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DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF THE DEMONIC  
IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING,  
IN CONVERSATION WITH  
WILLIAM PERKINS

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Keith Andrew Evans  
May 2024

**APPROVAL SHEET**

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Keith Andrew Evans

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeremy P. Pierre (Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_  
John M. Henderson

\_\_\_\_\_  
William F. Cook III

Date \_\_\_\_\_

“I will put enmity between you and the woman.” (Genesis 3)

To the woman in my life who continues to stand with me against the many wiles of the other kingdom, Melissa, you are a precious gift from the Lord, and I have found much favor from Him.

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## PREFACE

This dissertation could not have been possible without the support of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America and all its supportive members. Additionally, I am forever grateful to the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary for calling me to serve as the first professor of biblical counseling and supporting me in this endeavor of my doctorate. I rejoice that as I round out my studies, I do so under the reception and care of the Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. I thank the Lord that I have found a wonderful new academic home in the midst of these doctoral pursuits.

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Finally, my wife, Melissa, and my four wonderful daughters, Audrey, Evangeline, Aliana, and Aimee, have faithfully endured and supported these ventures most of all. While many hours were spent in my study, I wished they could have been



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Keith A. Evans

Charlotte, North Carolina

May 2024

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Books and articles written on demonology tend to fall into two main categories: the strictly theological and the purely existential. Theological treatments explain demons' nature and activities as described in the biblical text. While these works keep the reader appropriately grounded in God's authoritative Word, there can be a tendency to lose sight of the practical import.<sup>1</sup> Experiential treatments, on the other hand, tend to describe contemporary encounters with the demonic. This second category adopts the starting point of human experience, unmoored from the Scriptures, and reads back into the Bible the experiential worldview of the author. In John Frame's perspectival approach to theology, he argues all doctrines can be described from three perspectives: the normative, the existential, and the situational. The resources above define the normative and the experimental dimensions of who demons are and how they operate. However, less attention is given to the situational perspective of demonology. In other words, *how* are demons part of the situated human existence? And by extension, how are they part of an individual's personal situation who is in need of counseling?

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<sup>1</sup> Take, for instance, the case of Merrill Unger, who, in his first edition of *Biblical Demonology*, denied the possibility of Christians experiencing demonization. Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces behind the Present World Unrest* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen, 1952), 77–106. In his revisions and subsequent *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, he modified his previous understanding and acknowledged the demonization of believers. See Merrill F. Unger and Mark Bubeck, *What Demons Can Do to Saints* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 141–68. This was a case of one's normative theology being practically modified due to his later developing existential theology.

## Thesis

In this dissertation, I argue that demonic influence is an unseen reality of every person's situation (cf. 2 Kgs 6), understood in two key categories: direct influence and mediated influence, and that personal ministry of the Word, including counseling, must maintain awareness of these influences in its method for exploring a person's situated reality. Direct demonic influence, as the words indicate, would be unmediated interaction with unclean spiritual entities upon an individual. These would include demonization, such as temptation, harm, attack, and exertions upon a person's mental capacities, up to and including demon possession. Mediated influence, however, is indirect demonic activity. The mediated demonic activity comes through the influence of another individual or is situated in a particular cultural expression a person finds themselves in. Understanding these two fundamental categories will be called a "situational awareness" of the demonic. Upon establishing a situational awareness, the goal will be to apply such understanding to personal pastoral care—specifically in the context of biblical counseling. Thus, this dissertation will seek to develop a biblical awareness of the kingdom of darkness as applied to the concern and care of God's people.

Having established *that* a situational awareness is needed, the question that immediately follows is, *can* we differentiate between demonic influence and the influences of the world or the flesh? Since the three great enemies of the believer are the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the world and the flesh are under the sway of the evil one, having the added *dimension* of demonic activity, both direct and mediated, we will find that one of the many ways devils mediate their influence is through the world and the flesh. These three great enemies have the same design and goal at their core. As such, the means devils employ in their machinations against believers and unbelievers alike are primarily those of the world and the flesh. The aim of the present study is not so much to establish clean, precise lines on where the flesh ends and the demonic begins, or where the world begins and the demonic ends, and every combination thereof. Instead, it is to

add the additional *dimension* of understanding demonic influence in the discipline of biblical counseling.

To perceive demonic influence as a counselor, biblical criteria must be established in discerning demonic involvement versus non-demonic activity. Here, the biblically revealed purposes of Satan will serve as our guide. When the intentions of the evil one are evident, such as causing the person to doubt the very character of God or the truth of his Word, or there are apparent lies sown in the thinking of the individual, or when the desire to mar and destroy the image of God in the individual is manifest, these serve as markers in the mind of the biblical counselor to be aware of direct or mediated demonic activity. As such, methodological considerations are applied to the sphere of biblical counseling; the two extremes of an exclusionary biological understanding of mental illness or an exclusionary spiritual understanding of mental illness will be rejected, as demonically instigated “mental illness” is an additional layer of consideration that other models are either unable to account for or unable to recognize.

All the above serves to establish that the discipline of biblical counseling must discover a situational awareness of the demonic. As a guide to this biblical rediscovery, we can use pastoral insights from those who have gone before us. In this dissertation, I consider William Perkins as representative of Puritan pastoral theology. Perkins will help establish the biblical understanding of demonic influence and how the ordinary means of grace are employed to resist and overcome that influence.

The lack of a situational awareness of the demonic in the realm of practical and pastoral theology, particularly that of counseling, becomes even more apparent when considering the historic treatment of the topic of demonology in the field of biblical counseling. This field has been significantly hampered due to the pioneer of the movement, Jay Adams’s over-realized amillennialism, in which Adams asserted that one

ought not to expect any demonic activity, post-ascension, pre-parousia, due to Christ's binding of Satan at the cross.<sup>2</sup> A commitment to *functionally* the same denialism, albeit with a different starting point, was subsequently adopted by the succeeding generation of the biblical counseling movement.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the field of biblical counseling must ask again, and more accurately answer, what pastor-counselors should be aware of in the post-modern Western culture in which we labor. And when that question is sufficiently addressed, ask, "How ought pastors appropriately respond?" In such a context of pastoral care, Perkins's theology will be shown to be a biblically durative situational understanding of demons. Perkins's writings explain how demons are active in the post-ascension world through more than mere temptation, but through the direct influence of harm, attack, accusation, deception, demonization, molestation, "fiery darts," and possession—all of those directly exerted upon unbelievers, and while limited or restricted by a sovereign God, nearly all of those directed toward believers as well. Additionally, any mediated demonic influence would include observation, deceiving wonders, influencing especially those in authority, "predicting" the future, and cursing, among other elements of indirect influence. Perkins's perspective of demonic activity persisted throughout the Puritan movement, which he impacted. Thus, this dissertation seeks to defend that the historic Reformed demonology, as found in Puritan writing, *is* the Bible's demonology. Such a demonology holds that contemporary demonic activity is culturally accommodated, must be pastorally perceived through the dimensions of the three main enemies of the believer (the world, the flesh, and the devil), and therefore employs a

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<sup>2</sup> Jay E. Adams, *The Big Umbrella: And Other Essays and Addresses on Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 120.

<sup>3</sup> See David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995); Powlison, *Safe and Sound: Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2019); Powlison, "The Classical Model," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 89–111.

robust application of the divinely instituted ordinary means of grace of Word, sacrament, and prayer as the only legitimate response to demonic activity.

### **Methodology**

The father and popularizer of Puritanism, William Perkins (1558–1602), was influential upon the entire Puritan movement which was to follow. Most theological outworkings in subsequent Puritan generations can be found at least in seed form within Perkins’s writings. Therefore, this dissertation establishes a biblical demonology in conversation with Perkins’s robust writings on the topic. Thus an interview approach to Perkins’s writings is employed. While most of his understanding of the dark spiritual realms is contained within his work *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, his fuller concept of spiritual warfare is found throughout his complete works.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, his situational awareness of the demonic is shown to represent the Puritan movement by examining other Puritan demonologies in tandem with Perkins’s writings. Therefore, this dissertation establishes a synthesis of a Puritan demonology, in order to apply such a synthesis to the field of biblical counseling. Thirdly, Perkins’s demonology is drawn out from Scripture, resulting in a general biblical theology of demons. Particular exegetical attention is given to Ephesians 6, as contrasted with James 4, and 1 Peter 5. Fourthly, Perkins’s understanding of the demonic in human experience is biblically demonstrated as the rightful expectation of demonic activity, thereby grounding Perkins’s demonology in Scripture. By this, we see the two primary categories of direct and mediated demonic influence as the biblical expectation of demonic activity in contemporary situations. This section therefore considers deceiving signs and demonic molestations which are

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<sup>4</sup> For the full corpus see William Perkins, *Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014–2021). Subsequent references to Perkins’s *Works* will follow a shortened format, recognizing individual volume editor(s) and publication year; see also Perkins, *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, in *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2020), 9:293–403.

deceptively applied to each person and culture in a way that furthers false personal or cultural beliefs, as opposed to undermining those individual or cultural deceptions. This is referred to as *culturally mediated demonic influence*. To these ends, the questions asked of Perkins's writings are as follows: *What demonic activity should be expected between the two advents of Christ, how may one determine something is demonic in nature?*; and *How ought a pastor-counselor respond to such activity?* Finally, in answering these questions, the pastoral implications for the practice of biblical counseling are teased out. The use of prayer and fasting, the response of the counselor in using the Word of God, and the uniqueness of the sacraments when considering the spiritual realms are also discussed. These implications are then contrasted with the biblical counseling movement's current understanding of demonology.

### **Summary of Research**

The Puritans have written a great deal on their experiences with one of their primary enemies, the devil—along with his demonic horde. These pastors of old took seriously the dark spiritual realms and their dreadful influence and impact upon their ministries. Although their witness has since been marred on this specific subject due to possible excesses in the trials of occult practitioners, as well as outsiders' propaganda revolving around such “witch trials” and the sensational, there is already a solid Reformed base from which to draw a biblically Reformed demonology. Additionally, these pastors of old were not only theologically robust in their writings and biblically precise in their confessional commitments, they also wrote with an eye toward the care of individuals. Their experimental theology takes into account the experience of the person in the pew.<sup>5</sup> Thus, their theology was inherently practical and immediately applicable to

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<sup>5</sup> By *experimental*, one may rightly modernize the term to *experiential*. But Puritan authors did not use “experiential theology” as a category and the modern reader may wrongly understand the term to mean something mystical or subjective. Puritans employed “experimental theology” as their category, meaning the application of theology practically to one's situation and experience. Not as though they were

the practice of biblical counseling—so it is all the more fitting to draw from this particular theological heritage for our present purposes.

Of the Puritan accounts of the demonological, the most notable entries include Thomas Brooks’s *Precious Remedies against Satan’s Devices*; John Downname’s *The Christian Warfare against Satan*; William Gouge’s *The Whole-Armour of God*; William Gurnall’s *The Christian in Complete Armour*; Charles Simeon’s *The Christian, His Conflict and His Armour*; William Spurstowe’s *The Wiles of Satan*, and Thomas Goodwin’s *A Child of Light Walking in Darkness*. While each of these works outlines at least an aspect of Puritan demonology and provides facet upon facet as they flesh out the fuller picture of a Reformed understanding of spiritual warfare, there is a foundational piece that theologically laid the groundwork for the treatises above—that is, Perkins’s *Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, among his many other essays dealing with the same subject matter. The chief element Perkins unfolds in his seminal work is the capabilities of demons in the then-present era. In other words, Perkins advances a situational awareness of the kingdom of darkness and its capabilities as one of the three primary enemies of the believer—that is, the world, the flesh, and (in this particular case) the devil.

While few contemporary works summarize Puritan concepts of spiritual warfare,<sup>6</sup> by and large, the original works of the authors themselves must be explored directly. Since the seventeenth century, however, there have been many treatments on the

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*experimenting* (i.e., to test, or to try) in the modern scientific sense of that word, but in the older conceptualization of “to find or to know by experience.” Thus, experimental theology is the application of theology to one’s life, and to therefore come to “know” the reality of that theology by one’s experience.

<sup>6</sup> Brian G. Zacharias, *The Embattled Christian: William Gurnall and the Puritan View of Spiritual Warfare* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996); Eric Riviera, *Christ Is Yours: The Assurance of Salvation in the Puritan Theology of William Gouge* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019); Cory Higdon, “The Spirituality of William Gurnall: The Devil’s Threat to Puritan Piety,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 11, no. 2 (fall 2019): 109–26; and, partially, Joel R. Beeke, *Fighting Satan: Knowing His Weaknesses, Strategies, and Defeat* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015).



demonic, some of a biblical-theological nature,<sup>7</sup> some of a systematic nature,<sup>8</sup> and still others of an experiential nature.<sup>9</sup> Very few exposit a situational awareness as their primary intention, often only peripherally touching upon the capabilities of the kingdom of darkness—except for that of demons’ primary effort of temptation.<sup>10</sup> There are contemporary works which explore the fanciful,<sup>11</sup> missiological works which explore the nature of demonic activity on the mission field,<sup>12</sup> larger conceptual works which explore the possibility of territorial spirits,<sup>13</sup> ekbballistic works which explore the practice of direct engagement with the demonic,<sup>14</sup> and generally evangelical works which are eclectic in

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<sup>7</sup> G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008); Frederick S. Leahy, *Satan Cast Out: A Study in Biblical Demonology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975); and William F. Cook and Chuck Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture: A Biblical, Theological, and Practical Approach* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Graham A. Cole, *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> John White, *The Masks of Melancholy: A Christian Physician Looks at Depression and Suicide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> See Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 60–142. Johnstone concludes in English Protestantism, spiritual warfare has as its primary focus, the devil as the believer’s adversary, and temptation as the “all-encompassing focal point of his activity.”

<sup>11</sup> Among this category, the most notable would be the works of Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019); Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020); less contemporaneously, but nonetheless influential, are Neil Anderson’s works: Neil Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings, Habitual Sins* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2019); Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness: Realize the Power of Your Identity in Christ*, rev. ed. (Bloomington, IN: Bethany House, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Michael Fape, *Powers in Encounter with Power: Spiritual Warfare in Pagan Cultures*, rev. ed. (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, particularly C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood’s contribution, “Strategic-Level Deliverance Model”; and Chuck Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation: A Biblical, Historical and Missiological Critique of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare*, rev. ed. (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Wagner and Greenwood, “Strategic-Level Deliverance Model.” See also Gregory Boyd, “The Ground-Level Deliverance Model,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*; or alternatively his standalone work: Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997).

their conceptualization of the demonic.<sup>15</sup>

In the field of biblical counseling, however, David Powlison remains the primary voice in the movement who deals with the demonic in any significant way.<sup>16</sup> In modern Reformed practical theology, there are chiefly two works that touch upon a situational awareness related to a historic, biblical, and Puritan theology. Those works are *Fighting Satan: Knowing His Weaknesses, Strategies, and Defeat* by Joel Beeke,<sup>17</sup> and *Satan Cast Out: A Study in Biblical Demonology* by Frederick Leahy.<sup>18</sup> Beeke's volume, though popular in its target, does well in doing what he regularly does—to distill and helpfully summarize Puritan writers on a given topic. Therefore, once again, this is Beeke's purpose in this small volume: the summation of Puritan authors and writings on the subject of spiritual warfare and demonology. While the application of his demonology is spiritual awareness and inoculation and is not in any form speaking about direct engagement with the enemy, this volume significantly contributes to this field in the contemporary era. Such concise helpfulness and application are of course due to his leveraging the bygone wisdom of Puritan theologians.

Leahy, on the other hand, is the definitive Reformed *biblical theology* of demonology in the last one hundred years. Leahy's work is not only biblically grounded, exegetically solid, and stoutly Reformed in its approach to the topic, it also is willing to venture into the experiential and situational perspective of the demonic and the activity of

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<sup>15</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997); Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Sense and Nonsense about Angels and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2007); Brian Borgman and Rob Ventura, *Spiritual Warfare: A Biblical and Balanced Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014); Rodger K. Bufford, *Counseling and the Demonic*, Resources for Christian Counseling (Dallas: Word, 1989); Jerry Rankin and Beth Moore, *Spiritual Warfare: The Battle for God's Glory* (Nashville: B&H, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*; Powlison, *Safe and Sound*; and Powlison, "The Classical Model."

<sup>17</sup> Beeke, *Fighting Satan*.

<sup>18</sup> Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*.

the kingdom of darkness in the world today. Leahy is balanced and lacking speculation—but due to his theological restraint there are places where he is less than definitive on certain biblical conclusions (e.g., his biblical prohibition of exorcistic practices could be strengthened considerably). Otherwise, this Reformed Presbyterian professor of theology presents an exhaustive work on the Bible’s consideration of the demonic. Therefore, the next steps must be to take this Reformed and Puritan pedigree and apply it to the modern practice of biblical counseling and pastoral care.

### Significance

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, stalwart pastors and theologians across Europe (but primarily England), known as the Puritans, had a wholistic and serious biblical perspective of the demonic. Much ink was spilled about the Bible’s teaching on the subject of principalities and evil forces in the heavenly places at work in their present and cultural epoch of history. However, the spiritual grandchildren of this bygone generation have all but lost a practical Reformed demonology, as twenty-first-century Reformed Christianity vacillates between a functional denial of the reality of demons or a charismatic overreach into the fanciful and experiential.

Moreover, every movement has its prophet, a voice crying in the wilderness, carving out a space for those who will follow and build upon such seminal work. In the case of the biblical counseling movement, all would agree that the modern expression (discounting the fact that pastoral shepherding has involved “counseling” from the beginning of time itself) has indeed been set on its present trajectory by Jay Adams. As the inaugurator of modern biblical counseling, Adams touted an extreme demonology on several occasions, but most clearly in his 1973 collection of essays entitled *The Big Umbrella*.<sup>19</sup> In his essay on “Demon Possession and Counseling,” he said it is a proper

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<sup>19</sup> Adams, *The Big Umbrella*, 120.

expectation never to encounter demonic activity in the counseling room. By this he means under the gospel age, pastors can be confident there is no demonic activity. If the originator of the biblical counseling movement discounted the field of demonology altogether, it is well worth the attention of Reformed counseling practitioners to assess if such a posture is accurate.

The second generation of biblical counselors, particularly in the person and work of Powlison, took up the mantle from Adams but did so in a more nuanced way. Just as Powlison did in many other areas, so too his understanding and expression of biblical demonology—moving away from the first generation’s excesses, yet essentially maintaining the foundations. While Powlison does not make the same fatal error of Adams’s over-realized eschatology in applying it to the demonic, he does functionally reduce his demonology to that of temptation, thereby attenuating one of the believer’s three great enemies: the devil. Powlison acknowledges the possibility of demonic activity in the present epoch and the Christian’s experience, but he is overly generic in determining whether something is demonic in origin. It is into this practical theological landscape that a Puritan situational demonology needs to be reclaimed.

Thus, returning to an earlier movement and its “founding father” is worth considering in contrast to Adams and his followers—that of William Perkins, the father of Puritanism and the one to whom contemporary Reformed pastoral ministry owes a tremendous debt. Perkins, a mature expression in his own right of demonic capabilities, was a major influence upon many generations of biblically faithful pastors and theologians who were to follow—the Puritans themselves.

Additionally, interactions in the counseling room or with contemporary Reformed pastors indicate there is a great need to apply this head of theology to the discipline of pastoral shepherding. American Reformed pastors lack a robust Reformed theology to conceptualize or make sense of their situational experience, let alone *engage with* their experience. It is one thing to have a biblical demonology (normative theology),

another thing to have what are thought to be demonic encounters (existential or experiential theology), and yet what is still more is that of a situational theology (a Reformed and biblical theology applied to present circumstances). Within this vein the present study seeks to clarify a situational awareness of both direct and mediated demonic influence as drawn from a historic Reformed and biblical perspective.

### **Argument**

In attempting to accomplish the above, of examining the Puritan demonology of old and comparing said demonology with the modern Reformed understanding of a situational awareness of the demonic, several elements of Perkins's theology will be drawn out. The first is the activity and phenomena a Puritan theology affirms—that is, Perkins's situational perspective of demons between Christ's first and second coming as it relates to personal experience. Arising from Perkins's phenomenology is the question of what situations are coordinate to our age and culture. While some circumstances may be unique to Perkins's setting, the continuity is far greater than the discontinuity, especially as Western cultures are moving/have moved from modernism to post-modernism to a new grassroots spirituality (i.e., paganism). This secondary consideration advances the mere historic and Puritan research beyond a general awareness of direct and mediate demonic influence and begins to connect to contemporary practical theology and methodology.

This study also addresses preventative and responsive ministry to demonic influence. As Perkins understands an inoculative place of Word, sacrament, and prayer, he also advances a biblically limited response to the demonic, that of the ordinary means of grace. In this second category, there is the perennial question of deliverance ministry and the contemporary application of exorcistic activity and encounters. Under such a heading, Perkins provides appropriate biblical restriction, limiting any apostolic sign-gifting engagements with the enemy (i.e., exorcisms and power encounters are biblically

*forbidden* in our present post-apostolic age). Although a charismatic understanding of demonic encounters has largely co-opted the terminology “deliverance” in the context of the demonic, there is still a biblically valuable denotation to the word and therefore may be appropriately employed here. Essentially, this study seeks to discern the modern Reformed methodology of prevention and response to the demonic in the life of counselees, as advanced initially by Perkins and subsequent Puritan authors. In other words, the enduring means of “engaging” with demons is the biblically prescribed prayer, fasting, worship, proclamation of the Word, and the regenerating work of the Spirit—not that of an extra-biblical binding of demons, or commanding them in Jesus’s name, nor is there a need for exorcisms preceding the indwelling of the Spirit.

The base conclusion one comes away with in detailing Perkins’s demonology is that demons are real, personal, spiritual beings, present in all ages, all cultures and nations, and throughout all times. Their engagement in our world falls under two primary headings of direct and mediated influence. While their principal activity would fall under the category of temptation, they additionally harm, attack, accuse, lie/deceive, condemn, observe, demonize, molest, engage in deceiving wonders, maximize natural knowledge to their wicked and deceitful ends, level “fiery darts” (i.e., external exertions upon the mental capacities of a person), influence (especially those in authority), curse, and possess—among other nuances under the preceding headings. Ontologically they are spirits—incorporeal entities occupying the spiritual realms—economically or functionally, they are fallen angels—*messengers* of the spiritual realms. Following the notion of what demons are and are capable of in our present age, what arises in one’s mind, is the extent demons can exert the above activity upon Christians. Perkins answers this question along the lines of 1 John 5:18 that believers are incapable of being “touched” except by the sovereign permission of Almighty.<sup>20</sup> Perkins discusses the instances when

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<sup>20</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

the Lord permits the believer to be “touched” in the sense of demonization. Later Puritan authors, such as Richard Gilpin, further nuance this notion when speaking of the dual “permission” of God and believer in the case of satanic molestation.

When dealing with spiritual warfare as a general category, it is helpful to understand the Puritan concept as more than direct interaction with the demonic, but engagement with all three of the Christian’s great enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Diminishing any of these great enemies is to the detriment of the effectiveness of one’s warfare and the believer’s fruitfulness in this life. Such a reality is only exacerbated when approaching this question from the vantage point of pastoral ministry. The pastor who fails to engage or instruct his congregants to engage all three enemies, fails in adequate rearmament and mobilization of the particular portion of the church militant under his charge.

In applying this Puritan situational understanding of the demonic to the field and discipline of biblical counseling, Adams’s understanding that whatever one encounters in the counseling room may be anything but demonic will be shown to be overly optimistic and piously naive. Further, Powlison’s reduction of the demonic into little more than temptation will be shown to be a similar over-simplification and reductionism of biblical demonology. Instead, a greater awareness will be advanced as the appropriate pastoral application of a Reformed demonology. For instance, one must know whether to apply Ephesians 6 as a category in the counseling dynamic, or James 1 and 4, depending upon whether the counselee is facing fiery darts or personal desire. Powlison’s blissful ignorance of the origin of the problem unintentionally removes a biblical taxonomy available to the counselor.

Finally, the means of response to the kingdom of darkness afforded to the believer will be explored from a biblical and Puritan perspective. I argue that the proper response, as seen from Perkins, and the naturally arising position of the Bible is that the only biblically lawful and theologically appropriate response to demons is the ordinary

means of grace (Word, sacrament, and prayer). Exorcistic or ekballistic power encounters with demonic entities have been unlawful since the close of the apostolic age; therefore, the coordinate apostolic sign gifts and the response to demonic activity that endures is that which Christ speaks of in Mark 9:29 as being greater than casting out demons, that of “prayer and fasting.” In other words, the ordinarily commanded means are what remain. To these ends, a “regulative principle” of the demonic and pastoral counseling will be developed. It will be shown that awareness and response to the rulers and principalities of darkness are biblically restricted and explicitly commanded, and that which is not expressly commanded for engaging the spiritual realms is forbidden. If we have not received instruction from the Lord to directly interact with such spiritual beings, then we must not do what is unlawful and is, in fact, condemned. Alternatively, Word, sacrament, and prayer are the only enduring means of “reaching into” the spiritual realms.



CHAPTER 2  
OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

*“For no matter how often the Bible may speak of incidental appearances of angels, there is hardly any reflection on it, and one finds no basic outlines of an angelology. From the Bible, no angelology can be constructed.”<sup>1</sup>*

Hendrikus Berkhof

*“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about 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 pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”<sup>2</sup>*

C. S. Lewis

The question of “why consider such a topic” is, first and foremost, a biblical one before it is a “theological” one. The Bible speaks of demons. If God, in his most holy Word, has given time and attention to the topic, no matter how minimally unpacked or established in holy writ, it is worth a believer’s time and attention. To suggest that no angelology, or considering in parallel, no demonology can be constructed from Scripture, is to devalue what is inerrantly, infallibly, and inspirationally contained in the pages of special revelation.

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<sup>1</sup> Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 176.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, preface to *The Screwtape Letters* (1942; repr., San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), ix.

As 2 Timothy 3:16 characteristically states, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” And if the apostle Paul argues over the significance of a simple plural, whether the word is rendered “seed” or “seeds” in Galatians 3:16,<sup>3</sup> then the presence of even the most minute detail in the Scriptures is worth our time and attention. Thus, if God has spoken to the unseen realm in his precious Word, forever enshrined in pages that will endure longer than heaven and earth itself,<sup>4</sup> it is a biblically worthwhile consideration.

Second, there is immediate practical value—the doctrine of demonology itself is *useful*. In nations where the gospel is first engaging with and coming into conflict with the paganism of that nation, the conflicts of the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light are seemingly more pronounced. But in Westernized countries, where the gospel has gone forth and saturated the land and culture, we now see the gospel tide receding, paganism, and the paganization of Western nations is increasing. The West has gone from a Judeo-Christian worldview, to modernism, to post-modernism, to post-postmodernism (or “metamodernism”).<sup>5</sup> We are seeing a grassroots spirituality; as

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<sup>3</sup> “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Gal 3:16).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Matt 5:18.

<sup>5</sup> As Peter Jones at the Truth Exchange, emeritus professor at Westminster Southern California, suggests. In his book *The Other Worldview*, Jones argues the evil one used modernism to shift us away from a supernatural understanding of the world. While keeping us grounded in facts and reality, which unmoored the Western world. Then, the agenda of darkness was to move the West to post-modernism, in order to dislodge us from reality, and move us to relativism. Lastly, Evil sought to break the West from the Judeo-Christian worldview, and now, move the West back toward a pre-modernism—a paganism, but a moral-less paganism. Peter Jones, *The Other Worldview: Exposing Christianity’s Greatest Threat* (Bellingham, WA: Kirkdale, 2015), 24–28. Carl Trueman makes a similar argument in *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, drawing upon Philip Rieff, sociologist cultural critic at University of Pennsylvania, with First, Second, and Third World Cultures, being the focus of his proposal. First world cultures are designated pagan culture (involving a belief in fate, morality, and laws). Second world cultures are those of Christianity, where there is an understanding of true transcendent morality, or God’s law. Third world cultures involve the abandonment of the sacred and anything transcendent. Such progression results in imbalance and leads the culture toward irrecoverable cultural decline. What, then, is built upon the rubble, but grassroots, immoral, and legally ungrounded paganism. Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and*

Westerners move from “religious” to “spiritual,” they are embracing a neognosticism of pagan practice. It would be no surprise in such a setting and under such conditions that occult activity and practice will crop up, followed by more overt manifestations of demonic activity.

While the gospel has full sway and influence over a nation and a culture, there is an inoculatory effect. The preaching of the gospel, the outward obedience of a nation, and the general morality and worldview of the Scriptures upon a land would invariably result in less immediate or overt engagement with occult practices. Thus, there would be greater need for animistic beliefs and demonic manifestations to hide, conceal, deceive.<sup>6</sup> But as America becomes less and less religious and more and more spiritual,<sup>7</sup> thus rejecting organized religion, and pursuing grassroots spirituality (i.e., paganism), we must be prepared for a shift, culturally, from covert demonic activity, for more open and overt demonic interaction. The church in the west must prepare herself for the cultural shift that is upon us, for the Christianly inoculated culture of the past 200 years is not the culture that has dawned. The gospel tide is receding, and the church that grew accustomed to the high-gospel-tide of a bygone era will be caught unawares for the confrontation with the kingdom of darkness which is to ensue.

If Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17, Psalm 106:37, 1 Corinthians 10:20, and

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*Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 74.

<sup>6</sup> Take the anecdotal illustration of a Brazilian pastor friend who stated that a local witchdoctor, levitating twelve feet off the ground, does nothing to secure the materialist and anti-spiritual worldview of the historic Western world. But the same display in Brazil, or another animistically-minded culture, secures that particular occult practitioner as one of the most powerful and trusted men in the land, when ensconced in such a societal worldview.

<sup>7</sup> “More spiritual less religious,” 56 percent of Americans identify as “religious”—one of the major world religions, while 89 percent believe in God, with only 71 percent being “certain of God’s existence,” and 23 percent who explicitly identify as “spiritual but not religious.” See Becka A. Alper, Michael Rotolo, Patricia Tevington, Justin Nortey, and Asta Kallo, “Spirituality Among Americans.” *Pew Research Center*, December 23, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/spirituality-among-americans/>.

Revelation 9:20<sup>8</sup> are true, that to worship idols is to worship demons—as each of those passages establish—when a culture moves toward a grassroots paganism (i.e., idolatry), then what our culture is manifestly embracing, more and more, is occult worship—literal engagement with dark spiritual forces.

What is more, the practical and biblical import of demonology meet, in that we are commanded to stand against the wiles of the devil, resist the devil, not be unaware of his ways, put on the full armor, among many other biblical injunctions. Thus, there are biblical commands relating to the unseen world, and therefore there is significant practical value from a sufficiency of Scripture perspective in helping people who find themselves demonically troubled. This is where biblical counseling, as a discipline, does its best work: addressing practical needs in the lives of believer and unbeliever alike, from a sufficiency of Scripture vantage point.

In raising the specter of the devil, it would behoove us to initially define and explain why the systematic heading of “demonology” and not the heading of “satanology” instead, or mere “spiritual warfare” as our category of consideration. First, the field does not speak of satanology, for that nomenclature is tautological. Satan is the “prince of demons,”<sup>9</sup> or the first of the fallen demons, and therefore to speak of demonology is to speak of satanology, or to speak of satanology, is to speak of studying one particular demon. To address the systematic heading of demonology, therefore, includes satanology.

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<sup>8</sup> “So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations” (Lev 17:7). “They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded” (Deut 32:17). “They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons” (Ps 106:37). “No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons” (1 Cor 10:20). “The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk” (Rev 9:20).

<sup>9</sup> “But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul (that is, Satan), the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons” (Matt 12:24).

Secondly, “spiritual warfare” deals with the practical outworking *of* a demonology. Thus, if we have a full orb ed understanding of demonology, as such, the practical implications (i.e., spiritual warfare) rightly flow from the larger systematic head. In other words, methodology always flows from theology. Said another way, orthodoxy always precedes orthopraxy. Thus, the present consideration, while aiming to arrive at the practical import of one’s right theology (i.e., spiritual warfare), our primary objective is a Reformed and historically orthodox demonology itself in order to establish said praxis.

### **Contemporary Reformed Literature**

Some preliminaries having been addressed, we begin our literature review proper with contemporary Reformed literature, and move to contemporary evangelical literature. Finally, we will return to a Puritan demonology and demonstrate how the classic understanding of a situational awareness of the demonic had achieved a high-water mark on the subject, as we then turn our attention to a representative author of Puritanism and demonology—that is, William Perkins.

We begin with the definitive work in Reformed biblical theology on demonology, and that within the past century. Frederick Leahy’s work, *Satan Cast Out: A Study in Biblical Demonology*,<sup>10</sup> is not only biblically grounded, exegetically based, and consistently Reformed in its approach to the topic, it is willing to venture into the experiential and situational perspective of demonology—the activity of the kingdom of darkness in the present epoch of redemptive history. Leahy, a Reformed Presbyterian, writing in the 1970s, when few Reformed works on the topic of demonology and even fewer from an exclusively biblical perspective existed.<sup>11</sup> At the time of his writing, Leahy

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<sup>10</sup> Frederick S. Leahy, *Satan Cast Out: A Study in Biblical Demonology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975).

<sup>11</sup> Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, 7.

suggests that there was but one book in the previous 100 years “contemporary” to his work, and that in the late 1800s. Additionally, his denomination requested a volume be produced as there were many questions arising from the mission field and very little teaching on the topic being conducted in theological halls and in the prescribed course of seminary education. Thus, Leahy, pastor and theologian, was asked to produce this work. But herein lies the fascinating element of those various lines of thought converging: he produces an exegetical treatment on the topic of demonology, but in such a way which connects with a situational demonology applicable to the mission field. This is the great strength of his work: it is a practical systematic treatment of demonology, exclusively derived from a Reformed exegetical framework.

Leahy examines the ontology of angels and demons, traces their fall, so far as the biblical evidence, speaks to the diversity of rank within the elect angels and draws parallel conclusions to fallen angels as well. He speaks of Satan’s binding and uses a helpful illustration about the success of the cross as lightning striking, but there being a time-delay before we hear the thunder. So too, Christ has cast down Satan, his time is short, he prowls around seeking whom he may devour, and yet he is a defeated foe.<sup>12</sup> We are awaiting the final judgment when the thunder from the central lightning strike (the cross) is finally heard (at the consummation). This is a decidedly simple but helpful way to think about the centrality of the cross (“he will strike your head”), and yet the seemingly unremarkable situational difference the cross has resulted in, regarding demonic activity before and after the first advent of Christ.

Certainly, much of the book can be described as an argument for what it means that Satan “is bound” or “is cast out,” that his limitation is being cast down to the earth, his time is short, and he can no longer deceive the nations. Attention is given to the

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<sup>12</sup> Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, 25.

impossibility of the believer being possessed, the impossibility of the believer being “touched” by the evil one,<sup>13</sup> the absolute victory of Christ over the evil one, and therefore our union with Christ in overcoming. There is definition provided to what it means that Satan is the prince of the power of the “air,”<sup>14</sup> as well as “the whole earth being under the sway of the evil one,” and even the fact that Satan “has the power of death.”<sup>15</sup> These are but a few examples of the practical exegetical considerations of Leahy’s demonology with which he engages in this volume.

Leahy also covers the unwitting partnership even believers can find themselves in, doing the unknowing bidding of the enemy—the concept codified in this dissertation as “mediated” or “indirect” demonic activity. He cites David’s census, and Peter’s refusal to let Christ go to the cross, resulting in the statement, “get behind me Satan.”<sup>16</sup> Additionally, he connects Job’s friends and their unwittingly wicked counsel and Satan’s desire to “sift” Job. This notion of “sifting” transitions to the absolute submitted authority of Satan under the sovereign power of the Lord, that to sift anyone, the Lord himself must permit Satan to do so. Here Leahy’s exegesis is illuminating, that Satan must have sifted the disciples as he requested, for Judas is found to be chaff, and the others scatter, but are ultimately determined to be wheat. Thus, the effectiveness of Christ’s prayer for them is evident.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, commenting on 1 John 5:18b, “But he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.” Leahy suggests such touching, or “sifting” in the case of the disciples, is only possible if the Lord sovereignly permits the believer to experience such demonization (31, 175).

<sup>14</sup> Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, 56.

<sup>15</sup> Leahy’s definition of the prince of the power of the air and the whole world being under the sway of the evil one are parallel in concept, not in any way spatial location of our enemy’s abode, as some have wrongly conjectured. Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, 55–56.

<sup>16</sup> Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, 42.

<sup>17</sup> Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, 36–37.

The situational demonology of exorcisms, power encounters, occult, and animistic activity all boil down to how we permissibly engage with the dark spiritual realms. Leahy points out that the biblical data would prohibit us from directly engaging with the demonic apart from divine command to do so (spiritual gifting of the first century sign-gifts, authority given by Christ himself, explicit directives of the New Testament epistles regarding its ongoing efficacy and normalcy). Since we have no directives from the epistles, and we have the general prohibitions of the Old Testament for directly engaging with the spiritual realms, then exorcisms and power encounters today, fall under such a prohibition. He makes arguments to this effect from the narratives of the New Testament as well, but those arguments are less definitive and ultimately less persuasive. What the reader finds, however, is that Sola Scriptura and the sufficiency of Scripture would require explicit command and directive on how we engage with the demonic in an ongoing way.<sup>18</sup> Without such New Testament epistolary instructions, we find the enduring position of the Scriptures as prohibiting direct engagement with demons. In other words, Leahy finds the Scriptures’ silence on this matter a very pregnant and theologically significant silence. Though approaching matters from a staunchly cessationist perspective, Leahy is touching upon a definitive argument against exorcistic activities within Christian ministry—whether on the mission field or in the counseling room—the regulating principle of the Scriptures on all of our ministerial practices.

In Joel Beeke’s short book *Fighting Satan: Knowing His Weaknesses, Strategies, and Defeat*, he distills Puritan writers’ teaching on the topic of demonology and spiritual warfare. While his “application,” as such, is that of awareness of the dark realm and inoculation or prevention regarding its activity, and Beeke does not

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<sup>18</sup> Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, 164–65.



specifically address “engagement” in direct situational demonology, the volume is useful due to the work he has done in achieving a summation of Puritan Theology of the demonological.

Beeke summarizes Satan’s goals, strategies, and devices, distinguishing between the three elements of Satan’s activity in this world in an apt illustration about removing mice from one’s home.<sup>19</sup> He speaks of the goal: to remove mice from one’s home. Next, he speaks of strategy, to get a variety of traps to catch the mice (snap traps, poison traps, sticky traps). Finally, he speaks of the devices one employs to lure the mice into the traps, or bait (cheese, peanut butter) in order to cause them to fall prey to one’s strategy. After addressing how the enemy uses goals, strategies, and devices, Beeke speaks of remedies: disposing of the mice. He then applies these categories to how the evil one and his servants have the goals to destroy humans because we bear God’s image, to overthrow the kingdom of God, to retain control over the portion of this world which he still possesses, and to regain any of his lost territory.<sup>20</sup> The strategies Satan and his followers employ is primarily to entice us to sin, hinder our spiritual disciplines, misrepresent God and truth, and oppose believer’s sanctification.

Finally, Beeke summarizes Satan’s devices by which he carries out his strategies and aims to achieve his goals. The term *devices* (Greek, *noema*) suggests the thoughts and actions involved in deceiving someone, such as an ambush in war, fake moves in a sport, or fallacies in a debate. In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul provides guidance to the church in Corinth for handling a repentant incestuous person “lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Satan’s devices involve fiery darts, sudden temptations, patiently wearing down the one tempted, lies brought to the

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<sup>19</sup> Joel R. Beeke, *Fighting Satan: Knowing His Weaknesses, Strategies, and Defeat* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015), 67.

<sup>20</sup> Beeke, *Fighting Satan*, 77.

individual through the method of the world, or other indirect demonic efforts.<sup>21</sup>

Where Beeke lacks is any concept of “engagement” with the enemy. While I am not thereby advancing any exorcistic or ekballistic deliverance-type interaction with the enemy, certainly more could be said regarding the believer’s response besides an inoculative effect of the ordinary means of grace.<sup>22</sup> Here is where Beeke’s summary of Puritan literature leaves room for further extrapolation and research.

In a recent work by G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, we find a biblical theological treatment of idolatry, as found progressively throughout the whole of the Scriptures. In this volume, Beale advances the notion that those who engage in idolatrous worship become like the idols they serve, which is most clearly expressed in Psalm 115:8 and 135:18 when God states that the idolator will become spiritually deaf and dumb like the deaf, dumb idol itself.<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, we who worship the one true and living God, are made increasingly like the one whom we worship. Thus, the idolator is patterned after the image, and conformed to, the god (or God) whom he serves.<sup>24</sup> Beale has therefore developed an evolution/devolution or sanctification/desanctification conception in worshipping individuals. He further advances this thesis in that the breadth of Scripture additionally speaks of demonic activity behind idolatrous practices, and therefore the desanctifying activity is actually the work of demonic influence, just as

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<sup>21</sup> Beeke, *Fighting Satan*, 77–95.

<sup>22</sup> To be fair, Beeke does speak of an offensive concept, that the preaching of the gospel, the use of the word of God, and prayer in the Spirit, as means of taking our stand against the enemy in an advancing way. However, this is not an offensive strategy that is “in light of” a situational awareness, but is instead “in spite of” Beeke’s developed situational awareness. In other words, it is not an awareness of the devices of Satan, and thus offensive responses to his activity in the world and life of the believer. Beeke, *Fighting Satan*, 51.

<sup>23</sup> G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 45.

<sup>24</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 268–69.

sanctifying activity is the work of the Spirit's influence.<sup>25</sup>

Beale's work is ground-breaking, in that there is little literature developing a biblical theology of becoming like, devolving toward, the idol that is ultimately trusted in by the worshipper. It is this point that Beale spends the majority of his book unpacking. Connecting this to demonology only furthers the strength of his work. Such devolution is described as a malfunction of the sense organs that ought to produce perception and understanding, but due to the existent idolatry, they in fact result in the opposite. According to Scripture's unified testimony, the person who gives herself over to idolatry becomes like the one she serves as "idolators are [regularly] being mocked [by God in the Bible] as becoming spiritually insensitive and void, just like the idols that they worship."<sup>26</sup> While Beale, and more importantly by extension, the Bible, sees the progression in question as degradation and debasement, the idolator, or more precisely, the occultist, would see themselves as doing the exact opposite: as evolving. They are becoming more enlightened, more spiritually aware, more sensitive to the greater reality than is dreamed of in most philosophies. They would see themselves as wise in their own eyes. And yet, what is at stake is not mere devolution with the occultist. The Scriptures make clear that there is more involved than inanimate objects incapable of spiritual knowledge; the Bible indicates that demons are behind this idolatrous worship.<sup>27</sup>

Beale persuasively cites Hosea 4:7–11 to this point, highlighting that the idolator becomes more deceived and lacking in spiritual understanding and yet they believe they are becoming more knowledgeable (cf. v. 12 which states they consult their wooden idol and their diviner's wand "informs them"). Yet all of this takes place because

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<sup>25</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 225.

<sup>26</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 122.

<sup>27</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 147n4.

a “spirit [of harlotry] has made them err.”<sup>28</sup> Drawing on Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17, Psalm 106:37, and later in the book from Revelation 9:20, Beale concludes that there are literal spirits at work in this unholy desanctification process. To summarize this point, Beale states, “Therefore, just as the believer reflects the attributes of the living God, it is likely that the idolater will reflect the same evil or dead spiritual attributes as the idols (which are inanimate wood or stone) and the destructive and deceptive character of the demons that stand behind the idols to which they passionately commit themselves.”<sup>29</sup>

For those in Christ, the opposite is now true. As Beale summarily points out, we who used to be conformed to the pattern of this world, made ever more deaf and blind and ignorant, now are being conformed to the pattern of Christ; ever increasing in holiness until we are fully and finally conformed to the image of Christ in the consummation of all things.<sup>30</sup> The bottom line is, “people resemble what they revere, either for ruin or restoration.”<sup>31</sup>

The second major theme highlighted at present, involves Beale’s basic definition of idolatry. He furthers Martin Luther’s definition of the same, by stating idolatry is “whatever your heart clings to or relies on for ultimate security.”<sup>32</sup> This theme requires far less development to present in the current discussion. Essentially, an idol can be anything, other than the true and living God, one looks to for ultimate hope and help in this life as well as the one to come. Note his connection to occult practices when he appeals to 1 Samuel 15:23 on this topic. The Lord says through Samuel, “For rebellion is

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<sup>28</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 108.

<sup>29</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 224.

<sup>30</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 282.

<sup>31</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 284.

<sup>32</sup> Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 17.

as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the Word of the Lord.” The connection is drawn between idolatry in general and “divination,” therefore the occult, in particular; because after all, divination is the occult attempt of seeking knowledge, especially of the future.

Nearly every human is seeking their ultimate blessing and ultimate good. Unfortunately, the occultist is doing so in a grossly distorted way, seeking at best “autonomous” self-improvement through idolatry, or at worst, seeking self-improvement through the demonic. Yet, the individual’s greatest good would be to pursue true godliness, sanctification in Christ, remade after the image of Christ-Jesus. Ironically, doing so would be the height of “self-love.” Beale makes this point in his conclusion of the book, but the bare point is apparent. The individual ought to seek the highest good for oneself through conformity to God himself, in personal godliness, as enabled by the Holy Spirit. Instead, the occultist believes the lie that one’s greatest good can be attained through occult activities. Thus, security is found not in the Creator, but in his creation. Either the individual worships the one God through whom all things were made or serves the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever.

Beale implicitly offers the solution to occult involvement, even as one reflects upon his apt illustration of gum disease.<sup>33</sup> The sinister genius of the spiritual disease of occult involvement, the idolator or occultist does not realize the destructive place they are in until it is too late. Ongoing warnings must be given, the truth lovingly offered. Clear alerts of the looming demonic damage done, must take place. And the offer of the one true gospel must not be absent when seeking to see people set free from such demonic enslavement of idolatry and occultism.

For the final section of contemporary Reformed literature, Jay Adams’s own

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<sup>33</sup> See the full illustration in Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 309.

understanding of the demonic ought be included in this category. Finding himself situated within a confessional presbyterian tradition and writing from a clearly theologically conservative branch of the church, satisfies this rough categorical designation. Additionally, it makes sense to cap off this section with the originator of the biblical counseling movement, to see how the trajectory of the movement was set by such a pioneer when it comes to the category of the demonic in the counseling room.

In his article-length treatment contained in the book *The Big Umbrella: And Other Essays and Addresses on Christian Counseling*, Adams argues for a cessationist, amillennial understanding of the demonic, such that no exorcistic practices would be permissible in this present epoch of the church, and no demonic activity ought be expected, now that Christ has “bound” Satan at the cross. Perhaps it would be most beneficial to hear his conclusions in full at this juncture:

This, and the other considerations about the cessation of demonic activity mentioned above has important implications for Christian counselors. More and more frequently failure in counseling has been attributed to the fact of demon possession. In the light of biblical theological eschatology, it would seem that a heavy burden of proof belongs to the one who retreats to demon possession as the cause of bizarre behavior. Counselors, in this present era, have every reason to expect that the cause of the problems with which they will deal in counseling will be other than demonic possessions. In more instances than one, I have seen incompetence in counseling excused by resorting to the diagnosis of possession by demons, sometimes with very damaging effects. If, for example, one’s problems are the result of his own sinful behavior, and they are instead charged to possession by an evil spirit, those problems may be complicated rather than solved by efforts to cast out the demon. Not only will such efforts fail, leading often to hopelessness and despair, but they will shift the focus from the counselee’s own responsibility. He will be viewed as a helpless victim rather than as a guilty sinner. The results are likely only to confirm him in his sinful life patterns, and the frustrations of counselors who are reduced to fruitless prayer and pity are likely to encourage deeper depression and even despair. It would seem vital to effective biblical counseling to presuppose that a counselee is free from such direct demonic influence in this era.<sup>34</sup>

Several things are notable in this portion of writing. First, his language is all but absolute: “have every reason to expect,” “heavy burden of proof belongs to the one

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<sup>34</sup> Jay E. Adams, *The Big Umbrella: And Other Essays and Addresses on Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 120–21.

who retreats to demon possession as the cause,” and “presuppose that a counselee is free from such direct demonic influence.” While theologically he must leave room for a hypothetical possibility of demonic activity, as one who is not privy to all that transpires behind the curtain which separates the natural and preternatural world, and additionally he must leave room for temptation and fiery darts (whatever they may be in Adams’s theology), he functionally closes the door to every element of demonic activity this side of the resurrection. But for all his assertions of danger in wrongly diagnosing sin issues as demonic in origin, his over-realized eschatology and amillennial overcommitments prevent him from considering the alternative. Think of the harm done to the individual, if a matter is of demonic origin, and he is told by a nouthetic counselor it is the result of his volitional, sinful flesh. Such a category error has the potential to do lasting harm and spiritual damage, akin to calling the abused wife to repent for exasperating her violent husband to engage in his abusive tactics because of her insubordination. Such outright rejection of a biblical category has had lasting ramifications in the biblical counseling world. While we will see the second generation of biblical counselors advanced the movement beyond Adams’s functional atheism to that of a generalism,<sup>35</sup> regardless, the reader will understand the need to reclaim a *biblical* methodology of diagnosis and response when it comes to a situational understanding of the demonic.

Having completed an overview of the contemporary Reformed literature, we now more generally turn our attention to contemporary evangelical literature on the demonic—which is a much larger category of writings than that which has preceded.

### **Contemporary Evangelical Literature**

In a book spanning four rather different perspectives on the demonic, Walter

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<sup>35</sup> If the reader will allow “atheism” to be employed to mean “denial of the demonic” and “generalism” to mean “functional indifference to the demonic” in the present discussion, though formally “theism” is in direct reference to God, and “atheism” proper refers to the lack of existence of God.

