“Where spiritual warfare is taken seriously, it is often experience-driven rather than scripturally based. Yet many of the rest of us, especially in the West, think very little about Satan and demons. This is a rare book that I, for one, will read again and recommend to others.”

Dr. Michael S. Horton  
Host of whitehorseinn.org  
Editor in chief, Modern Reformation magazine

“Relatively brief, but captivating. A perceptive investigation. Ideal for an older youth or adult Bible study group. Easy, engaging style—as if the author is speaking directly to his readers as he insightfully leads them through many different scenarios and situations.”

Dr. Ernst R. Wendland  
Lusaka Lutheran Seminary, Zambia

“It’s about time! Our Western culture has shrugged at and belittled this topic for too long. This book helped me measure and reassess our family’s alertness to demons and Satan’s deceiving ways.”

Amanda Rose  
Founder of holyhenhouse.com  
Wife and mother of three
“It expanded my perspective on the presence of demons and their impact on our everyday lives. I believe that the insights gained from this text will help me to keep my skepticism in check and to consider the impact of Satan’s demons on the future patients that I will treat as a physician.”

Adam Miller
Medical student, Medical College of Wisconsin

“A very valuable work. It is a beautiful devotional that a Christian can use in all times of trial and struggle. Definitely an eye-opener.”

Prof. Gaylin R. Schmeling
President, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
2000 DEMONS

No Match for My Savior

Jesus’ Infinite Power Over Evil

E. ALLEN SORUM

NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
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FOREWORD

By Pastor Pheng Moua

As a refugee from Southeast Asia, I grew up learning and embracing the tradition of my ancestors. The spiritual realm is always something that clouds the minds and hearts of my people. Most of us fear the unseen spirits. We imagine they eventually will swallow us up slowly, like a snake devouring its crushed prey. We know our community is surrounded by demons. We are afraid. We don’t want to talk about it. We fear that by talking about demons, they will take over our lives and souls. Evil spirits are real and dangerous.

By the Lord’s grace, I was called out of this spiritual darkness into his wonderful light and now serve as a minister for Christ. I have seen and known people saved from the grip of the devil’s hands by a demonstration of the Lord Jesus Christ’s mighty power. When the gospel first reached many of my people, they refused to believe it without a demonstration of its power. The name Jesus Christ is a powerful name. I have seen Jesus’ name deliver and save many people from the
devil, and these people, in turn, were brought to accept Jesus Christ as their only Savior.

This book covers the wonderful ministry Christ came to do, which is to destroy the work of the devil. This book provides information that will strengthen Christians—not to fear but to be diligent, watchful, and ready to fight the devil at all times. The author encourages the readers that Christ has already overcome the power of darkness and rescued them from sin. In Christ, we can stand firm and have no fear of the devil. Christ will fight for us.

I want my people to have this information. It will be so good for them. Yes, it will help them understand how demons want to torture people. But more than that, they need to be informed about how Jesus works through his Word to rescue people. My people need to know as much as they can about the power of Jesus. This book shows how Christ uses his power to rescue his people. I want my people to have this insight for fighting their spiritual battles, so that together we can have the victory.

I also think the Christian community at large needs this book and needs to realize the spiritual warfare we all are experiencing. We need to understand the consequences of this warfare. It is real, and we need to be
ready to face it. This book will help us be ready. It equips all Christians to prepare for spiritual battle and to live godly lives as we wait for the Lord Jesus Christ’s return.
I hope that reading this book will open your eyes to what you cannot see. “See” Jesus, your Savior. “See” demons and the devil, your adversaries. Then, seeing more clearly the unseen, you will lift your voice in praise to Jesus for guarding you from these enemies. And, finally, I hope your time here will make you want to raise your arms in prayer to Jesus to continue his watch over your soul.

How am I qualified to engage anybody on this topic?

I am not an exorcist.

As the director of the Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, one of my main tasks is to train men from various ethnic and immigrant backgrounds to serve as pastors in the Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In working with spiritual leaders from different countries and cultures, I have had to learn to “see” some things that I had missed before. Christians, coworkers, and students from places far and near have brought me into their experiences with the spirit world. I have not dealt directly with demons or the demon-possessed. I am not looking to change that. But my job has required me to support those who do deal directly with demons. In the process of helping, I have had to adjust my own thoughts and perspectives on the spirit world. My coworkers have been patient with me and have taught me. I am eager to share with you a few of their stories and their important insights on the matter of dealing with demons.

