

Lancaster Theological Seminary

**For We Wrestle Not Against Flesh And Blood But Against Spiritual Forces:
Examples of the Theology, Doctrine and Practice
Of Spiritual Warfare in
Lancaster County**

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in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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For We Wrestle Not Against Flesh and Blood But Against Spiritual Forces: Examples of the
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Abstract

This research provides a close look at ten churches in Lancaster County to determine whether or not they practice spiritual warfare and if so, how. Spiritual warfare is often defined by its practitioners as a conflict between God and the heavenly host against Satan and his malevolent forces of evil for the souls of people. According to many Christian traditions, the Bible states that Jesus has given the church authority and power to employ spiritual warfare practices like prayer, laying on of hands, anointing with oil, or exorcisms. The questions of whether they engage in spiritual warfare practices or not, how they think about them theologically and doctrinally, and how they implement them practically are closely examined here.

I dedicate this project to my three sons: Bryan, Jacques and Patrick. I leave them a legacy of trusting God's Mighty Power to deliver, to heal and to save. May they pass this trusting of God's Mighty Power on to Saifer, Autumn, Wisdom, Leila, Liana, future grandchildren and generations to come

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study will examine closely how and whether a sampling of churches engage in spiritual warfare practices, how they think about them theologically and doctrinally, and how they implement them practically.

Significance of the Project for Ministry

“People will admit that someone has the devil in them, just don’t try to get him out,” are the words that I heard from an older church member as we boarded the bus for an out-of-town trip to another church. It was clear that she was responding to another woman whose little boy was “acting up,” as they put it. The woman with the boy had said to the other that the boy had the devil in him. One couldn’t help wondering, how could a little boy like that be classified as having the devil in him?

This was not the first time that I had heard those words. Often this sort of terminology was used in regard to people who were thought to be evil; however, I had never heard it in reference to a child. Certainly, I was clueless as to what the woman meant when she said “just don’t try to get the devil out.” At another time, in the context of the same church, a young woman stood up to testify to the goodness of God, and she said with determination and confidence, “We don’t know the power that we have.” I wondered, “What could she have possibly meant by that?” Power? Power to do what? Did anyone know what she meant? With these statements, “People will admit someone has the devil in them but just don’t try to get him out” and “We don’t know the ‘power’ that we have,” much is left to the imagination. I did not know it then, but I realized now that these statements were infused with spiritual warfare implications.

These words were seeds that were planted into my thought processes and would eventually become a part of the motivation to reflect upon the possible validity of spiritual warfare practices. Many years later, I came to believe that the power that the young woman was talking about was in the *Bible*. Acts 1:8 reads, “And you shall receive power when the Holy Ghost comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth.” I interpret this to mean that this power was a promise from Jesus to the disciples that would equip them to go into all the world and make disciples. This project is not an attempt to justify my own convictions, but is rather an effort to explore some of the ways in which spiritual warfare is understood by a variety of Christians in my local context.

Jesus confronts issues of, but not limited to, demon possession, sickness and disease, deafness and dumbness, blindness, lameness, and death. According to Christians who believe in spiritual warfare, some of these issues may originate with Satan and some may not. They believe that Jesus can resolve the Satan-inspired issues, for His authority over Satan is sufficient. However, according to this tradition a Christian individual does not have the authority to resolve any of these aforementioned issues except “in the power and authority of Jesus Christ.” Luke 10:19 states what Jesus said to the seventy disciples who were sent out two by two, “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” For those who practice spiritual warfare, this implies that as followers of Jesus go forth into the world to serve; there are malevolent forces in the realm of the spirit that they will directly or indirectly confront in a spiritual warfare stance. The POWER of God is needed to do that.

Certain biblical passages are crucial for those Christians who practice spiritual warfare. 2 Corinthians 10:4 states: “...For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through

God to the pulling down of strongholds...” For the practitioners of spiritual warfare, this also strongly indicates that the warfare is spiritual and cannot be fought with weapons of this world. Often times, Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians to advise them that certain types of challenging situations or circumstances should not be addressed with human or worldly weapons. Weapons like one’s fists, guns, knives, grenades, for example, are no match for the malevolent spiritual forces that oppose Christians. The practitioners of spiritual warfare believe that Paul makes it clear that the weapons of our warfare “are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

For those in the spiritual warfare tradition, these warfare weapons of prayer, the blood of Jesus, the name of Jesus, anointing with oil, casting out of demons or exorcism, and laying on of hands, when practiced, are imbued with the power of God. According to its practitioners, this power is the power of God that is activated when practices of spiritual warfare are in operation. This is the power to stand up for righteousness; this is the power that heals the sick; this is the power that raises the dead; this is the power that gives sight to the blind; this is the power that confronts and delivers people out of the grip of Satan. This is the power to live right-side up in an upside-down world, whether that world is narrow or broad. According to this heritage, without the power of God, the use of these spiritual weapons would be simply empty threats and would be useless in the combat against malevolent forces.

My interest in this spiritual warfare tradition remains very personal. The more I reflected about God and His power, the more I wanted to know. What part are we as the Body of Christ to play in the midst of a dark world in which we have been commissioned to serve? Even as I asked myself the question, the answer was obvious from an interpretation of the Bible that is common in the spiritual warfare tradition. From this perspective, Acts 1:8 offers the answer , “But you

shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth.” My interest in spiritual warfare continued as I experienced the overwhelming desire to see the sick healed and the spiritually-oppressed set free with each encounter.

When I look back over my life I see how the interest in spiritual warfare grew. It was at the tender age of eight years old that an event happened in my life that would initiate this aspect of my religious journey. The questions that I asked my mother about Jesus were unending and would eventually lead to relentlessly telling her that I wanted to be saved. Because I grew up in a staunch Baptist church, Believer’s Baptism was the way into the Body of Christ. Surely a child couldn’t understand that, not to mention “being saved” or accepting Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. In this particular framework, teenagers and adults were baptized because they understood the need to confess and repent of their sins. However, my persistence would yield the fruit of Baptism in my life and at eight years old, I was baptized.

Years later, I would come to believe that the determination to become a part of the Body of Christ at such a young age was a provocation by the Holy Spirit. I continue to cherish a belief that He, the Holy Spirit, was preparing me for my calling to ministry. Surely something could be done! LORD, I just wanted to help somebody but I felt helpless. While at my home church, at altar prayer time, the Pastor would ask me to pray for those who had come up for prayer. Word soon spread throughout the church that if someone needed prayer to ask for Pat. Because there was a problem with his heart, one of the officers of the church was taken to the hospital. I felt a strong urge to go to the hospital to pray for him. Once I entered his room, I anointed him with oil and prayed for him to be healed. About a week later, at church, he stood and shared with the congregation that the doctors had ordered a series of tests to be done the next day but the night

before I had come and anointed him with oil and prayed for him. The doctors concluded that he did not need the procedure that had been scheduled. Episodes like this led me to wonder about the efficacy of spiritual warfare and its relation to medical and other modes of treatment. Of course, spiritual warfare is not a replacement for medical therapies, but I began to wonder if in certain circumstances it could be a supplement.

At the official meeting with the pastor to acknowledge and accept my call to ministry, the pastor of our church asked, “Where do you see yourself in five years?” The answer came gushing forth out of my mouth without hesitation, “In the midst of God’s people, preaching, teaching and healing.” This is indeed Isaiah 61:1 in its entirety. That being said, this doctoral project is the culmination and realization of spending more than twenty-five years in a ministry where what I believe to be the *power* of Jesus Christ is used to bring healing and restoration to men and women, boys and girls, who are sick and/or spiritually-oppressed in congregations and communities. My experience and passion for this spiritual warfare ministry compelled me to wonder whether or not there are other pastors and congregations who practice spiritual warfare in a particular way, and if so, how. I suspected that my own commitment to spiritual warfare was not universal in Lancaster County, and I wanted to see if there is a lack of attention to spiritual warfare in many local congregations; consequently, this question became the driving force behind my study and eventually will be my contribution to the field of ministerial research.

Major Goals of the Research Project

Spiritual warfare is an area which, in my opinion, is “taboo” for many mainline denominations. This project’s focus is to determine how a sampling of churches in Lancaster County, all in the same geographic region but representing a variety of Christian traditions, view it. Is it practiced, or not? Whether or not some congregations believe that spiritual warfare is a

practice that Jesus engaged during His time here on earth, the indirect goal of this study is to bring to the forefront the possibility that this practice may be important for the church and to motivate pastors to seriously consider the possible need for it in the church today.

Several questions have been formulated to ask a sampling of pastors to address this question. They are: First, what do you understand by “spiritual warfare?” Secondly, is spiritual warfare practiced in this congregation and if so, how? Thirdly, is there doctrinal attention or a lack of attention to spiritual warfare in your authoritative denominational congregational documents (such as confessions of faith, books of worship, official denominational statements, etc.)? Finally, is there a gap between your doctrine and practice?

These questions have served the study well in accomplishing the goal.

Basic Assumptions

Basic Assumptions relevant to my project, particularly its motivation, are:

- (1) Jesus Christ is indeed often described in the Christian traditions as Jehovah Rapha, God our Healer. He is often portrayed as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. I assume that this suggests an implied belief that it is the will of God who was incarnate in Jesus Christ that His creation be made whole physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- (2) Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament as a healer who addressed all kinds of sickness and disease and has given the power and authority to the church to heal, to deliver, and to cast out. It is assumed that physical, emotional, and spiritual healing was a major component of Jesus’ earthly ministry, and that He conferred on the church the ministry of healing.

- (3) In the Christian heritage, it is often believed that many of the illnesses that Jesus addressed and that the church should address are caused by malevolent spiritual powers.
- (4) Christian churches should practice a ministry of healing, which involves spiritual warfare.
- (5) There may be some churches that may not call a particular practice “spiritual warfare” yet they carry out this practice under a different name, and there may be some churches that do not practice it at all.
- (6) Based on these assumptions I am suggesting that there may be many who are spiritually oppressed and/or sick within church congregations because their conditions are not addressed from a spiritual warfare perspective.

Theological Rationale and Reflections

Some of the literature about spiritual warfare examines it from the perspective of the social sciences and historical-cultural studies, and often tends to reduce it to psychological or social dynamics. However, another type of reflection is engaged in by those who practice it. These works more sympathetically clarify what “spiritual warfare” means to those who engage in it. For example, Robert H. Bennett, in *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare*, defines “spiritual warfare as a technical term that describes the battle between God and Satan for the souls of people” (p. 13). He points out that the term, “spiritual warfare,” is not used in the Bible, though different translations use words like wrestle, battle, fight, struggle, and contend in Pauline theology. Paul clearly states in the Ephesians 6 (KJV) passage, verse 12, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly

places.” Even verse 11 of Ephesians, encourages the Christian to put on the whole armor of God because the opposing forces are not human beings. Therefore, the armor, which is designed by God to cover and protect the Christian against the tricks and tactics of the devil, implies spiritual warfare. This type of warfare is not engaged with human weapons like guns, bombs, knives and the like because the war is a spiritual one.

There is definitely a gap between the conceptuality of many modern Western Christians and the prominence of spiritual warfare in the world-view of the New Testament and much of the rest of the world. However, even among more “progressive” modern Western Christians the language of spiritual warfare persists in the language of the church. My suspicions were confirmed that a more supernaturalistic conceptuality, that uses different terminology to refer to what has been called spiritual warfare, occurs in some confessions of faith, books of worship and constitutional documents of the churches/denominations. For instance, the book of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* clearly states that evil forces are confronted at Baptism. It declares, “In holy baptism the triune God delivers us from the forces of evil, puts our sinful self to death, gives us new birth, adopts us as children, and makes us members of the body of Christ, the church.” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 2006). The candidate to be baptized is asked three questions as a profession of their faith, “Do you renounce the devil, and all the forces that defy God?” “Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?” And, “Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 2006).

A sampling of the official documents of some other denominations revealed the same pattern. It is important to note that in the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, baptism is also the means by which evil is addressed. ““Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?” (p. 292). In *The Book of Confessions: The Constitution of the*

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part I, no mention is made of spiritual warfare nor is it referred to by a different term. However, mention *is* made of the devil in regards to man having his own free will and is therefore not being forced to do evil by God or the devil. It is man's decision (Chapter 9, 5.044 p.64).

The Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship, Pastoral Edition* has instituted in its sacrament of baptism the renunciation of evil: "Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?" It continues, "Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your LORD and Savior, trusting his grace and love?", and "Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?" The candidate responds to the first two questions with "I do." The last question's response is to be, "I will, with God's help" (12).

The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, has nothing regarding spiritual warfare. At baptism, there is a renunciation of evil by the candidate: "Do you renounce the devil and all of his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the flesh; so that you will not follow, nor be led by them?"(516). It is interesting to note that there are a few AME churches that engage spiritual warfare strategies and practices though they are not written in *The Doctrine and Discipline of the Church*. This indicates that though evil is acknowledged in their official documents, for these denominations, the reliance upon the sacrament of baptism is significant in renouncing Satan and his works in people's lives.

This gap between espoused beliefs and actual practice or "theory-in-use" is what I sought to explore with the congregations that were interviewed. Accordingly, Chris Argyris and Donald Schön in, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*, have argued for the need to integrate espoused beliefs and the actual convictions proposed by a community's practice. They

are suggesting that people are unaware that their theories-in-use are often not the same as their espoused theories, and that people are often unaware of the incompatibility of the two theories (6,7). Their work further suggests the need for close observation of a community's practices to see if a congruence of espoused theory and the theory-in-use is present or not. It is this that I have intended to do.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

My conceptual framework challenges that of many modern Western people. Much of the literature suggests that the conceptual framework of the modern West discourages belief in demonic forces and spiritual warfare. Although the primary theme of this thesis is spiritual warfare and the theological and doctrinal understanding of it and the practice of it in ten Lancaster County denominations, the literature review will also address the background issues of mental illness versus demon possession, the anthropological perspective of spirit possession and dissociative disorders, as they relate to this project. Responsible practitioners of spiritual warfare do take into account the fact that many or even most behavioral disorders do fall under the category of mental illness. Such issues have partially motivated my interest in the project. These issues also informed the development of the questions that I addressed to the pastors, and the themes that I listened for in their answers.

This discussion of the literature is not intended to be exhaustive. It is designed to present some of the most influential representatives of authors who are sympathetic to spiritual warfare and interpret it as “insiders,” as well as those who tend to reduce it to sociological and psychological categories. This spectrum of interpretations is important in that it informs what I listen for in the responses of the pastors.

Some authors do affirm the reality of spiritual warfare. Robert H. Bennett suggests in *I Am Not Afraid: Demonic Possession and Spiritual Warfare* that such a worldview is often dismissed as superstitious. He quotes John Pless who writes that “Talk of exorcism, demonic possession, and spiritual warfare is likely to evoke some suspicion among Christians from North America and Europe. Even though these realities are spoken of in the Holy Scriptures and

attested to the history of the Church catholic, they are apt to be dismissed or explained away by Christians living under subtle influences of Enlightenment skepticism” (xi). This age of Enlightenment or period of critical thinking no doubt had its effect on many religious traditions.

Richard Beck, a professor of psychology at Abilene Christian University, in his book *Reviving Old Scratch: Demons and the Devil for Doubters and the Disenchanted*, makes the case for “Old Scratch,” another name for Satan, to be talked about more (5). Most people, he suggests, just don’t feel comfortable talking about the Devil, demon possession and exorcism. Spiritual warfare, he adds, is not limited to demon possession and exorcism. There is a broader or wider view that one needs to consider (6).

This is of key importance because at the onset of this study, I initially considered shifting my study of spiritual warfare practices in mainline Protestant as well as Catholic and Pentecostal denominations to the narrower topic of exorcism. After engaging the literature, the question was adjusted to a wider consideration of spiritual warfare practices because exorcism is only one practice or aspect of spiritual warfare. That is the theme of Beck’s book. He makes the point that demon possession and exorcism are not all there is to spiritual warfare. Contextually, there are situations or circumstances that require or need other spiritual warfare practices besides exorcism. This claim drives this study to closely examine churches to determine what, if any, spiritual warfare practices *are* engaged and, if so, how.

Nevertheless, Beck points out that the world is filled with people who do not believe that there is an adversarial influence that attempts to gain entry into every sphere of life in some way. It is as if people have become desensitized or numbed to the supernatural or spiritual realm. Beck agrees with Bennett that the world in which we live has definitely been influenced by the Age of Enlightenment. Beck states at the start of his book that:

“We are living in a more increasingly modern, scientific, technological, and therefore more skeptical age. Faith is harder for us. Doubt fills our pews. And books about living with doubt fills the shelves of Christian bookstores. Many Christians are losing their belief in God, so when you look at the TO-DO List of Belief, endorsing the existence of the Prince of Darkness seems pretty far down the list” (xv).

Beck reiterates that “we live in a skeptical age where science and technology define what is true and real” (14). It is almost, if not totally, a rigidly materialistic ideology. A profound point is made when Beck says “if anything should convince a Christian that Satan exists, it has to be the crucifixion of Jesus” (11). He goes on to say “that something was *against* Jesus and the Bible calls that force Satan.” (11). He argues that the Devil is real, not because science or technology determines it so, but because “the Bible warns us that Satan is still out there, prowling the world, looking for someone to devour” (11).

