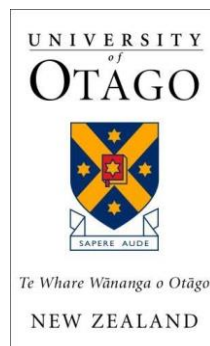


From Peter Wagner to Bill Johnson: The History and Epistemology of the “New Apostolic Reformation”

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Abstract

The factors that persuade people into their spiritual perspectives and beliefs are not necessarily based on gaining a full understanding of or conviction about the set of ideas to which they subscribe. The popular appeal of some ideas often derives from dynamics other than thorough comprehension of their foundations. This thesis examines how the conceptions that emerged from a series of movements among evangelical charismatic Christians in the twentieth century were shaped into a new theology that offers an intuitive, experiential, and miraculous spirituality built upon promises of the power and blessings due to God's children. By tracing the history of movements such as church growth, signs and wonders, spiritual warfare, apostles and prophets, and dominion theology, and deconstructing how their discrete elements were developed and disseminated, it seeks to assess whether the new theology accurately represents its own claims of being the true Christianity. An exemplar of the new theology, Bill Johnson's Bethel Church in Redding, California, presents as the culmination of ideas promoted by advocates such as C. Peter Wagner, who taught that the dying denominations of evangelical Christianity must be replaced by churches where God's purposes for Christians are finally being realised. With apostles and prophets establishing the proper order of church governance, Christians fulfilling their mandate to assert power and authority in performing signs and wonders, and Satan defeated as territorial demons are expelled from their domains of control, finally God's kingdom can be established on earth and Christians will soon take their place as the rightful rulers over society. Because of its increasing pervasiveness, this "Reformation" has implications for the evangelical Churches in general and so a clear understanding of its roots and processes is necessary.

Keywords:

Charismatic Renewal, Signs and Wonders, Miracles, Healing, Apostles, Prophets, Spiritual Mapping, Spiritual Warfare, Territorial Demons, Church Growth, Dominion Theology, Evangelicalism, Independent Churches, Five-Fold Ministry, Wineskins, New Apostolic Reformation, Third Wave, Kingdom of God, Bethel Redding, Bill Johnson, C. Peter Wagner, John Wimber, Jesse Penn-Lewis, Kurt Koch, Epistemology, Networking, Popular Christianity, Therapeutic Christianity.

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I dedicate this thesis to Jesse and Bazi.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------|--|
| ACPE | Apostolic Council for Prophetic Elders |
| AoG | Assemblies of God |
| BLN | Bethel Leaders Network |
| BSSM | Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry |
| CEFI | Charles E. Fuller Institute for Evangelism and Church Growth |
| DRT | Dead Raising Team |
| FEA | Fuller Evangelistic Association |
| ICA | International Coalition of Apostles |
| ICAL | International Coalition of Apostolic Leaders |
| LXX | Septuagint: Greek Old Testament |
| NAR | New Apostolic Reformation |
| NRM | New Religious Movement |
| S&W | Signs and Wonders Movement |
| SWM | Spiritual Warfare Movement |
| TPT | The Passion Translation |
| WLI | Wagner Learning Institute/Wagner University |
| YWAM | Youth with a Mission |

Introduction

This study is about ideas. It is a case study of one particular set of theological ideas. It traces their origins, the processes that shaped them, and the methodologies that their advocates employed in recruiting followers. The study interacts with the theology of the ideas, but in itself it is not a theological study, and it does not operate from or compare against any particular theological position. My purpose is to scrutinise the ideas in order to discover if what they claim as truth accurately represents the evidence that they provide to support their claims. Therefore, my intent is to weigh the theology against itself to determine if its advocates sufficiently demonstrate that their case is justifiable.

The ideas explored in this thesis have emerged from one stream within evangelical charismatic circles and their advocates claim to be changing the shape of Christianity. This claim may seem extreme, but indications are that this one strand of theological thinking is gaining influence worldwide to the point that it is becoming pervasive among many churches. While the study outlines how a new theology developed from the ideas, it also examines how strategies and mechanisms of persuasion have been employed to convince Christians into accepting the new thinking. Although it is necessary to weigh the veridicality of the new theology, it is equally important to explore why so many Christians are choosing to accept its premises.

To fully comprehend what eventually coalesced into a new theology, the thesis tracks the progression of five movements during the latter half of the twentieth century: church growth, signs and wonders, spiritual warfare, apostles and prophets, and dominion theology. Each movement grew out of the previous, each built upon and progressed certain premises inherited from the former, and all had a chief spokesperson in common: Dr C. Peter Wagner, a high-profile tenured professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. As time went on, and as Wagner endorsed and publicised each of the movements, those initial links to the academic environment faded. Each movement advanced a popular theology that increasingly dismissed scholarly thought. In their turn, academic scholars increasingly disregarded the new theology. Although embracing aspects of charismatic Christianity, most of the chief protagonists within these movements tended to distance themselves from both Pentecostalism and the “Charismatic Renewal,” preferring instead to use the term “Third

Wave.” A designation that gradually overtook the Third Wave moniker is the “New Apostolic Reformation” (NAR), a term that has acquired a particular character and controversy that varies depending on the viewpoint of those discussing it.¹ Although some Third Wave ideas emerged earlier in the United Kingdom, I will focus on the specific features that developed in California from the 1970s and forward.

The combined influence of the five movements has laid the foundation for some present-day churches that are controversial, influential, and expanding rapidly. Currently one of the most prominent is Bethel church in Redding, California, led by Bill Johnson. The teaching that comes from Bethel will therefore be examined as representative of what the new theology looks like in the twenty-first century. Bethel Redding claims more than 11,000 local members, but its influence extends worldwide through its training schools and programmes, a huge network of contacts with other churches, and most especially through its music that now rivals Hillsong (the previously dominant producer of worship music) for popularity. Christchurch, New Zealand, the city in which I live, demonstrates a pattern that is found in many places. The independent churches, the fastest-growing sector of evangelical Christianity, are the most likely to embrace the new theology, regularly host speakers connected in some way to Bethel, or otherwise teach the same theology as Bethel. Yet the influence of the new theology is not limited to the independent churches. Many denominational churches are also experiencing its impact, even if only through the use of Bethel worship music or adherence to Bethel-style theology among members who, for now, remain committed to their denominational churches. The focus of the thesis is not Bethel but rather the ideas that contributed to its formation. I will demonstrate how Bethel may be seen as a logical endpoint for the five movements under examination.

The reach of those who promote the new theology demonstrates that this is a global story: the conceptions explored here have had an international impact. Elements of the theology are popular in Latin American, Asian, and African regions, and becoming increasingly pervasive among churches in all other regions. However, it is impossible to explore this vast international context in just one thesis so the focus will remain largely on the North American environment while drawing on wider contexts where relevant. This is

¹ The term, “New Apostolic Reformation” (NAR) is not accepted by all who subscribe to its basic tenets, hence I will also use the designation “new theolog(ies)” because it encompasses those who practise the new beliefs but who repudiate its various labels.

because the new theology largely has been influenced and driven by North American evangelicals. There are two related factors that have enabled it to develop. First, evangelical Christianity has been vulnerable to increasing fragmentation. Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan commented on twentieth-century churches as witnessing “so many bewildering streams of charismatic renewal flowing in so many directions that it was almost impossible to describe them all.”² The majority of scholars are likely to agree: fragmentation in the Church body is ever-increasing.

The second contextual factor is the rise of the independent churches. Established denominations increasingly are losing members to the independent churches, many of which choose to associate themselves with loosely-knit and well-marketed global networks that renounce the authoritative structures that they associate with denominations. I cannot here address all the associated or interconnected groups and relationships that form the networks around the theology under scrutiny; Bethel remains just one example of how these networks can be successful and extensive. Overall, there is no central point or leader to be located and, in true postmodernist style, this body of belief is amorphous, difficult to define, and highly susceptible to evolutionary processes.³ I can do no more than provide a framework that outlines and analyses the main issues.

Two main questions drive this thesis. The first question lies with the claims of its proponents that their message is coherent and is spiritual truth received by means of direct revelation from God. Furthermore, they say, access to God’s direct revelation is available daily for every believer who aligns with their claim. Thus, the first question concerns the veridicality of the message: how can we go about determining if it is reliable? The few scholars who have examined the conceptions of Wagner and his cohort have been critical of the subjectivity inherent in their truth claims and their failure to carefully exegete scripture with proper attention to its consistency and authority. However, some scholars’ assessments have been compromised by their own *a priori* beliefs.⁴ Other scholarly opinions are so erudite

² Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 349.

³ I will not attempt to argue definitions of postmodernity in this thesis, but rather choose to follow Hammer’s observation that postmodernity was “primarily, an intellectually fashionable word, denoting a vaguely sensed cultural condition with extremely fluid contours.” Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 9. Note that, as will be shown, modernity also has a significant role to play in the thought processes of the main characters examined here.

⁴ For example, some critics of signs and wonders phenomena belong to theological traditions with a starting point that denies the possibility of supernatural manifestations in the present-day.

that they are not accessible for most ordinary Christians.⁵ Furthermore, some of the specific biblical passages used to justify the beliefs of the new theology are sufficiently unclear in some respects that no consensus about their meaning has yet been achieved. Although the thesis necessarily scrutinises the theological ideas being proposed, my own intent is not to formulate a theological opinion about them. Rather, I am testing the ideas for their stability and coherence in the face of the evidence that their proponents offer, as an alternate way to determine if the assertions of God's voice directly speaking to them is authentic. Therefore, I will use means other than theological analysis to assess the veridicality of the new theologies being promoted, measures that can stand alongside theological evaluations and that can be accessible to enquiring minds whether inside or outside the academy.

Questions of veridicality can be addressed if we draw on available insights from other disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, or philosophy. Looking beyond the theological content to locate historical influences and development, the message's epistemology, the credentials and proclivities of the "experts" who promote the message, and the logic of their arguments can help to build a picture that assists with assessing not only the epigenesis of their respective worldviews but also the integrity of their claims. When promoters claim that their innovations are God-inspired, examining their claims through a cross-disciplinary lens can provide valuable information about the degree to which humanly-generated ideas have contributed to the overall message. Therefore, the strong component of historical enquiry in this thesis sits alongside examination of contemporary innovations because, as Hammer point outs, "doctrinal similarities or chains of influence are often subordinate to the cultural context" of the group that is under scrutiny.⁶ In the conclusion to my thesis, this methodology is reinforced by a discussion of Swinton and Mowat's framework that defines how "faithful performance of the gospel" can be evaluated. As I will show, the construction and content of some significant elements scrutinized in this thesis demonstrate that they are either theologically weak or not defensible. Hence it becomes important to identify why the message nonetheless is persuasive for many Christians.

⁵ Throughout this thesis, my use of the word "ordinary" in relation to Christians is merely to differentiate those who are the recipients of the messages from those who initiate and propagate the messages.

⁶ Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 48.

The second question arises from how the message is conveyed: how do we evaluate the process by which Christians have been persuaded to accept the new beliefs being promoted? This is of most interest when Christians choose to shift away from beliefs that they have previously held or if the new message diverges in some way from traditionally-held conceptions. Social psychologists tell us that strategies of persuasion can be used as substitutes for reasoned argument.⁷ Discourse about theology is just as vulnerable to such strategies and so this study seeks to identify strategies of communication to ascertain what bearing they have on the soundness of the theology itself. Many Christians, perhaps even a majority, if asked to explain their faith system, are likely to frame their answers in terms of *where* they learned about what they subscribe to: at Sunday School, at church, from parents, from a friend, and so on. If pressed, they might articulate *what* they believe: the existence of God, the incarnation, the resurrection, or any of the other foundational tenets of the Christian faith. When it comes to the varieties of doctrines that inhabit the Christian faith, fewer may be able to articulate *how* they came to their theological understanding and *why* it happened this way. How many Christians give meaningful thought to what they base their beliefs on? Without fully realizing it, most people acquire their belief system, their spiritual *weltanschauung*, through the ministrations of other humans. Although Christians often recognise the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8) in the conversion process, the specific constructs that shape this faith are seldom unaccompanied by human input. Therefore, where a particular group communicates new “truths” about God in relationship with us, or their content presents challenges to straightforward discernment of whether it is veridical, it helps to locate the strategies used to procure acceptance of new ontological conceptions.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle described three modes of persuasion that a speaker uses to convince an audience of his or her message. He declared that persuasion is a “sort of demonstration” where “we most believe when we suppose something to have been demonstrated.”⁸ Aristotle believed that to persuade an audience the speaker has to demonstrate to them that he is credible, he has to be able to stir their emotions, and he has to

⁷ Andrew McKinlay and Chris McVittie, *Social Psychology and Discourse* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 122-124.

⁸ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse*, 2nd ed., trans. by George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33. An earlier translation conveys Aristotle’s meaning with greater clarity: “Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated.” Aristotle, “Rhetorica,” in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans by W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Random House, 1941), 1327.

use argument to prove a truth or an apparent truth.⁹ His formulation has nothing to say about the authenticity of the speaker's message; it merely makes a statement about how a speaker can get his audience to *believe* that the message is authentic. In the case of the ideas examined in this thesis, we need to determine whether the mechanics of persuasion are more effective in shaping beliefs than are the theological messages. My contention is that, for an individual in the processes of acquiring a new belief system, other factors initially tend to carry more weight than investment in a personal conviction that something is "true."¹⁰

This is a wide-ranging study that covers a period of approximately fifty years. Its scope therefore implies limitations of depth and detail for each of the movements I describe. Nevertheless, the range of the investigation demands cohesiveness and so I represent cohesion in terms of threads that run throughout the entire study. One of these is the inheritance of particular epistemological and theological tendencies as each movement built on the legacy of its predecessors. Another involves the trajectory of the man who presented himself simultaneously as the prime instigator of innovation and as an observant chronicler of each movement. Although Peter Wagner is the most prominent character in this thesis, the study is not about him. It is about how he and his associates assembled, adapted, developed, and promoted some specific ideas, and it is about what the eventual outcomes look like. In this study, he is viewed as a leading advocate, a persistent link, and a catalyst in the development of the ideas. Through tracking his participation, we can distinguish the elements that gradually combined, in Wagner's own words, to "reshape Christianity." Some other thematic threads traceable throughout the thesis are more minor but do retain a degree of importance. For example, the influence of individuals within the Fuller School of World Mission, missional theology, missionary experience, or the missionaries themselves have a significant role to play in the emergence of the new ideas. Other threads are the role of eschatology, the rejection of what Wagner and his associates saw as mainstream church characteristics ("dead" Christianity), dualistic thinking that included an "us versus them" approach as a strategy of persuasion, and repudiation of academic learning. These threads will be addressed as they become relevant to the overall investigation.

⁹ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 38-39.

¹⁰ In support of this see Michaelis Michael and John Paul Healy, "A Guru-Disciple Tradition: Can Religious Conversion be Non-cognitive?" in *Philosophical Explorations of New and Alternative Religious Movements*, ed. Morgan Luck (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 77-95.

The themes that Wagner and other important leaders of the five movements viewed as the essential elements of their message will be traced broadly in chronological order throughout the thesis. Even though Wagner did not consciously anticipate the directions his thinking would take in years to come, the seeds of future theologies can be detected in his early writing. The most significant foundational teaching pertained to the power and authority available to Christians and bestowed by the Holy Spirit; personal experience in exercising this power provided the basis for constructing the theology. Over the course of several decades these elements were fundamental to the teaching as Wagner and his associates created an idealistic narrative that prioritized a hyper-supernatural worldview with concomitant pursuit of non-rational experiences, that elevated the role of human agency, and that promised therapeutic outcomes in Christian living. Among the characteristics of this faith system were an emphasis on selfhood along with an intuitive and experiential response to theological principles that sought to sustain a constant milieu of enthusiasm, excitement, and expectancy. An important feature was an insistence that the theology should remain on the “cutting edge,” a philosophy that will be shown to push it into ever more bizarre extremes. For example, reports that emerge from Bethel church about young people attempting to walk through walls in imitation of Jesus’ resurrection appearances, Christians “grave-soaking” to absorb the spiritual legacies of dead luminaries such as Charles Finney, or students praying over “demonized” dogs they encounter in public spaces become less inexplicable when viewed in the light of the heritage documented in this thesis.

Another facet was an implicit expectation that followers should, with unquestioning acceptance, comply with the prevalent narrative, innovations in the theology, or the guidance of leaders. Within this has developed a new elitism and esotericism that encourages a separation from the wider church community while simultaneously engaging with it for the purposes of proselytizing. To support and sustain their theology, Wagner and others taught doctrines that intentionally separated the past (“old wineskins”) from the future they were introducing (“new wineskins”). In doing this, they adjusted the role of scripture, rejected church traditions as no longer relevant, redefined language and meaning, engaged a process of mythologization, alienated adherents from intellectual thought, incorporated contemporary cultural mores, and above all, emphasized a pragmatic methodology oriented to their conceptions of success. Wagner argued for purposeful pragmatism underpinned by the belief that God “wants us to be pragmatic” and he viewed the ends as justifying the means: “If the

method I am using accomplishes the goal I am aiming at, it is for that reason a good method.”¹¹ Ultimately success was considered as anything that contributed to building the kingdom of God on earth, but it is how success was measured that occupies the interest of this thesis. All these mechanisms combined have generated an intuitive, experiential, miraculous Christianity that elevates human identity and status, concomitantly diminishes the sovereignty of God, devalues the role of scripture, redefines conceptions of and accountability for sin, and attempts to remove the boundaries between heaven and earth.

Although this study primarily takes an historical approach (with input from other disciplines), the movements and individuals that are the focus saw themselves as “doing theology.” Therefore, theology is indeed the central theme. Even though this is not a theological study, I will address theology directly where relevant, either by referencing comments from theologians and biblical scholars who hold contrasting opinions, or by direct analysis of theological claims as they arise. My own analysis uses the tools of historical analysis, textual analysis, and logic. Where theological perspectives are required, comparison with scholarly work built upon extensive education, training, and experience serves to highlight some points of vulnerability in the new theology. On occasion, I will also compare the claims of the new theology against a plain reading of scripture to assist with determining the degree to which context and scriptural consistency have been retained in the hermeneutic of the new theology’s assertions. Because of theology’s centrality in this thesis, it is necessary to define two terms that will occur repeatedly: “theology,” because that is the main theme, and “movements,” because these are the contexts for the theologies under scrutiny.

The attempt to define theology is complicated by the range of definitions that have been proffered by others. David Wells points out that theology may mean something quite different in a popular context from what it does in the academy.¹² While some definitions can be succinct, others are lengthy. Alister McGrath simply states that theology is discourse

¹¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 161; C. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 28-29; C. Peter Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators, Prophets, and Theologians: Lessons from a Lifetime in the Church—A Memoir* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 104.

¹² David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 98.

about, or reflection upon, God.¹³ Wells takes four pages to explore the word's meaning.¹⁴ Where McGrath seems to look at theology as a historical construct, Torrance insists that God's self-revelation is of the utmost importance; we cannot know God without God revealed to us.¹⁵ Rommen emphasises the systematic process of gathering and analysing information about God.¹⁶ Because these are just some among many definitions, it seems most practical simply to work from the definition that the main character in this study provides. Wagner defined theology as "a human attempt to explain God's Word and God's works in a reasonable and systematic way."¹⁷ Acceptance of this definition thereby gives opportunity to assess whether his definition accurately reflects his praxis.

The second definition pertains to the term "movements." I use the term here merely for convenience' sake and do not tie it to any particular academic definition. This is because within the discussion around strands of religious thought and praxis, explanations are still debated. Religious studies scholars draw attention to elements that may tempt a researcher into a working definition of a religious "movement" but there remain too many outstanding questions that require further reflection. Any use of a label can invite problematic issues, as with the previously popular term "cult" that has now largely been abandoned.¹⁸ As an example of the problems of labelling that can arise, Travis Cooper notes that a definition allows ideological groups the opportunity to coalesce as they seek to establish their

¹³ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 86.

¹⁴ Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 98-101.

¹⁵ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 2, 14.

¹⁶ Edward Rommen, "Theological Method," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 946.

¹⁷ C. Peter Wagner, *Dominion!: How Kingdom Action can Change the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2008), 59. The assumption is made here (and Wagner would likely agree) that we are talking about "revealed" theology as differentiated, for example, from natural theology. See Charles Taliaferro, "The Project of Natural Theology," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, eds. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1-23.

¹⁸ The term "New Religious Movement" (NRM) has achieved widespread acceptance but is precluded by multiple discrepancies in relation to the groups that I examine here, not the least of which being that adherents still claim to subscribe to the basic tenets of Christianity and many remain within mainstream Christian churches. On the other hand, there are indicators that might lead some to apply the NRM label. For example, see Dobbelaere who notes the tendency of NRMs to lower the level of transcendence towards 'this-worldly' or mundane everyday reality in contrast to historical religions, where transcendence carries great importance. This certainly would apply to features I examine in the thesis. For example, the concepts of everyday miracles, human abilities on a par with those of Jesus Christ, or the lowering of boundaries between heaven and earth might justify use of the NRM label. Karel Dobbelaere, "The Contextualization of Definitions of Religion," *International Review of Sociology* 21:1 (March 2011): 196.

legitimacy, authority, and power with resultant benefits of collaboration, solidarity, and networking.¹⁹ But, as I shall note in the chapter on dominion theology, he warns also that it gives room for critical outsiders to become “gatekeepers” through exerting their own “oppositional rejoinder strategies.”²⁰ Therefore, keeping in mind also Sean McCloud’s recognition of how “diffuse and loose” these movements are, my use of the term carries no particular weighty connotations.²¹ Another purely mundane reason for using the terminology is simply that it is used commonly by both adherents and commentators alike.²² So the word “movement” here is more or less synonymous with “streams” or “currents” within Christian thought.

Although church growth is the topic of Chapter 1, the main emphasis is on Wagner. As protégée of Donald McGavran, the founder of the church growth movement, Wagner re-oriented McGavran’s foreign missions focus to church growth in American evangelical churches. A survey of Wagner’s personal history, character, and publishing history allows insight to his personality and agendas. But most significantly, analysing his substantial revision of McGavran’s important text on church growth demonstrates some of the techniques he used to enlist popular acceptance of the pragmatic, success-oriented, American-focussed worldview that provided the foundation for subsequent movements.

¹⁹ Travis Warren Cooper, “Emerging, Emergent, Emergence: Boundary Maintenance, Definition Construction, and Legitimation Strategies in the Establishment of a Post-Evangelical Subculture,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56:2 (June 2017): 400. See also Christian Smith, et al, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 218-220.

²⁰ “For outsiders ... naming delimits a clear field onto which a dissenting authority can project its theological fears and worries and establish a category for the purposes of alienation and distancing.” Cooper, “Emerging, Emergent, Emergence,” 399-400.

²¹ Sean McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7.

²² Sociologists Christerson and Flory might beg to differ in that they place less emphasis on the concept of “movement,” preferring instead to argue for “networks” among what they label as Independent Network Charismatic (INC) Christians. For them, “movement” implies a degree of formal organization synonymous with “sect” or “denomination.” While their depiction of networks is accurate, I would argue that it is a “both/and” situation, with a higher degree of coordination than they suggest—albeit with barely perceptible organisational hierarchies. As I will show, the theological system promoted by the groups examined by Christerson and Flory, and in this thesis, consciously promotes separation from historical church thought, redefines vocabulary and language to alter traditionally accepted meaning in scripture, and adjusts some foundational beliefs such as the nature of sin or the sovereignty of God. This goes some way towards fitting a (loose) definition of a movement, even where individuals who subscribe to the new beliefs maintain ongoing relationships with their traditional churches. See Brad Christerson and Richard Flory, *The Rise of Network Christianity: How Independent Leaders Are Changing the Religious Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 8, 11.

Chapter 2 covers the signs and wonders movement (S&W). John Wimber was the highest-profile personality of the movement, but Wagner was nearby, influencing Wimber's thought and organising the means of systematising signs and wonders phenomena into a taught course at Fuller Seminary. MC510 ultimately facilitated the worldwide dissemination of S&W theology. The chapter traces how a narrative was formed to explain the new paradigm of signs and wonders as an everyday experience of Christian living. Based on earliest audience responses to phenomena that were taken to be the power of the Holy Spirit, the narrative standardised and choreographed its public enactment as experiences of "power encounter" that achieved anticipated and desired outcomes. While no serious theological justification was attempted, the narrative was built by adapting terminology from missionary models of evangelisation, incorporating elements of mythologization, and promoting dependence on charismatic leaders who could lead the people into transcendent experiences of God's power.

The next four chapters focus on the spiritual warfare movement (SWM) that emerged from S&W. The topic occupies four chapters because, to a greater degree than the other movements, it most clearly reveals how particular historical sources influenced the process of engineering a new theology, how an attempt was made to mount its theological defence, and how critics responded. Chapter 3 outlines the shaping of the new theory of demons. It notes some factors that contributed to its formation and describes how some diverse influences, from Paul Hiebert's famous essay "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle" to Frank Hammond's peculiar theories of demonic categories, were integrated to accommodate innovative explanations of the functions, activities, and operational spheres of demons. Chapter 4 introduces SWM conceptions of demonization. An attempt to establish an intellectual foundation for the notion of demons inhabiting Christians was based on three pillars of argument: the tripartite nature of humans, a reinterpretation of the Greek verb *δαίμονιζομαι* (*daimonizomai*), and concepts of gradation in severity of demon involvement with Christians. Against a background of ideas derived from two important historical sources, Jessie Penn-Lewis and Kurt Koch, the SWM constructed a theology informed by folklore and weakened in its intellectual premises by issues of semantic instability, inadequate exegesis, and poor logic. Notwithstanding, demonization in Christians, the first of the two chief components of the SWM, has remained a persistent idea and is still widely adhered to. The second component, the doctrine of "strategic-level spiritual warfare," for which Wagner is best

known, is the subject of Chapter 5.²³ Theories related to territorial demons and spiritual mapping demonstrate how a mere handful of biblical verses and a great deal of mythologization could be built into a full doctrinal position. Power and the role of human agency in disposing of demons came to the fore as the main themes of the doctrine. The final chapter related to the SWM is Chapter 6 where scrutiny of contexts demonstrates how the wider context of American culture and worldviews, the charismatic/neo-Pentecostal environment, and the context of Fuller Theological Seminary had a bearing on the formation of the SWM. The chapter also considers scholarly responses to the theological propositions of the SWM, responses that serve to demonstrate how fragile the doctrines are in the face of serious biblical scholarship.

Chapter 7 introduces the NAR. This was Wagner's term for what he saw as the restructuring of the Church on a scale at least as radical as the Reformation instigated by Martin Luther. The chief feature of Wagner's reformation was defining levels of church authority with apostles and prophets as those who occupy the highest leadership positions; pastors and teachers in Wagner's scheme were of lesser importance to correct functioning within the church. Apostles, he taught, are especially equipped with supernatural authority, and prophets speak God's messages to the people. Of particular importance is the examination of what the prophets utter and how they communicate their messages. This is because of their increasing influence on Christians who subscribe to the new theology. The chapter also explores the origins and the nature of apostolic authority before noting adjustments in orientation following Wagner's death in 2016.

The theme of Chapter 8 is dominion theology that teaches how Christians are mandated to occupy world-leading positions in seven spheres of human society: religion, family, government, arts and entertainment, media, business, and education. Although at times denying theocracy, nevertheless its advocates tend to use the vocabulary of "control" of these seven "mountains." The motivation of dominion theology is eschatological: Jesus' purpose in coming to earth was to re-take the dominion that Satan stole from Adam in the Garden of Eden. Jesus did not take full dominion, but he did establish his kingdom and he expects his people to finish the work he started. When the kingdom of Satan is defeated, and

²³ Wagner was also famous for popularizing systematic discerning of spiritual gifts, but that is outside the scope of this thesis.

peace and prosperity is established by Christians, then Jesus will return. Although the chapter appraises attempts to accomplish this goal, the most important element concerns the implications of how Christians who subscribe to this theology understand themselves, their relationship with God, and their faith system.

In Chapter 9 we finally come to the culmination of the conceptions found in the five movements: Bethel Redding theology. The chapter delineates some of Bill Johnson's fundamental teaching and what the theology looks like when enacted by his followers. Johnson's connections to and influences from Wagner and his associates are summarized, but most significantly, the chapter explores what modifications Bethel theology introduces to the mainstream churches that it currently influences worldwide.

Chapter 10 draws together the theological and epistemological threads of the thesis as it explores the meaning of the conceptions that have been scrutinized. One question to be addressed is the degree to which the new theology represents "faithful performance of the gospel."²⁴ Furthermore, it is crucial to explore the mindset of those who are the recipients of the new theology: what can we learn about those who hear and respond to its messages? In the twenty-first century, Christians are increasingly exposed to new ways of understanding, expressing, or living a life of faith. Consciously or unconsciously, many are amending some important aspects of their convictions, traditional beliefs that are gradually eroding away in favour of new conceptions about what comprises the relationship between God and humans. In the end, my claim is that the new theology is built largely in response to the demands of ordinary Christians. The desire for individual needs and wants to be fulfilled forms the basis for the theology that is the subject of this thesis. In working towards these objectives, this popular theology caters more to the temporal desires of Christians than it responds to God's revelation to humanity.

One of the gaps in reflections on Christian theology is found in the distance between scholarly thought and the claims of popular theology. Because an increasing percentage of Christians base their understanding of their faith on popular ideas, this thesis seeks to address that gap in the hope that it may provoke efforts to reduce the distance. It contributes new

²⁴ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 4.

material to existing theological and historical scholarship in three areas. Firstly, it explores the links between all five movements, their connections to Bethel, and how their combined influences continue to impact evangelical Christianity today. Secondly, it analyses the mechanisms employed to persuade Christians into a particular view of God's revelation and their place in it. Thirdly, it draws on available knowledge from across multiple disciplines, thus supporting theological and biblical scholarship where consensus on claims about some specific scriptures is challenging to achieve. Opening up these three areas begins with looking at the first important phase in the formulation of the new theology: the contribution of its foremost promoter, C. Peter Wagner, to the advancement of church growth theory, the topic of the first chapter.

Chapter 1: Church Growth and Peter Wagner

This chapter introduces the first of five twentieth-century movements that contributed to re-shaping Christian beliefs in some sectors of evangelicalism. Some influential concepts birthed from the church growth movement provided the foundation upon which the subsequent movements grew. Of chief interest is how church growth also facilitated the emergence of a figure whose trajectory is important because of his central role in promoting the beliefs of interest to this study. Although C. Peter Wagner became enormously influential in the movement, he was not its instigator. Donald McGavran (1897-1990) established the movement while Wagner's role pertained mostly to the change in emphasis as McGavran aged and gradually relinquished the reins to Wagner. This chapter briefly outlines the theory of the movement before focussing on Wagner the person, his impact on the movement, and the direction in which he eventually led it.

Fuller Theological Seminary

The history of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, is a story worth telling. Not only does it reflect significant developments in American Evangelicalism from the 1940s to the 1960s, it is also filled with much drama and many twists and turns. In the early pages of his book *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (1977), historian George Marsden advised his readers that even though his fascinating account of Fuller's first twenty years appeared to be fraught with conflict, nevertheless it was also a story of warm relationships and success in training students for lives in Christian ministry.¹ The events and characters tracked in this present study entered Marsden's narrative towards the end of the period he described. Noting that a declining number of their graduates were entering the mission field, Fuller approached a former missionary who had established a small school for church growth in Oregon and persuaded

¹ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 9. Nevertheless, Worthen noted that at times the atmosphere was "poisonous" amid tensions over the fundamentalist/neo-evangelical divide and biblical inerrancy. Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 49.

him to transfer to Pasadena.² Donald McGavran's School of World Mission and Institute for Church Growth opened at Fuller in 1965.

From the outset, McGavran's department was characterised by a passion for evangelisation, a clear sense of identity, strong-mindedness, and the ability to attract controversy.³ Impatient with what he saw as inefficient missionary strategies that focussed on converting individuals before bringing them into church fellowship, McGavran's thrust was mass conversions of "people groups" with less emphasis on individual decisions.⁴ The missional processes of "search" theology (activities known as "seed sowing" or mere proclaiming of the gospel) were heavily criticized by McGavran who insisted that drawing groups of people into dependable church membership, irrespective of their personal decisions, is where the will of God sits. Attracting these groups into the church environment was a process he called "discipling." From there a somewhat lesser emphasis was given to "perfecting" them into mature Christian commitment.⁵ World mission equated to pure ("classical biblical") evangelism only and he viewed "good works," including mission hospitals and schools, as being like "treating a troublesome itch, while the patient dies of cholera."⁶ God's desire is that persons be reconciled to himself, with church growth the chief and irreplaceable purpose of mission.⁷ Furthermore, focus must be on "ripe for harvest" mission fields rather than more difficult to reach people groups.⁸ The most controversial of McGavran's themes was the Homogenous Unit Principle. It was based on his conception that

² Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 238.

³ Donald McGavran's incentive to develop his church growth theories grew out of his determination to find out why he was observing negligible growth in churches connected to his mission in India where in other regions churches were growing rapidly. Donald A. McGavran, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10:2 (April 1986): 54; Gary L. McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran: A Biography of the Twentieth Century's Premier Missiologist* (USA: Church Leader Insights, 2015), 79-80.

⁴ McGavran drew parallels between Christ's Great Commission (Matt 28:19) and what he describes as the Great Commission given to Paul (Rom 1:5; Rom 16:26) where the gospel is taken to *panta ta ethné*, translated as "all nations" in the NEB but meaning "all peoples": tongues, tribes, castes, and lineages of men. Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 56. This interpretation became important to advocates of dominion theology in later years (see Chapter 8), when Wagner and his associates insisted that *panta ta ethné* meant that the emphasis on reaching individuals with the gospel is mistaken and should be interpreted as taking dominion over all social units in order to achieve societal transformation. Wagner, *Dominion!*, 48, 72-73.

⁵ McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 253; Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 241; McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 56, 312.

⁶ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 32. See also McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 227.

⁷ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 31-34.

⁸ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 44.

“men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers,” a notion that concerned many because of the implication that it promoted racial separation.⁹ However, most prominent among the themes that came to characterise the church growth movement was numerical growth. McGavran’s thinking coalesced into a pragmatic focus that clearly articulated his (often polemical) argument: “On biblical grounds one has to affirm that devout use of the numerical approach is in accord with God’s wishes.”¹⁰ Moreover, “all thinking about the church should be done against the graph of growth, because when done without exact knowledge of how the church has and has not grown, it is likely to find itself in error.”¹¹

McGavran’s ideas caught on. Eventually, he came to be described as the “Father of the modern Church Growth Movement” and “arguably the greatest missiologist of the twentieth century.”¹² His beliefs spawned an entire industry in church growth literature and ministry organisations and are still observable in today’s mega-church phenomenon.¹³ However, he also attracted criticism for weaknesses in his theological arguments and emphasis on numerical growth.¹⁴ At Fuller Seminary, McGavran’s methods were received with disquiet.

⁹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 198, see also 85. Although criticized by many, McGavran’s Homogenous Unit Principle also had its defenders. For example, see John Michael Morris, “McGavran on McGavran: What Did He Really Teach?” and Troy L. Bush, “The Homogeneous Unit Principle and The American Mosaic,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Missions and Evangelism* 2 (Fall 2016): 9-23, 25-45.

¹⁰ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 83.

¹¹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 109. However, van Engen argues that McGavran was not overly focused on results-oriented pragmatism, and the emphasis on numerical growth increased as time passed (from about 1980 on). Charles van Engen, “A Centrist Response,” in *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views*, ed. Gary L McIntosh (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 192-193.

¹² Tim Stafford, “The Father of Church Growth,” *Christianity Today* 30:3 (21 February 1986): 19, Gary L McIntosh, “Why Church Growth Can’t be Ignored,” in *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views*, ed. Gary L McIntosh (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 7; John M. Morris, “Introduction to Donald McGavran’s Thoughts On the Church and Denominations,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 55:1 (Fall 2012), 90.

¹³ J.B. Watson, Jr. and Walter H. Scalen, Jr., “‘Dining With the Devil’: The Unique Secularization of American Evangelical Churches,” *International Social Science Review* 83:3/4 (January 2008): 171-180; Richard G. Kyle, *Evangelicalism: An Americanized Christianity* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 234; Marion Maddox, “‘In the Goofy parking lot’: growth churches as a novel religious form for late capitalism,” *Social Compass* 59:2 (June 2012): 148, 150; Yongsoo Lee and Wim Dreyer, “From proto-missional to mega-church: A critique of ecclesial ‘growth’ in Korea,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74:4 (13 March 2018): 3-4. See also the discussion in Os Guinness, “Sounding out the Idols of Church Growth,” in *No God but God: Breaking with the Idols of Our Age*, eds. Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 151-174, especially 152. Worthen summed up the priorities of American Evangelicalism: “In the free marketplace of American religion, where preachers survived by hawking their wares to the greatest number of people, head counts at the baptismal font—not the coherence of doctrine or the mastery of new knowledge—became the test of a church.” Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 8. See also William Chadwick, *Stealing Sheep* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 70-72.

¹⁴ David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 69-70. For assessments of the church growth movement see Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *Exploring Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983); Gary L McIntosh, ed., *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: 5 Views* (Grand Rapids,

Fuller leadership's "disappointment" with McGavran was driven by his technical approach to soul-winning.¹⁵ Nevertheless, wrote Marsden, the pragmatism of McGavran sat well with American evangelical values of free enterprise. These values approved of church growth principles in using scientific method to achieve the desired results—numbers of converts—and moreover, McGavran did still acknowledge the importance of conversion.¹⁶ Therefore, though it was an uneasy relationship, the School of World Mission remained firmly ensconced at Fuller. It attracted enthusiastic students, grew in profile, but did eventually acquire a controversial reputation, as the next chapter will show.¹⁷

C. Peter Wagner

The focus of this chapter is McGavran's protégée and heir apparent to the leadership of the church growth movement: C. Peter Wagner (1930-2016). Because of his role in developing the ideas that are the focus of this thesis, it becomes necessary to understand Wagner himself: his character, his background, and the formulation of his ideas. What factors contributed to his ability to appropriate the ideas of others, to gather around himself like-minded champions of the theology, or to use his remarkable personal skills to promote the new notions successfully?

Wagner first encountered McGavran when he wrote a dissertation under McGavran's supervision while on leave from the mission field during the 1967-68 academic year. This experience became a turning point for Wagner: he reported that his experience of studying under McGavran had made him a "diehard advocate" of church growth theories.¹⁸ Wagner's missionary years in Bolivia had involved several changes in location, strategy, and projects

MI: Zondervan, 2004). Also see informative reviews of McGavran's book *Understanding Church Growth* by James A. Scherer, "The Life and Growth of Churches in Mission," *International Review of Mission* 60:237 (January 1971):125-132; Sabbas J. Kilian, "Understanding Church Growth (Book Review)," *Theological Studies* 33:1 (March 1972): 182; Duncan B. Forrester, "Understanding Church Growth," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37:3 (August 1984): 421-423. The general tone of eleven reviews located for the first two editions of *Understanding Church Growth* can be summed up in the words of one reviewer: "Here is missionary zeal, to be read with caution." Jeffrey I. Myers, "Understanding Church Growth," *Theology Today* 38:4 (January 1982): 496-497. However, McGavran's arguments were endorsed by numerous supporters who insisted he was misunderstood. See for example nearly all the articles in the *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* 2 (Spring 2003).

¹⁵ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 242.

¹⁶ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 243.

¹⁷ The church growth movement itself fragmented over the years and different streams emerged, although it remained an American-focussed phenomenon.

¹⁸ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 87.

and he was disappointed to discover eventually that evangelistic efforts in which he had participated had had little impact on Bolivian church growth statistics.¹⁹ This provided an incentive for his keen interest in the church growth ideas offered at Fuller. Through McGavran's influence, quantitative measures became Wagner's indicator of success: the definition of God's blessing is numerical growth in church membership.²⁰ Each of McGavran's themes was firmly endorsed and reinforced by Wagner for many years. His Ph.D. thesis was a defence of McGavran's Homogenous Unit Principle, declaring that the Principle "is as much a law of sociology as gravity is a law of physics."²¹ But most significantly, where McGavran's dedicated focus was on missions outside of North America, Wagner was widely recognised for steering the theory towards the American context.²²

Wagner's background is important to the themes explored in this thesis. He had been raised in a non-Christian environment and did not have a meaningful encounter with the Christian faith until he met his future wife who announced she would not marry him unless he converted.²³ Although his earliest passion and career aspiration was farm work, Doris extracted a promise from him to become a missionary on the night he agreed to become a Christian.²⁴ They were married shortly thereafter. When he met Doris, he was in the midst of earning an undergraduate agricultural degree from Rutgers University (1952). To qualify for the mission field, the newly-wed Wagner then undertook a divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary (completed 1955).²⁵ This led to sixteen years in Eastern Bolivia and the Andes Mountains (1956-1971). He completed two Masters-level degrees during year-long

¹⁹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 66.

²⁰ C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake!: How the New Apostolic Reformation is Shaking up the Church as We Know It* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 9.

²¹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 109. Wagner held that it was a "valid Christian principle" for church congregations to be homogenous, that is, not racially mixed. He stated that the principle was "practiced by Jesus and the early church, throughout Christian history and even today in the United States." Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 111.

²² McIntosh, "Introduction," in *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement*, 9, 17.

²³ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 28.

²⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 29.

²⁵ Fuller Seminary Archives and Special Collections, "Collection 0181: C. Peter Wagner Collection, 1930-2016," *List of Archival Collections*, 2019, 157, <<https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/findingaids/157>> (5 March 2019). Note that Wagner's first degree from Fuller was awarded as a Bachelor of Divinity and was a post-undergraduate programme for those who had earned degrees in other disciplines (such as Wagner's agricultural degree). In 1972, the title of the Bachelor of Divinity was changed to the Master of Divinity and the degree title was retroactively changed to Master of Divinity. Source: Alyson Thomas, Archives Librarian, Fuller Theological Seminary, email to author, 13 March 2019. Wagner refers to the MDiv as an undergraduate degree in his memoir, Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 248.

furloughs from his missionary work. His ThM (1962) thesis from Princeton Theological Seminary was on the Marian Theology of Thomas Aquinas.²⁶ His MA dissertation (1968) in Missiology (Church Growth) under McGavran examined the history of early missionary work in Bolivia. In summer 1971 Wagner left Bolivia permanently and returned with his family to the United States to take up a teaching position alongside McGavran at Fuller.²⁷ In 1979 he completed his controversial PhD dissertation at the University of Southern California.²⁸ Eventually Wagner became a tenured professor at Fuller and remained in the position until 2001.²⁹ As Professor of Church Growth at Fuller for thirty years and as a popular teacher, Wagner's prominence and influence increased. One significant role to which he was appointed was Chair of the Strategy Working Group of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (1976-81).³⁰ Furthermore, in 1984 he was installed as the first Chair of Church Growth at Fuller's School of World Mission.³¹ Positions such as these allowed him a wide range of contacts and relationships within powerful groups that undoubtedly contributed to his high profile as a Christian leader.

In terms of his personality, those who knew him personally spoke well of him, in particular noting his kindness and willingness to engage in dialogue.³² Wagner's pastor described him as "a puckish man" with a graying goatee and twinkling eyes who had a "sneaky, disarming sort of charisma."³³ In a letter lamenting Wagner's move away from Bolivia, the executive director of the Andes Evangelical mission described his "tremendous

²⁶ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 56.

²⁷ McGavran's biographer Gary McIntosh reports that McGavran hired Wagner because he was impressed with his leadership, enthusiasm, and teaching ability. McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 184.

²⁸ Entitled "The Ethical Implications of the Homogeneous Unit Principle of Church Growth." Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 111. Later published: C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979).

²⁹ There are discrepancies in dates in some of the scholarly material referenced throughout this thesis. The most accurate information comes from Wagner himself and Gary McIntosh. Wagner stepped down from teaching and moved to Colorado Springs in 1996 but did not formally retire from Fuller until 2001. In his last years at Fuller he was busy establishing other private projects but did return to Fuller to teach week-long intensives from time to time. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 177, 221; Gary McIntosh, email to thesis author, 26 February 2019.

³⁰ Billy Graham Center, "Records of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization," *Collection 46*, 25 October 2016, <<https://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/046.htm#3>> (17 November 2018).

³¹ McIntosh, "Introduction," in *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement*, 18.

³² See for example: Ed Stetzer, "C. Peter Wagner (1930-2016), Some Thoughts on His Life and Passing," *CT: The Exchange*, 22 October 2016, <<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2016/october/in-memory-of-c-peter-wagner.html>> (23 September 2018), n.p.

³³ Raymond Ortlund, foreword to the 1st edition, in Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 6.

curiosity ... [his] very agile mind and a tremendous capacity for work.”³⁴ Gary McIntosh, Donald McGavran’s biographer, studied under Wagner, maintained sporadic contact with him over the years, and engaged with him during interviews for McGavran’s upcoming biography. Although McIntosh is clear that he does not agree with everything in Wagner’s teaching, he remains convinced of Wagner’s motives: “I feel that [Peter and Doris Wagner] were honestly seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit, and whatever direction God took them, they followed.”³⁵ New Testament scholar Clinton Arnold knew Wagner well and was “deeply inspired by Pete’s evangelistic fervor.”³⁶ Billy Graham wrote in a letter to Wagner that “There are few people in the Christian world that I admire any more than I do you.”³⁷ In not so positive terms, anthropologist Jon Bialecki reported that some within the Vineyard movement viewed him as a raconteur and self-promoter.³⁸

Wagner’s self-view is of great interest to this study. His memoir (2010) is a candid account of his personal perspective and reads more as a manifesto for his theological programme than it does as a personal story of one man’s life and times.³⁹ The opening chapter follows typical autobiography patterns in describing his early years and it remains the most personal of the entire book. From the time of his marriage and subsequent account of preparing for the mission field, the focus progressively shifted to his theology while his personal history became incidental. However, he did remain the centrepiece of the memoir as he framed the book in terms of his journey through a series of theological progressions. He forthrightly described his motivations, influences, and personal perspectives, and the memoir is peppered with descriptions of his character and how this influenced his functions and roles. He began this process early in the book by stating: “On Florence Littauer’s ‘The 4 Temperaments’ personality profile, I turn out to be a choleric–melancholy. This clearly indicates my bent to leadership and organization.”⁴⁰ From the outset, Wagner assisted the reader to interpret and understand Wagner in precisely the manner that Wagner wished.

³⁴ McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 212.

³⁵ Gary McIntosh, email to thesis author, 3 March 2019.

³⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 14.

³⁷ McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 268.

³⁸ Jon Bialecki, “The Third Wave and the Third World: C. Peter Wagner, John Wimber, and the Pedagogy of Global Renewal in the Late Twentieth Century,” *Pneuma* 37:2 (January 2015): 183.

³⁹ It also contains much material repeated from his many books; a characteristic of all his published works.

⁴⁰ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 17.

To this end, he emerged as a man with a strong work ethic and a team player with natural leadership abilities who characteristically made quick decisions.⁴¹ In video footage of his onstage teaching he presented with a folksy, rambling style regularly interrupted by personal anecdotes or jokes.⁴² He preferred an optimistic outlook against giving attention to the less positive aspects of life.⁴³ Nevertheless, he had a predilection for taking controversial stances and preferred out-of-the-box thinking. He appeared to relish his reputation as a maverick.⁴⁴ There were two other aspects to his personality that he regularly noted in his literature. These characteristics are important to the trajectory he followed in his life and so require a closer look in order to understand what sat behind the themes examined in this thesis.

Firstly, he embraced and enjoyed change and transition; a trait acquired due to many household moves made in his childhood and that he believed was driven by curiosity.⁴⁵ He regularly drew attention to significant “paradigm shifts” in his life and conveniently divided his autobiography into “eras” named after the person who most influenced him into a new paradigm.⁴⁶ He defined paradigm shifts as theological transitions: changes of mind so that a person could see, interpret and understand certain phenomena in a new and different way, pulling them out of their comfort zones.⁴⁷ In his view, this is what was meant by the biblical

⁴¹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 13, 19, 25.

⁴² Wagner loved jokes so much that he published a book of his favourites: *Let's Laugh: Discovering How Laughter Will Make You Healthy* (2007).

⁴³ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 146. Wagner was an admirer of “possibility thinking” advocate Robert Schuller and repeatedly referred to him in his books as an exemplar of his own approach to theology. See for example the more than a dozen references to Schuller in Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*.

⁴⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 33, 155, 172. He also wrote that he chose to study at Fuller because its controversial reputation appealed to him, 33.

⁴⁵ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 13-14, 268. Wagner described his father as a manager of outsourced millinery departments in large department stores who had to move his family each time he was promoted. Due to their frequent moves he attended thirteen schools in the twelve years of his schooling. Although not confirmable, in the text there are hints of other dynamics at work, such as his father's gin manufacturing during Prohibition. Wagner's response to a lifestyle that stimulated him where other children might have been traumatized goes some way to explaining his urge to be on the “cutting edge”: “I think that one of the reasons I have managed to find myself on the cutting edge of many new trends through the years is that as a youngster I never had the opportunity to settle very deeply into a comfort zone. Change for me was simply an acceptable and normal way of life, and I learned to enjoy it, even going so far as to desire it at times.” It also gives insight into Wagner's self-described “optimistic and gullible” character (see *Alligators*, 146). Observable traits that emerge in his writing display a tendency to gloss over uncomfortable details to positively promote his theological agendas.

⁴⁶ Under the heading “Theological Transitions,” Wagner lists and describes fourteen “paradigm shifts” he made in the course of his life. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 268-273.

⁴⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 151, 268.

instruction to be transformed by the “renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2).⁴⁸ At the heart of much of Wagner’s writing sat this theme of change: the old (“wineskin”) is no longer working, therefore the new (“wineskin”) has arrived. Loosely speaking, his transitions can be described under headings: church growth, signs and wonders, spiritual warfare, apostles and prophets (and the promotion of the NAR), and dominion theology.⁴⁹ Wealth transfer, the means to funding the achievement of dominion over the earth, emerged as his final enthusiasm shortly before his death in 2016.

The second, and perhaps the most commonly referenced trait associated with Wagner was his self-declared pragmatism. In his memoir he explained this proclivity by telling anecdotes to illustrate the point: how he learned to make good money gambling at poker or his decision to become a Christian after he realized his girlfriend would not marry him otherwise.⁵⁰ From wooing the girl of his dreams to his acquisition of “practical skills” in paying bribes to smooth daily life in Bolivia, Wagner declared himself a pragmatist throughout his career and regularly reminded his readers of it, even engaging in extended discussion to contest critics who expressed discomfort with his methods.⁵¹ An excellent fit with McGavran’s beliefs, this pragmatism provided the basis for a new methodology in mission: “We are unashamedly recommending a fiercely pragmatic approach to evangelism.”⁵² Academic discussion on church growth repeatedly uses this term in regard to the movement initiated by McGavran, sometimes in a pejorative sense.⁵³ But proponents of

⁴⁸ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 151.

⁴⁹ One other area in which Wagner was notable was the theme of spiritual gifts. Wagner’s best-selling book (over 250,000 copies sold) was *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1979); see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 173. Wagner was one of many publishing on the same theme during a season when identifying one’s spiritual gifts was highly popular in evangelical church circles. I will make little mention of this theme because it is not directly relevant to the issues under discussion, beyond pointing out that Wagner’s teaching on this contributed significantly to an increasing emphasis on the supernatural gifts.

⁵⁰ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 20, 28.

⁵¹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 28, 60-61. See also C. Peter Wagner, *This Changes Everything: How God Can Transform Your Mind and Change Your Life* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2013), 60-62 and Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 29-34. In *This Changes Everything*, Wagner challenged John MacArthur’s criticism of his pragmatism in MacArthur’s *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes like the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 72-80.

⁵² Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 160. See also C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Powers: How the New Testament Church Experienced the Power of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), 47-48.

⁵³ See for example: Watson “Dining with the Devil,” 171-180; Yongsoo Lee, “A Korean Perspective on Megachurches as Missional Churches” (MTh. Diss., University of Pretoria, 2014), 32, 112; Martyn Percy, “‘How to Win Congregations and Influence Them’: An Anatomy of the Church Growth Movement,” *Modern Churchman* 34:1 (1992): 24-34.

church growth defended their approach as God-inspired, as opposed to being merely humanly pragmatic. Their stance was that those who oppose it are simply mistaken about the spiritual implications of a pragmatic outlook.⁵⁴ Wagner called it “consecrated pragmatism”⁵⁵ In accord with this, his pragmatism typified his approach not only to his personal life but also to the way he viewed issues of faith and spirituality.⁵⁶ As Wagner saw it, pragmatism is God’s desire for our lives and the end justifies the means, provided the means are “value-neutral” (not immoral).⁵⁷ His most succinct expression of this philosophy was: “Do whatever works.”⁵⁸ He argued for biblical precedents in Jethro’s solution to Moses’ “burnout” (Exod 18), and in Paul, who “flirted” with what theologians of his day might have seen as ethical issues (1 Cor 9:22), even though doing so may have made Paul feel uncomfortable.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Jesus modelled the strategy for focussing only on “ripe for harvest” fields. In sending out his twelve disciples with specific instructions, he ensured his limited people resources were maximised to reach only the Jews: “As a competent strategy planner, Jesus took as many precautions as possible to see that the output of energy resulted in the maximum harvest.”⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Elmer L. Towns, John N. Vaughan and David J. Seifert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth*, (Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1981), 191.

⁵⁵ Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 33. Projects following this ethos accrued “task oriented information that accelerates the completion of the great commission.” C. Peter Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry Without Making Your Church Sick* (Eastbourne: Monarch Publications, 1988), 13.

⁵⁶ Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 29.

⁵⁷ “We ought to see clearly that the end *does* justify the means. What else possibly could justify the means? If the method I am using accomplishes the goal I am aiming at, it is for that reason a good method.” Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 161. (Italics his) See also Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 28-29; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 104.

⁵⁸ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 217.

⁵⁹ Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 30-31. “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (NKJV). Wagner’s failure to explain what Paul meant in this verse risks providing readers with a misguided sense of freedom to be and do as one pleases in different contexts. Theologians have commented on how this verse can be abused. Fee noted accommodation in evangelism can lead to acting out of self-interest, Blomberg warned that the gospel must not be compromised in any way, and Carson reminded his readers of Paul’s standard that allows no cause of stumbling to any hearer of the gospel. Wagner merely commented: “Although [Paul] himself might have been somewhat uncomfortable, especially with his strategy for reaching the Gentiles, he affirms, ‘This I do for the gospel’s sake’ (1 Cor 9:23).” Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F.F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 432-433; Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians: The NIV Application Commentary*, The NIV Application Commentary Series, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 151-155; D.A. Carson, “Pauline Inconsistency: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 and Galatians 2:11–14,” *Churchman* 100 (1986): 15.

⁶⁰ Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 66-68. Paul, however, needed to engage trial-and-error experimentation in order to locate his ripened harvest field and initially made some false starts in his ministry, 68-72.

Wagner defined his pragmatism by recording how his (unnamed) dictionary described it: “Concerned with practical consequences or values.”⁶¹ Because his writing was aimed primarily at the popular market his definition serves well enough for his purposes. However, there are wider implications to be found in more academic definitions. The entry for “Pragmatism” in one encyclopaedia explains: “Pragmatism holds that truth is found in ‘what works,’ and that truth is relative to the current situation ... truth is not seen as an absolute but a moveable and usable construct for understanding the nature of reality.”⁶² This carries implications for Wagner’s stance within Christian belief systems. For example, pragmatism’s rejection of absolute truth would bring him into conflict with Christian ethics and most particularly with those who claim to hold to *sola scriptura*. By being loose with his definitions Wagner left himself open to criticism, a fact that seemed not to trouble him at all.⁶³ But as will emerge in this study, he demonstrated that this pragmatic worldview reflected the encyclopaedic description: truth at times became a fluid commodity.

These then are the characteristics Wagner wanted his readers to learn about him. Apart from his love of telling jokes, his evident sociability, and his knack for developing relationships with prominent figures in evangelical circles, not a lot more information about who he really was can be gleaned from his memoir. Perhaps one of the most notable characteristics of his personality emerged from the pages of his many theological books. His social and organisational skills and his apparently indefatigable work ethic made him the ultimate networker. He was responsible for repeatedly bringing people together in conferences, meetings, and organisations, invariably with himself at the helm. Combined with a prolific output of published works, this meant that Wagner maintained a very high profile in both American and overseas evangelical circles for the last few decades of the twentieth century and into the next.

Wagner: Published Works

As the most prominent and productive writer on the ideas scrutinised in this thesis, Wagner’s contribution to their formation and dissemination means that it is important to

⁶¹ Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 29.

⁶² Mark L. McCaslin, “Pragmatism,” *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 672.

⁶³ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 55, 172.

understand his methodology in writing and how he ensured that his messages were effectively circulated.⁶⁴ A survey and analysis of Wagner's archetypal patterns in his published books helps us comprehend how his theology was convincingly articulated. His material abundantly demonstrated how he employed strategies of persuasion to convince his readers. Each of the elements discussed in this section combined to assist the successful promotion of a new worldview.

As mentioned above, Wagner's passions and transitions progressed through several different stages and these interests were reflected in noteworthy developments in his published works. His first published books were missions-oriented followed by his interest in church growth that came to the fore in the 1970s. From the early 1980s, stemming from the connection with John Wimber, his attention centred on signs and wonders, which evolved into a focus on spiritual warfare. In the late 1990s through to the 2000s the theme of apostolic churches and apostles became the most prominent: in these titles he introduced the concept of the NAR. The first explanation of this theme is found in his chapter "The New Apostolic Reformation" in *The New Apostolic Churches*, a book edited by Wagner with contributions from other church leaders on their apostolic ministries.⁶⁵ Books on Dominion theology took precedence near the end of the first decade of the 2000s, followed by his autobiography in 2010. His final book was *The Great Transfer of Wealth: Financial Release for Advancing God's Kingdom* (2014). He never wrote exclusively on one topic in any one period but there is a strong trend in his titles that shows where his interests mostly lay in particular seasons and at what points his thinking changed. Given that he mostly wrote his books from a first-person perspective, a question arises in regard to his position within the movements he described: was he an observer/reporter or was he an instigator/leader? This question is held in tension throughout his literature.⁶⁶ Although he often paid lip service to his role as reporter, throughout his text he invariably placed himself front and centre of any new development. Certainly he was a leader and he knew how to position himself. But his greatest skill lay with his ability to shape the perspective of his readers or audiences by telling them what to see.

⁶⁴ Other individuals who made important contributions will be introduced in subsequent chapters.

⁶⁵ C. Peter Wagner, "The New Apostolic Reformation," in *The New Apostolic Churches*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1998), 19.

⁶⁶ See for example modifications in his self-representation in Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 7-11, 33-53, and compare with Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 207-215.

Productivity

Wagner saw teaching as his goal; writing was the means to achieving it.⁶⁷ However, analysing his published material is not a straightforward task for several reasons. Firstly, he was prolific in his outputs. During the years 1966-2014 seventy-six books were published under his name.⁶⁸ In twenty-four of these he was a co-author, editor, or contributor rather than the sole author, including one written by McGavran with a later revision including Wagner's name. Secondly, it can be confusing to catalogue his books due to similarities in numerous titles. Thirdly, titles changed. Some books were published in North America but the same book carried a different title where it was released simultaneously (or at a later stage) in other English-language countries. Some were translated into other languages and again may have had entirely different titles. A significant number of books were re-issued as reprints or revisions; the title on these also might be changed from the original. Although some early titles were published by companies such as Zondervan or Eerdmans, often his books were produced by smaller houses that focussed on the popular market or who in general produced resources (such as Sunday School materials) that differed in category from Wagner's theological teaching.⁶⁹ Many titles were bestsellers, although a few did not do so well.⁷⁰

Analysis of Wagner's written work is further complicated by the search for new material in his books. He repeated a great deal of his material, regularly reproducing entire sections almost word-for-word in multiple books, but at other times making small changes that could alter the meaning of the text.⁷¹ Although the theme of each book was usually reflected in the title, much of the repeated material was simply a reiteration of the substance of several previous books. Getting to the core of the new material can be a challenge.

⁶⁷ C. Peter Wagner, "How I Write a Book for Publication," unpublished article (April 2010), 1. Provided by Doris Wagner, 25 February 2019. I am grateful to Gary McIntosh for facilitating provision of this resource.

⁶⁸ The count of seventy-six should be allowed some latitude due to the number of variables alluded to in the remainder of the paragraph, but it is as accurate a count of individual works as can be determined.

⁶⁹ Wagner's usual publisher was Regal Books (acquired by Baker Publishing Group in 2014). Regal was the book-publishing division of Gospel Light whose previous core business was producing Sunday School and vacation Bible school materials, and church curricula, although it subsequently moved into publishing writers similar in genre to Wagner. Lynne Garrett, "Baker Publishing to Acquire Regal Books," *Publishers Weekly*, 14 April 2014, <<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/religion/article/61845-baker-publishing-to-acquire-regal-books.html>> (20 November 2018).

⁷⁰ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 298.

⁷¹ This also is a characteristic of books written by Bill Johnson of Bethel Church (see Chapter 9). When Wagner's books are surveyed as a total entity, it becomes obvious that the repetition of material was so extensive that it would be pointless to cite every instance, so I have chosen to reference merely representative examples.

Style

Wagner's writing was characterized by plain and easy-to-understand language. Typically, he divided his material into short sections with eye-catching headings. Some books were very short. His popularity as an author was not surprising given that the books do not take long to read and his points gave the appearance of being made clearly and convincingly. An effective technique was the frequent use of anecdotes to support his case: for the reader this adds great interest to the text. One quirk of his writing was extreme use of exclamation marks, sometimes closing up to two-thirds of the sentences in a paragraph.⁷² While this can become merely a habit for some writers, it is possible that Wagner used this as a stylistic technique to convey a sense of excitement, in line with his general tone of writing. Heavy use of exclamation marks is absent from other types of material such as email discussions with his publisher or journal articles. Of particular interest are the sections of text he inserts into his revision of McGavran's book *Understanding Church Growth*. Here his style matched McGavran's own, thus suggesting intentional stylistic modifications depending on the material he was working with or perhaps the target audience.⁷³ The most notable feature of Wagner's style is the optimistic, positive, and forward-looking tone that pervaded his entire body of work. He rarely referred to anything negative and frequently underplayed some of the less palatable aspects of his proposals.⁷⁴ The importance of this pertains to how it became a characteristic of the culture he inhabited, becoming in effect a theological principle, as will be noted later.⁷⁵

Method

In very general terms, Wagner's earlier books demonstrate more evidence of research and are slightly more academic in tone. Later books were written in an increasingly popular style and his (few) references tended towards other popular works or his own books. In "How I Write a Book for Publication," an unpublished article aimed at aspiring writers, Wagner

⁷² See for example C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles Today* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006), 16. Exclamation marks also feature regularly in book and chapter titles. Interestingly, this has become a characteristic among charismatic circles, as I can testify from numerous written communications I have seen or received personally.

⁷³ For just one example see several paragraphs written and inserted by Wagner in Donald A. McGavran and C. Peter Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 7-9.

⁷⁴ See for example Wagner, *Dominion!*, 59-62.

⁷⁵ For just one example, the most commonly given argument to support partial preterist eschatology in preference to Rapture-oriented dispensationalism was that it is optimistic, positive, and victorious; see Chapter 8 of this thesis.

described how he went about the process of writing.⁷⁶ He recommended never rewriting material, allowing for reduced attention spans in readers, and making sure that the material was oriented toward sales. Finally, he advised hopeful writers to follow his practice: “Write what you know at the moment and get the ideas out there. If it turns out that you have made a mistake or that you subsequently change your opinion about something, no problem. Correct it in your next book!”⁷⁷ This advice presents a problem for accurate transmission of theological themes and could go some way to accounting for an observable phenomenon among adherents of Wagner’s style of theology: vague or fluid doctrinal notions that are seldom clearly articulated.⁷⁸

One further notable characteristic is a pattern found in most of his books, usually relatively early in the text. Wagner took care to emphasize his status. He drew attention to his academic credentials, his leadership positions, and his participation in important events (most commonly the Lausanne Congresses).⁷⁹ The same information was often reiterated later throughout the text.⁸⁰ Another frequent emphasis concerned how much research he had undertaken, regularly using related terms such as “study,” “analysis,” or “my reading.” These are effective methods for reinforcing credibility and adding weight to the message; they serve to reinforce that the commentary is well-prepared and authoritative.⁸¹

Wagner produced written material at a quantity and rate that appears extraordinary. For example, in 1988 while on sabbatical leave he was working on the revision of McGavran’s *Understanding Church Growth* at the same time as completing two of his own books, writing several chapters for other books, six articles and a seminar on prayer. That same year, Wagner records in his memoir that he undertook a mission to Japan.⁸² In terms of

⁷⁶ Wagner, “How I Write a Book for Publication,” 1.

⁷⁷ Wagner, “How I Write a Book for Publication,” 4.

⁷⁸ This has been marked during many years of my informal conversations with adherents to Wagner-style teaching: it is challenging to get clear information on exactly what the theology comprises.

⁷⁹ Wagner participated in the first and second conferences of the International Congress on World Evangelization (Lausanne 1974 and Lausanne II in Manila 1989).

⁸⁰ Historian Olav Hammer designates these references as “paratextual markers” intended to legitimize the text. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 503.

⁸¹ For examples in just two books see: Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 7-8, 14, 15, 17, 27, 33, 57, 105; and Wagner, *Dominion!*, 26, 50-51, 58, 120, 121. Note that there is no question that Wagner achieved high-level credentials, held prominent leadership roles, and acquired elevated status. However, it should not be assumed that the quality of his research is automatically assured through repeated listing of his credentials.

⁸² McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 329; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 240.

assistance to achieve his outputs, his wife Doris reports that she proof-read and corrected errors before each manuscript was sent to the publisher and that the receiving editors generally made few corrections because of the already excellent condition of the manuscript.⁸³ So given that he was dividing his attention between a number of different projects and that he did not have research assistance, how did he have time to undertake research for individual projects? There are two sources of information to help answer this question: firstly Wagner himself, and secondly a survey of reference notes in his books.

Research

Wagner's research methodology is vitally important to the themes of this thesis. Here we gain an understanding of how it differed from conventional research approaches and outcomes, and begin to discern processes that contributed to the construction of his theology. The most illuminating statement about how Wagner approached his research comes from his own writing:

My research methodology is not philosophical or theological (in the classical sense) nor exegetical or revelational, but rather phenomenological. I am not saying any of these methodologies is right or wrong. Phenomenology clearly is not superior to exegesis. It is merely my personal choice.⁸⁴

This helps to explain the methodology of an academic writer who had earned advanced degrees and yet chose to draw on personal experience and popular writing for a significant proportion of his research sources. In Wagner's advice to potential writers, he outlined his own research habits of subscribing to periodicals and books, and he indicated that magazines were a regular source.⁸⁵ His stated preference was for print material: he did not often access television, the internet, video or audio material. His news came from newspapers or news magazines because he preferred to choose the information he accessed rather than have other types of media, such as television, choose for him. His philosophy, passed on to other writers, was that they should "stay ahead of the pack" by giving time to "cutting edge ideas" that others have not thought much about, hence avoiding the tendency of many Christian leaders who are preoccupied with the past instead of the future. He also wrote that he spent as much time as possible with others who knew more about his subject matter than he did, although it

⁸³ Doris Wagner, email to Gary McIntosh, 25 February 2019.

⁸⁴ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 77.

⁸⁵ Wagner, "How I Write a Book for Publication," 1-2.

should be noted that indications from quotes in his books are that these others were almost always authors of the same mind as Wagner and thus reinforcing of his own viewpoint.

Vital clues as to the quality of Wagner's research are found in a comment about how he read his research material:

Having a predetermined mental agenda helps in speed reading. I can read many books in 30 minutes because in most books there is relatively little new content that will help me develop my particular agenda. I have developed a skill in sorting out the writer's agenda from mine and spending time only on what contributes to my agenda. Does that mean that I miss a lot of interesting material? Yes, but I find it much more productive to invest my time on relevant material than to waste time with *interesting* material.⁸⁶

This comment highlights an issue that requires pause for thought. Given that Wagner presented what he claimed as new theological truth and an "extraordinary work of God," a reader can be forgiven for expecting that the research for a book describing God's work has comprised a thoughtful, systematic, and extensive investigation. Yet the above statement draws attention to the multiple risks of researching in this manner: missing valuable information, material taken out of context, reading only for information supportive of his agenda, and avoiding differing opinions.⁸⁷ Most markedly, Wagner's reading habits exposed him to the danger of impaired comprehension. Scholarly research on the relationship between speed reading and comprehension of text indicates that "reading is an elegantly choreographed dance among a number of visual and mental processes" and "it is only via careful reading that the reader will be able to appreciate the appropriate meaning."⁸⁸ The results of multiple speed-reading studies indicate that increased rates of reading come at the expense of comprehension.⁸⁹

This begs the question of exactly what Wagner did understand from his reading of some of the authoritative sources he quotes. One example of how he interpreted his sources comes from his discussion on the authority of apostles who are charismatic leaders in the

⁸⁶ Wagner, "How I Write a Book for Publication," 1. Italics Wagner's.

⁸⁷ While Wagner explained that he disengaged from academic polemic following a specific instruction from God, this also had the effect of potentially ensuring that he did not have to answer or even maintain awareness of his critics. See Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 190-191.

⁸⁸ Keith Rayner, et al, "So Much to Read, So Little Time: How Do We Read, and Can Speed Reading Help?" *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 17:1 (January 2016): 20, 18.

⁸⁹ Rayner, "So Much to Read," 24.

NAR. Max Weber's famous definition of charismatic leaders became important in scholarly discussion of how they attract and persuade followers, but Wagner approached Weber's theory as an endorsement for the type of leadership he wished to promote. Weber wrote:

The term "charisma" will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.⁹⁰

In response to this, Wagner remarked that Weber's "seminal insights about leadership are very *apropos* to the New Apostolic Reformation. Such leadership charisma, as Weber defines it, cannot derive from ... a corporate system, such as a denomination, but it must come from outside, namely, from God."⁹¹ However, Weber's explanatory text on his statement introduces elements that Wagner did not allude to. Weber explained that leaders endowed with this quality are often thought of by their followers as possessing magical powers. They are of a type that includes not only the greatest heroes, prophets and saviours, but also "berserkers" in states of manic passion, shamans who fall into trances, those who might be deliberate swindlers, or individuals carried away with their own demagogic success. Charismatic leaders, Weber elaborated, are the objects of complete personal devotion—their charismatic authority depends on the absolute trust of followers who are bonded in an emotional form of communal relationship. They earn the freely given trust of followers by means of a sign or proof such as a miracle and view the devotion of their followers as a duty because of their recognition of the leader's charisma. Moreover, they demand new obligations ("It is written ..., but I say unto you ..."). Where proof of their charismatic qualification fails, they tend to believe that their god or magical powers have deserted them. They lose their charismatic authority if followers do not benefit from their leadership and enter into contest when conflict with a competing authority arises.⁹² Weber further explained that charismatic authority "lasts only so long as the belief in its charismatic inspiration remains."⁹³

⁹⁰ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1947), 358-359.

⁹¹ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 114.

⁹² Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 358-363.

⁹³ Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 362.

While some aspects of Weber's definition fit Wagner's thesis, most are at odds with Wagner's view of God alone being the maker of apostles, the possessors of Weber's charismatic authority.⁹⁴ For Weber, the key indicator of continued charismatic leadership was that the followers must remain satisfied. Wagner did not acknowledge that Weber's definition hinges on the perception of the followers of this divine appointment and does not persist if this perception changes. Furthermore, Weber also listed charismatic leadership tendencies to repudiate the past and reject "rules."⁹⁵ These traits and the ability to demand new obligations are difficult to reconcile with Christian ethics and biblical teaching. Neither did Wagner account for the problem of a charismatic leader who believes their god or power has deserted them if their charisma fails.

What are we to make of this? In quoting Weber, Wagner selected text only insofar as it met his purposes. It seems unlikely that he saw the quote elsewhere and used it without actually reading Weber because he also referenced other Weber material in *Churchquake!* when discussing the routinisation of charisma.⁹⁶ Due to Weber's clarity of explanation, it is also doubtful that Wagner misunderstood him. There is a case to be made that Wagner inserted a quote taken out of context simply to lend an authoritative voice to his own argument. There are many instances of this throughout his writing.⁹⁷ But another possible answer is found in Wagner's article "How I Write a Book for Publication." Perhaps the issue here is that Wagner missed important material because it was of little interest to his agenda and his reading habits prevented him from full comprehension of Weber's reasoning.

The second method to help understand Wagner's research comes from analysing the references in some of his books. This way we can learn about what type of sources he quoted and what sort of information he relied on to help him make his case.⁹⁸ I chose six books representative of and important to four of his six key stages of thought: spiritual warfare,

⁹⁴ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 37.

⁹⁵ This aspect becomes important to themes emerging later in this study.

⁹⁶ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 133-134.

⁹⁷ This feature will be further explored in later chapters.

⁹⁸ Note, however, that simply surveying references tells us nothing about *how* Wagner used them, nor does it imply that his theological and doctrinal claims are aligned with other authors that he quoted. These issues will be addressed at other points in the thesis.

apostles and prophets, the NAR, and Dominion.⁹⁹ Wagner described the first three books collectively as a commentary on the book of Acts.¹⁰⁰ Wagner's comments on the *Acts* series reflect how he typically "sold" his material to his readers. He stated that a weakness in other commentaries on Acts was the missing theme of power ministries, a gap that his theological teaching had now filled. He described his *Acts* books as "verse-by-verse exposition" and a commentary that should be placed alongside those that have gone before.¹⁰¹ He listed his qualifications and experiences that equipped him to write with authority, and he emphasised that his work drew on the weight of a number of other key commentators.¹⁰² He boasted of the (measured) dimensions of his library which included sixteen commentaries on Acts and implied his use of eighty-six further commentaries in the Fuller Seminary library.¹⁰³ However, in the end, Wagner cited only a handful of scholarly authors in a total of 294 footnotes across the three-book series.¹⁰⁴ This indicates that likely he was not intending to present an academic

⁹⁹ Signs and Wonders was also important to Wagner's stages of thought, but the two relevant published works contain no citations so cannot be included in this survey: C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Signs and Wonders Today* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Creation House, 1987), and C. Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1988). The most important book on church growth was Wagner's edit of Donald McGavran's *Understanding Church Growth*, which is discussed at length below.

¹⁰⁰ C. Peter Wagner, *Spreading the Fire: Book 1, Acts 1-8*, The Acts of the Holy Spirit Series (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994); *Lighting the World: Book 2, Acts 9-15* (1995); *Blazing the Way: Book 3, Acts 15-28* (1995). Wagner described the research and writing for these three books as the most extensive project and the best work of his career. They were re-released in one volume as *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* in 2000 and repackaged as revised and updated in 2008 with the title *The Book of Acts: A Commentary*. Wagner claimed the 2008 book as his *magnum opus* even though changes to the original material were insubstantial, consisting of removal or insertion of a handful of words or sentences and the addition of three new references from material published subsequent to the early editions. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 180, 296, 299; C. Peter Wagner, *The Book of Acts: A Commentary* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2008).

¹⁰¹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 180; Wagner, *Lighting the World*, 10. His actual agenda was to align the messages of Acts with his theology of spiritual warfare. When Wagner's published books are classified into their themes, spiritual warfare is the topic on which he wrote most (25%).

¹⁰² Wagner, *Spreading the Fire*, 7, 11-13; Wagner, *Lighting the World*, 10.

¹⁰³ Wagner, *Spreading the Fire*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ There are 293 references to other published material and one explanatory note (this count is from the 2008 edition which has two more than the 1994-1995 series: three were added and one removed for the later edition). Biblical scholars cited most frequently were F.F. Bruce (12%), Calvinist theologian Simon Kistemaker (7%), John Stott (5%), Ernst Haenchen (4%), and Clinton Arnold (3%). Two other works were referenced several times: a book on the Lukan portrayal of magicians and the demonic, and an edited work on historically geographic, cultural and social aspects of the book of Acts (10%). Wagner cited his own books in 10% of references. The other 49% mostly comprised a handful of citations each from seven other commentaries, a single reference each from a journal article and a PhD thesis, with the balance being other types of books, magazine pieces, or newsletters. F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), with occasional references to three other Bruce books; Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990); Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic: the Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992); Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); David W. J. Gill and Conrad H. Gempf, eds., *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

work (and indeed a casual reading confirms this), even though he implied to his readers that his work carried a weight comparable to other scholarly efforts.

The other three books surveyed for their citations were *Churchquake!* (1999), *Apostles Today* (2006), and *Dominion!* (2008).¹⁰⁵ A comparison between the *Acts* series and these three books reveals a trend in his use of sources over time.¹⁰⁶ In his *Acts* series, 85% of all footnotes cited published books with the remainder (15%) being from dictionaries or encyclopaedias, magazine articles, newsletters, or private correspondence. This is a marked contrast to *Dominion!* published fourteen years later, in which only 45% of sources comprised published books, journal articles, or academic dissertations.¹⁰⁷ In *Dominion!* magazine articles comprised 26%; *Christianity Today* and *Charisma* magazine were two frequent examples.¹⁰⁸ Ministry newsletters as sources occupied 7% of citations in *Dominion!* with the balance being from all other types of sources, including 4% from the internet, which clearly Wagner had started to use. Wagner also made use of ministry newsletters in *Churchquake!* (7%) and *Apostles Today* (6%). This type of source appeared to be the origin of many of the miraculous success stories that Wagner recounted in his books.¹⁰⁹ An unusual resource was material that had been produced for promotional or marketing purposes; ten instances appeared in *Churchquake!* alone. It is not possible to examine this no longer extant material, but general indications from the titles and Wagner's text are that this type of source tended to be connected to ministries involving Wagner's associates or concerned with wealth creation. In compiled statistics on the type of sources that Wagner cited, it is evident that over time

¹⁰⁵ These three books will occupy further discussion in later chapters. Wagner viewed *Churchquake!* (an overview of the NAR) as one of his best-researched books and he repeatedly described it as a textbook. *Apostles Today* incorporated material from his previous five books about apostles; this book summarised his previous thoughts on the topic. *Dominion!* is included because according to Wagner, the Dominion Mandate is the most accurate biblical framework for true understanding of the Great Commission and this book provided the theological framework for understanding why. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 298, 301, 302.

¹⁰⁶ The overview here reflects the statistics for and trends in all six books surveyed. I compiled information on every author/source cited and used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to quantify percentages for each citation and graph trends for literature types in the following categories: Books, Journals, Theses, Conference Material/Occasional Papers/Sermons, Dictionaries/Encyclopaedias, Newspapers, Magazines, Newsletters, Internet, Self-References, Private Correspondence, Promotional Material/Publicity Brochures.

¹⁰⁷ The journals Wagner mostly accessed were missiological in orientation, for example, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, or *Missiology: An International Review*. He also referenced Church Growth journals in some of his earlier books and in *Churchquake!*

¹⁰⁸ Most magazines were Christian in origin although Wagner also cited *Time* or some Alumni magazines.

¹⁰⁹ The newsletter cited by Wagner the most frequently was *Fridayfax*, a weekly report on church planting and mission success, published by DAWN Ministries 1994-2005. It claimed distribution to seven million readers in four languages and described itself as a "positive news service about what God is doing around the world for those who need up-to-date insights."

<<https://web.archive.org/web/20021209030013/http://www.jesus.org.uk/dawn/index.html>> (5 May 2019).

Wagner gradually re-oriented toward popular and hence non-reviewed sources that aligned with his own messages, and away from academic works. The chief indication here is that Wagner's theology, as he explained it, decreasingly was supported by academic research or writing and that much of his information came from popular sources.

Content

In seeking to understand the nature of Wagner's published material, a unique opportunity to comprehend his perspectives and treatment of content arises with the publication of the third edition of Donald McGavran's *Understanding Church Growth*.¹¹⁰ Wagner's actions as editor of McGavran's book demonstrate how he used his editorial role to direct the focus of church growth theory away from McGavran's emphasis on foreign missions to church growth in America, an effort that appeared to be a source of pride for him when he noted in his memoir that his influence on church growth theory eventually outweighed McGavran's.¹¹¹ As demonstrated by the patterns perceivable in his editorial choices, his manipulation of McGavran's text reoriented the book to fit his personal agendas. Furthermore, Wagner's handling of the text prefigures how, in the coming years and decades, he appropriated other people's material in advancing his own propositions. To fully comprehend how he engineered the text to reorient readers, in this section it is necessary to examine in detail the types of changes and modifications he made to McGavran's book. The length of the section indicates the degree to which it is important to understanding Wagner's *modus operandi* and provides a basis for recognising some particular characteristics in his life's work.

First published in 1970, McGavran's book had made a significant impact on evangelical thinking about missions and was widely regarded.¹¹² In 1980 McGavran released a second edition. While he altered little of the original text, he added a significant amount of new material that expanded on his arguments from the first edition.¹¹³ One type of addition to

¹¹⁰ Donald A. McGavran and C. Peter Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990).

¹¹¹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 257.

¹¹² It also introduced thinking about church growth to American pastors. McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 228.

¹¹³ Along with material that served to reinforce the values of the Homogenous Unit Principle, the addition of an entirely new chapter related to the idea of "bridges" that create people-group connections for evangelistic purposes. Another added chapter addressed a gap in the first edition: the "how to" of church growth. These made few significant contributions to McGavran's argument or theory apart from providing more information on how to go about the process of church growth.

the second edition is relevant to this discussion. The first edition was almost exclusively concerned with a focus on missions to foreign fields but noteworthy new insertions in the second were a significant number of references to America. Text analysis reveals that McGavran's overall argument remained unchanged as a result of these new inclusions: most of the new references to America appeared somewhat parenthetical.¹¹⁴ Further instances included regular insertion of text that stated to the effect: "This applies in America as well."¹¹⁵ What makes this notable is McGavran's attitude towards his church growth principles being applied in the American context. Wagner himself described this: "[McGavran's] interest in church growth in North America and Europe was very near to zero, if not past zero to the negative side."¹¹⁶ He also reported McGavran's persistent irritation during discussions of applying church growth principles to America. Wagner decided that there was no doubt that "my 'diversion' into American church growth, as he would have seen it, became an ongoing disappointment to him."¹¹⁷ So why did McGavran seemingly introduce new text about the American context into his second edition? McGavran's biographer Gary McIntosh noted that Wagner had assisted McGavran with this second edition. In view of McGavran's lack of interest in the American environment, this is possibly the first indicator of Wagner's intent to reorient McGavran's material for his own purposes.¹¹⁸

It is in the third edition, released in 1990, that Wagner's ability to influence McGavran's text reached its zenith.¹¹⁹ This is because McGavran gave Wagner a free hand to revise this edition.¹²⁰ When his alterations are analysed and compared with McGavran's

¹¹⁴ One representative example concerns McGavran's discussion on how outsiders might fail to discern the complex web of kin relationships contained in a people group. In the first edition, McGavran said: "These, the missionary or minister is inclined to say, are all Japanese, Congolese, or Chileans, and that is true." In the second edition, he added "or Americans" to the end of the list, which produced no effect on his discussion. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 200, and 2nd ed., 229.

¹¹⁵ For examples see McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 207, 243, 375.

¹¹⁶ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 89.

¹¹⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 90. McGavran's biographer, Gary McIntosh, also recorded McGavran's disappointment with Wagner's shifting emphasis. McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 260.

¹¹⁸ McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 329. However, the second edition remained chiefly McGavran's own work and his style prevailed. Wagner himself confirmed his intentionality in reorienting McGavran's material, see later in this discussion.

¹¹⁹ McIntosh reports that Wagner assured the Fuller School of World Mission/Institute of Church Growth that his revision of McGavran would help keep the faculty at the centre of the worldwide Church Growth Movement. McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 329.

¹²⁰ For Wagner's assertion that he was given a free hand see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 179. Wagner declared himself as a "McGavran Revisionist" although when he transitioned to his Dominion Mandate position he reverted to McGavran's original premise of conversion of total people groups, see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 256-257.

original text in the previous two editions, patterns in the changes make it possible to discern to what extent they might reflect Wagner's own views in contrast to McGavran's and how the changes subtly reorient the reader's perspective away from McGavran's original intent.¹²¹ Wagner indicated that this revision was his own idea and McGavran was agreeable to Wagner's taking over the project.¹²² McGavran not only gave him a free hand but also handed over literary rights so that Wagner would receive all future royalties. Wagner insisted that the text of the third edition is "not a Wagnerized version" of McGavran and later stated: "I carefully avoided including any of my personal interpretations of McGavran's thoughts, but rather I focused only on bringing McGavran himself up to date."¹²³ Furthermore: "While he reviewed my revisions of each chapter, he made surprisingly few changes of his own."¹²⁴ This latter assertion must be weighed against McGavran's life circumstances at the time the book was being edited. In 1988, when Wagner was working on the text, McGavran was in his nineties and coping with a terminally ill wife.¹²⁵ He had suffered progressively declining eyesight through his eighties and as a result could no longer read.¹²⁶ McGavran's biographer believes that "McGavran had no input whatsoever into the editing of the third edition. His eyesight, age, and his wife's illness prevented him from reviewing any edits."¹²⁷ This made it probable that he was unable to adequately assess Wagner's changes and so Wagner's "free hand" was in all likelihood absolute. As will be demonstrated below, the changes to the book are considerable and do not reflect Wagner's claims about his handling of the text.

So then, what can we learn about Wagner's methodology in his revision of McGavran's work? The publishers announced on the back cover that Wagner reduced the text by thirty-five percent and at first glance it does appear that Wagner took a "slash and burn" approach to the task. However, in spite of initial impressions that Wagner made only sweeping removals or additions to large swaths of text, detailed analysis shows that the edit was in fact undertaken with great care and attention to detail. His improvements included

¹²¹ The methodology was a line-by-line comparison of all three editions.

¹²² Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 179. Note that, contrary to this statement, elsewhere Wagner records that McGavran issued the invitation to revise; see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 112.

¹²³ C. Peter Wagner, "Preface to the Third (1990) Edition," in *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., vii; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 179.

¹²⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 179.

¹²⁵ McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 329.

¹²⁶ McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 310, 317. McIntosh records that during this period of his life McGavran could no longer distinguish faces, find light switches, or see obstacles.

¹²⁷ Gary McIntosh, email to thesis author, 26 February 2019.

updating terminology, removing repetitive statements, reducing some lengthy quotes, correcting gender bias, and deleting some anecdotes detrimental to women. Some complicated charts were removed. He also considerably modified McGavran's acerbic style although some of the polemic was retained.¹²⁸ Evidence of close awareness of the text is demonstrated even to the point of substituting individual words such as "as well" for McGavran's "also."¹²⁹ Much of this type of editing was justifiable and contributed to improving the book's accessibility for readers.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a great deal of the editing involved wholesale amputation of text.¹³⁰ Two entire chapters were deleted. Wagner mostly retained chapter and section headings, but under these his text removals involved entire or partial sections and seldom consisted of less than a paragraph. Often multiple paragraphs were removed. Cutting of a mere sentence was less frequent, although the most significant alterations in meaning from the original text were accomplished by the elimination of single sentences: some of these will be discussed below. One perhaps unintended corollary was that large-scale text removal also deleted forty-two percent of McGavran's references to scripture, sometimes from sections in which he argued for the biblical authority of his theory.¹³¹

Aside from subtractions, Wagner also added to McGavran's text. New text consisted not only of sentences but a substantial number of insertions of one or more complete paragraphs.¹³² Some features of these additions included a considerable number of references to his own work including expanding McGavran's bibliographic references to Wagner's books from eight to twenty-one. This is not entirely unjustified given that Wagner was enormously influential in the church growth movement at the time. More noticeable,

¹²⁸ For example, McGavran accused the *Yearbook of American Churches* as "close to being fraudulent" in portraying "entirely false" proportions because of its practice of publishing member figures for denominations that included baptised infants alongside denominations that included only baptised believers. Wagner prudently removed these sentences. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 105.

¹²⁹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 300; McGavran and Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., 214.

¹³⁰ Close to 350 sections of text were cut from the original.

¹³¹ The second edition of *Understanding Church Growth* contained seventy-one specific references to scripture; Wagner removed thirty of these for the third edition. Thirteen scripture references were removed without alteration to the surrounding text, the rest were cut along with the accompanying text.

¹³² The most notable eleven additions of entire sections of text appear in McGavran and Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., 3, 5, 7-9, 19, 79, 81-83, 94-95, 162, and 221. Two of these sufficiently alter the original text to the extent that they can be designated new material, the rest are wholly new.

however, is Wagner's preservation or insertion of references to his own work at the cost of references to other key personalities in the church growth movement.¹³³

A further addition was an entire chapter on divine healing. This chapter has a history of its own. The original source of the text was from a pulpit message given by McGavran in 1979.¹³⁴ An edited version of this lecture was published in the 1984 MC510 syllabus.¹³⁵ Wagner included the material in his 1987 book *Signs and Wonders Today*.¹³⁶ McGavran's text in Wimber's MC510 syllabus included a number of anecdotes within an overall positive endorsement of divine healing. However, it concluded with four cautionary points: that "few Christians" have the gift of healing; that "many healings in Christ's name are incomplete, temporary, or even contrived;" that healings are an evangelistic tool with the required outcome of church multiplication; and that sensitivity to the audience means healing claims may not be appropriate in all settings.¹³⁷ Wagner's 1987 edit of the material consisted mostly of minor deletions of some phrases and complete removal of the final nine paragraphs of the lecture. Although it could be argued that the removal of such a substantial portion of the text was for reasons of space, it must not be overlooked that the removed passages were the paragraphs relating solely to McGavran's four cautionary statements. This was a preliminary indicator of Wagner's predilection for removing material that did not fit with his own theological stance: his approach to healing did not admit any consideration of McGavran's warnings. The chapter on healing as it appeared in the third edition of *Understanding Church Growth* underwent further adjustments including the removal of thirteen words, conceivably overlooked in previous edits, which reinforced McGavran's insistence that multiplying churches must be the outcome of notable healings.¹³⁸ The reasons for Wagner's complete removal of so much text from other places in McGavran's third edition deserve closer

¹³³ For example, compare McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 257-259, with McGavran and Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., 188. Compare also 413, 2nd edition with 266, 3rd edition, or 423, 2nd edition with 275, 3rd edition.

¹³⁴ Donald McGavran, "Introduction" in John Wimber, *Signs and Wonders and Church Growth* (Placentia, CA: Vineyard Ministries International, 1984), 6.

¹³⁵ Wimber, *Signs and Wonders*, 1-6.

¹³⁶ Donald McGavran, "Divine Healing and Church Growth," in *Signs and Wonders Today*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Altamonte Springs, FL: Creation House, 1987), 71-78. Wagner prefaced the chapter with the puzzlingly erroneous statement that the lecture was appearing in print for the first time in Wagner's book, even though he wrote the foreword to the 1984 syllabus.

¹³⁷ Wimber, *Signs and Wonders*, 5.

¹³⁸ Compare McGavran, "Divine Healing and Church Growth," in *Signs and Wonders Today*, 72, with McGavran and Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., 145.

attention, a task greater than feasible within this present analysis. However, there are several themes that stand out because of their potential ability to indicate how and why meaning in the original text was altered; these will be briefly addressed here.

Firstly, there is the issue of the Chokosi tribe. Perhaps McGavran's most frequently mentioned example of successful church growth methods involved the work of Alfred C. Krass amongst the Chokosi people in Ghana. At six different points in his book he discussed the Chokosi work at length.¹³⁹ There can be little doubt that McGavran viewed this as a shining example of how principles of church growth could enjoy enormous success.¹⁴⁰ At one point in his text he devoted almost four pages to reproducing an article by Krass about his work in its entirety.¹⁴¹ The standout point for McGavran was the rapid growth in the number of conversions and Krass's prediction that in about ten years from the time of writing "the whole Chokosi tribe will have become Christian."¹⁴²

Without exception, Wagner removed every comment pertaining to Alfred Krass or the Chokosi tribe from the third edition of McGavran's book.¹⁴³ A possible reason is to be found in a chapter written by Krass in *Exploring Church Growth* three years after McGavran's second edition was published.¹⁴⁴ To begin, Krass rehearsed all the reasons why his work was hailed as an example of successful church growth methodology.¹⁴⁵ Certainly his description of the Chokosi people and their responses was a prime example of McGavran's paradigm for a ripe and then successful harvest field. But the remainder of Krass's article concerned what happened in the eleven years after he left the work. His description of events that resulted in a demoralized and steadily shrinking mission work provided a sombre contrast to the heady success of earlier days. Krass, however, sought to explore the reasons for the virtual collapse

¹³⁹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 228, 291, 351, 369-372, 388 (*fn.*), 453-454.

¹⁴⁰ McGavran's source was A.C. Krass, "A Case Study in Effective Evangelism in West Africa," *Church Growth Bulletin* 4:1 (September 1967): 244-247. In his four-page commentary following Krass's article McGavran refers to the article as "extraordinarily luminous" and a "refreshing contrast" to other information coming from the mission field. Donald McGavran, "Notable Mission Leaders on Church Growth: Comment," *Church Growth Bulletin* 4:1 (September 1967): 247-250.

¹⁴¹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 369-372.

¹⁴² Donald McGavran quoting Krass: McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 291, 453-454. The tribe consisted of 22,000 people.

¹⁴³ Although the reference to Krass's first article was inadvertently retained in the bibliography.

¹⁴⁴ Alfred C. Krass, "Church Growth among the Chokosi of Northern Ghana," in *Exploring Church Growth*, 49-59.

¹⁴⁵ Krass, "Growth among the Chokosi," in *Exploring Church Growth*, 49.

of his former mission. He presented a thoughtful and rational account of his self-examination process to uncover what might have gone wrong. He identified a list of reasons followed by a series of lessons he believed were to be learned from the mistaken assumptions and inadvertent corollaries that eventually undermined the continued success of his efforts. An assessment such as this is likely to have landed a painful blow on ardent church growth practitioners and by eliminating all mention of Krass from the third edition, Wagner avoided drawing the reader's attention to several thorny questions about the principles of church growth. The question of why Wagner would disengage from an opportunity to take Krass's reflective analysis and address issues that could benefit the mature development and integrity of the church growth movement cannot be fully answered. But what we can do is determine if this is part of a pattern for Wagner: to simply eliminate anything that presented any form of challenge to his agenda.

A second example of Wagner's text modification can be seen in how Wagner handled McGavran's references to the Roman Catholic Church. In all, McGavran mentioned Roman Catholicism twelve times in his second edition. Several new insertions that were sympathetic to Roman Catholic methods of evangelism gave support to suggestions that he was moving more toward ecumenism; a viewpoint endorsed by his daughter when interviewed on his doctrinal views.¹⁴⁶ Notable references included two substantial quotes from Pope John Paul II and one from Pope Paul VI urging Christians to join together to fulfil God's mandate for evangelisation. Two of the quotes appeared in his closing remarks to the book where he approvingly prefaced them with: "The Roman Catholic Church has spoken clearly on the point [of evangelisation]."¹⁴⁷ Another comment elsewhere indicated his disdain for some Protestant missions: "The documents of Vatican II on mission indicate that the Church of Rome is much closer to the New Testament Church in its concept of mission than some Protestant leaders who have captured the mainline missionary societies."¹⁴⁸

Of the twelve remarks about Roman Catholicism in the second edition, Wagner completely removed seven for the third edition. He retained four and in a fifth he altered the

¹⁴⁶ Morris, "Donald McGavran's Thoughts," 92.

¹⁴⁷ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 289, 456.

¹⁴⁸ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 356. However, in other places he pointed out his perception of "wrong methods" in Roman Catholic evangelism or regarded the Church as a competitor to Evangelical missions.

wording to give a different effect. When these modifications to the text are analysed, a pattern emerges. The seven text removals were all positive or endorsing Roman Catholic evangelistic efforts in some way, including the three quotes from Popes mentioned above and the comment about the Vatican II concept of mission.¹⁴⁹ The four retentions consisted of “wrong method” or competitor allusions that served to reflect the Roman Catholic Church in a less positive or even negative manner.¹⁵⁰ The single text adjustment consisted of partially altering the first sentence followed by removal of two words (“among them”) to subtly alter the meaning of the entire sentence, thereby suggesting a bias against the notion of “wiser heads” among Roman Catholics:

| McGavran: ¹⁵¹ | Wagner: ¹⁵² |
|--|--|
| <i>Superficial thinkers among the Roman Catholics</i> in Chile may bewail the fact that a tenth of their people have become Pentecostal Christians; but wiser heads <i>among them</i> no doubt praise God for the vitality and growth of the Pentecostal sections of the Church. | Some Roman Catholic leaders in Chile may bewail the fact that a tenth of their people have become Pentecostal Christians; but wiser heads no doubt praise God for the vitality and growth of the Pentecostal sections of the Church. |

What made Wagner’s actions significant is a characteristic that pervaded much of his own writing. Consistently through his career Wagner took a stance against Roman Catholicism that was most openly expressed in his books on spiritual warfare, maintaining that it exerts a powerful demonic oppression over people.¹⁵³ Much of his opposition focused on Roman Catholic practices:

Some “Christian” churches even contain graven images before which people are allowed to bow, to make obeisance, to light candles, to kiss, to burn incense, to leave gifts, and to otherwise worship and give honor to spirit beings represented by those idols. All this is a tool of the enemy to deceive people and to keep them from finding the true God and being saved.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 101, 104, 246, 289, 408, 436, 456.

¹⁵⁰ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 116, 247, 282, 300.

¹⁵¹ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 3-4. Italics mine.

¹⁵² McGavran and Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., 4.

¹⁵³ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 52. For an extended discussion of his view on the Roman Catholic Church and the centrality of Mary, see for one example, C. Peter Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven* (Colorado Springs: Wagner Institute for Practical Ministry, 1998), 31-34.

¹⁵⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Hard-Core Idolatry: Facing the Facts* (Colorado Springs, CO: Wagner Institute for Practical Ministry, 1999), 28.

His negative view of Roman Catholicism is further exemplified by the tale, told repeatedly, of an evangelistic campaign in Resistencia, Argentina. Wagner recounted how he and others urged the townspeople to burn their idols that “bring honor to the spirits of darkness.” The long list of idols for destruction included images of Catholic saints.¹⁵⁵ These accounts make clear his position on the Roman Catholic faith.¹⁵⁶ Given McGavran’s apparent move toward ecumenism, it would appear that Wagner’s treatment of references to the Roman Catholic Church in McGavran’s book demonstrates his attempt to ensure that readers have access only to text congruent with his own personal position.

The third notable adjustment to McGavran’s text is found in the changes to references about America. McGavran alluded to America 157 times in the second edition. As already noted, a significant number (mostly inconsequential) had been inserted into the second revision. Wagner deleted ninety-eight (62%) of these, and retained fifty-nine (38%), but the importance of this lies with *which* references were deleted. McGavran’s references to America can be divided into four categories: “Filler” text where the insertion of “America” made no contribution to the surrounding text other than adding to a list or to a point being made about all countries or mission fields;¹⁵⁷ “Repeat” where the same point has already been made; “Fact” text where McGavran states factual information that stands independent of his argument and is not likely to be disputed;¹⁵⁸ and “Argument” where McGavran makes a point that is related to his overall argument or theme.¹⁵⁹ The most significant element observable is that the largest part of text deletions (about America) fell into the category of McGavran’s argument (36%). The filler and repeated text made no impact on McGavran’s argument whether it was left in or removed. Changes to this type of text mostly occurred where sections of surrounding text were removed so the cuts to the term “America” were simply corollaries to the larger action. Wagner’s deletions in these two categories accounted for 24% of

¹⁵⁵ Wagner, *Hard-Core Idolatry*, 38.

¹⁵⁶ Wagner writes that his ThM degree on “The Marian Theology of Thomas Aquinas” was undertaken in order to acquire professional expertise in Roman Catholicism. See Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 56.

¹⁵⁷ For example: “The Homogenous Unit Principle ... has nevertheless great applicability to many situations in America and other lands all around the world.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 243.

¹⁵⁸ For example: “Between 1906 and 1980 the Nazarene Church in America has grown enormously.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 4-5.

¹⁵⁹ For example: “In America they assert that brotherhood or church unity is more important than church extension.” McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 44.

references to America.¹⁶⁰ The factual information, either removed or retained, does not feature significantly. It is in McGavran's argument that the interest lies. Where his argument included remarks about America, Wagner retained thirty-five (38%) but deleted fifty-seven (62%). The question arises whether it is possible to discern why Wagner made the choices he did with the text and it is these that we will look at more closely.

Again, it is the patterns that reveal Wagner's influence over the text. In terms of retained comments about America, when they are analysed it emerges they fell into several categories. Fourteen (40%) of the retained comments concerned the Homogenous Unit Principle, a theme that Wagner endorsed. Ten (29%) involved church growth principles and a further four (11%) involved discussion of shortcomings in denominations, another theme that Wagner firmly approved. The remaining seven comments can be classified as dealing with receptivity to the gospel (three), statements about Christian resistance to racism (three), and revival (one). When it comes to deletions most do not fit these classifications and a pattern of a different type emerges.

The fifty-seven deletions of text about America stand out for one key reason: they were somehow critical of American culture or attitudes. These include comments where McGavran was critical or cautionary of American attitudes of racism, imperialism, or hegemony.¹⁶¹ Suggestions of American affluence, conflict within churches, cross-cultural issues, or social issues were also targets for removal.¹⁶² Other removed text concerned topics of faulty attitudes in churches, motivations in conversion, or where McGavran addressed issues related to minorities or cross-cultural contexts.¹⁶³ Interpretation of text removals, their meaning, or their rationale, must be approached with caution. No definitive statement can be made about Wagner's actions or intentions, and analysis runs the risk of the interpreter's own

¹⁶⁰ This begs the question of whether Wagner was simply stripping the text back to the content of the first edition. However, the analysis demonstrates that cuts were made from both editions.

¹⁶¹ 14% deleted: McGavran's eight comments on American imperialist influence, post-colonial "self-absorption," and hinting that Americanization is not in God's plan. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 7, 49, 374. Wagner was not alone in this tendency: Worthen comments on accommodations to American culture as church planters applied Church Growth principles in their own contexts. Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 134.

¹⁶² 46% deleted: McGavran's opinions (26 instances) about America's exploited masses, affluence in American churches, race riots in the USA, superior Christian lifestyles among African or Asian Christians, ethnocentricity, and disparagement of mega-churches. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 270, 282, 286, 301, 311, 404, 449.

¹⁶³ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 435, 237, 67.

bias or even simple misunderstanding. However, the accumulation of a large enough number of examples allows the probability of a proportionally representative picture to emerge and provide the best explanation for Wagner’s methodology. In this case, Wagner removed 62% of McGavran’s references to America and it is important to note that the subject matter of the removed text contrasted markedly to the references that were retained. The overall effect was a “whitewash” of any text that might point to shortcomings in American attitudes or behaviour. The impression gained by surveying the references to America is that Wagner made changes to the text to make it more palatable and less confrontational for the American reader. The importance of this lies with the avoidance of any material that suggested challenge or the need to be accountable, a characteristic that permeated the theologies that developed in later years, as we shall see.

A fourth example of changes to McGavran’s text is perhaps the most significant yet simply involves the removal of two sentences from the middle of a paragraph. The end result fits with the editor’s theology but substantially modifies the author’s message to the point that it implies a significantly different stance to McGavran’s original text:

McGavran: ¹⁶⁴

The Good News has a powerful corollary which appeals greatly to the masses today: that just men can build a just society. *This just society must be clearly differentiated from the ultimate Kingdom of God—that reign of perfect goodness when death itself shall have been abolished, which comes as God’s gift. Man can do nothing to bring that in.* The just society of which I speak, however, is the kindlier, more humane order which by God’s grace arises within family, neighborhood, city, or state as the number of Christians multiply.

Wagner: ¹⁶⁵

The good news has a powerful corollary that appeals greatly to the masses: that just people can build a just society. The just society of which I speak is the kinder, more humane order that by God’s grace arises within family, neighborhood, city, or state as the number of Christians multiplies.

In McGavran’s view, God ushers in his kingdom and humans cannot. When working on the third edition of McGavran’s book, Wagner’s published material on dominion theology was still several years away (see Chapter 8) but his beliefs were already well under development. These held that humans are responsible to bring the Kingdom of God to fruition: “My basic

¹⁶⁴ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 288. Italics mine.

¹⁶⁵ McGavran and Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., 206.

premise is that God's Kingdom should come and that His will should be done here on earth as it is in heaven."¹⁶⁶ Furthermore: "God's will being accomplished on earth as it is in heaven depends on his people becoming empowered by the Holy Spirit and moving into action."¹⁶⁷ Wagner was convinced that God's plans are not "set in concrete" and that "the all-powerful or omnipotent God will use His power in one way if we do certain things, and He will use it in another way if we do not."¹⁶⁸ His declared position on open theism significantly was at odds with McGavran's views.¹⁶⁹ In this instance, Wagner altered the text to reflect more of his own position than that of the original author.

When analysed, Wagner's editing of McGavran's work points to the use of strategies to persuade readers into his own worldview. These included expunging or sanitizing material that dealt with issues that may have made some readers uncomfortable but brought others to self-reflection. Passages that challenged church growth theory or Wagner's own worldview were deleted. Other text was manipulated to conform to Wagner's agenda, at a cost to McGavran's intentions. These are serious charges to level at an editor. However, the problem is compounded by Wagner's failure to acknowledge, address, or attempt to justify his alterations. In fact, he had expressly denied his actions in his claim that he was not "Wagnerizing" the text. For readers, the difficulty lies with discerning some of the more subtle differences in the text, even if they were familiar with the first two editions. Any reader could be forgiven for assuming that this work fully represented McGavran's theories on church growth. Thus, Wagner established a pattern of using persuasive techniques that were not easily discernible for those who read his material, one of the most significant being a disregard for the intent of his sources. Much later, Wagner seemingly admitted his actions when he recorded in his memoir that he was an intentional "McGavran revisionist." To this he added that eventually his influence, particularly in the American church growth context, outweighed McGavran's with his revision of McGavran prevailing among church leaders.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 11.

¹⁶⁷ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 6.

¹⁶⁸ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 76.

¹⁶⁹ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 76-77, 80-95. Open Theism asserts that God's will is flexible, open to the future, and responsive to changes determined by human actions. It has been highly controversial with critics claiming that it challenges God's sovereignty.

¹⁷⁰ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 257.

Wagner was likely correct in this regard.¹⁷¹ As McGavran aged, Fuller had eased him out of his teaching load and his influence began to decline while the School of World Mission focus on American church growth gained momentum.¹⁷² McGavran, clearly uncomfortable yet wanting to remain supportive, expressed concern over some issues that he perceived, in particular Wagner's exegesis of Acts 6 that Wagner used to demonstrate the efficacy of the Homogenous Unit Principle.¹⁷³ McGavran was worried about balance and eisegesis but Wagner responded that "he had tested his hypotheses with several informed audiences and exegetical literature and felt his interpretation of Acts 6 was reasonable."¹⁷⁴ This provides an indication of the importance that Wagner placed on popular response to his material. McGavran's worries continued even as the church growth movement gained traction in the United States. In a 1987 letter to Wagner he acknowledged the role of signs and wonders in assisting growth in some churches; nonetheless, he clearly longed for a return to the focus on conversion evangelism.¹⁷⁵ Wagner, however, had different intentions, and he chose a trajectory that moved him in a direction away from addressing McGavran's concerns. The church growth movement had introduced a new way to determine success in Christian mission: success is measured by the number of people who respond. Building on this legacy and repurposing it for the American market, the next of Wagner's great passions was a paradigm shift into the miraculous. Signs and wonders were to become the ultimate means to church growth.

¹⁷¹ There remains a question over how well the third revision of McGavran's book was received, but certainly Wagner's reputation as the most prominent figure in the Church Growth movement was accurate.

¹⁷² McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 254, 259-260.

¹⁷³ Acts 6 deals with conflict in the early church over support provided to widows. See Wagner, "Should Foreigners Run the Church?" in Wagner, *Spreading the Fire*, 167-192.

¹⁷⁴ Taken from correspondence between McGavran and Wagner, March 1976. McGavran also expressed concerns related to Wagner's lack of scriptural usage, understated emphasis on theological principles, terminology and conceptions, balance between global and American church growth, and the issue of American church growth being due more to transfer or biological growth than conversion growth. Nevertheless, he still saw Wagner as his successor and continued to encourage him into the succession. McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 264, 265, 279, 301-302, 309, 310, 330.

¹⁷⁵ McIntosh, *Donald A. McGavran*, 330.

Chapter 2: Signs and Wonders

In its simplest explanation, the signs and wonders movement (S&W) can be viewed as a rapidly swelling feature of the Charismatic Renewal that ultimately triggered the establishment of two influential constituent parts: the association of churches known as the Vineyard and the attempt to engage the power of the movement in the service of church growth theory.¹ It also promoted some themes that gathered momentum later when spiritual warfare became the focus: increasing emphasis on supernatural domains, the role of humans as God's agents, and the therapeutic promise of Christian life. Ultimately, S&W theology became the dominant discourse of the charismatic renewal.

Academic and popular interpretations of the S&W cover a range of opinions and are dependent upon the perspective of the commentator.² Where some saw a mighty work of God, others saw theological divergence, mass hysteria, or even satanic activity. Scholars writing from a secular perspective favoured using the “imaginary” as a noun, that is, the self-conception of a collective identity; how a group sees itself.³ Generally speaking, popular commentaries have focussed on the *events* of the movement whereas academics have examined the *themes* that are most notable, for example, the role of charismatic leadership or the foundational notion of power. Because one aim of this thesis is to locate the strategies of persuasion that influenced followers' spiritual orientations, here the focus will be to examine some elements in the construction of a narrative that became an important conduit for eliciting and encouraging responsiveness among followers of the charismatic leaders.

Those who led the movement were vitally important to its success. In the literature about signs and wonders, John Wimber invariably emerges as the most prominent figure although the significance of Peter Wagner's influence is not overlooked. Much of the discussion in this chapter pertains to Wimber but the connection between the two men is an

¹ For the purposes of this discussion, the S&W and the Vineyard movement can be regarded as integral to each other as Vineyard was a key channel for S&W theology.

² Note that the theological literature that analyses Wimber/S&W/Vineyard theology or praxis is relatively sparse and mostly takes a critical stance. A small number of dissertations written from an emic perspective usually focus on attempting to counter the criticism. For example, see Douglas R. Erickson, “The Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit: Eschatology and Pneumatology in the Vineyard Movement” (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2015), 95n143, 96n145.

³ On the “social imaginary,” see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 146, 150, 171-172ff.

important key to understanding the processes of an emerging worldview that eventually grew to dominate an important corner of charismatic thought. In his autobiography, Wagner described himself as Wimber's disciple and credited Wimber with being the primary force in his shift away from cessationism.⁴ However, throughout Wimber's published material he demonstrated how Wagner's pervasive influence shaped his thinking.⁵ This was a mutual bond of influence and shifting paradigms which, in Bialecki's terminology, resulted in "an 'instrumentalization' of charismata in the early Vineyard."⁶ The discussion of these two important leaders begins with Wagner and how he built on the legacy he inherited from his church growth years.

Peter Wagner

Wagner's shift from his self-declared suspicion of Pentecostalism to zealous promoter of signs and wonders was always underpinned by his orientation towards church growth. This was his functional paradigm through which he viewed with confidence the expansion of Christianity and his role in it. As a theoretician of church growth, he had read of dramatic growth in African Independent Churches, Chinese House churches, and Latin American "grassroots" churches. This set him on a path attempting to find out why they were growing. In the early 1970s he defined himself as a non-Pentecostal and a "convinced cessationist" who nevertheless was intrigued to locate the causes of high growth rates in these churches.⁷ His interest in the Pentecostal churches of Latin America led him to write *Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming* (1973). Before defining what he believed made the churches grow,

⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 113, 122 (caption), 148.

⁵ For examples, see John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), xiii, xviii-xix, 16, 18, 38-42, 47, 91-92, 103, 122, 124, 134. A note about the authorship of Wimber's published books: there are some discrepancies in accounts of how much he actually contributed. Jackson records that Kevin Springer wrote the material based on Wimber's tapes and lecture notes with Wimber remaining in close contact and revising chapters as he saw fit. Wimber clearly refers to himself as the writer of the book in the acknowledgements section of *Power Evangelism* yet was reported to have said during a meeting with some challengers in Australia that he had "not read the manuscript in detail or critically before its publication" and that the book needed re-writing to correct areas that were "wrong." Bill Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard* (Cape Town: Vineyard International Publishing, 1999), 111; Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, xiii; Phillip Jensen, "John Wimber Changes His Mind," *The Briefing*, 24 April 1990 <<http://thebriefing.com.au/1990/04/john-wimber-changes-his-mind/>> (11 September 2020).

⁶ Bialecki described this as "qualitative imaginary": "shot through with various registers of affective intensity and prone to stark discontinuities." Bialecki, "The Third Wave and the Third World: 178, 199.

⁷ C. Peter Wagner, *Look Out!: The Pentecostals are Coming* (London: Coverdale House, 1973), 13. Wagner explained that his transition from a convinced cessationist (who believed the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit had ceased after NT times) to openness toward the power of the Holy Spirit (and full use of the miraculous gifts) occurred during the period he was involved with the MC510 course at Fuller Seminary (1982). See Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 130.

he ruled out some factors as causative of the dramatic increase. Firstly, to share in the blessings of growth that the Pentecostal church in South America experienced, he declared that one does not need to become a Pentecostal or even agree with Pentecostal pneumatology.⁸ Wagner believed there were other more important lessons to learn from Pentecostals than their pneumatology. Secondly, the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues was not the key to rapid growth.⁹ This was because not all the rapidly growing Pentecostal churches in Latin America subscribed to tongues as the sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, preferring instead other signs. Thirdly, some Pentecostal churches were not growing while the fastest-growing churches were Oneness churches.¹⁰ For Wagner, this indicated that non-doctrinal factors were the key to growth. These assertions in this stage of his thinking indicated the germination of his future contention that the New Apostolic Reformation, as a post-denominational movement, was also post-Pentecostal.¹¹

Wagner arrived at a number of conclusions and listed factors that contributed to the growth in Latin American Pentecostalism: street preaching to draw people in followed by tying them into commitment to church attendance, planting new churches, focus on fields “ripe” for harvesting (in particular the masses of the lower classes), assigning duties to all church members, training pastors functionally using apprenticeship-type training rather than seminary education, and making church fun, social, participatory, and physically active.¹² One chapter in *Look Out!* addressed divine healing in Pentecostal churches although he mostly inserted hearsay anecdotes about healing without describing a theology of such.¹³ He explained healing as an important contributor to new baptisms and church planting, quoting a Pentecostal pastor who told a research student: “The object of healing for the unsaved is as

⁸ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 35-36.

⁹ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 36.

¹⁰ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 39. Oneness doctrine asserts the singularity of God as opposed to Trinitarian doctrine.

¹¹ This will be covered in a later chapter. See Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 18. For further elaboration of Wagner’s view on post-Pentecostal movements see also C. P. Wagner, “Third Wave,” *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 843-844; for the suggestion of a later adjustment in his position see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 134-136.

¹² Wagner, *Look Out!*, 41-47, 51, 55, 68-72, 78, 95-98, 106-107, 109, 111-112.

¹³ The use of anecdotes by the writers examined in this study will be discussed later at length because of their important role in supporting their theological propositions.

bait.”¹⁴ Wagner’s only discussion on demons was taken entirely from an unpublished M.A. thesis by Fuller Seminary student Harmon Johnson, a missionary to Brazil.¹⁵ He also discussed the role of the church leaders, most particularly their training, the care and reverence shown by the congregation, the charisma of pastors, and the control they wielded over all aspects of church life.¹⁶ Additionally, their preaching was important:

Pentecostal preaching is not intellectual, but emotional; it is not rational, but experiential; it is not exegetical, but allegorical; it is not doctrinal, but practical; it is not directed as much to the head as to the heart. The result of hearing Pentecostal preaching is not that you learn more, but rather that you feel better.¹⁷

Each of these factors contributed to shaping Wagner’s conclusions. For him, what the Pentecostals were experiencing was a culturally relevant gathering: “Pentecostals have very positive feelings about what goes on in their church services, and consequently they bring others in with them. The main reason they have such positive feelings, is, very simply, because it’s fun to go to church.”¹⁸ He did refer to concerns about lack of theological depth in the Pentecostal teaching but for him, this was offset by preaching that was relevant to listeners’ lives: this was the mark of a successful preacher.¹⁹ Wagner’s conclusions became important to the S&W that was soon to emerge; his assessment was that what constituted success in a church setting related to fun and the promise of a therapeutic experience.

There are two further points to note about Wagner’s observations in *Look Out!* Firstly, there was the clear connection to elements of Donald McGavran’s teaching on church growth. What Wagner saw when he observed the Pentecostal churches fitted neatly into McGavran’s paradigm; for example, focus on ripe harvest fields, the lower-class masses, or planting churches.²⁰ Wagner even drew on some of McGavran’s terminology such as “theology of search” or “redemption and lift.”²¹ This tells us that Wagner’s experience was interpreted within his existing framework (as taught to him by McGavran) and he interpreted what he observed within that framework. The risk here is the possibility that he may have missed

¹⁴ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 124, 126, 129.

¹⁵ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 133-136.

¹⁶ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 90-91.

¹⁷ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 118.

¹⁸ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 119.

¹⁹ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 118.

²⁰ See McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 154, 235-259, 360-361.

²¹ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 32, 71. See McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 1st ed., 34-40, 260-277.

noticing important elements that did not fit McGavran’s paradigm. Secondly, although the items on Wagner’s list that contributed to the rapid growth of the churches were related to human activities, he framed this in spiritual terms that eventually divided churches into inferred categories of those who were “blessed” or not-blessed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Numerical growth of the Latin American Pentecostal churches clearly indicated they belonged in the former category.²² The way that Wagner formulated his human-spiritual connections remained a feature throughout his writing career. Where he described human activities that resulted in a particular form or style of Christian experience, he designated a “work of God.” An example of how he arrived at this conclusion can be seen in comparing the differences and similarities between a set of questions devised by McGavran to underpin his church growth theories and the adjustments that Wagner made to accommodate his own perspectives. Although Wagner never acknowledged the source of his (often repeated) questions, the resemblance is enough to attribute the original source as McGavran, but with Wagner’s particular slant:

| McGavran: ²³ | Wagner: ²⁴ |
|--|---|
| What are the <i>causes</i> of church growth? | Why does the blessing of God rest where it does? |
| What are the <i>barriers</i> to church growth? | Because it is obvious that not all churches are equal, why is it that at certain times and in certain places some churches seem to be more blessed than others? |
| What are the factors that can make the Christian faith a <i>movement</i> among some populations? | Can any pattern of divine blessing on churches be discerned? |
| What <i>principles</i> of church growth are reproducible? | If so, what are the salient characteristics of unusually blessed churches? |

Although Wagner firmly tied the blessing of God to church growth for many years, later this concept also became associated with other factors, for example, financial success.²⁵

Wagner’s interest in how Pentecostal churches achieved such spectacular growth initially kept him in the role of interested onlooker. His focus remained on the technical

²² Wagner, *Look Out!*, 29.

²³ George G. Hunter, “The Legacy of Donald A. McGavran,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16:4 (1 October 1992): 158. Italics in original.

²⁴ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 9. Wagner wrote that “I discovered that the essential methodology of church growth can be boiled down to answering four crucial questions” without mentioning McGavran’s original formulation.

²⁵ See C. Peter Wagner, *The Great Transfer of Wealth: Financial Release for Advancing God’s Kingdom* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2015).

aspects of church growth with only passing attention to the role of healing miracles. In his experience of writing *Look Out!* clearly he did not envisage himself as a participant. In the wider context, however, the charismatic renewal gained momentum and John Wimber steadily rose to prominence. Wagner gradually became attracted to the phenomenon and eventually the developing bond between the two men proved to be the catalyst for significant change in Wagner's thinking. Having successfully worked together previously, their final and most significant collaboration was "MC510: Signs, Wonders and Church Growth."²⁶

John Wimber

North American authors outlining the history of the Charismatic Renewal typically begin with the experiences of Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett, who announced in 1960 that he had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues as evidence.²⁷ Writers from the United Kingdom also acknowledge the significance of Bennett's story, but include the earlier experiences of individuals from the 1950s who then spread their messages of renewal and revival by means of itinerant ministries and conferences.²⁸ Until Bennett's declaration generated extensive public attention the Pentecostal experience of tongues, increasingly accompanied by practices of healing and prophecy, had been spreading relatively quietly among non-Pentecostal Christians. With increased public consciousness the Charismatic Renewal quickly gathered momentum through the 1960s. The renewal's profile was boosted further when the "Jesus People" movement of the late 1960s to early 1970s flared dramatically before fading from view just a few years later. Thousands of hippies

²⁶ The course title changed several times during its existence. Fuller Seminary Archives and Special Collections, "Collection 0182: Signs and Wonders Collection," *List of Archival Collections*, 2019, 156 <<https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/findingaids/156>> (28 November 2019), 2. "MC" is the Fuller School of World Mission course code for Church Growth.

²⁷ For example, Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 28. See also Dennis J. Bennett, *Nine O'clock in the Morning* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1970), 16-25, 61. Other commentators view this as "charismatic folklore." Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter, "Introduction: Tongues, Toronto and the Millennium," in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 2. Worthen notes some pre-Bennett instances of tongues-speaking in non-Pentecostal American settings: Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 139.

