal and pseudopigraphal literature.

<sup>121</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*. 35.

<sup>122</sup> James 4.1-7; Ephesians 2.3; Galatians 5.17; Romans 7.5; 8.3-9; 1 Corinthians 5.5; Colossians 2.11; 2 Peter 2.10.

<sup>123</sup> Thomas thoroughly surveys the NT texts and concludes that there are three sources of sicknesses and disease: God, the devil/demons and 'unattributed causes'. Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance*. p 292.

<sup>124</sup> Quote is from Ed Murphy, who rightly points out that the 'danger is now that we go the other extreme of demonizing all sin in the believer's life'. Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*. p102.

<sup>125</sup> See Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. 1.

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unity of the church (1.22, 23; 2.19-22; 3.10-12, 4:1-16), and, whilst holding the purpose of the church and its final glorious destiny in sight, he changes course by offering personal and household ethical codes (5:15-17, 22-33, 6:1-9). He wraps up all the course adjustments by reminding the Ephesians that the specific course settings he has given them will meet with opposition from evil spirits (6.10-20). They are to resist the undercurrents of the enemy *by staying on the course mapped out for them!* Note that the armour recommended by the author corresponds to the attributes necessary to 'live as children of the light' (5:8b),<sup>126</sup> which means to live in accordance with the ethic of the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus and now extended by the Spirit to the church. All of this is to say that when one privileges the 1<sup>st</sup> Century warfare worldview as the dominant life paradigm for all Christians, regardless of the cultural context, that surrounds the believing community (a static hermeneutic), it is almost inevitable that one will form, to quote C.S. Lewis 'an excessive and unhealthy interest in them [the devils]'. Worse still, if Barth is to be believed, such people may become more than a little like the demons themselves.<sup>127</sup> For a more nuanced development of the power exerted on humanity by the devil following Jesus' resurrection, see Appendix C: 'Musings on the Devil and Death'.

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<sup>126</sup> Note also that the Biblical genesis of this image lies in Isaiah 59:17, where God metaphorically dresses himself in salvation, righteousness and vengeance to 'shift the helm' of a people who are way off course!

<sup>127</sup> Barth's position quoted from Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. p175.

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## **Chapter 4: Soundings on the Elusive Middle Course.**

Under the preceding headings, I have tried to map the outline of the two worldviews, which each present some measure of truth in regards to the nature of evil that confronts the Christian. For illustrative purposes, I have called these two worldviews 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis' since they, like the mythic dangers that threatened homeward-bound Odysseus and his crew, tempt the unwary into danger. Odysseus, as the story goes, had his eyes fixed on the 'boiling whirlpool' under which lay Charybdis, and was taken unawares by Scylla, who snapped up 'six of his men, the stoutest of the crew'.<sup>128</sup> Is there a way through the two competing worldviews, each of which presents the presence of evil in real yet limited terms and includes the Bible, with its NT emphasis on the supremacy of Christ, as its prime source of authority, without loss to ship and crew?

### **4.1 Testing the Waters on a Middle Course of Christian Resistance to Human and Demonic Evil. Ephesians 6.10-12 as a Test Case for Applying a Redemption Movement Hermeneutic.**

William Webb's RMH, with its undergirding criteria for cultural analysis, may well yield a real and practical course between the two opposing worldviews. Webb's focus 'is primarily on the criteria by which Christians can distinguish between what is

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<sup>128</sup> H. L. Havell, *Stories from the Odyssey* (Middlesex: Echo Library, 2006). 73.

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cultural and what is transcultural when seeking a contemporary application of the Biblical text'.<sup>129</sup> To apply Webb's cultural analysis criteria to all the texts that address the subject of evil throughout the length and breadth of the Bible would be, in my opinion, an extremely fruitful exercise, but one well beyond the scope of this paper. I will rather attempt to sieve a single text, that of Ephesians 6.10-12, in an effort to gather a few brief 'soundings' on the middle course between the competing views on Christian resistance to evil. Passing Ephesians 6.10-12 through the sieve of relevant cultural analysis criteria offers the promise of minimising the influence of the 'cultural component'<sup>130</sup> of the text and allowing the 'transcultural components'<sup>131</sup> to flow through into present-day applications for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australia that are consistent with a RMH. For the sake of brevity, I have placed the process of sifting our text through Webb's cultural analysis criteria in an appendix at the end of this paper<sup>132</sup> and have summarised my findings below:

#### **4.2 A Word about sources.**

I have chosen to adopt Clinton Arnold's social perspective on 1<sup>st</sup> century Ephesus that depicts the Ephesian culture as riven by magical power play under the dominating influence of the Ephesian Artemis cult.<sup>133</sup> This is a significant assumption, since it will have a bearing on the relative movement of Ephesians 6.10-12 (hereafter

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<sup>129</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*. 25.

<sup>130</sup> William Webb defines 'cultural component' as "those aspects of the Biblical text that we 'leave behind' as opposed to 'take with us' due to cultural differences between the text's world and the interpreters' world as we apply the text to subsequent generations" Ibid.24.d

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> See 'Appendix 1', 29.

<sup>133</sup> Rick Strelan has called into question Arnold's research and conclusions on the development of the Ephesian Artemis cult, but has not convincingly debunked Arnold's argument by offering a more comprehensive explanation for the unique cosmology presented in the epistle to the Ephesians. See Rick Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996).

