

Towards a Historical Understanding of Spiritual Warfare

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Clinton Arnold explains the prevalence of spiritual warfare in early church history writing, acknowledging the “numerous accounts of demonization and exorcism as well as descriptions of the deceptive work of demons in pagan religions fill the writings of the church fathers.”¹ Some rationalist and cessationist Christian theologians surmise that spiritual warfare has diminished since the apostolic era, but the evidence is that there “is no hint of demonic activity dying out.”² Documentation of spiritual warfare continues “through the whole time period of the ancient church” as well as during the Middle Ages, the Reformation, and the early post-Reformation.³

In evaluating spiritual warfare writings and practice, early church leaders share a helpful perspective in understanding and evaluating claims of territorial spirits, demonic possession, exorcism, demonic oppression, and other experiences and practices. Church history does demonstrate that church leaders “took the realm of the demonic seriously and believed that Christians could be profoundly influenced by evil spirits.”⁴ Clinton Arnold asserts that a “thorough treatment of this topic from the vantage point of church history would be very helpful and illuminating.”⁵ History shows a serious concern for the demonic possession of unbelievers and for the affliction of believers.⁶

¹Clinton E. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 25.

²Ibid.

³Oscar Skarsaune, “Possession and Exorcism in the Literature of the Ancient Church and the New Testament,” in *Deliver Us from Evil Consultation* (Nairobi: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization 2000), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/historical-overview-1.html>.

⁴Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions*, 112.

⁵Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions*, 112.

⁶“Numerous other accounts and excerpts could be given from Christian leaders throughout the

The focus of this section is to conduct a historical survey of the theological understanding of spiritual warfare. Attention will primarily be given to the early church era (AD 100-400). The focus of the research is on the main characters, councils, and confessions that reflect and represent the general theological considerations of spiritual warfare. This survey will establish whether Anderson's spiritual warfare understandings and practices are rooted in early church history.⁷

Ante-Nicene Church Fathers

The church fathers before the First Council of Nicaea (AD 325) are numerous and diverse. Interestingly, they almost all show some concern in addressing spiritual warfare issues among Christians and the church. Their statements, observations, and practices are of great importance to establishing the historical validity of Anderson's approach.

Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome, or Pope Clement I, is believed to have been a disciple of Peter and a co-worker with Paul (Phil 4:3; AD 57) and one of the first leaders of the church. In his letter to the church at Corinth, Clement references the war-like nature of the call for Christians to "act the part of soldiers" in following the commandments of Christ.⁸ Clement seemed aware of spiritual warfare and called for Christians to actively engage in the battles they found themselves in.

post-Nicene age, the Byzantine Empire, and from luminaries such as Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Martin Luther, and the Puritans. . . . They all took the realm of the demonic seriously and believed that Christians could be profoundly influenced by evil spirits. Yet they were also thoroughly convinced that believers had authority in the Lord Jesus Christ to send these spirits packing. As Martin Luther said regarding the devil in his famous hymn, 'one little word shall fell him.' That word is Jesus." Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions*, 112.

⁷In surveying the historical references to spiritual warfare, this historical research focused on discovering terms such as "Satan," "devil," "demons," "exorcism," "enemy," and "evil." The presence of such terms often revealed the location of writings that demonstrate the theology and practice of spiritual warfare during that period of history.

⁸Clement, *First Epistle of the Blessed Clement the Disciple of Peter* (ANF 1:5) accessed

Two letters that claim Clementine authorship, but are likely third or fourth century writings by another author, place particular emphasis on the role of exorcists within the church.⁹ The writer interestingly dedicates a significant portion of a chapter to the practice of exorcism. This early, yet pseudopigraphal (false-named), reference gives significant weight to showing that the practice of exorcism did not die out with the apostles. The author exhorts his Christian brothers to take initiative in visiting those who are “harassed by evil spirits.”¹⁰ He describes such activity as “suitable and right and comely” and places a primacy on intelligent and authoritative prayer.¹¹ The author encourages prayers rooted in “true faith,” cautioning against formulaic prayer.¹² The writer reminds believers that empowered prayer is characterized by being continuous, focused, pleading, holy, humble, pure, and cheerful, and with noble intentions.¹³ He emphasizes how an effective deliverer only exercises their powers through the help of God. Such empowered warriors put their own flesh to death and seek the “power of the

December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ii.ii.html>. Corresponding scriptures are found in Phil 2:25, 2 Tim 2:3, and Phlm 1:2.