²⁸ Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), 44-50, 74. For earlier renewal in Latin America or South Africa see also Paul Freston, "Charismatic Evangelicals in Latin America: Mission and Politics on the Frontiers of Protestant Growth," in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 184-185. Walker briefly mentions the earlier hopes of a "latter rain" among revivalists such as Smith Wigglesworth in the 1920s, however note that intimations of direct connections to the 1960s/1970s renewal vary depending on the perspective of those recounting the narrative.

flocked to mass baptisms, particularly in the epicentre of Southern California where Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel became the best-known Christian outreach to hippies.²⁹

In the American context, one important Christian leader who emerged during these exciting times was John Wimber. A musician and a married family man who described himself as a "fourth-generation unbeliever," Wimber became a Christian in 1963 and thereafter keenly evangelised anyone he encountered.³⁰ His contribution to swelling numbers in his Quaker congregation led to his appointment as a co-pastor in 1970, while around the same time he enrolled at Azusa Pacific University for two years of study.³¹ In 1975 Wimber enrolled at Fuller Seminary to take the Doctor of Ministry course and met Wagner who was teaching on church growth.³² Upon hearing about Wimber's success in achieving growth in his church, Wagner (who characteristically moved rapidly in forming relationships and making decisions) was so impressed that at the end of the two-week course he offered Wimber a job at the newly-remodelled Charles E. Fuller Institute for Evangelism and Church Growth (CEFI).³³ Wagner's attraction to Wimber stemmed from his realization that he had in his class a student who was "as sharp a practitioner of church growth as anyone I had ever met."³⁴ In his view, Wimber held the credentials essential for church growth: successful in business before his conversion and then successful as an American pastor, making him the perfect complement to his own theoretician's role.³⁵ At Wagner's behest, Wimber resigned

²⁹ The most comprehensive history of the Jesus People is Larry Eskridge, *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁰ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, xv. Different accounts of Wimber's life contain discrepancies in dates, usually varying by one year. Some instances include the year of Wimber's conversion, Wimber's first encounter with Peter Wagner at Fuller Seminary, his departure from Fuller Institute of Evangelism, and the famous Mother's Day sermon by Lonnie Frisbee. I record here the dates that appear to be the most reliable. Where cross-checking has been possible, indications are that the errors are more likely to be in the Wimber/Springer accounts, although this is not confirmed.

³¹ Jackson records that Wimber took Biblical Studies but never earned a graduate degree, noting that he remained sensitive about his lack of theological training and felt inferior to those with degrees. *Contra* Martyn Percy, Azusa Pacific has Quaker and Methodist roots: Wimber's training there would have taught him to emphasize method but would have been unlikely to expose him to expressions of Pentecostal-style gifts. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 47-51; and also Erickson, "The Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit, 95n142; Martyn Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power* (London: SPCK, 1996), 30.

³² The Fuller D.Min programme for experienced pastors incorporated a two-week intensive course on church growth taught by Wagner. From the available record it appears Wimber did not complete the D.Min. or undertake further studies, particularly as within weeks Wagner had appointed him to lead CEFI full-time.

³³ Wagner was Executive Director of the Fuller Evangelistic Association, the purpose of which was to fund overseas missions projects; he occupied this position concurrently with his teaching position at Fuller School of World Mission. When funds ran low at the FEA, Wagner obtained consent from the board to shift focus to American church growth and change the name of organisation. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 97-98, 276.

³⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 98.

³⁵ Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 19.

from his pastorate and spent three intense years travelling to speak on behalf of CEFI all over North America.³⁶

Although no longer a pastor at the Yorba Linda Friends church, Wimber and his wife Carol continued as members and participated in a home group that began to experiment with new styles of worship, quickly attracting rumours of tongues speaking and demon expulsion.³⁷ Things came to a head when the church asked them to leave. During this time John was experiencing symptoms of burnout in his CEFI role and struggling spiritually as his personal Bible reading and prayer life had almost come to a halt.³⁸ The remedy for the church issues and Wimber's depleted personal resources was to establish a new church affiliated with Chuck Smith's association of churches: the Calvary Chapel of Yorba Linda.³⁹ It grew so quickly that Wimber resigned from CEFI to focus fulltime on his new church.⁴⁰ His ministry was characterised by an increasing emphasis on exercising the spiritual gifts although Wimber felt frustrated because he did not experience much success with healing.⁴¹ However, as he persisted and became more convinced that healing ministry was essential, his growing church moved further into a focus on the power of the Holy Spirit. Wimber began to experience spiritual power that felt like electricity coming out of his hands as he prayed for people and they fell over. Along with other experiences of seeing "cones of light" shining down on people, healing and other supernatural events became central to the activities of his church.⁴² Although the church was growing quickly, one particular service proved to be a "watershed" moment for Wimber. On that evening his first "power encounter" changed everything in his approach and in his ministry.⁴³

³⁶ Although dates vary among authors, all seem to be consistent on the length of Wimber's employment at CEFI.

³⁷ In the early period of the home group only Carol attended as John was often out of town on CEFI trips. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 58-62.

³⁸ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 56, 60.

³⁹ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 62-63.

⁴⁰ C. Peter Wagner, "Foreword" in Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, x. Note that in this period between CEFI and MC510 (1978-1982) Wagner and Wimber were not professionally connected but they stayed in touch and Wagner visited Wimber's church from time to time. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 123.

⁴¹ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 69-71.

⁴² Carol Wimber, "A Hunger for God," in *Power Encounters: Among Christians in the Western World*, ed. Kevin Springer (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 10-11.

⁴³ Carol Wimber, "A Hunger for God," 12.

Wimber's turning point, an evening service on Mother's Day in May 1980, occurred when Wimber invited a young hippie to speak at his church.⁴⁴ Lonnie Frisbee had converted to Christianity during a drug-fuelled encounter with God in a canyon near Palm Springs.⁴⁵ In his own telling, his former preoccupations included Edgar Cayce, flying saucers, marijuana, LSD, metaphysical meditation, and hypnotism.⁴⁶ When some other Christians came across him on a street corner waving a Bible and preaching a strange mix of Jesus Christ and flying saucers, they took him into their care and informally educated him towards a more orthodox understanding of his new faith.⁴⁷ Not long after, Lonnie was introduced to Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel who quickly recruited Lonnie to assist him with a new ministry among hippies.⁴⁸ Lonnie's success in attracting youth to Smith's church proved to be spectacular with thousands attending the church and making decisions to become Christians.⁴⁹ His personal profile increased dramatically to the point that he featured in several prominent media publications, including a *Time* magazine article about the "Jesus Revolution," and people on the streets screamed for him by name when he visited Denmark.⁵⁰ Wimber had some apprehensions about Frisbee speaking at his church on Mother's Day because of his

⁴⁴ Audiotape of the service provides the basis for the analysis later in this chapter. John and Carol Wimber respectively date the event to Mother's Day 1979 and 1981. In his study of the Vineyard, psychiatrist and ex-missionary John White places the date as 1978. However, the audiotape and other authors confirm the year as 1980. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 72n6, 401n21; John White, *When the Spirit Comes with Power: Signs and Wonders among God's People* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 158.

⁴⁵ As with other narratives associated with the S&W, discrepancies and inconsistencies emerge in accounts told multiple times by their chief protagonists. I have chosen to relate here the most frequently told versions and will not address conflicting details unless it is important to the discussion of the thesis.

⁴⁶ Vine and Branches Television, "The Son Worshipers: Part 1 of 4," *YouTube*, 10 September 2010 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALaBKQMD27M>> (15 September 2020), 4:35.

⁴⁷ One of this group recalled Frisbee's head was "bent out of shape with LSD." Eskridge, *God's Forever Family*, 33; David Di Sabatino, "Appendix III: Lonnie Frisbee: A Modern Day Samson," in *The Quest for the Radical Middle: A History of the Vineyard*, by Bill Jackson, (Cape Town: Vineyard International Publishing, 1999), 394-396.

⁴⁸ Chuck Smith and Hugh Steven, *The Reproducers* (Philadelphia, PA: Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 2011 [1972]), 26, 37-39.

⁴⁹ Lonnie's connection to Calvary Chapel was relatively short-lived. He worked with Chuck Smith 1968-1971 but left as his relationship with Smith increasingly deteriorated over Frisbee's idiosyncratic Pentecostalism. He spent five unstable years firstly with Bob Mumford (of the "Fort Lauderdale Five") in the controversial Shepherding Movement before moving through a succession of jobs, ministries, and locations during which time his marriage broke up. He returned to Calvary Chapel in 1976 but found his "spiritual experimentalism" at odds with the church's emphasis on Bible study and teaching, and his employment as a church counsellor not suited to his preferences. By the time he met Wimber, he was (in his own words) desperate for a "gig" that could return him to the spotlight. Di Sabatino, "Lonnie Frisbee," 398-401; Vine and Branches Television, "Lonnie Frisbee - Mothers Day, 1980 (Part 3 of 5)," *YouTube*, 7 May 2012 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIN6DUYLhYM>> 5 September 2020), 1:14; Lonnie Frisbee with Roger Sachs, *Not By Might, Nor By Power: The Great Commission* (Santa Maria, CA: Freedom Publications, 2016), 137-138.

⁵⁰ Frisbee, *Not By Might, Nor By Power*, 122; Di Sabatino, "Lonnie Frisbee," 398n14.

reputation for unpredictability.⁵¹ When nothing untoward occurred during Frisbee's sermon, he relaxed until Frisbee moved on:

And then he does the weirdest thing I've ever even heard of. Everything's going good, and then all of a sudden he stops and says, "Well, that's it." He said, "You know the church has been offending the Holy Spirit a long time, and he's quenched, but he's getting over it, and we're going to invite him to come and minister now. Come Holy Spirit." And Wham-O! [gesticulating, laughter and applause] The Spirit of God comes, and people start flying! Well, first of all, he says, "Everybody 25 years and under, come forward." Well, in our church, that's everybody! They're all coming up there, and there's hundreds of them up, all crowded around the stage, and he says, "Come, Holy Spirit." The next thing I know, people are falling and bouncing, and they're laying on the floor, and they're talking like turkeys [imitates the gobbling of a turkey] ... And Lonnie is going like a banshee, you know, he's running through the crowd and raising his hands, and you know. And I'm thinking, he's pushing people over! He's knocking them down, but he's not even touching them. He's walking by them, and they're going wham! Wham! You know, they're falling everywhere, and I'm thinking, "Oh God! Oh God! Oh God! Oh God, get me out of here!"⁵²

Wimber's orientation towards demonstrations of the miraculous had always been intentional. On more than one occasion he made it publicly clear that he had been disappointed and frustrated when he attended church as a new Christian and failed to see miracles performed. This was the reason he "signed on" to Christianity and he wanted to "do the stuff."⁵³ Watching Lonnie Frisbee made him realise that, finally, he was seeing "the stuff," *en masse*. This was the beginning of an explosion in growth: within a few months the church was seeing an average attendance of 1,800 young people eager to experience what Frisbee had led them into. Lonnie remained with Wimber for three years, news of the phenomenon spread, Wimber's church grew, and the S&W was launched.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 24. Wimber claimed that he had not been involved in or greatly aware of the Jesus People previously (some commentators associate him with the hippies and Jesus People movement). Inthelight1776, "John Wimber Signs Wonders (2/12) Power Evangelism," *YouTube*, 31 January 2013. Transcript from 1985 Signs and Wonders Conference, Vineyard Anaheim. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OpALHm9AJs&t=66s>> (28 October 2020), 1:21:50.

⁵² Inthelight1776, "John Wimber (2/12) Power Evangelism," 1:14:12-1:18:10.

⁵³ KCFonline, "John Wimber - Doin' the Stuff," *YouTube*, 13 July 2014, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTep5jzjhu8>> (17 September 2020), 2:16, 4:12 (Original Broadcast: Lecture 4, 1985 Signs and Wonders Conference, Vineyard, USA); Vine and Branches Television, "ABC News - The Vineyard," *YouTube*, 23 September 2010, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9I9YCue3Fkk>> (17 September 2020), 2:36 (Original broadcast: "ABC News Special: Peter Jennings Reporting: In The Name Of God," 16 March 1995).

⁵⁴ Wimber's alliance with Frisbee was the catalyst for the spectacular growth in the church until the relationship between the two broke down in 1983. Frisbee's input was almost forgotten until his story was later rehabilitated by supporters. In telling their narratives, Wimber and other writers avoided mention of Frisbee's name and his influence on early Vineyard growth, almost certainly due to disapproval of Frisbee's handling of his struggles

The public displays of tongues and other manifestations occurring at Calvary Chapel of Yorba Linda opened a rift among Calvary Chapel Churches that eventually led to Wimber taking leadership of its seven extant associated “Vineyard” churches and breaking away permanently from Calvary.⁵⁵ Joined later by a further thirty Calvary churches, the Vineyard Movement was born.⁵⁶ In 1982, not only did Wimber assume leadership of the rapidly growing new movement, he also collaborated with Peter Wagner to launch a course at Fuller Theological Seminary that was designed to teach Christians the “how to” of “doin’ the stuff.” “MC510: Signs, Wonders and Church Growth” was officially Wagner’s course. Wimber did not have the academic credentials to teach at Fuller but Wagner, because of his position, was able to bypass official approval to employ Wimber as teacher of the course.⁵⁷ Although in later years the friendship was broken by disagreement over Wagner’s views on spiritual warfare, Wagner always deemed Wimber a major influence in his life, particularly in his transition from a “convinced cessationist to a practitioner of supernatural signs and wonders.”⁵⁸

MC510

The importance of the MC510 course to the themes of this thesis pertains to the widespread distribution of the ideas that were taught in the class, its impact on some of the key participants, and how it laid the foundation for the SWM that grew out of MC510 concepts.⁵⁹ MC510 can be viewed as an attempt to combine the pragmatism of the church

with sexuality. This omission embittered Lonnie in the years before his death from AIDS in 1993. Frisbee, *Not By Might, Nor By Power*, 170; Di Sabatino, “Lonnie Frisbee,” 403. For examples of Frisbee’s absence from the historical record see Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 24; Jessica Russell, Debra Smith and Tom Price, “They Called It the Jesus Movement,” *Calvary Chapel Magazine* 58 (Winter 2014): 12-21. Chuck Smith’s first account of Calvary Chapel history (*The Reproducers*) was published in 1972 so covers only the phase of Frisbee’s public ministry before his troubles began to emerge. Smith’s later book retold the story of Calvary Chapel’s early days but completely omitted mention of Frisbee although he had been a significant catalyst in the church’s growth. Chuck Smith and Tal Brooke, *Harvest* (Costa Mesa, CA: The Word for Today, 2003).

⁵⁵ The original Vineyard group of churches were named by Kenn Gulliksen who established the first in the mid-1970s. They were considered full partners of Smith’s Calvary Chapel churches but possessed a “different flavor” such as emphasis on intimate worship and inner healing. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 80-88.

⁵⁶ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 85-86.

⁵⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 128.

⁵⁸ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 113, 152, 189-90.

⁵⁹ MC510 was a ten-week course, held on Monday nights, which started each January for four years 1982-1985. Fuller’s School of World Mission faculty cancelled the course in January 1986. The previous year the theology faculty had denied credit for theology students who took the course. In the first year the course had enrolled about 85 students but numbers leapt to around 250 in subsequent years, a record for any Fuller course. After MC510 discontinued, modified courses were offered (MC511, MC522, and MC550) but were either also cancelled or broadened to considerably widen the scope and balance of the teaching. Fuller Archives “Collection

growth movement with the exhilarating mysticism of signs and wonders. Occurrences of signs and wonders, its teachers believed, would attract numbers to churches, and numbers were what constituted success in church growth theory. In MC510, students could learn how to heal ailments and cast out demons in a classroom setting, the format being a teaching session followed by a “clinic” to practise the new skills.⁶⁰ The course was wildly popular among its attendees and attracted significant media attention.⁶¹ The healing sessions conducted by Wimber generated excitement, drama, and many claims of renewed passion for Christian experience.⁶² However, it quickly became controversial and Fuller began to face criticism, disillusionment among some attendees, and various other types of academic and public backlash.⁶³

Just four years after its introduction, the institution announced that it was discontinuing the course. Following its cancellation, Fuller convened a taskforce to evaluate MC510 and its impact before explaining the institution’s position and conclusions in

0182,” 156, 2; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 128, 146; Charles H. Kraft, “Contemporary Trends in the Treatment of Spiritual Conflict in the Mission of the Church,” in *Lausanne Missional Content Library*, 22 August 2000 <https://www.lausanne.org/content/contemporary-trends?_sf_s=Contemporary+Trends+in+the+Treatment+of+Spiritual+Conflict+in+the+Mission+of+the+Church> (24 March 2019), 9. See also Marjorie Lee Chandler, “Fuller Seminary Cancels Course on Signs and Wonders,” *Christianity Today* 30:3 (21 February 1986): 48-49.

⁶⁰ There are disagreements about the identities of course attendees. Coggins claims numbers were swelled by young people from Wimber’s church who took no other courses at Fuller. Wagner claims that most of the attendees were Fuller theology students. Certainly, numerous non-enrolled curious onlookers attended the post-lecture healing sessions. James R. Coggins and Paul G. Hiebert, *Wonders and the Word: An Examination of Issues Raised by John Wimber and the Vineyard Movement* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1989), 20; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 147; David Hubbard, “Foreword,” in *Ministry and the Miraculous: A Case Study at Fuller Theological Seminary*, ed. Lewis B. Smedes (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1987), 15. See also Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 111.

⁶¹ *Christian Life Magazine* (October 1982) devoted the entire issue to the topic followed by publication of an expanded and enlarged version: Editors, *Christian Life Magazine, Signs & Wonders Today* (Wheaton, IL: Christian Life Missions, 1983). *Christianity Today* also reported on MC510, either directly or in the context of discussing the rapidly growing Vineyard churches: Chandler, “Fuller Seminary Cancels Course,” 48-49; Tim Stafford, “Testing the Wine from John Wimber’s Vineyard,” *Christianity Today* 30:11 (8 August 1986): 17-22, especially sidebar “Cause for Concern,” 20; Anonymous, “Fuller Seminary Releases Study on the Miraculous,” *Christianity Today* 31:2 (6 February 1987): 44-45. Secular media also commented at a later stage: Russell Chandler, “Churchgoers Look to Vineyard for Answers to Spiritual Needs,” *Sun Sentinel, Fort Lauderdale* (29 December 1990): 68.

⁶² The format for MC510 classes is outlined in Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 27-28. Compare anthropologist Jon Bialecki’s description of the classes and his comment: “Wimber’s lecture notes are incredibly vague, and I have never spoken to anyone who took the class who had a very detailed memory of what was covered.” Bialecki also outlines details of rather uneven rates of success in healing a variety of ailments in the class. Bialecki, “The Third Wave and the Third World”: 193-196.

⁶³ Hubbard, “Foreword,” in *Ministry and the Miraculous*, 15-16; Coggins, *Wonders and the Word*, 20; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 147.

published form.⁶⁴ The short book covered issues of the contextual appropriateness of the classroom, inconsistencies with the biblical record, lack of critical examination or transparency in a questionable theology, over-emphasis on the miraculous with implications of magical performance, the suggestion that more faith gets better results, and ignoring the role of suffering in the Christian experience.⁶⁵ One particularly forthright statement declared:

The Christian faith caters neither to the narcissistic assumption that health is the highest of all goods nor to a gratuitous assumption that God exists to deliver on the demand the health and welfare we may claim as our inalienable right. The gospel does not clearly vindicate itself to the world when ministers proclaim the occasional release of affluent individuals from bearable aches and pains while thousands of starving children call in vain to be fed ...⁶⁶

Unsurprisingly, Fuller's assessment was rejected by Wagner. Although he had been appointed as one of the twelve members of the taskforce, in his memoir he conveyed some of his feelings of bitterness with the committee's conclusions, preferring to view the process as a personal vendetta against himself and Wimber, and indicating that he had considered taking legal action against the seminary if he was not permitted to keep teaching his topic.⁶⁷ Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that Fuller had been influenced by the demonic spirit of religion that convinced the leadership they were serving God by cancelling MC510.⁶⁸

However, despite the controversy, MC510 became a springboard into new spheres of spirituality and life transitions for many course attendees as well as the non-students who were involved. One person who became important later in developing spiritual warfare theology was Charles Kraft, professor of anthropology in the Fuller School of World Mission. He described his experience in the class as "breaking through a kind of a glass ceiling" and the lifting of his Christian life to a "completely new plane," a "dimension of Christian

⁶⁴ Lewis B. Smedes, ed., *Ministry and the Miraculous: A Case Study at Fuller Theological Seminary* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1987). The response to this publication depended upon who was commenting. Compare Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 148; Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 124-125; Kenneth A. Strand, review of *Ministry and the Miraculous: A Case Study at Fuller Theological Seminary*, by Lewis B. Smedes, ed., *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 27.2 (1989): 158-159; Tom Schwanda, review of *Ministry and the Miraculous: A Case Study at Fuller Theological Seminary*, by Lewis B. Smedes, ed., *Reformed Review* 41:3 (April 1988): 227-228; Grant Wacker, "Wimber and Wonders—What about Miracles Today?" *Reformed Journal* 37:4 (April 1987): 16-19.

⁶⁵ Smedes, *Ministry and the Miraculous*, 24, 27-33, 37, 51-56, 57, 59-61. Some scholarly opinion leans more towards viewing the cancellation of MC510 as a reflection of the Establishment's unease with the status quo being challenged. See for example, Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 147.

⁶⁶ Smedes, *Ministry and the Miraculous*, 60.

⁶⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 146-149.

⁶⁸ C. Peter Wagner, "The Corporate Spirit of Religion," in *Freedom from the Religious Spirit*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005), 22-23.

experience” that previously he had never imagined. As a result, he felt “connectedness and spiritual vitality” in relation to a close, active God who regularly demonstrated his presence. For Kraft, this became normal Christianity and he was clear that this experiential knowledge was superior to simply intellectual knowledge.⁶⁹

Wagner and others asserted that Wimber was so damaged by the fallout from MC510 that his heart was broken and his health affected.⁷⁰ Nevertheless it gave him the opportunity to embark on the most successful period of his career. He had already taught MC510 material in his own church as a week-long course to 2,000 attendees.⁷¹ From there, his public presence catapulted him into the international arena as he began teaching MC510 all over the world and gained an influential profile, particularly in the UK.⁷² Eventually, the demise of the course at Fuller became the catalyst for launching Wimber’s most significant legacy: the worldwide Association of Vineyard Churches, which now claims over 2,500 churches on six continents.⁷³

Although Wagner was professor of record for the course, his role had been secondary to Wimber’s position as the lead instructor.⁷⁴ Wagner perceived himself as a spectator when the class commenced in January 1982 but within a few weeks he identified as a full participant and enthusiastically embraced all facets of the signs and wonders experience.⁷⁵ One vivid example serves to illustrate how momentous a change occurred in Wagner’s thinking in this season of his life. During the time of the MC510 course, Wagner also taught a Sunday School class for adults at his church in which the class practised healings and deliverance from demons as he had learned in the MC510 classroom. One evening Wagner and his wife Doris hosted a group from the class for prayer at the house where they had lived for the past seventeen years. During the course of the evening two of the group informed

⁶⁹ Charles H. Kraft, *Confronting Powerless Christianity: Evangelicals and the Missing Dimension* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2002), 15-16.

⁷⁰ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 147; Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 125.

⁷¹ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 121-122.

⁷² Coggins, *Wonders and the Word*, 20-22; Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 119, 121; Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom*, 294-295n5.

⁷³ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 147; Vineyard Global <<https://www.vineyard.org/>> (23 September 2020).

⁷⁴ Wimber attracted media attention as a Fuller “professor” to the discomfiture of the institution. Smedes, *Ministry and the Miraculous*, 15; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 147. He is named as a “professor” in the best-known publication on MC510: Editors, *Christian Life Magazine, Signs & Wonders Today* (Wheaton, IL: Christian Life Missions, 1983), 20.

⁷⁵ Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 49-50.

Wagner that they felt something was wrong in the house, most specifically in the Wagners' bedroom. They went upstairs and rebuked the spirits they discerned were present; the problem was deemed solved. Not long after, while Peter was absent overnight, Doris woke up in fear in the middle of the night and saw a luminous green being with glowing green eyes staring at her from a corner. She prayed, the creature left, and she returned to sleep. A couple of months later Doris again woke, this time with a cramp in her foot that would not leave, even after prayer from her husband for healing. However, following Wimber's guidelines on how to get rid of an evil spirit—treat it “like it is a cat on the back porch” and yell at it to leave in the name of Jesus—the pain subsided.⁷⁶ At this point the couple arrived at the conclusion that still there must be something wrong in their house so some of the class members volunteered to come to the house to pray. Confronted by a powerful physical force that prevented entry to the house, they went into the garage where they felt a strong energy and smelled something evil. An axe hanging on the wall suggested to them there had been a violent event in the garage at some point, possibly a murder. After disposing of the demon in the garage they were able to enter the house and cast a demon out of an ornamental stone puma acquired in Bolivia. When they entered the bedroom, in the corner where Doris had seen the green demon, they had a vision of a man with an axe who had committed an act of terrible violence against a screaming woman. Although they could not be sure, they suspected a murder but ultimately managed to evict the demon (or demons) successfully from the house and the Wagners had no further problems from that day forward.⁷⁷ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt a theological examination of this incident but it is included to demonstrate what a radical shift in thinking Wagner made through the influence of John Wimber. By his own admission, in all his years of missionary experience he had never personally encountered demons or other supernatural experiences. This was an area of spiritual experience entirely new to him but he embraced it with zeal and commitment from this time forward. What Wagner and Kraft discovered in MC510 laid the groundwork for their future commitment to spiritual warfare, as we shall see in the chapters to follow.

⁷⁶ Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 64-67. See also Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 140-141.

⁷⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 140-141. For a more detailed account see also Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 64-67.

Signs and Wonders: Important Postscripts

Before examining the theological propositions of the S&W, there are two important corollaries of Wimber's signs and wonders emphasis to note briefly. The first demonstrates an increasing reliance on declarations of messages from God made by humans in preference to scriptural statements, with associated weight given to humans who were regarded as God's agents. This foreshadowed the apostles and prophets movement that we will address in a later chapter. The second relates to increasingly unusual manifestations of behaviours that were deemed to be the effect of the Holy Spirit's power falling on individuals, strange events that had far-reaching effect and that continue to the present day in churches such as Bethel Redding, the subject of Chapter 9.

Postscript 1: The Kansas City Prophets

In 1988, a period when Wimber was experiencing ill health and feeling spiritually and emotionally depressed, he entered into roughly a three-year relationship with some individuals from an informal group known popularly as the "Kansas City Prophets."⁷⁸ The most prominent figures with whom Wimber had dealings were Paul Cain, Bob Jones, and Mike Bickle.⁷⁹ Their messages of hope for the future, predictions for Wimber's successful leadership, and especially an earthquake prophecy from Cain became catalysts for Wimber's emergence from his depression.⁸⁰ Quickly the prophets, in particular Paul Cain, gained influence over Wimber and the Vineyard in general as the movement was plunged into a maelstrom of elitism, apocalyptic fever, false prophecies, dashed hopes, conflict, scandal, and disgrace.⁸¹ Nevertheless, opinions in the Vineyard about the prophets remained divided. Some viewed it as a devastating period in Vineyard history, others as the initiation of renewal following a season of demoralization.⁸² Eventually Wimber withdrew from relationship with

⁷⁸ Wimber's contacts with the prophets were initiated and facilitated by Jack Deere, a prominent leader in Vineyard circles and former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 142, 178. Mike Bickle pastored a Kansas City church that attracted a number of prophets in the early 1980s. He denies the prophets ever existed as an actual entity and claims that the informal moniker was used more often by critics than supporters. Jonathan Hall, "Ask Mike Bickle - Who are the Kansas City Prophets and are you one of them?" *YouTube*, 9 January 2015, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD_fa_hdazI > (26 November 2020).

⁷⁹ There were a number of other associated prophets whose names will appear in later chapters.

⁸⁰ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 177-181. The facts about the accuracy of the earthquake prediction are disputable: a 4.9 earthquake did occur in Pasadena 3 December 1988 but in the stories related to Paul Cain's prediction, details and dates are inconsistent with the actual event. Wimber himself came to question the prophecy later, 179.

⁸¹ The full story is detailed in Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 174-235.

⁸² Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 178.

the prophets as the Vineyard movement sought to regroup and set a course for the future.⁸³ However, the prophets, operating within their individual ministries, continued to maintain their presence in other sectors of the charismatic renewal with most surviving controversies, personal scandals, or accusations of false prophecies. Although their connection with Wimber and the Vineyard was relatively short-lived, their influence became an important factor in shaping later developments, as we shall see in the chapter on apostles and prophets.

Postscript 2: The Toronto Blessing

Some commentators have suggested that planning and deliberate marketing were the drivers of the Toronto Blessing and that MC510 was the platform that taught how to establish the right environment for supernatural events to occur.⁸⁴ Whether or not this is true, the events that occurred at the Toronto Airport Vineyard echoed around the world and despite fading in less than three years, the “Blessing” remained one of the more controversial “revivals” of the late twentieth century.⁸⁵ A series of inter-personal contacts involving evangelist Benny Hinn, Argentinian pastor Claudio Freidzon, and revivalist Rodney Howard-Browne culminated in the speaking visit of Pastor Randy Clark to John Arnott’s Toronto Airport Vineyard church in January 1994.⁸⁶ Stemming from the interactions of all these men, claims of prophecies, visions, and unusual occurrences gave rise to expectation of an imminent and powerful revival that duly erupted on 20 January under the ministrations of Clark. His four-day visit to Toronto turned into forty-two days as the church experienced an explosion of strange behaviours among attendees.⁸⁷ Attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit, laughter, falling over, “drunkenness,” and seemingly stupor-like states became the norm. Attendance swelled

⁸³ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 234, 244.

⁸⁴ Philip Richter, “The Toronto Blessing: Charismatic Evangelical Global Warming,” in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 106-109. I can attest personally to heavy marketing around the impending arrival of the Toronto Blessing in the months preceding its actual “launch” in my own church.

⁸⁵ Another notable revival broke out 18 June 1995 at the Brownsville Assemblies of God, Pensacola, Florida. It was less controversial and did not display excesses as extreme as at Toronto. Nevertheless, reports claimed it was deliberately modelled on Toronto events and accused the pastors of orchestrating the 18 June event while completely manufacturing some details (such as a “mighty wind” blowing through the auditorium). Videotape of the event supports the criticisms. See George Payne, “Brownsville Revival - The Fathers Day Outpouring - June 18, 1995,” *YouTube*, 15 January 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HceHGcCtxFY&t=3720s>> (30 September 2020); Alice Crann, “Pastors Orchestrated First Revival,” *Pensacola News Journal*, 19 November 1997, 1. For a dramatically and imaginatively enhanced account see Daniel K. Norris, “What You Never Knew about Steve Hill and the Brownsville Revival,” *CharismaNews*, 3 April 2017, <<https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/from-the-frontlines/63998-what-you-never-knew-about-steve-hill-and-the-brownsville-revival>> (12 December 2018).

⁸⁶ Guy Chevreau, *Catch the Fire: The Toronto Blessing* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 15-21.

⁸⁷ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 283-284, 288.

into the thousands as curious onlookers arrived from all over the world hoping to experience the “blessing.” From the outset, controversy swirled as Christians debated whether the occurrences were from God or the devil. Media scrutiny spread the message even wider, particularly as on occasion manifestations began to include barking like dogs, roaring like lions, or clucking like chickens.⁸⁸ As key personalities such as John Arnott or Rodney-Howard Browne travelled worldwide, the phenomenon spread into multiple countries until it began to lose momentum approximately two years later. In his capacity as leader of the Association of Vineyard Churches, Wimber’s response was characterised by seeming uncertainty and ambivalence. His position was difficult because the events of the Toronto Blessing bore resemblance to those that he had promoted as the work of the Holy Spirit since 1980, but they seemed more extreme than he could safely defend. Initially he appeared to endorse what was happening in Toronto but eventually, after a messy and contentious process, Toronto Airport Vineyard was asked to leave the Vineyard Association in December 1995.⁸⁹

Supportive testimonies and opposing critiques of the Toronto Blessing phenomenon have been published in a variety of contexts. As with all other S&W debate, much depended on the perspective of the authors and the final analysis has remained contentious. The intent here is not to revisit this material but to note several features that will be explored in later chapters. Firstly, from the very beginning, a veritable flood of dreams, prophecies, and “words of knowledge” bolstered the inception of the Toronto Blessing. Secondly, it was no secret that Toronto Blessing events were weak in biblical exposition or reliance on scripture in any way.⁹⁰ This aligned to a third aspect: a reconfiguration in the view of God towards more of a “divine dad full of homely fun, ever ready with a minor miracle for those who know the correct formula.”⁹¹ Fourth, increasingly faith became oriented towards an emphasis on the therapeutic. Fifth, given that the spectacular occurrences seemed to be the ultimate objective, a question arises: How significant was the need to remain at the “cutting edge,” continually responding to follower demand for the renewal of expectancy, enthusiasm, and

⁸⁸ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 312, 327.

⁸⁹ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 308-311, 314-315, 326-333.

⁹⁰ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 289.

⁹¹ Douglas McBain, “Mainstream Charismatics: Some Observations of Baptist Renewal,” in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 57. For how this was conveyed in song lyrics, see also Pete Ward, *Selling Worship: How What We Sing Has Changed the Church* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2005), 140.

excitement? Each of these elements, notably present in the Toronto Blessing, had its genesis in S&W theology. These were some of the factors that became important in the reshaping of belief for twenty-first-century evangelicalism.

Shaping Signs and Wonders Theology

Before examining the elements that characterized S&W teaching, it is necessary to establish what comprised its theology. The role of power comes to the fore, including how existing missional theory was adapted to explain the new paradigm of power, and how scripture was used to justify normalcy in expressions of power. A further element underpinning the theology of the S&W was eschatological: this aspect will be discussed in more depth later.

Power Evangelism and Encounter

Wimber's objective towards church growth was realised when his concept of "power evangelism" resulted in an explosion of attendance at his church. Thenceforth he continued to tie church growth to manifestations of power.⁹² Power evangelism refers specifically to demonstrations of supernatural power that include most particularly healings but also deliverance from demons, raising the dead, and other signs such as falling over (putatively under the power of the Spirit), all of which serve to reinforce the proclamation of the gospel and thus are tools of evangelism.⁹³ "Power encounter" describes the conflict with the kingdom of Satan during these demonstrations of power, especially in the casting out of demons.⁹⁴ Where once the emphasis in the MC510 course was on evangelism accomplished through demonstrations of healing, similar courses inspired by MC510 (offered later in other institutions) increasingly focused on clashes between the kingdoms of light and darkness: a shift from power evangelism to power encounter, particularly as the SWM gained

⁹² Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 44.

⁹³ John Wimber, "Power Evangelism: Definitions and Directions" in *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Towards a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare*, eds. C. Peter Wagner and F. Douglas Pennoyer (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 15, 24-29; John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Healing* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), 60-61. Although Wimber was careful to explain that evangelism consists of *proclamation* of the gospel combined with *demonstration* of miraculous works, a claim echoed by other writers, the clear focus of MC510 and subsequent writing on the topic focussed on the healing aspect with little attention to the proclamation component. See Wimber, "Definitions and Directions," 27.

⁹⁴ Wimber, "Definitions and Directions," in Wagner, *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 31.

momentum.⁹⁵ Nevertheless power evangelism remained a frequently-used catchphrase even though the activity of evangelism, in its traditional sense, no longer appeared to be the focus.

S&W proponents viewed the power invested in Christians as the functional constituent underlying the life of the believer. Wimber provided a definition: “Power is the ability, the strength, the might to complete a given task. Authority is the right to use the power of God.”⁹⁶ The power encounter was the activity within which this power was exercised. By this he meant the confrontation between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan where the encounter is a “visible, practical demonstration that Jesus Christ is more powerful than the false gods or spirits worshiped or feared by a people group.”⁹⁷ Peter Wagner reiterated the nature of the power encounter: it was a “public visible challenge that pits God against Satan.”⁹⁸ Charles Kraft framed this as power versus power, an example of a cosmic dualist approach that drew criticism from commentators.⁹⁹ Therefore, power was the visible, dramatic, and miraculous force demonstrated in processes of healing, expulsion of demons, or other experiences of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁰ Although healing was the most common demonstrative action, Christians could also bestow blessings or forgive sins.¹⁰¹

Reinterpreting and Redefining Tippett

In defining a power encounter, Wagner, as quoted by Wimber above, referred back to the individual who originally coined the term. Alan Tippett was an Australian missionary and anthropologist who taught at Fuller Seminary with Donald McGavran after many years of

⁹⁵ F. Douglas Pennoyer, “Trends and Topics in Teaching Power Evangelism” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 344. Wimber and Wagner eventually had a falling out and discontinued their relationship over Wimber’s increasing discomfort with Wagner’s teaching on these themes. See Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 189-190.

⁹⁶ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 11. An earlier forerunner to this concept was Andrew Murray who made references to power in the healing acts of the Holy Spirit (see next chapter). See Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 25.

⁹⁷ Wimber quoting Peter Wagner from MC510 class notes. Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 16. See also Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 150.

⁹⁸ Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 150.

⁹⁹ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity with Power: Your Worldview and Your Experience of the Supernatural* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1989), 110. For just one example of critical comment see Michael S. Horton, “Introduction,” in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*, ed. Michael Scott Horton (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 17.

¹⁰⁰ Wimber, *Power Healing*, 222, 242, 266. Deliverance from demons was considered an act of healing.

¹⁰¹ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 110, 126-132.

missions work in the South Pacific regions.¹⁰² The leading authors of S&W and the SWM that emerged later all cited Tippett in relation to the power encounter or clearly demonstrated his influence in their text.¹⁰³ In authoring books that became missiological classics, Tippett was particularly noteworthy for his discomfort with Western perceptions of primitivism in non-Western cultures and his determination to dismantle colonial attitudes.¹⁰⁴ His views on the conversion of people groups aligned with Donald McGavran's, although he distanced himself from the numerical emphasis that was gathering momentum in the church growth movement: "Most of the Oceanic peoples who have become Christian have done so by group movements. I did not say 'mass movements.' They are multi-individual movements. We are concerned with individuals, not in isolation, but within groups and sub-groups."¹⁰⁵

Tippett also taught a well-received model that outlined the processes through which people groups passed as they moved from previous religious beliefs to acceptance of Christianity: the "old context" to the "new context."¹⁰⁶ The stages in this process consisted of "Awareness" (discovery), "Decision-making," "Incorporation," and "Maturity."¹⁰⁷ As potential Christians moved from the awareness stage towards decision-making there was an experience of realization. This was the point where Tippett said a "power encounter" needed to happen. The purpose of the power encounter was to demonstrate that the God of Christianity was more powerful than the gods of the people to whom the missionary was relating.¹⁰⁸ He viewed it as an "act or *rite of separation* from the old ties and loyalties."¹⁰⁹ In

¹⁰² Tippett was held in high esteem by Charles Kraft, who worked alongside him for eight years at Fuller. Charles H. Kraft, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22:4 (October 1998): 164.

¹⁰³ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 16; Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 149; Timothy M. Warner, *Spiritual Warfare: Victory over the Powers of This Dark World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 115; Ed Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 255; Kraft, "Contemporary Trends," 9.

¹⁰⁴ Darrell L. Whiteman, "The Legacy of Alan R. Tippett," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16:4 (October 1992): 163, 164.

¹⁰⁵ Alan R. Tippett, "Conversion as a Dynamic Process in Christian Mission," *Missiology* 5:2 (April 1977): 204. Elsewhere Tippett commends those who avoid being "blinded by mere numbers," A.R. Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction* (New York: Friendship Press, 1967), 106.

¹⁰⁶ Tippett, "Conversion as a Dynamic Process," 219.

¹⁰⁷ Tippett, "Conversion as a Dynamic Process," 212-213. These stages could occur over a long period of time and were not necessarily each of the same length.

¹⁰⁸ Tippett made an important distinction about the nature of the gods concerned: because in the Solomon Islands worship focussed on ghosts and spirits more than the almost-forgotten creator, "The encounter had to take place on the level of daily life against those powers which dealt with the relevant problems of gardening, fishing, war, security, food supply and the personal life crises ... the issue was one of *power in daily life*" (Italics his). Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 5.

power encounters, “converts show their change of faith and demonstrate that they no longer fear the old gods.”¹¹⁰ Tippett was careful in his explanations. The role of the missionary was as God’s human agent of advocacy and witness.¹¹¹ The power encounter was not an act instigated by the missionary; rather it had to be generated from within the group that was contemplating conversion.¹¹² Furthermore, it had to be initiated by a group representative who was deemed *by the group* to hold approved authority to represent their pre-agreed decision.¹¹³ The power encounter itself was a type of iconoclasm; Tippett defined it as “a cultural mechanism within a social pattern, the proof of sincerity in a time of major decision-making.”¹¹⁴

Tippett’s description of the power encounter is important to note in the context of examining the S&W definition of the same. The power encounter as defined by Tippett was a demonstration of the *loss* of power in the old gods in the presence of the new God. It was a choice to destroy something previously held to be sacred, invested with the power of the old god, and symbolic of the previous belief system. Tippett provided numerous examples of how this could occur: for example, by eating something forbidden (because it was representative of a local or personal deity), burning a fetish, burying an ancestral skull, or destroying sacred vegetation.¹¹⁵ Tippett described this as an “ocular demonstration” where “every acceptance of an innovation [conversion] is simultaneously an act of rejection and an act of acceptance.”¹¹⁶ He reiterated: “The act itself must be an ocular demonstration with a manifest meaning to Christian and pagan alike. It must leave no room for doubt that the old context may still have some of their allegiance, or still hold some power over them.”¹¹⁷ This, then, was a power encounter. The important feature to note was that the act involved a demonstration of how the

¹⁰⁹ Alan R. Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1987), 82. Italics his.

¹¹⁰ Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology*, 83.

¹¹¹ Tippett, “Conversion as a Dynamic Process,” 206, 214.

¹¹² Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 106.

¹¹³ Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 106, 109.

¹¹⁴ Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 106.

¹¹⁵ Alan R. Tippett, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 169.

¹¹⁶ Tippett, “Conversion as a Dynamic Process,” 218. See also his emphasis that this was an act of commitment: Alan R. Tippett, “The Evangelization of Animists,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, eds. Winter, Ralph D. and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 632-634.

¹¹⁷ Tippett, “Conversion as a Dynamic Process,” 213.

old gods could no longer exert any power or control. It did not consist so much of a specific act by the new God but more of a *failure to act* on the part of the old god.¹¹⁸

With the emergence of the S&W, the term acquired revised meaning. The context for a power encounter in Tippet's explanation was very specific. The people concerned were animist groups who were being introduced to the Christian God and engaging in the *process* of evangelism.¹¹⁹ As they travelled the journey towards acceptance and belief, they were encouraged to make public demonstration of their rejection of the old beliefs and their associated symbols in order to demonstrate their new commitment to the new faith system. However, Wimber and Wagner modified Tippet's conceptions and applied them in a different context. Both acknowledged Tippet as the originator of the power encounter concept but did not disclose that they had integrated Tippet's conceptions with their own modifications.¹²⁰ Instead, Wagner described Tippet as "one of the early exponents of power encounter evangelism" before tying a quote from Tippet to his explanation of a visible, practical demonstration of power.¹²¹ In the context of describing the commonality of his encounters with demons, Wimber wrote: "Missionary Alan Tippet calls these events *power encounters*, the clashing of the kingdom of God with the kingdom of Satan."¹²² The result was that use of Tippet's term "power encounter" took on meaning substantially different from that he had envisaged.¹²³ These modifications consisted of shifting from convert-driven actions to God's human agents as the protagonists, redefining the nature and manifestation of the power encounter from a symbolic demonstration to a miraculous event, and changing the

¹¹⁸ Lest this appear to indicate passivity on the part of the Christian God, Tippet represented the ocular demonstration as an active demonstration of faith in the saving power of Christ, hence both an act of repudiation and an act of faith; God's power over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 278.

¹¹⁹ Tippet, "The Evangelization of Animists," 632.

¹²⁰ See also further discussion on the reinterpretation of Tippet in the SWM section.

¹²¹ Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 149-150. Kevin Springer, co-author of Wimber's books, integrated Tippet's and Wagner's teaching in a long passage that situates Wagner's explanation as reflecting Tippet's; the text and examples of power encounters make no distinction between the variant definitions. Kevin Springer, "Foreword," in *Power Encounters: Among Christians in the Western World*, ed. Kevin Springer (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), xiii-xviii. Missiologist David Hesselgrave provides an historical overview of power encounters and further discussion on how the signs and wonders proponents evolved their theory from Tippet's teaching; David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 168-182.

¹²² Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 16. Italics his. Wimber repeatedly used "clash" in context of building on Tippet's conception of power encounters but note that Tippet's only use of the word pertained to cultural clash. For examples see Tippet, *Introduction to Missiology*, 87, 270, 282n8; Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 25.

¹²³ The rhythmic nature of what became the catchphrase "power encounter" should not be overlooked. Numerous catchphrases permeated the language of the movements discussed in this thesis and were important due to their ability to act as heuristic devices in the new theology.

focus on symbolic departure from an old faith system to a focus on the power encounter as a catalyst in a dualistic struggle between the forces of God and Satan. Eventually, even though Wimber and Wagner claimed it as the premise underlying power encounters, evangelism faded almost entirely from the process, a significant departure from Tippett's orientation.¹²⁴ Ultimately Tippett's definition also became useful to underpin claims in the SWM, as we shall see in following chapters.

The Shape of the Argument

Aside from his references to Tippett, John Wimber did not attempt a serious theological justification for power evangelism and power encounters in his books, preferring rather to use scriptural examples as illustrations to support his explanations.¹²⁵ Although Wagner and Charles Kraft relied heavily on anecdotal evidence to present their claims, they made some effort to argue the theology. Kraft saw demonstrations of power (miracles) as a move away from "unbalanced Evangelicalism" that focuses more on talk than action (1 Cor 4:20).¹²⁶ Moreover, he considered that beliefs about miracles as an abnormal intervention or interruption of the laws of nature are "semi-deistic" views of God, influenced by the Western mindset. Rather, he said, miracles are to be expected as a normal part of the Christian life, a principle that became one of the central elements of the emerging new theology.¹²⁷ Kraft found his support for this proposition in the responses of Jesus in specific NT accounts. In Kraft's reading of scripture, these responses indicated that Jesus expected miracles as part of normal life: "Where is your faith?" he asked when his terrified disciples woke him during a storm (Luke 8:25). Furthermore, he exclaimed "How unbelieving you people are!" when the disciples failed to cast out a demon (Mark 9:19), and "You yourselves give them something to eat" an indication that the disciples naturally should have been able to feed the five thousand

¹²⁴ Although he was making a different point in his narrative, the historian of the Vineyard Movement (from which the Signs and Wonders movement emerged) drew attention to the issue of evangelism stopping when Wimber took over leadership of the Vineyard in 1982, the same year as the commencement of the MC510 course at Fuller. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 86, 366-367.

¹²⁵ For representative examples, see Wimber, *Power Healing*, 84-86, 122-123.

¹²⁶ "For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power" (NRSV). Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, xi-xii.

¹²⁷ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 101-102, 115. Although Kraft tended to frame his arguments as dogmatic statements, he may have been feeling his way (unawares) towards questions emerging from the wider debate on reconciling distinctions between the ordinary and extraordinary works of God that divided the as-yet-undeveloped theology of the charismatic movement from its opponents. See George W. Harper, "Renewal and Causality: Some Thoughts on a Conceptual Framework for a Charismatic Theology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 24:1 (Winter 1987): 93-103.

via the Father's counsel without Jesus' input (Luke 9:13).¹²⁸ His conclusion was that "An approach to presenting the gospel that focuses on power demonstrations and power encounters would seem then to be warranted by both Scripture and common sense."¹²⁹

Wagner's view agreed with Kraft's: miracles are the normal pattern for evangelistic ministry.¹³⁰ This pattern was built upon the construal that specific events described in scripture provided the mandate for activities in the present-day. Therefore, because Jesus sent his disciples out after giving them power to heal, raise the dead, and cast out demons (Matt 10: 1, 7-8), so Christians today are empowered.¹³¹ Kraft argued the connection between the baptism of Jesus and the filling of everyday Christians with the Holy Spirit. As the source of power, the Holy Spirit began his work when he empowered Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22); likewise, all believers are empowered when they are filled with the Holy Spirit.¹³² Moreover, Christians are empowered to do greater miracles than Jesus (John 14:12).¹³³ Wagner expounded further: "The Holy Spirit was the source of all Jesus' power during his earthly ministry. Jesus exercised no power of or by himself. We today can expect to do the same or greater things than Jesus did because we have been given access to the same power source."¹³⁴ In Wagner's parlance, "greater things" meant superior and more spectacular acts of signs and wonders.¹³⁵ His explanation for Christians' ability to do greater things than Jesus

¹²⁸ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 102-103.

¹²⁹ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 200.

¹³⁰ Note that theoretical discussion and use of the term "evangelism" continued long after any actual evangelistic effort (in the traditional sense) had ceased in actuality. Eventually the very term itself was redefined as later chapters will show.

¹³¹ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 127.

¹³² Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 110-111.

¹³³ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 50; Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 110.

¹³⁴ Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 114; see also Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 129.

Commentators have suggested other options for what Jesus intended in this statement. For example, considering the enormity of Jesus' miracle in raising Lazarus from the dead, what can exceed this? Therefore, the explanation must lie instead with the extraordinary position of ordinary believers now able to perform works such as Jesus did through the power of the Holy Spirit (Burge). An alternative interpretation suggests "greater" entails quantification. Peter preached on Pentecost Sunday and 3,000 were converted with new believers being added daily. This level of response outstrips any seen during Jesus' ministry on earth (Erickson). See Gary M. Burge, *John: The NIV Application Commentary*, The NIV Application Commentary Series, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 393-394; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996), 873, 1039-1040.

¹³⁵ One difficulty that Wagner did not address regarding his reading of John 14:12 was that no evidence has emerged to suggest that he or his colleagues did in fact perform greater works than Jesus. Wagner's indication was that his particular gifting seems to have been leg lengthening: Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 53-55, 84-85. He did mount a surprising defence for "greater works" by giving the example of reports of silver fillings in teeth miraculously changed to gold. This is because it would involve a nuclear reaction to change a metallic substance and therefore a sign that "God has taken off the gloves with regard to the world of science and

was made possible by his kenoticist approach to the two natures of Jesus, which he based on Phil 2:6-7.¹³⁶ He asserted that Jesus temporarily differed from the Father and the Holy Spirit in having two natures. He subordinated himself to God by totally suspending all use of his divine attributes. This made him dependent on the Holy Spirit's working for any power that he demonstrated. Ultimately, Wagner's teaching in this regard had far-reaching implications as it paved the way for the increasing emphasis on human potential, agency, and power.¹³⁷

Drawing on a combination of adapted theory from Tippett, deriving generalities from specific scriptures, and the belief that power is the primary objective for Christian living, what emerged was a narrative to explain the new paradigm. This paradigm was declared to bring not only revival but a "remarkable harvest" of millions of souls won in the "tug-of-war" against Satan as empowered Christians fulfilled their mission to destroy his kingdom and usher in the kingdom of God.¹³⁸

the world's preoccupation with it as the only source of truth." C. Peter Wagner, *Seven Power Principles I Learned After Seminary* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005), 60.

¹³⁶ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 130-131; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 37-38; Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 114-115, 118-119. Wagner's argument here (originating from kenoticism) provides a useful example of the characteristic presentations in his arguments. Usually, he offset his own arguments against those that he considered to represent the "establishment" or "old wineskins." However, his representations were reductionist almost to the point of caricature. In his case for Jesus' operant nature on earth he explained that the alternate view is the "two channel theory" where Jesus switched back and forth between his divine and human nature as called for by the situation, one that "stretches the imagination a bit too much" (Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 130, Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 37-38, 268). Wagner credited his teacher at Fuller, Edward J. Carnell, for his understanding of how Jesus functioned while on earth (Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 38). Carnell was chiefly an apologist and a spokesperson for neo-evangelism. It is more likely that Wagner's style of argument may have been inspired by Carnell (constructing new apologies based on comparative strategies, individualistic interpretation, and rationalism, see Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 181-182, 185), albeit modified by Wagner's idiosyncratic reductionism. For an excellent summary of Carnell see Marsden, 97, 172-196, especially 181-185.

¹³⁷ Of interest in Wagner's assumption of kenoticism is McCormack's proposal for renewing kenotic theory. A surface reading of Wagner's explanation of Christ's two natures might suggest that he anticipated McCormack's proposition that Christ's "self-emptying" could be viewed as the divine Logos relating to the man Jesus *taking on* a posture of receptivity (to humility). The man Jesus acted or experienced suffering and the Logos received those acts or suffering as his own. This involved "willed non-use" of the powers shared with the Father and the Spirit: the miracle acts were performed through the power of the Holy Spirit who indwelt the man Jesus. However, if McCormack is correct, and this does represent how Wagner saw it, nevertheless Wagner still faces the problem of uniqueness in the two natures of the Christ figure; there are no scriptural or logical grounds for saying the Holy Spirit would act on a human being in the way he did through the man Jesus as possessor of two natures. Bruce McCormack, "Kenoticism in Modern Christology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 455-456.

¹³⁸ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, xi, 14, 26.

“Doin’ the Stuff”: The Template

In his discussion on Fundamentalism (in which category he places the S&W) theologian Martyn Percy remarks on the importance of narrative: “Stories ... help constitute communities, not just propositions; it is often the group’s own narrative that shapes its theology.”¹³⁹ He goes on to say: “This view recognises the power of language to shape, mould and delimit human experience, to the extent that it may be said that the way language itself is used can give rise to certain experiences.”¹⁴⁰ Given that a significant portion of the S&W theological foundation was built on a misreading of Tippett’s model for missions and some assumptions drawn from Jesus’ ministry, a means to bolstering this doctrine was needed. It lay almost entirely with the focus on experience as the pathway to authentication.¹⁴¹ In order to construct a rational defence of experience, a narrative of experience was crucial.

The narrative that encapsulated the S&W is most simply expressed by the word “power.” This narrative had its starting point on the evening Lonnie Frisbee enthralled his audience and astounded the watchful Wimber. Wimber’s catchphrase “Doin’ the stuff” has remained a ubiquitous slogan in the Vineyard and other charismatic churches.¹⁴² It describes any activity that demonstrates the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, as exercised by believers. These activities could include speaking in tongues, healing, casting out demons, or falling over, often accompanied by shaking, jerking, laughing, crying, or other verbal expressions. For Wimber, the “stuff” that occurred on Mother’s Day 1980, led by Frisbee, was his watershed moment where he finally saw what he had been longing for: a repetition of what he understood as the NT experience of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).¹⁴³ There are two elements pertaining to this event that are important to note. Firstly, what impressed Wimber so much could not have been that people fell over or spoke in tongues: he was not new to either of

¹³⁹ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 12. See also Martyn Percy, “Fundamentalism: A Problem for Phenomenology?” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 10:1 (1995): 89.

¹⁴⁰ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 12.

¹⁴¹ Wimber does attempt to argue (from examples in church history and from twentieth-century reports) that the S&W was merely a continuation of forerunners. This is disputed by Percy in a footnote discussion pointing out discrepancies in Wimber’s hermeneutics. See Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 157-185; Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 29n14, 172-173.

¹⁴² KCFonline, “Doin’ the Stuff,” 2:16, 4:12. My own most recent experience of hearing the phrase used in a church service (during a demonstration of healing that mirrored Wagner/Wimber’s instructions) was the day before typing this paragraph (September 2020), thirty-five years after Wimber coined it.

¹⁴³ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 23-24.

these experiences.¹⁴⁴ Healing or casting out demons, if either occurred at the Mother's Day event, went unnoticed compared to the "battlefield scene—bodies everywhere, people weeping, wailing, and speaking in tongues, much shouting and loud behaviour."¹⁴⁵ For Wimber, what seems to have created such an impact was the *scale* of the occurrence: the sheer numbers of young people affected all at once by what he viewed as the power of the Holy Spirit falling on them.¹⁴⁶ Secondly, the experience was reproducible. As a church growth promoter who subscribed to McGavran's theories, for Wimber numbers were how success was measured. The success of this initial event was borne out by the sudden increase in attendance at his services that followed as young people sought recurrence of these dramatic events.¹⁴⁷ And occur again, they did, over and over.¹⁴⁸

Those who have commented on the events at Wimber's church offer a range of opinions that, for many, nevertheless are derived from within their own worldview. For its enthusiastic participants, there was no doubt that the Holy Spirit was visiting mightily upon their gathering. Others suggested Frisbee had hypnotised the young people at the front of the church.¹⁴⁹ Sociologists who witnessed other Frisbee performances viewed the young people as fallen into a hysterical stupor that they could not easily pull themselves out of.¹⁵⁰ Some commenting on charismatic ministries in general were sure that Satan had a hand in

¹⁴⁴ Carol Wimber, "A Hunger for God," 5, 7, 10. Wimber makes it clear that at first he was disturbed and upset by the events at the service. However, early the next morning he received a message from God via a phone call from his friend Tom Stipe. After hearing Wimber's story, Stipe reassured him that such events occurred during the Jesus Movement and therefore were of the Lord, about to bring great health to the church. Other accounts attribute greater dramatic effect to the phone call (God says: "It was me, John"). Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 25; Tom Stipe, "Recovering the Ministry I Left Behind," in *Power Encounters: Among Christians in the Western World*, ed. Kevin Springer (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 166-167; White, *When the Spirit Comes*, 158-159; Carol Wimber, "A Hunger for God," 13; Erickson, "The Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit," 216n70.

¹⁴⁵ Carol Wimber, "A Hunger for God," 12.

¹⁴⁶ Frisbee had summoned just those aged under twenty-five to the front.

¹⁴⁷ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 26.

¹⁴⁸ Bill Jackson commented on his own response to "the sobbing bodies vibrating under God's power" as Frisbee moved among the prone young people after they started falling over: "For me these are the sweet sounds of God visiting his people. They were the sounds that accompanied a John Wimber meeting—at least the Wimber meetings after 1980." Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 74.

¹⁴⁹ Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997), 201, 238.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Lynn Adams and Robert Jon Fox, "Mainlining Jesus: The New Trip," *Society* 9:4 (February 1972): 51. For unexplained reasons Adams and Fox altered personal and venue names in their article. It is clear that the "Rennie" they describe is Lonnie Frisbee, particularly as Di Sabatino quotes their article at length in his own account of Lonnie's life, transposing "Lonnie" for "Rennie." Di Sabatino, "Lonnie Frisbee," 399. A side comment: use of the word "performance" here is not accidental. Repeatedly, I encountered the word as writers and leaders described their own and others' stage appearances. None seemed to detect a measure of irony in their own use of vocabulary.

proceedings.¹⁵¹ Whatever explanation comes closest to accuracy, one certainty emerged: Frisbee’s accomplishment on Mother’s Day provided the template for many similar events in future years. The pattern he laid down, most likely unintentionally, established itself as the formula for many other similar gatherings, and continues to this present day.¹⁵² Via a methodology of promises for God’s supernatural visitation, the experiences (falling down, tongues, and healings) always followed a preamble that was entertaining, was imbued with a sense of personal engagement, ensured that the audience was expectant of something about to happen, and prepared hearers to accept any non-rational features as the work of the Holy Spirit. These were some of the characteristics that appeared to make the S&W so appealing, especially to young people.

The discrete components of Frisbee’s fifty-five-minute address incorporated each of these characteristics.¹⁵³ Firstly, it was highly entertaining. Two thirds of his talk was occupied with self-deprecating humour that elicited gales of laughter from the audience as he told stories from his childhood, his conversion, and his early attempts at being an evangelist, including how he grew his hair and a beard, acquired a staff, and adopted a specific style of dress in order to look like the prophets he had seen in the movies (1/5, 5:28).¹⁵⁴ Secondly, the experience he promoted was personal on two levels. He demonstrated the centrality of his own identity in the ministry by making it clear that he was chosen of God to lead them: “[God] said: ‘I’m gonna send you to the people,’ ... and then the Lord showed me that there was a light on me, that He was placing on my life, and it was Jesus Christ, and I was going to go bear the word of the Lord,” (1/5, 5:03). But also, Frisbee engaged his audience to reassure

¹⁵¹ David C. Lewis, *Healing: Fiction, Fantasy or Fact?* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989), 11.

¹⁵² Recognisable to any regular attendee at charismatic healing or deliverance meetings. See Bialecki’s comment on this: Jon Bialecki, “Apostolic Networks in the Third Wave of the Spirit: John Wimber and the Vineyard,” *Pneuma* 38:1-2 (January 2016): 31.

¹⁵³ The discussion here of Frisbee’s sermon is based on audiotape of the event released on YouTube. The complete recording is split into five separate files of approximately fourteen minutes each. For convenience’ sake, citations from the audiotape appear in brackets immediately after the reference in the text (rather than footnotes), listing first the specific file and second the start time related to the citation. Vine and Branches Television, “Lonnie Frisbee - Mothers Day, 1980,” *YouTube*, 7 May 2012:

Part 1 of 5: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gz04MngFW1o>>;

Part 2 of 5: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bldUsFINfJI>>;

Part 3 of 5: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIN6DUYLhYM>>;

Part 4 of 5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=If_oBfiLAuA>;

Part 5 of 5: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPrzt3xPwaM&t=2s>> (5 September 2020).

¹⁵⁴ Lonnie continued the story with an account of how he witnessed people falling down upon command of another evangelist and his attempts to imitate the effect, including mistakenly trying to “throw a mantle” over people and filling a bottle of “anointing oil” with various ingredients inspired by Catholic tradition and Edgar Cayce.

them of their participation: “You’re going to be my family in Jesus,” (1/5, 1:20), and to promise a share of his experience:

I believe that we’re having an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, something similar to what I sensed back then, 11 years ago. I sense it in the atmosphere. I sense it in the eyes. I sense it in the voices of the people that I hear responding to the Lord in this hour. God is moving upon you in a very blessed way and now some of you are just new to it. You’re just being introduced to it, (1/5, 11:30).

Thirdly, from the outset, he told his audience to be expectant and repeated the theme throughout his talk: “I think the Lord’s gonna meet us tonight in a special way. So I want you to be in expectancy for a move of the Spirit of God,” (1/5, 1:30). Exactly what they were to expect constituted the fourth characteristic:

One night [in South Africa] we were in a church, and the windows were open, and as we started to pray, the Spirit of God blew through the church and a mighty wind, it blew the curtains right up to the top of the ceiling like this, and there was a bolt of lightning, and a crack of thunder and 12 people fell on the ground under the power of the Holy Spirit, (3/5, 11:03).

Furthermore:

We’re going to see the Lord. We’re gonna see the Lord. We’re gonna see the Lord in our midst. We’re seeing the Lord in our midst now he’s moving down the aisles and healing people. He’s moving down the aisles and baptizing people, and we shall flow together, (4/5, 9:55).

There was no doubt that Frisbee’s message was heavily oriented to the experiential: “Feel the Spirit of the Lord, feel the move of the Spirit. We’re entering into it now. I want everybody to be sensitive. I want everybody to seek God and draw the presence of the Lord into this meeting,” (3/5, 11:48). What was noticeably absent was any reliance on scripture or theological exposition. Frisbee did not explain the Christian gospel or provide information about what being a Christian meant. He preached no recognisable sermon in the traditional sense but did at one point read to the congregation from Isaiah 60:1-5 (“Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee...”). His key message, briefly expressed, was for the youthful assembly to make themselves available to God for his purposes (4/5, 3:00) while he expounded on shining as referring to the “countenance of the Lord” (like Moses’ face upon descending from the mountain). The same, he advised, is available to contemporary Christians who can witness without saying a word through the

shining of their faces that draws people to them (4/5, 5:04).¹⁵⁵ Lonnie’s final exhortation suggested excitement and possible risk as he neared his climatic call to ministry at the front of the church: “You are a model of what God wants to show the church a lot of places (*sic*). Learn. Move. Flow. It’ll be a little dangerous. Learn how to step out, you know, a little bit more, when the Lord says ‘Come.’ The Lord is saying ‘Come.’ The Lord tonight is saying to you, ‘Come. Let’s go into a greater dimension,’” (4/5, 00:15).¹⁵⁶ And accompanied by emotionally charged music, they came.¹⁵⁷

Lonnie Frisbee was by no means the first evangelist to achieve such dramatic results, but for Wimber this eye-opening moment changed everything. Ultimately it motivated the construction of a ministry “package” that was modelled on his observation of Frisbee’s spectacular success and combined with Wimber’s own pragmatic orientation and tendency to systematize.¹⁵⁸ In this, one crucial ingredient was the narrative about the evening when the power first fell. Vineyard historian Bill Jackson recorded how the story was retold for years in a variety of settings (one instance of which was quoted earlier in this chapter).¹⁵⁹ Jackson noted fondly how Wimber typically depicted the “Cotton Patch” version, by which he meant Clarence Jordan’s very loose paraphrase of the New Testament written for Americans from the rural Deep South.¹⁶⁰ Similarly to *Cotton Patch Gospel* style, Wimber’s version of

¹⁵⁵ Frisbee’s contemporaries noted that Lonnie did not know scripture very well and on occasions “woefully misinterpreted” it. This is reinforced by several instances in the Mother’s Day sermon that indicate he had only vague knowledge or understanding of several biblical passages that he mentioned in passing. He was also known for his lack of preparation for speaking engagements; observable in his typically rambling, wide-ranging narrative style. See Greg Laurie, *Lost Boy: My Story* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2008), 106-107; Frisbee, *Not By Might, Nor By Power*, 121; Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family*, 73-74.

¹⁵⁶ Although it seems unlikely that Lonnie did indeed hypnotise the crowd (he had experience, but his skill level was unknown), one puzzling aspect of his ministry was his insistence (also observed in recordings of other occasions) that his audience remain focussed on him. In the fourteen minutes of ministry time recorded following his Mother’s Day message, he can be heard demanding individuals to keep their eyes open or “look at me” nine times (4/5, 10:51–5/5, 12:39).

¹⁵⁷ There is not room here to explore the significance of music in the ministries of Frisbee and Wimber, but some relevant discussion will emerge in later chapters. For specific comment on worship music in Wimber’s ministry, see Ward, *Selling Worship*, 100-101, 135.

¹⁵⁸ As seen in his MC510 classes and during conferences or meetings: see Wimber, *Power Healing*, 181; KCFonline, “The 5 Step Healing Model - John Wimber,” *YouTube*, 18 October 2014 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHdaxc3VIJI>> (12 October 2020), from 1985 Signs and Wonders Conference, Vineyard, USA).

¹⁵⁹ Jackson’s history of the Vineyard is comprehensive and has the advantage of insider viewpoint but it should not be viewed as a neutral account; in places it acts as an apologetic for Wimber/Vineyard theology and praxis.

¹⁶⁰ “Cotton Patch” references generally indicate colloquial, highly stylised, or exaggerated language. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 73. An example reflecting the character of the *Cotton Patch Gospel* can be detected in its rendition of Paul’s comment in 1 Cor 1:19: “It’s just like scripture says: ‘I will tear to bits the dissertations of the Ph.D.s.’” Clarence Jordan, *Cotton Patch Gospel: The Complete Collection* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2012), 253.

Lonnie's impact was abridged, was told with gusto and dramatics, and elicited laughs.¹⁶¹ However, it also contained material that did not reflect what had actually happened. Not only did Lonnie not say that the Holy Spirit had been quenched, but also he never said anything like: "Come, Holy Spirit."¹⁶² Nevertheless, due to Wimber's frequent retelling, the expression passed into legend and became as popularly employed as the catchphrase "doin' the stuff." Wimber's construction of a narrative that only loosely resembled what actually happened requires examination because it provided the basis for what came after. The story of Lonnie, even after his identity was expunged from the story, was an ideal segue into leading audiences towards experience of the same phenomena, especially as it provided them with the elements required for them to understand what *should* happen next.¹⁶³

"Doin' the Stuff": The Narrative

The S&W narrative should not be viewed as confined merely to the stories that Wimber told his audience in order to effect a response. In a wider sense, it refers also to the metanarrative that underpinned the ethos of the S&W: power, derived from the Holy Spirit, is the substance of the kingdom of God and believers as citizens of that kingdom inherit the power in order to battle the kingdom of Satan and fulfil the Great Commission.¹⁶⁴ Due to his connections with Fuller Seminary, Wimber had been exposed to, and convinced by, the inaugurated ("already-but-not-yet") eschatology of theologian George Ladd.¹⁶⁵ He saw this as the foundation for his theology of power evangelism.¹⁶⁶ In the years after 1980 and as demonstrated in the MC510 class, Wimber and his colleagues intentionally shaped and systematized an entire process around this metanarrative that gained permanent status as the model for S&W/Vineyard theology and proceedings.¹⁶⁷ This system was also presented at

¹⁶¹ For another telling of the story, see Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 24.

¹⁶² As the audio recording makes clear. See also Carol Wimber's version of the story that includes filler pauses and audience reactions between Lonnie's declarations (that never were). Carol Wimber, *John Wimber: The Way It Was* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), 149.

¹⁶³ See n54 above in this chapter on removal of Lonnie's identity from S&W history.

¹⁶⁴ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 9, 31; Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 42-43, 130. See also Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 125.

¹⁶⁵ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 4-8, 13-14; Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 54-55.

¹⁶⁶ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, xiii.

¹⁶⁷ Wimber, *Power Healing*, 181. Wimber explicitly described his intentionality in construction of the narrative: "I asked myself, 'Is it possible to develop a model for healing from which large numbers of Christians may be trained to heal the sick?' I thought the answer was 'Yes,' and became committed to developing that model."

conferences for attendees to take back to other churches or denominations.¹⁶⁸ Where falling down and tongues had been the most notable response to Lonnie Frisbee's invocations, healing (and later casting out demons) gradually became the focal point, on the basis that demonstrations of healing are the effective way to demonstrate God's power in evangelism.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, falling down, shaking, or other associated manifestations were still considered an integral part of demonstrating the power; it was evidence that something was actually happening. The three essential components of the model for signs and wonders events or services were the worship time, testimonies and/or an address from a speaker, and a time of ministry.¹⁷⁰ Each component was choreographed, documented into training modules, and faithfully followed in meetings around the world with the aim of sending the same messages (power) and achieving the same objectives (demonstrations of that power).¹⁷¹ This model was evident during the week-long conference in June 1985 at Wimber's Anaheim church, where MC510 was taught publicly for the first time.¹⁷² The discussion here is based on film footage of the conference. Wimber's retelling of the Frisbee story, transcribed earlier in this chapter, appeared in the first evening session.¹⁷³ In the opening remarks of the earlier afternoon session, Wimber had made his goals clear:

We anticipate that over this week you will go through a paradigm shift ... what we're saying is you're going to look at the things you've always looked at ever since you became a Christian and look at it in a new context, in a new way.¹⁷⁴

Our desire today is that through this week, we affect behaviour. You will have achieved an A for the course if you can function differently in the next healing circumstance that you run into after you leave here.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁸ E. Mary Neve, "Power Praying: An Evaluation of Prayer Ministry in the Teaching of John Wimber and the Vineyard Movement" (Ph.D.diss., University of Birmingham, 2012), 8-9, 102-103.

¹⁶⁹ Wimber, *Power Healing*, 60-61.

¹⁷⁰ The discussion here draws on the field research conducted by Mary Neve. As a participant/observer, she reported on the structure and proceedings of Vineyard events held 1984-2011 while comparing her observations with several other similar studies. Neve, "Power Praying," 1-4, 105, 107-112. In general, the speaker's portion of an event tended towards relatively unstructured personal testimony, exhortation, and audience preparation with theological exposition frequently absent.

¹⁷¹ Neve, "Power Praying," 114, 153.

¹⁷² Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 121-122. Note that although healing was the focus of the conference, falling down, shaking, or other manifestations of Holy Spirit "energy" were still considered essential aspects of the total experience.

¹⁷³ Inthelight1776, "John Wimber (2/12) Power Evangelism," 1:14:12-1:18:10.

¹⁷⁴ Inthelight1776, "John Wimber Signs Wonders 1985 1/12 (Personal Pilgrimage)," *YouTube*, 31 January 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGkob0n363A&t=377s>> (28 October 2020), 2:45.

¹⁷⁵ Inthelight1776, "John Wimber 1/12 (Personal Pilgrimage)," 5:10.

The value of the seminal narrative about Mother's Day 1980 lay in how it readied the audience for the first "clinic" where they could witness (or if they were fortunate, even participate in) what Wimber had been leading up to in his talks thus far. To begin, mindful of how disconcerted some might be when they first encountered what he was promising, Wimber preempted any fears they might have:

When the presence of God comes into your sanctuary and into your life you will find that you have antagonism. That you are frightened and put off and bewildered and upset – perplexed and vexed against the very God that you've been inviting to come for years and move among you. The first time that the Lord Jesus Christ sent his spirit in great power among us [Mother's Day 1980] I was fit to be tied for days. I was so angry; I was so upset I wanted to get out of the ministry. I said 'no way am I gonna put up with – why that's absurd – what God did,' [audience laughter].¹⁷⁶

From here, Wimber recounted the Frisbee anecdote with theatrical style. The key messages were built into his version of what Lonnie had said and what had happened after that. Firstly, the time of God's displeasure was over: "The church has been offending the Holy Spirit a long time, and he's quenched, but he's getting over it." Secondly, he taught listeners to recognise the cue: "Come Holy Spirit."¹⁷⁷ Thirdly, they learned what to expect: "The Spirit of God comes, and people start flying!" and, "people are falling and bouncing, and they're laying on the floor, and they're talking like turkeys."¹⁷⁸ Each of these elements was either an addition or a dramatic enhancement to what actually had happened but each served its purpose. The laughter that the story elicited ensured the audience was relaxed and "with" Wimber, ready to be open and responsive. He offered the listeners hope—they too could expect to experience the power of the Holy Spirit falling on them.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Inthelight1776, "John Wimber (2/12) Power Evangelism," 1:13:52.

¹⁷⁷ Neve described this as a "trigger phrase," where another version "More, Lord, more of your Spirit," became the "mantra" of the Toronto Blessing. Neve, "Power Praying," 162-163; Martyn Percy, "The Morphology of Pilgrimage in the 'Toronto Blessing'" *Religion* 28:3 (July 1998): 281-285; C. Hope Flinchbaugh, "The Man Who Asked God for More," *Charisma Magazine*, 31 March 2000, <<https://www.charismamag.com/site-archives/120-features/unorganized/7-the-man-who-asked-god-for-more>> (19 October 2020).

¹⁷⁸ Trigger phrases and behaviours can be described as "cueing." Responses to cueing as a means to facilitating faith resemble Pascal's much-criticized advice to those who were struggling to believe: "Follow the way by which they began: by behaving just as if they believed ..." Blaise Pascal, *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. by Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), XLV: 680, 155-156. For today's equivalent— "fake it till you make it"—promoted in a church sermon, see Arise Church, "The New Normal: Part 2: Ps John Cameron," *Arise Church Resources*, 24 April 2017, <<https://www.arisechurch.com/videos/the-new-normal-part-2>> (25 June 2021), 18:20.

¹⁷⁹ Expectancy was an important facet of Wimber's teaching. He wrote: "We should expect this experience [of the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit]—Scripture teaches it is a part of the normal human life." He added

The end of the story signalled the announcement of the clinic that was about to begin.¹⁸⁰ After a brief address on the problem with the church's focus on learning over practice and praying for the Holy Spirit to come, Wimber and a colleague called up to the stage those who identified with a number of ailments that they had discerned before selecting one woman for a demonstration. During a decidedly technical approach to healing, Wimber acted as compère while his colleague engaged (inaudibly) with the (motionless) woman: "He's asking her if she feels power on her. Can any of you see what we're seeing on her? It's quite a bit of energy moving over her body already."¹⁸¹ At one point Wimber unclasped her interlinked fingers: "Sometimes when people have their hands folded that will actually act as a protective circle that will stop healing. It's a way of feeling safe. I just had her open her hands because I could see the power of God coming down her body and stopping again and again."¹⁸²

In replicating the elements that Lonnie inadvertently had laid down as the template, Wimber established several characteristics that other commentators also have noted as integral to S&W theology. The ground covered in this discussion so far has been how the narrative developed, audience preparation for an experience, and the role of humour. But there were other factors that are germane to the overall argument of this thesis. The strongly pragmatic attributes of Wimber's teaching reflected the influence of the church growth movement and Peter Wagner. Percy's characterization of this as a mechanistic and formulaic theology was echoed by Bialecki who described the "instrumentalization" of procedure and process.¹⁸³ Also noted by Percy, the S&W message itself was simplistic, carried its own "aura" or presence, encouraged a shared identity within a community of believers, and was adversarial; in this case, against Satan.¹⁸⁴ This latter point draws attention to the pervasive

that the reason evangelical churches do not experience the miraculous is because they do not expect it. Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 147.

¹⁸⁰ Inthelight1776, "Signs Wonders (3/12) Power Evangelism Pt 2 Kingdom of God Pt 1," *YouTube*, 1 February 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fIISUkVi0U&t=992s>> (28 October 2020), 00: 33.

¹⁸¹ Inthelight1776, "Signs Wonders (3/12) Power Evangelism," 13:04. Recounting his own experience, Wagner described Wimber as "like a sports announcer giving a play-by-play account of what was happening to me." Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 130.

¹⁸² Inthelight1776, "Signs Wonders (3/12) Power Evangelism," 13:47. Although the woman requested healing for what was implied as a post-nasal drip, later she was offered healing for a "female condition" that she denied knowledge of, but she was prayed for and pronounced healed regardless, 17:57.

¹⁸³ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 109-110, 125-126; Bialecki, "The Third Wave and the Third World: 200.

¹⁸⁴ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 54.

dualism that divided Wimber's theological conceptions.¹⁸⁵ His message was permeated by contrasts, whether it related to the Satan-God conflict, the rational/transrational divide between Christians influenced by the Enlightenment and the new paradigm believers, or the struggle between rejection and acceptance of the experiences he was promoting.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, Wimber's portrayal of the church offending the Holy Spirit who is "quenched, but getting over it" sits within his recurring message about the Church's failure to invest in the power of the Holy Spirit. Here Wimber proposed, according to Percy, a revolutionary message that rejects (or escapes from) the past in order to tie the recipients to the new message.¹⁸⁷

The Charismatic Leader

The message about rejection of the past in order to embrace the future highlights a significant feature that dominated the S&W during Wimber's lifetime and has been preserved in his continuing iconic status within the Vineyard movement.¹⁸⁸ The centrality of a charismatic leader (usually male) who declares a revolutionary message, whose followers invest him with authority, devotion, and trust, and is the centrepiece of a community that forms around him was famously proposed by Max Weber.¹⁸⁹ Weber's description (along with

¹⁸⁵ Wimber, in his own telling, was heavily influenced by the work of George Eldon Ladd. His dualism possibly may have been birthed from his reading of Ladd's argument for the dualistic character of apocalyptic eschatology in ancient religions, including (but not ultimately dominating) Jewish traditions, and his argument for an eschatological dualism underlying the gospels—particularly in the ongoing need to overcome Satan and in Jesus' apocalyptic teaching. George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (London, S.P.C.K., 1964), 83-89, 147-148, 314-315, 318.

¹⁸⁶ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 124. Wimber's repeated theme of the damage done to Christian thinking by the Enlightenment and subsequent Western worldviews was an integral part of his teaching, as was the theme of rationality versus the non-rational. See for example Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 70-72. For a converse view of the rationalism that Wimber claimed negatively impacted Christianity, see Sarles, who points out the beneficial impact that Christianity's rational nature had on the development of western civilization. Ken L. Sarles, "An Appraisal of the Signs and Wonders Movement," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145:577 (January-March 1988): 68-69.

¹⁸⁷ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 53.

¹⁸⁸ Bialecki, "Apostolic Networks in the Third Wave," 23-24; Neve, "Power Praying," 147. Wimber's centrality to Vineyard history is demonstrated in Jackson's "Timeline of key events" that starts with Wimber's birth and ends at his death. Jackson also records that when Wimber was absent from his ministry due to health issues, church attendance dropped by 30%. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 136, 389-391. His importance to the very identity of the Vineyard can be seen in patterns observable in academic responses to Vineyard critics. They demonstrate a tendency to focus on defending Wimber the person over defending Vineyard theology. See for example, Joseph T. Zichterman, "The Distinctives of John Wimber's Theology and Practice within the American Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement" (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2011); or Erickson, "The Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸⁹ Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 358-363. As seen in the previous Church Growth discussion, even Wagner (selectively) interpreted Weber's material to support his argument for the divine authority of Apostles.

his discussion on the routinisation of charisma) is still referenced in some studies of charismatic Christian leadership; Frisbee and Wimber are no exception for those who have examined their respective roles.¹⁹⁰ The majority of the literature pertaining to the S&W invariably centres on the key personalities at the heart of the movement and the personal characteristics of these figures are held as important in accounting for the appeal that led to their success. Studies of charismatic leaders often focus on issues such as control or domination but within the S&W movement and its successors, it is more germane to view the leaders in terms of their status as celebrities. Although control is certainly maintained, it is not necessarily perceived by adherents; the approach of devotees was more akin to treating leaders like rock stars or shamans. Within S&W discourse, the most common descriptors applied to Lonnie Frisbee (aside from his “Jesus-like” appearance) pertained to the effect he had on his audiences: “mesmerizing,” “hypnotic,” a “pied piper,” or a “lodestone” for the youth who were attracted to him.¹⁹¹ With John Wimber, his appeal rested on humour, warmth, and affability, along with his “lovable teddy bear” appearance.¹⁹² While no doubt these qualities helped to maintain the status of both men, sociologist Stephen Hunt warned against focussing too much on the personal appeal of individual leaders without accounting for this faith community’s cultural ambience and its established theological constructs, such as a dualistic worldview or the motivating philosophy of evangelism.¹⁹³ The shaping of the S&W owed as much to church growth principles and Wagner’s influence as it did to Wimber. Nonetheless, Wimber was able to capitalise on his personal appeal and to emphasize his role as God’s agent. Even if he did not seek to be deliberately manipulative, repeatedly he used his platform to enhance an arcane experience (“I see the power of God”) in which he suggested the audience could share (“Can any of you see what we’re seeing?”). This mirrors Frisbee’s sharing of his personal conversion and inviting them into a share of the same experience.

¹⁹⁰ Although not relevant to expound on here, note that Weber’s material has been updated and modified by scholars over the past century.

¹⁹¹ Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family*, 73.

¹⁹² Stafford, “The Father of Church Growth,” 18; Vine and Branches Television, “Lonnie Frisbee,” Part 1 of 5, 2:59; Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 34; Neve, “Power Praying,” 9.

¹⁹³ Stephen Hunt, ““Doing the Stuff”: The Vineyard Connection,” in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 79. Similarly, Fer notes the risk of over-dependence on Weber’s typology of the charismatic leader in the face of diversity among Pentecostal/charismatic groups. Yannick Fer, “An Affective (U-)Turn in the Sociology of Religion? Religious Emotions and Native Narratives,” in *Bringing Back the Social into the Sociology of Religion: Critical Approaches*, eds. Véronique Altglas and Matthew Wood (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 157.

Two other factors highlight the gradually increasing promotion of humans as agents of God's power, here pertaining more to leaders than to followers. Firstly, during her field research at signs and wonders events, Mary Neve observed that Wimber's leadership teams, as well as directing operations, acted as agents and interpreters of what was happening in relation to the power falling on a person.¹⁹⁴ She noted also that recipients of the power appeared to be responsive to the leaders' verbal invocations for more power ("More, Lord!") by concomitantly increasing their rates of shaking, falling down, or making noises.¹⁹⁵ Secondly, the implication that the agent/interpreter is the "middle man" for God's power is reflected in a comment made by Percy: "Access to charismatic power can enhance the position of a leader as the best mediator between God and humanity."¹⁹⁶ In the S&W context, a type of dependence on the leader as a director of God's operations could be perceived, albeit accompanied by an invitation to join in and wield the same type of power: MC510 was a training course and the idea was to teach others to share the esoteric and recondite knowledge of the leaders.

Mythologization

One thread running through the S&W narrative, in nascent form, was the development of a process of mythologization.¹⁹⁷ This process is nothing new; similar occurrences within Christianity are as old as the faith itself.¹⁹⁸ But because of twentieth-century global communication, this latest incarnation not only took hold faster but spread more quickly and more pervasively. In addition to the problem of supplementary details that Wimber added to his narrative (as already noted), there were three further aspects. Each contributed to the formulation of a mythology that came to be viewed as history and that fashioned adherents

¹⁹⁴ Neve, "Power Praying," 162.

¹⁹⁵ Compare Neve's account of audience responsiveness with Jackson's who related that the first time he led a "clinic" and publicly invoked the arrival of the Holy Spirit, nothing happened until he commanded the audience to "Speak in tongues!" whereupon they "began to rattle out in tongues. Some fell on the floor. Demons began to manifest in people ... and the room took on the general feel of a battlefield." Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 135. Others also reported how people would fake the "signs" of the Holy Spirit upon them in order to increase their chances of getting attention from the leaders; see Tom Stipe, "Foreword," in *Counterfeit Revival* by Hank Hanegraaff (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997), xiii.

¹⁹⁶ Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 21.

¹⁹⁷ This became more overt during the SWM period; to be examined in forthcoming chapters.

¹⁹⁸ The concept of myth or mythology here is not used in the popular sense of "falsehood" but pertains to explanations of mystery or that which is unknown in human understanding, usually of sacred significance. A myth pertains to a narrative that carries meaning or explanation for the members of the group that generated it. Where I refer to "mythologization," I am using it as a verb to indicate the building of a myth that may contain elements of fiction.

into a habit of unquestioning acceptance. The first aspect was how Wimber, Wagner, and other key leaders had a “way of seeing.” By this I mean that they interpreted information through the lens of their own worldview and subsequently shaped a new theology around their viewpoint. This is a universal human characteristic: all people interpret the world via their individual worldview. However, in this case, the stakes were higher as they sought to convey ontological truths via their own construction of the same. An early clue as to how this worked can be seen in Wimber’s interpretation of Wagner’s book *Look Out!* As we saw earlier, Wagner’s primary orientation in the book was pragmatically utilitarian. He identified crucial factors that he attributed as the reason behind Pentecostal church growth, and although he spiritualized the outcomes of these human endeavours, he paid little attention to miraculous or supernatural themes. Wimber’s response to the book demonstrated what he took from it: “In Dr. Wagner I encountered a credible witness ... who wrote that healing and deliverance from evil spirits were happening in South America today. Further, he proved that these miraculous encounters resulted in large evangelistic harvests and church growth.”¹⁹⁹ Wimber’s reading and equation for success differed in actuality from that recorded by Wagner, although of course Wagner adjusted his own equation later when he joined Wimber in the new worldview.²⁰⁰ In the same way, McGavran’s strategy for missions and Tippett’s model for evangelism were reinterpreted and reoriented, even in the midst of denials that the fundamental message of the original sources differed from the new emphasis.²⁰¹ This characteristic way of seeing affected Wimber’s and Wagner’s approach to scripture: generally it was viewed through the lens of power. Therefore, consequent interpretations reflected this orientation. Theologian Donald Miller, using the label “new paradigm Christians,” described them as “doctrinal minimalists” who pioneered a new epistemology based on an inductive construction of a worldview based on experiences.²⁰² By implication, this allows for fluidity in doctrine, as we shall see. Scripture was used more as an instrument, rather than as a guide, in this process.

¹⁹⁹ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, xix. This “way of seeing” also is exemplified in Jackson’s account of “what Wagner saw” in relation to miracles and healings during his research in Latin America. In fact, there is no indication in the book that Wagner saw even a single miracle or healing. Like Wimber, Jackson read into Wagner’s text more than was actually there. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 55-56

²⁰⁰ Wimber was well aware of how “ways of seeing” work: he discussed at length “learning to see,” expectations, and how worldview affects theology, insisting that Christians must undergo a change of perception. Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 82-90.

²⁰¹ C. Peter Wagner, “Preface to the Third (1990) Edition,” in *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., vii; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 179; Springer, “Foreword,” in *Power Encounters*, xiii-xviii.

²⁰² Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 121-122.

A second contribution to the mythologization process was acknowledged but defended by Wimber's supporters. Jackson reported Wimber's "typical" Cotton Patch-style renditions of stories and elsewhere acknowledged that he exaggerated, but he did so in order to make a point.²⁰³ Others noted the obvious difficulties this presented. Assemblies of God pastor Donald Kammer wrote that although Wimber might make extreme statements for effect then temper them with a more realistic tone, it did not avoid the problem that his assertions could be misinterpreted and that sometimes he contradicted himself.²⁰⁴ This begs the question whether Wimber had adequately reflected on the import of conveying spiritual "truths" with integrity or the potential vulnerability of his audiences.

The third aspect of the mythologization process concerns the past. As stories circulated about the personal history and experiences of central figures, individuals such as Lonnie Frisbee, Wimber, and others acquired a type of "aura" based on their own myths about adversity turned to triumph, transformation of the soul, victorious overcoming, or miraculous intervention from God.²⁰⁵ Many of the stories of testimony originated with the individual concerned and often grew in the retelling. Frisbee, a "modern day Samson" about whom "legends abound" was a stoned "nudist vegetarian hippie" sitting by a waterfall in an exotic location when God spoke directly to him.²⁰⁶ Wimber was a famous musician living the rock'n'roll life but on the verge of a collapsing marriage.²⁰⁷ From among the Kansas City Prophets, Bob Jones at the age of seven was met on a dirt road by the archangel Gabriel seated on a white horse, who blew a silver trumpet in his face before throwing a bullskin mantle at his feet.²⁰⁸ Paul Cain's mother, on her deathbed with multiple morbidities (cancer,

²⁰³ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 46, 73.

²⁰⁴ For example, contrast "There are many reasons why people are not healed when prayed for. Most of the reasons involve some form of sin and unbelief" with "I never blame the sick person for lack of faith if healing does not occur." Wimber, *Power Healing*, 164, 186; Donald Kammer, "The Perplexing Power of John Wimber's Power Encounters," *Churchman* 106:1 (April 1992), 50, 51, 53, 59.

²⁰⁵ These biographical histories find parallels with figures in the Esoteric Tradition such as Helena Blavatsky or Rudolf Steiner. Hammer notes how biographies are framed as a "kind of private folklore" based on a "culturally predefined plot structure." They have in common a number of characteristics that include an early childhood "calling" or a radical change into spiritual awakening, motifs such as suffering or struggle, and often, exaggerated or even fabricated details; all part of a discursive strategy for legitimating the subject in their role as an appropriate spokesperson for the transcendent. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 403-412.

²⁰⁶ Di Sabatino, "Lonnie Frisbee," 392; Vine and Branches Television, "Lonnie Frisbee," Part 1 of 5, 3:47. The allusion to Samson was first used at Lonnie's funeral.

²⁰⁷ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 44-45. Published accounts of Wimber's history differ considerably from the verified histories of his connections to the musicians he was associated with.

²⁰⁸ Bob Jones, "Bob Jones Bio," *The Prophetic Ministry & Resources of Bob & Bonnie Jones with Lyn Kost* <http://www.bobjones.org/?zone=/unionactive/view_article.cfm&HomeID=163041&page=2020202020Photos202620Bio27s2020202020> 6 November 2020).

TB, heart disease), was visited by an angel who told her she would bear a son to be called Paul, after the NT apostle, because his ministry would reflect that of his predecessor. She miraculously recovered and Cain's personal visits from the Lord began when he was eight.²⁰⁹ Drama-filled and awe-inspiring, these personal narratives were always integrated into the wider narrative about signs and wonders. Observers such as Hunt have remarked on this tendency: "In the spiritual marketplace 'enterprise' religion has encouraged the charismatic persona, the superperformer who is always seen to succeed and overcome adverse circumstances."²¹⁰ Bialecki also commented: "There is a certain American charismatic speech-genre that is structured by early failure turning into later unforeseeable yet exemplary success; it is a way of marking the kind of transformative journey that is so central to charismatic sensibilities."²¹¹ This draws attention to the difficulties of distinguishing God's intervention from human invention when narratives are fluid and constructed to be crowd-pleasing.

Although Wimber and Wagner stepped into the already existing stream of charismatic renewal, the currents they created soon became the dominant discourse as S&W theology spread to other churches and denominations worldwide.²¹² However, the success of the S&W narrative raises questions that cut to the very heart of this thesis. Its central theme was God's power demonstrated through miracles, with personal experience as the authenticator.²¹³ This was the pathway to "living in the supernatural." It was oriented towards a therapeutic Christian message: God's will is to eliminate your distress. The means of conveying the narrative was entertaining, created expectancy and enthusiasm, and offered personal participation and a sense of belonging to those who embraced its message. But along the way, the concept of God and the role of scripture began a process of reconfiguration as human agency in wielding God's power gained status. Given that the narrative was beset with problems of precision, inconsistency, little interest in theological discourse, and scant attention to scripture, what does this tell us about the uncounted number of Christians who

²⁰⁹ Michael G. Maudlin, "Seers in the Heartland," *Christianity Today* 35:1 (14 January 1991): 20-21.

²¹⁰ Hunt, "Doing the Stuff," 79.

²¹¹ Bialecki, "The Third Wave and the Third World: 183. For some specific (biblical and modern charismatic) examples, see also Scott L. Thumma, "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: The Megachurch in Modern American Society" (Ph.D.diss., Emory University, 1996), 73n4.

²¹² McBain, "Mainstream Charismatics," 55-56.

²¹³ Surprisingly, few critics or commentators have challenged the reductive interpretation of power as visible demonstrations of miraculous signs, even though nowhere in the S&W power discourse did writers address the meaning of texts such as 2 Cor 4:6-10, Eph 1:19-21, 3:16-21, or Col 1:11.

eagerly accepted the messages? Why is there so little evidence that followers scrutinized the theology or the approach to scripture, asked questions, or sought accountability? What made them so eager, and why was their extant Christian faith insufficient to sustain them without recourse to experiences such as falling on the floor barking or roaring? This and other questions about the perspective of the audience need to be addressed further. However, first we turn to how the S&W evolved into what came next: the spiritual warfare movement.

Chapter 3: Spiritual Warfare and the Theory of Demons

As we have mapped so far, from the years of church growth emphasis and forward the declared goal was world evangelisation. Fuller's MC510 course moved the emphasis to signs and wonders to attract growth in churches. But as controversy arose and disagreements flared, focus shifted to demonic power and its ability to inhibit evangelism. Growing out of MC510, the spiritual warfare movement (SWM) sought to explain how the functions, activities, and operational spheres of demons affect humanity and how Christians can exert power and authority to wage war against the forces of darkness.¹ Although the SWM was oriented to the charismatic movement, many sectors of evangelicalism felt its impact due to participating individuals who brought its influence back to their own denominational churches.² The interest of this chapter, and the next three, lies with locating how the ideas of the SWM were shaped and carried out, and what were the subsequent implications for Christian belief.

Shaping a Theory of Demons

The Christian concept of encounters with the demonic, often described as “spiritual warfare,” extends throughout church history from the biblical narratives of Jesus casting out demons until the present day. Early Church doctrines and practices centred on exorcism by means of prayer for individuals who were thought to be “possessed.” Church writers held that this redemptive act was intended for people from outside of the church who had engaged in idolatry or pagan worship. Exorcism was a sign that Satan (the “strong man”) had been robbed of a soul by the conquering Christ. The process of baptism placed God's “seal” on the newly converted Christians and they were henceforth considered protected unless they consciously re-engaged with idolatry or paganism.³ Broadly speaking, these beliefs continued

¹ The historical understanding of spiritual warfare is not the same as the movement that is the focus of this study. The initialisation SWM refers only to the 1980s movement under scrutiny here.

² Other contemporaneous streams of thought also had some impact. One associated with Walter Wink emphasized an “Integral Worldview” embracing pantheism that allowed for human systems and structures to be imbued with (impersonal) demonic influence as the result of human idolatrous behaviour. The focus here is the SWM because of its relationship to the other movements and because it most significantly captured public imagination. Wink's and other viewpoints are not addressed unless they meaningfully interacted with the SWM. For four co-existing views on demonology, including Wink's, see James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds., *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

³ Oscar Skarsaune, “Possession and Exorcism in the Literature of the Ancient Church and the New Testament,” in *Lausanne Missional Content Library*, 22 August 2000 <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/historical->

into the Middle Ages and through the Reformation period although some fantastical ideas that mixed biblical concepts with pagan notions developed in popular thinking.⁴ The Enlightenment emphasis on human rationality eventually introduced a conception of the Devil as a linguistic-metaphorical idea in contrast to previous acceptance of a literal identity.⁵ Even though luminaries such as Matthew Henry or the Puritan writer William Gurnall reinforced Paul's view of Christians' struggle against dark powers in the spiritual realms (Eph 6:10-18), in more recent times many (but by no means all) have viewed spiritual warfare as either confined to the early years of Christendom or as just "Pentecostal hocus pocus."⁶

Considering the traditional Christian understanding of deliverance from demons and prayer against satanic influence in the world, the question to address here entails identifying the innovative features promoted by Peter Wagner's "Spiritual Warfare Network," a small group of persons who rapidly gained enormous and widespread influence over evangelical thinking about spiritual warfare from the late 1980s forward. At the time, the practice of deliverance from demons had faded in Protestant thinking but was never wholly absent from church tradition.⁷ The advent of Pentecostalism had brought some resurgence. Pentecostal conceptions of spiritual warfare remained focussed on individuals who needed deliverance but this did not occupy much of their thinking. They had greater interest in the experiences of tongues and healing.⁸ Now in the late twentieth century new ideas were being disseminated.

overview-1> (24 March 2019), 8-9, 15. Skarsaune writes that in early church literature, "exorcism occurs primarily at the border between church and paganism." See also Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981) on early church thinkers about this topic: 61 (Pseudo-Clementine), 73 (Tatian), 100-103 (Tertullian).

⁴ Tormod Engelsen, "Historical Overview III," in *Lausanne Missional Content Library*, 22 August 2000 <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/historical-overview-3>> (24 March 2019), 2. For further surveys of church history in regard to spiritual warfare see Erwin van der Meer, "Reflections on Spiritual Mapping," *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 20:1 (2001): 53-58, and Chuck Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation: A Biblical, Historical and Missiological Critique of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Fearn, GB: Mentor/OMF, 1998), 86-90, 94-100.

⁵ Engelsen, "Historical Overview III," 2-3, 10. Engelsen further notes that the persistence of grotesque imagery originating in the Middle Ages, such as Satan with horns, also contributed to modern rejection of a "mythical" devil. Also note Alan Tippett's perspective on the Church's failure to equip its members to deal with the issue: A.R. Tippett, "Spirit Possession as It Relates to Culture and Religion," in *Demon Possession: A Medical, Historical, Anthropological and Theological Symposium*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1976), 167-168.

⁶ Wayne A. Detzler, "Myths about Spiritual Warfare." *Reformation and Revival* 4:1 (Winter 1995): 30-31; see also Robert A. Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti," *Pneuma* 13:1 (Spring 1991): 33.

⁷ The Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches held to their traditions and practices of exorcism but also largely remained aloof from the spiritual warfare preoccupation that swept the evangelical churches. See Engelsen, "Historical Overview III," 10.

⁸ Andrew Walker, "The Devil You Think You Know," in *Charismatic Renewal: The Search for a Theology* by Tom Smal, Andrew Walker and Nigel Wright (London: SPCK, 1995), 90.

Firstly, there was new information about the demons: they have particular spheres of operation and geographical territories over which they rule; they have names and specific functions assigned to them; they can infest inanimate objects such as jewellery or household ornaments; and they imbue human creative endeavours such as music or books. Moreover, demons can “indwell” Christians, not gaining total control over the person they inhabit but certainly holding them in bondage. Secondly, humans have a role to play: any Christian has power and authority over demons, a responsibility to enter into battle with them, and can undertake specific activities such as spiritual mapping, warfare prayer, or symbolic acts in order to locate and expel demons. In addition, people can exercise “identificational repentance” for the remission of a nation’s sins. As the new movement grew under Wagner’s direction, a new vocabulary (“strategic-level spiritual warfare,” “territorial spirits,” or “spiritual mapping”) gradually became synonymous with the overall concept of spiritual warfare.⁹ It did not take long before the new ideas on spiritual warfare became so entrenched that many Christians would have had no conception that they were only recently implemented. Proponents contributed to this by claiming there was historical precedent in Christian tradition.¹⁰

The MC510 Signs and Wonders course at Fuller Seminary greatly assisted with bringing the practice of spiritual warfare into non-Pentecostal evangelical Christianity.¹¹ While healing remained the central theme of the course, expulsion of demons was also taught and demonstrated in the class.¹² The syllabus prefigured the soon-to-develop concept of

⁹ There exists a confusing array of terms and acronyms to describe aspects of this movement. “Spiritual Warfare Network” refers to a specific group of persons but “Third Wave,” “Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare” (SLSW), “Spiritual Mapping,” or “New Apostolic Reformation” (NAR) are used interchangeably and sometimes inaccurately by commentators to describe particular aspects of the movement or its activities, or even the overall movement itself. Peter Wagner coined all the terms and was partially responsible for the confusion due to his tendency to drop the use of some terms and coin others to replace them in different seasons of his thinking. Throughout this study I will use SWM as an umbrella term to describe inclusively all aspects of the spiritual warfare movement that was headed by Peter Wagner.

¹⁰ For example, see Ed Silvoso, *That None Should Perish: How to Reach Entire Cities for Christ through Prayer Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994), 17-18.

¹¹ Kraft, “Contemporary Trends,” 1-4.

¹² Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 158. MC510 was by no means the initiator of ministry activities concerned with deliverance. Deliverance from demons had been a part of Pentecostalism from its earliest days but no clear doctrine of demonology (including possession in Christians) had emerged. In the early 1970s charismatic ministers such as Derek Prince and Don Basham conducted public exorcisms that Synan described as “messy and disorderly” until they agreed to retreat to the private sphere for deliverance activities. In 1972, the Assemblies of God deemed the issue of demon-possessed Christians controversial enough to warrant distribution of a position paper rejecting the possibility. In some circles the topic was avoided. After cancelling MC510, Fuller Theological Seminary published a document that outlined the institution’s position and rationale for cancelling MC510. The issue of discernment and exorcism of demons was only briefly mentioned and there was

strategic-level spiritual warfare with its description of binding the Strongman (Satan) and driving him out of the house (this present evil Age) as the fourth of seven signs of the Kingdom of God present in the world today.¹³ Thus MC510 acted as a springboard for one of the most significant and controversial movements in late-twentieth-century evangelicalism.

Although the literature generated from within the movement does not necessarily indicate it, there were essentially two streams of activity occurring: the focus on demons in relation to Christian believers and the wider conception of demonic control over territories. Both streams freely intermingled however, and any differences centred on the individuals who were promoting their own particular cause. Initially, before the spotlight shifted to battling territorial demons, most attention was focussed on how demons affected individuals. Within the newly developing SWM, this stream was carried forward with Fuller Seminary Professor of Anthropology Charles Kraft as its lead champion. The most prominent personality promoting the second stream, the concept of territorial spirits, was Peter Wagner (see Chapter 5). Although there were a group of spiritual warfare “experts” who helped to spread the ideas of the movement, Wagner made his own role clear: he declared that God told him he was to take leadership of the movement as a whole and that he was to write the material that guided churches into implementing the new concepts.¹⁴ Along with Kraft, other influential SWM figures were missions researcher and media producer George Otis, Jr. and prophet Cindy Jacobs.¹⁵ A later arrival was Jacobs’ associate Chuck Pierce, who contributed

no discussion whatever on Fuller’s position in regard to Christians and demon possession. L.G. McClung Jr., “Exorcism,” *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 624; Synan, *Century of the Holy Spirit*, 18, 364; General Council of the Assemblies of God, “Can Born-Again Believers be Demon Possessed?” *Assemblies of God Position Paper*, May 1972, <http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Position_Papers/pp_downloads/pp_4176_possested.pdf> (27 January 2020); Smedes, *Ministry and the Miraculous*, 72-74.

¹³ Wimber, *Signs and Wonders*, Section 2: 4, 7, 13-14.

¹⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 162; Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 20; C. Peter Wagner, “Introduction,” in *Breaking Strongholds in Your City: How to Use Spiritual Mapping to Make Your Prayers more Strategic, Effective and Targeted*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 13-14.

¹⁵ The group of individuals most influential in the SWM was small. Charles Kraft and Peter Wagner are cited most frequently in this thesis as the chief intellectual representatives. They were the most prolific and formulative contributors; in general their colleagues held to the same views. Cindy Jacobs has a slightly different profile and cannot be considered an intellectual leader. She is listed here because of her influence on Wagner’s thinking and her longevity: of all the writers she has remained the most prominent in the public eye although Chuck Pierce could also be placed in the same category as Jacobs. Other associated names are the Argentinean-born and USA-based Fuller graduate Ed Silvano, whose primary ministry was prayer evangelism and who was the chief instigator of the Resistencia evangelism project, and Ed Murphy, a former missionary, Fuller graduate and seminary teacher, who wrote a book that greatly influenced the SWM: *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992). Both men attended Wagner’s 1990 inaugural meeting of the Spiritual Warfare Network. Some other names, for example Tom B. White, Jack Hayford, or Jane Rumph, are

to Wagner's material on the Queen of Heaven and co-wrote books about demons with Wagner's daughter.¹⁶ However, due to Wagner's communicative skills, his buoyant personality, and his instinct for effective public relations, he remained the best-known figurehead and foremost chronicler of the SWM.¹⁷

How Demons are Organised

This section provides an overview of the entire theory of demons as described in this and the next two chapters. In general terms, the doctrine of the SWM was built on three components. Firstly, demons were categorised into a hierarchy of three levels and their roles within each were identified. Wagner's name was usually associated with devising the arrangement although he may not have been solely responsible for the original conception. His levels consisted of "ground-level spiritual warfare" (casting demons out of individuals); "occult-level spiritual warfare" (dealing with demonic forces released through "structured occultism" such as witchcraft, Freemasonry or other activities); and "strategic-level spiritual warfare" (confrontation with high-ranking territorial principalities and powers).¹⁸ His belief was that "whatever is done on any one of the three levels has its ripple effect on the other

frequently mentioned in Wagner's writing but these tended to be involved more as promoters or reporters of the movement's ideas rather than its intellectual leaders. Others who made important contributions to the formation of ideas but were not necessarily at the centre of the movement will be cited or discussed later in this section. Mention of Ana Méndez should be made because as a close associate of Wagner's and whose ministry is patterned on SWM theories, she demonstrates the continued influence of the SWM. Peter Wagner helpfully provided his own list of who he viewed as key authors: strategic-level spiritual warfare (Cindy Jacobs, Dick Eastman, C. Peter Wagner), identificational repentance (John Dawson), prayer evangelism (Ed Silvos), prophecy/hearing directly from God (Cindy Jacobs, Chuck Pierce), city transformation (George Otis, Jr., Ed Silvos, John Dawson, C. Peter Wagner), spiritual mapping (George Otis, Jr.). C. Peter Wagner, "The AD2000 United Prayer Track," in *AD2000 Summary Report* (25 June 2000): <<http://www.ad2000.org/re00623.htm>> (18 July 2019). A possible reason for Kraft not appearing in the list is that Kraft's focus remained on deliverance from individuals where Wagner had moved on to new interests by the time this list was compiled.

¹⁶ Wagner was introduced to Pierce by Cindy Jacobs in 1991. The relationship with Pierce eventually became so close that Wagner described him as "son and heir" to Wagner's Global Harvest Ministries. Jacobs and Pierce had met when Jacobs spoke a prophetic word over him at one of her meetings. Pierce had a background in business and she saw him as an asset to her ministry because of his organisational skills. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 202-203.

¹⁷ Among commentators, whether critical or promotional, there seems to be unanimous agreement with this statement, although it is possible to detect in Kraft's writing that he may not have been totally satisfied with the situation. Charles H. Kraft, "Introduction," in *Behind Enemy Lines: An Advanced Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, ed. Charles H. Kraft (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 13.

¹⁸ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 21-22; C. Peter Wagner, "Territorial Spirits," in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 58. Others expanded on Wagner's typology, for example see Kraft's division of "cosmic-level" (equivalent to strategic-level) spirits into territorial, institutional, vice, nature (and household and cultural items) and ancestral spirits. Charles H. Kraft, "Contextualization and Spiritual Power," in *Lausanne Missional Content Library*, 22 May 2000 <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/contextualization-and-spiritual-power>> (10 November 2019), 21-22.

two.”¹⁹ Kraft, an important associate of Wagner’s, preferred the term “cosmic-level warfare” and identified two levels rather than three in the demonic hierarchy.²⁰ Although Kraft was an enthusiastic participant in the movement who agreed with the teaching on territoriality, for the most part his focus remained on “ground-level” deliverance and inner healing.²¹

Strategic-level spiritual warfare became the most publicised theme of the overall SWM, a shift of focus from one-on-one deliverance ministries, although ground-level deliverance was still promoted and its prominence increased in many charismatic churches. The ultimate goal of the SWM was always stated as world evangelisation and explanations centred on the ability of territorial spirits, those situated at the highest level, to prevent the spread of the gospel:

Satan delegates high ranking members of the hierarchy of evil spirits to control nations, regions, cities, tribes, people groups, neighborhoods and other significant social networks of human beings throughout the world. Their major assignment is to prevent God from being glorified in their territory, which they do through directing the activity of lower ranking demons.²²

In conspicuously imitative use of statistical language Wagner explained the principle:

One of the bedrock principles of the Church Growth Movement is resistance-receptivity theory. This postulates that through analysis of certain indicators, the degree of resistance or receptivity to the gospel on the part of a given people group can be anticipated within certain ranges of accuracy. It goes without saying that if this hypothesis concerning territorial spirits is correct, and if we could learn now to break their control through the power of God, positions on the resistance-receptivity axis could change virtually overnight.²³

¹⁹ C. Peter Wagner, *The Queen’s Domain: Advancing God’s Kingdom in the 40/70 Window* (Colorado Springs, Wagner Publications, 2000), 12.

²⁰ See Charles H. Kraft, *The Evangelical’s Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2015), 162-163, 235; and Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 22. Kraft’s term cosmic-level warfare is based on GNB/TEV terminology used in Eph 5:12. Although he persisted in using the term, others rejected it because it felt too “New Age.” Kraft lists of demon categories resembled the groupings of Frank and Ida Mae Hammond (see discussion below on the Hammonds) and differed structurally from Wagner’s descriptions. Each of Kraft’s categories dualistically comprised spirits assigned by Satan and “competing spirits” assigned by God. He held that cosmic-level spirits rule over ground-level spirits. Categories of demons were: cosmic-level (territories of nations, cities, regions), religious/institutional (organizations), vice (abortion, gambling, homosexuality, prostitution, etc.), nature/household/objects (cultural artifacts, music, homes), ancestral, and ground-level (family, occult, ordinary spirits such as fear, anger, rebellion, etc.).

²¹ Kraft, “Contemporary Trends,” 16-19.

²² Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 77.

²³ Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 77. Behind the goal of evangelism lay the motivation of eschatology; this will be addressed later in the section.

The second component of the SWM was the ongoing endeavour to locate the geographical regions of dominion for territorial spirits.²⁴ This involved research to assess an area's geography, history, and spiritual influences to identify and map the forces that keep the region in spiritual darkness. George Otis Jr. coined the term "spiritual mapping" and although he was not the first to describe the process, in the literature he became accepted as the foremost authority on spiritual mapping.²⁵

The third and eventually most emphasized element was the process of designing projects and undertaking activities to expel demonic spirits from their (usually geographical) location. Numerous strategic-level spiritual warfare projects involved expeditions to countries around the world to expel demons from their "seat" of power, thereby paving the way for evangelistic efforts (presumably undertaken by others) in the region.²⁶ The largest and most prominent project, however, was not primarily an endeavour of Wagner's Spiritual Warfare Network and it differed in its character from Wagner-devised initiatives. Argentinean-born pastor and church planter Luis Bush led an ambitious venture, a "Great Commission catalyst," to galvanise Christian efforts towards fulfilling the mandate of Matt 28:18-20.²⁷ The vision of the "AD2000 and Beyond" movement was to encourage cooperation amongst Christians worldwide by means of networking, conferences, consultations, and communication materials to inform, inspire, and promote prayer for evangelisation.²⁸ The target for prayer was unreached people groups, in particular those who lived in the "10/40 window," the geographical region located between ten degrees and forty degrees north latitude, understood

²⁴ Identifying them by name and role was a slightly later development.

²⁵ George Otis, Jr., "An Overview of Spiritual Mapping," in *Breaking Strongholds in Your City: How to Use Spiritual Mapping to Make Your Prayers more Strategic, Effective and Targeted*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 32; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 170. Otis identified geographical regions or cities as "captive strongholds," those with dense and dominating demonic populations (for example, Lhasa, Beijing, Tripoli, Mecca, or Teheran); as "frontier strongholds," those considered to be beachhead operations not yet fully under demonic control (for example, San Francisco, Utah, Las Vegas, or Havana); and as cities under siege (for example, London, New York, Moscow or Jerusalem). George Otis Jr., *The Last of the Giants: Lifting the Veil on Islam and the End Times* (Tarrytown, NY: Chosen Books, 1991), 94-96. Clinton Arnold more usefully describes spiritual mapping as creating a "spiritual profile" of people in a city or country. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 198.

²⁶ These expeditions can be generally described as short-term visits to targeted areas where—not always but sometimes in partnership with a local church—prayer activities would be engaged to unseat the demonic power that controlled the area; success was invariably claimed. See below for closer examination of these events.

²⁷ Luis Bush, "The AD2000 Movement as a Great Commission Catalyst," in *Between Past and Future: Evangelical Mission Entering the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jonathan J. Bonk (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 32.

²⁸ Bush, "The AD2000 Movement," 32. In much of the literature the full name of the movement is shortened to "AD2000" and numerous individually-named projects sat under the general banner of the overall movement.

to contain ninety-seven percent of the world's unreached peoples (North Africa, Middle East and sections of Asia).²⁹ Bush recruited Wagner to head the "United Prayer Track" aspect of the initiative and Wagner in turn involved his entire Spiritual Warfare Network group.³⁰ In subsequent years the leaders triumphantly declared that over 120 million participants worldwide had joined several month-long prayer initiatives named "Praying through the Window" making this an unprecedented effort to unite Christians through a common goal.³¹ The resultant benefit of AD2000 for Wagner and the Spiritual Warfare Network was access to worldwide dissemination of their beliefs and strategies. According to an article in *Christianity Today*, the key to AD2000's success was the use of state-of-the-art technology that allowed efficient and rapid communication between millions of participants all over the world.³² For Wagner and his colleagues this undoubtedly became a significant means of bringing their own "new spiritual technology" of strategic-level spiritual warfare, spiritual mapping, and identificational repentance to the Christian world.³³ Thanks to Wagner's involvement in AD2000, in the space of a few years they were able to overcome barriers of geography, language, culture, race, and denomination to achieve worldwide attention.³⁴

The Role of Success in Demonology

There is one further aspect that did not involve the doctrinal foundation of the movement but that must be considered integral to its philosophy. It was one thing to formulate ideas, and another thing to disseminate them widely. But in line with the pragmatic orientation of the church growth movement, the S&W movement, and the promoters of both, there was also a need to demonstrate that it was *successful*. For Wagner this was all-

²⁹ Bush, "The AD2000 Movement," 21. Note that the focus of the project was prayer and that no actual evangelisation was attempted.

³⁰ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 169-171.

³¹ Bush, "The AD2000 Movement," 25; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 197. Claiming great success, the AD2000 project was intentionally disbanded in 2001 although critics doubt any real impact on world evangelisation. For analysis see David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends AD30-AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 793. (2200 is indeed the correct date in that title: Barrett and Johnson projected their calculations into the future).

³² Andrés Tapia, "Is a Global Great Awakening Just Around the Corner?," *Christianity Today* 38:13 (November 1994): 80, 85-86.

³³ The summary report distributed by the AD2000 & Beyond Movement in June 2000 (Wagner, "The AD2000 United Prayer Track") demonstrates how Wagner successfully integrated reports compiled in his official role as United Prayer Track Coordinator with publicising his personal projects.

³⁴ Holvast believes that there is virtually no country in the world where spiritual mapping has not been practised. René Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping: The Turbulent Career of a Contested American Missionary Paradigm, 1989-2005" (Ph.D. diss., Utrecht University, 2008), 2.

important; the theme of success permeated each of his many books. His means of reinforcing this was to repeatedly describe a project that he considered the “field testing” of SWM proposals.³⁵

Over the years, there were many projects to drive out demons and thereby facilitate evangelism. Undoubtedly however, the mission to Resistencia, Argentina was the most frequently referenced by Wagner and others.³⁶ It was deemed a model for future evangelistic projects and they regarded it as highly successful. Wagner was convinced that church growth is directly related to demonstrations of spiritual power and wanted to conduct field testing of his theory. By spiritual power he meant prayer warfare to successfully remove the demons that control a city. He repeatedly hailed Resistencia as proof that he was correct: “My much-needed field laboratory experiment worked!”³⁷ Other SWM writers likewise affirmed the success of the Resistencia campaign.³⁸ Ed Silvoso summarised it thus:

From the handful of 5,143 believers who were in the evangelical church population in 1988, the number has since grown to over 100,000 in the entire city. The ominous control the devil exercised over the region has been replaced by open heavens, and the Church is impacting the city, the government, the media and the schools ... We were there when demonic powers used to run the city, and we were there when they came crashing down as a result of prayer evangelism ... As a result, our names, along with those of the local leaders, have been recorded in heaven where evil forces operate, making us known to them as people with spiritual authority.³⁹

“Plan Resistencia” was inspired in the context of a wider revival unfolding in Argentina (led by Carlos Annacondia) and was a three-year campaign (1989-91) to evangelise

³⁵ Discussion here about the project will draw on the work of René Holvast who covered the topic in his PhD thesis. Holvast describes the Resistencia project, its religious and historical context, its methodology, the people involved and their responses to it, its decline, and his analysis and conclusions: Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 31-50, 62, 83-87, 106-108.

³⁶ Resistencia is a city with a population of about 400,000 in the northern Argentinean province of Chaco. Missionaries from earlier eras had originally found more receptivity among the indigenous Indian people than among the white *chaqueños*. R. Edward Miller, *Secrets of the Argentine Revival* (Fairburn, GA: Peniel Outreach Ministries, 1999), 118.

³⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 180-181. See also C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: How to Seek God's Power and Protection in the Battle to Build His Kingdom* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 30-34; Wagner, *Lighting the World*, 136-137; Wagner, *Hard-Core Idolatry*, 37-39.

³⁸ Cindy Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (New York: Chosen Books, 1991), 121-122, 184-185; Victor Lorenzo, “Evangelizing a City Dedicated to Darkness,” in Wagner, *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*, 174-177; Kraft, “Contextualization and Spiritual Power,” 28.

³⁹ Ed Silvoso, *Transformation: Change The Marketplace and You Change the World* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2007), 162.

the entire city.⁴⁰ Ed Silvosio was the main instigator and leader of the Resistencia outreach programme although Wagner's accounts strongly imply that the entire campaign hung on four visits by his team in 1990 to remove the demonic oppression over Resistencia.⁴¹ René Holvast's investigation into the project was based on a combination of research and interviews with some of the main Argentinian personalities that Wagner describes in his narratives. Holvast identified three functions for the Resistencia project: as a laboratory for testing the strategic-level spiritual warfare model; as a product to be marketed and used as a public relations tool; and as a means of "mythological validation" for events considered a "divine repository of truth."⁴² His analysis concluded that the role of the Resistencia strategic-level spiritual warfare project in Argentina's evangelistic programme was overplayed, that important Argentinean evangelists Wagner included in his narrative did not consider themselves part of the enterprise, and that many regarded the project as an American idea imported to Argentina then reported back in the USA as Argentinean.⁴³ Although the SWM representation was that the project was pivotal in the work of Argentinean evangelism, this was not the view of some evangelists actually based in Argentina.⁴⁴ Pentecostal pastor and scholar J. Norberto Saracco told Holvast:

Because of [Wagner's] publications people came to Argentina in the eighties and the nineties to look at the growth and its principles. We had to tell them that it was just not there. That the methodology just does not work. Often others pitied us: 'Argentines do not know what happened in their own country!' It was an awkward situation. When going abroad, we were confronted with all kinds of stories about Argentina, while we did not know anything about it! We had to tell over and over what was really happening, but not everybody wanted to believe us.⁴⁵

Pablo Deiros, who had co-edited *The Rising Revival* with Wagner, told Holvast during a 2006 interview:

⁴⁰ Both Wagner and Silvosio write that Resistencia was a city with a tiny percentage of Christians and in the grip of a satanic principality; Wagner states the Argentine Revival seemed to bypass the city. Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 30; Silvosio, *That None Should Perish*, 42, 236. For unknown reasons, none of those documenting the evangelistic campaign of 1989-1991 mention that it had experienced a significant revival that began in 1956 through the work of a long-time missionary to the area, Clifford Long. In one period of eight months over four thousand people in Resistencia were recorded as having made decisions for Jesus. Long regularly experienced five to six thousand attending his meetings. See Miller, *Secrets of the Argentine Revival*, 113-128, esp. 121-122.

⁴¹ Silvosio, *That None Should Perish*, 17, 41-55. SWM success narratives tend to place the narrator as central to the stories. Therefore, it is useful to compare accounts, such as Silvosio's and Wagner's renditions of the Resistencia project, in order to gain a wider perspective.

⁴² Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 49-50.

⁴³ Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 46-49.

⁴⁴ Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 46.

⁴⁵ Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 47.