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called ‘the text’ unless noted otherwise) with respect to the beliefs of the surrounding culture. Nevertheless, for the reasons given in footnote 115 and in expanded upon in Appendix A, I will adopt Arnold’s analysis of the cultural situation at Ephesus the most convincing outline of the cultural setting that characterised the receivers of the original letter to the Ephesians.

### **4.3 Summary of Findings:**

The concept of Christian resistance to the influence of hostile, non-human personal beings purely based on faith in Christ’s authority, without recourse to magical formulae, hefty fees and accessories such as amulets, implies a movement *away* from the worldview of the time (Criterion 1),<sup>134</sup> which factored these influences into many areas of life. This ‘cultural shift’ suggests the possibility of a transcultural resistance motif. Webb’s Criteria 2 and 5 further underline the transcultural ‘resistance motifs’, which deal, in turn, with the presence of future indicators of demonic conflict within the Biblical text. The earliest Biblical source of the conflict between humanity and non-human evil appears to emerge from the Garden narrative in Genesis 3 which, together with Revelations 20, form a literary ‘bookends’ that enclose God’s file on evil in all its revealed forms in the canon. The opening of the cover of evil in Genesis, and its final chapter in Revelation, provides a fascinating glimpse on the transitory nature of cosmic evil, which is itself but one volume in the library of Christ’s triumphs. Evil has a beginning, and it will have an end. Therefore, the trajectory of the life of the church, which is analogous to the inaugurating of the kingdom, reflects a growing repudiation and resistance to oppression by evil spirits as well as the abuses of human psychic projections.

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<sup>134</sup> Based on Arnold’s assessment in Arnold, *Power and Magic*.

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#### 4.4 Summary of Inter-Scriptural Criteria:

In a fascinating widening of the scope of the text's analysis, Criterion 3, which Webb has called '*breakouts*', yields a reversal of the direction of the 'cultural shift' one might expect to find on the basis of Criteria 1,2 and 5. The texts where one might expect to find an endorsement of the cosmic conflict paradigm, are either lacking or are seen to replace the cosmic battle with a conflict between the working of God's spirit in the believer and forces such as indwelling sin, law and death, with evil spirit/s as a secondary cause, if mentioned at all.<sup>135</sup> This leads our analysis to conclude that there *is a component of our text* that may well be culturally confined in such a way that the 'resistance motif' towards non-human evil spirit beings may, *in some circumstances*, not apply outside of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Ephesian context! This conclusion is buttressed by Criterion 4 in which the original purpose and intent of the text is held up against the outcomes resulting from a direct, literal contemporary application, and in Criterion 8, where the consistency of the pragmatic basis of the issues at hand is compared from one cultural setting to another. To illustrate the operation of Criterion 4 (original purpose and intent upheld in current context), consider telling a contemporary Australian Pentecostal that they should resist the temptation to consult a spirit medium or a horoscope before going for an interview for a promotion at work. Although this may be an issue for some Pentecostals, it is clearly not the case for many others. In sum, there is a definite culturally specific component to our text.

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<sup>135</sup> For an example of the negative function of the law, personified as working to prosecute sinful humanity in concert with the desire of 'τας ἀρχάς και τας ἐξουσίας' see Col 2.15 as quoted in Chris Forbes, "Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing Apocalyptic?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 82 (2001): 61–88. Chris Forbes argues that the fluctuating meaning that Paul gives for the 'Powers' indicates that Paul is revising the use of ancient Greek philosophical terms in order to **frame** a Christian cosmology. p88.

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Criterion 8 is similar to Criterion 4, except that it deals with practical realities rather than intentionality.<sup>136</sup> See page Appendix 1, page 38.

### **Summary of Extra-Scriptural Criteria:**

The chief extra-scriptural criterion that clamours for consideration is that of the impact on the text of Scientific and Social-scientific evidence within criterion 7, which states, “a component of a text may be culturally confined if it is contrary to present-day scientific evidence”.<sup>137</sup> Scholars such as Bultmann, Wink and Wright have not been slow to place the text under the lens of the scientific and social-scientific microscope, and rightly so. However, as noted earlier, Twelftree, Instone Brewer and Arnold, amongst others, have convincingly argued that scientific categories are inadequate in explaining *all* the data that traces the impact of non-human, personal evil. So much to say that this criterion is inconclusive since it neither supports, nor undermines, the cultural and transcultural claims of the text.

### **4.5 Summary of Results for the Cultural Analysis of Ephesians 6.10-12.**

The varied results a brief foray into the cultural analysis of the text suggest a nuanced approach is required towards Christian resistance to demonic evil. Once the scholarly dust has settled, it appears sufficiently clear that there is a strong case for the immanent existence of non-human, ontologically distinct hostile personal spirit beings. These were known by various labels such as ‘διαβολος’, ‘αρχων’, ‘στοικεια του κοσμου’, ‘κοσμοκρατορες’, ‘πνευματικα’, ‘ο πονερος’, ‘δυναμις’, ‘αρκαι και εξουσιαι’ and so forth, and that these beings were viewed as a threat by the Ephesians. The

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<sup>136</sup>See Appendix for more detail.

<sup>137</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*. 162.



