

PART 2: SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND PERSECUTION

THE UNSEEN BATTLE: REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE

by Clyde Hiestand

Clyde & Naomi Hiestand retired in 2008 following a lifetime of service with AWM. Their service has been characterized by sacrificial loving perseverance in the face of difficulties and huge challenges. Their final 15 years of service in Morocco followed earlier ministry in Algeria, Tunisia and France.

Visible versus Invisible Realities

In the natural world, scientists inform us that we can only see about 2 % of the electromagnetic field with the human eye. The rest, although unseen by the human eye is indeed very real – whether I am aware of it, or not. Even more so with the spiritual world where the unseen is also part of the real world!

‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark work and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’ (Eph 6:12)

Early Indications & A Story of Spiritual Conflict

After we first arrived as new workers in Algeria, in a conference in Dar Naama, some of us were surprised to hear an elderly German missionary warn us about curses that came down via family lines. What kind of ‘strange doctrine’ is this, we wondered? Is it biblical?

Later, while we were having a teaching conference with new believers in Constantine, Algeria, the police swooped in on us and took the young men away. We then went to where the parallel meeting for girls was being held and shared the news. One young woman, a sister of one of the young men whom the police had taken, panicked and went into a trance-like state with eyes rolling. Wendell Evans,¹ our speaker, suspecting something more than physical

¹ Wendell Evans was a life-long colleague of Clyde Hiestand. Wendell and Lillian served in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco for many years, and then was North Africa Director and AWM's second Missiologist. Wendell passed away shortly after retiring after a prolonged battle with cancer. Lillian is very active in her retirement and is making her first trip as a Mature Mobile Mentor into the Arabian Peninsula in the spring of 2009.

or psychological, prayed over her using the blood of the Lord Jesus and she revived.

The next day Helen Wilson and I went to a neighbouring city to tell some of the parents what had happened. Rather than being grateful they panicked, turned on us and took us to the police. We spent the day being grilled by the police of that city. Finally released, we were making our way home over the mountains late at night in the dark when a cow ran out of the darkness into the path of our car and was struck to the ground. Fearing a violent reaction of the villagers if they rushed out and found the cow dead or injured, we prayed earnestly that the cow would get up quickly. After a few long minutes, the cow staggered to her feet and we quickly drove off.

The next day, Wendell, who had visited us from Tunisia for the weekend conference, made his way home by train. A rock crashed through the train window by his seat and a piece of shattered glass lodged in his eye. The conductor called ahead for an ambulance which rushed him directly to the hospital when he arrived.

We later found out that the girl who went into a trance was heavily involved in sorcery, along with her family. We felt like we'd just had a 3-day Eph 6:12 experience!

The Bible's Stance on Occult Practices

The Bible, while exhorting us to focus on God, gives lots of references to occult practices, but with very little detail as to how they actually work. All these references are negative, but they contain negligible detailed information.

The Bible simply condemns and forbids them, calling them 'abominable practices' (Lev 18 Deut 18:9-13), and warns of dire consequences for those who engage in them. (II Chron. 36:8-21).

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Why does the Bible not give more detail? Probably for a couple of reasons: (1) The danger of over fascination with them, and (2) like weeds on a manure pile, there are an infinite variety of them, and while having traits in common, their variations vary from family to family and country to country.

Nevertheless, even though the Bible does not provide much detailed information on occult practices, the North African worker is urged to find a copy of *Occultism in North Africa* by Mr. Bernard Collinson, former director of North Africa Mission (now Arab World Ministries). This is an excellent in-house mimeographed booklet, written at the request of the NAM Field Council, detailing many of the occult practices prevalent in North Africa. I believe it needs to be

reprinted.² A more recent book, *The Unseen Face of Islam* by Bill Musk³, details the extensive mixture of the occult at the very heart of Islam.

One Consequence of Sin is Demonization

Sinful actions do have consequences – even on believers. If we open the door, by sin – whatever the form – the devil will come in. Some common door-openers include: disobedience, anger, unforgiveness, drugs, yoga, passivity, promiscuity, occult practices (including using the Ouija board) and the transfer of sins of the fathers. Some of us believe that the very act of submission in saying the Shahada can be in itself a door-opener.