My first reaction [after reading the Rumph report on Plan Resistencia] was that it was typical that Americans coming to Argentina do not understand the local culture. And I was partly right. It never developed into a movement, but it remained a group of individuals. Why? I guess first of all because it was considered an US issue (*sic*). Thus it was considered ‘not for us’, especially since working with the demonic is considered kind of weird by some.⁴⁶

Holvast also questioned the unsubstantiated claims of dramatic numerical growth in churches, for which no empirical evidence was provided apart from mention of a newspaper journalist’s opinion.⁴⁷ Drawing on data from other researchers, Holvast arrived at the conclusion that Pentecostal growth in Argentina in the 1980s occurred but was not exceptional.⁴⁸ In the end, he reports, pastors in Resistencia fell into disunity with each other and the spiritual mapping concept was eclipsed by the Unción (anointing) movement that arrived just a year later in 1992.⁴⁹ Interviewees told Holvast that mapping was something that was “in the air for a while” but never became big.⁵⁰ By 2006 only one church and an estimated 150 private individuals, under the auspices of no organisation, were involved in spiritual mapping and warfare in Argentina.⁵¹

There are several themes in the SWM literature on Resistencia and other “field” projects that will be further noted in different discussions throughout this thesis. Firstly, what comes to the fore is the self-view of Wagner and other personalities in the SWM: as God’s warriors they were leading the charge to win the battle against Satan.⁵² Secondly, even though

⁴⁶ Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 49. The Rumph report could refer either to an unpublished and internally circulated document (see Holvast, xiv) or a chapter in the book co-edited by Wagner and Deiros. However, there is likely to be a high degree of similarity between the two. See Jane Rumph, “Engaging the Enemy in Resistencia,” in *The Rising Revival: Firsthand Accounts of the Incredible Argentine Revival - And How It Can Spread Throughout the World*, eds. C. Peter Wagner and Pablo Deiros (Ventura, CA: Renew Books, 1998), 143-156.

⁴⁷ Silvosio, *That None Should Perish*, 53.

⁴⁸ Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 90-92. Holvast also draws attention to the problem of over counting, double counting and inclusion of large numbers of foreign visitors (drawn by the publicity around the revival); Protestant churches had more visitors than members attending in the 1980s. Marostica reported remarkable numbers of decision cards filled out at Carlos Annacondia crusades 1984-1985 but these predated any SWM involvement in Argentinean evangelism and decision cards provide no indicator of continued commitment or subsequent church growth. Matthew Marostica, “Learning from the Master: Carlos Annacondia and the Standardization of Pentecostal Practices in and beyond Argentina,” in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. Candy Gunther Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 211-212.

⁴⁹ Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 44.

⁵⁰ Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 45.

⁵¹ Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 106.

⁵² Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 37; Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 184-185; Cindy Jacobs, *The Voice of God: How God Speaks Personally and Corporately to His Children Today* (Ventura, CA:

empirical evidence was never sought, inevitably they declared great success. The pattern of field campaigns was consistent: prayer warfare to dispose of demonic forces conducted by short-term visitors who claimed victory and then departed. Projects took place in diverse regions: from other cities in Argentina to countries such as Turkey or Nepal. There was no need for long-term commitment to a mission field and triumph was guaranteed. Thirdly, it is clear that the *projection* of a highly successful enterprise worked. The Resistencia project did indeed attract much attention in the USA even though the opinion of locals interacting with the project in Argentina was quite different (and appeared to be ignored).⁵³ The field experiment served to generate enthusiasm for the ideas generated by the SWM, not in the field itself but in the USA and among readers of Wagner's books elsewhere. Despite extravagant claims, what was achieved was success in terms of marketing rather than in terms of evangelism and new converts to Christianity. To attract and hold the attention of consumers, authors wrote more books, conference speakers touted success, and key leaders announced further expeditions. As Wagner himself pointed out, there was a need to stay at the cutting edge.⁵⁴ Holvast also identified this dynamic in his analysis. The public must be kept interested and not be exposed to negativity: "The religious consumer does not like problems and does not care about exact accountability either. He bought his product and may shop somewhere else next time."⁵⁵

One element of the SWM field projects became the centrepiece of Wagner's thinking in later years when he moved on from the spiritual warfare phase of his career: prophecy and its fulfilment. Wagner had been the recipient of a prophecy from one of the "Kansas City Prophets," John Paul Jackson. Jackson decreed that Wagner was being called to help re-shape the face of Christianity in the arena of South America.⁵⁶ For Wagner, the Resistencia project was clearly the fulfilment of this prophecy. This prophecy and Wagner's response to it demonstrates the sense of personal destiny, authority, and direct experience of God's voice that was so important to the practitioners of the SWM. The success they claimed through

Regal Books, 1995), 233-237; Silviso, *Transformation*, 162; Rumph, "Engaging the Enemy in Resistencia," 153-154.

⁵³ This success is reflected in the number of visitors that travelled to personally witness the revival in Argentina. Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 42, 91-92.

⁵⁴ Wagner, "How I Write a Book for Publication," 2.

⁵⁵ Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 214.

⁵⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2000), 108-109.

projects such as Resistencia served as confirmation that they personally were at the forefront of ushering in, expanding, and advancing no less than the kingdom of God.⁵⁷

Historical Background and Influences

Tracing the elements that shaped the propositions of the intellectual leaders in the SWM helps with understanding how the movement evolved and on what its thinking was based. Most importantly, locating the key influences contributes to the formation of perspective in relation to the ontological and phenomenological significance of the movement within the Christian context. Before surveying the source literature that contributed to the formation of SWM ideology, we will briefly look at the group dynamics that contributed to mutual support and cohesion in promoting what became a controversial new doctrine.

Firstly, some points of commonality in background and environment helped to consolidate relationships and the exchange of ideas among the key players. Most had experience in foreign missions.⁵⁸ They were Americans who had stepped into foreign cultures for a season before returning to their own culture and developing new conceptualizations as they reflected on their experiences.⁵⁹ This has implications for how their explanations of the spiritual worldviews in other cultures were informed. A second factor in relationships was the environment that drew a number of leading personalities together: Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission.⁶⁰ At Fuller, principles inherited from Donald McGavran's church growth

⁵⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 203, 210.

⁵⁸ Andrew Anane-Asane, Timothy L. Eckert, Jason Richard Tan and Robert J. Priest, "Paul G. Hiebert's 'The Flaw of The Excluded Middle,'" *Trinity Journal* 30 NS:2 (Fall 2009): 189. Note however that for some of the individuals discussed here, the length of service on the mission field was relatively short or cross-cultural interactions in the field were likely limited: Charles Kraft was three years in Nigeria (Kraft varies his length of service in other publications but dates listed in the reference cited here appear to be the most accurate), and Timothy Warner was three years in Sierra Leone. John Dawson and George Otis, Jr. had long experience in Youth with a Mission but note that YWAM projects are generally measured in weeks rather than years; the organisation has been criticised for its minimal (and sometimes disruptive) cross-cultural understanding and involvement during these operations. Cindy Jacobs had no missionary experience. Peter Wagner's experience has already been discussed in the earlier chapter. Kraft, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," 163; Timothy M. Warner, "Spiritual Warfare Conference, Part 1," *Asbury Theological Conference*, 2012, <<https://place.asburyseminary.edu/atsconferences/771/>> (16 November 2019), 6:11; John Dawson, *Taking Our Cities for God* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1989); Otis, "Overview of Spiritual Mapping," 29-31.

⁵⁹ The pattern that emerges is that viewpoints on the spiritual nature of the cultures they encountered in foreign missions were re-evaluated only after exposure to new material in their home encounters. For example, in light of what he learned from John Wimber in 1982, see Kraft's re-evaluation of the reasons why a village shaman might have dropped away after starting to attend church: Kraft, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," 164.

⁶⁰ Not all the key SWM personalities came from identical backgrounds. Cindy Jacobs, for example, did not have missionary experience nor was she associated with Fuller.

theories disposed the SWM proponents to the view that the traditional models of evangelisation were not effective and that new methodologies must be developed.

A third point of commonality, to which major writers such as Wagner or Kraft frequently drew attention, was their former stances as convinced cessationists (belief that the miraculous gifts ceased after NT times) until their experiences within the Fuller MC510 class changed the course of their lives. Wagner particularly made much of his non- or even anti-Pentecostal background.⁶¹ They claimed their previous beliefs included neutral or negative attitudes not only towards healing but encounters with dark spiritual forces. A common remark among the returned missionaries was that they felt inadequate, did not encounter, ignored, or simply had no interest in matters of evil spiritual powers until their return to North America.⁶² Back in their home territory and exposed to Fuller's MC510 course they underwent major shifts in their worldview that they found exciting, stimulating, and eye-opening.⁶³ This aspect contributed to the fourth group dynamic that assisted solidarity. Their adaptation to new thinking placed them front and centre of a burgeoning "new wineskin" designed to replace a perception of the old and no-longer-working ideas of the past.⁶⁴ They

⁶¹ This theme of shift from cessationist attitudes towards full embrace of the supernatural is barbed and frequently mentioned. The reason for the attention to this theme is hard to pinpoint beyond perhaps it targets non-Pentecostals/Charismatics with encouragement to do likewise and join the Third Wave as the embodiment of God's new plan on earth. However, it is presented in black-and-white terms, almost to the point of caricature: cessationists are painted as rigidly opposed to any of the supernatural gifts or belief in supernatural beings such as demons. "Third Wavers" are presented as wholly enlightened and within God's favour. (See Chapter 7 for explanation of the Third Wave).

⁶² Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 127; Warner, "Spiritual Warfare Conference," 6:26-6:50; Kraft, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," 164, compare with a slight re-orientation of the story in Charles H. Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels: Breaking Demonic Oppression in the Believer's Life* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1992), 14; Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, ix.

⁶³ Erwin van der Meer makes an interesting comment in his Th.D. dissertation. In comparing his own background with Wagner's he notes that he grew up in a Pentecostal environment that led him to become "cautious with issues such as supernatural inspiration and extra-biblical revelation due to some of the excesses I have witnessed first hand." He lists issues of unfulfilled or erroneous prophecies, psychological manipulation, and abuse of authority. He implies that because Wagner was fresh to Pentecostal experiences at a later stage of life, conceivably he would not have had the experience to filter out the "excesses" and take a cautious approach as he did. Erwin van der Meer, "The Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of C. Peter Wagner and its Implications for Christian Mission in Malawi" (Th.D. diss., University of South Africa, 2008), 48.

⁶⁴ The vocabulary of "new" and "old" wineskins permeates the literature from signs and wonders through to dominion theology. In essence it represents the call to repudiate the past based on traditional Christianity (the "spirit of religion") and to embrace the new theological ideas. For examples, see Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 59; Chuck D. Pierce and Rebecca Wagner Systema, *The Future War of the Church* (Ventura, CA: Renew Books, 2001), 70-72, 75,84-85; C. Peter Wagner, *Changing Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004), 15-17, and throughout; Wagner, *Seven Power Principles*, 100; Bill Johnson, *Dreaming with God* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006), 146; Johnny Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy: Unveiling the Coming Elijah Revolution* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2008), 124, 128; Mike Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2008), 46.

were the enthusiastic “early adopters,” the first to respond to innovation in doing God’s will.⁶⁵ Fifthly, although some of the main participants were highly educated and held advanced earned degrees, they developed prejudicial opinions against their intellectual environment. Even though none rejected their degrees or the highly respected academic positions they held, a common theme became evident in their writings: suspicion of academic learning and a strong preference for theologies developed out of personal experience over theological learning or reasoning.

A sixth factor in terms of the group involved close personal relationships and collaboration among the main figures; Wagner frequently emphasized this element. One important example demonstrates how some individuals with no academic or theological background, or previous connections to intellectual ideologists, became integral to and influential in shaping the SWM. His memoir repeatedly describes his inclination to bond instantly with the major figures that influenced his life. One such of these was Cindy Jacobs.⁶⁶ Wagner met her during a shared car ride that progressed to lunch in a restaurant. He recorded that by the time he returned to the afternoon session of a seminar he was attending, he found himself transitioned into a new stage of his thinking and his instant bond with her led to a long association.⁶⁷ Although Jacobs’ website lists her ministry “Generals of Intercession” as primarily a prayer and intercession ministry, she is now better known for being a prophet. When Wagner met Jacobs in 1989 her ministry was officially just four years old and had not yet achieved a significant profile. Two months after meeting her, Wagner facilitated her attendance at Lausanne II in Manila. He reported how Jacobs’ presence in Manila cemented her value for him. Firstly she set free his wife Doris from a demon that had attached itself to her, causing a “foggy depression” for twenty-four hours, and then by breaking off curses from a practising witch who had infiltrated Wagner’s session at Lausanne, causing him

⁶⁵ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 18; Kraft, “Contemporary Trends,” 6-7; Cindy Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto: Your Part in God’s Plan to Change Nations Today* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2008), 58-59.

⁶⁶ Wagner describes Jacobs as one of his closest personal friends. C. Peter Wagner, “Foreword,” in Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 12-13.

⁶⁷ Instant bonding in new relationships seems to have been one of Wagner’s personality traits; he made the same claim for numerous other connections. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 157. For the remainder of his life, Wagner credited Jacobs with being the instrument for introducing him to his new perspectives. She remained influential in each new stage of his life and career. He met her in 1989 in the aftermath of the ugly fallout from MC510 and when he was already teaching on territorial spirits. What attracted him to Jacobs was the link she provided between the concept of territorial spirits and what Christians can do about them. Jacob’s theme at the time was “healing of the nations” through prayer that ultimately evolved into the concept of expelling territorial demons through warfare prayer.

momentarily to lose his train of thought.⁶⁸ Wagner described the incident: “Cindy, who was physically present in the session, astutely discerned the spiritual battle that was going on in the invisible world, quickly bound the witchcraft spirits, broke the spell in the name of Jesus, and I was able to continue teaching as usual.”⁶⁹ From that point forward, Jacobs’s position in the SWM was assured and the strong personal bond she forged with Wagner provided her with the status of an authoritative voice, even to the point of Wagner making her book *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* required reading for his students at Fuller Seminary.⁷⁰ The close personal and collaborative relationships within the SWM group were exemplified in the consistent patterns of not only regularly quoting each other but repeating each other’s material—usually without any substantive development of the theme: Wagner cites Jacobs who cites Wagner and so on.⁷¹ This mutual reinforcement was useful to give authoritative weight to their own claims.

Although there were some differences in opinion or approach within the SWM, all of the factors mentioned here served to facilitate a unified outlook and furnish a hothouse environment within which they were insulated from reflection on or the need to respond to external criticism.⁷² As long as they had each other, could attract faithful followers, and were

⁶⁸ Wagner gives no indication how anyone present knew there was a practising witch in their midst.

⁶⁹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 161.

⁷⁰ C. Peter Wagner, “Foreword,” in Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 13-14. It is unclear what nature of relationship she maintained with the other key figures in the SWM but her attachment to Wagner as the most important figurehead allowed her to develop not only a high profile but longevity of profile beyond those of her colleagues in the SWM.

⁷¹ This pattern of repeating material could occur with or without attribution. Examples of reciprocal quoting can be seen in *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*. In addition to relating anecdotes about each other, Jacobs explains Wagner’s influence in the field of spiritual warfare or quotes him fourteen times in Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 7, 16, 17, 70, 151, 159, 160, 165, 208, 210, 234. Likewise, in *Warfare Prayer* (1992) Wagner mentions Jacobs’ influence or quotes her fourteen times in Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 31, 40, 43, 44, 46, 58, 127, 129, 134, 153, 156, 164, 171, 174. Each promotes the other’s books multiple times in their text or bibliographies. Close personal relationships between the most prominent personalities in SWM are frequently referred to in the literature and at times the comments about each other come close to hagiography, particularly between Wagner and Jacobs. One factor also to consider however is that there were no previous published works on strategic-level spiritual warfare to quote so building into the text “authoritative” support had to be based on the small group who were at the forefront of promoting it.

⁷² Although some commentators have referred to differences of opinion among the chief SWM personalities, for the purposes of this present study I find no need to go into detail about these, unless they constitute doctrinal inconsistency, in which case they will be addressed here. Examples of some differences in opinion occasionally can be detected in comments made by Charles Kraft, such as: “Whether ‘territorial spirits’ is the best name for this factor [satanic power wielded over a territory] or not is an open question. My preference is for another term.” Charles H. Kraft, “‘Christian Animism’ or God-Given Authority?” in *Spiritual Power and Missions: Raising the Issues*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series #3, ed. Edward Rommen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 131.

able to measure success by their own criteria, there was no need to question or justify any of their assertions and claims to anyone.

Historical Intellectual Sources

Tracing conceptual origins provides valuable insight into how the SWM sits within Christian tradition. The main orientation in spreading the message about spiritual warfare firstly involved describing demons: their variety, their activities, their attributes, and their spheres of operation. In the main, this chapter pertains to the specifics of demon identity. The following chapters will bring together the influences noted in this chapter while introducing some important others that helped to shape thinking about two spheres of demonic activity: effect on individuals and control over entire territories. Overall, the doctrines of the SWM were influenced by a very small range of literary sources: some Christian missions or ministries, a handful of academic sources, and some individuals who wrote for the popular Christian market. While some were historical, others were contemporary, and as will become evident, personal relationships with like-minded associates arguably became the most influential of all.

In consideration of these sources, there are several points to note before surveying them. Firstly, because SWM proposals were theological in nature, it is reasonable to expect that their chief source would be scripture. As we will see, this was not necessarily so. Secondly, the tendency was to draw on contemporary sources with little attention given to intellectual thinking throughout church history. Thirdly, although the SWM literature contained numerous citations from the sources outlined throughout this study, these were referred to in a superficial manner. In his doctoral thesis on spiritual mapping, René Holvast commented on this: when quoting sources, the writing “did not always entail a careful representation of their contents. It was frequently a mere allusion, and often referred to one or sometimes a limited set of aspects ... The function of the quotation or allusion seems to be identification or desired justification of an opinion.”⁷³ However, some distinction should be made here. Holvast is correct in his assertion but his comment is most relevant to the scriptural, academic, or theological sources cited in the text putatively to reinforce a point

⁷³ Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 129. For just one example see Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 34, where Jacobs’ reference to Max Weber does not contribute to her topic and gives the impression of being inserted merely for reasons of implying her familiarity with his work.

being made. Greater focus will be given here to those sources that provided seminal input to the development of SWM concepts. The sources selected for detailed examination were chosen either because the SWM writers themselves noted their significance or because they directly influenced other sources that the SWM writers acknowledged as contributing to their ideas. The fourth point, as noted above, is that the number of sources listed by SWM writers is relatively few. The writers who shaped the principles of spiritual warfare were a small, finite group, and the resources they drew on for their conceptions were likewise a small, finite group.⁷⁴ On the whole, their sources were referred to by most, if not all, the main SWM writers at some point.⁷⁵ It seems reasonable to assume that given the close relationships within the group, developments in thinking came as a result of shared ideas and resources.

There is no dispute among participants or commentators about the sources they consider the most influential among SWM writers. Where lists of book titles are given, the same books appear repeatedly in bibliographies.⁷⁶ The books most commonly included in recommended reading lists at the back of SWM books were those written by SWM colleagues. But the intellectual leaders of the movement also helpfully provided references to the material that they read when they began their own journeys toward their ultimate conclusions. This does not mean that all these sources were participant in or even approving of the SWM, although some were. In 1982, confronted with new ideas during the MC510 classes, Kraft read a number of books in order to prepare himself “for the inevitable [change in his perspective].”⁷⁷ He lists these as *Pigs in the Parlor* (1973) by Frank and Ida Mae Hammond; *The Adversary* (1975) and *Overcoming the Adversary* (1984) by Mark Bubeck; *Spiritual Warfare* (1970) by Michael Harper; *War on the Saints* (1912) by Jessie Penn-Lewis; and *A Guide to Healing the Family Tree* (1982) by Kenneth McAll.⁷⁸ Each of these titles that

⁷⁴ The number of authors who have published books on spiritual warfare is certainly in the hundreds, but the majority of books they publish are derivative of the original ideas and tend to repetitiveness.

⁷⁵ For reasons of space, the sources discussed here are only those that contributed to the intellectual formation of SWM writers, even though there are numerous predecessors (sometimes referred to as exemplars) who could be mentioned regarding specific aspects of SWM demonology.

⁷⁶ For example, compare Kraft, “Contemporary Trends,” 7-12; and Michael W. Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty* (New York: Broadway Books, 2001), 201-202.

⁷⁷ In an article written in 2000, Kraft lists several publications that influenced the SWM; space does not allow examination of all of these but the main titles have been covered here. Kraft, “Contemporary Trends,” 7-12.

⁷⁸ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 14. In the 2016 edition of *Defeating Dark Angels*, Kraft adds to the list *He Came to Set the Captives Free* (1986) by Rebecca Brown, a still best-selling book plagued by a (documented and verified) background of scandal, fraud, and cancellation of the author’s medical practitioner’s license due to severe misconduct and serious mental health and drug addiction allegations. Kraft appears to be unaware of the problematic nature of Brown’s books.

were so foundational to Kraft's new understanding also was popular in SWM circles (and indeed in wider evangelical Christianity). Other frequently cited names included Kurt Koch or John Dawson, and from academic circles, Merrill Unger and Fred Dickason, or the 1975 Christian Medical Society book of symposium papers edited by John Warwick Montgomery.

For the sake of chronological comprehension, the literary influences introduced here, and in the following chapters, can be divided into three generations of writers on demonology. The first-generation sources are those who introduced new concepts, or at least articulated concepts that had not yet been generally disseminated. The earliest dates to the last decade of the nineteenth century and all others appeared in the twentieth century. Names such as John Nevius (published 1894), Jessie Penn-Lewis (1912), or Kurt Koch (1960s) occur repeatedly in the SWM literature.⁷⁹

A second generation drew on these primary sources and in turn these writers were often cited by the SWM writers.⁸⁰ Biblical encyclopaedist and theologian Merrill Unger (1909-1980) and theologian/pastor Mark Bubeck (1928-2017) published from the early- or mid-1970s. Fred Dickason (1926–), a professor of theology at Moody Bible Institute, published somewhat later (1987) as the SWM was emerging but was cited along with the former two as an authoritative source of information. These were not involved with the SWM as such but were significantly influential in shaping particular areas of SWM thinking.

The third generation consisted of the SWM writers themselves. These cited from the first two generations and the conceptions are clearly traceable in their literature. Yet they could also generate “first generation” type material. For example, *Pigs in the Parlor* was a foundational work yet Frank Hammond was part of Peter Wagner's Spiritual Warfare Network. However, the most important source for the formation of the SWM fits into none of these categories because its topic was not specifically on demonology. This was a single

⁷⁹ Some sources of lesser importance such as missionaries J.A. MacMillan or R.A. Jaffray will be briefly referenced later.

⁸⁰ Some other influences should not be overlooked. These will be mentioned at relevant points but will not be discussed extensively here for reasons of space and because they were rarely referenced by the SWM writers. Individuals to note include the controversial revivalist William Branham or Don Basham and Derek Prince who were among the few writers predating the SWM on spiritual warfare themes. The main indicators of their influence are the resemblances between some specific ideas about demons and the same views held by SWM writers. For an historical overview of figures such as Branham, Oral Roberts, Prince, Basham, and others, see James M. Collins, *Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry in the Twentieth Century* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009), 24-56.

article by anthropologist and missiologist Paul Hiebert that arguably (and inadvertently) did more to steer the thinking of SWM thinkers than any other source. This one essay profoundly influenced SWM theology in ways that far exceeded its author's intentions.

Paul Hiebert

In 1982, Fuller Seminary professor Paul Hiebert wrote a “celebrated” essay entitled “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle.”⁸¹ This influential work drew attention to how the western worldview of missionaries in countries such as India could not adequately respond to the worldview of the people they were attempting to evangelise.⁸² Hiebert’s main point was that the two-tier view of reality in the western mindset fails to comprehend the three-tier view of the people groups to whom missionaries are ministering. The western worldview holds to a bottom tier of the everyday world in which the world’s natural order is understood in terms of empirical knowledge and the scientific mindset. The top tier, disconnected from the bottom, is the transcendent sphere consisting of ideas about God or the purpose and meaning of life: the “ultimate questions” that cannot be empirically answered. These two tiers correspond roughly to the upper and bottom tiers of the majority (non-Western) worldview. However, in Hiebert’s cross-cultural experience, he perceived a middle tier that is considered by non-Westerners to form a very real part of life’s experiences. In this tier are found spiritual forces and beings that exist on this earth, inhabiting places and objects, and that interact with everyday human life. In Western culture, equivalents would be fairies or gnomes; creatures that are generally thought to belong to the realm of the imaginary. In other cultures, such beings are ghosts, spirits of ancestors, demons, or earthly gods and goddesses who are not only present in earthly realms but also have the power to affect them. Questions of accidents, bad luck, or unforeseen circumstances are answered in terms of this middle tier.⁸³ Missionaries were

⁸¹ Paul G. Hiebert, “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,” *Missiology: An International Review* 10:1 (January 1982): 35-47; Robert J. Priest, Thomas Campbell and Bradford A. Mullen, “Missiological Syncretism: the New Animistic Paradigm,” in *Spiritual Power and Missions: Raising the Issues*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series #3, ed. Edward Rommen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 12n4. Hesselgrave describes this “acclaimed” essay as “both tremendously significant and common grist for missiological mills.” Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 194.

⁸² A note about vocabulary: in recent years, much terminology previously used to denote certain concepts has been deemed culturally inappropriate and so new terminology has come into use. For example, the division of world cultures into “Western” and “non-Western” is considered to be outmoded and has been replaced with other terms such as “Global South.” Because not all subscribe to all the new terminologies and because the primary sources I have accessed use the older terminology, I have retained it in my own usage so as to avoid confusion, unless the older terminology is patently offensive and/or globally rejected.

⁸³ Importantly, this does not indicate that these beings were always considered evil or threatening. In many cultures, they may have served a protective or other otherwise benevolent purpose, a factor entirely overlooked

unable to communicate effectively because they did not understand or could not respond appropriately to this perspective.⁸⁴ Hiebert's two responses to the problem were firstly that missionaries need to develop holistic theologies that deal with all aspects of human life, including the reality of God's presence and activity in the histories of nations, peoples, and individuals. But in doing so, secondly, he warned missionaries against the development of a "new form of magic" in Christianity, insisting instead on an attitude that is relational with God and not driven by seeking our own will.⁸⁵

"The Flaw of the Excluded Middle" had a significant impact on the developments in thinking for practitioners of signs and wonders and spiritual warfare in the 1980s. Andrew Anane-Asane and his colleagues noted that Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft "reoriented their missiology to make this 'middle range' the center of their work."⁸⁶ Without attribution, Kraft produced a simplified version of Hiebert's chart to explain Hiebert's theory, although his discussion of the concept did not fully represent Hiebert's message.⁸⁷ However he did also comment on the importance of Hiebert's article in his list of significant publications on spiritual warfare and deliverance.⁸⁸ Wagner credited Hiebert with helping move him away from his "Greek mindset" into a "Hebrew mindset," which he explained by blending a folkish rendition of Plato's philosophy, Hiebert's material, and somewhat confusing modern-day applications.⁸⁹ And although John Wimber withdrew from involvement in the SWM, he responded enthusiastically to Hiebert's article with extended discussion of it in his book *Power Evangelism* (1986).⁹⁰ Wimber also produced an adaptation of Hiebert's three-tiered

in SWM demonology. See Craig S. Keener, "Crooked Spirits and Spiritual Identity Theft: A Keener Response to Crooks?" *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 39:4 (Autumn 2018): 348.

⁸⁴ Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," 44-45.

⁸⁵ Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," 45-46.

⁸⁶ Anane-Asane, "Hiebert's 'The Flaw of The Excluded Middle,'" 192.

⁸⁷ Kraft, *Behind Enemy Lines*, 33-34. This book was originally published in 1994 by Servant Publications.

⁸⁸ Kraft, "Contemporary Trends," 10-11.

⁸⁹ Wagner, *This Changes Everything*, 131. Pratt described Wagner as a "first-rate eclectic." Thomas D. Pratt, "The Need to Dialogue: A Review of the Debate on the Controversy of Signs, Wonders, Miracles and Spiritual Warfare Raised in the Literature of the Third Wave Movement," *Pneuma* 13:1 (Spring 1991): 35.

⁹⁰ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 75-82. For an overview of Wimber's ties to the (then nascent) SWM see Pratt, "The Need to Dialogue," 7-32. On Wimber's falling out with Wagner, see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 189-190.

explanatory chart; his interpretation of the material soon became a catalyst for Hiebert's public rejoinder to the way in which his material was used.⁹¹

In the MC510 course led by Wagner and Wimber and contributed to by Kraft, Hiebert was extensively quoted but for the purpose of reaching different conclusions.⁹² This response to his theory was disconcerting for Hiebert who addressed his disquiet in several publications.⁹³ Eventually, he departed from his post as Professor of Mission and Anthropology at Fuller Seminary.⁹⁴ His corrective to the conclusions drawn from his article, and thence disseminated via MC510 and the SWM movement, was that the phenomenological beliefs of other religions do not necessarily equate to ontological truth.⁹⁵ His concern was that while Christians must take animistic beliefs seriously, unexamined acceptance leads to Christopaganism: animism with a Christian veneer. Hiebert pointed out that, influenced by resurgent interest in animistic worldview and occult practices in North America, some Christian leaders were promoting a return to animistic beliefs.⁹⁶ He argued that in assigning too much power and authority to demonic forces, God's power and presence in the everyday lives of Christians is thereby implicitly denied. Furthermore, valuable insights offered by scientific understanding were undermined. His summary of the worldview that he was opposing was that "power, not truth, is the central human concern in this worldview."⁹⁷

Kraft and Wagner's converse view was to accept the reality of demonic activity in all aspects of life, including the infusion of inanimate objects with demonic power; a strong theme in Kraft's published material and graphically illustrated with anecdotes throughout Wagner's books.⁹⁸ However, Anane-Asane and his co-authors held Hiebert partially

⁹¹ Much of the discussion on Hiebert was deleted from later editions of Wimber's book (1992, 2009).

⁹² Coggins, *Wonders and the Word*, 20.

⁹³ These concerns included disputing some of Wagner's claims regarding course attendance and the degree of support it had from the Fuller faculty. Each presents different versions of class composition: Hiebert claims that numbers were swelled considerably by young people from Wimber's church who took no other courses at Fuller and Wagner claims that most of the attendees were Fuller theology students. Coggins, *Wonders and the Word*, 20. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 147.

⁹⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 188; Anane-Asane, "Hiebert's 'The Flaw of The Excluded Middle,'" 194.

⁹⁵ Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw and Tite Tiénou, *Understanding Folk Religion: a Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 168-169.

⁹⁶ Coggins, *Wonders and the Word*, 117.

⁹⁷ Coggins, *Wonders and the Word*, 117.

⁹⁸ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 161-163; Kraft, "Contextualization and Spiritual Power, 8-10; Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 77; Wagner, "Territorial Spirits," in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 58; Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 64-67. See also Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 447.

responsible for the emergence of exactly what Hiebert feared, a “magical” mindset, because he stated the problem but failed to provide detailed guidance on how to overcome it. In their view, given this oversight (rectified in subsequent books) Wimber, Wagner, and Kraft may have been justified in responding to what plausibly could be read as criticism of missionaries who were ill-equipped to deal with indigenous ideas of the supernatural. This made their attempts to remedy the problem perhaps defensible.⁹⁹

Hiebert’s article, to which Wagner and his colleagues responded enthusiastically, suggested the need to modify worldviews. However, the next problem concerned what the new worldview might consist of. This entailed thinking about the spiritual orientation that Hiebert had introduced to them and subsequently out of the somewhat imprecise doctrines taught in the MC510 course emerged some developments in thinking about the extent of demonic powers. Wagner’s career as a prolific writer was well underway but up until the mid-1980s his themes had been missions and church growth. In his first book on the phenomenon of Pentecostal church growth, demons were discussed only in reference to Harmon Johnson’s dissertation on Brazilian spiritism.¹⁰⁰ Nor did Wagner have anything to add on the topic in his 1986 follow-up book.¹⁰¹ John Wimber, however, did include a chapter on the demonic in his 1986 book *Power Healing* and so this is the point that we will use to begin tracing the literature that influenced the evolving ideas of the SWM. Although eventually Wimber seriously disagreed with Wagner’s progression and distanced himself from the SWM, he was at the forefront of the early teaching about demons in the movement.¹⁰²

John Nevius

Although Hiebert was the catalyst for early formation of SWM ideas, other sources were drawn on as ideas were shaped into specific proposals. The oldest source that Wimber lists as informing his knowledge about demons dates to the end of the nineteenth century. John L. Nevius (1829-1893) was a missionary to China who was influential in missiological circles; Donald McGavran can be numbered among those who drew on his well-known

⁹⁹ Anane-Asane, “Hiebert’s ‘The Flaw of The Excluded Middle,’” 194.

¹⁰⁰ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 133-136. Wagner drew on Harmon A. Johnson, “Authority Over the Spirits: Brazilian Spiritism,” M.A. Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA), 1968.

¹⁰¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Spiritual Power and Church Growth* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Strang Communications Company, 1986), 126-128. Much of the material from *Look Out!* was simply reproduced in this 1986 book.

¹⁰² Wimber’s discomfort stemmed from his disagreement with Wagner’s theology of territorial spirits. In 1991 the relationship between the two men broke down over the issue. Wimber died in 1997. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 189-190; Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 137-138.

principles for indigenous church planting.¹⁰³ However, his posthumously published *Demon Possession and Allied Themes* came to be considered a classic amongst books on demonology.¹⁰⁴ Few would disagree with the foreword that described Nevius' work as insightful, careful, and thorough.¹⁰⁵ He had distributed a questionnaire to missionaries and indigenous Christians in China to obtain information about their experiences with demonic beings. In returned questionnaires, respondents described the behaviours of the demon-possessed people they had encountered. Nevius analyzed these, examined several alternate explanatory theories, and concluded the book with a thorough discussion on the biblical representation of demon possession.¹⁰⁶

What emerged from his book was an influential description of what demon activity looks like when demons are manifesting in individuals they have possessed. This provided valuable information to subsequent generations of demonologists. If he was not already cited or listed as a reference by the SWM writers, he was cited by their own acknowledged authorities.¹⁰⁷ However, there were some important differences between Nevius' conclusions about who can be demon-possessed, and those of the spiritual warfare writers, to be discussed in the next chapter.

Frank and Ida Mae Hammond

Broadly speaking, historical Christian intellectual commentary on demonology was more focused on how humans were affected by demons and less on the nature and functions of the demons themselves. Speculation on the latter aspect was left to the realm of popular

¹⁰³ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 2nd ed., 1375-377; Hunter, "The Legacy of Donald A. McGavran," 159.

¹⁰⁴ John L. Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1894). Citations henceforth are from the second edition (1896).

¹⁰⁵ F.F. Ellinwood, "Introductory Note," in Nevius, *Demon Possession*, iii. The integrity of Nevius' work is affirmed by others: see for example Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1952), 87.

¹⁰⁶ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 243-262.

¹⁰⁷ For examples: Jessie Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts, *War on the Saints* (Leicester: The Excelsior Press, 1912), 111, 308-309; Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 160; Merrill F. Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1977), 25, 144; Kurt E. Koch, *Occult ABC: Exposing Occult Practices and Ideologies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1986), 49; Wimber, *Power Healing*, 288; C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession & the Christian* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1987), 351; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 281. Nevius was also cited by Lovelace, Tippet, Mooneyham, and Wilson in Montgomery, *Demon Possession*.

imagination.¹⁰⁸ When publishing for the mass market introduced a new way to disseminate ideas this opened opportunities on all topics. Consequently, as interest in demons began to stir in the twentieth century, one book that provided detailed information about the character and behaviour of demons was eagerly devoured by popular market readers.

Frank and Ida Mae Hammond were itinerant deliverance ministers who wrote *Pigs in the Parlor* (1973), a book that has sold over one-and-a half million copies.¹⁰⁹ Their potentially anxiety-provoking teaching about the vulnerability of Christians to demonic infiltration in their beings is belied by the book's popularity. In a manner reminiscent of Jessie Penn-Lewis's warnings (an earlier source that we will shortly examine) that any aspect of Christian living could instead be satanic deception at work, *Pigs in the Parlor* proved to be enormously beguiling and influential, particularly in North American evangelical circles. This book was an important precursor to the SWM because no other source had offered such comprehensive information about demons or how to do actual deliverance. It gave detailed advice: from deliverance team size, composition, and unity, to the position in which a person being delivered should sit, and to the concept of "binding and loosing" that is connected to the authority that Christians have over Satan.¹¹⁰ But more notably, the Hammonds laid the groundwork for the SWM practice of identifying demons by nomenclature. The book lists fifty-three demon "groupings" (colonies), each of which contains a number of specific demon types, over two hundred and seventy in all (and not an exhaustive list, according to the Hammonds). Group names range from Occult and False Religions to Insecurity and Indecision. Types under these groupings include demons named shyness, sadness, or tiredness through to demons of homosexuality, handwriting analysis or necromancy.¹¹¹ In short, the assertion made by the Hammonds was that just about any negative emotion, behaviour, or

¹⁰⁸ Some historians believe that the topic of demons remained largely ignored, at least in the Christian sphere, due to distaste generated by the injustices of the 1692 Salem witch trials. See Richard Lovelace comment in Agnieszka Tennant, "In Need of Deliverance," *Christianity Today* 45:11 (3 September 2001): 48.

¹⁰⁹ Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor: A Practical Guide to Deliverance* (Kirkwood, MO: Impact Books, 1973). Frank was originally a Baptist minister; his fulltime focus on deliverance developed after losing his job about 1967-68. Frank D. Hammond, *Overcoming Rejection* (Kirkwood, MO: Impact Books, 1987), 69. Sales information derived from Amazon book publicity material.

¹¹⁰ See Matt 16:18-19 (Peter given the keys of the kingdom) for the theological justification of the concept of binding and loosing. This controversial doctrine has attracted a lot of criticism but will not be explored further here because it was not specifically generated from within the SWM.

¹¹¹ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 113-115. See the section below on the theology of spiritual warfare for comment on the Hammonds' attribution of demons to acts of the sinful nature described by Paul in Gal 5:19-21.

experience was due to the presence of a demon that carried the name of their particular characteristic.

Many of the claims made by the Hammonds were problematic. For example, they wrote that every person, including Christians, has demons in them that require deliverance.¹¹² Hammond himself was delivered of demons of heart attack and nervousness among others.¹¹³ Where many observers might recognize the adverse consequences of human experiences or behaviours, the Hammonds saw demonic activity. A demon of rejection can enter a baby in the womb if the foetus is unwanted by the mother; a repelling suggestion, wrote Frank, but the devil is no gentleman and delights in targeting the most defenceless.¹¹⁴ A child who “forgets” to clean up after being told to by the mother has spirits of procrastination and forgetfulness, and will become stubborn and rebellious if the situation arises repeatedly.¹¹⁵ A church describing itself as “independent fundamental” on a signboard was merely publicising the ruling demon over the congregation.¹¹⁶ Ida Mae wrote that she had been given a special revelation from God that schizophrenia consists of dual personalities in a person, is caused by parental rejection, is not genetic but is demonically inherited, and the person is under the control of a nest of demons inhabiting them. The demons drive schizophrenics to grow into rebellious, lustful, insecure, self-accusatory, wilful, paranoid, and bitter persons.¹¹⁷ There are indications in the book of even more serious issues, one involving a six-year-old girl whose divorced father was having difficulties handling her.¹¹⁸ His “severe punishments” when he became “excessively angry” were not working. Although he had presented himself for deliverance from this, the Hammonds determined that the little girl needed deliverance even more than her father. In a long and rather gruesome account, the little girl was physically restrained as demon after demon was cast out from her.¹¹⁹ Her protestations during the restraint were interpreted as demons speaking through her. To the convinced believer of the

¹¹² Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 12. Charles Kraft revised this number down somewhat but still estimates that a third of person attending church carry demons with them. Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 28.

¹¹³ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 25, 26.

¹¹⁴ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 117.

¹¹⁵ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 119.

¹¹⁶ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 16.

¹¹⁷ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 123-133. The back cover of the book claims that the chapter on schizophrenia “could well revolutionize the way this subject has been traditionally viewed by the medical profession!”

¹¹⁸ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 66-70.

¹¹⁹ Fear, rejection, hate, murder, defiance, self-will, stubbornness, madness, mental illness, insanity, schizophrenia, self-pity, rebellion, bitterness, and others unnamed.

Hammonds' ministry, the encounter might be considered a remarkable description of how to free a child from demonic control. To the sceptical reader, the account could be seen as the record of a particularly disturbing case of severe psychological and physical abuse of an already damaged child.¹²⁰ The embedded message of the book was that any type of negative life experience is a problem solved instantly with little effort apart from an encounter to expel the causative demon, regardless of any potential drama or even trauma to the sufferer.

Frank Hammond recorded that the sources of his knowledge were study, revelation, and experience.¹²¹ He was particularly influenced by Derek Prince and acknowledged this in his Foreword to *Pigs in the Parlor*.¹²² In a later edition of the book, Frank wrote an afterword, "Reflections," in which he revealed that when his ministry was five years old, Derek Prince suggested he write the book because there was no other information of the type available and Prince himself had no interest in doing so.¹²³ Dreams and revelations from God seem to have been the main source of inspiration for the Hammonds' work. The theory of schizophrenia (including detailed palmistry-resembling diagrams) is based entirely on a dream/revelation that Ida Mae experienced. Frank devoted the entire final chapter of the book to one of his dreams. He also wrote about God awakening him in the night with words of knowledge about specific demons in people.¹²⁴ Others mentioned Frank's visionary dreams: Cindy Jacobs described one about the forthcoming fate of America.¹²⁵ His claims to learning through study are somewhat undermined by his statement about the chapter on schizophrenia:

At first thought I considered doing research on schizophrenia, since we were not schooled in psychology or psychiatry. The Holy Spirit stopped me as I took my first steps toward the library. He said, "I do not want what I have given to be mixed with

¹²⁰ Other stories about child deliverance contain similar disturbing elements. For example, Frank tells of a three-month-old baby whose parents had a violent argument over how to discipline (!) the child. The baby began to scream during the argument and when brought to the Hammonds they determined "tormenting spirits" as the problem before casting out three demons from the infant. Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 65.

¹²¹ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 103.

¹²² "Foreword," Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, n.p. Prince's ideas about demons are clearly reflected in Hammond's work. See footnotes about Prince earlier in this chapter: n12, n80.

¹²³ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor* (c2003), 221. Electronic copy: <<https://archive.org/details/PIGSINTHEPARLORByFrankIdaMaeHammond/page/n221/mode/2up>>.

¹²⁴ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 92, 106, 123-133, 145-153.

¹²⁵ Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 205.

what the world thinks.” So, the chapter was written just as Ida Mae received it from the Lord.¹²⁶

The Hammonds’ influence has been significant. *Pigs in the Parlor* has been used by churches as a guide to deliverance and is listed among resources recommended by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation.¹²⁷ Charles Kraft listed the book as one of the six he read to educate himself when he first encountered deliverance teaching from Wimber in the MC510 course.¹²⁸ Their influence continued: Frank Hammond was listed among the thirty attendees at the inaugural Spiritual Warfare Network meeting convened by Wagner in February 1990.¹²⁹ In his foreword to *Pigs in the Parlor*, Frank issued a challenge to the church to move “beyond the concept of personal deliverances to the concept of spiritual warfare against the spiritual potentates,” a call that was answered by Wagner and his colleagues some fifteen years later.¹³⁰ Most notable however, was how the Hammonds’ teaching contributed to the formation of the doctrine discussed in the next chapter: how demons can inhabit Christians.

¹²⁶ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor* (c2003), 221. The Hammonds’ beliefs about schizophrenia are not only derivative of long-discarded psychological theories but could be considered dangerous for any person with this condition who sought help from the Hammonds.

¹²⁷ Catherine Bowler, “Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2010), 161; Lausanne Movement, “Prayer in Evangelism,” Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 42, 5 October 2004 <lausanne.org/content/lop/prayer-evangelism-lop-42> (29 July 2019), 24.

¹²⁸ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 14.

¹²⁹ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 45.

¹³⁰ Hammond, “Foreword,” in *Pigs in the Parlor*, n.p.

Chapter 4: Spiritual Warfare and Demonization of Christians

One significant feature of the SWM doctrine on demons pertained to the question: Can Christians be demon-possessed? SWM thinkers, in particular Kraft and Wagner, drew on a range of historical and theological authors to articulate an answer to this question in the affirmative and it remained integral to all aspects of the theology. Without explaining what he meant by the distinction, Wagner maintained that it was a primary, not a secondary, issue in ministry.¹ Formulating a response to their argument is a theological problem that is beyond the scope of this study. What is of interest here is the *process* that lies behind the development of their claim. The extended discussion here serves several purposes and requires close analysis of the beliefs and literature of two key historical sources: Jessie Penn-Lewis and Kurt Koch. From tracing these sources as foundational to the origins of SWM conceptions through to the ultimate conclusions on the question of demon possession, we can locate the roots for SWM beliefs, understand the developmental progression of the doctrine, and identify how and on what basis the intellectual arguments were shaped. The intent is to understand more about where the movement sat in relation to mainstream Christian theology and to locate the key messages that were passed on to future generations of Christians. The significance of the doctrine lies with its corollaries: the view of human responsibility for sin and the authority of personal experience.

The chief problem of the doctrine of demons is that scripture has very little to say on the issue. As already mentioned, for almost two thousand years of church tradition there appeared to be general accord on the issue: demon possession was seen as a phenomenon that belongs to the pagan world and Christians are preserved from the same experience by reason of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.² In the 1980s and 1990s, however, SWM writers asserted that demons have the ability to indwell and control Christians, even those who are fully committed to living christianly and who have no awareness they are enslaved by demons.

¹ Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 190.

² There were some exceptions to this general conclusion, for example, Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805-1880) who was controversially (and initially reluctantly) involved in an excruciating and prolonged exorcism of Gottlieb Dittus in the 1840s. Blumhardt was sometimes used as an exemplar in SWM literature on demonology. See Dieter Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt, Life and Work*, trans. by Monty Ledford (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009).

Although John Wimber cited Nevius as a source for detailed criteria for demon possession, he did not mention that Nevius had a different view about *who* could actually be possessed by a demon.³ In alignment with early Church teaching, Nevius described demon possession as occurring only in people who were not Christians and as a rule, instances in China were connected to pagan temples and idolatrous worship.⁴ The purpose of deliverance was to draw public attention where the gospel was first preached, thus convincing observers of the truth and power of Christianity.⁵ Without fail, demons departed after prayer to Christ or in his name (as opposed to addressing the demon directly), even though the process was sometimes long.⁶ Upon becoming Christians, they were no longer troubled by demons.⁷ Nevius asserted a difference between demon possession and demonic harassment of Christians: he saw demonic interaction with Christians as more akin to external harassment.⁸ Furthermore, Nevius doubted that demon possession was prevalent in Christianized nations compared to non-Christianized regions because, he asserted, Satan uses methods best suited to his ends. In Christianized areas he would be too easily exposed.⁹

Jessie Penn-Lewis

Less than two decades after Nevius, Jessie Penn-Lewis (1861-1927) published a book that took a different viewpoint. Her book had significant and lasting impact on thinking about demonology in evangelical circles.¹⁰ *War on the Saints* (1912) became not only a bestseller in the years immediately after it was published but is still regarded as a classic on the topic over a century later. Her contribution included several elements that coalesced decades later in the SWM: the tripartite nature of humans, the vulnerability of Christians to demonic influence,

³ Wimber cites Nevius as well as Wilson's summary of Nevius' findings. Wimber, *Power Healing*, 288; William P. Wilson, "Hysteria and Demons, Depression and Oppression, Good and Evil," in Montgomery, *Demon Possession*, 224.

⁴ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 260.

⁵ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 259.

⁶ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 145.

⁷ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 145.

⁸ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 279.

⁹ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 277-278. Although he changed his stance later, Unger was initially of the same mind: he stated that Satan works differently in "cultured and educated" societies. Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 82-83.

¹⁰ The extensive discussion on Penn-Lewis here is relevant not only to this chapter's theme of demon possession in Christians, but also pertains to multiple other factors in the SWM theology, as will be seen later in this study.

the concept of aggressive spiritual warfare, and the role of emotion and experience in Christian life.

Penn-Lewis's background is significant to the foundations of her theology. She grew up a sickly child whose education was largely the result of her own exploration.¹¹ Eighteen months after her marriage at age nineteen, she made a decision for Christ precipitated by her unease about the Second Coming. Convinced at the time that she was a child of God, she was thus filled with a sense of peace.¹² However in subsequent years, as she threw herself into many Christian activities, she struggled with an agonized sense of failure that culminated one day in a vision informing her that all her years of service were mere "filthy rags."¹³ That day she came to the revelation "that even 'consecrated self' is still 'self' and must be reckoned 'crucified' if the life of Jesus is to be manifested through the human vessel."¹⁴ Although the centrality of the cross was one characteristic of Evangelicalism, some, such as Penn-Lewis, took the doctrine a step further.¹⁵ Her viewpoint, as conveyed in her teaching, saw crucifixion to self ("death with Christ") as a necessary prerequisite to spiritual life.¹⁶ In the evening of the same day, she found herself overcome with a dramatic "ecstasy of delight" that healed her agony:

Suddenly my spirit broke through into the spiritual world and I was caught up into the bosom of the Father! For days afterwards I felt that I was as a babe lying in the Father's bosom with all the world below lying in darkness whilst I was in light, clear as crystal and so pure that every speck of sin stood out in blackness. The people walking the streets looked to me as in another world. The morning following the Lord stood by me and I clasped his very feet.¹⁷

Despite her lack of formal training and buoyed by her vivid experience, she embarked on a career of writing and became a famous travelling speaker, all along engaged in a

¹¹ She developed a passion for reading any book she could lay her hands on but was discouraged from actual education after her parents followed the advice of a doctor who declared she should not be taught as her enemy was her "active brain, which must not be roused." Mary M. Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis: A Memoir* (Shoals, IN: Kingsley Press, 2014), Kindle Edition, ch. 1, "The Preparation for the Vessel 1861-1891." As she grew, her parents sent her away for periods to the country "where there was no temptation to read."

¹² Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, "The Preparation for the Vessel 1861-1891."

¹³ Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, "Power for Service 1892-1895."

¹⁴ Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, "Power for Service 1892-1895."

¹⁵ Singling out Penn-Lewis as an example, historian David Bebbington described how for some, the Evangelical doctrine of the cross and the atonement (crucicentrism) became an obsession and an exaggerated form of spirituality. D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 2005), 40.

¹⁶ Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, "The Pathway to Life in God 1893-1895."

¹⁷ Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, "Power for Service 1892-1895."

continual struggle with her physical and mental health.¹⁸ However, she acquired notoriety when she took into her home the young Evan Roberts (1878-1951), a leading figure of the 1904-1905 Welsh revival. Roberts was suffering from a complete breakdown in his mental health, probably induced by stress and burnout, from which he never fully recovered.¹⁹ Purportedly under the dominance of Penn-Lewis, Roberts lived in her home for nineteen years, during which time they collaborated to write “*War on the Saints: A Textbook for Believers on the Work of Deceiving Spirits Among the Children of God.*”²⁰ Penn-Lewis’s theology about satanic effect on believers stemmed from her suspicions about Pentecostalism and her observations of the Welsh Revival when she became convinced that some people’s perceived experiences of the Holy Spirit were actually counterfeits of demonic forces.²¹ With this book, Penn-Lewis heralded the beginning of a new era: church historian Richard Lovelace, quoted in *Christianity Today*, reported that the focus on the Devil had plunged after the 1692 witch trials but “shyly” re-emerged with the publication of *War on the Saints*.²²

From the outset *War on the Saints* was controversial and several features caused such offence that they were deleted from later editions.²³ Penn-Lewis had established a long-running magazine, *The Overcomer*, and when, years after her death, the still-extant magazine re-issued the book, the magazine’s trustees ordered the removal of some elements because they felt they could not endorse her teaching on these particular areas.²⁴ Firstly, she firmly

¹⁸ Anonymous, “The Overcomer Trust.” *Overcomer Magazine*, n.d. <<https://www.overcomertrust.org.uk/aboutus.htm>> (04 April 2020); Peter Prosser, “Jessie Penn-Lewis,” in *Revival, Renewal, and the Holy Spirit*, ed. Dyfed Wyn Roberts (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 118-120.

¹⁹ Gaius Davies, “Evan Roberts: Blessings and Burnout,” in *Revival, Renewal, and the Holy Spirit*, ed. Dyfed Wyn Roberts (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 108; and Prosser, “Jessie Penn-Lewis,” 125-126.

²⁰ Jessie Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts. *War on the Saints* (Leicester: The Excelsior Press, 1912). Pope described Roberts as a “virtual prisoner” in Penn-Lewis’s home, a claim that circulated widely at the time but that remains unproven. Robert Pope, “Demythologising the Evan Roberts Revival, 1904-1905,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57:3 (July 2006): 525. It does seem likely however, given the style and personality that emerges from Penn-Lewis’s other material, that *War on the Saints* was largely the result of her contribution and my discussion proceeds on this assumption.

²¹ Jessie Penn-Lewis, “The Laws and Perils of Revival,” *The Overcomer* 7:4 (October 1920), <<https://www.ogccl.org/overcomer/index.html>> (4 April 2020): 48; Jessie Penn-Lewis, “An Autobiographical Sketch,” *The Overcomer* 6:72 (December 1914), <<https://www.ogccl.org/overcomer/index.html>> (4 April 2020): 184.

²² Tennant, “In Need of Deliverance,” 48.

²³ Although SWM writers do not specify which editions they drew on, we can be relatively sure that they were the original, not abridged, editions because the features deleted from the abridged edition were mostly parallel to the doctrines of the SWM.

²⁴ J.C. Metcalfe, “Foreword,” in *War on the Saints* (Abridged Edition), by Jessie Penn-Lewis (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1993), 9. There had been seven previous editions of *War on the Saints* before the abridgement was first published (with Metcalfe’s Foreword) by Overcomer Literature Trust in 1956.

asserted the final war between the forces of light and dark had begun.²⁵ Her conviction was that she was living in the Last Days, hence the onset of an unprecedented attack by Satan on the Church.²⁶ Secondly, she held that the spiritual warfare activity of believers was crucially involved in hastening the destruction of Satan and thereby the return of Christ.²⁷ So the third element was her call, repeatedly issued throughout *War on the Saints*, for Christians to engage in aggressive spiritual warfare.²⁸ These latter two themes promoted by Wagner and his colleagues decades later were due in large part to Penn-Lewis's rallying cry.²⁹ Fourthly, Penn-Lewis viewed the baptism of the Holy Spirit, particularly during times of Revival, as a dangerous experience for many Christians who were actually being deceived by Satanic counterfeits.³⁰ Her warnings about the dangers of Pentecostal "imagination" and tongues

²⁵ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 10.

²⁶ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 2. Penn-Lewis ceased publication of her magazine *The Overcomer* in 1914 due to her conviction that the Second Coming was imminent. She quoted Rev. S.B. Rohold who declared that 1914 was, according to Jewish chronology, the beginning of the end of Judah's 2,520 years of punishment, the beginning of the tribulation, the rise of the anti-Christ, the nearness of Second Coming, and the approach of the "Golden Age of Universal Righteousness and peace." Jessie Penn-Lewis, Index to *The Overcomer* 6 (1914): iv, <<https://www.ogccl.org/overcomer/index.html>> (4 April 2020). See also *The Overcomer* 6:61 (January 1914): 6; and "The Change of the Dispensations," *The Overcomer* 6:72 (December 1914): 193-194, and other articles in the same issue where she reiterates the imminence of the Second Coming. Penn-Lewis resumed publication of *The Overcomer* in 1920.

²⁷ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 262, 263. In relation to the extent of human authority and power, although there is not space to explore further here, it remains important to note that Penn-Lewis implies a theology of human power throughout her writings. For example, further to her declaration of binding Satan and in reference to Rev 20:1-3 (262), she states: "A material 'chain' [held by the angel] could not bind a supernatural being, and it may be that 'the great strong angel' typifies the mystical 'Christ'; consisting of the Head and members—the 'Man-Child' caught up to the Throne—when the members will have been liberated from the power of the enemy, and then commissioned to lay hold of the Deceiver to cast him into the abyss, and shut him up for the thousand years." Penn-Lewis interprets the "man-child" as the overcomer believers birthed by the woman in Rev 12:5, and it is their task to consign the Deceiver to the abyss. Jessie Penn-Lewis, "The Prize of the Throne," *The Overcomer* 4:40 (April 1912): 54, <<https://www.ogccl.org/overcomer/index.html>> (4 April 2020). Following Penn-Lewis, Watchman Nee further argues the point, especially in relation to the child "caught up" in the Rapture. Watchman Nee, "The Principle of the Man-child," *Affirmation & Critique* 12:2 (October 2007): 44, 52-53, <https://www.affcrit.com/archives/ac_07_02.html> (6 April 2020). In this proof-text for the role of believers in exerting power over Satan, Penn-Lewis's assertion is challenged by (numerous) other arguments for the man-child as the Christ-figure. See for example, G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 639-642; or Craig S. Keener, *Revelation: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 318.

²⁸ For example, Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 29, 43, 198.

²⁹ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 29.

³⁰ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 50-51, 53, 107-108, 278-281. Penn-Lewis did believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit; what was so offensive to others was her belief that manifestations of spiritual signs such as tongues could equally be gifts from the Holy Spirit or counterfeits from Satan.

were strongly repudiated by European Pentecostal leaders who found not only a number of her publications and statements offensive, but also her (alleged) detention of Evan Roberts.³¹

Deception of Christians was the centrepiece of her theology. The chief message of *War on the Saints* was that believers were vulnerable to Satanic counterfeit even as they attempted to live a faithful Christian life. The book included a long list of components in a believer's relationship with God, each cross-referenced to pages elaborating on how the believer can unwittingly be drawn into the equivalent Satanic counterfeits.³² The deceit worked on Christians by demons could lead to believers praying to demons and receiving scripture verses from them even as they believed these were from God.³³ And so the fifth and final element edited out of *War on the Saints* was the outcome of the deceit: demonic possession. Penn-Lewis defined possession as "a hold of evil spirits on a man in any shade of degree" and declared: "Christians are as open to possession by evil spirits as other men" a claim echoed years later by writers in the late twentieth century.³⁴ As with the SWM, Penn-Lewis held that Christians may be unaware they are possessed.³⁵ The condition of a believer who becomes possessed is due to "passivity," that is, failure to exercise active willpower over spirit, soul, and body.³⁶

Although Penn-Lewis had no educational background to support her conceptions, she did read books popular in contemporary Christian circles, particularly those circulating among Keswick ("Higher Life") movement Christians. As she came into the period of her own epiphany, there were two main sources that influenced her thinking. In her personal papers she described the importance of Andrew Murray's *The Spirit of Christ* and, most

³¹ Cornelis Van der Laan, "The Proceedings of the Leaders' Meetings (1908-1911) and of the International Pentecostal Council (1912-1914)," *Pneuma* 10:1 (Spring 1988): 47-48. See Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 144, 160, 294-295 and footnote. Her attack on the Pentecostal movement intensified in the first edition of the resumed *The Overcomer* in 1920: Jessie Penn-Lewis, "Spiritual Perils of To-day," *The Overcomer* 7:1 (January 1920), <<https://www.ogccl.org/overcomer/index.html>> (4 April 2020): 6-8.

³² Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 300-304.

³³ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 97.

³⁴ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 69, and compare with Wimber, *Power Healing*, 127. Penn-Lewis cites Nevius as the source for her list of the symptoms of demon possession although she did not follow his views on the impossibility of possession in Christians, 308-309. On Nevius' stance she wrote: "This unexamined, unproved theory in the minds of believers, serves the devil well as a cover for his workings to gain possession of the minds and bodies, of Christians in the present time. But the veil is being stripped off the eyes of the children of God by the hard path of experience," Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 98.

³⁵ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 96, 164.

³⁶ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 69-70.

significantly, she found inspiration in the work of the controversial French mystic Madame Jeanne-Marie Guyon.³⁷ Penn-Lewis's biographer described the similarities between Madame Guyon's spiritual experiences and those of Penn-Lewis, even to the extent of their mutual activities of "automatic writing" that both women considered the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit.³⁸ Madame Guyon's description of this process struck a chord with Penn-Lewis, who pencilled in the margin of Guyon's book: "This is how I have always written. J. P-L."³⁹ The mystic nature and imagery of Madame Guyon's work is reflected in Penn-Lewis's work, for example, where she describes how to be caught up in the "tide of Divine power" that is defined as the "spirit of the heavenly life" with the objective to obtain "ascendancy." The goal is to "disconnect [the believer] from earth and connect him to heaven."⁴⁰ Although *War on the Saints* focuses firmly on the deception of the saints, this "other-world" mysticism emerged in the final chapter as the culmination of Penn-Lewis's spiritual foundation.⁴¹ In subsequent generations the mystical union with the Christ in heaven came again to the forefront, as we shall see.⁴²

The enduring influence of Penn-Lewis is demonstrated by the regularity with which *War on the Saints* and her other material is quoted from, listed as recommended reading, or included in the bibliographies of books on demonology or spiritual warfare.⁴³ Her name is

³⁷ Penn-Lewis felt she had a special bond with Andrew Murray and his influence is pervasive in her writing: Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, "The Pathway to Life in God 1893-1895."

³⁸ Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, "The Pathway to Life in God 1893-1895," and ch. 8 "The Deepening of the Channel 1899-1902," where she expresses her belief that all of her writing was directly inspired by God. See also Patricia A. Ward, "Madame Guyon (1648-1717)," in *The Pietist Theologians*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 167, 168.

³⁹ Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, "The Deepening of the Channel 1899-1902." In *War on the Saints*, Penn-Lewis warns against automatic writing under the influence of evil spirits but then progresses to an explanation of how the same occurrence can also be directed by the Holy Spirit, as seen in Paul and the other authors of the Scriptures. Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 116-117.

⁴⁰ Jessie Penn-Lewis, "The Spirit of Translation," *The Overcomer* 7:4 (October 1920), <<https://www.ogccl.org/overcomer/index.html>> (4 April 2020): 201-202. Note however a point of contrast between the two women. Guyon's Quietist tendency emphasized passivity of the will where Penn-Lewis strongly advocated engagement of personal volition. See M.R. Haddad, "The mystical theology of Jessie Penn-Lewis (1861-1927)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Durham, 2005), 169, 185, 293-294.

⁴¹ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 286, 288. Although Roberts was listed as co-author with Penn-Lewis, extensive reading of her other material demonstrates stylistic and theological patterns that suggest that Roberts' input may have been less than substantial.

⁴² This type of mysticism is a feature of Bethel theology, to be discussed later in this study.

⁴³ Bubeck, *The Adversary*, 128-129; Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 351; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 435; Koch, *Occult ABC*, 205; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 14; Lausanne Movement, "Prayer in Evangelism," 24; Derek Prince, *War in Heaven: God's Epic Battle with Evil*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2003), 19; Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 235;

inevitably included in lists of influential books about demons.⁴⁴ In his suggested reading material, psychiatrist John White described it as “a sort of Bible on Demonology.”⁴⁵ This continuing popularity hence raises the question: what legacy did Jessie Penn-Lewis pass on to her readers?

Penn-Lewis’s theology consisted of a potent mix of heady mysticism combined with a preoccupation with how demons can destroy the lives of unwary Christians. From her writing emerges a personality that was intensely spiritual, strongly resolute, demonstrating immense willpower, and carrying a pioneering spirit.⁴⁶ These aspects of her character combined to give her writing an air of assertive authority most evident in the advice she dispensed in editorial replies to readers’ letters in *The Overcomer* magazine. But it is in the foundational basis for her theology that the interest of this present study lies. With no formal training or education, her learning was reliant on the popular opinions she read and the culture in which she was immersed. In Bebbington’s view, “changing theological fashions” were more driven by the contemporaneous cultural atmosphere among the lay population than by theologians: “Thus the holiness teaching of the later nineteenth century, very much a symptom of the Romantic inclinations of the period, was adapted to fit the Calvinist theological inheritance of its Anglican proponents.”⁴⁷ The resultant Keswick movement was the cultural milieu to which Penn-Lewis belonged.⁴⁸

Timothy M. Warner, “Deception: Satan’s Chief Tactic,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 113; Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 199.

⁴⁴ For example, William K. Kay, “A Demonised Worldview: Dangers, Benefits and Explanations,” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 11:1 (1998): 17-29; A. Scott Moreau, “North American Case Study: An Overview of Spiritual Warfare Literature,” in *Lausanne Missional Content Library*, 22 August 2000 <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/north-america>> (24 March 2019), 2. Moreau describes *War on the Saints* as a “classic” under the heading “Theologians and Biblical Scholars” (although he does apologise in advance for possible categorization errors).

⁴⁵ John White, “Problems and Procedures in Exorcism,” in Montgomery, *Demon Possession*, 299.

⁴⁶ In keeping with the times, her public ministry was confined to women’s circles until she was unexpectedly called upon to take the place of an absent speaker at the 1901 Scottish Keswick meeting in front of a mixed audience. Having overcome the objections of those who did not allow women to teach men, thenceforth her public ministry comprised both men and women. Garrard, *Mrs. Penn-Lewis*, “The Deepening of the Channel 1899-1902.”

⁴⁷ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 493, 495-496.

⁴⁸ Fuller discussion of the enormous influence of Romanticism and the Keswick movement is not possible here beyond noting both as the seedbed for later spiritual warfare conceptions. In particular, the Keswick emphasis on fervent prayer, the connection of Christians to the heavenly realms, and the authority and power of the believer should be acknowledged as seminal and not to be overlooked. Characters most representative of the Keswick movement in this study are Jessie Penn-Lewis and Andrew Murray.

The Romantic emphasis on selfhood and emotion had a bearing on what is arguably the most significant element that shaped Penn-Lewis's theology: her mystical interpretation of her own personal faith journey.⁴⁹ This provided the impetus for her emerging ideas and thereby became the basis for her teaching about the centrality of experience. As the adjunct to this, her observations of the Welsh Revival consolidated the nascent theology that if Christians were not truly sacrificed to self and to the Cross, their experience could not be of the Holy Spirit and therefore must be demonic. Writing with certainty and confidence in her topic, Penn-Lewis successfully concealed a lack of exegetical and hermeneutical aptitude by focussing on her themes of willpower and experience in the believer's life.

This emphasis on experience (perhaps inadvertently) led to a diminishment in the role of scripture.⁵⁰ Experience taught more about the satanic powers than did scripture:

The Bible throws much light upon the Satanic powers, which cannot fail to be discerned by all who search the Scriptures with open minds, but these will not obtain as much knowledge of the subject from the sacred record, as will those who have understanding *by experience*, interpreted by the Holy Spirit, and shown to be in line with the truth of the Word of God. In short, Scripture, *apart from experience*, does not enable the believer to know, and realize, the actual existence of the devil, and his hosts of evil, and the way they deceive, and mislead the children of men.⁵¹

Penn-Lewis's many declarations on experience also revealed the confusions that could emerge in her teaching. Her key statement on how to determine what is truth exemplified how hazy her exposition could be: "Deliverance from believing lies must be from believing truth."⁵² On how to detect the voice of God and distinguish it from the voice of the devil, the clearest indicator appeared to be based on retrospective appraisal of outcomes, although she also noted that a persistent inner voice that urges quick action is likely to be from the devil.⁵³ On the other hand, she warned that "a deceived believer may be more deeply deceived, by

⁴⁹ The roots of emotion, intuition, and experience as the grounds for theological conceptions derive from Romanticism's development of Schleiermacher's view of God-consciousness. Hammer points out that although many religious traditions today persist with this foundational perspective (as do the subjects of this thesis), the cultural constructs that originally shaped this orientation are often overlooked. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 337-338.

⁵⁰ A theology built around her personal experience also led to difficulty with balance in her approach to scripture. For example, in *War on the Saints* and throughout her writing career, she placed continued emphasis on Romans 6 as to correct attitudes of self with scant attention to the deliverance and liberating themes of the chapter or the rest of Romans. Her theology centred more on the work of self, (as demonstrated by willpower) thereby overlooking the importance of God's work of justification (Rom 3:24), the outcome of faith (Rom 4:5), or the resultant peace (Rom 5:1).

⁵¹ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 3. Italics hers.

⁵² Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 59. Original in all upper-case.

⁵³ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 139-140.

seeing nothing but Satan's counterfeits everywhere."⁵⁴ These mixed messages highlight the tension that exists throughout *War on the Saints*. Little guidance was given to readers about exactly how to tell the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit or the work of a demon in the believer's life.⁵⁵ However, one important standard for measuring truth was feelings. A despairing reader of *The Overcomer* wrote that she had followed Penn-Lewis's advice to stop speaking in tongues yet continued to suffer from the effects of evil spirits. Penn-Lewis replied that once evil spirits gain admission to the nervous system, the "sensitive nerves remain sensitive to all supernatural power." Only by abiding deeply and by placing her whole being under the power of Christ's death could the reader lose all consciousness of this sensitive condition: "If you do not abide you will quickly know it by your jarred and tingling nerves."⁵⁶ In line with her own experiences, paying attention to feelings became foundational to discerning what was true and what was not.

In summary, a close reading of Penn-Lewis reveals an extensive body of work underpinned by a deeply emotional response to spiritual experiences that were interpreted in light of insufficiently formed theological arguments. What made her so influential was not just that her followers believed she expressed erudite biblical truth but that ostensibly she offered answers to questions that perhaps Christians had not even articulated yet. She did not have the skills to lay out an informed argument for the role of evil spirits in a believer's life, but her audience never demanded one. In the exciting but confusing days of the Welsh Revival and its aftermath, Penn-Lewis appeared to *know*.⁵⁷ In a number of different ways, Penn-Lewis was the most important precursor of the SWM. However, another source had a more far-reaching effect. Arguably, Kurt Koch's material did more than any other source to shape the conceptions specific to the impact of demons on Christians.

⁵⁴ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 149.

⁵⁵ One of her most definitive statements on the issue provided little real assurance to Christians agonizing over their spirituality: "When believers first hear of the possibility of counterfeits of God, and Divine things, they almost invariably ask, 'How are we to know which is which?' ... They should remain neutral to all supernatural workings until they do know. There is among many a wrong anxiety to know, as if knowledge alone would save them. They think that they must be either for, or against certain things, which they cannot decide are either from God, or from the devil; and want to know infallibly which is which, that they may declare their position: but believers can take the attitude of 'for' or 'against' without knowing whether the things they are in doubt about are Divine or Satanic; and maintain the wisdom and safety of the neutral position to the things themselves, until, by a means which cannot be fully described, they know what they have wanted to understand." Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 60-61.

⁵⁶ Jessie Penn-Lewis, "The Spiritual Clinic," *The Overcomer* 7:4 (October 1920), <<https://www.ogccl.org/overcomer/index.html>> (4 April 2020): 53.

⁵⁷ Penn-Lewis was likely assisted into her authoritative status by the fact that no Pentecostal (or non-Pentecostal) theology of demons had emerged. McClung, "Exorcism," 624.

Kurt E. Koch

Although Wagner, Kraft, and other SWM writers may have been unaware of it, a book first published in 1849 had an important part to play in the history of their thought. Johann Scheible, an antiquarian who collected old manuscripts, published the first edition of *Das sechste und siebente Buch Mosis, das ist Mosis magische Geisterkunst, das Geheimniß aller Geheimnisse* in German.⁵⁸ The first English translation of his book, *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, was published in New York in 1880. The impact of Scheible's book, to which he added new material in subsequent editions, was considerably enhanced by its publication in an inexpensive format and its easy availability. The highly popular little volume was carried worldwide by emigrants and copies were known to circulate within many disparate groups including European cultures, Pennsylvanian Germans, African American practitioners of Hoodoo, Rastafarians in Jamaica, and even the German-descent community of Australia's Barossa Valley.⁵⁹

The legend behind the book begins with Moses in Pharaoh's court when Aaron's rod, transformed into a serpent, swallowed up those conjured by the Egyptian magicians (Exod 7:8-13). One of multiple explanatory narratives includes the details that the snakes were black, thus indicating Moses' knowledge of the black arts, having been brought up in Pharaoh's court.⁶⁰ This knowledge was compiled by Moses into his sixth and seventh books, the first five being familiar to readers of the Bible.⁶¹ The book is a grimoire (book of spells)

⁵⁸ "The Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses; that is, Moses' Art of Magic, the Secret of All Secrets." Little is known about Scheible but evidence indicates that he had no personal interest in the occult, thereby making it unlikely that he contributed creative input to the book. His compilation appears to draw material from a range of sources dated from around the mid 15th century to the 17th century. See Kevin J. Hayes, *Folklore and Book Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press: 1997), 17; Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 123.

⁵⁹ Hayes, *Folklore and Book Culture*, 17-19; John J. Lowke, "The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses: Barossa Valley 'Witchcraft' Explained," *Journal of Friends of Lutheran Archives* 26 (December 2016): 72. Hoodoo is the syncretistic spiritual practice of "conjure" followed by African slaves throughout North America. Derived originally from some African religions, it incorporates healing and specific features from other religions. In some elements it resembles Voodoo but is not the same.

⁶⁰ Lowke, "Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses," 72. For another version of Moses' acquisition of the dark arts see Hayes, *Folklore and Book Culture*, 14.

⁶¹ The Sixth Book claims to be translated directly from the ancient Hebrew but clues to forgery can be found in the numerous anachronisms among the hundreds of supposedly Hebrew names listed in relation to the incantations. Even allowing for translation issues, many are clearly not of Hebraic etymology and give the appearance of (pseudo) Greek or Latin origin. Furthermore, the use of Latin names for the planets also betrays much later dating for the documents. For example, in place of "Venus" the expected use would be Kôkab Nôgah or Kôkebet (ancient Hebrew) or maybe Inanna (Sumerian) or Ishtar (Babylonian) as found on cuneiform tablets dated circa 1645-1625 B.C., the first known identification of Venus. See Robert R. Stieglitz, "The Hebrew

containing incantations that claim to harness the power of both black and white magic to bring good fortune into the lives of practitioners and bad luck into the lives of their enemies.⁶² While many may regard grimoires as exemplars of folklore, for others they contain the secrets to powerful means of controlling one's own environment and producing desired outcomes.⁶³ But for Kurt Koch, Scheible's book fell into a different category; for him it was a potent source of demonic influence.

Kurt Koch (1913-1987) was a German theologian with a Th.D. from University of Tübingen and a Lutheran pastor who wrote a number of books about occultism.⁶⁴ In his childhood, he struggled with visits to his grandparents' house where overnight he would wake repeatedly to see a huge beast with glowing eyes.⁶⁵ Years later when he told his father about what he saw, his father replied that he too had suffered in the same way and went on to explain that Koch's great-grandmother had practised magic using *The Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses*. Immediately Koch arrived at the realization that his grandmother was the "demon-oppressed daughter of an enchantress."⁶⁶ "This insight," relates Koch, "motivated me as pastor and evangelist to conduct thousands of conversations with soulsick, occult-oppressed persons and come to hear similar things, time and time again."⁶⁷ His experience of counselling

Names of the Seven Planets," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40:2 (April 1981): 135; A. Sachs, "Babylonian Observational Astronomy," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series A, Mathematical and Physical Sciences* 276:1257 (1974): 44; Louise M. Pryke, *Ishtar* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 126.

⁶² Most of the many editions of the book contain additional material from other sources so it can be described generally as a compilation. The incantations consist of instructions to recite long lists of (pseudo) Hebrew names followed by declarations of the desired outcome. Many of the spells invoke power in Jesus' name and the lists of names relate to purported angelic beings. Spells must be cast under certain conditions, for example specific times of night or recited in "perfect" Hebrew. The notion of witching (or counter-witching) at significant times in the night can be traced in SWM literature. See for example Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 24-25, 102.

⁶³ For a twenty-first century version of a grimoire see Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* (New York: Atria Books, 2006), which has sold over 30 million copies worldwide (and that I located on the shelves of a Christian bookstore).

⁶⁴ The English translation of Koch's 1956 thesis was later published as Kurt E. Koch, *Christian Counseling and Occultism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1965). Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 128.

⁶⁵ Ellis quoting Koch: Bill Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions, and the Media* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 15.

⁶⁶ Ellis quoting Koch: Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 15. Ellis points out that Koch's phrase: "die belastete Tochter einer Besprecherin" uses "belasten" in the context of "in bondage to" or "enslaved" by Satan in relation to his grandmother ("die belastete Tochter"), thereby indicating that Satan's enslavement transferred to the next generation even though there is no mention of his grandmother continuing her mother's practices. Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 289n3.

⁶⁷ Ellis quoting Koch: Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 15. Koch was under no illusion that *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* were genuinely written by Moses. Even though he knew it to be fraudulent representation of Moses' knowledge, his concern was the intrinsic power of the enchantment formulas in the book. Koch, *Christian*

these persons, combined with a massive collection of occult stories, led to Koch finding himself in huge demand as a speaker in North America and on several other continents.⁶⁸ Moreover, his books continued to be frequently cited by spiritual warfare writers from the time they were published into the early years of the twenty-first century.

Using classic textbook-style language and structure, Koch described a system for dealing with physical, spiritual, and mental health problems that have demonic oppression as their cause.⁶⁹ He did not present a work of theology; his biblical exegesis was confined to a few pages in *Christian Counseling and Occultism*.⁷⁰ Rather his focus was on a psychological and prayer approach to free people from demonic oppression.⁷¹ Sessions began with the counsellor listening to the counselee explain the problem, meanwhile observing the person to obtain impressions of their personality and detect physical signs of “psychical disturbances,” for example, the fold of upper eyelids to indicate depression. The next step was for the counselee to be probed to recollect their personal, familial, and ancestral occult history.⁷² Then by a process of confession and renunciation, victims of satanic assault were absolved. His therapeutic method centred on pastoral care: full exorcism was not required frequently because in Koch’s (early) view “pure” possession occurred in only a small percentage of occult cases.⁷³ A significant aspect of Koch’s work was the frequency with which he diagnosed symptoms of mental illness as the result of demonic oppression. Although he took care to distinguish his descriptions of “psychic ailment” and “occult affliction” and provided

Counseling, 55n91, 95; Kurt E. Koch, *Between Christ and Satan* (Berghausen, Baden: Evangelisation Publishers, 1970), 132.

⁶⁸ Bill Ellis, “Kurt E. Koch and the ‘Civitas Diaboli’: Germanic Folk Healing as Satanic Ritual Abuse of Children,” *Western Folklore* 54:2 (1 April 1995): 83-84.

⁶⁹ The book most oriented towards training in spiritual counselling was Koch, *Christian Counseling*; originally published as *Seelsorge und Okkultismus*. Later books focused more on anecdotes than exposition. Ellis described Koch’s work as “demonic clinical psychology.” Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 16.

⁷⁰ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 227-231.

⁷¹ Koch’s work predated the later designation “demonized” but his text indicates that his concept of “oppression” was synonymous with later use of “demonization.” “Pure” possession appeared to be synonymous with “severe” demonization as described by Kraft et al. In Koch’s system, this required exorcism where other cases were handled with prayer and counselling.

⁷² Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 27-28.

⁷³ For a description of his method see Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 250-286, and especially 277 for comment on exorcism. His view on the rarity of “pure” possession later seemed to change as he embarked upon a travelling ministry to perform deliverance. Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 228.

some examples of psychological disturbance, nonetheless overwhelmingly his findings leaned towards occultic influence on individuals.⁷⁴

The most remarkable features of Koch's system were the many hundreds of anecdotes that accompanied the exposition in each of his books. All manner of occult activities were divided into categories and sub-categories, each accompanied by numbered examples drawn from over 20,000 occult cases that he held on file.⁷⁵ Some of his books contained more stories than theory. For example, the book arguably the most frequently quoted by SWM writers, *Between Christ and Satan*, is 192 pages long and includes 194 anecdotes mostly gathered from regions in Europe. Koch's work was based on his belief that Germanic folklore about good and bad luck, sickness, misfortune, or other unexplained life events was imbued with satanic influence.⁷⁶ He wrote: "Superstition is the greatest contaminator of the soul of all time."⁷⁷ The stories he collected are replete with details that are familiar to any reader of folklore and Koch appears to have gathered them firstly by direct involvement with counselling cases and later by employing the traditional means of oral transmission from many sources.⁷⁸ As he extended his repertoire of anecdotes from the 600 "cases of occult affliction" that he drew on in *Christian Counseling and Occultism*, his files increasingly included stories representative of folklore from other countries and cultures.⁷⁹ Some elements, such as the wearing of amulets or the involvement of an ancestor in "occult activities," appeared regularly in the stories. The larger part of his anecdotes involved tragic deaths, terrible events happening to families or their children, and elements of horror.⁸⁰ Others

⁷⁴ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 233-238, where he concludes: "The spiritual-historical background has, because of its great power, the preponderance above the medical-psychological factor."

⁷⁵ Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 11. Categories of occult activities each contained multiple sub-topics, some examples of which were: fortune-telling (astrology, cartomancy, divining with a rod and pendulum, psychometry), magic (hypnosis, black and white magic, defence magic, charms), spiritism (automatic writing, glass-moving, visions, telekinesis, ghosts), occult literature (*Six and Seventh Books of Moses*) and healing miracles (by means of magic and including faith healers William Branham and Tommy Hicks). Koch held these faith healers to be demonically inspired, as well as Pentecostal practices of tongues and healing.

⁷⁶ Note that it is unlikely that Koch would have described his examples as "folklore." For him they were truthful accounts of reality. I use the word as a means of explaining the *characteristics* of the bulk of Koch's examples.

⁷⁷ Kurt E. Koch, *The Devil's Alphabet* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1969), 11.

⁷⁸ In *The Devil's Alphabet*, Koch specified that the 172 anecdotes described in the book were drawn from his own counselling case histories and that he personally had talked with those involved. Koch, *Devil's Alphabet*, 8.

⁷⁹ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 19, 167.

⁸⁰ Frequent consequences of occultic involvement were violent behaviour, descent into insanity, institutionalization, suicide, dreadful death agonies, tragic destruction of children, appearances of ghosts, and damage to property. One story that contains all these elements described several generations of family horror (with details of twelve members) all originating from the great-grandfather's use of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*. Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 100-111.

concerned conflict between neighbours where harm is done to animals that are sources of livelihood or sustenance, especially cows and their milk.⁸¹ Many were related to the curing of disability or disease. Koch asserted that occultic cures often did work, but ailments tended to return when the person disposed of the cure, as in the case of a young woman with a leg shortened due to polio. She had been advised to undertake a complicated treatment involving mandrake root, knives in the wall and under her pillow, and an amulet. She was healed but when later she relinquished the items to her minister, her leg reverted to its former condition.⁸²

Koch's assumptions about cause and effect appeared in many of his cases and a substantial number were unaccompanied by interpretation.⁸³ For example, a young man with infantile paralysis was given an amulet by a charmer and told to place scissors and a Bible under his pillow each night. He was cured of his paralysis but hanged himself at age sixteen.⁸⁴ Koch offered no further commentary; the reader is left with the consciousness that the amulet and the boy's obedience to the instructions were the causes of the story's tragic end. Other times cause and effect were attributed by Koch, for example, in natural disasters that occur as the result of conjuring. Koch stated that he personally witnessed the eruption of Mount Etna in 1942 and knew of a specific conjuration causative of the event.⁸⁵

Certain factors about the victims of occultism were common to many stories. In the book most explanatory of his method, six out of the seven earliest stories accompanying the text were concerned with Christians described as "faithful," "godly," or as Christian leaders or workers who were oppressed by demonic experiences. What these had in common is that each had consulted spirit mediums or participated in séances, "glass-moving," "table-lifting," or other occult activities.⁸⁶ This seemingly dual allegiance was also found in a seventeen-year-old youth who "suffered from fits of mania and possessed a dark strange, restless character."

⁸¹ For example, a man who discovered blood in his cow's milk performed a spell involving thrusting a sickle into heated milk. When he saw a woman the next day with facial injuries, he knew her to be the cause of his cow's bewitchment. Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 81.

⁸² Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 71-72. As described by Koch, placing items under pillows was a common treatment.

⁸³ Many of those with no explanation are inserted to illustrate merely the type of occultic practice under discussion. His analysed anecdotes usually pertain to the exploration and diagnosis of personal histories and behaviours in victims. A further missing element is detailed information about outcomes of client interactions.

⁸⁴ Koch, *Occult ABC*, 138-139.

⁸⁵ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 113n200.

⁸⁶ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 29-38. Activities described by Koch are known in current vocabulary as Ouija board-type games.

He attended a Christian Bible Hour with a New Testament in one pocket and *The Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses* in the other. When discovered, the latter was burned at the meeting.⁸⁷ Despite the thoroughness of his method and discussion, Koch did not directly explore the seeming disparity between allegiance to Christian faith and engagement with activities deemed to be occultic.⁸⁸ If victims of demonic oppression had not participated in occult activities themselves, invariably they were found to have a family history of the same.⁸⁹ Undoubtedly, the single most frequently-occurring cause of terrible events unfolding in families was the reported presence, somewhere within the previous four generations, of a family member who was known to practise some form of magic or divination. Generational occultic activities included use or even mere possession of *The Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses*.⁹⁰

Koch's conviction about the power of objects, including books, to oppress people demonically was a common theme in his stories, the echoes of which can be seen readily in SWM writers.⁹¹ For example, amulets causing physical or mental sickness featured frequently in his examples. Often, they were discovered to contain (unbeknownst to the wearer) pieces of paper dedicating the wearer to a Satan-pact.⁹² Books such as *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, were imbued with intrinsic power. In an extended discussion of the book, he warned of the dangers of keeping it in one's house.⁹³ He described one man as an elder of the church, a faithful attendant, and a true Christian church-member who died horribly while uttering dreadful curses and blasphemies. After his death relatives found the book amongst his belongings.⁹⁴ Koch wrote: "There is no possessor of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*

⁸⁷ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 129.

⁸⁸ Koch attributes the "confusion" of mixing Christianity with (his definition of) occult practices to: disbelief among pastors ("humbug"), actual practice by pastors, masking of magic with Christian symbols, and rationalism. Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 159-169.

⁸⁹ For a number of familial examples see Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 108-111.

⁹⁰ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 54-59, 96-97, 109, 110-111, 123 (mother-in-law), 129, 133-134, 151-152, 155. Koch frequently cites *The Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses* in his other books, for example some two dozen times in: Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 47, 77, 83, 88-89, 90, 94, 128, 131-141, 158, 162.

⁹¹ For example: Kraft, "Contextualization and Spiritual Power, 66.

⁹² For just a few examples, see Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 132, 133; Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 72, 144-145; and Koch, *Occult ABC*, 293, 295-296. Koch includes carpet in his identification of potentially spirit-infused objects: Kurt E. Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance: Counseling the Occultly Oppressed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1970), 92.

⁹³ Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 133.

⁹⁴ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 134. A number of stories in content are so similar to each other (but with changing details about the type of occult practice) that their origins become questionable. Several accounts

who has no psychic complications.”⁹⁵ This included people who possessed the book merely for study: he related how four ministers, known personally to him, held copies of the book in their libraries. Each, Koch noted, led congregations that were spiritually dead and “this is always the case in such circumstances.”⁹⁶

One further feature involves Koch’s acceptance of fantastical elements that have no precedent in biblical descriptions of the demonic.⁹⁷ Koch’s orientation was profoundly Christian and overtly evangelistic even though he devoted little space to biblical exposition in his material. He did briefly cite the Bible however. From New Testament passages he drew conclusions about demonic manifestations of loudness, voice modification, strength, violence, convulsions, and resistance against divine influence.⁹⁸ He also listed Old Testament mentions of and injunctions against spirits, divination, and magic.⁹⁹ However, notions derived from folklore and mythology acquired equal status in his assessment of occultic involvement.¹⁰⁰ He provided a number of examples of sexual attacks by *incubi* and *succubae*.¹⁰¹ As well, shape-

describe pastors or church leaders who died amid “frightful death struggles” and who were later discovered to have been connected to occultic activities, from hosting séances in their home to possessing *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*. For just one example compare this narrative with *Christian Counseling*, 38. Koch asserted personal knowledge of or connection to these individuals.

⁹⁵ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 134. A measure of incongruity in Koch’s work is his own possession and study of *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* as well as his family history with the book, seemingly without the ghastly consequences suffered by the subjects of his study. Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 113, 125n221, 135.

⁹⁶ Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 135-136. Elsewhere he reiterates the dangers of possessing the book merely for educational study. “I have often heard it said by a wife, ‘Since my husband brought the 6th and 7th Book of Moses into our home to study it, there has been nothing but unhappiness, quarrelling and discord in our family.’” Koch, *Devil’s Alphabet*, 86. The author of this thesis also possesses more than one copy for study (because each edition contained different material), with no ill-effects yet experienced.

⁹⁷ Not all Christian writers would agree with this no precedence claim. For example, in an apologetic for demonic territoriality (Ph.D. dissertation supervised by Peter Wagner), Siew argued for theriomorphic form in Azazel (KJV: scapegoat) sent into the desert (Lev 16:8-10). In my view, this is too great an interpretative leap especially given the uncertain etymology and attribution of Azazel and the lack of Jewish or Christian interpretative correspondence with pagan conceptions of Azazel. Siew also assigned anthropomorphic status to Satan and the Prince of Persia in Dan 10. Tye Yau Siew, “Spiritual Territoriality as a Premise for the Modern Spiritual Mapping Movement” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 87-88, and see Bernd Janowski, “Azazel,” *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed., eds. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 128-131, especially 130.

⁹⁸ Matt 8:29; Mark 1:24, 26; 5:7, 9; Luke 4:34, 35, 41; 8:28, 29; 9:42; Acts 8:7; 19:16. Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 224.

⁹⁹ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 228-230.

¹⁰⁰ The notion of sexual relations with demons goes back as far as Augustine (*City of God* 15:23) although Augustine seemed ambivalent on the concept. Burton Russell, *Satan*, 210n51.

¹⁰¹ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 133-136; Koch, *Devil’s Alphabet*, 145-146. Koch does cite Gen 6:4 (sons of God in sexual relations with the daughters of men) as evidence of the phenomenon but this much-discussed verse remains undetermined in meaning to the extent that it cannot legitimately be used as proof-text for sexual relations with demons.

shifting (therianthropy) appeared in a number of the stories.¹⁰² Koch's meeting with a Liberian district governor generated a number of anecdotes including the following:

A hunter had gone out hunting. His boy was carrying his gun for him. In the jungle they both caught sight of a leopard. The boy silently handed the hunter his gun. He raised it, took aim, and fired. At once he heard a woman's voice crying, "You are a murderer. You have shot me." Both hurried over to the wounded woman. The hunter asked the boy, "Did you not see a leopard?" "Yes, certainly." "I'm sure I did too. How can one explain this?" They gave the screaming woman first aid and took her back to the village. The relatives of the wounded woman took the hunter to court. The judge listened to the whole story, and then, to everyone's amazement, acquitted the hunter. As the reason for his verdict he said, "I know that the hunter is telling the truth. This woman was my first wife. I divorced her when I discovered that she could turn herself into a leopard." That is African justice. The governor finished the story by saying, "We in our government know that there are leopard people. So we have a law which prescribes the death penalty for such offences."¹⁰³

Aside from the remarkable coincidence of a judge presiding over a court case involving his ex-wife, nothing in scripture suggests the possibility of a human transforming into an animal under demonic influence.¹⁰⁴ A related theme is transference of energy to animals:

There are some powerful mediums, capable of materialization, who can split off energy when in a state of trance, and transfer this energy over to a cat which they then send out to annoy one of their neighbors. Milk and butter can disappear. Cows can be milked dry, and other things. If someone catches the cat and beats it, the blows affect the medium.¹⁰⁵

Koch's opinion on these stories was that even though western-educated minds might have difficulty believing such a story, travelling around to visit mission fields forces a change

¹⁰² Among the SWM writers, Cindy Jacobs also described shape-shifting, including details on exactly how witches undertake the process. Cindy Jacobs, *Deliver Us from Evil: Putting a Stop to the Occultic Influence Invading Your Home and Community* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), 87. See also George Otis Jr., *The Twilight Labyrinth: Why Does Spiritual Darkness Linger Where It Does?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1997), 31n17. There are some popular writers who speculate that "shape shifting" is indeed featured in the Bible, most notably the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus in the form of a dove, Jesus on the road to Emmaus who took a different form, or the concept of angels appearing in human form. Taken to its logical conclusion, Kenoticism also implies the same in Jesus the divine separating himself temporarily to take on human form before reverting again to the divine after the ascension.

¹⁰³ Koch, *Occult ABC*, 148. Note that verbatim quotes, as well as stylistic rendering (as seen in this example) can equate to novelization. Alternatively, if Koch did record the story-telling verbatim, the narrative bears hallmarks suggesting the possibility the governor was narrating a mytho-history that had intrinsic cultural meaning unrecognized by Koch.

¹⁰⁴ Koch does cite Acts 8:39-40 where Philip is transported away from the Ethiopian eunuch as an example of dematerialization. This appears in a wider discussion of materialization that includes animal metamorphosis. Among justifications from spiritism, parapsychology, and nuclear physics, Koch cites Einstein to demonstrate the theory of reciprocal conversion of energy and mass. Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 139-140.

¹⁰⁵ Koch, *Occult ABC*, 147.

in thinking.¹⁰⁶ In his view, all pagan countries were engulfed in death magic.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, 95% to 98% of people from the East were “mediumistically inclined” or had psychic powers compared to 5% or less of Westerners.¹⁰⁸

Ironically, while Koch demonstrated a thoroughly systematic and explanatory approach to his counselling theory, he had very little to say about the process of collecting and authenticating the anecdotes. He did claim integrity in the process:

Twenty-five years of gospel ministry at home and abroad granted shocking insights into spiritual maladies ... For years I have recorded and collected the most severe and striking instances of such maladies. “The pressing spiritual problem” of those seeking help gave the urge to select from that mass of material some six hundred cases of occult affliction and to submit them to critical testing and evaluation.¹⁰⁹

However, Koch never explained what sort of evaluation he undertook or what his processes of scrutiny were. He did include a section on the legal issues surrounding privacy as his rationale for removing identifying details.¹¹⁰ This meant the stories contained no particulars that allow examination or verification; neither did he reveal explicitly his sources. In spite of the difficulty of authenticating the anecdotes, some clues to the degree of his own scrutiny can be found in some better-known examples that he recorded.¹¹¹ For example, he described as “historical proof of actuality” the story of the medium Henry Slade, a convicted fraudster, who convinced astrophysicist Professor Karl Zöllner that he could psychically move objects and tie knots in ropes during séances where he demonstrated his spiritual powers.¹¹² A later investigation exposed Slade’s hoax and methods of trickery.¹¹³ Koch’s evaluation concludes: “Slade’s levitations and apport-phenomena aroused great amazement and could not, despite

¹⁰⁶ Koch, *Occult ABC*, 148.

¹⁰⁷ Koch, *Occult ABC*, 46.

¹⁰⁸ Koch, *Occult Bondage*, 39; Koch, *Occult ABC*, 8-9.

¹⁰⁹ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 19.

¹¹⁰ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 23-25. Koch asserted that he held statistical data about each story on file, but this probably consisted of his dates, locations, and the sources that told him the stories: Koch, *Occult ABC*, 2.

¹¹¹ Although there is space here to record only two examples, others include the story of Doreen Irvine whose fantastical exploits as a witch were inconsistent in subsequent retellings and for which no corroborating evidence for incidents that would have attracted public attention can be found. (Data held on file by the author of this thesis). Koch devotes several pages to reproducing sections from Irvine’s memoir. Koch, *Occult ABC*, 175-180; see Doreen Irvine, *From Witchcraft to Christ* (London: Concordia Publishing House, 1973).

¹¹² Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 32-33.

¹¹³ Klaus B. Staubermann, “Tying the Knot: Skill, Judgement and Authority in the 1870s Leipzig Spiritistic Experiments,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 34:1 (March 2001): 73-77. The general tone of public response to the experiments can be seen in a newspaper article that mocks Zöllner: “The Universal Answer,” *New York Times*, 17 November 1880, 4.

the best checks and controls, be unmasked as swindles or be explained rationally.”¹¹⁴ Koch seems not to have been aware of the very public scrutiny of the experiments and the culminating exposure of Slade’s deceit. Elsewhere Koch also accepted without questioning the explanation of “black mass” rites among the Knights Templar who were exterminated by King Philip IV of France.¹¹⁵ From the time of the events in the early 1300s (when contemporaneously many disbelieved the authenticity of the charges), historians have concurred that financial greed lay behind the torture and executions of members of this Christian order.¹¹⁶ Charges of satanic rituals were trumped up to conceal the truth. Koch’s repetition of the legend and further gruesome elaborations linking the Templars directly with Satan-worshippers in the USA are demonstrably erroneous.¹¹⁷

While it is a straightforward matter to assess the integrity of these two historical examples, it is more difficult to assess the narratives that he collected personally. There is no suggestion that he fabricated any of the material, but it does appear from his narration that he accepted each story as being reliable and true to fact without further interrogation. This included his unquestioning acceptance that each individual knew and represented accurately their family history over four generations. His enquiring approach to the stories was confined to declarations of diagnosis: he found some were not evidence of demonic assault but rather psychological disturbance.¹¹⁸ In lieu of documentary evidence to verify the stories, he tended to lend authority to the narrative by testifying the good character of the person telling the story. The leopard story told above is reinforced by the societal status of the story-teller, a Liberian district governor who was educated in Europe and who was a believing Christian.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 32-33. “Apport” means appearances or disappearances within closed environments. Koch’s extended discussion on materialization is partially based upon Zöllner’s “tests”: 137-139.

¹¹⁵ Koch, *Occult ABC*, 196. Koch described the Templars as founders of a “regular church of Satan” in the context of describing how “the history of the Christian church is full of Satanic and snake cults.”

¹¹⁶ Dan Jones, *The Templars: the Rise and Spectacular Fall of God's Holy Warriors* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2017), 314, 338-342. Compare Stephen Howarth, *The Knights Templar* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 253-254, 268-271, 283, 301-302. Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Canto XIX, completed just a few years later, demonstrates contemporary opinions as he places the key accusatory protagonists, Philip IV and Pope Clement V, in hell for the sin of simony.

¹¹⁷ Koch’s graphic rendition of the myth is reproduced in the police training manual by the City of Glendale Police Department, *Occult Criminal Investigation* (Rockvale, MD: National Institute of Justice, 1993), <<http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/publications/abstract.aspx?ID=149064>>, 3.

¹¹⁸ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 171. Explanations other than demonic influence also included drug-taking, tricks, synaesthesia (atypical activation of a second sense when another sense is stimulated), or sheer coincidence, 195-200.

¹¹⁹ Koch, *Occult ABC*, 148.

In others the narrator was identified as a professional: a doctor or a lawyer.¹²⁰ Even familial ties were drawn on to serve as testimony:

While lecturing just recently in New Zealand, I heard some very good reports of a certain psychiatrist living in Hamilton. He is the son of a minister and the brother of a bishop. This doctor claims that 50% of the neurotics being treated in the clinics in Hamilton are the fruit of Maori sorcery. The Maoris are the original inhabitants of New Zealand and there are many sorcerers to be found in their ranks.¹²¹

In a tale that many New Zealand psychiatrists or Māori might question for its authenticity, the testimony is suggestively strengthened by the family connections of the protagonist.

Some further aspects related to Koch's method deserve note, although space does not allow extended discussion here. The first highlights some potential issues with Koch's intellectual sources. Paradoxically, most of the sources that Koch heavily relied on for his theoretical framework were psychical researchers whose beliefs originated in nineteenth-century Spiritualist experimentation, the very activities that Koch opposed.¹²² Although he drew on some material from other Christian investigators of the same phenomena, those he most frequently cited were an unusual mix of authorities. In particular these were parapsychologist Karl Schmëing, a specialist in "second sight"; experimental parapsychologist Hans Bender, whose particular interests were poltergeists and clairvoyance; Gerhard Kloos, a Nazi psychiatrist who was involved with euthanizing disabled children; parapsychologist Rudolph Tischner, an experimenter with clairvoyance; T.K. Österreich, an often-quoted professor of philosophy and psychical researcher; and Enno Nielsen. The latter is a pseudonym for publisher Wilhelm Langewiesche, who issued storybook collections of fairytales and legends involving all types of supernatural identities such as ghosts, angels, werewolves, or clairvoyants. Koch also cited Alfred Lechler, a psychoanalyst with similar views to Koch and with whom he collaborated.

These sources stimulated Koch's views on some concepts that were in vogue in the first half of the twentieth century but would be rejected by most thinkers today. For example, ideas of human physical characteristics that could indicate intellectual ability or emotional

¹²⁰ For example, Koch, *Occult ABC*, 148, 167.

¹²¹ Koch, *Occult Bondage*, 31.

¹²² Gardner Murphy, *Challenge of Psychical Research: A Primer of Parapsychology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 2.

traits, often to the detriment of the person being examined, were rife.¹²³ Koch's expression of these ideas included the division into "types" and the concept (taken from Schmëing) of "heliogenic" acceleration of development in people from southern regions and "scotiogenic" (*sic*) retardation of maturity with associated youthful characteristics in northern peoples.¹²⁴ In addition, Schmëing's concept of dosing with calcium to improve clairvoyance had an impact on Koch's evaluation of his cases.¹²⁵ For example, he tells the story of "A man constitutionally of Nordic type, tall, blond, with blue eyes, austere, and reserved."¹²⁶ This man was troubled by visions of people from the past and of ghostly funeral processions. One apparition was of a former fellow soldier who blamed the visionary for his presence in hell and demanded the man visit his widow to ensure she converted to avoid the same fate. The visionary had a history of depression and suicidal thoughts from his youth that had vanished when he became a Christian, so Koch ruled out "nervous affliction." Even though he was not predisposed to "second sight" because the soil and water in his region was alkaline, he was however inclined because of his "scotio-genic" retardation of development due to being Nordic. In terms of type, Koch found this man to be T-type, with a B-type twist.¹²⁷ However, as with many of his cases, in the end Koch's final diagnosis came down to four generations of infection by the *Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses*.¹²⁸ In five pages of analysing the man's troubles, Koch did not consider the possibility of war-induced trauma even though he knew the man had fought in WW1.¹²⁹ After prayer to remove the clairvoyance from the man's life, Koch's final conclusion was that he was healed.¹³⁰

¹²³ Most notoriously this methodology was practised by Nazi scientists but all indications are that Koch was more influenced by the general thinking of the period rather than specifically the Nazi-era events in his own country.

¹²⁴ Heliogenic: pertaining to exposure to the sun. Scotogenic: a term used in the science of physics to explain dark matter. For explanation see Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 201-202. (Koch variously uses "scotiogenic" and "scotio-genic").

¹²⁵ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 201-202. These environmental issues led Schmëing to identify a "magic ring" around the Baltic Sea, 105, 202.

¹²⁶ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 54.

¹²⁷ Tetanoid (T-type): have dull receding eyes, pinched grim face, stiff, angular, awkward, clumsy movements, and are reserved, mistrusting, timid, insecure, uncongenial, and unintegrated. Basedowoid (B-type): marked by large, shining eyes, are lively, outgoing, conversational, confiding, and well integrated; Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 56.

¹²⁸ Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 55.

¹²⁹ Koch failed to keep up with important developments in the science of psychology, especially in non-German sectors, perhaps because he focused so intently on the paranormal and parapsychological. By the time he was practising, much greater understanding of the psychology of trauma had emerged, especially in the work of Abram Kardiner first published in 1941. Previous to this, there was very little acknowledgement or understanding of trauma, especially in regard to WWI soldiers. For Kardiner's widespread influence see Bessel

In considering Koch's work, we need to account for the view of scholars who research firstly the processes behind the development of folklore and secondly the issues around oral transmission of narratives. As will be shown below, these two issues have direct implications for the way the SWM thinkers formulated conceptions that were based on Koch's significant influence. Therefore, the interface between the secular understanding of folklore and the "flood of magic" imbued with demonic power that characterized Koch's worldview requires delineation.¹³¹ Folklorist Bill Ellis writes: "Folklore by definition is the part of culture characterized by small-group choice in the face of institutions who impose formal creeds, rules, and laws."¹³² It functions to maintain group identity, explain concepts and scenarios, and resolve conflict. It assists with regaining control in times of threatening social stresses. It does not survive if it no longer serves a purpose.¹³³ In other words, it expresses an anxiety specific to a particular place and time and is part of a "cultural 'belief-language' that helps individuals make sense of disorienting and stressful experiences."¹³⁴ One type can be seen in stories of farmers faced with sudden and inexplicable sickness in their animals.¹³⁵ Although oral traditions concerning the devil and witchcraft were part of a community's "normal cultural language," periodic explosions of witch crazes occurred as the result of a temporary syncretism that arose from the higher-educated classes coming into connection with the cultural milieu of the community that lived within its folklore traditions.¹³⁶ "Diabolization" of

A. van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane and Lars Weisaeth, *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996), 56-58. For historical discussion on psychological trauma in soldiers, see Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (London: Pandora, 2001), 20-28, 53-54, 57, and especially 58 for connections between symptom patterns and childhood history, issues that Koch disregarded because of his tendentious approach.

¹³⁰ This event took place in 1938; Koch wrote up his analysis of the man's story for his 1956 thesis, first published in German (1959) then in English (1965). Even as the understanding of human psychology grew in leaps and bounds during this period, Koch appeared not to have reflected on or revised his own psychological opinions. Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 54-59.

¹³¹ Ellis, "Civitas Diaboli," 81. Note however, that spiritualism, folklore, and paranormal experimentation were widespread in German culture particularly from the mid-1800s on, hence not unreasonably giving rise to Koch's perception of a "flood of magic." For comment on Germany's fertile ground for these types of idea, see also Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 57.

¹³² Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 1-2.

¹³³ For further development of Ellis's argument that these cultural traditions can in fact operate with positive function in a community, see Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, xvii; Ellis, "Civitas Diaboli," 78-79.

¹³⁴ Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 4.

¹³⁵ Lowke describes this type of scenario in his home region of the Barossa Valley where amid stories of chickens dying after neighbourly hexing, a potential explanation of metal poisoning after pecking at welding residue eventually emerged. Lowke, "Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses," 75.

¹³⁶ Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 2. Burnett argues for less discrete categories of class than Ellis implies. Writing from a Christian and missiological perspective, he allows for a "permeable" relationship between educated elite and illiterate villagers that exists as "two currents of thought and action, distinguishable, yet ever flowing into and

folklore arises where some credence is given to folk beliefs by the encroacher but then whose particular interpretations become cultural catalysts that allow scape-goating of the folklore traditions (for example, see Appendix A).¹³⁷ Viewed in light of Hiebert's explanation of the "excluded middle" this secular viewpoint provides a warning as to how interpretative processes can become distorted by etic approaches that do not account for pre-existing worldviews in the observer.

A further complication arises when we consider the issues surrounding oral transmission of narratives, such as those told to Koch about personal family histories or stories of events surrounding others. A significant body of work across a number of disciplines describes the shortcoming of oral histories; this information must also inform the discussion of transmission in folklore. Psychologist Daniel Schacter explains that "We do not store judgment-free snapshots of our past experiences but rather hold on to the meaning, sense, and emotions these experiences provided us."¹³⁸ Archivist Wolfgang Weber writes that oral sources are "intentional, selective, reflective, retrospective and produced light years away from the actual event."¹³⁹ Historian David Bankier warns that "memory is not a reproduction of reality but rather a symbolic mediation and elaboration of meaning with imagination guiding the perception of reality."¹⁴⁰ And from the field of qualitative research, Yvonna Lincoln reminds us that any texts (including narratives) must be considered partial and incomplete. Texts that claim to be whole and complete truth are specious, inauthentic, and

out of each other." David G. Burnett, "Spiritual Conflict and Folk Religion," in *Lausanne Missional Content Library*, 22 August 2000 <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/folk-religion>> (16 October 2019), 2.

¹³⁷ Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 3; Ellis, "Civitas Diaboli," 80. Often the victims of this scape-goating were singled out and labelled as deviant for political, economic, or gender reasons. In more recent times, to these could be added ethnic/racial and religious categories, for example as seen in the doctrine of territorial spirits where indigenous art or culture is regarded as a source of demonic influence. See Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 156-159; Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 238; Lorenzo, "Evangelizing a City Dedicated to Darkness," 175; also see 225-226 by Wagner in the same volume, and Wagner's associates Eddie and Alice Smith, *Spiritual House Cleaning* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003), 61-62. Kraft described cultural items from "non-Western" societies brought home to the United States being the means of unwittingly inviting enemy spirits into the home. In a discussion that also included American Indians he specified a number of objects, from religious or warfare items to implements for seeking food, and canoes. The Native/American Indian culture was a particular target. For just two examples, Wagner repeated a declaration that there is a "demon prince over each [American] Indian village," and Kraft identified respective demons of Rage and an "American Indian spirit" in a man named Jim. Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 63; Kraft, *The Evangelical's Guide*, 98-99; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 126.

¹³⁸ Daniel Schacter, *Searching for Memory: the Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York, 1996), p. 5.

¹³⁹ Wolfgang Weber, "Mass of Trash" or "Veins of Gold"?: *An Investigative Report on the Relationship Between Oral History and Archives* (Regensburg, S. Roderer Verlag, 2000), 28.

¹⁴⁰ David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 118.

misleading.¹⁴¹ In consideration of Koch's collection and transcription of his cases we need to recognize that folklore or any kind of narrative based on memory is highly likely to contain confusions or generalizations caused by conscious or sub-conscious "touching up" of the narrative. Rumours may or may not be true. Furthermore, we must remember that socio-cultural, historical, and psychological or emotional factors are at play in any reconstruction and externalizing of an account.¹⁴² All of these cautions must be kept in mind as we consider Koch's methodology and the legacy he passed on to the writers of the SWM.

The goal of examining Kurt Koch's books is not to reach a verdict about the authenticity of his material or to determine the validity of his conclusions.¹⁴³ Rather, the objective is to determine his legacy. How did Koch's foundational principles contribute to the formation of ideas about the demonic in SWM writers? Before locating the specific elements, we need to establish just how pervasive was his influence.

Koch's influence on beliefs about demonology and Satanism in the later twentieth century should not be underestimated. Much of his material and analysis would be enough to set a reader's head spinning with incredulity and exhaustion over the sheer number of horrifying experiences spelt out in chilling detail throughout his books. But what is surprising is the enormous influence and tremendous respect accorded him by acknowledged experts in the field of demonology, from academic commentators all the way through popular circles and in both secular and Christian sectors. Ellis maintains that Koch was a "pivotal but neglected catalyst" who played a central role in starting the "Satanism Scare" of the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁴⁴ The extent of his authority can be seen in a 1993 police training manual

¹⁴¹ Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 1:3 (September 1995): 280.

¹⁴² This of course does not imply that memories have no value. Even if they are not factually accurate, they may still carry therapeutic value. Counsellors and psychologists recognise that in the process of healing, the emotional responses to and phobic affect of memories carry more weight than their historical reliability. Specifically in relation to cases of Satanic Ritual Abuse during the "satanic panic" see the comment by psychologist John Kelley cited in Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 211-212.

¹⁴³ Some might argue that even if Koch's work were to be assessed as flawed, still he made significant contributions to specific aspects of the problem. This is exemplified in an essay by psychiatrist John White who draws on Koch's material about how to make a spiritual and therapeutic approach to those who struggle with demonic encounters. However, the question arises as to whether the greater weight lies with the beneficial aspects or the flaws in Koch's material, and also if Koch was the best source available for research on therapeutic methodologies. White, "Problems and Procedures in Exorcism," 296.

¹⁴⁴ Ellis, "Civitas Diaboli," 81; Bill Ellis, "Why Is a Lucky Rabbit's Foot Lucky? Body Parts as Fetishes," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39:1 (1 January 2002): 79. For Ellis' prominent placement of Koch within the genealogy of Christian writers on the occult see Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 87-89.

published in the USA. The manual contains advice for criminal investigations suspected to be occult-based. It includes information on how to recognize occult signs and symbols at a crime scene, what evidence to locate on a dead body, and what to record on a search warrant. The opening pages of the manual give an historical overview and “common signs of deviant pagan and Satanic practices” all of which are taken directly from the pages of Koch’s *Occult ABC*.¹⁴⁵ However, Koch’s most significant impact was on the Christian understanding of spiritual warfare in the latter decades of the twentieth century. That he achieved respectability among academics is demonstrated by six contributors referencing his books in the published proceedings of the well-known 1975 Christian Medical Society symposium on demonism.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, if we trace back through previous generations of influence on the SWM, Koch’s presence is felt at each stage. His books often appeared in bibliographies or were cited by spiritual warfare writers.¹⁴⁷ Timothy Warner, himself an influence on SWM thought, was one such example. He had experienced no contact with demonic forces during his missionary years in Sierra Leone but upon his return to the USA one day he picked up a copy of Koch’s *Between Christ and Satan*; a book that “blew my mind.”¹⁴⁸ When interviewed by Michael Cuneo, he said: “The biggest impact on us [deliverance ministers] was Kurt Koch. We cut our eyeteeth on his books. Pretty well all of us were influenced by Koch.”¹⁴⁹ The most direct intellectual sources for the writers in Wagner’s circle (Mark Bubeck, Merrill Unger, and Fred

¹⁴⁵ Glendale Police, *Occult Criminal Investigation*, 1-5; Koch, *Occult ABC*, 195-199.

¹⁴⁶ John Warwick Montgomery, ed., *Demon Possession: A Medical, Historical, Anthropological and Theological Symposium* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1976). In 1975, a conference sponsored by the Christian Medical Society drew together, by invitation only, twenty-five professionals from diverse fields to spend four days pondering the issues surrounding the symposium’s title: “A Theological, Psychological, Medical Symposium on the Phenomena Labeled as ‘Demonic.’” The conference essays were eventually published; the resultant book was highly respected and valued as the product of a gathering of distinguished academic minds. Holvast notes that Kraft and Wagner used this book in their courses at Fuller seminary: Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 129.

¹⁴⁷ In addition to those who will be specifically mentioned later, some examples are: Michael Harper, *Spiritual Warfare* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 103 (demonization of Christians); Bubeck, *The Adversary*, 125 (how to tell whether something is demonic or not); Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 225n25 (ability of demons to have sexual relations with humans); 431n11 (demonization of Christians); Wimber, *Power Healing*, 124n13 (demonization of Christians); Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 66 (demonization of Christians); Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 168, 176, 193 (Indonesian stories and demonization of Christians). In his list of eight influential books published in the 1970s, Kraft erroneously describes Koch as a medical doctor. Kraft, “Contemporary Trends,” 9.

¹⁴⁸ Warner, “Spiritual Warfare Conference,” 6:26ff. This comment reflects a pattern of ideas about demons that seemed to develop among SWM American missionaries only upon return to their home culture.

¹⁴⁹ Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 231.

Dickason) used Koch as a source for their material. Dickason and Unger in particular drew heavily on Koch; in each book citations from Koch numbered in the dozens.¹⁵⁰

The significance of Koch's impact comprises two facets: not only were his anecdotes a rich source of evidence for demonic effect on believers (and often were cited as such), but Koch modelled approaches to his conclusions that were consistently followed by his successors. The first aspect he modelled was an *a priori* approach to his material. In his own telling, his entire career was shaped by a single moment of realisation. This underpinned a lifetime of assumptions about what causes trouble in the life of believers and non-believers alike. His assumptions about the power of *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* remained the pattern for each subsequent case history he encountered, notwithstanding the semblance of careful and systematic exposition in his books. His diagnoses arguably were more reflective of his own worldview to the detriment of objective analysis in the presenting case histories. This led to a second problem: he did not acknowledge the boundaries between human myth-making and reality. Therefore, he modelled unexamined acceptance of folklore, myths, legends, and specious or fallacious scientific claims. This is not to suggest that he never encountered genuine demonic activity in the lives of his clients; it should not be ruled out as possible that he did from time to time. The problematic aspect was that he was unable to recognise differences between the real and the mythological.¹⁵¹ The consequence of this was a third problem: he consistently overlooked possible alternative explanations, for example, issues of human imagination, emotionalism, suggestibility, illness, trauma, cultural pressures, faulty memory, misconception, or delusion.¹⁵² This forces a spotlight on a fourth concern, that

¹⁵⁰ In some relevant chapters, over 50% of Unger's footnotes consisted of references to Koch's material. See later in the section for further discussion on these writers. Bubeck, *The Adversary*; Merrill F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971); Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints*; C. Fred Dickason, *Angels Elect & Evil* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975); Dickason, *Demon Possession*.

¹⁵¹ Again, by using the term "mythological" here I do not imply "false" but rather narrative that carries meaning to explain the unexplainable. For a useful explanation of "myth" see A. Scott Moreau, "Religious Borrowing as a Two-Way Street: An Introduction to Animistic Tendencies in the Euro-North American Context," in *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series #2, eds. Edward Rommen and Harold Netland (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 169.

¹⁵² Koch was scornful of psychiatric opinion and saw little distinction between the demythologization of Rudolf Bultmann ("spiritual whoredom") and medical opinions about causes of mental illnesses. For example, a factor that he did not build into his thinking was the emergent understanding in psychiatry about the causes of trauma. The work of Jean-Martin Charcot in the late nineteenth century (later progressed by Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud) centred on the hysteria phenomenon that "possessed" many of their clients. Eventually, hysteria came to be understood as caused by psychological trauma; a significant precipitant was identified as childhood sexual abuse. Victims had no other means of expressing their trauma until the development of the "talking cure" that became modern psychotherapy. The clash of worldviews between Koch and psychiatry is exemplified by a 1960s post-lecture discussion where a psychiatrist described a case as hysteria causing dissociation. Koch

of his interview techniques, an issue that later came under widespread scrutiny in the fallout from the Satanic Panic era.¹⁵³ Schacter described how factors of suggestive questioning, efforts of recall and conjecture, and faith in God's revelation can mutually reinforce each other to construct a subjective recollection that reassuringly can be believed as accurate.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, living with emotional stresses such as depression (as were many of Koch's clients) tends towards "biased encoding," which entails focus on negative themes in everyday events and over-generalizing of personal experiences. This "mood-congruent retrieval" can also distort accurate recall of childhood experiences.¹⁵⁵ In terms of the role of the counsellor, Judith Herman warned of the "desire for certainty" in therapeutic situations similar to those that Koch operated within: "Zealous conviction can all too easily replace an open, inquiring attitude."¹⁵⁶ Given the understanding that has emerged from psychology research on the risks inherent in these client-counsellor relationships, Koch's approach was problematic.¹⁵⁷ Fifthly, Koch was a product of theoretical construal common in the years that preceded his era but problematically he remained so, even when in his lifetime these became recognized as outmoded. Koch modelled for his successors a cloistered and monolingual type of critical thinking that failed to acknowledge wider sources of knowledge.¹⁵⁸ This impediment

insisted this was a clear case of demon possession. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 10-13; Koch, *Occult ABC*, 47-49; Koch, *Between Christ and Satan*, 24.

¹⁵³ Two of the most notorious (of many) examples highlighting the phenomenon of faulty interview techniques are found firstly in the case of *Michelle Remembers*, a book detailing psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder's therapy sessions with a patient (and his soon-to-be wife) where she "recovered" memories of years of ritual satanic abuse in her childhood. Pazder always insisted that his processes and her accounts were authentic but subsequent investigations uncovered evidence that demonstrated the impossibility of Michelle's memories being truthful. The second was the McMartin Preschool court case where counsellors claimed that children had been subjected to grotesque sexual and satanic abuse over a period of years. Pazder was a consultant in the long-running proceedings (1983-1990) that eventually saw the charges dropped due to a lack of any evidence related to the extremely bizarre accusations. For an overview of the extensive research on the social and psychological issues that emerged see David Frankfurter, "The Satanic Ritual Abuse Panic as Religious-Studies Data," *Numen* 50:1 (January 2003), 108-117. For research describing the problematic interviewing techniques and the results of applying the techniques in controlled experiments, see Sena Garven, et al., "More than Suggestion: The Effect of Interviewing Techniques from the McMartin Preschool Case." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 83:3 (June 1998): 347-359. For the British equivalent see William Thompson, "Charismatic Politics: The Social and Political Impact of Renewal," in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 178-179.

¹⁵⁴ Schacter, *Searching for Memory*, 130-132.

¹⁵⁵ Schacter, *Searching for Memory*, 211-212.

¹⁵⁶ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 180.

¹⁵⁷ For example, Ricoeur's critique methodology of approaching material with a "hermeneutic of suspicion" emerged during Koch's publishing heyday but there is no evidence that Koch widened his own intellectual formulation to include advancements in theory.

¹⁵⁸ Koch completed his Th.D. thesis, the foundation for his future career, in 1956. Therefore, his research and writing occurred in the early-to-mid 1950s. *Christian Counseling and Occultism* (1965) was the translation of the thesis. Some points of vulnerability in Koch's overall presentation can be found in his bibliography. It lists almost exclusively German works that were weighted heavily towards parapsychology, the paranormal, magical

compounded when his progeny failed to comprehend this factor and neglected to view his work in light of updated perspectives. Each of these characteristics can be detected in Koch's successors. In the hands of SWM writers who then extrapolated toward their own bias, Koch's theories became radicalized.

The historical intellectual sources, in particular Penn-Lewis, Koch, and Hammond, provided a foundation for SWM thinking. Their influence continued to permeate the developments in SWM thought and on this the SWM writers built a theological framework. It is to this structure that we now turn.

Three Pillars Supporting the Theory of Demonization

All SWM writers who argued the case for demons inhabiting Christians acknowledged that there is little or no support in scripture for the concept. They were quick to point out that neither did scripture support the concept that Christians could *not* be demon-possessed but this also forced them into having to argue from the silence in scripture. As a result, their doctrine of demon inhabitation of Christians balances precariously on theories of the tripartite nature of man, an adjusted interpretation of a Greek verb, and the formulation of varying levels of demonic invasion in Christians.

Tripartite Human Nature

A theory of human nature as tripartite makes it possible to account for the notion of a Christian inhabited by both the Holy Spirit and a demon at the same time. Jessie Penn-Lewis did not argue the semantics of the term "possession" as her successors did but she did lay the groundwork for future developments in the theory of possession in Christians, thereby becoming an intellectual predecessor to Kraft, Wagner, and their colleagues. She taught the tripartite (trichotomist) nature of humans, derived from Platonic thought, that spirit, soul, and body are separate elements in a person.¹⁵⁹ She took the view that the spirit dominates the soul,

practices, superstition, and occult practices; one of the few exceptions was the German translation of Penn-Lewis's *War on the Saints*. Combined with his own predispositions, this resulted in a constricted viewpoint that seemed not to account for progressions in psychological or psychiatric thought, non-German sources, or wider theological considerations.