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plethora of terminology for ‘the powers’ in our text can best explained as a list designed not so much to be exhaustive as to indicate the comprehensive nature of the forces arraigned against the Christian. That is to say, it is not just some of the variously understood families of spirits<sup>138</sup> but all of them, no matter how helpful or benign they may have appeared in the past, that are inimical to Christ. To use my trusty metaphor, ‘Scylla’ may present a real threat given the right environment in which to operate. Similarly, one cannot ignore the sources of evil of human origin, stemming from the influence of sin.<sup>139</sup> Luther’s explanation of the bondage of the human will to sin built on Augustine’s famous dictum of the state of fallen man –*non posse non peccare*, offers an anthropological scaffold for the erection of an evil of human proportions whose character and operation is unfolded in Walter Wink’s analysis of ‘The Powers’. Although Wink denies the reality of personal hostile spirit beings in the way that Twelftree, Arnold, O’Brien, Thomas and others<sup>140</sup> conceive of them, he nonetheless furnishes his readers with a convincing description of the destructive mechanics of social conditioning and influence of human organisations and institutions that are energised by fallen humanity’s lust for power and control. He also advocates a ‘resistance’ to this evil sourced in the human sphere which embraces ‘nonviolent direct action’<sup>141</sup> which he convincingly situates within the gospel accounts of the life of Christ, explaining how his theme works contextually in such instances as Jesus’ instructions on ‘do not resist evil’ in Matt 5. Central to his argument is the usage of ‘ἀντιστηναι’ in Matt 5:39 adopted from a military term for

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<sup>138</sup> For a list with a similar broad-brush purpose see Rom 8:38,39.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Rom 6:12,13.

<sup>140</sup> Twelftree and Arnold’s position has already been mentioned, for O’Brien, see O’Brien, *The letter to the Ephesians*. 468.

<sup>141</sup> Wink, *Engaging The Powers*.175.

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armed resistance 'στηναι' that is used with that intent in Ephesians 6:13 with respect to the believer's resistance to the hostile demonic powers. Wink goes on to argue that what is required of the Christian is a kind of resistance that does not mirror the evil it opposes. In short, it does not respond in kind, but it responds nonetheless! I have listed the positive alternatives that Wink offers as a guide for the Christian response to the experience of human systemic evil, cited from 'Engaging the Powers'<sup>142</sup> in Appendix B, on page 42.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 186.

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## **Chapter 5: Sketching the Contours of Christian Resistance to Evil.**

The soundings taken by examining the theology and practice of two distinct approaches to human resistance to evil indicate that both ‘Charybdis’ and ‘Scylla’ represent real and present threats to the Christian life of faith regardless of whether one lives in the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, to navigate between both of these dangers, one must plot one’s course of resistance by factoring in the direction of the prevailing winds of the culture through which is one sailing. To be more precise, the way in which a human society structures its implicit cosmology, regardless of whether that community is a nation or a family group, appears to have a direct bearing on the type of resistance to evil that is required of that specific Christian community. Thus, the Biblical course settings given to the 1<sup>st</sup> century Ephesian Christians may well be, at times, different to those required in the predominantly secular and materialistic Australian culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Conversely, the instructions to the Ephesians may apply directly to some sections of Australian communities, such as, for example, recent immigrants to Australia from war-torn Southern Sudan who hold a tribal worldview.

One is, at best, almost certainly doomed to ineffective forms of resistance to evil, or, at worst, an unwitting accomplice to that same evil,<sup>143</sup> if there is a failure to understand the direction in which the winds of one’s idolatrous culture are blowing –

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<sup>143</sup> Note Barth’s jab at those who, by becoming fixated on the role of demons, become ‘more than a little like them’. See note 122.

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towards Scylla or Charybdis. I have argued that the direction of these winds, determined through cultural analysis, give a clear indication of the type of resistance required to combat 'the schemes of the devil' that dominate within that culture. I have argued that a sensitivity to the spirit, or trajectory, of the Biblical text allows the Christian the much-needed flexibility to either directly map a text such as Ephesians 6.10-12 onto the situation at hand, or to use a 'redemptive better' that more closely approximates the final ethic of the Kingdom. It may even be necessary to move up 'the ladder of abstraction' if the text's original context does not directly relate to the present circumstances, or in some cases, to agree that the text is not directly relevant *at all* to the present exigencies! Given the central role played by the authority of the Biblical text in shaping the thinking of the Australian Pentecostal movement, the appropriate and relevant application of scripture becomes crucial. It is at this point that the necessity of a RMH, rather than a 'static Hermeneutic' which views the text in isolation from God's progressive unfolding of the ethics of the Kingdom, becomes critical for Australian Pentecostals as they steer their communities through 'τας μεθοδεις του διαβολου'.<sup>144</sup> I have attempted to show the way in which a RMH of cultural analysis bears out my soundings of a 'via media' between two quite different understandings of the nature of cosmic evil, both of which, when viewed in isolation, are inadequate explanations of the Biblical and experiential components of Pentecostal Christian faith. The reader is reminded that although evil is presented as springing from two different sources - that of the fallen human nature and of destructive evil spirits, it is clear that both these sources of evil act in concert, inasmuch as they have a common goal of opposition to God's purposes. I grant that

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<sup>144</sup> 'Τας μεθοδεις του διαβολου' : That is, the schemes, or craftiness, of the devil. Ephesians 6:11.