Wink writes for the World Systems Model, advocating for a general concept of evil, even a “collective unconscious” akin to a Jungian understanding of evil’s presence in the world.<sup>36</sup> David Powlison contributes for the Classical Model, or the Puritan perspective of spiritual warfare, advancing the reality of the demonic but remaining overly general to specific encounters with personal demonic agents in the world.<sup>37</sup> Greg Boyd puts forward the Ground-level Deliverance Model as his exegetical and situational demonology, arguing for the appropriate place of direct and exorcistic encounters with personal demonic agents, while Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood contribute to the volume with experiential argumentation for a Strategic-Level Deliverance Model, or as it is more commonly understood, Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare (SLSW). This final position seeks to establish territorial demons over nations and geographical landscapes, calling upon readers to engage in exorcistic activity against the highest-level authorities in the dark spiritual realms.<sup>38</sup>

Writing from a World Systems perspective, Walter Wink takes Ephesians 6’s statement about powers, authorities, thrones, and principalities to mean a one-for-one correlation between the world power structures and demonic entities.<sup>39</sup> In other words, in his view there are no such spiritual beings as unique demonic entities, ontologically speaking, and instead, these “dark forces” in the world *are* the power structures of our day. Perhaps the shining contribution of this overstated position, though, is Wink’s

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<sup>36</sup> Walter Wink, “The World Systems Model,” in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 47–71.

<sup>37</sup> David Powlison, “The Classical Model,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, 89–111.

<sup>38</sup> C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood, “Strategic-Level Deliverance Model,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, 173–98; Gregory Boyd, “The Ground-Level Deliverance Model,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, 129–57.

<sup>39</sup> Wink, “The World Systems Model,” 47.



understanding of prayer as world-influencing and powerful in its effects.<sup>40</sup> While his theology of prayer would still not be an evangelical one, nor would it even be an orthodox commitment to the ordinary means of grace, he still sees prayer as accomplishing much, so far as opposing the world systems of evil is concerned.<sup>41</sup>

Writing for the Classical Model of spiritual warfare, allegedly summarizing the Puritan understanding of the demonic, is David Powlison.<sup>42</sup> While Powlison certainly has an apprehension of the dark spiritual realms, a belief in their reality and influence, especially that of temptation, his ultimate conclusion about how to respond to such a situational awareness is overly generic. If there is nothing we *do* with demons, and their activity and temptation is but the “heat” of life,<sup>43</sup> the counseling solution or the spiritual warfare response is the simple Christian life. While ardently advocating for an ordinary means of grace (prayer, counseling with Scripture) response to the dark spiritual realms, his situational awareness does not result in any added benefit or discernible difference to the believer’s life.

Contrasting with Powlison’s functional generalism is Boyd’s Ground-Level Deliverance Model.<sup>44</sup> If Powlison suggests that the demonic activity is ultimately

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<sup>40</sup> Wink, “The World Systems Model,” 70.

<sup>41</sup> Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, 78. Boyd’s response to Wink at this point all the more highlights the significance of prayer in Wink’s theology.

<sup>42</sup> Powlison, “The Classical Model,” 89.

<sup>43</sup> In the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) three trees diagram, the heat of life is external to the person and irrespective of the person’s ability to respond to the heat with good fruit or bad fruit. In other words, the circumstances of life do not ultimately affect if the person responds with good fruit or bad fruit, but what is in one’s heart is what affects one’s response. If the demonic spiritual influences are but “heat” in such a model, though the counselee may suffer at the hands of their circumstances, it does not ultimately determine how one responds. Thus, Powlison’s *functional* counsel is that we may ignore the dark spiritual realms (a functional generalism to counselor and counselee alike) and deal with the volitional individual of the counselee in front of us, regardless of one’s external circumstances.

<sup>44</sup> Boyd, “The Ground-Level Deliverance Model,” 129.

unimportant to the individual believer and the counsel/response one receives, Boyd errs on the other side of the equation and offers counseling and exorcism to every situation faced in the church.<sup>45</sup> If we cannot know for certain demons are involved in a circumstance, Powlison sides with inactivity. Boyd, believing we cannot know for certain demons are involved in a particular situation, sides with activity—particularly deliverance ministry. While Boyd does not believe the SLSW Model has biblical and practical warrant, determining the god of a locale and binding them and casting them out,<sup>46</sup> on the individual level he does believe one must bind and exorcise. Ironically, he and Powlison come down on opposite sides of the same overgeneralization, but in Boyd’s case, one that methodologically moves us away from the specific instructions of the Scriptures (i.e., a *sola scriptura* understanding of spiritual warfare). For all the shortcomings of his methodology being unmoored and untethered from a direct regulation of Scripture to our practice, at least Boyd has a robust situational awareness of demonic influence in the world—in both believer and unbeliever alike.

Articulating the Strategic-Level Deliverance Model are authors Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood.<sup>47</sup> In this view, largely based upon Daniel 10, there are demonic forces in control of cities, territories, and nations. And before one can successfully evangelize a community or locale, the hierarchical structure of these powers and principalities must be discovered, bound by prayer and strategic exorcistic activity, and then the kingdom of God can advance in that area.

Perhaps the two positions which are most methodologically compatible with one another are the ground-level deliverance model and the SLSW deliverance model, for

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<sup>45</sup> Boyd, “The Ground-Level Deliverance Model,” 155.

<sup>46</sup> Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, 210.

<sup>47</sup> Wagner and Greenwood, “Strategic-Level Deliverance Model,” 173.

both seek to establish the appropriateness of ekballistic encounters with evil foes, just on different planes—personal or national. More ironic still, would be the similarities between Wink and Powlison’s perspectives. This is ironic, because Wink is writing from a liberal academic/theological perspective, whereas Powlison is writing from a thoroughly conservative academic/theological perspective. And yet both put forth a rather similar methodology of the demonic, so far as not seeing much practical import (or in the case of Wink, no import) for personal, ontological, spiritual beings interfacing with our present physical reality.

In other words, while Wink sees no need to believe in actual, literal demons, and Powlison does, they are both overly generic regarding demons’ effect upon our world and experience. “How can we know?” demons are involved, is Powlison’s situational perspective, whereas Wink’s “demons are a biblical descriptor of general and collective evil” do not functionally appear much different in day-to-day practice and resultant methodology. Both call for prayer and both call for bigger picture opposition to the present evil in the world, and to be sure, these men present radically different arguments and ultimately very different positions, but so far as their situational demonology is concerned, the differences are less pronounced than one would initially think.

Biblically speaking, Powlison’s exegetical commitments are correct. He embraces the historic and Reformed understanding of not directly engaging with demonic beings, not compelling and commanding them in the name of the Lord, and not casting them out, as the first century giftings of the Spirit uniquely enabled. He comes to this conclusion because of the parallels of exorcistic sign gifts with the miraculous sign giftings of healing and raising the dead. However, his effective dismissal of demonization and fiery darts of the evil one, leads the reader to conclude that Boyd’s treatment is most precisely holistic regarding demonic activity today. Surely Boyd overstates his spiritual warfare, going beyond exegetical allowances, when he calls for power encounters (or perhaps more precise to Boyd’s terminological comfort: truth encounters). Additionally,

though the SLSW position builds a case off very little, there is still biblical warrant for concluding there are hierarchical spirits in the dark realms and uniquely over certain locations—for how else would one make sense of Daniel 10?<sup>48</sup>

In summary, it seems that the biblical, exegetical understanding of spiritual warfare would be a combination between Powlison’s theological commitments, Boyd’s situational awareness, and an acknowledgment that territorial spirits, in some sense, exist. The results would be a proper understanding of demons’ activities in the world today, in how we interface with the dark spiritual realms, with a proper limitation placed upon us as grounded in the Scriptures alone. Wink’s categorical dismissal of the demonic as “mythic” is the only wholesale view included in this volume which cannot be biblically countenanced.

A more recent addition to the field of evangelical demonology includes Graham Cole’s systematic theology of angels and demons—a tandem angelology and demonology, entitled *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons* from the Foundations of Evangelical Theology series. Cole engages with the vast majority of modern scholarship on the topic and summarizes, critiques, and synthesizes said scholarship well. His interaction with David Powlison’s overly cessationist perspective and presuppositions, seeks to show that Powlison begs the question of his cessationism, presuming the conclusion of non-interaction with dark spiritual realms in the way he frames the discussion. For example, Powlison simply asserts that exorcistic apostolic sign gifts are like unto the gifts of healing, and while the Lord may heal today, the gift of miraculous healing has ceased. So too exorcisms. While Powlison’s conclusions ultimately may agree with Cole’s conclusions (that we ought not engage in

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<sup>48</sup> Dan 10 does provocatively speak of demonic entities being given authority over Persia and Greece as they are described as the “prince of Persia” and the “prince of Greece,” and as contrasted in verse 1 with the earthly king of Persia (Cyrus), and the prince of Daniel’s people, the angel Michael (cf. vv. 20–21).

direct confrontation with the demonic),<sup>49</sup> Cole rightly reveals Powlison’s narrow “reductionism” as he calls it, reducing exorcistic or ekballistic activity to that of mere mercy ministry alone, and not a supernatural encounter with preternatural beings.<sup>50</sup>

Another area of contribution from Cole, would be his understanding and exegesis of Isaiah 14 regarding the king of Babylon, and Ezekiel 28, the prince of Tyre. While greatly debated passages of Scripture, regarding Satan and the demonic, and whether or not either, neither, or both of these passages speak of Satan, or the fall of Satan, Cole helpfully offers a unifying interpretation of these passages, coupled with Daniel 10, that the Scriptures do not speak exclusively of Satan, nor do they speak exclusively of world rulers. Instead, they speak of both—the power of the throne and the power behind the throne. This is the very concept found in Ephesians 6, that such wicked earthly powers, and such wicked supernatural powers are in league combined. The same is true of Psalm 82 for instance, especially as Jesus applies that passage clearly dealing with demonic entities, to that of earthly leaders. The consistent teaching across the Old and New Testaments is that there are satanic powers behind the earthly evil powers, not either or, but both and.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Cole’s systematic demonology is his willingness to engage with more fringe conceptions of spiritual warfare, but ultimately pull back from “the fanciful,” to use his words.<sup>51</sup> To do so, one must be decidedly biblical, taking the Bible at its word and honoring the Bible’s silences.<sup>52</sup> To that, Cole

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<sup>49</sup> Graham Cole humorously gives account of being asked if he has ever spoken directly with a demon, where Cole responded with “[we are] not on speaking terms.” He states, “I was once asked at a seminar whether I would speak directly to the devil. I replied that we were not on speaking terms.” Graham A. Cole, *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 292.

<sup>50</sup> Cole, *Against the Darkness*, 177.

<sup>51</sup> Cole, *Against the Darkness*, 194.

<sup>52</sup> Cole, *Against the Darkness*, 194.

appears to move away from not only SLSW, but direct engagement with the enemy—even while he leaves open the possibility of non-fanciful, non-charismatic spiritual warfare besides the ordinary means of grace, whatever such a possibility may be.<sup>53</sup> At the end of the day, his conclusion seems appropriately reserved: “Above all, the Christian needs to embrace a biblically defensible model of spiritual warfare, and to avoid the fanciful.”<sup>54</sup> And yet, clear articulation of what is biblically defensible and where the theological guardrails of “the fanciful” begin and end would have provided greater insight and precision.

The author who introduced evangelical scholarship to the notion of “demonization” in contradistinction from demon possession, is that of Clinton Arnold.<sup>55</sup> His book *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* is a summary and unification of his other works dealing with the subject matter.<sup>56</sup> His three questions are (1) “Should we engage in spiritual warfare?”; (2) “Can Christians be possessed?”; and, (3) “What about territorial spirits?” What Arnold provides in this work is an evangelically and biblically conservative situational demonology which allows room for (1) territorial

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<sup>53</sup> Cole, *Against the Darkness*, 194–96. During this discussion Cole gives the reader the impression that more than prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, and sanctifying locations by worship may be warranted in a biblically grounded spiritual warfare. He speaks of a methodology that arises explicitly and exclusively from Holy Writ, and the significance of the Scripture’s silence on the issue does not imply absence of certain practices. However, he never defines what that meaningful silence may result in, and besides throwing out fringe concepts of placing a bucket of water near a demonized individual prior to an exorcism, he seems to leave open the possibility of ekbastic activity of some sort.

<sup>54</sup> Cole, *Against the Darkness*, 196.

<sup>55</sup> “‘Demon possession’ is always the translation of a single Greek word, *daimonizomai*. Words for ownership or possession (e.g., *huparch*, *ech*, *katech*, *ktaomai*, or *peripoie*) are absent in the original text,” and “the problem is that terms like ‘possession’ mean ‘to be totally under the Devil’s control.’ Of course Christians can never be totally under the Devil’s control, but in terms of bodily motions, ordinarily, neither are unbelievers.” Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 79.

<sup>56</sup> Clinton Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism. The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996). Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul’s Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992). Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic. The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

spirits without conceding to SLSW commitments, (2) demonic encounters at the personal level, while avoiding exorcistic practices, and (3) Christians experiencing demonization without conceding demon-possession.

The first question, “what is spiritual warfare?,” addresses personal conflict and potential confrontation with literal, spiritual, ontological beings.<sup>57</sup> Second, “can a Christian be demon-possessed?,” qualifying the terminology, and answering that a converted, Spirit-indwelled believer can in fact be “demonized,” which is surprisingly akin to possession in certain cases.<sup>58</sup> And third, “are we called to engage territorial spirits?,” to which Arnold answers, biblically, there are such things as territorial spirits, but we are not called to engage them, as we may be called to personally on the ground level of spiritual warfare.<sup>59</sup> This summarizes Arnold’s answers to his three questions.

Arnold points to the three primary enemies of the believer: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Of course, the vast majority of the book is taken up by the final category, “the devil,” representing the entire demonic horde. Despite this, he elucidates how all three must be considered within the correct proportions.<sup>60</sup> Said another way, if evangelical believers are overly concerned with one or two categories of the opposition, to the detriment of the other(s), then this is an imbalance and a theological problem, so far as orthopraxy is concerned. What is needed is theological precision, understanding all three enemies of the church in their correct proportion and significance. If one is

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<sup>57</sup> Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 17.

<sup>58</sup> Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 73.

<sup>59</sup> Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 143.

<sup>60</sup> Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 33–34. The three diagrams, two of imbalance and one of biblical balance are very helpful visualizations of the field of demonology, from the ordinary and diminished protestant view (Devil’s influence functionally ignored), to the charismatic overstatement of the devil (his influence greatly exaggerated), and finally, the biblical (the view Arnold is arguing for, and the view this dissertation presents as the Puritan and classically Reformed view) balanced view of all three enemies.

deficient, we will have a truncated understanding of spiritual warfare. He asserts that contemporary evangelical believers have a tendency to err in one of two ways, so far as the demonic is concerned: overly inflating the significance, prevalence, and activity of demons, or unnecessarily and unhelpfully downplaying the prevalence, significance, and role of demons. It is here that the volume most shines.<sup>61</sup>

The second area of benefit this volume affords is a comment Arnold makes concerning SLSW. He said that speaking directly to principalities and attempting to rebuke them and cast them down from territories, reducing their power and effectiveness to deceive an area, city, or even a nation—that such confrontation is not prayer, but is exorcistic activity. In other words, he advances that the Scriptures allow for praying down strongholds of the Enemy, but that Scripture never grants permission to the practice of directly confronting territorial spirits and casting them out. Prayer is directed to God, and direct confrontation is ekballistic. Ekballism is directed at the demon, to which Arnold raises a soft prohibition, since he finds no biblical warrant.<sup>62</sup> It is here that one wonders why in ground-level spiritual warfare he allows for direct confrontation and ekballism, but for SLSW he does not. Arnold attempts to assuage this concern by pointing to Christ granting such authority to his disciples, as well as narrative examples of the apostles and the early church engaging in such activity. As such, he advanced that current believers have received *biblical example* to engage in ground-level spiritual warfare in this way, if not *clear instruction* to do so. However, while this is indeed an answer, and one with biblical backing, it remains to be proven in Arnold's work that these narrative examples are normative. Additionally, if one were to approach this subject

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<sup>61</sup> Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 33–34.

<sup>62</sup> In arguing from Jude 9, Arnold makes the very perceptive, though haunting insight: “We do not have the right to tell a spirit to leave if it has an invitation [from the Lord] to stay.” Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 166.



from cessationist commitments, that the apostolic sign gifts (healing, tongues, prophecy, exorcisms) have ceased, it would mean Arnold's comment regarding ekballism and SLSW would also apply to ground-level spiritual warfare and the deliverance model. This point serves to undergird a basis for a regulative principle of spiritual warfare. Or perhaps more apt and fitting, such a commitment demonstrates the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, applied to a methodology of spiritual warfare—that which is not explicitly commanded in the New Testament regarding encounters with the demonic, ought not be engaged in—as opposed to that which is not forbidden may be permissible.

Another biblical theological work, along similar lines as Beale's work on idolatry discussed above, is that of William Cook and Chuck Lawless, in their volume *Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture: A Biblical, Theological, and Practical Approach*.<sup>63</sup> Instead of a biblical theology on idolatry with demonology layered in, Cook and Lawless address spiritual warfare as their principal topic. Their methodology is a straightforward one: walking through the storyline of the Bible, and exhaustively highlighting those locations which speak to a biblical demonology.<sup>64</sup> Though simple in method, the effect is weighty in its results—for the reader comes to appreciate the Bible's natural progressive revelation regarding demonology. This volume presents the clear impression that the whole of the Scriptures have a consistent understanding of spiritual warfare from the opening pages to the close of the canon.

Additionally, the reader comes away seeing spiritual warfare in far more locations than a Western and Reformed thinker would typically assume.<sup>65</sup> We are met

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<sup>63</sup> William F. Cook and Chuck Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture: A Biblical, Theological, and Practical Approach* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019).

<sup>64</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 4.

<sup>65</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, particularly their treatment of the Old Testament overview and summary (pp. 7–41).

with God commanding lying spirits,<sup>66</sup> Saul being incited to murder the messianic line and coming king,<sup>67</sup> David being tempted to count soldiers,<sup>68</sup> Joshua the high priest being accused,<sup>69</sup> Ananias and Sapphira being satanically incited into the sin of Achan,<sup>70</sup> Christ engaging in the grandest exorcism at the cross,<sup>71</sup> what the results of such an exorcism effectively looks like (i.e., the events of the book of Acts), multiple satanic magicians, and the war of Revelation as an ongoing cosmic battle throughout all time.<sup>72</sup> It should be noted at this point that the treatment of Revelation was interpretively balanced, regardless of one's eschatological commitments, considering all of the possible interpretations readers may be approaching the work from. Nearly all camps may come away satisfied, having encountered an unbiased straightforward reading of the apocalypse. That analysis rings true of the exegesis throughout the entire volume as well. All of this is to say, what the work sets out to do in biblical theological, exegetical exposition, it achieves.

On this point of exegesis, perhaps one of the greatest strengths of this volume's commitment to the Text over and above the authors' possible perspectives, is the treatment of Genesis 6.<sup>73</sup> Genesis 6 is fraught with multiple varying interpretations and textual challenges. Understanding the sons of God and the daughters of men is not an easily solved interpretive conundrum. But what Cook and Lawless rightly emphasize, is

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<sup>66</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 22–23.

<sup>67</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 20–21.

<sup>68</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 24–25.

<sup>69</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 36–37.

<sup>70</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 82–83. The comparison between the sin of Achan and that of Ananias and Sapphira is a particularly observant demonically instigated connection between the Testaments.

<sup>71</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 77.

<sup>72</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 181.

<sup>73</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 13–16; cf. 167–72.

the notion of the analogy of Scripture—Scripture interprets Scripture. Particularly, less clear passages are interpreted by clearer passages.<sup>74</sup> This is the very thing *Spiritual Warfare in the Storyline of Scripture* does regarding Genesis 6. Jude and 2 Peter’s understanding of the events in Genesis 6 are taken as the definitive, and inspired interpretation—as well they should be. What is more, this coming from a New Testament scholar, Cook in particular, he concludes the demonic rubric of Genesis 6 is the understanding of the New Testament authors. This is not to say that the exegesis or the resultant theology is easy, but it is at least fundamentally clear. The inspired authors interpret Genesis 6, “sons of God,” as angelic beings—that is, fallen angelic beings.

There are at least two other points worth highlighting of significant value, and that is the work’s short, but decisive, engagement with SLSW, and the volume’s emphasis upon offensive spiritual warfare. First we turn our attention to Cook and Lawless’s engagement with SLSW. The authors recognize their theological interaction with a SLSW perspective must inherently be brief, due to the nature of the volume, but brevity results in efficiency. While this book tips the proverbial hat to a theological understanding of territorial spirits in some sense (cf. Dan 10), it definitively closes off the biblical possibility of SLSW methodology.<sup>75</sup> It does so by acknowledging that SLSW advocates are proposing a novel means of ensuring the gospel advances in the nations; however, to suggest this is necessary so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the proclamation of the gospel, is to deny a fundamental tenet of Christ’s promise.<sup>76</sup> That through the simple preaching of Christ crucified, and a call to repent and believe the gospel, men everywhere will be saved. SLSW must, in its essence, fundamentally disagree with the classic modality of the New Testament: the simple means of grace.

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<sup>74</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 279–82.

<sup>76</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 281.

The former point provides a good segue to the last notable item we examine from this work, and that is the importance of offensive spiritual warfare. Cook and Lawless point out that so often in churches and Christian circles we believe spiritual warfare is primarily reactive and defensive, when in fact, we are called upon to be equally offensive against the kingdom of darkness.<sup>77</sup> By this, of course, they mean the advancement of the gospel through missions and evangelism. The victory of Christ on the cross and from the grave, being granted all power and authority and calling his Church to go into the nations, ought to be a battle call of greatest proportions. The gospel ought to propel us to offensive spiritual warfare, not just passive and defensive reactions against the enemy's assaults.

The second book produced by Cook and Lawless in this same space is the recent addition to the field, *Victory Over the Enemy: Defeating the World, the Flesh, and the Devil*.<sup>78</sup> Instead of a biblical theology, this second work is more applicational in focus and additionally steps back to consider all three enemies of the believer: the world, the flesh, and the devil. This book proposes an ordinary means of grace response (Word, the church, and prayer) to all three enemies.

One of the strongest contributions is the notion of satanical victories not being ultimate victories for the kingdom of darkness.<sup>79</sup> While there are sincere setbacks to the Christian cause in this life, those temporal "victories" of the devil result in greater advancement of the kingdom of Christ overall. The example of Paul being hindered upon returning to Thessalonica, resulted in two inspired New Testament epistles and nearly two years of building up the church in Corinth, is a helpful reminder that when evil

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<sup>77</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Spiritual Warfare in Storyline of Scripture*, 282–85, while equally dispelling notions of ekbalistic encounters, though that term is not employed.

<sup>78</sup> William F. Cook and Chuck Lawless, *Victory over the Enemy: Defeating the World, the Flesh, and the Devil* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2023).

<sup>79</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Victory over the Enemy*, 21–22.

appears triumphant, what Satan intended for evil, God ultimately undermines and uses for good.<sup>80</sup>

In the first three principal chapters, Cook unpacks each great enemy (what the authors refer to as the three headed monster) the world, the flesh, and the devil in their respective biblical presentations. Also, in each of these chapters, the principal solution of the gospel, or union with Christ, is proffered. It is the victory of Christ over these great enemies that is the source of believers being able to stand and resist our foes. The authors then proceed to hold forth all the provisions Christ makes available to believers in temptation, with prayer, by the power of the Spirit, and enshrined in the Christian's complete armor of Ephesians 6. Lastly, they proceed to victory over this three-headed monster via a disciplined life, the right use of the Word in reading and memorization, prayer and fasting, and battling these enemies in Christian community with others. While the practical treatments of the ordinary means Lawless and Cook lay out in this volume are helpful, applicational, and certainly much appreciated, some of the warfare and context of conflict with the devil is lost in the latter half of the volume. Had the practical *confrontational* aspects of the book endured throughout, it would have been a more instructional guide in preventing and responding to demonological attacks. However, the foundational elements they provide are still excellent spiritual disciplines necessary in our battle against our three great enemies, even if some of the immediate situational context wanes.

The significant strengths of the volume include the notion that we must meet each of these great enemies with an ordinary means response and prevention. To highlight such a strong point, they cite the importance of being filled with the Spirit, gathering for worship, singing, actively listening to the preaching, engaging in daily

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<sup>80</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Victory over the Enemy*, 21.

family and private worship, and drawing into the fellowship of Christian conversation throughout the week, as the means to stand against the wiles of our three great foes.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, and as this dissertation will aim to prove from the Scriptures and the pen of William Perkins, Cook and Lawless offer a taxonomy distinguishing between immediate temptation from Satan and temptation that proceeds from a sinful heart.<sup>82</sup> To be able to distinguish these enemies and origins of temptation is significant and alleviating for the believer, for the believer ought not be saddled by the burden of responsibility for temptation that he himself does not contribute from his sinful flesh. The differentiation is a useful one, though additional criteria could be cited, as will be seen in Perkins's and Puritan writings. They also see Satan's present epochal position as altered after the cross.<sup>83</sup> That prior to the cross, he had greater access to the throne of God (cf. Job 1:6–9; 2:1–6) and could more freely and directly accuse God's people. Post-resurrection of Christ, Satan has been cast down to the earth (cf. Rev 12:9). This is a notion I have only seen elucidated explicitly by Frederick Leahy in *Satan Cast Out*, and it is confirming to see modern scholarship wrestling with these satanical differences between Testaments.

One of the themes that can be perceived at the foundational level of what has been discussed thus far in the literature review, is that of all being two—Creator/creature distinction, as opposed to the occult claim that “all is one.” Peter Jones, in his book *One or Two: Seeing a World of Difference*, presents the dramatic difference between two fundamental worldviews, that of Judeo-Christianity (“*twoism*” as he coins it) and paganism (or “oneism,” which is effectively everything other than the biblical worldview).<sup>84</sup> In this treatment, Jones demonstrates the increasing paganization of

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<sup>81</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Victory over the Enemy*, 143.

<sup>82</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Victory over the Enemy*, 92.

<sup>83</sup> Cook and Lawless, *Victory over the Enemy*, 27.

<sup>84</sup> Peter R. Jones, *One or Two: Seeing a World of Difference* (Escondido, CA: Main Entry Edition, 2010).

America and the systematic abandonment of a “two-ist” perspective for a “one-ist” understanding of the world. To define Jones’s unique terms at the outset, Jones explains how only a consistent biblical understanding of all things sees a genuine Creator-creature distinction, that God is wholly other and we are separate from him as his created beings, part of the created order.<sup>85</sup> In a one-ist perspective “all is one,” and we are all part of the divine and the divine part of the creation, or one in essence with the creation. These are the radically different worldviews present today—and in fact, present throughout all time. Jones ties this concept to the decidedly simple, yet profound, verse in Romans 1:25: “They exchanged the truth about God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” Jones draws from his passage, there are but two possible, ultimate positions: the truth of the one Creator God, and the lie. And to this end, Jones takes the lie all the way back to the garden.<sup>86</sup>

Here is where Jones’s work intersects with a biblical demonology. While *One or Two* does not purport to be a demonology, it finds itself treading in the territory of the demonological at a global level. First of all, Satan is the one who advanced the lie of “one-ism” from the beginning: “you will be like God” and has continued to assert that lie ever since. Alternatively, there is a narrative we are offered from the Teller of Truth himself which comports with reality, and therefore we have before us the scale of stakes at play as the evil one continues to seek whom he may devour.<sup>87</sup> Will we believe the Author of Truth or the father of lies? To this end, Jones demonstrates that Satan is a dealer in morals and truth—undermining biblical morality and subverting biblical truth. To this end, he discusses the major categories of the lie as spirituality (the religious

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<sup>85</sup> Jones, *One or Two*, 17.

<sup>86</sup> Jones, *One or Two*, 51.

<sup>87</sup> Jones, *One or Two*, 66–68.

perspectives increasingly being imbibed by Western culture which is far from Western Christianity) and the lie of sexuality (which, we do not need to venture far into examining Western sexuality to see the pan-sexuality of paganistic oneness!).<sup>88</sup>

Some particulars are in order, especially as we pivot to the usefulness of this work for the consideration of a situational demonology as it pertains to pastoral counseling. First, demonic activity and the work of the evil one is present in every society and every nation. While Jones makes the comment that perhaps overt demonic involvement is more obviously apparent in primitive cultures and pagan societies, that does not mean the activity of Satan is less real or less actual in America—in fact, just the opposite.<sup>89</sup> Each society experiences the advancement of the lie, but how it is taking shape in the United States (US) is particular to our societal circumstances. America is seeing a shift in the dominant philosophical and practical religious activities and commitments, as a Christian society was dismantled by post-enlightenment modernism, which was systematically further deconstructed by postmodernism, making way for the reconstruction of a new-pagan spirituality, society-wide. Satan, as Jones asserts, is dealing in matters of life and death, worldview and thinking, spirituality and sexuality, of the gravest proportions.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps we could say that Jones is putting his finger on an understanding of the “territorial spirits” notion which is actually taking place in America. Not in the fanciful way that the SLSW advocates mean, or in the simplistic reductionism of Walter Wink, but so far as the nations each face their unique deceptions, particular to the spirits sinisterly at work in that particular culture, during that particular time.

One other element worth noting from Jones’s Western cultural assessment, has

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<sup>88</sup> Jones, *One or Two*, 169.

<sup>89</sup> Jones, *One or Two*, 216–17.

<sup>90</sup> Jones, *One or Two*, 223.



nothing to do with his cultural observations, but his biblical observations. When he exegetes the lie of the Garden, connecting it to the temptation of Christ by the same demon, Satan himself, he draws out the eschatological elements of the lie in both scenarios. Satan tempts Adam and Eve with the notion of “you will be like God,” as a shortcut—a work-around to the probationary period God had placed them in at that time. So too, Christ is offered the eschatological achievement via a demonic shortcut: bow down and I will give you the nations.<sup>91</sup> This connection is profound, and Jones draws this same notion to the modern-day temptation: we are God, or we will become divine. The lie says the answer is within the creation, not the Creator. Additionally, when considering pastoral counseling implications, perceiving the unique lies the counselee is being offered, and the way in which the person is being tempted with a shortcut to God’s good ends, is parallel to what we will see later regarding the list of “remedies” against Satan’s devices, as this is a universal device, with a universal biblical response.

While we considered a portion of Powlison’s writings thus far in our literature review, we have yet to consider his two more substantial works on the subject, *Power Encounters* and *Safe and Sound*. Beginning with *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare*, written in 1995, primarily pushing back against the deliverance models that had become prevalent in the church in response to the Satanic Panic of the 1980s, the likes of Neil Anderson and other more charismatic influences upon the evangelical world, Powlison was seeking to reclaim territory that had slowly been relinquished to more fringe conceptions of engagement with the devil and his ilk.<sup>92</sup> After defining spiritual warfare, how one engages with and responds to demonic activity, the four basic truths

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<sup>91</sup> Jones, *One or Two*, 93–96.

<sup>92</sup> David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).

that all Bible believing Christians should be able to assert,<sup>93</sup> Powlison explains how there are two primary ditches people fall into on this front. Either people ignore the dark spiritual realms, influenced by a Western materialist understanding of the world. Or people are over-enthralled with the dark spiritual realms and engage in charismatic excesses. This is a true enough assessment of general tendencies, and in the Reformed and evangelical world, the materialist ignorance or denial tends to be the default position of the church today. But what this binary consideration fails to take into account, is the range of response within the classical model of spiritual warfare. It is not as though so long as the reader avoids either ditch on the side of the road, the result will necessarily be a thoroughgoing biblical demonology. Instead, it only brings us to Powlison’s baseline of demons exist and are active in the world today, and our response ought to be ordinary Christianity, thus we can functionally dismiss any situational awareness.

What Powlison compellingly argues for in this volume, however, is an ordinary means of grace “engagement” with the enemy, and avoidance of any “ekballistic” or exorcistic responses. Powlison, always the winsome interlocutor, coins this then-novel-term from the Greek word *ekballo*, meaning to cast out. Instead of employing the term “exorcism,” which some deliverance ministry practitioners would find pejorative and unbiblical, Powlison uses this term to speak to the Ekballistic Mode of Ministry (EMM) concept that there is need to break demonic strongholds in believers’ lives in order for them to mortify sin and grow in grace.<sup>94</sup> And despite all of his strenuous

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<sup>93</sup> The four points of common ground are (1) “We are involved in spiritual warfare”; (2) “Jesus Christ is the triumphant deliverer and King”; (3) “the modern age deadens people to the reality of spiritual warfare”; (4) and finally, “error and excesses occur in deliverance ministry.” Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 20–25.

<sup>94</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 28–29. Powlison cites the only location the word *exorcism* occurs in the Bible is Acts 19:13, and even then it does not describe Christian ministry, but the use of magic by unbelieving Jewish practitioners. It has pagan overtones and is associated with demon possession. Powlison says, “Modern demon deliverance ministries do not use this phrase as a description of ‘demonization’ for they assert that Christians cannot be ‘possessed’ by the devil because they belong to God. But they would say that Christians may be ‘demonized’ to a greater or lesser extent when held in

pushback against EMM in his volume, Powlison still manages to see the strengths of the movement. Though he lists six different benefits of EMM thought, we will presently point out but one. Powlison says that “they usually believe and practice classic-mode spiritual warfare much of the time. Prayer, awareness of warfare with the power of evil both within and without, love for the Word, and love for needy people.”<sup>95</sup> It is worth especially noting that he believes “awareness of warfare with the power of evil both within and without” is a virtue of the EMM movement. And yet, at the end of the day, his awareness results in zero change to one’s functional practice or counsel rendered. It is a wonder he perceives this as a strength.

Powlison next unpacks several key passages of Scripture to demonstrate his main thesis that the Scriptures both downplay Satan’s involvement and maximize human responsibility.<sup>96</sup> Most notable is his understanding of 1 Samuel 28:3–25, when Saul consults the Witch of Endor. Somewhat shockingly, as will be demonstrated later in the chapter on Perkins’s biblical demonology, Powlison believes the actual soul of Samuel is the one who is called up. Once again, this betrays Powlison’s default overgeneralization to demonic and occult practices. He blithely passes over the overt demonic elements of the text and opts instead for a sovereign God who sends back the glorified soul of a faithful saint, overcoming the artificial practitioner of magic. On the opposite side of the same coin, but similarly, Powlison’s exegesis of the book of Job finds no theodicy in understanding how God is sovereign over Leviathan and Behemoth, as pictures of Satanic expressions: the beast of the sea and the beast of the land, respectively. Instead, Powlison has a reduced and truncated perspective of the dark spiritual realms even

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bondage to sin by indwelling spirits. To label these ministers as exorcists of the demon possessed would be pejorative and not reflect their self-understanding” (28–29).

<sup>95</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 37.

<sup>96</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 51.

present in the biblical texts themselves.

There is great strength in this work when Powlison contrasts the two means of opposition we face in this world: moral evil and situational evil, and subsequently the two biblical responses to each.<sup>97</sup> First, the response to moral evil requires repentance and faith, the truth of Scripture brought to bear upon our sin—mortification and vivification, in the classic mode. Secondly, the response to situational evil in the Gospels, is that of mercy ministry in the alleviation of temporal suffering.<sup>98</sup> He argues that the EMM practitioners confuse the two evils, and blend and distort the two responses. There are ekbastic binding and casting out of moral evil (e.g., the demon of pornography), as well as truth encounters where these same “demons” resulting in sin-enslavement are addressed with the classic mode of warfare. Thus there is a hybridization taking place between exorcistic ministry and the classic mode which Powlison seeks to appropriately segregate and clarify.<sup>99</sup>

Strengths continue as Powlison demonstrates there is no biblical command to engage in ekbastic activities, even if there are narrative and apostolic sign gifts participating in such ekbastics.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, he speaks of the ways in which demons are able to tempt from within.<sup>101</sup> And though, Powlison, includes some additional elements *beyond* mere temptation, he does not speak to the nature of fiery darts, the nature of how people can be in the snare of the devil,<sup>102</sup> or how one might “grant the devil a foothold.” Thus Powlison’s situational awareness of the demonic does move the

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<sup>97</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 74.

<sup>98</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 75–76.

<sup>99</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 75.

<sup>100</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 95.

<sup>101</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 103.

<sup>102</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 104.

reader past exclusive temptation, but not substantively or meaningfully so, as he wants to ground each aspect of the above in the person's own volitional and moral responsibility.<sup>103</sup>

It seems as though Powlison may not be quite as conversant with the Puritan classic-model of spiritual warfare as he is under the impression he is. For acquaintance with the practical situational awareness espoused by Puritan authors (see the Puritan literature review below) is quite a bit more robust in their particular awareness and practical response than Powlison might make them out to be. Regardless, if the reader receives the corrective Powlison was aiming for, that the EMM model moves moral evil away from personal responsibility and toward a “devil made me do it” mentality; as well as made the Christian response much more charismatic and speculative than the Scriptures put forth; then *Power Encounters* is a very valuable and welcome addition to the field.

Having interacted with Powlison's work *Power Encounters*, Powlison's chapter and interactions contained in the *Four Views* book on spiritual warfare, and now *Safe and Sound*, Powlison's final, posthumously published work in demonology stands as a well-polished revision of his previous works.<sup>104</sup> Disappointingly, however, we find the same stories retold again in a slightly edited fashion, the same points and arguments restated with only slight variation, and Powlison's conclusions coming down in the same well-worn places. Fascinatingly, he has, if this were possible, redoubled his commitments to a generalist practical stance on demonic activity, when compared to his previous works. We hear of his colleague at church one Sunday afternoon where people are standing over a frothing-mad woman attempting to cast out demons, and his even-keeled

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<sup>103</sup> Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 103.

<sup>104</sup> David Powlison, *Safe and Sound: Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2019).

elder friend calmly talks to the young lady and restores sanity to the situation.<sup>105</sup> He makes the comment that we must “remain agnostic” as to our conclusions of causation in this station—we simply have no way of knowing.<sup>106</sup> He tells the story about his daughter being afflicted with a grave physical diagnosis, and their temptation to fear, and connecting this to the work of the evil one and a spirit of fear.<sup>107</sup> But perhaps most staggeringly we hear in the introduction to this book, his story prior to his conversion, and on the night of his conversion, of hearing an evil, blasphemous, and gravelly voice declaring the lie to Powlison that he cannot possibly be saved.<sup>108</sup> This introductory story is the closest that Powlison will get to acknowledging any possibility of a situational demonology, otherwise, the best we have this side of glory is uncertainty. We cannot be sure, apart from direct revelation in the canon of Scripture, when something is of organic origin, personal spiritual origin, or demonic origin. Therefore, we must deal with what we can know for certain: the revealed will of God. This leaves the reader (and more importantly the counselor) with little to do regarding sound interpretation of our experiences *from the illumination of the Scriptures*, however. Would not the Bible provide us with all we need to make appropriate determinations of the phenomena we are perceiving? Or does Powlison’s worldview leave us with a radical Clarkian Christian rationalism<sup>109</sup> that precludes any notion of empirical evidence? It seems Powlison would functionally leave us with such practical “blindness” in our present experience.

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<sup>105</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 72–73.

<sup>106</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 74.

<sup>107</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 55–56.

<sup>108</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 5.

<sup>109</sup> This is a reference to Gordon Clark and his extreme rejection of even empirical data, let alone any possibility of empiricism. As he was wont to say, “The Bible doesn’t tell me anything about the trees on the campus.” Gordon H. Clark, “Defending the Faith, Level 3,” Trinity Lectures, collection 6, accessed August, 8, 2023, [https://www.trinitylectures.org/MP3\\_downloads.php](https://www.trinitylectures.org/MP3_downloads.php). Though this idea recurs throughout Clark’s teaching, see especially “Empiricism” and “A Christian Construction, part 1 and 2.”

“Yea and amen” ought to be spoken when being called to walk according to the revealed will of God and basing all one’s wisdom, methods, and conclusions upon the all-sufficient Scriptures—but an inability to draw any conclusions when something is of the world, or the flesh, or of the devil, and to remain in a perpetual state of uncertainty, seems beyond what the Lord would have for the believer, let alone the practitioner. After all, spiritual matters are discerned by spiritual people—ones gifted with the Holy Spirit. It would not be fitting to need to speak to the counselee, “I’m sorry we simply cannot know if this is demonic in nature or of the flesh, but the response is the same, nonetheless.” While there will be points where such uncertainty *must* be our counsel this side of knowing in full, though now we know only in part, to be able to speak only in part, seems to leave the biblical counselor in an unnecessary state of uncertainty. Why else would the Scriptures provide different responses to different opponents if discerning the particular opponent is not possible?<sup>110</sup>

Perhaps where Powlison is strongest in this volume, however, is his practical emphasis upon addressing the person in the counseling room and never supposing to address the demonic (whether we could ever be certain there is demonic activity in the counseling room remains immaterial to this present point Powlison is making).<sup>111</sup> His contention is that the counselor always addresses the person in front of them. The counselor calls the person to a personal responsibility, personal grappling with the Lord Jesus and his Word and truth. The counselee is called to personal commitment to walk in faithfulness, to put off unrighteousness, and put on the deeds of righteousness. Powlison emphasizes what biblical counseling, as a movement, does best: emphasize individual responsibility. Herein Powlison establishes the counselee has no ability to claim “the

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<sup>110</sup> Eph 6 prescribes a very different biblical response to demonic enemies than James does regarding temptations of desire (chaps. 1 and 4), i.e., “the flesh.”

<sup>111</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 76.

demon made me sin” just as much as we cannot say “my body made me sin,” or “my upbringing made me sin,” or “my environment made me sin.”<sup>112</sup> And such conclusions are biblically reasonable and appropriately reserved.

Another area of strength in this work is Powlison’s interaction with the lies of animism and the false dichotomy it seeks to lure the unsuspecting believer into. In this section, Powlison is interacting with missiology and, in some sense, is counseling we who may not have experienced mission fields which are riddled with overt demonic manifestations.<sup>113</sup> He explains how we can be lured into an animistic worldview, believing we need to engage in our own “Christianized” version of amulets, shamanism, exorcisms, and warding off curses.<sup>114</sup> It should be noted in similarity how Powlison argues here and Richard Gilpin argues below, regarding the deceptive nature of the evil one. By feigning response to certain practices, the Enemy coaxes the unsuspecting and undiscerning into a false methodology and errant worldview.

Of the entirety of the book, precious is Powlison’s autobiographical sketch at the end of the work, writing through his battle with terminal pancreatic cancer, which only months after completing the book, took his life. Any believer who has any sensitivity will not be able to read that chapter of Powlison’s personal wrestlings with the fear and pains of death—the last enemy—unmoved. While this chapter may not most clearly fit within *Safe and Sound*’s primary thesis, it is a treasure for the believer and counselor alike. The connection of this section with Satan’s last laugh in death is apparent—even if the sting of death has ultimately been removed. There are underpinnings of a demonology as he walks us into his personal valley of the shadow of

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<sup>112</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 17.

<sup>113</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 69.

<sup>114</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 70.



death.<sup>115</sup> At the end, we can rejoice that Powlison feared no evil, and Christ has overcome.

To summarize Powlison's writings to this point, what our faithful second generation father of biblical counseling has done, is advanced the biblical counseling movement beyond the absolute atheism of Jay Adams's demonology.<sup>116</sup> In doing so he has brought the discipline to a more thoroughgoing functional generalism. Demons are present and active in our current epoch and culture, they may even be involved in the counseling process. But certainly that involvement would be no more than a battle for what we believe and do, and thus our situational awareness of the demonic can be reduced down to awareness of temptations and lies propagated. The solution then, not functionally moving us beyond Adams, is that of believing the truth and walking in the faithful and ordinary Christian disciplines of life. The apostle Paul tells the Corinthian church (2 Cor 2:11): "So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs." And yet, it seems, though Powlison benefits the movement by moving her beyond the grand limitations of Adams's demonology, he functionally leaves us unaware of Satan's devices—the very thing the apostle tells us we are not, or at least ought not be as believers. Powlison leaves us functionally satisfyingly ignorant of Satan's ways, devices, and activities, for knowledge of such will not alter our practice of biblical counseling. It appears it is the present generation of the biblical counseling movement to advance this paradigm (knowledge and interaction regarding the dark spiritual realms) beyond an overgeneralization, to a genuine and practical belief, but one that keeps us grounded in the classic Puritan methodology of engagement with the enemy: the ordinary means of grace.

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<sup>115</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 82.

<sup>116</sup> Adams, *The Big Umbrella*, 120 (i.e., that we ought to expect no demonic activity in the present epoch of the Church).

Prior to transitioning into the last genre of our literature review, there is one voice that must be addressed in the present landscape of evangelical writings. Though he does not ultimately find himself within the theological bounds of evangelical and Reformed literature, he does position himself as a *voice* to such circles—that is, Michael Heiser and his principal work *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*.<sup>117</sup> As the subheading indicates, Heiser’s book offers a more “supernatural” perspective of the Scriptures. Heiser has since expanded this, his principal academic foray, into three distinct volumes of a more popular treatment: *Angels, Demons, and Supernatural*.<sup>118</sup> In the main piece, however, *The Unseen Realm*, Heiser introduces us to his grand thesis, which is a functional revision of the Bible’s main worldview. He builds a henotheistic<sup>119</sup> understanding of the cosmos, where God rules over all of time and creation, through the agency and with the means of a heavenly council.<sup>120</sup> This heavenly council, pointed to in Psalm 82, Job 1, a reinterpretation of the classically understood Genesis 1:26,<sup>121</sup> Deuteronomy 32:8 and 38, among other places, consists of

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<sup>117</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019).

<sup>118</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Supernatural: What the Bible Teaches about the Unseen World—and Why It Matters* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015). Heiser, *Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God’s Heavenly Host* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018). Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020).

<sup>119</sup> Henotheism is a heretical view of God, that *YHWH* is one god among many lesser gods, or that the universe is ruled by a family of gods, or divine beings, with one being the highest deity among the rest. It is a denial of polytheism, as such, but it is simultaneously not monotheism, in its historic and orthodox understanding.

<sup>120</sup> Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 25–27.

<sup>121</sup> In the passage under question, God says “let us create man in our image,” often interpreted as one of the earliest and clearest biblical allusions to the Trinity in the Bible. Heiser, however, argues through lesser known Hebrew scholars that a notion of the Trinity could not possibly be in the mind of the biblical author, and thus the “us” and “our” in question is more accurately the heavenly host (God and the angels). This would ironically “recreate” man in the image of angels (and God), which the Scriptures clearly contradict. This and his preceding unique expression of henotheism brings to mind the passage of Scripture, “Let no one disqualify you, insisting on . . . worship of angels” (Col 2:18).

the angelic host, both fallen and elect. As demonstrated in 1 Kings 22:19–23, God accomplishes his purposes with such council, both fallen and elect angels alike, as there God grants a demon the authority to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets—showcasing God’s sovereignty over fallen messengers as well as angelic ones, with each group occupying a portion of the host of heaven. While there is much truth and insight in such interpretations of some of these passages, even a reclaiming of historic understandings on a few of these passages from modernistic curtailment and materialist reductionism, Heiser then builds a much more preternatural understanding of the world through these lenses than orthodox interpretations would permit.

To demonstrate the latter point being made, Heiser rereads Genesis, and other portions of the Pentateuch, through ancient Near Eastern (ANE) studies. He suggests that the proper way to understand the context of the Scriptures is through the biblical authors’ ANE counterparts and contemporaries—for surely the Scriptures are in a historical setting much unlike our own, and the ANE setting is more accurate to their time and reality.<sup>122</sup> While this may bear the hallmarks of truth, it reverses the way in which Scripture is to be historically and confessionally interpreted. That is, Scripture offers God’s interpretation of history, as opposed to history interpreting God’s Word. And additionally, it denies the orthodox understanding of the analogy of Scripture, that Scripture interprets Scripture, not that external and extra-biblical sources are needed to properly understand and exegete the Bible. This makes God’s inspired Word subservient and secondary to ANE “primary” interpretive texts, and without such context, the Bible is not able to be rightly understood. This is a denial of the historic Reformed and protestant tenet of *sola scriptura*, or “Scripture alone.” One does not need access to ANE literature, belief, and practice to have an insider’s guide to comprehending biblical truth.

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<sup>122</sup> Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 44.

Heiser also re-images Satan and the Devil as two entirely different characters in the Bible. He goes to pains to prove that they are not one and the same being, but that “the satan” in Job is but a prosecutor, even a “good” character merely doing what God has assigned him to do in the courtroom of heaven, and not the one associated with the serpent of Genesis 3, who is connected to the devil in the New Testament.<sup>123</sup> Such special pleading will not do, as the Bible itself clearly identifies this being as one, as Revelation 12:9 explicitly states, “That ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.” Additionally, Heiser believes that God “takes risks” in the Open Theistic conception of God’s inability to fully know and sovereignly oversee the future. There is an inability on God’s part to control future outcomes, even though he foreknows all possible outcomes (i.e., middle knowledge), because redemptive history transpires in certain ways God would not foreordain without destroying free will. The fall, for instance, is what Heiser points to in order to demonstrate this notion. God is thus restricted and incapable of predestining all aspects of the future, for things can be foreknown and not predestined, or predestined in part but not in whole.<sup>124</sup> Thus, as an Open Theist, his worldview is not evangelical, Reformed, nor confessional, as Heiser makes far too much out of God’s middle knowledge, resulting in a deity who finds himself enslaved to the absolute free will of his created beings.

With a rather simplistic understanding of the meaning of the Hebrew word *Elohim* as “gods,” seeing portions of Old Testament Scripture as referring to an angelic host as opposed to one of the many common references to the one true and living God, to a historically and hermeneutically backward reading of Scripture in light of ANE literature and belief, Heiser’s worldview is a reinvented one and not the worldview of the

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<sup>123</sup> Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 57.

<sup>124</sup> Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 65.

Bible. A portion of his exegesis is accurate and refreshing, but the vast majority of his efforts recasts the Bible's imagery as that of fantasy literature and not the stuff of biblical reality. Lastly, he conveys all of the above reimagining of the Scriptures in such a way as to intimate that he has special or "secret" knowledge that was once known, then lost, now regained, if the reader would but listen to Heiser's insider knowledge and assertions. This too, his heretical conceptions of God aside, should be sufficient cause for us to pause in embracing the recasting of Scripture he is offering.