Similarly, M. Scott Peck argues in *Glimpses of the Devil*:

“To most in our culture, the subject of Satan seems esoteric indeed...the problem is that ours is a materialistic culture; materialism is a philosophy or attitude that holds that what you can see and touch and measure is all you get and anything else is not worth serious consideration” (xv).

He goes on to say that “almost all psychiatrists in the United States do not believe that demonic possession is a real condition” (99). His experience with two demon-possessed individuals was a turning point as a psychiatrist for him. He says, “It is my hope that you will envision that matters of possession and exorcism, of demons and deliverance, constitute a proper field of scientific inquiry. Specifically, I wish that you will join me in proposing that ‘demonology’ be made an incipient subspecialty of psychiatry and psychology” (239). Peck defines exorcism as a massive therapeutic intervention to liberate, teach and support the victim to choose to reject the devil (248). Peck continues, “But acceptance of demonology into the scientific old is not going to happen – at least not until history itself is reformed, not until a 350-year old separation of the world of supposed natural phenomena from the assumed world of

supernatural phenomena is revisited, and recognized by all concerned as having been a gigantic mistake” (249).

A world that is skeptical of the supernatural will look for natural or scientific ways to explain away the mystery of it. I agree with Beck that people look for the human component in the situation. He calls it the Scooby Doo or Scooby-Dooification which happens when one reads the Bible story and looks past the supernatural to uncover the naturalistic element in the Biblical text (18). Beck states that this approach may recognize that there is a supernatural aspect to the situation but it is just sidelined for further discussion. He suggests, “When we read that Jesus healed demon-possessed persons, this approach allows one to debate whether Jesus was facing demons or mental illness (18, 19).

In a parallel way, Graham Twelftree and James D. G. Dunn in their article “Demon-Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament” state that “the understanding of some of these healings as exorcisms has continued to pose problems for those who want to hold a properly scientific view of the world and of illness” (210).

Seemingly, the problems arise out of a probable conflict between the spiritual views versus the scientific worldview. There is one presenting issue, yet two very different courses of treatment. One calls for a spiritual remedy which finds its foundation in the supernatural power of Almighty God while the other looks for elucidation in the field of medicine and natural laws.

Mental Illness vs. Demon Possession

Is mental illness the same as demon possession? It must be emphasized that those who practice spiritual warfare typically do not doubt the reality of psychological disorders. They only believe that not all behavioral and emotional problems are entirely reducible to the sorts of dynamics that science can investigate and Western medicine can treat. This question came up

often during this study and is reviewed to determine what the literature is saying as to whether there is a differentiation between the two. Mallard J. Sall in his article, “Mental Health and Demon Possession,” published by the *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, states that one can tell the difference between mental illness and demon possession (286). Sall is clear on what he believes distinguishes the two in the following discussion with Bach.

Paul J. Bach in his article, “Demon Possession and Psychotherapy: A Theological Relationship,” also published in the *Journal of Psychology & Theology* strongly disagrees with Sall. Sall says that though both conditions may manifest bizarre, fierce or violent behavior and extraordinary strength, he distinguishes the two because demons want nothing to do with Jesus (287). Sall contends that a demon-possessed person always reacted strongly to Jesus and His disciples. He supports his theory with a scriptural reference from Matthew 8:29, “What do you want with us Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the appointed time” (287)?

Bach differs and states that “possessed persons prostrated themselves before Jesus, a posture associated with worship, and proclaimed Him “Son of God” (Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7), indicating at least a cognitive appreciation for the power of the Messiah on the part of the possessed person” (22). Sall says that people who are deeply mentally disturbed are often devoutly religious. Unlike demons, they want to be close to Jesus or have some kind of deep religious experience (287). Bach counters Sall by concluding that “aversion or attraction to Jesus does not adequately differentiate psychotics from demon-possessed persons any more than from ‘normal’ individuals” (23).

Sall also believes that demons are rational, while psychotics are irrational in their communication (288). Bach totally disagrees and concludes that evil is not biblically portrayed as rational nor is the behavior of the demon-possessed person. He concludes that Sall’s

differentiations between mental illness and demon possession are not verifiable, biblically or clinically (24). According to the review of literature by those who take spiritual warfare seriously, there seems to be no agreed-upon process of knowing the difference between demon or spirit possession and mental illness, although such a difference is admitted.

Anthropological Perspectives

From an anthropological perspective, Klass, in *Mind Over Mind: The Anthropology and Psychology of Spirit Possession*, takes a close look at spirit possession and dissociative disorder or mental illness. He examines it through the lens of the Trinidadian culture and its impact on the behaviors of individuals. He defines culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (18). These variables all weigh heavily in how one is culturally socialized to think concerning spiritual warfare and spiritual warfare practices. In this culture, it seems, to possess the spirit of a loved one is considered ok.

Klass argues that the common ground of spirit possession and dissociative disorders is that they are both altered states of consciousness. The distinction or differentiation between the two is rooted in whether one is culturally patterned, or idiosyncratic. If the spiritually possessed person has the characteristics of the god or an ancestor then it is spirit possession; if not, then it is some type of dissociative disorder (41, 42).

Klass further distinguishes between spirit possession and Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) by explaining that the two are not a variation of the other. Spirit possession is not a “disorder.” In the context of the Trinidadian culture, new DID identities that surface are essentially unpredictable and idiosyncratic. In spirit possession, the new identities are those of entities known to and accepted as part of the individual’s (and the individual’s community) belief

system. These new entities include, though not limited to, deceased members of the subject's family or community; iconic figures such as saints, various nonhuman guardian angels, or threatening demons; and even transcendent divinities (115). He contends that regardless of the type of spirit possession identities, they are invariably recognizable and identifiable by other members of the society or at least by that society's trained observers (115).

An example of a spirit possession identity and a DID identity is observed by Klass from a paper by W. Mischel and F. Mischel (1958), "Psychological Aspects of Spirit Possession" (115, 116). Klass contends they reported that members of the community had come to them out of concern for a particular member who had exhibited aberrant behavior as a result of participation in a religious ceremony in which participants are possessed by "*loa*," a god (116). However, this individual presented an identity which was unidentifiable in terms of what they considered to be definitely "*loa*" and so was suspected of mental illness (116).

Paranormal Christian Perspective

According to Dr. Harry Serio, a retired pastor of the United Church of Christ, there are those who believe that if the spirit of a person manifests through someone else, it is because that particular spirit may be trying to communicate some type of special message to the living. Dr. Serio, having served two terms as president of the Board of Directors for the Academy of Spiritual and Consciousness Studies, is an expert in the area or field of the paranormal (www.harryserio.com/mysticism.html).

Dr. Serio said, in an interview, that he has found out that there are at least three reasons why entities or "*spirits*" (my word) manifest themselves:

1. The person who has died wants to indicate that there is a continuation of life beyond this one, that everything is ok and there is nothing to worry about;
2. That something bad or unnatural happened to them and;

3. That there is unfinished business, for instance warning family, friends, and colleagues to the existence of papers or something that is hidden.

In one particular case, he shared that the parents of a young woman who had been presumably murdered would see shadows and smell the young woman's perfume. When he asked them what they thought this meant, they replied that they felt that she was trying to communicate with them and tell them that her death was not a natural death, that she was indeed murdered (personal interview).

The literature supports the fact that how one is taught to behave or think in accordance with (but not limited to) cultural habits, laws, norms, mores or one's general socialization has a great impact on how one interprets spirit possession, mental illness, and spiritual warfare practices. The ministry of Jesus is viewed through one's socialized lens. This study did not focus directly on culture and its impact on how one views spiritual warfare practices; however, it has proven to be a very important aspect and certainly cannot be overlooked.

Amanda Witmer in, *Jesus, The Galilean Exorcist: His Exorcisms in Social and Political Context* (Witmer, 2012) views Jesus' ministry through the lens of His Galilean culture, that culture's response to His exorcisms, and how the Mediterranean world possibly perceived spirit possession. This literature supports the fact that culture plays a significant role in how people process the knowledge of spiritual warfare.

The Bible often allows for differing cultural interpretations of Jesus' healing ministry. It states in Matthew 4:23-24 that, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them." The biblical text makes no differentiation between

mental illness and demon possession. There is no differentiation made by Jesus regarding *any* of the cases which were brought before Him. He just healed them all.

The differences in cultural interpretations are evident in the vast range of literature available on spiritual warfare practices among Christians who live in the eastern and southern part of the globe. For instance, it seems that countries in other parts of the world embrace these practices more so than Christians in the United States of America. A friend, Tanaka Bendu, of Zimbabwe, Africa, said that, “the United States of America is the only country that calls a demon a syndrome and then tries to medicate it” (personal interview). However, she did not claim that all syndromes are due to demons.

The aforementioned factors that emerged from the period of Enlightenment, including science and technology, and the anthropological perspectives in the literature, all have a profound impact on one’s interpretation of spiritual warfare and the how one perceives spiritual warfare practices.

Scott A. Moreau shares in his book *Essentials of Spiritual Warfare: Equipped to Win the Battle*:

“That as a high school science teacher in Swaziland, Africa, he witnessed a student who suddenly slumped to the floor and began writhing and groaning which to him appeared to be an epileptic seizure. He writes that my western background predisposed me to look for a physical reason for the seizure. I was the American science teacher struggling to get my students to believe atoms existed even though they could not see them. On the other side, my students, from their African perspective, looked for a spiritual reason for the seizure. They struggled with my failure to understand that spirits existed in daily life” (13-14).

This project is significant because of what I do not find in much of the literature from main-line North American churches.

Even evangelicals may tend to minimize the importance of spiritual warfare. The theoretical framework of much of the American Protestant mainline does not seem to emphasize

what Jesus did with spiritual warfare and the importance of its place in the church. For example, Paul Hiebert in *Spiritual Warfare and Worldviews*, points out that the “cosmic” battle between God and Satan is not one of power but rather the establishment of His Kingdom here on earth. He suggests the parables of the wayward son (emphasizing human responsibility) and the rebellious stewards (emphasizing legitimacy and authority) provide a better perspective on the biblical view of spiritual warfare; might does not make right, nor does the battle make the victor legitimate (119). Hiebert in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* also acknowledges the reality of demons but insists the establishment of the Kingdom of God is more important to Christianity than spiritual battles (211). Guelich in *Jesus, Paul & Peretti* disagrees with Hiebert. Guelich says in examining Pauline theology that he believes the Ephesians 6 passage portrays defense more than offense; “prayer and alertness” are hardly armor. He concludes there is no basis for positing in Paul the thought of a cosmic struggle between God and Satan that works itself out in human history as a great “spiritual war” waged between God and Satan’s forces (45).

H. T. Sydney Page in the article, *The Role of Exorcism in Clinical Practice and Pastoral Care*, only contends cautiously “that there is a legitimate place for exorcism in the church today but the church needs to be careful in how it is used (121). The question then is why would the church need to be careful in how she uses a spiritual warfare practice that Jesus gave power to execute? Thus, there is a gap between the conceptuality of many modern Western Christians and the prominence of spiritual warfare in the world-view of the New Testament and much of the rest of the world.

Annotated Bibliography

Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views, edited by James K. Beiby and Paul Rhodes Eddy (2012), presents four models of spiritual warfare from the perspectives of Walter Wink, David Powlison, Gregory Boyd, and C. Peter Wagner with Rebecca Greenwood. Wink's view is a world systems model which presents Satan as "the symbolic repository of evil that exists in the world. Spiritual warfare occurs when Christians hope, pray, and partner with God to expel evil in oppressive social structures" (Powlison offers the classical model which presents Satan as a real being who cannot be reduced to "psychological or socio-cultural forces." There is no need for deliverance ministries because all Christians should engage in spiritual warfare through prayer and proclaiming Christ. Boyd presents the ground-level deliverance model that not only recognizes Satan as a personal agent, but it also portrays spiritual warfare as the central theme of Scripture. He contends that warfare is not violent; that prayer and counseling should be used against the powers of evil. Wagner and Greenwood suggests the strategic-level model which recognizes the existence of territorial spirits who can be defeated through methods that include spiritual mapping, identification, repentance, and prayer walks. This book has been a great resource to my study in categorizing spiritual warfare views and perspectives of interviewees.

Robert H. Bennett's *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare - True Account from The Lutheran Church of Madagascar* (2013) is one of the most recent publications on spiritual warfare practices performed in a Protestant church with roots in the European Reformation. Bennett is a trail-blazer in the Lutheran church in Madagascar. He has written this book with the hope that what is happening in Madagascar in terms of spiritual warfare will spread to Western churches, especially the Lutheran church. He makes it clear that Martin Luther knew and understood that "sin, death, and the Devil were not a theological problem to be

solved,” but were indeed enemies that needed to be fought (Foreword, xi). He also makes note that the *Lutheran Service Book: Pastoral Care Companion* contains a section of resources under the heading “Occult Practices and Demonic Affliction” with specific instructions for pastors to use in cases such as these, yet none of the resources are accessible (Foreword, xii). This book supports my claim that there are denominations that do or do not make mention of spiritual warfare on their books or in their confessions of faith, and yet they may not or may practice. Although the book outlines the spiritual warfare practices in this particular Lutheran church, there is nothing written in it concerning the practices in the Lutheran churches of North America.

William Kay and Robin Parry in *Exorcism & Deliverance: Multi-Disciplinary Studies* provide a diverse study using multiple disciplines and to examine deliverance and exorcism from the Old Testament period to New Testament writings (2011). The book examines the understanding of the root of evil in reference to supernatural forces like demons, spirits and Satan (39); the practice and purpose of exorcism in New Testament writings (45); exorcism and deliverance in the Early Church (69); deliverance ministry during the twentieth century with a focus particularly upon its practice in Charismatic and Evangelical Fundamental circles (97); deliverance and exorcism in regards to Pentecostal ministry in the Majority World, particularly, Africa, Asia, and Latin America (115); anthropological perspectives which demonstrate that the experience of spirits is bound to the social and cultural context in which people live (127); psychological perspectives in which both the psychological and theological psychiatric conversations address the same phenomena when they speak about spirit possession but they describe it, analyze it, and explain it very differently (154). It also philosophically deals with the reality of demonic possession by considering certain ancient and modern accounts of exorcism in contemporary western culture that dismiss the belief in evil spirits as primitive and irrational

(178); the evolving reception of exorcism in popular culture in films, novels, songs and internet websites (198); theological perspectives that consider the existence of the devil and demons (241); theological perspectives based on what Jesus did according to New Testament accounts (262). The book explores the possibility that the supremacy of Jesus Christ and His power over the powers of darkness is the most effective way to deal with them in the modern world. Some of the essays call for renewed theological praxis, and a particular case study pulls together all of the different perspectives contained in this book. This provides for me a wide spectrum of the different approaches regarding possession and exorcism.

In *Mind Over Mind: The Anthropology and Psychology of Spirit Possession* Klass Morton (2003) describes how during a trip to Trinidad in 1957, he had the opportunity to witness someone being possessed. In this particular culture, births, marriages or transitions to a new home were celebrated with the priest who would “cut off the head of a rooster or a goat and was possessed by the goddess Kali” (Foreword, vii). This stirred within Klass a passion to understand the common ground of spirit possession and dissociative disorders in that they are both altered states of consciousness. He argues that the distinction between dissociation and spirit possession is rooted in the issue of whether one is culturally patterned or idiosyncratic (115). In persons who are possessed, the new identities are known and accepted as a part of that person’s culture. New identities that come from dissociation are not known or recognizable and are therefore idiosyncratic. Dissociation may perhaps mean that the person is mentally ill and not spirit possessed (116). This book provides a look over the shoulders of other disciplines like anthropology as well as psychiatry, and psychology to understand the cultural and psychological implication and dimensions of spirit possession.

In *The Devil Within: Possession & Exorcism in the Christian West* Brian P. Levack classifies a demoniac as those whose bodies have been invaded by demons, which is why this book is entitled, “The Devil Within” (2013). He takes a close look at possession and exorcism in two periods of time, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. He gathers various views across denominational lines regarding possession and exorcism, clearly defining the phenomena which early Christians classified as symptoms. He attempts to make sense of the pathological behavior that demoniacs displayed in both Catholic and Protestant communities. Demonic possession was ascribed to what people in early modern Europe deemed as pathological behavior like convulsions, contortions, muscular rigidity, swelling, vomiting of alien substances and speaking in languages that they had not previously learned to name a few. Most modern scholars are not satisfied with this interpretation of symptoms and have offered two explanations: (1) the demoniacs were either faking or pretending to be possessed, or (2) they were physically or mentally ill. Some even felt that demoniacs were performers in religious dramas and that the specific culture of a demoniac had much to do with how they expressed or the way in which they expressed themselves. This study allows one the opportunity to appreciate the variety of religious beliefs and experiences in the age of the Reformation and to compare those beliefs and experiences with those of both believers and skeptics in the modern world. This study provides great insight into the theological foundations of Catholic and Protestant responses to demonic possession. It informs my understanding of what kinds of questions must be asked to address the theological framework of the interviewee.