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distinguishing between these two expressions of evil may be difficult and require discernment, but that does not mean that they come from a common stem.

By analysing and evaluating the two extremes of 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis', some of the 'soundings' yielded a positive ethic of *resistance* to a human-generated evil, seen most clearly in Walter Wink's analysis of the potential for evil that transcends the individual in human organisations and institutions (see Appendix B). Other 'soundings' showed the necessity of the exercise of the individual's will to believe and act on the truth of Christ's supremacy over preternatural, personal evil spirits by *resisting* their intimidating appearance of power. This evil power has its basis in lies and deception. We tested these soundings on the text of Ephesians 6.10-12, a well-known text that directly addresses the Christian's need to resist evil. The results of applying a RMH to the text suggested that the most effective way for contemporary Christians to resist evil depends very much on the context of the cultural climate in which they live. In other words, the degree of relevance of the text in Ephesians 6.10-12 is likely to be directly proportional to the extent of the fear of evil spirits that is present within the receptor community, be it a church, family group **or nation**.

Once the 'soundings' have hinted at the contour of the passage between Scylla and Charybdis, it seems appropriate to reflect on the pastoral value of these 'soundings'.

Pastorally speaking, one's heart must go out to those who have struggled with conditions which defy the usual channels of medical analysis and treatment, and who appear tormented in such a way that their behaviour warrants what Twelftree calls 'a

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*full and balanced ministry that includes exorcism*'.<sup>145</sup> Twelftree is careful to qualify the range of conditions that call for such ministry and the personal qualities needed by the exorcist, but the monumentally clear point is that it is vital to be aware of the possibility of this hideously personal aspect of the schemes of the enemy, and to be equipped to deal with it.<sup>146</sup> Secondly, as I hope to have proved, it will not do to attempt to reduce all evil to a direct result of the work of evil spirits. Modern medical practice can effectively deal with many conditions that were, and sometimes still are, attributed to the direct influence of evil spirits by some in the Pentecostal/Charismatic community. A misapplication of scripture that attributes to evil spirits more power than they really possess actually works in such a way as to erode the Christian's God-given capacity to resist evil, and diverts him/her from worshipping the risen Christ as creator and supreme authority in heaven *and on earth*.<sup>147</sup> Finally, to make it through the severity of some of the inevitable confrontations with evil, the Christian must assess his/her position relative to both the 'Scylla' of demonic intimidation and deception *as well as* the 'Charybdis' of the sinful projections of human evil by discerning what is the source, or sources, of the evil they are experiencing. The believer must then work at trimming his or her hermeneutical sails using cultural analysis in order to capture the full force of the redemptive movement found in the biblical course settings. In so doing, they should resist the temptation to be drawn off course by the cultural eddies and cross currents that surround the 'Scylla' of evil spirits and the 'Charybdis' of the sinful human nature.

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<sup>145</sup> Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. 191.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. See also discussion in Appendix 3: Musings on the devil and death.

<sup>147</sup> See Colossians 1.15-20.

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## **Appendix A – A Cultural Analysis of Ephesians 6.10-12.**

The cultural analysis criteria fall into two categories and then, within those categories, they are ‘Persuasive’, ‘Moderately Persuasive’ or ‘Inconclusive’. Webb points out that these categories and their assigned levels of importance are guides, and are not intended to be applied as an equation in which one plugs in the data to produce an a neat, mathematically precise result. Rather, some of the criteria may rise or lower in importance depending on the topic at hand. For example, the Penal Code criteria may be seen to be ‘moderately persuasive’ when considering the issue of Women’s role in the Christian community, but will be ‘Persuasive’ when considering the Biblical texts on the Christian moral perspective on the practice of Homosexuality.<sup>148</sup>

Further to this, not all eighteen of Webb’s criteria will bear directly on, or have immediate relevance to, any one text. For example, In the case of Ephesians 6:10-12, issues of primogeniture that deal with created order (criterion 7), or those of how a matter is dealt with by the penal code (criterion 12), do not appear to be immediately

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Wink, *Engaging The Powers*.

<sup>148</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*. see page 69 where the author uses this very example.

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relevant to the cosmic warfare allusions found in our text and so I have omitted them from the analysis. In order to condense and simplify the process even further, I have included only those criteria that are deemed 'Persuasive' (with one exception) in keeping with the 'soundings' nature of this analysis. The topic begs a more definitive approach, but we will have to content ourselves with this initial exploration, in the hope that others to follow will map the waters in more detail.

### **Persuasive Criteria**

1. **Preliminary Movement:** 'A component of a text may be culturally bound if Scripture modifies the original cultural norms in such a way that suggests further movement is possible and even advantageous in a subsequent culture.'<sup>149</sup>

This criterion is important, since it situates the text within the cultural milieu that surrounds it. The way the text 'moves' with respect to the surrounding culture will contribute significantly towards how one applies it in the present. I have selected Clinton Arnold's analysis of the occasion and purpose of Ephesians since Arnold's work post-dates that of Walter Wink and engages the writings of other prominent commentators on the epistle, such as Marcus Barth, P.T. O'Brien and Johan Christiaan Beker. In addition to this, many in the Australian Pentecostal community know and respect Clinton Arnold's work.

Arnold notes that Ephesians was most likely a letter designed to be circulated amongst several churches in Asia Minor, all of which had a common

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<sup>149</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexual*, 73.