### **Puritan Literature**

As we turn our attention to a summary of Puritan literature on the demonic, having covered the present Reformed and evangelical landscape, it would be natural to start chronologically, going back to the likes of Richard Fitz, Thomas Cartwright, and Henry Jacob. However, the first demonologist from that time period and movement would be the main subject of this dissertation, William Perkins. For obvious reasons we will return to the earliest Puritan demonologist and the great popularizer of Puritan thought in the next chapter. In the literature summary which follows, the aim is to demonstrate how Perkins's thought does not find itself unique or isolated, but he finds himself situated in a solid Reformed pedigree among the Puritans so far as his theology of the demonic is concerned.

John Brown of Haddington, in his short summary piece on 1 Peter 5:8–11, *The Christian's Great Enemy*,<sup>125</sup> practically applies the demonology found in that section of Peter's letter. His summary of the demonic consists of the following "definition":

There exists a numerous race of unembodied intelligent beings, occupying a higher place than man in the general scale of existence, who have lost the moral integrity in which they were created, and who, though under the control of the Supreme Providence, are constantly engaged in an attempt, by a variety of methods, and

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<sup>125</sup> John Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy: A Practical Exposition of 1 Peter 5:8–11* (1848; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2013).

particularly by influencing in a malignant manner the minds of men, to uphold and extend the empire of evil in the universe of God.<sup>126</sup>

Though the book is little more than a verse-by-verse exposition of these four verses in Peter's first epistle, the straightforward exposition provides greater insight than most speculative demonologies today. For instance, even his simple biblical definition of the demonic is perhaps more efficient and exact than other more technical books on the particular topic of demonology. Furthermore, there is a sense in Christian communities that perhaps these spiritual entities are omnipresent, or near-omnipresent, but Brown addresses the seeming ubiquity of our ancient foes when he discusses an innumerable horde of demons who do the bidding of Satan, thereby creating a perception of ever-presence.<sup>127</sup> Later, he speaks of the believer's need to resist such individual, intelligent, spiritual beings against the believer's person and against the Christian cause.<sup>128</sup>

The book contains many practical and applicable points of theology, such as, when the devil departs from temptation or seeking to molest the believer or the cause of Christ, it is only to redouble his efforts and prepare for a greater onslaught.<sup>129</sup> While this comment may foster a sense of foreboding and fear, Brown offers it realistically and as a means to ensure we are always watchful and prepared to stand against the wiles of the devil. He wants the believer to be well aware of how tireless and active our enemy truly is, how cruel, how subtle, how vile. The believer's toil is not against some minor, effectively incapable enemy, unworthy of our attention. Instead, we are explicitly commanded by our Lord to be aware of the Devil and his schemes, and to be watchful.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy*, 2.

<sup>127</sup> Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy*, 22.

<sup>128</sup> Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy*, 34–39.

<sup>129</sup> Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy*, 25.

<sup>130</sup> Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy*, 49–50.

Brown breaks down his exposition into the following headings, of the Devil as adversary, a subtle adversary, an active adversary, a cruel adversary, and a powerful adversary. Additionally, the Christian's duty is to resist him, how the believer is to resist him, and the source of the Christian's encouragement in the face of such a formidable foe: the ability to persevere and overcome in Christ, who is infinitely more able than our Enemy.<sup>131</sup> In all of his exposition, the call to awareness is a real and present one, and the call to resistance is an "ordinary" one.

Surely it is well known in Reformed and evangelical circles that Satan is not on equal footing with our Lord, but the more one studies the abilities of Lucifer and his followers, the more one is tempted toward fear. The more one comes to realize the situational demonology brought forth by Brown, and its implications, the more one desires to recoil in the face of the roaring lion.<sup>132</sup> However, Brown provides the true spiritual balm and solution to this tendency, and it is rather simple: a greater confidence in our omnipotent Lord.

Additionally, Brown draws the connection between "be sober-minded" (1 Pet 5:8) and the notion of giving the demonic a foothold. An unsober mind from drugs, alcohol, or that which results in debauchery, not being in control of one's mind, provides an easier opportunity to tempt, lure, and influence. With the lectionary connection to *pharmakeia* and witchcraft/occult practices, it is no surprise that Brown draws these parallels, as does the apostle Peter.<sup>133</sup>

A manual for demonic temptation exists in one of the more well-known

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<sup>131</sup> Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy*, 80.

<sup>132</sup> Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy*, 45. Along the lines of Job 41:8, "Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again!"

<sup>133</sup> Brown, *The Christian's Great Enemy*, 44–48.

Puritan works, *Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices*, by Thomas Brooks.<sup>134</sup> Brooks, in his famous treatment deals with demonic temptation, lies, and deceptions directed toward the believer, and the biblical response to addressing each of those concerns. While the work can be uniquely dense in following which device one is reading and which device the current remedy is paired with, as there tends to be a fair bit of overlap and similarity between the remedies and devices, it still stands as a helpful summary on the believer's guide to temptation.

While an exhaustive recounting of Brooks's work is not beneficial in the present treatment, a sampling is fitting. Brooks speaks of Satan presenting the bait and hiding the hook, painting sin with virtue's colors, extenuating and lessening of sin, showing to the soul the best men's sins and by hiding from the soul their virtues, their sorrows, and their repentance. He continues with the nature of Satan's temptations, presenting God to the soul as One made up all of mercy, persuading the soul that repentance is easy and that therefore the soul need not scruple about sinning, making the soul bold to venture upon the occasions of sin, representing to the soul the outward mercies enjoyed by men walking in sin, and their freedom from outward miseries. Additionally, presenting to the soul the crosses, losses, sorrows and sufferings that daily attend those who walk in the ways of holiness, causing saints to compare themselves and their ways with those reputed to be worse than themselves, polluting the souls and judgments of men with dangerous errors that lead to looseness and wickedness, and leading men to choose wicked company. Finally, he discusses how Satan seeks to keep the believer from holy duties, by presenting the world in such a garb as to ensnare the soul, by presenting to the soul the dangers, losses and sufferings that accompany the performance of certain religious duties, by causing saints to remember their sins more

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<sup>134</sup> Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2017).



than their Savior, even to forget and neglect their Savior, and by causing saints to make false definitions of their graces.<sup>135</sup>

We see similar lists of “devices” showing up in other literature around the same time. Richard Gilpin’s work *A Treatise of Satan’s Temptations*<sup>136</sup> is one such example. Gilpin’s lengthy demonology speaks of situational realities of the demonic around the world, and how the notion of worshipping Moloch, was discovered when the Spaniards first landed in Americas, there were native tribes with idols to Moloch causing their little ones to pass through the fire.<sup>137</sup> If these indigenous peoples had not the Scriptures, nor a written language, how could they have come to know “Moloch” and how to worship him in such a specific way? Gilpin additionally speaks of Christians’ first colonization efforts in the new world, and how they speak of witches flying around the night sky, or how there is documented evidence of occultists being transported from distant location to another.<sup>138</sup>

Again, with the notion of an awareness for what our spiritual enemies are capable of, in this case with direct attacks, he tells of particular dealings with pastors and efforts the evil one goes to in opposing the preached Word in preparation or delivery, along with making the journey to church on the Lord’s Day particularly challenging for both pastor and congregants alike. Gilpin speaks of the subtlety of Satan’s deception, that he gives the appearance of being moved by superstitious activity, such as using the Lord’s name as a talisman or employing crucifixes to ward off demonization. To these

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<sup>135</sup> This final category is along the lines of Satan defining “faith” as unshakable, fully assured, and undoubting—whereas that is not how Scripture defines “faith.” Our faith can be great but lack assurance; our faith can be vitally true and full of doubt.

<sup>136</sup> Richard Gilpin, *A Treatise of Satan’s Temptations* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000). The title of this work is sometimes denoted *Daemonologia Sacra* or simply *Satan’s Temptations*.

<sup>137</sup> Gilpin, *Satan’s Temptations*, 106.

<sup>138</sup> Gilpin, *Satan’s Temptations*, 251–54.

ends, Gilpin describes Satan's feigned flight, of pretending to be cast out or exorcized, in order to further deceive and establish belief in animistic practices. He speaks of demons feigning departure at the sight of crosses and at ekballistic practices, as a means of encouraging that which has no efficacy or of things which are not commanded.<sup>139</sup> While Gilpin does not speak in this manner, one can see the four-dimensional chess that is being employed by these deceptive spirits. One begins to realize how anecdotal evidence can by no means be the basis of our demonology. If empirical data cannot be trusted on what is effective in engaging the other kingdom, due to the deceptions of the dark spiritual realms, one is forced to stand on the only unshakable ground: the Scripture's self-revelation on how to engage, methodologically, with the demonic.

Although most known for his allegories, John Bunyan's demonology is more self-aware than first glance might suggest. In his infinitely well-known *Pilgrim's Progress*, coupled with his autobiographical treatment in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* one would come to understand Bunyan's theology on the demonic, specifically, an apt awareness of fiery darts. *Pilgrim's Progress*, though an allegory, stands as a treatment of the ordinary Christian life from a Puritan author, representative of the thought of the Christian life in his day. Peppered throughout the tale is an understanding of the demonic, most overtly in Christian's engagement with Apollyon.<sup>140</sup> Clearly an illustrative description of temptation in the believer's life, it is notable how little "battle" there is between Christian and the devil figure, and by comparison, just how much talk there is between the two. This is suggestive of Bunyan's primary focus being placed upon the psychological nature of temptation, or the work of devils upon the

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<sup>139</sup> Gilpin, *Satan's Temptations*, 461. The section is most thought-provoking: "Of the devil's feigned flight at the sign of the cross, the sprinkling of holy water, the angelical salutation, St Bernard's staff, or certain words and verses hung about the neck."

<sup>140</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Pooley (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 61.

believer's mind—cognitive, affectional, and volitional seat of a believer's soul.

Later in the narrative, when Christian is walking through the valley of the shadow of death, the narrator speaks of the darkest night of the soul, when the believer is unable to distinguish his own thoughts from the suggestions of demons:

One thing I would not let slip; I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded, that he did not know his own voice. And thus I perceived it: just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stept up softly to him; and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him—which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than anything that he met with before, even to think that he should now blaspheme him that he loved so much before! Yet could he have helped it, he would not have done it; but he had not the discretion neither to stop his ears, nor to know from whence those blasphemies came.<sup>141</sup>

Then when alternatively reading in Bunyan's other principal work aiding in our understanding of his practical demonology, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, he speaks of such fiery darts and devilish suggestions to one's mind, thus finding parallel treatment in his writings.<sup>142</sup> Bunyan tells of an event where he struggled with his own assurance for over a year's time, he could not distinguish his own thoughts from that of devils' accusations. He tells of walking in a merchant's shop, where, though an open window came a dart, a suggestion of the devil that left him questioning his eternal state and struggling with his assurance for a year's time.<sup>143</sup>

An immediate contemporary of Bunyan, Thomas Watson, a prolific writer of his day, has a work on *The Lord's Prayer*,<sup>144</sup> and entitled such as he comments on the various parts of Christ's model prayer. In speaking on the portion "deliver us from evil," Watson, conceding that Satan cannot know our thoughts, as the Scriptures say in 1

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<sup>141</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 68.

<sup>142</sup> John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2018), 40.

<sup>143</sup> Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, 51, 81.

<sup>144</sup> Thomas Watson, *Lord's Prayer*, rev. ed. (1692; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960).

Corinthians 2:11,<sup>145</sup> Satan can however, tempt according to our heart's desires. He says, "[Satan] can excite and stir up the corruption within, and work some inclinableness in the heart to embrace that temptation. He can blow a spark of lust into a flame." He speaks of devils being spirits, are able to convey temptations "into our minds," so that we are not able to easily distinguish what originates from within ourselves, our flesh, and what comes from the devil.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, he asks how we may perceive the difference, that which comes from our hearts and that which comes from Satan. To this he provides three means of discernment:

First, that which comes to us suddenly, like a dart (cf. Eph 6:16), may be known as a satanic temptation. The contrast is to our own evil desires which "spring up more leisurely and by degrees," as our own sin is long concocted in our thoughts before we give in to the sinful desire.<sup>147</sup>

The second means of discernment is that which comes from the devil is ghastly and disturbing, even causing us to be frightened of the thoughts that come to our mind. Thus they are known as "fiery" darts, because like flashes of fire they startle us and alarm our souls. This is contrasted with our own thoughts which arise from within, and are hardly so terrible to our minds, for, as Watson illustrates "few are frightened at the sight of their own children" in reference to our thoughts, which are "children" of our own mind.<sup>148</sup>

Thirdly, when these thoughts and suggestions are thrown into our minds, we have reluctance to them. We naturally loathe these influences and strive against them.

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<sup>145</sup> "For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:11).

<sup>146</sup> Watson, *Lord's Prayer*, 263–64.

<sup>147</sup> Watson, *Lord's Prayer*, 263–64.

<sup>148</sup> Watson gives two examples in this category, such as self-murder and blasphemy. Watson, *Lord's Prayer*, 263–64.

The fact that we flee them and do not instantaneously cling to them and own them as our desires, reveals Satan has “injected these impure motions” into our minds.<sup>149</sup>

While Watson himself only lists the above three means of discernment, a fourth is implicitly undergirding the above rationale. That fourth unique characteristic is worth pointing out as an additional means of distinguishing our thoughts from the suggestions of the devil. And that is, the suggestions of demons are alien. They are originating outside of ourselves and being suggested to our mind. While this alienness is revealed in the suddenness of the thoughts, the ghastliness of the suggestions, and the natural resistance to them, the “otherness” is a feature of these fiery darts, as they do not arise from within the heart of man himself, and hence they are ghastly, resisted, and appear suddenly “out of nowhere.”

Thus Watson provides ways to discern temptations arising from our sinful flesh, versus temptations coming from the evil one, by their suddenness, their ghastliness, the natural recoiling to them, and their alienness to our own desires. Though Watson says the endeavor is “hard to distinguish between the bite of the serpent and the disease of the mind; between those suggestions which come from Satan, and which breed out of our own hearts,” it is nevertheless able to be done. In fact, coupling Watson’s theology with Bunyan’s above, it *must* be done by the believer if he is to stand against the evil suggestions to the mind.

### **Why Not Significantly Engage Pentecostal and Charismatic Literature?**

As we bring our summary of Puritan literature to a close, though not immediately apparent of a transition, we now consider why Pentecostal and charismatic literature will not be explored in the present treatment. If Randall Pederson’s thesis about

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<sup>149</sup> Watson cites Moses fleeing from the serpent (Exod 4:3) and “the hand of Joab in in this” (2 Sam 14:19) as comparable. Watson, *Lord’s Prayer*, 264.

the various schools of thought in Puritanism be permitted at this juncture, then a charismatic branch of Puritan thought was present even during the time of our primary consideration. What we will be leveraging is not the fringe or charismatic branch of Puritanism, but that of mainstream and centrist theology at the time. After all, we are seeking to “reclaim” the historic Reformed demonology, as apprehended and elucidated by Puritan theologians—particularly Perkins. Thus it will be argued presently that the more charismatic Puritan understanding may be set aside as non-centrist, as is the case with contemporary and modern evangelical writings. While Pentecostal and charismatic thought may occupy a large swath of present day demonology, it is not centrist protestant thought, and therefore will not be principally considered.

In his work *Unity in Diversity English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation, 1603–1689*, Randall J. Pederson advances the thesis that there are four main strains within Puritanism, the Precisianist Strain, Mystical Strain, Antinomian Strain, and the Neonomian Strain. In the first strain, the Precisianist,<sup>150</sup> or central strand of Puritanism, Pederson equates with “mainstream” Puritanism, as espoused by the likes of Perkins, John Preston, Thomas Taylor, William Gouge, Thomas Goodwin, Richard Baxter, and Richard Sibbes.<sup>151</sup> Pederson later states, “Precisianism had the majority opinion within

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<sup>150</sup> Randall J. Pederson, *Unity in Diversity: English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation, 1603–1689* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2014). Pederson explains the origin of this term, that those in this particular camp were considered “precise” in their theology, and the term was originally coined against their ilk in a derogatory fashion. However, those who fall into this mainstream or centrist camp of Puritan thought soon came to adopt the term as their own, captured by Richard Rogers with the quick-witted reply to the pejorative designator: “Sir, I serve a precise God” (68–69n123).

<sup>151</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 66; Christopher Hill, *Some Intellectual Consequences of the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 62; and Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2018), 15. Numerous historians employ the term without qualifying or defining it. See for instance David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603–60* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 99; and David Parnham, *Sir Henry Vane, Theologian: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Religious and Political Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 74. Pederson continues, “Richard Greenham, Richard Rogers, and William Perkins, and which was carried into the seventeenth century by William Ames, John Downame, Isaac Ambrose, Thomas Taylor, William Gouge” among others, as the mainstream or centrist Puritan theologians (Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 67).

Puritanism” and “historians have long equated it with “mainstream,” and confessionally orthodox” Puritan thought. Though he argues for the greater precision of seeing Precisionism as being but one strain among four primary strains rather than equating it with “Puritanism” itself, per se.<sup>152</sup>

While Perkins has already been mentioned as one of the principle contributors to the Precisionist camp, and thus centrist to the Puritan movement of theology, Pederson also grants to Perkins the title of “Father of Pietism”<sup>153</sup> as originally argued by Heiko Oberman in his work *True Christianity*.<sup>154</sup> What characterizes such centrist Puritan thought is a thoroughgoing Calvinist piety, pastoral concern, a rejection of theological novelties, conscientious nonconformity, and robust engagement with a practical and logical theology.<sup>155</sup> Pederson would see “mainstream” Puritanism as involving “experimental piety”<sup>156</sup> and “Reformed orthodoxy”<sup>157</sup> or as he defines elsewhere as “confessionalism.”

Thus, our overview of Puritan literature on the demonic culminates in Perkins being a central representative of mainstream Puritanism. Perkins will serve as

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<sup>152</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 68.

<sup>153</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 69. Though Pietism may be used as a derogatory term in some contemporary evangelical and Reformed circles, Pederson and Oberman are speaking of it as a genuine and earnest piety which marked the Puritan movement.

<sup>154</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 69.

<sup>155</sup> J. I. Packer, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2003), 15–102; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 305–16; and Edward Hindson, ed., *Introduction to Puritan Theology: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 17–27. Beeke and Jones cover a range of themes, such as the covenant, predestination, salvation, and eschatology. Packer identifies as distinctively “Puritan” a “thoroughgoing Calvinist piety . . . pastoral concern which distinguished clerical Puritan leaders . . . spiritual kinship with Edwardian Reformers . . . repudiation of Commonwealth novelties . . . [and] conscientious nonconformity” (27–28), as well as a pensiveness for practical divinity and Ramist logic (33–43).

<sup>156</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 71.

<sup>157</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 70–72, including “the development of federal theology” and “the maintaining a strong exegetical tradition” as two additional points.

representative of centrist Puritan thinking on demonology, and as we summarize his treatment of this particular systemic head, we will also find that it is fitting with what we have seen above in Puritan authors at the time. More than that, it will be demonstrated throughout the summary of Perkins's demonology how other Puritan divines' contributions dovetail nicely with and complement well Perkins's own treatment. Thereby, interviewing Perkins, as it were, becomes the means of capturing the central thought on the demonic in Puritan literature.<sup>158</sup>

Finally on this particular line of thought, Pederson argues the mystical strain in Puritanism explored the more "spiritual waters" of Protestantism.<sup>159</sup> He argues these writers (Ambrose, Powell, Cradock, Llwyd, and others) emphasized the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit and the benefits such indwelling brings to the Christian life. This mysticism fell within the Protestant tradition,<sup>160</sup> but sought out a more immediate interaction with God and the spiritual realms.<sup>161</sup> The parallels with modern Pentecostalism or charismaticism and their respective emphases should be apparent at this point. While these Puritan writers were within the pale of Puritanism on the whole, they were outside of centrist thought from their Precisianist contemporaries. If the present focus will be that of mainstream Puritan thought, in order to reclaim the historic Reformed and confessional demonology, our primary focus will be that of precisionism and not the other, less central theologians (e.g., the mystical camp in particular). If such will be our historic focus, so too will be our contemporary considerations of evangelical, Reformed, and confessional writers.

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<sup>158</sup> It should be noted that Pederson attributes "providence and the devil" as one of six major themes prevalent in precisionism Puritanism—or a supreme authority of a sovereign God over providence, with the devil included under the larger heading of "providence." Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 68.

<sup>159</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 73.

<sup>160</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 75.

<sup>161</sup> Pederson, *Unity in Diversity*, 75.



## Conclusion of the Literature Review

As we bring the present literature review to a close, and transition to Perkins's representative demonology, perhaps the most fitting summary of the demonic at this point, will in fact be Perkins's very own summary of fallen angels. He, and we along with him, can conclude that, demons are fallen angels, and as angels, they are spiritual, incorporeal beings. Ontologically they are composed of that of "spirit"—they are spiritual entities. As spiritual entities, they have been endowed with wisdom, knowledge, and great "might" (spiritually speaking). They are swift and innumerable. They occupy the "heavenly realm" or the spiritual plane of existence. They vary in rank and degree. They have been given a function (Ἄγγελος).<sup>162</sup> They either remain in their upright estate in which they were created (elect angels) or elected to fall with Satan in his great rebellion against God (fallen angels).<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> That is, "angel" or divine "messenger."

<sup>163</sup> A summary of Perkins's Angelology can be found in William Perkins, *Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Greg A. Salazar (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2018), 6:28–29. He states,

The angels, each of them being created in the beginning, were settled in an upright estate, in whom these things are to be noted. First, their nature. Angels are spiritual and incorporeal essences. "For he in no sort took the angels, but he took the seed of Abraham" (Heb 2:16). "And of the angels, he saith, He maketh the spirits his messengers, and his ministers a flame of fire" (1:7). Secondly, their qualities. First, they are wise. "My lord the king is even as an angel of God, in hearing good and bad" (2 Sam 14:17). (2) They are of great might. "When the Lord Jesus shall show himself from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thess. 1:7). "David saw the angel that smote the people" (2 Sam 24:17). "The same night the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of Ashur, an hundred, fourscore, and five thousand" (2 Kgs 19:35). (3) They are swift and of great agility. "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me with a hot coal in his hands" (Isa. 6:6). "The man Gabriel whom I had seen before in a vision came "flying and touched me" (Dan 9:21). This is the reason why the cherubim in the tabernacle were painted with wings. Thirdly, they are innumerable. "Now Jacob went forth on his journey, and the angels of God met him" (Gen 32:1). "Thousand thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand thousands stood before him" (Dan 7:10). "Thinkest thou I cannot pray to my Father, and he will give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt 26:53). "To the company of innumerable angels" (Heb 12:22). Fourthly, they are in the highest heaven, where they ever attend upon God and have society with Him. "In heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt 18:10). "The chariots of God are twenty thousand thousand angels, and the Lord is among them" (Ps 68:17). "But are as angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25). Fifthly, their degree. That there are degrees of angels, it is most plain. "By him were all things created, which are in heaven, and in earth, things visible and invisible: whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" (Col 1:16). "Neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers," etc. (Rom 8:38). "The Lord shall descend with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God" (1 Thess. 4:16). But it is not for us to search who or how many be of each order; neither ought we

He illustrates their fall by describing a man who takes away his hand from a staff. For the man to remove his restraint, it falls to the ground of itself. In like manner, for God to remove his restraining grace, angels fall of their own accord, their own willing, their own choosing.<sup>164</sup> In their fall, they have been deprived of all that is good within their nature, and they have an insatiable hatred toward God and a desire to destroy mankind. Their degree and diversity involve different ranks, with the chief being Satan or Beelzebub, the prince of demons, and the rest are ministering angels attending to him. Their punishment is one of perpetual torments without any possibility of forgiveness or pardon—unlike fallen man. And finally, they are limited in their power and influence, in that God sovereignly restrains their hand from greater evil, though their final damnation will be greater in time, measure, and torment.<sup>165</sup>

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curiously to inquire how they are distinguished, whether in essence, gifts, or offices. “Let no man at his pleasure bear rule over you by humbleness of mind, and worshiping of angels, advancing himself in those things which he never saw” (Col 2:18). Sixthly, their office. Their office is partly to magnify God and partly to perform His commandments. “Praise the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandment in obeying the voice of his word. Praise the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye his servants that do his pleasure” (Ps 103:20–21). Seventhly, the establishing of some angels in that integrity in which they were created. (6:32–33)

<sup>164</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:32.

<sup>165</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:34.

CHAPTER 3  
WILLIAM PERKINS'S SITUATIONAL AWARENESS  
OF THE DEMONIC

*There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*<sup>1</sup>

Hamlet

**Introductory Considerations**

As we transition to William Perkins's demonology proper, several elements must be kept in mind. First, we will be summarizing and organizing Perkins's demonology from across the breadth and depth of his extant literature, factoring in every major contribution from his works to what can rightly be regarded as a foundational Puritan demonology. As we work through his material in such a summative and organizational way, it will be systematized in an original fashion. Though his principal demonological work, *A Treatise on the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, will serve as our primary guide, the structure and synthesis is unique to my work.<sup>2</sup> Along these lines, this type of engagement with Perkins's demonology has not been done before. The secondary sources certainly prove that Perkins as the father and popularizer of Puritan thought is important and a crucial contributor to the general field;<sup>3</sup> however, no secondary source

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 5, lines 167–68.

<sup>2</sup> See William Perkins, *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, in *Works of William Perkins*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020), 9:293–403.

<sup>3</sup> See Joel R. Beeke et al., *William Perkins: Architect of Puritanism* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019); Randall J. Pederson, *Unity in Diversity: English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation, 1603–1689* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2014); J. I. Packer, *An Anglican to Remember: William Perkins, Puritan Popularizer* (London: St. Antholin's Lectureship Charity, 1996); Matthew N. Payne and J. Stephen Yuille, *The Labors of a Godly and Learned Divine, William Perkins: Including Previously*

has yet summarized his demonology proper, let alone practically apply his demonological works to the field of pastoral counseling. Secondary sources list him as a prominent demonologist to be sure,<sup>4</sup> but such treatments are superficial, surface-level, or literature reviews at best. Thus we will summarize his corpus of work that we might later draw insights into the method and practice of pastoral counseling as it relates to the dark spiritual realm.

Second, we must keep in mind why we are discussing a *situational awareness*, and not merely *awareness* of the demonic. As we retain Frame's triperspectival approach to theology, there are many *normative* treatments of the demonic (i.e., biblical theology of the demonic). Additionally, one may approach the subject *experientially*, or from the author's own experimental vantage point. But we are considering the *situated* experience of the counselee and counselor, of being in and surrounded by the spiritual realities. Thus the normative (Scripture) breaks into the situational in order to shape the experiential. Our primary consideration is our present situated reality as we draw conclusions for the field and practice of biblical counseling.

Stemming from the general situational reality of being surrounded by "rulers, authorities, powers, and spiritual forces of evil," Perkins finds himself situated in a different time than our present one. As such, the Puritans had a far more robust demonology than the Reformed church does contemporarily. Stemming from Perkins's own personal, pre-converted history in the occult, and his and his contemporaries'

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*Unpublished Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2023); and Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012), as but a small sampling of the many secondary sources attributing great significance to Perkins as the father and popularizer of Puritan thought.

<sup>4</sup> See Owen Davies, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft and Magic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); and Reinier W. de Koeijer, "Spiritual Warfare: A Survey of Puritan Practical Divinity," *Studies in Puritanism and Piety Journal* 2, no. 1 (November 2020), as two examples including Perkins's works as contributing to a Puritan demonology; but no substantive engagement with his demonology proper is conducted. Instead, he is treated as one figure among many demonologists and merely summarized in scant, literature review fashion.

engagement with explicit paganism and culturally present witchcraft, results in this greater speaking to the dark realms in his day. The cultural considerations Perkins was writing to was more rampant paganism and less occulted than Western twenty-first century Christianity has known before now. As such, one finds Perkins writing against the yearly prognostications,<sup>5</sup> for instance, as believers were more readily engaging with the pagan activity which was simply *on the surface* of Western European culture of his time. While, as a result, some in our age may be tempted to believe the Puritans were therefore excessive in their fascination with devils, the opposite is actually true, that due to our culturally situated moment, we find ourselves theologically deficient in our demonology as a result.

### **A Brief Biography**

William Perkins, born in 1558, and dying at the rather young age of 44, in 1602, was a significant contributor to English Puritanism. It has often been stated of him that he is the “Father of Puritanism,”<sup>6</sup> due to his lasting influence upon the later Puritan movement from his day. Living during Elizabethan England, and remaining within the Church of England after his conversion and despite his staunchly Reformed beliefs, Perkins, a prominent theologian, pastor, preacher, and reformer, shaped Puritan thought and advocated significant change within the Church of England, seeking to ensure Roman Catholic practice and belief were uprooted and removed from the mainline church.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Perkins, *A Resolution to the Country Man, Proving it Utterly Unlawful to Buy or Use Our Yearly Prognostications*, in *Works*, 9:409–38.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Muller, “William Perkins and the Protestant Exegetical Tradition: Interpretation, Style, and Method,” in *Commentary on Hebrews 11 (1609 ed.)*, by William Perkins, ed. John H. Augustine (New York: Pilgrim, 1991), 72.

<sup>7</sup> “And hence we gather that the practice of all those men in our church which separate themselves from all assemblies for the wants thereof, holding that our church is no church, that the grace which is wrought by the preaching of the word among us is nothing else but a satanic illusion; that sacraments are no sacraments—I say that their practice is condemned by our Savior Christ’s conversing

Though thoroughly Reformed, confessional, and “Puritanic” in his writings and belief, Perkins was not of the more *extreme* Precisianists of his contemporaries, who were non-conformist Presbyterians, those who departed the Church of England for its “lack of purity” and fidelity to the truth. For this reason, some may dispute the claim of “father of Puritanism” and would find “popularizer of Puritan thought” a more fitting nomenclature, since he was centrist and thus more conformist than English Puritans would later come to be known. Both “father of Puritanism” and “popularizer of Puritan thought” are fitting titles for this man who clearly stands as a prototypical English Puritan and one who made Puritan theology (Reformed and confessional theology, a call to personal conversion, an emphasis of the primacy of Scripture, and experimental theology of practical Christian living) more well-known during his lifetime, and due to his prolific writings, well after his death.

William was born to Thomas Perkins and Hannah, in Marston Jabbett, Warwickshire. He matriculated at Christ’s College, Cambridge, in June 1577, and studied under Laurence Chaderton, who likely influenced his Puritan leanings.<sup>8</sup> During his education at Christ’s College, Perkins demonstrated academic and intellectual prowess, and became a fellow in 1584. As a lecturer and preacher at the college, he was able to promote his Reformed understanding of Scripture and see such take hold during his time there.

Perhaps one of his most known works was penned in 1592, entitled *The Art of Prophesying*, a book on experimental preaching, instructing the student in proper biblical

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among the Jews. For if Christ should have followed their opinion, He ought to have fled from among the Jews and not so much as once to have come into the temple or taught in their synagogues. But contrariwise He joined Himself with them, and therefore we cannot in good conscience disjoin ourselves from the Church of England.” Perkins, *Works*, ed. Ryan Hurd (2017), 5:159.

<sup>8</sup> Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014), 469–70.

hermeneutics and its movement to practical, straightforward, and clear applications to the person in the pew. This work stresses the hallmarks of Puritan preaching, that of clear, systematic, exegetical, scriptural elucidation. Additionally in his other writings, Perkins engaged the theological topics of predestination, a personal response of faith, and the place of the believer's obedience in the Christian life, all which aligned him with the wider Puritan movement. Like those Puritans who would come after him, Perkins emphasized the need for true biblical piety. Saving faith, if genuine, must transform one's practice.

“His piety set the tone for the literature that would pour forth from the presses in the seventeenth century, thereby ensuring him a place in history as the Father of Puritanism,” as Beeke and Yuille note of Perkins. J. I. Packer states of the movement and in reference to its father: “Puritanism, with its complex of biblical, devotional, ecclesiastical, reformational, polemical and cultural concerns, came of age, we might say, with Perkins, and began to display characteristically a wholeness of spiritual vision and a maturity of Christian patience that had not been seen in it before.”<sup>9</sup>

Prior to his conversion to Christ, however, Perkins was reputed to be a notorious drunk with a quick temper and a foul mouth. What the Lord used in his life, to bring him to a point of self-surrender and personal yielding to the lordship of Christ, was an event where a townswoman threatened to turn her publicly disobedient son over to “Drunken Perkins” if the child would not mend his ways. Obviously alarmed by such a threat, the boy allegedly straightened up. So too Perkins, as that was the beginning of his conversion and pursuit of Christ. In addition to his intemperance, though, Perkins was involved in black magic and occult practices prior to his conversion. He mentions this

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<sup>9</sup> Packer, *An Anglican to Remember*, 4.

directly in his *Resolution to the Country Man, Proving it Utterly Unlawful to Buy or Use Our Yearly Prognostications* when he says in the note to the reader:

I have long studied this art, and [I] was never quiet until I had seen all the secrets of the same. But at length it pleased God to lay before me the profaneness of it, nay, I dare boldly say, idolatry, although it is covered with fair and golden shows. Wherefore, that which I will speak with grief, the same I would desire you to mark with some attention.<sup>10</sup>

This occultic history would later go on to shape his theology of the demonic and witchcraft, and give way to his principal work on this subject, *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft*.<sup>11</sup> Despite his untimely death at the young age of 44, Perkins's legacy endured through his writings, and the impact of his writings on later theologians and pastors (even beyond his immediate Puritan counterparts) can hardly be overemphasized.<sup>12</sup>

For the present purposes, it should be especially noted that Perkins was a centrist in his theology, popular in his treatments, precise in his systematics, and confessionally Reformed in his positions. We will see such attractive elements emerge in his demonology as well. Far from a sensationalist, Perkins brings a level-headed moderation and balance to a topic of otherwise wild speculation. We will find a man whose demonology, and his theology overall for that matter, was one of moderate centrism, helpfully grounding our present studies in the central vein of Puritan demonology.

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<sup>10</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:409.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2022), 129.

<sup>12</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr., endorsement of *Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2014–2021), back cover.



## A Brief Bibliography of Perkins Demonology

Over the corpus of Perkins's entire work, we find his clearest articulation of his demonology expressed in his discourse on the *Damnable Art of Witchcraft*, but he additionally expounds such particulars at length in his three-volume *Cases of Conscience*. In the latter, Perkins addresses the uniqueness of demonized persons and demonized buildings. We also find an extensive demonology arising from his treatment on the temptation of Christ in his *Combat between Christ and the Devil*, as he exegetes Matthew 4:1–11, the biblical account of Christ's wilderness temptation. In his correspondence with "the country man" in the 1580s, we find an argument against anything occultic in practice, in this specific case horoscopes, due to their legitimately demonic nature.<sup>13</sup>

Elsewhere in his complete works, we see glimmers of his demonology throughout. Such is the case in his commentary on the book of Jude, his commentary on Galatians, his exposition of the Lord's Prayer, his treatment of the Sermon on the Mount, a summary of demonology in his concise systematic theology in *The Golden Chain*, and again in his sermons on Jude and Exodus. While the lion share of focus will naturally be upon *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* and *Cases of Conscience*, along with

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<sup>13</sup> *The Damned Art of Witchcraft (DAW)* will serve as the general "outline" of Perkins's demonology, as it is the most mature expression of his systematic understanding of the demonic. With regard to lawful (and unlawful) responses to the demonic, *The Cases of Conscience* (book 1) will serve as the secondary source, undergirding and filling out what *DAW* does not directly address. Regarding his robust situational awareness of demonic activity, *Combat between Christ and the Devil: Matthew 4:1–11* provides further insight into what devils can do to saints. In his treatment of *The Sermon on the Mount*, particularly under the heading of the Lord's Prayer and the petition, "deliver us from evil," Perkins draws out similar principles of a situational awareness and ordinary means response as seen in the previously mentioned sources. In his commentary on *Commentary on Galatians*, dealing with 5:2 and 3:1, his understanding of believers' "bewitchment" is drawn out. In his *Golden Chain*, which is his abbreviated systematic theology, or perhaps more accurately, "confessional" theology due to its compact nature, he summarizes angels and demons in their own sections, which further elucidates his summative understanding of fallen angels, as well as an entire chapter dedicated to "spiritual warfare." His correspondence with the "country man" entitled, *Resolution to the Country Man, Proving it Utterly Unlawful to Buy or Use Our Yearly Prognostications*, Perkins develops a systematic response to the "triviality" of engaging in implicit divination and the danger of even trifling with the devil. This reveals a practical and pastoral applicational response to the demonic as applied to the totality of the believer's life. These sources serve as his principal demonology. In the next footnote, the remainder of his demonology is drawn out in more subtle locales in his corpus.

his *Combat between Christ and the Devil*, we will presently examine his corpus of work as it relates to his demonology, through the lens of these principal works.<sup>14</sup>

### **William Perkins's Situational Awareness**

As Perkins begins his painstaking treatment of the “art” (so called) of witchcraft, he begins by defining this wicked art, which comes by way of assistance from Satan himself. While Perkins will later explore the basis of this “relationship”—that of a covenant between the Dark Lord himself and the practitioner—at this point he merely highlights that any benefit to such practitioners is found only in the dark spiritual realms—not in the craft itself. It is fascinating, however, to see Perkins develop the hypocritical mimicry Satan employs in delivering to his human followers a set of rules, principles, and ungodly practices to govern their magic conduct, craft, and art by.<sup>15</sup> Even in the conveyance of this trade from demon to person, there is a manipulative bent to it.

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<sup>14</sup> While Perkins's principal demonology was addressed in the works cited above, there are other locations in his complete works, where he addresses more subtle or nuanced views regarding his demonology. In his *Commentary on Jude*, he deals with the Archangel Michael's encounter with Satan over the body of Moses, as well as Jude's inspired understanding of what took place when the angels fell, with a glancing allusion to Gen 6. In his previously unpublished sermons on Jude, as contained in the volume *Labors of a Learned Divine*, his same understanding as expressed in the commentary, comes out in more sermonic and truncated fashion. In his systematic treatment of *An Exposition of the Symbol or Apostles' Creed*, Perkins makes many glancing references to Satan, as the father of the fallen, as vanquished by Christ at the cross, and the meaning of “he descended into hell” with the whole gates of hell being opened to Christ as he took our deserved wrath. In his *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, he once again covers the same discussed in the above Sermon on the Mount, thus no new data on his demonology is added. In the work on *Fruitful Dialogue Concerning the End of the World*, peripheral treatments of the demonic come out so far as they deal with the eschaton. *A Warning Against the Idolatry of the Last Times* is a treatise of Perkins where he upholds divine worship in contrast to satanically suggested idolatry. While he calls the reader to a sufficiency of Scripture argument and a regulative principle of worship argument throughout, he contrasts it with the diabolical intent behind idolatrous practices. Perhaps the clearest point of demonology in this treatise is Perkins's direct statement that Satan cannot draw a believer into the sin unto death, as spoken by 1 John 5:21. In his work on the *Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Family*, Perkins references the “sons of God” of Gen 6, as likely being believing children of Adam and not angelic beings. Coupling that with his interpretations from the book of Jude, we find a very moderate, even centrist interpretation of the Gen 6 event across his writings. Lastly, so far as this exhaustive treatment on Perkins's understanding of the demonic is concerned, in his unpublished sermon of Exod 22:18, “suffer not a witch to live,” we see the sermonic underpinnings of his *DAW* previously referenced.

<sup>15</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:310.

The practitioner may believe he is laying hold of some forbidden power and finding newfound freedoms, when in fact, slavish laws and rules are being laid upon the one in league with the devil.

### **In League with Satan**

Perkins discloses the motives one might have in endeavoring in such vain gazing into the spiritual realms—and those are the motives to work wonders. Those wonders may appear to be genuine miracles, but Perkins will take great pains to distinguish them from the proper miracles of God (rightly called “miracles”) and the deceitful signs of the evil one. It is important to note that these wonders are not affected by the magician<sup>16</sup> himself but are done at the “assistance of the devil.”<sup>17</sup> This is important to note, because the master of such arts, believes himself to be truly liberated and even evolved to a higher plane of ability, knowledge, and wisdom. He finds himself illuminated and exulted over the rest of the masses, but he does not know that he finds himself increasingly enslaved to the deceptions of the devil.<sup>18</sup> Since any “abilities” are brought about by the devil or his horde, it is right to conclude that the occultist can “do nothing” apart from the assistance of demons.

The wonders the occultist is able to perform, by the help of the devil, that of appearing to turn the substance of one to that of another. Or to turn the substance of one

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<sup>16</sup> This word, *magician*, is distinct from stagecraft and entertainment magic. Therefore, some chose the aberrant spelling of “magick” to offset it from stage magic. However, a magician, in its occultic or “proper” sense, is one who seeks to do signs and wonders with the help of spiritual entities. Since the kingdom of light will not rightly be manipulated by such forbidden activities and unlawful “reaching into” the spiritual realms, it can only be said that such “magicians” are operating, whether knowingly or unknowingly, with the assistance of demons.

<sup>17</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:312.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Gilpin speaks in much the same way. Richard Gilpin, *A Treatise of Satan's Temptations* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000), 166.

creature to that of another creature,<sup>19</sup> the truth of such miracles, however, could only ever be said to be possible by the work of God. This is because he alone is creator and sovereign over his created order, and even angels, though preternatural beings<sup>20</sup> as creations themselves, are bound by their natural order. As such they are not able to ascend beyond their natural order and accomplish something genuinely supernatural or “above nature.”<sup>21</sup> Perkins cites Psalm 136:4 to biblically defend his assertion at this point, which says that “[God] alone does wonders.”

Elsewhere when speaking of idolatrous worship, in his treatise on *Idolatry*, he references the claims of the Roman Catholic Church that miracles do in fact take place in the worship of their various saints. He cites an example of a particular Catholic Saint, Lady of Loretto, saying,

Her miracles be as many as those which we read to be done by Christ and His apostles. And yet they indeed are such as may be done by satanical operation. For the devil knows the secrets of nature more than all men do, and by this means he can do things like miracles, which indeed are no miracles. And he is the best physician in the world and can cure diseases which in the judgment of man seem incurable. Yet cannot he give sight to them that are born blind, nor raise the dead. And therefore, among all her miracles there is no mention of such.<sup>22</sup>

From his preceding arguments, he has thus established that all works of the devil, while appearing miraculous or observationally seem sincerely supernatural, must be merely natural. For they cannot be properly called “miracles” and must be produced by lying and deceitful signs. Lest we believe this severely limits Satan’s power in the signs that he affects, Perkins reminds the reader that Satan is a spirit, and as such has great capacity beyond what we terrestrial beings are limited to. Secondly, he is an ancient

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<sup>19</sup> Perkins gives the illustration of Jannes and Jambres transforming rods into serpents, in mimicry and mockery of God’s miraculous transformation from wood to living serpent.

<sup>20</sup> Not “supernatural,” or “above nature,” in the proper sense of the word.

<sup>21</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:313.

<sup>22</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. Shawn D. Wright (2018), 7:433–34.

spirit, many thousands of years old, and has the benefit of long observation. And thirdly, he is one of God's strongest of creatures.<sup>23</sup> By this he means, Satan and his angels are able, by their spiritual nature, to travel great distances in short time and are able to convey others to far distant places in the same manner.<sup>24</sup> Fourthly and finally for this argument, Satan is a powerful spirit, made all the more fearsome by his malice and hatred of mankind. By this, in his creaturely nature, he is still able to shake the earth and immensely dwarf inferior creatures by his natural display of power. His ability is only restrained by the omnipotence of God and none other.<sup>25</sup>

What is more, lest we believe these are but silly fancies and greatly diminished “works” because we situate them as “natural” or according to demons’ natural spiritual order, Perkins elsewhere points out that Satan genuinely affects the mind of Christ when he shows him the kingdoms of the world in a moment.<sup>26</sup> He says this temptation of Christ,

Teaches us that the practices of sorcerers and magicians, undertaking to represent unto the eye, partly in the air, and partly in [mirrors], either the person of men that lived long since, or actions done in far countries or long before, are not mere fancies as some think, who deny altogether that such things can be shown. For the devil can resemble things done long since and a far off; for if he could set such a sight before the eye of our Savior Christ in vision, as the view of the whole world, and the glory

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<sup>23</sup> Perkins makes the argument that angels and demons, as spiritual beings and ministering spirits, are given great ability. He says this is so plain from Scripture, he need not biblically defend it at this point in his argument. Additionally, he will make the argument in his treatment of Jude, that Satan finds himself equal with the archangel Michael, who has no other counterpart among the angelic host. Perkins, *Works*, 9:314; and his theological exposition of Jude, in Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2017), 4:149, during his treatment of the identity of the archangel Michael.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Manton, in his exposition of the *Temptation of Christ*, explains that Satan is able to convey Christ's physical body from the wilderness of Judah to the pinnacle of the temple according to his afforded spiritual abilities. While Manton states that Christ must have “permitted” Satan to convey his body in such a way, just as a practitioner permits their bodies to be conveyed great distances by demons, it still suggests this is a normal ability afforded to spiritual beings according to their natural order. Thomas Manton, *Christ's Temptation and Transfiguration* (London: 1685), 40–41, Monergism eBook. Gilpin shares the same principle when speaking of well-documented cases of witches showing up great distances away. Gilpin, *Satan's Temptations*, 301.

<sup>25</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:315.

<sup>26</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2014), 1:140.

thereof, then much more can he represent unto the eye of man strange and marvelous things.<sup>27</sup>

What is more, Satan, as a spiritual being, is able to “convey himself into” a creature. Such as is the case when he “entered into Judas” or as he “abused the tongue and mouth of the serpent”<sup>28</sup> when he tempted Eve. Thus by these means and more, Satan is able to bring to pass that which is commonly accepted as impossible according to man.<sup>29</sup> From this argument that the devil engages in deceiving and lying works, and produces the appearance of the miraculous, Perkins then outlines the nature of those works: illusory or real action.

### **Types of Wonders in Which Satan Engages**

The first wonder we encounter is that of illusion. Illusory wonders would be those which devils impress upon the minds of men, or the manipulations they produce in the “air,” as Perkins puts it. In other words, the devil either creates in the mind’s eye that which he intends to display, making the person believe he sees or hears that which he does not see or hear. These would be hallucinations. Perkins draws from the Greek word the apostle Paul employs in Galatians 3:1, *ἐβόσκαθεν*, translated “bewitched” in his question, “who has bewitched you?” This is the notion of dazzling the eyes or making one believe that which is not real. In his commentary on the same verse in his book on the epistle to the Galatians, Perkins indicates this is genuine satanical operations upon the Galatian church, an actual bewitchment by the devil.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 1:140.

<sup>28</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Greg A. Salazar (2018), 6:319.

<sup>29</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:315.

<sup>30</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. Paul Smalley (2021), 2:145.

Alternatively, the devil engages in these illusory deceptions by making it appear, external to the person themselves, as though the miraculous was actually taking place. Here Perkins cites the example of the witch of Endor calling up Samuel from the grave. Seeing as the woman is an occult practitioner, and unlawfully engaging in the dark arts to “call up” Samuel, though more will be said to later demonstrate these are satanical inducements meant only to appear like the real Samuel, it is safe to temporarily conclude that these are deceitful signs, external to Saul’s and the witch’s mind.<sup>31</sup> Thus there are two types of illusory signs.<sup>32</sup>

The second type of the devil’s wonders are those of real works—that which they appear to be.<sup>33</sup> While the Spirit of God speaks of devils’ works as “lying wonders” (2 Thess 2:9), though they may be true in actuality, are still deceitful in their intended ends. This second category is illustrated by Perkins in the fire from heaven brought down by Satan upon the property of Job (Job 1:16–19). There the Scriptures speak of the satanical fire as true fire. So too the wind which destroyed Job’s house, and the boils which afflicted Job’s body. These are all in the same, actual works of this malevolent being upon a believer and his family—and these attested to by the Scriptures themselves. These are not vain speculations of the power of the devil, but actual signs brought about by these created, though fallen, beings.

Another illustration that Perkins provides regarding the real signs the devil is able to engage in, is the taking on the form and shape of a man.<sup>34</sup> The angels are seen to

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<sup>31</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:316–17.

<sup>32</sup> Later in his argumentation, Perkins lists a “third,” which is a nuance of the second possibility. The devil can (1) bewitch the mind/eye of the person, (2) can alter the appearance of the object itself, or (3) alter the “air,” meaning the distance or space between the object and the person’s eye—thus engaging in three possible points of creating the delusion. Perkins, *Works*, 9:366.

<sup>33</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:318.

<sup>34</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:319.

have this same natural ability, as they appear to Lot, his family, and the city of Sodom. Additionally, they appear in the New Testament to various people.<sup>35</sup> So too fallen angels retain this natural ability, that though spirits, are able to take on the form and appearance of man. The third illustration Perkins gives of real works, is that of entering into a creature and using the creature to speak and communicate to others.<sup>36</sup> This is true of the serpent just as the angel of the Lord utilizes the tongue of a mute donkey to speak to Balaam. Angelic beings (elect or fallen) are presented in Scripture as being able to use other creatures by which to appear and speak.

At this point, some of Perkins's conclusions should be noted. He states that if real wonders, albeit not supernatural or genuine miracles, can be worked by devils, then the working of wonders will not compel people to trust in the one true and living God.<sup>37</sup> Craig Keener, in the second volume of his *Miracles* series, makes the very same point about skeptics: "If I show them medical documentation, they may say, 'Just because that was unusual doesn't mean it couldn't happen on its own. Show me someone who was raised from the dead.' If I give examples of people raised from the dead, they may say, 'Well, I didn't see that happen.'" <sup>38</sup> Keener will even go on to document many eye-witness accounts of people being raised from the dead,<sup>39</sup> and even ones clearly brought about from demonic origin.<sup>40</sup> So too Abraham makes a very similar argument in Jesus'

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<sup>35</sup> This includes Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the other women who come to the tomb.

<sup>36</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:319–20.

<sup>37</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:320–21.

<sup>38</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Miracles Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 5.

<sup>39</sup> Keener, *Miracles Today*, 139–58.