Scott A. Moreau in *Essentials of Spiritual Warfare: Equipped to Win the Battle* argues that “what spiritual warfare involves, why we are engaged in it, and how we can fight the daily battles we face” should include the basic knowledge that one needs to be adequately prepared

when attacked by the enemy (2008). Having theoretical knowledge of these areas without praxis is not enough. He writes this book so that it may be used as an introductory course to spiritual warfare. He contends that there are many people in churches and schools who know what is right but are not able to do what is right. The spiritual element that may bear on one's powerlessness is most often overlooked. Our relationship with God and knowing who God is fortifies and empowers us against enemy attacks. Moreau approaches the praxis of spiritual warfare from a perspective that makes it easy for those who are new Christians or those who are being exposed to it for the first time to understand.

In *Glimpses of the Devil: A Psychiatrist's Personal Accounts of Possession, Exorcism, and Redemption* M. Scott Peck (2005), reports that as a psychiatrist, he did not believe that the devil existed, so demon possession was not on his radar screen. It was being confronted first-hand with clients whom he finally analyzed as victims of demon possession that led him to reflect on the existence of evil forces. He examines what he sees and experiences through a scientific as well as a theological lens. He believes that there is a world out there that is demonic; that human beings can be possessed; that exorcism is able to cure seriously possessed patients beyond what psychiatric remedies can do; and possession and exorcism go hand in hand because the process of exorcism reveals the magnitude of one's possession. With all of Peck's research and his quest to find answers to questions, he concludes that "acceptance of demonology into the scientific fold is not going to happen." This suggests that many Christians in the United States may call what may be a demon a syndrome and then attempt to medicate it.

In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians by Graham H. Twelftree is a historical study, an attempt to understand the conflicting data regarding the place and practice of exorcism among early Christian represented by New Testament documents (2007). While

Mark's gospel is clear that exorcism is of profound importance to understanding Jesus and His mission, John's gospel is not. The gospel of John recognizes demonic possession as a category to describe the presence of evil in a person but does not see exorcism as an appropriate response. Second century Christians did not ignore the demonic; they just did not view exorcism as the only response. The purpose of prayer or any incantation is to bring about a confrontation between Jesus and the demonic. In light of this study, Twelftree shifts his position concerning exorcism and its rightful place as part of the whole ministry given to the Church to push back the frontiers of evil. His position is that the church has been provided with a wide range of options for understanding and dealing with the demonic. He rests his case on the premise that the church may confront the demonic in the form of an exorcism or in the form of the proclamation of the gospel. This book has helped me understand the different perceptions of spiritual warfare practices and how each pastor who has been interviewed has given expression to the options, if any, that he or she uses in their particular congregation.

In *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (2007), Twelftree makes the claim that the life, ministry, and passion of Jesus were then and are now important to the life of the church. He seeks to determine that by answering a three-part question: (1) If Jesus was an exorcist, what did the first report of His activities as an exorcist contain? (2) How would He have been viewed by those who saw Him at work? (3) And, how did He understand His ministry of exorcism? Twelftree recognizes the gap between what Jesus did as an exorcist and what contemporaries do in churches in the twentieth century. This study attempts to provide an understanding of the Jesus of history including Jesus the exorcist. The early church maintained that the historical Jesus was also an exorcist with a high reputation in that He did not rely on outside help, charms or calling on the name of someone else to bring about deliverance or

exorcism. He was in a category all by Himself as He stood out among rabbis as one who laid hands on the sick and they were healed. No other rabbi did this. This book supports my premise that spiritual warfare practices are crucial to Jesus and to the life and ministry of the church. I agree with Twelftree that the Gospels support Jesus the exorcist but modern Christianity in many cases does not.

Amanda Witmer in “Jesus, The Galilean Exorcist: His Exorcisms in Social and Political Context” looks at Jesus in His Galilean culture; that contextual response to His exorcisms and how the Mediterranean world would have perceived spirit possession. She uses sociology and anthropology to draw attention to the significant impact of Jesus’ exorcisms within His first-century rural environment. This article shows how culture plays a significant role in how persons process the knowledge of spiritual warfare (*Library of New Testament Studies*, 459 New York: T&T Clark International, 2012).

This research is important because there seems to be missing components in the literature from main-line Protestant, as well as Catholic and evangelical churches in North America, and even some Pentecostals may tend to minimize the importance of spiritual warfare. While useful attention is given to the cultural context of beliefs about demons, often the possibility that there might be demons is ignored. The theoretical framework of much of the American mainline denominations does not seem to put much emphasis on what Jesus did with spiritual warfare and the importance of its place in the church. More sustained attention to the possible reality of spiritual warfare usually only comes from its practitioners.

Chapter 3

Methods

Research Design and Expectations

The question addressed by this research project in relation to spiritual warfare is the perceived prevalence of the seeming lack of attention to it in many congregations and the gap between their doctrine and practice. The purpose of this research is to examine closely whether churches engage in these practices, how they think about them theologically and doctrinally, and how they implement them practically. Deciding what tool best would serve this research to acquire the information that I want to know is necessary. The research question as phrased is supported through the research method that I have chosen. I used the qualitative ethnographic method outlined by Mary Clark Moschella in her book entitled, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*. This method serves this project best because it affords opportunity for one-on-one interviews, congregational participant observation, and perusal of official and historical documents, all of which will contribute to understanding the “how” of congregations in regard to the practice of spiritual warfare.

According to the definition of semi-structured interviews in Tim Sensing’s book, *Qualitative Research*, semi-structured interviews involve predetermined questions, themes or issues which allows for the interviewer to probe further as the situation dictates (107). Therefore, semi-structured interviews are chosen as the method to use for this aspect of the research. Questions were developed to determine whether or not pastors in mainline denominations engage in spiritual warfare practices. The semi-structured interviews involved asking about twelve questions of ten pastors, with their consent.

Even though semi-structured interviews were used for this project, I pondered whether surveys or questionnaires could have been just as useful. Some of the interviewees seized the

opportunity to engage in long monologues that sent them veering off in a direction that took them “the long way” to the answer. Yet, the interviews proved to be a necessary tool to determine whether or not pastors in mainline denominations engaged in spiritual warfare. They also offered a truer insight into the ministry context which contributed to an atmosphere that was favorable to the subject matter. As I embarked upon this research journey, to my surprise, I discovered how important relationships are in conducting this type of research. Pastors who had prior interaction with this issue directly or indirectly were incontestably enthusiastic to assist in the study. Conversely, those who had no prior interaction were aloof, distant and very unwilling to allow themselves to be interviewed. The subject of spiritual warfare was an absolute turn-off and there was no interest at all in being interviewed.

Participants

The scope of this study extends to ten Lancaster County churches and their spiritual warfare practices. Non-Christian groups are not considered. The churches were chosen because they represent diverse denominational traditions, but are all found in a very small geographic region of a few square miles. No claim is being made that any of the churches are perfectly representative of their respective heritages, nor that my sampling is exhaustive. My interest has been in the range of beliefs and practices found in one specific locale.

Because this study employs the qualitative ethnographical method, this posed some restrictions when it came to examining the “Old Order Amish” spiritual warfare practices. An effort to gain an interview with “an Old Order Amish” pastor proved fruitless. However, contact with the PRC (Parish Resource Center) yielded an opportunity to speak with a representative from the Amish Community. I was told by him that it would be better to wait until after the New Year to try to meet with an Amish pastor. He assured me that he would try his best to connect me

with someone but could not promise anything. During the conversation with him, I learned some very vital information. He took the time to tell me that each Amish Bishop has rules for their respective jurisdiction. So even if I were to interview a bishop, that bishop could not speak for the whole Amish religious community. He reiterated that no one jurisdiction abides by the same rules as another. It is up to the presiding Bishop over a particular area to determine the laws they will be governed by. He also emphasized that the Amish community of clergy are extremely reluctant to open themselves up to the outside world because of past negative experiences and the deceptive, twisted use of information. Unfortunately, that would be the last time I would speak to him.

When it comes to the discussion of this topic, I am aware that just the mention of spiritual warfare causes walls of suspicion to go up, a phenomenon that caused some rejection of my research efforts. For that reason, I used an expanded pool of churches to draw from so that my sampling would remain at no less than ten. The majority of the sampling came from Graceland, a relatively small suburban community in Lancaster County, except for two pastors who were from a nearby section of Lancaster City and one Lancaster County pastor from a small town west of Graceland.

Graceland has an organized Ministerium which is comprised of a variety of mainline Protestant, Catholic and Pentecostal denominations. Pastors from diverse pastoral backgrounds and denominations were contacted six months prior to the actual interviews via email, texts, telephone and social media to inquire as to whether they would be interested in assisting me with my doctoral project by answering some questions about spiritual warfare. I did not want to wait until the last minute to begin the selection process because I needed ample time to construct my sampling. Each pastor was interested and with curiosity consented to work with me.

As the time drew nearer for my Major Project Proposal (MPP) Consultation, I contacted those whom had consented to remind them that possibly the interviews would begin in the upcoming Fall term. Once the MPP was approved with revisions, I knew that I was on my way. The final approval had to be given by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a committee established to review and approve research involving human subjects. The purpose of the IRB is to ensure that all human subject research be conducted in accordance with all federal, institutional, and ethical guidelines (www.apus.edu/community-scholars/institutional-review-board/).

With IRB approval, each pastor was contacted and the interviews began that week. Pastors from Graceland were at the top of my list to interview, though the list also includes pastors of churches from neighboring sections of Lancaster County area and Lancaster City as well. I wanted to have a diverse mixture of congregations to draw from in order to gain a well-rounded perspective.

Also, as a result of this study, I uncovered a flourishing Haitian church in Graceland. Their presence in the town was almost unheard of, which I found interesting. Apparently, this church seemed to be culturally exclusive as its leaders and members had no interaction with the Ministerium nor with other churches in Graceland.

Nevertheless, I decided to make an attempt to communicate by phone with Pastor Emmanuel and Mrs. Chrystelle Celestin of the Haitian Church. I really wanted them as part of my sampling. We set up a time to meet. Pastor Celestin's schedule was quite full and the meeting that we originally scheduled never took place as he realized he'd already booked a prior engagement. After sharing with Pastor Celestin the purpose of the meeting and the research topic, to my disappointment, further attempts to meet were futile.

The goal was to draw from a reservoir of about 20 to 25 churches, with a final sampling of about 10 to 15. Calls to one church after another in the broader Lancaster County area resulted in my speaking with secretaries, administrative assistants, and leaving messages on answering machines. My efforts were unsuccessful and it seemed that my suspicions were correct.

While putting together the sampling of churches for the study, it became apparent that not every church was woman-pastor friendly or even woman-friendly for that matter and were not open to being questioned concerning their ministry practices by a woman. The question arose in my mind, “Should I introduce myself as ‘Pastor Pat’ or as a “student in a doctoral program”?” The topic of spiritual warfare was certainly not serving me well and did not gain for me a front row seat in the presence of most of these pastors. At last, I was able to garner the support of 10 pastors in Lancaster County. Seven pastors are from the Graceland Ministerium while the remaining three pastors are from the broader Lancaster county and city of Lancaster.

The Graceland Outlying Churches and Their Demographic Categories, Including Age, Race, Gender, Socio-Economic Level, Years in Pastorate:

These categories are transcribed verbatim from the interviewees:

- **Pastor A, Genesis Episcopal Church;** Age 69, White, Male, Middle Class, 40 Years in Pastorate, Depth of Involvement in Church Life: 100%
- **Pastor B, Amy McPherson Presbyterian Church;** Age 58, White Male, Middle Class, 11 Years in Pastorate, Depth of Involvement in Church: All In
- **Pastor C Interim, John Wesley United Methodist Church;** Age 67, Caucasian, Upper Middle Class, Depth of Involvement in Church Life: 3rd yr. Full-time Pastor

- **Pastor D, The Lutheran Church of Graceland;** Age 57, White Male, Middle Class, 12 Years in Pastorate, Depth of Involvement in Church Life: Very Deeply Involved
- **Father E, St. Peter Holy Catholic Church;** Age 81, White Male, Middle Class, 56 Years in Pastorate, Newly Retired Priest, Very Active in Church
- **Pastor F, William J. Seymour Church of God In Christ;** Age 57, Black Male, Middle Class, 9 Years in Pastorate, Depth of Involvement in Church Life: Committed
- **Pastor G, The Graceland Holiness Church of God;** Age 72, White Male, Middle Class, 15 Years in Pastorate, Depth of Involvement in Church Life: Very Active
- **Pastor H, John The Baptist Missionary Baptist Church;** Age 72, African American Male, 35 years in Pastorate, Depth of Involvement in Church Life: Very Involved
- **Pastor I, Spirit and Truth AME Church;** Age 65, African American Male, Lower Class, 46 years in Pastorate, Depth of Involvement in Church Life: Full-time
- **Pastor R, Living Water United Church of Christ;** Age 51, White Female, Middle Class, 10 Years in Pastorate, Depth of Involvement in Church Life: Life

To develop the interview questions Powlison (92) was used as a guide, though they are not verbatim.

Interview Questions

- What do you understand by “spiritual warfare”?
- How much awareness do you have of the various practices of spiritual warfare in Christianity?
- Does spiritual warfare feature in official documents, constitutional documents, or liturgical and educational resources of your denomination?
- Does spiritual warfare feature in the doctrines and constitutional documents of your congregation?
- What do you personally believe about spiritual warfare?
- How does your broader theology inform your understanding of spiritual warfare?
- Is the issue of spiritual warfare important to you?
- What do you do in regard to spiritual warfare in your ministry?
- How do your beliefs, and the beliefs of your congregation and denomination, affect your ministerial practices in regard to spiritual warfare?
- If there is a difference between your beliefs and your ministerial practice, can you explain that difference?
- How do you understand spiritual warfare practices in relation to modern medicine and psychology?
- How do you think that your theology impacts your understanding and practice or non-practice of spiritual warfare?

Interviews

Each pastor was interviewed in their ministry context except for Pastors R and F. Pastor F was working close to the church of Pastor I, so he opted to come to Pastor I's church to be interviewed. Pastor R agreed to meet me at my church location. When Pastor R arrived she shared that the layout of my church was exactly like her church. Father E advised me over the phone, when I called to set up the meeting for the interview, that he had retired as priest of St. Peter Holy Catholic Church in August of 2015. From March 2015 when I first spoke with him to November 2015, much had transpired.

Once we were settled, each pastor was given a consent form to fill out for permission to interview and record the session. An audio recording device was used with a promise of confidentiality given by using pseudonyms instead of actual names. Notes were also taken during the interviews so as to record ministry settings, expressions, moods, or anything that the recording was not able to pick up. Throughout the interview process, I looked for whether there was any awareness of spiritual warfare practices or not. I asked questions that explored what each pastor believes about spiritual warfare. Questions to determine if the persons interviewed knew whether spiritual warfare is featured in the teaching of the church or not, and what they thought that the church believes about spiritual warfare were asked. Close attention was given to what was being said during these interviews to see if there might be practices that indicate that they *are* engaging in spiritual warfare even though they may not say it. The questions ranged from theological, doctrinal and practical perspectives in a quest to determine the degree of understanding of spiritual warfare, and to determine whether spiritual warfare practices were being engaged and if so, how. The questions also probed any possible gaps between doctrine and practice, and explored possible references to spiritual warfare in the church's official

documents. The questions also dealt with how the pastors understood spiritual warfare in relation to modern medicine and psychology. The interviews lasted between twenty minutes to an hour.

Data Collection

Data collection was done via note taking and data recording using an electronic recording device. Transcriptions of the interviews were done on the same day of the interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, they were sent to the interviewees for accuracy purposes. This allowed them to make changes or corrections, if necessary, before they were used in data analysis. Official church documents, such as books of worship, books of common prayer, and church disciplines were closely examined to determine if any references to spiritual warfare were featured.

Data Analysis

Step One: Transcription

As soon as the interviews were completed, they were transcribed. Transcriptions were quite tedious as the recording needed to be listened to over and over to make sure it was a verbatim transcription. Note taking was used to fill in any gaps that the voice recorded device could not catch like key gestures, or facial expressions (Sensing, 186). Once the interview was completely transcribed, it was sent to the interviewee for editing and returned before use in this study.

Step Two: Categorizing Themes

Once the transcription was completed, sent to the interviewee and returned, I began to look for commonalities or repetitions of the same words throughout the interviews, i.e.,

battle, struggle, warfare, enemy, demon, or Satan. I began categorizing so a number could be applied to the theme to determine how many times this particular one appeared. I also looked for not only similarities but also differences. I examined the data closely to find everywhere this kind of concept or idea occurred. Thematic categories are coded such as prayer, exorcisms, anointing of oil, laying on of hands, and prayer. Though race/ethnicity, geography, and culture were not factored into this research in relation to churches and spiritual warfare practices, it surfaced and is viewed as a category.