¹⁵⁹ This view is rejected by many theologians but has been popularly held at specific points in Christian history. For one argument against its validity see Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 204-209. Grudem also discusses the issue at length and concludes with the

and the soul (mind) controls the body.¹⁶⁰ The place where the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian is in the spirit.¹⁶¹ This opens the way to allowing Christians to be possessed. Even if the Holy Spirit inhabits one place, Satan can freely enter via the other two:

A believer baptised in the Holy Ghost, and *indwelt by God in the inner shrine of the spirit* can be deceived into admitting evil spirits into his being; and be possessed, in varying degrees, by demons, even whilst in the centre he is a sanctuary of the Spirit of God; God working in, and through his spirit, and the evil spirits in, or through, mind, or body, or both. From such possessed believers there can proceed, at intervals, *streams from the two sources of power*; one from the Spirit of God in the centre, and the other from an evil spirit in the outer man.¹⁶²

However, later in the book, she discussed how even the spirit of a believer is vulnerable:

When the Holy Spirit takes the spirit of man as His sanctuary, evil spirits attack the spirit to get it out of co-working with God. They first get access to mind or body, their object being to close the outlet of the Spirit of God dwelling at the centre; or when the man is “spiritual,” and the mind and body is subservient to the spirit, the spiritual forces of Satan can come into DIRECT CONTACT with the spirit, and then follows the “wrestling” referred to by Paul (Eph. 6:12).¹⁶³

In other words, the life at the centre of a believer, where he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, becomes imprisoned by the evil spirit, therefore making all previous spiritual growth of no value in Christian service.¹⁶⁴

This then, was the first pillar in the doctrine of demon activity in Christians.

Subsequent authors reiterated the trichotomist view.¹⁶⁵ Frank Hammond admitted that the

interesting comment that a trichotomist viewpoint lends itself to anti-intellectualism because it holds that the spirit relates most directly to God and is separate from the intellect, emotions, and will. This risks neglect of sound study, teaching, or doctrine, a perception of academic enquiry as unspiritual, and a failure to exercise mature wisdom, all because of undue reliance on spiritual discernment. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 482.

¹⁶⁰ She gave a detailed description of how this works (“simple Bible psychology”) in Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 81-82. Penn-Lewis quotes her own sources of information as Murray and Fausett, see Andrew Murray, *The Spirit of Christ* (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1888), 333-334, and Fausett in Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausett and David Brown, *A Commentary: Critical, Practical and Explanatory on The Old and New Testaments: Vol. 4: Galatians-Revelation*. (Toledo, OH: Jerome B. Names & Co., 1884), 504-505. Fausett’s exegesis in particular highlights the exegetical and hermeneutically problematic culture of Penn-Lewis’s theological community.

¹⁶¹ Jessie Penn-Lewis, “Spiritual Things to the Spiritual,” *The Overcomer* 3:9 (September 1911), 135.

¹⁶² Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 98-99. Italics hers. The location of evil spirits is in “the very structure of the human frame ... the spinal column, nervous system, and deepest nerve centres ... from the ganglionic nerve centre located in the bowels ... to the cerebral nerve centre in the head, the eyes, ears, neck, jaws, tongue, muscles of the face, and delicate nerve tissues of the brain,” 163.

¹⁶³ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 216. Capitalisation hers.

¹⁶⁴ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 118.

¹⁶⁵ The view is still held by many in the present day; of the authors discussed in this thesis, the most recent is Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth: A Practical Guide to a Life of Miracles* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2003), 33.

theory of demons who indwell Christians was (necessarily) based primarily on the “clear understanding of the difference between soul and spirit” before outlining the tripartite doctrine.¹⁶⁶ Inadvertently highlighting discrepancies in beliefs among writers about the physical location of demons, Hammond was unambiguous with his own opinion: “Demons can indwell any part of the human body. One of the favourite areas seems to be the lower abdomen.”¹⁶⁷ Kenneth McAll, quoting a French neurologist, claimed that demons enter via an area that lies between the body and soul, especially when a person has been weakened by illness; the person may not necessarily be sinful in themselves.¹⁶⁸ Nearly all the other important contributors to the SWM doctrine of demon possession asserted the same position, with some tying the tripartite doctrine directly to arguments for demonization in Christians or attributing their source as Watchman Nee, a follower of Penn-Lewis’s writing.¹⁶⁹ The one exception was Fred Dickason, who criticized both Mark Bubeck and Merrill Unger for their trichotomist perspective.¹⁷⁰ This placed him in a challenging position as it meant that, unlike the others, he could not rely on the tripartite doctrine to explain how spatially demons could occupy humans in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. Of the writers examined here, Dickason was the most equivocal about demons inhabiting Christians (see discussion below). However, on balance he believed that it was more likely than not. Given his inability to employ trichotomy to justify his position he relied instead on arguments from (flawed) logic, asserting varying degrees of demonization (see below) and drawing on his experience.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 136-138.

¹⁶⁷ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 80.

¹⁶⁸ R. K. McAll, “Demonosis or the Possession Syndrome,” *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 17:2 (April 1971): 154.

¹⁶⁹ Bubeck, *The Adversary*, 39, 88; Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints*, 86-87; Thomas B. White, *The Believer’s Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1990), 46; Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 434-435; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 67. One question left unaddressed pertained to the Holy Spirit’s position and role in the life of a Christian who is demonized.

¹⁷⁰ Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 135-138. Philosopher/Theologian Nancey Murphy asserts that “no one in academia is a trichotomist” which begs the question of how she would view Unger and Ed Murphy as they both subscribed to the tripartite theory, earned advanced post-graduate degrees, and worked in academia. Nancey Murphy, “Theology, Science and Human Nature,” in *Science and Religion in Dialogue*, Vol. 2, ed. Melville Y. Stewart (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 741.

¹⁷¹ For one example: Dickason presented a syllogism that he claimed to represent the argument of those who deny a Christian can be indwelt by a demon: “Major premise: God cannot dwell with evil. Minor premise: God dwells in every believer. Conclusion: Therefore a demon (evil) cannot dwell in any believer.” Brackets his. He declared the major premise invalid therefore rendering the conclusion invalid. However, his argument was compromised by failing to demonstrate that the syllogism is indeed an accurate representation of the opposing view as well as failing to define his terms. He also had to acknowledge that disproving the syllogism does not necessarily prove the case *for* demon inhabitation. Ed Murphy attempted to reproduce the same argument but with his own wording: Major: Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Minor: The Holy Spirit cannot

Daimonizomai

The second pillar was a semantic line of reasoning that emerged over a single word: the Greek verb δαιμονιζομαι (*daimonizomai*).¹⁷² Historically, Nevius had made a passing comment on the inadequacy of the English translation “possessed by a demon” (from *daimonizomai*) and suggested that a more suitable rendering might be “demonized.”¹⁷³ But any significance in this comment was considerably enhanced in later years. By discarding previous translations and re-phrasing the implications of the word *daimonizomai*, writers were able to build a doctrine that allowed for a nuanced interpretation of how demons can inhabit Christians.¹⁷⁴ Reinterpretation of *daimonizomai* emerged first in the writing of the SWM’s intellectual sources (Unger, Bubeck, and Dickason) before the SWM writers reiterated the point and made it central to their arguments.

Nevius’ view was followed by Merrill Unger when he published his 1945 Th.D. thesis as *Biblical Demonology*.¹⁷⁵ He stated that the use of the word “possession” originated with Josephus from whence it passed into ecclesiastical history.¹⁷⁶ Unger’s explanation was worded thus: “The New Testament speaks of those who ‘have a spirit, or a demon, or demons, or an unclean spirit,’ but principally of people who are ‘demonized’ (*daimonizomenoi*) as applying to persons suffering from physical disease or mental derangement, under the possession of

dwell with demons. Conclusion: Christians cannot have demons. He then sought to disprove the first syllogism by presenting a second that substituted the word “sin” for “demons” in the minor premise and the conclusion, thereby creating a clear fallacy. While based on logic, his argument nevertheless falls over because of his failure to differentiate the semantic spaces between the two syllogisms, a point that Dickason inadvertently drew attention to in his own argument by noting the ambiguity of “dwell.” Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 131-133; Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 431. Note that even if a syllogism is logically valid, that does not necessarily make it true: see D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 96.

¹⁷² Thirteen instances of the verb *daimonizomai* occur in the NT: Matt 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; Mark 1:32; 5:15, 16, 18; Luke 8:36; John 10:21. Six of these pertain to the incident at the Gadarenes.

¹⁷³ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 264. Following on from Nevius’ comments, this discussion bypassed Penn-Lewis simply because she had neither the education nor the knowledge of Greek to be able to articulate any thoughts on the matter.

¹⁷⁴ The opposing theory (of demons in relation to Christians) holds that Christians can only be externally harassed (oppression). Internal habitation (possession) is possible only in those who are not sealed by the Holy Spirit (as are all Christians). This view is held by writers who are more likely to be from non-Pentecostal/charismatic backgrounds. As with the alternate view, this opinion also has to contend with the silence of Scripture. However generally it tends to seek scriptural support more than the SWM argument does. One variation allows for “obsession” that distinguishes between “no fault” oppression and control by demonic forces due to sin, weakness, lack of willpower, or illness, depending on who is advocating the proposition. For an early expression of this see J.A. MacMillan, “Obsession,” *The Alliance Weekly* 83:36 (4 September 1948): 566.

¹⁷⁵ Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1952).

¹⁷⁶ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 90.

demons or evil spirits.”¹⁷⁷ His rendering “demonized ... under the possession of demons” allowed for the continued use of the word “possession” in his material, as also with Nevius who, in spite of his reservations about the translation, continued to use the word nevertheless. Unger saw the problem of temptation into repeated sin as the means by which Satan could demonstrate his power over individuals but also pointed out that NT exorcisms were nearly all performed among the “rude and half-Gentile populations of Galilee,” thereby drawing attention to the connection with paganism.¹⁷⁸ Further to this, he was clear that while unbelievers are vulnerable to possession, believers are not: “In the one case, the personality is actually invaded, the body inhabited, and a dominating control is gained; while in the other instance, attack is made from without, through pressure, suggestion, and temptation.”¹⁷⁹ Two of these points became significant in light of his later stance on the issue. First was his assertion of “perfect similarity of the facts” between the biblical accounts and constancy throughout history in the centuries since.¹⁸⁰ Second, his agreement with Nevius and in accord with scriptural description led to his claim that demon possession is revealed in the place where the gospel collides with paganism; in support of this he quoted from a number of missionary letters describing the phenomenon.¹⁸¹ His summary of the discussion was clear:

To demon possession only unbelievers are exposed; to demon influence, both believers and unbelievers ... The very nature of the believer’s salvation, as embracing the regenerating, sealing, indwelling, and filling ministry of the Holy Spirit, placing him “in Christ,” eternally and unforfeitably, is sufficient explanation why he is not liable to demon inhabitation ... The believer, we may confidently rest assured, although perpetually faced with the subtle power and cunning of the foe from without, is shielded from the enemy within the gates.¹⁸²

To the surprise of many, Unger amended this stance in later years.¹⁸³ Although his shift was triumphantly hailed by SWM writers as evidence of an authoritative voice crossing

¹⁷⁷ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 90.

¹⁷⁸ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 93-94. Skarsaune concurs: Skarsaune, “Possession and Exorcism,” 14-15.

¹⁷⁹ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 100.

¹⁸⁰ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 84-85.

¹⁸¹ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 86-90.

¹⁸² Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 100.

¹⁸³ Note that Michael Harper predated Unger in questioning the translation of *daimonizomai* and potentially might have been influential also in developing the new line of reasoning to justify demons indwelling Christians; Derek Prince made the same point in a pamphlet at about the same time. Harper, *Spiritual Warfare*, 109-110 and see 11-12 for his account of a demonized minister at a 1965 meeting conducted by Dennis Bennett, who many credit with instigating the charismatic renewal in the early 1960s; Derek Prince, *Expelling Demons: An Introduction into Practical Demonology* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Derek Prince Publications, 1970), 7-8.

into their camp, in fact Unger's move was more cautious than suggested.¹⁸⁴ He explained that after *Biblical Demonology* was published, he received many letters from missionaries who told of witnessing re-possession among converts from idolatrous cultures.¹⁸⁵ Technically this did not contradict his previous stance or that of Nevius.¹⁸⁶ But it did lead to an admission that "this statement [about believers' safety] was inferred, since scripture does not clearly settle the question. It was based on the assumption that an evil spirit could not indwell the redeemed body together with the Holy Spirit."¹⁸⁷ By this time, he had read J.A. MacMillan and Kurt Koch and thenceforth he relied heavily on these sources; in particular he cited Koch repeatedly.¹⁸⁸ In the face of what he saw as new evidence from the missionaries and influenced by MacMillan and Koch, he took a more speculative tone in *Demons in the World Today* (1971).¹⁸⁹ He described meeting a depressed young man who under questioning informed Unger that his grandparents had sought to kill his mother using black magic. Unger, slightly prevaricating, concluded: "We do not know whether such aggravated cases of demon influence go deeper than external pressure, suggestion, and temptation. They apparently do,

¹⁸⁴ Kraft overstates Unger's shift, variously describing it as "abandoning" or "reversing" his former position, and lists Unger's "conversion" as one factor that contributes to the overall verdict that "we can be dogmatic" about asserting demonization in Christians. Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 34, 61, 64, 66; Kraft, "Contemporary Trends," 7. On several occasions Kraft claimed that Unger's move occurred after a member of his immediate family became demonized, an assertion unsupported in Unger's writing and unlikely to have been communicated privately to Kraft as Unger's death predates Kraft's involvement in the topic.

¹⁸⁵ Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 117. This draws attention to Unger's shift towards acceptance of accounts of experiences over biblical scholarship.

¹⁸⁶ Both Unger and Nevius had recorded that the state of possession did not return "if the subject has become a Christian, and continued to lead a Christian life." Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 87; Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 145. Skarsaune records an account from Tertullian about the conditions under which re-possession can occur. Skarsaune, "Possession and Exorcism," 8.

¹⁸⁷ Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 116-117.

¹⁸⁸ John A. MacMillan was an editor of *The Alliance Weekly*, a bulletin focussed on evangelism and missions; he also had a ministry in exorcism. His background was in the printing business and for a few years he worked alongside pioneering missionary Robert Jaffray in China as well as participating in ministry in the Philippines. He followed the teachings of the Higher Life and Keswick movements, Andrew Murray, and most particularly Jessie Penn-Lewis. His writing on the believer's authority and on demon possession made a lasting impression on future generations: his contribution will be referenced at later points in this study. Paul L. King, "John A. MacMillan: Pioneer Missionary of Spiritual Warfare and the Believer's Authority," *Jurnal Jaffray* 14:1 (April 2016): 1-20.

¹⁸⁹ Unger demonstrated the same vulnerability as Koch in failing to weigh evidence appropriately before using it to argue a case. His book *The Haunting of Bishop Pike* was a depiction of the activity of demons in the life of the controversial Bishop in the aftermath of his son's tragic death. Unfortunately, Unger based his book on assumptions about the "psychic phenomena" encountered by Pike. Stringfellow and Towne, close friends of Pike, were witnesses to the period of Pike's "haunting." In their authorised biography of Pike they presented substantial evidence in support of their claims that Pike was in fact the victim of malicious fraud by a mentally unbalanced mistress and at least one fake medium. Although Unger's premise about the dangers of dabbling in the occult would be accepted by most Christians, his argument was undermined by his emphasis on building a case around faulty evidence. Merrill F. Unger, *The Haunting of Bishop Pike* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971); William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne, *The Death and Life of Bishop Pike* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1976).

and demonic invasion of the body seemingly is involved and the personality is infested by one or more vile spirit.”¹⁹⁰ His eventual determination was that “it is possible for a believer to experience severe demon influence or obsession if he persistently yields to demonic temptation and sin.” However, “such cases are rarely seen, if ever, in the United States” although re-possession is known amongst new believers in other lands who have returned to their old idols. And ultimately: “Severe demon influence can produce enslavement and subjection even if it does stop short of actual possession.”¹⁹¹

Although it appears from the above quotes that Unger had more or less stated a position, later in the book his anecdotal evidence comprised semantically tangled descriptions that muddied the waters of exactly where the boundaries lay between demonic influence and possession. He described “truly regenerated” Christians as variously psychically oppressed, infested, possessed, indwelt, or inhabited.¹⁹² In discussing biblical examples of demon infestation he made no distinctions between Job, King Saul, Timothy’s warning about quarrelsome believers, Jesus’ freeing of a woman bound by a “spirit of infirmity,” and an (“undoubtedly possessed”) incestuous Corinthian church member.¹⁹³ He told of a woman in his prayer group who had a problem with lack of tact and wisdom (in retrospect due to an “alien spirit indwelling her”). As she was quietly praying, the demon inside her suddenly “gave an unearthly yell” and she lapsed momentarily into unconsciousness. This brought Unger to compare the woman with Mary Magdalene who had seven demons cast out from her.¹⁹⁴ His confusing use of vocabulary signalled a crossover point in the continuum between Nevius and later writers who claimed that every Christian at some point was demonized. As well, a type of dichotomy started to emerge that was demonstrated in the difference between

¹⁹⁰ Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 115. Questioning the young man on his family history was a technique learned from Koch. Koch’s effect on Unger extended also to where he states that the power of black magicians to perform magical feats (satanic miracles) is enhanced by use of the books such as the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, 41. Unger is unlikely to have been personally familiar with the *Books of Moses*.

¹⁹¹ Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 116-117. In his summary remarks he also pointed to Koch’s experience as establishing the fact of demonic subjection to the third or fourth generation of a family, 117. In his final book on the subject, Unger clarified that *daimonizomai*, “to be demonized,” means “to be under the power [control] of a demon.” He maintained that to call it “demon possession” was still biblically permissible. Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints*, 97, 113.

¹⁹² See Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 184-187.

¹⁹³ Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 184-185. Here Unger incorporated his biblical examples of demon infestation under the heading “The manifestation of occult oppression amongst Christians” and brought them all under the rubric “believer.” This assumed that physical descendants of Abraham were automatically included in the category “believers” which begs the question of what Jesus meant by coming to the “lost sheep” of Israel (Matt 15:24) or the status of the Rich Man in the parable of Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31).

¹⁹⁴ Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 185-186.

Unger's theological explanations and the recounting of his anecdotal evidence. It was an early indicator of a growing inconsistency between theory and evidential corroboration.

Unger's rather nebulous transition was sufficient stimulus for writers who drew on his material to progress the argument into definitive statements of their own; eventually *daimonizomai* evolved into the starting point of the argument for demon activity in Christians. In the early stages, Mark Bubeck made only passing reference to the English translation of "possessed."¹⁹⁵ Although he was comparatively conservative in his argument, still he allowed for affliction and control by demons in "certain parts of [a Christian's] being," predicated on the Holy Spirit's sealing presence in the human spirit and in accord with Watchman Nee's trichotomist perspective.¹⁹⁶ Later, Fred Dickason undertook the largest and most systematic study of demon possession in Christians. In deconstructing the NT use of *daimonizomai* he came to the conclusion that "demon possession" is a faulty translation because it implies ownership (by the demon of the person afflicted).¹⁹⁷ The preferable rendition is "demonization" indicating physical or psychological control of a person who is passive in the presence of the demon; this process is synonymous with inhabiting, invading, or residing.¹⁹⁸ He disputed the contention of some writers who assert four stages of demonic control, instead noting that the Bible differentiates only external or internal demonic working; "demonization" is internal.¹⁹⁹ Quoting Unger, he wrote that the chief characteristic of someone who is demonized is the projection of a new personality: the demon displays his personality, to greater or lesser degree, by means of controlling thought processes and emotions, even if the person is not aware.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Bubeck, *The Adversary*, 85-86. Bubeck served most of his life as a pastor after graduating with a D.Min from Talbot Theological Seminary; he wrote two bestsellers on demonology *The Adversary*, and *Overcoming the Adversary* (1984).

¹⁹⁶ Bubeck, *The Adversary*, 87-92, especially 88 and see footnote for Watchman Nee reference. Nee drew on Penn-Lewis for much of his material.

¹⁹⁷ Donald Carson noted that it is a mistake to rely on etymology alone to determine the meaning of a word and that context must always be considered. This has a bearing on the interpretation of *daimonizomai*: there is enough evidence to assert that the writers discussed here did not give sufficient weight to contextual meaning in NT descriptions of deliverance from demons. See Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 28-33.

¹⁹⁸ Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 37-40.

¹⁹⁹ Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 40. For an example of the multiple stages that Dickason objected to, see Wimber, *Power Healing*, 123.

²⁰⁰ Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 41.

Dickason's explanation of *daimonizomai* was somewhat more evenly balanced than many others, particularly those in the SWM, who expressed the same argument with varying degrees of intelligibility.²⁰¹ Although asserted with confidence, still there was some awareness among them that the concept was vulnerable to questioning. Frank Hammond admitted that the doctrine did not seem logical but: "all logic is not truth, and some logic is based on a false premise."²⁰² With unintended irony, Kraft wrote: "Don't ask me how a Spirit filled Christian can be demonized. It doesn't completely make sense to me. But it is beyond doubt that Christians do become demonized."²⁰³ His confidence increased in later years: "The evidence that Christians can be (and frequently are) demonized is so conclusive that we can be dogmatic about asserting it."²⁰⁴

Most central to the argument on *daimonizomai* was the theme of control. The core objection to the word "possessed" was its implication of ownership and total control.²⁰⁵ Demons could "indwell" Christians but never gain the "ownership" already purchased by Christ (Titus 2:14).²⁰⁶ The difference lay between who has ownership of a house and who is merely a visitor, squatter, or tenant.²⁰⁷ A temporary resident could never exert ownership rights and total control but could exert partial control.²⁰⁸ Translating the word as "demonized"

²⁰¹ Harper, *Spiritual Warfare*, 109-110; Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 1; Wimber, *Power Healing*, 122-123, 127; Warner, *Spiritual Warfare*, 79-80; Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 51-52; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 35-36; Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 57, 86-87. It is probable that some of the writers who had no background in Greek or biblical studies were simply attempting to recreate Unger's argument in their own words. See also Clinton Arnold who argued the same case articulately. However, he should not be considered a contributor to the formation of Spiritual Warfare doctrines on demons. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 79-80.

²⁰² Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 136. Hammond likely appropriated his argument on *daimonizomai* from Derek Prince, either from Prince's tape-recorded teachings or from his 1970 pamphlet *Expelling Demons*. For his more extensive discussion (that is congruent with all SWM comments) see a later work: Derek Prince, *They Shall Expel Demons: What You Need to Know About Demons – Your Invisible Enemies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1998), 16.

²⁰³ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 130.

²⁰⁴ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 66.

²⁰⁵ Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 89.

²⁰⁶ A difficulty with comprehending the demonization argument is the confusing mixing of vocabulary. The term "possession" was ruled out of use by some writers while others continued to use it. In a volume edited by Peter Wagner, some contributors used "possessed" as often as others used "demonized." One contributor used both words in referring to the same phenomenon. See C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies for How to Crush the Enemy Through Spiritual Warfare* (Shippensburg, PA, Destiny Image Publishers, 2012), Kindle Edition, 41, 56, 78, 136, 148, 183.

²⁰⁷ Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 115; Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints*, 61; Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 40; Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 2. The use of "house" as a metaphor is questionable as it is an inanimate object and cannot be compared to a living being that is capable of self-determination in relationship with spiritual forces.

²⁰⁸ In contrast to the Holy Spirit, who resides in the house permanently: Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints*, 61.

putatively solved the problem by allowing the latter and thus opening the possibility for an effect on Christians and non-Christians alike. Furthermore, it gave room to assert varying levels of demon involvement in people's lives. Thus, the third pillar of argument was expressed by SWM writers in terms of measurement: a demon can have partial control, but never full control.

Degrees of Demonization

Although they quoted each other at length, each SWM writer had their own way of explaining this third pillar and measurement terminology varied: mild through to severe, weak/medium/strong, numbered levels, graded on numbered scales of strength, or merely described as varying in degree.²⁰⁹ Kraft's explanation was the most explicit:

I find it helpful to think of the strength of a demon's attachment to a person on a scale of 1-10. Level one represents the weakest attachment and ten, the strongest. *I am using this scale here only to measure demonization in Christians.* To plot the strength of demonization in non-Christians (that is, persons in whose spirits demons can dwell), would require either a larger scale, say, of 1-15, or separate scales for Christians and non-Christians.²¹⁰

According to Kraft, in the Gospels, Jesus cast out "heavy duty" demons with strength of attachment at level nine or ten but in present-day times deliverance ministers tend to encounter levels one to three.²¹¹

Dickason's justification for varying degrees of demonization was based on a literal interpretation of Matt 12:44-45 that indicates degrees of wickedness *in demons*, the unsound logic of a greater number of demons ("Legion") having greater control, and the acceptance of ranks within demon organisation.²¹² Other writers merely declared the concept without

²⁰⁹ Wimber, *Power Healing*, 123; Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 138; White, *Believer's Guide*, 42-43; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 131-135.

²¹⁰ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 131 (italics his). The word "dwell" used here highlights the issue of semantic confusion that pervaded the explanations of doctrine. Terms were rarely clearly defined and regularly were used inconsistently and interchangeably. The implication in Kraft's statement here is that non-Christians are the only persons in whose spirits demons can dwell. However, Kraft elsewhere states that he and his colleagues all agree that "Christians can have demons living in them" (see 64, 66-67 in the same volume). Words such as "indwell" were used equally in regard to relationship with demons and the Holy Spirit yet remained undefined. The issue was substantial and pervasive enough to create the impression of a doctrine not clearly formulated by its advocates.

²¹¹ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 129; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 131. Kraft also provided extensive information about what demonization at each of the levels comprised although he did not describe the basis for his understanding of each level.

²¹² Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 40, 44-45.

providing any rationalization. This pillar of argument can be viewed as the weakest because other than Dickason (whose argument does not contribute to stabilising the line of reasoning), almost no attempt was made to justify it, either from scripture or by logical argument. Neither would they have found support from scripture: the Bible says nothing whatever about varying levels of demonization. This third pillar highlights a further problem with the case for *daimonizomai*: the claim of varying levels in effect adds extra-biblical material to the doctrine and therefore makes it not a better translation but gives *daimonizomai* a new meaning.

Dickason's conclusion on demonic control of Christians was the most equivocal among all the writers on the topic. He wrote that while the biblical evidence neither clearly affirms nor denies the reality of demonization in believers, and definite or dogmatic conclusions are not possible, nevertheless he felt the weight of evidence leaned toward the affirmative.²¹³ Moreover he claimed to have encountered more than 400 cases of demonization personally, and on that his argument finally rested.²¹⁴ Eventually, experience was to become the key indicator of reality in the SWM doctrine of demons inhabiting Christians.

The Response of SWM Experts to Their Sources

As the above discussions of historical sources and intellectual arguments demonstrate, the doctrine of demons indwelling Christians rested on fragile propositions. Validation from scripture was subsumed within an argument that placed more emphasis on rationalisation from other factors: cultural, personal, or inelegantly argued logic. As the SWM proponents built on the legacy of the historical and contemporary sources examined in this chapter, their own conceptions continued to evolve.²¹⁵ The problem of demons inhabiting individuals shifted to dealing with the issue insofar as it pertained to Christians only and the causes of demonic control in Christians evolved into less clearly defined factors. As well, conceptions about the identities and ubiquity of demons expanded. Finally, arguments for the doctrine of demons centred on experience and rested on anecdotal evidence.

²¹³ Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 340.

²¹⁴ Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 12, 175, 221.

²¹⁵ Note that although SWM writers drew from the ideas of their historical sources, they were selective and ignored elements that did not fit with their own conceptions. For just one example, Koch vehemently opposed charismatic healing and tongues as satanically influenced.

Progression

Although influenced by historical sources and predecessors, the SWM doctrines of demons did not remain static or dependent on what they learned from the past. Their ideas evolved and progressed in several ways, not only in developing new ideas about demons but also in relation to the respective roles of both God and humans. Aside from Hammond, for the most part the historical sources generally situated the demon/Christian interface within the context of demons in relation to the world in general.²¹⁶ They presented the activity of demons as a problem for all of humanity, with Christians also vulnerable if they were exposed in certain ways. However, from MC510 days forward the orientation involved a contextual shift. Eventually the doctrine of demons evolved into two spheres of focus: demons that inhabit Christians, and the territorial demons that control the world.

The first sign of progression lay with the evangelistic impulse. The orientation of Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission under Donald McGavran was mission and evangelism. McGavran's focus was church growth as the objective of evangelism. Under Wagner's influence signs and wonders became the means of stimulating church growth. Almost exclusively, healing came to represent the definition of signs and wonders; deliverance from demons was included in the definition because it was considered also a process of healing.²¹⁷ The title of MC510's syllabus, *Signs and Wonders and Church Growth*, reflected this perspective and stated that the function of signs and wonders was to "draw public attention to the power of God in order to open unsaved people's hearts to the message of the Gospel."²¹⁸ What ultimately characterized the course, however, did not involve unsaved people. Healing and deliverance praxis occurred exclusively within circles of those considered already saved: the Christians.²¹⁹ By the time John Wimber published *Power Healing*, his orientation was directed towards Christians more than evangelisation.²²⁰ In this

²¹⁶ The exception was Penn-Lewis whose sole focus was Christians. Dickason's work post-dated MC510 so it is not included in this generalization.

²¹⁷ This has its roots in Pentecostal belief, especially as some diseases were considered demonic in origin. See Collins, *Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry*, 21.

²¹⁸ Wimber, *Signs and Wonders*, 2:8.

²¹⁹ See the chapter in this study on the signs and wonders movement. The response to this charge was that MC510 was merely the "laboratory" for practising signs and wonders in evangelism. However this is not borne out in the subsequent literature or praxis. See Don Williams, "Exorcising the Ghost of Newton," in *Power Encounters: Among Christians in the Western World*, ed. Kevin Springer (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 124.

²²⁰ Theron suggests a reason for this is claimed to be that there is no point setting free anyone who still belongs to the enemy camp and any ground gained through deliverance could be lost again to the enemy leaving the

book he listed several “entry points” for demons. These were unconfessed or serious sin (with specific mention of anger, hatred, sexual sins, and drug or alcohol abuse), involvement in the occult, demons passed from parents to children or from previous generations, trauma, accidents, and curses spoken by others.²²¹ When categorized, this meant that demonization was caused by one’s own sin, sins committed against oneself, or inadvertently (by means of fear and terror resulting from serious accidents that created avenues for demons). From this point forward, the claim of demon deliverance as belonging within the context of evangelisation was displaced as the focus shifted to demons in Christians.²²² Kraft made this explicit when he wrote about working almost exclusively with demonized Christians.²²³

Another area in which significant progression occurred was the explanation for the causes of demon activity in Christians. Historically, Jessie Penn-Lewis had described it as the result of residual sin and a “passivity” that meant no willpower was exerted to resist demonic influence.²²⁴ Kurt Koch placed heavy emphasis on generational inheritance along with dabbling in occultic activities.²²⁵ For Unger, the risk lay with flagrant or persistent sin.²²⁶ For

person worse off. Jacques Theron, “A Critical Overview of the Church’s Ministry of Deliverance from Evil Spirits,” *Pneuma* 18:1 (Spring 1996): 88.

²²¹ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 129-132. In Wimber and the literature that followed, although sin was (decreasingly) listed as a cause of demonization, almost no discussion was given to discontinuing the causative sins: the focus remained solely on expelling the resultant demon.

²²² This orientation has evidently persisted as exemplified by more recent Vineyard publications. A 2015 course workbook on demonization clearly follows the teaching from Wimber’s *Power Healing*. No mention is made of evangelism or reaching the unsaved. The Vineyard Church, “Clash of the Kingdoms,” *Vineyard Workshops*, Duluth, MN (September 2015): <<https://duluthvineyard.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Clash-Handouts.pdf>> (29 April 2020), 13-15.

²²³ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 56.

²²⁴ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 68-70.

²²⁵ The twin issues of exegesis and hermeneutics emerge in the SWM view of generational curses. Koch (or the SWM writers who argued the same) made little attempt to defend the belief in curses to the third or fourth generation but merely cited without comment the second commandment in Exod 20:5 and 1 Pet 1:18. Dickason claimed that well over 95 percent of the demonized persons he dealt with were in that condition as a result of their ancestors’ activities. Koch, *Christian Counseling*, 111; Koch, *Occult ABC*, 277; Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 351. In the worldview of the spiritual warfare adherents justification for this concept usually comes from Exod 20:5; 34:6-7; Deut 5:9-10; or Lev 26:39 but does not account for several passages similar to Deut 24:16; or Ezek 18:20 (with Dickason being a partial exception, 220). One example of somewhat baffling exegesis is that of Dean Hochstetler’s (Koch’s “apprentice”) use of Matt 23:29-33 (Jesus’ diatribe against the Pharisees) to mandate dealing with generational demonic curses. See Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 229. For alternate views, see Block’s commentary on Deuteronomy where he explains that the warning of “visiting the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation” should be understood in terms of horizontal, not vertical, familial relationships. Domestic units in the ancient world contained up to four generations living in the same household and the concept is based on the notion of corporate solidarity as exemplified in the story of Achan and his household in Josh 7:16-26. Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 162. Peter Enns holds a similar view: the “third and fourth generation” should not be taken literally but rather denotes far-reaching effects not on blood descendants but on the vibrancy

all sources, mental illness was commonly interpreted as evidence of demonic activity. One consistently targeted theme was the gift of tongues (often combined with discussion on the charismatic movement): nearly all the predecessors to the SWM writers bluntly specified this as a point of vulnerability to demonic infiltration.²²⁷ By contrast Frank Hammond stated that *not* being able to speak in tongues was the result of demonic interference.²²⁸ For him, the causes of demons indwelling a Christian were yielding to temptation to sin, unfortunate family circumstances, and inheritance of parental traits.²²⁹

In material published subsequently by SWM writers, as the focus on evangelism decreased, the emphasis on “no fault” demonization increased. Kraft and Wagner were the most prominent exponents of this concept:

That demonization comes about through conscious choice is a lie ... conscious choice is but one way, and comparatively rare among Christians ... Demonized Christians are, almost without exception, anything but rebellious to Christ or wallowing in sin. Rather, they are courageous believers who deeply love Jesus, but can't explain or free themselves from something that has a hold on their lives.²³⁰

Kraft reiterated his point shortly thereafter by saying that those who came for deliverance experienced great pain “through little or no fault of their own,” rather, “they were victims and, in accordance with some law in the universe, they became demonized.”²³¹ As well, physical ailments came more to the fore. Wagner typically preferred to rely on anecdotal evidence to argue his case and he drew attention to physical ailments in his literature. Troubled by headaches during his early years of involvement with spiritual warfare, Wimber informed him that the headaches were caused by a spirit. When Wagner asked what he should do, Wimber

and health of the whole community. Peter Enns, *Exodus: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 416.

²²⁶ Unger, *Demons in the World Today*, 116-117.

²²⁷ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 144; Koch, *Occult Bondage*, 95-97; Bubeck, *The Adversary*, 129-120; Unger, *What Demons Can Do To Saints*, 205-206; Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 144, 221. Most writers repeatedly stated their concerns about tongues, some rejected tongues outright (e.g. Koch, Dickason), and others merely issued warnings (e.g. Bubeck); these positions reflect their non-Pentecostal stances.

²²⁸ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 21.

²²⁹ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 23-26.

²³⁰ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 47. The other important writer, Ed Murphy, fell somewhere between Wimber's and Kraft's stance: his list of causes was almost the same as Wimber's and he described those demonized as “sincere, Spirit-filled Christians.” Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 432-433.

²³¹ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 48. Note that although progression from the conceptions of their historical sources occurred, much was retained. For example, in line with Koch's thinking, Kraft claimed to have cast out significant numbers of demons from people who, in spite of no involvement themselves, had inherited demons as descendants of Freemasons, a common target for accusations of demonic activities. Kraft, ““Christian Animism' or God-Given Authority?,” in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 128-129.

responded that he should “Treat it like a cat on the back porch! Yell at it and tell it to go away!”²³² Wagner followed the advice and henceforth was freed of the “headache demon.”²³³ Along with not being responsible for the state of demonization, Christians also could be completely unaware of a demon’s presence. Kraft maintained that awareness is rare, particularly in Westerners.²³⁴

In terms of the identity and organisation of demons, information became detailed. Although demons are biblically described as unembodied spirits the SWM writers sometimes provided physical descriptions, described associated odours, or noted the evidence left behind by demons.²³⁵ When expelled, they departed from the nose or mouth, with tangible evidence ranging from sighing or yawning to coughing, retching or vomiting, although seldom did stomach food contents actually come up.²³⁶ Clearly drawing on material from Hammond, Kraft wrote that demons were organized into hierarchical groups under the direction of a specific leader. Only rarely did a single demon inhabit a Christian; they were more likely to be invaded by a group (or even several groups) for which the head spirit of each group was spokesperson.²³⁷ These groups were controlled by “higher level” outside spirits who had charge of those inside a person. The higher-level spirits were responsible for sending the “inside” demons; these could not leave until the outside spirits allowed them to go. Therefore,

²³² Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 138-139.

²³³ Along with headaches, elsewhere Wagner described demons as also being responsible for marital conflict, drunkenness, or scoliosis. Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 17.

²³⁴ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 135.

²³⁵ Wagner identified the demon in his house as “luminous green” with luminous green eyes (see the account in Chapter 2). In a later retelling he added details of it having green teeth also and being nine feet tall. During an in-class deliverance session at Fuller, Kraft commanded demons to jump into a box and then cut their arms and legs with a spiritual sword. Dawson discerned them in gloomy clouds. Demons in the form of an “old African-aboriginal man and woman” presented themselves to a child in a room where dead flies later found signified the presence of Beelzebub, the lord of the flies. According to Hammond, demons manifest with characteristic “snake eyes.” Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 64; Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 81; Wonsuk Ma, “A ‘First Waver’ Looks at the ‘Third Wave’: A Pentecostal Reflection on Charles Kraft’s Power Encounter Terminology,” *Pneuma* 19:2 (Fall 1997): 192; Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 25; Smith, *Spiritual House Cleaning*, 13; Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 49. Foul odours were regularly mentioned: see for example, Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 162; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 140, Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 49; Wimber, *Power Healing*, 242. Demons also acquired something akin to anthropomorphic status in Prince (who influenced the Hammonds) because their departure points from the human body indicated their nature (doubt from the left ear, masturbation from the fingers) and when departing from the mouth their progress could be impeded by lip or tongue movements. If no progress occurred during expulsion, it could indicate the demon had stopped in the narrow section of the throat and was holding on, particularly in women (!). A deliberate, forceful cough would complete the process. Prince, *They Shall Expel Demons*, 212-214.

²³⁶ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 51-52. Sometimes SWM writers also stated that not all deliverance sessions were ostentatiously physical; often little visible evidence accompanied deliverance.

²³⁷ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 121, 126.

in the process of deliverance Kraft recommended dealing with the outside demons first to break their control over the inside demons.²³⁸

Naming demons became a prominent theme with the nomenclature including function-based labels, descriptive titles, and proper names.²³⁹ Again basing his discussion on Hammond's material, Kraft provided long lists of demon groups that named the head demons and the lesser demons. For example, the group headed by the demon "Unforgiveness" contained lesser demons of anger, bitterness, and resentment. Writers claimed that demons revealed their personal names during the process of deliverance from individuals.²⁴⁰ Descriptive titles associated them with particular folk deities, for example the spirit of "San La Muerte."²⁴¹ They also possessed varying levels of strength.²⁴²

Demon infestation of places and material objects became another key theme as contact with these provided an explanation for how believers unwittingly could expose themselves to demonization. Wagner theorized that his "headache demon" may have entered him at some point during one of his many tours of pagan temples.²⁴³ An early influence for this suggestion was Michael Harper, an often-cited British Anglican-priest-turned-charismatic whose bestselling book *Spiritual Warfare* described his own recollection of living in a haunted house.²⁴⁴ But more frequently, objects were presented as a risk. Advancing Koch's belief in demon-influenced amulets and books, Kraft warned of the dangers related to physical objects,

²³⁸ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 126-127.

²³⁹ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 121, 123-125.

²⁴⁰ Wagner reported that the six world principalities directly under Satan are Damian, Asmodeo, Menguelesh, Arios, Beezezebub, and Nosferasteus (see Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 60, 146, for Beelzebub's identity). The governors over Costa Rica are Shiebo, Quiebo, Ameneo, Mephistopheles, Nostradamus, and Azazel, those over the United States are Ralphes, Anoritho, Manchester, Apolion, Deviltook, and one further unnamed. "Raastapack" governs Oceania. These names were ostensibly revealed to Rita Cabezas as she expelled Asmodeo during her deliverance ministry. (Wagner variously described Rita Cabezas de Krumm as a psychiatrist or a psychologist. She is an American-born exorcist based in Costa Rica). There are some puzzling issues of logic at play here. No writer explained why ruling demonic princes were able to be cast out from individuals in Cabezas' office. Furthermore, the etymology of the names reveals that at least some originate in fiction. For example, see Chapter 5, n201 for the etymology of Nosferasteus and note the striking coincidence of "Damian," being also the name of the child antichrist from the 1976 horror film "The Omen." Cabezas provided a detailed map of the demonic hierarchy containing dozens of demon names: see Rita Cabezas, *Lucha Contra Principados Demoníacos* (Miami, FL: Editorial Unilit, 1995), 52-53; Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 202-203; Wagner, "Territorial Spirits," in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 84.

²⁴¹ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 184-185.

²⁴² Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 125.

²⁴³ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 139.

²⁴⁴ Harper, *Spiritual Warfare*, 106. Harper also singled out chiropractic and colour-therapy (in his telling, widely practised in New Zealand) as means of attracting demons, 44-45.

buildings, and other human structures.²⁴⁵ Wagner declared that “Real demons do attach themselves to animals, idols, brass rings, trees, mountains, and buildings as well as to any number and variety of manufactured and natural objects.”²⁴⁶ Kraft told of demonized parakeets and cats.²⁴⁷ Even health food shops were not immune: “So many health food shops are infected that we would be well advised to claim God’s protection whenever we enter one.”²⁴⁸

By this point, it seemed that the demon plague was ubiquitous. Relationships and attitudes also became points of entry for demons. Wimber had implied satanic involvement in “soul ties” (unhealthy relationships) and inner vows (negative self-talk) but Kraft consolidated the notion and added: “This seems to play into some rule in the spiritual sphere that can provide a demon with a place to attach.”²⁴⁹ One further channel for demons developed somewhat later. The designator “spirit of religion” became a persistent and popular expression with wide application. Wagner’s 2005 book on the topic contained his boldest claim yet of God’s direct revelation. The issues surrounding explanations of direct revelation from God or guidance from the Holy Spirit can be contentious because of the difficulties in verifying whether or not God has spoken.²⁵⁰ However, an ideal form of defence against any who raised this question came in the form of attack. Here Wagner identified a “pernicious spirit” that “must be resisted, bound and cast out.”²⁵¹ He specified that this was not an attitude of religiosity but an actual demon. His long-term targets of church traditions, academics, or

²⁴⁵ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 162. Shortly thereafter, he wrote that God likewise empowers words, material objects and places, 163. Kraft drew particular attention to demon infestations of churches. He related anecdotes of infestations caused by a church accepting a donation of a carpet from a funeral home, a bell tower infested after a teenage runaway lived there for a few weeks, and a group praying against demons in the church that forgot to pray over the church parking lot thereby allowing the expelled demons to congregate there. He asserted that in churches, demons tend to cluster in particular spaces: the nursery, the area of the church office where records and offerings are processed, around the pulpit, in the library, in the musical instruments, and in furnishings such as the carpet or the seats of disgruntled choir members. Charles H. Kraft, *I Give You Authority*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1997), 288-291.

²⁴⁶ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 79.

²⁴⁷ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 234.

²⁴⁸ Kraft, *The Evangelical's Guide*, 192. Derek Prince also warns of the dangers associated with health food shops: Prince, *They Shall Expel Demons*, 135.

²⁴⁹ Wimber, *Power Healing*, 96, 238; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 210-211.

²⁵⁰ This claim of God’s new revelation is not confined to the SWM. It can be found widespread in the charismatic movement, especially reflecting an eschatological foundation by claiming the fulfilment of Joel 2:28: “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” However, Wagner’s orientation was towards specifically thematic revelations and also contained intimations of esotericism and elitism.

²⁵¹ C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Freedom from the Religious Spirit* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005), 8, 9, 12, 13.

denominations now stood accused of possessing this spirit.²⁵² To the present day, it has remained a useful indictment to level against any Christian individual, institution, or platform deemed oppositional to the belief systems espoused by the SWM or their successors.

A further evolution from the teaching of their sources occurred in methodology. Craig Keener made an important point when he wrote: “If psychiatric problems may stem from material, emotional and/or spiritual causes, one can never assume the latter as an exclusive or necessarily even a direct contributing cause without compelling evidence.”²⁵³ Although Koch’s methodologies were severely compromised by the flaws in his approach to the evidence, he did advocate a serious and thorough process of diagnosis that at least attempted to rule out other possible explanations for his clients’ afflictions. One of the notable features of the SWM is that it appears many practitioners leapt to demonization as the first and perhaps only explanation for the troubles their clients were experiencing.

Personal Experience

Personal experience as the indicator of truth was essential to the doctrine of demonised Christians because detection of demons relied on the deliverance minister’s direct connection to the spirit world and to God’s voice. Over time, God’s direct revelation had become increasingly important to the theology of the SWM, particularly in view of insufficient biblical support for their themes. This was expressed in terminology such as “fresh revelation” and typically framed as “not writing ... with the authority of biblical revelation, yet we do believe that we have clearly heard from the Lord on the matter.”²⁵⁴ Wagner’s first experience of hearing directly from God appears to be when he heard the voice of God in “words that can be quoted.” This was in regard to taking leadership of the newly-developing conceptions about territorial spirits.²⁵⁵ At other times, God’s voice precipitated

²⁵² Wagner, *Freedom from the Religious Spirit*, 15-17, 20-24.

²⁵³ Keener, “Crooked Spirits,” 357.

²⁵⁴ Wagner, *Freedom from the Religious Spirit*, 12, 13.

²⁵⁵ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 162. See also Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 20. This occurred during the 1989 Lausanne II congress in Manila, an exciting event for him. He viewed it as the seedbed for the subsequent development of his spiritual warfare network.

dramatic events: “A word from the Lord came to me quite clearly: ‘Take authority over mad cow disease!’”²⁵⁶

Wagner’s hermeneutic in this regard stemmed from the distinction he claimed between *logos* as the written word of God and the *rhēma*, which is the directly spoken word of God.²⁵⁷ His explanation for this was vague but “Rhema word” became a catch-phrase in the SWM for any new revelation deemed to be from God.²⁵⁸ Wagner credited Cindy Jacobs with helping him into this understanding, citing her book (*The Voice of God*) that repeatedly describes God directly speaking to her.²⁵⁹ Jacobs defined the *rhēma* as the “living word” or “alive word” that is God’s direct speech or his speech through dreams and visions.²⁶⁰ Wagner’s suggestion was that reliance on the *logos* was not sufficient and that increasingly Christians would come to rely on the *rhēma*.²⁶¹ He declared himself “among rapidly increasing numbers of others who believe that a valid source of divine knowledge comes through what some would call ‘extrabiblical revelation.’ I daresay that the standard-brand evangelical doctrine of ‘logos only’ that we were taught might now find a place on an ‘endangered doctrines’ list, about to become extinct.”²⁶²

²⁵⁶ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 243.

²⁵⁷ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 52, 54-55.

²⁵⁸ For example, Wimber’s *rhema* word to locate the cause of Wagner’s headaches as a demon. Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 59. The concept of “Rhema word” remains in frequent use in charismatic circles to the present-day.

²⁵⁹ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 54. For example, see Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 21-22, compare with 26. If Wagner’s statement about Jacob’s influence is sincere, it means that he laid aside his formal training in (compulsory) Greek at Fuller Seminary in favour of the assertions of Jacobs, who, from available biographical information, appears to have had no training whatever in biblical Greek.

²⁶⁰ Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 102, 123, 197ff.

²⁶¹ This distinction was made repeatedly among the writers in Wagner’s cohort, for example: “The Greek word *rhema* is the biblical term for the specific personal communication of God with His children here and now. This is different from the *logos*, which refers to the already revealed word recorded in scripture.” Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 199.

²⁶² Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 55. Wagner’s assertion raised the ire of at least one theologian: “This misuse of Scripture is inexcusable for one who claims biblical scholarship.” Hart’s view is that the two words are used synonymously and that *rhēma* is not used in the NT for God’s direct communication in voices or dreams. His objection is supported by NT scholars who agree that the two words are not distinguished from each other. Jesus appears to use *logos* and *rhēma* interchangeably in relation to his own words: compare John 15: 3, 7. Furthermore, the LXX translates the Hebrew *dābār* (God is what he says) as either *logos* or *rhēma*. John F. Hart, “The Gospel and Spiritual Warfare: A Review of Peter Wagner’s *Confronting the Powers*,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 10:18 (Spring 1997): 23-24; see also Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Doubleday, 1966-1970), 1:520-521, 2: 662; and H.D. McDonald, “Word, Word of God, Word of the Lord,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1292-1293.

Among SWM writers, the experience of hearing from God commonly was framed in terms of feelings and senses. In multiple instances, Wagner's language followed a pattern: "I sense ... that the Holy Spirit is saying, 'Prepare for warfare.'"²⁶³ Cindy Jacobs sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit before hearing God's voice and engaging in a conversation in which God compared her to Jeremiah.²⁶⁴ Kraft described how Wimber's MC510 class discerned healing needs among them: "Someone would see a picture in his or her mind, or feel a strange pain, or receive an impression concerning a physical problem someone was experiencing."²⁶⁵ Kraft personally would get pictures in his mind that indicated a relationship problem involving the person he was ministering to, or would see Jesus ministering to that person. These variances led him to state: "Apparently God individualizes his revelations to humans."²⁶⁶ Typically, his experience was that "Words of knowledge usually come to me feeling like hunches or guesses."²⁶⁷

Feelings and senses directly influenced activities or events. Kraft reported that when he began to minister he would feel the presence of God in a very tangible way.²⁶⁸ In other types of circumstances, Wagner noted that "Only after [evangelists] sense that spiritual powers over the region have been bound will they begin to preach."²⁶⁹ This sensibility could equally be related to the presence of God or to the presence of the demonic. Hence Wagner described spiritual mapping in Manchester, England: "Spiritual people there agree that they feel a heaviness of spirit in the Manchester area, and this heaviness seems to center on the pre-Roman site on which the Cathedral was constructed."²⁷⁰ Kraft wrote of feeling an oppressive atmosphere in a room that belonged to someone who had awakened paralyzed for

²⁶³ Wagner, *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies*, 33.

²⁶⁴ Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 25-26. Although she described a tangible experience where she could recognise God's voice as one she had heard before and that involved reciprocal communication, she did mention that a previous experience of the voice of God had occurred in her heart. This type of experience is commonly asserted in Pentecostal and charismatic circles and so should not be regarded as an exclusive claim of the SWM. The difference lies with the degree to which direct revelation was used by SWM writers to support theological conceptions. Wagner and Jacobs, more than other writers, documented specific conversations with God; others tended to convey more general "impressions."

²⁶⁵ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 2.

²⁶⁶ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 159.

²⁶⁷ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 158.

²⁶⁸ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 158.

²⁶⁹ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 26-27.

²⁷⁰ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 172.

no reason. Taking authority over the enemy partially diminished the oppression that did not completely disappear until a rug made in Pakistan was removed from the room.²⁷¹

One further component to the revelation of God involves the question of agency. Kraft saw himself as administering the power of God only to the degree that God was guiding him, meaning that outcomes varied:

As I minister, I try to bring the power of God to bear on as much of the person's experience as I feel led to. This often means that whatever God does will in one sense be more than was originally asked for, but in another sense it sometimes turns out to be less. For example, person after person has come to me with a physical problem and gone away with that problem resolved, plus a number of deeper problems either healed or on their way toward healing. Sometimes, though, God deals with inner problems but chooses to leave the physical problem intact.²⁷²

Although Kraft clearly indicated that God's will is an integral part of what is happening, nevertheless he implied that his role mediated the outcome, much as a worker can control the power to increase or decrease the speed of a tool. This implication of agency became increasingly important and will be explored further below.

The intellectual inheritance from historical or contemporary sources combined with certainty of hearing God's voice supported what became the central tenet of the SWM case: experience in dealing with demons as the ultimate authority for veracity.²⁷³ Arguments for experience took precedence over attempts to make a case from a rational or a scriptural basis and anecdotal evidence was the mainstay of proof. The reasoning was that notwithstanding the absence of scriptural information about the demonic, new understanding is available due to God's extra-biblical revelations, either expressed directly to certain individuals or gathered from anecdotal evidence. George Otis attempted to draw a distinction between two terms: "There is an ocean of difference between that which is 'extra-biblical' and that which is 'unbiblical.' Extrabiblical is a yellow light that encourages passage with caution; unbiblical is a red light that requires travelers to halt in the name of the law and common sense."²⁷⁴ Kraft framed extra-biblical revelation as a question: "Can we make a case, therefore, for the

²⁷¹ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 162.

²⁷² Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 140.

²⁷³ This argument was usually expressed in quantitative terms to give it extra weight; Kraft in particular was at pains to point out the many hundreds of cases he and his colleagues had encountered. For example, Kraft, "Contemporary Trends," 23; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 65-66.

²⁷⁴ Otis, "Overview of Spiritual Mapping," 35.

continuous leading of God in ways that take us beyond what He has endorsed in inspired writings?”²⁷⁵ Describing the Bible as “bare-bones revelation” he drew on Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit to his disciples to reply in the affirmative: “There may be greater insight for all of us if we are venturesome, risking in faith in God to perhaps discover some of that additional truth that He promised us (Jn 16:13).”²⁷⁶ In several places, Wagner argued that conceptions such as Sunday Schools, celebrating Christmas, or the decision for sixty-six books to comprise the canon had no biblical precedent and were not explicitly taught in the Bible yet are commonly accepted by believers. In his view, this made them comparable to the doctrines of demonization in Christians or strategic-level spiritual warfare. His ultimate argument was that there is nothing in the Bible that prohibits these doctrines, even if we do not have biblical proof. Rather, he claimed, there is an abundance of concepts in the Bible to support the validity of the doctrines.²⁷⁷

Kraft was the most forthright champion for the validity of experience. He visualised a glass ceiling above which one could enter into a new dimension (the presence of God) and below which were most evangelicals who have knowledge of God but need to partner with Jesus in “bringing healing and freedom to others” in order to break through the glass. The correct translation of John 8:32, he wrote, is: “You will *experience* the truth and the truth will make you free.”²⁷⁸ Elsewhere he commented further:

There are at least three kinds of knowledge: intellectual, observational and experiential. Though, as Westerners, we tend to understand knowledge as an intellectual thing, the consistent emphasis of both the Old Testament and the New Testament is knowledge based on and validated through experience. How are we to know, then? It is experience that is the measure.²⁷⁹

Kraft’s chief target of attack in the argument for experience (echoed by all other SWM writers) was the Enlightenment. Based on an abridged and caricatured explanation of its rationalistic effects on Christian belief, Kraft’s conclusion was that as “victims of

²⁷⁵ Kraft, *Confronting Powerless Christianity*, 35.

²⁷⁶ Kraft, *Confronting Powerless Christianity*, 36; Kraft, “‘Christian Animism’ or God-Given Authority?,” in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 91. Brown rejects the notion that Jesus was referring to new revelation (“additional truth”), especially accounting for the Johannine emphasis on realized eschatology. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 2: 715-717. However, Burge allows for Jesus to be referring to genuine prophecy that reveals the future, with limitations that ensure any revelation remains measurable against Jesus’ historic revelation. Burge, *John*, 440.

²⁷⁷ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 86-87, 98. See also Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 192.

²⁷⁸ Kraft, *Confronting Powerless Christianity*, 16-17. Italics his.

²⁷⁹ Kraft, *The Evangelical's Guide*, 48.

Enlightenment ideas” Christians have thrown themselves “right into the arms of deism—a Christian heresy spawned by the Enlightenment.”²⁸⁰ He declared the need to ““exorcise the ghost of Newton’ in order to have a truly supernaturalistic perspective on Christianity.”²⁸¹ For him, this perspective centred on the experiences of spiritual warfare and engagement with demonic activity.²⁸² Kraft’s sharply drawn outline and sweeping characterization of twentieth-century Christian thinking drew a dividing line between his view of a powerless Christianity and his own empowered Christianity, a standpoint that he expressed in fierce polemic against any who disagreed with him.²⁸³

Wagner’s approach to an argument for experience was to quote respected authorities to bolster his contention that theology grows out of experience.²⁸⁴ Quoting practical theologian Ray Anderson, he wrote that ministry precedes and produces theology, not the reverse.²⁸⁵ In support of this he said: “Ray Anderson and I both would see Paul as a task theologian rather than as a philosophical theologian. Paul’s theology was much more rooted

²⁸⁰ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 24-26, 39, 44. For the entirety of Kraft’s argument about the effects of the Enlightenment see 24-49. Seemingly without recognising any irony, Kraft and the other SWM writers repeatedly stressed their use of scientific and rational method to argue their case: “We also seek to go about such a quest [for truth] in a structured, organized, rational manner—as scientists do.” Kraft, ““Christian Animism’ or God-Given Authority?,” in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 111. Kraft, Wagner, and others also appeared not to be aware of the role of the Enlightenment/Modernist thinking in the development of American-style Christianity that so influenced their thought. See Andrew Walker, “Thoroughly Modern: Sociological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement from the End of the Twentieth Century,” in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 19-21.

²⁸¹ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 39. For the background to his comment about Newton see Williams, “Exorcising the Ghost of Newton,” 116-127. Kraft’s tendency to base his ideas on outdated and reductionist thinking is exemplified by Harper’s comments on long-discarded Newtonian conceptions. In the interest of fairness, however, popular Christian thought often lags behind developments in scientific/intellectual conceptions and Kraft may not have encountered contemporary understanding in his own circles: see Harper, “Renewal and Causality,” 101-102.

²⁸² Kraft’s statement: “practice confirms belief” builds on Penn-Lewis’s advice: “It is only by continual application, and assimilation of truth in experience, that it becomes clarified in the mind in order to teach others.” Kraft quoted Jas 1:22, 25 (GNB) to support his statement: “By just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice But whoever looks closely into the perfect law that sets people free, who keeps on paying attention to it and does not simply listen and then forget it, but puts it into practice—that person will be blessed by God in what he does.” Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 87; Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 59.

²⁸³ See Kraft, ““Christian Animism’ or God-Given Authority?,” in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 88-136.

²⁸⁴ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 44-46. See also Wagner, *Spreading the Fire*, 56-57. His own definition of theology was: “Theology is a human attempt to explain God’s Word and God’s works in a reasonable and systematic way.” Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 41. Disconcertingly, he claimed this definition goes to the core but “any number of details may later be added according to individual conviction.”

²⁸⁵ Ray S. Anderson, “A Theology for Ministry,” in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. Ray S. Anderson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 7.

in what he *experienced* and what he *did* than in his rabbinical training.”²⁸⁶ Unfortunately, Wagner substantially misrepresented Anderson’s thesis by truncating his actual statement: “Ministry precedes and produces theology, not the reverse. It must immediately be added, however, that ministry is determined and set forth by God’s own ministry of revelation and reconciliation in the world, beginning with Israel and culminating in Jesus Christ and the Church.”²⁸⁷ Anderson saw theology as the “handmaid” of ministry: *both* exegetical and experiential.²⁸⁸ In a survey of several biblical narratives concerned with human responses to God’s word, Anderson issued a warning against “overly optimistic reliance” upon some technique that could lead to self-sufficiency or relying on human effort to fulfil God’s word.²⁸⁹ Repeatedly, he said, God’s ministry of reconciliation (as seen in scripture) “brings a judgment against the possibility of a creaturely response that can complete the Word of Revelation.”²⁹⁰ To this end, “when the theological mind of the minister is being educated primarily through experience, an ad hoc theology emerges which owes as much (or more) to methodological and pragmatic concerns as to dogma.”²⁹¹ Anderson’s embedded warnings seem to have been overlooked by Wagner who preferred to locate confirmation of his own perspective by a selective approach to Anderson’s text.

The actual experience being defended by SWM writers pertained directly to their involvement in deliverance from demons or to battling territorial demons. However, to comprehensively grasp the nature of this experience, we need to factor in the roles of the participants because they are integral to the process.²⁹² The first role belonged to the individual who was conducting the deliverance. The element steering the process was this

²⁸⁶ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 44. Italics his.

²⁸⁷ Anderson, “A Theology for Ministry,” 7.

²⁸⁸ Anderson, “A Theology for Ministry,” 8. Anderson’s fuller explanation reads: “God’s ministry becomes the dogma from which all insight into the nature and strategy of ministry issues and to which the Church must return in every generation to test its own concept of ministry ... For the Church to seek a ministry of its own is to deny Christ’s ministry and to turn aside to spurious activities which can never justify its own existence or redeem the world. Consequently, unless ministry takes a purely pragmatic turn, it is necessarily led to the theological activity of exploring the dogma of divine revelation which is given to us as the Word of God in Holy Scripture. This theological activity will be both exegetical and experiential.”

²⁸⁹ Anderson, “A Theology for Ministry,” 14-16.

²⁹⁰ Anderson, “A Theology for Ministry,” 16.

²⁹¹ Anderson, “A Theology for Ministry,” 7.

²⁹² This discussion pertains only to casting out demons from individuals because in battling territorial demons there were no other participants who could exhibit observable responses. Outcomes of the procedure were solely attested by declaration from the spiritual warrior undertaking the demon expulsion.

person's connection to God; Kraft maintained that attempting to hear God was the first step.²⁹³ SWM writers did not deny that this was a subjective experience. Nevertheless, they repeatedly expressed their confidence that they were hearing God clearly. Secondly, and controversially, Kraft and others also claimed to obtain a great deal of information from demons while interacting with them.²⁹⁴ Here the focus on the interaction widens to include the person being delivered of the demon, and the demon itself. The responses from the demon and individual being delivered were considered by the SWM writers as objective empirical verification for their doctrinal claims.²⁹⁵ However, the question arises about how much the claim of objectivity and empiricism can be sustained when the process underway is directly affected by subjective responses.²⁹⁶ There is no way to verify if in reality demons were cast out of individuals. We cannot be sure about the accuracy of details in reported events because no verifiable data was ever produced by any SWM writer.²⁹⁷ Certainly there were no doubts in the minds of those who performed deliverance ministry; the experience was very real for them. We do not know the perspective of those delivered from demons because no information was given that could identify them.²⁹⁸ One factor that must not be overlooked is the therapeutic effect (described by Cuneo as the placebo effect) that many persons were reported to have experienced as a result of deliverance.²⁹⁹ For those who felt relief from the problems troubling them they were likely to feel the deliverance to be genuine and efficacious. This thesis is not concerned with proving truth or falsity in the claims being

²⁹³ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 159.

²⁹⁴ Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 165-170; Cabezas, *Principados Demoníacos*, 14-17.

²⁹⁵ Note that even though there were many dramatic accounts in SWM literature they also reported that sometimes there might be no observable response from persons being delivered, in particular children. See for example footage of Ana Méndez delivering a demon from a child who slept through the entire procedure. Ana Méndez Ferrell and Emerson Ferrell, "Deliverance by Ana Mendez Ferrell," *YouTube*, 19 May 2018 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N46hL4yZRK0&t=347s>> 13 June 2020, 3:54-5:20. Charles Kraft outlined his strategy for reducing the number of dramatic occurrences in Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 54-56.

²⁹⁶ The potential roles of heightened emotions or of responses to suggestion should not be overlooked. For example, in an article that pre-dates the SWM, a clinical psychologist reported an instance of iatrogenically-induced belief in possession and is worthy of consideration: to what degree did iatrogenic factors influence the processes of deliverance in the SWM? See John P. Kildahl, "A Case of Iatrogenic Demon Possession," *Journal of Religion and Health* 3:4 (July 1964): 372-374.

²⁹⁷ Furthermore, even if such data were available, there is no way to verify the presence of a spiritual identity such as a demon.

²⁹⁸ One exception (often quoted by other SWM writers) was Ed Murphy's daughter Carolyn. His account of her demonization, caused by rock music, a necklace, and a box containing collected paraphernalia, is one of the very few that specifies the identity of the demonized person. If separated from the parents' shocked impression of a normally compliant daughter yelling at them and a demon "glaring" through her eyes, the elements of this story bear the hallmarks of an angry and rebellious fourteen-year-old struggling with over-busy parents and readjustment to a new culture after a move from South America to the turbulence of 1960s USA. Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, viii-xi.

²⁹⁹ See Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 277.

made. However, it is germane to reflect on other explanations for the phenomena because this study is about the processes of how belief is shaped.³⁰⁰ These claims should also be weighed in light of what close examination reveals about the theology's overall reliability.

In considering the responses to either God's voice or demonic presence, we need to acknowledge what is recognized in psychological terms as "schemas" that can populate human minds. A schema allows pre-existing beliefs or conceptions to sub-consciously impose themselves on interpretations of events and leads to expectation of particular patterns in the behaviours of protagonists in a given situation.³⁰¹ This latter aspect is known as "scripting." Self-schemas incorporate personal theories of reality to help individuals organise their experiences, anticipate events, and script their behaviour in particular domains.³⁰² Schemas include "procedural knowledge" consisting of rules that can be followed in social exchanges. Social psychologist Mark Baldwin explains further: "People learn prototypes for situations that help them anticipate how an interaction will proceed and therefore allow them to plan their actions accordingly."³⁰³ He quotes cognitive social psychologist Jerzy Trzebinski in noting that these action-oriented representations consist of "chains of events and actions, having actors with typical goals, occurring under certain typical conditions, and meeting typical obstacles that can be overcome in certain typical ways."³⁰⁴ Procedural knowledge is represented by "if-then" scripts that are used to "generate interpersonal expectations and to plan appropriate behaviour."³⁰⁵ One example of this can be found in a practical demonstration conducted by John Wimber and described by Peter Wagner where Wimber taught members of

³⁰⁰ Germane to explanations for manifestations of troubled behaviours and experiences of extreme distress is a recent theoretical development in psychology research: the "Power Threat Meaning Framework." It postulates that mental disorders can be survival and coping mechanisms ("meaning-based threat responses") developed in response to trauma induced by the exertion of various kinds of negative power over an individual. L. Johnstone, et al., *The Power Threat Meaning Framework* (Leicester: British Psychological Society, 2018), 5-11, 18.

³⁰¹ Mark W. Baldwin, "Relational Schemas and the Processing of Social Information," *Psychological Bulletin* 112:3 (November 1992): 467-468.

³⁰² Baldwin, "Relational Schemas," 463.

³⁰³ Baldwin, "Relational Schemas," 463, 466.

³⁰⁴ Baldwin, "Relational Schemas," 463, quoting Jerzy Trzebinski, "Action-Oriented Representations of Implicit Personality Theories," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 48:5 (May 1985): 1266. Although Trzebinski's discussion is now thirty-five years old, the schema concept is still universally accepted and central to social psychology, see Harwood Fisher, *Schema Re-Schematized: A Space for Prospective Thought* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2, 7.

³⁰⁵ Baldwin, "Relational Schemas," 468. In terms of relational schemas that function as scripts for expected patterns of interaction, the best-known example in the literature is the restaurant script where an individual can anticipate and understand the experience of taking a seat, reading from a menu, and ordering a meal from a waiter. Likewise, the waiter understands and anticipates their role in this interpersonal interaction. These are consensually-held "role schemas" that utilise "procedural knowledge."

the MC510 class what to expect, either when they were healing or casting out demons or when they were recipients of the same:

When the [MC510 practical] clinic began, John ... had me sit on a stool facing the class. I told him and the class that I had been diagnosed with high blood pressure for two years and that the doctor had put me on three medications to control it. When John started praying, I felt a warm blanket of power come over me and I felt like my mind was partially disconnected ... John was describing my physical reactions to the class like a sports announcer giving a play-by-play account of what was happening to me. “See the eyelids fluttering?” “There’s some flushing on the sides of his face!” “Watch the lips—they’re quivering!” “Thank You, Lord! More power!” A few days later, I went back to the doctor and he took me off one of the medications. Soon afterward, he took me off the second, and then the third. My blood pressure was fine.³⁰⁶

The theme of expectancy was raised by several professionals who participated in the 1975 Christian Medical Society symposium on demonism. Anthropologist Alan Tippett pointed out that possession and glossolalia are most common in places where the people are expectant.³⁰⁷ Psychiatrist Basil Jackson noted that expectation levels in the surrounding environment, as well as changes in the socio-cultural matrix in which they occur, have a bearing on the clinical features displayed (by the person seeking deliverance).³⁰⁸ Psychologist Gary Collins concurred by saying:

There is abundant evidence from studies in perceptual psychology that people see and act in accordance with the expectation of those around them. If someone convinces me I am demon possessed, unconsciously I might begin to experience the symptoms and show the behaviour which fit the diagnosis. In like manner, if I assume someone else is possessed, I may begin looking for symptoms to prove my hypothesis.³⁰⁹

In his book *American Exorcism*, anthropologist Michael Cuneo described his unparalleled access to an extraordinary array of exorcists who generously allowed him to observe and probe their activities.³¹⁰ His ultimate conclusion was that, after witnessing more than fifty individual exorcisms (and many more group exorcisms) among American evangelicals and Catholics, he observed no instance of anything that might be considered

³⁰⁶ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 130.

³⁰⁷ Tippett, “Spirit Possession,” 161, see also his other comments on expectancy: 145, 146, 149, 156, 166.

³⁰⁸ Basil Jackson, “Reflections on the Demonic: A Psychiatric Perspective,” in Montgomery, *Demon Possession*, 257, 263.

³⁰⁹ Gary R. Collins, “Psychological Observations on Demonism,” in Montgomery, *Demon Possession*, 246.

³¹⁰ Michael W. Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty* (New York: Broadway Books, 2001).

supernatural.³¹¹ He noted however, that the participants were bewildered when he failed to see what they were seeing, for example, people levitating two or three feet above chairs.³¹² Echoing the psychological theory of schemata, Cuneo eventually concluded: “There was nothing to be seen. People tend to be so keyed up during an exorcism, so eager to sink their fingers into something preternatural, that they easily convince themselves they’re seeing, hearing, or feeling things that simply aren’t there—not *really* there—to be seen, heard, or felt.”³¹³

The biggest challenge in seeking to understand the SWM lies with comprehending the role of experience. Whether delivering demons from individuals or driving them out from concrete locations, testimony to the reality of the event relies on personal verification from those involved. The reason it is important to weigh up the value of experience is because ultimately the SWM case rests almost entirely on their claims of experience.³¹⁴ The arguments from scripture, logic, or authoritative sources contain many discrepancies and hence do not fare well under close scrutiny. Concerning the reliability of experience as an indicator of reality, we have already raised issues of schemas and expectancy, the problems of misdiagnosis, the stability of the belief that Christians can be demonized, and the fantastical-seeming notions of the ministers. The power of emotion and imagination must be accounted for: by default, the interpretation of experience incorporates feelings and emotions that can be unreliable.³¹⁵ One factor not mentioned so far is the knowledge base and training backgrounds of deliverance ministers. Although undoubtedly they would claim that power in the Holy Spirit is the only requirement, Christians working professionally with human behaviours draw

³¹¹ Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 274-275.

³¹² Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 275.

³¹³ Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 275. This same phenomenon can be observed in numerous videos on *YouTube* that claim to show angels or demon manifestations. For example, one clip by Ana Méndez shows a toddler alternating between playing with her doll and imitating the worship activities of surrounding adults. No angels are observable as claimed although there are some shifting shadows on the floor cast by the swaying worshippers. (The text at 0:20 claims the angels pass through at high speed). Ana Méndez Ferrell and Emerson Ferrell, “Angels surrounding a girl during worship in Netherlands,” *YouTube*, 4 September 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILarmrULx_4> (12 June 2020). A further example of a woman undergoing exorcism demonstrates her extreme reactions, each of which is explicable as responses either to distress or as a result of poor mental health, but which are viewed by the exorcists as manifestation of demonic activity. National Geographic, “Exorcise the Demons,” *YouTube*, 19 August 2008 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ms2Tu-4AHL8>> (12 June 2020).

³¹⁴ David Wells comments on the problem of Truth in modern society: “If it persuades, it does so because our experience has given it its persuasive power—but tomorrow our experience might be different.” Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 86.

³¹⁵ Horton, *Power Religion*, 79.

attention to the complexity and precision required for skilful interventions.³¹⁶ This is precisely why Collins recommends that a careful, thoughtful, collaborative multi-disciplinary approach is necessary.³¹⁷

Michael Cuneo's investigation, although described with sly humour and a significant dose of scepticism, nevertheless is a credible account of personal witness to dozens of questionable exorcisms that were believed by the protagonists in each instance to be authentic. It is possible to argue that it does not matter. If a minister casts a demon out of an individual and that individual is convinced that indeed they have been freed from demonic influence and they consequently feel as if they are healed, then does the authenticity of the event itself matter?³¹⁸ The difficulty with this stance is that conversely there is potential for enormous harm to a person if any aspect of the deliverance is not authentic, particularly if the use of modern medical intervention is displaced in favour of deliverance ministry. Moreover, if demons are merely a metaphor for diagnosing an ailment that successfully can be treated with deliverance prayer in the name of the God of the Bible, then that risks reducing some or all of scripture itself to nothing more than a metaphor.

Expelling demons from individuals was, for a season, a major preoccupation for SWM proponents. However, as they started to cast their vision wider, Wagner in particular moved into a new area: battling the demons that occupied entire territories. As this new activity sprang into popular consciousness, the subject of the next chapter became widespread and new vocabulary was employed: strategic-level spiritual warfare.

³¹⁶ By implication, all the deliverance ministers are inadvertently claiming that they are equipped with all the necessary skills to accurately analyse and interpret human experiences, including distinguishing between natural consequences of sin, physiological problems, mental instability, emotional problems, or genuine demon possession.

³¹⁷ Collins, "Psychological Observations," in Montgomery, *Demon Possession*, 249-250.

³¹⁸ Keener suggests that mistakes in diagnosing as demonic are relatively common and also acknowledges the placebo effect. Keener, "Crooked Spirits," 351.

Chapter 5: Spiritual Warfare and Battling Demons

Territorial Spirits

Where Kraft's chief interest remained with demons as they pertain to individuals, Wagner's focus shifted to a wider sphere: the territorial demons. His style of writing was to place himself at the centre and as leader of each new innovation in which he participated and to tell the story from his personal perspective. Given that he did remain consistently the key leader at each stage his point of reference was not inaccurate. Therefore, his description of the evolutionary process that led to a focus on territorial spirits likely provides a reasonable explanation for how it occurred. In his memoir, Wagner stated that due to the MC510 course, Wagner, his wife Doris, and Chuck Kraft had become recognized for their expertise in the field. Once he became convinced of the reality of demonic beings active in the world: "My thoughts began to escalate. I began to wonder if demons could not only affect *people*, but also possibly even whole people *groups*."¹ He started "entertaining the notion" that spirits could exercise evil assignments over geographical regions. "The more I researched, taught and discussed this hypothesis ... the more convinced I became that we were on to a valid missiological principle."² Moreover, new phenomena were advancing his moves into new avenues of inspiration. For the first time he recorded "hearing" the voice of God in "words that can be quoted," which in this instance told him to take leadership in the area of territorial spirits.³ Previous to this he had attributed changes in his life to pragmatic decisions or human interactions combined with prayer.⁴

The SWM doctrine of territorial spirits, also known as strategic-level spiritual warfare, rested on Dan 10:13-20 and Eph 6:12. Such a doctrine was not a recent innovation. The theme of hierarchies or organisation among demons had attracted comment much earlier and the same two passages always sat at the heart of any discussion, frequently linked together. In the conceptions of the writers scrutinized here, Dan 10:13 revealed the territorial nature of demonic forces and introduced the theme of warfare. Eph 6:12 provided further details about

¹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 158-159. Italics his.

² Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 159.

³ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 162. See also Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 129.

⁴ For one example see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 82, for how he made the decision to leave the Bolivian mission field.

structure and hierarchy among demons but also outlined the role of humans in engaging the battle against the forces of darkness.

Historically, some attention had previously been given to relatively formless thoughts of territoriality.⁵ John Nevius merely confined his remarks to describing Satan as the princely head of a “martialled host of veterans” who were simply legions of Satan’s willing subjects.⁶ One of his own sources for his work on demons, a book on principalities and powers by Charlotte Elizabeth (1790-1846), had earlier shied away from the subject matter. In discussing Eph 6:12 and Dan 10:13, she wrote: “We build no theory on these extraordinary declarations of the Most High: we merely point them out, and endeavour to show how they harmonize with other parts of the same immutable word.”⁷ Jessie Penn-Lewis, however, repeatedly referred to a hierarchy of Satan’s evil powers from the early pages of *War on the Saints* and throughout the book, beginning with the princes of Daniel 10.⁸ She categorized the elements described in Eph 6:12: Paul’s “principalities” referred to demons with dominion over nations and governments, “powers” were demons with power in any sphere that was open to them, “world-rulers” were demons who govern the world at large, and “wicked spirits” were those who target specifically Christians.⁹ In 1927, missionary Robert Jaffray suggested that demonic forces ruled over specific territories but did not formulate a specific doctrine.¹⁰

⁵ The earliest conception of territorial spirits goes back as far as Origen (every nation is controlled by two angels, one good and the other evil). See Burton Russell, *Satan*, 134. For a historical survey of early and medieval church fathers and the Reformers’ approaches to the concept see Lowe, *Territorial Spirits*, 86-90, 94-100, and Van der Meer, “Reflections on Spiritual Mapping,” 53-58. Wagner consistently implied historical precedent for territorial spirits but also covered his bases by writing: “the absence of available material doesn’t *prove* that no-one in the past did strategic-level spiritual warfare,” and “Few people I know ... would deny that God might very well decide to do something new in our generation. Nothing we know about the nature of God would preclude that.” Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 95. Wagner supervised the dissertation of one of his students that attempted to establish precedent for SWM conceptions in the patristic period, see Siew, “Spiritual Territoriality.”

⁶ Nevius, *Demon Possession*, 266.

⁷ Charlotte Elizabeth, *Principalities and Powers in Heavenly Places* (New York: John S. Taylor & Co., 1842), 25-26. Her text does hint that more could be said: “In this, as in other instances, a growing dimness of vision on our mysterious and awful subject, has perhaps biased both translators and commentators, to put a gloss on what they cannot easily reconcile with their established systems.”

⁸ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 7.

⁹ Penn-Lewis, *War on the Saints*, 17. See also Jessie Penn-Lewis, *The Warfare with Satan: and the Way of Victory* (Dorset: Overcomer Literature Trust, 1973), 8 (.pdf edition). This document was compiled from a series of addresses Penn-Lewis gave in 1897.

¹⁰ R.A. Jaffray, “Our Great Unfinished Task: God’s Programme for the Evangelisation of the World.” *The Alliance Weekly* 62:28 (9 July 1927): 457. Drawing on the mention of the Princes of Persia and Greece in Dan 10, Jaffray listed Princes of Tibet, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Arabia, Mohammedanism, and Bolshevism. In keeping with the tenor of his times, Jaffray drew a sharp distinction between Christianized and unchristianized lands, seeing these in terms of light and dark. Therefore he had no conception of ruling princes over Christianized areas. Jaffray was not alone in suggesting demonic territories. McGee records a comment by a missionary to China, Arthur E. Street, who called for prayerful intercession to bind the strongman over China.

Reflecting on the events of World War Two, fellow missionary John MacMillan implied much the same theme in 1946.¹¹ In 1948, he developed the concept further.¹² As with Penn-Lewis but with variations, MacMillan read Eph 6:12 as a type of taxonomy: “principalities” were rulers of great world areas; “powers” were associated but subservient to principalities, probably in prime minister roles; “world rulers of darkness” were the forces that kept human minds blinded by “cunningly devised heresies” such as evolution; and the “spiritual powers of wickedness” were the unnumbered armies of demons whom people encounter during séances.¹³ Unger pointed out in *Biblical Demonology* that it is only logical that Satan’s forces be highly organized, given that they consist of a vast multitude and are described as Satan’s kingdom (Matt 12:26).¹⁴ In relation to Daniel 10 he further suggested that satanic organisation is connected to human affairs (for example, corresponding with governmental institutions) in order to thwart the purposes of God on earth.¹⁵ Nonetheless, to this point, no commentators had shown interest in developing a specific doctrine of territorial spirits. Such a doctrine did not evolve until the latter half of the twentieth century.

Frank Hammond’s chief preoccupation was the groups of demons that invaded individual persons, but he also gave some attention to the composition and definable territories for satanic forces at large. He derived comparisons from the organisational structures of American armed forces and then drew on the Webster Dictionary definition of the English word “principalities” to assert therefore that ruler spirits controlled specified territories such as nations or cities. From there he extrapolated to argue that territories could also consist of individual churches and homes, as evidenced by the troubles that can plague both spheres.¹⁶ Any suggestion of speculation dissipated later in the book when he laid the foundation for later development in the doctrine of territorial spirits:

McGee notes that other missionaries shared the same view although it is difficult to tell from the text if they held literal or metaphorical conceptions of the spiritual powers. Gary B. McGee, “The Radical Strategy in Modern Mission: The Linkage of Paranormal Phenomena with Evangelism,” in *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series #5, ed. C. Douglas McConnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 83-84.

¹¹ J.A. MacMillan, “Editorial,” *The Alliance Weekly* 81:37 (14 September 1946): 579. It is quite possible that Jaffray was the inspiration for this theme in MacMillan, due to the close association between the two men.

¹² J.A. MacMillan, “The Satanic Working,” *The Alliance Weekly* 83:31 (31 July 1948): 484-485. This article was the second of four that were later compiled into booklet form and sold widely as “Modern Demon Possession.”

¹³ MacMillan, “The Satanic Working,” 484.

¹⁴ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 72-73.

¹⁵ Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, 194-195.

¹⁶ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 6.

Demon powers are set in array in a chain of command. Satan has his representatives assigned over nations, cities, churches, homes and individual lives. The scripture instructs us to engage this power structure in spiritual warfare. Therefore, take authority over all higher powers that have authority over the demons indwelling the one being set free. Bind off these higher powers from interfering in any way with the ministry. Then bind the “strong man” or ruling spirit which is over the lesser demons that indwell the person.¹⁷

Two years after Hammond’s book was published, theologian/pastor Mark Bubeck outlined his interpretation of Eph 6:12 in his influential book *The Adversary*.¹⁸ Like Hammond, he drew on America’s military structure and like Penn-Lewis and MacMillan he saw Paul’s description as a hierarchy, although he varied its details. “Principalities” were princes who carried out Satan’s plans by influencing the political, educational, and entertainment structure of every nation. “Powers” were more numerous, but less powerful and independent than the princes; without directly stating so, Bubeck implied that their targets were believers. The rulers of darkness were the numerous workhorses (“lieutenants and sergeants”) who in turn controlled the wicked spirits. This final type of spirit was the kind that manifested during the ministry of Jesus on earth. Eventually Bubeck came to hold the opinion that entire nations or cultures could become demonized.¹⁹ The variance in opinions about Paul’s “hierarchy” in verse 12 demonstrates the fragility of the proposition and is further challenged by NT scholar Benjamin Merkle’s exegesis. He records that the view of a hierarchy is difficult to maintain “since the relationship between these powers and the devil is never delineated” and moreover, elsewhere in the NT different combinations of these terms are used by Paul. Merkle’s view is that due to the lack of information, any type of classification is “pure speculation.”²⁰

From the late 1980s on, all these prior speculations seemed rudimentary in comparison to the detailed information that Wagner and his colleagues began to develop. Although Hammond was directly involved with Wagner’s Spiritual Warfare Network and was cited as an influence by SWM writers, Wagner introduced territorial spirits to his readers as a “new area of research” and implied that Timothy Warner, a Professor of Mission at Trinity

¹⁷ Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 107.

¹⁸ Bubeck, *The Adversary*, 71-73.

¹⁹ Mark I. Bubeck, *The Satanic Revival*. San Bernardino (CA: Here’s Life Publishers, 1991), 45-46, 49-50.

²⁰ Benjamin L. Merkle, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Ephesians* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2016), 212.

Evangelical Divinity School, was the first to suggest the notion of demons assigned to specific territories.²¹ Others more precisely described Warner as the first “leading missiologist” to actively promote the concept.²² In 1986 Warner wrote: “It seems safe to assume that just as there was a ‘prince of Persia’ who withstood the angelic messenger sent with the answer to Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 10, so there are ‘princes’ in charge of other geographical areas.”²³ Two years later he had consolidated his thoughts. Wagner quoted a lecture Warner gave at Fuller Seminary: “I have come to believe that Satan does indeed assign a demon or corps of demons to every geopolitical unit in the world, and that they are among the principalities and powers against whom we wrestle.”²⁴ The public launch of the SWM concept occurred in 1988, following the controversy and cancellation of the MC510 course.²⁵ In the style that was Wagner’s typical *modus operandi*, this new focus was heralded by his organising and facilitating a symposium in December 1988.²⁶ Although the title was “Academic Symposium on Power Evangelism” and the keynote speaker was John Wimber, Wagner introduced the theme of territorial spirits to the assembled scholars. One result of this event was a book comprising edited presentations delivered by thirteen of the forty participants: *Wrestling with Dark Angels* (1990).²⁷ Aside from the introduction, Wagner’s

²¹ Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 74, 77. Otis described this “widespread and ancient phenomenon” as given little prominence until Wagner began reversing the trend among theologians and biblical scholars. Otis, *The Last of the Giants*, 87.

²² Priest, “Missiological Syncretism,” 20. Both Wagner and Warner described the “hypothesis” in books published in 1986, which makes it more likely that the theory evolved from within a group dynamic. Wagner wrote: “A part of power evangelism, not too well known as yet, deals with the territorial assignment given by the enemy to high ranking evil spirits in the demonic hierarchy. Certain ‘powers of the air’ (Eph. 6:12) may be in charge of certain geographic regions such as countries, provinces, towns, cities, sections of cities and so forth.” Wagner, *Spiritual Power and Church Growth*, 40.

²³ Timothy M. Warner, “Power Encounter With the Demonic,” in *Evangelism on the Cutting Edge*, ed. Robert E. Coleman (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1986), 98.

²⁴ Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 74.

²⁵ The course was cancelled from 1985 but Fuller Seminary later (1987) offered replacement course MC550 “The Ministry of Healing in World Evangelisation” in an attempt to provide wider perspectives on the topic. See Fuller Archives “Collection 0182,” 156, 2; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 149.

²⁶ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 155. The sequence of events should be noted in terms of Cindy Jacobs’ influence on Wagner. What Wagner announced as “high-level spiritual warfare” in the 1988 symposium consisted of mainly theory about territorial spirits and a generalised call to engage in spiritual warfare against them. When he met Cindy Jacobs five months later she provided him with conceptions of *how* to engage in spiritual warfare. Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 78, 89-90, Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 157.

²⁷ C. Peter Wagner and F. Douglas Pennoyer, eds., *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Towards a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare*, eds. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990). Thomas Pratt implies that the essays in *Wrestling with Dark Angels* were stacked in favour of Wagner’s worldview, a proposition that does seem possible given that the responses to the essays in the book for the most part served to reinforce the key ideas presented in the essays. One view that did express some disagreement (with the SWM view of demonization in Christians) comes from a response by Opal L. Reddin. Pratt states that Reddin and some colleagues subsequently organized their own symposium, again implying that the event and

contribution to the book focuses on territorial spirits but the chapter by John Wimber served to articulate the connections between church growth, the S&W, and the SWM.²⁸

The SWM argument that there are demonic forces ruling over geographical regions comes almost exclusively from Dan 10:13-20 where Daniel's heavenly visitor explains that he was delayed by the prince of Persia and where later he mentions the coming of the prince of Greece. The importance of this passage is demonstrated by its inevitable inclusion in SWM literature.²⁹ George Otis Jr., who became prominent as an expert on mapping territorial spirit realms, linked Deut 32:8-9 (God's allocation of inheritance to the nations), Ezek 28:12-19 (prophecy against the King of Tyre), and Eph 6:12 (Paul's discussion of our struggle against the spiritual forces of the heavenly realms) to make the case for territorial spirits, in his view, even "more compelling."³⁰ Supported by anecdotes, claims of divine revelation, and

their resultant book was in reaction to Wagner's presentation. Pratt, "The Need to Dialogue," 14. Reddin was later criticized by Kraft as not taking seriously the evidence for demonization in Christians. Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 34.

²⁸ John Wimber, "Definitions and Directions," in Wagner, *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 14-42, esp. 24, 27, 29, 31.

²⁹ For examples, see Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 6; Warner, "Power Encounter With the Demonic," 98; Dick Bernal, *Storming Hell's Brazen Gates: Isaiah 45:2* (San Jose, CA: Jubilee Christian Center, 1988), 5; Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 202; White, *Believer's Guide*, 34, Wagner, "Territorial Spirits," in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 59-60; Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 72, 229; Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 21; Otis, "Overview of Spiritual Mapping," 35. Jacobs takes her claims further than other writers: she asserts that Daniel's prayer started a great war in the heavenlies, the prince of Persia was actually battling to prevent the message getting through to Daniel, and the same demon also tried to kill Daniel by causing him to be cast into the lion's den: 72, 160, 227-228.

³⁰ Otis, "Overview of Spiritual Mapping," 35. The view that the King of Tyre is Satanic comes from Origen. Burton Russell, *Satan*, 131. The Deut 32:8 link rests entirely on F.F. Bruce's acceptance of the LXX text where he finds support from Qumran (4QDeut^a: should read 4QDeut^b) for the translation "he set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the angels of God." F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 71n16. Wagner elaborates on this reliance on Bruce and adds further details drawn from Sumerian concepts of divine hierarchy. Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 90-91. In contrast to the SWM one-explanation-only view, scholars continue to debate the wording in Deut 32:8 where God apportions boundaries for the nations according to the number of the "sons of God" (LXX) versus the "sons of Israel" (MT). While the debate described here may appear more complex than is warranted for a discussion of SWM theology, it is because the SWM case ultimately rests on Deut 32:8 plus the Daniel 10 passage discussed elsewhere. The issue mostly pertains to the implication of polytheism in the LXX rendering, in which the SWM reading finds angelic territorial responsibilities that then open up the possibility of demonic angelic rule. Stevens (1997) suggested, among other points, that the LXX reflects developments in Jewish intertestamental thinking on angelic protection (during the Alexandrian Diaspora) and believes that the (SWM) concept of delegating territories to angelic rulers is contrary to the biblical-theological context of Deuteronomy. David E. Stevens, "Does Deuteronomy 32:8 Refer to 'Sons of God' or 'Sons of Israel'?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154:614 (April-June 1997): 136, 138-140, but note Stevens' shift in position in his 2000 article on Daniel 10 discussed elsewhere here. For a view in favour of the LXX rendition, see Heiser who argued against textual priority of the MT as a given while denying the possibility of polytheistic interpretation in the LXX. Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:629 (January-March 2001): 52-74. Laato provides yet another perspective (the influence of the Ugaritic tradition concerning the 70 sons of ʿĒl): Antti Laato, *The Origin of Israelite Zion Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2018), 119-121.

references to beliefs from other religious traditions, the interpretation of Daniel's experience remained central to the SWM argument for territorial spirits.³¹

Many critics took issue with the SWM interpretation of Dan 10:13-20. Although not all biblical scholars see it this way, at first reading it does seem possible that the Persian and Greek princes of Daniel 10 are demonic beings.³² Because of this, Clinton Arnold expressed qualified support for demonic territoriality.³³ Others, whether or not they agreed with the spheres-of-power theory, found much to criticize in the SWM understanding of this passage. Greenlee argued that in cultures that are known to have venerated territorial spirits, their power dissipated with economic, political, or environmental changes and emigration, something the SWM proponents did not take into account.³⁴ Tinker pointed out that if demonic beings were tied to specific geographical regions, there would have to be a "political reshuffling of the demonic cabinet" each time a country's boundaries changed.³⁵ Many objections stemmed from the SWM failure to account for other potential explanations within this interpretation. These take into consideration hermeneutical and exegetical fundamentals of historical context, political situations, alternate opinions, and vocabulary, translation, or consistency in the text; aspects that the SWM writers are accused of ignoring. For example, Löfstedt took issue with the SWM authors taking no notice of hermeneutical considerations such as genre or dating in Daniel, merely presenting their version as being the only reasonable

³¹ Priest, "Missiological Syncretism," 70. However, van der Meer does note that SWM writers are not alone in viewing these princes as demonic: even some church fathers wrote on the theme. The issue at stake is how SWM writers used this text to develop their theology of territorial demonic power and activity. Van der Meer, "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner," 105.

³² However, Hammond's logic in arguing for angelic identity over human identity—"He does not refer to an earthly prince, for no mere man could withstand a heavenly messenger"—is somewhat undermined by Dan 8:25, where Antiochus IV opposes even the Prince of princes. See David E. Stevens, "Daniel 10 and the Notion of Territorial Spirits," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157:628 (October-December 2000): 419. Otis argued the same point as Hammond: Otis, *The Twilight Labyrinth*, 277.

³³ Nevertheless, he warned against excesses, "magical" thinking, and over-reliance on technique while indicating his belief that there is no biblical warrant for engaging battle with territorial rulers. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 129-138, 146-147, 164-169, 197. Arnold also called for unity to replace the division occurring in the Church over spiritual warfare, citing the Lausanne Movement's plea for the same. Lausanne Movement, "Statement on Spiritual Warfare (1993)," *Working Group Report*, 14 July 1993, <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/statement/statement-on-spiritual-warfare-1993>> (30 July 2019), 5.

³⁴ David Greenlee, "Territorial Spirits Reconsidered," *Missiology* 22:4 (October 1994): 510-512. A good example of how this happens can be seen in the fluctuating power of Artemis through hundreds of years, to the point that at times her temple was completely neglected. See James D. Rietveld, *Artemis of the Ephesians: Mystery, Magic and Her Sacred Landscape* (New York: Nicea Press, 2014).

³⁵ Melvin Tinker, "The Phantom Menace: Territorial Spirits and SWM," *Churchman* 114:1 (Spring 2000): 76.

explanation without accounting for other options.³⁶ Others proffered alternate explanations to demonstrate the reductive nature of the SWM single-explanation-only approach. For example, Stevens proposed that the Persian prince was indeed of malevolent angelic nature but that his influence was over personal and socio-political structures not geographical territories.³⁷ By contrast, Meadowcroft argued for the princes of Persia and Greece as temporal rulers in whose dealings the angel Michael involved himself, pointing out how Western dualist separation has displaced Hebrew scholarship's view of a "permeable membrane" between heavenly and earthly concerns.³⁸ Stevens and Meadowcroft offered differing assessments for the same biblical passage and among biblical scholars there are more variations, demonstrating that it is not legitimate to make "closed case" assertions about the ultimate meaning of this passage.³⁹

Spiritual Mapping

The theories of territorial spirits and spiritual mapping go hand-in-hand in the doctrines of the SWM. Mapping is the process of locating and identifying the territorial spirits.⁴⁰ Wagner argued scriptural support for the mapping concept in God's instruction to Ezekiel to draw a map of Jerusalem on a clay tile and to "lay siege against it" (Ezek 4:1). This, Wagner wrote, was "obviously not a reference to physical warfare, but to spiritual warfare."⁴¹ As the mapping system developed, increasingly it began to incorporate more

³⁶ Torsten Löfstedt, "Establishing Authority in Spiritual Warfare Literature," *HumaNetten* 41 (Autumn 2018): 11. See also Lowe, *Territorial Spirits*, 33-34, 46-47.

³⁷ Stevens, "Daniel 10," 413, 415-419, 422, 427.

³⁸ Tim Meadowcroft, "Who are the Princes of Persia and Greece (Daniel 10)? Pointers Towards the Danielic Vision of Earth and Heaven." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29:1 (September 2004): 102, 104-107, 109.

³⁹ Here Stevens and Meadowcroft are referred to merely as representative of direct scholarly responses to the propositions of the SWM movement. There are other aspects of Daniel 10 that are not necessarily germane to discuss here but still should not be overlooked in consideration of territorial spirits theory. Neither Stevens nor Meadowcroft account for Brown's description of progression of thought in Judaistic angelology, where Michael in Daniel 10 appears in the middle of increasing bifurcation in the interpretation of angelic identity from the "sons of God" in pre-exilic times through to the full duality of forces of light and darkness in Qumrân literature. See Raymond E. Brown, "The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 13: 2 (January 1967): 121-122.

⁴⁰ A note about a frequently-cited source: René Holvast's terminology "Spiritual Mapping" pertains to the entire ideology of what I call the SWM. My use of "mapping" here is confined to the specific activity of locating and identifying demons; in line, I believe, with the intention of devotees. See Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 1.

⁴¹ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 152. This interpretation contrasts significantly with clear indications in the text that God's instructions to Ezekiel were to perform a series of symbolic acts in order to serve as illustrations of God's displeasure and judgment of his people. See Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 44-47.

complex information about the demons: location, names, character, activities, and even narratives about particular events. Once the mapping process provided sufficient knowledge and understanding of specific territorial spirits, SWM prayer warriors could embark on the process to expel them from their “seat of power.” Of all aspects of belief and practice in the SWM, spiritual mapping is the one truly innovative feature: no other precedent appears to exist.

The origins of spiritual mapping are rooted in early Youth with a Mission (YWAM) practices of researching an area to determine ministry needs before embarking on a mission. Risking accusations of cultural imperialism, Otis wrote that spiritual mapping involved “superimposing our understanding of forces and events in the spiritual domain onto places and circumstances in the material world.”⁴² He provided a defence against accusations that spiritual mapping has no biblical precedent and is an invention of contemporary times. He wrote, “If this were found to be true, it would certainly give us reason for pause. Fortunately, God’s Word offers up several precedents for spiritual mapping.”⁴³ These “biblical precedents” were: Moses dispatching the spies into Canaan (Num 13); Joshua sending surveyors from Shiloh to map the land for division (Josh 18); Joshua sending two spies to Jericho (Josh 2:1); Nehemiah’s night-time inspection of Jerusalem’s broken walls (Neh 2:11-15); Ezekiel’s vision of desecrating images in the temple; and Paul’s observational walk around Athens where he saw the altar to the unknown god (Acts 17).⁴⁴ However, Otis did not address the lack of resemblance in intention and activity between these proof texts and the activities of spiritual mappers in the late twentieth century.

In the earlier years of spiritual mapping, Otis did little to describe the “how to” of spiritual mapping but John Dawson from YWAM provided some guideline questions that could be answered through research in local libraries.⁴⁵ In later years, Wagner took Dawson’s suggestions further. He advised research on city features that might be demonically-driven or might form a pattern when plotted on a map. These could be locations of previous bloodshed, natural features (rocks, hills, rivers), artwork that might be sensual or demonic, or “high-

⁴² Otis, *The Last of the Giants*, 85. Otis appeared to have little appreciation for the risks inherent in this process, tragically observable throughout human history.

⁴³ George Otis Jr., *Informed Intercession* (Ventura, CA: Renew Books, 1999), 90.

⁴⁴ Otis, *Informed Intercession*, 90-93.

⁴⁵ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 85-86. Both George Otis and Dawson were long-serving leaders in YWAM.

places,” that is, buildings or monuments associated with witchcraft, Eastern religions, Freemasonry, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the like.⁴⁶ Eventually the research took on additional character by combining research with “spiritual impressions”:

By gathering objective information (including key historical facts such as foundational history, locations of bloodshed, idolatrous practices, key historical leaders, broken covenants, and sexual immorality) and combining it with spiritual impressions (prophecy, revelation, words of knowledge, dreams, and visions), believers can prayerfully combine all of this information and draw a map that identifies the open doors between the spirit world and the material world.⁴⁷

In Wagner’s opinion, it was originally Dawson who initiated a major paradigm shift among charismatically inclined evangelicals when he published his book *Taking Our Cities for God* (1989).⁴⁸ Wagner described it as the first analytical and instructional book on warfare prayer and the first with the concept of taking whole cities for God.⁴⁹ This often-quoted book introduced the concept of territorial spirits to a popular audience and influenced many spiritual warfare books to come.⁵⁰ Dawson’s themes concerned the hierarchies and territories of demonic spirits, the battle to be engaged with evil powers, the authority of Christians over Satan, and praying for “remittance” of a city’s sins.⁵¹ Dawson made no mention about the origins of his thinking apart from telling of his personal experience in “discovering demonic activity.” During a conference in Korea, he heard the story of Pastor Paul (David) Yonggi Cho’s “hair-raising” confrontation with an evil spirit. Cho’s talk on spiritual warfare was the catalyst for Dawson to start questioning his own vulnerabilities to demonic deeds. After thinking about Cho’s encounter all the way home on the airplane, he immediately sensed a demon in the family vehicle as his wife picked him up at the airport. After stopping the vehicle and commanding the spirit to leave, he discerned its departure. The next day at work,

⁴⁶ Wagner, “Summary: Mapping Your Community,” in *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*, 225-230.

⁴⁷ C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood, “The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model,” in Beilby, *Four Views*, 182-183. Otis also incorporated his “sense of oppression,” “inexplicable eeriness,” or “clinging unease” into his spiritual mapping, experiencing these sensations in the birthplace of Yugoslavia’s Communist leader Tito or in Andalusia Spain where the “spirit of Islam” lingered even though the Muslims themselves were long gone. Otis, *The Last of the Giants*, 86-87.

⁴⁸ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 53-54. Wagner stated that Dawson sold 100,000 copies in 1990 alone.

⁴⁹ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 46; Wagner, *This Changes Everything*, 176. Wagner viewed Dawson’s whole-city approach as restoring the correct interpretation of the Great Commission (*panta ta ethne*). He asserted this revelation moved him from an erstwhile focus on saving individual souls back to his original accord with McGavran’s theology of focus on whole people groups.

⁵⁰ Under the heading “The Book That Changed the World” the publisher of the second edition hyperbolically claims that Dawson’s book is “one of the most influential books ever written.” (Charisma House Publishers, 2001).

⁵¹ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 70, 130, 137, 158, 185.

he saw in his “mind’s eye” a gloomy cloud hovering in the corner of the ceiling and recognized a spirit of unbelief in the YWAM boardroom. He records that this was the beginning of a process to clean out a number of demons who had been harassing his family and Christian ministry.⁵²

Other than being the son of well-known missionary parents and his life experience of worldwide travel, there is no further information available about what led Dawson to develop the theology he presents in his book. He was a director of YWAM in Los Angeles and the activities of this ministry played a formative role in the development of the doctrine of spiritual mapping. The exercise of researching a city’s history and demographics for the purposes of locating ministry needs evolved into the concept of researching in the same way to discern the spiritual forces over a city; only later it came to be known as “spiritual mapping.”⁵³ Research was important because the control exerted by demonic forces over a city stems from the past: “The study of a city’s history will often reveal the wounds a people have sustained.”⁵⁴ Cities were central to Dawson’s thinking. Each city contains a “redemptive gift” (the mark of God’s sovereign purpose on them) and has a “creaturehood” or personality: Dawson’s suggestion was that this equates to a soul. God has participated in the creation of cities by “forming their personality and in stationing high-ranking guardian angels over each one.”⁵⁵ Even though Dawson admitted there is very little biblical evidence for demonic territorial spirits, he explains that: “God will reveal what we need to know when we need to know it.”⁵⁶

⁵² Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 23-25.

⁵³ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 119-123, see also 85-86, 115-116. Although George Otis does not explicitly explain the formation of his own thinking on spiritual mapping, the years that he spent as a missionary in YWAM (1972 onwards) are likely to have influenced him similarly to Dawson: Otis, “Overview of Spiritual Mapping,” 29-31.

⁵⁴ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 83. This concept of past wounding deserves more attention than possible here because of its ability to assist with locating worldviews among adherents. For example, Dawson identified wounding and struggle in Australians due to rejection and fear of authority because the country was originally a penal colony. These “cruel roots” of Australian history enabled Satan to create a general distrust of all authority figures, including God Himself. A 1979 gathering in Sydney extended forgiveness to the British for the injustices suffered by Australian forefathers in the establishment of the colony. Dawson said that this produced spiritual release in the crowd of fifteen thousand attendees and an outpouring of prophetic revelation that has filled the country ever since, enabling hope for the future, 80. No mention was made of the ongoing deeper and more extreme injustices experienced by Australia’s aboriginal peoples.

⁵⁵ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 39-40.

⁵⁶ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 156.

Spiritual intuition played an important role in Dawson's discussion: his method of locating demons was the process of "sensing" or "discerning" through prayer. What can be discovered in this way is which particular evil spiritual forces control a city (New York: mammon, Miami: political intrigue, Chicago: violence); the presence and departure of demons within a local environment; the attendance of the Holy Spirit in certain settings; the removal of God's (mighty, brooding) presence over a city; or his threats of punishment (Los Angeles laid to waste because of wickedness in the city).⁵⁷ Spiritual intuition also concerned individuals: Christians should pray until they sense they have gained authority, and feelings from the Holy Spirit (foreboding) can alert someone to impending disaster.⁵⁸ This discernment therefore incorporates the authority and power of humans: prayer alters history by releasing legions of angels into the earth, a theme familiar to readers of Frank Peretti's books.⁵⁹

One prominent concept in Dawson's material provided a type of template that was often repeated in SWM literature over subsequent years: the twin themes of victory and disaster averted. For example, central to his book's discussion is the city of Los Angeles, in particular the events surrounding the 1984 Olympic Games.⁶⁰ A massive outreach project—Dawson described in particular the huge prayer efforts—culminated in the sense that Satan's power over the city was broken because of all the prayer.⁶¹ He wrote: "During the summer of 1984 the Christians of Los Angeles briefly experienced the reality of a city free from spiritual oppression ... Instead of the expected crime-spree, the crime rate actually dropped."⁶² A contact in the police force told him that during the two weeks of the Olympics there were no murders in the city. Nevertheless, on the last day of the Olympics, Dawson and others felt overwhelmed with an impending sense of disaster. He rallied a large number of Christians to pray in an outdoor park and at half past four in the afternoon people felt change occur: disaster was averted. "I believe that in that summer of 1984 something terrible was about to happen in Los Angeles and that it was averted through the repentance, obedience and earnest

⁵⁷ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 24-25, 58, 60 (see Lev 26:31), 70-71, 154, 156.

⁵⁸ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 20-21, 178.

⁵⁹ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 140. See discussion below on Frank Peretti.

⁶⁰ Although he was originally from New Zealand, Los Angeles was Dawson's long-term home.

⁶¹ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 71-72.

⁶² Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 73.

prayer of thousands of Christians across the city.”⁶³ But, he went on to warn: “There is a point when God will irrevocably destroy a rebellious city.”⁶⁴ The victory of the 1984 Olympics lay with the unity of Christians, joined into a coordinated army: “In this unity we found that we had new power to hold back the forces of darkness. We experienced great success in evangelism. We learned to discern the territorial spirits operating over the city and to break their yoke through spiritual warfare.”⁶⁵

There is another perspective to note on this event. In the wake of wounds inflicted on the Olympic movement by the 1973 Munich massacre, tit-for-tat boycotts by the USA and communist bloc countries, and warnings by Chief of Police Daryl Gates that Los Angeles was under threat of terrorism, Los Angeles was “militarized” for the July 1984 Olympics.⁶⁶ The city bristled with newly-purchased specialized weaponry (including tanks) and 20,000 security guards and police officers. Thousands of homeless people, prostitutes, and young African-American or Latino men, marked as potential criminals because of their colour, were rounded up or driven away in the lead-up to the Games in a campaign announced by an LAPD captain to “sanitize” the city.⁶⁷ Historian Max Felker-Kantor notes that the overwhelming show of force kept crime and violence to a minimum during the Games.⁶⁸

In summary, Dawson’s contributions to the thinking of the SWM integrated concepts of battles over entire cities controlled by territorial spirits with victory accomplished by means of intuitive prayer. Some elements that supported these concepts also became significant to later developments in spiritual warfare. Firstly, Dawson called on Christians to “stand in the gap” by identifying with the sins of the city in personal and corporate repentance.⁶⁹ Although he framed this in terms of asking for God’s mercy, in later years this concept acquired the label of “identificational repentance” and evolved to the point that it

⁶³ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 61.

⁶⁴ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 62.

⁶⁵ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 73.

⁶⁶ Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 153.

⁶⁷ Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, 191-192, 199-200. See also Jenna Chandler, “LA ‘Sterilized’ Its Streets for the ’84 Olympics—How Will It Treat the Homeless in 2028?” *Curbed, Los Angeles* 12 July 2018 <<https://la.curbed.com/2018/7/12/17454676/los-angeles-olympics-homeless-police-militarization-security>> (11 November 2019), n.p.

⁶⁸ Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, 200.

⁶⁹ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 185-186.

came to mean remittance of the sins of a city or nation, even without the consent of the majority of its inhabitants.⁷⁰ Secondly, Dawson made seminal statements about the authority of Christians over Satan: “We need to overcome the enemy *before* we employ other methods of ministry among people.”⁷¹ Furthermore: “We need to bind the strong man and gain a place of authority over Satan before we will see the full fruit of our labors.”⁷² This theme of human authority is important within the SWM and will be further explored below.⁷³

Dawson’s book was written for the popular market so it did not attract attention from scholars or other commentators; at the time of publication it could not have been predicted how significant it was to become in shaping the ideas of spiritual warfare. One exception is found ten years later in a journal article by cultural anthropologist Jean DeBernardi. She argued that the SWM was a syncretic blend of animism and Christianity with new ritual forms contained within a dualistic framework of good and evil.⁷⁴ She referred to Dawson’s

⁷⁰ Cindy Jacobs advised the necessity of remitting a city’s sins (such as ungodly laws passed by the government) through prayers of repentance on the city’s behalf. Without this remittance the power of strongholds over a city cannot be broken. Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 245. See also Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 129-131, 136-137; Kjell Sjöberg, “Spiritual Mapping for Prophetic Prayer Actions,” in Wagner, *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*, 109, 118; Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 228; Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 260. Clinton Arnold, alarmed at “the assumption that there is an efficacy of proxy confession in the application of Jesus’ blood for forgiving sin” writes that in a personal conversation with Wagner in January 1996, Wagner assured him that he and his colleagues were “thinking solely of removing the curse and penalty for the sins of others that is visited upon the subsequent generations and upon the land.” Arnold accepted this explanation although he continued to have reservations on other grounds. However, a document describing what is meant by “identificational repentance” (to which Arnold had contributed, according to Wagner), when re-read in light of Wagner’s explanation, continues to give the impression that the SWM practises identificational repentance that remits the sins of a nation. See “Appendix: The Philosophy of Prayer for World Evangelisation Adopted by the A.D. 2000 United Prayer Track,” in Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 260 (Clause 22) and 251 for Arnold’s involvement in constructing the document. See also Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 179, and 179n72. Wagner’s explanation is weakened by his subsequent references to remittance for a nation’s sins, see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 236. Dawson later reinforced the theme of identificational repentance by making it a key theme in his 1994 book. He included the text of a public prayer made at the Springfield, Missouri 1992 March for Jesus where a leader of the march repented of a 1906 lynching: “We, as Your Church, repent of the mob violence and the spirit of spectatorism that took place on the Easter weekend of 1906. We ask forgiveness for the death, destruction, and devastation which was perpetuated against the black community.” See John Dawson, *Healing America’s Wounds* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994), 212-214. The heir to Wagner’s ministry, Chuck Pierce, co-authored a book with Wagner’s daughter where he describes the “spiritual principle of remitting sin.” Pierce states that according to Heb 9:22, no sin can be atoned for without the shedding of blood. Christians must appropriate the blood that Jesus shed on the cross in order for sin to be remitted. Repentance and appropriation of Jesus’ blood removes Satan’s legal right to a foothold. Land is defiled through sin in the same way as a soul. So if there is no repentance and appropriation of Jesus’ blood over land, Satan remains in control. He can be expelled only by remitting the sin that gave him control over the land. Chuck D. Pierce, and Rebecca Wagner Systema, *Ridding Your Home of Spiritual Darkness* (Colorado Springs: Wagner Institute for Practical Ministry, 1999), 38.

⁷¹ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 137. Italics his.

⁷² Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 70.

⁷³ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 260.

⁷⁴ Jean DeBernardi, “Spiritual Warfare and Territorial Spirits: The Globalization and Localisation of a ‘Practical Theology,’” *Religious Studies and Theology* 18:2 (December 1999): 90.

acknowledgement of Yonggi Cho's influence and points out Cho as a leader whose critics have associated him with "Christian animism."⁷⁵ This suggestion of syncretism was increasingly laid as a charge against the SWM as the activities of the movement garnered more critical attention over time.

Eventually, Dawson publicly separated himself from some of the extremes that grew out of the assertions in his bestselling book. Identified in the *Los Angeles Times* as one of the founders of the SWM, he was portrayed as being "clearly disturbed that he may have helped create a monster."⁷⁶ Backing down from his earlier claims, Dawson now declared that God had never given Christians the degree of authority they assumed, that what was identified as demonic was actually a "systemic problem of dynamics within a culture," that there was too much preoccupation with demonic activity, and that there is a risk of racial divisions developing from assumptions of the demonic in non-Anglo religious practices.

The Role of Christians: Power

Further to the developmental history and the key features of the SWM doctrine of demons, we can now turn to the role of Christians in dealing with the forces of darkness. The main SWM themes related to Christian involvement in spiritual warfare are firstly power and authority, and secondly prayer. Power was the manifestation of authority in the spiritual battle. Prayer was the weapon.⁷⁷ As we saw in a previous chapter, the S&W promoted the concept that all Christians could display God's superiority over Satan by means of visible and miraculous demonstrations of power. Even though evangelism was ostensibly the purpose of power demonstrations, praxis re-oriented towards the problems of those who were already Christians, especially regarding healing. As these ideas carried over into thinking about warfare against satanic forces, an increasing emphasis on human agency in the power encounter came to the fore.

The S&W pointed to Jesus' ministry as the model for power encounters. However, the example that they consistently noted as the ultimate power encounter was Elijah's

⁷⁵ DeBernardi, "Spiritual Warfare and Territorial Spirits," 69-71.

⁷⁶ John Dart, "Spiritual Warfare Sparks a Warning," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 February 1994 <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-02-26-me-27491-story.html>> (20 June 2019), B13.

⁷⁷ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 16; Wimber, *Power Healing*, 136.

confrontation with the Baal priests (1 Kings 18).⁷⁸ This provided continuity in linking to Alan Tippett's work because in his explanation of power encounters he also drew on the example of Elijah. The difference between the two lay with the elements of emphasis. In S&W thought, the final objective in the Elijah story was the manifestation of power in the fire that fell from heaven.⁷⁹ For Tippett, the important aspect was the confrontation. He saw this as the biblical prototype for evangelism in an *encounter by challenge*: "As with all societies which employ mechanisms of contest for proof or ordeal, it is assumed that the result is not merely the personal strengths of the contestants but the power of the God or spirit on whom the contestants call. 'The God who answers by fire, let him be God!' (1 Kings 18:24)."⁸⁰ Thus it appears that Tippett's view aligns with the views of those in the SWM who cited him. However, some differences emerged in SWM literature that increasingly indicated a divergence in premise. These pertain to the role of Elijah, the context of the power encounter, and the expression of the encounter itself.

Tippett stipulated that the role of missionary (synonymous with Elijah's position in the Baal confrontation) was as advocate and witness on God's behalf. However, Wagner firmly located Elijah as the centrepiece and driver for the action: "God raised up Elijah to lead the strategic-level spiritual warfare ... Elijah was not wrestling so much against flesh and blood ... but against principalities and powers."⁸¹ In Wagner's telling, Elijah was the authority figure and the agency for all events; as such God handsomely rewarded him later.⁸² SWM associate Ed Murphy took a similar approach in *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*. In his long commentary on the incident, Elijah from the outset was the chief actor. When the climax was reached, the falling of fire, Murphy reminded the reader of the intent of the entire episode: "The purpose of power encounter and trial by ordeal must always be kept in view. It does not serve just to validate the authority of God's servant, though that, too, usually occurs.

⁷⁸ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 17; Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 195; Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 254-255; Kraft, "Contemporary Trends," 9. In Kraft's report of Tippett's work ("Contemporary Trends," 9), he alluded to Tippett's use of Elijah versus Baal and Moses versus Pharaoh as examples of power encounters, thus creating the impression that dramatic manifestations of signs were inherent to Tippett's data. However, Tippett did not mention Moses and Pharaoh in his work on the topic and his emphasis in the Elijah example was not the fire but rather the confrontational aspect. Kraft here has interposed new material to suggest that Tippett was teaching the same definition of power encounter as SWM writers.

⁷⁹ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 17-18.

⁸⁰ Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity*, 107, see also 79 for Tippett's orientation towards evangelism in the use of the Elijah prototype.

⁸¹ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 195.

⁸² Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 195-196.

It is meant *to lead people to a verdict, to a decision.*”⁸³ Although Murphy here made sure to echo Tippett’s process for conversion, Elijah was presented as the main protagonist from whom all outcomes were derived. This becomes important when considering the role of the Christian in spiritual warfare. Almost imperceptibly, a shift in the centre of gravity among the characters in a power encounter meant that Tippett’s view of God’s servant as agent of advocacy and witness became in SWM view the actual agency of the outcome. Eventually this emphasis became more overt. We return once more to Wagner’s statement about the enormity of power available to Christians: “My theological premise is the following: ‘The Holy Spirit was the source of all of Jesus’ power during His earthly ministry. Jesus exercised no power of or by Himself. We today can expect to do the same or greater things than Jesus did because we have been given access to the same power source.’”⁸⁴ This premise evolved into particularly personal acts of authority. For example, outraged (for the sake of farmers) when unable to order a steak in a German restaurant, Wagner claimed to have ended the outbreak of “Mad Cow Disease” in Germany in 2001 and publicly decreed so at a meeting, to which the crowd responded with sustained cheers and applause. He declared: “A word from the Lord came to me quite clearly: ‘Take authority over mad cow disease!’”⁸⁵

The authority available to the Christian was also significant in Kraft’s view:

I see an important *difference between praying and taking authority*. Though we often use terms like “pray for” or “pray over” to label what we do when we minister, in actual ministry I find myself more likely to *command* the condition to leave than to ask God to relieve it. In Luke 9:1, we read that Jesus gave the disciples “power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.” I believe it is the taking of authority over the condition on behalf of Jesus, rather than the need to ask Jesus to heal, that is our primary function in this kind of ministry.⁸⁶

In similar manner, Cindy Jacobs, suddenly burdened for the economy of America while on an airplane, described how her intercession decreased the impact of a stock market crash: “All at once the words came to me, *I want you to fast as soon as your feet touch the ground in the United States because the stock market is going to crash. It cannot be averted, but it can be*

⁸³ Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 254-255. Italics his.

⁸⁴ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 54, quoting Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 114.

⁸⁵ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 242-243. Wagner went on to say that the last reported case of mad cow disease before the epidemic broke was the day before his decree; a claim not borne out by multiple cases occurring in subsequent years.

⁸⁶ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 149, qualified by reminding readers elsewhere that authority necessitated maintaining right relationship with God (John 8:28-29), 111. Italics his.

lessened.”⁸⁷ Jacob’s view was that it was only by her intercession that the downturn in the stock market was not as severe as it might have been, placing herself as the very catalyst for the outcome.⁸⁸ At this point in SWM literature, the implication was that this type of authority was available to all Christians. Nevertheless, undertones of elitism permeated the text, arguably enhanced by the personal narrative style of the writers.⁸⁹ The emergence of the apostles and prophets movement a few years later served to bring this intimation into the open as particular authority was invested in specific anointed persons.

While SWM writers declared a seemingly clear contextual purpose for power, they made statements at other times that appeared to add extra dimensions to their meaning. For Wagner, the purpose was to win souls; power ministries were a chief part of missionary and evangelistic work.⁹⁰ Yet even though repeatedly declaring the reason as evangelism, his material was increasingly oriented to the expression of power in addressing problems in the lives of people who were already believers. On the other hand, Kraft described the purpose of power as demonstrating God’s love.⁹¹ He did not frame this in terms of coming into relationship with God, but rather as a mechanism for relief from life’s pressures:

Most of the world’s peoples are seeking greater spiritual power to cope with the exigencies of life. That is why following Jesus’ example, we are to use spiritual power as a primary method of blessing and communicating to those whom God loves.⁹²

Timothy Warner expressed a similar outlook: “Man has an inherent need for power, the power just to live as a significant human being, but especially power over the circumstances of life, power over people, and power over the future. God provides that power for us.”⁹³

⁸⁷ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 154. Italics hers. Jacobs explained that this is in accord with “he ever liveth to make intercession” on our behalf (Heb 7:25, KJV). Jesus sees a need (on earth) and “through the power of the Holy Spirit prays through [an intercessor] in order for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven,” 153-154.

⁸⁸ There are obvious questions arising from this anecdote in terms of the extent of God’s interest in the American stock market, the reason why he could not avert it happening at all, or how Jacobs determined that her intervention did actually lessen the degree of downturn, but these are not germane to the present discussion.

⁸⁹ Wagner identified seven “spiritual Green Berets” called to spiritual warfare at the highest levels including Cindy Jacobs and John Dawson. Although he did not list himself, he made it clear in multiple contexts that he was the leader of the group. Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 58.

⁹⁰ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 104-105.

⁹¹ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 123. Kraft stopped short of explaining how love is the very being of the triune God (1 John 4:16), preferring instead to maintain a distinction between God’s love and power, even though he claimed them as inseparable in Jesus. For a contrasting explanation see Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 134.

⁹² Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 200.

⁹³ Warner, “Deception: Satan’s Chief Tactic,” 110.