I am even more eager to share with you the written record of Jesus’ experience with demons and the devil. The Bible offers exactly the eye-opening power necessary to accomplish the purpose of this little book. We will look at Mark’s gospel especially, together digging into Mark’s narrative of the day when Jesus performed his biggest exorcism. We will see that this was quite a day for the small band of disciples whom Jesus had just recruited to follow him. This day will be special for us too, as we relive it.
Does it seem to you that, generally speaking, the activity of demonic forces is growing in our world? Are we more aware of demon activity or are demons just more open and bold these days? Their influence seems to grow. Many lives are ruined. This does not need to be. We have access to power that rescues people from demons. We have the power to keep people safe from demons. May our time together in the pages that follow bring us closer to that power!
CHAPTER ONE

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”
1 Peter 5:8
Before we begin to unfold and reflect on the events of this dramatic day in Jesus’ life, please let me ask: Do you believe in demons? Do you believe in the devil? Are you persuaded that the devil and his demons want to hurt you? Are you worried about demons and maybe even afraid that you could run into one? If you did run into one, how would you recognize him? (or her? or them?) What do you think?

Perspectives are wide-ranging.

Let’s start with Robert’s view.1 His pockets bristle with devices that track activities and manage information. He gets together with friends and coworkers to talk about technical topics. One matter that has never come up in any of his personal or professional circles is the potential threat of demons. He would not consider legitimate the idea that demons come from some spiritual place in a spiritual form to bring suffering on humans. Sickness is spread by germs. Robert would tell you to wash your hands often and be well! He would be impatient with anyone trying to dodge responsibility by accusing outside forces for bad outcomes.

Dawb—she prefers this traditional name to her English name—is the oldest child of immigrant parents

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1 “Robert” and the three persons that follow are composite characters I will use to illustrate different points of view.
who came to North America from Southeast Asia. Dawb wants to be left alone. But there is no place she can go to be alone; spirits and their mischief are everywhere. Dawb hopes that her family, the ones who have died and passed into their next place, can protect her—at least a little. Lately, Dawb’s father brings extra offerings to the small shrine in the family’s home to secure the ancestors’ assistance. Both of her little brothers are still sick. The family suspects that someone sent magic to cause this trouble. Tonight, finally, the healer will come to their home. And if the healer is not able to help, the family will have to bring the shaman in to deal directly with these spirits—or the magic. The shaman’s fees are high, probably too high for the family to handle. Dawb’s father and uncles meet to discuss strategy and options. Dawb’s father is afraid. She sees it. She sees that her uncles are also afraid. This makes Dawb afraid.

Jenny’s view on things supernatural is connected to her social life with high school friends. For instance, Jenny goes to parties. One of Jenny’s friends who comes to the parties is learning how to “do readings.” These readings come out of creepy cards she deals out to her friends. The girls squeal when someone gets the “tower” card. If you get that card, it means your
boyfriend will drop you for sure. “Ask the cards anything! They show you the future.” Jenny wonders about that. How can turning over a card reveal or direct the future? Anyway, once people start playing it, the game takes over the party. Everybody wants answers, and there is always “just one more” question to ask.

Let’s add Jonathan’s perspective to this list. Ghosts are his hobby. He likes to read about houses and their poltergeists. These spirits, in Jonathan’s view, do not represent evil or want necessarily to harm humans. He believes that every ghost has a story, almost always a tragic one. Ghosts like this, he is sure, give off an aura. By measuring different kinds of energy, their presence can be confirmed. They can be summoned. Communication is not only possible, it is the desired outcome. Jonathan is not at all sympathetic to religion’s view that these are evil demons. He eagerly seeks a relationship with the paranormal.

There are definitely more perspectives, but this conversation is already getting crowded. Robert is skeptical. Dawb is fully engaged. Jenny finds it all a source of entertainment, an icebreaker. Jonathan wants an interface with the supernatural. But here is the reason I have written out these descriptions—and this is my heartfelt prayer: I want you, please, to think about your own perspective. Which of these viewpoints do you most
connect with? Any? Does one of them resonate? Do you ever discuss the world of spirits, demons, the supernatural, the paranormal, or the occult? If so, what are those discussions like?

Full disclosure? I get Robert’s disinclination to even consider the existence of demons or that they may have any impact on my everyday life.

I think back to conversations I had with American Indian spiritual leaders. They shared their encounters with “skin walkers.” A Navaho told me about a nighttime car ride into the reservation. As he drove along at normal highway speeds, an Indian spirit ran up alongside of his car. “The skin walker turned his face to me, smiled, and ran off into the darkness. I was scared, man!” The story over, I remained silent. I waited for a punch line or a moral to the story. I did not think that he was serious.