<sup>40</sup> Craig S. Keener, "Are Miracles Intellectually Credible?," *Symposia Christi*, February 3, 2017, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-O4koeiNGc>; see especially the 1:50 mark, in reference to Bruce T. Grindal, "Into the Heart of Sisala Experience: Witnessing Death Divination," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 39, no. 1 (1983): 60–80.



account of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in Luke 16:31, when he says that even if someone should rise from the dead, such a sign and wonder would not cause someone to believe.

Secondly, Perkins draws the preliminary conclusion that a matter ought not be confirmed and believed upon the basis of signs and wonders.<sup>41</sup> If the devil himself is able to perform deceptive signs, and if he by strange and extraordinary acts, seeks to deceive mankind, then followers of Christ ought be exceedingly cautious of that which is confirmed by the “miraculous” alone, and apart from explicitly revealed truths of God’s Word. If one were to base their theology and practice upon wonders that are able to be observed and not drawn from the all-sufficient Word, Perkins suggests that we would be lured into the grossest points of falsehood on matters of religion.<sup>42</sup> This point undergirds what Gilpin suggests, that just because Satan feigns departure at the display of crucifixes or in the invocation of the name of Christ, like one would employ a rune or a talisman, does not mean we should embrace such methodology as biblical.<sup>43</sup>

### **Why Does God Permit Such Demonic Activity?**

Finally in this section of Perkins’s work, he extrapolates why God in his sovereignty permits such signs and wonders be performed by the devil and his followers. His conclusion is twofold. First, God sovereignty grants Satan such lengthy leeway for the trial of his children and second, for the deception and punishment of the wicked. For the first order, God desires his children to trust only in him and his Word. To seek out

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<sup>41</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:321.

<sup>42</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:321.

<sup>43</sup> Gilpin, *Satan’s Temptations*, 166. We see very similar logic employed by David Powlison, in his interaction with missionary endeavors when Western believers come back from the mission field, believing that animistic responses to an animistic culture (i.e., ekballistic and exorcistic power encounters) are necessary in dealing with demons; very well is the work of the evil one in deceiving believers into perceiving a need beyond Christ’s prescribed means. See David Powlison, *Safe and Sound: Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2019), 68–69.

that which is additional to his all-sufficient Word is not the prerogative of his saints, and granting Satan such occasion to enact such deceptive signs requires God's people to remain steadfast to the explicitly revealed truth of God. And secondly, God sends upon the children of darkness "strong illusions" or otherwise translated, "strong delusions" that they should believe lies.<sup>44</sup> But in all of this, it cannot be lost sight of that these works and wonders are not only limited by demons' natural and creaturely limitations, but all is submitted to and superintended by God alone. Satan is not somehow on equal footing with God, able to battle Almighty at his level. Far from it. Satan and his horde are created beings, and even their most amazing works are only able to do and accomplish that which God permits "and no more!"<sup>45</sup>

### **Why Does Satan "Permit" Such Activity?**

While this may seem a strange question to pose, parallel to the one stated above regarding God, we must ask why Satan would permit such activity. Seeing as Satan and his followers grant occult practitioners great power and wonders, and in some cases great fame and/or riches, it is a wonder why an ancient spiritual being of such might would ingratiate himself, even seemingly subordinate himself, to man in this way.<sup>46</sup> Perkins's answer is twofold: it is because of Satan's hatred of God and his malice against men. For his hatred of God and his kingdom, our enemy will do all he is able to do to oppose God's gracious care of his creatures and will mock and mimic God by way of bringing insult to him and his ways.<sup>47</sup> For his hatred of mankind, Satan will employ

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<sup>44</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:322; and in reference to 2 Thess 2:10–11.

<sup>45</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:322–23.

<sup>46</sup> Gilpin asks much the same question in his *Satan's Temptations*. His answer is slightly more explicit than Perkins at this point, though he asks it in the form of a question, wondering provocatively the value of a single human soul if Satan would be willing, for a time, to serve the fancies of men. Richard Gilpin, *A Treatise of Satan's Temptations* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000), 902–5.

<sup>47</sup> Perkins cites the illustration of God employing Word and sacrament as his holy and lawful means. Satan, with his counterparts, employs certain words, outward signs, ceremonies, gestures, and other

any and all unlawful means to destroy the image of God in man and mar God's grace and mercy in humanity's life.<sup>48</sup>

### **Kinds of Evil Signs**

Perkins next explores the various activities the devil deceitfully engages in, covering divination, prognostication, dreams, necromancy, the use of familiar spirits, possession, enchantments, and delusions.

#### *Divination*

This Puritan divine defines "divination" as the activity where men are able to understand past, present, or future events by the assistance of the devil.<sup>49</sup> The question of how the devil tells of things, past, present, or future, takes us back to the preceding section on false signs and wonders. Satan "masquerades himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor 4:11) and falsely imitates divine revelations and predictions, all in an effort to make himself great in the opinions of men and to obfuscate the glory of the only God, who alone can predict the future.<sup>50</sup> This is why Deuteronomy 18, in the contest of abominable practices such as divination and fortunetelling, speaks to the prophet who makes predictions which are not true and do not come to pass, that such a one speaks presumptuously, his prophecies need not be feared, and the false prophet must die.<sup>51</sup> Such

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confirmations of his covenant with his instruments as a way of satanically mocking the truth of God. Perkins, *Works*, 9:325–26.

<sup>48</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:328. This notion will come into play significantly when we consider application to the field of biblical counseling in the final chapter. For this is one of the chief purposes of the evil one so far as a situational awareness of his schemes: the destruction of the image of God in man. As we consider fiery darts of self-harm or suicide, as it relates to Eph 5:29, "no one ever hated his own body" or other efforts to see persons destroyed.

<sup>49</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:329.

<sup>50</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:329.

<sup>51</sup> This is speaking to a judicial context of the theocratic church-state of Israel. The author is not arguing for a theonomic understanding and application of Old Testament case law.

falsehoods are not mere presumptuous statements, but the context of the passage bears out the satanic practices which are under the ban—practices which are conducted by the occultic works of the devil.<sup>52</sup> But since Satan is merely a creature, and unable to genuinely predict the future, how is it that he engages in such fantastical works? Perkins gives us several means.

First, the Scriptures themselves contain many prophecies of things to come.

Perkins provocatively states,

Now the devil, being acquainted with the history of the Bible, and having attained unto a greater light of knowledge in the prophecies contained therein than any man has, by stealing divinations out of them he is able to tell of many strange things that may in time fall out in the world, and answerably may show them ere they come to pass.<sup>53</sup>

He provides the historic example of Alexander the Great coming to know of his defeat of Darius, king of Persia, through the means of occult divination and prophecy. Connecting this back to Daniel 8 and 11, not to mention implications from chapter 2, by these genuinely divine prophecies, Satan was able to ascertain the intended meaning regarding Alexander.

The second reason Perkins gives is that the devil is far more skilled than any philosopher or scientist in the observational arts.<sup>54</sup> For scientists are able to observe the weather or the heavens, the movements of planets, stars, and the like, and are able to draw logical conclusions about that which will come to pass, based solely upon the

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<sup>52</sup> “When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God, for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do this” (Deut 18:9–14).

<sup>53</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:329.

<sup>54</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:330.

natural laws of things, and the likely outcomes of such events. By this Satan, a far more able observer, for he is an ancient being who has become much more preceptive to the natural order of things than mere man ever could, is able to give the appearance of prophecy.<sup>55</sup>

The third reason Perkins supplies is that there are many demons present throughout the world.<sup>56</sup> How many are a “third of the stars of heaven” who chose to fall with Satan?<sup>57</sup> Though a direct knowledge of the number cannot possibly be known, if the analogy of “stars” is remotely comparable in quantity, one third of such a numerous amount is an incredibly vast amount! From the exceedingly great multitude of fallen angels, Perkins argues that they are present across the globe in most places, observing “all assemblies and meetings” and are well aware of the happenings of all rulers, princes, and peoples.<sup>58</sup> These observances, then being reported among Satan’s messengers and servants, gives the appearance of “remote viewing” or at least of great knowledge of things to come.

Fourthly, Satan puts into men’s minds wicked thoughts and purposes, and having enticed and incited people to engage in certain actions, by his own design and intention, he then can reveal ahead of time that such action will take place. This gives the

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<sup>55</sup> Even Jesus himself points to observations of the weather and the logical “predictions” we are able to make from natural observation when he speaks of the clouds rising and rain coming in Luke 12:54–55.

<sup>56</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:330.

<sup>57</sup> As Rev 12:4 clearly indicates. There the dragon sweeps a third of the stars of heaven with him, as they are all flung to the earth, is most likely a reference to the original fall of the devil and his angels. The immediate narrative then goes on to explain the historical battle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Many commentators have recognized this, but Frederick Leahy will suffice for the present: Frederick S. Leahy, *Satan Cast Out: A Study in Biblical Demonology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975), 143–44; and Leahy, *Victory of the Lamb: Christ’s Triumph over Sin, Death and Satan* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2001).

<sup>58</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:330.

appearance of foreknowledge, but it is yet another one of the devil’s ploys and tricks.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, Perkins speaks of the clear revelation from God’s Word, that at times, the Lord uses Satan as his means to execute his judgment upon man.<sup>60</sup> If God intends to bring to pass his eternal will, and do so by the means of evil spirits, as was clearly the case in 1 Kings 22:21–23 when God permitted a lying spirit (a demon) by deceptive means to mislead Ahab, unto his death, we clearly see the devilish horde having advanced warning of what was to come to pass, for the Lord had made it known. Additionally, in 1 Samuel 28:19, God had determined to allow the judgment of Saul and his household the next day in battle at the hand and design of the evil one. If the enemy thus knows the future, for God told it to him, then he is free to feign as though he himself produced the accurate prophecy, as was the case with the Witch of Endor and her prophecy through the means of divination and calling up an unclean spirit.<sup>61</sup>

In all of this, we see that Satan does not have the ability to genuinely foretell the future, but through deceptive means gives such a distinct impression to easily deceived, “weak minded men,” as Perkins was wont to call them.<sup>62</sup> Divination being the first of the false and deceptive signs, we come to understand it as nothing but a lie—a ruse to give the appearance of power and prophecy, when no such ability exists.

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<sup>59</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:331.

<sup>60</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:331.

<sup>61</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:331–32. More will be explained later in the exegetical treatment of this chapter on why the Witch of Endor most certainly did not call up the literal Samuel, but instead, prophesied of Saul’s death through demonic means.

<sup>62</sup> Divination by the means of entrails is memorably mentioned in Ezek 21:21 as Nebuchadnezzar seeks which way to go when going to war against the Jews and the Ammonites, and additionally by the flight of birds in Deut 18:10–11, as it is sometimes rendered: “let none be found among you that is a marker of the flying of fowls” (1599 Geneva Bible); but it is more commonly translated “diviner of divinations” or “one who practices divination.”

### *Prognostication*

The next category could possibly be considered a subset of divination above, but for the present purposes, we will address it as its own heading. This is separate from divination as defined above, for divination included telling of events past, present, or future. Prognostications are telling of what is to come, but by the means of the stars or written predictions, such as horoscopes. First, regarding the stars, or that of astrology, Perkins demonstrates how God in his Word lumps astrologers, soothsayers, diviners, and magicians all together as one group of condemned superstitious practitioners of the dark arts.<sup>63</sup> This is important, for one cannot suggest that consulting a horoscope, for instance, is a mere trifle and an occasional fancy, not to be alarmed by. Perkins on the other hand, suggests it is a great evil, severely forbidden for it is consulting with devils. He provides five very thorough reasons for why these acts must be done in league with Satan and no other.<sup>64</sup> The five are as follows: (1) God alone knows the future of men's days, the outcome of events, the time of one's death, and many other such things that astrology seeks to prove. Since they are done by unlawful and unprescribed means, not instructed in God's Word, and in fact forbidden in that Word, they must be achieved by satanical and wicked means.<sup>65</sup> (2) They are the inventions of men's minds and not immutable observations of the heavens, or at "best" they are given by Satan supplying his own knowledge through the stars of things which are to come to pass. To this he asks the

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<sup>63</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:335. He cites Isa 47:13–14, Deut 18:10–11, Dan 2:2, and the fact that the same judicial punishment falls to each.

<sup>64</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:336–42.

<sup>65</sup> While implicit compared to Perkins's later explicit argumentation on the "regulative principle" of methodology, Perkins is arguing that since this reaching into the spiritual realms is not according to the prescribed means of God, therefore it must be according to that of devils. This is similar to how Paul argues in 1 Cor 10, regarding "eating at the tables of demons." Either we engage the spiritual realms by the ordinary means of grace, or we consult with demons—for when we reach into the spiritual realms, there are beings reaching back. Further, Perkins employs the same reason when distinguishing between the casting of lots—lawful, gambling, or divining—and of the latter he says "cannot be done without confederacy with Satan, either explicit or implicit." Perkins, *Works*, 9:347.

question “how is it possible that upon false grounds should proceed true predictions?” (3) Since the person consulting prognostications must couple his consultation with the belief that these things will come to pass, it demonstrates this is no science at all and a religious (i.e., idolatrous/demonic) practice. (4) The stars are created heavenly bodies which “work in the qualities” of heat, light, cold, moisture, and dryness, not that of telling the future and things to come. Thus God has endowed these created heavenly lights with natural causes and benefits, and to extract from them something that God has not intended is to consult the help of devils, and not the Lord of his creation. (5) These prognostications call for the observation of days, lucky and unlucky. That people are supposed to govern their lives by certain superstitious considerations and warnings. To this Perkins says that it can be confidently observed that they are used to lure people into greater league with the devil and away from the truth.

When arguing with “the country man” in his *Resolution to the Country Man on Yearly Prognostications*,<sup>66</sup> his basic argument is that such consultation with obviously unlawful practices, though seemingly innocuous and perhaps even apparently helpful, is strictly forbidden. The country man’s assertion in favor of astrology is that it is a legitimate science, a discipline, and art. The basic tenor of this buyer of yearly prognostications is that they are innocuous and require great study and skill to provide such predictions about the future. Perkins rejects it as unbiblical through the following rationale.

First, they bring the reader to an immoderate care about the future. Christ has promised “our daily bread” and tells the believer not to “worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will care for itself, the day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34). Second, they produce a neglect of God’s providence, both good and challenging providences alike,

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<sup>66</sup> The full title is *A Resolution to the Country Man, Proving it Utterly Unlawful to Buy or Use Our Yearly Prognostications*. See Perkins, *Works*, 9:409–38.



and instead attribute all future activities to that of the stars or “luck.” This is a denial of God’s superintendence of life. Third, they are explicitly forbidden in Deuteronomy 18:9, which Perkins translates as “to make a child go through the fire, to use witchcraft, to regard the times (that of prognostication), to mark the flying of fowls, to be a sorcerer, to be a charmer, to counsel with spirits, to be a soothsayer, to ask counsels at the dead.” All these abominations are the consultations with evil spirits. Fourth, though the lights are said to “be signs” in the sky (Gen 1:14–15), God elsewhere says he “will destroy the signs of them which divine” (Isa 47:13–14), and is the reason Beale makes the argument that the heavenly bodies and the earth itself must be destroyed by fire in the end, because they are the source of false and demonic worship.<sup>67</sup> Fifth, there is no known cause behind the prognostications being able to predict the future. And finally, their tricks of deceit and untruths. There are elements of prognostications that do not come to pass, and thus they predict untruths. What is more, the way the predictions are worded are able to be interpreted different ways and with multiple plausible meanings. By such deceitful efforts, their lying and deceptive nature—that from the father of lies himself—are able to be seen. For these reasons, Perkins rightly grounds such predictive elements in that of the dark arts and the consultations with demons.

The present discussion may appear to be somewhat of an excursus or tangential to our present considerations. However, Perkins here is calling the believer to a quiet contentment to the “things revealed” and forbids and warns us away from the vain speculations of seeking to know “the secret things of God” (Deut 29:29). Coupling this concept of vain consultations and seeking to peer into that which is forbidden with Perkins’s treatment elsewhere of compacts between Satan and occultists, brings even further appreciation of the pertinence of the present discussion.

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<sup>67</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:414–15; G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 285.

Perkins speaks of open covenants,<sup>68</sup> and secret leagues between a person and the devil. In the case of such closed contracts with demons, Perkins mentions two. The first would be superstitious prayers which require, by their nature, the help of the devil if there is to be any “help” provided in the case of such superstitions. He speaks of these invocations not directed toward the One God, and in the form prescribed by that One God in his Word, as implicitly granting consent to devils. Such would be an implicit pact with Satan. The second he mentions would be the use of superstitious means that can have no effect in and of themselves to bring about the desired ends without the intervention and help of the devil. These would include things like charms, runes, or incantations directed to alleviate pain or sickness, for example.<sup>69</sup>

If the reader can see the connection between the concept of trifling with prognostications as inherently, though perhaps implicitly, demonic, along with the use of charms and superstitious incantations as the same, we can plainly conclude that such unlawful means may never be employed. This is clear in the case of horoscopes. This is true if we are dealing with occult evil and the consultations with devils in the case of palmistry. But in the case of Rieke healing,<sup>70</sup> for instance, by Perkins’s logic, we see it too would be eliciting the aid of devils in bringing about healing through means which cannot possibly result in healing in themselves. To supernaturally move energies through one’s body by the manipulation of life force to promote healthfulness, cannot be grounded in truth, observationally or revelationally. Thus, such superstitious means are

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<sup>68</sup> An open covenant with the devil would be where a practitioner expressly makes an oath to Satan in order to gain certain benefits in exchange for his or her eternal service.

<sup>69</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:327.

<sup>70</sup> Rieke healing or Rieke therapy is the art of moving one’s hands near the body of the ailing person, so as to channel healing “energy” into the person requiring healing. Medical studies have found it produces more benefit than placebo, due to its meditative effects. David E. McManus, “Reiki Is Better Than Placebo and Has Broad Potential as a Complementary Health Therapy,” *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 22, no. 4 (October 2017): 1051–57.

always prohibited and ought be avoided, for they are the implicit reliance upon the aid of the devil.

### *Dreams*

Perkins deals with this category under the heading of divination, once again, for he deals with false prophets who seek to tell of strange things or the future, by means of “dreaming dreams.”<sup>71</sup> He rightly nuances that there are false prophetic dreams condemned by the Old Testament in no uncertain terms, then there are divine dreams that are (or at least were) used lawfully in granting visions from God, and finally there are naturally occurring dreams.<sup>72</sup> Our present focus is not the exclusive notion of foretelling by means of dreams, but the way in which demons use diabolical dreams for their purposes. First, though, let us distinguish between divine and natural dreams, from that of the demonic in nature.

Divine dreams are those which God uses (or at least *used*)<sup>73</sup> to reveal his purposes. Intriguingly, the biblical examples Perkins cites of divine dreams, while many are immediately brought about by God, many others are instigated on behalf of God by elect angels (Matt 1:20; 2:13, 19).<sup>74</sup> While a bit of an aside, it is reasonable to assume, that if diabolical, demonically instigated dreams continue, for they are the activity of fallen angels, it stands to reason that divinely brought about dreams through the ministry of angelic messengers, may very well coordinately continue, even if one holds to

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<sup>71</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:342.

<sup>72</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:342–46.

<sup>73</sup> The past versus present tense continues to be a debated issue regarding divine dreams in Reformed circles. Those who are cessationists and classically interpret Heb 1:1–2 in cessationist terms will tend to understand dreams as visions from God have “ceased.” And yet, *Missions Frontiers* reported in 2001, that of Muslim converts to Christianity who self-report, 25 percent of them had a clear dream about Christ prior to ever knowing who Christ is. “Muslims Tell . . . ‘Why I Chose Jesus,’” *Mission Frontiers*, March 1, 2001, <https://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/muslims-tell...-why-i-chose-jesus>.

<sup>74</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:342.

cessationist commitments.

Natural dreams are those which we humans ordinarily experience, arising from our thoughts, affections, or even our physical constitution.<sup>75</sup> Most helpfully in his treatment here, he speaks of ways in which we contribute to the content of dreams through sinful occupations during the day. What one fills the mind and heart with, so far as sin and corruption are concerned, has a tendency to come out in one's dreams. This section of Perkins has obviously similar features to Richard Baxter's thoughts on sinful dreams.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, then, Perkins brings us to the focus of this section, and that of diabolical dreams, or dreams instigated by devils.<sup>77</sup> He begins by demonstrating that such a notion, that devils can put dreams into the minds of men, is a longstanding notion throughout all time and culture. Citing several "well known" examples,<sup>78</sup> he then proceeds to argue in the reverse from the way in which he did regarding angelically induced dreams. If elect angels are able to cause divine dreams to come into the minds of men, it stands to reason<sup>79</sup> that evil spirits are able to do likewise for malicious ends. While this is a bit of a syllogism, or a good and necessary consequence argument from Scripture, it is one that stands up to rigor. While Perkins may not appeal to a single proof

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<sup>75</sup> Perkins speaks of melancholy, sanguinity, sickness, and various physical states. And while his perspectives feel particular dated in certain regards ("choleric complexion" and "full of phlegm"), we all know of disquieted sleep from late-night eating or from filling our minds with certain entertainments near bedtime (cf. Perkins, *Works*, 9:343).

<sup>76</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:343; and Richard Baxter, "Directions against Sinful Dreams," in *Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: With Life of the Author, and a Critical Examination of His Writings* (London: Forgotten Books, 2016), 2:469–72.

<sup>77</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:343–46.

<sup>78</sup> "Well known" to Perkins and his contemporaries, but seemingly lost to time in our age.

<sup>79</sup> Perkins says to this, "No doubt the evil spirits may cause in men diabolical dreams."

text in the Bible where we are shown a devil causing a dream of believer or unbeliever,<sup>80</sup> what he does is point to the clear biblical references of angelically instigated dreams throughout Scripture. If demons are fallen angels, then it stands to reason they too can instigate the same effect. Coupling this notion with Ephesians 6:16 and the notion of fiery darts, or the insertion of demonically suggested thoughts into the minds of believer and unbeliever alike, then we have the biblical argument for demonically instigated dreams. Simply put, angels clearly instigate dreams in Scripture; demons are angels; therefore demons can instigate dreams.

Having established that these three types of dreams exist, he then seeks to provide means to discern the difference between the three. Admittedly, Perkins suggests such a task is incredibly challenging, because the devil is involved—and as one who masquerades as an angel of light, it makes the case increasingly hard. The methods he provides are as follows. First, divine dreams contain the most important matters in all the world, namely Christ and his kingdom. Natural dreams contain that of the ordinary matters of life. And diabolical dreams would not be of the weighty matters mentioned in divine dreams and can more easily be distinguished in content as a result.<sup>81</sup> Second, divine dreams always have an evident interpretation attached to them. He cites Scripture after Scripture passage to demonstrate this to be the case (e.g., Matt 1; Gen 41; Dan 2;

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<sup>80</sup> Eliphaz's dream in Job 4:12–21 is incontrovertibly a demonically instigated dream. It bears all of the hallmarks of what Perkins is suggesting in his criteria below which mark diabolical dreams. It opposes true religion, moves the affections away from the one true God, is ambiguous and lacks clarity, is disagreeable to God's revealed will (claiming God charges his angels with error and has no trust in his servants, as v. 18 records. Both falsehoods stand in contrast with other Scriptures which claim the exact opposite), and establishes false beliefs in the minds of Eliphaz and his hearers. This is another satanically instigated assault on Job, but this one is mediated through a dream and Eliphaz as the recipient of such deception. Lastly, the word for "whenever" in 1 Sam 16:23, speaking of Saul being tormented by the evil spirit, implies a lack of time-bound restriction on when the demon would afflict Saul—day or night. While it is no "proof text" for diabolical dreams, the notion that the spirit can afflict at any time and state of the person is an implicit evidence for the present theological consideration.

<sup>81</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:345.

and Dan 8). In contrast, diabolical dreams are ambiguous, uncertain, and convoluted.<sup>82</sup> This is because his work and kingdom are not one of knowledge, clarity, and truth. As such his dreams reflect his nature and the nature of his kingdom.

Third, dreams given by God are always agreeable to God's revealed will, in whole and in part, and are perfectly compatible with special revelation as inscripturated. Natural dreams are compatible with man's nature, being agreeable to his corruptions and natural thoughts—and as such, they are repugnant to God's will and purposes. Diabolical dreams are similar, in that they are aimed to go against the will of God, and lead man's thoughts and affections away from the revealed will of God.<sup>83</sup>

Fourth, the goal of divine dreams is to further the true religion, piety, and sound doctrine. Whereas, the goal of the devil is to subvert true religion, lead man away from the right worship of God, and establish false religion, superstition, or false beliefs in the minds of men.<sup>84</sup> Perkins makes the argument from Deuteronomy 13 that this is the very revealed end to the false prophet's dreams—to draw men to apostasy. "Let us go after other gods . . . and let us serve them" (Deut 13:2).<sup>85</sup>

Finally, if they are natural, they are to be regarded as natural, as dreams most commonly are. If they are demonic in nature,<sup>86</sup> they are not to be delved into, speculated

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<sup>82</sup> Consider once again Eliphaz's dream of Job 4. The ambiguity and uncertainty is apparent (cf. vv. 12, 16, and the vague "truths" suggested in vv. 17–21).

<sup>83</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:345. In connection to these notions, once again, compare Eliphaz's dream, which claims in vv. 17–18, "Can mortal man be in the right before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error." These are clear lies which contradict other didactic truth claims of the Scriptures (cf. Ps 24:2–3 for the first claim; Luke 12:42–44 for the claim about servants; and Ps 103:20; 1 Kgs 22:19; Heb 1:14 for the claim about charging his holy angels with error).

<sup>84</sup> Again, consider Eliphaz's dream, particularly Job 4:19–21, which seeks to establish false beliefs about God toward his children.

<sup>85</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:346.

<sup>86</sup> In, this, our final consideration of Eliphaz's dream, though Perkins does not draw out this unique element of diabolical dreams, it is consistent in feature with the kingdom of darkness (cf. 2 Tim 2:7, "spirit of fear" vs. Spirit of God), and it is that of fear and terror or dread. Eliphaz describes his encounter

about, and sought after. For if the one dreaming begins to give themselves to the interpretation of such dreams, or the further pursuit of such dreams, Perkins says, the individual may inadvertently begin to grow familiar with the devil, and soon seek out more of his ways.<sup>87</sup>

### *Necromancy*

While this heading may seem a bizarre addition to a demonology that practitioners of biblical counseling ought to know with regard to pastoral shepherding, it is yet an instructive one, in how Perkins views its application from the Scriptures and to life.<sup>88</sup> First, in expounding the clear biblical prohibition of such practice (Deut 18:11; Isa 8:19–20) a helpful contrast is established, especially in the latter referent. God through Isaiah states that men may not go “from the living to the dead, but to the law and to the testimony.” The larger contrast is even more instructive, for should people seek out mediums and necromancers who merely “chirp and mutter,” or should they inquire of their God, with the Hebrew parallelism being that of the “teaching and the testimony,” standing in contradistinction from those who have “no light in them” compared to those who speak according to the Word of God. In other words, the Scriptures clearly create the stark contrast of those who consult demons through forbidden means, with those who consult God through the ordinary and lawful means of the Word of God.<sup>89</sup> This will be a crucial distinction as we move along in the development of a responsive demonology,

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with the spirit as resulting in: “dread came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake. A spirit glided past my face; the hair of my flesh stood up” (Job 4:14–15).

<sup>87</sup> Anecdotally, this is a haunting thought. For I once counseled a distant family member who slowly grew familiar with the arts of darkness, not from dreams initially, but still in subtle and incremental comfort and increasing familiarity, until she became so engrossed with the occult that she marked herself with an occult tattoo in the secret name of her familiar spirit and has since given her life to the craft.

<sup>88</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:347–52.

<sup>89</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:347.

that the only lawful means of engaging with the spiritual realms are the ordinary means prescribed by the Lord.

Secondly, Perkins develops his theology of necromancy from the historical account of 1 Samuel 28, when Saul consults the medium of Endor. In that section of Scripture, we see the appearance of one who is understood to be Samuel and one who accurately prophesies of Saul and his sons' death. There are three possible interpretations of what is taking place there: (1) Samuel is truly called up from the dead; (2) it is entirely counterfeit what is taking place there as witchcraft and devilry are false; or, (3) it is a demonic apparition masquerading as the called-back Samuel. Perkins is of the latter persuasion, and convincingly argues for such a conclusion on the following basis.

First, God had withdrawn his Spirit from Saul by every means of lawful communication, that of prophets, lots, dreams, or divine oracle (cf. v. 6). To therefore think that God would grant the holy Samuel to return to Saul and prophesy rightly according to the Lord's purposes, but through such unlawful and forbidden means of necromancy, is unreasonable. Second, since the faithful who die, united to the Lord by faith, do rest in their graves and both their bodies and their souls remain united to Christ,<sup>90</sup> Satan would either have to be granted the power to call up deceased Samuel, or God would have to have been the one to do it, placing our reasoning back to the first rationale immediately preceding. Third, Saul falls down and worships this personage of Samuel, and the being receives such unlawful and blasphemous worship. Were this the literal holy prophet Samuel, he would most assuredly, and all the more in his then-glorified estate, proceed to rebuke Saul for his sacrilegious homage, as we see regularly with the apostles and holy angels alike (cf. Rev 22:9; Acts 10:26; 14:15). The fourth

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<sup>90</sup> Anachronistically, but informatively, Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 34, answers thus: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." Perkins simply confesses a pre-Westminsterian understanding of the same doctrine, Perkins, *Works*, 9:348.



reason is similar to the third, in that the true Samuel would have soundly corrected Saul for seeking unlawful means and the assistance of witches.<sup>91</sup>

The opposition to these points is that the Scriptures refer to the personage as “Samuel” (1 Sam 28:12, 15, 16, and 20), to which Perkins retorts that the Bible often refers to things as they seem to the reader, and not to what they are in themselves. His examples are the moon as a “lesser light” like the Sun and stars, or idols which are “nothing” (1 Cor 8:4), but are referred to by Scripture as “gods.” The second objection is that the being referred to as Samuel accurately prophesies. To this Perkins says it is no proof at all that this is the real Samuel, because the being tells no more or no less than the devil himself would be able to do, if the Lord purposed to bring Saul down to the grave the next day, and that by the immediate instrument of Satan himself. The final objection is that dead men often appear to the living after their death. While an odd objection, perhaps, to modern sensibilities, Perkins’s straightforward answer is that, theologically, either departed souls of the righteous go straight to heaven, or departed souls of the wicked go straight to hell and do not walk about the earth.<sup>92</sup>

As for the second main position held, that witchcraft and devilry do not exist, and therefore the entire spectacle must have been some elaborate ruse—Perkins dismisses such an assertion simply, by saying that true prophecy takes place from this “Samuel.” Thus, the only biblically conceivable conclusion to Perkins is that this apparition was “brought up” by the work of the devil and is not in fact the real Samuel. The main reasons for concluding such, is first, there is league with the medium and the devil. This, after all, was why Saul sought her out, for he could not gain knowledge of what was to come to pass by any other way. Second, the text indicates that she engaged in her craft by

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<sup>91</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:348–49.

<sup>92</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:350.

a familiar spirit (vv. 7, 8, 9, and 13), and that what she saw coming up from the pit was “*elohim*” (v. 13), or in other words, those angelic beings often referred to throughout Scripture as such.

The conclusions Perkins draws from these points are as follows. First, there is a genuine confederacy between Satan and his earthly servants, witches and wizards, that can accomplish actual “wonders.”<sup>93</sup> The text clearly presents that Saul would not have been able to ascertain this knowledge by any other means, and these forbidden means (i.e., witchcraft) produced a true result.

Second, the devil makes himself useful to the occultist for his wicked ends. This does not mean that Satan and his horde are sincerely bound to the whims of men, but he feigns response to their beck and call, that he might raise his unholy mischief against the kingdom of God and so that he might obtain a human soul. Here Perkins enters a powerful and provocative aside, when he says of Satan,

When he is commanded, he yields not upon constraint, but voluntarily, because he builds upon his own greater advantage the gaining of the soul of the witch. Where, by the way, let it be observed what a precious thing the soul of man is; the purchasing whereof can make the proud spirit of Satan so far to abase itself as to be at the command of a silly woman. Again, what an inveterate malice Satan bears to man, which for the gaining of a soul will do that which is so contrary to his nature. It may teach man what to esteem of his soul, and not to sell it for base a price.<sup>94</sup>

Third, Perkins concludes that genuine demonstrations of power are exhibited by Satan through occult practitioners, for here he presented a thoroughly convincing “counterfeit Samuel,” such that even Saul, a close companion of Samuel during his lifetime, could not tell the difference. From this Perkins cautions us in the present, if such deception and subterfuge is possible by the works of the devil, and so convincing the

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<sup>93</sup> Refer to previous discussion on the various wonders Satan is able to accomplish, and how he is able to accomplish them.

<sup>94</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:351.

ruse, that we should be incredibly cautious in giving any credit to any such apparitions.<sup>95</sup> Once again, the attentive reader will perceive that conclusions we draw from mere observation and evidence, regarding the dark spiritual realms, may not be accurate, for we are dealing with an inherently deceptive foe, one whose aim is to continue the observer in the lie and deception. Even the occult practitioner is deceived in what is actually taking place.<sup>96</sup> There will be some who, on the mission field, conclude that greater direct engagement is necessary, for they have observed the success of such exorcistic practices.<sup>97</sup> Or there will be those in pastoral ministry who conclude we must go beyond the direct instruction of Scripture in the case of demonic influence, again, because of observational “realities,”<sup>98</sup> but once we venture outside of *sola scriptura* and the sufficiency thereof, we are on uncertain ground, most especially in the case of the demonic, to be sure.

### *Familiar Spirits*

Next, the father of Puritanism covers diabolical signs accomplished by familiar spirits. We have just covered a section on necromancy that was accomplished by a familiar spirit, as it is Perkins’s understanding of the Hebrew description of the witch of Endor, that she is in league, not only with Satan in the ultimate sense, but has a specific familiar spirit of *Pytho* and hence rendered Pythoness, or perhaps in more common parlance, “a female soothsayer.”<sup>99</sup> Such practices, of course, are explicitly forbidden by

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<sup>95</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:351–52. It may be thought that Perkins is merely speaking of consulting mediums or other forbidden means, but he is speaking more generically. Such as the appearances of ghosts, ghouls, or devils, even that of “angels” for the devil masquerades as an angel of light, or in more modern conceptions, such appearances of aliens or other mythic creatures.

<sup>96</sup> See 1 Sam 28:12–13, and Perkins’s above comments as they relate to this event.

<sup>97</sup> See Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 71, as an example of such arguing from experience.

<sup>98</sup> Again, Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 63, serves as illustrative of what the present author is cautioning against from Perkins’s demonology.

<sup>99</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:351; cf. 9:347n8.

the Bible (cf. Lev 19:31; 20:6; Deut 18:11), but bare forbidding is not the point to be gleaned. The fact that the Scriptures speak to and against these satanical activities, demonstrates from an infallible source, that these practices are indeed actual practices by demonic spirits.<sup>100</sup> What is more, the Hebrew word *ob* (ֹבִיָּא) signifies a spirit or a devil (cf. Lev 20:27 and 1 Sam. 28:8), and the same word is used of the occult practitioner who divines by means of such an unclean spirit (cf. 1 Sam. 28:9, and one who “rules a spirit,” or conducts her craft “by a spirit” or “in a spirit” depending upon the rendering of *ba-ob* or בְֹּבִיָּא in vv. 7–8) whether outside of him by means of trances, or inside of him, by means of voluntary possession.

Perkins then ventures outside of the Scriptures for examples of occultists divining by means of familiar spirits. He cites the Sibyls of Greece, and the ten most renowned Sibyls. To this group of occultists at this particular time in ancient history, Perkins suggests that they divined things that came true and things that did not. By this they are known to be false prophetesses, and the accuracies were things stolen from the Bible that the devil and his minions might claim credit for.<sup>101</sup>

The value of this section, however, is Perkins’s delimitation between divine trances referenced in Scripture, and unlawful trances propagated by familiar spirits. First, he demonstrates that divine trances are when the Lord causes one of his children to be rapt in a heavenly trance, either in the body or out of the body, for the sake of promoting the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 12:2, “whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know,” and Acts 10:11). Diabolical trances on the other hand, do not further true religion or piety, but instead are of a polluted nature and are aimed at the hindrance of true religion and personal piety.<sup>102</sup> Further, he points out that such diabolical trances do not

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<sup>100</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:352.

<sup>101</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:353.

<sup>102</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:354.

permit the recipient to exercise all their faculties, and find their senses at least temporarily hindered or blemished.<sup>103</sup> Such satanically induced states cast the victim into frenzy, madness, darken their reason, obscure their understanding, weaken their memory, and “distemper their brain.” Such afflictions reveal that these are the workings of the “other” kingdom, and are not the operations of a good and gracious Sovereign.<sup>104</sup>

### *Possession*

In the previous section, it was noted that witches may divine by familiar spirits within or without. In the case of the young girl in Philippi who divined by the means of a familiar spirit, the holy Text tells us “Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And it came out that very hour” (Acts 16:18). The perception of Paul was accurately discerning that she was indwelled by an unclean spirit, hence his command of “come out,” and the divinely inspired interpretation of that event was in fact in agreement with the apostle’s understanding, for it states, “and it came out that very hour.”<sup>105</sup>

Perkins’s purpose at this juncture in his argument is not to delineate the Bible’s exhaustive understanding of demon possession, but to merely refer to the devil’s wonders of possession, and the willful desire of some occultists to divine by means of possession. In these cases, the practitioner is knowingly in league with Satan and is seeking his

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<sup>103</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:353. It is important to note that sleep paralysis of various descriptions have been reported throughout all times and cultures. That, in a state of near-wakefulness or near-sleepfulness, one finds themselves unable to move, with the experience of a bodily presence on or around the almost asleep individual. This phenomenon has been called “the night hag” or “old hag,” the incubus or succubus, or the more modern parlance of “sleep paralysis” or “night terror.” Such a trance-like state often includes an inability to use most or all of one’s faculties.

<sup>104</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:353. More will be said later regarding such diabolical purposes of Satan and how to discern his involvement on experienced activities. Much modern application could be drawn from such a discussion, however. Not only the sleep paralysis and night terror “trances” as in the preceding footnote, but application to ufology and abduction testimony, along with ghost encounters and other parapsychologies.

<sup>105</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:352.

immediate benefits by way of indwelling and ownership by a familiar spirit. This would be the opposite of exorcism, or in the case of conversion, regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and would be what is known as adorcism—the desire of “adding” or bringing a spirit to reside within the occultist.

Elsewhere, in his treatment of the *Cases of Conscience*, Perkins addresses demon possession directly.<sup>106</sup> This he defines as the devil being “evidently present” in the person,<sup>107</sup> and the body of the person, either in whole or in part, being under the sway of the devil. The whole of the person would clearly be that of “possession,” as the principle of indwelling and ownership is at play. In the case of “in part,” Perkins lists obvious biblical examples of the devil possessing the instrument of the voice or the tongue to make the person speak in a voice not his own, or a language not his own—even languages unknown to the person.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, he cites strange diseases and “distempers” which fall upon man which have no natural causes nor natural cures as also falling under “partial” possession of the devil.<sup>109</sup>

While more will be said of demon possession, its presence or lack thereof in the believer, and the extent of Satan’s power, perhaps the best way to draw this section to a close for our immediate purposes would be to leave us with Perkins’s own thoughts on the matter:

Though Satan is by nature strong, and his malice great, yet he can do nothing at all, nor execute his natural power, to the hurt and prejudice of any man, without the will

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<sup>106</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2020), 8:191–96. See *A Cases of Conscience Book 1*.

<sup>107</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:191.

<sup>108</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:192.

<sup>109</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:194. While the present author sees no inherent fault with such a notion, perhaps a more precise nuance would differentiate this latter experience of strange diseases as “demonization” or more exact still, “demon oppression” and the former of having one’s body or voice taken over by demons as more properly speaking: “demon possession.” This would arrive at a taxonomy of demonization as the broadest category, of which demon oppression and demon possession are separate subsets of the larger category.

and permission of God. Thus, the evil spirit could not go forth to deceive Ahab, until the Lord had said unto him, “Go and thou shalt prevail” (1 Kgs 22:22). Thus, the devil could not touch the body, children, goods, or friends of righteous Job, while he was fenced and fortified by the power and providence of God. But when the Lord, in regard of Job’s outward estate, had given leave, and said, “Lo all that he hath is in thine hand,” then did he exercise his power to the utmost, yet so far only as he was permitted, and no further (Job 1:12). The consideration of this first point, that Satan’s power is determined by God, will serve to stay the minds of those whose persons, houses, or friends are molested by him. For hereupon it follows that God, who has the devil bound up (as it were) in chains, will not suffer his power to be enlarged against His own children to “their destruction and confusion, but so far forth alone as shall be expedient for their good and salvation. Again, that God being their Father in Christ Jesus, they may in the time of such affliction have access unto Him, and call upon Him for the restraint of Satan’s power and malice, and consequently for the deliverance of them and theirs.”<sup>110</sup>

### *Enchantments or Charms*

When Perkins speaks of demonic “enchantments” he lists several; the causing of storms, killing of animals, curing or causing torments in people’s bodies, and the casting out of devils, among others. He then alleges that such practitioners of the dark arts engage in these enchantments by means of charms. To demonstrate this biblically, Ecclesiastes 10:11 is cited and exegeted to mean “if the enchanter is bitten before the serpent is charmed, then he is not benefited by his charm.”<sup>111</sup> He sees this as divine warrant that charms, by the work of the devil, can stay the poison of a serpent so as not to cause harm to the enchanter.

Balaam is referenced as a notorious witch of the Scriptures, and though he is referred to as a “prophet,” and therefore some allege that he is potentially a picture of redemption, cannot be further from the truth. For Balaam is clearly a practitioner of the dark arts, and attempts to curse Israel by means of enchantment. This is clearly captured in his words found in Numbers 23:23: “For there is no enchantment (i.e., sorcery) against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, ‘What has

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<sup>110</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:195.

<sup>111</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:355.

God wrought!” Perkins, of Balaam’s exclamation, extrapolates, “As if he should have said, ‘I know well that sorcery is powerful in many things and of force to bring much mischief upon men, yet it can take no place against the people of God because He has blessed them, and whom He blesses, them no man can hurt by cursing.’”<sup>112</sup> Perkins concludes, “Enchanters, therefore, may upon God’s permission work strange things.”<sup>113</sup>

He then goes on to list out the various means by which occultists engage in enchantments, such as incantations, diabolical prayers, power circles, voodoo dolls, and other such “watchwords.”<sup>114</sup> Now, from this discussion he draws the conclusion that each of these devices, in and of themselves, that is, in their natural abilities, have no means by which they could produce the strange effects intended. Therefore, any efficacy of these acts must be accomplished by the means of the devil. While he proves this at length, offering four immediate proofs and four additional rationales,<sup>115</sup> the takeaway for the present readership would merely be his connection to and reasoning regarding the Lord’s Supper in the immediate context. Perkins says that the Supper has efficacy beyond the creational benefit of bread to nourish the body, and nourishes the soul, because of the special appointment of God.<sup>116</sup> It is supernatural and extraordinary because of divine ordination. This is also why we have the right to engage in such “laying hold” of the spiritual realms through the Supper and not through other means, because we have been given divine command, ordinance, and example to use it. It is not so with any of the

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<sup>112</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:356.

<sup>113</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:356.

<sup>114</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:356–57.

<sup>115</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:357–62. The reasons are (1) they are mere words and words are but breath from the lungs; (2) anything that causes harm to another must come into contact with it, and spells are often cast far from the object of cursing; (3) if men’s words have such power in the case of spells, it would reason that all words have the same efficacy and power; and, (4) words are but significations of what the speaker intends.

<sup>116</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:357.



unlawful means of reaching into the spiritual realms, such as enchantments and charms.<sup>117</sup> This rationale will be of import when we come to the ordinary means of grace (particularly the Lord's Supper) and a situational demonology in the chapter which follows.

Perkins then goes on to describe these unlawful means, which clearly fall under biblical prohibition. It is significant that he lists the making of images to harm in effigy, drawing power circles, the use of amulets, remedies and preventative measures against enchantments,<sup>118</sup> the burning or use of herbs for sorceries, or the hanging of certain products around one's neck for the sake of warding or protecting, as well as that of exorcisms, or finally, the use of Jesus's name to ward off spirits, or the use of crosses or crossing oneself to drive away or cast out devils. To all these practices and devices, Perkins ascribes them to the category of *enchantments* and therefore are all condemned by God.<sup>119</sup> While we will return at length below to the prohibited means, including exorcisms and the invoking of Jesus name as a functional warding amulet, it is worth understanding why, at present, Perkins includes these practices in the category of enchantments themselves.

Regarding exorcisms, he cites their regular use in the Roman Catholic Church,<sup>120</sup> where priests use salt, holy water, spit, oil, or other means to cast out devils.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:359.

<sup>118</sup> While Perkins does not delimit which "preservatives against enchantments," he has in mind at this immediate juncture, he goes on to mention "remedies . . . made of herbs or some such things . . . for that end." Perkins, *Works*, 9:363.

<sup>119</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:363–64.

<sup>120</sup> It is worth remembering that the Roman Church employs regional exorcists and trains particular priests in the art of exorcism. Perkins rightly understands this is a paganistic response to paganism, or an animistic response to animism (as Powlison instead would put it, see *Safe and Sound*, 68–69). It is the kingdom of darkness divided against itself. Or as Jesus provocatively asks in Matt 12:26–27, "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?"

At this point in his argument, he merely states that though they may be attested to in the Roman Church, they have no attestation in the Word of God, nor by their nature to accomplish such intentions. Regarding the use of Jesus's name to drive away the devil, Perkins states that it is a "common practice among the ignorant."<sup>122</sup> Of such "ignorant," he suggests that Satan is deceiving them into believing that Christ himself is a "conjurer," and by thus invoking his name, we are adjuring Christ to act in a certain way. Instead of seeing efficacy in the bare name of Christ, Perkins instead points to the reality that Satan loves to see Christ's name so abused and degraded as to be invoked in such frivolous and trivial ways.<sup>123</sup> Like Gilpin referenced along these same lines in the literature review, Perkins suggests that Satan feigns departure to the holy name of Christ, to all the more deeply seduce and deceive into believing there is force in using a name in such a way. When in fact, there is no such power granted by the Word of God. Even the apostles who were given the apostolic sign gifts of exorcisms, were not said to cast out devils "by the name of Jesus," but as Acts 3:6, 16 states, "through faith in his name," with "faith" being the operative element, and not a mere name like an amulet (cf. Acts 19:13–15, where the demons strikingly do not yield to the mere name of Christ).<sup>124</sup>

Finally, regarding crosses or crossing oneself, such accoutrements or actions clearly situate themselves as that of charms. For there is no warrant from the Word or from nature that crosses are to be used in such a manner, nor has God given them any virtue by "creation, special privilege, or appointment."<sup>125</sup> Let us enshrine in our thinking

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<sup>121</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:363. We must not forget that in the regular administration of baptism to infants, Rome engages in an exorcistic rite prior to applying the waters of baptism. The notion is that any evil spirits must be cast out by means of salt, spit (historically), or oil applied to the baby, before the Spirit of God (allegedly) takes up residence in the child.

<sup>122</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:363.

<sup>123</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:363.

<sup>124</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:364.

<sup>125</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:364.

the logic that Perkins continues to employ as he reasons from Scripture regarding these various means. Either something has inherent benefit in itself by way of creation/nature (e.g., medicines, sleep, etc.) or by divine command and warrant (e.g., the Lord's Supper, prayer, etc.), and if they have not either of these, and we expect them to have supernatural or preternatural efficacy, they are not the work of Christ, but the work of the devil. And in employing unprescribed means when engaging the spiritual realms, there is at least an implicit confederacy with the devil in doing so. This logic will strenuously undergird later argumentation about employing only lawful means commanded by the Word of God, and nothing more.

#### *Delusions or "Sleight of Hand"*

Much was already covered above regarding Satan's deceptive signs and wonders, but in this portion of his demonology, Perkins distinguishes between magic and magick,<sup>126</sup> as it has sometimes been coined. Here he speaks of the differences between stagecraft and the performance of sleight of hand, all done within the natural abilities and talents of men, as contrasted with deceptions performed by occult practices. The latter, Perkins suggests, is a result of devils corrupting the ability of the eye to perceive what is taking place, by altering the view of the object, or by altering the appearance of the object itself. The scriptural example he cites is that of Jannes and Jambres working wonders before Moses and Aaron (Exod 7–9). Here we have Moses and Aaron working true miracles and sincere wonders, by the finger of God,<sup>127</sup> and in contradistinction, the magicians of Egypt engage in magical illusions wrought by sleight of hand and the

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<sup>126</sup> Though he does not employ the more modern parlance of "magick," coined long after Perkins's death in the twentieth century by none other than famed occultist Aleister Crowley, to distinguish occult practices from stage magic.

<sup>127</sup> That is, the Holy Spirit.

delusions of the devil.<sup>128</sup>

Perkins proves at length that Jannes and Jambres could not have engaged in true signs and wonders, and that they merely were able to create the appearance and imitation of the real thing achieved by Moses through the miraculous power of God.<sup>129</sup> First, the devil, being a mere creature, cannot make a true serpent or true frog, for then he would be capable of the power of God: exercising creation. Second, if they could genuinely change water to blood, they would be equal in power to the Son of God who changed water to wine demonstrating he is no mere creature, but showing forth his divinity in his first miracle. Third, the text explicitly tells us that they did these works by sorcery and enchantment (Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7). Fourth, God could exercise such miracles, but he would not work through the likes of these occultists to oppose himself—for God cannot be divided, nor is his kingdom, but it is the kingdom of darkness which is divided against itself. Fifth, the text reveals that the magicians were not able to preserve themselves from the plagues, and this was an easier feat than creating a new creature from nothing or supernaturally altering the material of creation (water to blood). And lastly, if they were capable of creating creatures and altering the substance of creation, certainly they would be capable of removing the plagues Moses caused. But the text clearly demonstrates they were not capable of such and had to beseech Moses and Aaron to “pray” that they would be removed, revealing their ineptitude in such things and emasculated ability to accomplish the miraculous.<sup>130</sup> All of this established, however, this does not undermine the devil’s crafty ability to engage in preternaturally assisted delusions and sleight of hand.