Step Three: Open Coding

According to Dr. J. Patrick Biddix, open coding “involves looking for distinct concepts and categories in the data because this would form the basic units of my analysis.” (<https://researchrundowns.com>). Using different colors and coding line by line enabled me to break down the data into categories, with major headings and subheadings. If the interviewee used the word “prayer” ten times, for example, it was coded a particular color or “spiritual warfare”, a different color code was ascribed to it. From this, concepts and categories were developed, for instance like, kinds of prayer or types of spiritual warfare, each having its own category. If spiritual warfare was referred by a different word or phrase, that was coded as well. I coded words like demon, devil, and battle as well. I was intentional in making sure that the interviewee’s voice was not suppressed in the analyzing of this data. This method of coding enabled me to keep their voices distinct.

Step Four: Analysis across Open Coding

Once each interview was color coded, I wanted to know how the codes were connected to each other and if there were any relation at all of one to the other. I quickly discovered that for this study, there was not enough different colors in the pack of markers to

analytically account for each category, subcategory, and sub-subcategory. To find out how each code was connected to the other, I created a unique way of analyzing the data for this particular study by utilizing large drawing paper to categorize the data. This provided for me a sort of panoramic view of all the data at once without having to sort through and arrange by themes thousands of pieces of paper. As a researcher, this type of analysis across open coding allowed me to see how they were connected and served to effectively substantiate the research data.

Chapter 4

Findings

The analysis for this project is the result of interviews conducted with ten pastors of theologically diverse churches in Lancaster County, eight Protestant, one Catholic and one Pentecostal. Of the ten participants, there is one white female, three African-American males, and six white males. Each participant signed a consent form with the assurance that pseudonyms would be used in this study. Ages range from 51 to 81 with an average age of 64.9. Nine out of the ten pastors classified their socioeconomic status as middle class with one categorizing himself as lower class. When totaled, the number of years in pastoral ministry ranged from 9 to 56 years, spanning 274 years. All of the pastors except one are members of a Ministerium located in a borough of Lancaster County called Graceland. Graceland has a history of paranormal activity and is known for its haunted houses. The actual name of the town has been changed to Graceland for confidentiality and to protect the innocent. Also, each pastor or priest has been ascribed a pseudonym, in particular, A, B, C and so forth to protect their confidentiality.

The theological rationale for this spiritual warfare study assumes that there is truth to the notion that evil forces exist, and that they currently offer a serious, though ultimately futile, challenge to God. These evil forces or “demons” are personal beings with intentionality. Their intention is to inhibit the forward progress of God’s agenda in the lives of God’s people, whether it is through physical, spiritual, or mental means. The theoretical framework is concerned that many modern Western people discourage belief in demonic forces and spiritual warfare. Therefore, this study is approached from a phenomenological research perspective which allows for examining official denominational documents as a background for looking at the phenomena

of spiritual warfare through the interviewing of pastors to determine whether or not and, if so, how these pastors confront these demons or evil forces. Throughout, I was interested in how these pastors interpreted the teachings of their respective denominations, and did not deal with how accurate or representative their understandings of their denominations were.

As I analyzed the data, beginning with the transcription of interviews, I was extremely careful to make sure that the interviews were transcribed verbatim so as not to impose my voice or opinion over theirs. Whether I agreed or disagreed with their responses, I knew that in order for there to be an authentic result to this study, it must be the voice of the interviewee that is heard. My findings have revealed surprising data. All of the churches engage or have engaged in spiritual warfare practices on some level of ministry. This study proves that they believe that there are evil forces, and that a devil in some form exists; however, engaging more intentionally in spiritual warfare practices with the intent to confront the evil is not contemplated by them. Two out of the ten pastors, on two separate occasions were accosted by parishioners who claimed to have demons. One pastor confessed that he has not responded to two parishioners who have sought his help in dealing with the demonic presence in them but he has not challenged them.

The other pastor responded to the challenge with prayer while redirecting the parishioner to issues that were more physical than spiritual. Beck would call it Scooby Dooification which is when we look beyond the spiritual or supernatural covering to expose the human element (18).

The parishioner approached her pastor and said:

I'm filled with a demon and I'm no good. God doesn't love me. I'm filled with something bad and God can't get near me.

The pastor explained that she didn't believe for a moment that the woman had a demon in her. She felt sure that it was all mental. It wasn't a demon. It was an addiction. She also shared that she is finding that talking to other people about this type of subject matter causes one to be labeled a fundamentalist.

In the interview with another pastor, it was disclosed that the town in which he serves thinks that the whole idea of demons and demon possession is hilarious and he laughs hysterically. The sound of irritability can be heard in his voice as he responds.

“Nobody believes that they can be possessed by the devil anymore. If you took the ten thousand people in Graceland and asked can you really be possessed by the devil, I would think the vast majority would go, “Hahahahaha” (*he laughs hysterically to demonstrate how ridiculous it is*). You've got to be kidding me. What are you making a movie? I think, to a large extent, we have rejected the concept of the devil.”

As an investigator, I thought it was a paradox that a town which is known for its paranormal activity and haunted houses, where documentaries have been done pertaining to the same, would reject the idea of demon possession or the concept of a devil. However, these interviews allow for an up-close, first hand assessment of how each pastor views spiritual warfare and spiritual warfare practices, whether these practices are engaged in, and if so, how.

The Bible states that Jesus has given authority and power to the church to execute spiritual warfare practices, for instance, exorcism, anointing with oil, prayer, laying on of hands, etc., although different Christian traditions can interpret his words differently. To determine whether churches engage in any of these practices and if so, how, the data was classified into five major themes. The themes are Spiritual Warfare; Prayer; Devil; Word of God; Faith. It is important to note that words denoting same connotation were categorized: words like battle, struggle, fight, negative force, forces of evil, conflict were categorized under spiritual warfare;

words like demons, forces of evil, enemy, evil spirit, demonic forces, evil, Satan were categorized under Devil.

Spiritual Warfare

The question, “Is spiritual warfare featured in official church documents, yes or no? Is it also practiced in the local congregation, yes or no?” was asked. Four out of ten pastors indicated that spiritual warfare is at least indirectly featured in their official Church documents though the language of spiritual warfare may or may not be used. Father A of the Episcopal Church explains:

Spiritual warfare is there, just phrased differently. You see, as Episcopalians, we talk about the struggle (*puts strong emphasis on the word struggle*). The struggle between good and evil; the struggle to convert the world; the struggle. In most Episcopalian churches, you would not sing, “Onward Christian Soldiers.” It’s just not in. But what we do is there. We just use a different language.

Pastor D of the Lutheran Church spoke of spiritual warfare as being featured in the documents of the church but that it was for a different period in time. He acknowledges that Luther talks about spiritual warfare in official church documents but it was in the context of the period in which *he* lived. Regarding the Church’s documents where Luther talks about evil, exorcism and the devil, Pastor D was asked how he reconciles what is written in the books versus what he practices. He responded:

How do I reconcile what’s in the books? Well, I’ve got to look at it this way, too. In the context of Luther’s writing, and this is the problem. . . . I understand the theology of that time period but it’s not a theology that is practical today because a lot of that has been debunked.

Pastor F of the Church of God in Christ responded:

Yes it does. We fast every Tuesday as the National Church. We have fast days. It is a familiar scripture, Ephesians 6, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood. It is a familiar passage, 2 Corinthians, casting down every imagination that would exalt itself against the knowledge of God, bringing them under captivity.

Pastor R of the United Church of Christ states:

Well, I'm UCC and I have to say that because UCC is so widespread, I have to say that it depends on your independent church. My independent church is German Reformed and so we are a little bit more conservative when it comes to creeds and liturgy, etc., and therefore I would say yes.

Six out of ten pastors stated that spiritual warfare does not feature at all in their official Church documents. They are not all engaging in spiritual warfare in the same way, yet spiritual warfare practices are engaged on some level. This study revealed that five out of ten anoint with oil; eight out of ten engage in prayers to protect from evil; seven out of ten apply the Word of God; three out of ten practice the laying on of hands; five out of ten employ faith as a warfare practice; two out of ten engage in fasting; one out of ten believes holiness as the key to victory over Satan; two out of ten performed outreach and social justice as key spiritual warfare practices; two out of ten acknowledges deliverance/exorcism as a spiritual warfare practice and appears to have indirectly practiced it.

Further clarification of the findings of particular spiritual warfare practices as implemented by each church are here presented:

Episcopal; AME; UCC; Church of God; Presbyterian

Anointing with oil

Prayer

Word of God (Application)

Laying on of hands

Church of God In Christ; Baptist

Prayer

Word of God (Application)

Catholic

Word of God (Application)

Holiness

AME; Church of God in Christ

Fasting

Lutheran; UCC, COGIC; Church of God; Presbyterian
Faith
Word of God (Application)

United Methodist Church
Prayer

Episcopal Church; Presbyterian
Outreach
Social Justice

AME; UCC
Deliverance/Exorcism

One pastor discussed the importance of acknowledging good and evil as the ills of this world (i.e. hunger, homelessness, etc.) and winning against evil by making provisions for these individuals. He further discussed that anything which causes the focus to be altered from doing things for the Kingdom of God rather than the kingdom of this world could be seen as an issue concerning good and evil. It is important to understand that the war concerning social justice issues are compared with issues between good/evil and light/dark. According to him, when life issues are acknowledged in this manner, change will occur because the Kingdom is at hand, meaning right now, right here.

“What do you understand by spiritual warfare?” As I walk along with Father A of the Episcopal Church through the church’s kitchen and pantry area, there were tables of food items being packaged by his members to be given away. This was the day that people, who were in need, came to get bags of food. The parking lot, the alley next to the church, and the ramp that leads into the church were swelled with people coming from every direction. The office was situated *somewhere* within this massive church. The walk seemed like we were going through a maze. Once we get settled in his office, he responded:

A Struggle

I think for me personally spiritual warfare is the constant day to day struggle between good and evil. On a personal level, it's every day focusing on the Kingdom of God rather than the Kingdom of the world. It's like in John's gospel, the struggle between light and dark. Jesus says, I Am the Light of the world. I have to remember that that's true but I struggle every day in my own life to make that true for both me and for the people that I serve as a priest... There is a struggle but I think it is both personal in my life and then as a priest trying to get this congregation and the community to understand that, yeah, we are in a struggle. Very often, it's subtle, you know.

He talked about the subtle struggles:

How we treat Sunday mornings by having sports teams and band competitions and all of those things that go on that take away from the sanctity of a Sunday morning; that make people make choices and often they choose the band competitions rather than church. To me, that's a very subtle struggle between good and evil... Our emphasis on consumerism is the struggle between good and evil; when people say we need to do away with food stamps, I'm sorry that's a struggle between good and evil.

His hands-on approach to meeting the needs of the hungry allows him to see, front and center, the importance and value of social government programs that are intended to aid people in having a better quality of life.

A Conflict

Pastor B of the Presbyterian Church views spiritual warfare as a conflict with injustice as he peers through the lens of social justice.

There is conflict everywhere and we are met day in and day out with evil. We are met with human suffering; we're met with racism; we're met with prejudice; we're met with injustice; we're met with a sense of (*pauses*) ... a way to show forth that gospel that we've been taught; that what we have been sent out to proclaim is relevant in a world that often teaches us it is irrelevant these days.

The passion can clearly be heard in Pastor B's voice as he talks of the struggles that we are confronted with because we live in a world broken by sin. He speaks of the problems that people face with no apparent answers. His words point to the sensitivity and caring heart that he has for those who have become victims of the struggle. That sensitivity is played out as he and

his congregation provide shelter for homeless men during the winter and gives clothing to those who need items that most of us take for granted.

Sister, I get tired of the struggles I see with people, uh, I get tired of things like chronic homelessness which we try to deal with here; I get tired of seeing addiction and people wrapped up in the chains of being hooked on heroin, being hooked on crack or even the abuse of K2, spice and all that stuff. I get tired of people who have obvious mental illness but yet don't have any answers and so I live in sin because I get tired of it. I get very weary and sometimes my arms need to be held up so I think when it comes to spiritual warfare there is a struggle of good versus evil. When it comes down to something as simplistic as evil I think we're going to be faced with that every day. And it's a spiritual struggle in my own heart and I'm as human as any of these things and people I feel tired about some days.

He shares how the ministry of Amy Semple McPherson has greatly impacted his life and reawakened him to what he learned having been brought up in the Salvation Army and the Assemblies of God.

I have anointed people with oil. I have prayed for people's physical healing and their emotional and spiritual health. Oh yeah, I do it probably more now than I've ever done it... So that's what caused it all.

Pastor C of the United Methodist Church reached back to the history of Graceland to answer the question regarding his understanding of spiritual warfare. He defines spiritual warfare inside of the town's demographics and the unorthodox behaviors of the people. He said that Graceland has a reputation and yet he loves it because it reminds him of some of the river towns in western Pennsylvania where he was raised.

At one point and you wouldn't have to dig back too far, it was more cat houses than churches. It was a rough town, well-known for that. There were gangsters here.

He would rather refer to spiritual warfare as "conflict" and prefers not to use the term "spiritual warfare" at all. He says that his background is not the norm for him as a Methodist pastor because he comes from a different denomination. He says that he was raised as a low

church Episcopalian but about the time of the liturgical renewal in the Episcopalian church, he got fed up with some of what was happening and so he decided to become a United Methodist candidate in seminary. He feels that experiences with demons are more of a reality overseas. He believes that spiritual warfare is in the Bible but he believes that that is not his call.

I don't get hung up on demons. I've never met one, like in the "Exorcist," but I know it happens overseas. I know that to minister over there requires a different kind of perspective. And it's in the Bible. I'm not ready to reject it but on the other hand I have not been called to it...I've had two people who claim they need exorcism and I have not challenged them.

Pastor C and Pastor F of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) both seem to think that dealing with demons is something that one experiences overseas or abroad. If one needs an understanding of spiritual warfare, then that need is due to the fact that the person has not traveled abroad.

I can't say we are experts in the United States on spiritual warfare. God has raised up prophets and a voice who can speak spiritually on this subject but I don't think many of us, especially if we haven't traveled abroad and crossed a lot of barriers to understand spiritual darkness, see the depth of the hand of the devil. I think in other countries, they see it more prevalently. They see the hand of Satan.

Moreau echoes this claim in his narration of his experience as a science teacher overseas in Swaziland, Africa. When he sees a student slump to the floor as he is writhing and rolling in what appears to be an epileptic seizure, he says that his western background predisposed him to look for a physical reason for the seizure. He said his students, from their African perspective, looked for a spiritual reason for the seizure. "They struggled with my failure to understand that spirits existed in daily life" (Moreau 13, 14).

A Negative Force

Pastor D of the Lutheran Church expresses his understanding of spiritual warfare as a negative force:

I've been with the devil many times...the drugs, the sex, the bars and all that. As a musician you deal with a lot of stuff. Spiritual warfare wouldn't be called the devil. We would probably call it a negative force, those things of resistance. Spiritual warfare is not an evil force by my experience. I could say we have a parishioner here that's almost like poison because of their negativity. I could say that would be the devil. But I chose to say it's just negative.

As Forces of Evil

Father E of the Catholic Church states:

When we take a look at our society today, it's quite obvious that the forces of evil are very active. And so it's very difficult to counteract them because Satan has his forces spreading evil throughout the world.

As a Battle

Pastor H of the Baptist Church:

I believe that it's in part described in Ephesians 6 where Paul speaks of the fact that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and the whole hierarchy of the enemies of Christ against the children of Christ. It is purely demonic and we teach that there is a devil; there is Satan, who is an actual force.

Pastor I of the AME Church says:

I don't think most of the time as a church we see ourselves as warfare. We don't see it as being warfare. I take the responsibility for it, for not really expressing it. Over the last couple of years, I said, we are in a battle. It's a battle that we are losing as a congregation. As a Church, the Church is losing the battle; that we don't see ourselves, that these forces that are around and that are forming. We don't see them.

Pastor R of the United Church of Christ says that she does a lot of Bible studies where she and her congregation talk about spiritual warfare but she doesn't consider herself an expert on it. She tends to stay away from that. She says she knows that it's there but talking about it makes her uncomfortable.

Anything that causes evil, causes hurt, causes me to steer away from God is problematic for me so I just set my sights.... I know it's there, but I set my sights on God.

When it comes to understanding spiritual warfare, Pastor F of the Church of God in Christ explains:

I think when we talk about spiritual warfare I think many churches do it to their degree of understanding. When we talk about spiritual warfare, there are many aspects of spiritual warfare.

Pastor G of the Church of God responded:

I hear people talk about spiritual warfare and sometimes I get a little upset at that because I think they don't understand what spiritual warfare is and I'm not sure that I can articulate God's definition of that.

Question: How much awareness do you have of the various practices of spiritual warfare in Christianity?

Prayer Is the Key

Eight out of the ten pastors discussed specifically prayer as a spiritual warfare practice.