Not many days after hearing the sprinting skin walker story, I walked up to a group of several American Indian men conversing on a street corner. After some preliminary small talk, I asked the men whether they had had any experience with this phenomenon of skin walkers. My impudent curiosity almost got me into trouble! Their body language morphed into menacing. Simultaneously, each member of the group made it clear that
my fact-finding mission had crossed some kind of line. One of them threatened me physically. Before they could organize the promised thrashing, I ran. That’s right. I ran. It seemed the prudent thing to do.

Over the years and up to now, bizarre accounts of personal encounters with demons and spirits have infringed upon my worldview. The people who tell me these stories know that it is with some risk they share them with “outsiders” like me. The risk I speak of is that someone like me, from where I come from, could very easily reject the story and discredit the teller. I appreciate very much that I get to hear these stories and that people are willing to risk telling them to me. But the stories still challenge me—a little. As I travel and make new friends in different cultures and places, I know that I will hear more stories. Sometimes, if the stories seem slow in coming, I ask. And when I ask, the accounts come—accounts with incredible details that challenge me.

I believe the stories that I hear. Or I believe that I should believe them. Part of me wonders, “Who can I tell this story to back home that will not think me naïve or silly for believing it?” Maybe the challenge is not with the stories I hear away from home, but with the reaction I anticipate when I tell these stories back home. I project my own skepticism onto my family and
friends. Obviously, therefore, I should be reluctant to retell the incredible accounts of personal encounters with demons and spirits to my mainstream, Western, “skeptical” community back home. Yet sometimes I cannot hold these stories back. They boil over and out like a pot of rice on the stove. Depending on the company I am with and the circumstances at hand, in a moment of weakness, I share a bizarre story of a personal encounter with the evil of demons. But here is a surprise: I am not ridiculed. The account is not rejected as fancy, myth, or primitive superstition.

Then I wonder, what is my problem? Why do I harbor even a particle of skepticism? I wonder if you would bump into the same reaction. If you were to admit to your friends a regard for or concerns about the spirit world, would you discover not skepticism but perhaps an awkward curiosity? You might encounter something between a conviction and dread. One thing that helps me to let go of some of my lingering skepticism about the demon world is that I just do not meet very many skeptics. But I know I have much more skepticism to let go of. I want to grow out of it completely.

Are you a “Robert” like me? Can we make this journey together?

But this book is not just for the Roberts.
As I have said, I work on a close personal level with many Christians from other cultures who cannot understand how anyone could struggle with doubts about the spirit world. Like Dawb, these Christians would consider such skepticism dangerous, yes, irresponsible. On the other hand, Dawb’s conviction encroaches upon obsession. Her burden is a sense of helplessness over against a malicious presence that eludes human control. More than half of the people from Dawb’s immigrant community in North America rely upon a shaman—a witch doctor—to intercede for them when circumstances suggest that the spirits are unhappy.

When a shaman cannot mediate successfully for the suffering family member, Christian pastors are sometimes called upon to serve—often out of a sense of desperation. The pastor accepts these terms. A team of members of the congregation soon arrive to offer prayers and encouragement. It is soon evident that these are not friendly spirits. For communities like this who are fully—woefully—engaged in the spirit world, the question is not, “Do spirits exist?” The question is, “How can we possibly be safe from them?”

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2 In the preface.
3 This is the figure given by members of that immigrant community.
Is that the question you wrestle with? This book will show you it is a wise question to ask. But, believe me, there is an answer. I will help you see it. I will help you find encouragement in it.

People like high school Jenny and ghost whisperer Jonathan would not follow Robert’s rationalized rejection of spirits. Jenny’s and Jonathan’s views represent a cohort of American culture that has a serious interest in spirits, ghosts, the supernatural, and the occult. This slice of North American culture is “fully engaged” with the spirit world, though not in Dawb’s way. Evidence of a wide interest in the spirit world lies in the fact, for example, that horror films in America have earned more than 8.3 billion dollars in one ten-year period. America’s film industry responds to this interest by producing between two hundred to three hundred new horror movies a year. Many are rated PG-13.