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‘extraordinary fear of the hostile spiritual “Powers”’.<sup>150</sup> This fear had its locus around the great Temple of Artemis/Diana, under which magical practice flourished throughout the region.<sup>151</sup> Our text instructs those Christians who lived in fear of the Demonic realm to ‘stand against the Devil’s schemes’ by donning the panoply of God and empowered His mighty Power, continue to live as Christians, and not as slaves to the magical practices of the surrounding community. Thus, the direction in which the text takes its original receivers is *away* from magical practices and fears of the Demonic and *towards* Christian living. This entire seemingly impossible task is to be accomplished not because the demonic influence is not real or tangible, but because God’s power will protect and enable the Christian to resist its lies and deceit. This brief analysis leads towards the conclusion that the text does have a transcultural component since it does modify the cultural norms of the Artemis cult that largely served to intimidate the populace into compliance.

2. **Seed Ideas:** ‘A component of a text may be cultural if “seed ideas” are present within the rest of Scripture to suggest and encourage further movement on a particular subject’<sup>152</sup>

Webb notes that ‘seed ideas’ are harbingers of change to come. They hint at possibilities not yet extant. The text in Ephesians 6.10-12 is one of the most explicit statements of Christian resistance to evil, rather than a hint of what is to come, and yet the canon itself has ‘seed ideas which suggest’ the opposition of Satan to humanity, the growing resistance of the redeemed

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<sup>150</sup> Arnold, *Power and Magic*. 167.

<sup>151</sup> See Acts 19:17-40.

<sup>152</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexual*, 83.

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community to the forces of evil and his final defeat. See, for example Genesis 3:15, Zechariah 3.1-10, Isaiah 27.1-3. Time does not permit me to delve into each of these examples, but in each case, the sovereign power of God causes a redeemed humanity to resist the hostility of evil in an ever-deepening way. This concept of the redeemed being 'shielded' by the power of God against personal, hostile 'Powers', suggests that there is a transcultural component to Ephesians 6.10-12.

3. **Breakouts:** 'A component of a text may be culturally confined if the social norms reflected in that text are completely "broken out of" in other Biblical texts.'<sup>153</sup>

This criterion is an interesting one for the text under consideration, since the text seems to affirm the ontological reality of non-human evil spirits,<sup>154</sup> and yet there are numerous other Biblical texts which point to sources of evil beyond personal evil spirits<sup>155</sup>. On the basis of 1 John 3.8, Neil Anderson has chosen to locate the devil as the source of all sin.<sup>156</sup> By logical progression, the sinful thoughts that precede sinful actions also come from the devil.<sup>157</sup> According to Anderson, Satan's influence on the believer is manifest through direct mental deception or through the effects of original sin, in either case the root cause still stems from the personality of Satan himself. Anderson thus sees the devil directly or indirectly at

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<sup>153</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexual*, 91.

<sup>154</sup> See Arnold, *Power and Magic*.132,

<sup>155</sup> Romans 5.18, 7.23; Galatians 3.22; James 4.1-4; Acts 4.23, 12.5,12 - Barry Chant notes that the apostles' response to persecution was focused on human opposition, with no references to evil spirits or Satan. Chant, "Spiritual Warfare.", 61.

<sup>156</sup> Anderson's anthropology is quite complex. He defines 'the flesh' and 'sin' as synonymous terms on pages 81 and 83. Anderson has both terms representing patterns of living which are 'independent of God'. He sees the devil being 'at the heart of all sin' (page 84). Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990). 84.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* 84.

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work behind all sinful human behaviour. It can be argued that Neil Anderson has made an 'interpretive leap' without sufficient Biblical warrant, based upon the presupposition that all evil can be traced directly to Satan's lies that are whispered into the Christian's mind, rather than also springing from fallen humanity on a personal and corporate level, which is the plain meaning of a number of texts (see footnote 155). If, as some authors state, evil is essentially irrational, why did Adam and Eve not find Satan's lies irrational and unattractive? What reason was present in the earliest man and woman that caused them to doubt God and to believe Satan, as portrayed in the Genesis Narrative? I argue that the human heart has a capacity for evil which is linked to human finitude<sup>158</sup>. Our station as creatures, rather than creator, is a cause of suffering. That suffering is the soil from which sin may grow. Satan may water this seed of suffering, but he does not appear to be its originator, since he is not the Creator. Satan may 'jump on board' this evil, and ride on its swell, but the source of its waves appears to be beyond the scope of God's revelation to us at this point in history. Thus, the Biblical text presents the evil as forthcoming from personal, non-human hostile spirits<sup>159</sup>, *as well as* springing from within humanity itself, and also coming from the impersonal terms 'flesh', 'sin', 'death' and 'the law'. The indications here are that there may be a culturally contained meaning in the text insofar as it speaks most directly to those people dominated by fear of non-human hostile spirits as over against a collective or individual human-sourced evil.

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<sup>158</sup> Neil Ormerod traces the link between suffering and evil, and finds them both to be 'related yet distinct'. Ormerod sees suffering as good, provided it has a purpose, whereas meaningless suffering is evil, since by definition, evil is irrational. Neil Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption* (Orbis Books, 2007). p16.

<sup>159</sup> Arnold presents '...gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts...' Ephesians 2:3 as a clear reference to the impersonal cosmic power of sin, law, flesh and death whilst at the same time referring to '...the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient...' Ephesians 2:2 to refer to 'personalized forces of evil'.