The first time I heard a demon speaking out of the mouth of a dear believer, it shook my theology, since I knew all the reasons why a Christian could not have a demon and yet here I was witnessing the contrary. It was like believing that the electrical outlet was dead, yet when I put my finger on the wire, I got shocked. If my theology teaches me that the 'outlet is dead' but I repeatedly get shocked, then maybe I need to reconsider.

Here, the advice of Evangelist Ron Sussek is helpful: 'Don't build your theology on your experience! But don't build your theology on your lack of experience, either!'⁴

Interestingly, the Bible doesn't declare either way whether Christians *can* or *cannot* be demonized! That's the conclusion of a lengthy book written on the subject: *Demon Possession and the Christian* by C Fred Dickason and Mark I Bubeck in 1989.⁵ Both, They both came to the conviction that believers can come under demonic influence. Mark Bubeck's initial work, *The Adversary*⁶ tells how he discovered the role of demons even in believers. This discovery proved helpful. A correct diagnosis aids in treating the problem more efficiently.

Note the testimony of Gary Hixon: 'I have cast out a lot of demons. But I have never cast a demon out of an unbeliever. I lead the person to the Lord, and

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2 Copies of the French version, *Occultisme en Afrique du Nord*, Marseille: Ecole Radio Biblique, 1992, can be ordered from MENA. Contact editions@mena-france.org. The English version of this book is out of print. For a PDF copy of the English original, contact Malcolm in Worthing: malcolm@wornet.org.

3 *The Unseen Face of Islam*, Bill Musk, Kregel Publications, 2004.

4 Evangelist Ron Sussek, speaking at Community Bible Church, Marietta, PA, on May 29, 2005 where he knew many in the audience questioned whether a believer could be demonized.

5 *Demon Possession and the Christian: A New Perspective* by C. Fred Dickason and Mark I. Bubeck, Chicago: Moody Press, 1987.

6 *The Adversary*, by Mark I. Bubeck, Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1975.

then deal with the demons.’⁷

When trying to make sense of a demon speaking through a Christian’s mouth, I was helped by reflecting on Jesus’ rebuking Peter in Matthew 16. After having received strong praise from Jesus in Matt 16:17-19, Jesus went on to say to Peter: ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ (Matt. 16:23) Note that Jesus did not say that a mere demon was speaking through Peter’s mouth, but Satan himself. Peter, at that moment was unknowingly being guided by Satan! (I’ve observed that some Christians ignore Satan, but get all ‘bent out of shape’ at the mention of demons.) The Bible speaks a lot about Satan. Why? Because Satan is the real enemy. Demons are just his flunkies. Furthermore, the demons know – even if the Christian does not – that if sin is confessed and renounced, the Christian has authority over them.

My Apartment helps me Understand Demonization vs. Possession

I live in an apartment. This apartment does not belong to me, but to the owner, the landlord. However, as a tenant, I have a lease giving me the legal right to live here. So far, so good. But if I invite a sub-renter to live here or worse yet, if I open the door to a squatter, he will come in and may run to a back room and ensconce himself there. Note again that the ‘squatter’ being there behind bolted doors does not make him the owner! No, he is a squatter! We get confused because we speak of ‘demon possession’ rather than the Scriptural term ‘demonization.’

When I realize the horrible thing I have done, in welcoming a squatter into my life, I must do the following: (1) *Submit* to the owner. (2) *Confess* my wrongdoing. (3) *Renounce* rights given to Satan – read the riot act to the squatter, and tell him to get out! ‘Satan, I now take back the rights and promises I made to you.’ Here my thinking must be clear. Satan will say, ‘But you promised me.’ If so, I must say, ‘But I had no right to give to you what only belongs to the owner. (4) If he refuses, call in the Sheriff – *exorcism*, by the person, and/or with the help of another servant of God. Neil Anderson’s books are very helpful here for more specifics.⁸ But should we study Satan and his tactics at all? Yes! Soldiers and generals had better study their enemy and his tactics! But what is the correct balance?