I admit with some embarrassment that I missed the whole “Jason” and “Freddy” craze. The trailers alone scared the daylights out of me. I bought a ticket for a horror movie just one time in my life. I did not make

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4 www.the-numbers.com/market/genres
5 Apparently the producers of horror movies count on parents’ willingness to allow their children to support the industry.
6 Jason was the main character in Friday the 13th movies. Freddy was the main character in A Nightmare on Elm Street movies.
it to the end of the movie. I couldn’t handle it. I was terrified and traumatized even before all the characters had been introduced onscreen. That movie’s images of occult horror and demons are as clear in my mind right now as they were 30 years ago when I was sitting—briefly—in the movie theater. Call me a scaredy-cat but I am not the only one who has a hard time sitting through horror flicks. A lot of us do not process this form of “entertainment” well.

Horror movies are popular in many countries. There is also an international market for music that explores occult themes. Bookstores offer horror literature and occult fiction. Check the best sellers right now: more than one will have an occult-related theme. Clothing and makeup styles associated with the occult are sold, and not just in specialty stores. Or would you like to dress up as the devil or a witch next Halloween? No problem. Amazon offers about one hundred different versions of Ouija boards, including a pink version for girls. Are these family-friendly board games for fun and entertainment? You can find a Tarot card reader

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7 I suppose this is one way I am not like Robert the skeptic either: For him, a movie about demons and horror is just as unreal as one about giant flying dragons or superheroes.

8 Even a professional poltergeist researcher (Dale Kaczmarek, www.ghostresearch.org/articles/ouija.html) suggests that the Ouija board is not just a game.
in your city. YouTube videos will show you how to conduct séance table tilting. Human interest in the world of spirits and the occult fuels a portfolio of these “entertainment” industries.

Forces and images and ideas that some cultures want to escape are regarded as entertainment by others. Which cultures are acting more wisely?

Science is also interested in the supernatural. Want to earn a degree in paranormal research or paranormal psychology? You will not have any trouble finding an academic or professional institution to help you earn that certification. You could even pursue a PhD in parapsychology or the like. Go on a study tour to investigate ghosts. Purchase single access EMF meters\(^9\) to measure paranormal activity. Learn how to apply the scientific method to the supernatural. From Jonathan’s perspective, there is no room here for skepticism or religion or fear.

But what is the nature of the supernatural? Is there any problem with the paranormal? Are you afraid of it? Should you be afraid of it? Is it evil? Is it bad, immoral, wicked? What do you think? Is Satan a character for a child’s Halloween costume? Or is he a dangerous

\(\text{\footnotesize 9 EMF meters measure variations in electromagnetic fields.}\)
enemy who wants to possess us and destroy us? If you are not sure or think not, you hold the majority view. Most people in North America do not think that the devil is real—in the sense that he is a personal being intent on evil. Even only 25 percent of those who identify themselves as Christians are of the opinion that Satan is a real and living being intent on hurting people.\textsuperscript{10} If the devil and demons and the spirit world are not threats to our souls and to our eternal destiny, then why would it be a problem for us to spend billions on horror films and do ghost research? We can acknowledge a spirit’s existence as long as we harbor no presumptions as to its character. We must not test the spirits—apparently.

Again, the reason I have spent all these words describing these different perspectives is to get you to think, “What’s my perspective on demons or the spirit world? How real or how malicious or how dangerous or how harmless do I actually think demons are, from one day to the next?”

What if your perspective on the spirit world is seriously wrong?

\textsuperscript{10} www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/260-most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exists#
Is there even one objectively right perspective, that is to say, a perspective that is “best” for people like Robert, Dawb, Jenny, Jonathan, and for you and me? If we acknowledge that these creatures are real, can we figure out what they want? And if what they want is to hurt us, is there any reliable way to get help against them?

What if the best perspective on the matter of spirits and demons is that of the writer of the gospel of Mark from almost two thousand years ago? His detailed reporting of the day of Jesus’ biggest exorcism teaches us a perspective on the spirit world that I want to believe. It is not yet my perspective, completely, but I want it to be. It is this: If not for the constant protection Jesus of Nazareth has given us up to this very moment, the demons would likely have us all naked, screaming, bleeding, and living in burial caves.

Study Questions
Which perspective on demons could you most relate to? Or would you like to add another to the list? Explain.
When was the last time you had a conversation about demons or the spirit world? What was the conversation like? Was it a comfortable topic for you to raise?

What’s the difference between believing in the existence of demons and taking their existence seriously?

“Even only 25 percent of those who identify themselves as Christians are of the opinion that Satan is a real and living being intent on hurting people.” What do you think of that statistic? What has led to it being such a small number?

Have you, or has someone close to you, ever encountered a demon? How do you know? Did this person recognize this encounter as potentially dangerous or threatening?

Describe how your perspective on demons is changing so far, or how it isn’t changing.