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4. **Purpose/Intent Statements:** 'A component of a text may be culturally bound, if by practicing the text one no longer fulfils the text's original intent or purpose.'<sup>160</sup>

Given the original intent and purpose of the letter to the Ephesians was to reassure a church living in dread of hostile spirits<sup>161</sup> then its original intent is preserved when applied within cultures where there is a dread of evil spirits and their human allies such as witch doctors, occult practitioners, neo-pagan priests and the like. By contrast, if a culture such as our western materialist culture, is untroubled by fear of evil spirits, then it is clear that one ought not attempt to create that fear in order to be able to apply the remedy of Ephesians 6:10-12.<sup>162</sup> That would be to practice the text in such a way as to no longer fulfil its original intent or purpose. Thus, once again, it seems that the application of Ephesians 6.10-12 is contingent on the worldview of the culture in which it speaks: If the culture evinces openness to evil 'powers', then they must be identified in personal terms as such and their influence resisted. If the scriptures are being read by a culture in which there is an absence of magical practice and belief, then the message of the text must

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<sup>160</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexual*, 105.

<sup>161</sup> Arnold, *Power and Magic*. 167.

<sup>162</sup> I note that I am oversimplifying the word 'culture'. In any nation, or people group, especially in a society that prides itself on being 'multicultural' like Australia or the US, there are a variety of sub-cultures that form part of the whole. This being the case, Ephesians 6.10-12 may be directly relevant to one sub-culture, and yet be utterly dissonant to another. For example, Australians whose country of origin is Zimbabwe will view, at least initially, Ephesians 6 in a different light to those who have grown up in Australia under the dominating influence of a social-scientific worldview.

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travel up the 'ladder of abstraction'<sup>163</sup> to gain relevance for the readership.

This can happen without discounting the reality of the possibility of indirect demonic involvement lying behind the systems and institutions, which place fallen humanity in opposition to the Kingdom of God, and make that same fallen humanity into the unwitting allies of evil spirits.

5. **Basis in Fall or Curse:** 'A component of a text may be transcultural if its basis is rooted in the Fall of humanity or the curse...While the degree or proportion of curse-related pain may vary, all cultures suffer from its downward pull.'

The text we have under consideration points directly to the events of Genesis 3. 1-19. The role of the serpent in suggesting and deceiving Adam and Eve is taken up by Paul in the NT as an ongoing danger faced by the Corinthian church who were beginning to succumb to a similar form of deception, arguably from the same source (2 Corinthians 11:3). The hostility between the 'seed of the woman' and the 'seed of the serpent' has many echoes throughout scripture<sup>164</sup>, and in every case the injunction on the part of the Biblical authors is to resist, avoid, and live differently to the devil and his 'seed'. The indicators are that our text attains a basis in the fall or curse in the sense that it expresses the ongoing opposition occurring to the work of the Holy Spirit by the devil and those he has deceived. Our text is transcultural in the sense that it lies along the trajectory whose terminus is the consummation of

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<sup>163</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*. 210.

<sup>164</sup> Matthew 13:38, John 8:44, Acts 13:10, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 3:8, 10, Revelation 2:1 and so forth.

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the kingdom, when Christ will indeed fill everything in every way (Ephesians 1:23).

### **Criteria that are Moderately Persuasive.**

- 6. Opposition to Original Culture:** 'A component of a text is more likely to be transcultural if it counters or stands in opposition to the original culture. When Scripture speaks directly against a particular practice within the ancient setting, the dissonance with the original context generally ensures its transcultural status'.<sup>165</sup>

The message of our text is clear enough: the 1<sup>st</sup> Century setting and occasion of the letter to the Ephesians is a response to the need for the local Christian community to resist the temptation to succumb to the fear of antagonistic evil spirits.<sup>166</sup> The community may even be struggling refrain from obtaining the assistance of apparently benign spirits, if Rick Strelan is right.<sup>167</sup> By putting on the spiritual armour of God and resisting the temptation to alter the course of their Christian praxis to conform to the surrounding non-Christian culture, the community of faith is operating as a counter-culture within the broader cultural milieu.

### **Persuasive Extra scriptural Criteria.**

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<sup>165</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexual*, 159.

<sup>166</sup> See Arnold, *Power and Magic*.

<sup>167</sup> See also, Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus*.

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7. **Scientific and Social-Scientific Evidence:** ‘A component of a text may be culturally confined if it is contrary to present-day scientific evidence.’<sup>168</sup>

The differences in categories of thought that appear to exist between the first century near east and those of a twenty first century western country like Australia may appear to be dramatic, largely because of the technological sophistication of the present age. However, a closer inspection of the two cultures may yield some surprising similarities, which suggest that there is little social-scientific evidence that can conclusively bracket out the activity of non-human, ontologically personal hostile spirits. Firstly, Twelftree points out that were influential voices in the ancient world such as Lucien of Samosata and Celsus, who, like Rudolph Bultmann, did not accept the ontological reality of evil spirits.<sup>169</sup> Bell adds Cicero, Philostratus, Josephus and Philo as well as the Sadducees to the list of sceptics.<sup>170</sup>

Secondly, not all sickness and suffering was ascribed by the ancient texts to the direct influence of evil spirits.<sup>171</sup> This suggests that the first century observers had a diagnostic scheme that could distinguish between those oppressed by evil spirits and those who were merely sick from other causes.<sup>172</sup> David Instone Brewer notes that many of the symptoms linked to

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<sup>168</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexual*, 221.