Back to the basics – the shortest verse on Spiritual Warfare

‘*Submit, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you!*’ (James 4:7). This verse is a corrective to two commonly practiced errors. (1) Some argue that we

7 Gary Hixon is an American whom God called to move to Southern Europe in order to serve the worker community in North Africa and beyond by doing deliverance ministries and training others in such ministry. He is known to many colleagues in North Africa, and has been called in to help and to train on a number of occasions.

8 See, for example: *The Bondage Breaker* and *Who I am in Christ*.

should just focus on the Lord, ignore the devil and God will take care of Satan. However Paul declared, '*We are not ignorant of his devices.*' (II Cor. 2:11). I fear many would-be soldiers who go out to battle cannot say as much. He who would go to war had better know some of the enemy's tactics. 'What you don't know can cost you a lot.' from an insurance advertisement. (2) The opposite error is to focus on the devil and become devil-centred, rather than God-centred, a danger some believers fall into. James 4:7 gives us the Biblical balance: First submit to God! Then rebuke the devil! But don't ignore him.

How to Apply James 4:7 – A Major Discovery – the 'If' Prayer

When hit by a new adverse circumstance, I can immediately pray, 'Lord if this situation – whether a flat tire, sickness or a headache – is from you, I accept it. Maybe you are trying to get my attention. But if it *is* from the devil, I refuse it and command it to leave.' Note that in Job 1-2 God and Satan knew exactly what was going on, even if Job, like us, did not. But even in our uncertainty, we must avoid passivity. If it's raining, and we have a God-given umbrella in our hand, but don't put it up, we will get wet!

Sometimes, but not always, as we raise this spiritual umbrella of the 'If Prayer' the results are dramatic. For example, when sickness strikes, especially before a ministry opportunity, pray first, then take an aspirin or consult a doctor, not the inverse order! (II Chron. 16:12). Once when we were praying, the colleague beside me exhibited suspicious behaviour with his hands, which I had observed previously. So I watched, and this time I prayed silently, with no audible voice. 'Lord, if this is from the devil, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I bind it up to powerlessness.' The motion stopped immediately – it was like an angel grabbed his hand!⁹ Afterwards I was able to share with him what had happened and suggested that he didn't have to put up with that in his life any longer.

Helpful practical lessons learned along the way about:

- **Satan:** Satan is the great counterfeiter. He doesn't invent anything. He steals and corrupts turning God's gifts into temptations.
- **Words:** We give permission to God, the devil, angels, demons and our spirit and to other people by what we say. So be careful of your words! And what you think! Once in a moment of discouragement my wife, Naomi, said, 'I have no authority.' Many months later the person we were working with said, 'You know, you lost your authority that day (over the demons) when you said that.' So Naomi had to confess and renounce that statement in order to regain her authority.

9 *Binding and Loosing: How to Exercise Authority over the Dark Powers.* K. Neill Foster, L. Neill Foster and Paul L. King, Christian Publications, 1998, is very helpful on the subject of taking spiritual authority over situations where in the church the enemy desires to cause havoc. His stories are fascinating. He is also careful to give Biblical qualifiers.

- **Humility:** In the area of spiritual warfare, you never become an expert. I've noted that gifted servants of God in this field always work humbly with moment by moment dependence on the Holy Spirit, which in turn gives them authority.
- **Learn:** Study, observe, learn. Listen to the nationals when they speak.
- Beware of asking the wrong question, and getting the wrong answer: For example, to ask 'Is the problem psychological or spiritual?' (Or) 'Is the problem physical or spiritual?' (Or) 'Is it the devil or the flesh?' may be like asking, 'Do you walk with your right leg or your left?' The answer is 'Both Legs' Not 'either/or', but 'both/and' often apply. Often the psychological and spiritual overlap.
- **Destroy Occult Objects:** Have the person do it. (See Acts 19:19). The experience of many is that this helps break the demonic attachment.
- **Break curses!** Neal Anderson is very helpful on the subject. When people curse you, bless them. It's powerful! Demons hate blessings. Curses from people are to be sent back as blessings for repentance. Curses from demons are to be sent back as added punishment.
- **The believer's authority in Christ.** I saved the best for last – See what follows!