Thereby the purpose of power was subtly re-oriented as a means to an end: God's power works to alleviate the problems of life.⁹⁴

The expression of power required a modification of Tippett's conception, although SWM writers continued to claim his legacy. Tippett had described a power encounter as a form of iconoclasm where the result demonstrated to adherents of an animistic religious system that their gods had no power in the face of the Christian God. Timothy Warner's interpretation somewhat conflated Tippett's overall thesis but also hinted at a universal application:

In many parts of the world, however, (and increasingly so in places in the West) people are much more power conscious than they are truth conscious. In such places, we may preach a very logical and convincing message by Western standards, but our hearers are unimpressed. Let them see Christian power displayed in relation to the spirit world of which they live in great fear, however, and they will "hear" the message more clearly than our words alone could ever make it.⁹⁵

Hiebert's prescience in stating that "power, not truth, is the central human concern in this worldview" appeared to be borne out in the preoccupations of SWM writers.⁹⁶ Where the S&W had promoted power in the relatively confined arenas of healing or manifestations such as tongues and falling down, here the conception broadened to allow power to be wielded against anything from stock disease to the stock market. It became a means to demonstrate how Christians can exert enormous power in doing God's work. Moreover, according to Dawson, that power extended to control over spiritual forces: "The prayer of a human being can alter history by releasing legions of angels into the earth."⁹⁷ Here was the catalyst that made the difference to the outcome of battles in the heavenlies. Dawson described his disappointment when observing an "anemic" prayer meeting. After his exhorting intervention he described the transformed scene in echoes of Peretti: "The room was filled with the roar of

⁹⁴ An extended discussion is not warranted here but the outworking of this can be seen in some particular signs and wonders. One of the more common miracles (that continues to attract the scorn of critics) is leg lengthening. This miracle appears to be based on relieving the inconvenience of having one leg shorter than the other, although there is no indication that the many narratives of healing in this area pertain to people who had been hobbling around all their lives with uneven gait. Another common miracle is filling teeth with gold or silver.

⁹⁵ Warner, "Power Encounter With the Demonic," 94.

⁹⁶ Coggins, *Wonders and the Word*, 117.

⁹⁷ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 140.

intense prayer as earnest saints took up their weapons and fought.”⁹⁸ The outcome of spiritual warfare, wrote Jacobs, quoting 2 Cor 10:3-4 (NKJV), is that when we pull down the strongholds and “when we possess the land over our cities, we gain control of their political, physical and spiritual arenas.”⁹⁹

The Role of Christians: Prayer

The conception of spiritual warfare, present from the earliest days of the S&W, gradually evolved into the depiction of a stridently aggressive dualist struggle in the heavenlies where the outcome is dependent on the input of humans. Wimber described it as cosmic warfare, a battle into the middle of which Christians are thrust.¹⁰⁰ Superimposing the image of weaponry on Paul’s exhortation to pray (Eph 6:18), the SWM writers made prayer the centrepiece of Christian power in warfare.¹⁰¹ Intercessors were prayer warriors and intercessory prayer related to their activities undertaken in the context of spiritual warfare.

The SWM writers only occasionally referred to historical sources that influenced developments in their thinking on prayer. However, there were two that they did cite: S.D. Gordon and Andrew Murray. Although his name does not frequently appear in SWM literature, S.D. Gordon (1859-1936) exerted considerable influence on the movement.¹⁰² Gordon was educated to high school level only, was never a minister, and worked as an assistant secretary to the YMCA. Yet he was the author of twenty-five popular devotional books written in a conversational style, most with a title beginning “Quiet Talks on...”¹⁰³ He

⁹⁸ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 140. For a graphic representation of how angelic strength and success in battle with demons directly depends on the intervention of the saints, see Frank E. Peretti, *This Present Darkness* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986), 370-373.

⁹⁹ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 225. Jacobs ignored the context of Paul’s statement here. Paul was clear that the weapons are words of truth in proclaiming the gospel. The strongholds being torn down are barriers erected by the attitudes of those who resist the gospel message. The verses read: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (NKJV).

¹⁰⁰ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 13-14.

¹⁰¹ See Guelich’s comment on the “militarizing” of prayer: Guelich, “Jesus, Paul and Peretti,” 60.

¹⁰² Samuel Dickey Gordon.

¹⁰³ Gordon also contributed to *The Overcomer* magazine edited by Jessie Penn-Lewis. See for example S.D. Gordon, “The ‘War of the Ages’: Satan’s Disguises, and How We May Detect Them.” *The Overcomer* 4:37 (January 1912), 4-5, <<https://www.ogccl.org/overcomer/index.html>> (5 April 2020).

was estimated to have sold a million and a half books by 1951.¹⁰⁴ These books served more as a conduit for Gordon's ideas, and references to scripture in the material were relatively infrequent. Gordon's best-selling *Quiet Talks about Prayer* (1904) contained several themes that are repeatedly found in SWM material. Cindy Jacobs quoted his insistence that the language of war is necessary in prayer.¹⁰⁵ Peter Wagner cited Gordon's explanation of prayer: "The purpose of the prayer is not to persuade or influence God, but to join forces with Him against the enemy ... The real pitch is not Godward, but Satanward."¹⁰⁶ Timothy Warner wrote in support of Gordon's declaration that prayer is defined as striking the winning blow at the concealed enemy.¹⁰⁷ Warner reproduced, in his own words, Gordon's comment on Paul's Eph 6 exhortation on the armour of God: "At the end of such a strong admonition to put on spiritual armor, one would expect to hear [Paul] say, "Now fight!" And in a sense he does, because that is what real intercession is."¹⁰⁸

Other themes in Gordon's writing on prayer are threaded throughout SWM literature.¹⁰⁹ *Quiet Talks on Prayer* expressed a dualist theology where Earth is the scene of conflict between Jesus and Satan: "The purpose of the conflict is to decide the control of the earth, and its inhabitants."¹¹⁰ Gordon strongly advocated man as the deciding force in spiritual warfare: "Our praying makes it possible for God to do what otherwise He could not do."¹¹¹ Other statements reinforced this viewpoint: "Prayer is man giving God a footing on the contested territory of this earth," and, "[God] does nothing without our consent. He has been hindered in His purposes by our lack of willingness."¹¹² On the passage in Daniel 10 that is so important to the SWM argument, Gordon uses Eph 6 as a lens through which to interpret

¹⁰⁴ Michael Chiavone, "Gordon, S.D.," in *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the United States*, eds. George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 981-982.

¹⁰⁵ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 224-225; S.D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904), 36-37 (quote edited by Jacobs).

¹⁰⁶ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 106; Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 120.

¹⁰⁷ Warner, "Power Encounter With the Demonic," 92; Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 19.

¹⁰⁸ Warner, "Power Encounter With the Demonic," 98; Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 110-111. Gordon's text reads: "A Roman soldier reading this, or hearing Paul preach it, would expect him to finish the sentence by saying '*with all your fighting strength fighting*'" (italics his). He goes on to say, "our fighting is praying."

¹⁰⁹ Gordon's contribution to foundational dominionist ideas will be described in the chapter below on Dominionism.

¹¹⁰ Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 28, 29.

¹¹¹ Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 14.

¹¹² Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 35, 54.

Daniel's role: "Daniel and his companions are wrestlers too, active participants in that upper-air fight, and really deciding the issue, for they are on the ground being contested."¹¹³

Gordon's views on the nature of prayer itself would be considered unconventional by many: "The prayer takes on the characteristic of the man praying. He is a spirit being. It becomes a spirit force. It is a projecting into the spirit realm of his spirit personality," and:

Prayer is really projecting my spirit, that is, my real personality to the spot concerned, and doing business there with other spirit beings... It makes my praying for [a man in another city] very tangible and definite to recall that every time I pray my prayer is a spirit force instantly traversing the space in between him and me, and going without hindrance through the walls of the house where he is, and influencing the spirit beings surrounding him, and so influencing his own will.¹¹⁴

The second source, Andrew Murray, wrote with a mystical orientation and was important to the SWM because of his envisioning of the relationship between prayer and power. On almost every page of *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, Murray (writing in 1885) reiterated that prayer is the key to the possession of power: "Prayer is indeed a power, on which the ingathering of the harvest and the coming of the Kingdom do in very truth depend."¹¹⁵ Furthermore, "[Churches] know not that God rules the world by the prayers of His saints; that prayer is the power by which Satan is conquered; that by prayer the Church on earth has disposal of the powers of the heavenly world."¹¹⁶ Murray asserted that the coming of the kingdom can be hastened by the prayers of believers and depends upon those whose "prayers are bold enough to say what they will that their God should do."¹¹⁷ This included having the power to obtain and dispense the powers of heaven on earth: "Your prayer can obtain what otherwise will be withheld, can accomplish what otherwise remains undone."¹¹⁸ These sentiments expressing the role of Christians as influencers of spiritual proceedings

¹¹³ Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 116.

¹¹⁴ Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 31, 32. An aside: although by no means empirically evidential, my own inherited copy of S.D. Gordon's 1907 *Quiet Talks on Personal Problems* includes a handwritten copy of William Ernest Henley's 1875 poem "Invictus" famous for its conclusion: "I am the captain of my soul." This contributes to potential indications that the concept of human agency, emerging amongst Christians in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, was influenced by secular Victorian values.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1953), 69, also 66.

¹¹⁶ Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, 112.

¹¹⁷ Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, 113, 134.

¹¹⁸ Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, 133, 177. Murray's preceding discussion pertained to having dominion over earth, a conception important in dominion theology. See Chapter 8 of this thesis.

resonated from Jessie Penn-Lewis all the way through to Cindy Jacobs.¹¹⁹ A close associate of Wagner, Dick Eastman, wrote the foreword to an edited version of *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, thereby signalling Murray's continued currency in SWM circles.¹²⁰

Aside from Murray and Gordon, the plethora of anecdotes in SWM literature masks the scarcity of sources, including scripture, that SWM writers drew on to explain prayer. Only a small amount of information was available for readers wanting to thoroughly understand the topic. One important indicator from Wagner paved the way for explanations of unanswered prayer. Seemingly in conflict with Jesus' modelling and teaching, Wagner declared that praying for God's will is a marker of lack of faith and discernment in a timid soul. To pray in this manner is a passive approach. Active prayer, he declared, is more effective than passive prayer.¹²¹ Wagner and his successor Chuck Pierce held that prayer should be "spontaneous, frequent, aggressive, loud, expressive, and emotional."¹²²

With this approach in mind, the strategy for combating demons consisted of "warfare prayer," also described as "prophetic intercession" or "strategic-level intercession." It often revolved around activities such as prayer walking, dancing, shouting, clapping, blowing horns, flag waving, "prophetic" music or proclamations, "strategic declarations" and other symbolic acts such as processions or planting objects ostensibly effective in repelling demonic activity.¹²³ The use of aggressive military-style language was a characteristic feature.¹²⁴ These activities frequently occurred in public places amidst bewildered onlookers

¹¹⁹ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 30. See also Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 139, 140.

¹²⁰ Dick Eastman, "Foreword," in *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, by Andrew Murray (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), 3-4. This version's text was revised from the original, although not disclosed as such.

¹²¹ Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 229. Compare Matt 6:10, Luke 22:42.

¹²² John W. Kennedy, "Prayer Warriors," *Christianity Today* 47:5 (May 2003): 37.

¹²³ Wagner, *The Queen's Domain*, 13, and Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 27-28. See also Ana Méndez, who makes documentaries of her team's prophetic acts around the world, sometimes in the presence of bemused onlookers. Everest: Seguidores do Cordeiro, "Ana Méndez Monte Everest Nepal," *YouTube*, 5 January 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG5B6zGZiIg>> (18 July 2019); Amsterdam: Ana Méndez Ferrell and Emerson Ferrell, "Amsterdam City of Glory: Spiritual Warfare Documentary by Ana Méndez Ferrell," *YouTube*, 20 August 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5TT_SIH9FQ&t=556s> (11 September 2019).

¹²⁴ For examples, see Wagner, "Introduction" in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 9-12. An early example of typical SWM language appears as a sub-title on Bernal's book cover: *Storming Hell's Brazen Gates: Isaiah 45:2, through militant, violent, prevailing prayer!* Van der Meer asserts resemblances to American war theory and practices: Van der Meer, "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner," 10.

and although the large scale events eventually faded from view, smaller groups of spiritual warfare warriors continue in similar manner to the present day.¹²⁵

Another common activity consisted of intercessors gathered in venues for lengthy prayer sessions near specific events underway nearby.¹²⁶ The central theme of Cindy Jacobs' book *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* was intercession. Here she described an intercessor as "one with whom God shares his secrets to cover in prayer."¹²⁷ Intercessors are mediators, they stand in the gap, they fight on behalf of others, they bring authority to a situation, they bring divine intervention into the life of a nation, and they destroy the works of Satan.¹²⁸ Intercessors are given assignments by God: one example is seen in Daniel's prayers that started a great war in the heavenlies.¹²⁹ Again, the imagery of prayer as a weapon came to the fore. Jacobs explained that God's salvation through His Son is one answer to the riddle of Gen 3:15.¹³⁰ Additionally:

I believe it also refers to a further weapon, one that was hidden away, waiting to be unveiled after the resurrection. First Corinthians 2:8 explains it is a weapon the "none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." It is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, a praying army. This mystery is alive in the earth today, "bruising" the works of the evil one.¹³¹

Jacobs, who played an increasingly significant role in shaping the theological thinking of the Christians she influenced, described intercessors as "God's enforcers." She explained that this meant enforcing his will on earth using the "law of prayer."¹³² She viewed this law as the means for God to act sovereignly over the world because it is a law higher than evil and

¹²⁵ For one recent example see Méndez, "Amsterdam City of Glory."

¹²⁶ For one example: Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 39-40.

¹²⁷ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 40.

¹²⁸ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 42, 61, 63, 64, 233.

¹²⁹ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 72. As discussed earlier, if Dan 10 is placed in context with accurate reading of his preoccupations and subsequent events, there are no grounds for asserting the engagement of Daniel in any war that might or might not have been occurring.

¹³⁰ "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

¹³¹ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 52. Jacobs' hermeneutic clearly mangles this passage where the context indicates the mystery revealed as the crucified Christ. There is no intent towards weaponry or the prayers of the Church: "But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, [Θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ] which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Cor 7-8 (NRSV). Guelich points out that the "rulers" here are human, not spiritual authorities. Guelich, "Jesus, Paul and Peretti," 44n48.

¹³² Jacobs repeatedly refers to intercessors as "enforcers" throughout the book.

rebellious intent; it sanctions God's intervention.¹³³ Her implication here was that God is subject not only to what she quoted as the "highest law of the universe" but also to the prayers of his intercessors.¹³⁴ Wagner's explanation expressed a similar sentiment although he phrased it differently. His assertion was that although our prayer does not affect God's *attitude*, it does influence his *actions* (italics in Wagner's text).¹³⁵ Wagner distinguished between prayer in general and *effective fervent prayer*, noting that the prayers that accomplished results (a witch who purportedly dropped dead in Mar del Plata, Argentina, at the precise moment they were praying against witchcraft) were those that were targeted, aggressive, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and intentional.¹³⁶ Wagner summarized: "If we pray powerfully, more blessing will come and God's kingdom will be manifested here on earth in a more glorious way than if we choose not to."¹³⁷ What emerged from the SWM approach to prayer was an implicit elevation in human agency with concomitant diminution of the sovereign God.

Even though prayer was the most frequently expressed theme in the literature, remarkably, none of the SWM authors ever took an expository approach to the subject. The *activities* of prayer were described but little attempt was made to provide a theological discourse nor was there any evidence of exegetical enquiry into prayer. On the occasions that verses were cited, characteristically they were isolated from their biblical context. Sometimes verses even appeared to be unconnected to the proposition being made. For example, John Dawson cited Heb 1:4 to support his proposition that "Prevailing intercessory prayer brings more powerful angels to hinder Satan's work."¹³⁸ Given the dearth of information on what

¹³³ Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 48.

¹³⁴ Kraft also seemed to imply that there are laws standing independent of God's sovereignty. He wrote of innocent victims who in accordance with "some law of the universe" become demonized as well as laws of the spiritual universe that give demons the legal right to enter people. Moreover, "inner vows" such as "I will *never* be like my mother/father" play into "some rule in the spiritual sphere that can provide a demon with a place to attach." Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 48, 121, 210.

¹³⁵ Many would agree in principle with Wagner's statement although not with his doctrinal application. Scholars have different approaches to this conundrum, but one example comes from Chisholm, who argues for contingency and making room for human response in what he calls God's "relational flexibility" that nevertheless does not act to diminish his sovereignty. However, my point here is that the SWM presumed the role of human as primary agent within enactment of power. Robert Chisholm, "When Prophecy Appears to Fail, Check Your Hermeneutic," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53:3 (September 2010): 564, esp. n12.

¹³⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *Praying with Power: How to Pray Effectively and Hear Clearly from God* (Shippensburg, PA, Destiny Image Publishers, 1997), 37.

¹³⁷ Wagner, *Praying with Power*, 38.

¹³⁸ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 149. "[When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,] having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent

prayer comprises, what it means in terms of Christian belief, why it is important, or what the Bible teaches about it, the closest we can come to understanding how the leaders of the SWM viewed prayer is by looking at the sources they quoted when they were discussing it. Absent from their explanations were discussions of attitudes toward prayer (awareness and affirmation of God's centrality, oriented to and submissive to his will); the resources available (scriptural teaching on prayer); our understanding of prayer (as driven by willingness for his spirit to show us how to pray); the processes of prayer (acknowledging sinfulness and requesting forgiveness, praise and worship, intercession for others, and requesting God's supply of needed resources); or the outcomes of prayer (spiritual transformation). The guidance Jesus provided to his disciples (Matt 6:9-13) seemed to be irrelevant to the SWM argument for prayer.

Fiction as an Instrument of Persuasion

Alongside the theological structures of the SWM, an important and influential feature occupies a strange position. The best-known name associated with SWM demonology is integrated into its conceptions yet stands outside in terms of the protagonist's relationship to SWM inner circles. Frank Peretti wrote two novels that have had lasting impact on the public's understanding of spiritual warfare.¹³⁹ *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness* are exciting, drama-filled, and sinister works of fiction describing courageous Christians in small-town America who wage warfare with demonic forces that seek to engulf their neighbourhood with evil.¹⁴⁰ The more fervent the intercessory prayers, the more the angels are empowered to come to their rescue. SWM advocates unabashedly acknowledged Peretti's importance to their own worldview. Charles Kraft wrote:

When evangelicals ask me how to gain insight into what is going on in the spirit world, I frequently recommend reading *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*. Though Peretti uses imagination to construct his stories, he offers great

than theirs." Heb 1:4 (NRSV). He also cited Dan 10: 12-13 in line with the SWM assertion of Daniel's engagement with territorial princes.

¹³⁹ *Publishers Weekly* reported in 2013 that *This Present Darkness* alone had sold over 2.7 million, Peretti's total sales for all his books are over 12 million.

¹⁴⁰ Frank E. Peretti, *This Present Darkness* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986); Frank E. Peretti, *Piercing the Darkness* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989).

insight into what probably goes on in the invisible spirit world. He knows what he is dealing with and deserves to be taken seriously.¹⁴¹

Kraft's associates agreed. Wagner reminded his readers that the novels are fiction yet described their publication as "undoubtedly, the single-most influential event that has stimulated interest in strategic-level spiritual warfare among American Christians." He pointed out that many Christians "find themselves reading *This Present Darkness* as a documentary rather than as somewhat fanciful fiction."¹⁴² Cindy Jacobs saw Peretti's books as "prophetic parables."¹⁴³ Steven Lawson noted that a number of Christian writers take the Apostle Paul's warnings of spiritual conflict seriously and apply "as fact the same principles that Peretti used to craft his novels."¹⁴⁴ Timothy Warner did not discuss Peretti's books but did list them in his bibliography.¹⁴⁵

Peretti's first book was published in 1986 but he had been working on its development since the early 1980s.¹⁴⁶ This placed him at the forefront of still-emerging ideas about spiritual warfare although no firm suppositions can be drawn about how responsible he was for generating ideas that persisted. However, scholars who critiqued the books viewed them as contextually and philosophically linked to the SWM. They noted the parallels between Peretti's themes and SWM teaching, claiming he represented the SWM position on hierarchies and powers of demons, territorial spirits, the "demonization" of humans, and sin as demonically-driven.¹⁴⁷ Peretti's depictions of dualistic cosmology, magical and formulaic approaches to demonic encounters, and paradoxical issues of control in the human struggle with supernatural beings were challenged.¹⁴⁸ Theological objections were accompanied by concerns about the role of prayer, with commentators taking issue with the suggestion that the source of spiritual power comes from human "prayer cover."¹⁴⁹ Peretti's novels implied that

¹⁴¹ Kraft, *The Evangelical's Guide*, 22-23. Kraft elsewhere discusses Peretti's "ring of truth" and credits the books with contributing significantly to the impact of the Third Wave movement. Kraft, "Contemporary Trends," 11-12.

¹⁴² Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 19. Wagner also believed that God providentially used Peretti to prepare the way for the insights that were to come from his SWM colleagues: Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 74.

¹⁴³ Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 219.

¹⁴⁴ Steven Lawson, "Defeating Territorial Spirits," in Wagner, *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies*, 57.

¹⁴⁵ Warner, *Spiritual Warfare*, 151.

¹⁴⁶ Holly G. Miller, "Angel Scare," *Saturday Evening Post* 262:6 (September 1990): 97.

¹⁴⁷ Guelich, "Jesus, Paul and Peretti," 54-55.

¹⁴⁸ Guelich, "Jesus, Paul and Peretti," 34-51, 57-64.

¹⁴⁹ Guelich, "Jesus, Paul and Peretti," 56-57.

control of situations and their outcomes ultimately lies with those who pray, in effect reducing God's sovereignty.¹⁵⁰ Other critics took a different view, finding that humans were mere pawns in a deterministic battle between good and evil, their only responsibilities being prayer and deliverance. The consequence of this, they claimed, is fear, paranoia, and paralysed Christian witness where superstition replaces belief in the supernatural.¹⁵¹ As well, there was the question of motivation to pray. Clinton Arnold personally testified to the books incentivising prayer although he qualified himself slightly a few years later by warning against Peretti's magical approaches to prayer.¹⁵² Others questioned the prayer strategies as cheapening prayer and contributing to a loss of biblical literacy.¹⁵³

Some commentators felt that Peretti simply tapped into an existing cultural and Christian fascination with the demonic and angels.¹⁵⁴ As the secular world of the era immersed itself in supernatural themes of movies and on TV, spiritual warfare novels merely provided a way for evangelicals to enjoy their own special powers while remaining within the Christian tradition.¹⁵⁵ Peretti appeared to confirm this: one media interview suggested that his novels were indeed inspired by the movies *Star Wars* and *Superman* and that Peretti did see his stories as Christian counterparts.¹⁵⁶ A further opinion was that Peretti portrayed a formerly dominant Christian worldview now driven to the cultural margins. Consequently, he projected

¹⁵⁰ Gary Corwin, "This Present Darkness," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 31:2 (1 April 1995): 148-49. (Article sometimes cited elsewhere with title "This Present Nervousness.")

¹⁵¹ Annang Asumang, "Powers of Darkness: An Evaluation of Three Hermeneutical Approaches to the Evil Powers in Ephesians," *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 5:3 (March 2008): 14.

¹⁵² Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 206-207, 214; Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 31-32.

¹⁵³ Corwin, "This Present Darkness," 148-49.

¹⁵⁴ A. Scott Moreau, "Gaining Perspective on Territorial Spirits," in *Lausanne Missional Content Library*, 22 August 2000 <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/territorial-spirits>> (18 November 2018), 1. Also see Moreau's more detailed discussion where his concern focuses on the encroachment of animistic values that he perceives in Peretti's work. Moreau, "Religious Borrowing," 173.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Gardella, "Spiritual Warfare in the Fiction of Frank Peretti," in *Religions of the United States in Practice*, Vol. 2, ed. Colleen McDannell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 328-329, 332.

¹⁵⁶ Gene Edward Veith, "This Present (and Future) Peretti," *World Magazine*, 25 October 1997 <https://world.wng.org/1997/10/this_present_and_future_peretti> (24 September 2019), n.p. On the other hand, Peretti claimed on his website that "The Lord God provides the inspiration for my novels," and, "I write from whatever God had placed upon my heart." Crawford Gribben, *Writing the Rapture: Prophecy Fiction in Evangelical America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 114.

an idealised simple, peaceful Christian life where family is central, locating a niche for survival in the face of increasing cultural pressures.¹⁵⁷

One concern related to the shift from spiritual warfare “metaphor to movement.”¹⁵⁸ The books could act as an interpretive paradigm for Christians by which they perceive reality and practise spiritual warfare.¹⁵⁹ DeBernardi concurred, noting that for those who believe in demonic possession, these “imagined events compel belief, transcending the allegorical.”¹⁶⁰ The writer himself had a viewpoint to offer on this. In a media interview, he claimed that as sales exploded into the millions he became alarmed not only by many readers taking his fiction literally and confusing it with reality, but by others who critiqued the books for their theological integrity.¹⁶¹ This drove him henceforth to inscribe his novels with disclaimers asserting they were to be read as symbolism not doctrinal statements.¹⁶² However, this statement represented a slight change of position from a previous interview where he described the books as “half fiction, half reality. I think in a few years it will be more reality than it is fiction.”¹⁶³

Although it seems possible that the author did not intend so, the books can legitimately be viewed as a bridge that introduced SWM themes to the worldwide Christian community.¹⁶⁴ Even though the concepts were presented as exciting fiction they also hinted at

¹⁵⁷ Gardella, “Spiritual Warfare in Peretti,” 328, 331-332. Gardella’s view of Peretti’s ultimate concern for Christian family life is overlooked by most commentators but is borne out in an interview with Peretti and his wife: Bob Passantino and Gretchen Passantino, “Battling for the Minds and Hearts of Our Children,” *Answers in Action*, 1992 <<http://www.answers.org/issues/peretti.html>> (30 September 2019).

¹⁵⁸ Guelich, “Jesus, Paul and Peretti,” 34. Guelich acknowledged this may be unintentional on Peretti’s part.

¹⁵⁹ Guelich, “Jesus, Paul and Peretti,” 52. For case studies illustrating the tension between readers’ acknowledgement of fictional content and their belief in the premises being put forward, see Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48-59, especially 55-56.

¹⁶⁰ DeBernardi, “Spiritual Warfare and Territorial Spirits,” 72-73.

¹⁶¹ Gardella and Guelich both note that *This Present Darkness* acquired the nickname “The Bible of the Third Wave.” Cox made the same comment: Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1995), 282.

¹⁶² Veith, “This Present (and Future) Peretti,” n.p. For example, *Prophet* (1992) is inscribed: “This novel is a creative work of fiction imparting spiritual truth in a symbolic manner, and not an emphatic statement of religious doctrine.”

¹⁶³ Michael G. Maudlin, “Holy Smoke! The Darkness is Back,” *Christianity Today* 33:18 (15 December 1989): 58-59.

¹⁶⁴ Although it is not relevant to explore here, Peretti’s novels could be viewed also as indicators of the struggle for dominance between Rapture/Dispensationalist eschatology and the postmillennial position taken by other groups that included the “partial preterists” of the SWM. If asked, Wagner would likely have portrayed this as integral to the shift from “old wineskins” to “new wineskins.” See Chapter 7 for how some prophets appear to

actuality. The importance of Peretti lies with his ability to influence readers of fiction into a paradigm of reality. Furthermore, the books provided useful insight into the paradigm within which the SWM operated. Peretti himself did not engage or publicly align with the SWM or its associates, although some have mistakenly assigned him a role of leader or spokesperson.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, these books accurately represented the worldview of SWM and captured an audience who might not otherwise have subscribed to Wagner's promotional material.

Theological Mythologization

Peretti's work, although loaded with meaning for those seeking it, was openly fictional. The SWM literature made a different type of claim: the writers repeatedly told their readers their books were the result of direct revelation from God to them.¹⁶⁶ Their readers were recipients of nothing less than God's own truth. This did not seem to impede one of the most problematic aspects of the SWM literature, the process of mythologization that permeated the writing. This occurred by means of building the doctrine around anecdotes of uncertain origin that were intended to validate the case for the SWM theology.¹⁶⁷ The critics did not overlook this aspect and frequently drew attention to the weakness of the argument and the proliferation of anecdotes.¹⁶⁸ Although the chief characteristic of SWM literature was the heavy reliance on anecdotal evidence, the actual number of stories was less than might appear. This is because the same stories appeared multiple times in books by multiple

mix the two conceptions in their personal theology. From my observations of Pentecostal/charismatic circles in my region, the prevailing current view appears to be an uncertain and vaguely-formed mix of the two.

¹⁶⁵ Pierre Gilbert, "The Third Wave Worldview: A Biblical Critique," *Direction* 29:2 (Fall 2000): 153; see also the implication of the same in Don Fanning, "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare," *Trends and Issues in Missions* 8 (2009): 8 <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgm_missions/8> (20 November 2014). Peretti's lack of presence among the central figures of the SWM serves as a reminder that although Wagner and his associates were the chief promoters and publicists, this does not necessarily mean they comprised the entirety of spiritual warfare origins, thought, or activities at that time. Van der Meer draws attention to ideas and concepts of demon hierarchy or territoriality that were "floating around" within Pentecostalism prior to Wagner's incorporating them into his theology. Van der Meer, "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner," 85-86. For the British version of the ideas "floating around" in earlier years see also Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom*, 20.

¹⁶⁶ Most particularly Wagner and Jacobs made these assertions: see the discussion above on the role of personal experience.

¹⁶⁷ In commenting on the uses of anecdotes in modern esotericism, Hammer notes that they are rhetorical devices that readers readily believe to be "transparent renditions of underlying facts." Their repetition serves to substitute for demonstration, they shape the expectancy and experience of the readers, they create links between the doctrinal system and the reader's own life, and when interpreted within the theoretical framework, they contribute an appearance of coherence. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 352.

¹⁶⁸ For extended discussion on this technique see Priest, "Missiological Syncretism," 36-40.

authors.¹⁶⁹ Wagner in particular repeated his “empirical evidence” over and over again to support his declarations; a technique that served to disguise its paucity.

However, there were larger problems than mere quantitative evidence; the real issue was qualitative. Propositional arguments drawing on anecdotal evidence were based on interpretative assumptions, personal impressions, failure to interrogate the evidence for reliability, and reliance on intellectual sources that were sometimes questionable or quoted out of context. Furthermore, although most anecdotes could not be traced to their sources because the content detail was too vague, those that did contain enough information to permit tracking revealed that with disturbing regularity they tended to contain material that was grossly exaggerated, misrepresented, or sometimes clearly false. Occasionally the details in the stories changed or became enhanced.¹⁷⁰ Even though the lack of verifiability was a common complaint among critics, some of them were able to locate information valuable for ascertaining the authenticity of particular narratives. Chuck Lowe disputed every element in a tale pertaining to his wife’s hometown.¹⁷¹ Priest, Campbell and Mullen tracked the origins of a story that was intended to demonstrate differences in receptivity to the gospel on either side of a street traversed by the Uruguay-Brazil border (due to the powers of the respective territorial spirits). After contact with the missionary at the centre of the story, they determined that the facts were substantially out of proportion to the claims of this often-repeated story.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ The debunker of the Bermuda Triangle myth points out that repetition enables narratives to “take on the aura of truth.” Lawrence David Kusche, *The Bermuda Triangle Mystery—Solved* (London: New English Library, 1975), 252.

¹⁷⁰ For example, Wagner’s green demon acquired more dramatic dimensions; compare Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 64; and Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 81. Compare Warner’s two versions of a missionary’s encounter with a demon (originally told in the first person) where Warner later added the detail that the demon identified itself to the missionary, a detail that the missionary himself did not include. Warner, “Dealing with Territorial Demons,” in Wagner, *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies*, 76; Warner, “Power Encounter With the Demonic,” 98-99. The original version was taken from Oscar W. Jacobson, *Attack from the Spirit World: A Compilation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1973), 127.

¹⁷¹ Lowe, *Territorial Spirits*, 116-118; and for the factually flawed anecdote see Sjöberg, “Spiritual Mapping for Prophetic Prayer Actions,” 113.

¹⁷² Priest, “Missiological Syncretism,” 19, 40. This story was repeated multiple times by multiple authors, for example (not an exhaustive list): Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 201-202; Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 60-61; Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 81; Warner, *Spiritual Warfare*, 136-137; Kraft, *Behind Enemy Lines*, 60-61; Warner, “Dealing with Territorial Demons,” in Wagner, *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies*, 77, and told also by Wagner earlier in the book, 72. Priest et al. investigated another story retold multiple times by Wagner that was based on a dramatic and highly publicised exorcism in the Philippines. Their checks established that the author of the original story had falsified some details to enhance the story; not Wagner’s doing, but evidence that he did not check the details of stories he retold. Priest, “Missiological Syncretism,” 46-49.

The issue of mythologization is of great importance to this study because of the far-reaching effects on evangelical thinking produced by SWM doctrines on demons. This requires giving space here to examine more closely the implications of the narratives. Before proceeding to examine further anecdotes, it is necessary to sound a word of caution. Demonstrating here that *some* of the SWM anecdotes were unreliable does not necessarily indicate that *all* were unreliable. However, two questions should be considered in conjunction with this warning. Firstly, how many examples are required to demonstrate a consistent pattern? And secondly, given the anecdotes are intended to demonstrate ontological truth about God and his workings, how important is it that all the anecdotes should be expected to be reliable?¹⁷³

In a chapter of seventeen pages in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, Wagner provided eighteen anecdotal accounts to support his hypothesis of territorial spirits.¹⁷⁴ Three examples serve to demonstrate the use to which he put these. Firstly, in speculating how many evil spirits there are on Earth he referred to an “interesting set of figures” provided to him by a former occult leader in Nigeria who reported that Satan had assigned him control of twelve spirits and that each spirit controlled 600 demons, giving a total of 7,212. For him this gave an indication of the scale of potential numbers of demons there may be worldwide. His *audi alteram partem* declaration was immediately subordinated to his hypothesis: “If this report is true, it would not be unreasonable to postulate that [other individuals such as this former occult leader] could be found in considerable numbers around the world.”¹⁷⁵ However, Wagner provided no information that could cast light on how he knew the informant’s narrative was accurate or trustworthy. In a second example, Wagner told the story of missionary Kenneth McAll being caught in a storm in the Bermuda Triangle from which he and his wife were rescued. Wagner wrote that upon researching the area, McAll discovered that the provenance of mysterious disappearances in the area was a curse generated by the deaths of two million slaves being thrown overboard by slave traders. He organised an event for bishops and priests to seek the “release of all those who had met their untimely deaths in

¹⁷³ These questions remain in tension not only with the claims of the S&W and the SWM but also pertain to future developments that emerged as the legacy of both, especially in relation to the reliability of prophecy and the standards of godliness required of apostles.

¹⁷⁴ Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 74-91.

¹⁷⁵ Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 76.

the Bermuda Triangle” and as a result the curse was lifted.¹⁷⁶ At the time of his writing, Wagner reported no further inexplicable events had occurred in the Bermuda Triangle.¹⁷⁷ This example is important to note because of Wagner’s proclivity for utilising folklore to support his assertions. The legends related to mysterious disappearances in the “Bermuda Triangle” area have been debunked by researchers who drew on information supplied by insurance companies, official investigations, and Coast Guard reports. However, they persist in popular folklore.¹⁷⁸ A third example relates to Wagner’s conclusion that Kyoto, Japan, houses the seat of Satan, hence Japanese resistance to the Gospel.¹⁷⁹ He provided no explanation of how he arrived at this supposition beyond drawing a comparison with ancient Pergamos where Satan’s throne was located (Rev 2:13). It can only be hypothesized that Wagner may have had in mind a link with emperor worship but he gave no indication if this is why he drew a parallel between Pergamum and Kyoto. No matter how he did it, this example draws attention to how personal impressions became integrated with his theology.

As related above, Wagner used the popular mythology of the Bermuda Triangle to claim a spiritual victory. Two further examples from another book serve to demonstrate that this manner of using folklore and mythology was not an isolated occurrence. *Confronting the Queen of Heaven* described spiritual warfare and a project to drive out a powerful demonic

¹⁷⁶ Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 83. Wagner took some poetic license with the details of the story. The individuals concerned did not find their boat crippled and set adrift, they were not rescued, and the “research” Wagner referred to was a magazine article. The missionary was R. Kenneth McAll, a doctor who upon his return to the UK worked in private psychiatry consultancy using divine guidance to heal illnesses and deliver patients from demons. He told the story of his 1972 Bermuda Triangle experience in a book that was chiefly concerned with delivering individuals from their demonic ancestral spirits (including “harsh and unyielding” Calvinist ancestors): R. Kenneth McAll, *Healing the Family Tree* (London: Sheldon Press, 1982), 12-13, 59-61. See also R. Kenneth McAll, “Taste and See,” in Montgomery, *Demon Possession*, 143-174. Note that McAll was not the only person to claim responsibility for chasing demons away from the Bermuda Triangle: Ana Méndez also accomplished the same by diving in the area to drive away Neptune, who she asserts is the same demonic spirit as Leviathan in the Book of Job, in July 2009. Ana Méndez Ferrell, “Ministry Letter,” *Voice of the Light Ministries* (September 2009): <http://voiceofthelight.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/the_new_moon_walk.pdf> (13 December 2019), n.p.

¹⁷⁷ Wagner also told this story in a published article in which he wrote: “My principal calling is to obey the Great Commission. Thus, I see territorial spirits chiefly in terms of their alleged ability to prevent the spread of the gospel.” However, in repeatedly telling the story of the Bermuda Triangle, he does not make clear what connection exists between the purported removal of demonic spirits that caused ships to disappear, and evangelism. C. Peter Wagner, “Territorial Spirits and World Missions,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 25:3 (July 1989): 278-288.

¹⁷⁸ The best known of several de-mythologizing investigations is by Lawrence David Kusche, *The Bermuda Triangle Mystery—Solved* (London: New English Library, 1975). Gordon Melton records that the myth of the Bermuda Triangle was inspired largely by *Invisible Horizons: True Mysteries of the Sea* (1965) by Vincent Gaddis: see the entry “Bermuda Triangle,” in *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*, 5th ed., vol. 1, ed. J. Gordon Melton (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Group, 2001), 174. Gaddis was a journalist who became infamous for his implausible and speculative theories on a number of topics.

¹⁷⁹ Wagner, “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 89.

force. According to Wagner, since the 1990s God had entrusted Christians with the task of undertaking a new level of spiritual warfare. The assignment consisted of dealing with the “highest levels of ‘rulers of the darkness of this age.’” Furthermore: God “has now given us the word to confront the Queen of Heaven. This booklet will tell how that command was received and how God expects His army to move into battle.”¹⁸⁰ In the book, he presented a mix of theological exposition, ancient history, personal stories of visions, prophecies, and divine instructions along with accounts of unusual spiritual expeditions before concluding with details of plans for the next event aimed at fighting the powers of darkness.

The central figure in the book was the “Queen of Heaven” who is also Diana/Artemis of the Ephesians.¹⁸¹ While visiting the ancient site of Ephesus, the Wagners claimed to have had a revelation when electricity passed through Doris’ body as they stepped into the Temple of Diana area and realised that the power of Diana was still there: “probably not precisely in the temple ruins” but nearby in a shrine to Mary.¹⁸² In the context of claiming that Mary, the Mother of God, is worshipped in the Roman [Catholic] church, Wagner declared that Mary is actually a counterfeit Mary who is empowered by the demonic Diana of the Ephesians. Diana’s power was neutralized by the Apostle Paul’s visit to Ephesus (Acts 19:1) and Wagner speculated what transpired next:

So could it be that the Queen of Heaven began to ask herself whether, since she had been unsuccessful in stopping Christianity from the outside, there might be a way to keep people from being saved from the inside? But how? ... Would it be possible to fabricate a counterfeit Mary within Christianity who could be empowered by the Queen of Heaven to do miracles and make appearances, and thus attract worship, even in Christian churches, that should only be given to Jesus Christ? There might be a way to transfer the power that was once in Diana to the counterfeit Mary, right there in the city of Ephesus. If people won’t worship Diana, let’s see if they will worship a false Mary!¹⁸³

Wagner’s speculative tone swiftly turned to assertion as he described how Diana evolved into the persona of Mary. Proof of his theory came after a visit to the Vatican museums:

¹⁸⁰ Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 7.

¹⁸¹ Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 12-13.

¹⁸² Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 30-31.

¹⁸³ Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 31.

When Doris and I took a guided tour of the Vatican in Rome a few years ago, we had a hard time trying to understand why a life-sized statue of Diana of the Ephesians should be located in a room in the Vatican along with statues of Christian saints. After visiting Ephesus, we think we have a better idea as to why.¹⁸⁴

The Artemis (Diana) of Ephesus is housed in the Vatican Pio Clementino museum in the Galleria dei Candelabri. There are no statues of Christian saints in the gallery as Wagner asserts. Artemis is surrounded by other small statues and urns from antiquity, directly opposite another (huntress) Diana. Likewise, no other Diana statue is located in a Vatican Museums gallery that contains saints. All appear in galleries devoted to classical Roman sculpture.¹⁸⁵ Wagner's asserted connection of Diana with the Virgin Mary remained tenuous at best.

The eventual outcome of his conclusion about the still extant power of Diana was that a team, including Wagner's wife Doris, secretly travelled to Nepal in September 1997 to depose the Queen of Heaven ("Operation Ice Castle").¹⁸⁶ They report that some team members, who had taken professional alpine training in order to prepare, ascended to a brown stone formation 20,000 feet up Mount Everest, the place of the Queen's seat; a tale that conclusively has been shown to be false in its most dramatic claims.¹⁸⁷ Without providing any

¹⁸⁴ Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 33. Wagner's "eyewitness" claims, made throughout his literature, should be approached with caution. For a further example, see Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 61-63. This claim of personal verification pertains to the "goddess of mercy" statue (Guan Yin) located on the hillside above Kek Lok Si temple in Penang, Malaysia. Wagner's account relates how members of his Spiritual Warfare Network targeted the statue with prayer warfare. The result was the appearance of a crack in the statue's cement skirt that eventually led to collapse of tons of concrete; a later fire finished the statue off. Wagner visited the site himself and declared in his account: "The fall of this Goddess of Mercy was a work of God." While the statue was indeed damaged by fire, no record of its cracking or collapse is locatable. This original (plaster) statue is now replaced with a bronze version of Guan Yin that is more than thirty metres high. Wagner makes no mention of the tens of thousands of other statues (mostly of Buddha) that he would have seen housed in the nearby temple pagoda or in the temple itself, or of the over one-hundred other statues of Guan Yin on the site. Numerous images of Guan Yin in her newly-built protective pavilion can be seen in tourist videos on *YouTube*.

¹⁸⁵ Information based on a personal visit to the Vatican Museums but for viewing the statues of Diana/Artemis in their contexts see the Vatican Museums collections:
<<http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei.html>>.

¹⁸⁶ Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 35-37. Throughout this explanation Wagner conflates the deities of Everest, Diana/Artemis, the Queen of Heaven and cultural Latino icons, reflecting connections sometimes made in popular mythology, albeit with his own particular interpretation.

¹⁸⁷ The history of this expedition (both genuine and fabricated) is well-documented. A video made by the leader Ana Méndez, a close associate of Wagner's, is available for viewing on *YouTube*. Wagner and Méndez have both reported on the events in books, newsletters and other material posted on the internet. Countering their claims is a discussion of the expedition in *The Himalayan Database*, an extensive and highly regarded project to record data on all aspects of mountaineering in the region. Elizabeth Hawley's account differs substantially from those of Wagner and Méndez. Although some of the activities appearing in the video are also mentioned in Hawley's record, it appears that the main claims of the climb and surrounding events are either patently false or grossly exaggerated. Hawley reports the team never received a permit from Nepalese authorities to set foot on Everest and never moved above base camp. Other commentators on the internet (mostly on website pages

details, Wagner reported that “several unmistakable signs in the natural world confirmed that it had been a successful venture and that it had deeply affected the invisible world,” again a serious misrepresentation of verifiable facts.¹⁸⁸

In telling this tale of Diana, Wagner explained that in biblical times, Paul’s work in Ephesus required completion by the Apostle John. As proof, he drew on the authenticating contribution of an expert. Wagner drove home to his readers the authority of his source, Ramsay MacMullen, by scattering throughout his explanation references to this “well-known” Yale University historian who uses his “specialist” knowledge of Roman history and “historical sources” in his “scholarly treatise.”¹⁸⁹ The focus on validating MacMullen’s credentials makes a short phrase in the lead sentence of Wagner’s paragraph slip by almost unnoticed: “Subsequent history, not the Book of Acts, tells us that a few years after Paul left, John moved to Ephesus and finished his career there.” In fact, MacMullen’s source was the

devoted to discrediting Peter Wagner) have also investigated the claims using diaries and reports from other climbers present at the time and confirm that the most dramatic aspects of the story are not true. See Seguidores do Cordeiro, “Ana Méndez Monte Everest Nepal”; C. Peter Wagner, “Operation Queen’s Palace,” Memorandum to International Spiritual Warfare Network Members, 1 December 1997 <<http://etpv.org/1998/opqueen.html>> Retrieved from <<https://web.archive.org>> (5 May 2019); Ana Méndez, “The Ana Méndez Story,” *DAWN Ministries*, Fridayfax 27, 5 July 2002 <<http://www.jesus.org.uk/dawn/2002/dawn27.html>> Retrieved from <<https://web.archive.org>> (18 July 2019); Elizabeth Hawley, *Seasonal Stories for the Nepalese Himalaya 1985-2014*, Autumn 1997 <<https://www.himalayandatabase.com/publications.html>> (5 May 2019), 227; Mike Oppenheimer, “Ana Méndez battles the ‘Queen of heaven’ on the World’s Tallest Mountain,” *Let Us Reason Ministries*, 10 December 2010 <<http://www.letusreason.org/Latrain64.htm>> (7 May 2019).

¹⁸⁸ Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 37. These “unmistakable signs” are listed elsewhere by both Wagner and Méndez as occurring worldwide within two weeks of their climb, among which were the deaths of Diana, Princess of Wales and Mother Teresa, and the destruction of the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi during an earthquake. The associations they draw are Diana’s connection to the British throne (because, Wagner claims, Mt. Everest was consecrated to the Crown by Sir Edmund Hillary) and association of the other two with the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, both women had died before the expedition embarked and the Assisi damage involved partial collapse of the vault and was restored within two years. In the detailed account of his Everest expedition, Edmund Hillary records no mention whatever of the British Crown; however he did plant a small Christian cross given to him by the expedition leader in the snow at the summit. Tenzing Norgay had wrapped four small flags (United Nations, British, Nepal, and India) on a string around his ice axe; they left these behind, expecting them to blow away almost instantly. Edmund Hillary, *High Adventure* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955), 212. Other signs Wagner and Méndez claim are likewise compromised by incorrect dates, considerably embellished details, and in one case, not verifiable: I could find no evidence for the existence of a “Baal-Christ” temple in Acapulco that supposedly collapsed during Hurricane Pauline in 1997.

¹⁸⁹ Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 13-14. The main thrust of MacMullen’s argument is that in the early centuries of Christianity, conversion chiefly occurred when evangelists demonstrated power superior to other gods, especially in casting out demons. Upon observing this power, conversion was the result either of induced fear or loyalties shifted from less powerful gods. Wagner describes MacMullen as an objective secular historian whose research “will go a long way to open up the horizons of many today who all too long have been captives of a worldview oriented to secular humanism and, thereby, shut off from a huge segment of reality which, when allowed to operate, can bring life, hope, and peace.” Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 82. It is doubtful that MacMullen would envisage his argument being put to this kind of purpose given the opening statement of his book that his objective was history not theology. See Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 1.

apocryphal *Acts of John*, which contains both gnostic and fantastical elements.¹⁹⁰ MacMullen recounted that as John prayed in the temple of Artemis for demons to flee, the altar suddenly split and half the temple fell down. The assembled Ephesians, terrified, were converted on the spot.¹⁹¹ Wagner added: “Then [MacMullen] comments, as a professional historian, on why he believes that this... should be accepted as historically valid.”

In his interpretation of events in the temple, MacMullen was more equivocal than Wagner would have it:

I don't think the explanatory force of this scene should be discounted on the grounds that it cannot have really happened, that it is fiction, that no one was meant to believe it. I suppose instead that it was quite widely believed in the second and third centuries with which we are concerned at the moment; and I assume that its substance, mostly in oral form, led on through belief to conversion.¹⁹²

MacMullen's text is based on a source that few historians would confirm as reliably historical and his own comments reflected some awareness of the uncertain ground on which he stood.¹⁹³ Moreover, archaeological evidence and documentation indicates that no such structural damage happened to this very large building during John's time. The temple was

¹⁹⁰ Marek Starowieyski describes the 2nd Century *Acts of John* as ascribed to (the fictitious) Leucius and Charinus, purportedly sons of Simeon. Marek Starowieyski, “Apostles,” *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, eds. Angelo Di Berardino, Thomas C. Oden, and Joel C. Elowsky (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 1:193. Also see Starowieyski in the same volume: “Descent into Hell (apocryphal),” 1:695; and “John, evangelist and theologian,” 2:416-418, esp. 2c. (Along with other earlier commentators, Clinton Arnold attributes *Acts of John* to Pseudo-Prochorus although Starowieyski views this as later replacement or reworking of the original text. See Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic*, 22. The differing explanations can be explained by the existence of several versions that differ somewhat in content). MacMullen is somewhat dismissive of Eusebius' warning that Acts of John, along with other books he lists, are to be rejected. Eusebius describes these books as “absurd and impious” and ranked among “spurious writings” for several reasons: they are never mentioned by any of the recognised successors of the Apostles, they differ in style, sentiment and content from authenticated works, and they deviate from sound orthodoxy. MacMullen asserts that these pseudepigraphical works were actively suppressed and that the “overwhelmingly authority” of Eusebius as the father of church historiography ensured that they were “consigned to silence” because they concerned “matters discreditable to the faith.” See MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, 6; also Eusebius Pamphilus, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus: Bishop of Caesarea, in Palestine*, trans. by Christian Frederick Crusé (1850) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1955), 111.

¹⁹¹ MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, 26. Cites Max Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* 2:1 (1898): 170-173 (trans. Hennecke and Schneemelcher (1963-64): 2.237.

¹⁹² MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, 26.

¹⁹³ MacMullen's lack of conviction is reinforced by one reviewer who refers to his “historical second-guesses” caused by lack of documentation. Gail Paterson Corrington, review of *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D. 100-400*, by Ramsay MacMullen, *The Classical World* 79:4 (March-April 1986): 277. Other reviewers refer to his “scraps of evidence” or hint at criticisms of “oversimplifications” and “reductionist” tendencies in what seems to have been a polarized debate over MacMullen's depiction of early church history. Keith McCulloch, review of *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D. 100-400*, by Ramsay MacMullen, *History Today* 35:7 (1 July 1985): 58; Robert Lee Williams, review of *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D. 100-400*, by Ramsay MacMullen, *Church History* 55:1 (March 1986): 84-85.

destroyed around 262-263AD during an invasion by the Goths then later partially rebuilt.¹⁹⁴ But in Wagner's hands, MacMullen's text became a validating statement and thereby proof of Wagner's proposal. The saga of the Queen of Heaven contains so much manipulated information, inaccurate or falsified details, and misconceptions that it lacks all credibility other than the fact that the expedition actually occurred. Yet this expedition became the template for similar projects performed by groups of evangelicals around the world to this present day. Although these could be equated with pilgrimages commonly made in all religions, the implications lie with the underlying spiritual premises that we will shortly address.

A second example that involves folklore is found in a paragraph about Peter and Doris Wagner praying at the former location of the "seat of Satan" in Pergamum, which Wagner referred to as the altar of Zeus. He wrote: "Hitler was said to have looked to the altar for much of the occult power he used to create the Third Reich."¹⁹⁵ On several counts, Wagner's comment about the altar is erroneous. Firstly, the centrality of Zeus to the Pergamon Altar is unlikely and remains undetermined as scholars are ambivalent about the purpose for this enormous structure.¹⁹⁶ Secondly, Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, detailed in his memoirs what was in Hitler's mind when he requisitioned a stone installation to replace temporary bleachers at the Zeppelin Field in Nuremberg. Speer described at length how Hitler's expression for the architecture of Germany was inspired by monumental remains bearing witness to the power of the great epochs of history; he hoped to create the same for his own regime. Speer struggled over his design until he came up with an idea influenced by the excavated monument that had been re-located to the Berlin Pergamon Museum. The inspiration of the Pergamon Altar occupied Speer only; in fact Speer told how Hitler uncharacteristically entered into no query or discussion about the final design when he saw it for the first time,

¹⁹⁴ Rietveld, *Artemis of the Ephesians*, 315-319, 332-333. Some historians believe that an earthquake did most of the damage a few months before the Goths completed the destruction and that later versions of John's Acts may have reflected this memory. What is certain though, is that John's prayer with a subsequent temple collapse did not happen historically.

¹⁹⁵ Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 31.

¹⁹⁶ Can Bilsel, *Antiquity on Display: Regimes of the Authentic in Berlin's Pergamon Museum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8-9, and see also 8n2 and 9n3. In 1879, in a burst of transcendent exuberance, Carl Humann, the excavator of the Pergamon Altar, exclaimed he felt the presence of Zeus and linked circling eagles in the sky above with the providential discovery. Bilsel relates that Humann's biographers capitalised on this quasi-mystical and much-circulated story (told differently by other witnesses present), hence the ongoing link with Zeus. This motif tied to the significance of the Pergamon Altar related more to German *Kaiserreich* pride and self-identification with former Hellenistic glory than to authentic significance of Zeus to the monument. See Bilsel, 94-97, 109-111.

merely approving it without comment.¹⁹⁷ Finally, the mythology about Hitler and the occult remains popular even though historians have pointed out how much the contrived mysticism of Himmler and the SS annoyed Hitler because he wanted the regime to be based strictly on racial and political philosophy. On 6 September 1938 he made a forceful speech attacking the efforts of those who were trying to religionize Nazism: “National Socialism is a cool, reality-based doctrine, based upon the sharpest scientific knowledge and its mental expression. ... [W]e have no desire to instil in the people a mysticism that lies outside the purpose and goals of our doctrine. ... In the National Socialist movement subversion by occult searchers for the Beyond must not be tolerated.”¹⁹⁸ When the separate elements of Wagner’s comment are examined within their accurate contexts it serves to highlight how, in the process of building spiritual propositions, he reinforced them using folklore to facilitate the reader into making associations between occult power, Hitler, Zeus, and Ephesus. In much the same way he linked the Queen of Heaven with the Virgin Mary.¹⁹⁹

A final example from other books points to Wagner’s sources of information. In the course of discussion about territorial spirits he reported the names of demons as identified by Rita Cabezas.²⁰⁰ Extra-biblical identities such as Nosferasteus or Deviltook belong to a long list of evil worldwide principalities or governors of countries.²⁰¹ Although he mentioned that

¹⁹⁷ Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 55-56.

¹⁹⁸ Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power: How the Nazis Won over the Hearts and Minds of a Nation* (London: Penguin, 2005), 257. For an authoritative account of the Nazi relationship with religion and spirituality see Evans, 257-260. But note also Kurlander’s useful analysis which leads him to conclude that “National Socialism was neither ideologically monolithic nor politically consistent in its attitudes towards science or the supernatural.” Eric Kurlander, “Hitler’s Monsters: The Occult Roots of Nazism and the Emergence of the Nazi ‘Supernatural Imaginary,’” *German History* 30:4 (2012): 546. Evidence of Hitler’s dislike of occult practices in no way discounts the pervasive evil believed by many to have inhabited the Nazi regime. However, the propagation of mythologies is not helpful to the genuine scrutiny and examination of the Nazi phenomenon.

¹⁹⁹ Note that I refer here to Wagner’s idiosyncratic version of the Queen of Heaven (in Roman Catholic tradition Mary is often known as the Queen of Heaven).

²⁰⁰ Although in at least three places Wagner declared he would not divulge her research methodology, Cabezas related in two books how demonic names were revealed to her by clients during the process of exorcisms in her office. Rita Cabezas, *Desen-Mascarado* (Miami, FL: Editorial Unilit, 1988), and Cabezas, *Principados Demoníacos*, See also Wagner, *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 84-85, Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 61-62, and Wagner, “Territorial Spirits and World Missions,” 278-288.

²⁰¹ Wagner records “Nosferasteus” but Cabezas’ original text records “Nosferatu.” Cabezas, *Principados Demoníacos*, 17. The nosferatu was the “UnDead” vampire in Bram Stoker’s fictional novel *Dracula* (1897). Stoker is likely to have picked up on the use of the word by Emily Gerard, a novelist contemporary to and influential on Stoker. The word appears to have been created by Gerard: no etymology predating these novelists is known apart from a (possible) derivation from an old Slavonic word meaning “plague.” For those not familiar with Stoker’s novel, they could have encountered the Nosferatu in two famous horror films (1922 and 1979) that were unauthorized adaptations of the book. Marie Mulvey-Roberts, *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 130, 140; and see also Linnie Blake, “Nosferatu”

research on these identities was still in progress he attempted to verify the information: “How valid are these findings? How can they be cross-checked?” Alongside biblical or apocryphal sources for some of the names he also listed Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan’s *Pilgrims Progress*.²⁰² Here he made no distinction between factual sources and works of fiction.²⁰³

What do the issues discussed above tell us about Wagner’s theological proposals regarding demonic activities? Firstly, there is the problem of his type of source. Wagner drew on some stories that are based more on fable than fact: the Bermuda Triangle disappearances, the significance of the Pergamon Altar, or Nazi occult fables. Moreover, in failing to distinguish between factual or fictional sources he assigned equal status to both types. This is difficult to reconcile with his status as a respected professor with multiple earned post-graduate qualifications. Secondly, he manipulated information to convince his readers his material was verified. This is seen in his repeated emphasis on a historian’s credibility to justify glossing over the historian’s somewhat doubtful sources. He also used his personal witness to verify a claim even though the information about the Vatican Diana is manifestly incorrect. Thirdly, he invoked the word of God, something that must be taken seriously by those who subscribe to the Christian faith. Because the veracity of his declarations can be challenged, this places in jeopardy the very authority of God. Finally, perhaps most disturbingly, his material was written for an audience that Wagner expected would accept his explanations at face value.²⁰⁴ Although there were some footnotes provided, some sources

in *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Surrey: Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 438.

²⁰² Wagner, “Territorial Spirits” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 85.

²⁰³ The problem of sources is not confined to Wagner. Perhaps the most startling source for information came from the website of a retired mathematics teacher in New Zealand. Chris King constructs a sexual mythology by integrating ancient Eastern mythologies with Hebrew tradition and Christian history in which the sexually jealous Christian God is the “ultimate alpha male at the head of the table of the gods,” who is “inextricably fused in deep union” with the Goddess (the Asherah). In King’s mythology Jesus had multiple female sexual partners, including Salome the stepdaughter of Herod, and all humans have potential to reach “the messianic condition.” Drawing on what he described as “a great article,” Chuck Pierce reproduced some of the key ideas from the website, (including one paragraph almost in its entirety) to outline the “history” of the Queen of Heaven. Pierce’s choice of source is problematic given that shortly before the passages that he quoted, King asserts that the notion of the “one true God of all” is “patently incorrect” and goes on to an elaborate explanation of why. Chuck D. Pierce, “The Queen’s Frigid Domain,” in *The Queen’s Domain: Advancing God’s Kingdom in the 40/70 Window*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Colorado Springs, Wagner Publications, 2000), 54-56; Chris King, “Hosea’s Plight and Jeremiah’s Lament,” *A God Whose Name is ‘Jealous,’* n.d., <<http://dhushara.com/paradoxhtm/jealous.htm#Anchor-Hosea's-49425>> (29 January 2019). Although Pierce does not clearly acknowledge the source of his material in his text, he does later cite the article with its original title “The Origin of Sin and the Queen of Heaven” with defective address: <www.mat.auckland.ac.nz>. King’s material is now reposted from <www.math.auckland.ac.nz> to <<http://dhushara.com/>>.

²⁰⁴ Wagner was quite open in admitting that his own inclination was to accept reports and accounts at face value. C. Peter Wagner, “Revival Power: God has Set His People ‘A-Praying,’” in *The Rising Revival: Firsthand*

were defended, and an attempt was made to justify his assertions, these devices do not stand up under scrutiny. This is not to say that Wagner's material is thereby invalidated. However, his anecdotes did perform the function of reinforcing and enhancing his pronouncements and they did suggest an implicit endorsement of syncretism. The veracity of his message was undermined by his carelessness in mixing verifiable facts with unreliable statements and this calls into question many of his other declarations that have no means of being verified, for example, personal testimonies or first-hand accounts of events.

This chapter and the previous two chapters have outlined the history of the SWM and the process of how their ideas developed. We have seen how some critics responded to aspects of their doctrines, but without exhausting all the areas of concern that commentators have discussed. The next chapter picks up again on the responses from critics before completing the section on the SWM with an examination of some contextual factors and a preliminary glimpse of some implicit messages that comprised the legacy the SWM conveyed to future generations of Christians.

Chapter 6: Scrutinizing the Spiritual Warfare Movement

Relatively little scholarly attention has been given to the new theology that emerged from the movements addressed in this thesis.¹ The reasons for this lack of response can only be surmised. Wagner's literature was aimed at the popular market and, for the most part, he and his colleagues showed little interest in engaging with scholarly opinion.² It is possible that scholars did not consider a popular theology worthy of their attention. However, an exception arises in regard to the SWM and especially its doctrine of territorial spirits. This is perhaps attributable to its high profile and how aspects of its theory and praxis became enmeshed in the imagination of the general public. Examining scholarly critique of the SWM in this chapter gives opportunity to find out how scholars approached the theology of Wagner and his associates, and the issues they identified, potentially indicating how they might have responded to the other movements.³ Before noting the theological critique that came from scholars, it is necessary to first examine contexts in order to gain a perspective on how contemporary culture and environments may have contributed to the formation of ideas.

Environmental and Spiritual Contexts

Three environmental contexts are relevant to the SWM: the wider context of "Western" (and in particular American) culture and worldview, the charismatic/neo-Pentecostal environment, and the context of Fuller Theological Seminary. Each of these had a bearing on the emergence of the movement. Firstly, American society was experiencing upheaval. The latter half of the twentieth century was undoubtedly a time of ferment and change. The generation that survived World War II saw its offspring rebel against what they saw as outmoded moral sensibilities, including sterile conformism and consumerism.⁴ This new generation embraced experimentation as a means to change and so engaged with

¹ If the chronology followed in this thesis (from church growth through to Bethel theology) is measured in terms of theological scholarly response to each movement, a general indication is that it decreased incrementally, with the exception of the SWM. Very little attention was paid to Wagner's theological propositions after the SWM.

² Wagner did submit a small number of articles to missions journals in his early days but this ceased as increasingly he denounced academia over time.

³ Occasional comments from scholars in relation to movements other than the SWM are noted in the text of each relevant chapter.

⁴ Eskridge, *God's Forever Family*, 1, 11-12.

activities and philosophies that dumbfounded their parents.⁵ Out of this experimentation grew a culture of protest, searching, mysticism, and post-modernist approaches to life. When seeking to explain societal developments during this period, writers often pinpoint particular factors such as the Vietnam War (1955-1975).⁶ Of course, as in all history, no one single cause is attributable and no single analyst can supply all the answers. As commentators sought to explain the cultural dynamics that facilitated the materialization of ideologies such as the SWM, numerous opinions were proffered, each of which is undoubtedly at least partially correct but which must be considered alongside equally important factors.

Many factors involved the preceding years and generations. Some commentators documented the feelings of powerlessness following WWII in the face of nuclear threat and disasters both technological and environmental.⁷ Others located the breakdown in traditional family structures as economic conditions changed.⁸ Sean McCloud identified the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which opened doors for immigrants from a wider diversity of backgrounds, as increasing the visibility of Asian religions in America.⁹ History well reflects the issues that arise when religious cultures encounter one another and attempt to preserve their respective identities. The mix of contributing factors included the Civil Rights movement and the rise of feminism.¹⁰ Andrew Walker pinpointed rapid societal change, aided by mass media, international travel, and new organisational structures, as mirrored in new religious movements that likewise could emerge and mutate but also decay or collapse at an increasing rate of speed.¹¹ Richard Kyle described how urbanization depersonalized relationships and hence turned people towards seeking new places of belonging. Furthermore, a backlash against the increasing dominance of rationalized science and technology led people to seek out personal and intuitive experiences.¹² The Christian Church was not immune to these external pressures and as new ways of thinking emerged, so did many Christians absorb, adapt to, or even embrace many of the societal changes that occurred. Because it is so

⁵ This phenomenon was not confined to America but the context here requires a focus on American society.

⁶ See for example Kyle, *Evangelicalism*, 151.

⁷ Van der Meer, "Reflections on Spiritual Mapping," 64.

⁸ David G. Bromley, "The Satanic Cult Scare," *Society* 28:4 (May/June 1991): 64.

⁹ McCloud, "Mapping the Spatial Limbos," 12. For her analysis of the resultant conflicts, see Harrington, "Exorcising the Mandala." See also Kyle, *Evangelicalism*, 150, 152, for the effect on voting patterns previously dominated by white Anglo-Saxon Protestant voters and the growth of cultural and religious pluralism.

¹⁰ John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000), 56.

¹¹ Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom*, 333.

¹² Kyle, *Evangelicalism*, 150.

commonly acknowledged, there is scarce need to discuss here the degree to which, in general, Christians tend to reflect the values, attitudes, and aspirations that comprise contemporary secular society, even if that society diverges from principles maintained by traditional Christianity. Increasingly, Christians became almost indistinguishable from the “spirit of the age” that characterises contemporary culture.

Consequently, into a cultural milieu of transition with its resultant anxieties (especially in America) crept an increasing fascination with the forces of darkness and the occult. Richard Kyle noted how occult interest increases in periods of rapid social breakdown, when people develop a thirst for the metaphysical due to the establishment’s failure to provide answers or reassurance.¹³ A number of other observers held the entertainment industry at least partially responsible.¹⁴ Whether movies such as *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973), or even *Star Wars* (1977) influenced, reflected, or merely commented on societal obsessions, certainly matters of the supernatural became a preoccupation of public thought for a period. Sarah Hughes identified the increasing role of television in creating a sense of “hyperreality” in consumers who faced difficulties in distinguishing their own natural lived experiences from sensationalist and sometimes fictionalised tabloid news shows on TV.¹⁵ Consumption of this “simulated environment” fed a growing national hysteria over satanic ritual abuse, a phenomenon that later came to be shown as not based on fact. Moreover, wrote Hughes, conservative evangelical Protestantism (manifested in the rise of televangelists), fostered conceptions of the occult and its threat to the idealised white middle-class suburban world.¹⁶ Similarly to Hughes, Michael Reid perceived increasingly blurred parallel realities as a cause for surging occultic interests, although bemusingly he identified Tolkien’s symbols and archetypes, and J.K. Rowling’s later fantasy books about Harry Potter as the precipitating factors.¹⁷ Fuelled by the macabre Tate-LaBianca murders (1969), the high profile of occultist Anton LaVey who deliberately surrounded himself with satanic mystique, ubiquitous urban myths about abducted children, and a series of court cases alleging sexual and satanic abuse in daycare centres, the “Satanic Panic” gripped North America to the point that media, law

¹³ Richard Kyle, “The Occult Roars Back: Its Modern Resurgence,” *Direction* 29:2 (Fall 2000): 94, 97.

¹⁴ For example, Ellis, *Raising the Devil*, 156-159; Cuneo, *American Exorcism*, 272-273.

¹⁵ Sarah Hughes, “American Monsters: Tabloid Media and the Satanic Panic, 1970-2000,” *Journal of American Studies* 51:3 (August 2017): 695-696.

¹⁶ Hughes, “American Monsters,” 711-712.

¹⁷ Michael S.B. Reid, *Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare: A Modern Mythology?* (Brentwood, Essex: Michael Reid Ministries, 2002), 15-16.

enforcement agencies, government institutions, and mental health professions responded with uncritical alacrity and numerous missteps.¹⁸ Once the official agencies became involved, notions of organised and ubiquitous occult activity became institutionalised. Although the Satanic Panic appeared to fade from public consciousness in the late 1990s, belief in this mostly mythical conception persisted in some evangelical Christian circles.¹⁹

Sitting alongside societal fascination with the occult was the eschatological orientation of large sectors of evangelical Christianity.²⁰ The editor of *Christian Life* magazine, Robert Walker, was unequivocal about his belief that humankind was in the “last great days before the return of [God’s] Son to judge the world.”²¹ His sentiment, although ever-present throughout Christian history, undoubtedly represented the thinking of many. And in the last three decades of the twentieth century an unprecedented phenomenon was unleashed on Christians who were eyeing world events with anticipation of the Last Days. An avalanche of apocalyptic literature flooded the popular Christian market and spilled over into secular readership. Hal Lindsey’s multi-million seller *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) set the trend and was followed by many more, for example: *Mystery 666* (1977) by Don E. Stanton; *Apocalypse Next* (1980) by William R. Goetz; *When Your Money Fails* (1981) and *The New Money System* (1982) by Mary Stewart Relfe; or *Prince of Darkness* (1994) by Grant R. Jeffrey.²² What the vast majority of popular books on the End Times had in common was J.N.

¹⁸ For the response of officialdom see Bromley, “Satanic Cult Scare,” 61-62. For law enforcement involvement see also Kenneth V. Lanning, “Investigator’s Guide to Allegations of ‘Ritual’ Child Abuse,” *National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Federal Bureau of Investigation*, January 1992, <<https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=136592>> (13 April 2009), 7-8. Academic writing on the topic sometimes dubbed the “Satanic Panic” as the “Satanism Scare.”

¹⁹ Arguably, the fading of the Satanic Panic is attributable to several factors: the eventual dismissal of charges in the McMartin Preschool court case and exoneration of the accused, the retreat of law enforcement hypersensitivity due to the release of FBI investigation reports defusing the most extreme rumours, an increased focus from more responsible sectors of the media in investigating some (false) satanic claims, and generalised distraction resulting from the switch of attention to issues (and panic) surrounding the arrival of the new millennium. However, some Christian/SWM writers rejected the shift in public discourse. For example, Ed Murphy wrote: “The case suppression and failure of the legal system to protect the child (witness the Presidio and the McMartin child care scandals, both thrown out of court in 1990) are due to unintended denial and chronic public avoidance on one hand, and the influence of treacherous decision makers and gatekeepers on the other ... The abusers are today free to carry on their sexual assault on children wherever they can find them.” Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 467-468.

²⁰ Frykholm goes so far as to claim that apocalypticism has shaped America. Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 14.

²¹ Robert Walker, “Preface,” in *Signs & Wonders Today*, by the Editors, *Christian Life Magazine*, (Wheaton, IL: Christian Life Missions, 1983), 6.

²² Tim LaHaye’s best-selling series of books, the first of which was *Left Behind*, was published from 1995 forward and had sold over 50 million copies by 2004, indicating that eschatological preoccupation was not abating. Frykholm notes that this is a wider cultural phenomenon, not limited to isolated believers. Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 3.

Darby's dispensationalist premillennialist theology featuring the Rapture. They focussed heavily on the coming Antichrist, the threat of new economic technologies such as barcodes, and expectancy of dramatic increase in witchcraft and demonic activity in (American) society. The event that was considered the most significant precipitant of the countdown toward the end times was the celebrated 1948 establishment of the State of Israel.²³ Starting from that date, untold numbers of writers issued dire warnings of events to come, although most declared that Christians would not be present for most of the troubled times due to having already been raptured.

Amid this tumult of expectation, the SWM endorsed and promoted the Last Days conception of increased demonic activity. However, this does not mean that they endorsed dispensational premillennialism. Neither does it mean that they actively promoted alternative eschatological positions. Simply put, no matter what private beliefs they held about eschatology, in their writing, they expressed little interest in eschatology.²⁴ Although all of their historical sources overtly referred to expectancy of the last days and increase in demonic activity as an indicator of this, SWM writers appeared to agree in a generalised way but made little effort to discuss the topic further.²⁵ Among the leading writers, Jacobs and Kraft entered no discussion other than fleeting references to the end times or the Second Coming without stating a position.²⁶ Vague indicators from others pointed toward an unfocussed postmillennial outlook.²⁷ Dawson commented on conflicting opinions about whether there will be revival or falling away in the end times. His answer was both: a polarization of light and dark culminating in the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit ever known.²⁸ Other than this he did not elaborate. Otis's book the *Last of the Giants* did claim a focus on end times

²³ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 33.

²⁴ This does not mean that the interest was absent, as we will see in later discussion. However, the topic was largely invisible in the SWM literature.

²⁵ See for example Harper, *Spiritual Warfare*, 42-43. Frank Hammond also made a statement that anticipated Kingdom Now theology: "Before the Kingdom of God can ever become a reality in your life or mine, the forces of hell that beset us must be faced and overcome." Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*, 150.

²⁶ Kraft, *Christianity with Power*, 13; Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 62.

²⁷ A brief but useful article by Stephen Hunt provides an overview of British charismatic deliverance ministries and their connections with important American equivalents. In discussing the influence of John Wimber's ministry in the UK he found Wimber's eschatology inspired by Wagner's thought and likewise "difficult to pin down" but pointed to the general implication of post-millennialism advanced by Wimber where the Church is being cleansed and purified in preparation for the Second Coming. Although deliverance is individual, the wider aim is to purify the Church from its complacency, legalism, and intellectualism – all products of spiritual oppression. Stephen Hunt, "Deliverance: The Evolution of a Doctrine," *Themelios* 21:1 (October 1995): 13.

²⁸ Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 59, 65.

events in “unveiling” of the threat of Islam. This included an appendix linking Otis’ “Islamic Beast Theory” to each element of John’s symbolism in the book of Revelation.²⁹ Somewhat paradoxically, he argued for the power of Christian warriors to demolish satanic strongholds in Muslim regions through spiritual warfare even while asserting the inevitability of specific events such as the invasion of Israel by hostile Islamic forces.³⁰ His eschatological orientation was merely hinted at: “If we determine to confront the giants that would bar our path and plant heaven’s flag in the hills and fields across the Jordan, then we may indeed prepare this earth to receive her King.”³¹ Beyond this, his focus remained squarely on Islam (and particularly Saddam Hussein) without further conceptual application to eschatology.³² Wagner was the only writer to clearly describe his position during the SWM era. Although in his early Christian years he held to the dispensational view, he wrote in his memoir that his belief in this system dissipated during his missionary years in Bolivia, after which time he gave no thought to the issue for decades: the subject was always a “low priority” for him.³³ His renewal of interest in eschatology occurred in 2006 when a friend gave him a copy of his book on partial preterism, thereby convincing him to acquire a new stance.³⁴ This indicates that during his SWM years, eschatology did not occupy his thinking. However, when Wagner developed interests beyond spiritual warfare and commenced his dominionist period years later, eschatology became his driving motivation.

The second context that formed the backdrop to the SWM, the charismatic/neo-Pentecostal environment, is less complex than the societal issues discussed above.³⁵ In the formation of a theology of demonology, the SWM had an advantage. The forerunner to the charismatic renewal, Pentecostalism, incorporated a range of beliefs and practices related to demonology, but no clear doctrinal stance that collectively represented the main Pentecostal

²⁹ Otis, *The Last of the Giants*, 267-268.

³⁰ Otis, *The Last of the Giants*, 96, 201.

³¹ Otis, *The Last of the Giants*, 29.

³² Otis’s release of a book on the end times that provides no explicit information to eschatologically orient his readers could be viewed as an example how much of the SWM material failed to provide evidence of a carefully worked out theology.

³³ The discussion on Wagner’s eschatology can be found in Chapter 8 on dominion theology.

³⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 273; Wagner, *This Changes Everything*, 200.

³⁵ The terms charismatic and neo-Pentecostal are synonymous with the term “charismatic renewal” gradually taking precedence.

bodies had emerged.³⁶ The charismatic renewal inherited this gap, and the formation of a clear theology about demons was further hampered by the newness of the charismatic moment, its emergence out of diverse denominations, and its early tendency towards fragmentation.³⁷ This meant that there were no clearly defined parameters against which the propositions of Wagner and his associates could be tested. Wagner further contributed to this freedom in constructing a new theology by announcing the formation of a “Third Wave” that stood separate from both Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement.³⁸ Van der Meer argued that the distinctive feature of the Third Wave movement was exorcism, thereby suggesting that its sole reason for existence was its demonology.³⁹ Whether this is correct or not, certainly the SWM was able to simply step into the gap created by the absence of a clearly formulated doctrine of demonology and declare that they had the answers.

The final context is found in the environment at Fuller Theological Seminary. The controversy over Wagner’s MC510 course was outlined in the chapter on S&W. However, behind the eruption of claims and counter-claims (that still remain associated with Fuller’s reputation) sat a thinly-veiled internecine conflict, one that gradually evolved in Wagner’s worldview to emerge eventually as overt hostility towards the academic environment and its learning structures. Established in 1947, Fuller was still a relatively young institution when Donald McGavran was invited in 1965 to set up a department of missions.⁴⁰ Fuller’s early years had been characterized by a battle to carve out a neo-evangelical identity that separated itself from fundamentalism.⁴¹ By the time McGavran arrived, the skirmishes (sometimes fierce) had subsided but McGavran’s background, unconnected to the fundamentalist heritage,

³⁶ McClung, “Exorcism,” 624. This does not mean that individual bodies had not taken stances on particular issues, see Assemblies of God, “Can Born-Again Believers be Demon Possessed?” cited above.

³⁷ See Theron, “Critical Overview,” 79n3. Theron also refers to a type of “oral theology” extant in early charismatic circles. For discussion on the “Achilles heel” in Neo-Pentecostalism that highlights the tension between Pentecostal inheritance and denominational discomfort, see also Harper, “Renewal and Causality,” 94-95.

³⁸ Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 18. Wagner had plenty of support for this conception from close associates who reinforced the notion of a Third Wave, although others denied its viability. Statisticians Barrett and Johnson declared: “First-Wavers and Second-Wavers alike are disturbed today by the Third Wave and resist recognizing it as the next phase in God’s global renewal of Christianity.” For: Barrett, *World Christian Trends*, 3, 300. Against: Synan, *Century of the Holy Spirit*, 359, 378; Van der Meer, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner,” 77-78n49.

³⁹ Van der Meer, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner,” 79.

⁴⁰ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 238.

⁴¹ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 2-11.

no doubt provided incentive to bring him in as fresh blood.⁴² From the beginning, there was an air of separateness between the School of World Mission/Institute for Church Growth and the rest of the institution. With priorities focussed on the pragmatic concerns of church growth, McGavran had insisted on a measure of independence to the degree that theology students were not permitted to take courses in his department.⁴³ It was a two-way street. Never one to shy away from launching personal volleys, Charles Kraft, an early addition to McGavran's staff, openly declared that theologians at Fuller regarded the School of World Missions as second-class citizens.⁴⁴ Wagner picked up on the theme of partition and expanded on it over the years. Although Fuller was his alma mater and then later his employer for thirty years (1971-2001), increasingly he became critical not only of his theological colleagues but of theologians in general.⁴⁵ Eventually he declared: "I ... predict that as the Second Apostolic Age progresses, theologians per se will likely become relics of the past."⁴⁶ Wagner was scornful of particular subject requirements in his Fuller undergraduate studies and once he became a faculty member in McGavran's department, his focus was entirely on the technical aspects of church growth. Likewise, Kraft, a linguist who later operated from within an anthropology framework, rejected epistemological approaches accepted within mainstream theological thought.⁴⁷

The combination of differing perspectives, disputes, and distancing over the years had a corollary. The lack of collegial connection with theologians meant that the theology of the SWM developed from within a type of silo that from the outset was underpinned by conflict with those who could have contributed valuable resources. Moreover, in promoting a theology and claiming expertise in scholarly disciplines associated with his themes, Wagner in particular stepped out beyond his academic parameters. While it is unjustifiable to claim that the development of the SWM was precipitated by the personal characteristics of the key leaders and the inadequate collegiately between disciplines, certainly one element that should

⁴² Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 238.

⁴³ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 240.

⁴⁴ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 239-240 and see 288-290 for Kraft's theological differences with theologians.

⁴⁵ Wagner moved to Colorado Springs in 1996 but maintained his tenure by teaching block courses at Fuller until his official retirement.

⁴⁶ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 58.

⁴⁷ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 288.

not be ignored is Wagner's enjoyment of his reputation as a maverick and Kraft's obdurate protection of his personal worldview.⁴⁸

Although the principal figures of the SWM were adamant that their propositions were the result of direct revelation from God, contextual factors undoubtedly played a part in not only shaping their thinking but also facilitating the reception of their ideas among Christians. Conceivably, if this theology had emerged during a different era, they might not have experienced the same eager reception for their messages. However, Peter Wagner's memoir hints at a further contextual explanation that must be considered. In his description of events leading to the establishment of the MC510 course, where the emphasis ostensibly was on healing of physical ailments, Wagner commented that many of his Fuller students, with their origins from seventy world nations, "yearned for more insight into God's supernatural power that would help them confront the demonic forces in their animistic cultures."⁴⁹ As noted earlier, the problem with this is that little was available to anyone who did indeed seek answers to such difficult questions. Hiebert's claim of a dearth in Western understanding has been widely accepted as accurate, and for Christians seeking answers to some difficult questions, there were very few resources available to help them.

Nonetheless, even if Wagner's claim is accurate and the development of SWM theory can be justified on these grounds, the proponents of SWM did not remain true to their own declared mandate: evangelism. Quickly the focus shifted away from reaching non-Christians toward those who were already considered to be in the kingdom.⁵⁰ The passion to reach the unreached became lost in the commotion of demon-chasing. Secondly, there is considerable evidence that SWM interpretations of demonic activity in non-Western cultures, upon which their theory was based, was severely compromised by viewing these through an American worldview. Their attendant suspicion of the "other" was observable in the demonization of visual art from other cultures (see Appendix A) or the failure to comprehend the existence of

⁴⁸ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 33, 55, 172.

⁴⁹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 128.

⁵⁰ Strategic-level spiritual warfare claimed to be fulfilling the Great Commission by freeing areas from demonic influence in order to pave the way for evangelism but was designated an evangelistic process only by means of redefining the accepted meaning/activities of the word. This orientation can also be detected in Peretti's novels. Gribben commented on how the books prioritized exercising spiritual power over the more minor theme of evangelism, as the novels were "more concerned to activate evangelical readers than to recruit others to the fold." Gribben, *Writing the Rapture*, 116.

varieties of beliefs about the supernatural in human societies.⁵¹ They held to a simplistic and reductionist approach that viewed all non-Western societies as holding identical beliefs about spirits and their functions.⁵² Thirdly, the evidence indicates that they were more influenced by popular conceptions about demons than by careful exegesis of scriptural information of the same. Green demons with glowing eyes or demon-infested humans writhing around and throwing up were more reminiscent of Hollywood than biblical descriptions. Fourthly, there were problematic corollaries associated with SWM doctrines: the disproportionate focus on battling demons meant teaching about personal responsibility for sin, repentance, or biblical promises of the victory already won by Jesus at the cross were relegated to the background. Fifthly in the face of a shaky case for scriptural authority, they relied on evidential anecdotes that usually at the very least were unproven and in many cases could be shown to be demonstrably exaggerated or false.

Critical Response to the SWM

External commentary on the SWM is copious almost to the point of competing with the spiritual warfare writers themselves for quantity of material; it is a challenge to muster relevant remarks to provide a summary.⁵³ From opinion pieces on the internet to books aimed at the popular market to scholarly responses, opinion on the SWM (much of it critical) came from all quarters.⁵⁴ Contextually, debate about the idiosyncratic approach to spiritual warfare espoused by Wagner and his colleagues was situated in a wider discussion that encompassed issues related to the charismatic renewal. This serves as a reminder that the SWM was only one stream of thought, albeit influential, which did not represent *all* charismatic thought. This

⁵¹ See Chapter 4 n137 for SWM reactions to cultural objects and see also Appendix A: “The Making of a Myth.” The SWM reductionist understanding of beliefs in other cultures held them to be inexorably bound up in fear of demonic control and they failed to see that other cultures also believed that spirits could be beneficial or present but neutral. Furthermore, belief in the very existence of specific spirits could be transitory. For the history of one community’s derived, blended, and short-lived belief in water-spirits, see Shorter, “Spirit Possession,” 45-53.

⁵² Although many of the key figures in the SWM could claim missionary experience, in fact analysis of their history demonstrates that their cross-cultural experiences were limited and short-lived. None (including Wagner who served the longest time as a missionary but who worked exclusively in Christian contexts during that time) could be construed as having experienced prolonged and close encounters with other cultures that would have given them sufficiently nuanced understanding of spiritual beliefs in the cultures they encountered. This includes Kraft who taught anthropology but appears never to have engaged in anthropology fieldwork. There are numerous instances of misinterpretation of cultural symbols and activities peppered throughout SWM literature.

⁵³ This section will deal with scholarly critique only. Although some popular critique contains quality material, a significant amount is incoherent, inaccurate, agenda-laden, or even vitriolic.

⁵⁴ Note that in the heyday of the SWM, widespread use of the internet had not yet emerged. The amount of discussion locatable on the internet is an excellent indicator of how many of its ideas have persisted.

section does not seek to outline all critical responses but will briefly allude to some of the key issues raised by academic commentators because they are germane to the overall focus of this thesis.

Two of the most comprehensive and frequently cited critiques came from former missionary and seminary teacher Chuck Lowe and from academics Priest, Campbell and Mullen, to whom Charles Kraft responded in the same volume.⁵⁵ Another often-cited work was the book based on René Holvast's Ph.D. thesis, a thorough examination of spiritual mapping projects in Argentina that also alluded to some of the wider SWM issues explored in this thesis.⁵⁶ Dissertations and theses, of which there were not many, varied in depth and bias. As would be expected, most of those generated outside American geographical regions kept a local focus in assessing the impact of the SWM, those from Fuller School of World Mission supported the SWM theology, and those from conservative institutions within North America took an oppositional stance.⁵⁷ The larger part of discussion occurred in missiological circles, especially in peer-reviewed journals, although numerous other critics from wider Protestant circles contributed their viewpoints. With the notable exception of Walter Wink, virtually no commentators questioned the ontological reality of demons as personal spiritual beings. Therefore, most focus was centred on SWM depiction of their roles. However, the high public profile of the SWM also attracted attention from diverse groups such as Christian Science,

⁵⁵ Lowe, *Territorial Spirits*; Priest, "Missiological Syncretism," 9-87.

⁵⁶ René Holvast, *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina, 1989-2005: A Geography of Fear* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

⁵⁷ For example and in order listed: Van der Meer focussed particularly on Wagner before evaluating erroneous and sometimes xenophobic western/SWM understanding of African traditional religions and witchcraft; Siew was supportive and asserted precedents for territorial spirits in early church fathers; Coleman was critical but suggested a strategy for the church to corporately resist principalities and powers. Van der Meer, "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner"; Siew, "Spiritual Territoriality"; Landon Coleman, "Principalities and Powers: A Historical and Biblical Study with Strategic Application in North American Churches" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010). Some other dissertations included: Mohr 2001 (relied on SWM theology and outlined his field study of exorcists' practices in America); Lawless 1997 (critical and suggesting an alternative model); Geib 1997 (critique from ethnographical perspective, accepted the theology but not the methodology of mapping); Smith 2011 (review of spiritual warfare theology and praxis in the British Anglican Charismatic renewal, confirming an extant ontology of evil). Michael David Mohr, "They Will Cast Out Demons: How Christian Exorcism is Practiced in North America" (D.Min. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2001); Charles Edward Lawless, "The Relationship between Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare in the North American Spiritual Warfare Movement, 1986-1997" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997); John David Geib, "An Examination of the Spiritual Mapping Paradigm for Congruence with Biblical Orthodoxy and Ethnography" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford Graduate School, 1997); Graham Russell Smith, "The Church Militant: A Study of 'Spiritual Warfare' in the Anglican Charismatic Renewal" (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2011).

Skeptic groups investigating the paranormal, other religions, or a number of social scientists working from a secular perspective.⁵⁸

Aside from Clinton Arnold's partial support, critique from within scholarly disciplines, whether Christian or secular, was mostly negative. Some critiques of SWM material are strongly worded.⁵⁹ Not all criticism was accurate: some journal articles drew mostly on secondary sources and appeared to have not read the SWM material thoroughly.⁶⁰ A small number of articles supported the general ideas of the SWM while criticizing a particular aspect. These, however, appeared unable to contribute new material to strengthen the SWM case and tended to retain some core SWM assumptions while arguing for a re-direction of focus.⁶¹ Broadly speaking, observers from a range of spiritual traditions criticized SWM theology and methodology, expressed concern for the impact on the Church body, or dealt with psychological and sociological issues. The most common accusations pertained to syncretism, *a priori* assumptions, or poor exegesis on the part of the SWM, but their logic was also called into question on several issues.⁶²

As alluded to in previous chapters, many theological objections centred on the notion of territoriality and highlighted exegetical problems with SWM approach to scripture. Moving beyond the question of whether or not there is biblical evidence for territorial spirits, some critics pointed out that nevertheless there remains no scriptural warrant for humans to engage

⁵⁸ For example, Jane Lampman, "Targeting cities with 'spiritual mapping,' prayer," *The Christian Science Monitor* (23 September 1999): 15. <<https://www.csmonitor.com/1999/0923/p15s1.html>> (24 July 2019); Barry Karr, "Never a Dull Moment," *The Skeptical Enquirer* 25:6 (November/December 2001): 53-57; Laura Harrington, "Exorcising the Mandala: Kālacakra and the Neo-Pentecostal Response," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 13 (2012): 147-171; Sean McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Ruth Marshall, "Destroying Arguments and Captivating Thoughts: Spiritual Warfare Prayer as Global Praxis," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2:1 (4 January 2016): 92-113.

⁵⁹ Unfortunately, McGee's call for irenic scrutiny of the issues by both practitioners and scholars has not always been heeded by either side. McGee, "The Radical Strategy," 94.

⁶⁰ Most were of a high standard and demonstrated good understanding of the issues. However, due to the sheer weight of numbers, many have not been included in this study unless they contributed new material. Those that relied on secondary sources for compiling their arguments or covered ground already well-trodden were not needed here.

⁶¹ For example, Yip suggested moving the focus from the names of demons to the societal strongholds they control. Tai M. Yip, "Spiritual Mapping: Another Approach," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 31:2 (April 1995): 166-170.

⁶² For example: apropos to the notion of opposing forces and in discussion of Daniel 10, Lowe, quoting John Collins, points out an issue of logic in the SWM argument about territorial demons: if empires go to war against each other, then their tutelary spirits end up in a civil war situation, problematic in light of Jesus' comments in Matt 12:25 and Luke 11:18. Lowe, *Territorial Spirits*, 34. Several other issues of logic have already been alluded to in this study.

them in spiritual warfare, nor are there any biblical examples of such a practice occurring.⁶³ This included Daniel, who Wagner had described as combating the rulers of darkness with prayer as his only weapon.⁶⁴ Scholars asserted Daniel knew nothing of the conflict Michael had engaged in until it was over, an indication that he had no role to play in naming or confronting evil forces.⁶⁵ Others attacked the emphasis on hierarchies, claiming in particular that Eph 6 pertained to personal spiritual battles not organisational warfare.⁶⁶ Furthermore, wrote Lawless, the scriptures claimed in support of spiritual mapping, for example spying out the land of Canaan (Num 13:17-21), Ezekiel drawing a map of Jerusalem on a clay tile (Ezek. 4:1), or Paul “mapping” Athens when he viewed the altars to foreign gods (Acts 17:22-23) do not equate to a mandate to locate the spiritual forces over the land.⁶⁷ Pointing out the SWM avoidance of accepting personal responsibility for sin, Pratt compared the Hammonds’ demon taxonomies with “Paul’s works of the flesh” in Gal 5:19-21 before commenting that their list “would be humorous if the authors were not serious.”⁶⁸ The activity of naming demons also came under fire because of its connection to pagan practices.⁶⁹ Although few took on the question of whether Christians can be demonized/possessed, the question that arose was whether it is possible for the Holy Spirit and demons to co-inhabit a Christian. The most prominent opposition came from the Assemblies of God in the position paper that firmly declared their denominational stance against demon possession of Christians.⁷⁰

⁶³ Gerry Breshears, “The Body of Christ: Prophet, Priest, or King?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:1 (March 1994): 14-15; Greenlee, “Territorial Spirits Reconsidered,” 510; Priest, “Missiological Syncretism,” 69; Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 164.

⁶⁴ Stevens, “Daniel 10,” 429-430; compare Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 66. S.D. Gordon, who influenced a number of SWM authors, likely stimulated thoughts along this line when he wrote: “Daniel and his companions are wrestlers too, active participants in that upper-air fight, and really deciding the issue, for they are on the ground being contested.” Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 116.

⁶⁵ Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 155, 162; Lowe, *Territorial Spirits*, 46-48; Chuck Lawless, “Spiritual Warfare and Missions,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9:4 (Winter 2005): 38.

⁶⁶ Breshears, “Body of Christ,” 15.

⁶⁷ Lawless, “Spiritual Warfare and Missions,” 38. Lawless is referring to Otis’s scriptural examples purportedly describing spiritual mapping.

⁶⁸ Pratt, “The Need to Dialogue,” 28-29n152. See also Lawless, “Spiritual Warfare and Missions,” 39.

⁶⁹ Moreau, “Gaining Perspective,” 8-9; Arnold, *Ephesians, Power and Magic*, 54, 56. See also Van der Meer, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner,” 162-163. Wagner wrote that “spirits know they are more vulnerable if their names are known” and anyone who knows the name of a demon can exert power over it: Wagner, *Praying with Power*, 101, 103. Departing from the concord usually found between chapter authors in SWM volumes, Grant McClung also expressed his reservations about the practice (among some other concerns). L. Grant McClung, “Pentecostal/Charismatic Understanding of Exorcism,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 210.

⁷⁰ Assemblies of God, “Can Born-Again Believers be Demon Possessed?” The 1972 release of the paper predated the *daimonizomai* argument but the text indicates that the AoG would not have amended their position even in light of the adjusted interpretation.

Another common criticism from detractors pertained to dualism, a view derived from Plato and reinforced by later philosophers such as Descartes.⁷¹ The implication of dualism pervaded all SWM texts as they repeatedly described a contest of struggle and war against the forces of darkness, a struggle involving humans that supported the increasing emphasis on human agency. Ed Murphy provided the most overt statement in support of SWM dualism:

The universe exists in a state of cosmic-earthly conflict or spiritual warfare. Cosmic dualism is a reality: spiritual warfare exists in heaven. Earthly dualism is a reality: spiritual warfare rages on earth. ... From a biblical perspective, however, this dualism is revealed to be an on-going conflict waged on two fronts: God and His angelic kingdom confront Satan and his demonic kingdom, while the children of God contend with the children of Satan.⁷²

Murphy declared a “modified dualism” in the Bible that defines the present but not the past or the future, where “absolute dualism” (the theology of the New Age movement) is eternal conflict.⁷³ This was expressed less explicitly by Wagner who stated that he believed in a limited dualism “because Satan and his forces of evil are not yet all under Jesus’ feet.”⁷⁴ “We are in a life and death struggle,” he wrote.⁷⁵ Indicative of the opinions of numerous other critics, Guelich found nothing in the stories of Jesus’ ministry or any of Paul’s writings that hinted at a dualistic cosmic conflict with believers on the side of God pitted against Satan and his forces. He pointed out that the depiction of cosmic struggle was more in line with Jewish apocalyptic writing than the concept of Jesus’ gospel kingdom.⁷⁶ His view was that Christ has already won the war and the believer’s role is to defensively withstand satanic attacks that threaten the believer’s relationship with God (Eph 6:13).⁷⁷

Critical opinion on SWM methodological strategies occupied less attention than the theology but nevertheless some pointed out issues of concern. Holvast commented on fluid or changing conceptions when faced with less than expected results and the lack of meaningful

⁷¹ Wagner (and others such as Bill Johnson, see Chapter 9) wrote about the “inferior Greek mindset” yet seemed unaware of how much they reflected ideas from Greek philosophy in their own thought.

⁷² Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 13. Murphy advises readers to see Peretti’s books for an excellent representation of this concept.

⁷³ Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 13 and see 13n12.

⁷⁴ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 64, 115

⁷⁵ Wagner, “Spiritual Warfare,” in *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies*, 34.

⁷⁶ Guelich, “Jesus, Paul and Peretti,” 42-44, 46. See also the comment on George Eldon Ladd’s eschatology, Chapter 2, n185.

⁷⁷ Guelich, “Jesus, Paul and Peretti,” 45-51. See also E. Janet Warren, “‘Spiritual Warfare’: A Dead Metaphor?” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21:2 (January 2012): 286-291 for a Pentecostal viewpoint.

interaction with theological, exegetical, or historical sources.⁷⁸ This included name-dropping patristic sources without accounting for their theology.⁷⁹ Löfstedt located specific strategies to persuade readers of SWM literature: constructing tradition by appealing to the experiences of SWM proponents or the experiences of non-Western peoples in preference to established scholarship, using scientific-sounding language while neglecting scientific method, and modelling a trusting attitude while discouraging questions by limiting access to resources.⁸⁰ Wagner in particular employed the latter two strategies while Kraft was hotly defensive of experience over scholarship. Löfstedt noted the resemblance to “source amnesia” discussed by Hammer in relation to Modern Esoteric writers.⁸¹ A form of this is demonstrated in the process whereby writers in the SWM circle merely repeated the claims of their colleagues as authoritative, a “chain of transmission” useful to give the appearance of scholarly and historic support for the ideas represented.

A raft of other concerns expressed by a range of writers permeated the critical literature. Chuck Lawless raised issues of neglect of evangelism in favour of focus on demons and the danger of cross-cultural offenses undermining the missionary work of other Christians.⁸² Others also thought that the over-emphasis on demons was unhealthy and to the detriment of attention to the work of the cross and the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.⁸³ Missions researcher Patrick Johnstone and others warned against the problem of division in the church.⁸⁴ Chuck Lowe criticised the SWM view of tradition as an obstacle to progress,

⁷⁸ Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 164-166. On “abuse of scripture” due to poor exegesis see Van der Meer, “Reflections on Spiritual Mapping,” 62n16.

⁷⁹ Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 148-149.

⁸⁰ Löfstedt, “Establishing Authority,” 7. For a definition of the “scientism” demonstrated in SWM literature, see Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 23, 206. Hammer, an historian of contemporary religions, lists three discursive strategies of the New Age and its predecessors: scientism, the construction of tradition, and the appeal to experience. Hammer’s findings on parallel strategies emerging from Western Esoteric and New Age writing resonate strongly with how Wagner and others formulated their arguments, as noted throughout this study.

⁸¹ Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 180-181.

⁸² Lawless, “Spiritual Warfare and Missions,” 40. See also John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Meet the Enemy* (Colorado Springs: ChariotVictor Publishing, 1992), 49. MacArthur was an influential and outspoken opponent of all of Wagner’s involvements; he wrote more for the popular market than academia. His most forthright (and best-selling) polemic was *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes like the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993).

⁸³ Mike Wakely, “A Critical Look at a New ‘Key’ to Evangelisation,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 31:2 (April 1995): 161; Patrick Johnstone, “Biblical Intercession: Spiritual Power to Change Our World,” in *Spiritual Power and Missions: Raising the Issues*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series #3, ed. Edward Rommen (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 138.

⁸⁴ Johnstone, “Biblical Intercession,” 139. Detzler described the situation as “a babel of emotion and hysteria.” Detzler, “Myths about Spiritual Warfare,” 30.

and innovation as the main measure of the Holy Spirit's leading, that results in a "smug condescension toward the past and an uncritical fascination with anything new."⁸⁵ Pierre Gilbert expressed concerns about the role of deliverance ministers, who can assume esoteric superiority and a position of authority over vulnerable people, thereby risking psychological or spiritual manipulation.⁸⁶ He also criticized SWM demonology for its "fundamental unverifiability," its "total subjectivity," and its "profoundly reductionistic" nature.⁸⁷ His concerns about paranoia were echoed by the Lausanne Movement, which issued a statement warning of the risk that fear of the Devil will overcome our confidence in Christ's victory and power to protect us.⁸⁸ Anticipating the rise of apostles and prophets, Andrew Walker's view of the "paranoid universe" engendered by the focus on demons was that it breeds "a basic insecurity which is always looking for the men and women of power to show us the way to protect ourselves from danger."⁸⁹ On the other hand, others noted the propensity of the movement to stimulate a sense of excitement or the mysterious with its provocative book titles or warlike language.⁹⁰

Perhaps the most common accusation from commentators pertained to syncretism.⁹¹ Kraft did not help matters by claiming that he and his colleagues obtained much reliable information directly from demons, along with some other sources:

I/we also believe in experimenting with the insights of others, such as animists, those in Scripture who did not obey God, and even (though carefully) demons, in our quest to discover more of what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us in this area.⁹²

⁸⁵ Lowe, *Territorial Spirits*, 76.

⁸⁶ Gilbert, "Third Wave Worldview," 163.

⁸⁷ Gilbert, "Third Wave Worldview," 163-164.

⁸⁸ Lausanne Movement, "Deliver Us from Evil – Consultation Statement," 22 August 2000, <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/statement/deliver-us-from-evil-consultation-statement>> (16 October 2019), 5. Depending on one's personal viewpoint, the Lausanne Movement benefits from, or is hampered by, the need to represent even-handedly the various opinions of its many participants and contributors. In general, documentary material produced by Lausanne reflects the carefully considered outcomes of this necessary tension. However, if Wagner's representations of his influence in the organisation are accurate (a fact that is perhaps challengeable in light of his tendencies towards self-promotion), then Lausanne documents such as this statement indicate the organisation also may be prone to shifting opinion.

⁸⁹ Walker, "The Devil You Think You Know," 96.

⁹⁰ Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 123-124. John White commented: "The occult is a new delicacy which titillates the jaded appetites of pulpit-weary evangelicals." White, "Problems and Procedures in Exorcism," 289.

⁹¹ This was the chief issue underlying Paul Hiebert's attempt to clear up some of the unintended consequences of "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle." See Hiebert, *Understanding Folk Religion*.

⁹² Kraft, "'Christian Animism' or God-Given Authority?," in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 91, 102-103.

Wagner also argued for validity in “learning from the world of darkness” because what matters most is to whom we give our allegiance.⁹³ With these types of comments in mind, critics expressed discomfort with “Christian spiritism” and apparent acceptance of a “magical worldview,” or folk religions where spirits are regarded as attached to geographical features.⁹⁴ In response to an essay co-authored by Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood, a diverse (and sometimes skirmishing) group of scholars—Walter Wink, Greg Boyd, and David Powlison—were in accord about the merits of the SWM argument, using terms such as “archaic pagan religion dressed up as Christianity” (Wink and Hardin), “animism-with-Christian-flavoring” (Powlison), and “fanciful” with a mindset of Constantinian triumphalism (Boyd).⁹⁵ Stevens pointed out that the concept of a territorial god was a mythical and animistic notion typical of the pagan nations around ancient Israel but in contrast, biblical literature always related to the relationship between God (or the “gods”) and the peoples of the earth.⁹⁶ Others had concerns about syncretism incorporating more contemporary religious practices, for example, Löfstedt, who charged SWM writers with using the same discursive strategies as New Age authors or Modern Esoterics (Theosophists, Occultists or modern Pagans).⁹⁷ Few drew attention to an important reality noted by Burnett: that all major religions, including Christianity, to some degree incorporate syncretism.⁹⁸ Burnett’s point was also noted by van Rhee who qualified it by noting that the nature and quality of syncretism nevertheless must be taken into

⁹³ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 64-66, 70.

⁹⁴ Breshears, “Body of Christ,” 15; Priest, “Missiological Syncretism,” 68; Hart, “The Gospel and Spiritual Warfare,” 20.

⁹⁵ Walter Wink and Michael Hardin, David Powlison, Gregory Boyd, “Response to C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood,” in Beilby, *Four Views*, 203, 205, 211, 214. It is germane to make a brief comment here about how SWM writers (specifically Wagner and Kraft who were the only responders to critique) engaged with academic scholars who argued viewpoints that differed from their own. In general, Wagner’s opportunity to respond to each of the contrasting opinions in Beilby consisted of repeating some of their points followed by “we believe” statements that merely rehearsed SWM views with no meaningful attempt to engage with the issues. Wagner’s material here suggests that he was not equipped to argue or defend his case at academic level (despite his academic training). In similar contexts Kraft argued more comprehensively but tended towards *ad hominem* approaches. See Wagner’s responses to Wink, Powlison, and Boyd in Beilby, *Four Views*, 84-88, 123-128, 169-172 (note that although Rebecca Greenwood is listed as co-author to Wagner in the responses, Wagner makes it clear that the responses are actually his, 84). For Kraft’s response to criticism see Kraft, “‘Christian Animism’ or God-Given Authority?,” in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 88-135.

⁹⁶ Stevens, “Daniel 10,” 428. See also Van der Meer, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner,” 18; and Gilbert, “Third Wave Worldview,” 159-160, 162.

⁹⁷ Löfstedt, “Establishing Authority,” 4-24. See also Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 168-169.

⁹⁸ Burnett, “Spiritual Conflict,” 3, 16. Theron also comments that claims of Christian theologies being derived solely from scripture are oversimplifications. Theron, “Critical Overview,” 88.

account. In his wide-ranging and thorough essay, van Rheenan identified several areas in which the SWM had appropriated postmodernist characteristics in shaping their theology.⁹⁹

Scholars publishing outside the theological context also saw syncretism as the most notable feature of the SWM worldview. They generally took a sceptical view, seeing resonances with shamanism, magic, or divination.¹⁰⁰ Sometimes these scholars seemingly failed to fully comprehend the ontological implications of genuine belief in the Christian gospel among SWM adherents or the role of scripture. Often they appeared also to make assumptions that statements from SWM leaders were driven by thoroughgoing philosophical or intellectual thought about social issues.¹⁰¹ This led to reading some highly original meanings into SWM ideology, for example, sexual anxiety.¹⁰² As they struggled to come to grips with meaning in SWM thought, some demonstrated fine instances of eisegesis (of secular origins) with its resultant incongruence.¹⁰³ For example, Peretti's novels were interpreted by one academic as an Italian-American historical allegory with allusions to the

⁹⁹ Gailyn van Rheenen, "Modern and Postmodern Syncretism in Theology and Missions," in *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series #5, ed. C. Douglas McConnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 164-207. See also an essay by Mark Chan that, even though not pertaining to the SWM, outlines characteristics of postmodernism that are clearly discernible in SWM constructions. Mark L. Y. Chan, "Following Jesus as the Truth: Postmodernity and the Challenges of Relativism," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31:4 (October 2007): 306-319.

¹⁰⁰ DeBernardi found that the practices of Wagner and colleagues were "strikingly congruent with the practices of shamanistic exorcism" where McCloud felt that Third Wave literature has more in common with TV shows than the Bible. De Rogatis pointed out the "striking resemblance to palmistry" in Ida Mae Hammond's vision from God about the true nature of schizophrenia. McCloud, *American Possessions*, 37-38, 43; DeBernardi, "Spiritual Warfare and Territorial Spirits," 72; Amy DeRogatis, "'Born Again Is a Sexual Term': Demons, STDs, and God's Healing Sperm," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77:2 (June 2009): 290.

¹⁰¹ For example, McCloud interprets Chuck Pierce's advice to destroy family heirlooms (harbouring demons due to generational curses) as standing in the spaces ("spatial limbos") between modern and late-modern identities: "As moderns, they recognize the self as inherently tied to family, community and place. But, as late moderns, they insist on the possibility of loosening those ascriptions." Sean McCloud, "Mapping the Spatial Limbos of Spiritual Warfare: Haunted Houses, Defiled Land and the Horrors of History," *Material Religion* 9:2 (1 June 2013): 181, and see Pierce, *Ridding Your Home*, 48.

¹⁰² DeRogatis, "Born Again Is a Sexual Term," 290.

¹⁰³ In a discussion of Christian political activism, sociologist William Thompson made a comment on this tendency in academic studies that is also germane to interpretations of SWM ideology: "Those who ignore moral codes as value and norm defining belief systems and an impetus to motivation in their own right, and disregard faith in favour of alleged secular motives, are reducing moral positions to less than a justification, to the level of mere rhetoric masking the 'real' sociological factors. That amounts to promoting a latent function to a motivational force, and is an ideological position rather than a sociological observation." Thompson, "Charismatic Politics," 168.

political fallout following Italy's 1861 unification, the rising power of the mafia, and mass immigration to America.¹⁰⁴

Although many secular scholars missed accounting for the importance of faith and scripture, nevertheless others accurately captured at least some significant elements that were not necessarily built into the thinking of theologians and biblical scholars who tackled the same subject. Sean McCloud, a religious studies scholar, argued for a convergence of three themes in the "Third Wave Evangelical Imaginary": consumerism, the therapeutic, and "haunting." Haunting is a trope suggesting that demons symbolize the past that still haunts the present: spirits of history, family, community, or institutions that Americans still desire, fear, or feel regret for.¹⁰⁵ With some justification, he saw Wagner and his colleagues as reflecting larger trends in American religion and culture. Other interpretations also contained a degree of validity in detecting attempts to revive conceptions of American Manifest Destiny in the face of imminent decline or otherwise to merely reflect the American worldview.¹⁰⁶ One anthropologist described the harm brought to a community through SWM interaction with its people. In his study of a community in Papua New Guinea, Dan Jorgenson recounted the brief visit of an American evangelist representing "Operation Joshua" whose intent ostensibly was to break the power of the ruling territorial spirits in the area. Jorgenson's perception was that the attempt to eradicate sorcery in the village may have actually given it larger prominence in local life.¹⁰⁷ Fallout from the visit, in which elements of the prosperity gospel had been introduced, led to the creation of scapegoat figures among the villagers accused of sorcery when promised riches failed to materialize.¹⁰⁸ Jorgenson further noted that no attempt was made to establish a mission or church organisation.¹⁰⁹ From the perspective of Tibetan

¹⁰⁴ Nancy Ann Watanabe, "Italian-American Ethos in the Post-Capra Novel: Peretti's *This Present Darkness* and Trigiani's *The Queen of the Big Time*," *Italian Americana* 30:2 (Summer 2012): 178-182.

¹⁰⁵ McCloud, *American Possessions*, 3-4. See also McCloud, "Mapping the Spatial Limbos," 166-185.

¹⁰⁶ Marshall, "Destroying arguments," 101-102. Holvast claims the same: Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," 208-216.

¹⁰⁷ Dan Jorgensen, "Third Wave Evangelism and the Politics of the Global in Papua New Guinea: Spiritual Warfare and the Recreation of Place in Telefolmin," *Oceania* 75:4 (September 2005): 459n30. In a similar vein, Shorter drew attention to the problematic aspects of forcing a dualistic scheme of good versus evil on beliefs in particular spirits in some cultures, thereby demonizing them and changing the character of the association. Aylward Shorter, "Spirit Possession and Christian Healing in Tanzania," *African Affairs* 79:314 (January 1980):48-49.

¹⁰⁸ Jorgensen, "Third Wave Evangelism," 454, 456.

¹⁰⁹ Jorgensen, "Third Wave Evangelism," 456. Jorgenson's account with its disconcerting results can be compared to Holvast's account of a visit to his own mission region of Mali. Holvast, "Spiritual Mapping," xi-xiii.

Buddhism, religious studies scholar Laura Harrington observed that SWM misconceptions about the Dalai Lama's activities and religious ceremonies are based on a fear of competing religious infiltration and colonization of American society in the face of its own dominionist intentions for the same.¹¹⁰ Although Harrington did not fully grasp some of the nuances of SWM development, the essence of her argument correctly identified the inherent consequences of globalization, particularly where faith systems cross paths and perceived threats emerge due to misapprehensions and *a priori* assumptions.¹¹¹

As the Satanic Panic faded, the SWM did not retain its prominence in overall public consciousness and some observers assumed it to be a passing fad.¹¹² Largely, the attention given to territorial spirits and mapping receded and the deliverance services that saw dozens of Christians writhing and screaming on the floor became less ubiquitous in charismatic circles.¹¹³ Instead, attention switched to different sources of enthusiasm such as the Toronto Blessing.¹¹⁴ However, the practice remained widespread as deliverance from demons sometimes routinised to the point of becoming casual and momentary prayer. Wagner himself moved on from spiritual warfare, joining with Cindy Jacobs in a new focus on apostles and prophets.¹¹⁵ The successor to his ministry, Chuck Pierce, and Wagner's young protégée, Rebecca Greenwood, published further books on the topic but their material was largely a replication of Wagner's.¹¹⁶ Charles Kraft's concentration on deliverance from individuals evolved into inner healing ministry, John Dawson's focus moved to the wrongs done to indigenous people, and George Otis reoriented towards his journalistic and storytelling

¹¹⁰ Harrington, "Exorcising the Mandala," 147-171.

¹¹¹ Harrington (incorrectly) views the Lausanne Movement as the originator of the SWM. Harrington, "Exorcising the Mandala," 157-158.

¹¹² Collins, *Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry*, 196-197.

¹¹³ SWM-style demon-deliverance services or people praying away territorial demons are still found among groups who are less visible because they tend to be on the periphery of gradually routinising charismatic churches. However, the viewing statistics for some of Ana Méndez's *YouTube* videos can rival those of more mainstream Christian material, with comments from viewers substantially expressing positive responses. This indicates that the survival of the more extreme activities should not be underestimated.

¹¹⁴ The physical manifestations of the Toronto Blessing were remarkably similar to those supposedly under the influence of demons; a casual onlooker would be hard-pressed to tell the difference. See for example the young man seemingly fitting at the foot of a stage where Bethel missionary Heidi Baker repeatedly calls for more of the Holy Spirit to move on him. A detached observer would not be able to tell if he was having an extreme emotional response or experiencing what some would claim as demonic or others as the power of the Holy Spirit. (Some controlled movements rule out the possibility of epileptic seizure.) See Lynda Kuni, "Heidi Baker @ Bethel Redding." *YouTube*, 9 October 2014 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQHsgY5EzVc&t=14s>> (24 February 2020).

¹¹⁵ See his comment in Wagner, "Strategic-Level Deliverance Model," in Beilby, *Four Views*, 173.

¹¹⁶ Pierce's contribution will be examined more closely in the next section.

interests. The stream of published books continued as other authors jumped on an already flagging bandwagon; a feature of many was that they made fewer claims of scriptural authority and increasingly resembled fantastical fairy tales. Gradually mainstream evangelical Christians became less aware of actively promoted spiritual warfare activities. However, the ideas and beliefs that the SWM bequeathed to the Church body remain important and so the following section summarizes and evaluates the legacy passed on to future generations.

Spiritual Warfare: Summary and Conclusions

Comprehending the veridicality of the SWM argument helps to clarify whether its legacy is non-threatening or deleterious to the spiritual maturity and growth of the Church. To formulate an idea of what this legacy might be, it has been necessary to take a close look at not only the claims and activities of the SWM but also at the sources that influenced their thinking. This study has no interest in arguing the reality of demons or how they act upon humans. Nor is it concerned to “prove” truth or falsity in SWM claims.¹¹⁷ However, assessing the integrity of the SWM doctrinal foundations and arguments remains important as this helps us situate their proximity to the propositions of scripture. It also helps us identify the messages that lie beneath the arguments, with their relative importance to Christian belief. Therefore, over the past four chapters I have drawn from several disciplines to see what can be gleaned about the robustness of the argument.

In historical analysis, we have seen that the sources described as influential by the SWM writers themselves are not the same as those drawn on by theologians working within traditional spheres. Rather these sources devised their own theories based on faulty exegesis, eisegesis, and reliance on personal emotions or experience (Penn-Lewis), dreams and purported revelations resulting in outlandish notions about demons and patently incorrect understanding of mental illness (Hammond), and *a priori* assumptions that compromised the data gathered from hurting people (Koch).¹¹⁸ The second generation of writers (Unger,

¹¹⁷ It is not possible to determine how much genuine possession the SWM deliverance ministers encountered; no definitive statement on this can be made without being presumptuous.

¹¹⁸ Commentators have pointed to the importance of historical influences such as the Latter Rain revival, William Branham, Derek Prince, Don Basham, Oral Roberts, or others. For reasons of space, my focus here is on the influences that the SWM writers themselves name, although historical lines of personal connections are also important to note, for example, William Branham—Ern Baxter—Paul Cain—John Wimber. Personal connections as a means of transmission of ideas will be further noted in later chapters. See Walker, “The Devil You Think You Know,” 90; and Hunt, “Deliverance,” 10-13.

Bubeck, Dickason) operated from a more solid foundation of theological training yet relied so heavily on sources such as Koch, or on other potentially unreliable anecdotal accounts, that their own arguments became compromised.

The theological claims of the SWM are weak and lack scriptural backing with strong evidence of mythologization. Events and activities were misrepresented or even falsified, and no distinctions were made between verifiable history and fiction.¹¹⁹ The claims in the SWM literature of direct revelation and personal experience are not verifiable. However, we can weigh their integrity by means of their relative position within the wider picture, not arriving at a conclusion, but forming an overall impression. What we can say with certainty is that scripture became side-lined in favour of direct revelation and that the two-thousand-year tradition of a worked-out Christian theology has been relegated to the notion of “old wineskins.”

In academic literature that focuses on the SWM or some aspects of its theology, critique has usually come from biblical scholars or theologians and has centred on issues of biblical exegesis or hermeneutics in relation to territorial spirits. A handful of secular scholars also have commented on the SWM, usually in terms of where it sits in relation to societal contexts. Even though most theologically-oriented scholars have seen significant flaws in the SWM argument, no real consensus can be reached because the Bible has so little to say about demonology. Simply there is no agreed point of explanation against which to assess the SWM. In other words, the SWM stepped into a gap that Christian theology had not yet adequately filled and furthermore, to a significant degree, had ignored and left open for popular speculation. It is not my role to determine why this may have happened, but one question has emerged that neither the SWM nor its critics seem to have addressed with serious intent: *Why* does scripture have so little to say about the issue of demons and demonology?¹²⁰

Specifically, sources from non-theological disciplines have been helpful to assist with developing a multi-faceted lens through which to view the SWM. They serve as a reminder

¹¹⁹ This runs counter to the views of those who hold that it is illegitimate to blur boundaries between falsehood and truth when the gospel of Jesus is proclaimed. Chan, “Following Jesus as the Truth,” 313.

¹²⁰ One hint comes from Walker, who suggests the dearth of information in the Bible about the devil is “a signal to us not to attempt to know more.” Walker, “The Devil You Think You Know,” 97.

that too narrow a focus can lead to missing important information relevant to the topic. Psychological sources describe how schemas in the sub-conscious can impact the way humans behave in certain situations. Schemas acquire greater significance especially in view of the discussion on the power of expectancy to confirm belief.¹²¹ Overall, most of the SWM argument rested on the principle of confirmation bias.¹²² Studies in folklore are useful to help us understand the origins, purpose, meaning, and function of folk mythologies. Religious studies scholars have suggested that SWM views might be based on responses to perceived threats from foreign (and misunderstood) belief systems. Oral history experts have contributed to understanding about the pitfalls in accurate transmission of historical information. In addition, consideration of the SWM small-group context reveals dynamics akin to “hothouse” fermentation of ideas that have chosen a self-referential approach with little reflection of external erudition. The attendant difficulties of this closed environment include lack of accountability, the tendency to generate excitement and enthusiasm to the detriment of rational and sober assessment, and an unbalanced perception of the need to stay on the “cutting edge” of new ideas.

So far, the strategies of persuasion that were employed to convince readers of the SWM literature have been alluded to contextually. To summarise, some specific discursive strategies included an “us versus them” approach, over-reliance on anecdotal evidence to bolster weak theory, assertion of authoritative voice, and redefining vocabulary to recreate meaning.¹²³ Viewing their argumentation schemes through the lens of logic, we have seen also that they employed a number of fallacious strategies, some specifically in arguing the

¹²¹ See Keener for comments on this with citations relevant to the exploration of these issues. Keener, “Crooked Spirits,” 351-352. Although there is no space to explore this further, Keener also made a noteworthy comment that those weighing the issue of demons should consider. In discussing some possible alternative reasons for the exhibition of possession behaviours (for example, marginalised people who have no other socially sanctioned outlets for expressing particular emotions), Keener wrote: “Susceptibility does not necessarily explain etiology, and cases of socially generated possession need not rule out genuine demonic activity that originally informed cultural models.” Keener, “Crooked Spirits,” 52. In a provocative (but somewhat flawed) essay, Crooks argued that universal narratives of possession in human memory, regardless of cultural, societal, or religious differences, carries implications that challenge present-day dismissals of demonic presence. Mark Crooks, “On the Psychology of Demon Possession: The Occult Personality,” *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 39:4 (Autumn 2018): 257-344.

¹²² Constructing a theory on the basis of skewed data and tendentious argument.

¹²³ One further technique was to imply widespread acceptance of SWM propositions: “It is commonly agreed that demons can and do attach themselves to objects, to house or other buildings, to animals and to people,” or “Skilled analysts and prophets alike are affirming that the decade of the ’90s is shaping up as an arena for the greatest outpouring of spiritual power in at least living memory if not in all of Christian history.” Wagner, “Introduction,” 5, and “Territorial Spirits,” in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 76.

case for the demonization of Christians and others as part of a repeating pattern throughout their material. For example, Fred Dickason wrote (and was quoted by Kraft):

The burden of proof lies with those who deny that Christians can be demonized. They must adduce clinical evidence that clearly eliminates any possibility in any case, past or present, that a believer can have a demon. In the very nature of the case, this is impossible. Further, we must note that those who deny that Christians can be demonized generally are those who have not had counseling experience with the demonized. Their stance is largely theoretical.¹²⁴

Dickason's attempt to shift the burden of proof sits alongside other fallacious arguments such as syllogisms constructed by Murphy and Dickason (see Chapter 4, n171), Wagner's persistent misrepresentation of expert authorities to bolster his case, or the appeal to false authorities (circular citing of other SWM proponents).¹²⁵ As well, Kraft in particular relied on *ad hominem* responses to his critics.¹²⁶ The intent here is not to demonstrate how the fallacious arguments of SWM writers undermine or weaken their case (although they do). Rather the concern lies with how these strategies can be used to convince readers that their case rests on solid logic when in fact it does not.