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<sup>128</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:367.

<sup>129</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:367–69.

<sup>130</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:368–69.

## Demonization of the Believer

Having considered all the above abilities of the dark realms, we must ask the question, how much does this truly bear upon the believer?<sup>131</sup> After all, 1 John 5:18 grants such comfort that the evil one cannot even “touch” the believer: “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.” It may be one thing to consider the above activity of the devil and not have to worry about this ever being the concern of the church, but only those who are unconverted and apart from Christ. And does it not appear at first blush that this passage would give us such hope? What is more, it is often asserted in Christian circles that the one thing we know for certain is that a believer cannot be demon possessed.<sup>132</sup> Perkins’s understanding and articulation of demonization of the believer, or in his terminology, “bewitching” of a believer, is worth quoting at length and in full at present. Perkins commenting on Christ being transported by the devil from the wilderness of Judah to the pinnacle of the temple, says,

Hence we learn that by God’s permission, the devil may have power over the bodies of God’s own children which are true believers, to transport them from place to place; for dealing thus with the Head Christ Jesus, why may he not do so with any of His members? Besides, we find (that God permitting him he has done more than this to the saints of God; he may possess their bodies, as he did the woman of

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<sup>131</sup> We must remember that Satan’s time is short, and as a result he desires to produce as much affliction as possible. As Rev 12:12 indicates, when Satan was cast down to the earth, to afflict all the dwellers of the earth, a great “woe” is pronounced upon the earth. Perkins along these lines says, “Secondly, because these are the last times, and Satan sees that he has but a short time to continue, therefore he bestirs himself; his desire is to bring confusions and to make havoc of all. It is a death to him to see God’s kingdom to be advanced, the preaching of His word to have free passage, His name to be glorified in the congregation of His saints, the clouds of ignorance be dispelled, and men that have long sat in darkness and in the shadow of death now to walk in the true light and to warm themselves at the comfortable sunshine of His gospel. He does even as tenants do with their farms. When their leaves draw near an end, then they use to rack all things to the uttermost to make money of everything and to scrape to themselves by hook and by crook whatever they can, that afterward they may have wherewith to maintain themselves. Even so fares it with the devil. This is the last hour. Therefore, now he will play reaks everywhere; he ruffles it apace, as though he were wood. He stirs seditions, conspiracies, tumults, wars; and by all means with violence he labors to overlarge his own kingdom.” Perkins, *Works*, 6:470.

<sup>132</sup> Incidentally, I first told an academic colleague in a Reformed institution my dissertation topic, the colleague’s first sentence in response was, “The immediate starting point is that a believer cannot be demon possessed.” It was a very peculiar assertion at such a juncture in the conversation.

Canaan's daughter (Matt. 15:22). He may torment them long, as he did exceeding grievously bow the body of a daughter of Abraham eighteen years (Luke 13:16). Yea he may kill the body, as he did to Job's children, who no doubt were holy persons (Job 1:19). And therefore much more may he transport them from place to place.

Here this question may fitly be answered: whether a true believer may be bewitched. Answer. He may: there is none upon earth so faithful and holy, but if God permits, Satan can afflict their bodies grievously, and therefore also they may be bewitched. It is but the fancy of presumptuous persons, when they say, their faith is so strong, that all the witches in the world cannot hurt them: for if God permits, Satan can grievously afflict man's body, as he did the body of Job; yea he can kill the body, as has been shown. "Solomon speaking of outward things says truly, "All things come alike to all, and the same condition is to the just and to the wicked" [Eccl. 9:2]. Now the wicked man may be bewitched, as all will grant; why then may not the godly also, seeing it is but an outward evil? This therefore must abate their pride that stand so much on their strong faith; behold this act of Satan to the holy body of Christ, and hereby learn for your humiliation, that if God permits, Satan is able to bring upon your body great affliction.<sup>133</sup>

Perkins appropriately draws upon passages where believers are "bewitched," or in our common parlance, demonized. The passage from 1 John 5:18 that brings much comfort to beleaguered believers, that the evil one "cannot even touch" a believer, is seemingly ominously lessened by the fact that God permits his children be "touched" by the evil one, as was the case of Job, the sifting of the disciples, and the demonized children mentioned in Perkins's quotation above, and even Christ himself. Although, it must not be forgotten that in all this, even the bare permission of Satan to "touch" one of God's people, is still under the sovereign hand of our heavenly Father. If a sparrow does not fall without his granting it, how much more valuable are his beloved sons and daughters.

To scripturally prove that such is the case, Perkins elsewhere cites Christ being transported by Satan (Matt 4), righteous Job afflicted in his body by Satan, and his righteous children slain by the same power, Christ's testimony that a "daughter of Abraham had been troubled 18 years with a spirit of infirmity" (Luke 13:16); Ecclesiastes 9:2 says, "It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the

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<sup>133</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 1:122–23.

wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.” While many of these proofs are identical to the arguments above, of this final proof, Perkins reasons,

Some men are of [the] mind that their faith is so strong that all the witches in the world, and all the devils in hell, cannot hurt them, they are much deceived. Their faith is but a fond presumption and no true faith. For no man in the earth can absolutely assure himself of safety and protection from the devil. And if any could, it would be the child of God. But Solomon says that “all outward things may come alike both to the good and to the bad” (Ecc 9:2).<sup>134</sup>

Thus, in Perkins’s mind, for Solomon to be speaking the absolute truth here, outward afflictions of the devil must be equally permissible to the believer and unbeliever alike. For this passage to be true, demonization is not exclusively restricted to the pagan, but in particular cases is permitted to the believer also—as the examples from Scripture above clearly demonstrate.

John Calvin is worth highlighting at this point. Though not a Puritan divine, he remains one of the greatest fathers to Reformed theology as we have come to receive today. And to demonstrate that the Reformers had a much different conceptualization of demonization than Reformed theology does in present-day America, we consider Calvin’s practice of the Lord’s Supper in Geneva. To this point of sovereignly permitted demonization, even “possession” should the word be allowed, Calvin granted demonized and professing saints to participate in the Lord’s Supper, even while they were actively “demon possessed.” One biographer notes,

Over the years, Geneva’s ministers established an informal protocol to regulate some of the special circumstances and difficulties surrounding Geneva’s quarterly celebration of the Supper. Ministers were instructed to deny the sacrament to men and women who wore ostentatious or provocative clothing. Likewise, people who were insane or seriously mentally impaired were not allowed to take the sacred elements. On the other hand, deaf and mute congregants who displayed a Christian lifestyle were welcome at the Table. So too, *people believed to be demon-possessed*

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<sup>134</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:391.

were permitted to commune as long as they were “peaceable” and “in their right mind.”<sup>135</sup>

To return to Perkins, however, in his *Cases of Conscience*, when instructing on satanically molested persons, Perkins explicitly allows for the potential of believers to be not only demonized, bewitched, or demon afflicted, but all the way up to and including demon possession. After delineating the promises of God to the believer that “no evil shall befall them,” “neither any plague shall come near them,” “he will give his angels charge over them” (Ps 91), “he will be a wall of fire round about his people” (Zech 2:5), “he will extend peace over his church like a flood” (Isa 66:12), and “there shall be no sorcery against Jacob” (Num 23:23), he yet concedes, “If God sees it to be good for His children to be tried by possessions . . . in this case the promise frees them not. Fall all temporal blessings are promised conditionally, so far forth as they may stand with God’s good will and pleasure, and withal may make for the good of his children.”<sup>136</sup>

Despite such troubling thoughts, Perkins provides ultimate comfort, that Satan cannot cause complete and total harm to a believer. Commenting on the sin which is unto death (1 John 5:21), and whether Satan can draw the child of God away from devotion to the Lord, such that he commits the unpardonable sin, “He which is born of God so preserves himself by grace that he cannot be drawn by Satan to commit the sin that is to

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<sup>135</sup> Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609*, 2nd ed., Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 279. Emphasis added. An example of artificially concluding from special revelation that the believer could not be demonized, but later revising his normative understanding based upon experiential theology, Merle Unger serves as a cautionary tale for us at this juncture. In his first edition of his foundational work, *Biblical Demonology*, Unger asserted that believers could not be demonized or demon possessed. But upon subsequent revisions of his book and when he wrote his later piece *What Demons Can Do To Saints*, his theological commitments had changed due to his experience in the world. See Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology: A Study of the Spiritual Forces behind the Present World Unrest* (Wheaton, IL, Van Kampen, 1952), 77–106. In his revisions and subsequent *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, he modified his previous understanding and acknowledged the demonization of believers. See Merrill F. Unger and Mark Bubeck, *What Demons Can Do to Saints* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 141–68.

<sup>136</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:195.



death.”<sup>137</sup> Then from such gospel hope and encouragement, still calls the believer to preserve ourselves by keeping oneself from idols, as John goes on to appeal to. Regardless of the call to vigilance, the ultimate reassurance should be a fitting one in this context.

### **Fiery Darts**

While we are considering the notion of what can demons do to believers, we should take up the topic of fiery darts. In our literature review, we may have covered the notion, but Perkins offers his own insights, and that prior to all the authors considered previously. Perkins deals with them as a category of temptation in his *A Case of Conscience*.<sup>138</sup> These darts are sudden suggestions to the minds of men, and often involve not merely temptation, but temptation to blasphemy, vileness, ugliness, or ghastliness.<sup>139</sup> While he leaves room for indirect fiery darts, or mediated demonic inducement to such vile considerations, such as listening to a discourse, the speeches of others, or some form of entertainments where we do not immediately flee in our minds from the reprehensible hearing,<sup>140</sup> he particularly has in mind those direct impressions Satan puts upon our minds, where he “troubles our fantasy” or casts into our minds impure thoughts.<sup>141</sup> He

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<sup>137</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 7:419. Anecdotally, I have heard of numerous accounts and testimonies of occultists, drug addicts, and others who were deep into darkness, share of sudden thoughts of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, in a last-ditch effort of devils to derail the very near conversion from darkness to light. In one such testimony, a Reformed pastor shares of almost not proceeding with his baptism after such thoughts raced through his mind. He has since come to appreciate that this too was a fiery dart and an effort of demons whom he once willfully sought out to indwell him when immersed in the occult.

<sup>138</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:198–203.

<sup>139</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:198.

<sup>140</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:198. An example he gives is hearing dishonorable speech from another and giving implicit approbation of the blasphemous words. A more modern illustration would be the laughter or enjoyment we engage in while taking in various forms of entertainment which are full of all kinds of wickedness. This would be a “mediated” dart of the devil against the believer’s mind.

<sup>141</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:198–99.

indicates we may distinguish these from our own suggestions, imaginations, and thoughts, because of their suddenness, that they are contrary to the light of nature, by their frightful content, and their incongruity with our innate desires.<sup>142</sup>

Regarding their suddenness, they are described as “darts” in the Scriptures, and do come like lightning into someone’s mind. He cites finding oneself in an innocent estate, not setting one’s mind on anything vile, and immediately having one’s heart filled with impure and ungodly thoughts.<sup>143</sup> If they were of one’s own desires and affections, they would arise more leisurely and grow in accord with one’s desires and would do so without so great of vehemence or regularity so as to wear one down.<sup>144</sup>

As for their being contrary to the very light of nature, we have thoughts which are in accord with God’s natural ordering of things. Fiery darts are most wicked, devilish, vile, monstrous, and alien, that they are able to be discerned as the suggestions of Satan.<sup>145</sup> The apostle Paul seems to speak of a similar notion in Ephesians 5:29: “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it.” And while he is making an argument about Christ, the church, and the relation to the household, he is appealing to the light of nature which we all know by common reality. No one naturally desires to take his own life or engage in self-harm. Such sudden suggestions to plunge a knife into one’s

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<sup>142</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:199–200. It must be seen how these four means of discernment directly line up with Thomas Watson’s three-fold means of discerning fiery darts, as recounted in the previous chapter in the literature review, or as found in his work on the Lord’s Prayer: Thomas Watson, *Lord’s Prayer*, rev. ed. (1692; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960), 263–64. Considering Watson was writing a generation after Perkins, it is not hard to speculate where Watson obtained his list.

<sup>143</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:198. All one would have to do is to confirm with a pastor if he has ever had such experiences of violence or a ghastly sexual thought moments before he enters into the pulpit. I have not yet found a minister of the gospel who has not experienced such horrendous temptations and at such a moment of not only innocence, but such a crucial juncture for the advance of the Kingdom of Christ. Another illustration which afflicts even quiet mothers of small children is that of driving one’s minivan across a bridge, and suddenly being struck with the suggestion to plunge the car and family over the railing and embankment!

<sup>144</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:199.

<sup>145</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:200.

own flesh while washing dishes, would be a surefire indication these suggestions are arising from the evil one.

Third, these fiery darts cause frightfulness in the one receiving them. Perkins says that the party smitten is often overcome by extraordinary fear. He then contrasts this with our own thoughts and suggestions which do not cause us such alarm, for they arise within us, are part of our own desires, and are in accord with our affections.<sup>146</sup> All have likely experienced such sudden suggestions that at the thought of them we recoil from them, hating even the suggestion of them. How these would arise naturally within our own desires, even our sinful flesh, is a question which betrays their satanical origin.

Finally, these darts are not naturally arising within the person but are indeed external, alien, and foreign to our own minds.<sup>147</sup> Especially those who are of Christ and not of a wicked mindedness, these suggestions are all the more obviously “from without” and are the work of devils casting them into one’s mind.<sup>148</sup> Metaphysically, how this takes place is certainly beyond the scope of the present study, even beyond the scope of man’s revealed or discoverable knowledge, but it is safe to say that it is not the result of the devil having full access to one’s thoughts and mind, for who can know the thoughts of man save the Spirit who is in man (1 Cor 2:11).<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:200.

<sup>147</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:201. Perkins uses the illustration of someone soliciting another to murder or to commit treason.

<sup>148</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:200.

<sup>149</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:194–95. Speaking of Satan, Perkins says, “The one is his own nature whereby he is a creature and, therefore, finite. Hence it is that he can neither know nor do anything that is beyond the reach or capacity of his nature, or above the power and skill of a creature. For example, he cannot directly and immediately know the deep things of God, unless they are revealed unto him, nor yet the secrets of men’s hearts. ‘None knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him: even so the things of God knoweth none, but the Spirit of God’ (1 Cor 2:11).”

## Mediated Demonic Activity

Lastly, I introduced the concept of *mediated* demonology in the literature review and opening chapter as a category to consider. We have seen direct demonic activity, and peripherally we have referenced indirect or mediated demonic activity. Perhaps the clearest example in the Scriptures is that of Peter tempting Christ not to go to the cross, and Christ saying directly to Peter, his friend and apostle, “Get behind me, Satan” (Matt 16:23). In the above presentation, we have seen how Satan will tempt through various means to get the children of God to disobey his lawful commands, and thereby incur the wrath of God, such as in the case of David numbering the troops (1 Chr 21:1) and Israel cavorting with the cult prostitutes of Baal of Peor (Num 25). Of such a category, we see Perkins speak in an applicational way regarding this doctrine of mediated satanical influence, in his work on *Combat Between Christ and the Devil*, speaking of the Roman Catholic Church as tempting in the same ways in which Satan himself seeks to entice Christ.<sup>150</sup> In *William Perkins: Architect of Puritanism*, Stephen Yuille draws out this connection with lucidity in his essay “The Wholesome Doctrine of Faith and Love”:

Perkins placed the Roman Church in the position of the devil himself. As the devil perverts the meaning of Scripture, so, too, does the Roman Church. As the devil tempts Christ to worship him by offering the kingdoms of this world, so, too, does the Roman Church tempt the people of God with offers of power, prestige, and preferment. In resisting the devil with God’s Word, Christ demonstrates how His people are to resist the Roman Church—“spiritual Babylon, the mother of abominations.”<sup>151</sup>

This category of mediated or indirect demonic activity must be seen as its own unique category of satanical inducement against believer and unbeliever alike. If we couple this

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<sup>150</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 1:142–43. In making this comparison between the temptation of Christ by an unmediated or direct temptation of Satan, and then putting the Roman Church in the place of Satan, by implication, Perkins sees Satan’s mediated use of *the beast of the land* or *the false prophet* as mediated or indirect satanic interaction.

<sup>151</sup> J. Stephen Yuille, “The Wholesome Doctrine of Faith and Love,” in Beeke and Salazar, *William Perkins*, 123.

notion with Perkins's understanding that Satan has two great helpers, the world and the flesh,<sup>152</sup> then it only makes sense that Perkins would see Satan using the various means of "the world" to tempt the flesh of the believer (and unbeliever alike) into disobeying God, in the same way in which Satan sought to lure away Christ with directed assaults.

While the present discussion is an alarming one, such a situational awareness, if the reality of the Scriptures, the historic understanding of Reformed theology, and one which comports with reality itself, then better the believer be aware than functionally agnostic.<sup>153</sup> But this question of demonization of the believer immediately leads us to the

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<sup>152</sup> William Perkins, *Satans Sophistrie Ansuered by Our Saviour Christ and in Divers Sermons Further; to Which Is Added, a Comfort for the Feeble Minded, Wherein Is Set Downe the Temptations of a Christian* (London: Richard Fields, 1604), 149, ProQuest. This work was originally from an unpublished portion of the *Combat between Christ and the Devil*.

<sup>153</sup> Summarizing what demons are capable of, Perkins states in his commentary on the book of Jude:

The devil's endeavor is utterly to overthrow all families, of Christian men especially. He robbed Job of all his substance, slew his servants and children. But the good angels guard and defend them. Jacob had the angels of God defending him and his family from the fury of Esau (Gen 32:1). When the plague and pestilence prevails against the ungodly, the good angels keep it off from coming near the tabernacles of the righteous (Ps 91:10). Secondly, in churches and congregations, the wicked angels strive to corrupt the word, sacraments, and all the ministry, or to make it fruitless, every way to their power hindering the good success thereof. The devil offers himself to be a lying spirit in the mouth of all Ahab's prophets [1 Kgs 22:21]. He stands at Joshua's right hand to withstand him in his office (Zech. 3:1). He sows tares in the field where the good seed of the word is sown (Matt 13:24–25). Hence are those false doctrines of forbidding meats and marriages called the "doctrine of devils" (1 Tim 4:3). He hindered Paul once or twice from his journey to the Thessalonians to confirm them (1 Thess. 2:18). He raises persecution against the church, for he is said to cast some of the church at Smyrna into prison (Rev 2:10). The good angels on the contrary fight against them for the good of the church, the furtherance of the gospel, and preservation of the true worship of God. The law was given by their ministry (Gal 3:19). The tidings of salvation and the doctrine of the gospel were first preached by angels (Luke 2:10). The angel brought Philip to instruct the eunuch, as also to baptize him (Acts 8:26–38). [He] delivered Peter out of prison (12:11). Thirdly, the wicked angels seek to supplant commonwealths and kingdoms. Satan moved David to number the people, by which sin he wasted seventy thousand of his people. The good angels fight in their defense. The angel told Daniel that he fought against the prince of the kingdom of Persia for the Jews (Dan 10:13). The angel smote of Sennacherib's army in one night a hundred fourscore and five thousand, who were enemies to the church (2 Kgs 19:35). Objection. How can the devil thus furiously fight against persons and societies, seeing he was never seen, neither can this fight be perceived of us? Answer. As he is a spirit, so his fight is spiritual, not easily discerned by the eye of flesh; for we fight not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and spiritual wickedness [Eph 6:12]. Again, he fights not only in his own person but by his instruments and accomplices, whom he daily raises up against the persons of men and all human societies. And this fight we may in part perceive. (Perkins, *Works*, 4:151–52)

consideration of, *what can be done about such activity?* And it is to that topic we presently turn.

### **Remedies to Such Demonic Activity**

Perkins shares of lawful and unlawful responses to demonic activity. In doing so he establishes the preservative and restorative (inoculative or responsive) lawful remedies to demonic activity, as well as the unlawful overreaches of casting out devils, by the use of the name of Christ in a superstitious fashion, the use of relics, or the sign of the cross, the hallowing of creatures, or exorcisms proper. Here we find a “regulative principle of spiritual warfare” if you will. That which is commanded in Scripture is to be practiced, that which is not prescribed by Scripture, ought not be engaged in and is forbidden. As discussed previously, this is an outworking of the reformational doctrine of *sola scriptura* as well as an application of the sufficiency of Scripture argument to the spiritual realms.

#### **Lawful Remedies**

Of the lawful remedies prescribed, Perkins offers two primary types, the preservative means and the restorative means. In our present discussion, the terms “inoculative” and “responsive”/“reactive” have been previously employed. Therefore, they will be used synonymously and interchangeably as appropriate and throughout.

##### *Preservative*

Of the preservative means a believer ought to employ in inoculating oneself against the wiles of the devil, Perkins offers several. First, the individual must be in the covenant of Grace by personal faith; second, the sanctifying of one’s abode; and third, an obedience to God’s law.<sup>154</sup> In the first instantiation of preservation, Perkins says there is

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<sup>154</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:389–92.

but one sovereign preservative: that is, to personally be in gracious covenant with Christ by faith in the one true gospel accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ. This is further nuanced, not in pretense, name only, or mere profession, but sincerely, inwardly, and truly, as only God's elect are able. What is more, these sincere professors of the true faith must bring forth the fruits of repentance and faith and grow in one's assurance of God's salvation and favor. Of such ones, God promises special protection of his holy angels as recounted in Psalm 91, that great psalm of preservation, where the Lord says in verse 11, "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." In like manner, he once again invokes Balaam's speech, where he says of and from Numbers 23:23:

"There is no witchcraft against Jacob, nor sorcery against Israel" (for so the words are to be read, according to the true meaning and circumstances of the text). As if he should have said, "I was of your opinion (O Balak) that Israel might be cursed, but after trial made, I found by good experience that I could do that people of God no hurt by my enchantments."<sup>155</sup>

Perkins then tempers this one "sovereign promise of preservation," that is, genuine conversion, by reminding the reader that no promise of temporal blessing is absolute. All other temporal blessings admit exceptions and all other temporal afflictions are not absolutely withheld. This is an obvious statement of fact in any other area for the believer, so why would it not be so in the case of the afflictions of devils? While demon possession, that is, indwelling and carrying with it the implication of "ownership" may not be possible for the Holy Spirit indwelled and regenerate believer in Christ,<sup>156</sup> all other wiles of the devil, up to and excluding such possession, would be possible, even if this chief preservative methodology is in place—as the inspired Text would seem to indicate.

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<sup>155</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:390.

<sup>156</sup> Clinton Arnold makes the distinction between demonization, all that is entailed up to and withholding all but demon possession, for demon possession implies "ownership" and indwelling, something that cannot be true for the believer, as Arnold contests. Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 138.

In spite of this tempering and qualifying, Perkins still provides great hope and comfort for the believer, for the converted person is, in his words, “a thousand-fold freer” from the power of Satan than unbelievers are.<sup>157</sup> For the unbeliever is under the perpetual sway of the devil, for he is by nature a child of wrath and following the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” as Ephesians 2:1–3 would remind. The true child of God, on the other hand, is under the sovereign and kind protection of a loving heavenly Father, who, by his good will and divine pleasure, may for a time allow the devil to try the faith of his children. Perkins says that such divine permission is the only case and only way the devil has any power to harm the believer.<sup>158</sup>

When instructing on this topic in his work *Cases of Conscience*, Perkins suggests that if the believer is permitted to be afflicted by devils in such a manner, even to the fullest extent of demon possession (were that possible), he says, “Howbeit, herein lies the comfort, that though such calamities befall them, yet they shall turn to their good rather than to their hurt. This point well considered, by the way, bewrays the great presumption of some who are not afraid to say their faith is so strong that the devil cannot touch them.”<sup>159</sup>

An additional comfort Perkins draws out of this heading of the greatest preservation of the believer, that he is a believer, is that “the best servants of God have been in their times molested by the devil.”<sup>160</sup> Here he once again cites Christ during the second temptation, Job and his children, the daughter of Abraham (that is, a woman who had the faith of Abraham) who Christ spoke of being troubled by a devil for eighteen

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<sup>157</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:391.

<sup>158</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:391.

<sup>159</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:195.

<sup>160</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196.



years, and lastly, the woman of Canaan who was “grievously vexed” with a demon in Matthew 15:21–22.<sup>161</sup>

Another comfort drawn from this ultimate preservation in this life, is that the believer is to hold fast to the promises of eternal life and wait upon the Lord’s good timing for deliverance.<sup>162</sup> If Reformed and Puritan theology would not have us presume upon the time and means of one’s healing, despite the promises throughout Scripture that the Lord will “heal all our diseases” and “bind up all our wounds” or “wipe away every tear,” so too may we not presume upon the Lord regarding the deliverance from devils in timing and by what means, not limiting the Lord with respect to his time and his means of such promised deliverance.<sup>163</sup>

Lastly, Perkins begins to segue into an additional preservative as well as responsive method in his final comforting appeal in this first heading of inoculation. The comfort he offers here is that of prayer unto and patience upon the Lord.<sup>164</sup> Again, his particular words of comfort are of use to us: “Men must in this case seek and sue unto God by prayer, either for deliverance, if it may stand with His good will and pleasure, or else for patience, that they may meekly and patiently bear that particular affliction.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196.

<sup>162</sup> By this, Perkins means that it is certain, in light of eternity, that the believer will be delivered from the wiles of Satan and the many afflictions of devils. But simply because it is an absolute promise and certain future reality, does not mean we may be presumptive about when and how such deliverance will be brought about.

<sup>163</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196. This notion of not limiting the Lord with respect to time and the means of his deliverance, should inform us greatly in the notion of binding demons and casting them out. For who may presume upon the Lord that the unclean spirit has not been sovereignly permitted to remain, and how may we presume that the spirit will come out, come out now, and come out by such demanded means? The abundantly cautious interaction between the archangel Michael and Satan (who, not incidentally, are equals in the narrative, as the prince of angels and the prince of demons) in Jude 9, when Michael dares not presume blasphemously to bid the devil “depart,” but instead petitions: “the Lord rebuke you.”

<sup>164</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196.

<sup>165</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196.

Such patient endurance at God's sovereign hand, and a loving hand at that, reminds one of Paul's thorn in the flesh, which is described as a "messenger of Satan," where Paul is comforted that God's grace is sufficient and the Lord's power is made manifest in weakness (2 Cor 12).

The second preservative offered concerns the dwelling places of believers. It may sound like mere assertion or even as fanciful suggestions of the "haunting" of house and home, but Perkins is not being alarmist in these sections of his writings. He says that Satan also "enlarges his molestations" from demonized person to demonized places where the person dwells.<sup>166</sup> He may cause annoyances in particular locations, and that by the work of wicked spirits.<sup>167</sup> The first remedy offered in this case is not to live there, if the Lord has given the place over to the power of the devil.<sup>168</sup> Now, this is not an injunction to move one's residence if Satan should harass. Instead, it is knowingly going into a location that is notoriously given over to the kingdom of darkness.<sup>169</sup> He cites Christ not willingly taking himself into the wilderness to be tempted, but only by the direction of the Holy Spirit, and the apostle Paul not willfully walking into captivity in Jerusalem, but only by the direction of the Holy Spirit, as a limiting instruction to us. If the Spirit of God would have us to take certain areas for the kingdom of Christ, we ought not foolheartedly and rashly rush into such locations obviously given over and delivered up to the power of Satan.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:391.

<sup>167</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196.

<sup>168</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196.

<sup>169</sup> By this, one's mind is taken to the notion of haunted residences; or the purchasing of freemasonic temples, for instance, may be another application of such a concept.

<sup>170</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196.

The only effectual means of cleansing such locations or sanctifying such habitations is demonstrated by the Word of God. When we receive food and drink, all things are clean if received with thanksgiving (1 Tim 4:4–5). We sanctify meat and drink by asking the Lord’s blessing upon it, additionally, as Paul says in that passage, “by word and prayer,” to which Perkins goes on, “And thereby procure His blessing upon His own ordinance for our refreshing, so in like manner we may sanctify the places of our abode.”<sup>171</sup> This has both a preventative and curative effect, as he states “and thereby both procure the blessing which we want and also avoid many curses and dangers which otherwise would fall upon us.”<sup>172</sup> Perkins calls us to flee to God in prayer, and as we draw near to the Lord in our hearts in such circumstances, in his mercy, he will draw near to us.<sup>173</sup>

If this all seems speculative and artificially added to a right understanding of demonology, Perkins gives multiple examples of locations given over to the kingdom of darkness, which were sanctified by word and prayer in the Scriptures. First, when God called Noah and his family out of the ark, and back onto the land that was the judged territory of the kingdom of darkness, Noah built an altar and worshiped the Lord, sanctifying that place by calling upon the name of the Lord (Gen 8:20). Then Abraham, when he was called out of his homeland to the land of Canaan, he built an altar, worshiped, and sanctified the place (Gen 12:8). He did the same again at Bethel (Gen 13:3–4). Jacob after him, sanctified the land of darkness, by doing exactly as his grandfather had done (Gen 35:7).<sup>174</sup> Though a bit more peripheral of an argument than the preceding use of Scriptures, Perkins also invokes Hezekiah who sanctified the priests

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<sup>171</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:391.

<sup>172</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:391.

<sup>173</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:196.

<sup>174</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:197; 9:392.

prior to celebrating the Passover, as an example of heads of households sanctifying household and home for the sake of holy purposes (2 Chr 30:18),<sup>175</sup> as well as the first fruits of the harvest being set apart as a means of sanctifying the rest of the grain.<sup>176</sup> In all of this, however, what can be seen is that the right and regular use of word and prayer is a way of inoculating against demonic afflictions.

The final inoculative action a believer ought to walk in, is implicit in the first of Perkins's protections. In several places dealing with the believer being protected by God, he speaks of the need to walk according to a right profession; the need to not merely profess true religion, but to order one's life according to genuine piety and fidelity. By this he includes the right keeping of the public ordinances and framing our entire lives according to the Word of the Lord.<sup>177</sup> For if one does not live one's life according to the ordinances of God, Perkins suggests he opens himself and his family up to "plagues and punishments."<sup>178</sup> Although Perkins does not reference the tactic of Balaam at this exact point in his argumentation, one would easily see the connection to the point he is making at the end of that biblical narrative in Numbers 25. When Balaam was incapable of cursing Israel through direct means of incantation and sorcery, he resorts to tempting Israel to sin with the cult prostitutes of Baal of Peor. As a result of their flagrant violation of God's revealed will, plague and slaughter come upon the house of Israel—24,000 people are killed in total. While the biblical text may not immediately present Balaam as the instigator of this horrific situation, Numbers 31:16 and Revelation 2:14 provide the divine interpretation of what took place that day: "These, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the

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<sup>175</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:392.

<sup>176</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:197.

<sup>177</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:390–91.

<sup>178</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:392.

plague came among the congregation of the Lord.” Likewise, “Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality” (respectively). While disobedience to God’s law, and God’s resultant punishment of his people may not constitute direct demonic activity, it does leave open the possibility of punishment or discipline being brought upon by the instrumentality of Satan. Alternatively, Satan himself tempts the child of God to break the law of the Lord, in order that afflictions, disciplines, or judgments may be brought upon the child’s head (cf. 1 Chr 21:1, Satan incited David to number the troops; and Acts 5:3, Satan put it into the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the church and to the Spirit of God).<sup>179</sup>

Again, of these three inoculations against demonization, there is no absolute guarantee of protection or absolute immunity from Satan’s devices. The examples above will suffice. We once again remind ourselves of Perkins’s understanding of Ecclesiastes 9:2, which states, “All outward things may come alike both to the good and to the bad.” Perkins exegetes and applies this in the opposite manner that we find when Christ teaches on common grace, that “God does good to the righteous and the wicked alike” (Matt 5:45). As Westminster Larger Catechism question and answer 99 rightly instructs, “where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.”<sup>180</sup> Blessings are afforded to the righteous and wicked alike, and the permissions of evil befalling man is afforded to both the wicked and the righteous alike.

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<sup>179</sup> This is a regular theme running through the Scriptures. When Satan is not capable of touching a child of God directly, he incites them to disobedience that his desired consequences still befall them, just by secondary or indirect means.

<sup>180</sup> WLC 99, with proofs cited, including Exod 20:12; Prov 30:17; Jer 18:7–8; Exod 20:7; cf. Pss 15:1, 4–5; 24:4–5.

### *Restorative*

These means are those which are employed to deliver the person afflicted by satanical afflictions.<sup>181</sup> The first means Perkins considers is that one which, in his words, heals entire nations, let alone individual men. It is that of the publishing and embracing the gospel.<sup>182</sup> While this may seem so basic as not to be mentioned, it is so foundational that it must be clearly mentioned in this context. After all, when Christ sent out the seventy, and they return explaining the effectiveness of their ministry, it is to that which he says, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). By this he means that the gates of hell cannot stand against the gospel proclaimed, and he can no longer hold sway over men’s lives who embrace the Lord Jesus by faith, as they naturally find themselves under the rule of such a wicked prince.

Perkins not only roots and grounds this restorative approach in the New Covenant, but also in the Old, as he appeals to Deuteronomy 18:9 and verse 18 to demonstrate this is one and the same responsive means transcending the Testaments.<sup>183</sup> Moses commanded the church underage not to follow after sorcery and witchcraft like the other nations (v. 9), but instead the prescribed response is, in Perkins’s words, “the reverent and obedient hearing of the Lord’s prophets” (v. 18),<sup>184</sup> and fittingly, that verse finds its ultimate fulfillment in the preaching of the One Prophet. Of this means, the plain and learned proclamation of the gospel, Satan detests and despises, because he cannot stand against it. In the immortal words of Martin Luther’s famous hymn about our adversary, “one little word shall fell him,” speaking of that simple gospel.

Prior to transitioning to the remaining “cures,” Perkins touches upon the fact

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<sup>181</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:392–94.

<sup>182</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:392.

<sup>183</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:392.

<sup>184</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:392.

that we may be inclined to take up the notion of binding and/or casting out devils. To this he says, “For howsoever the gift and power of casting out devils . . . are ordinarily ceased since the apostles’ times, it being a gift peculiar to the primitive church, and given to it only during the infancy of the gospel, yet there may be means used (and that effectual) for the easing of any person who is bewitched by Satan’s instruments.”<sup>185</sup> Those enduring and lawful means he goes on to expound are the right examination of oneself, hearty prayer of faith, and patient endurance of the Lord’s providence.

Of the first, the right examination of oneself, what Perkins has in mind is the serious-minded exercising of one’s own inquiry as to the cause of such demonic afflictions.<sup>186</sup> If our preceding consideration of preventative measures be accurate, that a person conducting himself according to the Word of God will have fewer occasions to warrant discipline, correction, or the permission of satanical afflictions, then the opposite is true. Of this, Perkins says “consider the cause for which it pleases God to suffer Satan to exercise them with that kind of cross” and “here . . . they shall find that their own sins are the true and proper causes of these evils.”<sup>187</sup> We saw above that such outward disobediences to Christ’s revealed will invited plague and punishments. Here he goes on to cite Saul’s disobedience as the reason for allowing the evil spirit to vex him (1 Sam 15); Hymenaeus and Alexander’s blasphemies as the occasions to be given up to Satan (1 Tim 1:20); along with the man who had his father’s wife of 1 Corinthians 5 who was handed over to Satan. In these final two cases, we may see men who are excommunicated, but that ecclesiastical reality does not lessen the clear biblical grounds Perkins is standing upon that their own personal evil is the occasion of being handed over to the devil’s whims.

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<sup>185</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393.

<sup>186</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393.

<sup>187</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393.

The next remedial action in response to demonic activity is that of the hearty prayer of faith.<sup>188</sup> Here Perkins calls the believer to depend upon the free mercy and favor of God to deliver from satanical molestations. He suggests that this ought to be joined with fasting that this hearty prayer of faith for deliverance might be all the more earnest.<sup>189</sup> In an allusion to James 5, as well as the preceding section of examining oneself to discover the cause of the demonization, Perkins instructs that this prayer should be “absolutely for the pardon of their sins” as well as for deliverance from the diabolical afflictions. It is worth noting that forgiveness is requested “absolutely” but deliverance is not “absolute,” because demanding deliverance would be a presumption upon the Lord, and he makes no “absolute promise” of deliverance in this life, in the same way he does regarding the remission of sins.<sup>190</sup>

Finally, Perkins draws our attention to the last remedy to demonization, and that is patiently bearing the present “annoyance” and comforting oneself with the notion that even this providential occurrence is permitted by the Lord’s own good hand.<sup>191</sup> In such a state of demonization, the unbeliever may be finally driven to the cross and thus delivered unto Christ; or the believer will rest in a most wise and loving God’s control who does not allow us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear, but in his perfect timing delivers. It may be at the God-appointed time in this life, or as Perkins says “or in the end of this life by death, they shall be eternally delivered and put in present

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<sup>188</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393.

<sup>189</sup> It is instructive that Jesus indicates prayer and fasting is more durative than the apostolic sign gifts of exorcism when he says to his disciples who have been unable to cast out a particular demon “this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Matt 17:21, NKJV).

<sup>190</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393. This notion of no absolute assurance of deliverance and therefore the believer has no basis to “require” or “expect” deliverance from the Lord, as he does regarding the forgiveness of sins, will be foundational to the notion of exorcistic practices today having no ongoing practical basis in the Word of God.

<sup>191</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393–94.



possession of everlasting ease and happiness.”<sup>192</sup> It is at this point that Perkins draws to a close his lawful means in response to demonization as a whole. But elsewhere when he speaks of fiery darts, he offers remedies to such demonic affliction as that.

In first distinguishing between our inward desires which the devil stirs up, these cannot rightly be described as fiery darts proper, for they are indeed our sin.<sup>193</sup> Those which are external to us, so long as we take no pleasure in them and do not incline ourselves toward them, they cannot rightly be said to be our sin. Perkins proves this in the many temptations, in fact “every temptation” as Luke puts it (Luke 4:13), which Christ faced, and not one of them can be said to be “his sin” or arising from within “his flesh,” for the Lord Jesus had no sinful nature, nor warred against corrupt flesh in the way in which fallen humanity does in accord with our sinful desires. Once these are recognized as external and not our sin, but Satan’s sin, there is greater freedom, and “men must not fear those kinds of thoughts.”<sup>194</sup> Not only is there freedom in recognizing these do not originate in us and from us, there is freedom in not “striving against them, for the more they labor to resist them, the more they shall be entangled with them.”<sup>195</sup>

Next, with those sins which are stirred up within us, we must immediately repent of the inclination toward the suggestions of Satan. These are thoughts which must be loathed and detested, and we must strive against these. The resistance does not begin with the darts themselves, but our response to them. We must pray against them, we must abhor them, and we must immediately repent of any agreement in our hearts with them.

Third, in resisting fiery darts, Perkins offers the communion of saints in a twofold capacity. First, in simply sharing company and not being alone. We find an

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<sup>192</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393–94.

<sup>193</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:200.

<sup>194</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:201.

<sup>195</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:201.

increase of the suggestions of devils when we are not occupied by holy company and interactions with others—he cites Eve and Christ as two examples from Scripture to demonstrate this is the case—when Eve was tempted alone and when Christ was driven into the wilderness and again in his final hour of prayer when he faced his most rigorous temptations apart from all other company. But secondly, holy conversation to fill our hearts and minds.<sup>196</sup>

The final remedy against fiery darts is that of filling our minds with the Word of God. Such daily meditations are inoculative as well as curative, in that it cleanses the mind and fills the heart with pure, lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy thoughts.<sup>197</sup> He then calls the believer to regular engagement with the above disciplines that such darts would have less effect in the believer’s life.

### **Unlawful Remedies**

Having covered the lawful remedies, Perkins then transitions to the “unlawful and superstitious remedies of the popish church.”<sup>198</sup> His introduction is notable and worth repeating:

The most learned papists of this age do teach and avouch that there is in God’s church an ordinary gift and power whereby some men may cast out devils and help annoyances that come by witches. The Protestant is of a contrary judgment and holds according to truth that there is now no such ordinary gift left to the church of God since the days of the apostles.<sup>199</sup>

He then proceeds to prove this is the case, by articulating a central commitment to a cessationist understanding of the apostolic sign gifts. The present paper does not seek to

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<sup>196</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:202.

<sup>197</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:202–3.

<sup>198</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:394.

<sup>199</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:394.

argue for cessation in general, and will only enter the discussion so far as it is crucial to Perkins's demonology.

First, he argues that miraculous gifts (handling serpents without harm, speaking in tongues, curing of diseases, and casting out devils) are all sign gifts given to the primitive church during the time of the apostles for the attestation that the gospel is true and the work of God.<sup>200</sup> Since the time of the apostles, all such miraculous gifts have ceased. Of these sign gifts, the apostle says they are a sign, not to those who believe the gospel, but to them who do not believe (1 Cor 14:22). Thus, the apostolic age having come to a close, if the miraculous gifts continued, they would call into question the effect and success of the apostolic ministry. Additionally, if the miraculous gifts continue, then God's extraordinary assistance to those ends should continue.<sup>201</sup> And if we expect exorcisms to continue, then we ought to expect ministers to lay their hands on the sick and them to arise.<sup>202</sup> Instead, as Perkins concludes such laying on of hands or anointing of oil would do no good, because the promise and gifting of such has ceased. So too exorcistic rites.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:394.

<sup>201</sup> While Perkins's point here is less than clear, the remainder of his argument reveals he has in mind the special office of apostle, the supernatural endowment of those apostles with miracles of healing, tongues, prophecy, and exorcism, and such an office, calling, and special blessing would continue if the works themselves are to continue.

<sup>202</sup> The categories of *magisterial* and *ministerial* authority help us here. The apostles were given magisterial authority to unilaterally ordain, heal, cast out demons, prophesy, forgive sins (cf. John 20:23), smite (cf. Acts 5:3–5), among other authoritative acts and declarations. The succeeding generations of the church, after the apostolic authority ceased with the "last" apostle (cf. 1 Cor 15:8 as Paul literally says he is), only receives ministerial authority. If the priestly office of engaging in all of these acts authoritatively continues, then all these magisterial abilities would continue. But if ministers do not authoritatively declare a person to be healed or forgiven of their sins (cf. Mark 2:7, "only God can forgive sins"), upon what basis can they authoritatively bind demons and cast them out? These magisterial acts rise or fall together, and ministerial responsibilities carry no authority or ability to carry on these particular deeds.

<sup>203</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:394.

Next Perkins delineates the particular and extra-biblical remedies the Roman Church prescribes, such as the use of Christ's name to cast out demons, the use of relics, the sign of the cross in various forms, the hallowing of things such as water, oil, or salt, and finally, exorcisms proper.

First, regarding the use of Christ's name as a talismanic means of casting out devils, Perkins says that of course the calling upon the name of Christ in prayer is more than acceptable—so long as the one pleading for deliverance from demonic possession or bewitchment is submitting to the Lord's will regarding timing, means, God's glory, the benefit of the church, and the good of the one afflicted.<sup>204</sup> But this is not what the one going beyond the parameters of Scripture has in mind. Such exorcists believe that the very name of Christ is powerful to cast out devils. The belief is that the authority of Christ is present at the use of his name, and by that authority the work of exorcism may be done. Perkins says, “this is a flat untruth and a practice full of danger,”<sup>205</sup> and cites the example of the seven sons of Sceva who engaged in such a practice (Acts 19:13). His two rationales to further substantiate this claim must be heeded, for he says, “The church of Christ has no warrant in the Word to use this name of Christ for any such purpose. Neither has any ordinary Christian a special calling from God to do so.” He concludes, “Therefore, he may not do it.”<sup>206</sup> This is the single clearest articulation of the “regulative principle of spiritual warfare” in all of Perkins's writings. Without the office to exorcise such a sign gift, without the direct warrant from God's Word to engage in the practice, and without a special calling from Christ to take up the gift or the office, then the believer is forbidden from engaging in such unlawful practices. Now, if Christ, by his power and in accord with what his name represents (his glory, majesty, power, and authority) by his

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<sup>204</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:396.

<sup>205</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:397.

<sup>206</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:397.

sovereign will chooses to heal the individual of his demonization, that is altogether good and right. But this is far from casting out devils “in Jesus’s name.”

Secondly, the use of relics, such as the items of deceased saints, like their books, bones, or apparel, as a means of casting out devils is clearly a superstitious practice on the surface of it.<sup>207</sup> This is not to mention the fact that there is nothing supernatural about a deceased believer—the very notion of Roman Catholic sainthood aside. Additionally, even if such items existed and were somehow endowed with such power, there is still no warrant from the Word of God to employ such practices.<sup>208</sup> Any examples in the Scriptures where it appears such relics affect miracles (cf. 2 Kgs 13:21; Acts 5:15; 19:12), Perkins answers that these men were all specially gifted an office and a blessing to engage in the miraculous, such miracles attesting to the authenticity of their message.

Third, the sign of the cross is yet another superstitious attempt at driving out demons. Perkins provocatively states, “Behold to what a height of impiety they are grown, ascribing that to the creature which is proper to the Creator! For the power of working miracles is proper only to the Godhead.”<sup>209</sup> If it will be rebutted that the prophets, apostles, and even Christ himself in his humanity engaged in such miraculous works, Perkins rebuffs these thoughts by indicating that all of these, even Christ in his humanity, were not able to accomplish these works in and of themselves, but only as instruments of the most high God. After all, even Christ was said to cast out demons “by

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<sup>207</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:397.

<sup>208</sup> Perkins states that either a commandment to use them, a divine warrant to use them, or a promise assuring us of their blessing upon the use of them, would have to be present in the Word for us to employ such practices. This is true for all these unlawful means—a threshold that none of them are able to rise to.

<sup>209</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:398.

the finger of God” (Luke 11:20).<sup>210</sup> Thus to rely upon a mere sign, or a mere symbol itself, is to trust in an object over and against our Lord. What is more, there is no divine warrant found anywhere endowing such symbols with such authority or power, once again leaving us with an unprescribed and therefore unlawful means of engaging the demonic.

The last of the base superstitious rites is that of hallowing things, such as salt, water, bread, images, spittle, oils, and other such created items.<sup>211</sup> As was the case with all other unlawful means, there is no warrant from the Word to employ such elements for the sake of casting out devils. The closest one can come is Elisha’s use of salt to cure bitter waters (2 Kgs 2:21). But even then, common salt is used, and he was a man with an office extraordinarily called and gifted to engage in miracles. Without such office or such special blessing, to engage in the rites would be biblically unwarrantable.

In the above examples of unlawful means, let it be remembered that no holy relic or holy location will bar the devil from passage—no talisman or sacred space. As Perkins shares from the temptation of Christ, that the evil one freely comes into the “holy city” as Scripture denotes it, and places Christ upon the pinnacle of the temple (the very seat of holiness on earth), and draws the conclusion:

In that Christ is brought to Jerusalem, that holy city, there to be tempted, we learn, that no holiness of place on earth can debar the devil from his temptations; he brings Christ from the wilderness to tempt Him, in the holy city even upon the holy temple he will thrust himself on “Joshua’s right hand to resist him” [Zech 3:1], though Joshua stands before the angel of the Lord to minister to the Lord. And therefore the folly of papists is egregious, that think the sign of the cross, holy water, relics, and such massing enchantments have virtue in them to free their houses, or their bodies from the assaults of Satan.

Lastly, hereby we see that change of place is but a silly cure for a troubled mind; indeed change of air may much further bodily cures; but a troubled mind has

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<sup>210</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:398. Matthew’s Gospel indicates “finger of God,” and refers to the Holy Spirit (12:27–28).

<sup>211</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:398.

conflicts with the devil, who will not leave for change of place; Jerusalem will fit his turn as well as the wilderness.<sup>212</sup>

Thus, after all the present argumentation, we finally come to the notion of exorcisms proper.<sup>213</sup> Perkins's rationale is so brief, his entire treatment will be here appended:

The fifth and last remedy is exorcism, which is an adjuring and commanding the devil in the name of God to depart from the possessed party and to cease to molest him anymore. This means was used by our Savior Christ Himself, and after Him by His apostles and other believers in the time of the primitive church when the gift of working miracles was in force. But in these days (as I said before) that gift is ceased, and also the promise of power annexed to the use of adjuration, and therefore the means thereof must needs cease. And for an ordinary man now to command the devil in such sort is mere presumption and a practice of sorcery.<sup>214</sup>

Though it may appear to some and at some times, that they or those observed have been able to cast out devils by the above alleged and observed means, Perkins states of the devil: "He will never make truce with any child of God, upon any condition less than the hazard of his soul."<sup>215</sup> While it may appear that the devil flees at the sound of a name or the sight of a cross, these would be but feigned retreats in an effort to further deceive. To try and demonstrate the practical import of such a theology, allow a brief account of a husband in a marriage counseling case.

The husband supposed his wife to be demonized, terrorized by thoughts of self-harm and suicidality. Any time he was away from the home, and being an airplane pilot he was away from the home quite a bit, his wife would find herself locked in the closet in abject terror over the spirits that were making her consider taking her own life. As a result, the husband removed all threatening objects from the home (sharp kitchen knives, for instance, were under lock and key), and he changed career paths to be home

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<sup>212</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 1:125.

<sup>213</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:399.

<sup>214</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:399.

<sup>215</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 1:121.

more. At one point in his life and marriage, utterly discouraged at the lack of progress in his family's growth in grace, he ceased going to worship. After months passed where he found himself effectively unchurched, his wife's afflictions had effectively ceased. It was impressed upon his mind that, should he abandon the faith, the demonization of his family would cease. This is the path he opted to take. He silently apostatized, believing if he abandoned Christ, the devil would no longer seek to destroy his family.

Perkins's counsel comes swiftly to mind: the devil will make no such truce with the child of God. But further still, he will not make peace upon any lesser condition than the hazard of the professing believer's soul. This husband sacrificed his eternal life for the temporal security of his wife and kids. If his wife and children are the Lord's, though Satan may have received his desired ends for the man's life, he will by no means take leave of the wife and children because of some alleged "truce." The parallels with the above unlawful means should also be apparent—for in feigning defeat by paganistic means, the devil further deceives the one using the unlawful means, luring the would-be exorcist further away from the explicitly revealed will of God, and causing him to abandon the notion of *sola scriptura* and the sufficiency of Scripture.