⁹M. B. Riddle, “Introductory Notice to Two Epistles Concerning Virginity” (*ANF* 8:53) accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf08.v.ii.html>.

¹⁰“This also, again, is suitable and right and comely for those who are brethren in Christ, that they should visit those who are harassed by evil spirits, and pray and pronounce adjurations over them, intelligently, *offering* such prayer as is acceptable before God; not with a multitude of fine words, well prepared and arranged, so that they may appear to men eloquent and of a good memory. *Such men* are ‘like a sounding pipe, or a tinkling cymbal;’ and they bring no help to those over whom they make their adjurations; but they speak with terrible words, and affright people, but do not act with true faith, according to the teaching of our Lord, who hath said: ‘This kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer,’ offered unceasingly and with earnest mind. And let them holily ask and beg of God, with cheerfulness and all circumspection and purity, without hatred and without malice. . . . By your fastings and prayers and perpetual watching, together with your other good works, mortify the works of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. He who acts thus ‘is a temple of the Holy Spirit of God.’ Let this man cast out demons, and God will help him. For it is good that a man help those that are sick. Our Lord hath said: ‘Cast out demons’ at the same thee *commanding* many other acts of healing; and, ‘Freely ye have received, freely give.’ For such persons as these a goodly recompense is *laid up* by God, because they serve their brethren with the gifts which have been given them by the Lord.” Clement, *First Epistle of the Blessed Clement the Disciple of Peter* (*ANF* 1:5).

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Clement, *First Epistle of the Blessed Clement the Disciple of Peter* (*ANF* 1:5).

Holy Spirit” through “fastings and prayers and perpetual watching, together with your other good works.”¹⁴ He connects the practice of exorcism with healing. He also commends exorcism as a gift from the Lord and a practice that will be rewarded. These writings, although pseudo-Clementine, point to an early understanding of spiritual warfare that emphasizes God’s power being accessed primarily through prayer.

Mathetes

The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus (c. AD 130) is an early writing. The author or recipient of the letter is unknown, but Mathetes “was possibly a catechumen of St. Paul or of one of the apostle's associates” and “is, perhaps, the first of the apologists.”¹⁵ There parts of the letter, such as chapter eight, “The Miserable State of Men Before the Coming of the World,” where the reader would expect a reference to Satan or his demons, but does not.¹⁶ Mathetes refers to himself as “a disciple of the Apostles” who is sharing the “things delivered to me” to the Gentiles.¹⁷

In the concluding chapter of his epistle “The Importance of Knowledge to True Spiritual Life,” Mathetes references the serpent multiple times. His references surround the serpent’s attempts to deceive and place false knowledge into the lives of believers. He comments that Adam and Eve did not use true knowledge of the way to life “properly, they were, through the fraud of the serpent, stripped naked.”¹⁸ Mathetes’ descriptions paint a picture of Satan’s focus on deception rather than power and possession.¹⁹

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the Epistle of Ignatius” (*ANF* 1:45), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.i.html>.

¹⁶Mathetes, *The Epistles of Mathetes to Diognetus* (*ANF* 1:25), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.iii.ii.html>.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Mathetes, *The Epistles of Mathetes to Diognetus* (*ANF* 1:12).