Further to this, the final comment to make in this section is to outline the legacy bequeathed to Christians who read the SWM literature or otherwise adhered to the doctrines. It grew out of the strategies described in the chapters above; a number of them were already discernible in the S&W as outlined earlier. This legacy was seen as a serious issue for some critics of the SWM. Robert Priest commented: "Those who learn the new epistemology will have learned a method for continuing to generate new truths about spiritual matters of all sorts—truths not learned from Scripture."¹²⁷ There were two types of bequest: epistemological and theological. In epistemological terms, SWM writers modelled and

¹²⁴ Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 175-176; Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*, 66.

¹²⁵ Some philosophers posit that *argumentum ad ignorantiam* is not necessarily fallacious. However, I would argue that Dickason's (*onus probandi*) argument as a "reversal of burden of proof" is indeed fallacious on several grounds: it presents a false dilemma (you can't know about demons unless you have direct experience with them), it does not achieve epistemic closure (due to failure against the "depth-of-search" premise) and it has failed to engage with the "rules" for critical discussion. See Douglas Walton, "Rules for Reasoning from Knowledge and Lack of Knowledge." *Philosophia* 34:3 (November 2006), 355-376.

¹²⁶ See for example multiple instances throughout Kraft's response to the criticisms from Priest, Campbell and Mullen in Kraft, "'Christian Animism' or God-Given Authority?" in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*. Wagner also employed "straw man" arguments as will be noted in a later chapter.

¹²⁷ Robert J. Priest, "Spiritual Warfare, Epistemology, and the Missiological Community," in *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics*, ed. C. Douglas McConnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 141. On the other hand, Arnold viewed the issue as a peripheral doctrinal issue that was merely concerned with strategy, although he did admit it was divisive. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions*, 196-197.

encouraged their readers to accept information at face value and implied that questioning was not a godly way to approach what they were being taught.¹²⁸ They also conveyed an esoteric and authoritative voice that trained readers into dependence on a small number of specific “experts” who could guide their readers into truth. Additionally, focus on personal experience and feelings as the measure of reality became of primary value. The theological inheritance passed on to successive generations saw the importance of scripture subside alongside weakened attention to God’s sovereignty or the work of the cross. Perhaps the most noticeable feature was the increase of human agency in matters related to the spiritual realms. By no means did the SWM carry sole responsibility for these elements gaining momentum in Christian thinking. It is more likely the movement was symptomatic of something that was emerging, largely unnoticed, in sectors of the wider church body. But during its peak period in the consciousness of Christians the SWM was the most notable and proactive promoter of these concepts. As further discussion will indicate, it proved to be an important link in the process of shifting Christian beliefs as the twenty-first century arrived.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Wagner, “Revival Power,” in *The Rising Revival*, 9. “Some Argentine leaders ... have chosen to be spectators (and critics) rather than participants. My own inclination is to accept revival reports more or less at face value without subjecting them to my own critical evaluation.”

¹²⁹ This is not to say that the SWM has significantly faded. Books advising Christians how to rid themselves of their demons are still produced by best-selling authors. See for example, John Eckhardt, *Deliverance and Spiritual Warfare Manual* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2014). This book is essentially a compilation and re-working of SWM material from the Hammonds (and Derek Prince) forward.

Chapter 7: Apostles, Prophets, and the New Apostolic Reformation

In a 2006 book, Peter Wagner made a bold statement about two Apostolic Ages: one that was past and a second that began around the year 2001. Without providing further information, he wrote: “The First Apostolic Age lasted for another 200 years *after* the first of the New Testament apostles concluded their ministry.”¹ The end of this first Apostolic Age is likely a reference to either Constantine’s conversion or his Edict of Milan, an event that Wagner and his associates repeatedly described as a disaster because it drove the Church into the “Dark Ages.” This is all we know about Wagner’s view of the “First Apostolic Age” as he did not explain further in his literature. Neither did he provide more detailed information on why 2001 signalled the arrival of the Second Apostolic Age, although it appears that church growth in specific regions and his own interpretation of their defining characteristics led him to deduce its commencement.²

Since 1998, Wagner had been publishing books on apostles and prophets and what he labelled the “New Apostolic Reformation” (NAR). His new interest seemed a considerable leap away from his preoccupation with territorial spirits and unseating the Queen of Heaven. However, transition in his thinking had developed as he became the recipient of personal prophecies and he increasingly gave his attention to claims of God’s directives regarding church leadership. The doctrine of apostles and prophets, those who would lead the Church in the battle against demonic forces, evolved into a phenomenon that continues to gain momentum at this time of writing. Because the themes of this and subsequent chapters are of a contemporary nature, the approach will be not only historical but also will examine their current presentations.

¹ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 6-7. Italics his. Wagner was never clear or detailed in his historical explanations but given that he acknowledged Bill Hamon’s influence it is possible that his view derives from this source. Hamon outlines in detail his rationale for Constantine’s responsibility in pushing the Church into apostasy; see Bill Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (Point Washington, FL: Christian International Publishers, 1981), 87-91. For examples of the view of Constantine’s impact, see Pierce, *The Future War of the Church*, 194; Wagner, *Dominion!*, 40, 43-45; Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, 32.

² Wagner specifically identified “African Independent Churches,” “Chinese House Churches,” “Latin American Grassroots Churches,” and “The U.S. Independent Charismatic Movement” as the indicators of the new Age. While he admitted they do not all employ the term “apostolic,” he asserted that they are apostolic in nature therefore representative of the “Second Apostolic Age.” Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 7-9, also see n4 below.

The New Apostolic Reformation

The identity of Peter Wagner is closely tied to the NAR. He coined the term, he wrote the books that defined it, and he organised the events and organisations that promoted it. As was his style, he represented himself as an observer before ranking his status within the NAR as one of its most significant innovators and leaders. His (often-repeated) foundational statement of definition claimed that the NAR had a history that preceded him, although later he declared himself not only an apostle, but a type of apostle-to-the-apostles as he established organisational structures and became the chief NAR spokesperson.³ His description of the NAR covered a lot of ground:

The New Apostolic Reformation is an extraordinary work of God that is changing the shape of Protestant Christianity around the world. For some 500 years, Christian churches have largely functioned within traditional denominational structures of one kind or another. Particularly beginning in the 1990s, but having roots going back for more than a century, new forms and operational procedures have been emerging in areas such as local church government, interchurch relationships, financing, evangelism, missions, prayer, worship, leadership selection and training, the role of supernatural power, prophecy and other important aspects of church life. Some of these changes are being seen within denominations themselves, but for the most part, they are taking the form of loosely structured apostolic networks. In virtually every region of the world, as Philip Jenkins has documented, these new apostolic churches constitute the fastest-growing and most influential segment of Christianity.⁴

Furthermore, he declared, the new “wineskins” of the twenty-first century, the new apostolic churches, are “*at least as radical as those of the Protestant Reformation almost 500 years ago.*”⁵ For Wagner, this was “one of the most epochal changes in the structure of the Church

³ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 218, 276. Bill Hamon named those he viewed as the pioneers and propagators of the restoration as himself, Peter Wagner, Rick Joyner, Cindy Jacobs, and popular author John Eckhardt. He claimed he had the original vision for the restoration of apostles but Wagner as theologian was the writer and the one who identified the apostolic functions. Hamon wrote that the two of them “worked together like Martin Luther and John Calvin.” Bill Hamon, *The Eternal Church*, rev. ed. (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2003), 280. The primary difference between the two editions of Hamon’s book is the addition of a chapter on Apostles and Prophets in the 2003 edition; material cited from the 1981 book was retained in the later version unless otherwise indicated.

⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 213. Although Wagner cites Jenkins’ 2002 work on global Christianity, Jenkins did not have Wagner’s definition of apostolic churches in mind during his discussion of the growth in charismatic Christianity in the “Global South” regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, nor does he discuss conceptions of the “apostolic.” In fact, Jenkins warned of a “trap”: “The idea that Southern churches are living in something like a renewed apostolic age inspires nothing short of awe, and it would be easy to write of all these developments in a thoroughly supernatural, even credulous, way ... I am in no position to affirm or deny that miraculous quality, but solid secular reasons also go far in explaining the character of the rising churches.” Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 135.

⁵ Wagner, “The New Apostolic Reformation,” in *The New Apostolic Churches*, 18. Italics Wagner’s.

that has ever been recorded.”⁶ In his definition of the NAR, he alluded to the changes wrought through the movements we have already examined: church growth, the S&W, and the SWM. Now, with church recognition of the offices of apostles and prophets, a reformation as significant as Martin Luther’s was unfolding.

How accurate were Wagner’s claims and what was their significance? Due to lack of clarity in the literature, the heavily used term “Third Wave” needs to be defined in terms of its relationship to “NAR.” In *World Christian Trends AD 30-AD 2200*, statisticians David Barrett and Todd Johnson explained there was indeed an eruption of renewal “waves” in the twentieth century: the Pentecostal Renewal, followed by the Charismatic Renewal, and finally a third wave: the Neocharismatic Renewal.⁷ In their complex account of groupings, they noted the development of “Independents” who comprise churches that have stepped away from denominationalism.⁸ Although they explained more than one typology, they claimed that the tendency among Independents is to seek experiences of the gifts and charismata of the Holy Spirit.⁹ Wagner’s view of three waves concurred with Barrett’s and Johnson’s. However, not all saw the Third Wave as a concrete reality. Pentecostal theologian Vinson Synan and others stated that an organized and well-defined third wave actually failed to materialize.”¹⁰

The numbers asserted for the Third Wave are significant. In *World Christian Trends* Barrett defined 85% of all Independents as Third-Wavers (synonymously Neocharismatics) and in *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2001) he numbered them 295 million individuals, the

⁶ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 6.

⁷ Barrett, *World Christian Trends*, 3. The statisticians projected their figures into the future but Wagner tended to treat these as definitive.

⁸ Note that the material in *World Christian Encyclopedia* and *World Christian Trends*, while certainly a comprehensive and useful study of Christian statistics, nevertheless betrays at times inconsistencies, needless complexities and a level of subjectivity that colours the text. For example, at one point the editors document the “chaotic side of Independency, or fragmentation run riot without the saving grace of charismatic manifestations.” Barrett, *World Christian Trends*, 307.

⁹ Barrett, *World Christian Trends*, 293, 298.

¹⁰ Synan, *Century of the Holy Spirit*, 359, 378. Van der Meer likewise disputes the existence of the Third Wave on the grounds that the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second experience is not necessarily held to rigidly in Pentecostal circles and therefore there is little to distinguish the Third Wave from Pentecostalism or the charismatic movement. Van der Meer, “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner,” 77-78n49. Wagner claimed to have coined the term “Third Wave” during a media interview in 1983. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 134.

bulk of whom live in Latin America, Asia, or Africa.¹¹ In Wagner's teaching, the numbers acquired new dimensions. Claiming Barrett as his source, he listed 386 million adherents (20% of all affiliated Christians worldwide), based on figures from *World Christian Trends*.¹² However, to arrive at this figure he tied one synonym for the Independent churches (Neo-Apostolic) to his definition of the NAR, even though not all Independents corresponded to this characterization.¹³ By 2008, he had revised the numbers of NAR adherents to 432 million and claimed that projections indicate an increase to almost 50 percent of non-Catholic Christianity by 2025.¹⁴

In 1988, Wagner's explanations for the Third Wave were imprecise: "The Holy Spirit is ministering in the same miraculous way but with a different flavor."¹⁵ Elsewhere, without clearly stating why, he noted the Third Wave comprised those who have chosen not to be identified with the first two.¹⁶ He also differentiated the typical "spiritual experience" of the

¹¹ Barrett, *World Christian Trends*, 298, 300; David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson, eds, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19. Note that there are some confusing (and unexplained) discrepancies in figures between the two 2001 publications by the same authors: *World Christian Trends* and *World Christian Encyclopedia*. See for example Table 6-8 on page 302 in the former compared with Global Diagram 5 on page 10 in the latter. I have chosen to work mainly from the material in *World Christian Trends AD30-AD 2200* because the interpretative nature of the accompanying text better illuminates the issues considered here. Academic responses to Barrett's research have ranged from enthusiastic endorsement to criticisms of cultural or racial bias, confusing labels, groupings, or definitions, hidden ecclesiological agendas, and lack of clarity about how some figures were obtained or evaluated. However, with some exceptions, the overall data appears to correlate reasonably well with other similar databases. See Christopher Brennan, "Rearranging Their Prejudices: The *World Christian Encyclopedia* as a Case Study of Bias in Reference Books," *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 57 (2003): 54-58, Becky Hsu, et al., "Estimating the Religious Composition of All Nations: An Empirical Assessment of the World Christian Database," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47:4 (December 2008): 678-693; Melody Layton McMahon, "Librarians, Publishers, and Theological Reference Resources: A Way Forward," *Theological Librarianship* 2:1 (June 2009): 8-19; Damian Thompson, *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996), 143.

¹² Barrett, *World Christian Trends*, 4.

¹³ Barrett's "Neo-Apostolic" category refers to a wider group of Independents, a large percentage of which sit at considerable distance in doctrine or praxis from the NAR. For just one example, Marshall points out that while Nigerian pastors might practise spiritual warfare they do not necessarily endorse the NAR concepts of hierarchy, submission to apostolic leaders, or dominion theology. Furthermore, Rapture theology is dominant, which undermines NAR eschatological justifications. Barrett, *World Christian Trends*, 293, 296-300, 302; Ruth Marshall, "'Dealing with the Prince over Lagos': Pentecostal Arts of Citizenship," in *The Arts of Citizenship in African Cities: Infrastructures and Spaces of Belonging*, eds. Mamadou Diouf, and Rosalind Fredericks (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014), 102, 104. For Wagner's presentation of the statistics see Bruce Wilson, "C. Peter Wagner lectures on the New Apostolic Reformation," *YouTube*, 12 August 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHWyOz_SZCk> (11 September 2019), 02:14. Video footage was taken from session 4 of the Wagner Leadership Institute Course AP825 "Developing Structure for Apostolic Ministry," <<http://wagnerleadership.com/student/cart.htm>> (no longer accessible online).

¹⁴ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 22-23.

¹⁵ Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 18.

¹⁶ Wagner, "Third Wave," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 843-844. Note that in this dictionary entry Wagner indicated that Third Wave participants' desire was to demonstrate Holy Spirit power

first two waves from the “portal of entrance” into the third wave, which is ministry under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ The foremost themes in his book about the Third Wave concerned power in ministry and victory over demons so without a clear definition it is reasonable to assume that these two elements were, for Wagner at least, the key components of the Third Wave.¹⁸ However, in subsequent years, “Third Wave” quietly slipped out of the vocabulary in his books and by the time he published *Churchquake!* (1999) the term was fully supplanted by the “New Apostolic Reformation.” But his earlier terminology of the “Third Wave” can be viewed as synonymous with the later “NAR.”

Building on his perception of a third wave, the main element of progress in Wagner’s reckoning was the restoration of the apostles and prophets to their rightful offices in the church context. Only with this foundation could the Church become what God had intended it to be.¹⁹ Wagner’s interest in the prophetic began in the MC510 classroom where attendees would announce “prophetic revelations” (“words of knowledge”) about the physical needs of others present so that they could come forward for healing prayer.²⁰ He embraced prophecy fully after hearing about Paul Cain’s earthquake prediction as Wimber persuaded him over dinner one night, as well as reading a book by prophet Bill Hamon.²¹ But the decisive step in moving into practising the prophetic was through the influence of Cindy Jacobs, who trained Wagner, his wife, and their adult Sunday School class into how to exercise the gift.²²

“without disturbing the current philosophy of ministry governing their congregations” but his later stance signalled a shift in thinking as he repudiated denominationalism.

¹⁷ Wagner, “Third Wave,” 843-844.

¹⁸ One possible (undeclared) reason for Wagner’s eagerness to differentiate the Third Wave is because of his stance on demonization in Christians. In the context of relating his own move into the Third Wave he noted the opposite position taken by the Assemblies of God in denying the validity of the notion. However, he also implied that Pentecostal and charismatic teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit (and tongues as the authenticator) was the reason that he preferred not to be called a charismatic. Although he was vague on this issue, the general indication appears to have been that he thought that the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues was unnecessary for Third Wavers. Wagner, *How to Have a Healing Ministry*, 190; General Council of the Assemblies of God, “Can Born-Again Believers be Demon Possessed?”; Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, 18.

¹⁹ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 11; Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 19.

²⁰ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 128-129.

²¹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 192-193. Wagner was not very impressed after his first attendance at a Paul Cain meeting, noting that the prophet did “not perform well,” apparently because of jet lag. The book that convinced Wagner was Bill Hamon, *Prophets and Personal Prophecy* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1987).

²² Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 193. Little information is available publicly about the background of Cindy Jacobs. She describes herself as a pastor’s daughter who earned a college degree in music but has never discussed her biblical training or education. Published biographical information varies in its details, particularly

Wagner’s conviction about the role of apostles grew out of his thinking about the growth in Latin American, Asian, African and North American independent churches and his rejection of denominationalism, which he portrayed as disintegrating and hence requiring change. His viewpoint about the historical roots to the doctrine of apostles had God “opening doors” to the emergence of apostles just after WWII. He wrote that the movements known as Latter Rain, the Shepherding Movement, and others did not succeed in reforming the Church but he was in no doubt that God Himself had initiated these “glorious” apostolic movements led by true pioneers who made mistakes but still began to shape the new wineskins of today.²³ Their problem, Wagner asserted, was that these pioneers did not have their way opened adequately by intercessors and prophets. Finally, however, the Church began to recognise the office of apostle in the 1990s.²⁴ In 1993, he received a “clear, new assignment from God to raise apostolic ministry to the top of my personal agenda.”²⁵ The first step was to note the dramatic church growth in the regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, followed by linking this with growth in American independent charismatic churches, and to start enquiring into the reason for this obvious blessing of God on these churches.²⁶ When he applied his

in recounting her early relationship with God. See Cindy Jacobs, “About Mike and Cindy,” *Generals International*, n.d. <<https://www.generals.org/about-mike-and-cindy>> (26 September 2018); Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 21-22; Anonymous, “Cindy Jacobs: Experience the Supernatural,” *CBN*, n.d. <<https://www1.cbn.com/700club/cindy-jacobs-experience-supernatural>> (19 January 2020).

²³ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 13-14. Here Wagner appears to endorse the controversial Latter Rain and Shepherding movements (and others), a fact that his critics have not overlooked. Wagner elsewhere claimed to be “oblivious” of, in particular, the Shepherding movement, due to his preoccupation with other spheres of thought. He reinforced this claim by describing his “naïveté” in laying out authority lines to a group of prophets who reacted negatively because of their prior knowledge/experience of the Shepherding Movement. Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 93, 94. However, Bill Hamon placed a lot of weight on the Latter Rain, evidenced by extensive discussion in his 1981 book. He presented a contextually divorced interpretation of Heb 6:2 as indicating the six doctrines of Christ that were lost during the “Dark Ages” and that are now being restored to the Church in chronological order. He claimed that the Latter Rain movement restored the fourth doctrine of the sequence, the “laying on of hands” in 1950. Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 161-162, 238-268. In his 2003 revision of his book, he drew a comparison between the forty-year period from Moses’ desire to free his people to when he led them out of Egypt with the same between the birth of the Latter Rain movement (1948) and that of the Prophetic-Apostolic movement (1988). Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (2003), 270. Wagner and Hamon had a long collaboration and indications are that a lot of Wagner’s inspiration came from Hamon’s writings so there may be justification in critics’ claims that the apostles and prophets movements had their real roots in Latter Rain. For Hamon’s influence on Wagner see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 193, and throughout. For a detailed history of the Latter Rain Movement see Richard M. Riss, *Latter Rain* (Mississauga, Ontario: Honeycomb Visual Productions, 1987).

²⁴ The Restorationist movement in the United Kingdom also taught the doctrine of a new church order involving apostles and prophets and was already underway in the 1960s and 1970s. The UK movement initially connected with, then disengaged from, American counterparts, in particular Ern Baxter, a leader of the Shepherding movement. After going through seasons of crisis it gradually settled into paler shades of doctrinal apostleship than the NAR. For an overview of the UK movement, see Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom*, 31, 48, 67-70, 83-84, 85-93, 150-162, 170-172. Walker identifies the roots of Restorationism in the Irvingites, some individuals originally from Brethren assemblies, and classical Pentecostalism, 43.

²⁵ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 15.

²⁶ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 205.

questions about why God blesses some churches more than others (see Chapter 2), he decided that there were nine characteristics in the growing churches, of which the most radical was a new structure of authority.²⁷ These innovations were the reason God was blessing the growing churches. For Wagner, it came in the form of a revelation (not described) that apostolic leadership was the most significant.²⁸

Initially, the concept underlying Wagner's formulation of the NAR appeared to be neither particularly theological nor doctrinal. Rather, the core of his theoretical foundation sat with the *form* or structure of churches.²⁹ The form of churches is how ministries and church functions are designed and operated. He believed denominational churches are dysfunctional and their problems are caused by their structures: these are the causes of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in church life.³⁰ Therefore, the premise behind the emerging new reformation was the failure of denominations. He explained further: "The current reformation is not so much a reformation of *faith* (the essential theological principles of the Reformation are intact) but a reformation of *practice* ... This current reformation is not so much against corruption and apostasy as it is against irrelevance."³¹ His argument built on Donald Miller's assertion that all hope of reforming a "dying" style of Christianity has been abandoned due to the problems of routinisation, bureaucracy and the restraint of tradition.³² Wagner insisted that change *must* happen and further quoted Miller: "If Christianity is going to survive, it must continually reinvent itself, adapting its message to the members of each generation, along with the culture and the geographical setting."³³

Wagner described a list of "new forms and operational procedures" in churches that have emerged particularly since the 1990s.³⁴ These new ways characterized the apostolic

²⁷ 1) A new name, 2) new authority structure, 3) new leadership training, 4) new ministry focus, 5) new worship style, 6) new prayer forms, 7) new financing, 8) new outreach, 9) new power orientation. Wagner, "The New Apostolic Reformation," in *The New Apostolic Churches*, 18-25.

²⁸ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 206.

²⁹ The roots of the NAR emphasis on church structures can be discerned in Hamon's view of the separation of the spiritual church from the structural church that began with Constantine. Although it was never made explicit, this potentially explains Wagner's view of the NAR as integrating both spiritual and structural elements in the church (see next paragraph). See Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 87-91.

³⁰ This explanation was later amended to the "demonic spirit of religion" as the cause.

³¹ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 6, 36-37. Italics in the original.

³² Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism*, 11.

³³ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 18, quoting Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism*, 18.

³⁴ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 5.

churches that comprise the NAR. Although his list intermingled each element without distinction, they can be arranged into three categories: 1) Structural aspects: local church government, interchurch relationships, financing, and leadership selection and training; 2) Church activities: evangelism, missions, prayer, and worship; and 3) God's gifts: supernatural power and prophecy.³⁵ This is an indication that for Wagner, the practical aspects of organising a church were tied to spiritual experience: "Many strong emotions are intertwined with what is happening in this contemporary change of the ways of doing church. The manners in which we relate to God and in which we encourage others to relate to God delve deeply into our inner persons."³⁶ And while he anticipated opposition from "denominational executives" who might feel threatened by the changes during the "early adoption" phase of the NAR, he was sure "it will not last forever." Wagner was confident that there would follow "middle" and "late" adopters while the "nonadopters" would fade into the background, as did the Amish who resisted the controversial introduction of the horseless carriage.³⁷

The Rise of the Prophets

As interest in the roles of prophets and apostles began to emerge in the early 1980s, the prophets were the first to attract widespread attention.³⁸ In the previous chapter on S&W, we saw the influence that the Kansas City prophets had exerted over John Wimber before he discontinued his relationship with them. Wimber's friend and associate, pastor Tom Stipe, who eventually left the Vineyard over his unhappiness with the role of the prophets, described their approach:

The Prophets began to inform us that in the last days, the Lord was restoring the fivefold ministry of apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists to the church. We were challenged to accept the arrival of apostles and prophets because today's church already had plenty of teaching, pastoring, and evangelizing. The arrival of the prophets and apostles would lead to the world's last and greatest revival. The prophets

³⁵ As with much of his material, Wagner reproduces the explanatory paragraph that contains this list in multiple publications. In his biography he adds prophecy to the list. See Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 213.

³⁶ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 7.

³⁷ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 19. See also Kraft, "Contemporary Trends," 6, and Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 34, 58-59.

³⁸ Bill Hamon wrote that the Prophetic-Apostolic Movement was "birthed" 15 October 1988 during a conference for prophets in Florida: "A mighty anointing swept over me as I began to travail in spiritual birth ... This intensified in my spirit until I felt my soul was being torn out as we cried out in the travail of birth pangs. I almost physically passed out from the intensity of the anointing and spiritual birth pangs. Finally, my whole body felt "weak as water," as if my very life was going out of me. I crumpled to my knees and was immediately caught up in the Spirit. Then I saw a vision of God lifting me and many others to a higher realm." Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (2003), 269. Wagner endorsed the "birthing" date in his Foreword to the book.

revealed that we had been chosen as the people and the movement that would lead Christians into this final display of power in the last days.³⁹

In Wagner's telling, although he was aware of what was happening with the prophets in Vineyard circles, he was preoccupied with other concerns (spiritual warfare) at the time and therefore did not pay much attention to the details. However, the message of the prophets aligned well with Wagner's new interest. Although he seldom used the term "five-fold ministry" himself, their descriptions matched his conception of the NAR and especially the role of apostles and prophets.⁴⁰ In typical fashion he started organising, even though primarily he regarded himself as an apostle, not a prophet. At the behest of Cindy Jacobs, he took leadership of the "Apostolic Council for Prophetic Elders" (ACPE), established in 1999.⁴¹

In Wagner's paradigm, prophets must submit to apostles but the apostle relies on them as one source of God's revelation.⁴² However, the prophet's words are subject to an apostle's assessment of validity.⁴³ This is not a hierarchical arrangement, he insisted, but a procedural relationship.⁴⁴ The roles sometimes were conjoined, as can be seen in Wagner's two closest associates, Cindy Jacobs and Chuck Pierce.⁴⁵ Pierce's main occupation became prophecy although Wagner recorded that he also was one of three individuals who collaborated to establish and lead the International Coalition of Apostles (ICA), formed in 1999.⁴⁶ The relationship of these three was close-knit and although Wagner's public profile began to fade in the years leading up to his death in 2016, both of his associates have remained at the forefront of apostolic and prophetic ministries linked to the NAR.

³⁹ Tom Stipe, "Foreword," in Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, x.

⁴⁰ Wagner acknowledged the preference of others for the term "five-fold" but explained why he preferred to use other terms in Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 10-11.

⁴¹ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 122-124.

⁴² Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 92-96.

⁴³ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 102.

⁴⁴ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 92. Somewhat bemusingly, Wagner's baseball metaphor to explain the relationship had pitchers (apostles) and catchers (prophets) working together as a team, even though "when the game is over, the winning pitcher—not the winning catcher—is the individual who goes into the record books."

⁴⁵ Ché Ahn, "Introduction," in *The Reformer's Pledge*, compiled by Ché Ahn (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2010), 22. Note that even though Ahn claims it is rare, a dual apostle-prophet role appears to be relatively common with a number of the prophets published in *The Elijah List* also well-known as apostles. No explanation for this is offered in the literature.

⁴⁶ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 215. The names of Pierce and Jacobs appear in ICA membership lists up until 2010 when public access to the lists was removed.

As Pierce and Jacobs continued to ride the increasingly swelling prophetic wave, one leading channel of growth came through the establishment in 1997 of a new website that was devoted solely to prophecy, described by its founder as a type of “clearinghouse” for prophetic streams.⁴⁷ By 1999, almost 8,000 people had subscribed to the new online magazine.⁴⁸ In 2000, *The Elijah List* published 249 prophecies from eighty-six prophets.⁴⁹ In 2006 the website had more than 127,000 subscribers, and in 2020, subscriptions reached 240,000.⁵⁰ In 2020, *The Elijah List* published prophecies from 192 prophets who issued a total of 812 prophecies.⁵¹ The ten most frequently published prophets, among them Chuck Pierce and Cindy Jacobs, were authors of 208 (26%) of the total prophecies. The turnover of prophets appeared to be high: of the eighty-six published in 2000, only eleven (plus the publisher) were still being published in 2020.⁵² Although the proliferation of prophets and prophetic words seemed to have outstripped his ability to stay at the vanguard of the prophetic movement, nevertheless Wagner, along with Jacobs, Pierce, and a prophet named James Goll, continued to have influence by advising the publisher, Steve Shultz (who also published his own prophetic “words”), on which prophecies to promote.⁵³

The exponential growth of *The Elijah List* draws attention to the enormous appeal and capacity for influence that prophets developed in the late twentieth century and that continues to the present-day. Although the Elijah List claims to be the largest prophecy website in the USA, *Charisma*, the highly influential platform that distributes a variety of media resources, also contains a prominent prophecy component and many *Elijah List* prophets are also published by *Charisma*. *Charisma* announced readership of over half a million in 2009 and

⁴⁷ Gail Wood, “Web Site Feeds Growth of Prophetic Movement,” *CharismaNews*, 31 March 2006, <<https://www.charismamag.com/site-archives/218-peopleevents/news/1870-web-site-feeds-growth-of-prophetic-movement>> (9 April 2018).

⁴⁸ Steve Shultz, “Most Common Questions Asked About The Elijah List,” *The Elijah List*, 19 June 1999, <http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word/407> (25 November 2020).

⁴⁹ Data presented here was collected by a systematic survey of the website archives; information was compiled using an Excel spreadsheet.

⁵⁰ Wood, “Web Site Feeds Growth”; Steve Shultz, “How did you get started and who are you?” *The Elijah List*, n.d., <<https://www.elijahlist.com/ourhistory.html>> (23 November 2020).

⁵¹ 103 male, 89 female. The rapid proliferation of prophets has its parallels in the New Age movement. Hammer notes several aspects: huge growth in the numbers of those who channel messages (personal revelation), local profile for many with a wider profile for fewer (for examples pertinent here: Cindy Jacobs or Chuck Pierce) and a tendency to short-lived celebrity status. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 342.

⁵² One possible explanation for this comes from Christerson and Flory, who describe “the limited shelf life of over-the-top prophesying.” Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 129.

⁵³ Wood, “Web Site Feeds Growth”.

now claims millions per month.⁵⁴ In view of the enormous number of followers of these two platforms, several factors must be examined to understand the phenomenon: what constitutes prophecy's appeal, what do the prophets utter, and what issues arise from their approach to conveying the words of God?

The Appeal of Prophecy

In the quote above, Tom Stipe reported hearing the news that the Vineyard churches had been chosen by the prophets as the catalyst for the world's last and greatest revival. He went on to record how he felt in response to the news:

It all sounded downright intoxicating. After struggling with the daily duties of ministry and our fears of inadequacy, this was exactly what we wanted to hear. Being told that our struggles and sacrifices had made us special in God's eyes was a comfort in itself. We clung to the promise that spectacular things would follow the inauguration of this new move of God.⁵⁵

Furthermore, he noted, confirmation came through the prophets' uncanny ability to reveal details from each individual leader's personal history. As the "gift" of prophecy spread to Vineyard members, people began carrying around notebooks filled with predictions delivered by the prophets and they flocked for more at any opportunity.⁵⁶ This scenario was repeated in many other places.⁵⁷ At the National School of Prophets event in early 1999, Wagner wrote that a large number of the 3,000 participants were given personal prophecies.⁵⁸ The vineyard ran several conferences featuring the prophets, one of which ran twice with 5,000 registered for each.⁵⁹ Clearly there was a hunger for the prophetic among the congregants. As the prophets increased their rate of prophesying over all aspects of Vineyard pastors' lives and ministries, they also began to step directly into church administration matters, including

⁵⁴ *Charisma* Media Kit 2009; "About Us," *Charisma*, <<https://www.charismamag.com/about/about-us>> (accessed 25 November 2020).

⁵⁵ Stipe, "Foreword," in Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, x.

⁵⁶ Stipe, "Foreword," in Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, xii. A note about Hanegraaff's book for which Stipe wrote the Foreword: while the book is reasonably thorough, it is compromised in places by numerous issues that include incorrect facts, inflammatory language, and *ad hominem* attacks on some individuals. Stipe's account was not challenged over its veracity (most of what he wrote was confirmed by Jackson's own account), but rather for its association with Hanegraaff's book. Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 321; James A. Beverley, "Counterfeit Critique," review of *Counterfeit Revival*, by Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity Today* 41:10 (1 September 1997): 59-60.

⁵⁷ My personal recall of these times (persisting to the present day in some circles) was that it became routine, even at social gatherings, for a "prophet" or someone who considered themselves gifted in this area, to begin pronouncing oracles for the futures of those present, even over strangers they had just met.

⁵⁸ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 125.

⁵⁹ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 211.

directing staff and policy changes. Stipe wrote: “Then, instead of waiting for the prophets to call, the pastors began calling the prophets for predictions, instruction, and advice.”⁶⁰ In this way transactional relationships grew between prophets and petitioners. What the prophets offered was hope for the future, the excitement of anticipation, and a means to escape from the troubles of the present. In return, the eager respondents gifted the prophets status, power, and almost certainly wealth, as no gathering was unaccompanied by offerings taken to support the work of those who spoke with God’s voice.

What do the prophets utter?

One of the more remarkable features of the literature on prophecy and prophets is what is missing from the writers’ definitions and explanations. Among those promoting the “five-fold” ministry of apostles and prophets, none of the most prominent writers on the topic (Bill Hamon, Peter Wagner, or Mike Bickle), attempted biblical exegesis or engaged with theological conceptions of prophecy.⁶¹ They made no attempt to explain who God is, how humans can come to know God, or what are God’s priorities in relationship with people. Where scripture was cited, it was used illustratively, isolated from its context, and served the sole purpose of reinforcing their present-day messages. However, what they did discuss was the purpose and role of the prophets: this was expressed in terms of God’s immediate revelation. People with the gift of prophecy receive and communicate messages from God through divinely appointed utterance.⁶² Furthermore, they are “supposed to hear the voice of God better than average believers.”⁶³ Because they are specially commissioned to speak directly from God, they possess the right to say: “Thus saith the Lord.” What they speak is God’s “rhema” word and revelations of Christ’s mysteries. They speak new truths with new

⁶⁰ Stipe, “Foreword,” in Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, xi.

⁶¹ For reasons of space, many important personalities, threads of historical influence, or related streams of thought have received less mention in this thesis than they deserve. Three of these are William Branham/Latter Rain theology, the prophet Bob Jones, and Mike Bickle. For a reasonably balanced historical overview from Latter Rain to 1990 (Branham to Kansas City Prophets/Vineyard connection) see Stephen F. Cannon, “Old Wine in Old Wineskins – A Look at Kansas City Fellowship,” *Personal Freedom Outreach: The Quarterly Journal* 10:4 (1990), <<http://www.banner.org.uk/kcp/kcp-wineskins.html>> (30 September 2020), n.p. Cannon was a pastor involved in charismatic/Pentecostal circles who later withdrew due to his theological concerns.

⁶² Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 96.

⁶³ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 124.

divine authority.⁶⁴ However, the nature of these truths, and what mysteries of Christ remain to be revealed, was left unexplained.

In his book *Apostles and Prophets*, the only information that Wagner provided about what prophets declare pertained to his own experiences. His first example (of twelve) was about a stock market prediction that benefited his personal portfolio.⁶⁵ In his role as apostle (who determines the legitimacy of a prophecy, see below), he commented: “I evaluated that one pretty well.” The same prophet predicted another stock market move a year later. When this one proved wrong, Wagner felt he had misinterpreted the prophecy and his judgment was mistaken. Told in the context of illustrating the evaluative role of apostles, he seemed to imply that God issues stock market tips to individuals for their personal benefit. He provided eleven further examples of prophecies he received from his associates between 1990 and 2000:

“You are being called to help reshape the face of Christianity.”

“This is a God-ordained program! It is where God is moving right now!”

“[Your ministry] will widen far beyond what you and Doris have planned or anticipated.”

“‘The work that I’ve called you to do over the next 10 years,’ saith God, ‘will be more productive and more effective than all the rest of your life put together.’”

“Your financial affairs are in My hands, and I’m about to give you a better, different place.”

“[Wagner’s seminary will be] so big that you cannot imagine how big it is. For it is greater than anything you could ever dream of.”

“I’m going to give you strength, I’m going to give you an extended life, O man of God.”

“Peter, I sense the Lord moving those who were birthed and connected with John Wimber under you. You will father and promote their message until it is in its next level of fullness.”

“You will do it, so get ready!”

⁶⁴ Bill Hamon, *Apostles Prophets and the Coming Moves of God* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1997), 123-124.

⁶⁵ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 103.

[John Wimber, after his death, looking down from a balcony in the clouds] “He says, ‘Take the baton and run with it ... I give you a baton with which you must run and call forth the apostolic community.’”

“You are going to be a network of networks.”⁶⁶

In *Apostles and Prophets*, all we learn about what constitutes prophecy comes from these twelve examples. They were all directed at Wagner’s life, they all contained the message of great success, and they all provided encouragement for the future. This makes them personal, positive, and predictive. The prophecies were spoken with God’s voice, on God’s behalf, and also using the voice of the deceased John Wimber. The longer statements from which these examples were taken almost always used adjectives related to magnitude: greatest, powerfully, far beyond, more productive, more effective, more spacious, fullness, freshness, millions, and so on. A number of these prophecies provided prompts for Wagner to establish what the prophecy had predicted was going to happen, thereby becoming self-fulfilling. For example, one of the above-cited prophecies was from 1998, when Cindy Jacobs prophesied that God spoke about how God was going to establish a seminary in Colorado Springs, where the Wagners had built a house two years earlier. The Lord would gather leaders from around the world and make it greater than anything Wagner could dream of; Jacobs named the seminary as the Wagner Institute. Wagner records that such a thought had never entered his mind; nevertheless within a month he began planning for the establishment of the Wagner Leadership Institute (WLI) in Colorado Springs.⁶⁷ This self-fulfilling aspect of prophecy became a characteristic of many of the prophecies recorded in Wagner’s books.

However, history has demonstrated that most of the examples above eventually proved to be inaccurate or even false. The details within them included promises about several specific activities: the “AD2000 and Beyond” movement, the World Prayer Centre in Colorado Springs, and Wagner’s (implied) leadership of the Vineyard Movement following Wimber’s death. It appears unlikely that Wagner would have been considered for a leadership role in the Vineyard; certainly none was offered. “AD2000” suffered humiliation when 1,600 delegate visas for its culminating event in Jerusalem were refused by Israel, thereby causing the cancellation of the event. The World Prayer Centre in Colorado Springs was established

⁶⁶ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 108-109, 111,112,113-114, 115, 116, 119, 126-127.

⁶⁷ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 116-118.

but exited by the Wagners following conflict with co-founder Ted Haggard.⁶⁸ Wagner's Leadership Institute was established but eventually evolved in a way significantly at variance to the prophecies made by Jacobs. Although it started well, Wagner University, the current entity evolved from the original WLI, is today based out of a converted house in Rancho Cucamonga, California and offers non-accredited online courses, for a large sum of money.⁶⁹ Wagner never conceived that any of the prophecies were false; in fact he often touted their accuracy. However, despite his enthusiastic declamations, the issue of false prophecies requires examination, a topic we will examine shortly.

Given that those who wrote about prophecy provided no discourse about what prophets are mandated to say on God's behalf, all that can be gleaned on the topic is by examining their actual prophecies. Wagner's discussion in the year 2000 revealed the personal, predictive, and positive nature of the prophecies he received. And so what of the prophecies delivered twenty years later to the general Christian public? Has the trend perceivable in Wagner's narration continued after him or has the nature of prophecy changed? This becomes important as it ties into the prophets that influence not only Bethel church but also the millions of Christians in independent or even denominational churches worldwide today.

The Prophets of Today

The best platform for examining prophecy is *The Elijah List* because it is presented as the largest dedicated distributor of prophetic words. Sifting through hundreds of prophecies from *The Elijah List* demonstrates that they contain characteristic patterns.⁷⁰ In order to build a representative picture, my methodology was to analyse the first fifty *Elijah List* prophecies of 2020 (see Appendix B) before comparing them to random selections from previous years

⁶⁸ See Bialecki, "Apostolic Networks in the Third Wave," 23-32 for the history of leadership and Wagner's relationship with the Vineyard. Wagner held the view that he was to inherit Wimber's "mantle" and listed several prophecies to support this, one of which came from Chuck Pierce: Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 126. See analysis of the "collapse" of "AD2000 and Beyond" and other global evangelism plans in Barrett, *World Christian Trends*, 781-807, esp. 793. Note however that organizers viewed the overall project as an enormous success. Also see Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 227-229 for the history of the World Prayer Center.

⁶⁹ A "D.Min. in Apostolic Leadership and Applied Theology" costs USD\$34,800. All websites for international branches previously established under WLI (now renamed Wagner University) are now taken down or operated by other ministries, apart from a Malaysian branch housed in a church basement in Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

⁷⁰ Although the focus here is on *The Elijah List*, *Charisma Magazine* prophecies bear the same characteristics and feature many of the same prophets. The main difference is that *Charisma* consists of news, articles, editorial comment, and prophecies, where *The Elijah List* is prophecy only.

and the rest of the 2020 prophecies. The discussion in this section pertains wholly to these fifty prophecies. They were unsurprisingly oriented to predictions for the coming months; later in the year they shifted to other themes although their characteristics remained consistent. Some regular topics that did not appear in the first fifty nevertheless should be noted. For example, astrological themes, especially concerning “blood moons” (declared to be meaningful, especially when they occur in conjunction with Jewish holidays) also appear frequently in *Charisma*.⁷¹ Other regular themes include political agendas (promoting right-wing politics), or prophecies against social issues such as abortion or gay rights.

The Elijah List prophets declared their prophecies to be received through visions, dreams, or while they were in prayer.⁷² Two claimed to have personally visited heaven to receive their messages (Kevin Zadai, 11 January; Robin McMillan, 20 January).⁷³ Based on the consistency of language, imagery, and scriptural references used to support their declarations, they appeared to model themselves on (their perception of) OT prophets.⁷⁴ This does not mean that they extensively referenced these prophets or even demonstrated

⁷¹ Although not described in detail here, contemporary prophets demonstrate a preoccupation with blood moons. A catalyst for this can be found in their emphasis on Joel 2 (especially verses 28-31) to justify the outpouring of present-day prophecy. However, another stimulus potentially carries more weight and draws attention again to the power of fiction in influencing belief. In 1996, Hal Lindsey published a novel, “*Blood Moon*,” about prophecy. See Gribben, *Writing the Rapture*, 148-149 on how Lindsey’s book outlined an agenda for prophetic comment related to current political events, a key feature of today’s prophecy. See also Raymond Brown’s remarks on Col 2:8-23 (Paul’s polemic against false teaching and the issue of syncretism involving heavenly elements), comments that underscore the increasing distance between NT teaching and the activities of present-day prophets. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 604-608. For examples of blood moon prophecies see Barbie Breathitt, “The Heavens Declare the Glory of God,” 5 September 2017, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=18711> (24 May 2021); Faith Marie Baczko, “An Unprecedented Season of God’s Power: The Presence, The Ark and The Blood Moons,” 10 September 2015, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=15135> (24 May 2021); Rod Parsley, “Are the Red Blood Moons a Prophetic Blessing or a Blight?” *Charisma Magazine*, 2 June 2016, <<https://www.charismamag.com/spirit/prophecy/26337-are-the-red-blood-moons-a-prophetic-blight-or-blessing>> (28 July 2018); Ron Allen, “Unpacking the Meaning Behind This Month’s Super Blood Moon,” *Charisma Magazine*, 26 January 2018, <<https://www.charismamag.com/spirit/apologetics/35594-unpacking-the-meaning-behind-this-month-s-super-blood-moon>> (28 July 2018).

⁷² For ease of reading, each example is referenced in the text with only the prophet’s name and prophecy date in brackets. The full citations details (date, prophet name, prophecy title and web page address) for the first fifty 2020 prophecies are listed in Appendix B.

⁷³ Others claim the same in prophecies not specifically analysed here, as well as meeting and talking with angels or Jesus. Some claim they visit heaven “in the spirit” (see Appendix B), others specify their visit is bodily.

⁷⁴ For example, the frequently-used imagery of the lion roaring comes from Amos 3:7-8, quoted by three prophets in the first fifty of 2020: “Surely the Lord does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord has spoken; who can but prophesy?” (NRSV). Another indicator of modelling on OT prophecy is the tendency of some to prophesy with sign-acts, such as one prophet using her experience of being in labour before giving birth: *Christy Johnston*, “3 Strategies for Delivering the Promise,” *The Elijah List*, 19 April 2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=23547> (24 November 2020).

understanding of the purpose and meaning of OT prophecies. Elijah was the only prophet whose personal ministry was referenced (twenty instances) and the citations from OT prophetic books were always isolated from their context and regularly divorced from the biblical meaning.⁷⁵ For example, in Micah where the Lord gathers the remnant of Israel like a shepherd, one prophet declared:

I like how the KJV translation reads: “The breaker is come up before them...” (Micah 2:13). The Word of God tells us that the Lord is a breaker, the Lord is a fearsome warrior (Jeremiah 20:11). Let us be reminded that the Breaker is within us. It’s His sound that is being released in the earth through a prophetic company; it’s the sound of the breaker! (Jesse Shamp, 1 January).⁷⁶

In regard to which prophecies are chosen for transmission to the public, clues are available from the publishers. For example, the editor of *The Elijah List*, Steve Shultz, commented on how editorial decisions are made as prophecies are selected (“one in a hundred”). The preferred prophecies are those that are edifying and encouraging, although a warning prophecy is occasionally inserted.⁷⁷ He also noted in one of his own prophetic words that there are deliberate agendas in what *The Elijah List* publishes: “We have, on purpose, with forethought, CHOSEN to promote our pro-life President, Donald J. Trump, and we’ve chosen to promote our pro-Israel, pro-LIFE, and pro-religious freedom president.”⁷⁸ The strong implication here is that the most prominent vehicle for prophecy available to ordinary Christians is actually a device to promote particular theological and political agendas.⁷⁹ The theological agenda pertains to promoting the roles of apostles and prophets, dominion theology, and most particularly, promises of God’s grace and favour poured out on the lives of readers: their families, businesses, finances, and health. The political agenda of *The Elijah List* is mirrored in the content of *Charisma Magazine*, where the publisher, Stephen Strang, is

⁷⁵ The importance of the Elijah figure becomes clear in the chapter following on Dominionism.

⁷⁶ Note that taking motifs from scripture and re-interpreting them for illuminating other contexts is also found in both the OT and NT, for example, Matt 1:23 using the “young woman” motif from Isa 7:14. However, when considered in conjunction with the other problematic aspects of the prophecies examined here, it seems more likely that the re-imagining of motifs are the result of eisegetical approaches to scripture.

⁷⁷ Wood, “Web Site Feeds Growth”.

⁷⁸ Steve Shultz, “Crazy Right? But This Is SO TRUE!” *Elijah List*, 14 December 2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=24715> (29 December 2020). Capitalisation his.

⁷⁹ Of a total 1726 *Elijah List* web pages in 2020, 812 were prophecies, two were news items related to revival or COVID miracles and 912 (53%) were advertisements. While many were health- or wealth-related ads, the majority were endorsements or promotions for prophecy-related meetings, conferences, or products.

an outspoken supporter of former President Trump and where the themes of support for Israel and anti-abortion protest are prominent.⁸⁰

Of the 2020 first fifty prophecies in *The Elijah List*, only six focussed on topics other than the lives of the readers.⁸¹ Overwhelmingly, they were aimed at individuals, although the personal promises and predictions were somewhat unfocussed and vague. For example:

I declare that this shall be your best year yet; your best decade yet. You shall speedily and suddenly give birth to your breakthrough, your promise from God, your divine purpose in Jesus' name (Agnes Ebedi, 3 January).

God is releasing seeds of revelation to you that will produce blessings up to 100 times. These are coming in the form of business ideas, inventions, new jobs and more. This is a year to get out of debt and create financial blessings to bless the world. This is a year of financial turnaround for many people (Doug Addison, 8 January).

Doors of opportunity, filled with endless possibilities, await you. It is going to be your year to advance! (Melissa Pearce, 18 January).

God has been leading you into a position of authority for legacy. He has been guiding you in order that you might seize the land He gives you; it has been a repositioning in preparation for His glory" (Christy Johnston, 22 January).

In these personal prophecies, common secondary themes were forgetting what is past, increasing faith for miracles, removal of obstacles to success, promises of transition, declarations for boldness, wisdom or inheritance, revelation of hidden secrets, and the removal of barriers between heaven and earth. Other features included dream interpretation and the growing importance of children and women as prophets.

Aside from the forty-four prophecies for personal promises of blessings, the themes of the remaining six consisted of predictions of revival (in the church), a call for deliverance of the LGTBQ community (Lou Engle, 15 January), political themes (endorsing President Donald Trump, success of America against its enemies), and one prophecy that predicted the entire nation of Australia in 2020 would (literally, not metaphorically) be consumed by fire as a sign of the coming of Elijah:

⁸⁰ One theme that increasingly has come to infuse the literature, theology, and praxis of the prophets is strong support for Israel and a focus on Jewish festivals or important dates. This has connections to the modern Messianic Zionist movement and deserves closer examination that is not possible here.

⁸¹ See Appendix B for full citations. The titles are good indicators of their content.

In America, God is birthing the greatest Jesus People Movement of all time, with a bi-coastal revival crashing upon America. The Father is releasing the mantle of Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke upon an entire generation, using celebrities like Kanye West to offend the religious. Kanye will continue to pack out stadiums and be a sign and a wonder of how Jesus the Evangelist is swinging the sickle for harvest time (Joel 3:13). (Shara Chalmers, 7 January).⁸²

Look forward to another four years of President Trump in the White House; for even though the darkness has risen against him, the light and power of God is greater and Trump will WIN as He was chosen by God for this time! (Kat Kerr, 21 January 2020).

God says, “Don’t be fooled for I’m going to show you the strength and the power of what I am doing to raise you up even greater United States, that your enemies will begin to fear the name United States again” (Hank Kunneman, 7 January).

I felt the Lord tell me that there were further strikes that [recently assassinated] General Soleimani had been going to issue against Americans. He told me that this strike against the General was an intervention. I saw what would have happened if we hadn’t had this intervention. I saw many U.S. servicemen dead. It was going to be a bloodbath (Cindy Jacobs, 10 January).

Initially, I thought I was seeing a metaphor for the nation burning under the fire of revival, but the Lord corrected me saying, “No, no! The time is coming in the future when you will see this happening, where the whole nation will literally be burning. When you see this take place, it will be a sign that I am sending the spirit of Elijah.” (Adam Thompson, 7 January).⁸³

Human agency, and its associated power and authority are important to the themes of this thesis. Nineteen prophecies declared the theme of personal decree:

The Lord wants you to look your problems, circumstances, situations and issues in the face and command them in Jesus’ name to be removed ... when something is blocking your progress, advancement, breakthrough and blessing then Jesus said you should command (decree) it to get out of the way (Hakeem Collins, 1 January).

As we draw near as friends of God (Amos 3:7), we can actually move His heart, change His mind, wrestle with Him over nations, and release grace (Shara Chalmers, 7 January).

Within the repeated themes, some consistent characteristics emerged that provided a sense of homogeneity among prophets and their prophecies. These included the repeated

⁸² Kanye West is a well-known and erratically-behaved rapper who has sometimes claimed a Christian commitment.

⁸³ The Australian bush fire season was unprecedented from mid-2019 to mid-February 2020; this prophecy was issued just before heavy rain brought decline in the severity of fires. All fires were extinguished by early March 2020. Other singular predictions included a cure for AIDS in 2020, the conversion of 100,000 people from the LGBTQ community, a visit from God to media celebrity Kim Kardashian, and the arrival of the Third Great Awakening.

citation of particular biblical verses and commonly-used vocabulary (for example: breakthrough, decree, reset, restore, birth, advance, harvest, roar). Potentially, this appearance of continuity may be intended to show how God’s message is consistent, but also points to the cultural aspects of the genre among groups of prophets who referred to their prophetic relationships and networked associations, another means to supporting claims of authority. Most of the “prophetic” vocabulary was left undefined. The use of “roar” (thirty instances) and “lion” (twenty-seven instances) was defined by one prophet: “The lion and its roar are symbolic of prophetic ministry and prophets” (Helen Calder, 10 January), but usage of the same terms by others was not always consistent with this definition. Imagery from nature was widespread. Everyday items in the prophets’ environment (a door at the end of a hallway, an arrow on a fence, hygiene items in a hotel bathroom), all acquired symbolic meanings that were translated into prophecy. Scripture was quoted often by nearly all prophets, although typically it was in the service of reinforcing the prophetic message with little attention to the original meaning and displayed concordist tendencies. Verse numbers related to the year (for example, Exodus 20:20, 2 Chronicles 20:20, or John 20:20: fourteen instances), numbers, and dates (usually from the Hebraic calendar) frequently inspired prophecies:

The Hebrew calendar year is 5780, which is represented by the letter “peh,” meaning “mouth.” It is the 17th letter of the Jewish alphabet and symbolizes victory. It is through the mouth of the prophet that the personal and national word of the Lord is proclaimed ... Only every 100 years do the double numbers 1818, 1919 and 2020 appear. For God’s prophetic people, it will be a double-portion year (Is. 61:7). It will be a year of new beginnings. New times and purposes of God will be launched (Bill Hamon, 17 January 2020).⁸⁴

The number 20 symbolizes *expectancy*. Jacob waited 20 years for his wives and property. Israel waited 20 years for deliverance to come through Samson. Solomon waited 20 years for the completion of his building project. 2020 = 40. Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness. Moses was 40 days on the mount to receive the 10 commandments. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. Jesus was seen by His disciples for 40 days after His resurrection ... 2020 = 4! The number 4 is a number of “being”; it is the number that connects mind-body-spirit with the physical world of structure and organization. Four symbolizes the safety and security of home, as well as stability and strength on a solid foundation of values and beliefs. Are we ready for a number 4 year or what? (Marsha Burns, 2 January 2020).⁸⁵

⁸⁴ See Appendix B for an example of numbers from a football game being used prophetically; a common methodology of one of the most prominent prophets, Johnny Enlow.

⁸⁵ The manipulation of numbers is also found in predecessors to the prophets. In 1985, five-fold ministry and “Kingdom Now” preacher Earl Paulk wrote that the number of those gathered in the upper room at Pentecost

A further characteristic was frequent reinforcement and promotion of the prophets' authority to comment:

And remember that the Word of God says that when you "Receive a prophet in the name of a prophet" you WILL RECEIVE "A prophet's reward" which is important revelation THAT YOU NEED – for yourself, for your business and for your family. God, who sees all, will reward you with revelation in this coming year when He sees you receiving His prophets! (Steve Shultz, 15 January 2020).

I have received several prophecies from major prophets that I would have the anointing like Caleb for possessing my promised inheritance from Christ ... 2020 is the year that I will begin possessing my full inheritance in Christ. (Bill Hamon, 17 January 2020).

Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.'" (Cindy Jacobs, 21 January 2020).

This, then, is an overview of what comprises the most commonly distributed prophecy today. However, there are several issues that arise; these not only echo the challenges that the Vineyard movement faced in their season of focus on prophecy, but also remain current in today's church environment—and potentially more influential than many church leaders would realise.

Issues arising with Prophecy

We have already noted that the prophecies that Wagner so eagerly received were personal, predicative, and positive. These characteristics are consistently found in many prophecies today, interwoven with themes political, self-promotional, or others such as revival. However, other factors contribute to a comprehensive interpretation of the nature of prophecy today, the first being elements that are actually absent from the prophecies.

The most notable element of absence was that the event that swept and preoccupied the entire world in 2020, the COVID-19 virus, was not foreseen by any prophet, either in 2019 (or earlier) or in the opening months of 2020. In a year that brought so much misery and suffering to millions of Christians and non-Christians alike worldwide, the promises of

(120) had significance: "The figure twelve (the trinity involved with the four corners of earth) and the zero behind it represents an extension of God's involvement in the earth. Ten is the number of perfection. The number represents a larger dimension of God's manifestation in the earth." Earl Paulk, *Held In The Heavens Until...* (Atlanta, GA: K Dimension Publishers, 1985), 68.

success, acquisition and all good things bestowed on believers rang hollow. When prophecies about the virus did appear from February on, they tended to decree that the USA would be spared, predict its demise in April, or deny its existence.⁸⁶ Moreover, the unanimity among the prophets who declared President Trump would win a second term in office in 2020, combined with the failure to predict the virus, attracted wide attention from the secular media and Christian critics of the prophecy movement. Their excoriation was enhanced by those with long memories who pointed out that neither had the prophets anticipated the 11 September 2001 attack on New York's twin towers, or the devastating effect on New Orleans wrought by Hurricane Katrina.⁸⁷

A further element of absence was prophetic content that might be expected if based on studies of prophecy in scripture, for example: God's covenant with his people, its related obligations and associated promises, God's nature, or the consistency of his revelation. Although eleven prophets used the words "sin" or "repent" in lists or quoted verses, none addressed themes of responsibility, behaviour, or accountability in Christians. In referring to the woman taken in adultery and Jesus' response to her, the prophet who had the most to say about sin framed his message in terms of her heroic status, considerably beyond the intent of the biblical account:

When He invites her to "sin no more," He is inviting her into a ministry of heroic holiness; not to earn mercy, forgiveness, favor or blessing – she already has all of that in her born-again relationship with her Savior (see Ephesians 1:3, 2 Peter 1:3) – but to propel her into what has been God's plan for her since day six – to operate

⁸⁶ See for example: Hank Kunneman, "Prophecy about the Coronavirus," *The Elijah List*, 17 February 2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=23241> Embedded video: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuIORjhAC-Y&feature=youtu.be>> ; Shawn Bolz, "The Lord Showed Me the End of the Coronavirus - The Tide Is Turning Now!" *The Elijah List*, 28 February 2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=23313>; Johnny Enlow, "What Will God Do Today on April 30?" *The Elijah List*, 30 April 2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=23608>; Henry Falany, "The Virus & America's Manifest Destiny in 2020," *The Elijah List*, 8 May 2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=23638> (20 January 2021).

⁸⁷ Prophecies did emerge that claimed such predictions. However, for those that I investigated, evidence indicated the likelihood of fabrication. For example, one prophecy by a previously unknown prophet claimed to predict Hurricane Katrina (23-31 August 2005) in January 2005. On 1 September 2005, *The Elijah List* published the "original" prophecy as originating from the prophet's website. However, data obtained (using internet tools for tracing webpage dates) indicates the first recorded date for the prophecy's webpage posting was 29 August, and that the prophet's website was first created 18 May 2005. This does not rule out the possibility that the prophet privately wrote down the prophecy as he claimed in January and then posted it during the hurricane itself. Nevertheless, it also contained false prophetic information, such as the destruction of the French Quarter (anticipated during the course of the hurricane so logically included if the prophecy was a concurrent composition). See John Mark Pool, "I saw New Orleans, literally, 20 feet underwater across the main downtown area," *Elijah List*, 1 September 2005, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=3373> 20 February 2021).

as one of His “Dominion Stewards” in the earth, who shatters darkness by choosing to arise and shine as a *Hero of Holiness!* (Robert Hotchkin, 16 January 2020).

Other absences (and inclusions) related to the movements we have already covered in previous chapters. In line with its increasingly fading profile, the concept of evangelism was almost entirely absent. Spiritual warfare was described imprecisely in terms of darkness, or “demonic systems, governments and social constructs” (Faith Marie Baczko, 6 January). An increasing feature was focus on overcoming the satanic powers that control the “seven mountains” of societal power (see next chapter). Promises of signs and wonders still featured heavily and were expressed in terms of temporal benefits for Christians, especially in the areas of health and wealth.

Notwithstanding, it is important to note that although much content was questionable, the prophecies often contained numerous biblical verses of encouragement for Christians who wanted to find hope. At the most generous of assessments, what the prophets offered their readers were words to lift up the way people feel about their lives. However, the problem is contextuality: because of the specificity of promises for improvements to the temporal aspects of life, the positive promises of God quoted from scripture become reduced to little more than a type of soothsaying akin to the astrology section of any popular newspaper. There is a sense of the inexorable in this approach due to the prophets’ beliefs that the meaning of God’s kingdom already established on earth is that heaven has physically arrived: “Heaven on Earth is what we are talking about here.” (John Belt, 5 January). The prophets thereby are compelled to make only statements of blessing and encouragement to enhance this conception and are at risk of undermining it if they pronounce otherwise.

There are other issues that arise out of this examination of present-day prophecy: the problem of disillusionment, the need to stay on the cutting edge, and the pervasiveness of false prophecies. In terms of disillusionment, this began back in the early 1990s when the Vineyard was struggling to come to terms with the enormous influence the prophets were having over their leaders and congregations. Tom Stipe recorded that concerns began to grow among some Vineyard leaders as detrimental characteristics in prophetic ministries emerged.⁸⁸ At a conference of 8,000 pastors, a speaker discouraged attendees from preparing

⁸⁸ Stipe’s account is confirmed by sociologists Christerson and Flory although unfortunately they do not identify their sources other than as Vineyard leaders with no accompanying citation information. Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 22, 40.

sermons using reference books, commentaries, or language tools. Rather, he declared, they should prepare their messages by taking long walks to listen for prophecies from the Lord. Some audience members faked the signs of the Holy Spirit's touch (shaking, laughing, weeping, fluttering eyelids) to get the attention of the prophets. People lived from one prophetic "fix" to the next, becoming biblically illiterate as they choose "dial-a-prophet" lifestyles over studying the Bible. Demand for pastoral counselling grew heavy as followers felt devastated after promises failed to come true.⁸⁹ As time went by, these problems became more discernible, particularly the issue of prophecies not coming to pass as had been promised. This has become a well-known phenomenon and how it is handled will be discussed further below. At worst, it has led to abandonment of faith altogether as disillusioned Christians have decided that failure in healing or prophecy means that nothing in Christianity contains truth.⁹⁰ On the other end of the spectrum, hopeful Christians move their focus to the next prophecy; in the words of Tom Stipe, searching for their next "fix."

A further issue is the need to stay on the "cutting-edge," or in other words, to be where the action is. This well-known marketing term is regularly articulated by the writers examined here as a desirable state to achieve.⁹¹ Wagner explained it as a means to attract and hold an audience, as expressed in his advice to Christian writers: "Try to stay ahead of the pack ... give your time to cutting-edge ideas."⁹² For him, the NAR was the new wineskin provided by God for his cutting-edge Church of the twenty-first century.⁹³ In the production of new artistry or technology the cutting-edge can be a worthy objective in order to ensure the continuation of development and progress. In theological contexts, it forces continually new revelations or rediscovery of "truths."⁹⁴ The difficulty with the exhortation to stay on the theological cutting-edge is that it tends to push practitioners into ever more extreme expressions of belief and praxis as they try to stay ahead of the pack.

⁸⁹ Stipe, "Foreword," in Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, xii-xiii. Stipe made particular mention of musicians and lay people being promised star status, and success and stardom prophesied over teenagers, xi, xii.

⁹⁰ Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 127.

⁹¹ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 13, 20; Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*, 17; Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 33; Wood, "Web Site Feeds Growth".

⁹² Wagner, "How I Write a Book for Publication," 2.

⁹³ Wagner, *Seven Power Principles*, 41.

⁹⁴ Hunt, "'Doing the Stuff,'" 92-93.

The most problematic issue arising is false prophecies and how these are explained away. None of the prophets indicate they have difficulty with OT injunctions against false prophets (Deut 18: 20-22; Jer. 23:16-17) and from time-to-time issue their own warnings against such.⁹⁵ Clearly, they do not perceive their own prophetic errors to be subject to these biblical warnings. Several strategies are used to combat accusations of false prophecy. Firstly, most prophecies are difficult to assess for their accuracy because the content is vague and ambiguous enough to allow a range of interpretations. Readers are therefore supported to read into the text the elements that they choose to perceive and there can be no means of tracking verification in personal interpretations.⁹⁶ Ambiguity assists with denial against accusations of false prophecy but also serves to support claims of prophecy fulfilled when needed. For example: “There is much shaking, and it can feel like everything is about to fall apart. However, the Lord says, ‘I have prepared you. Am I not in control? That shaking has to happen for you to reach the heights to which I have called you.’” (Ruth Hendrikson, 6 January). Conveyed in the context of rocket imagery in “blast-off year” 2020, it is unclear exactly what the shaking might consist of: physical, spiritual, emotional, or personal circumstances. Almost any interpretation could apply and could be claimed as fulfilment under multiple circumstances.⁹⁷

Secondly, various strategies are able to counter accusations of failing to predict major events or prophesying an event that did not happen. The two most common are claiming that major events were predicted at some point in the past (where the possibility of verification is remote), or that a predicted catastrophe was averted by the prayers of intercessors (therefore claimable as a victory).⁹⁸ Other strategies include simply never

⁹⁵ Tavolacci, Elaine, “A Mighty Prophetic Generation Will Emerge,” *The Elijah List*, 1 January 2018, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=19442 > (14 December 2020).

⁹⁶ In the year of a worldwide pandemic, it is somewhat easier to identify the inaccuracy of widespread prophecies for success in all aspects of temporal life given that only a few will have found 2020 a “season of increase” (see Doug Addison, 8 January; Cindy Jacobs, 21 January).

⁹⁷ Note that although *Elijah List* publisher Steve Shultz said that warnings are published only occasionally, prophecies about natural disasters are still implied in many.

⁹⁸ Confounding verification of predictions made in the past is that the contexts given for these usually were unrecorded or private, hence not traceable. One frequent user of this strategy, Chuck Pierce, nevertheless does give the appearance of authenticity by providing dates, locations, or other details. This allows some possibility of tracking the claimed details to verify them. In those I was able to trace, I found that the claim was either fabricated, details were changed, or his prophecies differed substantially in meaning and intent from his later claim. These included his claims to have predicted 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, President Trump’s election, and the COVID-19 virus. The catastrophe-averted strategy is employed by Cindy Jacobs; disaster is explained as foiled by her own or others’ prayers, or in some cases, the actions of leaders. For example, a predicted bloodbath of conflict with Iran leading to WWII was averted by Trump’s pre-emptive actions (10 January 2020, see

acknowledging the error (and conceivably relying on the short memories of readers), or by insisting they were right but that others have not yet perceived it. In the case of predicted physical disasters on specific dates, common in the 1980s and 1990s, a typical explanation for the event not occurring was that what had been meant was a “spiritual” tidal wave, or earthquake, or eruption.⁹⁹ Note that these strategies are employed by prophets in the public arena who are unlikely to personally encounter their readers. In the more personal environment of a church, other strategies can also be observed. One example is outlined in Scott Thumma’s Ph.D. dissertation on Earl Paulk, the founding pastor and later “bishop” of Chapel Hill Harvester Church in Atlanta. Unfulfilled prophecies issued by Faulk were announced as being thwarted by Satan, or, more commonly, having failed because the people did not respond or were not obedient.¹⁰⁰ This pattern of blaming failed prophecies on the recipients is part of a universal pattern that has been widespread since the advent of the prophets.

Possibly the most effective means of combating criticism is the teaching that since NT times, accuracy in prophecy is no longer required. Vineyard historian Bill Jackson recorded that none of Paul Cain’s prophecies over him and his wife came to pass.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, he defended the right of prophets to be inaccurate:

When we turn to the NT, those who were considered prophets were not subject to the same stringent standards (e.g., there is no indication in 1 Corinthians 12-14 that a prophetic error was a crime punishable by death). By the time of the NT the word “prophet” meant spokesman in a general way and was used to refer to prophecy that was not held to the 100% accuracy test. In other words the NT allows the church to be a place for people to learn how to prophesy. It was a gift they had to grow in (i.e., they could make mistakes as they learned).¹⁰²

Appendix B); see also Chapter 5 of this thesis for her claim to avert a stock market downturn. Christerson and Flory comment that these issues will eventually lead to disillusionment among followers and limit the growth of the movement. To date, there is no evidence of this happening yet. Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 129.

⁹⁹ In regard to literal versus spiritual events, compare with Bill Hamon’s prediction that the Rapture would occur in 1963. While acknowledging that he had erred, he also pointed out that he was correct because even though Jesus did not literally arrive, the Holy Spirit did come with a spiritual move around the globe (the Charismatic Renewal). Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 340-341.

¹⁰⁰ Thumma, “The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, 276-277.

¹⁰¹ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 208. See also Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 40, for nervousness in other Vineyard leaders over wrong prophecies.

¹⁰² Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 236. Jackson’s statements on prophecy are derived from Grudem, whose teaching on this point is challenged by a number of critics. For example, Farnell criticizes Grudem on several points including grammatical errors in the exegesis or the argument that there is discontinuity between

Cindy Jacobs takes the approach of implying that inaccuracy is acceptable because true OT prophets also prophesied erroneously: “Scripture makes it clear that on occasion true prophets knowingly or unknowingly prophesied inaccurately, though they were not put to death or branded false prophets for such inaccuracies.”¹⁰³ Further to this, her novel explanation is in part based on the logic that the OT prophets could not have had a greater degree of the Holy Spirit than the church received on the day of Pentecost. Because of Jesus’ revelation and the insight available through the NT, therefore, the prophecies of today must be of greater measure than those of the OT.¹⁰⁴ Although her argument contradicted itself and appeared incoherent in places, her conclusion was that “I do not believe anyone is 100 percent accurate.”¹⁰⁵ Bickle asserted that the NT does not require the same standard for prophets as the OT did because prophets today prophesy out of their faith and the subtle impressions of the Holy Spirit, thus lacking in clarity.¹⁰⁶ One explanation probably comes closest to how the prophets in general are likely to view prophetic integrity. Dr. Michael Brown, a radio talk show host, is a popular apologist for the new theologies.¹⁰⁷ Citing Matt 7:15 he stated: “I personally draw a distinction between someone who prophesies falsely and knows the Lord ... between that and a false prophet ... what [Jesus] is saying is they are not real believers, they are not real brothers.”¹⁰⁸ For him, Jesus’ comment about ravenous wolves in sheep’s clothing constitutes “a real clear definition” of the difference between the two groups. False prophets, the ravenous wolves, are not true believers, but believers who prophesy falsely are not false prophets. However, Brown semantically conflated his portrayal of a definition and the distinction between false prophecy and true prophecy. Matt 7:15, where Jesus warns his

OT and NT prophecy. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1049-1061; F. David Farnell, “Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets? A Critique of Wayne Grudem’s Hypothesis,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 2:2 (Fall 1991): 157-181.

¹⁰³ Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 90. Jacobs cites 2 Sam. 7:3-18 (Nathan’s message to King David about the temple) and 1 Kgs 22:15 (Micaiah prophesying to Ahab) as examples of inaccuracies in prophecies, as well as Jer 32:8 to show that even Jeremiah could be uncertain whether he had heard God accurately.

¹⁰⁴ Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 93.

¹⁰⁵ Jacobs, *The Voice of God*, 95.

¹⁰⁶ Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic*, 52-53. To support this claim, Bickle cites 1 Cor 13:9: “For we know in part and we prophesy in part,” and further claims the limiting factor of measures of faith, Rom 12:6: “Let us prophesy in proportion to our faith.”

¹⁰⁷ Brown’s radio show, “*In the Line of Fire*,” is published over a number of platforms including *YouTube*. Brown is one of the few proponents of the new theologies whose use of the title “Doctor” is based on an earned degree: his publicity material states he holds a PhD in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures from New York University. Formerly also he was a (controversial) leader during the Brownsville Revival. In 2016, he claimed 450,000 followers on *Facebook* and 25,000 on *YouTube*. ASKDrBrown, “Dr. Brown Answers Questions about the New Apostolic Reformation, Pastor Bill Johnson, and More,” *In the Line of Fire*, 27 October 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqW2xbs-MeM>> (20 September 2018), 6:58.

¹⁰⁸ ASKDrBrown, “Teaching & Prophesying Falsely vs. False Teachers & False Prophets,” *YouTube*, 5 July 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkTysvTF2sY>> (20 September 2018), 00:39.

disciples to be alert to false prophets, does not indicate a distinction between two categories of prophet. In this instance, scripture has not made a definitive statement on the issue; nor is any to be found elsewhere.¹⁰⁹

Between the strategies to rebut accusations of false prophecy and the convoluted attempts to explain away the need to be truthful, a strange tension emerged. On one hand the prophets denied that their prophecies were inaccurate, on the other they asserted that there was no requirement for them to be accurate.¹¹⁰ These explanations do little to address the question phrased by Farnell: “If prophets at times were used to convey inspired revelations and at other times were non-authoritative and mistaken, who could distinguish their authoritative accurate messages from the other kind?”¹¹¹ Bickle placed the onus on the church to discern which prophecies are true and which are false.¹¹² However, given that most prophecies today are delivered online, or at conferences, meetings, or other events under the organisation and control of the prophets, it seems that the church has little opportunity to provide input. Bickle’s other advice was given by means of quoting 1 Cor 14:29: “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”¹¹³ Combined with 1 Thess 5:20-21: “Do not despise prophecies. Test all things: hold fast what is good,” these verses imply that some prophecies will contain a measure of error, wrote Bickle, and therefore hearers should weigh prophetic words to determine their correctness. The difficulty with this is that it is entirely likely that many hearers of the prophecies may not be spiritually equipped to be able to discern their truthfulness.¹¹⁴

As in previous chapters, again the problem returns to those who are the recipients of words and benefits promised in God’s name. Remarkably, there is a great deal of evidence

¹⁰⁹ A further definition for a false prophet comes from Johnny Enlow, who writes that false prophets are those who are motivated by profit, where a true prophet does not have money motives. Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 105.

¹¹⁰ During a meeting at which I was present, the leader declared that the expected ratio of true versus untrue prophecies was 60:40. He did not state whether true prophecies constituted the 60% or the 40% or why this was the expected ratio.

¹¹¹ Farnell, “Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets?”: 174.

¹¹² Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic*, 53; see also Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 238-239. Wagner had little to say about the problem of false prophecies, other than: “As the movement has matured, the occurrence of flaky prophecy is now considerably less than it was not too long ago.” Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 129.

¹¹³ Bickle, *Growing in the Prophetic*, 52.

¹¹⁴ The “word of knowledge” is similar to prophecy but usually is directed toward specific individuals. Percy writes that words of knowledge “can be tools for persuasion, alteration and coercion” because they “frequently do not permit a free response, or constitute an invitation.” Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 23.

that, despite false prophecies, the enthusiasm of many followers has not dimmed. This is because they remain convinced and hopeful as sophisticated explanations are offered that ameliorate any discomfort and reassure them that, in fact, the prophecy should be received as truthful, just not in the way they had expected it to be.

Apostles and Their Authority

The scriptural justification for the notion that apostles should govern with authority over churches is found in three NT verses:

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues (1 Cor 12:28, NRSV).

[You are ... members of the household of God] built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20, NRSV).

The gifts [Christ] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers [to equip the saints] (Eph 4:11, NRSV).¹¹⁵

The NAR hermeneutic in regard to these verses comprised conceptions of foundation, order, office, governance, and authority.¹¹⁶ In a departure from the traditional view that first-century apostles and prophets formed the foundation of the Church, Wagner and his associates saw the foundations as continually being re-laid by today's apostles and prophets.¹¹⁷ They are essential: "If a church has Jesus *without* apostles and prophets, it has no foundation from

¹¹⁵ Eph 4:11 is the foundation for the terminology of the "five-fold ministry." Pentecostal theologians have defined the methodological framework of Pentecostalism as the five-fold gospel (salvation, sanctification, baptism in the Spirit, divine healing, impending arrival of the kingdom of God). This term markedly resembles the "five-fold ministry" but varies considerably in its meaning. Whether NAR writers have merely appropriated and redefined the term remains an open question. See Wolfgang Vondey, "The Full Gospel: A Liturgical Hermeneutic of Pentecost," in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 173.

¹¹⁶ Among the many books written on the topic, including Wagner's, most repeat the same material and authors regularly cite each other. Most early authors belonged to Wagner's inner circles; either through personal connection or via membership of organisations established by Wagner. Four of these are referenced in this section in order to help determine the levels of consistency in the teaching. Cannistraci's Amazon entry describes his book as the "first definitive book on the subject of modern-day apostles." Eberle's earlier book has a wider focus on the whole church with just some sections devoted to Apostles. Harold R. Eberle, *The Completed Wineskin*, revised edition (Yakima, WA: Winepress Publishing, 1993 [1989]); David Cannistraci, *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement* (Ventura, CA: Renew Books, 1996); Hamon, *The Coming Moves of God*, John Kingsley Alley, *The Apostolic Revelation* (Rockhampton, Australia: Peace Publishing, 2002).

¹¹⁷ Hamon, *The Coming Moves of God*, 143-145. Compare with Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 169; Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary*, The NIV Application Commentary Series, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 136-137.

which to initiate solid building.”¹¹⁸ In terms of order (and implying that it had been lost), God promised this would be restored in the Church prior to the second coming of Christ: it is the apostle’s role to bring this order.¹¹⁹ Another sense in which order is important is the sequence found in the list of the gifts. The designations first, second and third indicate God’s order of authority that must be followed; the apostle as first has a higher calling than others; therefore the apostle must be over the others.¹²⁰ Although Eph 4 refers to gifts, an apostle is in receipt of both the gift and the office. Where a gift might only be “occasionally functioning,” the office indicates a state of “being” and the apostle is authorized to minister the gift in an official capacity.¹²¹ According to Wagner, “The office is not given by grace; it is awarded by works.”¹²² He further noted that it indicates governance: “With the recognition of the office of apostle in the 1990s, the complete government of the Church came into place for the first time since the early centuries.”¹²³ Leaders in the coming last days will help the Church reach its peak performance and some of these “are even destined to grow up into the shoulders and headship of Christ where the government of the kingdom of God will be placed upon them.”¹²⁴

This tracked with Wagner’s understanding of his own role as apostle. Of the two “church offices,” prophecy had emerged first in his thinking, but his chief preoccupation became apostles because ultimately this was his official designation. One of several grounds on which the NAR was controversial was the view that it was orchestrated by self-designated apostles. In response to this, Wagner explained that “the Body of Christ, through its appropriate representatives, commissions the apostle on the basis of the fruit that has been observed. The church gives the office.”¹²⁵ He told how the evolution of his role began with a prophecy from Cindy Jacobs in 1995: “The Lord would say today, “My son, Peter, today I put

¹¹⁸ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 11 (italics Wagner’s). See also Cannistraci, *The Emerging Apostolic Movement*, 82-83; Hamon, *The Coming Moves of God*, 175.

¹¹⁹ Based on Acts 3:21: “[Jesus] must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets” (NRSV). Cannistraci, *The Emerging Apostolic Movement*, 82-83; Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 44.

¹²⁰ Eberle, *The Completed Wineskin*, 143, 147; Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 8-9. Wagner speaks in terms of a scale where apostles operate higher than other believers, particularly in terms of perfection (*teleios*): Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 38.

¹²¹ Hamon, *The Coming Moves of God*, 31; Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 109-110.

¹²² Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 209.

¹²³ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 19.

¹²⁴ Hamon, *The Coming Moves of God*, 233.

¹²⁵ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 209.

the anointing of apostle of prayer upon you. I put the mantle upon you of an Abraham, a patriarch, and I'm calling you forth into the land of promise."¹²⁶ He received a second prophecy during a conference that he had organised: "The title shall rest, the anointing shall rest, and men will give it to you."¹²⁷ From here, Wagner rose to the challenge and began organising meetings of apostles where, at one gathering in 1999, Bill Hamon commissioned him with anointing of oil, prayer, and prophecies. "From that time on," wrote Wagner, "I officially had the office."¹²⁸ However, his prophecies and commissioning all occurred within Wagner's personal circles and he never made it clear exactly how Hamon, Jacobs, Chuck Pierce, or the others present at his commissioning were considered appropriate representatives of the church.

The foremost theme in the literature about apostles was authority. Wagner's view was that the shift away from traditional Christianity pertained to "*The amount of spiritual authority delegated by the Holy Spirit to individuals;*" a transition from bureaucratic authority to personal authority.¹²⁹ Wagner often pressed the point: "The two operative words in this statement are "authority" and "individuals."¹³⁰ He was clear in what he meant by this: in the proper church structure, it is specific individuals who must hold the authority (the apostles), not bureaucratic groups of church leaders and not the congregations. The apostolic church is not democratic.¹³¹ The biblical model for his doctrine of apostles was Paul as seen in Paul's NT letters to the Corinthians. Paul found it necessary to assert his biblical authority in 2 Cor 10:8 and Wagner's premise was that Paul's authority came from the same source as today's apostles.¹³² This raises the question of hierarchy in the church. Australian apostle John Kingsley Alley was blunt in a section heading in his book on the topic: "God gives First Place to Apostles" and later stated that they hold final authority in the church.¹³³ Although Wagner attempted to underplay the notion of importance or hierarchy, the message that permeated his work on apostleship is reflected in his statement that "apostles are first in the divine order of

¹²⁶ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 207.

¹²⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 208.

¹²⁸ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 209.

¹²⁹ Wagner, "The New Apostolic Reformation," in *The New Apostolic Churches*, 15, 19-20, italics Wagner's. See also Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 105.

¹³⁰ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 25.

¹³¹ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 89; Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 49-50, Wagner, *Changing Church*, 27-33.

¹³² Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 25-26.

¹³³ Alley, *The Apostolic Revelation*, 26, 93.

church leadership.”¹³⁴ An apostle’s authority is trans-local in contrast to the local authority of pastors. The apostolic churches have pastors who are leaders of churches; in traditional Christianity they are employees.¹³⁵ But above the role of pastor is the apostle who is equipped with full powers in the manner of the New Testament apostles.

Wagner described the nature of this personal authority as “unusual,” “extraordinary,” and “exceptional,” and delegated by the Holy Spirit to specific individuals.¹³⁶ To these “leaders of great magnitude,” authority is conferred by God Himself.¹³⁷ There is a distinction between the gift and the office: the former is bestowed by God, the latter is awarded by the church in recognition of the former, a distinction that much of the literature does not make entirely clear.¹³⁸ However, in practice, it seemed that the church was not greatly involved; Wagner referred most particularly to a process of commissioning by apostolic peers, such as those who belong to the organisation that Wagner had established, the ICA.¹³⁹ Although he described the term “self-appointed apostle” as a semantic oxymoron, nevertheless in his first book on the subject, for which he was editor and contributed a chapter, he drew the reader’s attention to a chapter “by one who designates himself ‘Apostle John Kelly’ much like the apostle Paul did in most of his Epistles.”¹⁴⁰

Apostles: Characteristics and Ministry

In terms of the character of apostolic authority, Wagner turned to Max Weber’s definition of charisma as applying to apostles: individual personalities are endowed with “supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities ... not

¹³⁴ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 22.

¹³⁵ Wagner, “The New Apostolic Reformation,” in *The New Apostolic Churches*, 20 and Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 25. Wagner discusses at length the difference between pastors as employees in the traditional sense and new apostolic pastors in chapter four of *Churchquake!*, 81-102.

¹³⁶ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 105; Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 22; Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 25.

¹³⁷ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 27.

¹³⁸ The quote from Hamon in *Churchquake!* and Wagner’s accompanying comments (see previous paragraphs) undergo a progression of adjustments in later books; the clearest statement on the distinction between gift and office is seen in his memoir: Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 209; compare with Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 109-110.

¹³⁹ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 25-26. International Coalition of Apostolic Leaders (ICAL) since 2013. To become a member apostle of the ICAL, one has to be nominated by two other members, fill in the application form available at <<http://www.icaleaders.com/membership/>> and pay the annual fee (USD\$450 national, USD\$350 international).

¹⁴⁰ Wagner, “The New Apostolic Reformation,” in *The New Apostolic Churches*, 20. This is a sore point for critics who claim that the Apostles of the NAR are self-appointed.

accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin.”¹⁴¹ According to Wagner apostles possess twelve biblical characteristics. They have seen Jesus personally, perform supernatural manifestations, cast out demons, and break witchcraft curses, along with undertaking tasks to attract and distribute financial resources, appoint pastors, apply discipline including excommunication, settle disputes, and plant churches.¹⁴² Apostles have met God’s standards of holiness and humility and are blameless with a good reputation.¹⁴³ Wagner explained his own practices as an example of how an apostle can live without sin, thereby attaining the personal quality of holiness.¹⁴⁴ They seldom burn out. They are also powerful: as noted in a previous chapter, Wagner recounted how he used his apostolic authority to end the outbreak of “Mad Cow Disease” in Germany in 2001.¹⁴⁵

The work of the apostle covered a lot of ground.¹⁴⁶ Sent by God, the apostle has “authority to establish the foundational government of the church within an assigned sphere of ministry by hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches and by setting things in order.”¹⁴⁷ The ministries of apostles, according to Wagner, are to receive revelation, cast vision, begin new things, impart blessings to others, build and finish projects, govern, teach, send others to fulfil their roles, lead the church into spiritual warfare, align generations, and equip the saints.¹⁴⁸ Of these ministries, receiving revelation in the order of Paul’s experiences was the key:

¹⁴¹ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 114. Wagner is quoting Weber’s text here; see Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 358-359.

¹⁴² Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 30-33. Wagner qualifies the list by stating not all the points listed apply to all Apostles: about 20 percent of apostles he knows have seen Jesus personally and “not many” have seen mass healings through the casting of their shadow as did Peter.

¹⁴³ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 39, 42. An unexplained discrepancy in the text occurs where Wagner describes how he has had to dismiss some apostles for serious moral failure and force others to resign. See Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 45. The most public example of an Apostle’s failure occurred two years after *Apostles Today* was published; see later in this chapter.

¹⁴⁴ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 37-43. Wagner’s description of an Apostle is considerably more extensive than presented here and includes the biblical descriptions of good character expected of bishops from 1 Tim 3:1-7.

¹⁴⁵ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 242-243.

¹⁴⁶ One other feature to briefly mention is Wagner’s typology of apostles, still maintained by some, but not all proponents of the theology. Vertical Apostles were those who lead networks of churches, ministries, or individuals who sit under the apostle’s authority and are accountable to them. Horizontal Apostles (such as Wagner) were responsible to maintain connections (and by implication, superiority) between peer-level leaders, that is, the vertical apostles. Another type was Workplace Apostles. Within the types he outlined multiple sub-categories, for example, ecclesiastical, functional, or mobilising apostles.

¹⁴⁷ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 27. Eph 2:20 is the basis for the foundational role of apostle and prophets, see *Apostles Today*, 11.

¹⁴⁸ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 28-29, also see 142-149.

Apostles know where they are going. Not only that, but they know where the Church should be going. Where do they get this vision? They receive revelation from God. In writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul said, “It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord” (2 Cor. 12:1). Then he told them the story of being taken into the third heaven and learning truths so awesome and profound that he could not even share them with others ... One of the major roles of an apostle is to communicate to the Church “what the Spirit says to the churches,” as we see in the book of Revelation (see Rev. 2:7). The apostle knows what the Spirit is saying by receiving revelation from God. When this happens, authority increases exponentially; the apostle announces the word of the Lord. This is not the *logos* word contained in the canon of Scripture, which cannot be added to or subtracted from. Rather, it is the *rhema* word through which God gives us specific direction regarding His will for the present and future.¹⁴⁹

Drawing on his own experiences, he declared that apostles receive revelation in two ways: directly from God or through the prophets.¹⁵⁰ In his SWM period these types of revelation, he had implied, were available to all Christians. But with the new emphasis on authority, his implication shifted from everyone to God’s elite: apostles are those who receive (his definition of) *rhēma*.

Wagner’s conception of apostles and their role in the church was clearly defined and laid down specific parameters for their function. His declared reformation in the church and his conviction that the NAR structure was the only means to laying the proper foundation nevertheless strongly resembled those of many church systems that belonged to the “old wineskins” that he repudiated, in spite of his denials of the same.¹⁵¹ The Roman Catholic Church in particular, a church that Wagner had always decried as imbued with satanic influence, appeared similar in its conceptions with priests and popes as mediators between God and the people. This was not lost on Wagner: for him, the difference lay with the “life-giving” nature of the evangelical churches that emerged in the 1990s.¹⁵² What Wagner and his contemporaries never addressed was the apparent contradiction between the “priesthood of all believers” as proposed by Luther and the hierarchical systems of the NAR, with apostles and

¹⁴⁹ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 33-34. See Chapter 4 of this thesis for Wagner’s interpretation of *logos* and *rhēma*.

¹⁵⁰ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 34-35.

¹⁵¹ In a foreword to a Haggard book, Wagner recommended readers to read the church bylaws laid out in the final chapter (“new apostolic Bylaws, and therefore quite different from *traditional* church Bylaws”). The bylaws are heavily oriented towards governance and financial benefits to the leadership. Ted Haggard, *The Life-Giving Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1998), 19, 224-268.

¹⁵² Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 19-20.

prophets elevated in God's reckoning.¹⁵³ Nor did they account for some points raised by theologians who suggest that, although orderliness and leadership is clearly needed in a church setting, there was no prescriptive pattern for church government laid down in the NT, and organisation in the early church was actually relatively democratic. Furthermore, the structural needs of NT churches were not necessarily those of later or even contemporary churches, and Paul's list of gifts considered in its scriptural context does not indicate hierarchical order.¹⁵⁴ Martyn Percy noted that the nautical vocabulary from which "apostle" is derived means "ambassador," "delegate," or "messenger," but otherwise never had a precise meaning in the NT.¹⁵⁵ This raises the question of how Wagner and his associates developed such a detailed description of apostles, their roles, and their characteristics. Their explanations were not underpinned by scriptural exegesis, neither did they fully account for all that scripture could have revealed on the matter, especially when it came to biblical verses that might offer information contradictory to their accounts. For example, on the issue of leadership roles that differed in title or form (such as bishops in 1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:7, or Phil 1:1), NAR explanations ranged from claiming these as different roles established by human processes, allowed space for manoeuvrability by implying they could be part of the five-fold ministry in some instances but separate in others, or simply offered no explanation at all.¹⁵⁶

Apostles and the NAR: New Generations

As the number of apostles grew, Wagner served as "Presiding Apostle" over the ICA, for which he claimed membership of over 500 apostles in 2006.¹⁵⁷ When a second generation of apostles began to emerge, Wagner handed over leadership of the ICA in 2010, ICA

¹⁵³ See Erickson's argument that there is no need for any special intermediary as all can relate to God directly: Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1085-1086.

¹⁵⁴ Blomberg compares 1 Cor 12:28 with Eph 2:20 to view the list as chronological, not hierarchical, in the establishment of the church. Erickson also asked two important questions that were never addressed by Wagner or his associates: "What are the reasons for church government? What values is it intended to promote and preserve?" Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 215; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1083-1087. For an extended response to Wagner's interpretation of Eph 4:11-13, see Kelebogile Resane, "The New Apostolic Reformation: The critical reflections of the ecclesiology of Charles Peter Wagner," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72:3 (August 2016): 1-11.

¹⁵⁵ Martyn Percy, *Clergy: The Origin of Species* (London: Continuum, 2006), 8.

¹⁵⁶ Alley, *The Apostolic Revelation*, 34, 76; Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 29-30; Hamon, *The Coming Moves of God*, 175-178.

¹⁵⁷ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 97, 142. Wagner's lifelong tendency was to round numbers up significantly: in 2006 the ICAL membership list named 335 apostles. This increased slightly the following year before dropping to 281 in 2010. Membership lists since 2010 are accessible to members only with no public access.

changed its name to International Coalition of Apostolic Leaders (ICAL), and other coalitions formed with a similar focus.¹⁵⁸

Wagner continued to preach his message on apostles publicly until not long before his death in 2016.¹⁵⁹ However, pressures on the public image of the NAR had already begun to build. An early critique had come from the Assemblies of God (AoG) in two position papers that systematically explained the theological and scriptural difficulties of the teaching associated with the NAR.¹⁶⁰ Given that some prominent advocates of apostles and prophets (and dominion theology, the subject of the next chapter) had their origins in the AoG, this presented some challenges.¹⁶¹ A further blow to public perception came with the apostolic commissioning of Todd Bentley (23 June 2008), a triumphalist occasion that turned scandalous when two months later Bentley was forced to step down from his ministry due to exposure of multiple problems in his personal conduct.¹⁶² What made this particular commissioning unique was the public gathering on the stage of so many important leaders in the apostolic movement.¹⁶³ Greeted with screaming applause from an audience of ten thousand, Wagner presided over the ceremony and acknowledged the presence of his fellow apostles before decreeing over Bentley:

¹⁵⁸ For example, Revival Alliance (Bill Johnson, Ché Ahn, John Arnott). Some leaders such as Ahn also belonged to ICAL.

¹⁵⁹ See MRTV Media Revival TV, “Peter Wagner “Arise & Shine” Spirit Fall,” *YouTube*, 13 June 2015 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNS2JZVHOXA>> (17 November 2020). Filmed at the 2015 Global Fire “Arise & Shine Spirit Fall” event (June 11-14) at Global Fire Church, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

¹⁶⁰ Described by Wagner as the “most vocal and concerted attack” from any quarter against NAR doctrines. General Council of the Assemblies of God, “Endtime Revival—Spirit-Led and Spirit-Controlled: A Response Paper to Resolution 16,” *Assemblies of God Position Paper*, 11 August 2000, <<https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Revival-Endtime-Revival--Spirit-Led-and-Spirit-Controlled>> (19 June 2019); General Council of the Assemblies of God, “Apostles and Prophets,” *Assemblies of God Position Paper*, 6 August 2001, <<https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Apostles-and-Prophets>> (16 June 2019); Wagner, *Changing Church*, 29.

¹⁶¹ Bethel Redding was formerly an AoG congregation but Bill Johnson withdrew the church in 2006.

¹⁶² Bentley had been the main personality of a revival in Lakeland, Florida, that over just a few months had attracted up to half a million attendees with many more watching online; the scandal effectively brought it to an end. Bentley was already controversial for his claims of regular visits to heaven, guidance from an angel named Emma, violence on stage (breaking a man’s nose and kicking an elderly lady in the face), financial discrepancies, and other inappropriate behaviours, but the issues that emerged after the commissioning ceremony pertained mostly to multiple incidents of drunkenness and a sexual relationship outside his marriage.

¹⁶³ On stage with Wagner were sixteen other prominent apostles representing three different organizations of apostles (ICA, Revival Alliance, and Morningstar), an unprecedented gathering. Among the best-known were Rick Joyner and the three who anointed Bentley with oil during the ceremony: Bill Johnson, Ché Ahn, and John Arnott, announced by Wagner as “three apostolic pillars of today’s Church.” In a subsequent article, Wagner hailed the “groundbreaking” event for its “alignment” of so many apostles and wrote: “I cannot recall an event of this nature in the recent history of the Church.” Chuck Pierce and C. Peter Wagner, “FLORIDA OUTPOURING receives endorsements and oversight. Includes Chuck Pierce, C. Peter Wagner, Ché Ahn, Bill Johnson, Rick Joyner, John Arnott, and MANY MORE,” *The Elijah List*, 2 July 2008, <http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word/6611> (1 March 2017).

This commissioning represents a powerful spiritual transaction taking place in the invisible world. With this in mind, I take the apostolic authority that God has given me and I decree to Todd Bentley, your power will increase, your authority will increase, your favor will increase, your influence will increase, your revelation will increase.”¹⁶⁴

Bentley’s subsequent fall from grace made headlines around the world and the role of apostles came under withering scrutiny that was not helped by Wagner making an inelegant attempt to circumvent his personal responsibility and to declare the ceremony was actually a victory over evil.¹⁶⁵ Another source of pressure on the representation of the NAR came from both Christian and secular media where the word “cult” began to emerge, the links to strategic level spiritual warfare were re-visited, and the media noted connections to some prominent political figures.¹⁶⁶ Several books of unfavourable analysis also represented a challenge because they were researched and written by individuals with academic credentials but with their content aimed at the popular market.¹⁶⁷ Although many internet sites had long been severely critical of Wagner, the NAR, and any associated ideas or personalities, they had been easier to ignore because they tended to appeal only to niche audiences due to their own religious orientations or heavily contentious rhetoric.¹⁶⁸ The emergence of more neutral

¹⁶⁴ Fdavid65, “Peter Wagner Endorses Todd Bentley,” *YouTube*, 5 July 2008, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEwsG4lsXq4&t=68s>> (4 September 2019). Prophecies from the other apostles on the stage are recorded in a number of other videos on *YouTube*.

¹⁶⁵ Wagner wrote: “Looking back, I praise God for using me and others to help bring order to confusion, which is one of the chief biblical tasks of an apostle. Stephen Strader, who has been keeping records, affirms that the evil that the prince of the power of the air had been subtly introducing into the [revival] started to be exposed and unravelled the day after the alignment, June 24! ... [God] assigned me and the Revival Alliance leaders and others who were with us to align Todd Bentley apostolically for the first time in his life. When we did this publicly spiritual transactions took place in the invisible world that would not allow the enemy to maintain the veil of secrecy he had carefully placed over the [revival]. The evil was exposed.” Peter Wagner, “An Update on Lakeland from Peter, 25 August 2008. Wagner’s statement was taken from a privately distributed newsletter and published to multiple websites, for example, Jennifer Le Claire, “Peter Wagner Expounds on Todd Bentley Fiasco,” *Jennifer Le Claire*, 26 August 2008, <<https://jenniferleclaire.org/articles/peter-wagner-expounds-on-todd-bentley-fiasco/>> (7 October 2018).

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Marsha West, “Texas Governor's Aug 6th Prayer Event Includes Cult Members?” *Worldview Weekend*, 30 July 2011, <<https://shop.worldviewweekend.com/news/article/texas-governors-aug-6th-prayer-event-includes-cult-members>> (21 September 2018); Paul Rosenberg, “America’s Own Taliban,” *Al Jazeera*, 28 July 2011, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/07/20117259426336524.html>> (21 September 2018).

¹⁶⁷ The most notable are: Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec, *A New Apostolic Reformation?: A Biblical Response to a Worldwide Movement* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2014); John Weaver, *The New Apostolic Reformation: History of a Modern Charismatic Movement* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2016); Brad Christerson and Richard Flory, *The Rise of Network Christianity: How Independent Leaders Are Changing the Religious Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Christerson and Flory’s book focussed more on the marketplace emphasis and relationship networking among leaders than on the theology.

¹⁶⁸ There are many websites devoted to strongly worded or even vitriolic attacks on NAR ideology. These are not relevant to examine here but for just some examples see <<http://www.cultwatch.com/saseries.html>> (“mind control monster”) or Marsha West, “Damnable Heresies Invading the Church,” *RenewAmerica*, 25 May 2010, <<https://www.renewamerica.com/columns/mwest/100525>> (21 January 2021). A balanced and well-researched

assessments that held greater appeal for the general public was a different type of opponent. In a rare move, Wagner took a defensive stance against the accusations.¹⁶⁹ His response in an article for *Charisma News* was two-pronged.¹⁷⁰ Firstly, he blamed the political agendas of critics: “The best I can discern, the NAR has become a tool in the hands of certain liberal opponents of the conservative candidates designed to discredit them.” Secondly, the amorphous nature of the NAR proved to be ideal for deniability: “The NAR is not an organization. No one can join or carry a card. It has no leader.” Both strategies were repeatedly employed by the generation subsequent to Wagner as their rhetoric became more aggressive by attacking critics at their points of weakness and denying the existence of the NAR, even at risk of appearing disingenuous.¹⁷¹

Sometimes these defence mechanisms were technically correct. Many of the private ministries that attacked the NAR were indeed agenda-driven, although not necessarily for political reasons; a frequent orientation of the most vehement critics was Rapture-oriented dispensationalism. These critics objected to “Kingdom Now” theology and its related eschatology (see next chapter).¹⁷² However, the single biggest flaw displayed by critics, both neutral and agenda-driven, was the tendency to treat the NAR as the defining label to encompass all leaders and ministries that subscribed to the theology of apostles, prophets, and dominion theology. Wagner had laid down very specific parameters brought under an umbrella moniker “NAR” but there remained no means of “belonging” or “not-belonging”

approach is taken by an internet-based monitor of the Religious Right, *Talk to Action*, although information on the site is not always kept up-to-date. See Rachel Tabachnick, “The Ideology and History of the New Apostolic Reformation,” *Talk to Action*, 12 August 2011, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/8/12/1713/01915>> (21 February 2018); Rachel Tabachnick, “Resource Directory for the New Apostolic Reformation,” *Talk to Action*, 20 January 2010, <<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2010/1/20/131544/037>> (3 March 2018).

¹⁶⁹ Throughout his career, Wagner had effectively ignored critics by claiming that God specifically had told him not to engage in polemics. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 191.

¹⁷⁰ C. Peter Wagner, “The New Apostolic Reformation Is Not a Cult,” *Charisma News*, 24 August 2011, <<https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/31851-the-new-apostolic-reformation-is-not-a-cult>> (21 September 2018).

¹⁷¹ Of the second-generation adherents to the new theology, Michael Brown in particular displays articulate and adroit skills in attacking critics at their points of vulnerability by utilising a variety of polemic strategies, thereby likely effectively disarming their (essentially accurate) arguments in the minds of his listeners. In spite of Brown’s claims that he does not respond to critics, a feature that occurs at regular intervals throughout all his broadcasts is diatribe against critics. ASKDrBrown, “Why I’m Done Responding to the Critics,” *In the Line of Fire*, 24 September 2019, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odNUfWytdFQ>> (27 September 2019).

¹⁷² Another target for attack, employed particularly by Michael Brown, is critics who hide behind the “cloak of anonymity” to post “blatant falsehoods”: his claim that they hide their identities suggests that they lack credibility. Here he is on shaky ground as writers of articles not listing an author can usually be identified simply by tracking through their websites. However, the complaint against anonymity can have some validity. ASKDrBrown, “Dr. Brown Answers Questions,” 4:44.

other than a philosophical adherence to its principles. This gave plenty of room for denial against critics who tended to use NAR as a concrete term for a type of organisation. Critics handed adherents the opportunity to declare that they had “never belonged to Wagner’s organisation,” regardless of many years’ close association with him and broad agreement with most aspects of his assertions about the NAR.

With these types of pressures bearing on the public perception of the NAR some public figures such as talk show host Michael Brown embarked on what gave the appearance of a marketing campaign to enhance the credibility of the doctrine of apostle and prophets.¹⁷³ A softening of the authoritative rhetoric required some adjustments such as making semantic changes. For example, key leaders asserted that “apostolic” was an adjective, not an office, and that apostles were properly known as “apostolic leaders” or “fathers.”¹⁷⁴ The “dominion mandate,” the subject of the next chapter, became more commonly the “cultural mandate.”¹⁷⁵ In terms of toning down Wagner’s rhetoric, a long-time member of Wagner’s ICA and later the leader of the American branch of ICAL, Joseph Mattera, gave interviews and posted a statement on the ICAL website:

Although some of the earmarks of what Peter Wagner called the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) have made many of us in the present Restoration movement uncomfortable (such as top down leadership, hyper dominion rhetoric, the use of apostle as a title rather than a description, and the practice of laying hands on leaders proclaiming them to be apostles over regions and nations), it is still advancing because Jesus is the One building His church thorough the magisterium of the Holy Spirit who is pulling the whole body into the vortex of the New Testament pattern of Church.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ From May 2016 to September 2019, Brown devoted eighteen *In the Line of Fire* podcasts to issues involving Wagner, the NAR, or dominion theology.

¹⁷⁴ Bill Johnson, “Apostolic Teams – A Group of People Who Carry the Family Mission,” *The Elijah List*, 21 November 2008, <http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word/7083> (17 November 2020); ASKDrBrown, “An Apostolic Leader Calls for Changes in the New Apostolic Reformation,” *In the Line of Fire*, 30 April 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lGO13vxJKE>> (20 September 2018), 12:47, 40:49, 47:26

¹⁷⁵ The cultural mandate is a term long-used in Christianity and Wagner himself was using it in the early 1980s, tying it into the same biblical passages (Gen 1:28) as he did dominion theology. The difference lay with the philosophy behind the new expression. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 12.

¹⁷⁶ Joseph Mattera, “The Restoration of Apostolic Ministry,” *International Coalition of Apostolic Leaders*, 25 May 2018, <<https://www.icaleaders.com/news/2018/5/25/the-restoration-of-apostolic-ministry-by-joseph-mattera>> (10 July 2018). See also ASKDrBrown, “An Apostolic Leader Calls for Changes.” Joseph Mattera’s published books indicate a heavy emphasis on leadership in the marketplace and the power of individuals to reach their personal destiny, suggesting that Wagner’s vision for apostles over the church has evolved, at least for some apostles, further towards influencing secular culture, in line with the dominion mandate that Wagner later promoted.

Mattera's message was that Wagner had gone too far in his assertions, but nonetheless the doctrine of apostles (and prophets) in the church remains firmly in place with the terminology of the NAR displaced amid promises for the future: "If we embrace the five-fold ministry we're going to have a movement, we're going to have the great expansion of Christianity like we saw in the New Testament pattern."¹⁷⁷

Despite a retreat from authoritarian rhetoric and avoidance of the NAR label among some advocates for the doctrine of apostles, in the present-day Wagner is still widely quoted in North America and throughout the world.¹⁷⁸ For example, in Latin America, a proliferation of apostles cites the literature generated by Wagner, Jacobs, or Hamon as critics draw attention to the links with the theology of prosperity.¹⁷⁹ This focus on wealth is just one among many concerns raised by observers. Aside from the theological difficulties noted above, commentators address the risk of a cult of personality among apostles as the power accorded to them allows them to pronounce God's will "with a degree of infallibility that would be the envy of any modern pope."¹⁸⁰ In describing the impact on Latin America, Peruvian pastor and theologian Martin Ocaña Flores also points out that the locus of attention is more on the power of the apostle than on God or his kingdom.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, the "hermeneutics of the spirit" practised by adherents emphasises the interpreter more than the Bible, making scripture of interest only in an instrumental way.¹⁸² This assertion is supported by the message that permeates all movements examined in this thesis: "God speaks directly to his people today! Some would be surprised to find out that many intelligent, good-hearted, born-again Christians cannot come to believe this. They think that all of God's revelation to

¹⁷⁷ Joseph Mattera in ASKDrBrown, "An Apostolic Leader Calls for Changes," 12:08.

¹⁷⁸ In this rapidly spreading theology, currently there are numerous responses to the label "NAR." Some groups proudly associate with it while others publicly distance themselves. However, my contention is that the doctrines remain the same regardless of the public stance taken. From this point forward, where I refer to the NAR, it is for convenience' sake only: I am referring merely to the doctrines that are associated with it with no implication that particular individuals can be brought under the rubric. This will become more important in the chapter on Bill Johnson and Bethel because of their strong denials that they "belong" to the NAR.

¹⁷⁹ See the next chapter for discussion on wealth. Martin Ocaña, "The New Apostolic Reformation and the Theology of Prosperity: The 'Kingdom of God' as a Hermeneutical Key," in *Lausanne Missional Content Library*, 2 October 2015, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/88558?_sf_s=apostolic> (23 January 2021), 2 n2. The English translation of this article has multiple issues: for the original in Spanish see "La Nueva Reforma Apostólica ¿Nueva Teología Política?" *Misión Transformando Vidas*, 10 May 2016, <<https://ministeriomtv.blogspot.com/2016/05/la-nueva-reforma-apostolica-nueva.html>>.

¹⁸⁰ Alistair McGrath, "A Better Way: The Priesthood of all Believers" in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?*, ed. Michael Scott Horton (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 306; Kyle, *Evangelicalism*, 252.

¹⁸¹ Ocaña, "The New Apostolic Reformation," 9.

¹⁸² Ocaña, "The New Apostolic Reformation," 5.

his people is in the Bible.”¹⁸³ However, in the theology of the NAR, God speaks, most especially and most directly, to apostles and prophets.

One notable feature of the NAR theology has become increasingly more overt over time. The overall projection of the apostles and prophets doctrine depicts a disobedient Church that for centuries has ignored the biblical mandate, to its detriment, but now is being properly restored. The sentiments expressed by Johnny Enlow are repeated regularly throughout the literature generated by his contemporaries:

The spirit of religion is so persistent in mainline churches that it has suffocated the movement of the Holy Spirit out of church ... That’s why the doctrinal statements of many churches and denominations are carefully crafted to make sure the Spirit cannot surprise them with unexpected or unusual gifts or manifestations ... That kind of church is already dead. It just hasn’t been buried yet.¹⁸⁴

Thus, from the early days of focus on church growth and throughout the movements that emerged out of its heritage, there travelled with this projection an implicit message: “we have God’s truth, they do not,” the imbedded message of the new and old wineskins metaphor. Gradually this became openly expressed as advocates of the new theologies peremptorily dismissed contrasting viewpoints in terms ranging from the claim of “false arguments” that “cannot be biblically sustained” to the suggestion that satanic darkness is the cause for the “fog” of ignorance.¹⁸⁵ Wagner’s attack on “old wineskins” was two-pronged.¹⁸⁶ Firstly, the demonic spirit of religion (a high-ranking principality) uses religious devices to prevent change and maintain the status quo. He detailed how the “Luciferian Department of Religion” works on individuals to prevent them experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit and thereby fulfilling their true destiny. It also “casts a spell” on (unanointed) denominational leaders to prevent them from moving into the Second Apostolic Age: “[The spirit of religion] causes religious leaders to concentrate not on what the Spirit is saying (present tense), but on what the Spirit said (past tense) in a former season.”¹⁸⁷ Secondly, the reason for not embracing NAR theology is fear of change. People do not want to be pulled out of their comfort

¹⁸³ Wagner, *Seven Power Principles*, 39.

¹⁸⁴ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 20.

¹⁸⁵ Alley, *The Apostolic Revelation*, 26; Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 12-13; Cannistraci, *The Emerging Apostolic Movement*, 78-79.

¹⁸⁶ Wagner, *Changing Church*, 18-22.

¹⁸⁷ Wagner, *Changing Church*, 21. As exemplified by the “foolish Galatians” of Gal 3:1 who were “bewitched.”

zones.¹⁸⁸ Others expressed similar opinions. The view that apostleship was confined only to the NT apostles, declared Hamon, belongs to “dispensational theologians who are natural-religionists ... Praise God that born-again, Spirit-filled church theologians believe that [apostles are actively ministering now].”¹⁸⁹ Others tapped into the Christian dread of offending God by issuing implicit warnings:

I think that [critics] are people driven by fear. They have created their own boogie man, and I don't think anybody should be afraid of true Apostolic, prophetic leaders that God has ordained according to Ephesians 4, to continue until there's unity in the faith and complete knowledge and fullness of the Son of God, which hasn't happened yet. So if they're against apostolic leadership, they're fighting against God Himself.¹⁹⁰

It is difficult to avoid an impression of gnostic elitism and esotericism as conveyed by the promoters of the apostles and prophets' movement. The messages are straightforward and regularly repeated. The past must be rejected, it is faulty, and does not work. The way to the future is through the guidance of authoritative leadership. Opposing opinions are to be viewed with suspicion, mistrust, and rejection. Scripture is a tool that can be picked up and put down at will, but its use is dependent on the intention of the tool-wielder. The underlying ideology is power but with the reformation of the church, power resides most particularly with the leaders who are God's favoured vehicles for communication with his children. By accepting and responding to them, ordinary Christians can gain access to transcendent secrets and mysteries, as revealed by God's apostles and prophets. Exactly how authority is bestowed remains unclear apart from the assertion that God appoints apostles.¹⁹¹ But what is clear is that leaders gain and maintain their prominence and influence by means of self-promotion, intensive marketing, prolific publishing in print and digital media, and hyperbolic endorsements from colleagues.

In this culture, the theology almost completely overlooks any role for ordinary Christians who sit in church pews or stadium seats, even while it continually encourages them to seek personal experiences of power. Mere use of the term “Apostle” (or the regularly-used alternative “Bishop”) creates a distance between leaders and their congregants due to the

¹⁸⁸ Wagner, *Changing Church*, 21.

¹⁸⁹ Hamon, *The Coming Moves of God*, 29. As a theologian favoured for his support of the charismatic movement, Grudem argues the case for NT apostles only, which makes him not spirit-filled by Hamon's criteria even though Hamon's associates quote him at times. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 911.

¹⁹⁰ ASKDrBrown, “An Apostolic Leader Calls for Changes,” 35:23.

¹⁹¹ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 143.

connotations of status, authority, or inapproachability conferred by the title.¹⁹² The ordinary Christians do not participate in appointing their leaders and there is no means to question the authority of the leaders or to hold them accountable. Wagner saw accountability as peer-oriented, where units of apostles hold themselves accountable to each other within such groups as ICAL.¹⁹³ Similarly for the prophets, in what Wagner described as “public” accountability, prophecies given during a meeting of the ACPE were read aloud at a conference with Cindy Jacobs and five other ACPE prophets on stage “making appropriate comments as the Lord directed.”¹⁹⁴ As recipients of a barrage of messages that assure them their temporal and personal destiny is optimistic, concomitantly audiences choose not to ask questions because churches, conferences, seminars, or other types of meetings are places where messages are delivered with entertaining panache, Christians can immerse themselves in deeply emotive music with (presumably) cathartic effect, and church, in Wagner’s words, is “fun.”

The most notable aspect of the argument for apostles and prophets is that it is argued almost entirely in the realm of popular literature.¹⁹⁵ Other than those cited in this chapter, little scholarly opinion is expressed on the topic. One possible reason is that few scholars have found it necessary to articulate exegetical alternatives in the reading of Eph 2:20, 4:11, or 1 Cor 12:28. However, as the doctrine grows in influence this presents a problem: scholarly silence that abdicates the publicly-accessible platform of theological discourse to louder and better marketed but ultimately untutored voices. This issue has become more marked with the exponentially increasing influence of these voices within church settings and is particularly noticeable in the subject of the next chapter: dominion theology and the mandate for Christians to take authoritative control of society.

¹⁹² Thumma, “The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory,” 281-282.

¹⁹³ Wagner, *Apostles Today*, 18, 96-97.

¹⁹⁴ Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 139-140.

¹⁹⁵ One of the few exceptions is a dissertation that argues for the legitimacy of the “charismatic apostolate” on grounds that it is now so widely accepted that it is preferable to promote apostolic ministries over stifling them. Although the thesis reviews a lot of the literature pertaining to the restoration of apostles, it goes no further in advancing a scripturally-based case or explaining *why* it is so important to have churches governed by apostles and prophets. Benjamin Guthrie McNair Scott, “Making Sense of Contemporary Charismatic Apostolates: An Historical and Theological Appraisal” (Th.D. diss., King’s College London, 2012), 214, 251-252.

Chapter 8: Dominion Theology

Intertwined with the teaching on apostles and prophets, the dominion mandate has gained increasing prominence and remains the central agenda for many adherents of the NAR-style theologies that Wagner promoted. His final “paradigm shift” was to what he viewed as the reformation of society by Christians.¹ This involved not only Christians taking leadership of all aspects of society, but also having the world’s wealth transferred to them to facilitate the task at hand. In this conception, eschatology played a more prominent role than it had in the movements previously examined in this thesis.

There are three qualifications to make at the commencement of this chapter. Firstly, although it traces the dominionist theology promoted by Peter Wagner, by no means does this imply that his particular brand represents all of those who hold to dominionist thought or that his group of associates are the only evangelicals associated with what Bruce Barron irenically describes as the “dominionist impulse.”² The ideas of dominionism have become widespread and the assortment of adherents ranges from those who focus entirely on prayer as the solution to influencing the world, to those who advocate military solutions.³ However, the writers cited in this chapter were chosen because of their associations with Wagner’s variety of dominion theology, their prominence amongst dominion advocates, and their ties to Bill Johnson’s Bethel Church.

Secondly, terminology is important to the topic. Some of the vocabulary is loaded with political or pejorative implications and it is easy to mistakenly employ labels because of the fluidity in the way even proponents such as Wagner deploy their own terminology. Some

¹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 271-272.

² Bruce Barron, *Heaven on Earth?: The Social and Political Agendas of Dominion Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 12. Neither are all who espouse the dominion mandate of Gen 1:28 dominionists; see Barron, 13-14.

³ For example, we cannot presume to know the degree to which Wagner would have aligned himself with statements made by Rick Joyner, a prominent advocate for dominionist theology and the Seven Mountains mandate: “I believe our only hope is a military takeover. Martial law. And the most crucial element of that is who the marshall is going to be. I believe that there are noble leaders in our military that love the republic, they love everything we stand for and they could seize the government.” MorningStar Ministries, “Rick Joyner controversial TV show stirs up Americans, ‘Has Democracy Failed?’” *YouTube*, 5 October 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oV_a-L82JT4> (2 February 2021), 7:48.

of the terms that will arise in this chapter include theocracy, theonomy, dominionism, Reconstructionism, Kingdom Now, and dominion theology. Wagner used some terms interchangeably. “Dominion mandate,” “cultural mandate,” “social transformation” or the “7-M (seven mountains) mandate” are confusingly mixed in his writing and are seldom differentiated or fully explained.⁴ The closest definition he gave is that the cultural mandate is an “assignment from God to take dominion and transform society.”⁵ However, all the terminology is framed by his conception of Christians taking dominion over the world’s societies and structures. As with the NAR label, a number of prominent proponents associated with the theology behind the dominion mandate avoid using the term or otherwise deny the descriptor, most likely in response to adverse publicity.⁶ In this chapter, those who subscribe to dominion theology or the dominion mandate that Wagner espouses necessarily will be described as dominionists, but the use of the term in relation to these figures does not imply that they are willing to describe themselves openly as such. It merely means that they adhere to and teach very similar ideas, while maintaining close association with or endorsing others with the same dominion agenda.⁷

Thirdly, eschatology plays a role in the formation of dominionist ideas and so requires some attention. Eschatology in dominionist thought is not a motivating force. Rather,

⁴ For his usage of the different terms see Wagner, *Dominion!*, 59, 171, 174, 182.

⁵ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 46. This definition of the cultural mandate originates (and is adapted) from the neo-Calvinist thinking of individuals such as Abraham Kuyper. Compare Wagner’s earlier definition of the cultural mandate: to live with integrity, to stand up against social injustice, and to “promote *shalom* to the greatest extent possible.” Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, 13-14.

⁶ For example, Barron noted that well-known media personality Pat Robertson refuses the labels associated with the dominionist agenda but does have “definite affinities” with the worldview of the theology. Barron, *Heaven on Earth?*, 1992), 12.

⁷ Michael McVicar issues a warning to researchers as he explains how in the 1980s some evangelical critics appropriated the terms dominionism, dominionist, and dominion theology to construct a discourse depicting an extremist right-wing ideology that was “shadowy, ill-defined and apparently nefarious” until it “leaped, virus like, from its host in the evangelical press to the alternative secular press, where it mutated into something more dangerous and far more insidious.” In doing so, the terms became charged with meaning, became strongly associated with the Christian Right, and were pushed to the “fringe” by being separated out from “true” evangelicalism. Michael J. McVicar, “‘Let them have Dominion’: ‘Dominion Theology’ and the Construction of Religious Extremism in the US Media,” *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 25:1, (Spring 2013): 126-127. McVicar’s comment illustrates Cooper’s point (see “Introduction” to this thesis, n21) about outsiders alienating groups from the mainstream through naming and categorizing them, see Cooper, “Emerging, Emergent, Emergence,” 399-400. See also Fer, “An Affective (U-)Turn in the Sociology of Religion?,” 142-168, on interpretive paradigms that confine researchers within “disciplinary boundaries” thereby allowing the possibility for erroneous perspectives.

eschatology is used as a device for orienting to a theological agenda of power and control, a significant factor in the functional aspects of dominionism.

The Dominion Narrative

The principle of the dominion mandate is based on just two biblical verses:

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Gen 1:26, NRSV).

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen 1:28, NRSV).

The interpretation of these two verses is important to understanding the rationale behind the theology.⁸ Although Genesis states that God created humankind to have dominion, the dominionist reading is that it is the Christians who are mandated to take it. Furthermore, the scope of dominion is not just over plant and animal life but includes authority over all other humans, the structures that comprise society, and the demonic powers, because they are also living things that move on the earth.⁹ This, declares Enlow, is what the prophets have been speaking since the world began.¹⁰

In the narrative of the dominion mandate, apologists for the theology explain that God established the government of the earth with Adam and Eve as the first governors.¹¹ They

⁸ Wagner’s notion of what is meant by the (English translation of) “dominion” has its origins in the Stoic and Aristotelian view of human uniqueness and superiority over nature. Ironically, a characteristic throughout Wagner’s life’s work was his repeated insistence that Christianity was damaged by the “Greek mindset” and that his call was to return to the “Hebrew mindset” to remove the destructive impact of the Greek philosophers on Christian thought. As with this example, on numerous occasions he betrayed his unfamiliarity with the complex relationship between Christianity and ancient Greek philosophy as he repeatedly and inadvertently revealed the “Greek” roots of his own orientation. See Richard Bauckham, *Living With Other Creatures* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 20-24.

⁹ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 186-187.

¹⁰ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 186.