Overall, the word prayer was repeated over 143 times. Father A of the Episcopal Church mentioned prayer 82 times in his interview alone. He stated:

To me prayer is a primary weapon in spiritual warfare because without conversing with God you really can't hear God. And so to me, in the practices of spiritual warfare, prayer is a primary and that is for all Christians whether you are clergy or monk, hermit, it doesn't really matter, or a person off the street.

Pastor R of the United Church of Christ shared an incident that happened at church after a Bible study, reporting:

There was a woman in my congregation that came to me... said I'm filled with a demon and I'm no good, and I said ok. You tell me why you think that. And we went through the whole thing and then I brought everybody in and I asked the woman would you be comfortable sharing this with other people in our Bible Study? And she said, yes. She shared with the group...and we just jumped on her and laid our hands on her and we just prayed, that demon out of her... we just prayed and prayed and prayed.

Pastor C of the United Methodist Church explained:

We have a prayer list with just names but I have an e-prayer list. On Sunday morning I will speak specific situations and I will tell what we are praying about. A lot of clergy, because of HIPAA, are scared to death of that. I refuse to be. But I

always have permission of the individuals to share it. If it's an odd situation, like if a lady is self-conscious about a hysterectomy or breast cancer, I'll say well you tell me what you want me to say... I do pray for these people.

Pastor F of the Church of God in Christ said:

Fundamentally, what you believe actually shapes your thoughts; what shapes your thoughts governs your actions and so because I believe that there is an enemy and I believe that I'm no match for him in myself. Because I believe I'm no match for the devil in and of myself, then I pray.

Pastor G of the Church of God stated:

Prayer is one of the greatest means of fighting Satan because while Peter says to resist him we really can't do that on our own. Prayer to me is one of the best ways to fight him because we need that wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor H of the Baptist Church responded:

I think one of the keys is prayer. We have an official prayer meeting but we have people who come into the sanctuary on Sunday mornings and pray before anybody gets there. We have people who come on Wednesdays at Bible Study time and just bathe the sanctuary in prayer.

Pastor I of the AME church shared how he responds if someone within his congregation is struggling with some type of spiritual onslaught.

I definitely would pray for deliverance and I believe that I have the power to pray for deliverance for folk in our congregation and that other people have that. The church has the anointing and the anointing is on the church and the people in the church are part of that deliverance and so when somebody is dealing with something spiritual because I think all things come out of a spiritual base...but the praying for deliverance, I definitely do that and I have a wife who believes in me praying for deliverance.

I asked Pastor B of the Presbyterian Church if he had instances at all in his congregation of employing spiritual warfare practices. He indicated that he has prayed for his people's emotional, physical and spiritual healing.

From this study, prayer holds a prominent place as a weapon of spiritual warfare or dealing with issues between good and evil. Prayer is discussed by many as a healing mechanism as well as a vehicle of deliverance or as a means for driving out demons.

Question: Is there a renunciation of Satan, or evil in the church's baptism liturgy?

Since I suspected that exorcism was not a spiritual warfare practice utilized in the congregations, as an investigator, I was interested in whether a renunciation clause is included in the baptism liturgy and whether that is considered as exorcism. Seven out of ten churches have a renunciation of evil, Satan or the devil in the baptism liturgy.

Father A of the Episcopal Church said:

Yes, in our baptism, it does talk about renouncing Satan and evil (*He gets up, walks to the bookshelf and takes a book from the bookshelf, sits back down and starts reading from it*). The Bishop says to the parents or to the candidates, if they are old enough, "Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?"...Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God? Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?"

Pastor B of the Presbyterian Church stated:

Just from the Book, Pat, right here there's three different ones that we can choose from, but the first one in the Book and I use it all the time (*reads from the Book*):
"Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the way of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?"

Pastor C of the United Methodist Church observed:

Baptismal vows in the United Methodist Church would, yes. (*Reads from the Book*): "Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject evil powers of this world and repent of your sin? Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?"

Pastor D of the Lutheran Church responded:

Oh yes, of sin and the devil. And there again too historically Luther used to do an exorcism at the door of the church before he would baptize a child. Before anybody came into that church, at the church door, they would do an exorcism

and then you would come in. (*Gets up from his desk and goes out to get the Book with the baptism renouncement in it, comes back in and begins to read*): “Do you renounce all forces of evil, the devil and all his empty promises?”

Father E of the Catholic Church did not specify whether renunciation of Satan and evil occurs during the baptism liturgy of the Catholic Church; however, a prayer of exorcism and anointing is prayed over the person being baptized. He explained:

“Baptism liberates us from sin. An exorcism prayer is recited over the one being baptized, preparing the person to renounce sin and be released from evil. The celebrant anoints the person to be baptized with the Oil of Catechumens (an oil that has been blessed by the bishop for the candidates for Baptism) or imposes hands on the person. In this way, the person is being called to renounce sin and to leave behind the domination of the power of evil.”

<http://bedfordcatholic.org/documents/2015/5/8-major-elements-of-baptism.pdf>

Frequently throughout the interview, Pastor I of the AME Church was off topic and rambled on and on. As a result, even though he was not asked the question during the interview, it is the case that a renunciation clause is included in the baptism liturgy. (*Taken from the African Methodist Episcopal Church Book of Worship*):

“Do you renounce the devil and all of his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the flesh; so that you will not follow, nor be led by them?”

During the interview with Pastor R of the United of Christ, the question of renunciation of evil was not mentioned; however, renunciation is a part of the church’s baptism liturgy, which says:

“Do you renounce the powers of evil and desire the freedom of new life in Christ? Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be Christ’s disciple, to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?”

http://macucc.s3.amazonaws.com/892D6384A20E4BA7A557D843EAE430BE_baptism%20education%20resource.pdf

While seven out of ten churches renounce evil, Satan or devil in some way in their baptism liturgies, it was discovered that none of them consider renunciation as exorcism. One out of the seven, the Catholic Church, actually includes a prayer of exorcism as part of the ceremony. In the original baptism liturgy of the Lutheran Church, exorcism was included; however, “By the twentieth century, the renunciation of the devil—also a part of Luther’s liturgies—was taken to be sufficient and supplanted any need for exorcism.”

www.strasbourg-institute.org/wp.../2014/.../Baptismal-Liturgies-in-Lutheran-History

The renunciation of devil and Satan in the baptism liturgies of the majority of the churches interviewed substantiates the fact that they implicitly believe that malevolent forces do exist, or their official documents do suggest such a belief. However, though the practice of renouncing Satan or the devil at baptism is included in the liturgy, it is not viewed as direct war against the forces of evil.

Devil

Even churches that do not have a renunciation clause in their baptism ceremonies made reference to the devil, evil spirits, the enemy, demons, Satan, forces of evil and such throughout the interview process. “Devil” or words implying something like that like Satan, demons, demonic forces, evil spirit, enemy, and evil were mentioned 131 times throughout the interviews. Pastors make reference to the devil, thus in some way indicating that they know that there is an opposing force to contend with.

Pastor F of the Church of God in Christ put it like this:

In the Pentecostal Church, we would like to think that we believe in spiritual warfare from a Biblical perspective. We try to teach people the profile of the devil, that he is a thief, that he is a liar. He is the author of confusion and he has a resume’ and he has a bio just like Christ has a bio.

Pastor H of the Baptist Church stated:

I personally think there are forces; that the enemy is real; that his job is to try to discourage and defeat if he could, the people of God. I believe that he cause maladies and problems. I believe he can get into a congregation and stir things up.

Pastor B of the Presbyterian Church talks of malevolent forces that are in conflict with God and God's agencies thereby preventing forward movement or preventing God's creation from being all that God intended His creation to be. He said:

I do think that evil does come from a higher place. I'm thinking of the Book of Job. At the beginning, here comes the devil and God says where've you been? And he says oh walking to and fro in the earth doing whatever. And they just sit down and have a contest all of a sudden.

Pastor G of the Church of God expressed:

Sometimes people don't like to use the word Satan so they call him the enemy. The enemy has a name and it's Satan. I don't know if you've ever noticed or not but Santa and Satan have the same letters but I won't go there (*chuckles*).

Father E of the Catholic Church spoke of the forces of evil, asserting:

It seems in many aspects in society today that the forces of evil are counteracting the forces of good. However, as the Psalmist tells us in many, many places in his words that God is more powerful than Satan and that is spelled out in many places in Scripture and specifically by St. Paul.

Pastor I of the AME Church talked about "something" happening around us that he can't quite figure out. He believes that the church has to get prepared for whatever this is that is coming. He doesn't believe that the church is prepared. He raises questions for which he is not expecting an immediate answer. He asked:

Are we operating as the sons of light and day or is the church operating more like the darkness and the drunk? Are we really looking forward to the return of Jesus? I think the enemy knows He's returning and that's why he's stepping up whatever is going on out there.

Pastor C of the United Methodist Church said of evil:

There is evil. I believe that and whether it's personified, I think sometimes depends on the situation. Whether you're able to recognize it and say here's evil personified, otherwise it can be very subtle.

Pastor C said the closest that he has seen evil personally was when he worked in a steel mill one summer and he said something that made a young white man very angry. He elaborated:

I don't know how we got on the subject but I said something. I don't even remember what I said but a young white man picked up a piece of steel and called me a N-lover and I've never so much hate in that face as that. So I'm aware that evil is out there and people need to have their hearts changed.

Pastor D of the Lutheran Church shared information about his struggles, particularly the struggle of being pushed away from God or drawn to the devil by something. He said:

God knows my heart and if I believe that to be so, I don't want to say the devil is not there, the devil just doesn't win.

Pastor R spoke of the transparency between her and her congregation as well as the importance of relying on God in order to deal with the enemy. She explained:

We are not going to rely on me and we are not going to rely on them cause we cannot take down the enemy on our own; that we have to rely on God, we have to rely on God for everything... we don't have the capabilities nor the power to ward off the enemy without God's help.

Father A of the Episcopal Church gave his opinion about the reality of the devil and demon possession, stating:

Now I believe evil exists. I'm not quite sure personally whether I can personify that into a cloven-hoofed, tail-horned guy in a red suit. I mean I'm not sure that the popular images of the devil resonate with me. I do believe that there is evil in this world and that evil constantly is working to overcome the good. I believe that people can be possessed by evil.

Regardless of how each pastor perceived the devil, the findings determine that all believe that there is a force that one needs power that is beyond human strength to overcome. Pastor D

(Lutheran) and Father A (Episcopal) agree that evil exists but evil is not necessarily the devil. People have evil in them but this evil is not necessarily a devil or a demon. Pastors F (COGIC), H (Baptist), G (Church of God) both believe undoubtedly that Satan exists and that the Bible substantiates their claim; however, Pastors F (COGIC) and C (United Methodist Church) both agree that the devil can be very subtle. In speaking of evil or Satan they both said:

Pastor F: Sometimes he is very subtle and his ways don't change. He just comes a different way.

Pastor C: Whether you're able to recognize evil depends on the situation. It can be very subtle.

Pastor R (UCC) and Father E agree that God is more powerful than evil and that one must fully rely on God to win the battle. Pastor B (Presbyterian) believes that evil comes from a higher place while Pastor I (AME) feels that the church is losing the battle against the enemy.

The Word of God

Applying the Word of God is a major factor in the fight against Satan and his cohorts. God's Word is one of the weapons that is described in Ephesians chapter 6 as the "Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of the LORD." Even when Jesus was confronted in the wilderness by Satan, He relied on the Scriptures to fight off Satan. With each temptation, Jesus quoted Scripture:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
² And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He ^[a]then became hungry.
³ And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."
⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

⁵ Then the devil *took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,
⁶ and *said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,

‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’;

And ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP,
SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’”

⁸ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹ and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” ¹¹ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him.

This scriptural reference is included only to explain the importance of the application of the Word of God in the face of evil for those Christians who believe in spiritual warfare. As a most powerful spiritual warfare weapon, the Word of God is considered by many practitioners of spiritual warfare to be mighty in and of itself. These Christians believe that when the Word of God is practiced or applied to one’s life or to a given situation or circumstance, it becomes like an atomic bomb in waging warfare against malevolent forces. Moreau says that “Jesus’ response to Satan’s proposals by quoting Scripture is what enabled Him to resist the enemy’s challenges and the same is true for us, too” (147).

Seven out of ten pastors validated this as they kept referencing the Word of God or the Scriptures in their interviews. They declared it to be a substantive foundation upon which to stand for a victorious outcome against the enemy. Father E (Catholic) and Pastor G (Church of God) emphasized the importance of living in accordance to and obedience to God’s Word in defeating the forces of evil or Satan. They said:

Father E: I see that there are many people who are not living up to the teachings of God and therefore are not living up to His teaching is an obvious fact that the forces of evil are taking over. He wants us to do this...to obey the Beatitudes for example, which is a step beyond obedience to the Commandments. God wants us to live as He would like us to live constantly to counteract the forces of evil.

Pastor G: The simplest answer to fighting Satan is number one, obedience. Obedience to Christ; obedience to God' following the lead of the Holy Spirit. But the fighting him and we do have to fight him first with obedience to God.

Pastor F (Church of God in Christ) talked about the importance of the Word of God in his own deliverance from drugs, stating:

I had to be held accountable and I had to hear accountability. I had to hear you drink from your own cistern. I had to hear certain things for me to grow. I would never have been free and my life would have never changed... so I needed a gospel that held me accountable.

Pastor D (Lutheran) contended that he is able to help people when he listens to them tell their stories and then shows them how the Word of God identifies with them and where they are in the moment.

For me it is not so much going with my sword and shield, saying the Good News, the Good News. It is come and tell me your story. Let me listen to you. And let me share with you Jesus in your life and here's how I see Christ or here's how I see God working in your life already that you can't see. Yes it's very troubling that you are on the street. But Christ does not leave you alone here. Christ suffered the same as you're suffering. God suffered for you in this.

Pastor R (United Church of Christ) contended that relying on Scripture and going into Scripture and knowing that spiritual warfare is implicit in almost everything that is read lets us know that we are up against the enemy. Therefore, the Scriptures are major in warding off the enemy. He said:

And so you read these Scriptures and you meditate on them and you pray with them in front of you and you know that God is always accessible, always the first, always strong enough to give you whatever help you need to ward off the enemy that we are dealing with. So I think it is Scripture that is the root of it. If you are embedded in Scripture, the answer is right there.

Pastor B (Presbyterian) believes that we live in a world that has been broken by sin and so evil or sin is always around us and we are called to do something about it. Doing something about it means meeting the needs of people, whether social injustice; whether hungry, naked, or

shelter less. Addressing these needs is synonymous with confronting evil in the lives of people and showing God's love.

We are called to the Presbyterian Constitution, the Confessions and Book of Order call us to live in a manner worthy of the gospel, following and setting the example of Jesus Christ and also embracing fully the doctrine of the Old and the New Testament which go all the way back to providing justice and equality for all people as the Torah instructed people to do in the days of the giving of the law through Moses. All the way through the teachings of Jesus, all pointing to God's love. It needs to be shown and to do that is easy to say it. It is not so easy to do it. We have reoriented ourselves toward the community; we have reoriented ourselves to feed the hungry; to clothing the naked; to helping the homeless; trying to learn to walk with addiction and mental health issues, homelessness on a larger scale where people go from transitional housing to permanent housing.

Father A (Episcopal) adds that the Scriptures; reading Scripture and Bible Study are necessary and spiritual practices like feeding the hungry; clothing the naked; standing up for justice and righteousness; how we stand against racism, or sexism or ageism enables the Kingdom of God to be more present therefore pushing evil away, therefore winning the battle between good and evil, light and dark.

Beck concurs with Father A and Pastor B in their position that Jesus rejected the strategies of Satan on the mountain to embrace the tactics of love; healing the sick; preaching the good news to the poor; welcoming the unclean; lifting up the oppressed...He went about doing good and healing all those under the power of the devil (178). Father A adds that the Scriptures; reading Scripture and Bible Study are necessary. When people carry out social justice practices, they are doing what Jesus did. This is executing the Word of God.

Faith

Faith is a spiritual warfare practice. Five out of ten pastors mentioned their faith as integral strategy in what they believe and do when it comes to spiritual warfare.

When asked the question, "What impact does your theology have on what you believe about spiritual warfare? Pastor D (Lutheran) said that as a Lutheran he is justified by his faith, that that is the mark of a Lutheran. He assured me that asking him a question like that would

guarantee that I am going to automatically hear that first and foremost (*We both burst out laughing.*) He reiterated that he truly believes that. There is nothing he can do to please God because he believes if he could it voids Jesus.

Why did that man die on the cross? Because I can't do it. I need that so when I look whether I'm possessed or anything, I know my grace is going to be there. I probably see the devil more of a struggle. Then again I can look at the cross and say there's God who is struggling there for me as well. So I see a God who is going to struggle with me.

The thoughts of Pastor B (Presbyterian) as he articulates faith in regards to spiritual warfare practices.