¹⁹“did not use this [knowledge] properly, they were, through the fraud of the Serpent, stripped naked. . . . or he who thinks he knows anything without true knowledge, and such as is witnessed to by life,

Polycarp

Polycarp (AD 69-155) was a disciple of John and other apostles, in contact with many eyewitnesses of Christ, and an early leader of the Christian church.²⁰ In his letter to the church at Philippi, Polycarp mentions little concerning spiritual warfare, but does point to the fact that “whosoever does not confess the testimony of the cross, is of the devil.”²¹ He additionally affirms that “whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist” and that “whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first-born of Satan.”²² Such powerful, bold statements do not reinforce any specific encounter approaches. Polycarp does reveal that there is significance in understanding that all humanity is allied with either Christ or the devil.

Ignatius

Ignatius was an early church father (AD 30-107) linked with the Apostle John, Eusebius, and Polycarp. It is “scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance of the testimony which the Ignatian letters offer to the dogmatic character of Apostolic Christianity.”²³ His works include seven credible letters but early church history reveals eight additional writings that are likely later, spurious forgeries.²⁴ Out of these writings, two credible letters and three spurious letters contain spiritual warfare language.

knows nothing, but is deceived by the Serpent, as not loving life. . . . thou shalt always gather in those things which are desired by God, which the Serpent cannot reach, and to which deception does not approach.” Ibid.

²⁰A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians” (*ANF* 1:31), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.iv.i.html>.

²¹Polycarp, *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Ephesians* (*ANF* 7:33), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.iv.ii.html>.

²²Ibid.

²³John Bonaventure O’Connor, “St. Ignatius of Antioch,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 7 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07644a.htm>.

²⁴A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the Epistle of Ignatius” (*ANF* 1:45), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.i.html>.

The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians refers to Satan as the “wicked one” who envies in an invisible way. Ignatius refers to Satan as literally warring against him. Ignatius fights back through “meekness, by which the devil, the prince of this world, is brought to nought.”²⁵ He encourages the Trallians to put “put on your guard” and to “forsee the snares of the devil.”²⁶ Although Ignatius does not reveal a specific power or truth encounter approach, he clearly reveals his understanding that there are real attacks of Satan at both an individual (believer) and corporate (church) level. Ignatius also writes in his letter to the Philadelphians a warning concerning heretics “from whom ‘a defiling influence has gone forth into all the earth.’”²⁷ He reinforces light, truth, and especially unity as they avoid “many wolves in sheep's clothing.”²⁸ As Ignatius demonstrates, the Church Fathers often emphasized spiritual warfare when considering heresy.

Another important Ignatian writing is *The Martyrdom of Ignatius*. Although several aspects of the martyrdom account are verified historically, parts of it are of unknown veracity, as the writing was not referenced in the first six centuries of the church.²⁹ In this work, an eyewitness narrative of Ignatius’ approach towards death is given. The crime Trajan assigned to Ignatius was of not worshipping idols. The author describes idol worship as the “worship [of] daemons.”³⁰ This intimate connection of

²⁵Ignatius, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians* (ANF 1:66), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.iv.html>.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ignatius, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians* (ANF 1:79), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.vi.html>.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the Martyrdom of Ignatius” (ANF 1:127), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.xxiv.html>.

³⁰“Ignatius replied, ‘No one ought to call Theophorus wicked; for, you call me wicked in respect to them, I quite agree with you; for inasmuch as I have Christ the King of heaven [within me], I.’ Ignatius replied, ‘No one ought to call Theophorus wicked; for all evil spirits have departed from the servants of God. But if, because I am an enemy to these [spirits], you call me wicked in respect to them, I

demons and idol worship was a spiritual warfare concept the early church continued to communicate.

Ignatius replies to the accusations that he is wicked, asserting that “all evil spirits have departed from the servants of God” and that he is “an enemy to these [spirits]” in destroying “all the devices of these [evil spirits].”³¹ The clarity and certainty with which Ignatius describes demonic spirits shows that he believes the battle is real. He holds that believers should actively oppose Satan and his demons. Ignatius’ reference to evil spirits departing from believers also suggests the practice of exorcism at the point of belief, implying from his own example that evil spirits are present in the lives of unbelievers.