¹¹ This interpretation should be contrasted with others referring to the English translation of Gen 1:26, 28: to “rule” or “have dominion over.” Commonly-held views pertain to “rule” meaning a type of stewardship (cf. Gen 2:15), or that the rule of God’s people will only occur at the eschaton. Three viewpoints are noted here because of their challenge to the interpretations of dominion theology. Bauckham suggests that humans wrongfully interpret dominion as solely a hierarchical relationship where also it includes a horizontal aspect that recognizes our “common creatureliness” with the rest of nature in giving glory to the Creator. Hence the relationship consists more of mutual service and care than domination. Stanley argues for contextually weighing the entire canon where, in light of the *imago dei*, humans are intended to rule over the elements in creation that we might

were to have dominion over all of creation but he also allowed them the authority to give their dominion away, which they did, to Satan.¹² Satan's goal was to take back the authority he had lost when he fell from heaven and he saw the opportunity to accomplish this through Adam: "God gave Adam the authority to give his authority over to Satan!"¹³ The visual symbol of this was the "apple."¹⁴ God's plan for the history of the world was suddenly changed because of Adam's action, but, equally suddenly, changed back with the advent of Jesus Christ.¹⁵ According to Cindy Jacobs, "Jesus' main emphasis was not the gospel of salvation but the gospel of the kingdom of God."¹⁶ The reason for Jesus' death on the cross was not what Christians tend to think:

The main purpose of Jesus dying on the cross was not so that you can go to heaven. The main purpose of his death was so that His kingdom can be established in you so that, as a result, you can exercise kingdom authority on the earth (Luke 17:21) and reconcile the world back unto him (2 Corinthians 5:19).¹⁷

In other words, the dominion over creation was taken back from Satan at the cross.¹⁸ Jesus has returned to heaven and must remain there until Christians fulfil their responsibility to effect the reconciliation of the world, thereby provoking his return (Acts 3:21).¹⁹

In his 2008 book *Dominion!* Wagner explained: "God's dominion mandate tells us that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, His people must replace Satan's dominion over the

otherwise deity: the inverse of "rule" is idolatry. This rule involves benevolence and love as a reflection of our identity within the *imago dei*. Mustol incorporates and builds on similar concepts while emphasizing human responsibility within a properly theocentric worldview. See Bauckham, *Living With Other Creatures*, 20-29, 33-35; Alan Stanley, "The Relationship Between 'Rule' and 'Image' in Genesis 1:26 and Its Importance for Spiritual Formation," Paper presented at ANZABS/STAANZ Conference, Laidlaw College, Christchurch, New Zealand, 30 November 2020, n.p.; John Mustol, *Dusty Earthlings* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2017), 118-153.

¹² Wagner, *Dominion!*, 63-64.

¹³ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 63-65.

¹⁴ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 65.

¹⁵ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 67. Sometimes this is framed in terms of God's "defeat": "God's plan for man was defeated in the Garden of Eden," Earl Paulk, *Satan Unmasked* (Atlanta, GA: K Dimension Publishers, 1984), 98.

¹⁶ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 34, 63.

¹⁷ Joseph Mattera, *Ruling in the Gates* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House Press, 2003), 5. See also Bill Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind: Access to a Life of Miracles* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2014), 38.

¹⁸ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 8. Note the same conception from S.D. Gordon writing in 1911: "When Jesus came, he came to win back what we had lost." S.D. Gordon, "'Authority' over the 'Enemy,'" *The Overcomer* 3:8 (August 1911): 115.

¹⁹ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 133-135, 366; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 185-186; Wagner, *Dominion!*, 73; Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 23-24, 186-187; Harold R. Eberle and Martin Trench, *Victorious Eschatology: A Partial Preterist View*, 2nd ed. (Yakima, WA: Worldcast Ministries & Publishing, 2017), 163.

nations with the blessings of the Kingdom of God.”²⁰ God’s will done on earth as it is in heaven means that every segment of society should be permeated with peace, justice, prosperity, life, health, righteousness, joy, harmony, love, and freedom.²¹ To achieve this state of social transformation in society, he wrote, the “seven supreme molders of culture” must be led, or dominated, by those who agree with God’s standards of human life.²² The seven “molders” (also named “mountains”) of society are religion, family, government, arts and entertainment, media, business, and education.²³ “Kingdom Now” is the popular term for the theology; it is based on a “victorious eschatology” that rejects the “defeatist, negative, escapist, passive” eschatology of Scofield’s dispensationalist, rapture-oriented eschatology.²⁴ The book that convinced Wagner into this new paradigm was by his friend Harold Eberle who had claimed a personal visitation from God announcing a glorious church.²⁵ In echoes of Jonathan Edwards, Eberle wrote: “The view of eschatology presented in this book reveals that the kingdom of God will grow and advance until it fills the earth. The church will rise in unity, maturity, and glory before the return of Jesus.”²⁶

²⁰ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 182. A note on the book itself: once released, the book was almost immediately recalled by the publisher. Because of a substantial advance offered to him, Wagner had moved to a new publisher (Chosen Books, owned by Baker Publishing) but when the publishing rights were handed back to him after its recall, he successfully persuaded his former publisher (Regal) to re-release it with a different title and exactly the same content. Wagner’s preface to the re-released book outlines a dramatic version of events that differs from a less flattering explanation in a private email to the Regal publisher. In the book, he implied that *Dominion!* sold until it “went out of print” and was so controversial that a “firestorm” erupted when “naysayers” responded with a “radioactive explosion of fear,” with some wanting him “ousted from Christendom.” For him, the “silver lining” was “a media rush to my doorstep” including, he proudly noted, a mention in *TIME* magazine. However, he told the Regal publisher that the original book was “recalled almost as soon as it hit the shelves.” He added that Chosen Books was not forthcoming in telling him why the book was recalled, but he was suspicious that “Someone higher in the Baker hierarchy ... reacted negatively to something about it when it was released and decided it was not to be circulated.” This provides useful insight to Wagner’s predilection for modifying information for the purposes of making an impact or selling an idea. C. Peter Wagner, *On Earth as it is in Heaven* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2012), 7-10; Peter Wagner, “Letter to Bill Greig,” 23 August 2010, Fuller Seminary Archives and Special Collections, “Collection 0181: C. Peter Wagner Collection, 1930-2016,” David Allan Hubbard Library, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

²¹ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 11. See also Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 46.

²² Wagner, *Dominion!*, 12. Among the dominionist writers surveyed in this chapter, it is clear that God’s standards are to be decided by the dominionists themselves, including political orientation.

²³ Writers vary their terminology in regard to the seven sectors but they all mean the same thing. So in addition to Wagner’s “molders” and Wallnau’s “mountains,” Enlow refers to either to mountains or “pillars,” where Jacobs uses “gates,” probably as a mean of continuity with her bestselling *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*.

²⁴ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 60; Wagner, *This Changes Everything*, 204.

²⁵ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 196, 200; The Arsenal Bookstore, “About the Author,” <<https://www.arsenalbooks.com/Bringing-the-Future-Into-Focus-Harold-Eberle-p/9781882523207.htm>> (17 February 2021).

²⁶ Eberle, *Victorious Eschatology*, 10. Revivalist Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) envisioned Christianity gradually liberating the world from satanic occupation until the whole earth is filled with God’s glory. Although stylistically Eberle’s book bears a resemblance to many Rapture-oriented books (diagrams, date calculations, and

To accomplish the task of Christian dominion on earth, God has promised, through his prophets, the “Great Transfer of Wealth” to assist with the transformation of society.²⁷

Wagner wrote:

Unfortunately, large segments of the church imagine that there is a direct correlation between piety and poverty. This is a crippling delusion. We must cast out the spirit of poverty and replace it with the godly spirit of prosperity if we expect to act as effective agents of social transformation.²⁸

The wealth message was twofold. Firstly, God will supernaturally ensure the transfer of wealth to his people to enable them to carry out their mandate. As the Egyptians voluntarily handed over their valuables to the departing Israelites, and later as God supernaturally preserved this wealth by drowning them when they pursued the Israelites, so contemporary financial organisations will be penetrated to allow God’s people to come away with the wealth.²⁹ Secondly, and inevitably, the wealth message became personal: God wants *you* to be wealthy.³⁰ In *The Reformation Manifesto* Jacobs devoted extensive discussion to the “curse” of poverty.³¹ She held Francis of Assisi responsible for teaching the Christian world that “poverty equates spirituality, and therefore wealth is sinful.”³² Her call was for Christians to shift their worldview on money to a “biblical stance” because of the need to acquire wealth and influence to establish God’s kingdom on earth.³³ Adam’s fall in the garden brought about the curse; the outcome of the curse was scarcity. The eisegetical approach that pervades so much of the literature examined here surfaced again in Jacob’s assertion: “When Jesus came

a step-by-step interpretation of John’s Revelation), Eberle’s primary objective was to repudiate “pessimistic” Scofield-style dispensationalism and replace it with the “optimistic” partial preterist position. He wrote: “We want to reassure you that if you embrace the partial preterist view, you will soon have a victorious, optimistic view that will give you confidence and energy to plan for the future and live today,” 71.

²⁷ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 19, 191. The first step in acquiring wealth is to “listen to the prophets” and “get as near to them as you can” in order to receive “guidance that God may give to you through them.” C. Peter Wagner, “Stewarding for Reformation,” in *The Reformer’s Pledge*, compiled by Ché Ahn (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2010), 209.

²⁸ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 19.

²⁹ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 193. Wagner claims that the parables of the talents in Matt 25 and Luke 19 are mistakenly interpreted as referring to personal gifts or talents. These parables, he asserts, are dealing with finances and financial markets: the workers were instructed to *trade* the money entrusted to them. The parables are about managing money. Wagner, “Stewarding for Reformation,” 204.

³⁰ Although it is not relevant to discuss at length here, the promoters of wealth transfer can often talk from their own personal experiences of enormous amounts of money pouring into their own ministries. For just two examples note the extent of Chuck Pierce’s empire or details of Bethel Church’s income: Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 58-60; Annelise Pierce, “The Really Big Business of Bethel Church, Part 1: Show Us the Money!” *A News Cafe*, 13 May 2019, <<https://anewscafe.com/2019/05/13/redding/the-really-big-business-of-bethel-church-part-1-show-us-the-money/>> (23 September 2019).

³¹ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 157-168.

³² Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 157.

³³ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 158. Wagner endorses this view in his Foreword to the book, 10.

to reverse the curse of the fall, He not only paid the price for our sin, but according to Galatians 3:13-14, broke the curse and its effects: scarcity, want, and lack.”³⁴ Wagner’s approach to eliminating the “repugnant” and “pernicious” spirit of poverty was summed up in the subtitle to the ninth chapter of *Dominion!*: “Money Answers Everything!”³⁵ As his dominion message progressed, so did his emphasis on personal wealth:

The word gospel means good news, you know that right? So Jesus said the main thing that I come for is to preach good news to the poor. Now if you’re poor, what’s the best news you could possibly hear? That you’re not going to be poor anymore, you’re going to be prosperous, right? Think about that, that’s what Jesus came for so he focussed on poverty and he said I have come to preach good news. Is it God’s will that you be poor? No! It’s God’s will that you be prosperous...the final measurement of whether a certain social group is transformed is—and these are technical terms—is the eradication of systemic poverty.³⁶

Sources of Influence

The historical background to dominion theology depends on who is telling it. In an evangelical sector where theological ideas continue to evolve rapidly, the most current formulation of Kingdom Now theology is the “seven mountains mandate.” It focuses on the role of Christians in taking dominion of society to transform it, with the eschatological premise taking a secondary role. For this reason, the writers who explain seven mountains theology trace the origins to a 1975 meeting between two prominent leaders of youth ministries who putatively envisioned the concept independently of each other. Loren Cunningham of YWAM and Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ were surprised to find that each had compiled a (similar but not identical) list of areas of influence in which Christians could help to shape society.³⁷ Virtually all “seven mountain” writers recount the story, with varying degrees of emphasis on supernatural revelation as the central impetus for the idea: the fateful meeting therefore is tied directly to God’s inspiration and will. Former pastor and motivational speaker Lance Wallnau claimed credit for envisaging the “mountain”

³⁴ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 159.

³⁵ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 181. Wagner’s conception of what constitutes poverty is demonstrated in his explanation of how he broke the curse over his own life. This spirit was exemplified by his habit of buying clothes from the Salvation Army thrift store and refusing to allow installation of air conditioning in his car even while he was receiving a good salary. The curse was broken when the Wagners received cash gifts that allowed them to dine in an expensive restaurant and trade in the older car for a new one. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 264.

³⁶ MRTV Media Revival TV. “Peter Wagner Arise & Shine Gathering 2015.” *YouTube*. 23 June 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hzmd9viA40Y>> (2 February 2021), 1:11:43.

³⁷ 1) Home; 2) church; 3) schools; 4) government and politics; 5) media; 6) arts, entertainment and sports; 7) commerce, science, technology. Loren Cunningham, *Making Jesus Lord: The Dynamic Power of Laying Down Your Rights* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 1988), 134.

imagery. It integrates the SWM notion of “high places” as strongholds occupied by “kings” (the “elites”) who hold the authority over their respective mountains and that are guarded by satanic powers.³⁸ These are the spheres that Christians must target in their bid to overthrow the satanic presence that rules from the “second heaven” and controls each mountain.³⁹

Wagner outlined a longer but tendentious history as the background to dominion theology. Beginning with Constantine through Martin Luther and John Calvin to Netherlands Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper, he claimed a long history of Christian attempts at societal transformation.⁴⁰ However, according to Wagner, their attempts were flawed. He implied this was because they lacked the spiritual equipping and maturity now found in present-day advocates for the dominion mandate. Constantine failed because he established a theocracy where ultimately the government made the church impotent and caused the “Dark Ages.” Luther operated out of a faulty “Greek-oriented” dualism that separated the Church from the surrounding culture.⁴¹ Calvin correctly identified the need for a cultural mandate but did not understand the role of supernatural power in implementing it to transform society. Kuyper as Calvin’s disciple failed because he had not grasped the importance of strategic-level spiritual warfare.

As evident throughout his writing, there was an ongoing tension between Wagner’s message of rejecting the past (“old wineskins”) and the need to suggest a lineage of tradition within Christian orthodoxy. The appeal to tradition implies a doctrine has stability and authenticity. Concomitantly, Wagner’s concern was to encourage acceptance of the innovations he was promoting. Scholars have noted how this same tension arises in other developing religious ideations such as the New Age. The tension is resolved by suggesting

³⁸ Lance Wallnau, “The Seven Mountain Mandate,” in *The Reformer’s Pledge*, compiled by Ché Ahn (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2010), 177-179, 181-182. See Chapter 5 in this thesis on spiritual mapping, and Wagner, “Summary: Mapping Your Community,” in Wagner, *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*, 225-230.

³⁹ Bruce Wilson, “Lance Wallnau Explains the Seven Mountains Mandate,” *YouTube*, 17 July 2009, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQbGnJd9poc>> (15 February 2021), 4:57. See also Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 52. Enlow explains that the second heaven is where the battle for earth takes place. Whoever reigns in the second heaven will rule the “corporate thought realm.” Demonic powers have already been displaced from third heaven authority. See below for further comment on the second heaven.

⁴⁰ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 42-47, 109-110.

⁴¹ The notion of a “Dark Ages” in medieval times is not supported by the vast majority of scholarly opinion but persists in popular culture. In his (often-repeated) dismissal of Constantine, Wagner did not appear to perceive the irony in Constantine’s efforts to establish a Christian society as bearing a remarkable resemblance to his own dominion mandate, and in his criticism of Luther, neither did he acknowledge the problem of dualism that pervades his own theology.

that new ideas provide modalities of advancement or necessary improvements in the historical progression, even as inconvenient or conflicting details are glossed over or ignored.⁴² In line with this strategy, Wagner claimed that, while the “social gospel” had been commandeered by liberal theologians in recent history, as he and his colleagues communicated the importance of strategic-level spiritual warfare (particularly at Lausanne II in Manila 1989), a resultant paradigm shift among evangelicals brought greater understanding among them. Finally, evangelicals recognised the need to socially transform cities or nations, thereby living out the true message of the Kingdom of God, which is to take dominion.⁴³ Wagner also credited John Dawson’s book *Taking Our Cities for God* as initiating this paradigm shift towards the cultural mandate.⁴⁴ In this way, Wagner made his case for the dominion theology of the present time as finally the appropriate response to God’s mandate for Christians.

Wagner’s repeatedly stated attribution to Dawson’s work draws attention to one historical influence that he never mentioned: American “Manifest Destiny.” Dawson’s orientation in his second book, *Healing America’s Wounds*, appeared to be aligned with this belief in God-ordained American expansionism, proposed by Jonathan Edwards and consciously promoted since 1845.⁴⁵ Even though unacknowledged by Wagner, some observers have suggested that indeed the roots of dominion theology are found in Manifest Destiny beliefs.⁴⁶ If they are correct about this connection, it highlights the very American orientation of dominion theology. Variations can be found in other regions of the world, but today’s chief proponents are American, and they frame their worldview in specifically American terms.

⁴² See Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 34.

⁴³ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 48-55. In relating the “history” of the shift towards social transformation in evangelical thinking, Wagner conflated the Lausanne declaration on social responsibility with his own dominion theology. See Lausanne Movement, “Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment,” *Lausanne Occasional Paper* 21, 26 June 1982, <<https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-21#4>> (18 February 2021). For a more nuanced history of Christian social activism for reform see Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 177-183.

⁴⁴ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 53-54.

⁴⁵ Dawson, *Healing America’s Wounds*, 45-46, 263. Note that even though Dawson expressly condemns “Manifest Destiny” for its agenda of dispossessing the indigenous peoples of America (177) nevertheless he implicitly endorses the overall concept by distinguishing the journalistic definitions of the 1840s from other expressions of it, such as that of Edwards. Note that Dawson did discuss themes related to dominion theology in his first book but later denied that he was promoting an “ecclesiastical takeover of cities in a governmental sense.” Dawson, *Taking Our Cities*, 128-130, 200; Dawson, *Healing America’s Wounds*, 15. Manifest Destiny should not be confused with “Manifest Sons of God,” emerging from Latter Rain theology and denoting Christian elites. For advocacy of the latter see Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 63-64, 385-386.

⁴⁶ Marshall, “Destroying arguments,” 101. Holvast links the ideologies of both church growth and the SWM to Manifest Destiny (as precursors to dominion theology, see 118); Holvast, “Spiritual Mapping,” 210-213, 226.

The suggestion of a link with Manifest Destiny indicates that the history of Wagner's brand of dominion theology goes back further than the meeting between Cunningham and Bright and is more complex than Wagner's interpretation. For example, dominionist ideas appear among some of the writers whose influence on spiritual warfare theology was noted in a previous chapter, drawing attention to the persisting influence of Romanticism on some sectors of Christianity, even after its heyday. Commenting on Gen 1:28 in a 1911 article for Jessie Penn-Lewis's magazine *The Overcomer*, S.D. Gordon wrote: "We were given authority, we were made masters of the earth, and all the powers of the earth, and masters of our own power as well. Man was made a master, man was born a king, he was given dominion over all the powers of the earth, everything subject to him."⁴⁷ For Gordon, authority meant power over one's personal sphere: "Do you realise what it means if we used our authority? Do you need something? Are you praying for something? Because when you need something, you are to *take* it. It belongs to you in your Brother's Name, the Lord Jesus, the Elder Brother."⁴⁸ Over twenty years earlier, "Higher Life" proponent Andrew Murray had repeatedly expressed the same concept: the people of Christ have the power and authority "to obtain and dispense the powers of heaven here on earth."⁴⁹

Interwoven with notions of power and authority were the eschatological premises that emerged in Murray's writing. He made it clear that the second coming of Christ depended on God's people taking up their positions as kings and priests: "As image-bearer and representative of God on earth, redeemed man has by his prayers to determine the history of this earth."⁵⁰ Similarly to Gordon, Murray portrayed prayer as the means to asserting authority over earth but did not envisage the rule of society as did the dominionists who emerged a century later.⁵¹ As the proponents of dominionism encountered the ideas of Murray and others, each may have contributed something to the eventual formation of ideas about the restoration of God's perfect society. However, a scholarly source closer to home was more

⁴⁷ Gordon, "Authority over the Enemy," 115.

⁴⁸ Gordon, "Authority over the Enemy," 116. Italics in the original.

⁴⁹ Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, 66, 112, 131, 133, 177.

⁵⁰ Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, 69, 113, 134.

⁵¹ Prior to Murray, nascent postmillennialist ideas can be found in Jonathan Edwards (see n26 above) and Johann Blumhardt, the exorcist of Gottlieb Dittus (see Chapter 4 n2). Blumhardt anticipated an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all humankind before the return of Christ and his ideas would have been familiar to those in the SWM who found him an inspirational exemplar. Blumhardt's biographer depicts his eschatology as conceptual but not formed into a specific doctrine; it is based more on Blumhardt's hope for the future. Richard Lovelace, "The Occult Revival in Historical Perspective," in Montgomery, *Demon Possession*, 87; Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt*, 233-234, 405, 407-409.

directly connected to the eschatological ideas that shaped Wagner's brand of dominion theology.

George Eldon Ladd (1911-1982) was a professor of NT theology and exegesis at Fuller Theological Seminary from 1950 to 1980. He was a participant in the fundamentalism versus neo-evangelical battles among Fuller faculty staff and rejected Rapture-oriented dispensationalism in favour of Christ's millennial kingdom established on earth.⁵² Although Ladd's published work on Kingdom of God eschatology had met with mixed responses from academic peers, his views eventually became popular and influential.⁵³ Ladd viewed the Kingdom of God as a "dynamic power at work among men," present not just in its signs or powers but present in its very being.⁵⁴ Through Jesus, God is redemptively active on earth and the struggle toward victorious combat over Satan is an ongoing work of the kingdom.⁵⁵ Ladd's ultimate thesis was that the kingdom of God is present "now" but "not yet" in anticipation of Jesus' return.⁵⁶ In the preface to *Power Evangelism*, John Wimber acknowledged his debt to Ladd and declared that his work on the Kingdom of God was the theological foundation for power evangelism.⁵⁷ He used Ladd's teaching as the springboard into his own conceptions of the spiritual tug-of-war with Satan for human souls.⁵⁸ There is no information available to indicate if today's advocates of dominion theology have studied Ladd's work, but what is certain is that Wimber's reliance on Ladd had a flow-on effect on those he in turn influenced, among whom are prominent dominion theology advocates such as Bill Johnson. However, a point of distinction between Ladd and present-day "Kingdom Now" advocates is that Ladd did not envisage the final consummation of the Kingdom of God, the "Second Coming," as being brought about by the work of humans in God's service.⁵⁹

⁵² For Ladd's eschatological orientation, see Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 150-151.

⁵³ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 248-250.

⁵⁴ The term associated with Ladd's eschatology is "inaugurated eschatology" whereby Jesus' victory at the cross restored the Kingdom of God to earth. Its final consummation will not occur until Jesus returns to earth, hence the frequent saying "already, but not yet."

⁵⁵ Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 135, 139, 141, 148-149.

⁵⁶ Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 333-335. The term associated with Ladd's eschatology is "inaugurated eschatology" whereby Jesus' victory at the cross restored the Kingdom of God to earth. Its final consummation will not occur until Jesus returns to earth, hence the frequent saying "already, but not yet."

⁵⁷ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, xiii.

⁵⁸ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 13-14.

⁵⁹ Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 329.

In his rendition of historical development in dominion theology Wagner bypassed discussion of the most important stimulus to his form of dominion theology.⁶⁰ His passing reference to R.J. Rushdoony in connection with Kuyper and Calvin provided the only acknowledgement of Reconstructionism, the theology that bears the closest resemblance to the dominion mandate and almost certainly is its chief progenitor. Although the ideas that contributed to the shaping of Reconstructionism can be traced back as far back as Augustine, it was the presuppositionalism of Cornelius van Til that most significantly influenced Rousas Rushdoony (1916-2001), the Calvinist architect of Reconstruction theology.⁶¹ Rushdoony's profile remained relatively obscure over most of his lifetime but he was prolific in producing scholarly tomes that outlined his programme for theonomy: society ruled by God's law.⁶² Presuppositionalism holds that the only basis for rational thought originates from the Christian God and is necessarily Christian; thus the Christian perspective is the only valid worldview. Building on van Til's teaching, Rushdoony proposed therefore that society can be successful only if it is run according to God's programme: his law.⁶³ Rushdoony's basis of law included all of OT law. His methodology in *The Institutes of Biblical Law* was to painstakingly interpret the Ten Commandments and, in McVicar's words, formulate his ideas into a "mind-bending conflation of ancient legal codes with contemporary cultural problems in the United States."⁶⁴ For example, the ninth commandment concerning false witness against a neighbour led him to an expository declaration that Christians must oppose the use

⁶⁰ There is no space to devote attention to several other important individuals whose philosophical ideas contributed significantly to the development of Rushdoony's thought. These include Netherlands Prime Minister and neo-Calvinist intellectual Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), fellow Calvinist Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), and theologian/philosopher Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984). Those still alive in Rushdoony's productive years either rejected Rushdoony's conclusions (Dooyeweerd, van Til) or distanced themselves after showing initial interest (Schaeffer).

⁶¹ For an overview of the historical influences on Reconstructionism see Julie J. Ingersoll, *Building God's Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 14-19. For the role of Abraham Kuyper and the connection to van Til, see Barron, *Heaven on Earth?*, 35-39. For van Til's influence see Michael J. McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction: R.J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 19, 34-43. See also Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 225-227. For how Reconstructionism regenerated into an increasingly significant movement after appearing to fade out, see Crawford Gribben, *Survival and Resistance in Evangelical America: Christian Reconstruction in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

⁶² Rushdoony's most important work was *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, a weighty three-volume set that laid out his programme for society. His lectures on the same material also are widely available as audiotapes.

⁶³ Van Til appeared to have been disconcerted by the use to which Rushdoony put his philosophy. He expressed his concerns in a private letter, a portion of which was published later by Rushdoony's son-in-law for polemical reasons. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), 133n21.

⁶⁴ McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 129. McVicar comments that arguably the largest portion of Rushdoony's total lifetime work was concerned with family matters. Rushdoony's views on family organisation and function (including education of children) ran along the same lines of thought as his biblical law for society; therefore, they were tightly structured with clearly demarcated gender roles.

of lie-detectors because an individual can be forced into a situation where his privacy, enshrined in the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, is invaded.⁶⁵ Most controversially, the eighteen offenses listed in the OT as requiring the death penalty would also stand in the biblical society he was proposing. These included striking or cursing a parent (Ezek 21:12-14), incorrigible delinquency (Deut 21:18-21), adultery (Lev 20:10-21), or homosexuality (Lev 20:13).⁶⁶

Setting aside the more radical aspects of Rushdoony's doctrine, Reconstructionism and the kind of dominion theology under scrutiny here reach parallel agreement in their underlying tenets. The dominionist interpretations of Gen 1:28, the failure of Adam, the restorative purpose of Christ on the cross, and the subsequent responsibilities of Christians are identical: "Man is summoned to create the society God requires."⁶⁷ The language, such as "dominion mandate" or "cultural mandate," carries the same meaning.⁶⁸ Rushdoony thought in terms of "spheres" of authority, for example, church, home, government/state, school, or vocation.⁶⁹ These bear a strong resemblance to the "Seven Mountains" of religion, family, government, arts and entertainment, media, business, and education. As do "Seven Mountains" dominionists, Rushdoony believed in the victorious militant church asserting the dominion of Christ over the entire world.⁷⁰ However, there are points of divergence. For example, as mentioned above, Rushdoony insisted that the strict application of biblical law (read OT law) is the only way to fulfil the mandate and to avoid rebellion against God. This principle is avoided by Wagner's variety of dominionists, most likely because of their preference to avoid the language of sin or punishment, and to frame their worldviews only in positive or optimistic terms.⁷¹ Furthermore, Rushdoony decried Pentecostalism for its "antinomian and un-Biblical doctrine of the Spirit," and the Keswick movement "higher way" to sanctification (as an alternative to law), neither of which reconciles with the theology of

⁶⁵ Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon/Ross House Books, 2020 [1973]), 1:553-554. See also McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 129-131.

⁶⁶ Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 1:238. His rationale was that the threat of the death penalty acts as a deterrent and hence leads to a reduction in crime, 1:239.

⁶⁷ Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 1:3-4. See also McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 4-5.

⁶⁸ Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 1:312, 1:738. "Cultural Mandate" derives originally from Calvinism.

⁶⁹ Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 1: 218, 220. Inspired by Kuyper's "Sphere Sovereignty" in social structures. See Timothy Keene, "Kuyper and Dooyeweerd: Sphere Sovereignty and Modal Aspects," *Transformation* 33:1 (January 2016): 67-68.

⁷⁰ McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 137. This included mutual postmillennialist inclinations.

⁷¹ Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 1:10-11.

Wagner and his associates.⁷² The greatest incongruity is found in the contrast between Rushdoony's strongly Calvinist orientation and Wagner's rejection of the same, declared when recounting attempts to "indoctrinate" him into Calvinism during his early Fuller years.⁷³ His eventual response was to embrace Open Theism, a system diametrically opposite to Calvinism.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Rushdoony's work clearly remains foundational to the ideology that Wagner promoted.⁷⁵

Given the replication of the key themes from Reconstructionism, one question that emerges pertains to the likelihood of dominion theology advocates, from Wagner on, having read in any depth the huge volumes of intellectual and very dense material produced by Rushdoony or his successors. Wagner knew enough of Rushdoony to mention him in passing. Cindy Jacobs quoted Rushdoony's son-in-law, Gary North, the individual most responsible for bringing Reconstructionism to public attention.⁷⁶ Although the assumption can be only speculative, the paucity of any further material that suggests extensive reading indicates that it is more probable that ideas were transmitted as individuals encountered each other and a popular version of Rushdoony's theology was transmitted through personal influences. Indeed, through all his published material Wagner repeatedly and explicitly discussed how influential personal contacts had been in shaping his thinking.

This process is exemplified in one particular person: the well-connected Earl Paulk, the foremost promoter of "Kingdom Now" theology who maintained a high profile as bishop of his mega-church in Atlanta (Chapel Hill Harvester Church).⁷⁷ As he attained a nation-wide

⁷² Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 1:311. Rushdoony also attacked the Holiness movement as running "counter to common sense" because of its belief in the saints' perfection.

⁷³ The theology of Wagner and the other dominionists is oriented to Arminianism but this was never expressed by Wagner. It is more implicit in his rejection of Calvinism and his support for human agency and power.

⁷⁴ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 79-80. Open Theism resists Calvinism in its declarations that God's flexible will is open to the future and that human actions are able to influence God's decisions and acts.

⁷⁵ Reconstructionism is also the source for much of the thought expressed by the American Christian Right; its appeal lies with how Rushdoony's theology provides a basis for political engagement. Ingersoll, *Building God's Kingdom*, 1; McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 4. Journalists tend to lump Wagner's brand of dominion theology together with the Christian Right and Tea Party politics. As already noted, this is largely a construction, although undoubtedly individuals connected with all or some of these groups do associate with each other. However, no ideological links necessarily should be assumed, even though sometimes they may exist. Another legacy left by Rushdoony is his work on Christian education that has significantly shaped the Home-schooling movement in America.

⁷⁶ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 170.

⁷⁷ Eventually a series of sexual scandals involving Paulk and a number of his senior staff, followed by a perjury conviction, led to the demise of his church shortly after his death in 2009.

profile and media presence and developed relationships with politicians, he had many opportunities to spread his message.⁷⁸ However, his personal history demonstrates how some individuals influenced him into shifts in his theology and how Bill Hamon in particular could be a conduit for ideas passed along a chain of relationships.

Having been raised in the Holiness tradition of Pentecostalism, Paulk became a minister, but when he found himself rejecting the legalism of his childhood denomination he started a new church that grew to approximately 12,000 at its peak.⁷⁹ Paulk's teaching contained the elements that have achieved popularity in many present-day charismatic circles: dominion theology, the five-fold ministry, the battle against and the binding of Satan, the gospel of wealth poured out on those who tithe, and predictions about the present generation being the last before the coming of Christ.⁸⁰ Furthermore: "[God] created us as little gods, but we have trouble comprehending this truth ... Until we comprehend that we are little gods and we begin to act like little gods, we cannot manifest the Kingdom of God."⁸¹ Derived from Latter Rain teaching, Paulk's early kingdom preaching initially grew out of the influences that came through his personal relationships.⁸² Later his nascent ideas about the kingdom evolved closer towards Reconstructionist ideas as he received direct teaching under Rushdoony and North, read Reconstructionist books, hosted the authors at church events, and sold their materials in the church bookstore.⁸³ Of particular note here is his close association with Bill

⁷⁸ Thumma, "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory," 291, 377-379.

⁷⁹ Barron, *Heaven on Earth?*, 68-69. The truncated version of Paulk's history presented here does not adequately reflect its true nuances and complexities, nor its importance to his later preached theology. Thumma argued a compelling case for the impact that Paulk's early life, persona, resultant consequences of some specific unsavoury behaviours, and his personal relationships had on the shaping of his ministry and its theological directions (including spreading the dominion message). This is important to mention because Thumma demonstrated how personal histories are essential to understanding the sociological and psychological factors shaping leaders and hence the messages they convey to followers. Throughout his study, Thumma also drew attention to similar patterns in other (controversial) religious leaders and some of the scholarly work around these aspects. Thumma, "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory," 19, 33-76, esp. 70-73, 83, 139n9.

⁸⁰ Paulk, *Satan Unmasked*, 22, 36, 120-121, 157, 159, 239-240, 264; Paulk, *Held In The Heavens*, 53, 57. For the link between the concept of dominion and the roots of the "Prosperity Gospel" (E.W. Kenyon) promoted by Paulk, see McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 199n93.

⁸¹ Paulk, *Satan Unmasked*, 96-97. See also Paulk, *Held In The Heavens*, 171. Paulk later attempted to "redeem" this and other controversial statements by "re-educating" his congregation and excising some vocabulary from revised editions of his books. He also toned down his kingdom rhetoric following adverse publicity. Thumma, "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory," 347-348.

⁸² Thumma, "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory," 135-146. The key relationships were with Lynn Mays ("spiritualized charismatic perspective"), and with John Meares and Bill Hamon (Latter Rain). For Latter Rain ideas about the kingdom and how the saints were going to "call the shots," see Riss, *Latter Rain*, 96-97.

Hamon. He was a regular guest speaker at Paulk's church and Paulk wrote an endorsement for one of Hamon's books.⁸⁴ The personal link between Hamon and Paulk was undoubtedly related to Paulk's theological evolution, in the same way that Wagner acknowledged Hamon's substantial influence on his own ideas. However, no matter whether Wagner read substantially on Reconstructionism or whether he absorbed the ideas through interpersonal relationships such as these, Wagner's version of dominion theology provides the basis for the view that prevails among this study's subjects.

Characteristics of the Dominion Mandate

In the dominion mandate we can discern ideas inherited from each of the movements previously examined: Church Growth's quantitative approach to measuring success, the performance of signs and wonders as indicators of God's power, the battle against Satan, and the rule of apostles and prophets as God's appointed leaders.⁸⁵ This means that the points of theological vulnerability noted for each of the movements apply also to the dominion mandate. However, some important characteristics require further scrutiny. These include the role of scripture and God's sovereignty, the eschatology of the movement, the methodology for taking dominion, the power of language in shaping thought, and the personal appeal for adherents.

The Use of Scripture

The relationship of popular dominionist writers to scripture demonstrates four characteristics.⁸⁶ The first is the propensity to read the Bible as a code that can be applied to today's concerns and situations. Numerous examples can be found in Enlow's book, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*.⁸⁷ One such relates to the argument for Christians taking control of society, which is predicated on God's promise to lead the wandering Israelites into a land of

⁸³ Thumma, "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory," 143-144, 218-219, 221; McVicar, *Christian Reconstruction*, 200-201. For the connections between Paulk, Hamon, Latter Rain, and dominion theology see Hamon, *Prophets and Personal Prophecy*, xi; Hamon, *The Coming Moves of God*, 198-199; Barron, *Heaven on Earth?*, 76-79; Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 293-294.

⁸⁴ Thumma, "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory," 271; Hamon, *Prophets and Personal Prophecy*, xi.

⁸⁵ Wagner also tied these together: Wagner, *Dominion!*, 11.

⁸⁶ From this point forward, the dominionists being discussed are those who subscribe to the type of dominion theology taught by Wagner, not those associated with Rushdoony's theories.

⁸⁷ See also Appendix B for Enlow's emphasis on sports results linked to biblical code and meaning.

milk and honey. In Deut 7:1, God listed seven nations that must be destroyed as the Israelites possess the land.⁸⁸ For Enlow, “Each enemy nation [of Deut 7:1] reveals clues about the current rulers of the mountains we must take” and for each there is a demonic power attached and a strategy to follow its defeat.⁸⁹ Therefore, the mountain of media corresponds to the Hittites and it is ruled by Apollyon.⁹⁰ The meaning of “Hittite” is “fear.” Fear is engendered by the media, (particularly networks such as Al Jazeera, “a Goliath for terrorism”) because it reports only bad news.⁹¹ Apollyon means “destroyer” who releases destruction as he controls this mountain. The beings under the control of Apollyon have forked tails like scorpions (Rev 9:11), just as the media have “sting in their tales” by twisting events to manipulate truth. Applying the same methodology to the remaining six mountains, Enlow thus makes his case for scriptural support of the seven mountains concept.⁹²

The second characteristic of dominion literature’s approach to scripture is to remove it from its context and original meaning to assign new meaning. In previous chapters we have noted the problems of interpreting scripture through the lens of a signs and wonders worldview, extrapolating to develop a concrete theology of territorial spirits from verses that biblical scholars acknowledge as contestable in their meaning, or reading specific didactic purpose into biblical narrative. Here in the writing about dominion theology, not only is context ignored but also the writer’s intent in the original verses. As noted above, Cindy Jacobs demonstrates this in her argument for the reversal of the curse that produces “scarcity, want, and lack.”⁹³ She identifies the curse as the cause of poverty (Gen 3:17-19), brought about by Adam’s sin.⁹⁴ Paul’s extended discussion in Galatians contrasts the difference

⁸⁸ Enlow does not comment on Exod 3:8, where, as he issues his promise to Moses, God omits the Girgashites from the list of nations occupying the promised land, thereby reducing the “mountains” to six.

⁸⁹ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 45.

⁹⁰ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 47-49.

⁹¹ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 48, 58. A characteristic of prophets and dominion advocates such as Enlow is to express their personal political views by mixing comments on contemporary events, persons or entities with their theology. For example, see his assertion of how negative media portrayal about American involvement in Iraq ignores the positive impact on Iraqi society, his endorsement of controversial conservative political commentator and conspiracy theorist Sean Hannity, or his comment that Fox News neutralizes the greater darkness released by other outlets. Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 48, 53.

⁹² The other six are (mountain/equivalent biblical nation/characteristic of that nation/associated demonic entity): Government/Girgashites/corruption/Lucifer; Education/Amorites/humanism/Beelzebub; Economy/Canaanites/love of money/Mammon; Celebration/Hivites/compromise/Jezebel; Religion/Perizzites/idolatry/the Religious Spirit (that inhabits the denominations); Family/Jebusites/rejection/Baal.

⁹³ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 159.

⁹⁴ “Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you ...”

between faith and Law, and how Christ's death purchased our freedom from the "curse" of Law's condemnation (Gal 3:13-14). In Jacobs' reading, Paul's meaning is transposed to the curse resulting from the fall in the garden. Here the argument for God's promise of wealth bears no relationship to the scripture used to support her claim.⁹⁵

The third characteristic pertains to wholly extra-biblical conceptions. These take varying forms. Hamon integrates imagination with theology when he claims that Lucifer and his angels reigned on earth during the time of the dinosaurs until the Ice Age when God started to restore earth to make it habitable for humans.⁹⁶ The roots of some other ideas can be found in pseudepigraphic material. A frequently found allusion in many *Elijah List* prophets and dominion writers pertains to notions of a "second" and "third" heaven. Those who refer to these levels of heaven never explain the meaning of the terms but merely treat them as if they are generally accepted frames of reference: "We will move beyond 'second heaven' intercession, where we are overly conscious of the dark forces and their strategies, and we will step into 'third heaven' intercession, where we go into heaven, see the counsel of God, and release His decrees on Earth—thus bringing the will of God 'on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10)."⁹⁷ Elsewhere, Enlow records that Satan is found in the second heaven, as is "the thought life of cities, regions, and nations."⁹⁸ The only possible biblical connection to this is found in Paul's enigmatic reference to the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2-4). Otherwise, the other source is the pseudepigraphical *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, VII:1-3 (Slavonic Enoch), where apostate angels are found languishing in the second heaven.⁹⁹ There is no biblical equivalent for the ten heavens that Enoch was reported to have visited.

The fourth way in which scripture is used references general biblical themes, for example, the behaviours of Jesus or how the fruits of the spirit work. Enlow blends these with reductionist or caricatured versions of scientific understanding to describe how the left and the right sides of the brain engage in a struggle for dominance. People must suppress the left

⁹⁵ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 158-159.

⁹⁶ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 144.

⁹⁷ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 25.

⁹⁸ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 71, 158.

⁹⁹ See W. L. Morfill, trans., *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 5-6. It is unlikely that Enlow, Wallnau, or the other prophets have first-hand knowledge of Enoch's travels through the heavens because they portray the demonic powers ruling over the earth from the second heaven, where Enoch's apostate angels are actually being held prisoner.

because it is a stronghold that restricts access to God, faith, and the fruits of the Spirit.¹⁰⁰ In Enlow's telling, a "right-brained" Jesus was "clearly anti-left-brain intellect." This is because:

Left-brain thinking, when it becomes dominant, squeezes out the things of the Spirit of God. The right brain isn't the kingdom of God, but it's the part of the brain God has created to be open to respond to His ways. It's the chimney through which faith is accessed. You can't do that with the left brain. You can quote all the scriptures on faith and understand the logic of faith, but only the right brain can tap into the actual substance of faith ... All the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, etc.—are all accessed only through the right brain.¹⁰¹

The essential point to note here is that, in the formulation and promulgation of a theology, scripture is not used as a guide to interpretation but rather it is an instrument; a device that is applied to a pre-conceived idea and used as a mechanism to persuade the reader they are apprehending a biblical truth.

Sovereignty of God

In commenting on the relationship between earth and heaven, Wagner wrote that "God's reign was in the heavenlies, and He created the earth with the thought of extending His reign. Earth was to be a colony of heaven."¹⁰² This presents God as a type of demiurge, sovereign only insofar as he can extend his territory, and to be compared alongside Wagner's interpretation of Rev 1:6:

Dominion means being the head and not the tail. Dominion means ruling as kings. It says in Revelation chapter 1:6 that he has made us kings and priests. And check the rest of that verse – it says for dominion! So we are kings for dominion.¹⁰³

Wagner ignored the clear indication in the verse that dominion is seen as belonging to God; instead, he assigned it to humans. When considered in conjunction with each other, his statements reveal a process of reduction in the view of a sovereign God while enhancing the role of humans, which is one of the risks, critics claim, of Open Theism. The elevation of human agency has been one thread that traverses the five movements that Wagner promoted.

¹⁰⁰ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 84-90.

¹⁰¹ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 88-89.

¹⁰² Wagner, *Dominion!*, 70.

¹⁰³ Tom Manning, "NAR Apostle C. Peter Wagner Teaching Its Key Doctrine of Dominionism," *YouTube*, 28 May 2014 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WboWrp-Cwo&t=249s>> (23 July 2018), 00:06. Video from "Starting the Year Off Right" conference, presented by Chuck Pierce and Glory of Zion International, 2-6 January 2008, Denton, Texas. The identification of humans as kings in Rev 1:6 depends on which translation is accessed. NRSV prefers "made us to be a kingdom" where the Amplified has "formed us into a kingdom" and the NET "has appointed us as a kingdom." Most others agree but King James, NKJV, and CEV have "kings."

As Christians progressively were assigned more power and authority, concomitantly the representation of God's sovereignty retreated. One corollary has been claims from many apostles and prophets about their personal visits to heaven, thereby gradually removing boundaries between heaven and earth. Heaven is now merely an extension of earth and vice versa. Overall, the literature of dominion theology is almost exclusively oriented to human interest and concern, making the role of God increasingly subsidiary.

Eschatological Mixture

As with other facets of dominionism, eschatological views are fluid, prone to shift, and are presented vaguely or confusingly by proponents. While three versions are mentioned here, they represent a general tendency among the popular writers on dominion theology. One variety is promoted by Wagner: when Christians have succeeded in establishing the kingdom on earth, then Christ will return. This theology holds that the Church will be prepared: "an overcoming, conquering, love-motivated bride who has made herself ready by fulfilling her mission."¹⁰⁴ The Church's tasks of crushing Satan and annihilating the false prophet and the beast of Revelation will have been accomplished. As the bride, Christians will present the nations of the world to the Lord as his possession, a dowry. This is known as Kingdom Now theology and identified by Wagner as partial preterism; he made it clear that this was a shift away from his former "pre-trib, pre-mil," conception of dispensationalism/Rapture theology.¹⁰⁵ However, Hamon's eschatology was not entirely consistent with this. He outlined Scofield's dispensations and included the Rapture of the Saints among his conceptions of the End Times.¹⁰⁶ His point of difference lay with the church reaching full maturity and restoration, a condition that would provoke the Rapture.¹⁰⁷ Hamon's chronology of events has the Rapture occurring before a (potentially) immediate return to earth to establish the thousand-year kingdom. His anthropocentric portrayal of the Rapture views its purpose as to assemble, immortalize, and organize the faithful into an army to war against and defeat

¹⁰⁴ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 24; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 182. Many commentators draw attention to the erotically charged language that pervades almost any mention of Christ's Bride, for example, the "loving, longing, tingling excitement" of Jesus' "anticipation" described by Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 148.

¹⁰⁵ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 60-62.

¹⁰⁶ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 54, 148, 379. See C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), 5n4 and n5.

¹⁰⁷ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 318.

Satan.¹⁰⁸ Following this victory, the Church will take dominion to rule and reign over every nation and mortal on earth.¹⁰⁹ His 1981 “expectation and conviction” that this would occur before the year 2000 was amended without explanation in a later edition to “within the first century of the third millennium, perhaps before the year 2030.”¹¹⁰

A third perspective starts with the same premise as Wagner and incorporates elements from Hamon but places emphasis on the figure of Elijah. Apostles and prophets are those who have the authority and direct connection to God to lead the expansion of the kingdom of God here on earth.¹¹¹ Their message is that “one of the highest items on God’s current agenda for His people is social transformation,” that is, taking dominion.¹¹² The figure of Elijah is important to unfolding events and puts the Church “in the driver’s seat” to hasten Jesus’ return (2 Pet 3:12): “The Church will be the instrument that will move in the power and spirit of Elijah, restoring all things which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, releasing Jesus from the Heavens and bringing about the Second Coming of Christ.”¹¹³ Johnny Enlow (formerly a deacon under Earl Paulk) frames this as the “Elijah Revolution,” a spiritual tsunami that will change the landscape of society.¹¹⁴ The arrival of “Elijah” (Mal 4:5-6) denotes a “revolution of mercy” for the purpose of avoiding the catastrophic judgment that is scheduled to occur before the Lord returns.¹¹⁵ The assignment of “Elijah Revolutionaries” in transforming society is important because Jesus will not return until it is completed.¹¹⁶ Enlow is not entirely clear in identifying Elijah. While he discusses the “spirit of Elijah,” the centrality of the prophets, and “we” as the Elijah revolutionaries, he also allows that Elijah the person may return, given that he never actually died and hence has a “dual passport to heaven and Earth. Either way, the Elijah Revolution will come.”¹¹⁷ The “company of prophets who are coming forth in the spirit of Elijah” are

¹⁰⁸ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 350, 379-380, 390-391.

¹⁰⁹ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 391.

¹¹⁰ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 327, and see the revised edition (2003), 311. See also n118 below for Hamon’s other attempts to set dates.

¹¹¹ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 27, 31.

¹¹² Wagner, *Dominion!*, 37.

¹¹³ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 136, 137.

¹¹⁴ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 16.

¹¹⁵ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 21-22.

¹¹⁶ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 186-187.

¹¹⁷ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 22, 24-25, 26, 27-28.

those who will see the second coming of Christ.¹¹⁸ In regard to timeframes, the writers are certain that this present generation is the one in which these events will occur.¹¹⁹

Although each of these differences could be parsed to trace the connected threads of influence, it is more useful to attempt to understand *why* eschatological explanations vary. Given the close associations among what is a relatively small group of public advocates on dominionism and given that there is a lack of doctrinal coherence, it suggests that perhaps eschatology is not the main objective for the writers. What they do have in common is the essential message of Christians taking dominion over the world as part of God's ultimate plan. The finer details of the eschatological programme are more of a device to address the Christian hope for the return of Christ; a framework where the content, the power of Christians to take control, carries more meaning than the framework itself. The corollary of this is that it helps to uncover where the real focus lies in the present-day message of dominion. The eschatology is oriented towards the *Now*. It is not future-oriented, nor is it backward-looking. The promises are for now: all expectations and hopes are tied to the present-day.¹²⁰ Now is the time for Christians to gain control over their own lives and, ultimately, the world. In bygone Christian beliefs the emphasis was on God's power and God's timing; this is no longer a valid viewpoint. Power and timing is in the hands of Christians, and their hope for the future is to believe for it to arrive now.

The Power of Language

Language is vitally important in shaping not only how we understand our world but also in how our beliefs are formed and what meaning we assign to them. This occupies a great deal of academic scholarship, especially since Wittgenstein's philosophical approach provided a basis for understanding how language works. Regardless of how fully aware Wagner and his fellow dominionists were of specific techniques of persuasion, patterns in their language demonstrate that at the very least they had an instinct for delivering a message

¹¹⁸ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (2003), 271.

¹¹⁹ Hamon, *The Eternal Church*, (2003), 271; Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 30-31. Given the emphasis that dominionist writers place on forty-year periods, this means that Christ will return before 2041. Hamon earlier predicted the Rapture would occur in 1963 but when it did not, revised his stance on the basis that the Church must first be perfected before the Rapture occurs. Hamon, *The Eternal Church*, (1981), 340-342. Contrast this view of timeframes with the Reconstructionist longer-term vision of perhaps thousands of years until Christian dominion; see Ingersoll, *Building God's Kingdom*, 68, 236.

¹²⁰ See Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 178.

that achieved wide appeal. This section examines four ways they used language to reshape the thinking and the response of those they were preaching to: claiming one thing to disguise the intent towards another, implying an esoteric command of language to convey authoritative voice, using the language of positivity to influence behaviour and belief, and redefining the meaning of specific terms.

The first way they used language pertains to reassurances offered by Wagner that he was dedicated to one concept, held dear in American hearts, when in fact he was proposing another. In his book *Dominion!* he declared his firm commitment to the democratic process and pre-empted fears about its loss by asserting that even with the dominion mandate in place, democracy would prevail.¹²¹ He reiterated this by avowing that the dominion mandate does not imply a theocracy. This, he claimed, is because in a theocracy, God rules, and this rule he will not take until Christ's Second Coming.¹²² Rather, Christians should penetrate society in a manner that makes it possible for them to lead and shape society.¹²³ In propagating and implementing their values in seven sectors, Christians are merely realizing a normal outworking of democracy. His seemingly benign proposition at first glance appears to reflect NT messages about the role of Christians as exemplars in society. However, one sign that democracy is not intended for all citizens occurs in his outline of what it means for the values of the "anti-Christian minority."¹²⁴ The Christian majority who will lead society have the right to ensure that minorities "follow" the rules of democracy as laid down by the majority, for example, as it pertains to public prayer or issues of sexual relationships.¹²⁵

Wagner's democracy that is not a democracy was characterised by mixed messages about what "rule" means and how the "democracy" will operate. In *Dominion!* he wrote: "The Church is called to influence the government, but not to rule over society."¹²⁶ In a 2007

¹²¹ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 14-15.

¹²² Critics disagree with the interpretation that his system is not a theocracy. See for example Frederick Clarkson, "Dominionism Rising: A Theocratic Movement Hiding in Plain Sight," *The Public Eye*, Summer 2016, 18, <<https://www.politicalresearch.org/2016/08/18/dominionism-rising-a-theocratic-movement-hiding-in-plain-sight/>> (31 January 2019).

¹²³ Wagner specified he had the USA in mind ("the whole nation") at one point but even though their frames of reference are usually American-oriented, dominionist writers usually imply the entire world. Wagner, *Dominion!*, 15.

¹²⁴ Elsewhere, Wagner's allusions to those who are anti-Christian indicate that he simply means anyone who is not Christian or who opposes the theology he endorses, for whatever reason.

¹²⁵ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 17-18.

¹²⁶ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 44.

newsletter to his supporters, he wrote that the divine mandate is to “do whatever is necessary” to take dominion.”¹²⁷ His language was adjusted to a more aggressive tone when addressing a responsive audience during a conference:

First of all I want to point out there’s two words, dominion and mandate. The word mandate you gotta understand, mandate means an authoritative order or command. It doesn’t mean a good idea, it doesn’t mean a suggestion. It means an authoritative order. Dominion has to do with control, dominion has to do with rulership, dominion has to do with authority and subduing and it relates to society.¹²⁸

These signposts indicate that Wagner was tailoring his messages according to who might be accessing them.¹²⁹ In print, they were relatively benign and he staunchly defended democracy. His flawed definition of theocracy was almost certainly disingenuous and intended to allay fears about the rule of law suggested by dominionism.¹³⁰ This is confirmed by his inconsistent use of the term in identifying Constantine’s rule as a theocracy.¹³¹ His need to soften the message was likely due to dominionism increasingly attracting media attention to the point that eventually he was forced into a defence against accusations of leading a cult.¹³² However, to receptive audiences he used terms of domination and aggression because, ultimately, his message to them was that they were the ones who would benefit from Christian control of society.¹³³

The second use of language to engender audience responsiveness pertains to the need to establish oneself as an authoritative source. As mentioned above, Enlow associated the “mountain” of media with the Hittites and Apollyon, based on his assertion of “Hittite” meaning “fear” and therefore aligned to the fear-generating reports of the media. His

¹²⁷ C. Peter Wagner, “An Email from C. Peter Wagner, (Apostle-Prophet),” *Fulfilled Prophecy*, 31 May 2007, <<http://www.fulfilledprophecy.com/discussion/viewtopic.php?p=241217&sid=ecb90060f1dabe271bc55f807bd0f5c5#p241217>> (15 February 2021).

¹²⁸ Manning, “NAR Apostle C. Peter Wagner Teaching,” 00:06.

¹²⁹ Although it could be argued instead that he was progressively radicalising, note that his conference address occurred in 2008, the same year as *Dominion!* was released.

¹³⁰ Wagner, “The New Apostolic Reformation Is Not a Cult.” That American society holds fears about rule of law in the name of God is demonstrated by the wildly successful TV adaptation of Margaret Atwood’s 1985 novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Located on American soil, the society depicted bears a strong resemblance to popular conceptions of what life might look like under Rushdoony’s dominionism.

¹³¹ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 45.

¹³² Wagner, “The New Apostolic Reformation Is Not a Cult,” n.p.

¹³³ The question of just how real is the threat presented by aggressive dominionist language (in the same vein as SWM vocabulary) is not pertinent to address here but note Garrard who suggests that indeed violence and murder has occurred in South America against those who are considered religiously opposed to or contravening the moral laws held important by dominionists. Virginia Garrard, “Hidden in Plain Sight: Dominion Theology, Spiritual Warfare, and Violence in Latin America,” *Religions* 11:12 (December 2020): 648-662.

reasoning includes a wholly unique interpretation of Rev 5:12 (NKJV) where the Lamb is declared worthy to receive power (*dunamis*), riches (*ploutos*), wisdom (*sophia*), strength (*ischus*), honor (*timē*), glory (*doxa*), and blessing (*eulogia*). Enlow writes:

These seven attributes of majesty that He is worthy to receive each coincide with the seven main pillars of every nation's culture or society ... After *researching the original Greek meanings* of these words, it became evident to me that power speaks of Government; riches speaks of Economy; wisdom speaks of Education; strength speaks of Family; honor speaks of Religion; glory speaks of Celebration (Arts and Entertainment); and blessing speaks of Media.¹³⁴

The centrepiece of Enlow's argument is the seven pillars (mountains) of society and who is to control them. His connection of the biblical Greek to his interpretations stands alone, unsupported by any other information to show *why* the relationship exists between the words and the seven sectors of society. His claim of researching the original Greek appears five times in *The Seven Mountain Prophecy* but he is not alone in using this strategy; thirty-six of the *Elijah List* prophets published in 2020 did the same, even where the verses they were quoting appeared to be self-explanatory in their English rendition. What purpose does a reference to the Greek serve? The technique bears some similarity to the process of "synonymization" described by Hammer in his discussion of how New Age writers "homogenize" religious terminology by equating a word in one language with another in a different language. The foreign words are integrated into the (English) text, giving "an air of authenticity to the text, a hint that the author is cognizant with the writings of an exotic culture, or at least with a specialized and arcane vocabulary that is not accessible to the lay person."¹³⁵ In the same way Enlow essentially portrays an esoteric position, a strategy for convincing his readers of his authority to proclaim the seven mountains mandate.

Thirdly, a personal trait of Wagner's that permeated his teaching and writing was also a theme that underpinned the theologies at the centre of this study. The chief objective in the eschatology of Wagner's brand of dominion theology centres on the word "victorious." Here the optimistic and positive viewpoint is of primary importance.¹³⁶ Harold Eberle, the source for Wagner's changing convictions about eschatology, concluded his book by writing:

¹³⁴ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 9. (Italics inserted).

¹³⁵ Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 164.

¹³⁶ This is not to imply that Wagner was solely responsible for the insistence on a perpetually optimistic outlook. Robert Schuller, frequently endorsed by Wagner, was best known for popularizing "The Power of Positive Thinking." For comment on the American predilection towards optimism see Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 67.

We realize that many scholarly teachers holding to the partial preterist view explain various verses in slightly different ways than we have. However, our *primary concern* is that you embrace a victorious view. A victorious view will inspire you to plan for the future, move ahead with courage, invest in the next generation, and believe God for greater things yet to come.¹³⁷

Eberle made it clear: the objective is a positive and optimistic outlook, the outcome of which will equip Christians into the future of their choice. This type of approach provoked accusations of Constantinian triumphalism that Wagner expressly denied, saying that his call to action for the “triumphant church” was not triumphalism because it was the design of the Creator Himself for the future of human-kind.¹³⁸ The point to note here is that the benefits of a victorious outlook as described by Eberle concomitantly imply that any lesser or alternative outlook will be detrimental to the believer’s future. Furthermore, the foundation for the belief in the eschatological programme is assigned as the benefit that accrues to the person who believes it. The basis for the theology has moved away from God as the centrepiece to meeting the personal needs of the believer. The corollary of this insistence on optimistic, positive attitude and outlook, highly visible in many present-day charismatic circles, is that any expression of a negative sentiment is deemed not of God, defeatist, or even inspired by demonic powers. Thus, the writers set the boundaries for expectations of behaviour in their readers and the measure of belief becomes what best suits the perceived needs of the believer.

The fourth use of strategy in language is redefinition of terms to give them new meaning and orientation. We have already seen how the declared priority of evangelism gradually disappeared as the focus shifted to signs and wonders for the benefit of Christians and as driving out demons became the new methodology for saving the world. Now with the dominion mandate came a shift in the meaning of evangelism itself and in particular the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). Dominion mandate teaching is predicated on the belief that Christians have misunderstood what Christ meant when he issued the Great Commission to his disciples. Wagner declared that Jesus came to save *that* which was lost, not *those* who were lost (Luke 19:10). What was lost was dominion in the Garden of Eden.¹³⁹ Lance Wallnau, whom Wagner credited with introducing him to the concept of the seven mountains, described it thus:

¹³⁷ Eberle, *Victorious Eschatology*, 232. (Italics inserted).

¹³⁸ Gregory Boyd, “Response to C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood,” in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, eds. James K. Beilby, and Paul Rhodes Eddy (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 214; Wagner, *Dominion!*, 204.

¹³⁹ Manning, “NAR Apostle C. Peter Wagner Teaching,” 8:46.

We made a decision in the body of Christ that may not have been a wise one. We looked at the quantitative call of the gospel, that is, the call to go to all the world and preach the gospel. And we look at the harvest of souls as the main issue or agenda that we're focussed on. But you see there is a qualitative, also, aspect to this. And the qualitative assignment we have is to actually transform nations. And this process is called making disciples. Of what? Nations.¹⁴⁰

This conception ties the interpretation of the Great Commission to Donald McGavran's advocacy of "discipling" whole people groups (*panta ta ethnē*) into church membership. Wagner reinforced McGavran's influence by claiming that even though he never used the term, McGavran "was inherently convinced that we should take dominion."¹⁴¹ That the concept of evangelising individuals was no longer considered the priority was emphasized by Enlow:

The Great Commission was to "make disciples of all nations." It was not to "make disciples of all souls." God is interested in the *nations*—a word mentioned over three hundred times in the Scriptures ... [God] loves nations, and He loves cities.¹⁴²

Cindy Jacobs claimed this "stunning revelation" came to her directly from God one day in 1985 as, with her "heart thundering," she read Matt 28:19-20 and her worldview shifted to the realization that the *nations* were God's concern.¹⁴³ Indications that Wagner had reoriented his priorities from evangelism to dominionism came when he referred to the primacy of the "evangelistic mandate" as his "former position" with "those who still hold the primacy of the evangelism mandate over the cultural mandate" being the objectors to dominion theology.¹⁴⁴

The loss of focus on persons as the objects of evangelism is mixed with the acknowledgement that individuals' choices are still related to their salvation. Enlow articulated this specifically but added a caveat: "Your entrance into heaven is very personal and is determined solely by your personal confession of faith in Jesus and His blood on the cross. You will, however, partake of a coming blessing or curse that relates to the direction your nation goes."¹⁴⁵ His statement here is just enough to avoid complete departure from the

¹⁴⁰ Wilson, "Lance Wallnau Explains the Seven Mountains Mandate," 2:18. See also Wallnau, "The Seven Mountain Mandate," 186.

¹⁴¹ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 72-73. Taking into consideration the body and thrust of McGavran's work, it is unlikely that McGavran would agree with Wagner's statement on his dominion viewpoint.

¹⁴² Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 39. (Italics in the original).

¹⁴³ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 34-36.

¹⁴⁴ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 60.

¹⁴⁵ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 41.

tenets of an orthodox understanding yet it comes very close to a new interpretation of the gospel.

Based on biblical exegesis, the traditional understanding of the “good news” (*euangelion*) is held to contain several constituent parts: the love of God, the centrality of Jesus, the nature of sin, the promise of forgiveness, and the awareness of regeneration through the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁶ The activity of evangelism is the proclamation of this message. Particularly within Evangelicalism, the objective is directed towards the personal response of individuals to the message. In the dominion mandate, this objective is subsumed into the greater goal of controlling society and bringing those who do not receive the message into submission under the rule of law. In terms of personal responses to the *euangelion*, this has almost completely disappeared from the dominion message because now, in Wagner’s words, “the true message of the Kingdom of God [...] is for us to take dominion.”¹⁴⁷ The dominion mandate reframes evangelism and the Great Commission into a governmental decree, regardless of the personal receptivity of individuals and despite a multiplicity of biblical passages that indicate the proclaiming of the gospel is oriented towards persons as individuals.¹⁴⁸ Redefining these terms allows selected verses to be quoted, thus giving the impression to the reader that this theology is wholly biblical.

How to Take Dominion: The Plan

When weighing up the efficacy of dominionist plans to take control of the world and transform society, both the plan itself and what is not in the plan must be considered. The first notable factor is the absence of some elements intrinsic to the Christian message. Hamon decried the “apostate condition” of the church that developed as the eventual outcome of Constantine’s edict. The formalizing of Christianity by the State was “the final blow to the message of repentance, conviction of sin, spiritual rebirth, and the need for a transformed life,” forcing the church to “nose dive into [a] millennium of dead works, formalism, and slavery to man-made made religion.”¹⁴⁹ Curiously, these “lost” aspects of Christianity are

¹⁴⁶ T.P. Weber, “Evangelism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter E. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 410-411.

¹⁴⁷ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 55.

¹⁴⁸ For example, Rom 10:14-15; 2 Cor 5:11-21; 2 Pet 3:9; Acts 2: 21-39.

¹⁴⁹ Hamon, *The Eternal Church* (1981), 87, 89, 90.

among those least attended to in the literature of the dominion mandate. The writers have very little to say about the spiritual condition of believers, seeming to assume that all Christians are in a state of spiritual completion and perfection, and hence fit to rule society. Therefore, the preparation, growth, maturity, or capability of Christians is simply not addressed in any meaningful way. The emphasis pervading the theology is temporal with little attention to what holiness means for the people who are to rule the world, at least in the biblical sense of holiness.¹⁵⁰

Secondly, there are challenges to the formation of any plan because of the inherent instability in the new theologies brought on by their diversity and perpetual states of flux.¹⁵¹ In broadly discussing the charismatic movement, Percy points out some vulnerabilities that are also common to one of its subsets, the dominionist camp. While at times it may be characterised by energy and revival, it is equally vulnerable to schism, erosion, and disaster. There exists a proclivity towards being “divisive, anti-intellectual, self-righteous and reluctant to assume responsibility for social and institutional reform,” characteristics not conducive to effective leadership of the world.¹⁵²

The third problem with the plan is that, in essence, there is no plan. Wagner did claim the tools are in place: spiritual mapping, identificational repentance, apostolic and prophetic intercession, prayer-walking, strategic-level spiritual warfare, and networks for strategic prayer coordinated by individuals such as Chuck Pierce.¹⁵³ The methodology is to invade Satan’s kingdom by attacking aggressively and it is the responsibility of all Christians to confront high-level spirits with the unlimited authority that they have been given.¹⁵⁴ Apostles are the major figures who are to serve as the generals in God’s army and until they are in position, God is hesitant to release his armies into higher conflict.¹⁵⁵ In particular, territorial

¹⁵⁰ The central message of Wagner’s book, *Radical Holiness for Radical Living* (Colorado Springs: Wagner Institute for Practical Ministry, 1998) is that holiness consists of obedience to God’s standards, although legalism must be avoided. He also discusses his methodology for personally staying sin-free but provides little other concrete information about what it means to be holy or how scripture describes what comprises holiness.

¹⁵¹ The extraordinary number of personal scandals among leaders, barely touched on here, is a significant contributor to poor survival rates of many ministries.

¹⁵² Martyn Percy, “The City on a Beach: Future Prospects for Charismatic Movements at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton and Tony Walter (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 207, 211.

¹⁵³ Wagner, *Changing Church*, 93-94.

¹⁵⁴ Wagner, *Changing Church*, 115-117.

¹⁵⁵ Wagner, *Changing Church*, 118.

and workplace apostles must be recognized and authorised by church leaders because they are crucial in taking spiritual government.¹⁵⁶ Wagner goes no further to outline a plan of action, but some of the most prominent personalities associated with the dominion mandate have their own approaches to offer.

Cindy Jacobs calls for a spiritual revolution to disciple the nations, the foremost targets being evolution taught in schools, homosexuality, and abortion. Similarly to Wagner, the action centres on intercessory prayer as the strategy.¹⁵⁷ Her call is for a return to following God's law and the principles of the American founding fathers; collective influence is achieved by voting in democratic elections, taking leadership in communities and standing up for righteousness.¹⁵⁸

Enlow describes his book, *The Seven Mountains Prophecy*, as a work of both prophecy and strategy for the assignment that God has set Elijah Revolutionaries in taking dominion.¹⁵⁹ He describes the strategy as part prayer (in spiritual warfare) and part action: faith and works combined.¹⁶⁰ However, it is difficult to locate specific details beyond this, although he does make broad statements pertaining to occupying the "mountains" of culture. For example, the role of Christians in media is always to release good news. If reporting bad news is unavoidable, then the report must have a redemptive end and leave "hope as an aftertaste." Another strategy is for Christians to "rise up" in journalism schools to influence philosophical shifts or start new media outlets that operate on godly principles.¹⁶¹ In echoes of Wagner's earlier expeditions to demolish demonic strongholds, one "action strategy" is going to the geographical location that is the stronghold of a spirit to pray or perform prophetic acts. Enlow asserts that the apostles, called out and validated by the prophets, are those who will fulfil the responsibility for taking the mountain of government (politics).¹⁶² However, he also promotes a "holy invasion" by prayer warriors against the stronghold of Washington D.C. and a host of "Elijah revolutionaries" to attend Harvard University because it is a seedbed for

¹⁵⁶ Wagner, *Changing Church*, 99-100. Territorial apostles are the spiritual gatekeepers of a city: Wagner, *Dominion!*, 154.

¹⁵⁷ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 72, 180-181.

¹⁵⁸ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 144.

¹⁵⁹ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 12.

¹⁶⁰ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 45.

¹⁶¹ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 51, 55-59.

¹⁶² Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 65-66.

future leaders.¹⁶³ Other options are supporting righteous politicians, forming new political parties, or funding changes of law.¹⁶⁴

Lance Wallnau, considered one of the foremost leaders of the dominionist agenda, is heavily oriented towards the language of the marketplace. Entrepreneurship, motivational messaging, strategy, and “maximization” sit within a vocabulary of success where he encourages Christians into consultancy roles to take the seven mountains:

God’s anointed you for an assignment ... You get involved with your assignment you’ll have fun. And you’ll get paid! This is a whole new missionary mentality. In the old days we’d be always shaking down people in the church who never have any money to support a world mission. In the new paradigm we make the devil fund the mission project. How do you do that? You go into Babylon and you charge Nebuchadnezzar to be a consultant!¹⁶⁵

This chapter has painted a picture of a movement depicting a group of ideologists who wish to dominate society, take it by any means necessary, and impose their rule over people whether the people like it or not. This rather uncomfortable scenario has been built from the very words of the proponents themselves. However, the picture is more complex than would initially appear because, at times, their words indicate almost the opposite of what they are attempting to convey. Wagner resisted the definition of a theocracy and then proceeded to outline his agenda for taking theocratic rule of society. Enlow declares that Christian political candidates are worthless unless they espouse “righteous” politics and denounces U.S. Supreme Court judges who were appointed as conservatives before voting with the “liberal block.”¹⁶⁶ Several pages later he outlines a situation to demonstrate that a leader can justifiably support decisions (using his civil authority) that conflict with his orientation (his spiritual authority).¹⁶⁷ This variety of “double-speak” permeates the dominion mandate

¹⁶³ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 78. Note that one strategy has involved attracting large numbers of people to political rallies. Although they may, in the short term, garner votes for attendant politicians, the vagaries of politics suggest the unlikelihood of a long-term benefit to the dominion cause. For an overview of some efforts in this area, see Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 98-100.

¹⁶⁴ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 74. A characteristic of Enlow’s “strategies” is that his solutions are aimed at those who are capable of reaching elite heights and he makes no mention of how the poor, uneducated, or otherwise not privileged could hope to undertake the actions he proposes.

¹⁶⁵ Shiloh Church Oakland, “The 7 Mountains Mandate - Dr. Lance Wallnau,” *YouTube*, 29 March 2013, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ1h8-WMMUQ>> (10 February 2021), 18:10. Wallnau markets himself as a “catalytic thought leader” and a business and political strategist. He claims a Doctorate in Ministry with a specialization in Marketplace from a now-defunct diploma mill.

¹⁶⁶ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 68-69.

¹⁶⁷ Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, 72-74.

literature and gives rise to the question of why it occurs. The first factor to note is that most of the writers who subscribe to Wagner's form of dominionism are not trained or educated in the subject matter on which they expound. The majority do not have higher education or training in theology, politics, or other specialist areas, despite a significant proportion using the title "Dr" and claiming to hold advanced degrees (usually Ph.D. or D.Min), sometimes from named institutions. Background checks of these claims reveals that the institutions usually fall into the category of "diploma mills" or otherwise unaccredited facilities that offer degrees upon completion of self-directed and un-assessed study.¹⁶⁸ Where legitimate institutions of learning are named, traceable biographical information is sometimes amended to assert qualifications that do not exist.¹⁶⁹ This suggests that the writers seek to establish an authoritative voice with the expectation that titles impress audiences, convincing them of superior attainment and authority.¹⁷⁰ However, the material contained in the books often betrays the appearance of erudite discussion because of tendencies to self-contradiction, faulty reasoning, muddled explanations, confusing rhetoric, or erroneous factual material. Put simply, most of chief proponents are not equipped to propose a significant intellectual theory and therefore their explanations are less than convincing. This begs the question of why their material is so popular and why they attract so many followers. This will be addressed shortly.

Aside from the capabilities of dominion theology advocates, the issue remains what their objective is. Intent or motivation cannot be assessed because it is not possible to accurately discern the thoughts of others.¹⁷¹ We can only assume that they are disseminating their material with a sense of sincere belief and personal integrity. However, the lack of clear plans of action and multiple inconsistencies in the texts and among proponents indicates that

¹⁶⁸ In return for a substantial fee.

¹⁶⁹ For example, Harold Eberle attended three seminaries but left before attaining any qualifications; an early biography specifies that he did not receive degrees. His current Facebook page implies an earned Master of Divinity from each of these. Chuck Pierce claims undergraduate and Masters degrees from two state universities; yearbooks confirm his attendance for only one year at one of the universities. Both men use the title "Dr" along with Cindy Jacobs, Brian Simmons, and Ché Ahn. Some of these are likely to claim they earned their "doctorates" at WLI because they are listed as faculty members. This scenario is repeated among many of the apostles, prophets, or other related writers. Book covers or biographical information using the title "Dr" in this genre frequently, and most often, imply claims of earned advanced tertiary degrees that are spurious.

¹⁷⁰ Another characteristic common to the leading dominionist figures is their repeated claim of meetings with government leaders around the world and the influence that they are able to exert upon these. None of the countries or leaders are ever named.

¹⁷¹ Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 348. See also John Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 79-100, especially 80 and 94.

they have not fully developed their thinking processes to the point that these drive coherent explanations or action.¹⁷²

Being Special and Important

The final observation of this chapter comes back to the question: what of those ordinary Christians who adhere to the teachings of dominion theology? The chief offering of the dominionists to their audiences is *hope*. As Cindy Jacobs introduces the dominion mandate, she asks her readers to imagine a world where there is no need to filter objectionable content from the TV or internet, where violent crime, homelessness, drug-pushers, or drive-by shootings no longer exist, and where government welfare support systems are no longer needed.¹⁷³ For anyone disillusioned, disappointed, or dismayed by the state of the world surely this touches the place where they long for changes, especially if their present faith systems are not meeting that need. However, there is more on offer. Religious studies scholar Julie Ingersoll, in commenting on characteristics that pre- and post-millennial systems have in common, notes that “Millennialist systems make the present moment the culmination of all of history and the lives of those of us living in this time of cosmic importance. The human desire to be special and important can be so powerful it can make global cataclysm appealing.”¹⁷⁴ Wagner capitalised on this when he boldly claimed that Kingdom action will change the world, and in changing the world we can effect change in God’s own choices.¹⁷⁵ Ultimately, the offer of the dominion mandate is power and authority, the promise of taking charge, to be at the top of the mountain and, in the words of Latter Rain saints, “to call the shots.”¹⁷⁶ Lance

¹⁷² Christerson and Flory discuss this issue at length and predict that the long-term survival of the dominionist agenda is doubtful because of an overall lack of competence, institutional capability or power, and ongoing issues with corruption. Nevertheless, they do predict that Wagner/NAR/Bethel-style theology (INC in their terminology) will continue to gain an increasing “market share” of Christianity. Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 134-141, 166-167. The lack of a coherent plan in this group can be contrasted with the resurgence of Reconstructionism. A new generation is in process of establishing a counterculture that promotes a defined lifestyle. Its thinkers have generated a (10-step) plan and a long-term vision, and it demonstrates its functional abilities through successful home-schooling advocacy or significant publishing enterprises (although Gribben notes that its reality on the ground may be somewhat chimerical). See Gribben, *Survival and Resistance*, especially 2-6, 15, 83-84, 113, 115-117. These clear differences between two groups of dominionist advocates might suggest that one has a better chance of survival than another. However, the issue at stake in this thesis is the degree to which mechanisms of persuasion can override coherence in seeking to garner popular acceptance, an issue that transcends the boundaries of the many fragments within Evangelicalism, including such as Reconstructionism.

¹⁷³ Jacobs, *The Reformation Manifesto*, 61.

¹⁷⁴ Ingersoll, *Building God’s Kingdom*, 37.

¹⁷⁵ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 76.

¹⁷⁶ Riss, *Latter Rain*, 96-97.

Wallnau emphasized this as he declared the power and authority of Jesus-followers in this final hour:

You ... are uniquely called out from among others in your nation to be a citizen of Heaven with authority to bring Heaven and its unique resources and solutions into the earth ... You are uniquely qualified to solve problems nobody else can solve! ... You are about to pioneer the last great chapter of the journey of the Church—into the Kingdom Age.¹⁷⁷

Scott Thumma, who spent several years at Earl Paulk’s church doing doctoral field research, provides insight to how, unawares, he found himself “socialized into the ethos of the church.” After several years of intensive immersion in the culture of the church he found its ethos expressing itself in his own behaviours: “an aggrandized devotion to Bishop Paulk, an elitist sense of self-importance, a feeling of being persecuted, the knowledge of spiritual superiority, and a strong triumphalism.”¹⁷⁸ It took being confronted by his dissertation advisor to pull him out of his gradual progression into an “ideological member.” His unique perspective provides a glimpse into how the dominion mandate meets the desires of its people (even those like Thumma who are more fortified against the message), promises them control, and allows them to hope for a future that is not only imminent but also is now.

When compared with mainstream biblical scholarship, the fragmentary and utilitarian approach to scripture among dominion mandate proponents demonstrates its fragility. In concluding this chapter there is one remaining element of importance to note. The very origin of dominionism—what happened in the Garden of Eden—denotes a point of separation from the scriptural interpretation of mainstream biblical scholars.¹⁷⁹ In dominion theology the central theme is Satan’s triumph in his theft of Adam’s authority to rule. Thenceforth the narrative focuses on the struggle to defeat Satan and gain the triumphant upper hand. Although dominion theology conceded that Christ at the cross won the victory, nevertheless the battle is ongoing: Christians have a “mop-up” role that, once effectively accomplished, will provoke the return of Christ.¹⁸⁰ For mainstream theologians the significance of the

¹⁷⁷ Wallnau, “The Seven Mountain Mandate,” 192-193.

¹⁷⁸ Thumma, “The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory,” 26-27.

¹⁷⁹ See n11 above.

¹⁸⁰ “It is not our job to win the war; Jesus did that on the Cross. Our job is the mop-up operation. But Jesus still expects us to overcome.” Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 59-60. See also the use of the same terminology elsewhere: C. Peter Wagner, “Operation Queen’s Palace,” Memorandum to International Spiritual Warfare Network Members, 1 December 1997. <<http://etpv.org/1998/opqueen.html>> Retrieved from <<https://web.archive.org>> (5 May 2019); Johnny Enlow, “September 2020: Be the Storm or Face the Storm,” *The Elijah List*, 2 September

Garden incident was Adam's fall into sin, thereby introducing into human history the most significant barrier to relationship with the Creator and the need for salvation. In the present-day dominion narrative, the element of sin is almost completely overlooked. Just as the meaning of evangelism was altered, so the vocabulary of sin gradually disappeared through the progression of eras: from the signs and wonders era through to the dominion mandate. The encroaching invisibility of conceptions about sin is most clearly seen in the outworking of theology at Bethel Church in Redding. In the next chapter, the strands of belief and persuasion that have been touched upon in examining the five movements are brought together as we undertake a brief survey of what they look like when they are exemplified in a twenty-first-century church that subscribes to the theological programme laid out over the previous decades by Wagner and his associates.

2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=24217> (20 January 2021). Enlow has angels as the mop-up crew, but Christians are the agents in being “the storm of all storms against the enemy.”

Chapter 9: Bethel Church, Redding

The objective of this thesis is to gain a perspective on how a significant sector of evangelical Christianity is being re-shaped in the twenty-first century. Previous chapters have addressed how, over the past fifty or so years, a relatively small group of people stimulated and directed a progression of influential movements that were closely connected, with each built on the legacy of the previous. This chapter is concerned with one particular church that subscribes to the theologies promoted by Wagner and his colleagues, a church that demonstrates the *outcome* of their interpretations of church growth, signs and wonders, spiritual warfare, apostles and prophets, and dominion theology. Tracing the backgrounds to the theologies being advanced through these movements has shown the contribution that specific historical sources made to their development.¹ In outlining what comprises the resultant theologies, some issues have been identified that challenge their claims of God's revelation and a solid biblical heritage. Consequentially, these issues point to the use of very human strategies of persuasion to gain a following.

Some important characteristics that result from these strategies already have been identified. Before turning to the main subject of this chapter, it is helpful to review these. Firstly, we saw how an intentionally shaped narrative emerged from the signs and wonders era: simplistic, repetitious, personal, entertaining, and appealing, especially to youth. It was justified by drawing on historical sources such as Tippet's model for guiding people groups into acceptance of Christian faith. But in using such sources, a pattern was established of selectively reinterpreting them, redefining language and meaning, and adjusting the role of scripture by making it a mere device to support a concept. In S&W, and even more expressly in the SWM, foundational conceptions were expressed that had their origins in religious imagination and folklore: historical figures such as Jessie Penn-Lewis and Kurt Koch were a rich source of material. A process of mythologization engaged both movements as real events were re-imaged to incorporate sensational or supernatural details: the stories became more dramatic and hence more appealing to hungry audiences. The principal goal was inherited

¹ This study has not alluded to some particular historical resemblances, for example, Gnosticism, Manichaeism, or Montanism, because the focus is on forerunners specifically named by proponents of the new theology. However, these resemblances certainly deserve exploration, as noted by DeConick who asserts that Gnostic spirituality has "eroded conventional religions" not only in the past but also in today's religions. April D. DeConick, *The Gnostic New Age: How a Countercultural Spirituality Revolutionized Religion from Antiquity to Today* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 17.

from the church growth movement and underpinned all activities: success was the objective, and the pragmatic measure of success was popular response.

Secondly, a new worldview was promoted, perhaps most easily summed up by the ubiquitous catchphrase found among charismatically inclined evangelicals: “living in the supernatural.” However, this worldview was shaped not only by rejecting tradition and the past as faulty, but by alienating its adherents from and advocating disapproval of intellectual pursuits, knowledge, and learning. The new worldview encouraged reliance on intuition over learning and focussed on experience alone as the measure of truth. It simultaneously competed with and incorporated contemporary culture. It ignored credible alternate explanations, promoted acceptance of the non-rational, and encouraged spiritual innovation. One further element that has not yet been explicitly explored but that always sat in the background is the issue of questions being discouraged; this will be addressed in the discussion below.

The third characteristic involved human agency. As scrutiny of the movements progressed, it became evident that a personal and individualistic focus was preeminent. Christians could develop a new sense of selfhood and personal destiny while enjoying direct experience of God’s voice and acquiring all the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, through training and practise. Prayer was reoriented toward these goals and, above all, the emphasis was on personal authority and power. Notably, this power extended over the unseen, dark forces that control the world. In a dualistic struggle against these demonic powers, Christians could gain the upper hand and triumphantly claim territory as taken back from Satan. Although it was only implicit, the resultant elitism and esotericism was reinforced by strong group bonding that protected from criticism, strengthened the core, and isolated believers and advocates from other perspectives. The ultimate expression of the new sense of authority and power was the belief that Christians were mandated to take control of all aspects of the world and, by their own efforts, to usher in the kingdom of God on earth. The corollary was that God receded into the background as less attention was given to comprehending him or his ways than to what humans can accomplish with their power and authority.

Fourthly, the reshaped spiritual perspectives, particularly insofar as they were individualistically oriented, offered a Christianity that was therapeutic. This was built by

generating emotions of excitement, enthusiasm, and expectancy. Solutions were pronounced as quick, easy, successful, and the emphasis was on the “Now.” Benefits were promised, suffering was eliminated, and concomitantly the concept of sin (and its consequences) was redefined and minimised. A final characteristic to note was the creation of dependence on leadership. While control and dominance over followers was not always overt, the insistence on apostles and prophets being the spokespersons for God and the high esteem that leaders could enjoy was an indicator that the role of followers was precisely that: to be exactly how they were told to be.

With these characteristics in mind, we turn to the outcome found in a church that is representative of what Wagner and his associates shaped. Bethel Church in Redding, California has close affinity not only with the theologies promoted in each of the five movements but also strong ties to the individuals who were the most prominent advocates. It is just one of many churches that subscribe to and disseminate the themes that we have explored but it stands out for several reasons. Firstly, it is a “megachurch” that claims well over 11,000 members.² It is also the hub for numerous initiatives that actively work to extend its influence worldwide. An array of enterprises includes extensive networks that guarantee a continual flow of income.³ However, the church is also notorious, chiefly for some activities in which its predominantly youthful population engage, and for the teachings of the leaders that appear to conflict with mainstream evangelical theology. Because of its dramatic growth, prominence, extensive influence, and because it is the target of much public discussion, it is an ideal entity to examine as we seek to gauge how effective Wagner’s claims of reshaping Christianity have been.⁴

² Bethel culture is strongly oriented towards youth: 45% of church attendees are under the age of twenty-five, and over half of those are minors. Pierce, “The Really Big Business,” n.p.

³ See <<https://www.bethel.com/ministries/bethel-leaders/>> (23 March 2021). Bethel reported USD\$60.8 million (tax free) income from its various initiatives in the fiscal year 2017-2018, including income derived from involvements in sixty-five countries around the world. Pierce, “The Really Big Business,” n.p. For description of Bethel’s networking paradigm see Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 61-62. Note that although there are no “rules” tying network participants to Bethel, nevertheless the networks remain a big source of income, see Christerson, 67, 105-108.

⁴ There is almost as much negative publicity on the internet as there is Bethel promotional material. One point of difference between the web-based condemnation of movements such as spiritual warfare and that of Bethel is that there is great deal of material from ex-Bethel members, outlining their insider perspectives and reasons for leaving. While the material is subjective and not always verifiable, the testimonies of disillusionment are relatively homogenous in their descriptions of the issues that led to their departure.

Bethel Description and Background

A description of Bethel necessarily involves its leaders, the most senior of whom are the central focus of any understanding about Bethel. For the purposes of this discussion, the identity of Bill Johnson as the key personality at Bethel will be treated as synonymous with the church itself.⁵ Johnson's biographical testimony recounts how he grew up hearing frequent stories of miracles and supernatural experiences within his Pentecostal family. By his own admission, he was a poor student and "uneducated—no Bible School, no seminary, not even much college training."⁶ Johnson's training was mostly on-the-job at Bethel and at Mountain Chapel, Weaverville, about one hour's drive from Redding, where he pastored for seventeen years before returning to Bethel. As a fifth-generation pastor, he took over the leadership of the Assemblies of God church in 1996, a church that his father had once pastored and where he had previously been a youthful staff member.⁷ When telling his testimony, it always features the influence of the Toronto Blessing on his life and how his desire has been to emulate it.⁸ Consequently, as he stepped into the role at Bethel, he stipulated that thenceforth the church would be wholly oriented to revival and that he would never teach anything else.⁹ In 2006, the church withdrew from its affiliation with the Assemblies of God and is now independent of denominational ties. Johnson's co-leader since 1998 is Kris Vallotton, a former businessman; other prominent leaders include Danny Silk and two of Johnson's three children and their spouses.¹⁰

⁵ This is because most public or private discussions involving Bethel do the same. Shuttleworth points out, particularly in regard to healing, that there are a variety of beliefs within the Bethel Church community but she also notes that it is Johnson's theology that has shaped the community as a whole. Abigail Delyth Shuttleworth, "On Earth as it is in Heaven: A Study of the Healing Praxis of Bill Johnson" (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2015), 31, 270.

⁶ Bill Johnson and Randy Clark, *The Essential Guide to Healing* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2011), 38. One of Johnson's critics claims he had a year at Shasta College, Redding, and one year at Genesis Discipleship Training Center, Santa Rosa (closed 1994). Although Oppenheimer incorrectly names the institutions, Johnson does confirm his presence at Genesis for a brief period. Bill Johnson, *Center of the Universe Too* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2013), 17; Mike Oppenheimer, "The New Toronto," *Let Us Reason Ministries*, 2019, <<http://www.letusreason.org/Poppteach78.htm>> (24 March 2021).

⁷ Martyn Wendell Jones, "Kingdom Come in California?" *Christianity Today* 60:4 (May 2016): 36; Greg Downes, "Profile: Bill Johnson," *Premier Christianity*, January 2015, <<https://www.premierchristianity.com/Past-Issues/2015/January-2015/Profile-Bill-Johnson>> (24 March 2021).

⁸ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 88-89.

⁹ Johnson, *The Essential Guide*, 48; Wendell Jones, "Kingdom Come," 36; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 88.

¹⁰ A third was senior leader until he announced his departure in late 2020. Johnson's current role at Bethel is more focussed on global expansion although he still maintains a regular platform presence. A brief comment on

There is no question that the ties between Bill Johnson and Peter Wagner, along with the prophets, apostles, and other like-minded leaders in Wagner's circles, were close when Wagner was alive. The connections within this group include platform appearances together at various events, speaking engagements at Bethel, mutual book endorsements, or co-contributions to published books.¹¹ In June 2012, Johnson was ceremoniously awarded a WLI "doctorate" by Wagner and Ché Ahn.¹² Currently Johnson is listed as a faculty member at WLI (now renamed Wagner University) and teaches residential course material.¹³ Shortly we will look at how these connections have directly shaped Johnson's theology but the first influence to note is that at least some of his Pentecostal heritage persists even though he has formally severed his ties with his denomination. One indication of this is that people who come for healing prayer at Bethel are asked if they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (as taught in Pentecostal theology).¹⁴ Wagner had dismissed the necessity for this baptism when he declared it was a point of differentiation between Pentecostalism and the Third Wave.¹⁵ While Johnson is commonly associated with Third Wave/NAR theology, this demonstrates his retention of some theological ideas from his past, thereby drawing attention to the doctrinal fluidity that can be perceived among those who subscribe to the new ideas.¹⁶ It also potentially indicates that beliefs might develop more because of personal associations than of carefully worked-out theological reflection.

an observable pattern in the churches under scrutiny here: family succession in leadership is common to the point of almost being customary.

¹¹ The books published from Wagner and forward to Johnson all carry large numbers of endorsements (e.g. twenty-six in Wagner's 2008 memoir, twenty-eight in Johnson's *God is Good*) that are useful to establish a "Who's Who" of the group as well as establishing its boundaries; the personal endorsements are mostly confined exclusively to the same group of authors/personalities. *The Reformer's Pledge*, with ten co-contributors, is also useful indicator of who are the key figures (Johnson, Wallnau, Pierce, Heidi Baker, Wagner, James Goll, Arnott, Jacobs, Lou Engle, and Jim Garlow). Baker, Goll, and another high-profile personality, Dutch Sheets, are among a number of names that are not discussed in this study for reasons of space. Nevertheless, they are closely connected and considered among the leaders of the theologies being promoted.

¹² Beni Johnson, *Facebook*, 8 June 2012, <<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10150943375099411&set=a.10150217994084411&type=3&theater>> (27 July 2020). Facebook account now deleted.

¹³ "Meet Our Residential Instructors," <<https://wagner.university/faculty/>> (last accessed 9 April 2021).

¹⁴ Wendell Jones, "Kingdom Come," 37; Molly Hensley-Clancy, "Meet the 'Young Saints' of Bethel Who Go to College to Perform Miracles," *BuzzFeed News*, 12 October 2017, <<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/mollyhensleyclancy/meet-the-young-saints-of-bethel-who-go-to-college-to>> (29 April 2019), n.p; Shuttleworth, "On Earth as it is in Heaven," 204-205. Johnson also comments on the baptism of the Holy Spirit in his books, see Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 70, 71.

¹⁵ See Chapter 7 n18.

¹⁶ Note that Johnson has publicly denied that he "belongs" to or is even familiar with the NAR. See, for example, Wendell Jones, "Kingdom Come," 36. This assertion is undermined by his considerable reliance on Wagner's teaching, his "doctorate" awarded by Wagner, and his own teaching position at Wagner University where the programme is based on NAR theology.

Although remaining Pentecostal in orientation, the foremost element to note in Johnson's theology is the various ways it adheres to the themes we have followed in this study. Firstly, Johnson follows the theological programme laid out by Wagner that we have traced in this study. His involvement at WLI/ Wagner University undoubtedly ensured that his grounding in Wagner's precepts was complete.¹⁷ Secondly, Johnson acknowledges the influence of specific individuals who were either integral to Wagner's ideation or otherwise connected in some manner or form. For example, there is his declared indebtedness to Wimber as well as his many years of collaboration with Randy Clark of Toronto Blessing fame. Johnson's absorption of Wimber's teaching was significant enough that Clark stated he "carries the DNA of Wimber."¹⁸ Thirdly, Johnson's language often mirrors Wagner's, for example, in explaining the demonic "religious spirit," the "inferior Greek mindset," the emphasis on our works being greater than Jesus', or the distinction between *logos* and *rhēma*.¹⁹ He also repeats the most frequent messages of dominion theology prophets, for example quoting Amos 3:7 before adding his own comment:

"The Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets." God's activities on earth begin with a revelation to mankind. The prophet hears and declares. Those with ears to hear respond and are equipped for change.²⁰

However, modifications to and progressions from Wagner's teaching also appear in Johnson's theology. This is further evidence of the fluidity that characterises the overall theological programme. The most explicit of these will be noted throughout this chapter.

Aligned with the S&W movement, Johnson insists on demonstrations of signs and wonders (including the casting out of demons) as evidence of the power of God manifest in the lives of his children.²¹ He makes it clear that miracles are normal and are the expression of the authority that has been delegated to all who are in right relationship with God: "Signs, wonders, and miracles are as normal to the gospel as it is normal for you to get up in the

¹⁷ WLI/Wagner University programmes are heavily oriented towards dominion theology and the doctrine of apostles and prophets.

¹⁸ Randy Clark, "Foreword" in Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 20. Johnson himself commented on Wimber's influence a number of times but also noted how much he owed to his association with Clark. Johnson, *The Essential Guide*, 5.

¹⁹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 81, 138; Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 72-73, 97; Bill Johnson, *Walking in the Supernatural* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2012), 10. This thesis treats Wagner as both architect and interpreter of his theological environment so note that these concepts were not necessarily original to him.

²⁰ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 177.

²¹ Johnson, *Walking in the Supernatural*, 11.

morning and breathe.”²² And: “Anything less than this is abnormal and unfulfilling.”²³ This centrality of miracles, the most common expression of which is physical healing, characterises Johnson’s theology more than any other factor.

Johnson’s view of spiritual warfare is oriented to the experience of the individual. He repeatedly states that the essence of the gospel is to destroy the works of the devil; this is what Jesus did and so also it is our assignment.²⁴ In line with SWM views, he sees a dualistic conflict between kingdoms, a collision with the world of darkness where we are always in a battle for dominion.²⁵ His attention to territory is presented as a back-and-forth tussle between Christians and the enemy (that includes secularising institutions) rather than battling demons on a national or global scale: “Any price you pay in claiming more territory for God is well worth the exchange.”²⁶ Because he expresses little interest in ruling demons, he does not employ the exotic personal names for demonic powers that emerged from the SWM, but he does label them by their character, for example, injustice, deception, or accusation.²⁷ Physicality of demonic presence is indicated through stories such as the child who scratched and clawed at him while he was (fruitlessly) attempting to pray against devils that were tormenting the child or another time when he felt cold standing near a young woman in church. Johnson asked a dancer to take the stage and perform a prophetic dance, the act of which caused the young woman to collapse, enabling her to be delivered of the demon.²⁸

At Bethel, Johnson and his fellow leaders actively promote dominion theology and the doctrine of apostles and prophets in accordance with the “five-fold model” of Eph 4.²⁹

²² Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 146, also see Johnson, *Walking in the Supernatural*, 11.

²³ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 25. Johnson bases this on 1 John 3:8b: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (NKJV).

²⁴ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 26-27, 32, 35.

²⁵ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 63.

²⁶ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 145-148, 156.

²⁷ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 55. Johnson also advocates the practice of binding and loosing that was popularised by figures such as Frank Hammond and Derek Prince.

²⁸ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 115, 121-122; Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 85.

²⁹ Bethel Senior Leader Danny Silk describes the status of teachers as at the third level of anointing, on only a “C” grade scale because they keep the church at an *average* level of effectiveness and influence: “Most teachers today are fixated on the *written* Word of God ... These are the lawyers, scribes, and Pharisees of our day ... I want us to understand how unimportant Heaven has become because of this dreadful error and disorder.” Silk places pastors even lower because they have “helped complete the disorder in church government.” Danny Silk, *Culture of Honor: Sustaining a Supernatural Environment* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2009), 67-70. Italics his.

Johnson does not use the title “apostle” but accepts the designation and promotes the ministry. He describes an apostle as:

One who actually influences the culture of the city or the state nation (*sic*) that they are a part of. They actually are influencing the natural realm with the culture of heaven as it pertains to politics, education, that whole thing. And so an apostle by nature has to have a glimpse of, like, heavenly structure ... have a perception of the way God structures things, whether it’s for family or for church life, or city or whatever, it’s heavenly structure and then implementing them (*sic*) into how we do life.³⁰

Vallotton is acknowledged as Johnson’s prophet.³¹ The gift and the office of prophet are distinct from each other with the office having a governmental role.³² Wagner’s rhetoric of control and rule is toned down, but Bethel maintains the same orientation.

In accord with dominion theology, Johnson frames the story of the Garden of Eden as God’s original commission and purpose for mankind with his intention for Adam and Eve to cover the entire earth with his glorious rule through man, the authority for which was forfeited by Adam.³³ God’s original plan for the earth was derailed but Satan’s triumph in the Garden was defeated at the cross and therefore the authority was reclaimed:

We were born to rule—over creation, over darkness—to plunder hell and establish the rule of Jesus wherever we go by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. *Kingdom* means: *King’s domain* ... Our rule is still over creation, but now it is focused on exposing and undoing the works of the devil ... If I truly receive power from an encounter with the God of power, I am equipped to give it away. The invasion of God into impossible situations comes through a people who have received power from on high and learn to release it into the circumstances of life.³⁴

As with Johnson’s predecessors, power has one meaning only: visible signs and wonders. The backbone of the Great Commission is to transform the earth into a place saturated with God’s power and presence (“Heaven invades earth”) and as such, healing is an essential part of the Commission.³⁵ Dominionism’s seven mountains of society are replicated in Johnson’s “seven mind-molders.” Although he uses the language of “invading” these

³⁰ Kris Vallotton, “5-Fold Live with Bill Johnson,” 11 June 2020, *YouTube*, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WQqapQUPv0>> 25 (March 2021), 4:56.

³¹ Vallotton, “5-Fold Live with Bill Johnson,” 00:46; 25:47.

³² Vallotton, “5-Fold Live with Bill Johnson,” 8:25.

³³ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 30-32. See also Bill Johnson, *God is Good* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2016), 46-53.

³⁴ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 32-33.

³⁵ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 32, 76. “The Kingdom of Heaven invading the earth is the goal, not unsaved people invading the Church.” Silk, *Culture of Honor*, 74.

sectors, he writes more in terms of influencing them, although without any specifics on how to achieve societal change.³⁶ The associated theme of wealth acquisition is implicitly pervasive in the concept of temporal wellbeing that is the objective of the theology. The overt expectation of financial blessing is exemplified in the mantra-like chants that Bethel congregations read from the screen each Sunday service as the offering is taken:

As we receive (*sic*) today's offering, we are believing the Lord for: Jobs and better jobs; Raises and bonuses; Benefits; Sales and Commissions; Favourable settlements; Estates and inheritances; Interests and income; Rebates and returns; Checks in the mail; Gifts and surprises; Finding money; Debts paid off; Expenses decrease; Blessing and increase. Thank you, Lord, for meeting all of my financial needs, that I may have more than enough, to give into the kingdom of God, and promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!³⁷

Bethel Theology and Praxis

The focus of this chapter lies with looking more closely at Bethel theology, particularly because it results from the legacy of the movements already appraised.³⁸ However praxis is important to this section because of the relationship between praxis and theology, as practical theologians Swinton and Mowat have remarked. They comment how all our practices are filled with meaning, purpose, and direction:

There is no such thing as a value-free form of practice. Whether acknowledged or otherwise, all of our practices are underpinned with very particular theories and theologies. In a very real sense belief is within the act itself.³⁹

What Swinton and Mowat are conveying, with reference to John 3:21, is that praxis is the performance of theology.⁴⁰ Therefore in this chapter theology and praxis are considered in conjunction with each other.⁴¹

³⁶ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 92-108. Signs of a rudimentary incursion is observable in the establishment of "Bethel School of Technology" that promotes itself as "A first-of-its-kind bootcamp that equips kingdom-minded believers to have high impact in the marketplace with the necessary skills to enter the job market for high-growth, in-demand IT careers." Although the language used on the website implies high-level qualifications with high success rates and salaries for graduates, the school is not accredited and most of the School Performance Sheets posted for each year of operation since 2018 (required by law) contain no data. Statistics listed for one course should be read with care as close scrutiny demonstrates some factors suggesting misleading data. <<https://betheltech.net/>> (17 October 2020).

³⁷ This is the first of four similar offering readings: these are published on Bethel's website at <<https://www.bethel.com/offering-readings/>>. Offering #4 begins: "I am powerful, and what I believe changes the world ..."

³⁸ A comprehensive scholarly study of Bethel theology does not yet exist, with the exception of Shuttleworth's, focus on healing praxis. She accurately claims to be the first academic project on Bethel: Shuttleworth, "On Earth as it is in Heaven," 6.

³⁹ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 19.

Narrative

Johnson's insistence that revival would be the only focus during his tenure at Bethel comprises the first element of the Bethel narrative. Revival, in Johnson's terms, is defined by the visible signs and wonders that demonstrate God's supernatural presence.⁴² The second element of the narrative is therefore God's presence. The presence refers to the awareness that the Kingdom of God is present: here and now, and within reach. This modifies the "now and not yet" (proposed by Ladd and Wimber) to focus on the present "now." Johnson insists that the reality of the kingdom is fully available in the present time:

If *now, but not yet* is used to define promise and potential, accept it. If it is spoken to build awareness of our limitations and restrictions, reject it. We don't need more people without authentic Kingdom experiences telling us what we can and cannot have in our lifetime.⁴³

For Bethel adherents, presence permits a tangible feeling based on a worldview of absolute belief that also can be witnessed as it manifests in others around. The presence makes possible the impossible and hence miracles abound; their reality indicates the presence of the supernatural.⁴⁴ The feeling of tangibility at times becomes literal: Bethel has become notorious for the clouds of "gold dust" or "angel" feathers that have appeared during church services, endorsed by Johnson as the actual presence of God.⁴⁵ Johnson's view of gold dust,

⁴⁰ "But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God."

⁴¹ Wells points out that it is in praxis rather than declaration where the shift away from theological integrity can be observed. Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 108.

⁴² Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 146; Johnson, *Walking in the Supernatural*, 11; Wendell Jones, "Kingdom Come," 36; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 88.

⁴³ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 64. Italics his. See also Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 34.

⁴⁴ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 38, 44, 53, 59, 74.

⁴⁵ Bethel has released heavily edited footage of falling "gold dust" where Johnson considerably amplifies the scriptural account of the cloud guiding the people of Israel in the desert. Claiming the gold dust is the very person of Jesus, he draws on a non-existent statement of God's to explain why he did not take a visibly recognised form: "He told Israel, he said 'I was in the cloud and I did not let you see any form because I knew you to be an idolatrous people and you would create an idol after the image you saw.' And so the lack of clarity sometimes is not punishing us, he's just letting us, he's wanting to give us as much as can bless us and promote us without destroying us." Unedited video footage shows the gold dust originating from a specific corner of the building's ceiling adjacent to the air conditioning ducts. Critics have claimed that some retrieved feathers have proved to be common bird feathers and that the "wind of the Holy Spirit" was created by a movie set fan. Bethel TV, "Glory Cloud at Bethel Church," *YouTube*, 20 December 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvJMPccZR2Y>> (22 April 2021), 1:47; WP Films, "WP TV Exclusive – The Bethel Glory Cloud," *YouTube*, 11 January 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcOPXLKAqL0>> (22 April 2021); Amanda Winters, "Bethel's 'Signs and Wonders' include Angel Feathers, Gold Dust and Diamonds," *Redding Record Searchlight*, 19 January 2010, <<http://www.redding.com/news/2010/jan/19/bethels-signs-and-wonders-include-angel-feathers/>> (23 March 2021); Kent Philpott, "Why I Must Oppose the New

appearances of gems or oil on hands, Holy Spirit wind, heavenly fragrances, or feathers that fall “anywhere we go” is that they are necessary: “Because He wants to take us farther, and we can only get there by following signs. Our present understanding of Scripture can only take us so far.”⁴⁶ He concludes: “When we follow His signs to the greater depths in God, His signs follow us in greater measure for the sake of mankind.”⁴⁷

What presence means is that God has brought his world into ours, hence Johnson’s attention to the concept of heaven invading earth.⁴⁸ With heaven present on earth this indicates the resources of heaven are available on earth and so, in line with Phil 4:19, God will supply our every need.⁴⁹ Worship is an ideal means to accessing the presence: through praise and worship we can bring the reality of heaven to earth.⁵⁰ The Christian’s role, as God’s agent, is to release this supernatural into our surroundings: “His presence in our shadows” (Acts 5:15).⁵¹ Signs and wonders release the glory of God, which displaces the darkness represented by sickness, poverty, or oppression: “When miracles are absent, so is the glory of God, which is the manifested presence of Jesus.”⁵² Thus Christianity carries a therapeutic promise: to relieve all suffering, not in the future world to come, but in the here and now.

The corollary to Johnson’s interpretation of God’s tangible and manifested presence, the kingdom of God on earth, is that the boundaries between heaven and earth are dismantled. Jacob’s dream of a ladder is linked with the concrete reality of Jesus on earth and angels descending and ascending, assigned to assist us as we carry out our supernatural activities (Gen 28:12, John 1:14, 51).⁵³ Johnson sees that the gate to heaven is contained within us: “Simply put, I am an open heaven!” and the ladder provides angelic assistance according to

Apostolic Reformation,” *Earthen Vessel Journal*, 1 July 2017, <<http://www.earthenvesseljournal.com/issue04+/articles/Kent/Oppose-NAR.html>> (17 April 2021).

⁴⁶ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 141-142.

⁴⁷ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 143. Johnson takes the power of the shadow literally: the presence overflows a person so that their shadow or clothing (or anointed pieces of cloth) become imbued with power. Bill Johnson, *Hosting the Presence* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2012), 166.

⁴⁸ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 26.

⁴⁹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 60-61.

⁵⁰ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 61-62.

⁵¹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 74-75.

⁵² Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 124.

⁵³ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 137-141.

the needs of the moment.⁵⁴ This channel between heaven and earth allows freedom of movement between the two, as expressed by Johnson's wife Beni. She describes her own visit to heaven in close detail, where Jesus picked her up and carried her around until he put her down by a cottage where she met and talked to many of her relatives who preceded her into heaven.⁵⁵ Beni makes it clear that she views this as a literal event, claiming that she first saw Jesus using her "sanctified imagination" but then she was literally caught up into heaven, specifically comparing it with Paul's comment on the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2).⁵⁶ Similar highly-detailed stories of visits to heaven abound in circles oriented to the same theologies as Bethel/NAR.⁵⁷

Worldview

Experiencing God's presence, in the way that Johnson defines it, requires a specific worldview. This worldview reflects Wagner's teaching on renewing our minds and transformation, the subject of Rom 12:2. Wagner saw this in temporal terms. Renewal of the mind meant shifting to a new mode of thinking, a paradigm shift, accepting and embracing change.⁵⁸ In his own life, this equated to moving from cessationism to being a practitioner of supernatural signs and wonders.⁵⁹ In the same way, Johnson interprets the verse to mean reframing our thinking to accept the proposition of the everyday miraculous. When Jesus told Nicodemus that a person cannot see the kingdom of God unless he is born again, what he meant was that when our minds are renewed, when we change our thinking, we will see the kingdom displayed and proven in the same way he did in his earthly ministry.⁶⁰ Johnson writes:

⁵⁴ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 140. The imagery of Jacob's ladder to heaven is used frequently by others who claim they personally ascend via the ladder; in particular, Todd Bentley has claimed numerous climbs.

⁵⁵ In recent years, among the apostles and prophets, claims of personal and literal visits to heaven have become frequent, detailed, and almost routinised. It is not relevant to discuss here, but the long and detailed descriptions (often found on *YouTube*) beg the question of what is the purpose of heaven when it is so frequently accessible.

⁵⁶ Beni Johnson, "Encounter" in Johnson, *Walking in the Supernatural*, 155-157.

⁵⁷ As evidenced by the hundreds of videos that result from typing keywords "visit to heaven" in the *YouTube* search bar.

⁵⁸ Wagner, *Changing Church*, 61-62.

⁵⁹ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 151.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 38. See also Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 38, where he emphasises the message to Nicodemus as a changed perception in order to see the superior reality of the world "that fulfils every dream you ever had."

The only way to consistently do Kingdom works is to view reality from God's perspective. That's what the Bible means when it talks about renewing our minds. The battle is in the mind. The mind is the essential tool in bringing Kingdom reality to the problems and crisis (*sic*) people face. God has made it to be the gatekeeper of the supernatural.⁶¹

Quoting Rom 12:2 he further asserts: "We will know our mind is renewed when the impossible looks logical."⁶² This worldview dictates that the way to experience miracles is to believe in them.⁶³ Johnson writes: "Faith actualizes what it realizes."⁶⁴

For Johnson, God's reality is the everyday miraculous; God's perspective means that signs and wonders should be part of normal life. However, the maintenance of belief that requires miracles as normal presents a challenge. In lived experience, every day in fact does not consist of miraculous events; therefore faith must be bolstered by *acts* of faith that serve to reinforce belief. This has given rise to numerous unusual and controversial faith practices that appear difficult to reconcile with biblical descriptions of faith in action. The most widely publicised is the practice of "grave-soaking" where young devotees of Bethel drape themselves over the graves of spiritual luminaries in order to absorb their mantle or anointing.⁶⁵ Other practices are described as "prophetic acts."⁶⁶ Some examples are the use of

⁶¹ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 35.

⁶² Johnson, *God is Good*, 38. Neither Wagner nor Johnson account for Paul's statement in Eph 4:22-24 that serves to illuminate Rom 12:2: "You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (NRSV). In his commentary on Ephesians, Moo interprets this verse as an exhortation to change the way we think from within; that is, internalizing God's values. Douglas J. Moo, *Romans: The NIV Application Commentary*, The NIV Application Commentary Series, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 395, 400.

⁶³ None of the proponents of signs and wonders, from Wimber/Wagner to Johnson, admit that many Christians do believe in the possibility of miracles and many also practise healing without subscribing to the specific theologies described in this study. Their theologies were, without exception, presented as either with them (that is, God's way) or against them (the demonic spirit of religion's way).

⁶⁴ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 43.

⁶⁵ Bethel leaders have responded ambiguously to this controversial practice. Beni Johnson has been accused of starting it when she posted photos on the internet of herself lying on the grave of C.S. Lewis. Bill Johnson wrote about "spiritual inheritance": "There are anointings, mantles, revelations, and mysteries that have lain unclaimed, literally where they were left, because the generation that walked in them never passed them on. I believe it's possible for us to recover realms of anointing, realms of insight, realms of God that have been untended for decades simply by choosing to reclaim them and perpetuate them for future generations." Bill Johnson, "Recovering Our Spiritual Inheritance," in *The Physics of Heaven*, eds. Judy Franklin and Ellyn Davis (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2012), 30. Bethel Missionary Ben Fitzgerald was filmed with a group of Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM) students at the UK grave of Smith Wigglesworth where he says: "The thing that we felt was like the raising of the dead power and the gift of faith came on us ... When you come into a place where the Holy Spirit was on a person, it still exists there, he still keeps the heritage of the person's life." Raideragent, "Bethel Church Soaking up the 'Anointing' of Dead Men, of Grave Sucking," *YouTube*, 9 December 2011, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrHPTs8cLls>> (23 April 2021), 0:17. For the response of Johnson and other leaders when challenged to explain the actions of their students see Jessilyn

tuning forks (528hz) to bring healing, blowing shofars to wake sleeping angels, or applying pieces of artwork to hurting body areas as intercession for healing.⁶⁷ Theresa Dedmon, who leads the creative arts programme at Bethel, describes how merely touching a piece of art can heal an injury.⁶⁸ Jesus Culture leader Banning Liebscher revealed how Bethel students put coins on walls to make them stay or practise walking through walls: “because it’s in the Bible, right?”⁶⁹ During a church service, Bethel leader Kevin Dedmon told the wildly cheering congregation two stories involving his son’s youth group: one where a youth walked five steps on water in front of 75-80 others and another where his son saw two of the group trying to walk through a wall after reading in the Bible “where Jesus is walking through the wall.”⁷⁰ Much of the controversy around Bethel activities relates to the students at the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM), a three-year programme that attracts thousands from around the world. Reports detail the frequency with which BSSM students accost strangers in public places such as supermarkets, car parks, or hospital emergency departments

Justice and Taylor Berglund, “Banning Liebscher: Why Bill Johnson Didn’t Immediately Shut Down Grave Sucking,” *Charisma Magazine*, 19 April 2018, <<https://www.charismamag.com/spirit/church-ministry/36641-bethel-pastor-why-bill-johnson-didn-t-immediately-shut-down-grave-sucking>> (25 April 2018); ASKDrBrown, “Dr. Brown Interviews Pastor Bill Johnson,” *In the Line of Fire*, 13 October 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Af1hswGOjZg>> (20 September 2018), 15:07ff. A number of other precedents to this type of activity include Peter Wagner. Wagner, Cindy Jacobs, Chuck Pierce, and others prayed at the grave for one of Wagner’s ancestors as a “prophetic act” to weaken the powers of darkness that are striving to prevent the great transfer of wealth promised through the prophets. Wagner wrote that it was one of the most powerful spiritual encounters that they ever had, and that they were expecting tangible results shortly. C. Peter Wagner, “Newsletter,” *Global Link* 2:25, 26 July 2005. <http://www.globalharvest.org/global_link_61.htm> (4 September 2019).

⁶⁶ Johnson defines a prophetic act as “where an action is taken in the natural that has nothing to do with the needed miracle.” This releases the Spirit of God to accomplish the desired outcome. He describes a biblical precedent: the prophet who threw a stick into a river to make a lost axe head float (2 Kings 6:6). Bill Johnson, *Face to Face with God* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2007), 213; see also Johnson, *Hosting the Presence*, 164-165.

⁶⁷ Beni Johnson, “Love Shack Time,” *Life and Wellness Blog*, 6 July 2012, <<http://benijohnson.blogspot.com/2012/07/0-0-1-329-1876-kingdom-living.html>> (6 April 2018); Beni Johnson, “Wakey,” *Joy The Pulse of Heaven*, 16 March 2009, <<http://www.benij.org/blog.php?id=1>> (30 December 2014); Raideragent, “Bethel Redding Theresa Dedmon using ‘prophetic art’ to heal,” *YouTube*, 22 December 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvMnvyV1R2A&t=127s>> (23 April 2021), 2:55ff; Anonymous, “Healing and Prophecy through Art,” *Bethel Testimonies*, 13 July 2007, <<https://www.bethel.com/testimonies/healing-and-prophecy-through-art/>> (30 January 2021). One man giving a testimony about how his daughter was healed of a ballet class injury when he applied a piece of art to her foot exclaimed: “I didn’t even pray!”

⁶⁸ Theresa Dedmon, *Born to Create: Stepping into your Supernatural Destiny* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2012), 70, 124.

⁶⁹ Banning Liebscher, who made the comment during discussion of these activities, is the head of the Bethel Ministry known as Jesus Culture, a youth-oriented music initiative. Justice, “Why Bill Johnson Didn’t Immediately Shut Down Grave Sucking,” n.p.

⁷⁰ Dedmon is a former Bethel church leader and BSSM teacher. Whizzpopping, “Can You Walk on Water? Walk Through Walls?” *YouTube*, 3 October 2009, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSNojCrel-I>> (20 February 2020), 1:28ff. Dedmon’s son retells the story in: Chad Dedmon, “Working out in the Spirit,” in *Walking in the Supernatural*, ed. Bill Johnson (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2012), 56.

offering to heal anyone who has any kind of malady (they have now been banned from some spots by the local government).⁷¹ However, tragedy has also resulted from some incidents related to faith practices. Believing a man had died after a 60 metre fall off a cliff, BSSM students involved in the incident failed to call emergency services but rather spent six hours attempting to reach the man to pray for his resurrection. The man survived but was left paralyzed.⁷² Another report (some details of which are disputed by one of the Bethel members involved) described how a boy who had an asthma attack on the street was found by Bethel members who, instead of calling an ambulance, surrounded him to pray. When after fifteen minutes an ambulance was called, it was too late to save the boy's life. While in a coma for four days before he died, Bethel members arrived at the hospital to blow a shofar, give his mother prophetic art, and prophesy that her son would be raised from the dead.⁷³ The actions of the Bethel believers, tragically misguided as they may be, demonstrate that their worldview is deeply held: convinced, sincere, and dictating their behaviour even in situations of dire stress or pressure. This same conviction is evident in a video distributed by Johnson when the two-year-old daughter of a Bethel worship leader died. He issued a call for intense prayer with the certainty that this would bring about her resurrection, on the grounds that it is biblical. Jesus set the precedent of raising the dead and Christians can perform the same miracles.⁷⁴

Agency

The role of humans in supernatural events on earth is central to Bethel theology. Johnson's repeated message is that we were born to rule over creation and to "plunder hell," to rescue those headed there.⁷⁵ To do this, we are invested with power. Power, in Wagner's terms, consisted of visible, dramatic, and miraculous demonstrations of God's presence, a definition with which Johnson concurs. Again following Wagner, Johnson takes a kenotic

⁷¹ Students are sent out from BSSM on school assignments: Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 32.

⁷² Hensley-Clancy, "Meet the 'Young Saints,'" n.p.; Wendell Jones, "Kingdom Come," 33.

⁷³ Hensley-Clancy, "Meet the 'Young Saints,'" n.p. The original source for the story was the boy's grandmother who now devotes her time to researching and monitoring Bethel activities, including its political involvement in Redding's government.

⁷⁴ Bethel Music, "A Message from Pastor Bill Johnson," *YouTube*, 20 December 2019, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcD-rxfaphg>> (24 February 2020).

⁷⁵ Johnson, *God is Good*, 52.

view of Jesus, therefore making it possible for us to perform remarkable miraculous feats as Jesus did, who could do nothing supernatural in himself:

Jesus had no ability to heal the sick. He couldn't cast out devils, and he had no ability to raise the dead. He said of Himself in John 5:19, 'the Son can do nothing of Himself.' He had set aside His divinity. He did miracles as a man in right relationship with God because he was setting forth a model for us, something for us to follow. If he did miracles as God, we would all be extremely impressed, but we would have no compulsion to emulate Him. But when we see that God has commissioned us to do what Jesus did—and more—then we realize that he put self-imposed restrictions on Himself to show that we could do it, too.⁷⁶

Johnson's claim that we are an open heaven and have constant access to the manifest presence of God puts us in the position of wielding unlimited power, including the power to forgive sins, because "We become like the One we behold":⁷⁷

Being the House of God means we have the exact authority Jesus has at the right hand of the Father. We are entitled and empowered to be His "House," His embodiment on earth. As a Christian at this very moment, you have absolute liberty and access to heaven.⁷⁸

This power carries corollaries for the role of God: "God has apparently given himself a self-imposed restriction—to act in the affairs of man in response to prayer."⁷⁹ With this limitation placed on God and our elevation to the same potential as Jesus, human agency increases while God's sovereignty diminishes, an implicit theme throughout the movements examined in previous chapters. The advent of sin infected the world with disease, sickness, afflicting spirits, poverty, natural disasters, and demonic influence. Now that we are restored to God's original purpose (through the cross) we are to expect there to be no sin, sickness, or poverty.⁸⁰ This emphasis on relief from temporal issues puts parameters around the work of God and limits his power to the visible manifestations of our daily living. Not only is God subject to human will but he is also confined to working only within the realm of visible, tangible miracles or otherwise bestowing his providence on humans. In his books, Johnson repeatedly makes the point about God's bending to human will: "[God] has made Himself

⁷⁶ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 42-43.

⁷⁷ Bill Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2007), 36; Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, 203.

⁷⁸ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 51. Elsewhere Johnson writes that the primary mission of the Holy Spirit is to "make us like Jesus" and therefore, "As He is, so are we in this world." Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 145.

⁷⁹ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 64.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *God is Good*, 53.

vulnerable to the prayers of His people. History unfolds according to what we do, what we pray, what we don't do and what we don't pray."⁸¹ Furthermore: "Something strange happens as [a] person enters into the intimacy of friendship with God; God becomes interested in our desires. And ultimately, He wants our minds renewed so that *our* will can be done."⁸² In the end, "God begins to feed off your wishes and desires."⁸³ Johnson asserts that Christians who do not see it this way view themselves "as remote control beings, totally under the direction of a God who sits in heaven and works the master controls."⁸⁴ He continues:

Many of us, myself included, have prayed prayers in the past that say, 'Oh God, take over my will!' That is easily one of the stupidest prayers anyone can pray. It totally devalues our will, which is one of the greatest things God ever created. Your will is so valuable that He wouldn't violate it even at the cost of His own Son.⁸⁵

Perhaps the most extreme expression of Bethel theology's view of human will, power, or agency is found in the Dead Raising Team (DRT), established by a former BSSM student.⁸⁶ The organisation claims almost fifty teams in its network, mostly in the USA but also in India, Sri Lanka, and the Netherlands. One of the central anthems at Bethel is "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, drive out demons" (Matt 10:8).⁸⁷ This same verse underpins the DRT belief that they are mandated to raise the dead: to date they claim fifteen resurrections, although no evidence has been produced.⁸⁸ DRT Director Tyler Johnson's conviction is that (according to John 10:10) God never intended anyone to die; it is Satan who

⁸¹ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 133-134.

⁸² Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 129. Italics mine.