I will incriminate myself but I will tell you that I believe in healing. I've been preaching John 11...help us to think outside of the grave cause Jesus called Lazarus to come out, not to stay in that little hole but to come outside and stand in the world of the living and where we have Mary and Martha, God love them, but it makes me say for myself to God saying, LORD help my unbelief because I refuse to grasp it sometimes. I'm the one who's in need of that belief and that deepening faith and that sense of healing. I believe in the manifestations of the Spirit and if I believe in the manifestations of the Spirit I have to believe that there is a world out there that we can't see but it does cause all this rotteness, and this suffering, and this sickness and this pain in the world today. So incriminating myself, (*laughing*) would only be to say that I believe so fully in the gifts of the Spirit, that I think they are necessary for healing to occur; for restoration in the Body and in the community and for people to walk in the light and not in darkness. I think it has to be in there.

Pastor R (UCC) provided her thoughts on the armor and spiritual warfare:

There is definitely spiritual warfare and that spiritual warfare can take you down but God's not so far away that you can't have God come in and bless you and put that armor around you, and it is armor cause you're fighting, put that armor you around you and save you from this evil one.

Pastor G (Church of God) articulated the impact his theology has in regards to what He believes about spiritual warfare, observing:

I allow God... I try to allow God to use me however He wants. He has never used me to perform a miracle on somebody, to heal somebody. He has used me to anoint people, to pray over them but it's all up to Him so I love to read of Jesus'

miracles. Again they weren't His miracles they were the Father's miracles that were done through Him. And I think, boy, if I had that kind of faith, wow. I do have that kind of faith but God hasn't chosen to use me in that way. Why? I leave that all up to God for Him to decide. You know, Jesus if you have the faith the size of a mustard seed you can say to that mountain, go jump in the sea. Well, now I do have that kind of faith but why would I want that mountain to go jump in the sea? If God had a purpose in me doing that, having that mountain go jump in the sea, then it would happen. Now what purpose would that serve? Could it be to show God's power? Yes. But He has never had me to something like that.

Pastor F (Church of God in Christ) stated:

It is important to me and it is important in my theology. It's built into my theology that some of the evils in life and some of the wrongs in life has its origin in Satan and has its deliverance in God and God's people.

Though this sampling was small, it crossed many denominations and socio-economic statuses, all found in the same geographic area. It was found that over half (6 out of 10) do not have documentation to give instruction concerning spiritual warfare in official church documents. All of them engage in spiritual warfare practices in some particular way. Seven out of ten (7 out of 10) rather have renunciation clauses in their baptismal ceremonies. Though it is generally thought that Catholics and Episcopalians practice exorcism, I was surprised to find out that this is not a practice that is performed regularly; rather, it is done on very rare occasions and then by an exorcist who has been formally trained in exorcism. Eight of the ten discussed specifically prayer as a defensive practice to combat evil. Nine out of ten pastors confessed that they did not discuss spiritual warfare with their congregations. It is not something that is readily preached on Sundays.

Some pastors stated that holiness, faith, and obedience to the Word of God were major practices which are integral in removing the evil from an individual's life. One out of ten thought that holiness is as important in being victorious over the forces of evil as obedience to the Word of God. Five out of 10 considered that faith is foremost and seven out of ten thought that obedience to the Word of God is important.

The devil, Satan, the enemy, or forces of evil is equated with many experiences that people have daily such as drugs, sex, and sin. Four of the interviewees insisted that spiritual warfare was not a culturally-correct term for their denominations, rather they talk about the struggle between good and evil, or light and dark, conflict or negativity.

Prayer holds a prominent place as the top spiritual warfare practice and is considered to be the key or major defense in spiritual warfare issues between good and evil. Prayer was discussed by many as a healing practice or an opportunity to focus on the situation at hand to create peace through the power of prayer. Anointing with oil, and laying on of hands are considered warfare defense practices.

There is some indication that a congregation's thoughts concerning the devil or good and evil are not necessarily determined by denominations but are rather shaped by the leadership of the congregation or its particular ethos, or so these pastors proposed. They said little about actively promoting the stance of their denomination on spiritual warfare, and had no programs in place to do so. The theology or passion of the local leadership may influence the congregation's understanding of spiritual warfare and issues related to good and evil more so than the official denominational teachings, even though traditional language is used in the liturgies. This research suggests that there is more work and research to be done in the educating and equipping pastors as well as their congregation regarding spiritual warfare practices, if congregations are going to make informed decisions about spiritual warfare. Also from this research, it became clear that at least two of the pastors have engaged in the practice of exorcism or deliverance, directly or indirectly, though it may not be called such. From this study it is determined that pastors understand that there is evil or a force to be reckoned with whether that evil is classified as the enemy, evil, Satan, forces of evil or the devil. While there is engagement of spiritual warfare

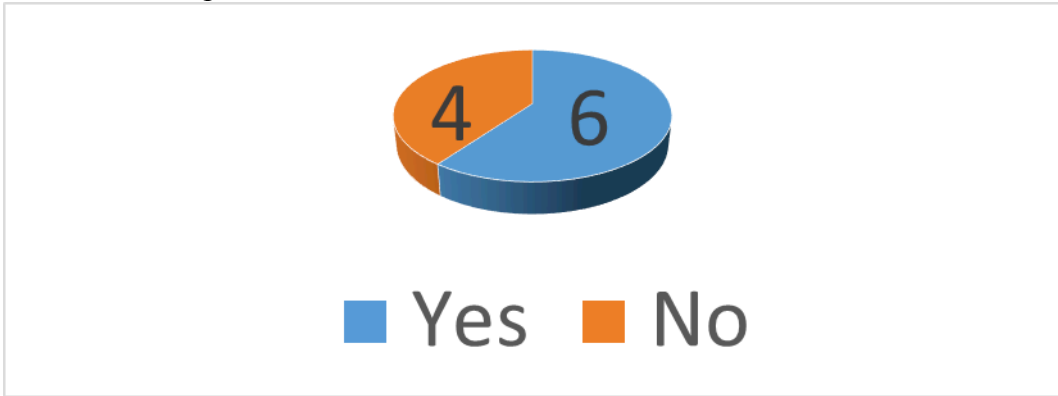
practices in a particular way among the pastors, exorcism remained at the bottom, percentage-wise, as a practice. It was evident that talk of spiritual warfare and the devil made over half of the pastors uncomfortable. They were intentional in making it known that this type of language is not used in their context. One of the ten pastors said that there is a thin line between what is of God and what is of the devil. In the baptism liturgy, though eight churches out of ten have renunciation clauses, only the Catholic Church has an actual exorcism prayer. One Pastor views Holy Communion as a spiritual warfare practice.

Pastor B of the Presbyterian Church explained that in his denomination the belief is that victory has already been attained at the Cross. One must need only to walk through life's struggles (spiritual warfare) in such a way that allows one to claim victory even if it doesn't look like winning to the world. Three pastors stated that they appreciated the study. Pastor I of the AME Church said that one of his greatest regrets is not really taken spiritual warfare as seriously as he should have been taking it. Pastor R of the UCC was very appreciative of this study of spiritual warfare practices. She stated that this particular study is very important, in her opinion; she added that she is aware and knows that there is definitely spiritual warfare. Her experience with a home in which her former pastor performed an exorcism was the turning point in her life and service to the LORD. Pastor H of the Baptist Church expressed his response in these words:

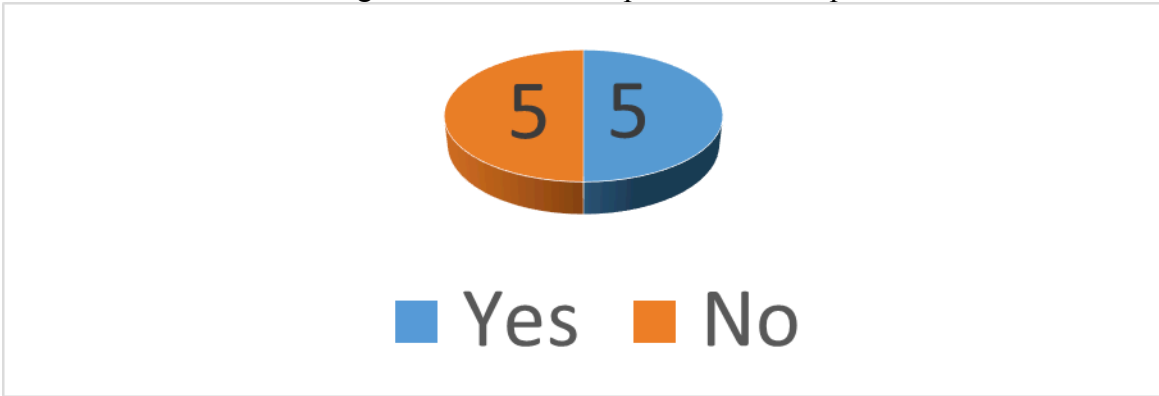
I am delighted with what you were studying when you told me about it last year. I was delighted about it because in our denomination it's on the hearts of our ministers and people but I don't think we necessarily lift it to the level where it is really something we talk to our people about in developing them to the point where they can resist the enemy. We do understand that we are in spiritual warfare but to say that we have a specific ministry would be taking it a little further than we do.

While pastors admit to being aware of spiritual warfare and spiritual warfare practices, I find that none of them are intentional in the use of these practices when it comes to exorcism or confronting evil forces.

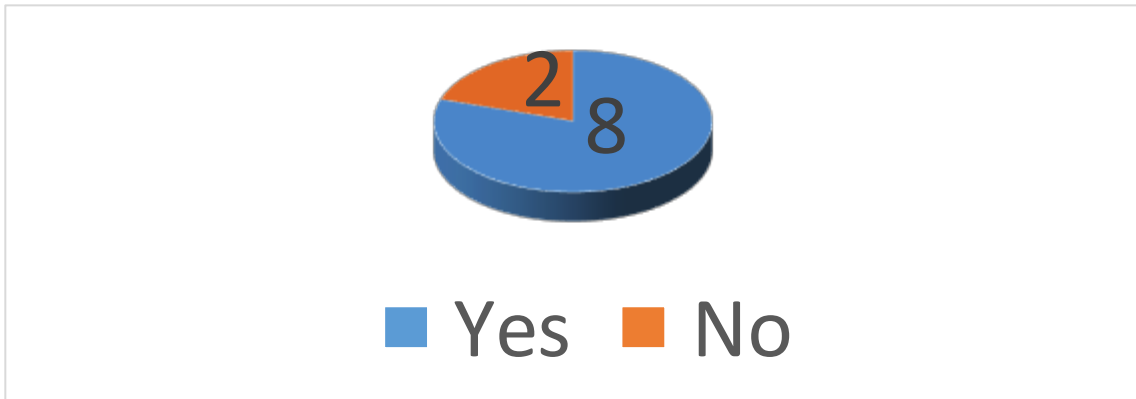
Ten Pastors of Mainline Protestant Churches in Lancaster County
Is spiritual warfare featured in official church documents?



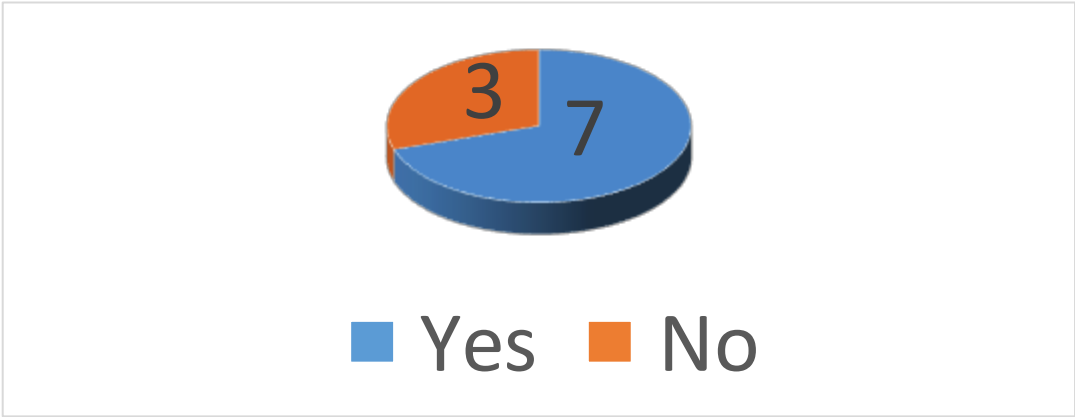
Is anointing with oil used as a spiritual warfare practice?



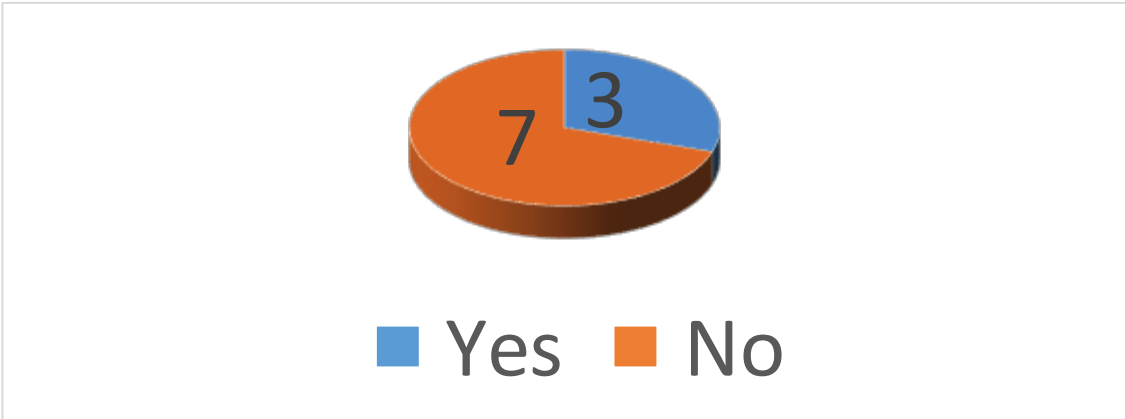
Is prayer used as a spiritual warfare practice?



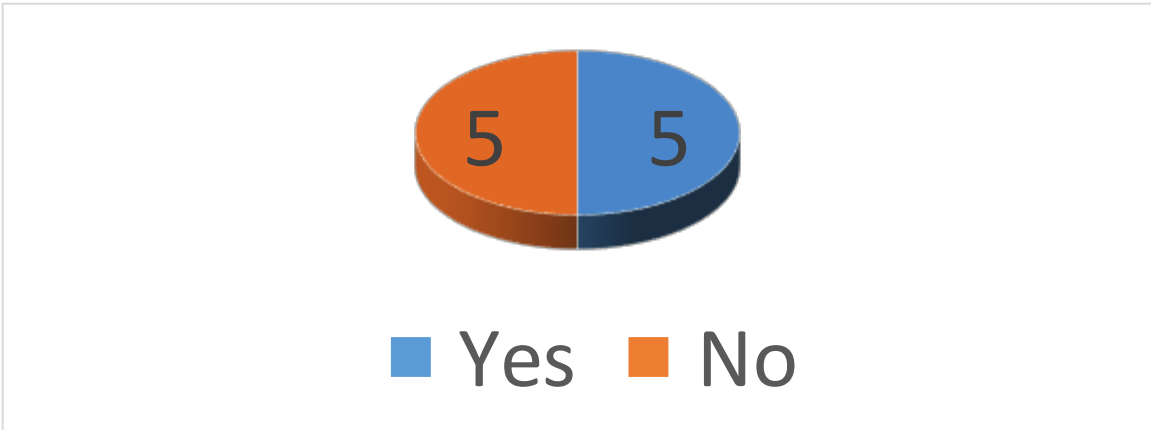
Is The Word of God used as a spiritual warfare practice?



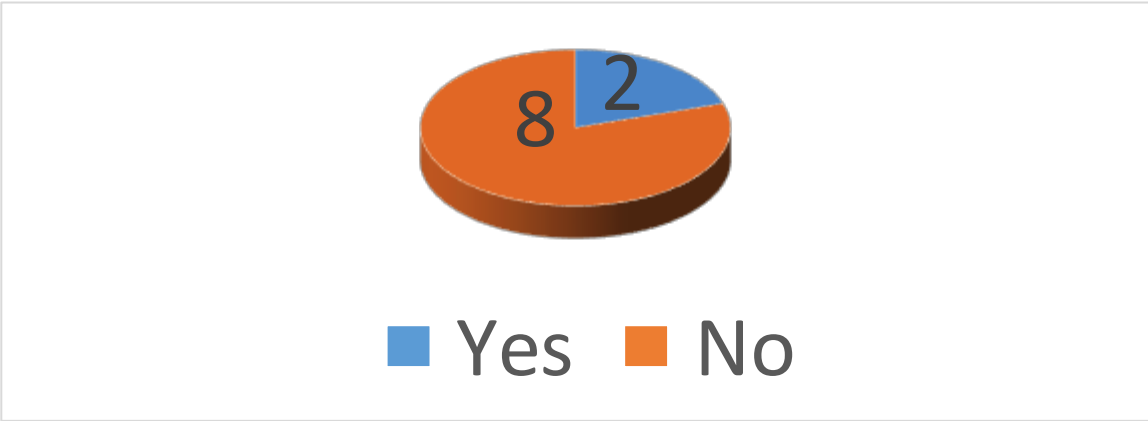
Is the laying on of hands used as a spiritual warfare practice?