Lastly, on the notion of direct confrontation of the devil being forbidden, Perkins, when he is commenting on the book of Jude verse 9, in the interactions between preternatural "equals," the archangel Michael and the fallen prince of angels, Satan, says that even Michael did not presuppose to cast out the devil or to rebuke him directly. Instead, he prayed, "the Lord rebuke you" regarding the body of Moses.<sup>216</sup> From this he argues, "What must a man do that is to encounter with the devil, either by temptation,

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<sup>216</sup> It is fascinating to follow Perkins's thought of why the contention of Moses's body and the need for the Lord to bury his body in a place no one would know or find, and that of instigating false veneration in the Old Testament church. If Satan could use the bones of the great prophet of old, he could sow seeds of false religion in the church underage, much like the veneration of saints in the Eastern and Catholic traditions. Perkins, *Works*, 4:150, 152–53.



possession, or otherwise?,” to which he answers, “He must follow the practice of the archangel, even flee to God by prayer and entreat *Him* to rebuke him.”<sup>217</sup> He goes on, “The Lord must be entreated to restrain the malice of the devil, that he may not in himself or instruments prevail.”<sup>218</sup>

### **Conclusion**

At this point in our consideration, we have now come to comprehend a situational awareness of the demonic from a Puritan perspective. The works devils are able to engage in are that of possession (in whole or in part of the individual), divination, the causing of sickness, attacking the body, afflicting the mind, false signs and wonders, illusions, prognostications, real acts of shaking the earth or shaking man, diabolical dreams, fiery darts, necromancy, trances from familiar spirits both within or outside of the individual, adorcism, enchantments, “good” healings or “beneficial” casting out of spirits, delusions both real or feigned, temptation, the “haunting” of locations, and generally speaking, the demonization of believer and unbeliever alike. Besides direct molestation from devils, there is also indirect or mediated “attacks” through other means besides the demon itself, such as the case of Peter’s tempting of Christ not to go to the cross, Balaam’s inciting Israel to sin and thereby incurring curse, or David numbering the troops.

After considering demonic realities in this present epoch, we also saw the numerous responses. Lawful remedies of a preservative nature and a responsive nature were considered, such as the Word of God meditated upon, read, and preached, belief in the one true gospel, hearty prayer of faith, fasting, the right use of the Lord’s Supper, patience under God’s providences, the sanctification of dwelling places through worship,

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<sup>217</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 4:156. Emphasis added.

<sup>218</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 4:156.

and obedience to the revealed will of God. Additionally, the responsive means considered were those of preaching, particularly that of the gospel, the examination of one's sin, prayer for the demonically molested to be delivered, prayers of repentance from the one afflicted, patience with the Lord's timing and means, watching carefully and guarding one's mind, immediate repentance when we are induced to sin, and filling one's mind with the Word of God.

Having demonstrated a situational awareness, next we will examine more thoroughly a Reformed and Puritan response to the demonic in pastoral counseling.

CHAPTER 4  
METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF  
A SITUATIONAL AWARENESS  
OF THE DEMONIC

In the previous chapter, we interviewed William Perkins on the topic of the demonic—what a twenty-first century evangelical and Reformed believer would need to know about devils that has been lost to time and culture. We saw Perkins’s situational demonology and his preventative approach of the lawfully prescribed means of God and the lawfully prescribed means of response. In both cases, what was central were the ordinary means of grace, word, sacrament, and prayer. And while sacrament may have featured less prominently in Perkins’s thought, it was still present, with word and prayer being of obvious import. As a result, we presently turn our attention to the methodological implications of the demonic so far as the ordinary means of grace are concerned—chiefly we are concerned with both the inoculative/preventative and responsive nature of those prescribed means.

Recall that our consideration is that of a *situational* awareness, as comes to us from a Framian perspectivalism, or triperspectivalism.<sup>1</sup> The normative consideration would be that of what special revelation immediately says about the demonic, which the norming reality breaks in on our situated reality, in order to inform our experiential reality. If our consideration was merely experiential, we could become unmoored from the Scriptures, and alternatively, if it was merely normative, we would have a bibliography of the demonic. However, we must know how to properly understand our situated reality

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<sup>1</sup> John Frame, “A Primer on Perspectivalism,” *Works of John Frame and Vern Poythress* (blog), June 4, 2012, <https://frame-poythress.org/a-primer-on-perspectivalism/>.

in the twenty-first century, and by extension, how we investigate, explore, observe, and understand the presence of the demonic. Hence, a situational awareness and not merely *an awareness*. This, then, has methodological implications.

Moving from Perkins's treatment of the dark spiritual realms, we must therefore pivot to a method of guiding people toward a responsible awareness and response. In other words, we have asked of Perkins what we need to know, which involves exploration and observation—but now we must turn to offering guidance and counsel in light of such an awareness. To that we find an inoculative and responsive application of the demonic. These preventative and reactive applications do not push us into a charismatic overstatement, but we can move beyond David Powlison's representation of the classical mode of spiritual warfare.

The first methodological implication of the ordinary means of grace we will consider is that of the Word of God. Secondly, we will consider the sacraments, with a primary emphasis placed upon the Lord's Supper as lawful engagement with the spiritual realms. And finally, we consider prayer as the second, but forgotten weapon of the believer so far as spiritual warfare is concerned. As a subset of prayer, we also consider the spiritual discipline of fasting, as it pertains to spiritual warfare.

### **The Word of God**

In the section above Perkins speaks of the plain preaching of the gospel and the conscionable hearing of the Word preached as the primary means of inoculation and response to demonization. In the case of the unbeliever, he needs to hear the gospel, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and come out from under the dominion of Satan to find thousand-fold protection from demonization than he had in the kingdom of darkness. For the believer, she needs to rest in the gospel, bring forth the fruits of a life lived under the conscionable hearing of the gospel, and order her life based upon the right proclamation of the gospel.

## The Soils and the Word

In his *Golden Chain*, under the chapter heading, “Of Christian Warfare,” on “the first assault,” Perkins speaks of the parable of the soils, and the soil where the seed falls near the path and birds come and snatch up the good seed. He logically connects this soil to the work of devils in the preaching and hearing of the Word.<sup>2</sup> Of course, Christ himself makes this explicit connection in interpreting the parable (cf. Matt 13:19), but of this, Perkins suggests that Satan is snatching the Word away from both believer and unbeliever alike. To the unbeliever, they who are lacking ultimate understanding of the things of God and the kingdom of God in their ignorance, the right-preaching is taken away through ensuring the Word falls on deaf ears. In the case of the believer, he offers many remedies to this lack of conscionable hearing and therefore, effect of the evil one as we sit under the Word.

First, Perkins encouragingly appeals to the resistance that the Spirit of God brings about in the children of God, both in their initial effectual calling by the preaching of the Word, and in engrafting that word more and more into the believer’s heart.<sup>3</sup> He ensures that, though we who on our own cannot make our eyes to see, our ears to hear, or our hearts to understand, we see, hear, and understand the preaching of the Word of God and said preaching is joined with a sincere faith in that Word.<sup>4</sup>

He then outlines additional preservatives in preventing the Word from being snatched away as it is sown, and removed by devils in however metaphysically fallen angels are able to make that happen. Those remedies are as follows: pre-mediation upon the Word to be preached (cf. Eccl 4:17; 5:1); diligent attention of the mind during the

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<sup>2</sup> William Perkins, *Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Greg A. Salazar (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2018), 6:194.

<sup>3</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:194–95.

<sup>4</sup> Perkins cites Ps 40:6; John 6:44; Acts 16:14; Jas 1:21; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:9; Luke 8:15; and Heb 4:2 to these ends.

preaching (cf. Acts 16:14); a hungering and desire of the heart for the preaching (cf. John 7:37); living a life of integrity that is consistent with that Word sown (cf. Ps 26:6); mortifying evil affections as we approach the Word, hear it, and respond to it (cf. Jas 1:22); inwardly consenting to the Word as it is preached (cf. Acts 2:37); hiding that Word in our hearts as and after it is preached (cf. Ps 119:11); and understanding the holy presence of God as we come under the preaching of his word, with reverence and awe (cf. Isa. 66:2; Acts 10:33). If the Word is then snatched away from us, he attributes the occasion to a coldness in our receiving of it, our neglect of it as it falls upon our ears, or as we depart from it in disobedience. And the solution of course is such holy subjecting ourselves to it.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of all three soils being applied to the believer and unbeliever alike does not explicitly or in total come out in Perkins's writings, though of course the implication is certainly present from what we have seen immediately preceding. However, we do see in Calvin's writings on this passage, that he sees the three great enemies of humanity (believer and unbeliever alike) present in this text. Those three of course are the world, the flesh, and the devil. In Jesus's interpretation of the passage, he explicitly cites the devil as one of the enemies represented by the soils, and we have already unpacked such a concept at length. But Calvin also sees the thorns of the third soil as the temptations of the world (cf. Matt 13:22) and the shallowness and lack of perseverance of the second soil to be the weakness and temptations of the flesh.<sup>6</sup> By this, then we see that all three soils have application to believer and unbeliever alike, and not only to that of those devoid of the Spirit and the regenerative ability to receive the Word.

Elsewhere, in his commentary on Jude, Perkins speaks of Satan sowing seeds

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<sup>5</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:195.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke*, trans. William Pringle, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1859), CCEL Online.

of lies as the Word is sown,<sup>7</sup> as well as snatching away the Word as has just been addressed above. This is an additional facet of the devil causing the ministry of the Word to be less fruitful in the believer or unbeliever's life. If error is included in the right preaching of the Word, and the insertion of the doctrine of men is included with the sound doctrine of God, then hearers are misled in the primary means of grace. Perkins attributes such extra additions and insertions to the suggestions of devils, as referenced in 1 Timothy 4:3.

### **Power Encounters or Truth Encounters?**

Under the heading of the ministry of the Word, there is a notion that must be addressed, and that is the concept of truth encounters versus power encounters. In the more than three-decade old, but seemingly ever-popular book *The Bondage Breaker*, known ekbalistic advocate, Neil Anderson, seeks to create a nuanced difference between traditional deliverance ministry of binding and casting out, and “truth encounter” deliverance ministry.<sup>8</sup> In the case of such a truth encounter, the person experiencing demonic affliction is interacted with, instructed in the general truths of the faith, and they as a volitional being are called to believe and act upon these biblical realities, and as they do, the demons flee at the light being shown in the darkness.<sup>9</sup> The central notion is that the one engaging in deliverance ministry need not bind and cast out, but call the demonized person to the truths of the Christian faith as the means of deliverance.

Clinton Arnold interacts with Anderson's conception at such a point, though he

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<sup>7</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2017), 4:151; “He sows tares in the field where the good seed of the word is sown (Matt 13:24–25). Hence are those false doctrines of forbidding meats and marriages called the ‘doctrine of devils’ (1 Tim 4:3).”

<sup>8</sup> Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Feelings, Habitual Sins* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2019), 258–59.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, 259.

initially does not mention Anderson by name.<sup>10</sup> Arnold's understanding of Anderson is that Anderson is advocating for a truth encounter nominally, but still holds to a deliverance model with nuanced terminology without a practical difference.<sup>11</sup> Arnold then goes on to advocate for a deliverance-style approach himself. At the end of the discussion, one is left with slight nuancing of one another's terminology without functional difference between the systems, and Arnold's understanding of Anderson rings true. While there are some in Reformed circles who would be comfortable with the notion of truth encounters and calling the demonized person to the proper response of faith, the notion of "encounter" does not serve our present purposes nor a Reformed understanding of what is taking place when the Word of God is being brought to bear upon a person's life who may be experiencing demonization.

For such ministry of the Word are no encounters at all. An ordinary means response to the demonic is not demons directly encountering believer or practitioner, but instead, counselor interacting directly with the individual counselee or parishioner. The "encounter" being advanced by Perkins and his Puritan contemporaries and counterparts are no more than a call to faith with the right proclamation and application of God's Word. Power encounters, or ekballistic activity as they have historically been practiced, involve speaking the right formula of words (e.g., "in the name of Jesus I bind you and command that you come out"), often coupled with the right use of objects (e.g., the

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<sup>10</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 126, 139.

<sup>11</sup> Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 126. He states, This issue is sometimes described as the difference between a "truth encounter" or a "power encounter" approach. Such labels oversimplify the issue, however, since both approaches rely on the power of God and encourage people to know and appropriate the truths of the Christian faith. The real distinction is over what we might call "self-deliverance" or an intervention-based approach. Even this distinction is somewhat artificial since those who practice a "truth encounter" approach do intervene to a certain extent by discerning the presence of spirits and even directly commanding them to silence and not to manifest their presence in any way.



holding forth a crucifix), together with the right application of materials (e.g., the placing of oil on the forehead or the sprinkling of holy water), with the ultimate result of the unclean spirit leaving. If the demon is particularly challenging to uproot and cast out, the use of lengthy prayers, protracted Scripture reading, and fasting may be employed to this end.

But in all of these, there is no grounding in Christ’s Word. There is no evidence directly from the Scripture or by good and necessary consequence that would cause us to arrive at such practices—none of them. As Perkins would remind us, these are the suggestions of Satan for the deliverance of devils—a kingdom divided against itself—much like in animistic cultures: whoever has access to the most powerful spirit can cast out lower and lesser spirits.<sup>12</sup> In this case, the triune God simply takes the place of the “most powerful spirit” in the animistic and pagan construction of deliverance.<sup>13</sup> At best they are the doctrines of men, arrived at over time and by Roman Catholic tradition. As these power encounters creep into the Reformed church in our present day, they are not a harkening back to the Reformation or the early church fathers, but are an importing of unlawful practices from the paganistic church of Rome.

What is needed is not a power encounter between kingdoms, with the kingdom of light binding the kingdom of darkness and casting it out. Instead, what is needed is the speaking of the gospel accurately to the one demonized, with the result of the person afflicted hearing, believing, repenting, and reordering one’s life according to the gospel of Jesus. With levity on this point, Graham Cole says in reference to speaking directly to

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<sup>12</sup> David Powlison, *Safe and Sound: Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2019), 68–69.

<sup>13</sup> And that, after all, is what Simon Magus attempted to do in purchasing the power of the Holy Spirit—become the best magician/pagan practitioner in town—to which the apostle reveals Simon has no lot with the one true and living God, and is simply a pagan seeking to treat God in a paganistic way (see Acts 8:19–23).

devils, binding, and casting them out, Satan and I “are not on speaking terms.”<sup>14</sup> Perkins additionally cites the apostle Paul’s thorn in the flesh, which is referred explicitly in the Text as being “a messenger of Satan,” or rightly rendered “an angel of Satan” as the Greek has “ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ.” By this, Perkins notes that Paul does not bind and cast away this angel of Satan, ironically so, since he was given ekbastic apostolic sign gifts and abilities, and even his prayer three times is rejected at the sovereign prerogative and purposes of the Lord (cf. 2 Cor 12:7).<sup>15</sup> This further compels us away from binding and commanding practices and toward an ordinary means response with a patient waiting upon the sovereign will of God. Lastly, Perkins argues from Jude 9’s treatment of Michael and Lucifer’s encounters over the body of Moses, as definitive that we are not called to bind and cast out, but merely plead with the Lord and wait on his sovereign timing for deliverance.

Thus, Powlison is correct on his methodology of dealing directly with the person and not directly with devils.<sup>16</sup> The ministry of the Word in the classic or Puritan model of spiritual warfare is the call to the person to repent and believe, in whatever capacity of repentance and belief is needed.

If at this point a personal account of counseling may be interjected, there was a couple who came to the Biblical Counseling Institute (BCI) of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (RPTS) seeking marriage counseling. The husband was concerned that the wife was engaging in occult practices. The wife was concerned they were experiencing poltergeist-like experiences in their home. In the initial session, the wife admitted to being a nominal Christian who was merely burning sage and drawing power

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<sup>14</sup> Graham A. Cole, *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 292.

<sup>15</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. Ryan Hurd (2017), 5:148–49.

<sup>16</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 75–76.

circles in her home to channel spirits to protect her and her children. She was even requesting indwelling by those spirits as a means to protect her and her children from the allegedly “more sinister” spirits in her attic. She was surprised, then, when the family was experiencing atrocious terrors in their home. While the counseling ended abruptly after two sessions, for the wife ended up wrongfully taking the children and fleeing the state for fear her husband may make her give up her occult practices, prior to such a tragic conclusion, the counseling involved calling the woman to recanting such beliefs and practice, and to place her faith sincerely in the Lord Jesus for genuine “protection” from the evil she had invited into her life. She had no interest in receiving the gospel, being baptized, and ordering her life around the truth of God’s Word. However, this volitional call to faith, is an ordinary means use of the Word in what was clearly an encounter with a willfully demonized individual.

### **A Call to Truth, Not Lies**

A subset category of the ordinary means response of the Word, is when dealing with fiery darts and lies sown by fallen angels. If Satan is known as the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10), and as we have demonstrated in the preceding chapter, fiery darts are real and are most dangerous when we cannot distinguish our own thoughts from the suggestions of Satan, then there must be a means of standing against such falsehoods and deceptions with the Word of truth. We have already received the caution from Perkins that focusing unduly on how to *prevent* or *head off* fiery darts results in a speculation into and over-fascination with the dark spiritual realms beyond that which is healthy for a believer to delve into;<sup>17</sup> but that said, how would one *respond* once those fiery darts have landed?

First, remembering the elements mentioned previously, that there are

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<sup>17</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2020), 8:201.

temptations which originate according to our own desires, those must be repented of at the onset. Those which originate with Satan must be detested and not delighted in in the least. Any inclination we have to such suggestions, we must repent of immediately. We are to occupy faithful company, conduct ourselves in holy conversation, and put off ungodly company and unchaste conversation. Finally, we are to fill our minds with the pure truth of God's Word as an inoculative, as well as responsive effect to the suggestions of devils.<sup>18</sup>

In his *Golden Chain*, dealing with "Of Christian Warfare," "the second assault" Perkins speaks of how Satan puts these fiery darts into one's mind: "The temptation is an illusion which the devil casts into the hearts of godly men, as when he says, 'You are not of the elect; you are not justified; you have no faith; you must certainly be condemned for your sins.' 'Then came to him the tempter, and said, If thou be the Son of God: command that these stones be made bread' (Matt. 4:3)."<sup>19</sup>

But there are implications to the above. We must be about the work of perceiving lies as they are suggested to us in whispers to our minds, and by whatever means they come. Allow two illustrations to ground the practical implications at this point. While researching mystery religions dating back to Babylon, and the occult and demonic implications of such proto-Gnosticism, I read of those worshiping the sun, as it "dies" each night and is "resurrected" every morning. The assertion of the text was that Christianity was a novel distortion of ancient sun worship, with a creative substitution of "Son" for the sun.<sup>20</sup> At that very moment the suggestion of "everything you have ever believed is a lie" raced through this author's mind.

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<sup>18</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:202.

<sup>19</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:196.

<sup>20</sup> William Cooper, "Sun Worship," July 8, 2020, episode 16 in Complete Mystery Babylon Series, podcast, 51:58, <http://archive.org/details/william-cooper-mystery-babylon-series>.

First, it must be noted that the immediate context of the temptation was from the Christian's enemy *the world*, and not primarily *the devil*. But the devil taking the occasion of one of his two great helpers,<sup>21</sup> employed a fiery dart of a pernicious lie, in effort to derail one's faith, much like the account of John Bunyan struggling with assurance of salvation for an entire year due to a fiery dart accusation of the evil one.<sup>22</sup> The lie had to be perceived as foreign to one's own thoughts, combated with the truth of Christianity, and reassurance and faith was sought by immediate prayer and reliance upon the Spirit who testifies with our spirits that we are the children of God (Rom 8:16).

The second illustration comes from a friend and colleague, who, while caring for his ailing wife in the midst of her agony and pain, the thought stole across his mind about his heavenly and good Father: "God, you are harsh!" His next thought was, "no, that's not true." In both of these illustrations the lie must be perceived; the ghastly thought which is alien to us must be discerned; and the lie must be met with the coordinate truth which we know to be certain from God's Word.

In comprehending these practical implications, it is not enough to understand that a suggestion is a lie or fiery dart. The believer must answer those lies or temptations with the immediate inward affection of "no!," as in "this is not true." But putting off such suggestions is often insufficient in itself as well. We must flee to the truth of God's Word which combats the suggestion we are facing, and establishing oneself in that truth through the means of earnest prayer.<sup>23</sup> As one considers the panoply of Ephesians 6, that

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<sup>21</sup> Recall Perkins says that the devil has two great helpers, the world and the flesh. William Perkins, *Satans Sophistrie Ansuered by Our Saviour Christ and in Divers Sermons Further; to Which Is Added, a Comfort for the Feeble Minded, Wherein Is Set Downe the Temptations of a Christian* (London: Richard Fields, 1604), 149, ProQuest. This was originally an unpublished portion of the *Combat between Christ and the Devil*.

<sup>22</sup> John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2018), 51, 81.

<sup>23</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:271–76.

which is brought to bear against fiery darts is “the shield of faith,” along with the additional defenses of “truth,” “righteousness,” “peace,” and “salvation” (Eph 6:14–17), culminating in the Word of God (Eph 6:17),<sup>24</sup> all of which points to the reality that we must stand against the lies of such fiery darts with settled confidence in the truth of God’s Word.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in counseling the Word to one who has been assaulted with lies from the pit, help should be provided in identifying those lies and presenting the exact opposite and coordinate truth, rooted and grounded in the Word of God.

Perkins illustrates the above principles thus,

To confirm this, these preservatives which follow are very necessary.

(1) When you are tempted to sin, do not only [be] abasing from it, but earnestly love and follow after the contrary (John 8:44).

(2) Never yield or consent to Satan’s words, whether he speak the truth, accuse falsely, or flatter dissemblingly. “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he has been a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him: when he speaketh a lie, then speaketh he of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof” (John 8:44). “And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, the Son of the most high God? And Jesus said, Hold thy peace and come out of him” (Mark 1:24). “She followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show to us the way of salvation,” etc. (Acts 16:17).

(3) One temptation is to be looked for after another, and then especially when our enemy, as though “he had made truce with us, is at rest—for the devil never makes an end of his malice (1 Peter 5:8).<sup>26</sup>

## A Call from Fear

One of the common themes seen throughout the treatment thus far, is that of

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<sup>24</sup> Powlison’s treatment in several of his works, regarding the panoply of Eph 6 is unrivaled in this context of spiritual warfare. He demonstrates the elements are all the armor worn by Christ in accomplishing salvation as revealed through the prophet Isaiah. For a sampling of that presentation see Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 28–29.

<sup>25</sup> All elements of the armor find their fulfillment in Christ. The righteousness of Christ, the peace of the gospel of Christ, the salvation accomplished by Christ, the truth of Christ, and faith in Christ. Coupled with the Word of Christ, all elements point to our union with Christ, which is all the more demonstrated by the fact that every command in Eph 6 is plural (e.g., “you all put on”). Thus, Paul is speaking to the church, to find defense against Satan’s devices through union with Christ and a living trust in the truth of Christ.

<sup>26</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:193.

*fear* induced by the kingdom of darkness. In the case of fiery darts, fear was one criterion for determining if they are indeed fiery darts: ghastly, alarming, or fearful suggestions. In the case of diabolical dreams, this too was one of the criteria mentioned in discerning between natural, divine, and demonically induced dreams. While much overstatement or overspeculation could result if one is too cavalier with such a notion, e.g., if fear is present it is the work of the other kingdom, there is biblical warrant that the intentional working of fear is the aim of devils, besides what was already covered in this dissertation. In 2 Timothy 1:7, a verse which is often cited in biblical counseling and contains a precious promise of blessing and Fatherly care, speaks of two spirits—a spirit of fear and a Spirit of love, power, and self-control. Paul assures the believer, that we Christians have been given by God “a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” While the grammatical and rhetorical force of the assertion could be that of a disposition (e.g., “a spirit of” or “a disposition of”), we also must consider which Spirit the Lord has given to his people, a Spirit whose fruit is that of love and self-control, and who is a Spirit of the very power of God.<sup>27</sup> The point being made is rather a straightforward one. When the characteristics of the other kingdom are being worked in us, in this case “fear,” we must put off such affectional responses and put on that of the true kingdom.

So, the believer must eschew all fear involved with spiritual warfare, and instead, stand against the wiles of the devil, resisting him in the truth of the Lord Jesus, and in resisting: stand.<sup>28</sup> And when he is resisted, the believer will see the devil flee. Thus, the believer must be able to distinguish the temptations of the flesh, and the efforts of devils. For the means to stand and resist temptations are different than those to stand

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<sup>27</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2020), 9:77.

<sup>28</sup> This is a synthesis of what we find between 2 Tim 1:7, Jas 4:7, 1 Pet 5:8–9, and Eph 6:10–18. The contrast being that of temptations resulting from our ordinary desires (cf. Jas 1:13–15; Jas 4:1–3) versus the temptations resulting from demonic inducement, which provides a different set of biblical responses, as seen in the passages mentioned at the beginning of this footnote.

and resist the suggestions of Satan. But in the case of being lured and lulled to fear (or any affectional response desired by the other kingdom), the truth of who the saint is in the Lord Jesus Christ must be invoked to stand against such lies and temptations. Once again, the Word of God, and in this case, the particular truth claims which counter the notion of fear, must be brought to bear in the counselee's life, calling them to confidence and courage (i.e., "power") in the Spirit of God, walking in Spirit-wrought love and self-control (2 Tim 1:7).

In all of this the pure Word is far superior in the dealings with devils, for it is the pure Word believed and obeyed that Satan hates. It is the pure worship of God according to the Word that Satan seeks to undermine. Therefore, it is the right application of the Word of God that men must be about. For Perkins says of that which is beyond the Word, the need for revelations to confirm the Word, or that which is in addition to it,

Only the written Word is the rule of our faith. "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). "To the law and to the testimony" (Isa. 8:20). Second, miracles . . . alone are not sufficient to justify the verity of a point of doctrine. For false prophets sometimes, for the trial of men, are suffered to work miracles [Deut 13:1]. Third, the Scripture says plainly that the coming of antichrist . . . shall be in miracles and lying wonders [2 Thess 2:9; Rev 16:14]. And therefore . . . the speaking, weeping, and bleeding of images, and the bleeding of the Eucharist, what are they else but satanical illusions?<sup>29</sup>

Here we see Perkins contrasting the all-sufficient Word of God, with the many suggestions of devils. We have no need of the miraculous (perhaps most applicably in our case, exorcisms, binding, etc.) when we have the pure Word of the Lord.

### **The Sacraments**

The second main category of the ordinary means of grace is that of the sacraments. We will consider the Lord's Supper first, and then baptism, and how they interface with the dark spiritual realms.

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<sup>29</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. Shawn D. Wright (2018), 7:454.



## The Lord's Supper

Few, when considering the Lord's Supper, would draw an immediate connection with the dark spiritual realms. And yet, when considering the New Testament's language of "participating in the table of demons" versus participating in the Table of the Lord, the apostle Paul obviously saw these two elements more immediately connected than modern sensibilities. As we gain an understanding of said "table of demons" we will find clearer insight into the apostle Paul's contrast of what we are engaging in during the Supper of the Lord.

When dealing with a Reformed and Puritan understanding of the Supper, while not immediately apparent, we must unpack the parallels between a pagan approach to idolatrous meals, and the contrast in which occult practitioners and everyday idolators, seek to lay hold and manipulate the spiritual — versus the way we are *forbidden* in seeking the spiritual realms, and instead, the way in which we are called and commanded to pursue spiritual benefit from our Lord. By that, what is meant, is how we reach into the unseen realm, and how it is that we *lawfully* lay hold of true spiritual blessing for our growth in grace and spiritual betterment. Thus we contrast an unlawful reaching into the spiritual realms, compared to lawfully laying ahold of the good spiritual realms.

### *A Pagan Engagement with the Spiritual Realms*

The Scriptures are replete with passages condemning or forbidding occult practices. Just a small sampling will suffice our present purposes:

When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God, for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do this. (Deut 18:9–22)

There are several pieces to note in this passage. The Text does not present this list as though these practices are mere trifles; as though they are cheap parlor tricks and displays of lies and falsehood. The inspired Word speaks of them as genuine religious practices, and as though the practitioners are genuinely reaching into the spiritual realms: they practice divination, tell fortunes, interpret omens, and inquire of the dead. At this point, this is not to advance the argument of the sincerity or genuineness of these practices, but the way in which the Holy Text speaks of them, the occultists are sincerely and genuinely seeking that which is beyond the natural order of things—beyond the seen realm, to the unseen realm.

The second thing to note is that such manipulations (or desired manipulations) of the spiritual realms are entirely forbidden. As the Israelites enter into the land, and observe their proverbial Canaanite neighbors engaging in the dark arts, even if what they observe appears to be effective and useful, it is strictly *verboten*. God has not allowed it. God has not commanded it. In fact, he provides the strictest condemnation of it, and attaches to it the severest of punishments.

To cite a New Testament example demonstrating the same level of concern and prohibition, in Galatians 5:19–21, Paul is listing out the obvious works of the flesh, when he says, “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, *idolatry, sorcery*, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, *and things like these*. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”<sup>30</sup> Once again, this scriptural list is not presenting the artificial or the fanciful, but genuine activities that are condemned.

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<sup>30</sup> Emphasis added.

To allow a final citation to make this point, the final consequences, though spoken of in the Galatians passage as well, are more completely revealed in Revelation 21:8, “But as for the . . . sorcerers, idolaters . . . their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

The present point is not merely that such activities are under the ban and condemned by God—they are—but that the activity is a genuine reaching into the dark spiritual realms—an activity that has dire consequences. And, when one reaches into the unseen, the testimony of the Scriptures is that there are entities which are sincerely reaching back. G. K. Beale, in his book *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*, establishes two primary themes throughout his 350-page work. He traces the Scripture’s clear teaching that idolatry results in a de-evolution of sorts, a desanctification. As the Psalmist says in Psalm 115:8 and 135:18, the idolator becomes like the deaf and dumb idol itself—whom he worships: “Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them” (as we saw in our literature review). Perkins makes a similar, though less fully developed argument in his works, *The Problem of the Forged Catholicism* and *A Warning against Idolatry of the Last Times*.<sup>31</sup>

Continuing in his argument, Beale cites Hosea 4:7–11 to this point, highlighting that the idolator perpetually becomes more deceived, lacking in spiritual understanding, while at the same time believing they are becoming more evolved, knowledgeable, and enlightened (cf. v. 12 which states they consult their wooden idol and their diviner’s wand “informs them”).

The reason that this desanctification takes places, is as the Prophet says, because a “spirit has made them err.”<sup>32</sup> Drawing on Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17,

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<sup>31</sup> See Perkins, *Works*, vol. 7.

<sup>32</sup> G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 108.

Psalm 106:37, and Revelation 9:20, Beale demonstrates his second main theme of the book, that the breadth of Scripture’s testimony is that there are literal spirits at work in this unholy desanctification process of idolatry. To be explicit, demons are involved in idolatrous worship—even as 1 Corinthians 10 makes manifest.

While Scripture is sufficient in confirming this point, and Beale and Perkins demonstrate this reality from the Scriptures, there is also of value to hear from the mouth of avowed occultists themselves. Manly Hall, a Canadian mystic, scholar, lecturer, and occultist by his own admission, writing in the previous century, wrote in his book *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*:

Ceremonial magic is the ancient art of invoking and controlling spirits by a scientific application of certain formulæ. A magician, enveloped in sanctified vestments and carrying a wand inscribed with hieroglyphic figures, could by the power vested in certain words and symbols control the invisible inhabitants . . . of the astral world. While the elaborate ceremonial magic of antiquity was not necessarily evil, there arose from its perversion several false schools of sorcery, or *black magic*.<sup>33</sup>

Of course, the implication is that Hall is not engaging in such “perversions” of ancient magic. Instead we are made to believe that what he advocates is “good” or *acceptable* paganism—that is, until no more than a dozen pages later he reveals to whom his true loyalties lie: “I hereby promise the Great Spirit Lucifuge, Prince of Demons, that each year I will bring unto him a human soul to do with as it may please him, and in return Lucifuge promises to bestow upon me the treasures of the earth and fulfill my every desire for the length of my natural life.”<sup>34</sup>

Lest we believe this is but an older school of thought and representative of but one twentieth-century occultist, a contemporary example helps solidify this point.

Modern occultist, Steven Bancarz, who more recently converted to evangelical

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<sup>33</sup> Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* (Cheshire, UK: A&D, 2007), 276. See especially his chapter on “Ceremonial Magic and Sorcery.”

<sup>34</sup> Hall, *Secret Teachings of All Ages*, 288.

Christianity, gives account of his time as an occultist. And though Reformed believers would take pause with some of his theological conclusions, despite being an evangelical, at this point in his writings he is simply speaking of his experience with the dark spiritual realms. He says, in seeking that spiritual plane, “[It] serves as leverage for demonic beings . . . to infuse participants with a false sense of godhood and spiritual power. . . . Everyone around them in the community sees their new ability as evidence of their spiritual development. But they are actually being groomed to take deeper steps into the occult world.”<sup>35</sup> Can one not hear Beale’s concept of de-evolution, or desanctification and Perkins’s concept of demons being behind the idolatrous practice in what Bancarz is describing in that section? The pagan believes he is gaining greater knowledge and ability, when in fact, they are being deceived and drawn further into evil spiritual involvement. As has already been seen, when reaching into the other realm, there are entities reaching back. And while offering and promising power, their objective is far from benevolent. Neither is the experience of accessing such spiritual realms ultimately beneficial to the human persons involved.

To summarize what has come thus far in the argument, Richard Gilpin, famed Puritan demonologist who wrote thousands of pages on *Satan’s Temptations*, wherein he says, “Satan sometimes . . . deals by fair promises of riches, advancement, pleasure, and such other baits, to allure men to his professed service. Thus are witches drawn to a compact with him. Witches give frequent accounts of Satan’s . . . promises; he tells them of feasts, of gold, of riches.”<sup>36</sup> Gilpin goes on to provocatively ask what must be the value of a single human soul, if Satan would be willing, for a time, to serve the fancies of men. This is no small trifle when dealing with genuine pagan activities.

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<sup>35</sup> Steven Bancarz, *The Second Coming of the New Age: The Hidden Dangers of Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America and Its Churches* (Crane, MO: Defender, 2018), 43.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Gilpin, *A Treatise of Satan’s Temptations* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000), 902–5.

Considering this practice, of reaching into the dark realms, to receive benefit and power, and to manipulate the spirits in order to bring about the occultist’s own whims, we now consider what the apostle Paul has to say about participation in that forbidden pagan activity.

*Participation in the Forbidden (1 Cor 10)*

Examining 1 Corinthians 10:14–22, we will first highlight the negative, and later by contrast, we will highlight the apostle’s positive admonition he is advancing.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. [vv. 16–17 omitted] Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Several observations are noteworthy. First, Paul says that an idol is nothing. There are no false gods, no pantheon of gods, nor can we tolerate henotheism—that our God is but one God among a family of gods.<sup>37</sup> Idols are, in and of themselves, nothing. But this does not mean, in the apostle’s theology, that there is nothing *behind* the idols. For in fact, he says “when pagans sacrifice to idols, they are actually sacrificing to demons” (cf. v. 20). And when he speaks of “tables of demons” he means the literal tables used at pagan meals—tables used in making sacrifice to idols, and eating food that has been sacrificed to idols as part of a pagan feast.

Harold Mare, New Testament professor of Covenant Theological Seminary, helps us to understand the meaning of “tables of demons” when he shares an ancient inscription,

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Heiser advances a functional henotheism in his preeminently popular volume on the demonic: Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019). Such a position cannot be biblically, confessionally, or historically tolerated.

Converts from paganism would readily associate with “tables” used for pagan idol meals. In [an ancient] Papyrus there is a revealing sentence that says, “Chairemon invites you to a meal at the table of the lord Serapis in [his temple], tomorrow the fifteenth . . .” So Paul is teaching that a Christian cannot at the same time participate in the meal at the table of the pagan god and the table of the Lord.<sup>38</sup>

Mare is speaking here of the Greaco-Egyptian god *Serapis*—and a pagan meal in one of *Serapis’* temples in honor of the false god. It is just such a meal, that the apostle Paul says is a participation with demons, and that there cannot be simultaneous participation with the table of the Lord, as well as fraternization with demonic worship.

This is the contrast being established in 1 Corinthians. Participation in pagan feasts and meals is a true communion with demons—a genuine spiritual reality. As he says in verse 20, “I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.” It is not *nothing* to Paul, even though idols themselves are nothing. It is fellowship with—communion with—evil spirits. And that image, that reality, is what he is using to impress upon his pagan converts in Corinth the significance of the Lord’s Table. It is in *that* light, that the apostle makes his positive admonition, “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:16–17); and verses 21 and 22 in this same light, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” (1 Cor 10:21–22). In the same way in which idolators are communing with true spiritual entities in the spiritual realms, so too, the Christians, who are eating at the Lord’s Table, are genuinely communing with a true spiritual being—and not only that, but a resurrected “Life Giving Spirit” as Paul says elsewhere in this same epistle (cf. 1 Cor 15:45). There is real fellowship in the Lord’s Table with the heavenlies. Christ dines with us, and we have,

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<sup>38</sup> See W. Harold Mare’s comments on 1 Cor 10:21: W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary Abridged Edition: New Testament*, ed. Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2004), 636.

as Paul says “participation with Christ’s blood” and “participation with Christ’s body.” As Westminster Larger Catechism question 170 states, “not corporally or carnally,” “yet . . . spiritually.” Just as demons are spiritually present and active in pagan meals, how much more so is Jesus spiritually present in his appointed *sacramental meal*?

Perkins, in his *Golden Chain*, speaking of the Lord’s Supper, makes a contrast with the earthly participants, elements, and nourishment, with the spiritual participants, elements, and nourishment.<sup>39</sup> While the believing recipient of the meal is taking the bread and the wine in his hand, he is apprehending Christ by faith (John 1:12). While eating the bread and wine, he is nourishing his body, and sealing the application of Christ to him by faith. And as the minister is setting apart the elements to the recipients, Christ, who is in the spiritual realms, is ministering to the believing recipient sealing, offering, and applying himself from the heavenlies.<sup>40</sup> In the same way that participation with the tables of demons, invariably results in the participation with demons themselves, as discussed above, so too the believing or unbelieving participant in the Supper is participating with the resurrected and exalted Christ—either to their spiritual nourishment, or in eating and drinking judgment to themselves.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, in his *Second Book on the Cases of Conscience*, Perkins once again deals with the sacraments, and that of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>42</sup> For the believer, they are compelled to come to the table, for they are instructed by Christ “take, eat.” There is not the freedom to abstain for the meal, for we are commanded to participate with Christ

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<sup>39</sup> See diagram in Perkins, *Works*, 6:166, coupled with his explanation in 6:167–68.

<sup>40</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:167–68.

<sup>41</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:169. Perkins’s language of being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and eating and drinking judgment to oneself when one comes unfaithfully to the table is as follows: “If you come not furnished on this manner to the Lord’s Table, you shall be adjudged guilty of the body and blood of Christ, as he is guilty of high treason who does counterfeit or clip the prince’s coin.”

<sup>42</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:294–300.



and to receive the benefit thereof.<sup>43</sup> He cites that some are of the custom to withhold themselves from the table and participate but once a year, or to arbitrarily come and arbitrarily withhold, bidding themselves to come to the table. So the believer is not free to withhold himself, or “shepherd himself” to the table.<sup>44</sup> But as the believer is to always come and thereby participate with Christ, the reprobate who comes to the table, whether by his ignorance or willfulness, always eats and drinks judgment to himself, for there is always a genuine participation in the spiritual meal.<sup>45</sup>

The solution to a wanton participation with Christ is a genuine hungering and thirsting after the one offered in the supper, a longing for and apprehending of, the spiritual reality of the Supper.<sup>46</sup> Perkins then uses an illustration of a man in prison who may not see the sun, ever in his time in prison, save for a single ray of sunlight breaking through the bars of his cell. Though he does not enjoy the full benefit of the sun, he has the effect of sun, even if in but a small sliver. So too the man who sincerely participates in the Supper, though we do not experience the fullness of the Son, we have use of him, even if but a ray of his splendor is apprehended, we have the Son beheld in the spiritual use of the Supper.<sup>47</sup>

In making this point, however, there could be a temptation to believe that the parallels between the pagan rites and the Christian rites are being drawn a bit too closely. Lest we believe we too are to reach into the spiritual realms as occultists seek to manipulate spirits in the unseen world, we must ask, is that what is presently being

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<sup>43</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:294–95.

<sup>44</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2017), 4:177. Even the clear referent of Jude 12 provides such insight.

<sup>45</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:296–97.

<sup>46</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:298–99; and 6:169.

<sup>47</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:299.

advocated for? Is that what the apostle Paul has in mind, that this meal is a means by which we *compel* grace?

It should be obvious from the rhetorical questions, “may it never be so.” In fact, just the opposite. Surely the Lord’s Supper is not a ceremony where our Benevolent Spirit has bound himself to be laid hold of and is thus coerced to give us grace. In other words, surely 1 Corinthians 10 does not lend credence to a pagan understanding of the spiritual realms, but merely a christianization of the pagan practice. God must be approached, not as *we* please, but only according to the prescribed means.

#### *A Pagan Approach to God*

While there are many places in the Old Testament one could turn to demonstrate the Israelites falling victim to a concept that God could be treated like any other contemporaneous deity. That the Israelites think outwardly, even talismanically about *YHVH*, that so long as they use his prescribed means and understand he is the one true God, then *their* God will be on their side—he will do as they desire—can be found throughout Israel’s history.

Though many passages reveal such a mindset, perhaps one is clearer than all the rest. That is 1 Samuel 4—when the Ark of the Covenant is brought into the camp of war, in an effort to defeat the Philistines. The people of God believe they can “put their God in a box,” if you will, and he will surely do their bidding, especially when they have their prescribed means of his presence. Even in this language, the parallel allusions to the Lord’s Supper can be seen. That is, the presence of the Lord in his prescribed means—the notion that he *de facto* works through said means. Let us presently consider 1 Samuel 4:1–11 *in toto*,

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it

may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.” So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

As soon as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, “What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?” And when they learned that the ark of the Lord had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid, for they said, “A god has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight.”

Let us note at this point in the narrative how the Philistines interpret the Israelites’ understanding of their use of the Lord’s means: the pagans clearly see the Israelites as interacting with their God in a paganistic way. Continuing with verse 10, “So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.” In this account, there is no self-examination on the Israelites’ part. No asking, “what have we done to provoke the Lord in such a way?” No searching, “why has the Lord judged us in causing 4,000 men to die on the field of battle?”

Instead, to the Israelites, the problem is with the Lord. This mindset can be easily discerned as verse 3 asks, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?” Their solution then is not to change themselves and their behavior, the solution is to try and affect change of the Lord! They continue on in verse 3, “Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh.” Why would the Israelites do such a thing? Their motivation is revealed: “that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.”

The people of God of old display that their hope is not even in the Lord, who does as he pleases and defends his people, but their question betrays that their real hope rested in the box—the Ark. The notion was that God was in the box, or could be put in a

box, and made to do their bidding. This is a pagan and occult approach to *YHVH*, the one true and living God. They are treating him as though he can be manipulated like the pagan deities. Their thinking goes, “God gives us power, and God gives us mercy and grace, and God does what we desire if only we will appease him by acting in accord with his prescribed means” (and in this case, namely, the use of his Ark).

Applying this concept back to the 1 Corinthians 10 consideration, simply because Paul is drawing parallels between participation with demons in pagan rites, and the participation with Christ in the lawful Christian sacrament, it does not permit us to have a pagan approach to the Table. Just as God’s people have always been forbidden and even opposed for treating *YHVH* as any other pagan deity, so too contemporary believers must not engage with God like the nations. In fact, just the opposite can be demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 11.

*A Biblical Engagement with  
the Spiritual Realms*

In the words of institution that we hear so frequently as we come to the Lord’s Table, beginning in verse 23, we are given the proper approach to the sacrament—not as though it is a guaranteed dispensary of grace, and is a conveyance of grace to all who partake, but,

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. (1 Cor 11:23–26)

Notice the posture of the Lord’s institution. *He* delivered it to Paul. *He* was betrayed. *He* took the bread. *He* broke it. *He* gave it. It is *his* body. It is *given* for us. It is in remembrance *of him*. It is the New Covenant in *his blood*. And we proclaim *him* until he

comes. The emphasis is clear. The focus of the sacrament is not on us—we laying ahold of him—but of him freely giving himself.

This is an altogether different posture and direction from the pagan approach to the spiritual realms. The occultist seeks to manipulate spiritual beings in the unseen world. The Christian reaches into the unseen world—or more clearly still, is invited to reach in—according to the lawful means Christ has appointed, and we simply receive what He freely gives.

One approach to the unseen is man-centered, seeking to wrest power and benefit from seemingly unwilling beings that must be coerced and compelled by ancient arts. The other is Christ-centered, seeking to humbly receive what is freely offered. To help us appreciate this point further, Perkins, speaking of the Supper says, “God alone is the author of a sacrament, for the sign cannot confirm anything at all but by the consent and promise of him at whose hands the benefit promised must be received. Therefore, it is God alone who appoints signs of grace, and in whose power alone it is to bestow grace.”<sup>48</sup> We are merely recipients—humble receivers of what God has promised to us in the meal.

What is more, the 1 Corinthians 11 passage goes on in verse 27 and following,

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.

Just as the Israelites used God’s Ark in an unworthy manner, and thereby brought judgment upon themselves, so too, the Corinthians were using the Lord’s means

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<sup>48</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:164.

in an unworthy manner, and thereby bringing judgment upon themselves. What ought the Israelites have done, and by extension, what ought the Corinthians have done—they ought to have examined themselves, instead of wrongly reaching into the spiritual realms.

Once again Perkins helps us, by contrasting a wrongful gazing into the spiritual realms—seeking to examine what we should not examine—and calls us to examine, instead, ourselves. He calls us to examine our ways, consider our vices and vanities, and to gaze into the certainty, not of the future, but the certainty of our death.<sup>49</sup>

We do not pursue the forbidden and the unknowable, as the pagans and the occultists do, we pursue the revealed and the knowable. We do not examine the stars and prognostications, we do not consult with the dead or the demonic. We examine ourselves, and as the Text calls us to do, we examine ourselves before the Table, and consult his Word, and then commune . . . not with the dead, but with the living and resurrected Christ. These considerations bring us to our conclusion regarding the Lord’s Supper.

### *The Lord’s Supper as True Spiritual Meal*

Herein we briefly consider two pastoral implications of the above meditations. First, recalling the fact that spirits are at work in the case of idolatry and are working desanctification or de-evolution in the life of the pagan, in the case of the Lord, we become like the one we worship, we are being actively conformed to the image of the one with whom we fellowship, commune, and participate.

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<sup>49</sup> In his *Resolution to the Country Man*, speaking to his interlocutor, “the countryman,” Perkins says,

If you are a Christian man, you ought only to be content with knowing the times and ordinary seasons of the year, not regarding nor searching any secret and special predictions for which the Lord never gave any man warrant but in plain words has forbidden them. Nay, they who are ingrafted into Jesus Christ indeed are so far from searching what shall be hereafter that they lead a life which is a continual meditation of present death. The which the Lord, for Jesus’s sake, grant unto us that we may in some measure behold our own vanities. (Perkins, *Works*, 9:418)

If demons are genuinely conforming idolators, occultists, and pagans to their image, as the Scriptures teach, the opposite reality is of course gloriously true, as the Scriptures also teach. The believer knows the Lord is sanctifying him, but just as alarming as it is to think about reaching into the dark spiritual realms, and there are entities reaching back—and that should caution and forbid the believer from ever engaging with such practices—so too, when one lawfully reaches into the True Spiritual realms, where light and truth reside, there is a gracious and benevolent Being reaching back. In fact, he is the one initiating. He is the one laying hold of *us*, enabling *us*, inviting *us*, beckoning *us*, summoning *us*, to lay hold of *him*—and by extension, to lay hold of true spiritual benefit.

As believers reach into the spiritual realms, they need not fear that there are spiritual entities reaching back, de-sanctifying and conforming them to the image of idols by the work of demons. Instead, the believer is being conformed to the image of Christ, not by the work of a fallen spirit, but by the work of the Holy Spirit, as the saint engages with Christ's lawfully appointed means.

The Lord's Supper is true spiritual meal, where the Christian is actively being conformed to the One with whom they commune. Thus, it must be acknowledged why the apostle says the true child of God cannot commune with the table of demons *and* the Table of the Lord. Because a person will either be conformed to the one or to the other. Praise God that the regenerate communes with the resurrected Christ, and is being actively conformed to Him, as the child of God sups with him.

This notion of being conformed to the pattern of Christ by the Supper, is, after all, the Westminsterian position. While we are presently considering an earlier expression in confessional theology than the Westminster Assembly's expression, Perkins stands in the same Reformed and Puritan tradition as that great work, and thus we presently consider its import. The Westminster Larger Catechism question 168 bolsters the present point before us,

Q. 168. What is the Lord's supper? A. The Lord's supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, his death is showed forth; and *they that worthily communicate feed upon his body and blood, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace*; have their union and communion with him confirmed; testify and renew their thankfulness, and engagement to God, and their mutual love and fellowship each with other, as members of the same mystical body.<sup>50</sup>

Just as there is a genuine participation in the table of demons in idolatrous and pagan worship, and it is a true spiritual participation, wicked though it may be, resulting in the practitioner's desanctification, as the participant sincerely communes with fallen spirits, coordinately, Westminster is saying that as the Christian participates in the Table of the Lord, they have true spiritual participation with Christ's body, and blood, as the believer is actively conformed to the resurrected Christ—as Westminster says, “To our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.”