⁸³ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 135. In terms of human control over this, Johnson wrote: "All of the promises He reveals to us will be realized in time, but the acceleration of events is largely determined by the desperation of God's people. Our passion for Him and His promises speeds up the process of growth and development, making us qualified for the stewardship of those events sooner than had been planned." Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 172.

⁸⁴ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 129-130.

⁸⁵ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 130.

⁸⁶ See the DRT website <<http://deadraisingteam.com/>>. Bill Johnson has endorsed the team publicly and accepts their claims of success. Amanda Winters, "Faith Healings, Dead Raising Teams Part of Bethel Experience," *Redding Record Searchlight*, 18 January 2010, <<https://archive.redding.com/news/faith-healings-dead-raising-teams-part-of-bethel-experience-ep-377152376-355396981.html/>> (23 March 2021).

⁸⁷ KCFonline, "Bill Johnson - Heal the Sick, Raise the Dead, Cleanse the Leper, Drive out Demons..." *YouTube*, 12 June 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKcw0SQJ91c>> (26 April 2021), 1:24.

⁸⁸ Tyler Johnson background: <<http://deadraisingteam.com/our-director/>> (23 April 2021). A 2013 documentary made about the DRT did reveal the name of one individual purportedly brought back from hell by the team. Later when the story was followed up by a reporter, the person concerned (who took a drug overdose and woke up in an ambulance) denied any encounter with the team. Will Storr, "The Evangelicals Who Believe They Can Raise the Dead," *The Telegraph*, 23 November 2014, <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/film-news/11244348/The-evangelicals-who-believe-they-can-raise-the-dead.html>> (26 April 2021).

is responsible for death.⁸⁹ However, the idea of human intervention in the process of bringing people back from the dead includes the power inherent in the person themselves, as described by Tyler, who tells how a man was healed of back pain simply by walking past him in a supermarket.⁹⁰

To what degree the manifestation of all types of power belongs to all the people or to some of the people is unclear, although ambivalent messages in the theology point to a “both-and” situation. Certainly, the prophets are invested with power, and moreover, the delivery of a false prophecy is not held to be the responsibility of the prophet. Bill Johnson’s co-leader, Kris Vallotton, teaches that New Testament prophecy consists of three elements: “Every prophecy should edify, exhort, and comfort.”⁹¹ To this he adds that prophecy is about the future.⁹² However, he also warns: “Unbelief will kill a prophecy. Unbelief will keep the purposes of God from happening in your life, in my life.”⁹³ This places the onus on the recipient and protects the prophet against accusations of false prophecy:

The value you place on the word determines the power you receive from the word. If you receive, if you have very little faith in the word, don’t be surprised if the word doesn’t come to pass and it isn’t because it was a bad prophecy. It’s because of very little faith. Often times the prophetic people get accused of bad prophecies because the prophecies don’t come to pass but the prophecies need to be mixed with faith for them to come to pass.⁹⁴

The insistence on a particular character for the prophecy (personal, positive, and predictive) and its self-fulfilling aspect means that hope and anticipation are sustained—at least if the recipient continues to believe in the efficacy of the prophecy. Regardless of whether prophetic agency is available to all or just to some, the objective remains the same. The purpose of prophecy is to promise outcomes beneficial to the individual.

⁸⁹ Storr, “The Evangelicals Who Believe They Can Raise the Dead.”

⁹⁰ The Movement TV, “God’s House - Tyler Johnson,” *YouTube*, 6 October 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQAQWrzAYfI&t=415s>> (26 April 2021), 7:08ff.

⁹¹ Vallotton, Kris. “Common Misconceptions of Prophetic Ministry.” *YouTube*. 3 October 2010. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkN5tTTo0Ds>> (24 February 2020), 0:26.

⁹² Vallotton, “Common Misconceptions of Prophetic Ministry,” 1:50.

⁹³ Vallotton, “Common Misconceptions of Prophetic Ministry,” 3:36.

⁹⁴ Vallotton, “Common Misconceptions of Prophetic Ministry,” 2:23.

The Therapeutic Promise

The culmination of Bethel theology is found in therapeutic promise. Johnson describes this as an “unlimited supply of blank checks” as promised to Jesus’ disciples and available to us: whatever we desire and ask for will be done for us.⁹⁵ What this means is healing for any affliction, alleviation of all suffering, and prosperity in all things whether in financial terms or in other dimensions of well-being. All of Johnson’s teaching is underpinned by this theme; this is how heaven invades earth:

Life in the Kingdom, which is past the narrow entrance of salvation, is ... bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. It is here we find the Lord saying to us that we’re no longer servants, but friends. It’s in that context He says that the Father will give us whatever we want. The emphasis is on *what you want*.⁹⁶

The promise begins with identity.⁹⁷ Johnson writes of the need for individuals to discover the truth that, with dependency on God’s favour, strength and guidance, liberates us into true humility: “I am significant.”⁹⁸ The concept of identity permeates a significant proportion of Johnson’s sermons and his penchant for pithy quotes includes related sayings: “If you make history with God, He’ll make history through you,” or “The Lord will not share his glory with another. But you’re not another.”⁹⁹ With selfhood one of the key focal points of his theology, Johnson explains what Paul meant in Rom 8:14-28:

Verse 19, creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the Sons of God. There is a groaning in creation for you to learn who you are. Verse 22 for we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs until now. Why? Because of what the Holy Spirit has been working to reveal to the people of God in verse 16. Your identity.¹⁰⁰

The discovery of identity sees its completion in the ability to arise, shine, and become glorious, with self-image essential to the process: “Our capacity to give glory ends up being

⁹⁵ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 27-28.

⁹⁶ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 31. Italics his.

⁹⁷ As Johnson clearly realizes, identity is particularly important to young people. See Melinda Lundquist Denton and Richard Flory, *Back Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 15-17, 222-223, 226.

⁹⁸ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, 196.

⁹⁹ As noted earlier regarding S&W catchphrases, such axioms serve heuristic purposes. They comprise a significant element in Bethel teaching (see Chapter 2 n123). There are numerous webpages devoted to Bill Johnson quotes, for just some examples see: <<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1316195>>; <<https://quotefancy.com/bill-johnson-quotes/>>; <<https://prayer-coach.com/bill-johnson-quotes/>>.

¹⁰⁰ iUniteinChrist, “Bill Johnson Identity in Christ,” *YouTube*, 5 May 2010, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4TIFauIqug>> (23 March 2021), 2:37.

reduced by our unbelief in our significance.”¹⁰¹ Johnson describes how the gospel transforms the nature of whatever it touches: “When the light of God touches you, you become light.”¹⁰² When touched by the righteousness of Jesus, we become the righteousness of God, the manifestation of his grace, thereby overcoming all the boundaries that constrained previous generations of Christians who believed that the expression of 2 Cor 5:21 was merely figurative or symbolic.¹⁰³ Becoming glorious means that we now have the capacity to release the power of the Holy Spirit, whether by declaration, acts of faith, or laying hands on someone to heal them of an affliction: the miracle is released in the act.¹⁰⁴ This manifestation of God’s glory that we carry with us is the means to transform lives, cities and nations—and the wealth of the nations released to the church for kingdom purposes.¹⁰⁵

This centrality of the self is associated with the need to renew the mind, to maintain a worldview of the miraculous as normative. But this also incorporates the process of repentance. In the context of discussing the renewed mind (having a heavenly perspective of reality), Johnson comments: “Repent, then, means to go back to God’s perspective on reality.”¹⁰⁶ Although in places he refers to sin it is nearly always kept separate from the concept of repentance and aligned more with the process of “changing your mind.” Sin, in this reading, does involve change, but without discussion about what actually is sin and without reference to NT passages that speak about sin. Rather, Johnson prefers to represent some of the corollaries of the search for identity:

By the hundreds of millions, people recognize the power of sin. They live under the realization that they cannot change their nature. And so they spend their lives changing the color of their hair, taking off pounds, and learning new skills to somehow quench that internal desire for personal transformation ... But the power of sin is old news! The news needed in this day is that the power of the authentic love of God transforms everything it touches ... As we face Him, our nature is changed into

¹⁰¹ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, 205.

¹⁰² Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, 202.

¹⁰³ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, 203. “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (NRSV).

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, 211-212.

¹⁰⁵ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, 215.

¹⁰⁶ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 37. Elsewhere, Johnson uses alternative wording to define those who repent as those who “change their life’s perspective, making His activities the focus and ambition of their lives,” or “alter their perspective on life itself.” Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 123.

the nature of the One who touched us, and we release the power of His love to those around us.¹⁰⁷

Johnson's comment on the old news, now needing re-focus, implies his repudiation of the emphasis on sin and guilt experienced by previous generations in some churches. He is far more interested in God's love and grace poured out than dwelling on the entrapments of sin. His theology of sin is summed up in one of his aphorisms: "When Jesus bought you, He bought your problem."¹⁰⁸ He goes on to say: "The blood of Jesus wiped out the power and record of sin in your life. Your old nature is dead. It hasn't been put on a shelf, or in a closed room, or imprisoned—it has been crucified. Period. Done deal."¹⁰⁹ This enables a "sin-free life" as Vallotton explained in a story about his visit to a YWAM base:

One of the greatest lies in Christendom (*sic*) is that I'm a sinner saved by grace ... I am no longer a sinner and when I receive Jesus Christ I was born again and Peter said that I actually have the divine nature. I actually have the nature of my Father. He didn't just save me, he delivered me from my old man, he killed the old man and I became alive...¹¹⁰

Vallotton recounts that at this point, he was challenged by a young man in the audience who demanded to know if he had ever gone a full day without sinning. Vallotton told him he can go an entire week without sinning before continuing:

... God actually has the power to transform your life and the Holy Spirit moved in so that you wouldn't sin ... once I admit my sin he forgives me and cleanses me from all unrighteousness and now guess what now I can live a sin-free life.¹¹¹

While the conception that people can sin *after* they have received the forgiveness of the cross is not denied, Johnson and his colleagues rarely address this scenario, instead focusing on the immediate (and by implication permanent) transformation that occurs because

¹⁰⁷ Johnson, *Face to Face with God*, 204.

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 98.

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 100. Johnson's phrasing elsewhere emphasises his view of instant metamorphosis with no accounting for sin after the moment of conversion: "Without Jesus, I was hopelessly lost in sin. But I am no longer without Him, and never will be again. The lost condition is no longer a factor, nor is it my identity. Now I am found in Christ, without sin, because His blood has made me clean." Johnson, *God is Good*, 169.

¹¹⁰ Bethel TV, "March 21st, 2021/Sunday Service/Bethel Church," *YouTube*, 21 March 2021, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFdzFOLtxMQ>> (22 March 2021), 1:10:22.

¹¹¹ Bethel TV, "March 21st, 2021/Sunday Service/Bethel Church," 1:12:15. Vallotton implies that eliminating sin is merely a matter of believing that it no longer has power: "I'm pointing out that you have power over it. The point isn't to make you feel bad, the point is to actually give you faith so you don't have to live like that. "I'm addicted to pornography." You were but you aren't. "Well I believe I am." That's why you are." (1:15:11). Vallotton makes no mention about how to deal with sin if it does occur after becoming a Christian.

of the cross. This means that associated recognition of ongoing accountability or personal responsibility are absent from the teaching.¹¹² The avoidance of direct discussion on the issue of sin combined with the promise of healing from all afflictions makes suffering redundant. When Johnson was asked “What is your theology of suffering?” his provocative response was: “I don’t have one. I refuse to have a theology for something that shouldn’t exist.”¹¹³

The life-blood that sustains the therapeutic promise for followers is testimony. Johnson’s strategy on the use of personal testimonies is clear:

The testimonies of God are the tools that equip us to walk in our purpose to demonstrate what He is like through the miraculous. First, they reveal the nature of God and how he does things—His ways. Secondly, this awareness of who God is creates an expectation in our hearts for God’s ways to be manifested in our lives ... When we declare what God has done, power is released to make that testimony happen again in the lives of those who hear it.¹¹⁴

His key intent is to sustain expectation: “Our expectation of God is what determines our level of faith.”¹¹⁵ With this in mind his programme has been to establish a “culture of testimony” at Bethel.¹¹⁶ Testimonies are found in every sector of Bethel culture. All Bethel staff and board meetings begin with one or two hours of sharing testimonies, Bethel maintains websites and Facebook pages solely devoted to testimonies (almost eight hundred on one page alone), and onstage testimonies are a component of any event.¹¹⁷ On one webpage, testimonies can be selected from five categories: emotional healing, finances, miracles, physical healing, and

¹¹² Some other absences in the teaching relate to exhortations that appear frequently in scripture: the need for discipline, endurance and perseverance, the cost of a faithful life, or the process of maturation and refining that occurs in a Christian’s life. One regular theme in Johnson’s teaching is obedience. However, he does not discuss or explain the meaning of obedience or what it entails, merely insisting that it is important to obey.

¹¹³ Downes, “Profile: Bill Johnson,” n.p. Johnson’s stance here makes no allowance for Paul’s comment in Phil 1:29 where he affirms the “privilege” of suffering nor does his teaching appear to address the topic as found in 2 Cor 4 and throughout 1 Peter.

¹¹⁴ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, 109. Wells suggests that subjective experience related via testimony performs a specific purpose that “opens up to view an inner experience” in response to the hunger in others but may sacrifice objective truth in doing so: “The question it poses to the outsider is not whether Christ is objectively real but simply whether the experience is appealing, whether it seems to have worked, whether having it will bring one inside the group and give one connection to others.” Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 172.

¹¹⁵ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, 110.

¹¹⁶ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, 113.

¹¹⁷ Johnson, *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, 114; <<https://bethelredding.com/ministries/healing-rooms/testimonies>>; <<https://www.bethel.com/testimonies/#>>. A regular feature of testimonies delivered from the platform (since Toronto Blessing days) are the behaviours of speakers who are considered to be so overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit that they have difficulty delivering a coherent account. Testimonies often are punctuated by drunken staggering, laughter, falling over, jerks, yelling, violent head shaking, or Tourette-like tics.

relationships.¹¹⁸ Testimonies about spiritual insights, learning, or growth do not exist; focus is solely on God's temporal blessings. No evidence is provided for the many dramatic stories of healing: the telling of stories and the documentation of them as they are told is considered sufficient proof of their truthfulness. One of the most noticeable absences is the lack of corroboration from those who have been healed, even though many stories of miraculous events putatively have occurred in front of "dumbfounded" witnesses in public places: restaurants, courtrooms, hospital emergency rooms, airports, universities, ice cream shops, or supermarkets.¹¹⁹ Johnson's response to being asked to provide proof of miracles is that such a request is more "a sign of unbelief than it is of our wisdom keeping us from deception. Such a fear only exists where unbelief has reigned for a long time," and furthermore, is an effort to put God on trial.¹²⁰

Overall, the theological ideas at Bethel are uncomplicated. Johnson's teaching on the Great Commission as concerned with discipling the nations makes the evangelical tradition of proclaiming the gospel message to individuals or groups superfluous.¹²¹ Viewing Psalm 67 as in harmony with Matt 28:19, Johnson rhetorically asks what brings nations to God. He answers that blessings precede the response, paraphrasing Psalm 67: "*Bless us so they know what You're like, and God shall bless us, and they'll come to Him.*"¹²² In short, this summarizes the totality of Bethel's theology. Blessings are temporal, normative, and abundant. When the nations see this, they too will turn to God. And to this, Johnson's audiences and followers, at Bethel and around the world, enthusiastically respond.

Nevertheless, the process of maintaining belief gives rise to some problematic issues that Johnson is forced to address. There is no guarantee that merely reading or hearing

¹¹⁸ <<https://www.bethel.com/testimonies/#>>; <<https://bethelredding.com/ministries/healing-rooms/testimonies>>.

¹¹⁹ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 27-28, 32-33, 71, 126. Corroborated testimony exceptions come from Bethel devotees who aver they personally were healed of pain in various body parts such as knees or elbows. Invariably these are vague descriptions without any claim of a diagnosis or confirmation of chronic disease.

¹²⁰ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 69.

¹²¹ Johnson, *God is Good*, 112. Vocabulary related to evangelism is rare in Johnson's teaching and when it does appear, it remains unexplained. I searched eight Johnson books for themes of evangelism, the sole explanatory reference was an enigmatic comment: "Evangelism in its purist form is simply an overflow of worship." Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 165. Note that individual adherents will frequently talk about their evangelistic activities but these often pertain to momentary encounters with strangers where a positive response to a question about wanting God or a better life leads to a proclamatory prayer over them before both parties move on; no meaningful explanation of the gospel is involved but the encounter is deemed another successful conversion.

¹²² Johnson, *God is Good*, 112. Italics his.

testimonies results in certainty of belief. Another problem is disappointment for those who fail to experience desired miracles or blessings. The issue that emerges from the insistence on the normality of miracles and the discarding of suffering is that this forces a conflict with lived reality. Although many Bethel adherents are committed to the belief in the miraculous, their experience of failure is inevitable. Consequently, Johnson deals with this by asking followers to “embrace the mystery” as he does with his son who has not been healed of deafness.¹²³

Mystery should be a continual part of your life. You should always have more questions than answers. If your encounters with God don't leave you with more questions than when you started, then you have had an inferior encounter. A relationship with God that does not stir up that realm of mystery and wonder is an inferior relationship.¹²⁴

An implicit message sitting within the requirement to embrace mystery is the issue of doubt or questions about Bethel teaching. Johnson implies disobedience or deception where questions do arise:

What we don't understand is sometimes as important as what we do. It's one thing to obey when He has given us understanding about a matter, and quite another to obey while facing questions and circumstances that seem to contradict what we understand ... God must violate our logic to invite us away from the deception of relying on our own reasoning.¹²⁵

No Bethel leader makes explicit mention of how Bethel responds to those who question. But Johnson's implications here are compounded by his claims of unbelief, fear, and putting God on trial if miracles are doubted. Alongside Vallotton's assertion that prophecy is made false only because of the recipient's unbelief, the implicit message is that asking questions is not an acceptable part of Bethel culture.

Re-Shaping Christianity Globally

Bethel exerts considerable influence outside of its own membership in the Bethel Redding church and its messages are being disseminated around the world. Perhaps the most

¹²³ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 57.

¹²⁴ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 64. Shuttleworth challenges Johnson's declaration of mystery as insufficient, particularly insofar as he places the blame for unrealized healing on human failure. Shuttleworth, “On Earth as it is in Heaven,” 111-115.

¹²⁵ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 59. There are an increasing number of Bethel ex-members posting denouncements of Bethel on the internet: one of the more common complaints is the intolerance of those who question Bethel teaching or activities.

effective mechanism for influence is through the music produced by Bethel, a global phenomenon that now strongly challenges the previously dominant worship music label, Hillsong.¹²⁶ The highly professional, talented, and polished Bethel musicians enjoy popstar status and write songs that are sung worldwide in church services. Even in some churches who declare their discomfort with Bethel theology, Bethel songs feature during worship time.¹²⁷ The appeal of the music lies with its excellent production, simplicity and repetition, and its heavily emotive style.¹²⁸ Johnson believes that his concept of the renewed mind can be achieved through worship (by which he means the songs sung during a church service): “Worship is to be a primary focus that affects all we are and do. That is the context for the development of the renewed mind.”¹²⁹ Furthermore: “Music bypasses all the intellectual barriers and when the anointing of God is on a song, people will begin to believe things they wouldn’t believe through teaching.”¹³⁰

Johnson’s viewpoint highlights the significance of Bethel music in the dissemination of its theological narrative but also raises the question of exactly what is conveyed. Scholars have noted how worship songs convey ideology, shape thought, and guide responses, something that Johnson seems to be aware of.¹³¹ This is further explored in an article about the content of worship songs by youth ministry scholar David Bailey. He discusses the “theological shorthand” that is found as “fragments of a coherent theology” within contemporary worship songs.¹³² These songs are narratives of divine encounter, full of fragments and motifs that are intended to connect us to ideas of God.¹³³ Because they are presented as fragments only, the worshipper is required to interpret them. However, a cursory

¹²⁶ Bethel songs were streamed over the Web more than 249 million times in the 2019-2020 financial year (statistics from 2019-2020 annual report). “Arise and Build,” <<https://ariseandbuild.net/impact/>> (16 June 2021).

¹²⁷ Anecdotal information based on personal observation and conversations with church leaders or members from a variety of churches in Christchurch, New Zealand.

¹²⁸ This style of worship developed decades before the advent of Bethel music and is now characteristic of contemporary charismatic worship songs. However, Bethel music is gaining ascendancy and is less theological in orientation. See Ward, *Selling Worship*, especially 198-199.

¹²⁹ Johnson, *God is Good*, 174.

¹³⁰ “Bill Johnson Quotes,” <<https://bethelmusic.com/blog/bill-johnson-quotes/>> (27 September 2019). Cox describes church music as “the wavelength on which the message is carried.” Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 121-122.

¹³¹ Martyn Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power* (London: SPCK, 1996), 71; Pete Ward, *Selling Worship: How What We Sing Has Changed the Church* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2005), 145-149.

¹³² David Bailey, “Living Among the Fragments of a Coherent Theology,” *Journal of Youth and Theology* 15:2 (September 2016): 173-195.

¹³³ Bailey, “Living Among the Fragments,” 178. Practical theologian Pete Ward describes the purpose of a charismatic worship song as the means to a personal encounter with God. Ward, *Selling Worship*, 198.

examination of Bethel lyrics demonstrates that the connection to God can be tenuous at times. A large proportion of songs contain no explicit (or even implicit) reference to God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit.¹³⁴ Other characteristics are common. Many are indistinguishable from secular love songs (“There’s no give and take away/There’s no game I need to play/There’s no waiting for the spring/Your love is evergreen”¹³⁵); are focussed solely on the experience of the worshipper (“I am strong and full of life/I am steadfast, no compromise/I lift my sails, to the sky/I’m gonna catch the wind”¹³⁶); imply the purpose of praise is to make us feel better (“Let praise be a weapon that silences the enemy/Let praise be a weapon that conquers all anxiety”¹³⁷); contain undertones of eroticism (“Here in Your arms, You steal my heart again/And I breathe You in like I’ve never breathed till now”¹³⁸); or express a triumphalist theology (“When I open up my mouth/Miracles start breaking out/I have the authority/Jesus has given me”¹³⁹). The challenge that Bailey alludes to is that because the songs contain only fragments and motifs of theology, worshippers have no means of interpreting the song lyrics within the framework of Christian narrative and tradition unless they are biblically literate and theologically educated.¹⁴⁰ The corollary of this is that a worshipper who is not grounded in the traditional Christian narrative can interpret only within the narrative created by Bethel and according to their personal response. The risk for the individual sits with the possibility of misinterpretation and, with the music being powerfully emotive, is based on subjective, contextually-driven emotional responses that are also temporary in their effect. If Johnson is right in his statements about the power of song to engender belief (and many scholars would agree with him) then indeed Bethel music is an effective vehicle for spreading their message.

The reach and influence of Bethel can also be found in activities or projects that are not driven directly by the church but are otherwise associated through endorsements or connected to Bethel through relationship. Two examples serve to indicate the problematic nature of some of these relationships. These can be viewed as logical progressions from

¹³⁴ Note that this survey is brief; a more in-depth study would distinguish between songs intended for corporate or performance worship. However, the interest here lies with the theology conveyed in the lyrics, regardless of genre.

¹³⁵ Amanda Cook, “Evergreen,” *Bethel Music Publishing* CCLI# 7123013, 2018.

¹³⁶ Melissa Helsler, et al, “Catch the Wind,” *Bethel Music Publishing* CCLI# 7068790, 2016.

¹³⁷ Brandon Lake, et al, “We Praise You,” *Bethel Music Publishing* CCLI# 7130961, 2019.

¹³⁸ Steffany Gretzinger, “We Dance,” *Bethel Music Publishing* CCLI# 7003304, 2013.

¹³⁹ Brandon Lake, et al, “Champion,” *Bethel Music Publishing* CCLI# 7130941, 2019.

¹⁴⁰ Bailey, “Living Among the Fragments,” 181.

Bethel's teaching as, more and more, the view of scripture is modified and as activities reach into mystical spheres that know no boundaries. Firstly a new "translation" of the Bible titled *The Passion Translation* (TPT) has been quickly gaining in popularity and widespread use, due in significant part to Bethel promotion. The sole progenitor of TPT is Brian Simmons; it is a work still in progress as he completes one book at a time.¹⁴¹ TPT is heavily marketed and Simmons' profile is maintained by frequent media appearances and broadcasting his public speaking engagements.¹⁴² Marketing material describes TPT thus:

The Passion Translation® is a modern, easy-to-read Bible translation that unlocks the passion of God's heart and expresses his fiery love—merging emotion and life-changing truth. This translation will evoke an overwhelming response in every reader, unfolding the deep mysteries of the Scriptures. If you are hungry for God, The Passion Translation will help you encounter his heart and know him more intimately. Fall in love with God all over again.¹⁴³

However, academic critique of TPT is devastating. Scholarly condemnation is plentiful and includes an entire website devoted to critical comment on TPT.¹⁴⁴ Reviewer after reviewer analyses differing sections of Simmons' work and rejects the material, using strong language such as "travesty" or reflecting the concern that "readers are deprived of the correct knowledge of God."¹⁴⁵ The general tenor of both academic and non-academic reviews is summed up in the abstract to an article written by OT and Hebrew scholar Andrew Shead. He accuses Simmons of:

...abandoning all interest in textual accuracy, playing fast and loose with the original languages, and inserting so much new material into the text that it is at least 50% longer than the original. The result is a strongly sectarian translation that no longer counts as Scripture; by masquerading as a Bible it threatens to bind entire churches in thrall to a false god.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ In early 2021, completed work included the entire NT and eight books from the OT. Simmons claims oversight of an editorial review team, the director of which has a professional background as a high school English teacher.

¹⁴² An anecdotal note: in my personal attendance at a number of events where TPT has been read aloud, the reading usually has been preceded by a statement along the lines of "This is a great translation, you should get it yourselves," an indicator of the pervasive marketing techniques employed.

¹⁴³ Taken from <<https://www.amazon.com/>> listings.

¹⁴⁴ "Reading the Passion Bible," <<http://readingthepassionbible.com/>> (3 May 2021).

¹⁴⁵ George Athas, "George Athas Reviews Song of Songs." *Reading the Passion Bible*, 8 July 2017, <<http://readingthepassionbible.com/george-athas-reviews-tpt/>> (3 May 2021); Andrew G. Shead, "Burning Scripture with Passion: A Review of *The Psalms* (The Passion Translation)," *Themelios* 43:1 (April 2018): 69.

¹⁴⁶ Shead, "Burning Scripture with Passion," 58.

Furthermore, a number of critics have produced evidence to suggest that Simmons' claims of training, experience, and translation work are substantially exaggerated or even fabricated.¹⁴⁷ Representatives of the missions organisation he worked for and personal acquaintances dispute his claims of training as a linguist and his participation as a co-translator of the Bible for the Kuna people in Panama.¹⁴⁸ Simmons' use of the title "Dr" is based on a doctorate awarded by unaccredited WLI (Wagner University), where no related study is offered.¹⁴⁹ Although Simmons and his publishers claim differently, based on his history there is no evidence to suggest that Simmons has any of the knowledge or skills required to access the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts that he declares as his sources.¹⁵⁰

This type of information seems to have no effect on the success of TPT. It has quickly become so popular that it is included in some prominent internet platforms such as Bible Gateway or Logos. Simmons has a close relationship to Bethel and has been a featured speaker at Bethel events.¹⁵¹ Most particularly during worship times, TPT regularly is read aloud from the stage.¹⁵² Bill Johnson recorded fulsome praise for the work, declaring that he reads TPT almost every day and on the TPT website describes it as "One of the greatest things to happen with Bible translation in my lifetime."¹⁵³ Supported by endorsements such as

¹⁴⁷ Occasional re-checks of publicly-available biographical information about Simmons 2016-2021 (including from his own website) demonstrate that he has considerably enhanced a number of his biographical details.

¹⁴⁸ For example, see email correspondence with the Director, International Ministries Office, Ethnos360 (formerly New Tribes Mission) cited in Alexander Hewitson, "Feeding the Sheep Moldy Bread: An Evaluation of The Passion Translation," *Academia.edu*, (December 2019), <<https://www.academia.edu/42028995>> (3 May 2021), 9-11. Other sources and historical data making similar claims are held in my files.

¹⁴⁹ Simmons is also listed as a faculty member at Wagner University.

¹⁵⁰ Part of Simmons' narrative includes his claim that he "downloaded" his translation after Jesus breathed on him and that during a visit to heaven he encountered, in the library of heaven, the twenty-second chapter of John. Jesus told him that he couldn't take it back to earth with him yet, but that one day he would allow Simmons to have it, a book that "would trigger awakening in all the nations of the earth." Sid Roth's It's Supernatural! "Rekindle Your Passion for God - Brian Simmons," *YouTube*, 2 February 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vMTufSKaY8>> (1 May 2021), 15:26, 21:24ff.

¹⁵¹ Bethel TV, "Secrets of His Heart-Brian Simmons-Kingdom Culture Conference." *YouTube*. 17 June 2017, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjJ-y-SB6Ro>> (3 May 2021).

¹⁵² Onstage, Johnson usually teaches from other translations where passages from TPT are used to highlight particular points or elements during services, such as in worship times.

¹⁵³ Broadstreet Publishing, "Bill Johnson-Endorsement of the Passion Translation," *YouTube*, 29 August 2019, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=codMT9AHR7U>> 3 May 2021; Bill Johnson, "Endorsements," <<https://www.thepassiontranslation.com/endorsements/>> (3 May 2021). Johnson also endorses TPT in his own books: Johnson, *God is Good*, 210.

these, TPT is rapidly becoming the version of the Bible that best represents and promotes the theology of Bethel and Bill Johnson.¹⁵⁴

A second and highly controversial connection to Bethel demonstrates how, even if it is not directly generating some practices, its teaching can inspire or align with other related groups and activities, most notably those resembling New Age ideas. The head of Bethel's creative arts ministries, Theresa Dedmon, uses "Destiny Cards" (and claims to have coined the term) that consist of "prophetic art" used for healing or proclaiming spiritual truths over the recipient.¹⁵⁵ Similar cards also are the main tool used by the Christalignment ministry based in Australia and run by Ken and Jenny Hodge. Although they are not formally affiliated, the Hodges are linked to Bethel in several ways. BSSM students participate in their activities, the Hodges describe sharing their methods with BSSM students during their visits to Bethel, and their son, Ben Fitzgerald, is a Bethel missionary.¹⁵⁶ Christalignment teams attend markets, festivals, and New Age events where "seers" who "hear from the third heaven realm" give a "reading" from laying out the "destiny cards" to provide clients insight into their personal circumstances or putatively to connect people with a "higher realm" (God). Through the card readings they offer "destiny reading, Presence therapy, trauma recovery, entity cleansing, relationship alignment and physical healing using divine energy."¹⁵⁷ The strong resemblance to tarot card reading is not overlooked by critics and although denied by the Christalignment team, who claim their work is evangelism, there is almost nothing to distinguish their activities from the "spirit fair" activities that surround them.¹⁵⁸

When controversy over Christalignment erupted with a flurry of posts on Kris Vallotton's Facebook page in December 2017, Vallotton initially responded before deleting

¹⁵⁴ TPT website carries endorsements from several persons recognisable from previous chapters of this thesis.

¹⁵⁵ Dedmon's claim to have coined the term "Destiny cards" is debatable as they are widely used, and known as such, in New Age practices.

¹⁵⁶ Post by Ken and Jenny Hodge on Kris Vallotton's Facebook page, 15 December 2017, <<https://www.facebook.com/kvministries/>>, no longer available. This post and others associated have been deleted but I have copies on file. Ben Fitzgerald was the leader of the UK grave-soaking activities described earlier in this chapter, see n65.

¹⁵⁷ <<http://www.christalignment.org/destinyreadingcards>> (20 October 2020). Note that the wording on the website changes regularly, possibly in response to ongoing controversy.

¹⁵⁸ At 22 September 2017, the Christalignment internet homepage explained the cards: "We believe they are more predictive and higher than most tarot and can address a current life question that you may have." Following the December controversy, the word "tarot" was removed (20 January 2018). Currently the statement reads: "We believe they are more predictive and higher than other card readings, as they are our own and therefore carry a special presence." <<https://www.christalignment.org/destinyreadingcards>> (3 May 2021).

all the related posts, including correspondence from the Hodges.¹⁵⁹ Shortly after, and in what reads as a general endorsement, Bethel posted a website statement: “Christalignment is not formally affiliated with Bethel. We do, however, have a value for what they are seeking to accomplish.”¹⁶⁰ Denying the cards are tarot, the Bethel statement draws comparisons with Paul’s “contextualizing the Gospel” at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34).¹⁶¹ On her own website, Dedmon defended her use of similar cards at Bethel by claiming that Bethel uses the cards only one at a time, not in multiples (as tarot or Christalignment does) and furthermore, that Paul called Christians to be all things to all people.¹⁶² On another Bethel-run website, a BSSM student recorded his involvement with Christalignment: “To reach the people at the psychic fair, we did not say Jesus, God, or Holy Spirit. Instead, we called God the ‘Spirit of Creation.’”¹⁶³ He explained how at first this offended him but recalling Johnson’s teaching changed his attitude: “Bill Johnson often says, ‘Jesus will offend the mind to reveal the heart’ ... I found I was willing to accept Jesus offending people in Scripture as fitting with His nature.” This led him into to a new perspective:

Now, whenever I see something that offends me, but does not feel demonic, I actually get quite excited. I ask Jesus if He is offended, and if He is not, then He is just showing me He is bigger than I previously thought. If I find myself getting offended about something that God is not offended by, it means that God is bigger than my boxes for Him, and He is helping me get free of religion.¹⁶⁴

This student’s acceptance of something that initially made him uneasy demonstrates a significant element of the transition into seeing things Bethel’s way. His initial response to the card readings, followed by the decision to remain involved, required him firstly to suspend his own discernment and secondly to adjust his worldview. In moving from his previous conception into a new one, he forewent a process of weighing and evaluating the validity of

¹⁵⁹ Copies of the correspondence held by thesis author on file.

¹⁶⁰ Bethel Press, “Bethel Statement Regarding Christalignment,” 5 January 2018, <<https://www.bethel.com/about/christalignment/>> (28 March 2020).

¹⁶¹ Bethel Press, “Bethel Statement Regarding Christalignment.”

¹⁶² Theresa Dedmon, “A Christmas Critique of ‘Destiny Cards,’” *Theresa Dedmon*, 19 December 2017, <<https://www.theresadedmon.com/blog/a-christmas-critique-of-destiny-cards>>; Theresa Dedmon, “Sharing God’s Love through Destiny Cards,” *Theresa Dedmon*, 29 December 2017, <<https://www.theresadedmon.com/blog/sharing-gods-love-through-destiny-cards>> (25 April 2021). The images used in the destiny cards are replicated on other products that Dedmon markets, such as “Happy Jesus” cellphone cases or “prophetic art leggings” that “enhance your awareness of God’s presence, and helps you become a walking encounter of Heaven’s message to those around you.” <<https://store.theresadedmon.com/>> (3 May 2021).

¹⁶³ Jim from Mendowie, “Are You More Religious Than Jesus? *BSSM School Planting*, 14 November 2017, <<https://bssm.net/schoolplanting/2017/11/14/are-you-more-religious-than-jesus/>> (28 March 2020).

¹⁶⁴ Jim from Mendowie, “Are You More Religious Than Jesus?”

each. Rather, he chose to give himself over to the new ideas based on his trust in Johnson and matching Johnson's words to his own situation.

Bethel's acceptance of New Age practices is founded on the rationale that the tools belong to God in the first place and the New Age has appropriated them. In a footnote to a comment about the Western Church's paranoia over the use of imagination, Johnson writes: "Many prominent authors and conference speakers add fuel to this fire of fear assuming that because the new age movement promotes it, its origins must be from the devil. I find that form of reasoning weak at best."¹⁶⁵ "Taking back" New Age beliefs and practices is exemplified in a book edited by Johnson's administrative assistant, *The Physics of Heaven*, to which Bill contributed two chapters with one by his wife Beni. It introduces to Bethel devotees a new dimension in the theology as it claims to be "a convergence of science and spirituality."¹⁶⁶ With a foreword from Kris Vallotton, the book "shares what the Lord has revealed to us" on a wide range of themes. These include the power of colour, dolphins and healing energy, quantum mysticism, vibrations that open a portal to heaven, sound frequencies that change human DNA, recovered "secrets, mysteries, mantles and realms of God," electromagnetic fields and human body frequencies, brain-emitting waves, the God-vibration, angelic encounters, and spiritual synaesthesia, where sound becomes God's future form of communication with humans.¹⁶⁷ The unmistakable echo of New Age beliefs is unambiguous and acknowledged. Author Ellyn Davis claims to have purposefully researched New Age thought and practice. She commented that all the book's contributors agree that "there are precious truths hidden in the New Age that belong to us as Christians and need to be extracted from the worthless."¹⁶⁸ She writes further:

Now we are beginning to hear more and more revelation that is in line with what New Agers have been saying all along and we are hearing more and more teaching about Christians "taking back truths" from the New Age that really belong to citizens of the Kingdom of God.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 67n1.

¹⁶⁶ Judy Franklin and Ellyn Davis, *The Physics of Heaven*, eds. (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2012).

¹⁶⁷ In Johnson's view, sound and vibration filled the air and brought about an atmospheric shift over Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The "heavenly sound was heard and experienced on earth," and changed the city. Johnson, *Hosting the Presence*, 103-105.

¹⁶⁸ Ellyn Davis, "Extracting the Precious from the Worthless," in *The Physics of Heaven*, 15, 18.

¹⁶⁹ Ellyn Davis, "Extracting the Precious from the Worthless," 15.

Aligned with this belief in new revelation is praxis and Johnson's view is succinct: "At our church, the only way we know how to learn is to experiment."¹⁷⁰ This goes some way to explaining Johnson's tolerance of extreme beliefs and behaviours.¹⁷¹ In practice, the demand is always for "More, Lord!"¹⁷²

Stylistically, Bethel church leaders and activities model a relaxed and laidback atmosphere that is personified in Johnson with his casual, understated, but trendy dress sense that sets the tone for the culture of the church. But this belies the high level of organisation that sits behind the casual façade. From Redding, Bethel operates multiple ministries.¹⁷³ Eighteen locally run ministries include the international Sozo inner healing and deliverance ministry, the Healing Rooms for physical healing, Bethel Music, and the music-oriented youth ministry Jesus Culture. Some other ministries such as BSSM Equip (a BSSM school-planting project) are not publicised on the Bethel website.¹⁷⁴ Fifty permanent mission projects operate in countries worldwide. Alongside onsite events such as the School of Prophets run by Kris Vallotton and conferences that are attended by people from all over the globe, several schools attract thousands: BSSM, a school of worship, a conservatory of arts, school of technology (unaccredited), missions intensive training, and a kindergarten-to-grade eight school for children. Each year, Bethel staff lead 80 teams of BSSM students in short term "mission" trips to churches in 50-60 countries around the world.¹⁷⁵ An additional five churches carry the Bethel name and "DNA" (including one in New Zealand). But many more churches worldwide are affiliated through the Bethel Leaders Network (BLN), a highly

¹⁷⁰ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 77.

¹⁷¹ In defending Bethel practices, Banning Liebscher comments: "Bill doesn't mind a little bit of mess. Bill's like, 'Where there's oxen, there's mess.'" Justice, "Why Bill Johnson Didn't Immediately Shut Down Grave Sucking."

¹⁷² Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 25, 46, 66. An example of how demand for "More" is enacted is seen in one of the frequent appearances of Heidi Baker at a Bethel church service: Bethel TV, "The Year of the Lord's Favor," *Bethel.TV*, 30 December 2012, <<https://www.bethel.tv/watch/1531>> (12 April 2021), 1:49:05ff. The entire two-hour service is available only by subscription to BethelTV but excerpts have been posted on *YouTube*: Lynda Kuni, "Heidi Baker @ Bethel Redding," *YouTube*, 9 October 2014, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQHsgY5EzVc&t=14s>> (24 February 2020). Baker describes other occasions where she has been ministering: "I've watched God take people and flip them three four rows back, doing backflip, flips!" "I watched Holy Spirit (*sic*) just slam down on her and she started rolling like a burning log ... rolling up and back, up and back and she was screaming and rolling and it was so powerful and nobody wanted to stop her even though it looked so bizarre, we were like God's doing something, he's on her." Is Not Satire, "A Mess-Heidi Baker-Bill Johnson-Rolland Baker-Bethel Redding," *YouTube*, 14 May 2017, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbEpJU1UMR0>> (16 August 2021), 0:49, 1:27.

¹⁷³ "Bethel Ministries," <<https://www.bethel.com/ministries/>> (29 April 2021).

¹⁷⁴ "BSSM Equip," <<https://bssmequip.com/>> (29 April 2021).

¹⁷⁵ Grace Vineyard, "Guest Speaker/City PM/Peter Mattis," *Grace Vineyard*, 7 April 2019, <<https://grace.org.nz/en/resources/>> (3 October 2020), 4:00.

organised structure with the express intention “to cause reformation in the church.”¹⁷⁶ BLN offers support, training, resources, gatherings, and collegiality to leaders wherever they are.¹⁷⁷ In addition to the many projects, an ever-growing number of new titles are added to the many dozens of books published by Johnson and other Bethel leaders. In short, the Bethel machine is vast, organized, sophisticated, and purposeful. It is probably no exaggeration to state that few individual churches would exceed the global reach and influence of Bethel, an influence that continues to expand. This raises the question of what it means for the evangelical church of the twenty-first century. In the concluding chapter, I will attempt to address some of the issues that emerge for the wider Church body.

¹⁷⁶ “Our Heart and Vision,” <<https://www.bethelleadersnetwork.com/>> (30 April 2021).

¹⁷⁷ “Bethel Leaders Network” (BLN), <<https://www.bethelleadersnetwork.com/>> (29 April 2021). Although an information package is downloadable (updated March 2021), the website gives no access to nonsubscribers so information about the current extent of the network is not obtainable. BLN appears to have replaced the Global Legacy Network that used to perform the same function and did make available for public access the names and locations of affiliated churches. Before the closure of the Global Legacy website, it listed twenty-four affiliated churches in New Zealand alone, eight of which belong to six different denominations (last accessed September 2018). In Christchurch, NZ, there are a number of churches with close ties to Bethel whose names did not appear on the list hence it is reasonable to surmise that the number of connected churches is far greater.

Chapter 10: The Church of the Future?

This intention of this chapter is to make some overall concluding remarks about the theology that grew from the movements examined in previous chapters and to identify some resultant issues that emerge for the twenty-first-century church. The term “new theology” used in this study refers to the accumulated theological ideas that Wagner and his associates taught and that are promoted by Bill Johnson and others who subscribe to similar conceptions. The theology’s manifesto consists of proclaiming a reformation in the church that incorporates pragmatic notions of success, signs and wonders, spiritual warfare, and dominion theology, with apostles and prophets leading the people. It has not been formulated into a creed, nor do formal organisations control operational aspects of the agenda. Rather, as sociologists Christerson and Flory have noted, “dynamic independent religious entrepreneurs” seek to promote their messages through “networks of cooperation”¹ However, as the survey of Bethel Church in the previous chapter demonstrates, behind the seemingly casual atmosphere, high level organisation and planning contribute significantly to worldwide dissemination of the theology.²

In considering the whole of the theology, several factors need to be taken into consideration. Evangelicalism is fragmented and its charismatic sector likewise consists of innumerable splintered parts; the stream of thought traced in this study is just one of many.³ Nonetheless, because of its rapid growth, this stream is fast becoming one of the most prominent and influential components. This leads to the second factor: the impact of the new theology is not confined only to those groups that overtly declare their adherence to Wagner- or Bethel-style theology. While many (particularly independent ministries) do subscribe to the

¹ Christerson, *The Rise of Network Christianity*, 2, 8. These networks are almost immeasurable in terms of their size, range, and links. For just one example, a network that is closely linked to Bethel and Bill Johnson by theology and personal relationship is the “Catch the Fire” group of churches. Founded by John Arnott and birthed from the Toronto Blessing, it comprises 84 churches around the world, including two in New Zealand and three in Australia: see <<https://catchthefire.com/churches>>.

² In a video announcing a significant expansion project, Bill Johnson begins by saying: “Bethel’s mission is revival, the personal regional and global expansion of God’s kingdom through his manifest presence.” He ends with: “Together we’re writing a story that will shape the course of world history.” While arguably a commonplace statement for an excited church leader announcing expansion plans, the evidence indicates that Bethel, at least currently, is making significant inroads to these goals. Bethel, “Groundbreaking Update/ Bill Johnson/ Bethel Church,” *YouTube*, 4 August 2021, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qimZlyxyvWg>> (17 August 2021).

³ In many ways, the networks referred to above simply are an extension of characteristic evangelicalism: see Smith et al, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, 86-87. This has continued to gain momentum since their 1998 depiction of the phenomenon.

new theology, many Christians attend church services unaware that the worship, teaching, praxis, or even the culture contains elements that have been inherited from some form of connection to it, passed on through networks or individuals. Many of the more extreme facets of spiritual warfare, prophecy, or dominion theology may never be articulated openly. In churches where the emphasis is on signs and wonders, these other aspects might remain unspoken yet are implicit in the worldview conveyed. Sometimes, the new theology is taught in denominational churches where their foundational doctrines might actually clash with those being proposed from the pulpit.⁴ Even groups that deny their connections to Wagner's brand of the new theology, for example, those that grew out of British Restorationism, have assimilated concepts, methodologies, or language that originate with the subjects of this thesis.⁵ Thirdly, Wagner was not the instigator of the various theological ideas, but their final formulation does reflect his influence. In van der Meer's words, many of the ideas were already "floating around" before Wagner shaped them into dogma.⁶ He was not involved in precursor movements such as Latter Rain, the first stirrings of Pentecostal-type experiences among non-Pentecostal Christians, or the original conceptions of dominion theology. His skill lay with discerning trends and promoting and popularizing them with himself in a lead role.⁷ His contributions were to enable coherence, shape structure, and expedite dissemination. Fourthly, although a number of persuasion methodologies have been identified in this study, these are not confined only to the new theology. For example, processes of mythologization exist in every corner of Christianity to lesser or greater degree.⁸ However, it is the lead role that mythologization plays in the new theology that is of importance here. The fifth and final point to note is that this theology evolved over time. Wagner did not consciously envisage at the outset where his "paradigm shifts" would take him but eventually his promotion of each

⁴ For example, see Jean Palmer, "Five-Fold Ministries," *Holy Trinity Anglican Church*, 17 April 2016, <https://www.holytrinityrichmond.org.nz/n/five-fold_ministries.html> (10 July 2018). The sermon was part of a series based on Danny Silk's book, *Culture of Honor*.

⁵ See Terry Virgo, "Give Me Back My Church," in *Power Encounters: Among Christians in the Western World*, ed. Kevin Springer (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 135-136; Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom*, 316-317. In the 1998 revision of his book, Walker places more emphasis on the influences of Wimber, the Toronto Blessing, hints of SWM ideas behind the Marches for Jesus in the late 1980s, and a "flirtation" with Reconstructionism. See Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement*, 4th ed. (Guildford, Surrey: Eagle, 1998), 19-20, 310-315, 326, 333-334, 360-361, 365.

⁶ Van der Meer, "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare Theology of Wagner," 85, see also 185-186 on the same issue faced by the early church.

⁷ In some cases, the degree of his influence on key leaders was overlooked because all attention focused on huge personalities such as Wimber without full recognition of the degree to which Wagner shaped Wimber's thinking. See for example Andrew Walker's comments in the fourth edition of *Restoring the Kingdom*, n5 above.

⁸ For example, see Cox's account of mythologization in Pentecostal testimonies and his discussion of its role. Cox, *Fire from Heaven*, 131-133.

phase saw the emergence of a complete “package.” Through signs and wonders, the package promised benefits to humans who realized the enhancement of their power, authority, and agency. In spiritual warfare, the adversary was re-imaged and the threat was represented as personally proximate to provide a cause worth fighting against. Success could be achieved by human agents merely declaring the enemy despatched. A new church structure was created via the five-fold ministry. A means of control came through the apostles and prophets. Ultimately, the objective became world dominion. The complete package is presented here as it manifests at Bethel Church, but there is no reason to think that within such a dynamic process it will not continue to evolve. This raises a question: is the theology moving away from the gospel message as it is understood within traditional Christian thinking?

Faithful Performance of the Gospel

As noted in the previous chapter, praxis is the performance, or enactment, of theology. Certainly, Wagner, Johnson, and others have demonstrated how their theological explanations go hand-in-hand with their practices. In their reckoning, these are built upon what they have experienced and these experiences (or rather the interpretation of them) generate the theology.⁹ Thus, a group of young people who fall to the ground in ecstatic states are imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit, a woman who shouts out during a prayer meeting is demon-possessed, or a person who can no longer feel their back pain after hands are laid on them is miraculously healed. The reference point for shaping the theology is the experience itself and from it, meaning is derived. The question that arises concerns whether this can be shown to be a *faithful* way to do theology. So far in this study, we have identified numerous issues that point to an unstable or perhaps even specious theology. However, while these issues are signposts, it does not necessarily follow that the theology in its entirety is problematic. Here it becomes useful to step back and rely on a wider perspective to assist with drawing conclusions about the faithfulness of the theology. Because the activities and claims of Wagner and his associates fit into the paradigm of practical theology, it is appropriate to use a practical theology framework to weigh up the veridicality of their teaching.

Practical theology works from the perspective of human experience, comfortably in line with the priorities of the new theology. According to practical theologians John Swinton

⁹ See Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 44-46.

and Harriet Mowat, its goal is to enable faithful living and authentic Christian practice.¹⁰ It is concerned with how theological reflection on any given situation contributes to transforming and illuminating our understanding of the experience.¹¹ Swinton and Mowat identify a key question asked by practical theologians: “Is what *appears* to be going on within this situation what is *actually* going on?” and furthermore: “We often discover that what we *think* we are doing is quite different from what we are *actually* doing.”¹² Swinton and Mowat’s interest here is to understand how we can engage in “faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to, and for the world.”¹³ However, this necessitates recognition that experience is not the goal or the end-point of theological reflection. Rather, the goal “is to ensure, encourage and enable faithful participation in the continuing gospel narrative.”¹⁴

Swinton and Mowat define their leitmotif, “faithful performance of the gospel,” within four dimensions, all held in tension with each other.¹⁵ These can assist with reflection on the doctrines outlined in the previous chapters. In their model, the first dimension is hermeneutical. This has to do with interpreting the “texts” of human encounters with the world and God—the process of finding meaning in these encounters. The second is correlational. This requires bringing together our perspectives of the world and its situations, Christian tradition, and other sources of knowledge to provide deeper insight and understanding. The third is critical: being prepared to challenge accepted assumptions and practices in Christianity through honest reflection that is faithful to the “script” of revelation. The fourth and final dimension in the framework is theological, where the truth and hermeneutical framework of the gospel narrative is the primary source of knowledge.

It is important to discriminate between what Swinton and Mowat propose as an *actual* way to faithfully perform the gospel and what the proponents of the new theology *believe* about their performance of the gospel. For example, new theology theorists might view the hermeneutical dimension as aligning with how they interpret their experiences to find

¹⁰ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 9.

¹¹ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, xi.

¹² Swinton, *Practical Theology*, xi. Italics theirs.

¹³ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 7.

¹⁴ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 10.

¹⁵ Summed up as “phronesis,” where theory and practice are combined to provide an embodied, practical knowledge that enables a God-oriented lifestyle. Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 4, 7-8, 25, 73. Note that in Swinton and Mowat’s framework, knowledge is not extrapolated from practice as in new theology teaching.

meaning in their spiritual encounters.¹⁶ However, Swinton and Mowat’s explanation includes knowing how to effectively “read” situations within a “circle” that moves back and forth between context and the event, a process of faithful practice that incorporates critical reflection in light of scripture and tradition.¹⁷ The hermeneutical circle thus is curtailed where context is not adequately reflected upon or where the accumulated value of two millennia of Christian reflection is discarded, scripture is subjected to eisegetical methodology in preference to careful and informed exegesis, or other sources of knowledge are disregarded. This also undermines the correlative dimension where the objective is “mutually constructive critical dialogue” among the spheres of comprehension.¹⁸ As already noted in a previous chapter, failure to dialogue with different perspectives and sources of understanding results in cloistered and monolingual thinking.¹⁹

In terms of the critical dimension, undoubtedly the new theology claims to challenge Christian assumptions and practice—as innumerable declarations in the literature indicate. Where it might depart from Swinton and Mowat’s approach is what constitutes the script of revelation and the full implications of what is meant by “honest reflection.” Kraft suggests that the Bible’s “bare-bones revelation” includes a promise of “additional truth” to come.²⁰ This serves to justify claims of God’s voice directly speaking to those who are appropriately receptive to the messages of the new theology. The claim is likely to be challenged by most biblical scholars, especially those who hold that scripture is the chief means of God’s revelation.²¹ More significantly, indicators in new theology literature suggest that critical thinking in the exercise of “honest reflection” is likely to be seriously compromised. Wagner was forthright in declaring that he preferred to accept miraculous stories associated with

¹⁶ Kraft, *The Evangelical's Guide*, 48; Kraft, *Confronting Powerless Christianity*, 36-37; Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 44-46. See also Wagner, *Spreading the Fire*, 56-57.

¹⁷ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 12, 111.

¹⁸ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 75.

¹⁹ Vanhoozer is unambiguous on this topic: “One tell tale sign of dishonest theology is an incapacity for conversation.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xvii.

²⁰ Kraft, *Confronting Powerless Christianity*, 36; Kraft, “‘Christian Animism’ or God-Given Authority?,” in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 91. Kraft’s use of John 16:13 to justify the concept of “additional” truth is *contra* to the interpretations of biblical scholars, who generally concur that the Holy Spirit’s role was to reiterate what Jesus has already taught, although Burge allows for the use of a genuine prophetic gift in the spirit’s revelation “to come.” Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 2: 707-708, 714-717; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), 700-701; Burge, *John*, 440.

²¹ New theology writers make the same claim about the primacy of scripture, but their discourse and praxis does not reflect the accuracy of their assertion.

revival at “face value without subjecting them to my own critical evaluation.”²² Additionally, an essential aspect of reflection involves authentic interaction with other critical thought, as noted in regard to correlative processes.²³ However, the writers promoting the new theology consistently demonstrate a range of discursive strategies that destabilize the possibility of reflective integrity.²⁴ Mutually constructive dialogue is displaced in favour of an antithetical approach to any source that does not align with their own thinking.²⁵ This is demonstrated in the use of *ad hominem* attacks and assigning motivations such as fear to those who hold alternate viewpoints or who critically interact with new theology material.²⁶ Another approach is the use of “straw man” arguments, as seen in Wagner’s response to two (unnamed) critics who suggested there is no scriptural warrant for strategic-level spiritual warfare. Neither, Wagner asserted, is there a scriptural warrant for using the label “trinity,” freeing slaves, a canon of 66 books, Sunday as the primary day of worship, or Christmas, Easter, and Sunday Schools.²⁷ He pointed to experience and the fact that strategic-level spiritual warfare does not *contradict* scripture, leaving the question of whether scripture affirms strategic-level spiritual warfare unaddressed.²⁸ Two other discursive strategies pervade the literature: representing only a caricature or distorted image of contrasting opinion; and taking a dualist approach by dividing thought into “two camps,” an issue that will be further discussed below.²⁹ The inevitable question arising out of failure to interact with other sources of knowledge pertains to accountability. New theology leaders claim they do maintain accountability; Wagner’s term

²² Wagner, “Revival Power” in *The Rising Revival*, 9.

²³ In spite of his academic training, Wagner conflates thinking critically with criticizing: “In academia, displaying a ‘critical mind’ is considered a badge of distinction ... I would rather help my students think positively and creatively than critically. I dislike reading book reviews in journals in which the reviewer has a compulsion to end the review criticizing the author. The underlying message is, ‘If only the author were as smart as I am, the book could have been much better than it is.’ Journals whose editorial policy I have been able to influence through the years prohibit this kind of academic one-upmanship.” Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 232-233.

²⁴ Hammer views discursive strategies as “ideological maneuvers” connected to attempts to establish power and authority. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 501.

²⁵ SWM advocate Otis wrote that academia is “where spiritual ‘war games’ are waged on paper” and “the current theological critique of territorial spirits must be seen as a uniquely Western indulgence—a kind of academic polo for tenured (and mostly Anglo) professors.” Otis, *The Twilight Labyrinth*, 197, 259.

²⁶ Kraft, “‘Christian Animism’ or God-Given Authority?,” in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 92; Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 52, 86-89, 137.

²⁷ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 82-87. In the same discussion, Wagner also engages a red herring fallacy by diverting the reader’s attention to how his critics’ stance on demonization of Christians agrees with his own, 85. Confirmation is not possible because he names them only as “Critic A” and “Critic B.” Throughout his literature, Wagner repeatedly employed phrasing similar to “[Scholar’s name] and I agree that...” to suggest that his ideas have scholarly support, a demonstrably misleading and sometimes fallacious claim.

²⁸ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 86.

²⁹ Kraft, *The Evangelical’s Guide*, 22; Clark H. Pinnock, “Foreword,” in *Christianity with Power*, by Charles H. Kraft (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1989), ix.

is “peer-accountability,” which is demonstrated to mean intramural or self-referential confirmation only.³⁰ In short, writers of the new theology offer little evidence of any genuinely reflective processes in relation to their constructions.

The final aspect of Swinton and Mowat’s model involves the centrality of the gospel narrative in the theological dimension. If we take their phrasing “God’s redemptive mission to the world” as comprising the gospel, then we can assume that this narrative encompasses the entirety of scripture.³¹ As already noted, the approach of the new theology is eisegetical and frequently scripture is used in a way that divorces it from its context and from the meaning that Christian tradition has recognised over the past two thousand years. But an equally important problem in the teaching relates to what is absent. The focus on signs and wonders, demons, human power and authority, or God’s role in bestowing continual blessings leads to failure to engage with many essential components of the gospel narrative. Some of these are the nature of the relationship with God, the character and cost of Christian commitment, the role of elements such as sin, suffering, perseverance, discipline, and the need for spiritual growth, maturation, and refining.³² Also missing is exploration of the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection, almost completely overlooked particularly as evangelism gradually was re-defined. Although the new theology appears to assume that adherents understand at least some of these components, no specific teaching on the full meaning of being Christian is locatable. As Johnson specifies, Bethel’s only focus is revival, particularly as it pertains to manifestations of signs and wonders.

Swinton and Mowat demonstrate that their model usefully can be supported by perspectives from other paradigms. For example, one that seeks a holistic view of God’s revelation is Wesley’s four primary sources for human truth: scripture, tradition, experience, and reason.³³ Wesley’s formulation draws attention to how the theological ideas promoted by Bethel and its predecessors have shortcomings even if considered in light of paradigms other than Swinton’s and Mowat’s. The new theology’s emphasis on experience comes at the cost of scripture, tradition, and reason. This is evident in their unconventional use and

³⁰ Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 238; Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 139-140; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 118 n10.

³¹ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 23.

³² Johnson comments that failure in practising healing (even less than 50% success-rate) enables growth into maturity but does not explain how this happens. Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 77.

³³ Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 74.

interpretation of biblical text, the repudiation of the “old wineskins” of Christian tradition, and the elevation of personal experience over what is considered as impotent “rational, theoretical truth” with its concomitant “deception” of logic and reason.³⁴ In summary, the new theology falls short when considered within the guidelines of frameworks that outline how faithful performance of the gospel can be appraised. This places in doubt how realistic it is to claim that the new theology is the result of God’s voice directly speaking to his obedient servants. If we accept that the new theology does not meet the criteria of Swinton’s and Mowat’s framework, then the next task is to comprehend what sort of problem this presents for the Church of the twenty-first century.

“Give Us This Day What We Want”

If the new theology is shown not to be an exemplar of faithful performance of the gospel, then, because it is so pervasive the mainstream church can only ignore it at its peril. This chapter draws attention to some mechanisms of persuasion not yet fully addressed, beginning with what first stimulated the shaping of the theology. The study concludes with identifying some elemental attributes of Christianity that have been exploited for the purposes of reinforcing the new theology as it consolidates its presence in the Church environment. Ultimately, given the increasing pervasiveness of the new theology, the Church faces questions that, if not addressed, may place its very survival in jeopardy.

Shaping the Theology: The Raw Material

Understanding the thought processes of those who shaped the ideas of the new theology is a relatively straightforward matter because they were candid in declaring their reasoning and justifications. Overall, the intellectual approach can be described as naïve realism, where the driving philosophy was pragmatism.³⁵ Wagner expressed what he called “fierce” and “consecrated pragmatism” in the aphorism “do whatever works.”³⁶ Any means

³⁴ Kraft, *The Evangelical's Guide*, 114; Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 47; Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 57-59.

³⁵ Naïve realism: the conception that what we observe must be true, described by Hammer as “pragmatic emic epistemology.” Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 507. In writing on the Modern Esoteric Tradition (that bears many resemblances to the theology of Wagner and his associates) Hammer notes that even though the Enlightenment is eschewed, nevertheless the epistemological roots of its theories lie in the Enlightenment. This is equally applicable to Wagner’s theology.

³⁶ Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 165; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 104; Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 217.

was justified if it was not immoral.³⁷ Wagner's alliances were with people who held to the same mindset: after observing his first healing, Wimber's pragmatic goal was to replicate it by intentionally developing a model for training large numbers of Christians to heal the sick.³⁸ The ultimate objective, underpinned by the ideals of church growth, was success. For Wagner, success and faithfulness were closely related indicators of stewardship, as seen in the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30). The servants who multiplied the talents were judged faithful because they were successful.³⁹ Always an admirer of positivity advocate Robert Schuller, Wagner quoted him: "The secret of success is to find a need and fulfil it."⁴⁰ What this means, explained Wagner, is that churches that grow are meeting the needs of their people.

Wagner's opinion on the state of traditional churches was transparent: they were stagnant, dull, boring, and declining.⁴¹ In this condition, they could not meet the needs of their people and they were unattractive to newcomers. As his views radicalized, his message about the traditional churches being merely "dead" shifted to proclaiming their actual infection by a demonic spirit of religion. His solution was to promote churches that were growing as these were the indicator of God's pleasure and blessing.⁴² These were the churches that clearly do meet the needs of the people. His construal placed emphasis on the forms of church life over consideration of spiritual factors and he found what he was looking for in Latin American Pentecostal churches. Attendees were positive about church and they felt better as a result of going, the main reason being that going to church was fun.⁴³ This theory of church-going persisted: the word "fun" has remained part of the core vocabulary in many charismatic church services and is often employed in reference to worship or the ministry time where the

³⁷ Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 161; Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 28-29; Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 104.

³⁸ Wimber, *Power Healing*, 181.

³⁹ Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, 81.

⁴⁰ Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 160.

⁴¹ Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 170.

⁴² Seemingly without recognising the irony of his metaphor, Wagner acknowledged the issue of "sheep-stealing" (church growth through transfers from other churches) but preferred the term "sheep-finding" because the blessing is on the shepherd who takes in the sheep, not on the church where the "wolves come in and raid the flock." Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 192-193.

⁴³ Wagner, *Look Out!*, 118-119.

power of the Holy Spirit is expected to manifest.⁴⁴ The concept of fun incorporates the elements already explored in this study: excitement, expectancy, and enthusiasm. Therapeutic benefits include positive mood and feeling better with instant relief from the problems that plague everyday life.⁴⁵ Herein lay the appeal for the people, and as far as Wagner was concerned, this constituted meeting their needs.

Thus, the drivers of success were the responses of the people: these were the raw material of the new theology. In effect, the very shape of the theology grew out of what Wagner, Wimber, and others observed in their responses. The people left churches where their (perceived) needs were not met, and they flocked to where they could get what they wanted.⁴⁶ It was clear in Wagner's mind: what they needed, and what they wanted, was to feel good. His belief in this premise was vindicated by observing this in action—the churches that soared in popularity were those that promoted the benefits of healing, of release from demons, and of having fun while doing it. And gratifyingly, as many other Christians agreed with Wagner's conclusions, the pathway to a new theology for the twenty-first century was established. In place of meticulous examination of God's word through scripture, the theology was built on what the people desired—re-imagined as God's direct revelation to those he favoured as his representatives on earth.⁴⁷

So far, this study has had little to say about the Christians who participate in the new theology—those whom its promoters seek to attract into their worldview. The picture that has

⁴⁴ Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 402; John Arnott, *The Father's Blessing* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1995), 99-100, 150; Inthelight1776, "Signs Wonders (3/12) Power Evangelism," 4:08; Johnson, *Dreaming with God*, 32; Grace Vineyard, "Guest Speaker/City PM/Peter Mattis," 1:16, 4:56.

⁴⁵ See Percy's further development of this theme: Martyn Percy, *Power and the Church* (London: Cassell, 1998), 195.

⁴⁶ Although a key premise of the new theology is that the manifestation of signs and wonders is an evangelistic tool to attract new converts, research has shown that church growth more typically is the result of Christians transferring from one church to another. Although relevant to this study, the question of transfer versus new converts needs no further development because the topic has already been much discussed. For examples, see Chadwick, *Stealing Sheep*, 10, 70-75; Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church*, 4-5, 39; Eskridge, *God's Forever Family*, 183-184; Jackson, *Quest for the Radical Middle*, 88; Sonny Tucker, "The Fragmentation of the Post-McGavran Church Growth Movement," *Journal of Evangelism and Missions* 2 (Spring 2003), 29; Walker, "Thoroughly Modern," in *Charismatic Christianity*, 34; Kevin R. Ward, *Losing Our Religion?: Changing Patterns of Believing and Belonging in Secular Western Societies* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 80-81, 92-94; Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 77.

⁴⁷ George Marsden, in agreement with other key commentators, makes an important observation that in the absence of clear lines of authority in Evangelicalism, *vox populi* is the main mechanism for arbitrating theological truth. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 291.

emerged indicates a somewhat dichotomous role where they are told they can exert power and authority over even Satan himself, yet who are framed as passive recipients of words from the prophets and apostles who tell them what God has to say to them. Because the churches that promote the new theology are growing so quickly, and because we know that congregations chiefly consist of Christians who have transferred from other churches, it is reasonable to assume they are accepting of the messages that are conveyed to them. But what can we learn about their own personal spiritual attitudes and viewpoints?

In 2005, sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton published the initial results of a ground-breaking longitudinal study that surveyed the religious lives of 3,370 teens across America and then conducted detailed interviews with 267 individuals.⁴⁸ Although the research covered a wide range of demographic variables, about one half of the teens were Protestant, one quarter Catholic, and the remainder from other faith traditions, an indication of Christianity's continued dominance in North America.⁴⁹ Many of the study's findings challenge previously-held assumptions made about religion and American youth but of chief interest here are its overall conclusions. In summary, most of America's teens are "exceedingly conventional" in their religious identity and practices, tend to follow the faith of their parents without questioning, and overall have a "benignly positive" attitude towards religion: it is a "Very Nice Thing."⁵⁰ However, they are not interested in spiritually "seeking" or exploring, tend to hold indistinct conceptions about religion, keep it confined to the background of their lives, and take a utilitarian approach where they only call on their faith if a need arises in their lives.⁵¹ Furthermore, they are inarticulate about their beliefs and struggle to clearly define exactly what they believe simply because they have not been educated in their faith and had never been asked to express it before.⁵² The researchers found the teens' knowledge about their own faith was "meager, nebulous, and often fallacious."⁵³ The comment of one girl: "I'm not sure, not sure, I can't remember what I believe," seems to

⁴⁸ Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴⁹ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 31-33. Smith's Introduction and Appendices A and B detail the demographic variables (religion, geographical region, socio-economic status, race, age, gender, rural/urban, etc.) weighed in the project. For an overview description of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) project see National Study of Youth and Religion, "Research Design," <<https://youthandreligion.nd.edu/research-design/>> (15 June 2021).

⁵⁰ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 120-122, 124.

⁵¹ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 127-130.

⁵² Smith, *Soul Searching*, 131-133. The researchers found, however, that they were highly conversant and articulate in discussing issues that mattered to them, such as the dangers of drug abuse or STDs.

⁵³ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 133.

reflect the low level of priority teens place on their faith, and moreover, reflect the priorities of their parents.⁵⁴ The purpose of religion, it emerged, is that it is designed to keep you good and get you through the hard times in life.⁵⁵ Smith reports:

As far as we could discern, what most teens appear to believe ... is that religion is about God responding to the authoritative desires and feelings of people. In simple terms, religion is essentially a tool for people to use to get what they want, as determined not by their religion but by their individual feelings and desires.⁵⁶

This conception of religion led the researchers to coin the term “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”⁵⁷ In this faith schema, teens tend to believe that there is a God who watches over humans. He wants “people to be good, nice, and fair to each other.” Life’s main goal is to “be happy and to feel good about oneself.” God’s role in this is to solve any problems that arise. When they die, good people go to heaven. One teen’s representative comment was: “It’s just whatever makes you feel good about you.”⁵⁸ Therefore God, in Smith and Denton’s terms, becomes a combined “Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist.”⁵⁹ Over ensuing years and as the teens transitioned into adulthood, the researchers found them still relatively uninterested in pursuit of God or involvement in religious activities, although maintaining a hope that forestalled outright rejection of their imprecise beliefs.⁶⁰ These were unstructured and characterized by intuitive and vague assumptions about moral consequences that they expressed as (a popular understanding of) karma. Their views were derived from an assortment of disparate sources into an individualized perspective that is “all good,” because it works for them.⁶¹ Sociologist Robert Wuthnow’s own research confirms this as he describes the improvisational “rummaging” of “bricoleurs” and “tinkerers”: “We piece together our

⁵⁴ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 135-137.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 138.

⁵⁶ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 149. Smith and Denton hasten to add: “Of course, very few teenagers, or adults, come out and say it in these crude terms.”

⁵⁷ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 140.

⁵⁸ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 163.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 165. During my own research, I acquired a significant number of second-hand books that contributed to my primary source library. Margin notations made by previous owners provided valuable insight into their responses to the material, particularly in instances where I knew the provenance of the books. My copy of Bill Johnson’s *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, along with its accompanying study guide, had been the text for a Bethel-run course. One inscription on the inside cover reads: “My life you gave me to live for me.”

⁶⁰ Melinda Lundquist Denton and Richard Flory, *Back Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 223-224.

⁶¹ Denton, *Back Pocket God*, 228-231.

thoughts about religion and our interests in spirituality from the materials at hand.”⁶² The result is a “jumble of orthodoxy and more relativistic assumptions about truth, salvation, and civility.”⁶³

The research continued to follow the teens and their evolving attitudes as they grew and matured, thus providing unprecedented insight into the spiritual understanding of (American) young people.⁶⁴ Ten years later, the teens’ beliefs about God could be summarized as a “Pocket God” who operates similarly to a cell phone app: “he is accessible but has limited functionality.”⁶⁵ This God is controlled by the user, waits around until asked to do something, but is only called on when needed: “The Pocket God performs whatever task he is designed to perform, yet is not particularly useful beyond that singular function.”⁶⁶ Thus the maturing form of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is individualized, customized, has a single function, and “God is close at hand, but safely stowed out of sight.”⁶⁷ Ultimately, Smith and Denton view this faith schema as parasitic and colonizing:

It cannot sustain its own integral, independent life; rather it must attach itself like an incubus to established historical religious traditions, feeding on their doctrines and sensibilities, and expanding by mutating their theological substance to resemble its own distinctive image.⁶⁸

In short: “Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith.”⁶⁹

Importantly, this tendency in youth did not appear spontaneously. In the view of sociologists, they have merely absorbed and now reflect what was modelled for them by the

⁶² Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 13-15.

⁶³ Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 15. In commenting on *bricolage* as a characteristic, other scholars have pointed to the charismatic movement as a whole: “a living, moving corpus of ideas, scriptural interpretations, images, discourses and techniques developed and circulating across a range of personal, institutional and virtual networks and engendering an elastic, undisciplined and pragmatic processes (*sic*) of inspired creations, borrowings, combinations and adaptations.” Marshall, “Destroying arguments,” 97. Hammer notes that in postmodern religion, this is observable only to the investigating scholar and is not recognised as such by the adherent. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, 11.

⁶⁴ For the most recent report see Denton, *Back Pocket God*.

⁶⁵ Denton, *Back Pocket God*, 233.

⁶⁶ Denton, *Back Pocket God*, 233.

⁶⁷ Denton, *Back Pocket God*, 233.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 166.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 171.

previous generation.⁷⁰ Fifty-two percent of Smith and Denton's sample identified with the Protestant tradition and therefore their conclusions consistently applied to the subgroups from evangelical/charismatic/Pentecostal backgrounds, the sector that has generated, and has been the most responsive to, the new theology.⁷¹ The background reasons for this type of religious orientation in American ideation are widely discussed and the common characteristics pinpointed by commentators pertain to the American need to be individual, autonomous, self-directing, and able to exercise freedom of choice.⁷² Moreover, evangelicalism has its own idiosyncrasies. Mark Noll's famous axiom, "The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind," is underpinned by his contention that contributing factors have been revivalism, separation of church and state, cultural synthesis as an outcome of the War of Independence, and fundamentalism.⁷³ Each of these, he asserts, have brought American Evangelicalism to a place where intellectual thought has little value or application. While this might imply that this is purely an American problem and of little relevance to other cultures, there are few who would disagree that America has heavily influenced what is now a globalized culture in most respects.⁷⁴ Wagner's worldwide distribution of his books and the current global impact of Bethel are yet further testimony of this reality. Combined with the effectiveness of postmodernism in reshaping worldviews, these issues serve to present significant challenges to the survival of Christianity.⁷⁵

What this indicates in regard to the themes of this thesis is that not only are young Christians and their parents' generation ill-equipped to meaningfully interrogate new theological conceptions that are presented to them, but they are vulnerable to embracing them simply because it suits them well. Many twenty-first-century Christians hold onto hope and a vaguely formed longing for God to be real in their daily living. They continue to believe, but exactly what they believe they cannot specifically define. What they have been provided in the new theology is exciting, full of anticipation, makes extravagant promises, and meets their desire to retain a sense of individual choice. No boundaries are set, no demands are placed:

⁷⁰ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 166; Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 16.

⁷¹ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 33, Table 2. See also 34-36, Tables 3,4,5 for data that demonstrates how youth follow the tradition of their parents.

⁷² Smith, *Soul Searching*, 143. For a summary of development in the American character from the Puritans forward, see Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 149-161

⁷³ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 3, 59-60ff.

⁷⁴ See George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, 9th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2019); Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 69, 89.

⁷⁵ Chan, "Following Jesus as the Truth," 307-311.

any kind of activity is accepted, any abandonment of outmoded Christian discipline or thinking is supported. In the face of disillusionment or disappointment from wherever they have been previously, here is an opportunity to redesign the Christian faith into a more palatable, and hence easier to swallow, diet for the postmodern world.

Creating a New Community

Earlier in this chapter, the new theology was described as a “package” largely built on raw material comprised of Christians who were no longer satisfied with their traditional churches. The emergence of new “wineskins” enabled them to switch their allegiance to churches that supplied them with a renewed sense of spiritual enthusiasm and energy without having to abandon their belief system. The new wineskins insist that they have retained all the basic tenets of traditional Christianity but with correction of the faulty attitudes and doctrines that comprised the old wineskins. So far, much of this thesis has been concerned with the mechanisms, the techniques, and the strategies that enabled the development and progress of the new theology. The picture that becomes visible demonstrates that the key elements in shaping the new theology had less to do with the triune God, scripture, theology, or church tradition than with (inadvertently or otherwise) using anthropocentric methodologies of persuasion. At this point, it is useful to consider some underlying mechanisms that have been mentioned in passing but that now require a closer look because of their role in sustaining commitments to the new theology.

Visionaries such as Wagner correctly perceived that the Evangelical Church in “Western” societies was in trouble. They were not wrong in seeing many traditional churches as irrelevant and moribund as members lost interest in maintaining their formerly held commitments. The decline in church attendance has been a well-known trend and undoubtedly was the subject of much discussion at Fuller School of World Mission during Wagner’s tenure there. His perspective reasonably can be assessed to align with his fellow promoters of the new theology so it is considered here to be representative. Although it is unclear in his literature how well he understood the problem, his naïve view of the Enlightenment allowed him at least to perceive how the cognitively based, propositional approach of church teaching no longer adequately met the needs of those living in the post-

modern era. Christians increasingly were oriented to building belief more from processes of intuition and personal experience than from exposure to discourse.⁷⁶

The key problem Wagner and his associates wanted to solve was how to shift churches into growth mode. Although their terminology always pertained to evangelism, we have already seen that this operated as little more than a technical term that increasingly took on revised meaning in the service of the developing ideology. Their solutions were underscored by certain characteristics that propelled their problem solving. Firstly, the desire for relevance meant that they found their answers in appealing to the temporal interests of those they wanted to attract into churches. This led to the second characteristic: cultural appropriation informed by the ethos of “whatever works.” Thirdly, they held to a worldview that permitted only optimistic solutions designed to counter the pessimism they believed typified the old wineskins. This had the effect of limiting their vision as repudiation of the old therefore confined them to demanding the creation of something new.

The pathway to accomplishing their goals contained other elements in addition to the factors already discussed throughout this thesis. Several of these likely were incorporated instinctively rather than intentionally designed. Wagner’s paradigm shifts were not the result of forethought or planning; they were his response to ideas “floating around” that he formulated into concrete proposals and disseminated via his considerable communication skills. Firstly, the new wineskins resembled the old model: core beliefs were maintained and church structures or procedures (such as worship/church notices/sermon/ministry time) were largely replicated. Thus, familiarity made transition easier. The element that remained unaccounted for was whether the changes met spiritual needs or improved spiritual health.

A second important factor relates to the importance of community, a factor known to be important across all types of religious adherence. When researchers studied devotees of the Siddha Yoga movement, they found that initial affiliation had less to do with belief in the

⁷⁶ See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1984), 16. Wagner’s own testimony and all the available evidence suggests that his (propositional) truth claims were built from his personal observations and the influence of those sources discussed in earlier chapters. Whether or not he would have been cognisant of Schleiermacher’s role in reshaping orientation to what Lindbeck describes as the “experiential-expressive” dimension of religious thought cannot be known. Given Wagner’s disparaging treatment of theological education and his admission of a jaundiced attitude and poor grades in his own training on the subject, it seems unlikely that he fully apprehended all the nuances of changes in critical thinking.

doctrines of the movement than with the attraction of community and environment: the feelings of belonging evoked by a multiplicity of stimuli as simple as homesickness, the smell of healthy food cooking, or washing dishes alongside others.⁷⁷ Similarly with Christianity, sociologists have documented that adherence to the religious system is more likely to begin with social dynamics than cognitive decisions to commit to a particular set of ideas about God or relationship with God.⁷⁸ Whether church leaders are conscious of this information or not, at the very least their intuition about the human need to belong has influenced efforts to draw people into the church environment. For example, two well-known megachurches in California and Illinois, Saddleback Valley Community Church and Willowcreek Community Church, have sought to attract people by meeting their (perceived) needs with deliberate planning that ranges from carparks, carpet colour, mall-like atmosphere, and gym facilities to worship themes, messages in drama, and various ministry “packages.”⁷⁹ Church websites also demonstrate awareness of how to appeal to specific groups. In one example from a New Zealand (new theology) church, groups for children up to eleven years old are described as “exciting” or “lots of fun” and those for teenagers are “high energy, high impact” and “definitely the place to be!” For adults, the church is “a place to call home” where “people love to party together” to find a “genuine sense of community.”⁸⁰ In short, the drawcard in church transition is likely to be the social aspect and the transition to a new worldview or belief system is secondary. If people feel welcomed, comfortable, safe, and their social needs/wants are met, they are more liable to invest trust in the new environment and most particularly, in the leaders who control the environment. Consequentially, they will be more receptive to messages delivered by the leaders, especially if their extant belief system is vulnerable due to theological uncertainty or lack of previous spiritual education. Messages that build and reinforce identity, trust, belonging, and empowering sit alongside promises for healing, freedom from afflicting demons, financial and all other blessings, and moreover,

⁷⁷ “The process is catalysed by affective aspects which need not have much of a cognitive correlate. It is characteristic of the conversions we have examined that the group is found to answer to a need, not an intellectual need but a need for a sense of belonging or purpose.” Michael and Healy, “A Guru-Disciple Tradition, 77-95, especially 90. See also Barker who notes that community and environment may be experienced/established even *before* exposure to the ideology or its leadership. Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 107.

⁷⁸ Ward, *Losing Our Religion?*, 96-101; Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, 90-91, 177. However, the proposal that social dynamics are the chief factor in conversion should be weighed alongside Fer’s warnings about a “disciplinary *doxa*” that sociologists inadvertently apply when making assumptions about the role of emotion. This is applicable also to reflections on the initial affiliation process. Fer, “An Affective (U-) Turn in the Sociology of Religion?,” 142-168.

⁷⁹ Chadwick, *Stealing Sheep*, 67.

⁸⁰ Arise Church, “Age Groups,” <<https://www.arisechurch.com/christchurch>> (25 June 2021).

ultimate authority over society. Buoyed by emotional messages of hope and personal promise in the lyrics of worship songs, Christians find themselves at “home” in new “families” with a father-figure who tells them what to believe.⁸¹

Thirdly, messages of belonging and community are reinforced by creating distance between former relationships and sources of authority. Although it might seem that the overall objective of the new theology is to oppose the powers of darkness, the “other” that is targeted more pervasively is the Church. In wider Christianity, although the Church is recognized as fragmented and even sometimes in conflict, this state is typically lamented, even if little effort is made towards unification. Wagner, however, did not lament it as a problem but supported it as an ideal. As early as 1976 he openly advocated reduced cooperation between churches and promoted more competition between them. This expression of his “consecrated pragmatism” was based on the possibility that less successful churches would drag others down if they worked together. Rather, he preferred a spirit of competition: “May the best church win!”⁸²

The two themes of contest that intertwine throughout new theology literature and teaching have already been alluded to in previous chapters. The first is the repudiation of formal theological education, which includes the allied conception of “the intellect.” The second is the “us versus them” posture that reflects the Manichaean nature of the new theology. Despite acquiring several advanced degrees and remaining employed as an educator at Fuller for thirty years, Wagner asserted that he developed an aversion to mandatory papers when he took a required course in epistemology (“irrelevant”) during his first semester at Fuller, barely passing with a “C” grade.⁸³ Years later and as employees of Fuller, Wagner’s

⁸¹ “For the last several years people have started to gather around fathers instead of doctrine ... Apostles are first and foremost fathers by nature ... In the same way that a father and mother are to bring stability to a home, so the apostles and prophets are the stability of the Church.” Bill Johnson, “Apostolic Teams – A Group of People Who Carry the Family Mission,” *The Elijah List*, 21 November 2008, <http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word/7083> (17 November 2020). One of the characteristics of Bethel-style churches that repeatedly surfaces in anecdotal information is concomitant alienation from biological families.

⁸² Wagner, *Your Church can Grow*, 169-170. First published 1976.

⁸³ Wagner’s expressed view that a course in epistemology is inappropriate for first-year ministry students, and that he was never able to make even a vague connection between what he learned in the course and the rest of his life experiences, is intriguing considering the course information in the Fuller schedule for Wagner’s year. The required paper taught by Carl Henry to first-year students was *Systematic Theology 416*. The course description includes study of “competing contemporary schools of religious epistemology, and related problems ... The evangelical view of special divine revelation and of inspiration. The relationship of the Spirit and the Scripture. The significance of prophecy and miracle,” the very areas in which Wagner challenged the Church during his lifetime. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 36; Fuller Theological Seminary, *Bulletin of Fuller*

and Kraft's sense of their adversarial relationship with the Fuller theology department quite possibly contributed to their ongoing denunciations of academia.⁸⁴ Wagner particularly targeted theologians: they have perpetrated "some of the most damaging heresies currently plaguing the churches" and are not mentioned in Eph 4:11 because it is apostles, prophets and teachers who are "the new custodians of a dynamic theology."⁸⁵ These new leaders do not carry the "excessive amount of doctrinal baggage many of their predecessors carried."⁸⁶ When Wagner established WLI/Wagner University his avowed intention was to counter academic institutions and their systems.⁸⁷ He held that for apostolic schools, "traditional academic accreditation was a dead-end street."⁸⁸ However, WLI (and other similar schools that have sprung up in recent years) have retained all the external trappings of successful higher education: graduation ceremonies, mortar boards, gowns, and bestowal of the title "Doctor," an indicator that while formal education and learning is deemed irrelevant, status is not.

As time passed and the new theology progressed in its development, the target category of "ivory tower theoreticians" and the "opposite camp" broadened to become not only academia but also the Church at large, including any Christians who did not subscribe to the new ideas.⁸⁹ The terminology of separation proliferated as the "other" was designated by its ascribed characteristics. Division into two camps was defined by "those with experience

Theological Seminary, Catalogue Number Six, 1952-1953 (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1952), 32-33.

⁸⁴ Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 36. See also Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 239-240, for the relationship between Fuller theologians and (some of) their missions-oriented colleagues; Wagner, *Churchquake!*, 233ff, for a substantial list of negative "perspectives" that seminaries operate by and his call for the demise of academia; and Wagner, *Dominion!*, 58, where he (hopefully) predicted theologians would become "relics of the past."

⁸⁵ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 58-59. "Apostles carry a blueprint in their hearts concerning the Church and God's purposes on the earth. They are used to bring fresh revelation to the Church." Bill Johnson, "Apostolic Teams."

⁸⁶ Wagner, *Dominion!*, 58-59.

⁸⁷ Note that suspicion of higher education and certification predated Wagner in some circles, especially among American fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals. Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 100ff.

Reconstructionists are philosophically opposed to and resist accreditation on the grounds that it is humanistic (government controlled) and unbiblical (education is the responsibility of parents). Ingersoll, *Building God's Kingdom*, 81, 85, 91. Although frequently making statements of opposition to formal accredited education, Wagner never discussed the philosophical reasons behind his own stance.

⁸⁸ Wagner, *This Changes Everything*, 49. Although the sophisticated presentation and language used on the website makes it difficult to discern, WLI/Wagner University has no academic restrictions, no required courses, no required credentials for faculty, no library facilities, no assessment processes beyond a "self-evaluation" paper, no grading system, and is not accredited. The institution offers associate, bachelor, masters, and doctoral degrees. For his statement of intentionality about this see C. Peter Wagner, "Are Seminaries Making the Grade?" *Charisma Leader*, 1 September 2000, <<https://ministrytodaymag.com/leadership/higher-education/536-are-seminaries-making-the-grade#sthash.H9IDvjBk.dpuf>> (14 November 2015), and Wagner, *This Changes Everything*, 49-51.

⁸⁹ Wagner, *Confronting the Powers*, 44; Kraft, "Contextualization and Spiritual Power, 2.

dealing with the spirit world and those without experience” where those in the opposing camp lack “spiritual discernment.”⁹⁰ Those who do not accept contemporary signs and wonders were hard of heart.⁹¹ The “compassionate ministry” of demon deliverance was juxtaposed against those who disagree that Christians can be demonized; these deniers “manhandle” and “accuse battered believers of wanting to be possessed by demons so they can continue to live a sinful life.”⁹² Missions groups and churches (including Fuller Seminary) that objected to aggressive spiritual warfare terminology had “developed some sort of pacifist paradigm I can’t track with,” declared Wagner.⁹³ Enlow asserted in a prophecy that “the 7 Mountain Reformation message is under assault by the ‘older brothers’ (old wineskins/denominations) who want to chase us all back to just watching our ‘few little sheep’ – even as they give up more time and more territory to the Goliath criminals on each of the 7 Mountains or Spheres.”⁹⁴ Rick Joyner predicted a “spiritual civil war” in the church.⁹⁵ Behind each statement stood the belief that every opponent is controlled by the demonic spirit of religion.⁹⁶

At Bethel, these perceptions continue to prevail. The emphasis on identity with its associated renewal of the mind is partially constructed by drawing a line between the new identity and the “other,” a frequently repeated pattern found in Bethel literature and in Bethel sermons. As with Wagner et al, the separation between the two is shaped by caricaturing the

⁹⁰ Kraft, *The Evangelical's Guide*, 22; Kraft, “‘Christian Animism’ or God-Given Authority?,” in Rommen, *Spiritual Power and Missions*, 107.

⁹¹ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, 85-86. Wimber correctly identified those who refuse to see or hear as hard of heart, but the context clearly indicates that he is referring to those who do not accept *his definition* of the supernatural.

⁹² Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, 430.

⁹³ Eric Gorski, “Mission Movement Split over Language of Spiritual Warfare,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 19 August 2000, <<http://bi.galegroup.com.ezproxy.otago.ac.nz/global/article/GALE%7CA122210194/639fda51963cb381b05ff3a5a461dd02?u=otago>> (24 July 2019), n.p.

⁹⁴ Johnny Enlow, “A Year of Roaring Justice and Raging Hope,” *The Elijah List*, 14 January 2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=23608> (20 January 2021). Parentheses his.

⁹⁵ Rick Joyner, “Civil War in the Church,” *MorningStar Publications*, 1 May 1996, <<https://publications.morningstarministries.org/civil-war-church>> (1 October 2020). Joyner’s final comment in the article was that the church of the American South “will be on the right side.” Chuck Pierce devotes an entire book to the subject and advises his readers to “Get off the dead horse!” that is the old wineskin of the Church. Pierce, *The Future War of the Church*, 269.

⁹⁶ In Wagner’s most overt attack on the Church at large, he asserted that the unanointed leaders of the old wineskin powerfully resist the new wineskin of the New Apostolic Reformation under the influence of a high-ranking demon that manipulates them into opposing God’s new times and seasons via an “intravenous injection of fear” of loss of power, being pulled out of their comfort zones, and losing control or money. Wagner, “The Corporate Spirit of Religion,” 11-24.

behaviours and attitudes of the other side.⁹⁷ Johnson writes: “Today in many churches, if you pray for people to be healed you are considered to be working under the influence of the devil, while disease is considered a gift from God to make people better Christians! Think how badly the church has backslidden, to believe such lies!”⁹⁸ He labels such an attitude as the “leaven of the Pharisees,” that is, the religious system where God is known theoretically only and experience of him is “completely removed”: “The Pharisees have God in form but without power.”⁹⁹ “Countless millions” in the Church are satisfied with this Pharisee leaven and “refuse to let God be active right now on earth.”¹⁰⁰ By contrast, the experience of God involves making miracles the new standard for life; this is the “leaven of the kingdom.”¹⁰¹ Other expressions of the adversarial pattern are more subtly expressed, in the style of “if your pastor taught you ... it’s not true.”¹⁰² In Johnson’s literature, his esoteric worldview is contrasted with those who live a life of unbelief, driven by fear and religion: these are carnal Christians who are hard of heart.¹⁰³ Christians belong to one of only two categories: those who are anointed and led by the Holy Spirit into (Johnson’s interpretation of) God’s power, or those who are led by the spirit of opposition, that is, the demonic religious spirit that has been generated by the spirit of antichrist.¹⁰⁴

Notwithstanding the messages of partition, the concomitant activity of Bethel is that which seeks to penetrate the churches with the messages of “reformation” expressed through music, visiting speakers, literature, training courses, or other types of contact. The global impact of Bethel, behind which sits the accumulated weight of its historical influences, is

⁹⁷ From within his view of John Wimber as a fundamentalist, Percy perceives a specific characteristic behind the “us versus them” divide: “Fundamentalists deny the ambiguity of truth, seeking to press for a uniformity that will effectively govern life. Truth emerges as an exclusive concept, with no space for error, alternative interpretation or appropriate ambiguity.” While this is a partial explanation, it does not fully explain the rhetoric that is engaged when referring to the “opposite camp.” Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power*, 13.

⁹⁸ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 76.

⁹⁹ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 86. Johnson uses “religious system” and the more familiar “religious spirit” interchangeably, both in reference to the wider Church body.

¹⁰⁰ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 86; Bethel TV, “The Fight over Worldview,” *Bethel.TV*, 30 May 2021, <<https://www.bethel.tv/en/podcasts/sermons/episodes/796>> (6 June 2021), 8:59ff.

¹⁰¹ Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 88.

¹⁰² Kris Vallotton preaching: Bethel TV, “March 21st, 2021/Sunday Service/Bethel Church,” 71:52ff.

¹⁰³ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 43, 45, 46, 47. Johnson defines carnal Christians as those not led by the Spirit (into a life of signs and wonders) and attributes the meaning as Paul’s. Compare Paul’s multiple statements that contest this reading, especially Rom 8:5-8.

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 81. Johnson also differentiates between preaching in Jesus’ name (“powerless, ineffective preaching” that “must stop”) and preaching with demonstrations of power. Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind*, 41.

significant and growing. However, even where the effect of Bethel has not been experienced, the heritage passed on by those same historical influences can be perceived in increasing numbers of evangelical Christians. Wagner's "reformation" may not yet have evolved in quite the way he envisaged but nevertheless, that he and others like him played a significant role in reshaping Christianity, or at least one of its largest sectors, cannot be denied.

The Church of the Future

What does all this mean for the Church of the twenty-first century? As the overall picture has developed through the examination of each movement, several underlying elements emerge. These are connected to some basic attributes of Christianity that are essential to its continued existence, and that have been exploited for the purposes of establishing the declared reformation. Here we will briefly mention three: belief, scripture, and the Body of Christ.¹⁰⁵ These reach to the very roots of Christian identity and function, and they are being re-engineered to meet the requirements of the new theology.

Firstly, we have seen how a simplistic and appealing narrative of belief was built through processes of reinterpretation, redefinition, modification, and mythologization. The resultant hyper-supernatural worldview spurns tradition, credible alternate viewpoints, and critical thinking. It focuses on the therapeutic purposes of belief. The outcome is an intuitive, experiential, miraculous Christianity that borrows from and sometimes misappropriates prevailing cultural attitudes. Belief is self-focussed and flexible. Its points of distinction from mainstream Christianity are that God is understood in diminished form, Jesus is barely differentiated from ordinary humans, the need to carry responsibility for one's own sins is incrementally vanishing, and the view of self is enhanced to the level of being virtually divine. Secondly, scripture no longer carries the authority and centrality it once held. God's message is sought after in personal revelation with the purpose of scripture being merely to act in a tendentious and confirmatory role. Increasingly, the text that informs the belief systems of Christians is more likely to be found in the lyrics of worship songs that act as the conduit for introducing a new way of thinking about God. Thirdly, the conception of the Body of Christ repeatedly affirmed in scripture (1 Cor 12:27, Eph 4:12) is all but destroyed in a climate of fragmentation and even antagonism. And this leads to a critical predicament for

¹⁰⁵ There are others, constrained by space but deserving of attention, for example, worship or prayer.

Christians who become alert enough to realize in themselves that they are facing disappointment and disillusionment, and who do not understand enough about their own faith to know where to go for healing.¹⁰⁶ The ultimate risk is the failure of faith.

The most important aspect of the new theology is not necessarily its prominence, influence, or rapid growth. What matters most is how it is *symptomatic* of the wider issues that the Evangelical Church faces. For decades, Christian thinkers have been commenting on the slide into spiritual decline as evangelical Christianity fails to combat a range of issues that include “astounding theological illiteracy” or a “failure to exercise the mind for Christ.”¹⁰⁷ What this means is that even if Bethel eventually falls by the wayside to join many other popular movements that briefly flared before disintegrating, still the core problem remains. The wants and needs of the people remain the same, they have not yet made appreciable gains in finding a centre to their theology that *will* hold, and the search for leaders who make the promises they want to hear will simply lead them to the next.

This scenario raises many challenging questions. In the limited context of this study, it is not possible to identify or address every issue that arises from close examination of the new theology. Nevertheless, it is possible to at least formulate some preliminary thoughts on where to start looking. When we consider belief, then the questions also should relate to how Christians think *about* their faith. For example, what causes so many Christians to fail in finding a depth of experience within their faith that obviates their need to seek out excitement or sensational experiences? What are Christians missing in their faith system that reduces their ability to effectively resist being defined by external cultural pressures? How can the elements that dissuade Christians from using their minds be dis-enabled without demoralising them or devitalizing their faith? How important is it to invest in supporting Christians to better understand *why* they believe? These questions centre on the inner experience of faith and relate to the need to moderate suspicions of “intellectualism” or the preference for subjective experiences that are rarely evaluated for their veridicality. The notion of the “enquiring mind” is slipping out of Christian belief and practice, potentially a factor that could contribute ultimately to the demise of the faith altogether.

¹⁰⁶ This potential outcome is a dimension that cannot be explored here but that nevertheless remains crucially important to consider.

¹⁰⁷ Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 4; Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 7.

A second set of questions relates to scripture. Most evangelical Christians hold the view that the Bible contains God's authoritative, cohesive, and consistent messages to humanity, yet for many, its centrality in their lives is diminishing. If scripture does not retain its significance in the lives of Christians, what does this mean for the survival of the Christian faith? What needs to change in order to restore comprehension of its importance in the relationship with God? Other questions pertain to "textual ideologies." Interpretation of biblical text is shaped by ideas and expectations that vary according to cultural identities among Christian communities.¹⁰⁸ Anthropologist James Bielo notes this in his account of a Lutheran Bible study group where a non-denominational Pentecostal attendee challenged them with his insistence on God's literal fulfilment of prosperity-related promises. Bielo writes that while the men contesting each other's views "equally understand God's Word to be sincere, they listen to this sincerity in different ways, with different expectations for how God speaks."¹⁰⁹ Is the problem of differing textual ideologies insurmountable? Furthermore, how does evangelical Christianity resolve the reality that, increasingly, leaders lack training or education in even basic exegetical and hermeneutical approaches to scripture?

Thirdly, we can frame questions around the survival of the Christian community. John Drane forcefully warns: "If the church replicates the fragmentation that is in the world already, it does not deserve to have a future."¹¹⁰ In the prevailing cultural climate of emphasis on the individual, the conception of the Body of Christ appears outmoded and irrelevant, yet community sits close to the heart of biblical Christianity. Distrust of or conscious separation of some groups from other Christian churches or sectors is nothing new; throughout history many have promoted the same in varying degrees.¹¹¹ Although we have seen how proponents of the new theology encourage separateness, this goes both ways.¹¹² It is replicated in the strongly oppositional stance taken by many critics, a strategy that does not serve to persuade into new modes of thinking but that simply reinforces separation and fragmentation. Damagingly to the Body of Christ, the disparaging tones used by either side do not account

¹⁰⁸ James S. Bielo, "'How Much of this is Promise?'" *God as Sincere Speaker in Evangelical Bible Reading*, *Anthropological Quarterly* 84:3 (July 2011): 643.

¹⁰⁹ Bielo, "How Much of this is Promise?", 649.

¹¹⁰ Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church*, 84.

¹¹¹ See examples documented by Boyer from the seventeenth century forward, particularly in relation to issues around knowledge and education: Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 306-308.

¹¹² See for example, the Lutheran community in Bielo's study, related to their depictions of the Self/Other relationship. Bielo, "How Much of this is Promise?", 649.

for the large numbers of Christians situated in “opposite camps” who are separated therefore by a divide that cannot be traversed in the interest of sharing their mutual love for God and desire to experience his presence in their lives.¹¹³ Is there a way to replace the reactive approach; to work towards places of agreement that preclude irretrievable separation in the Christian community? Are there irenic ways to rebuild without descent into internecine conflict?¹¹⁴ How do we engage a “hermeneutic of charity,” as recommended by Mouw, while yet retaining a crucially necessary hermeneutic of suspicion?¹¹⁵

One of the major themes in the new theology pertains to God’s revelation. While retaining at least a notional acceptance of the Bible as important, the emphasis on personal revelation dominates. Alongside the increasing preference for a Bible “translation” that lacks credibility, it overlooks the possibility that God’s revelation includes thousands of years over which humans have grown into comprehension of ever more about our world and ourselves. Instead of viewing Enlightenment thinking as an instrument of Satan’s, is it possible to locate God’s handiwork in our new discoveries about ourselves and the search for meaning in our existence? Furthermore, does the culture of post-modernity offer new opportunities to dig deeper into understanding what relationship with God really means?¹¹⁶ As Christians who work in the sciences or the humanities can attest, the more humans discover about our environment and about ourselves, the more our knowledge can serve to enhance our understanding of ourselves and of our relationship with God. However, those who do work in scholarly environments find themselves isolated in their own spheres where dialogue is confined among peers. Collegial cross-disciplinary activities are limited. Very few communicate with those who inhabit popular culture. The gap between the academy and churches is becoming a chasm. Some even speak of the distance between seminaries/Bible colleges and the churches as a “divorce.”¹¹⁷ In our century, humans have a range of life

¹¹³ This assumes that the notion of the Body of Christ is still relevant for today, perhaps the starting point for questions around its restoration/maintenance.

¹¹⁴ Even if two parties drawing together in dialogue seems unlikely, mechanisms for detaching from conflict can be implemented in the interests of moving forward without rupture.

¹¹⁵ Richard J. Mouw, *Consulting the Faithful: What Christian Intellectuals Can Learn from Popular Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 13.

¹¹⁶ Chan, “Following Jesus as the Truth,” 313-316; Daniel B. Wallace, “Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism for the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52:1 (March 2009): 86. Wallace writes: “Postmodernism is a corrective to the naïve epistemological triumphalism of the modernism that has infected so much of the evangelical community.”

¹¹⁷ Wallace, “Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism,” 99.

choices available to them that is unprecedented in human history. Likewise, Christians have freedom to select whichever form of Christian belief suits them best. The urgent imperative of the twenty-first century is for Christians across all sectors to start listening to and communicating with each other. The combined usefulness of each discipline and each perspective could show us a way to comprehend and communicate our faith system in a way that does not disallow freedom to choose yet that defies distortion or corruption in exercising that choice. And perhaps the place to start is with those inside the church who are increasingly losing sight of what actually they do believe.

Appendix A: The Making of a Myth

Demonic Artwork

Six accounts from spiritual warfare writers describing their activities at the “Génesis del Chaco” murals (La Plaza 25 de Mayo de 1810) to eliminate demons from Resistencia in June 1990:

1. In June 1990 a team from Harvest Evangelism was in the city of Resistencia on a spiritual warfare assignment. As we studied the city it became apparent that the strong man of San La Muerte, or death, wanted worship through music. The pictures of him painted in the town square depicted him playing musical instruments. One verse that came to us as we prepared to pray over that city was Psalm 32:7: "You shall surround me with songs of deliverance." When we sought the Lord for a strategy to take the city, we felt strongly that we should use praise warfare since the spirits over the city used music in their worship. God's light would overcome the darkness through worship. We used many of the weapons of warfare described in this chapter—we sang, we clapped, we marched and we shouted. The shouting came at the end of the five hours of prayer. After we gave great shout of victory we felt a tremendous breakthrough of joy. Although we could not see anything changed with our natural eyes, we knew in our spirits that the root had been cut that allowed the worship of San La Muerte in the city of Resistencia. “And the seventh time it was so, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: ‘Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!’” Joshua 6:16. What would have happened if the people had not shouted? Perhaps the walls would not have fallen down and victory would not have been won.¹
2. Near one corner of the plaza stood three 10-foot-tall panels displaying modern art on each side. In the large central panel, about 16 feet wide, a thick snake was wrapped around figures holding a guitar and a harp. The tail of the snake entered a red sun on which a violinist played. Cindy confirmed Victor's observation. “The snake often symbolizes the python spirit—a spirit of divination or witchcraft,” she said. The smaller panel on the left, six-feet wide, showed a second snake intertwining two figures playing an accordion and another guitar. “It looks as though the python spirit is claiming control of these musical arts,” Victor noted. The 10-foot-square panel on the right featured a hideous image looming over another figure lying at its feet as though dead. The phases of the moon were portrayed, along with a plant with dead roots and stem. “This is San La Muerte,” Cindy discerned. Other images suggested a curse of poverty on the land, economic distress and the influence of religious spirits, including the Queen of Heaven. “About 80 percent of the art in Resistencia has some spiritual symbolism,” Victor stated. With his research, the panels in the central plaza seemed to offer the intercessors a virtual map for planning their spiritual assault.²
3. Arriving in Resistencia, Cindy, Doris, Marfa, Ed, and the others found that the names of the spirits ruling over that city had been known by the people for generations. San La

¹ Cindy Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (New York: Chosen Books, 1991), 184-185.

² Jane Rumph, “Engaging the Enemy in Resistencia,” in *The Rising Revival: Firsthand Accounts of the Incredible Argentine Revival - And How It Can Spread Throughout the World*, eds. C. Peter Wagner and Pablo Deiros (Ventura, CA: Renew Books, 1998), 149-150. Later the group returned to the panels where Jacobs led a ceremony to destroy the temple of the python spirit, recalling Aaron's rod/snake swallowing those of the Egyptian magicians, 153-154.

Muerte, the spirit of death, was perhaps the most powerful. ... Other spirits of almost equal rank turned out to be Pombero, a spirit of division who brought terror, especially to children during the siesta time and at night; Curupí, a spirit of sexual perversion and incest whose image was characterized by a ridiculously long male organ; the Queen of Heaven, a religious spirit who had perverted the true character of the traditional Church; and the spirit of Freemasonry, a cleverly disguised form of occult power. Apparently, coordinating their activities was a principality of divination or witchcraft, represented by a snake. Surprisingly, the images of these spirits and their activities were clearly depicted on several large folk art murals in the central plaza of the city. After Cindy taught a day-long seminar on warfare prayer to pastors, intercessors, the Harvest Evangelism team, and others, a group of around 70 felt led to go to the plaza and engage in frontline warfare. After collectively praying, repenting, and confessing the sins represented by these evil principalities and powers, they engaged the spirits in five hours of spiritual battle. Only then did God give them an assurance in their spirits that they had broken through. When it was over, they lifted their voices together in praise and victory.³

4. Throughout this book, I have made frequent references to Argentina as a principal laboratory in which some of us are testing the theories of strategic-level spiritual warfare. One of the keys to the substantial evangelistic results in the city of Resistencia was naming the spirits over that city: Pombero, Curupí, San La Muerte, Reina del Cielo, witchcraft, and Freemasonry ... Under the coaching of Cindy Jacobs, the Argentine pastors prayed strongly and specifically against these principalities. Three large art panels in the main plaza of Resistencia helped considerably. Cindy said, “These panels are like a map of the spiritual realm. They reveal the plans and intentions of the enemy.” She then pointed out how a huge snake represented witchcraft and that it already had several Christian fish in its belly. The fowls of the air represented religious spirits. The bony figure playing the violin was San La Muerte. A cloud-like figure with the sun and moon stood for the Queen of Heaven. The case of Resistencia shows how naming the powers and spiritual mapping go hand in hand.⁴
5. You can also find evidence of demonic influence by studying the music, culture, architecture and art. Many times visible things are clues to the invisible realm ... We have discovered ruling spirits over several cities from folk art. In Resistencia we found three panels painted with the symbols of the spirit of death. Sometimes the paintings are sensual and may indicate a spirit of lust or sensuality. Not surprisingly those cities often have a high rate of sexual crimes.⁵
6. Satan’s perimeter began to be shaken when the pastors and their most trusted intercessors proclaimed the Lordship of Christ by serving an eviction notice on San La Muerte in the central plaza where a monument honours him.⁶

³ C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: How to Seek God's Power and Protection in the Battle to Build His Kingdom* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 32-33.

⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: How to Seek God's Power and Protection in the Battle to Build His Kingdom* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 156-157.

⁵ Cindy Jacobs, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (New York: Chosen Books, 1991), 238.

⁶ Ed Silvano, *That None Should Perish: How to Reach Entire Cities for Christ through Prayer Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994), 48.

The Cultural Landscape of Chaco: “Génesis del Chaco”

“Génesis del Chaco,” by Raúl Monsegur, 1962. The murals in La Plaza 25 de Mayo de 1810 (Resistencia, Chaco, Argentina).

Argentinian artist Raúl Monsegur’s three panels were inspired by eight poems about nature and music by poet Alfredo Veiravé, who lived in Resistencia for much of his life.⁷ The murals incorporate several themes. The cultural landscape of the region is expressed in depictions of poetry, music, and dance performed by humans or creatures. The natural landscape has the sun as the “introduction” with elements from nature such as the birds, fish, rivers, or snakes found in the landscape’s configurations.⁸

The cycles of nature and human relationships with nature are noted in the historical activity of cotton planting. Important to the message of the murals is the sense of legacy and belonging inspired by place and culture. Part of this legacy involves its mythology as expressed in the figure of the *Yasyateré*, who rises at night in Veiravé’s poem. The *Yasyateré* is a small blond-haired spirit of the forest in the mythology of the Guaraní culture in north-eastern Argentina. He makes himself invisible by means of the cane he carries with him. His distinctive whistle is often heard but he is seldom seen. He is known to steal unbaptized children who are not watched closely by their parents. Although somewhat of a trickster, some say he can be kind and helpful to those who appease him with gifts of fruit and honey. The children he steals are usually returned although they may be in a stunned state.⁹ It is probable that the mythology of the *Yasyateré* is based on the Pavonine Cuckoo that inhabits the Guaraní forest regions.¹⁰



The legacy of the cultural and natural landscape, representing the elements of nature (river/snakes) interacting with the cultural activities of the people who inhabit the landscape.

⁷ Luciana Sudar Klappenbach and Alejandra Reyero, “La gestión de El Fogón de los Arrieros y su implicancia en los procesos de patrimonialización del paisaje cultural de Resistencia, Chaco, Argentina,” *Apuntes* 29:2 (July-December 2016): 8-23. (“The management of El Fogón de los Arrieros and its implication in the processes of patrimonialization of the cultural landscape of Resistencia, Chaco, Argentina.”)

⁸ There is no reason to associate the figure playing the violin (inside the sun) with San La Muerte as Jacobs claimed. The figure is not rendered “bony” but in the style of other human depictions in the mural. “Death Playing the Violin” is a European cultural motif depicted in a number of artworks but with no connection to Latin American culture. San La Muerte is never seen with a violin.

⁹ Berta Elena Vidal De Battin, *Cuentos y Leyendas Populares de la Argentina*, Tomo 8 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Culturales Argentinas, 1984), 641-675.

¹⁰ The bird’s whistle mimics “*Yasyateré*,” heard at < <https://es-la.facebook.com/EIPueblitoIguazu/videos/yasyater%C3%A9-chico-pavonine-cuckoo-dromococcyx-pavoninus/3522976254400306/> >



The river incorporates human presence. Chaco province is marked with water channels



The *Yasyateré* rising at night while people dream



Reverse side of panels: Cotton picking, the sun (and cotton-picking), the wind



Murals view from street

Appendix B: Examples of Prophecies

“Birthing Manifestations of the Realm of Heaven on the Earth.”¹

In recent months, the Lord has taken me up several times, in the Spirit, to a particular place in the Heavenly realm. ... In this experience I simply laid down in the grass in order to enjoy the heavenly atmosphere of this place. While lying there I saw two angels approaching me and they began to feed me with honey. Honey in the Bible is symbolic of revelation. I believe, in this experience, the honey represented a spirit of wisdom and revelation that was being placed upon me in greater measure in order to comprehend, in the spirit, the things that were about to take place. The angels left and I then saw Jesus approaching me from a distance. The light emanating from His being was blinding, yet incredibly inviting at the same time. As He reached me and stood before me I was undone within myself ... The Lord then turned and walked away, but as he left, this mist or glory cloud, began to completely envelop me. I knew it was Holy Spirit! (*sic*) ... He then said something that astounded me: “Ask what you will and it will be done for you!” ... Jesus would hear and see what the Father was saying and doing in heaven; He would simply go proclaim it and heaven would invade earth. Let me give you a personal testimony of this in my own life. Several months ago I was in Australia ministering at a church on Sunday morning. I heard clearly from the Lord that I was to step up to the pulpit and, without any preaching, I was to immediately release a healing wave. He said the altars would be filled with healing testimonies. I simply did as He said and I never got to preach! I lined people up and listened to their testimonies of healings and miracles for an hour and a half. The next week I was in Tanzania, Africa and preached again at a church on Sunday morning. Just as I was about to step up to the pulpit I felt a wind blow on my left hand and I heard the Lord say, "My healing angels are here. Release a healing wave right away and I will do signs and wonders in your midst!" I thought, “Yeah, I’ve clearly heard from heaven, so this is gonna be fun.” I simply decreed to the people what I heard from God about the healing angels and I released the healing wave.

“Chiefs Win! A Stunning Prophetic Message.”²

The Kansas City Chiefs 31-20 Super Bowl victory is full of amazing prophetic messages for us. Every name, number, date, and time has something to add. I will not go through them all because sometimes more is not better but can diminish attention on main things that the Lord would have us focus on. The main message is clear: we have entered into a new day for the Kingdom of God and its advancement on planet Earth. The next to be promoted and advanced are those who understand His narrative for the nations themselves. *Kansas City Chiefs Defeat San Francisco 49ers 31-20: Jubilee Teams and Jubilee Time*. It was and is a good sign that both these teams were in the Super Bowl. It’s an accomplishment of note even by the losing team. Both speak into a JUBILEE time of prosperity ... This is quite evident in how our nation’s economy is currently doing, but it is to confirm we are not going to retreat from that in 2020. I have already seen an upcoming 35,000 on the Stock Market at some point, and long-term, the worldwide economic upgrade will be significant. The coming economic shifts will be staggering and unprecedented. The world has lived essentially under lack and in survival mode. The world will begin to learn to live in general prosperity. There is a test of lack, and an entirely new thing is the test of abundance. Lucifer failed the test of abundance.

¹ Ryan Wyatt, “Birthing Manifestations of the Realm of Heaven on the Earth,” *The Elijah List*, 5 July 2004, <http://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=2286> (13 November 2020).

² Johnny Enlow, “Chiefs Win! A Stunning Prophetic Message,” *The Elijah List*, 4 February 2020, <https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=23195> (14 December 2020).

God does not really have a person or a people He can trust until they have passed the test of abundance. It tests a spirit in an entirely different way, but it's more revealing of who a person is ... Remember this is 2020, and 2 Chronicles 20:20 speaks of hearkening to His prophets and you will prosper. I am giving you the prophetic decree—the test of prosperity is progressively what is next. It will be many decades before it finishes maturing. For those wanting things to fall apart so Jesus can come—deal with it, this is next. The 22, 222, 2222's (Isaiah 2:2, Acts 2:2, Isaiah 22:22) Trump, the Holy Spirit and Reformation. The Chiefs won on 2/2 of 2020. It was coach Andy Reid's 222nd victory. I was in LA last weekend and as I was coming in, I was getting some pretty strong clues from Heaven that the Super Bowl signified an important shift, and that Kansas City was going to win. My flight coming in was #2222. My car rental ended in 220. I had about 3 other strong 222's. The repeat patterns are to draw our attention to a message ... These Scriptures are all powerful and most relevant for this time. Isaiah 2:2 is my original foundational word for everything to do with the 7 Mountain message, as well as my initial Seven Mountain Prophecy book ... This all connects to what God is doing through how He is using President Donald Trump. It is no coincidence that he is commander in chief. His name, Donald, essential means “chief ruler.” I am still shocked at the Believers who can't discern that Trump is God-sent. It was understandable at first, as he came in disguised, but now with what his stands and legislation have proven over and over about himself, it is indisputably obvious that Trump is advancing a Kingdom agenda. It is even more obvious that those in high places who oppose him are anti-Kingdom of God. The only reasonable explanation for good people not recognizing President Trump as the most strategic, human kingdom asset in generations is brain washing and mind control. Your mind has been pickled through overexposure to a dark-agenda, narrative assault, which deceives you into thinking YOU are the one seeing clearly ... The Chiefs win is to let you know that the commander in chief is going to keep winning in 2020 ... Let me make this 20/20 vision clear: God loves you unconditionally, but you are displeasing Him if you are not recognizing His intentionality with putting Donald J. Trump as your president. God has been displeased with both Republicans and Democrats, so don't think this is political at all ... There is so much more to say through all of this, but it could be an overload. The Chiefs won on the 33rd day of the year with 333 days remaining because it's LEAP YEAR. When Jesus was 33 is when Acts 2 took place and the Holy Spirit invaded. Jeremiah 33:3 says to “Call Me” and I will “show you things you know not” ... Star Quarterback/MVP Pat Mahomes is 24 years old, and this connects to Psalm 24, which I recently shared regarding #24 Kobe Bryant. Ancient doors are opening, and the King of Glory is coming in. Pat is also the only person ever to throw for 50 touchdowns in a season in both the NFL and in college. He also did it in high school. Again, 50 is the number of Jubilee, but also the number of days they waited in the Upper Room. Pentecost means 50 days.

The Elijah List: Titles of first fifty prophetic words for 2020.³

| | | | |
|----------|----------------|---|-------|
| 1-Jan-20 | Hakeem Collins | “Decrees That Move Mountains in 2020 and Beyond” | 23045 |
| 1-Jan-20 | Jesse Shamp | “Breakthrough! Use Your Voice and Release Powerful Decrees!” | 23044 |
| 2-Jan-20 | Jennifer Eivaz | “Make These Decrees for 2020: ‘GREATER’ for Our Lives and Families” | 23047 |
| 2-Jan-20 | Marsha Burns | “2020 Vision: Do Something Great” | 23046 |
| 3-Jan-20 | Agnes Ebedi | “You Shall Break Through into 2020 - Like a Rocket!” | 23054 |

³ Numbers in brackets beside a prophet's name indicate they were among the ten most published prophets in 2020. Two others in the top ten did not appear in the first 50 (to 22 January) but were published in February and throughout 2020: Chuck Pierce (11) and Lana Vawser (17). The web address for each prophecy is the same with ID number the only differentiation: <[https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=\[ID number\]](https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=[ID number])>.

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|--|-------|
| 3-Jan-20 | Gina La Morte | “2020: The Year of Revelation” | 23053 |
| 4-Jan-20 | Sanjna Mahtab | “Transition Into the New Threshold!” | 23058 |
| 4-Jan-20 | Joe Dawson (13) | “Discerning Your Ladders and Fields” | 23059 |
| 5-Jan-20 | John Belt | “7 Benefits of a Joyful Heart!” | 23060 |
| 5-Jan-20 | Charity Kayembe | “The 8-Year-Old Dream Interpreter” | 23061 |
| 6-Jan-20 | Larry Sparks | “Women Arise! New Mantles, Callings and Kingdom Assignments” | 23243 |
| 6-Jan-20 | Faith Marie Baczko | “Big Things Are Coming” | 23062 |
| 6-Jan-20 | Ruth Hendrickson | “2020 - A Blast-Off Year” | 23063 |
| 7-Jan-20 | Shara Chalmers | “2020: Reset for a New Era” | 23068 |
| 7-Jan-20 | Adam Thompson | “Australia on Fire! A 2017 Word of the Lord on the Fires in Australia” | 23070 |
| 7-Jan-20 | Hank Kunneman | “Prophecy Decoders: US Assassinate General Soleimani Iranian Terror General” | 23069 |
| 8-Jan-20 | Doug Addison (17) | “Prophetic Word for 2020: Your Life Purpose Is Being Revealed” | 23073 |
| 8-Jan-20 | Patricia King | “Say ‘Yes’ - This Is Your Year to Elevate!” | 23074 |
| 9-Jan-20 | Bobby Conner | “How to Activate Divine Wisdom” | 23077 |
| 9-Jan-20 | Russ Walden (17) | “The Word for 2020 Is: ‘As in Heaven so on Earth’” | 23078 |
| 10-Jan-20 | Helen Calder | “Your Roar Is Being Restored” | 23079 |
| 10-Jan-20 | Kim Potter | “Your Inheritance Is NOW - Call It Forth!” | 23080 |
| 10-Jan-20 | Cindy Jacobs (12) | “Prayer Alert: Word of the Lord Over Iran and Iraq” | 23088 |
| 11-Jan-20 | Kevin Zadaï | “11 Tell-Tale Signs of the Coming Move of God” | 23089 |
| 11-Jan-20 | Jermaine Francis | “A Decade of the Fulfillment of Prophetic Promises” | 23090 |
| 12-Jan-20 | Ben Lim | “20 Prophetic Declarations for 2020 - You Will Eat the Fruit of Your Mouth” | 23091 |
| 12-Jan-20 | Helen Cobanov | “Don’t Look Back! Your Past Will Not Repeat Itself” | 23092 |
| 13-Jan-20 | Dutch Sheets (12) | “The Era of Miracles at the Right Time Gate” | 23093 |
| 13-Jan-20 | Anthony Medina | “The Great Exchange in 2020” | 23094 |
| 14-Jan-20 | Betty King | “What ‘Lenses’ Are You Wearing?” | 23099 |
| 14-Jan-20 | Johnny Enlow (25) | “A Year of Roaring Justice and Raging Hope” | 23098 |
| 15-Jan-20 | Steve Shultz | “IMPORTANT - a word about President Donald J. Trump” | 23104 |
| 15-Jan-20 | Joni Ames | “Treasure Maps for the Harvest” | 23103 |
| 15-Jan-20 | Lou Engle | “Freedom! You Said You Would Deliver Us” | 23102 |
| 16-Jan-20 | Westley Roderick | “It’s Time to Collide with Your Destiny!” | 23109 |
| 16-Jan-20 | Robert Hotchkin | “Heroes of Holiness - Are You Ready to Get Radical?” | 23108 |
| 17-Jan-20 | Andrew Towe | “It’s Your Time to Launch - Now!” | 23112 |
| 17-Jan-20 | Bill Hamon | “2020: The Year of the Prophets” | 23111 |
| 18-Jan-20 | Melissa Pearce | “The Year of Advancement and a Great Awakening” | 23116 |
| 18-Jan-20 | Theresa Phillips | “Kings and Priests, Take Your Place! A Seismic Shift in 2020” | 23115 |
| 19-Jan-20 | Che Ahn | “3 Practical Steps to Enter into His Grace” | 23118 |
| 19-Jan-20 | Patsy Southway | “26 Keys for 2020: Find Out What Promises God Wants to Unlock for YOU!” | 23117 |
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