Is faith used as a spiritual warfare practice?



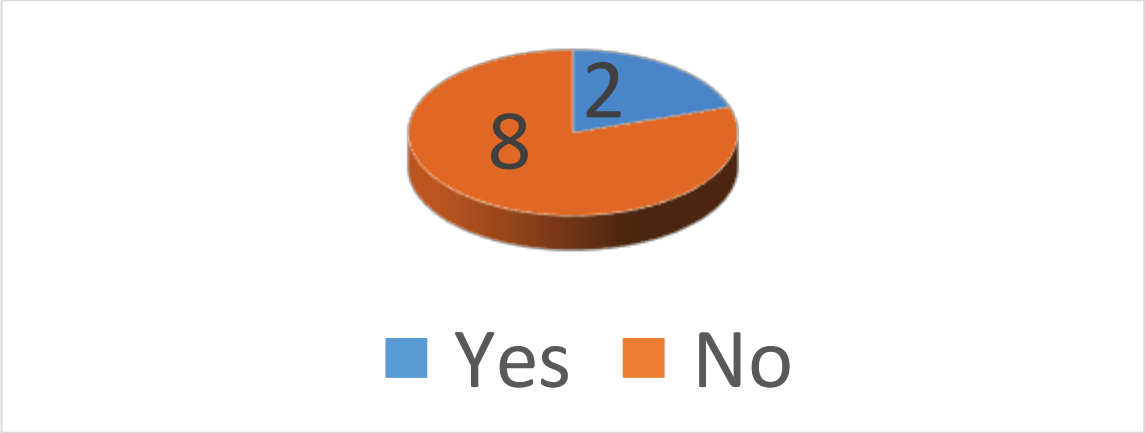
Is fasting used as a spiritual warfare practice?



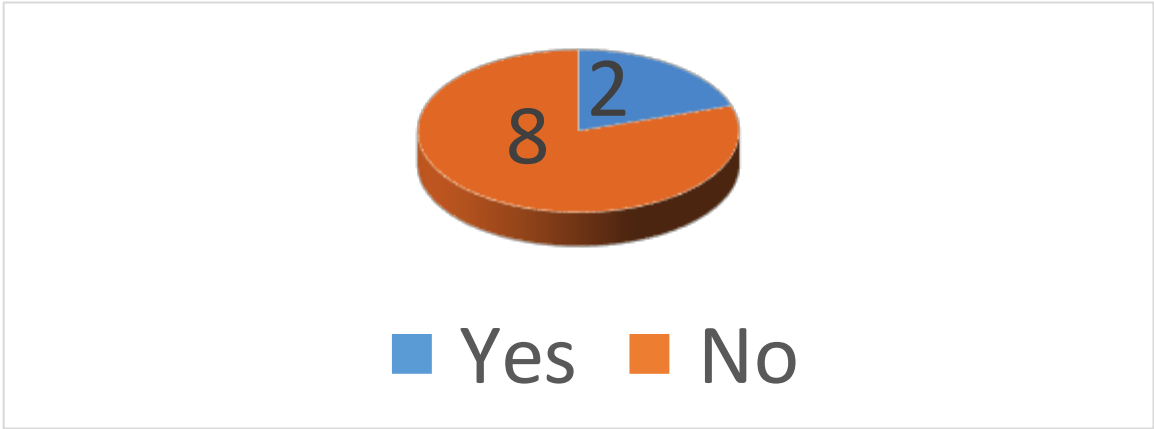
Is holiness used as a spiritual warfare practice?



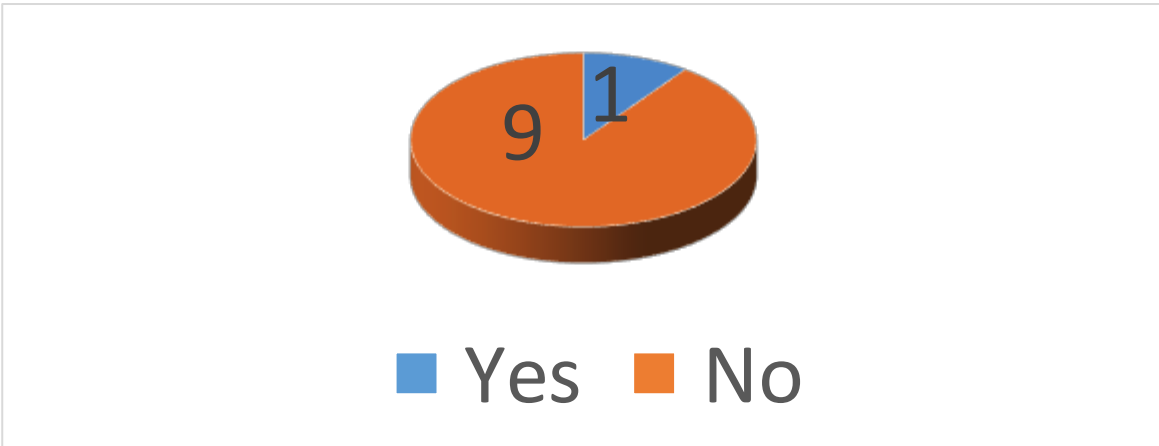
Is outreach or social justice used as a spiritual warfare practice?



Is deliverance or exorcism used as a spiritual warfare practice?

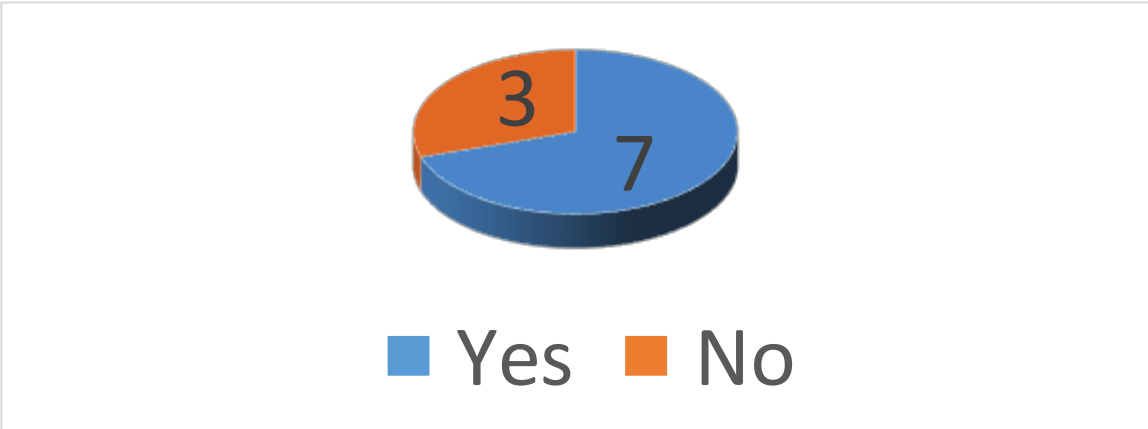


Is communion used as a spiritual warfare practice?

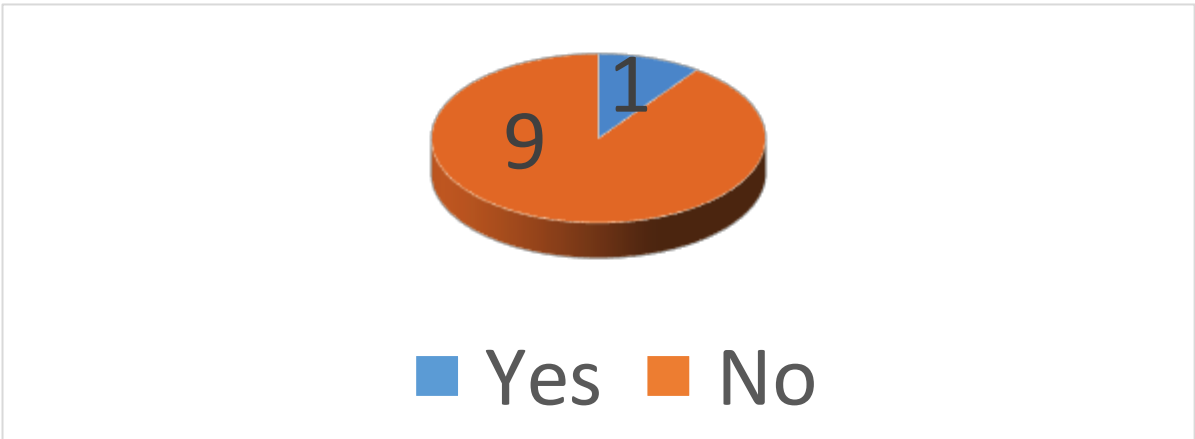


PASTOR C OF THE UMC CONSIDERS HOLY COMMUNION AS IMPORTANT IN WARDING OFF EVIL.

Is the renunciation of evil, Satan or the Devil in the baptism liturgy?



Is there a prayer of exorcism in the baptism liturgy?

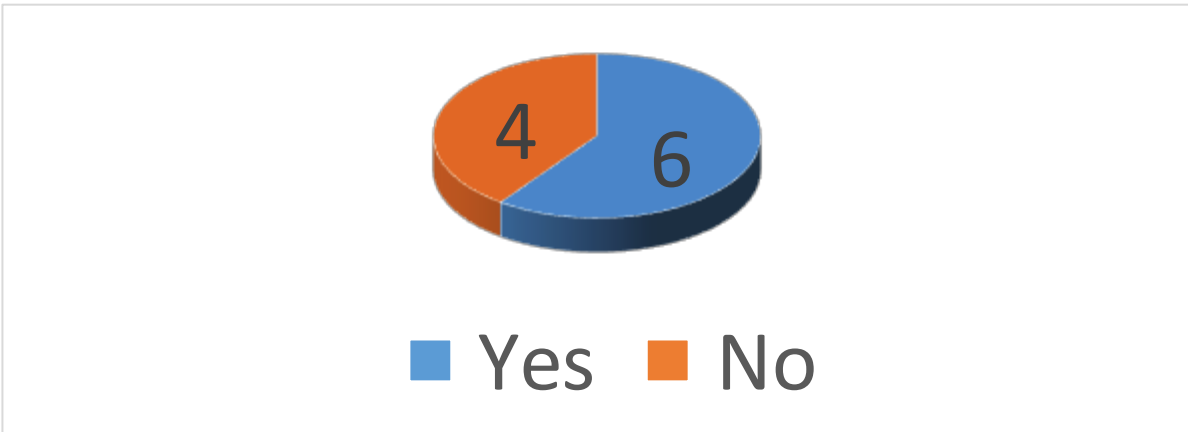


ONLY ONE CHURCH OUT OF TEN (CATHOLIC CHURCH) HAS AN ACTUAL PRAYER OF EXORCISM IN ITS BAPTISM LITURGY

Do you discuss Spiritual Warfare with your congregants?



Is “Spiritual Warfare” a culturally-correct term?



Chapter 5

Findings and Conclusion

Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project was to determine if a variety of churches in one section of Lancaster County practice spiritual warfare and if so, how. The topic of spiritual warfare, though much is written about it, is not a widely discussed one among many congregations. The research question, “Do congregations practice spiritual warfare, and if so, how?” served this study well as it helped to shape the questions for the interviews.

To accomplish that goal I had to develop a strategy which would allow me to gather the information needed. The questions had to be really developed in a way that would insure the success of this project because of the sensitivity of the subject matter. Because I found the subject of spiritual warfare to be intimidating or offensive to some of the pastors, I was careful to craft my questions in a non-intimidating or offensive way. I referred to Powlison as a guide in developing the interview questions (92). It was almost like going through the back door to get to the front of the house, instead of going directly to the front door. I took the long way around to get to what I needed to find out. The African American pastors, (Baptist, COGIC, AME) along with the Church of God, and the UCC (only female) pastors were not offended by the use of the term. The Catholic pastor didn't openly express any disdain for the term. He just responded by referring to spiritual warfare as the “forces of evil.” The pastors of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, UMC, and Lutheran Churches were very clear about the reference to spiritual warfare as something negative, and the thought of a devil was even less appealing to them. Their references to evil were directed more to the human element. From their perspective, the evil that is practiced by human beings is defined as but not limited to racism, discrimination, drugs, alcohol, sex, negativity, the raging anger that one expresses that drives them to want to kill, and the social

injustices inherent in the system which breeds lack of resources. They believe that these types of issues are what the Church has been called to address. I am not disputing that. I am not disputing that these issues are somehow grounded in evil, and that we are called to stand up, and speak up, and engage on behalf of those who cannot speak or petition for themselves. I suggest that addressing these issues may not be enough.

This research explores the gap that was in this area of literature regarding a spectrum of denominations and the practice of spiritual warfare in them. It answers the questions, “What do various denominations in one section of Lancaster County understand by spiritual warfare?” “Do they practice spiritual warfare?” Is it called by something else? If it is practiced, then how is it practiced?” This study revealed that though my contemporaries or colleagues in the field of pastoral ministry have engaged these practices at some point in their ministries, they are not practiced in their local congregations with the intention of opposing malevolent forces. They admit that evil exists, that there are forces of evil versus forces of light, that there is a devil or Satan, that there is conflict, and that there is a struggle between good versus evil, but they also admit that they do not address issues of evil that may come up in their congregations. What I discovered is that there are some churches that do not call it “spiritual warfare” and it is called by a different name. Father A of the Episcopal Church, being wary of the term, prefers to call it “good versus evil,” while Pastor B of the Presbyterian Church and Pastor C of the United Methodist Church use the word “conflict.” Still Pastor D of the Lutheran Church would rather say that it is “negativity or those things of resistance.”

This ethnographic study of ten pastors, all of them categorized in the upper mid-socioeconomic class excluding one who distinguished himself as being in the lower socioeconomic class, were from these ten denominations, all found in this section of the county:

AME; Baptist; Catholic; Church of God in Christ; Episcopalian; Church of God; Lutheran; Presbyterian; United Church of Christ; and United Methodist Church.

While some of them expressed some knowledge of demonic or evil forces, as often seen in the media, the thought of demonic or evil forces being present in the church is not popular with them for the most part. The AME and Baptist pastors felt as though they could have done more in their ministries to equip their people and prepare them to deal with spiritual warfare. The Episcopalian and Presbyterian pastors focused their attention on social justice issues like feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and spreading love. The Church of God and Church of God in Christ (COGIC) pastors expressed their concern as to whether one understands what spiritual warfare really is. The Lutheran pastor went even further to discuss what he believes about spiritual warfare in relation to his congregation. “Pat, these people would say that their air conditioner breaking is the devil or the window in their car won’t roll down is the devil. We are people of privilege.” He stated that it depends on one’s geographical location and, as a white male, he expressed that what one encounters in the suburbs is different than what one encounters in the projects in Philadelphia. The United Church of Christ pastor has a strong prayer ministry in her church, yet dealing with evil forces is not what she is comfortable with. She doesn’t consider herself an expert though she does a lot of Bible studies where she and her congregation talk about spiritual warfare. Pastor R of the UCC also explained that she tends to stay away from spiritual warfare because just talking about it makes her uncomfortable. She said that anything that causes evil, causes hurt or causes her to steer away from God is problematic for her so she sets her sights on God. The pastor of the Catholic Church made it very clear that forces of evil or exorcisms are never done in the parish; they only are authorized in extreme cases and then permission must be given from the “higher ups” to engage spiritual warfare. Those cases are

performed by someone who has been trained and assigned to such issues by the archdiocese. The Presbyterian pastor and the Catholic pastor both focused more on spiritual wickedness being in the natural realm than spiritual. Father E of the Catholic Church stated that all one needs do is just look around at society and it is obvious that evil forces are active. He spoke of the breakdown in the educational systems of the land where the teachings of God are no longer allowed. Pastor B of the Presbyterian Church, in regard to spiritual wickedness in high places and what is said of it in Ephesians 6:10, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but spiritual wickedness in high places," felt that it goes back to the oldest sin in the Book and people wanting to be God. He expressed the opinion that people get into high places whether they think it is humorous or arrogance and are deceived so that they don't live out what God has called them to. He felt that this is done out of a need to provide answers and their need to control. Pastor C of the United Methodist Church acknowledges that the need for this type of ministry of spiritual warfare is present within the church. He admits that he has a person that he is dealing with who is taking an extraordinary amount of diet pills. He listed her issues of abandonment by her mother when she was seven years old. He talked about this person's grandmother who was stricken with a stroke, leaving her to live on the street at the age of thirteen. He mentioned that she is dyslexic, can't read, can't get a driver's license, and has five children by about three different men. Pastor C admits that he knows that this person needs healing yet he doesn't feel called to do it. He said he was challenged once by a minister who told him that it doesn't make a difference what he felt. His friend told him that God said "Do it." As a result, he stated that he "started using it in nursing homes and hospitals." He mentioned that he would not only like to add a healing service for his congregation but also for the area; however, he doesn't feel called to that.

Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament as a healer who addressed all kinds of sickness and disease and has given the power and authority to the church to heal, to deliver, and to cast out. I believe that physical, emotional, and spiritual healing was a major component of Jesus' earthly ministry, and that He conferred on the church the ministry of healing. Matthew 4:24 reads, "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." In the Christian heritage, it is often believed by many people that many of the illnesses that Jesus addressed and that the church should address are caused by malevolent spiritual powers. According to the practitioners of spiritual warfare God has empowered the church with the Holy Spirit for the sole purpose of attaining victory over Satan and his cohorts. In Luke 10: 1-19, Jesus gave specific instruction to the seventy disciples as He sent them out into all the world. Verse 19 epitomizes the authority that was given to them. Luke 10:19 reads, "Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy: And nothing shall by any means hurt you." James 5:14-15 states: "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the LORD. And the prayer of faith will make the sick well."

Christians have been divided on the issue of how seriously to take these passages, and how to interpret them. Some Christians have claimed that radical monotheism, and the confidence that everything is governed by God, rules out the notion that evil cosmic forces could offer any serious opposition to the accomplishment of God's will. However, other Christians conclude that the damaging of the goodness of the created order could not possibly be God's will, and that, strangely enough, forces opposed to God have come into being, and offer a challenge to God.

They avoid absolute dualism by insisting that ultimately God will prevail. They contend that evil forces do exist, and that they currently offer a challenge, though ultimately futile, to God and to the church.

In Christian theology, there is disagreement about how these evil forces should be understood. For some, talk of demons serves as a symbolic way of drawing attention to social, cultural, and psychological forces beyond the control of the individuals. These forces can become so powerful that they cannot even be corrected by corporate reform efforts. For others, demons suggest impersonal cosmic dynamics that bring about chaos and disintegration. For still others, demons are personal beings with intentionality. It is the latter position that my research explores and to which spiritual warfare practices gravitate.

Theological Perspectives of the Participants

During the interviews, it was clear that the participants view spiritual warfare through the lens of their theologies. Pastor B of the Presbyterian Church felt that we already have the victory but that it is not embraced fully. He explains that one doesn't have the ability to choose for oneself but has to be aware that God will do His work in one's heart and by His Spirit. He also feels that one must walk in victory even when it doesn't look like winning to the world. Pastor C of the United Methodist Church believes that evil exists and though he believes that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, he is not ready to write off other religions. He made it clear that when it comes to the "big stuff," that has to be left to God. Pastor D of the Lutheran Church shared that faith is blessing that God has given to the church. He strongly believes that it is not something that one comes to on one's own and he quoted Luther to support his belief. He feels that when it comes to dealing with the devil, it is the individual who determines how he will interpret or parse it out, based on his experiences. He doesn't have the same battle with evil that someone else may

have. Pastor H of the Baptist Church was confident in making sure that I understood that combatting spiritual warfare is very consistent with what he believes. He said there are forces of evil that come up against the children of God and those who are part of the Kingdom. Father E of the Catholic Church strongly believes that a life of holiness and obedience to the Word of God is the greatest spiritual warfare practice. He says that living a life of holiness is how one is going to counteract or win the war over Satan and his forces of evil. Pastor R of the United Church of Christ explains her theological perspective regarding spiritual warfare practices by saying that Scripture is what she relies on. She says that the scriptures are clear that there is an enemy so reading the scriptures and meditating on them as well as praying them helps one to know that God is first. He is always strong enough to provide the help one needs to ward off the enemy that one is dealing with. If one is embedded in scripture, the answer is right there. The themes of getting into scripture; getting into prayer; being aware, and being awake sum up her theology. Pastor G of the Church of God believes that one's theological perspective on spiritual warfare is personal. He said that he doesn't talk to his congregation about warring against Satan except in a sermon or Bible study. While they pray that Satan will be held at bay, Pastor G believes that Satan knows their weaknesses more than he knows their weaknesses, which is why he believes that the response to the issue should be personal. It's up to the person to be obedient to the Word of God and to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Pastor F of the Church of God in Christ makes it clear that his theology helps him to not trust in himself. He contends that his theology has helped him learn more about himself as it pertains to spiritual warfare and how the enemy deals with him. His experience with drugs and alcohol has taught him that there are certain spirits that one cannot cohabit with. He said that one can't have a casual response when these spirits are trying to kill one. He was adamant in saying that every time he has been up against the

devil, he beats his head in and strongly expressed his belief that the devil doesn't go away when one tries to coexist with him. In conclusion, Pastor F stated that his theology was shaped as he watched Satan in his own personal life so he tries to make some interpretation of it in such a way that it benefits other people. Father A of the Episcopal Church states that the new Bishop, Michael Curry, talks about the Jesus Movement. The Jesus Movement is to preach and evangelize the Kingdom of God that Jesus represents. He goes on to say that when one listens to Bishop Curry, he is talking about warfare. He's talking about getting into the trenches and battling evil. Father A says that spiritual warfare is not used nor is the word 'battle' used. He said that Episcopalians talk about struggle, the struggle between good and evil and the struggle to convert the world. Talk is of the struggle. Father A explained that in most Episcopalian churches, one would not sing "Onward Christian Soldiers." He said that they do combat evil; they just use different language. Pastor I of the AME Church believes that spiritual warfare should be a much more important part of ministry than it is in the AME Church. He quotes 1 Thessalonians 5:8 as the reason, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm." He asks the question, "So why does one think one needs this armor?" He said that he doesn't think that most of the time as a church we see ourselves as engaged in warfare. Pastor I goes on to say that the church is in a battle. It is a battle that is being lost as a congregation and as the church simply because the forces of evil that are forming around are not seen. He said that the church is not conscious of the forces and doesn't realize why she needs to be in battle. Pastor I says that we need the armor not for protection but so we can remain proactive in the battle. However, he laments that he does not see this sort of proactive action in the church. He thinks that this failure is due to the fact that people are not really serious about spiritual warfare.

How we view spiritual warfare is shaped by our theology. Our view is at least partly the fruit of what we have been socialized to believe about God and about Satan. What we believe then determines what we do. Our theology is at the helm of our ministry focus. It is the driving force in determining the level or kind of ministry that a pastor within a congregation does. If the pastor doesn't believe that there are evil spirits, based on his or her theology, then that is what determines what he or she does when the pastor is confronted with evil. For example, many times the thought was expressed that everything that the church needs to do is taken care of in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pastor B summed that up when he said that one has to understand that we've already been taken care of and Jesus' blood has already been poured out at the cross.

Spiritual Warfare Practices in Relation to Modern Medicine and Psychology

Another interesting discovery was how the pastors felt about mental illness in relation to demon possession. All participants acknowledged the importance of both medicine and psychology. They also acknowledged the importance of medication for those who have been deemed to suffer from clinically diagnosed health problems. It was also asserted by the pastors that many mentally ill individuals are not possessed by the devil but rather may have not developed coping skills adequate to deal with everyday living. When asked, "How do you understand spiritual warfare practices in relation to modern medicine and psychology?" there were varying answers. Pastor A (Episcopal) stated that in matters that are spiritual, psychiatry is probably not going to help and that secular counseling is needed when one is clinically depressed or suffering from post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He also suggested in a critical way that people use psychological terms or psychiatric terms to name what might be a faith issue. In some

cases they really are depressed and need help but in other cases he thinks that they don't know what is going on so they name it depression or uncertainty, or whatever.

Another pastor (Pastor R) responded "The enemy distorts your illness to make it about YOU! With a change in thought, the individual may not need medications." She also strongly believes that some mental illness is influenced by the demonic. Pastor C of the Church of God expressed his feelings as to whether he believes that mentally-ill people are demon-possessed. He had heard others express that opinion although he does not believe that himself. He believed that psychology can be used for good to help people overcome emotional distress. The AME pastor was clear in his position that the church's lack of seeing the need for deliverance and spiritual warfare is not due to modern medicine or psychology but is due to the fact that our culture has made sin acceptable and people labeling themselves by their sin. Pastor H of the Baptist Church expressed that they believe that even some aspects of or manifesting of mental illness are really influenced by demonic forces rather than simply being something chemical. Interestingly enough, the COGIC pastor shared that he thinks that there is a thin line between whether Satan is driving the agenda of emotionally troubled persons or whether they have had a breakdown and need medication to regulate them. The Lutheran pastor felt that some of Luther's theology regarding spiritual warfare has been debunked by medicine and psychology.

It is worthy of stating that there are some who believe that some spiritual forces are not evil. They believe that the spirit of a deceased person may be attempting to communicate some information of importance to loved ones they've left behind. Dr. Harry Serio, retired pastor of the United Church of Christ elaborated this theme. Dr. Serio said in an interview that he has found out that there are at least three reasons why entities or "spirits" (my word) manifest themselves. First, he believes that the person who has died wants to indicate that there is a

continuation of life beyond this one, that everything is ok and there is nothing to worry about. Second, they are trying to make it known that something bad or unnatural happened to them. Third, they may be indicating that there is unfinished business, for instance thus alerting family, friends, and colleagues to the existence of papers or something that is hidden. While this is the position of some, it is not the position nor is it the focus of this study, and such a view does not contradict the belief that there may be malevolent evil forces` that oppose God and Christians.

Clergy convictions about psychology in relation to spiritual warfare is an area that needs more research. When I observe clergy attitudes toward spiritual warfare in relation to modern medicine and psychology, there is much room for further study.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Further Study and Action

- Pastors should be encouraged to consider the possible importance of this type of ministry to those on the ministerial staff in their congregations.
- A curriculum for this type of ministry could be considered on the ground level of ministerial education.
- In regards to the intersectionality of spiritual warfare in relation to modern medicine and psychology, further study is recommended.

Appendices

Appendix A (Informed Consent Form)

I, _____, have agreed to sign this form as my consent to participate in a series of interviews of myself and other pastors in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania for the purpose of sharing my theology, doctrine and practice on spiritual warfare. My participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time from this study. I understand that there are no known risks associated with participation in this study or any direct benefits. My real name will be kept confidential in all of the reporting and writing related to this study. I will be given an opportunity to review the transcript before it is used for further study and a pseudonym will be used for my name in the reporting process.

Because of my participation in this study, I am agreeing that the transcript of my interview may be used for analysis in the completion of this doctoral project. I also understand that this doctoral project will be published and further studies may be done which would involve my transcript as it relates to this study. I understand fully all of the terms of this agreement and understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time.

Signatures:

_____ Date _____

Interviewer

_____ Date _____

Interviewee

Academic Contact Information: Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me or my project supervisor, Dr. Lee Barrett, professor of Theology at Lancaster Theological Seminary;

lbarrett@lancasterseminary.edu or 717-290-____; Dr. Anne Thayer, Chairperson of the Doctor of Ministry

Committee, professor of Church History, athayer@lancasterseminary.edu.

Credits

Consent forms from DSEM1 designed by Dr. Martin Kuchma and the Major Project Proposal by Dr. Marianne Sickles Grabowski were used as guides to develop the informed consent forms used in this major project.

Appendix B

Definitions

Spiritual Warfare: This is defined as “warfare in the realm of the spirit involving the heavenly army and the church (as its earthly force) and the satanic army and evil men (as their earthly agents and force)” (Ajibade, *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology*, p.108). Spiritual warfare suggests conflict between God and God’s agencies that intend the well-being of His creatures, and malevolent forces that intend to harm creatures and subvert God’s life-enhancing purposes.

Ephesians 6:10-13 supports this definition: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

Robert H. Bennett defines spiritual warfare more specifically as a technical term that describes the battle between God and Satan for the souls of people (Bennett, p, 13). 2 Corinthians 10:4 reads, “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” Scripture enlists us to put on the whole armor of God because there is a war going on. Second Corinthians implies that the weapons or practices are not merely human or flesh but mighty through God.

Some of the spiritual warfare practices or weapons are *baptism* which is also understood as a form of exorcism. In some traditions, at baptism a renouncement of Satan and his ways is a part of the sacrament.

Binding and Loosing: John Eckhardt defines the word “bind” as to make secure by tying, to confine, restrain or restrict as if with bonds: to constrain with legal authority: to exert a

restraining or compelling effect.” He also gives a clear explanation of the authority that we as Christians have to bind and to loose. He goes on to say that “loose means to untie, to free from restraint, to detach. It also means to disjoin, divorce, separate, unhitch, get free, get loose, escape, break away, unbind, unchain, unfetter, free, release, unlock, liberate, disconnect, and forgive”. (John Eckhardt, *Deliverance and Spiritual Warfare Manual*, pp. 99-100). In the context of this study, binding and loosing refers to God’s power exercised through Christians to force malevolent powers to desist from their harmful activities, and to employ the power of God to liberate people from being afflicted by those powers.

Demons: Demons are destructive forces that aim at damaging the well-being of God’s creatures. Their power cannot be reduced to the sinful actions of individual human beings. Some Christians conceptualize them as impersonal cosmic or social forces that promote chaos, while others view them as intentional agents. The most widely accepted view is that they are fallen angels. As Rebecca Greenwood states, “Revelation 12:3-4 tells us in its enigmatic language that the tail of the enormous red dragon...swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth”. The primary purpose of demons is to “serve Satan in his conspiracy against God and His people” (Greenwood, pp. 42, 47).

Demonization/Demon Possession is taken from the Greek word *diamonizomai* which means “to be demoned”; that is, to be in some way under the influence or the power of demons a spirit. In the Christian tradition this has usually been understood as being controlled or influenced by a malevolent spirit that acts contrary to God’s purposes. In the King James Version this verb is usually translated by some phrase such as “to be possessed,” or “to be vexed,” by evil spirits (demons) (Eckhardt, p.217).

Exorcism or Casting Out: This is (1) the act of driving out, or warding off, demons, or evil spirits, from persons, places, or things, which are believed to be possessed or infested by them, or are liable to become victims or instruments of their malice; (2) the means employed for this purpose, especially the solemn and authoritative adjuration of the demon, in the name of God, or any of the higher power in which he is subject (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05709a.htm>). In this study both senses of “exorcism,” as an act of driving out demons and as the strategies used to do so, will be used.

Rebuke: This means to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted. <http://biblehub.com/greek/1651.htm>. In the context of spiritual warfare, this means to confront, chastise, and condemn an evil spirit in order to diminish its power.

Applying the Blood of Jesus: In the context of spiritual warfare, this is a prayerful invocation of the power of the justification, sanctification, and liberation from evil which was accomplished through the shedding of Jesus’ blood in His atoning act. It can be a specific prayer or ritual, and is intended to disarm the forces of evil by confronting them with the power of Jesus’ atonement. According to Charles H. Spurgeon, “the precious blood of Jesus is not meant for us merely to admire and exhibit. We must not be content to talk about it, and extol it, and do nothing with it; but we are to use it in the great crusade against unholiness and unrighteousness, till it is said of us, *“They overcame him by **the blood of the Lamb**”* (Revelation 12:11). This precious blood is to be used for overcoming, and consequently for holy warfare. We dishonour it if we do not use it to that end” (Spurgeon, *The Blood of the Lamb the Conquering Weapon*).

Anointing With Oil: The anointing of the Holy Spirit is one of our secret weapons of spiritual warfare. Many of us never understand what the anointing is and what it does. It is symbolic of

the power of God being applied to or released upon the person. The ritual is accompanied by the healing liberating, and strengthening activity of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 10:27 says, "And it shall come to pass in that day that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing." Many times there are those who are going through and burdened down with sicknesses, diseases, habits, addictions, or whatever the enemy puts on them and so it takes the power of Almighty God to remove that burden and to destroy the yoke. The "yoke" is whatever the enemy binds you with or puts on you. "The anointing of the Holy Spirit breaks all the chains of bondage and completely destroys it. The anointing in and on your life that you walk in destroys these chains of the enemy, even as you minister to others."

([www.blazingfireministries.org/spiritual offensive.html](http://www.blazingfireministries.org/spiritual%20offensive.html)).

The Name of Jesus: In this context, the "name of Jesus" refers to the invocation of the saving power of God available through the incarnation of God in Christ that can be employed in spiritual warfare. "The word *Jesus* is the Latin form of the Greek *Iesous*, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew *Jeshua*, or *Joshua*, or again *Jehoshua*, meaning "Jehovah is salvation" (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374x.htm). When the angel of the LORD appeared to Joseph, he spoke to him about Mary saying in Matthew 1:21, "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

As our LORD's proper name, it is used as an invocation, meaning that one can make an appeal to God using that name. Scripture says "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The word 'saved' denotes deliverance from the bondage of sin or anything that may have one under its control.

In much of the Christian tradition, it is believed that there is redemptive and liberating POWER in the Mighty Name of Jesus to save, to heal, to deliver, and to set the captives free from spiritual bondage. The Scriptures resonate with this theme as over and over and over again, indicating the power that is attributed to that GREAT Name. The use of the Name in prayer makes available the saving power accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Some of the texts that have been used to support his practice are:

Luke 10:17: The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your Name!"

Mark 16:17, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues."

John 14:13: And whatever you ask in My Name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:14: If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it.

Phil 2:9-11: Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the Name that is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John 16:23: And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My Name He will give you.

John 16:24: Until now you have asked nothing in My Name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Acts 3:1-10: One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer-- at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

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