This brings the present consideration to the second and final pastoral implication of our Lord's Supper consideration. As one lawfully reaches into the spiritual realms, the person is not doing so by his own initiation, nor is he doing so according to his own designs. While the Christian practitioner *is* seeking to lay hold of genuine spiritual benefit, he does not do so in a paganistic way. The follower of Christ does not seek to coerce or control the spiritual. For no one can manipulate God and compel him by this ancient custom and talismanic rite (that is, the Lord's Supper). Instead, we receive what Christ conveys,

Q. 170. How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord's supper feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein? A. As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses; so they that *worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal and carnal, but in a spiritual manner; yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.*<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>51</sup> Emphasis added.



The Supper is a true spiritual meal, wherein the benefits of Christ's body and blood are freely made available by faith, and Christ is pleased to have genuine fellowship and communion with his brothers and sisters in this true spiritual feast. The believer does not reach into the unseen and lay hold of Christ. On the contrary, Christ who dwells in the unseen, freely offers himself to the believer in the Supper.

The application of the above meditation to a situational demonology and a lawful ordinary means response should be apparent. However, in case it is not, when we participate in the Supper by faith, we are genuinely being conformed to the pattern and image of the Son who is held out in the Supper. This should call us to a regular participation in the Supper as a means of grace, and as a means of sanctification. The alternative of desanctification serves as a stark contrast and warning. Secondly, let us remember the use of John Calvin's Geneva in our previous chapter, where we saw a Reformed practice when demonic activity does not relent by prayer, fasting, and the right use of the Word and sacrament, Calvin still served communion to those believed to be demon possessed, due to the benefit offered to the right recipient.<sup>52</sup> Coupling this with everything we have considered thus far, the Supper is a means to enable beleaguered saints to bear up under the hard providences of life, of which demonization may be one.<sup>53</sup>

## **Baptism**

While much time was spent on the Supper, much less consideration by

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<sup>52</sup> Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609*, 2nd ed., Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 279.

<sup>53</sup> Recall the notion that a believer may not be delivered of demonization for a time. In that case, a continual reliance on lawful means (ordinary means of grace) must be employed and a patient waiting upon the Lord's deliverance is what is prescriptive. See the apostle Paul's lack of deliverance from the ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ (an angel of Satan) in 2 Cor 12:7. "Paul prayed to be delivered from the angel of Satan that buffeted him; but the Lord answered that it should not so be, because His grace whereby he was enabled to resist his temptation was sufficient. And Paul, finding the fruit of his prayers on this manner, protests hereupon that he will rejoice in his infirmities [2 Cor 12:9]." Perkins, *Works*, 5:148–49.

comparison will be given to the initiating rite of the Christian faith. We have already seen that the Roman Catholic rite of baptism includes exorcistic practices,<sup>54</sup> the thought being that the house must be swept clean, and then the Spirit of God may enter into the house and reside (cf. Matt 12:29, 43–45). In his “Treatise Against the False Religion of Rome,” speaking against Roman Catholic baptism, which include exorcism rites, Perkins says,

And Rabanus Maurus, lib. 1, cap. 27, de instit Cler., says that the wicked powers are exuffed [that is, to “blow out”], and blown away by the baptized. “Then when he has placed him (being attentive and reaching him his hands) towards the west . . . he commands him to exufflate Satan thrice, and withal, to rehearse the words of his abrenunciation.”<sup>55</sup>

Though the particulars of this practice may have since ceased, the exorcistic rites and elements of Roman baptism continue.

No, the solution we seek to demonization under this present heading is not baptism as exorcism, but baptism as adoption and covenant inclusion. Baptism points to the regenerative work of the Spirit, the inward washing of the recipient by the blood of Christ, as applied by the work of the Spirit. It is a sign of the forgiveness of sins, the inclusion in not only the definitive break from the world and inclusion in the covenant community (i.e., definitive sanctification), but also inclusion in the progress of mortification and vivification (i.e., progressive sanctification), and consecrates the recipient unto Christ.<sup>56</sup> Perkins draws out the external signs and seals, and contrasts them with the inward realities signified and sealed unto the recipient. The one baptized is washed by water, through the right administration of the water applied, in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The receiver is consecrated to God and called to forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and called to perceive the inward washing of the Spirit.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:363.

<sup>55</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 7:307.

<sup>56</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:160–63.

<sup>57</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:160, 164.

Now the question may arise, when is the Spirit effectively applied to the recipient, as some who are baptized fall away, and some who are baptized are very quickly shown to be no believers at all.<sup>58</sup> Thankfully the Westminster Standards speak directly to this very issue when they say, “That the inward grace and virtue of baptism is not tied to that very moment of time wherein it is administered; and that the fruit and power thereof reacheth to the whole course of our life.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, baptism has usefulness in the believer’s life, whether or not they have been certainly regenerated prior to baptism, during baptism, or even after their baptism, as some are revealed to have been. Such efficacy has import into our present discussion, but we will return to that in the next paragraph. Perkins himself sees such a lifetime benefit of baptism, regardless of when the actual internal operations of the Spirit take place,<sup>60</sup> pointing to the fact that baptism calls us to continuing in mortification and vivification, and is rightly called a “sacrament of repentance” for it testifies that past, present, and future sins are once for all washed away in the baptism of Christ.<sup>61</sup>

From this sacramental reality, Perkins then calls the baptized to use one’s baptism as a means of standing against the assaults of the devil, when he says,

Now this remedy [i.e., looking unto our baptism] would be of small force, except it be opposed against those imaginations which the devil casts into a troubled heart; yea, except it taught such that God is greater than our heart, who in baptism has not only offered us the adoption of sons, but has indeed bestowed the same upon us—as

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<sup>58</sup> See Acts 8:9–25, where Simon Magus, an occultist in the area of Samaria, who thought he could use the Holy Spirit occultically. Thinking that the Spirit was the most powerful pagan spirit, Simon thought to buy this great power for a price. Having recently been baptized by the apostles, very shortly thereafter Peter states of having part with the Holy Spirit, “You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God” and “For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

<sup>59</sup> *Westminster Assembly Directory of the Publick Worship of God* (1645), Westminster Standard, accessed March 3, 2024, <https://thewestminsterstandard.org/directory-for-the-publick-worship-of-god/>.

<sup>60</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:162–63.

<sup>61</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:164–65.

it is said by Christ, “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved” (Mark 16:16); and by Paul, “Ye which are baptized, have put on Christ” (3:27). David, being armed with the like comfort from his circumcision, feared not to join battle with the giant Goliath. And if this were not so, it must needs follow that baptism were nothing else but an idle ceremony, and also the persons of the Trinity would be thought liars. Wherefore, those afflicted men, when Satan assaults them, must resist him with these words: “Depart from me Satan, thou hast neither part nor portion in the inheritance of my soul, because I am baptized in the name of the holy Trinity, and so am I truly made the son of God by adoption.” And these are the strong weapons.<sup>62</sup>

There are several takeaways from what is being brought forth. First, baptism demonstrates the believer belongs to Christ. Thus, it calls the believer to look unto Christ for deliverance and protection. Secondly, as one faces demonically instigated accusations and assaults against one’s identity in Christ, Perkins is calling the believer to look unto your baptism. The outward rite declares you have been adopted, you are a child of God, this is who you *are*. As baptism speaks of identity, it is an identifying sacrament, therefore, it is a means to quell the accusations against one’s mind.

When dealing with baptism proper in his *Golden Chain*, Perkins speaking of falling into sin, says,

Again, if through infirmity you fall once or often into some sin, still have recourse to baptism, that there you may receive courage to your soul. For although baptism be but once only administered, yet that once testifies that all man’s sins past, present, and to come are washed away (Eph 5:25–27; 1 Pet 3:21). Therefore, baptism may be truly termed the “sacrament of repentance” and as it were a board to swim upon, when a man shall fear the shipwreck of his soul (Mark 1:4; Rom 6:4, 6; 1 Tim 1:19).<sup>63</sup>

As the accuser of the brethren accuses, seeking for the believer to remain discouraged upon a recurring sin, baptism is a recourse to remind oneself that we can immediately flee to Christ. This notion shows up in a later Puritan writer, Richard Baxter, when he speaks of the realization that it is the lie of the devil that he cannot immediately flee to Christ

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<sup>62</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:267.

<sup>63</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:165.

after he had sinned.<sup>64</sup> Here, Perkins is connecting that notion to the reality of our baptism: we are the children of God, expressed in our sign of inclusion in the covenant, therefore, our baptism points to the fact that we can immediately flee to our God when we fail.

Not only is the believer's identity displayed in their baptism, and not only are they a child of the king, even when they sin, but this notion is a solidifying identity in the gospel as well. Rosaria Butterfield makes a similar connection when reasoning with a hypothetical daughter, who one day may come to her and declare "Mom, I'm a lesbian," to which Butterfield's hypothetical response of "no, you're not" is arrived at by way of her covenant inclusion as a baptized and prayed for child of God.<sup>65</sup> The rationale to combat such temptations of identity or lies of the evil one either directly or mediated through his great helper, the world, is that of one's identity in Christ as visibly expressed in one's baptism. This is the sacramental power and persuasion of baptism.

In all this discussion on baptism, however, it is worth concluding where we began when speaking to this sacrament. Protestant, Reformed, and evangelical Christianity rejects the Roman Catholic notion that baptism is exorcistic, or that exorcistic rites are to be engaged in *prior* to or along with baptism. While there are some in the modern evangelical church seeking to reclaim and reappropriate such exorcistic practices prior to or during baptism,<sup>66</sup> this is not a Reformed and biblical notion of the sacrament. Instead, something far more benign and less sensational is meant. Baptism is a

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Baxter, *Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter: With Life of the Author, and a Critical Examination of His Writings*, vol. 2 (London: Forgotten Books, 2016), s.v. "Directions for Weak Christians": "It is the lie of Satan to make you believe you cannot flee to Christ for your sins . . . [The devil] will show you the greatness of your sins, to persuade you that they shall not be pardoned. He will show you the strength of your passions and corruption, to make you think they can never be overcome."

<sup>65</sup> Rosaria Butterfield, "Our Identity with Dr. Rosaria Butterfield," TruthXchange, May 27, 2021, YouTube video, 52:00 to 55:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIMVNrdq9F8>.

<sup>66</sup> Jeff Durbin, Jeremiah Roberts, and Andrew Soncrant, "Part 1: The Exorcism of Kristin Bellomy," December 8, 2020, *Cultish*, podcast, 51:30, <https://thecultishshow.com/podcast/part-1-the-exorcism-of-kristen-bellomy>.

call to one's identity in Christ, and as such, when that identity is being assailed by the enemy, we can like Martin Luther, our reformational father before us, appeal to our baptism. Luther is reputed to tell the devil, "*baptizatus sum*," or "I am baptized," as a means of engaging in spiritual warfare.<sup>67</sup>

### Prayer

The final ordinary means preventative and response against the demonic, is that of prayer. We see this means somewhat subtly introduced in Ephesians 6, in the context of spiritual warfare, and immediately after the first weapon of the Word of God is explicitly mentioned. Paul states,

Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph 6:17–20)

Several elements are worth noting at the outset. First, the first verb in that sentence, translated, "to take up" applies to all three distinct portions mentioned in that sentence. So we believers (for the verb is plural or corporate, not individual), are to take up the helmet, the sword, and prayer. Therefore, grammatically and structurally, we cannot lose sight that prayer is the second, almost forgotten, weapon spoken of here by Paul.

Second, note that the prayer is not that of sensational and exorcistic prayer, especially in this context.<sup>68</sup> Our battle may be against spiritual powers in the dark realms, as verse 12 would have us to know, but the means instructed are not a deliverance model. Paul even goes so far as to instruct what type of levelheaded or moderate prayers he has

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<sup>67</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 105. In his biography of Luther, Oberman states, "The only way to drive away the Devil is through faith in Christ, by saying: 'I have been baptized, I am a Christian.'"

<sup>68</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 36–37; and James Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds., *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 78–79.

in mind. He says “all prayers and supplications,” “prayer for all the saints,” prayers for the apostle Paul himself, that he may be given words, that he would “open his mouth boldly,” that he would specifically “proclaim the gospel.” Paul instructs the full range of prayers the believer is called to pray elsewhere in the New Testament, not exorcism prayers of “devil be gone.” But the types of prayers we are instructed to pray across the Testaments: precatory prayers, deprecatory prayers, imprecatory prayers,<sup>69</sup> advancement of the kingdom prayers, humility prayers, prayers for stability, strength, perseverance, and the like. While the Jude 9 prayer of “The Lord rebuke you,” which submits to the sovereign will of God,<sup>70</sup> would fall under such headings, it is clear that Paul does not have the binding and casting out of devils even remotely in his mind, or else now would be the time to instruct such combat. And if not in this present context, where else?

This takes our present consideration to that of the book of Jude where we do, in fact, see the archangel in spiritual combat with the prince of demons. In Jude 9, two preternatural equals<sup>71</sup> are spiritually sparring over the rights to the bones of Moses,<sup>72</sup> and even Michael does not presuppose to directly confront and “cast out” or personally

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<sup>69</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:88.

<sup>70</sup> While Clinton Arnold allows for ekballistic encounters with demons in some case, he nevertheless makes the very perceptive, though haunting insight from Jude 9: “We do not have the right to tell a spirit to leave if it has an invitation [from the Lord] to stay.” Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 166.

<sup>71</sup> It must be remembered that God and Satan are not spiritual counterparts, as Satan is a created entity, glorious though he may have been, and powerful though he may be. Instead, there is one archangel mentioned in the Scriptures, and Perkins makes the argument that this is not a class of many angels, but a reference to but one, Michael, the prince of the angels (see Perkins, *Works*, 4:149–50, for the full discussion). Michael, as the prince of angels, and not Christ, is the counterpart to Satan, the prince of demons. It is also in this section that Perkins makes the argument that Michael is *not* to be equated with Jesus as some mistakenly argue.

<sup>72</sup> It is fascinating to follow Perkins’s thought of why the contention of Moses’s body and the need for the Lord to bury his body in a place no one would know or find, and that of instigating false veneration in the Old Testament church. If Satan could use the bones of the great prophet of old, he could sow seeds of false religion in the church underage, much like the veneration of saints in the Eastern and Catholic traditions. Perkins, *Works*, 4:153.

rebuke Satan. Perkins makes much out of the fact that even glorious angels, namely the chief angel, do not place themselves in a position that only the Lord sovereignly holds: the power to command devils. And from there argues, if even angels dare not act in such a way, how can mere men, who have not been granted the right to such office or authority, presuppose a blasphemous declaration?<sup>73</sup> Angels dare not transgress the “power, justice, sovereignty, and lordship of God” who is over them, but “must be subject thereunto” and leave all “judgment, restraint, correction, and repayment of the devil” to the Lord alone.<sup>74</sup>

Instead of direct confrontation and exorcistic authority, what does the angel do, but pray? The prayer was a simple one, leaving matters in the sovereign hands of the Lord, who alone has the right to vengeance and wrath (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19). The prayer was that of, “The Lord rebuke you,” and this over the body of Moses. From such action, Perkins asks, “What must a man do that is to encounter with the devil, either by temptation, possession, or otherwise?,” to which he answers, “He must follow the practice of the archangel, even flee to God by prayer and entreat *Him* to rebuke him.”<sup>75</sup> He goes on “The Lord must be entreated to restrain the malice of the devil, that he may not in himself or instruments prevail.”<sup>76</sup> In the same manner that Jesus speaks of “prayer and fasting” (Matt 17:21) or in some contexts “prayer” (Mark 9:29) as being more enduring than apostolic sign gifts and exorcistic abilities, so here we see prayer is the more certain and prescribed means of dealing with devils than direct encounters.

Another example Perkins cites from Scripture to demonstrate that prayer is the more enduring means of engaging with the demonic than direct or ekballistic encounters, is that of Paul praying for the removal of the thorn in his flesh. While that context does

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<sup>73</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 4:154.

<sup>74</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 4:154–55.

<sup>75</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 4:156. Emphasis added.

<sup>76</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 4:156.



not immediately present itself as demonically induced suffering, the Greek is quite clear that Paul is facing “an angel of Satan” (2 Cor 12:7, ἄγγελος Σατανᾶ). While there is a range of potential meanings or translations to such a grammatical construction, the reality that this thorn was sent by Satan is indisputable. It is in such a context that Perkins states, “Paul prayed to be delivered from the angel of Satan that buffeted him; but the Lord answered that it should not so be, because His grace whereby he was enabled to resist his temptation was sufficient. And Paul, finding the fruit of his prayers on this manner, protests hereupon that he will rejoice in his infirmities [2 Cor 12:9].”<sup>77</sup> Here again we see the need to wait upon the sovereign decision of the Lord and when deliverance is not granted, to patiently bear up under the affliction until the time the Lord should grant. In such instances, then the prayer should be for God’s endurance and that his grace would indeed be found sufficient to sustain.

In, *A Golden Chain*, Perkins unpacks the various elements of faithful prayers.<sup>78</sup> Chiefly, prayers “in Christ” have two parts, that of petition and assent. In petition, we ask anything which is according to God’s will, expressing wants and desires for God to supply those wants. And then with regard to assent, the Scriptures call us to believe and profess before God that he in due time will grant to us those requests which are made in accord with his will.<sup>79</sup> Finally, though there are many infirmities in the one praying, the efficacy is in God alone who brings these answers to pass, and in receiving answer, the believer is called upon to give thanks to the Lord with joy and gladness for granting the request. In applying these notions to our present topic of the demonic, we see how they dovetail perfectly with our preceding meditation on praying that demon-afflicted

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<sup>77</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 5:148–49.

<sup>78</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:206–7. See especially s.v. “Calling Upon God.”

<sup>79</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:207.

individuals will be delivered from their demonization, and then waiting on the Lord until the due time as the Lord grants the request. And yet, in so doing, the prayer of the righteous person must pray in accord with faith that the Lord will grant that which he is requesting in accord with the Lord's will.<sup>80</sup>

Allow an illustration at this point. The Lord has promised to heal the believer of every physical ailment which ails her.<sup>81</sup> It is an absolute promise, ultimately, but not an absolute promise this side of glory. Therefore, the believer may pray, by faith, that the Lord will indeed heal, however imperfectly of all that physically ails her this side of glory, knowing that the promise, ultimately, is *yea and amen* in Christ. In the same manner, the promise of deliverance from all afflictions (demonically instigated affliction included, of course) is an ultimate one, but not necessarily this side of glory. Therefore, the believer may pray by faith to be relieved of all demonically instigated assaults, knowing that the promises are ultimately *yea and amen* in Christ, but vestiges of suffering and instigation may remain this side of the consummation. It is into such a context that God's grace is sufficient to sustain, even when his answer to our prayer for deliverance is "no," for the second half of such a negative answer is always "my grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor 12:9).

It was mentioned in the preceding portion of this present treatment on prayer, that there is that which is more durative than apostolic sign gifts and direct confrontation with devils, and that is prayer and fasting. While we will revisit fasting in the following subsection as a subset of prayer, it must not be lost on us at this point that Christ himself, when his disciples could not cast out a demon, instructed prayer and fasting. The father of the boy went to Jesus, indicating this was a demon who brought affliction into the child's

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<sup>80</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:207.

<sup>81</sup> See Rev 21:4; Isa 25:8; Ps 147:3, etc.

life in a way that mimicked muteness and epileptic seizures (Mark 9:17–18) and had been with the boy from a very young age and seemingly lengthy period of time (cf. v. 21). Jesus appeals to the man’s faith, and then casts out the devil (vv. 23–26). Then when the disciples are alone with Jesus they ask, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” to which Jesus replies “This kind can come out only by prayer” (or in some manuscript traditions, “by prayer and fasting,” as compared to Matt 17:21). The weight of this assertion from Jesus must be appreciated and understood. When asking what are the most powerful means of engaging in spiritual warfare, when the disciples had the sign gifts uniquely gifted to them, Jesus did not appeal to greater faith in order to cast out. He did not appeal to the disciple who could wield exorcistic rites with greater precision or authority. Instead, he pointed to that which is more powerful and more enduring than the gifts afforded the first century office of apostle, and that of prayer! If this is not an endorsement of the power and effectiveness of prayer when encountering the demonic, then perhaps we fail to appreciate the strength of how Jesus is speaking.

Lastly in this section, however, we must consider the larger setting of prayer in Ephesians 6. Perkins says in his *Cases of Conscience*,

First of all, it is to be remembered, that though Satan’s malice and power are very great and large, yet he cannot practice the same against the children of God, when, where, and how he lists. The malice which Satan bears to mankind, and principally to the members of Christ, appears in this: he is said “to accuse them before God, day and night” (Rev 12:10), and “as a roaring lion, to walk about the world, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8). Again, the Scripture notes him to be a powerful spirit, whose strength far exceeds and surpasses the might of any man or creature that is not of an angelic nature as [he] is. For he is termed “a prince of the air” and “the god of this world.” His power reaches even to the spirits and souls of men, whereby he works in the children of disobedience (Eph 2:2). His principality is so great that no strength, no defense of man, is able to withstand it, unless man takes unto himself “the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:194.

The whole armor of God is the context in which Paul appeals to our use of prayer in spiritual warfare. Therefore, consideration must be given to how prayer fits with this larger picture of the panoply.

Powlison, in his various treatments of the demonic,<sup>83</sup> compellingly presents how each piece of armor is in fact the armor worn by Christ as he accomplished salvation for his people. He shows how all pieces (with the lone exception of the shield, which finds its referent in the Psalms) show up in Isaiah's prophecy as it relates to the suffering servant and God himself accomplishing deliverance for his people (most notably, Isa 11:4–5; 49:2; 52:7; 59:17). Thus the armor is Christ's and the church is clothed in Christ. Paul's image is that of union with Christ.

Secondly, all verbs in this section of Scripture (Eph 6:10–20) are corporate commands (“you all put on”). The armor, therefore, is not the armor of the lone soldier,<sup>84</sup> but the armor of the church of Jesus. The apostle is calling the whole church of Christ to stand in Christ as their defense and protection. This situates the prayers we have been talking about in two unique ways. First, prayers for deliverance and protection from the enemy must always be “in Christ.” The believer has no authority in himself to cast out demons or interface with devils.<sup>85</sup> The victory is Christ's, the authority is Christ's, the sovereign decision to deliver or protect is Christ's alone.

Second, these means are not exclusively individualistic as twenty-first century American Christians may be tempted to believe that they are. These prayers are, primarily in the apostle's mind and in this section, the prayers of the church. They are the

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<sup>83</sup> David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995); Powlison, *Safe and Sound*; and Powlison, “The Classical Model,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*, 89–111.

<sup>84</sup> If one were to believe warfare is simply the individual soldier versus the enemies of God, tell that to Uriah the Hittite (cf. 2 Sam 11:14–17), who found himself the lone soldier in a particular part of the battle! Battle is always corporate, and spiritual warfare is no different.

<sup>85</sup> See Perkins's argument in Perkins, *Works*, 4:154–56.

corporate requests of his body, as it is *his body* that is clothed in *his armor*, and as they appeal to the rightful Head and Victor. If it was one of the chief reasons Christ came, to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), and crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15), it is no accident then that Paul says elsewhere that God is crushing the head of the serpent under the feet of the church, in the corporate sense (Rom 16:20). Individual Christians are not being called upon to conflict with individual devils, casting them out in prayer. Instead, the church of Jesus on earth is to engage in the corporate means Christ has established, the reading and preaching of the Word, the sacraments, and prayer, and in so doing, watch the kingdom of darkness's inability to stand against the advance of the kingdom of Christ. Such a corporate understanding places a refreshing emphasis upon a well-trodden and familiar text.

### *Fasting*

We have seen in the previous section that Christ appeals to prayer, *and fasting*, as an enduring response to the demonic. Although fasting is but a subset of the larger conception of prayer, it is still a unique form of prayer with a unique emphasis in our present consideration of spiritual warfare. In general, as we begin, Perkins defines a fast as “a voluntary and extraordinary abstinence taken up for a religious end.”<sup>86</sup> It is extraordinary in that it is not daily, nor is it mere moderation of food and drink. And when he says it is for a religious end, this implies in Perkins's mind, a just and weighty cause, exercised in right manner, aimed to accomplish a right end.<sup>87</sup> In the case in which we are occupied, that of demonic affliction, pleading with the Lord through such means of urgent prayer as fasting, satisfies the objectives Perkins has set out for us. By praying and fasting for deliverance from devils, we are telling the Lord by our outward estate and

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<sup>86</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:337.

<sup>87</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:337–38.

willful humiliation, deliverance is more important than food itself. To be delivered of demonic instigation is certainly an extraordinary occasion of a just and weighty cause, and is of a religious end. Coupling these notions with what was said in the previous section of this paper, if Christ states that prayer and fasting are more durative and permanent than ekballistic activity, the implication is that they are also superior to that of exorcistic gifting—for that which endures in Christ’s economy is indeed superior (see also 1 Cor 13:11, 13).

The final implication to Christ’s teaching of the durative means (prayer and fasting, contra exorcistic sign gifts) implies there are types of demonic afflictions which require patience, for *fasting* implies time. A religious fast does not take one hour. It typically does not take but a single night. Fasting in the face of demonic instigation implies a duration of the affliction. Such a suggestion is not to say that therefore believers are to engage in lengthy intervention sessions, as images may be conjured from the 1973 horror film *The Exorcist*. The length of time spoken of here is in no way meant to imply supernatural conflict or some dramatic phenomenon. Instead, the implication of time one may find themselves afflicted by devils in various ways is consistent with what this dissertation has been advancing thus far, that there are times the believer may be called to “bearing up under trial,” which is only further implied and undergirded by Christ appealing to *fasting* as a means of seeking the Lord’s merciful deliverance.

In all of this present consideration, however, Perkins does directly deal with prayer *and fasting* in dealing with the demonic, when speaking of those demonized, when he says they “must show forth their faith whereby they depend on the free favor and mercy of God for their deliverance.”<sup>88</sup> He continues,

How may this be done? By hearty prayer unto God, *joined with fasting* that the same may be more earnest. In [this] prayer the main desire of the heart must be absolutely

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<sup>88</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393.

for the pardon of their sins, and then for deliverance from the hurts and torments of diabolical persons, yet not absolutely (as for the other) but with this condition: so far forth as it stands with God's glory and their own good. For these are the bounds and limits of all temporal good things. The Lord makes no absolute promise of them, but with these conditions and qualifications.<sup>89</sup>

Here we see all the elements we have been seeking to establish. The afflicted must cast themselves upon the sovereign deliverance of God. They must avail themselves of all lawful means. They are to expect deliverance by faith, though they have no absolute promise they will certainly be delivered. And they are to bear up should they not be granted deliverance in the immediacy. The additional element Perkins helps us to see in this quotation, however, is fasting is a subset of prayer, making such prayer of faith all the more earnest in its use and aims.

### **Conclusion**

We have seen that the enduring response to the dark spiritual realms is that of the ordinary means of grace, of Word, sacrament, and prayer. All three of these are both preventative (inoculative) and responsive when dealing with spiritual warfare. Additionally, all three of these are corporate in nature and are not merely individualistic in our understanding and application of these means. Corporate prayer, corporate fasting, corporate proclamation of the Word, and of course, the corporate use of the sacraments, are all at least inoculative upon a church and culture when it comes to demonization. What is more, the corporate response to the demonic is not an element that ought to be overlooked in this context. Additionally, we have found the whole armor of Christ to be corporate, and the need to corporately stand against the wiles of the devil. And of course, as the sacraments are inherently corporate, we need to avail ourselves of the sacraments for the strengthening and deepening of our faith and against the assaults of the evil one.

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<sup>89</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:393. Emphasis added.

In all of this though, there are private and individual responsibilities, as we do not exclude the private for the corporate.

Especially in the application of these matters to biblical counseling, the private ministry of Word, sacrament, and prayer must not be forgotten at this point. We have seen the Word applied to particular lies and temptations, and believing the Word in the face of accusations, is a staple of the ordinary means ministry. In the case of looking to one's baptism to silence accusations on our identity or praying for the efficacy of the Lord's Supper to strengthen the believer in Christ, in these we see an individual aspect of the sacraments. And finally, prayer is the easiest to connect to the private ministry, as we are to be praying for deliverance from affliction by faith, even doing so more solemnly and earnestly in fasting for freedom from oppression. In all of the corporate as well as individual elements of the ordinary means, Perkins calls us to a responsible and sensibly grounded response to the demonic.



## CHAPTER 5

### APPLICATION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

As the title of this dissertation indicates, we have been in conversation with William Perkins—an interview with the father of Puritanism, of what he would have us to know about the dark spiritual realms, and how such awareness applies to pastoral counseling. Also, as the title implies, we have been seeking to *develop* an awareness of the demonic, as it relates to the field and discipline of biblical counseling. Thus, we have sought to *introduce* a situational awareness to the field, and we have begun to apply such an awareness to a Puritan and Reformed methodology. We now turn our attention to the way in which this immediately impacts the field of biblical counseling.

#### **Moving from an Overgeneralization and Atheism to Theism**

If our opening literature review was correct in summarizing the inaugurator of the modern expression of biblical counseling, Jay Adams, that he presented an *atheistic* approach to the demonic,<sup>1</sup> and the second-generation conciliator, David Powlison, moved the field to a rather generic approach to the demonic,<sup>2</sup> the present dissertation has sought to move the field to a *theistic*, or situationally aware system and practice. If successful thus far in our endeavor, we have seen that the pastor/counselor must be aware of fiery

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<sup>1</sup> Jay E. Adams, *The Big Umbrella: And Other Essays and Addresses on Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 120–21.

<sup>2</sup> See David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995); David Powlison, *Safe and Sound: Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2019); and David Powlison, “The Classical Model,” in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 89–111.

darts, demonically induced dreams, possession (in whole or in part), demonically induced sickness, attacks on the body or the mind, delusions (both real and imagined), lies suggested to the person from devils, false signs and wonders, illusions, false prognostications, the feigning of “good” healings or “beneficial” casting out of spirits, delusions, temptation, the “haunting” of locations, and generally speaking, the demonization of believer and unbeliever alike. Besides direct molestation from devils, the counselor must also be aware of indirect or mediated “attacks” through other means besides a demon itself, such as the case of Peter’s tempting of Christ not to go to the cross, Balaam’s inciting Israel to sin and thereby incurring curse, or David numbering the troops.

To discern the above, one must perceive “the hand of Joab is in this” (2 Sam 14:19), as Puritan authors would often point to as a verse which demonstrates the need to perceive the devil’s involvement in a situation,<sup>3</sup> even if explicit *proof* is not provided—the tree is still known by its fruit, and spiritual matters are discerned by spiritual people (Matt 12:33; 1 Cor 2:14, respectively). Thus, even if we do not have immediate revelation telling us the devil is involved in something, as some would allege is the only means by which we could conclude one is demonized, we do however have the faculties of wisdom and discernment, trained by a constant practice in the Word, and thereby we are able to discern good from evil (cf. Heb 5:14). Biblical counseling indeed offers a method of guiding people, having discerned a reasonable awareness of spiritual matters.

Every system of counseling, biblical or otherwise, engages in investigation, interpretation, and intervention. In investigation, we see the need to be situationally aware of the category of the demonic. In interpretation, if we only attribute

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<sup>3</sup> Two such examples are Thomas Watson and Thomas Brooks using this same verse in such a way. See Thomas Watson, *Lord’s Prayer*, rev. ed. (1692; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960), 264; and Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies against Satan’s Devices* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2017), 152.

demonological activity to the world or the flesh, our interpretive criteria are biblically incomplete. And for intervention, if all we are afforded is calmly talking to the counselee before us, applying biblical truths irrespective of a demonic origin, our intervention lacks the Bible's full-orbed ordinary means prevention and response mentioned in the preceding chapter when demonic activity is involved. Thus, all the tasks of the counseling enterprise are impinged upon by the category of the dark spiritual realms, and a lack of regard for such a category will leave the practitioner with a diminished Christian taxonomy when it comes to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In the CCEF three trees model,<sup>4</sup> the circumstance of one's life is merely the heat of our environment. What matters most, of course, is the response one has to the circumstances. One can find oneself in an ideal scenario and still bring forth bad fruit, or one can be in a state of suffering and hardship and produce good fruit from a good heart, as well as everywhere in between. When this model is functionally applied to the demonic realm, what results is Powlison's situational overgeneralization to the reality of devils.

In *Safe and Sound*, Powlison tells the story of a young woman who, while at church, manifested multiple personalities, spoke in a low guttural voice, and spewed forth rank blasphemies.<sup>5</sup> He explicitly states in response to the notion of why she acted this way, "it is a puzzle about which we do well to remain agnostic." He goes on, "naming her problems as demonic . . . is unhelpful speculation," and "true spiritual warfare looks beyond the problems and sees the person."<sup>6</sup> Jarringly, this is literally the exact opposite counsel the apostle Paul gives in Ephesians 6:12, when he says that our wrestlings are not

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change*, 2nd ed. (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2008), 84. See figure 6.1 on the three trees diagram.

<sup>5</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 72–73.

<sup>6</sup> Powlison, *Safe and Sound*, 76.

with flesh and blood, but with supernatural entities.<sup>7</sup> It seems one's presuppositional commitments that we *cannot* know and discern the realities of demons, leads one to draw a troubling, albeit well-meaning, conclusion that is actually moving the counselor away from biblical categories. To suggest that one's circumstances need not be accurately discerned, and true spiritual warfare merely deals with the person, is to discount and dismiss biblical data and a theological dimension of true biblical counsel.<sup>8</sup>

### **A More Complete Taxonomy**

Dimensionally, then, Perkins offers a fuller-orbed perspective. Just as Mike Emler has provided a fuller taxonomy of caring for people as *sinner*, *sufferer*, and *saint*, so too the Puritans provide more than a willful agnosticism to our circumstances and call us to discerningly perceive which great enemy we are primarily wrestling with, the world, the flesh, or the devil. As such, the observations drawn, the interpretations derived, and the biblical solutions provided will be the stronger for it. Additionally, biblical counselors know that the wrong diagnosis results in the wrong solutions—treating manic episodes from an exclusively material perspective (i.e., as only brain state), or addressing adulterous activity as mere addiction, does not account for causality or heart issues—just as believing neurological decline must only be counseled in moral categories (e.g., behavioral concerns resulting from Alzheimer's). Good biblical counsel has always taken into consideration sound body and soul care, just as good medical practice considers the importance of more than mere physiologic treatment and encourages the spiritual

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<sup>7</sup> “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12).

<sup>8</sup> Eph 6:10–20 offers a different investigative, interpretative, and interventive grid through which to see one's situation than that of Jas 1:13–15. In other words, the Bible offers different counsel for a different enemy: the devil or the flesh. Pastor counselors do well keeping in mind the Bible's various diagnoses and solutions and not artificially condensing them down.

dimension of healing as well.<sup>9</sup> After all, persons are psychosomatic unities—ensouled bodies and embodied souls. And as we have seen in our treatment thus far, demonic influence can be experienced in both body and soul.<sup>10</sup> To fail to recognize such a category in a situational awareness is to do disservice to the “heat”<sup>11</sup> that the believer and unbeliever experiences in this world and to leave untapped the biblical remedies to such particular affliction.

Therefore, biblical counseling needs to develop demonic affliction as a category of individual suffering, and more than mere awareness, needs to develop an exclusively biblical response to such demonic affliction. In the same way Emlet re-supplied to the church the categories of “sufferer” and “saint,” so too Perkins provides a biblical category lost to time: the demonic. Granted, this category of “devil,” does in fact, fall under the broader category of “suffering” and by that Powlison is accurate in situating devils under the “heat” in the three trees model. However, that still does not take into account the different response based upon different causes. Ephesians 6 deals with a different methodology (i.e., standing) compared to Ephesians 4 or James 1, 3–4, which call for repentance or mortification and vivification. When the source of one’s troubles is that of fiery darts, the solution is the whole armor and injunctives of Ephesians 6, not merely put-off/put-on. Alternatively stated, when one faces temptations of the flesh, the

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<sup>9</sup> By this, the author does not mean that medical doctors must be Christian practitioners and foster the one true religion. Instead, the author has in mind a good bedside manner, encouragement, positive goals, attainable benchmarks, and caring for one’s emotional state even while addressing primarily physiological concerns in the medical field.

<sup>10</sup> See Luke 10:13–17; Matt 4:8; Perkins’s coordinate exegesis, Eph 6:16; and Perkins’s comments on demonic afflictions in the body and afflictions in the mind: William Perkins, *Works of William Perkins*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2020), 8:191–96; and 8:198–203, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> This is once again a reference to the CCEF three trees model as recorded in Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 84.

solution is mortification and vivification, when one faces devils, the biblical prescription is different.

What is more, the Reformed world tends to view an understanding of *total depravity* as theologically neat and tidy. Reformed practitioners know the flesh, the biological effects of the fall, the spiritual effects of the fall, the noetic and thelemic effects of the fall, and so on. Biblical counselors are well-aware of how to mortify sinful desires. When it comes to the world and the devil categories, however, the Reformed world is less precise. Reformed theology is so defined on *the flesh* it has no functional need of the devil. Such a theological position excludes an entire category which the Scriptures acknowledge and advance as a possible source of anguish to the believer and unbeliever alike.

Scripture states that the Christian is not unaware of the devil's devices (cf. 2 Cor 2:11), while the modern believer likely finds themselves unaware of the devil's strategies. As such, the counselor's solutions and responses are not as robust as they otherwise could be. What is more, the atheistic or generalist approach of the past fifty years in the movement, results in no functional response to the demonic. If devils are at play, and the counselor encourages mortification, when in fact there is genuine demonic activity, practitioners will have misdiagnosed and misapplied the biblical balm. Alternatively, if one has an over-response beyond the prescribed ordinary means, the counselor will have abandoned God's precepts for animistic and charismatic excesses. In either case of under-response or over-response, as C. S. Lewis would have us believe, the devil would delight.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> C. S. Lewis's words come to mind: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about 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 pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942; repr., San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), ix.

While modern biblical counselors may functionally dismiss the category of the demonic, the world and its system of counsel fares worse. The Scriptures themselves surely have a situational awareness of demonically instigated epilepsy (Mark 9:20, 22), and demonically instigated severe curvature of the spine (Luke 13:11), while being nuanced enough to distinguish between physical ailments alone and those induced by devils (e.g., Matt 4:24). But the world cannot conceive of such a category. The spiritual realms, let alone the dark spiritual realms, is a taxonomy that the world's materialist overreach cannot account for. While the Reformed church would see such a situational awareness and response as charismatic overreach, the church is in the same functional position as the world's awareness and response to the demonic, that of functional materialists, so far as devils are concerned.

We are speaking into a culture that would understand mental disorder in a strictly biological sense. Someone losing their mind,<sup>13</sup> convinced of hallucinations,<sup>14</sup> experiencing vivid or lucid dreaming,<sup>15</sup> must be biological in origin, as the world's systems assume. Or, in the case of the church, mental disorders must be strictly spiritual,

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<sup>13</sup> Musa Basseer Sami and Peter Liddle, "Neurobiology of Psychosis and Schizophrenia 2021: Nottingham Meeting," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (March 1, 2022): 289–91. Five different models or explanations for psychosis are discussed. In each one, illness, abnormalities in the neurology of the brain, physiological processes of decline in psychosis, the impact of drugs, and autoimmunity's impact on psychosis are discussed. As more modern advancements in the field of schizophrenia, it is notable that in all of these models, physiology and neurophysiology at that, are all that are discussed. There is no discussion of the immaterial or spiritual dimensions of man whatsoever.

<sup>14</sup> Patricia Boksa, "On the Neurobiology of Hallucinations," *Journal of Psychiatry and Neuroscience* 34, no. 4 (July 2009): 260–62; although the authors admit that neurobiology can only point to correlation not causation of hallucinations, they nevertheless advance a material-only model for how one would understand auditory or visual hallucinations. No category of the immaterial or spiritual dimension is in view.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Baird, Sergio A. Mota-Rolim, and Martin Dresler, "The Cognitive Neuroscience of Lucid Dreaming," *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* 100 (May 2019): 305–23. The researchers advance neuroscientific explanations for lucid dreaming, potential brain stimulation that may *bring about* lucid dreaming, and the neurobiological explanation for consciousness involved in lucid dreaming. In all of these elements, no immaterial or spiritual dimension is remotely suggested.

so far as the flesh is concerned.<sup>16</sup> While such afflictions may be both, it can be exclusionary. We need to regain an additional layer of perception, though, the additional category that our world and materially-minded, semi-agnostic church cannot account for, that is, demonic affliction and instigation. The concept of devils in its rightful place in a biblical counseling paradigm is an affront to an exclusionary perspective—those exclusionists who would say mental disorders are exclusively physiological, or the exclusionists who would fundamentally believe mental disorder is exclusively spiritual, and by that we mean, the flesh. Furthermore, those who rightly perceive a body-soul interaction, may conclude that mental disorders are exclusively physical or spiritual, in combination, such theorists and practitioners find themselves failing to perceive this additional category of demonic instigation we must not reject.

Biblical counseling must develop a self-aware recognition of the Christian's three great enemies, and all three, the third of which modern pastoral care models have lost to time: the world, the flesh, and the devil. What this dissertation has sought to do is provide the category of the devil with the situational dimensionality the Scriptures would require.

### **An Added Dimension of Counseling Awareness**

By stating that we are aiming to add an additional dimension to the counselor's awareness, this is not to suggest that the counselor must infallibly perceive if and when the demonic is involved, and in which cases *only* the demonic is active. Or if and when the flesh is involved and in which cases *only* the flesh is involved. Or additionally in the instance of the world and in which cases *only* the world is at play. Instead, such an added

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<sup>16</sup> David Powlison, "Vive La Différence!," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 28, no. 1 (2014): 2–7. While Powlison acknowledges many different dimensions, such as biological, social, and even demonic, he concludes that in any situation, that which is decisive is the volitional human heart, regardless of various influences (cf. p. 5).



dimensionality is to suggest that we are presently seeking to reclaim to counseling the facet of the devil's influence. If such a dimensional consideration has been lost to time, the objective would not be to continue in an overgeneralization and remain practically unaware of this third category of Christian enemy, but instead to counsel with an ever-present awareness that this added facet exists.

When demonic influence is perceived, then the appropriate biblical interventions and responses must be employed. Just as when the flesh is rightly perceived, calling the believer to repentance and faith-filled obedience is the appropriate step. So too when devils are rightly ascertained—standing, resisting, and combatting with the ordinary prescribed means is the appropriate response. As we have been arguing throughout this dissertation, a situational awareness means being aware of the various dimensions of a person's experience, most particularly that of the demonic, and as we move to an applicational theology with this additional dimension of devils, we consider how those various dimensional realities shape the individual's response. The aim is not to stop at awareness but is then to recommend the correct response and the appropriate remedy for each.

The dimensions our counselees face are certainly that of the world, the flesh, *and the devil*. But there are also demonically afflicted bodies, flesh as “sinful corruption” or flesh as “bodily brokenness” from the somatic effects of the fall. We can see in the above preceding portion that the medical world and the psychological world conceive of even mental issues as physiological and material, but there is immediately the added spiritual component of our bodies suffering and declining as a result of the fall. What is more, there is the extra dimension of devils afflicting one's physiological realities (see Matt 17:15; Luke 13:11, 16). In defining and describing these various dimensions, this is not to suggest that the counselor must parse out which dimension is *exclusively* at play, as the discussion of exclusionism above demonstrates some would seek to do. No, instead, this added dimensionality is to first understand *that* these dimensions are active in the life

of the believer, and then seek to discern *how* each dimension is active. To categorize this notion a slightly different way, this framework means the counselor is not tasked with choosing *which* dimension is active and only which dimension is active, but rather discerning *how* each dimension is active. And since our primary task has been that of apprehending the demonic dimension, we will seek to apply perceiving the demonic and responding in preventative and reactive biblical care in the counseling enterprise. Again, if our aim is recognizing how the demonic is active (mediated or directly), applying the correct biblical intervention becomes a realistic endeavor.

### **Toward an Applicational Theology**

Putting this all together in an applicational direction, then, discernment between human agency and demonic agency is the first step.<sup>17</sup> If counselors are primarily dealing with the category of the flesh and temptation resulting from one's own desires, then the biblical solution will look very different (e.g., Jas 1; 3–4; Eph 4) than when centrally dealing with the category of the demonic. So, of first order importance is discerning the works of the devil. How do we perceive whether something is issuing forth from the flesh or is originating chiefly from the devil? In some sense, Perkins's answer to such a notion can be perceived as an overstatement or as a reductionistic assertion. But if consideration is given, the useful simplicity of his thought can be seen at such a point. Perkins says that Satan has two great helpers in this sphere: the flesh and the world.<sup>18</sup> We see both the world and the flesh are mentioned as being under the sway of the evil one in

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<sup>17</sup> This is not an exclusionary endeavor—it is not the aim of this applicational theology to ascertain when the flesh is isolated and the lone instigator toward sin, or when devils alone are the primary initiators of a given difficulty. Instead, primacy is being discerned.

<sup>18</sup> William Perkins, *Satans Sophistrie Ansuered by Our Saviour Christ and in Divers Sermons Further; to Which Is Added, a Comfort for the Feeble Minded, Wherein Is Set Downe the Temptations of a Christian* (London: Richard Fields, 1604), 149, ProQuest. It is also present but less clear in a portion of his republished works, in his *Golden Chain* (chap. 43 of the *Third Assault*), where Perkins states that Satan has two helps in his temptation: the flesh and the world. Perkins, *Works*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Greg A. Salazar (2018), 6:199.

Scripture (cf. 1 John 5:19; Eph 2:1–3). Additionally, and likewise, Richard Gilpin suggests that for the believer to be tempted, there must be an agreement of three parties: God to sovereignly permit the temptation, Satan to tempt, and man to concede to the temptation, giving in to the flesh.<sup>19</sup> What is more, very often initiation of temptation comes by means of the world.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, for the first area of discernment, thoughtfulness must be given as to the human agency or demonic agency as primary, of what the counselee is facing. Of course, there will be overlap, as the flesh will invariably be involved, at least in part, when devils tempt. Such a conception results in a multi-dimensional contribution where the fallen human nature and the suggestion of the devil overlap. George Scipione would colloquially refer to this as “limited liability,” as the devil makes the initial ghastly suggestion in the case of fiery darts, but then the flesh delights in the thought.<sup>21</sup> So Satan instigates, but he instigates in accord with the flesh. The world, the flesh, and the devil remain a clear and clean taxonomy, and distinction must be maintained; however, the human and demonic agency will doubtless display overlap and partial conflation in the

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Gilpin, *A Treatise of Satan’s Temptations* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000), 438–39; “He must use his craft, because he cannot compel; he must have God’s leave before he can overcome; he cannot winnow Peter before he sue out a commission, nor deceive Ahab till he get a license; neither can he prevail against us without our own consent” (127).

<sup>20</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:471. Perkins states,

And how can the prince of the world, Satan, love the faithful, that hates God? And how can he show favor to the members, that bitterly detests the head, Christ Jesus? And surely, it is the blessed will of God that His children shall welter and languish under afflictions, that they may learn to despise the world, to know themselves, to love God, to seek to Him, and to set their affections not on things on earth but on the things that are above. He lets the worldlings have their hearts’ ease; He lets them feed themselves with the pleasures of this world and set themselves as oxen against the day of slaughter. With His own children He declares after another manner. He takes them as it were by the heels; He flings them into a sea of melting glass. There He lets them for a time to seethe and boil, and in great perplexity to shift for themselves. At length He drags them to the shore and gives them ease of their former miseries. And all this is for this end: to sanctify and purify them and to cleanse them of the filthy dross of sin and to make them with joy of heart to praise and magnify His name, for which end they came into this world.

<sup>21</sup> George Scipione, “Introduction to Biblical Counseling,” course presented at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 12–November 21, 2009.

experience of the counselee as well as the discernment of the counselor.<sup>22</sup> Conceding that such multidimensionality is at work between personal and demonic actors, the flesh and the devil, effort must still be taken to disentangle the primacy and causality of the two. Thus, discrimination is needed regarding the criteria of which enemy is primarily at work in a given situation.

The two categories of mediated or direct demonic activity provide additional insight at this point as well. Some of the hallmarks of demonization that display Satan's handiwork, are the desire to destroy the image of God in man,<sup>23</sup> dealing in matters of fear,<sup>24</sup> sowing lies,<sup>25</sup> seeking to produce self-murder,<sup>26</sup> seeking to enslave,<sup>27</sup> and to bring accusation against believers and their identity in Christ.<sup>28</sup> Along these very lines, John, in his first epistle, instructs the church to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God"

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<sup>22</sup> Clinton Arnold captures this notion nicely in his threefold Venn diagram of the world, the flesh, and the devil, in his "balanced view of evil influences: biblical perspective" diagram. There are places on the Venn diagram where all three Christian enemies overlap, times when only two overlap, and contexts when only one great enemy is at play. Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 34.

<sup>23</sup> We have referenced Eph 5:29 in the immediate context of our battle not being against flesh and blood; Eph 6:12.

<sup>24</sup> The paradigm offered in 2 Tim 1:7 remains helpfully illuminating regarding the hallmarks of the other kingdom, it is a kingdom of fear.

<sup>25</sup> John 8:44 indicates that the devil has been a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Harkening all the way back to the Garden, Satan sought to murder the entire human race through the lie spoken to Eve.

<sup>26</sup> John 10:10 (additionally coupled with what we said above about Eph 5:29 and John 8:44) reveals a number of these hallmarks, as the evil one comes to "steal, kill, and destroy," whereas Christ comes to bring life and life abundant.

<sup>27</sup> One of the characteristics of Christ's reign is that of freedom (e.g., Gal 5:1; John 8:36; Ps 110:3), alternatively, we see the contrast the apostle sets up with the other kingdom and that of enslavement (cf. 1 Cor 6:12; Rom 6:6, 12).

<sup>28</sup> Rev 12:10 shares "accuser of the brethren" not only as a descriptor of Satan, but as a title. This is who he is, this is what marks his character well. By extension, his kingdom is marked by accusations against believers likewise.