This authority is found in living and teaching the complete Gospel

I observe that (1) Catholics tend to leave Christ on the cross – the crucifix. (2) Evangelicals tend to leave him in the grave; 'Jesus died for my sin.' (3) But the New Testament presents Jesus Christ, using his full titles, the God man – dead, buried, resurrected and ascended into Heaven!

Many pastors and missionaries, however, when asked to state the Gospel, reply with 'Jesus died for our sins.' True, but not complete! Look again at Paul's definition of the Gospel in I Cor. 15:3-4. 'Christ died... was buried... and rose again for our sins.' Why do we so often stop with Christ's death? In the New

Testament – whether in the Gospels or Acts or the Epistles – they all declare the death and resurrection in the same breath! (*Jesus*: Matt 16: 21 and parallel references; *Peter*: Acts 2:22-36; Acts 4:10,10: 34-43; and Paul: Acts 13:29,33; Rom. 1:1-6; I Cor. 15:3-4; Eph 1:20-22; Eph 2:5-6.)

Why, then, do we often miss the resurrection in our declaration of the Good News? Especially since in our western culture where even secular historians believe that Jesus died, but they question his resurrection, why do we not declare loudest that

which they most contest? For the East it is the death of Christ. For the West it is the resurrection of Christ. I often say to my Muslim friend: We have lots in

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common. We're both sinners. We both need a Saviour. Christ died for both of us, but Satan hates us, and in my culture he hides the resurrection and in yours he hides Christ's death.

Here is the Rub – What you Believe here has Practical Consequences

If you only focus on the death of Christ, you will be taken up with forgiveness from sins and reconciliation with God and going to Heaven. And possibly you will be seeking to live a 'cross-centred life.'¹⁰

I agree that when it comes to dealing with our ego, we must live the cross-centred life. 'I am crucified with Christ.' But don't miss this: the result of the resurrection and ascension is that we are seated with Christ at the right hand of God! (Phil 2:6-11; Col 2:20 and Col 3:1)! When dealing with demonic powers, we had better know our position of being seated with Christ in the heavens, 'waiting till every knee bow.'

But, how can I be seated with Christ in the heavens, when geographically, I am on the earth, and Christ is in Heaven? How can I get my mental fingers around that one? One day it dawned. The union is real, but spiritual, not physical. And it's like marriage. Everybody knows about the physical part of marriage. Then I thought of my bank. Would you believe it, *even my bank recognizes the spiritual nature of union in our marriage!* My wife and I have a joint checking account and a joint credit card account. And the bank honours them both. No matter where we are in the world physically, the bank honours our mystical union!

Likewise we are united to Christ – in his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension and we are seated with Him in the Heavenlies, and that entails authority and power – to be exercised in humility to be sure – but to be exercised. Now *that* is exciting news! And news that Satan really doesn't want you to know about! Because it will re-vitalize the way you think, act and talk!

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A Policeman has Authority

It's like the diminutive rookie policemen sent out to direct traffic in the middle of a busy Algerian intersection with cars coming at him from all sides. Overwhelmed by their size and power, he might be tempted to radio headquarters (prayers) asking for reinforcements.

10 *The Cross Centered Life, Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing*, C.J. Mahaney, Multnomah Publishers, Inc, 2002

But back comes the answer, 'You are in uniform and you have a whistle. Have you raised your arms to direct traffic? And have you have blown your whistle? 'But,' he protests, 'the cars are so many, so big, so powerful and they are coming at me from all directions. I need help.'

Back comes the answer: 'Yes, but you are in uniform and you have authority. Use it! Raise your arm! Blow your whistle.' So, hesitantly at first, he raises his arm, and blows the whistle and – wonder of wonders – those big powerful engines obey him! Not because of whom he is, or how big he is, but because of the authority he has and is learning to exercise.

Concluding Summary

The battle is real. Focus on God, but also study the enemy's tactics. Be humble and careful of your words. Live and preach the complete Gospel. Understand who you are in Christ and confidently exercise your authority!

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