



### Statement on Spiritual Warfare (1993) A Working Group Report

*The Intercession Working Group (IWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization met at Fairmile Court in London July 10-14, 1993. We discussed for one full day the subject of spiritual warfare. It had been noted at our IWG Prayer Leaders' Retreat at The Cove in North Carolina, USA, the previous November, that spiritual warfare was a subject of some concern in the evangelical world. The IWG asked its members to write papers reflecting on this emphasis in each of their regions and these papers formed the basis of our discussion.*

We affirmed again statement 12 on "Spiritual Conflict" in The Lausanne Covenant:

"We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of evangelization.

"We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armor and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put man in the place of God.

We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical gospel. We acknowledge that we ourselves are not immune to worldliness of thought and actions, that is, to surrender to secularism..."

We agreed that evangelization is to bring people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17). This involves an inescapable element of spiritual warfare.

We asked ourselves why there had been almost an explosion of interest in this subject in the last 10 years. We noted that the Western church and the missionary movement from the West had seen the remarkable expansion of the church in other areas of the world without special emphasis being given to the subject of spiritual warfare.

Our members from Africa and Asia reminded us that in their context, the powers of darkness are very real and spiritual warfare is where they live all the time. Their families are still only one or two generations removed from a spiritist, animist or occult heritage.

This led to a discussion of the effects of one generation on another. We noted that in the context of idolatry, the Bible speaks of the sins of the fathers being visited upon their descendants to the third and fourth generation.

Likewise, the blessing of God's love is shown to successive generations of those who love him and keep his laws. We wondered if the time we have had the gospel in the West has made us less conscious of the powers of darkness in recent centuries.

We noted, also that the influence of the enlightenment in our education, which traces everything to natural causes, has further dulled our consciousness of the powers of darkness.

In recent times, however, several things have changed:

**Change in Initiatives:** The initiative in evangelization is passing to churches in the developing world, and as people from the same background evangelize their own people, dealing with the powers of darkness has become a natural way of thinking and working. This is especially true of the rapidly growing Pentecostal churches. This has begun to influence all missiological thinking.

**Increased Interest in Eastern Religions:** The spiritual bankruptcy of the West has opened up great interest in Eastern religions and drug cultures and brought a resurgence of the occult in the West.

**Influx of Non-Christian Worldview:** The massive migrations of peoples from the Third World to the West has brought a torrent of non-Christian worldviews and practices into our midst. Increasing mobility has also exposed developing countries to new fringe groups, cults and freemasonry.

**Sensationalization of the Occult:** The secular media has sensationalized and spread interest in these occult ideas and practices. This was marked by the screening of the film "The Exorcist." In the Christian world the books by Frank Perretti and the spate of "How to..." books on power evangelism and spiritual warfare have reflected a similar trend.

**Lausanne's Involvement in the Process:** We in Lausanne have been part of the process, especially in the track on spiritual warfare at Lausanne II in Manila and in the continuing life of that track under the aegis of the AD2000 and Beyond movement.

We recognize that this emphasis will be with us for the foreseeable future. Our concerns are:

- To help our Lausanne constituency to stay firmly within the balanced biblical teaching on prayer.
- To provide clarity, reassurance and encouragement to those whom the emphasis is causing confusion and anxiety.
- To harness what is biblical, Christ-exalting and culturally relevant in the new emphasis to the work of evangelization so that it yield lasting fruit.

We noted the following dangers and their antidotes:

**Reverting to Pagan Worldviews:** There is a danger that we revert to think and operate on pagan worldviews or on an undiscerning application of Old Testament analogies that were, in fact, superseded in Jesus Christ. The antidote to this is the rigorous study of the whole of Scripture, always interpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New.

**A Preoccupation with the Demonic:** This can lead to avoiding personal responsibility for our actions. This is countered by equal emphasis on "the world" and "the flesh" and the strong ethical teachings of the Bible.

**A Preoccupation with the Powers of Darkness:** This can exalt Satan and diminish Jesus in the focus of his people. This is cured by encouraging a Christ-centered and not an experience-centered spirituality or methodology.

**The Tendency to Shift the Emphasis to "Power" and Away From "Truth":** This tendency forgets that error, ignorance and deception can only be countered by biblical truth clearly and consistently taught. This is equally, if not more important, than tackling bondage and possession by "power encounters."

It is also the truth that sets us free, so the Word and the Spirit need to be kept in balance.

**Emphasis on Technique and Methodology:** We observed the tendency to emphasize technique and methodology in the practice of spiritual warfare and fear that when this is dominant it can become a substitute for the pursuit of holiness and even of evangelism itself. To combat this there is no substitute for a continuous, strong, balanced and Spirit-guided teaching ministry in each church.

**Growing Disillusionment:** We had reports of growing disillusionment with the results of spiritual warfare in unrealized expectations, unmet predictions and the sense of being marginalized if the language and practice of spiritual warfare is not adopted and just general discomfort with too much triumphalist talk. The antidote to all of this is a return to the whole teaching of Jesus on prayer, especially what he says about praying in secret that avoids ostentation.

**Encountering the Powers of Darkness by the Peoples Themselves:** While recognizing that someone initially has to go to a people to introduce the gospel, we felt it was necessary always for the encounter with the powers of darkness to be undertaken by Christian people within the culture and in a way that is sensitive in applying biblical truth to their context.

**Caution Regarding Territorial Spirits Concept:** We are cautious about the way in which the concept of territorial spirits is being used and look to our biblical scholars to shed more light on this recent development.

**Warfare Language Can Lead to Adversarial Attitudes:** We heard with concern of situations where warfare language was pushing Christians into adversarial attitudes with people and where people of other faiths were interpreting this as the language of violence and political involvement.

We saw that the language of peace, penitence and reconciliation must be as prominent in our speech and practice as any talk of warfare.

We are concerned that the subject and practice of spiritual warfare is proving divisive to evangelical Christians and pray that these thoughts of ours will help to combat this tendency. It is our deep prayer that the force for evangelization should not be fragmented and that our love should be strong enough to overcome these incipient divisions among us.

In his cross and resurrection, Jesus triumphed over all the powers of darkness; believers share in that triumph. We would like to see evidence of this in our unity in prayer.

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