(1 John 4:1–6).<sup>29</sup> Here, John is speaking to mediated demonic activity and not direct demonic activity, therefore, discernment is being advocated.<sup>30</sup>

The trademarks John mentions are falsehood, failing to confess the truth, teaching a false gospel, they are worldly and conform to the pattern of the world, they agree with the world’s wisdom, they reject the pure teaching of the Word, and earthly, worldly people receive their false teachings. By these many elements, the spirit of error, or as John states, the spirit of Antichrist, is able to be discerned. For present purposes, it will suffice to summarize that the other kingdom is marked by lies, a deviation from the gospel, seeking to lead people away from the gospel, and seeking to further lead people into worldliness and away from a true Christlike piety. These are some of the biblical criteria we are provided in distinguishing between the true kingdom and the other kingdom (cf. 2 Sam 14:19). After rightly diagnosing how the devil’s kingdom is at work and in which way spiritual conflict with the works of devils is taking place—whether that of diabolical dreams, fiery darts, believing lies which originate from the pit, or whatever demonic activity one may be dealing with—then the ordinary means response may next be established.

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<sup>29</sup> The full section of 1 John 4:1–6 reads,

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Graham Cole has an extensive excursus on the meaning of this passage in Graham A. Cole, *Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 197.

<sup>30</sup> After the injunction to “test the spirits” as to “whether they are from God,” John immediately transitions to non-spirit entities: false prophets who have gone out into the world teaching and confessing certain realities. This is therefore not a section on ascertaining what type of demon one is dealing with, instead, it is using word-wise discernment to conclude if an individual pastor, prophet, or teacher is one of the Lord’s children or one of the devil’s.

Secondly, when considering a response to devils, one's applicational theology to the field must find its grounding exclusively in the Word of God. To be unmoored from the Scriptures when dealing with demons, would place the practitioner in territory that is the mere imaginations of men, or worse still, the suggestions of Satan (cf. Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1).<sup>31</sup> Perkins, speaking of methodology not exclusively grounded in explicit commands of Scripture, and nothing more, says, "Satan is called the 'god of this world' (2 Cor 4:4) because men rather obey his suggestions than God. In this respect also, antichrist is called God, because he more straightly enjoins men to obey his own traditions than he does the very Word of God."<sup>32</sup> We are therefore presented with a contrast of obeying the Word of God and only the Word of God, or the god of this world, antichrist, and the traditions of men. Functionally, this is a sufficiency argument regarding the response to the demonic—will one's applicational theology be that which is explicit in the revealed will of God or will it venture outside of the all-sufficient resource and be guided by suggestions of men or devils.

Regarding this notion of the absolute purity of God's prescribed means and the opposition of God's prescribed means over and against the kingdom of darkness, elsewhere Perkins says, "The true worship of God . . . there is no possibility of darkness in light, no possibility of evil in goodness."<sup>33</sup> He goes on, that in idolatrous practices, "it is possible that he which by signs manifests his presence, and hears them that pray before images, be the devil himself, and do it by satanical operation. There is no such likelihood in the sacraments and Word preached, because they are founded in the institution of God."<sup>34</sup> The pure worship of God, Satan hates. And it is the pollution of the

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<sup>31</sup> "According to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan . . . or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture." Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1.

<sup>32</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. Shawn D. Wright (2018), 7:438.

<sup>33</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 7:474.

<sup>34</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 7:474.

pure means God has prescribed in word, sacrament, and prayer, that Satan works to institute and instill.

Lastly, in thinking of how the counselee or the individual believer must respond, there must be a standing, a holding of one's ground against the kingdom of darkness in one's life, and according to God's prescribed means. Commenting on Ephesians 6:13, Perkins states,

In like manner must every one of us resist evil; first, in himself, and then in them that appertain to him. Therefore Paul says to all, "Put on the armor of God, that ye may resist" (Eph 6:13). Here two things may be demanded. First, what must we resist? Paul answers again, "Principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness"—that is, the devil and all his angels. It may be said, we have no dealing with them, for they use not to appear unto us. Answer. That the devil come not to us visibly, but in the persons of evil men, and in the bad examples of all men. This made Christ say to Peter, "Come behind me, Satan, for thou art an offense unto me" (Matt 16:23) when Peter would have dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem. Again, it may be said, in what things must we resist them? Paul answers, "In heavenly things" (v. 12)—that is, in things which pertain to God's kingdom and concern either the salvation of our soul or the worship of God. For the devil seeks by all manner of evils, to hinder these good things. Moreover, this duty of resisting evil is so necessary, that we must resist sin, if need be, to the very shedding of our blood (Heb 12:4).<sup>35</sup>

The call to such resistance, is once again, a call to the lawfully prescribed means of God, as rightly applied to the believer in preventative measure as well as in response.

Thus, we have before us two principal categories to discern when approaching personal ministry: methods for identifying the way human agency is involved versus the way demonic agency is happening, and methods of responding to demonic instigation. These two categories will serve as a guiding framework for the applicational suggestions that follow, in dealing with personal ministry to the demonized, against fiery darts, combating lies, and footholds.

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<sup>35</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. Paul Smalley (2021), 2:100.

## **Personal Ministry to the Demonized**

First, we begin with direct demonic instigation. When considering this category, the example of the case of “the old hag” experience will illustratively serve as a non-mediated, direct demonic experience. This anecdotal encounter described across time and culture is known as the “devil on my chest” phenomenon of sleep paralysis, the night hag, the incubus or succubus, or other such nomenclature and descriptions. When one relays difficulty sleeping, being awakened in the night to an evil presence, and recurrently so, there may be value in exploring the details of such encounters.<sup>36</sup>

So first in order of sequencing, agency must be discerned—in what way is human agency or is demonic instigation involved? Questions should be asked of the counselee to determine if the experience displays the categories of the other kingdom. Is there a sense of fear and foreboding accompanying the experience (2 Tim 1:7); is the encounter marked by any content, such as lies or whispers (Job 4:12, 17); is there a bodily presence experienced as well (Job 4:15)? Similar categories of discernment show up in the 1 John 4 passage extrapolated above when “discerning the spirits.” Alternatively, in seeking to discern human agency’s involvement or if the experience is sub-preternatural, questions could be asked along the lines of physical causation. Is there pain or clear bodily experience of sleep paralysis, such as a pinched nerve, recurring back spasms, muscle cramping, etc. Has this been a longstanding physiological reality, or did this begin with sudden onset not associated with other biological concerns or causes.

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<sup>36</sup> To share a literal case counseled along these lines, a Reformed pastor was seeking help for regular terrifying experiences in the night. He would have auditory hallucinations (i.e., hearing voices), visual imprints upon his mind (i.e., flashes of grotesque faces in his mind’s eye), and the distortions of memories (i.e., recalling a conversation from earlier in the week where the face of a friend would greatly shift and the content would become ghastly). He described regularly waking up around 3 or 4 AM, experiencing intense, sudden, fearful, and oppressive thoughts. Voices would gutturally state accusatory and condemnatory content: “I own you” or “I will destroy you.” The voice was not discernable as an individual person’s voice. Prior to learning to resist these things with the principles outlined in this dissertation and an ordinary means response, his night would then be disrupted in sleeplessness and fear.



Such notions of physicality are of an entirely different nature than a malevolent sense of another being's presence in the room.

Another means of parsing human agency and demonic origin, would be that of an awareness of wakefulness or sleep. Can the counselee comprehend if he is asleep and dreaming, or is he genuinely attentive to his real-world surroundings and experiencing wakefulness at the time of the encounter? If the experience is a diabolic or natural dream versus an unmediated encounter with a devil, the response and discernment would be of a different order, as seen in chapter 3 of this work where Perkins furnishes us with the tools of distinguishing between the three different types of dreams.<sup>37</sup>

If indeed the counselee is not asleep, is aware of his surroundings, and is under the impression there is another personal agent in the room, the counselee's immediate thought may be that of crying out to the Lord in hope for deliverance, with a sense of wishing to declare "be gone" or some semblance of needing to dispel evil. Such an experience may be accompanied by a heaviness present that gives one the impression that prayer is hard, speaking aloud and calling upon the name of the Lord feels opposed, or such calling out may be perceived as challenging to accomplish—there may even be a heaviness in one's body, as if a weight is upon the person. These considerations are a few ways to help determine if the experience is marked by the other kingdom and bears the hallmarks of direct demonic instigation. By similar question asking and data gathering, the counselor can comprehend the origin of the late-night experience (e.g., 2 Tim 1:7).

If it can be perceived that demons may be involved in bringing about such nightmarish terror, the next task is providing ordinary means of grace methods of response. The general principles established thus far in the present study will provide additional help at this point. First, it ought to be remembered by both the counselor and

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<sup>37</sup> See chap. 3 of this dissertation, s.v. "Dreams."

counselee alike that God alone is sovereign over spirits. God alone ultimately determines if a demon has the right to stay or depart (see 1 John 5:18; Jude 9, and the connected discussion in previous chapters), and the means of prayer must be employed. Instead of instructing the counselee to cry out in one's night terror directly against the apparent demons, the child of God should cry out to their heavenly Father for deliverance. Jude 9 once again comes to mind and similar prayers should be invoked.

Perkins established the principle of engaging in prescribed worship when a location or a person has been given over to the kingdom of darkness—his treatment on satanically molested persons and buildings being most apropos at this point. Thus, *audibly* crying aloud to the Lord in prayer should be employed. If more than one person is present, such as the case of husband and wife, or if children are crying out in fear in the night to their parents, it would benefit to have multiple people pray aloud, requesting of the Lord that he would deliver and care for his people. If such diabolical experiences are more than a single instance and are recurring with some frequency, especially during what is known as “the witching hour,”<sup>38</sup> then Christ's words of “these come out only by prayer and fasting” might be diligently considered. Suggestion could be given that the family give themselves to regular, earnest prayer, even engaging in fasting in pleading for relief, calling upon the Lord to spare them from further demonic encounters on a daily or nightly basis. If the counselee has not instituted the practice of family worship, again, Perkins's notion of sanctifying people and locations with the ordinary means of plain worship might be offered as a reasonable assignment aimed toward deliverance from the molestation. Thus, family worship might be added as a regular part of a believing household, and the home itself should therefore be sanctified by the simple worship of

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<sup>38</sup> This is particularly the hour of 3 AM to 4 AM. This is known to occultists as the time of night when the preternatural realm is closest to the physical realm and most accessible. See Icy Sedgwick, “What Is the Fabled Witching Hour and Does It Actually Exist?,” *Icy Sedgwick* (blog), March 3, 2019, <https://www.icysedgwick.com/witching-hour/>.

God. If Perkins's notion of particular *locality* be taken seriously applicationally, the possibility of nightly family worship in the bedroom where such encounters have taken place as a means of setting apart the location unto God may also be recommended. Lastly, since the Lord is the one who commands demons, who oversees dreams, and who gives his loved ones sleep, then regular calling upon the Lord to protect and care for his children in such a fatherly way might be added as a nightly part of the family's practice, especially those who have experienced such late-night encounters.

Should the Lord delay in granting deliverance and relief to the demonized counselee, two additional responses of Perkins's demonology could be brought to mind at such a juncture. Perkins advocated patiently waiting upon the Lord until the sovereignly appointed and appropriate time of deliverance be afforded to the sufferer. This too could be attended in prayer, where the counselee is asking for the requisite grace sufficient for the present and unrelenting suffering, even while asking for deliverance and relief. Secondly, Perkins suggests that the believer may find himself demonized in the case of willful sin. The pattern of not only Perkins, but also the Scriptures, is that in the face of such affliction, the believer (in this case the counselee) is called to examine himself to see if there is any impure way within him which is granting an occasion of the devil or a season where the Lord permits chastisement at the hands of Satan.<sup>39</sup>

### **Personal Ministry against Fiery Darts**

In the second application-specific consideration, we are once again under the heading of direct demonic molestation, and that of fiery darts. When a counselee has come to believe lies, specifically sudden and alien lies arising externally from the mind of

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<sup>39</sup> Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2020), 9:392; cf. 1 Cor 11:28–31; Jas 5:14–16; and Ps 139:24.

the person,<sup>40</sup> fiery darts are therefore in purview. First, we begin with discernment as to whether we are primarily dealing with human agency, the thoughts and intentions of the counselee's mind, or that which is primarily originating from the suggestions of devils: demonic agency.<sup>41</sup> To do so, the counselee may be instructed in distinguishing that which arises within one's own mind as contrasted with the suggestions of devils. As was seen in the previous chapter, the hallmarks of the other kingdom so far as fiery darts are concerned, are (1) sudden, (2) contrary to our innate desires, (3) frightful in content, and (4) contrary to the natural order of things.<sup>42</sup> Although not explicitly stated in Perkins's list, another feature of the alternate kingdom is the tendency of these darts to come relentlessly, at least for a time.<sup>43</sup>

Take for instance the rather specific example of the sudden and unbidden desire to take one's life. Perhaps the counselee is washing dishes, and as she is putting back a recently washed and large kitchen knife, the suggestion steals across her mind to slash her wrists. First, this was not the present consideration of the individual. Her mind was occupied by the domestical responsibilities of cleaning and tidying the kitchen. Second, the thought was seemingly out of nowhere. Third, the image is a ghastly one of self-harm and death. Fourth, "no one ever hated his own flesh but cares for it" (Eph 5:29);

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<sup>40</sup> This is a process of discernment that will seek to be delineated and extrapolated shortly in this dissertation.

<sup>41</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Roger Pooley (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 68; and Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2018), 40. Additionally, Thomas Watson speaks of these suggestions as "our own children" speaking of children of the mind, thoughts and suggestions we believe are arising from within ourselves. Thomas Watson, *Lord's Prayer*, rev. ed. (1692; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1960), 263–64; and finally, Perkins, *Works*, 8:198–203.

<sup>42</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:199–200.

<sup>43</sup> This final feature is not always present, whereas the other four are common indicators of the work of the other kingdom. The nature of Satan pushing relentlessly for a time, then as the believer resists the devil, the devil will flee, he regroups and regathers his efforts at a more opportune time (cf. Jas 4:7; Luke 4:13). Perkins, *Works*, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (2014), 1:158–59.

and as such, this is contrary to the natural desire of humanity. While not every notion of self-harm and suicide is going to be a direct demonic temptation, such sudden assaults upon the mind bear the hallmarks of the other kingdom.

If, alternatively, the thoughts are slow, plodding, and have been present in the mind of the counselee for some time and are in accord with her tendencies and willful desires, while demonic instigation *may* have played a role in the initial origin of such temptation, these volitional inclinations emphasize the primacy of human agency in this second case. A depressive disposition, the regular thought of death being superior to her discouraging and despairing condition, and an ongoing battle with such thoughts do not bear the immediate hallmarks of the other kingdom, instead reveal a James 1:15 notion of temptation being in accord with her desires.

If then we are dealing with the first scenario, having discerned the primacy of sudden demonic and unmediated directed attacks, we find that the counselee has experienced unwanted intrusive thoughts, derailing her normal thoughts and care for her family and her duties as a diligent spouse and parent. Having first perceived the devil's hand involved with the suggestions, the initial order of response may simply be helping the counselee perceive such an awareness. If the counselee sees herself as suicidal, if she believes these insinuations upon her mind are originating "from herself," from within her own mind and soul, she will own these thoughts as not only her thoughts, but guilt and shame will accompany such suggestions. If the counselor can help her to comprehend this as largely direct, non-mediated demonic instigation, there should be relief that comes from knowing that these are not her innate desires. Oftentimes a counselee struggling with invasive thoughts thinks themselves "crazy," even explicitly asking "am I crazy?" for thinking of sudden, out of accord with normality type thoughts. To be assured that, no, she is not crazy, but that she credibly may be experiencing fiery darts, a notion not unknown to the Scriptures and their instructions (cf. Eph 6:16), there is a modicum of

stability that hopefully will result. As Perkins himself put this notion, “Men must not fear those kinds of thoughts.”<sup>44</sup>

Secondly, and so far as lawful responses to fiery darts are concerned, Perkins’s recommendations serve as practical application and direction of one’s counsel. He does not encourage striving against the thoughts themselves, for the individual has no immediate means to stop the immaterial insinuations upon one’s own immaterial mind. Perkins posits that there is no freedom in “striving against them, for the more they labor to resist them, the more they shall be entangled with them.”<sup>45</sup> The counsel is not to prevent such thoughts, but instead, to loathe and detest such thoughts. The counselee may be instructed along these lines that resistance does not begin with the fiery darts themselves, but in her immediate response to such darts. She can pray against the suggestions of the devil, plead to the Lord for deliverance from them (cf. Matt 6:13), abhor them, and immediately repent of any inclination toward such suggestions. In this way, the limited liability human agency is simultaneously being addressed in immediate repentance, and the hatred of that which is external and alien, the demonic suggestions, is resisted against. Here we comprehend the dimensionality we have been seeking to speak to—experiences such as this will not be exclusively demonic or exclusively of the flesh with clear demarcations between the two. But when chief agency is ascertained, in this case fiery darts of the evil one, sorting through the central response becomes clearer.

A third recommendation that flows from Perkins’s demonology on fiery darts, is the place of the communion of the saints as a means of resisting the suggestions of devils. Perkins sees godly company as being a natural means of dispelling such attacks, as holy conversation and the presence of others helps the counselee not be alone with her

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<sup>44</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:201.

<sup>45</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:201.

own thoughts.<sup>46</sup> Speaking openly to others about these impressions on the mind is a simple means for her to live in the light in godly company, inviting the light of truth to shine upon these darts, and to draw down upon the benefits of the fellowship of the saints.

The final remedy Perkins offered on fiery darts is that of filling one's mind with the Word of God. Not only do we see the Son of God resisting the attacks of the devil on the basis of the Word of God, so too ought the believer fill her mind with inoculative truth in preparing to stand against the wiles of the devil.<sup>47</sup> Perkins views such meditation as both inoculative and curative, for if this counselee were to fill her mind with coordinate truth of Scripture, she would be filling her heart with pure, lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy thoughts, and the fiery darts will have less effect and fewer places of purchase in the mind of the saint.<sup>48</sup>

Before this subject of fiery darts is concluded, perhaps another common illustration that arises will prove profitable. The example is that of a parent driving her children across a bridge, when the thought is then immediately presented to her, "what if I jerked the wheel and drove over the embankment?" If the counselee perceives these thoughts as her own and as naturally arising within her, she begins to view herself as a suicidal person, perhaps in need of hospitalization. The question likely comes to her mind whether she is worthy to continue functioning as the children's safe guardian. Such questions plague the sufferer's mind if she were to perceive such fiery darts as her own desires.

Once again, the first tier of apprehending the activity of the devil becomes crucially important. If these are predominantly suggestions of Satan, then personal guilt

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<sup>46</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:202.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Matt 4:1–11; Eph 6:10–20.

<sup>48</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:202–3.

and shame and embarrassed culpability are removed. If they are seen as temptations, and insinuations from wicked spirits, then immediate relief is rendered. Surely these are temptations, but they also must be understood as suffering and affliction at the hands of devils. We see the sinister trap in such covert insertions and inceptions of the mind. If the counselee would have buckled to the pressure, devils rejoice, for multiple image bearers are destroyed. If the person does not cave, which is nearly certain in such scenarios, but perceives the perception as her own inner dialogue, then she is inundated with a sense of fear and self-doubt. She is questioning the soundness of her mind. It is a trap with multiple prongs and ill outcomes. Recognizing, however, that even Christ himself was tempted upon the pinnacle of the temple to throw himself down, and such suicidal notions against the Son of God were the suggestions of the devil, there is comfort in knowing this is not an uncommon tactic brought against Christ's children likewise.

As Perkins would have us consider, the solution to such a suggestion is not rebuffing the dart itself, but recognizing it as a dart. For the counselee to be able to perceive demonic activity is simultaneously to remove the snare. Falsely diagnosing that which is principally the whisper of devils as being the thoughts of the flesh results in confusion and harm. But helping the counselee to see what is expectedly demonic, teasing it out from her own inclinations and desires, grants clarity in helping to overcome wrongfully taking to herself undue guilt and shame. It would be similar to one knowing a stage magician's trick, that which the performer presents to amaze and dazzle loses its effect because the audience knows how the trick is performed. So too the evil one in the case of suggestions to the counselee's mind as she drives. If the dart can be comprehended as arising externally from the counselee,<sup>49</sup> standing against such

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<sup>49</sup> See the above discussion, as well as Perkins on distinguishing fiery darts from the suggestions of one's own mind: chap. 3 of this dissertation, s.v. "Fiery Darts," from Perkins, *Works*, 8:198–203. There Perkins suggests suddenness, that which is contrary to one's desires, includes ghastly content, and is contrary to the light of nature. While the flesh may invariably be involved in part, permitting a multi-



suggestions becomes much easier. In this case, we once again see the multiple elements Perkins presents to recognize satanic involvement. There is suddenness of the suggestion, the way in which it is not in accord with the driver's desires as she was occupied with driving her family and not presently walking in a sorrowful, suicidal state. One can see the dreadful content of plunging one's vehicle, family and all, into the depths below, and how this is contrary to light of nature—as it is a mother's natural tendency to protect and care for one's family, not dispatch them in one fell swoop. In this second illustration, it is hoped that even a situational awareness of the demonic, in and of itself, can be understood as a means of inoculation and deliverance.

Continuing again in the vein of not only comprehending the added dimension of demonic agency regarding the counselee's thoughts, but next Perkins would have the beleaguered sufferer respond to these fiery darts with reasonable and ordinary means of grace responses. Like the earlier illustration of the kitchen knife temptation, the solution is not mere resistance or putting off—even though that too is a biblical help. But prayer for deliverance, an immediate hatred of the suggestions, counseling oneself with the coordinate and biblical truth claims which would combat such an assault on the mind, remembering one's standing in Christ, and speaking of such experiences with godly company. All these would provide an immediate defense and response for the counselee—some of which can be employed in the moment and some which would be spoken to others at a later time.<sup>50</sup> As we are developing an applicational theology and

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dimensional contribution where the fallen human nature and the suggestion of the devil overlap, a clean taxonomy of world, flesh, and devil must nevertheless be maintained.

<sup>50</sup> One can see how these practical suggestions line up with the ordinary means response and preventions of Word, sacrament, and prayer, and fellowship of the saints, just in slightly rearranged order. The second to last suggestion is appealing to one's baptism and ongoing participation in the Supper of the Lord, as these sacraments point to one's ongoing identity in Christ—in those two cases, the objective realities (I am baptized and I participate with Christ in the Supper) are appealed to as more concrete and substantive than mere appeals to what one believes. The sensational (i.e., appealing to the senses) signs are applying Christ to one's physical senses.

adding this additional dimension of the demonic in our counsel, it can be seen how Perkins's treatment of discernment and response has methodological import.

### **Personal Ministry in Combating Lies**

The previous category has begun to tread upon demonically instigated lies directed at the counselee—but now we turn to the more subtle lies, the *mediated* demonic insinuations. Previously we saw suggestions which come in the form of fiery darts, or the direct demonic activity as addressed above. But perhaps more commonly experienced by the believer—the counselee—are the suggestions and insinuations that sneak through one's initial defenses. Such mediated demonic molestations originate from the world. In the first category, direct attacks are whispers to the mind's eye in a way we indeed perceive them as our own thoughts.<sup>51</sup> In the second category of mediated demonic suggestions, these would-be lies arise from Satan's great servant, the world (cf. 1 John 5:19). The world sows such lies in every medium possible: entertainment,<sup>52</sup> politics, education, literature, false religions, or even much more benignly as Perkins most often

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<sup>51</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 68; and Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, 40. Additionally, Watson speaks of these suggestions as "our own children" speaking of children of the mind, thoughts and suggestions we believe are arising from within ourselves. Watson, *Lord's Prayer*, 263–64; see also Perkins, *Works*, 8:198–203.

<sup>52</sup> At this point, if very specific examples of mediated demonic influence in entertainment will be allowed for the sake of illustration, first consider horror movies. They are approximating demonic activity, playing up the features of "the other kingdom" (fear, terror, death, evil, etc.; cf. 2 Tim 1:7 and Rom 8:15 to further contrast the Spirit and the spirits of the *other* kingdom), and seeking to find entertainment from evil of the other kingdom. The notion of fear, death, demons, etc., are the source of levity. Another illustration is that of sitcoms and laughing at adultery. Such a culture is entertained with premarital and extramarital affairs as the lie is sown that such sin is not a significant issue. Thus, the culture continues toward greater and greater evil. The culture normalizes such evil, laughs at such evil, has fun with such evil. This is a culture domesticating elements of the kingdom of darkness—desensitizing itself to that which should be abhorred. Instead, Christians should hate what God hates and love what God loves. If believers are loving horror, they are cultivating diametrically wrong affections of the heart—and this the work of the evil one through one of his two great helpers, the world. For the sake of argument, however, it is possible that horror movies *literally* involve demonic activity, in which case, *direct* demonic activity could be involved. But in such cases mediated influence is still nevertheless present through "the world." Even in the cases of direct demonic activity *in conjunction with* mediated activity, they would still differ from occultic objects, means, and practices such as Ouija boards or Tarot cards, which are means used to immediately engage with dark spiritual realms.

speaks about, conversation of others.<sup>53</sup> When one of our counselees has imbibed such lies, the goal must be to distinguish not only truth from error, as would be present in all good biblical counseling, but particularly demonstrating how these lies undermine the realities of God in one's life.

The first order is discerning human agency and demonic agency. Since these lies are originating from the mouths of others, the challenge of perceiving *how* demonic influence is present becomes much greater, and the conflation between the two great enemies, the world and the devil, is once again on display.<sup>54</sup> As was the case in comprehending the flesh and the devil as previously considered, there still can be a primacy or priority discerned, and if the taxonomy of the Christian's three great enemies is present in the Scriptures, then discernment without exclusive conflation must be possible. The goal is that of observing the added layer of demonic agency in the lies sown via the mediated influence of the world. If the lies the counselee is believing were sown by the other kingdom, these lies will bear certain features.

First, the lies will be diametrically opposed to the true kingdom, even if subtly so. As was the case in the above section, testing the spirits is necessary (1 John 4). Demonically insinuated lies will sow seeds of doubt and disbelief about the true gospel. Alternatively, they will be of the character to lead the believer away from true piety and the faithful Christian life. In displaying such character, the lies believed will foster and move the counselee toward greater worldliness. Not only will they move one away from the practice of the Christian life, but they may also take on an accusatory nature regarding

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<sup>53</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:202.

<sup>54</sup> As was the case with the flesh and the devil, there is an imprecision in distinguishing cleanly between the two, and vestiges of both will invariably be present. Thus, the goal is comprehending the added dimensionality of dark spiritual influences, not ascertaining where one begins and the other ends. Arnold's Venn diagram of the world, the flesh, and the devil once again is brought to mind. There is apparent overlap between these enemies. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 34.

one's position in Christ. After all, Satan is the accuser of the brethren, and his lies will bear his image (cf. Rev 12:10). Such hallmarks would indicate there is more than mere falsehoods or a simple believing of falsehoods, but the falsehoods themselves characterize the other kingdom and are mediatorially being sown from the other kingdom, as they display the evidence of such (cf. 2 Sam 14:19; and as was the case with Christ to Peter in Matt 16:23).

Moving from a situational awareness that these lies are from the pit, not exclusively arising from human agency, we move to the next category of response, or the biblical means for combating said lies. It may be a simple notion to confront such lies with the truth of God's Word, but of course this is fundamental in helping the counselee see how these lies are opposed to the true kingdom, true piety, and a true understanding of one's identity in Christ. Therefore, finding the coordinate biblical truth to the believed lies is a helpful counseling methodology, applying the text rightly to the counselee, calling her to a belief in the truth, over and against the lie. There is an apt illustration of lies believed and the coordinate truth of Scripture which instead should be believed, produced by the Institute of Biblical Counseling and Discipleship, in one of their counseling card resources.<sup>55</sup> While many of the delineated lies may be generic in such an illustration,<sup>56</sup> some are diametrically opposed to the gospel and would seem to fall under lying accusations of the evil one.<sup>57</sup> In such a case, the believer is to be lovingly counseled from the truths of God, gently but earnestly applied to her heart, in helping her to see how

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<sup>55</sup> Jim Newheiser, "Counseling Cards (English)–Jim Newheiser," accessed October 9, 2023, <https://jimnewheiser.com/counseling-cards-english/>.

<sup>56</sup> "My situation is hopeless"; "I am all alone"; "I can't live without what I desire"; "I have ruined my life by my sin"; "My life is unfair"; "God doesn't care"; "I am no good"; "God is against me."

<sup>57</sup> "God doesn't care"; "God is against me"; "I have [irreparably] ruined my life by my sin"; In these three cases, the lies are more insidious than some of the others. They oppose the holiness of God, the love of God, the redemption of the gospel, and the power of God to save. As a result, they bespeak of suggestions of the other kingdom, more than that which naturally arises from the flesh.

the evil one would desire her to believe these lies and therefore be less effective for Christ's kingdom. In believing them, not only would she be less effective, she would find herself walking in less faithful piety before the Lord as a result.

As a secondary method of response, it would be insufficient to have the counselee merely hear the alternate but coordinate truth, a prayerfulness in believing and cultivating those truths is in order. Having the counselee pray the realities of these scriptural truths will further, and spiritually, embed them in one's heart and mind, to stand over and against the lies of the devil. Methodologically, asking the counselee to pray in a session would be in order, guiding her to ask that the Lord would enable her to believe those truths of Scripture. The counselee could be encouraged to pray of her standing in Christ, as that standing pertains to her objective realities in covenant with Christ—that she is a child of God, under his kingdom, and no longer under the sway of the evil one and his accusations.<sup>58</sup>

Lastly, in this counseling scenario the counselee should remember that even discernment itself, perceiving the lies as lies, and that they display the character of the other kingdom, is methodologically a benefit in itself. If the counselee can see the magician's *sleight of hand* in his deceptive trick of sowing these lies through the medium of the world, the effectiveness of such lies will be that much less effective in the life of the believer, even as she avails herself of the coordinate means of grace.

### **Personal Ministry against Footholds**

The final category of application we will consider when applying demonology functionally to the field of biblical counseling, is that of footholds of the devil. Such an

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<sup>58</sup> Christian's battle with Apollyon from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* stands as an example to what is being methodologically recommended here, where the accuser of the brethren hurls accurate accusations at the beleaguered Christian. Christian's believing response is to acknowledge that which is true but be reminded of his identity in his true Prince. Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 61.

illustrative category falls under the heading of mediated demonic attack once again, since the counselee herself, by her volitional choices, has opened herself up for demonic instigation. This is spoken of in the Bible as “granting the devil a foothold.” There is only one explicit statement of that phrase, “granting the devil a foothold” in the Scriptures and that is found in Ephesians 4:27, when Paul says in that context not to let the sun go down on anger (Eph 4:26), for doing so will grant the devil a “place” in one’s life.

Demonologists have made much of the notion employed here by the apostle,<sup>59</sup> but suffice it to say, it is an opportunity or an occasion for the devil to tempt and lure, a foothold that believers grant for the evil one to take advantage of in one’s life. Despite there only being a single reference to the notion of “foothold,” at least explicitly so, there are still multiple locations where the New Testament authors refer to granting the devil additional opportunities. As John Brown of Haddington explains in his exposition of 1 Peter 5:8, an unsober mind is also considered an occasion or a “foothold” of the devil by the apostle Peter.<sup>60</sup> Perkins himself sees such a concept when he speaks of the “distempers of the mind” as an occasion for the devil, or as “another foothold.”<sup>61</sup>

With this notion as a foundation, we find the basis of our first order of applicational significance, and that is discerning how human agency versus demonic

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<sup>59</sup> For one prominent example of this, see Arnold’s discussion in Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 88–89. Brown sees “an unsober mind” as far more than mere sobriety from drug and drink. He does see an application to temperance in substance, but much more so, he sees a call to a sharp reason and attention to matters spiritual. A mental insobriety would be to fix one’s mind on the things of the world, riches, pride, imaginations of men, and so forth. This is a broad category of footholds indeed. John Brown, *The Christian’s Great Enemy: A Practical Exposition of 1 Peter 5:8–11* (1848; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2013), 35–38.

<sup>60</sup> Brown, *The Christian’s Great Enemy*, 35–38.

<sup>61</sup> In speaking about prophets and whether or not they can be trusted, addressing the man who speaks prophecies, but is clearly “insane,” Perkins suggests that such weakness of mind, or an “unsober mind” is an occasion for the devil: “If his complexion and the temperature of his body be strange, for then he may be thought to have some disease which hinders the reasonable part. He may have the weakness of the brain, the frenzy, or some such like. And it is certain that in all such Satan has great power and does trouble them with dreams and visions and many strong fantasies and terrors of mind.” Perkins, *Works*, 6:457.

agency are at work. In the case of footholds, there is an ordering of human agency, followed by demonic agency—and again the multidimensionality is in view.<sup>62</sup> The counselee has engaged in immoral or unwise activity, opening herself up to demonic instigation. To further validate this biblical discernment, there are other examples in the Scriptures regarding human activity granting the devil leverage in one’s life. Another instance is found in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul says husbands and wives should not refrain from regular conjugal relations for too long, lest it be a source of temptation and lack of self-control, providing an opportunity for the devil (1 Cor 7:5). This again is the notion of foothold, even if the words themselves are not unequivocally employed in the immediate context. Thus, the Scriptures provide us categorical examples of what the devil may use in seeking to lead Christians away from devotion to Christ: unrepented of anger, an unsober mind, and lacking regular marital intimacy. Within these we see many other elements at play as well, just as we have already considered in the case of the unsober mind. In this most recent example of 1 Corinthians 7, then, Paul additionally mentions self-control, and a mutual depriving one another in the marital relationship with a mutual commitment to prayer as the basis for avoiding such a snare of the devil. Stated alternately then, a lack of self-control and unilaterally depriving one-another would be occasions Satan may exploit to tempt the believer—hence footholds in the counselee’s life.

Applying this same rubric to the Ephesians 4:26–27 concept, being sinfully angry, letting the sun go down on our anger, and allowing division between brothers and sisters in Christ to fester, would all be occasions for the devil. We certainly see how sinful anger does not accomplish the righteousness of God (cf. Jas 1:20) and allowing the

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<sup>62</sup> If the demonic category is being layered over the typical biblical counseling paradigm and methodology here, then simply seeing the additional category of demonic agency is our goal, not distinguishing where the flesh ends and the demonic begins.

sun to set on one's anger implies a failing to keep short accounts with what the counselee is troubled by. And of course, divisions between the people of God not only grieve the Holy Spirit of unity (cf. Eph 4:30), but they are rife opportunities for the evil one to incite and to tempt. Thus moral human agency leads in this first category of identification, and demonic capitalization of the counselee's volitional action then follows.

Regarding the next element of applicational theology so far as satanic footholds are concerned, beyond perceiving them aright that they are footholds and opportunities for the devil, they must secondarily be rejected and repented of. If these are the devil's playground in our counselee's life, assisting her to discern these occasions as further opportunities for her being incited to evil is the first step in one's situational awareness of the demonic. On such a note, Perkins says,

The temptation is a provoking to sin according to the disposition of every man and as occasion shall offer itself. "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chron. 21:1). "And when supper was done, and the devil had now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (John 13:2). In this temptation, the devil does wonderfully diminish and extenuate those sins which men are about to commit, partly by objecting closely the mercy of God and partly by covering or hiding the punishment which is due for the sin.<sup>63</sup>

In other words, Satan merely puts the temptation into the heart of David and the heart of Judas, prompting and promoting what was already there. This comports with the notion of footholds or occasions which the devil utilizes to his ends in the believer's life.

Elsewhere, Perkins makes such a universal application demonologically, when he says,

Man's body being at the first made a palace for the ever-living God, if a man shall abuse it by drunkenness, swearing, lying, fornication, or any uncleanness, he does make it instead of a temple for the Holy Ghost to be a sty or stable for the devil. For the more filthy a man's body is, the more fit it is to be a dwelling place for sin and Satan.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 6:199.

<sup>64</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 8:70.



The first order of response, then, is to help the counselee remove such impurities from her life so she does not continue to maintain these footholds.

Second, for the counselee to pray that the Lord would deliver from the works of the devil and provide protection from such molestation as a result (cf. Matt 12:44–45; Mark 3:27), would be an ordinary means of grace response which calls for patiently waiting on the Lord to graciously deliver. The merciful care of a Father who delivers, even when the individual has brought such demonization upon themselves, so far as sequencing is concerned, is a gracious reality. God does not require his children to get themselves out of the predicament they invited upon themselves by willingly embracing the foothold, but instead he is a merciful Father who has compassion upon his children.

A third method of response would be to walk the counselee through the ways which the Bible presents faithfulness which is diametrically opposed to those footholds (cf. the Eph 4 principle as is mentioned in the context of Eph 4:27 and the particular foothold of anger). While this is the basic put-off/put-on tenet of the apostle Paul, and the New Testament for that matter, it is a practical particular for biblically removing such footholds—ordinary mortification and vivification. It is in the coordinate obedience (i.e., put-on) that the counselor can help the counselee think through moving from the disobedience of the foothold itself, to the appropriate obedience of the Word. Once the foothold is removed, and the respective Christian obedience is more consistently being walked in, the counselee can be counseled to patiently wait upon the Lord for subsequent deliverance of any ongoing satanic molestation or relentless temptation (cf. Num 25:7–9; 2 Sam 24:25).

The final method of response would be counseling the believer in her position within the covenant, keeping in mind the sacrament of belonging (baptism) and the sacrament of remaining and growing in Christ (the Lord's Supper). From these means of grace which speak to her identity, it could be methodologically helpful to counsel the believer struggling with footholds in her life, to remember who she is as a child of the

King and that she does not need to live as orphan, in the way that she used to walk in her former days. Instead, since she is no longer under the sway of the prince of the power of the air, she must not live like it, not granting him influence in her life any longer (cf. Rom 6:12–13; coupled with Eph 2:1–2). This notion is illustrative of the applicational reality drawn from the sacraments' teaching to the counselee of her standing with Christ, and no longer being a slave of the devil. If she continues to live like a child of the King, those occasions of the devil's molestations will be fewer, and as Perkins speaks of demonically instigated consequences of one's actions, she will additionally be free from such fallout as well.<sup>65</sup>

### **Concluding an Applicational Theology**

While explicit discernment between human agency and demonic agency would never be perfectly attainable, and one cannot know with exacting clarity about most things we experience in life; however, this section has begun to shine a light on the need for discernment and for the ability to make strides to those ends. Such conclusions that demonically instigated attacks are at play result in a situational awareness of the demonic in the counselee's experiential reality. This awareness, then, provides a modicum of peace, for clarity and understanding are a benefit in and of themselves. Seeing the world rightly is inherently a counseling help. While the counselor and counselee may not be able to precisely differentiate between the world, the flesh, or if something is of the devil, Perkins's answer to such a notion is still of benefit to the biblical counselor, so far as his emphasis on priority. If Satan has two great helpers in this sphere, the flesh and the world,<sup>66</sup> then we have been afforded an advantage as far as spiritual discrimination is

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<sup>65</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 9:392.

<sup>66</sup> Perkins, *Satans Sophistrie Ansuered*, 149. It is also present but less clear in *Golden Chain* (chap. 43 of the *Third Assault*), where Perkins states that Satan has two helps in his temptation: the flesh and the world. Perkins, *Works*, 6:199.

concerned. The additional dimension layered on to our biblical counsel, that of the devil, is a development in the field. Just as Methodist ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas states that the concept of “sin” is a theological achievement,<sup>67</sup> so too the category of the demonic, rightly apprehended, is a theological achievement. What is more, if biblically responded to with the rightly commanded inoculation and defense, such a theological category of the demonic is a methodological advancement as well.

Mere discernment and awareness are not all we have aimed for in this applicational attempt, but a response to the demonic once the devil’s handiwork has been comprehended has been our second main endeavor. As such, we have sought to maintain a strict and exclusive grounding in the Word of God for our applicational and methodological response, decidedly seeking to avoid the vain inventions of men or the suggestions of Satan as the proposed response to devils. As Perkins put it well, the explicitly proposed means of God in his Word, has “no possibility of darkness” and “no possibility of evil.”<sup>68</sup> The purity of God’s Word and its proposed means stand as the only sure foundation upon which to build an applicational response to one’s demonology. The call to such resistance, such *warfare*, is a call to the all-sufficient means God has given, as rightly applied to the believer as preventative measures and response.

The added dimensionality of the demonic when it comes to applicational biblical counseling is a sincere advancement in the field. For biblical counselors to be called to a situational awareness of how devils are active in our present age, and how they affect and influence even saints, moves the field beyond the willful and functional agnosticism toward the third great enemy of the believer, demons. More than that, if

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<sup>67</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “Practical Divinity,” *Circuit Riders*, Nov/Dec/Jan 2014–15, [https://www.ministrymatters.com/circuit\\_rider/69/plain-truth-for-plain-people-do-united-methodists-have-a-theology-novdecjan-2014-15](https://www.ministrymatters.com/circuit_rider/69/plain-truth-for-plain-people-do-united-methodists-have-a-theology-novdecjan-2014-15).

<sup>68</sup> Perkins, *Works*, 7:474.

Perkins's prioritization is accurate, and as the Scriptures reveal, that the first two great enemies, the world and the flesh, are also under the sway of the evil one, then this additional layer of awareness to our counsel is all the more needed in our age. If we are looking back to the Puritans as a bygone era of pastoral counseling, then a situational awareness of the demonic has been *reclaimed*. If we are considering where the field of biblical counseling has found itself since its modern inception in the 1960s, then a situational awareness of devils has been *developed*. Either way, the field of pastoral counseling will be stronger having been provided the capacity to stand against the third great enemy of the believer, the devil, in a more biblically aware way.

### **Future Research and Exploration in the Field**

The goal of this dissertation was, for the first time, to establish a demonology in the field of biblical counseling. The founder of the movement, Jay Adams, while carving out a God-glorifying space for biblical counseling to be restored and therefore thrive once again in the church, did the movement a disservice in the area of the demonic. He set the course for biblical counseling to functionally hold to an atheistic understanding of the demonic—thereby denying any demonic activity in the present epoch of redemptive history. In the second generation, David Powlison, the great unifier and conciliator of the movement, brought biblical counseling from an atheistic posture to that of generalism, though he upheld a classic, Puritan ordinary means of grace response to any potential demonic activity. While his situational awareness left much to be desired, his methodology was fundamentally sound, even if practically lacking as a result of his demonology. The only functional problem with his methodology, then, was due to his lack of situational awareness, for then there is no need for an inoculative and responsive effect toward the demonic as produced by the ordinary means, because whether demons are present and active is immaterial to our ultimate and practical response.

Thus, this dissertation sought to move the field of biblical counseling from a demonological atheism or generalism, to developing a practical demonology for the first time, a thoroughgoing situational awareness of the spiritual realms (not atheistic, not agnostic, but *theistic*, if such word choice will be allowed when speaking of the dark spiritual realms). Or, at the least, “aware” and “responsive” in light of said situational realities. Having developed such an awareness as we have harkened back to the front runners of precise Reformed theology, the Puritans, we now must look ahead.

In future studies, more could be done on any one of the elements highlighted in this demonology; such as, diabolical dreams and how to appropriately counsel and respond to such distressing dream content. Alternatively, an entire methodological response to fiery darts and how to counsel those facing such inundating terrors of the mind could be developed. A treatment on the lies the devil seeks to convince saints of and the particular response to such particular lies, combatted with the coordinate truth claim and identity of the believer—in other words, a response to the “accuser of the brethren” alongside of the one accused.

If this dissertation has accomplished what it set out to do, to develop an awareness of the demonic in biblical counseling and adding the additional dimensionality of the Christian’s great enemy, the devil, to its counseling repertoire, then greater work must go into further development. When Michael Emlet introduced to the biblical counseling world the additional categories of *sufferer* and *saint* in his “sinner, sufferer, saint” paradigm, the movement followed suit and began more fulsomely speaking to our present condition of suffering and how to biblically respond to and help alleviate such suffering.<sup>69</sup> If this dissertation succeeded in *reclaiming* this category of the demonic from our Puritan forefathers and reformational heritage, and has *developed* it for the biblical

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<sup>69</sup> Michael R. Emlet, *Cross Talk: Where Life and Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2009), 74.

counseling approach toward counseling the whole person, then the discipline needs to follow suit, as it did in the case of Emlet. The discipline must begin speaking to this additional category more fulsomely and what a holistic biblical counseling response might look like with this added and greater dimensionality, including all three enemies of the counselee, the world, the flesh, and the devil—with the category of the demonic being additionally mediated through the world and the flesh.

Likewise, more work should be done on what mental disorder, caused by demonic influence, may look like. In his book *The Masks of Melancholy*,<sup>70</sup> John White establishes that there are physiological, behavioral, and supernatural forces observationally at play in various cases of “medical” depression. While he does not provide a means of distinguishing biological issues, sin issues, and demonic issues, he does at least present the three varying categories when dealing with alleged “mental illness.” More work on this particular front could be done in parsing out biologic causes, spiritual causes (i.e., the flesh), and demonic causes, and the overlap that the three may at times play in the case of mental issues.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In sum, useful insight has been gained, developed, and reclaimed in our study of the demonic from the lens of William Perkins’s astute mind and prolific pen. The field of biblical counseling, however, still has room to grow and develop if it is to fully understand and apply the Christian’s great enemy, the devil, to its discipline. Greater situational awareness has been achieved, and practical import to the field has been demonstrated, but the biblical counselors must apply this additional dimension and

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<sup>70</sup> John White, *The Masks of Melancholy: A Christian Physician Looks at Depression and Suicide* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982), 21, 30–39.

counsel to the beleaguered Christian in their counseling room, with the prescribed response and prevention of the ordinary means of grace.

We have found demonic influence to be an unseen reality of every believer's situation. We have uncovered two key categories for understanding the demonic, that of direct demonic influence and mediated influence, and have additionally seen the primary means employed in mediated influence are the other two great enemies of the believer, the world, and the flesh. We have also shown that personal ministry of the Word, including counseling, must maintain an awareness of these mediated and unmediated demonic influences in exploring a counselee's situated reality. Upon establishing this additional *dimension* of a situational awareness of the demonic, we have then applied such understanding to biblical counseling, not so much to draw clear demarcations between the world, the flesh, and the devil, but to apply the Scriptures and the Scriptures' solutions to the third great Christian enemy, the devil. That application has come in the form of the inoculative and responsive nature of the ordinary means of grace.

It is hoped that this foray into the topic of considering the dark spiritual realms in the field of biblical counseling will provoke increased awareness of this subject—and that the Puritans' comfortability speaking so plainly about our adversary will reawaken a willingness for the contemporary Western church to speak of a foe the Scriptures so willingly acknowledge. Lastly, may a field that since its modern inception has denied or largely ignored this biblical dimension of the demonic, take back up the prescribed biblical means of resisting and inoculating against this ancient dragon in the lives of counselees and congregants alike.

*Soli Deo Gloria.*

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF THE DEMONIC IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING, IN CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM PERKINS

Keith Andrew Evans, PhD  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jeremy P. Pierre

William Perkins, the father of Puritanism and the great popularizer of Reformed and Puritan theology from the sixteenth century onward, articulated a robust situational demonology further developed by Puritan writers subsequent to his theological contributions to the field. His demonology serves as the foundation of later pastors' and theologians' expansions and applications from this systematic locus. Thus, beginning with a Perkinsian understanding of the demonic, particularly, an awareness of direct and mediated influence from evil spirits in the present epoch of the church, engaging in synthesis with later Puritan advancements and expansions of his thought, and moving onward to pastoral application, this dissertation demonstrates the historic practical theology of a Reformed demonology. After explaining what may be expected between the two advents of Christ in all cultures and across all times, the biblical response to such demonic phenomena is developed. The Reformed and Puritan answer to the demonic is an engagement with the enemy through the ordinary means of grace—Word, sacrament, and prayer—and eschewing a deliverance or ekbastic response to the demonic.

Finally, Perkins's demonology, as the foundation of Puritanism, is contrasted with Jay Adams's demonology, as the foundation of the contemporary biblical counseling movement. Subsequent generations of biblical counselors have expanded on Adams's articulation and have largely retained the practical outworking of his over-realized

eschatology and situational understanding of demonology. Thus, Adams and his followers—the theological heirs of Puritanism within the field of pastoral counseling—are compared and contrasted with their theological forefathers under the systematic heading of demonology to determine which approach is most biblically faithful. While a historical and practical corrective to the contemporary demonology of the biblical counseling movement is offered, a positive application to pastoral counseling is also presented—a robust but straightforward embracing of Word, sacrament, and prayer-based ministry. Perkins serves as an historical basis for standard Puritan demonology; reexamining such an historical demonology allows the contemporary practitioner of pastoral counseling to reclaim a genuinely Reformed understanding of the demonic.

## VITA

Keith Andrew Evans

### EDUCATION

BA, Grove City College, 2006

MDiv, Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2011

### PUBLICATIONS

“Biblical Counseling: A Discipline.” *Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal* 5, no. 2 (2019): 26–30.

“College Ministry to a Secular University.” *Reformed Presbyterian Witness*, January-February 2017.

“Fear of a Changing World.” *TableTalk Magazine*, March 2020.

“How Sanctification Works: The Westminster Assembly and Progressive Sanctification.” *Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal* 7, no. 1 (2020): 27–36.

“Laying Hold of the Unseen: The Lord’s Supper as Spiritual Meal.” *Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal* 9, no. 1 (2022): 37–46.

“The Lord Binds up All Your Wounds: Counseling Self-Harm from the Psalms.” *Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (2020): 27–41.

“The Other Weapon: Praying in the Spirit as Warfare.” *Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal* 10, no. 1 (2023): 5–16.

“The Third Heading of the Canons of Dort: Human Corruption.” *Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal* 6, no. 1 (2019): 33–38.

“Wisdom Is Without Hypocrisy.” *Reformed Presbyterian Witness*, January-February 2021.

### ORGANIZATIONS

Association of Certified Biblical Counselors

Biblical Counseling Coalition

Evangelical Theological Society

### ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Admissions Director, Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2008–2011

Faculty, Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2018–2024

Academic Dean, Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2019–2024

Assistant Professor of Christian Counseling, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, 2024–

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Pastoral Intern, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North Hills, Pittsburgh,  
Pennsylvania, 2009

Associate Pastor, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Lafayette, Lafayette,  
Indiana, 2011–2014

Pastor, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Lafayette, Lafayette, Indiana, 2014–  
2018