<sup>169</sup> Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. 45,51.

<sup>170</sup> Bell, *Deliver Us from Evil*. 343.

<sup>171</sup> Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*. 71.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.* In line with the Gospel accounts, Twelftree suggests that superhuman strength, violence (Mark 5:7), disregard for pain and an altered vocal range are amongst the means by which the demonised were recognized. David Instone Brewer notes that the Gospel writer Matthew distinguishes between epilepsy (using the term ‘σ ελενιαζεται’ which suggest ‘moonstruck’ or, by implication, epileptic and the term ‘δαιμονιζομαι’ meaning demonically afflicted. David Instone Brewer, “Jesus and the Psychiatrists,” in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1996), 133–148.

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demon-possession in the Gospel narratives fit into the category of modern psychiatric disorders that are treated by drugs rather than exorcism.<sup>173</sup> He goes on to write that the ability of demonized persons to identify the nature of Jesus as the Son of God is the only symptom of 'demon possession' that, according to him, cannot be explained in psychiatric terms. Instone Brewer and Thomas underline the ability of the first century Biblical authors to distinguish between sicknesses such as epilepsy and fevers that were the result of demonic influence, and those sicknesses that were not so. All of this to say that the language used by the author of Ephesians 6 to describe non-human opponents of the church need not necessarily be abstracted or 'demythologised' in order for it to make sense to the modern person who, to exhume Bultmann again, uses electric lights, the wireless and modern medicine. Thus, modern medical science does not necessarily block the transcultural movement of our text into present-day Australian society since its categories are not broad enough to encompass what Instone Brewer has described as 'demon possession'.

8. **Pragmatic Basis between Two Cultures:** 'A component of a Biblical imperative may be culturally relative if the pragmatic basis of the instruction cannot be sustained from one culture to another.'<sup>174</sup>

Considering that Paul wrote his text in Ephesians 6 as a metaphor which served as a gathering point for his earlier indicative teaching on the status of the believer in Christ and the following imperatives of the household codes, it

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<sup>173</sup> David Instone Brewer, "Jesus and the Psychiatrists," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm* (Paternoster Press, 1996), 134.

<sup>174</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexual*, 209.



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seems odd to make this metaphor into a definitive cosmological doctrinal summation. For example, I have adopted the metaphor of Odysseus' homeward Journey between Scylla and Charybdis in order to vividly illustrate the dangers succumbing to either an exclusively social-scientific understanding of human evil, or conversely, to succumb to a dualistic cosmic combat worldview in which human responses become determinative. One can be certain that my use of nautical metaphor does not mean that I am advocating every Christian must literally sail through the strait of Messina keeping one eye out for a six headed monster and the other on a massive whirlpool in order to reach the kingdom of God! Neither is it likely that Paul had in mind that the Ephesian believers had to grapple with the personal physical presence of the devil or demons. Rather, by using the verb *παλη* instead of the usual *μαχη* or *άγων*, he arguably used the popular image of a 'όπλιτοπαλας' – a 'weighty wrestler-in-armour, terrible to his rivals'<sup>175</sup> to illustrate the necessity of 'standing' against the ontological reality of hostile spirit beings who are cunning and dangerous opponents. Having said this, it is of vital importance to note the pragmatic nature of this metaphor is delivered to a cultural context that experienced the need for the instruction illustrated by said metaphor. Thus, to use Webb's terminology, the pragmatic basis of the text is 'culturally bound' to those whose daily life is lived in fear of evil spirits. For a contemporary application of the text in a culture which does not experience a

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<sup>175</sup> For an insightful view of the imagery surrounding *παλη*, see Michael E. Gudorf, "The use of *παλη* in Ephesians 6:12," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 331–335.

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dominating fear of evil spirits,<sup>176</sup> Paul's wrestling metaphor may be better understood by travelling up the 'ladder of abstraction'<sup>177</sup> in order to produce a 'redemptive better'. This means that for many Australian Pentecostals, resistance to evil will be more likely to involve battling with the destructive power of fallen human nature that produces individual as well as institutional evil, rather than direct confrontation with evil spirits.

### **Appendix B: Wink's Code of Non-Violent Resistance.**

- Seize the moral initiative.
- Find a creative alternative to violence.
- Assert your own humanity and dignity as a person.
- Meet force with ridicule or humour.
- Break the cycle of humiliation.
- Refuse to submit to or to accept the inferior position.
- Expose the injustice of the system.
- Take control of the power dynamic.
- Shame the oppressor into repentance.
- Stand your ground.
- Make the Powers make decisions for which they are not prepared.
- Recognize your own power.
- Be willing to suffer rather than retaliate.

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<sup>176</sup> Once again, I remind the reader that I am assuming 'culture' to mean homogeneity of thought and experience. I am aware that Australia is a 'multicultural' society and cannot easily be described in broad brush strokes, but one can apply the meaning of Ephesians 6 in as broad or as narrow a context as one needs to, depending on the commonality of shared experiences and beliefs of the listeners.

<sup>177</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*. 210.

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- Force the oppressor to see you in a new light.
- Deprive the oppressor of the situation where a show of force is effective.
- Be willing to undergo the penalty of breaking unjust laws.
- Die to the fear of the old order and its rules.
- Seek the oppressor's transformation.

### **Appendix C: Musings on the Connection between the Devil and Death.**

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil- and free those who all their **lives were** held in slavery by their fear of death...for this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:14-17).

Given the Biblical claims of the monotheistic sovereignty of God, it is of value to our discussion to consider the means by which the devil exerts his control over unredeemed humanity. How one resolves the apparent contradiction of an omnipotent Creator brought alongside an evil created being that opposes the creator's revealed will, largely, determines the way in which one resists that evil. Has God confined himself to 'heaven', wherever that may be, and left his people with an instruction manual (the Bible) to help them battle it out with Satan and his hordes on the earth? Perhaps an even more disturbing scenario may be that Satan is acting with God's permission, doing God's 'dirty work', much like a Western Government's

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covert military wing that operates out of sight until one of their missions is leaked out to the press and makes it onto the headlines. The headline may read, “God allows bully boy (the devil) to beat up one of his friends (Job) so that he can win a bet”.<sup>178</sup> God does not appear ‘Good’ in the light of the latter statement, nor does he appear omnipotent in the former statement. What are we to make of this new ‘Scylla’ and ‘Charybdis’?

Faced with these two unpleasant and ill-fitting options, it seems appropriate to suggest a third possibility: In the person of Jesus, God has acted in history to abolish death by reversing the effects of sin.<sup>179</sup> The plot of this scenario places the devil as the one who rules over humanity by means of their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14). One might ask, “How it is that Satan has ‘the power over death’? Has not this power been given to Jesus?”<sup>180</sup> I reply that it is the ignorance of unregenerate humanity that gives this power to Satan. There is a clear link between sin and death that stretches from Genesis 3 all the way to Revelations 20. The devil is present at both ends – in Genesis he successfully tempts the first couple to sin, which results in their death, and is himself given a death sentence<sup>181</sup> that is executed in Revelation 20.10. In each case, it is the judgement of God over sin that brings death.<sup>182</sup> The presence of a foreboding that clouds that lives of unregenerate humanity is well attested in secular existential philosophy, often spoken about as a form of Kierkegaardian

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<sup>178</sup> Wink sees the book of Job as a satire, in which God is lampooned and Job, the rich exploiter, gets his just deserts. Wink, *Unmasking The Powers*. 15.

<sup>179</sup> ‘...that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’ sins against them..’ 1 Corinthians 5.19. See also Romans 5.12-15.

<sup>180</sup> Matthew 28:18, Revelation 1:18.

<sup>181</sup> See Genesis 3:15:b

<sup>182</sup> See, for example, Deuteronomy 24:16; Rom 6:16; 7:11, 1 Corinthians 15:56; James 1:15.

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'angst'.<sup>183</sup> The Biblical writers propagate the motif that all humanity must stand before the judgement seat and give an account,<sup>184</sup> so that there is a strong suggestion that most of humanity, regardless of their faith tradition, experiences anxiety at the thought of the judgement of their deity. The human fear of falling short and of punishment by God makes them ripe for exploitation by the devil. My conclusions are that after Christ's resurrection, the devil's main weapons are deception and intimidation, for he has no substantial power since this now all belongs to the risen Christ. The devil's grip on humanity, such as it is, involves the delusion that they are pleasing their gods through their many and varied forms of idol worship. Paul alludes to this scheme of the devil in 1 Corinthians 10:19-22 and exposes its hollow nature to the Corinthian Christians in verse 18. The idols are a demonically inspired ruse designed to divert humanity's attention from Christ, who has brought life and immortality to light<sup>185</sup> through the Gospel by means of dealing with human sin. The idols are a means by which the devil can offer a false hope of justification for sin, and *to the extent that humanity believes in the idols proffered them* to assuage their fear of death and coming judgement, the devil indeed has power over them. F.F. Bruce puts it in this way:

Through the fear of death many men will consent to do things that nothing else could compel them to do...for the majority the fear of death can be a tyrannous instrument of coercion. And death is indeed the king of terrors to those who recognize in it the penalty of sin...If, then, death itself cannot separate the people of Christ from God's love which has been revealed in Him,

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<sup>183</sup> Emmy Van Deurzen and Raymond Kenward, *Dictionary of Existential Psychotherapy and Counselling* (London: SAGE, 2005). Page 6.

<sup>184</sup> See particularly Hebrews 9:27.

<sup>185</sup> 2Timothy 1:10.

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it can no longer be held over their heads by the devil or any other malign power as a means of intimidation.<sup>186</sup>

It appears, at least to me, that Luther is right concerning the devil when he said that the devil's power was to deceive our senses and no more than that.<sup>187</sup> This does not reduce the devil and his demons to harmless caricatures, since we are certainly 'slaves to the one whom we obey'.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, this understanding of the way in which the devil may exploit the human fear of death and judgement pays due respect to the supremacy of Christ in all things as well as the real, yet limited threat posed by the devil who is now, after the resurrection, disarmed of all but his deceiving voice.

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<sup>186</sup> Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990). Page 51.

<sup>187</sup> See discussion on page 20 of this essay.

<sup>188</sup> Romans 6.16.

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