The spurious writings communicate many more references to spiritual warfare, particularly to the power encounter approach. In *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*, the writer references the office of exorcists.³² Another fraudulent writing, from Mary of Cassobelæ to Ignatius, describes some “who were possessed of a wicked spirit as being false in their speech, and deceivers of the people” as well as referencing the “deceit of the demons.”³³ Interestingly the activity of both the demons and the possessed focuses on deception.

quite agree with you; for inasmuch as I have Christ the King of heaven [within me], I destroy all the devices of these [evil spirits].’ Ignatius answered, ‘Thou art in error when thou callest the daemons of the nations gods. For there is but one God, who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them; and one Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, whose kingdom may I enjoy.’ Trajan said, ‘Do you mean Him who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?’ Ignatius replied, ‘I mean Him who crucified my sin, with him who was the inventor of it, and who has condemned [and cast down] all the deceit and malice of the devil under the feet of those who carry Him in their heart.’ Ignatius, *The Martyrdom of Ignatius* (ANF 1:129), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.xxv.html>.

³¹Ibid.

³²“I salute the sub-deacons, the readers, the singers, the doorkeepers, the labourers, the exorcists, the confessors.” Ignatius, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians* (ANF 1:110), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.xv.html>.

³³Ignatius, *The Epistle of Maria the Proselyte to Ignatius* (ANF 1:121), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.xviii.v.html>.

Another likely fraudulent writing, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, contains perhaps the most references to Satan in many of the ancient church writings with half of the chapter titles directly referencing Satan.³⁴ In this epistle, the author makes multiple references to the temptation encounter of Christ with Satan in the desert as well as scriptural references to the devil. Along with these references are a seeming inclusion and incorporation of terms and theology (bishop, presbyter, Lord's Day, overemphasis on Mary, the Trinity) of the later church (3rd and 4th century and beyond).³⁵ Despite the biblical nature of many of the spiritual warfare references in the fraudulent writings, their inconsistencies lend little weight to an early date. These spurious writings, with additional emphasis on exorcism, possession, and spiritual warfare, cause concern that there was an attempt to over-emphasize and influence theology and practice where the early church did not.

Barnabas

The Epistle of Barnabas is a writing whose authorship is circumspect in many ways. The early church believed it written by Barnabas the Levite of Cyprus, an early believer of renown in the church.³⁶ Its dating is early, but its veiled authorship leaves some wondering as to its actual importance and significance. This letter does possess some early spiritual warfare references however, comparing the pre-salvific state of being a "habitation of demons" compared with how believers become a spiritual temple of God.³⁷ Such a reference implies possession, but because authorship questions remain, the references are not greatly weighted.

³⁴Ignatius, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philippians* (ANF 1:117), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.xvii.iv.html>.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶A. Cleveland Coxe, "Introductory Note to the Epistle of Barnabas" (ANF 1:133), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.vi.i.html>.

³⁷"Before we believed in God, the habitation of our heart was corrupt and weak, as being

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (AD 110-65), a Gentile born in Samaria, was a philosopher who came to Christ upon witnessing the “extraordinary fearlessness which the Christians displayed in the presence of death.”³⁸ Justin’s writings constitute some of “the most important that have come down to us from the second century” and give “us an insight into the relations existing between heathens and Christians in those days.”³⁹ The attestation and trustworthiness of his writings give lend greater importance to his writings. In the arena of spiritual warfare, Justin Martyr provides the most significant insight into the Christian understanding of spiritual warfare in the early church.

Justin, *The First Apology*. In Justin’s apologies, he shares great insights into his understanding of Satan’s work on earth. He counters the accusations of atheists against Christians by identifying Greek gods as being demonic. He argues,

since of old these evil demons, effecting apparitions of themselves, both defiled women and corrupted boys, and showed such fearful sights to men, that those who did not use their reason in judging of the actions that were done, were struck with terror; and being carried away by fear, and not knowing that these were demons, they called them gods, and gave to each the name which each of the demons chose for himself.⁴⁰

Not only does Justin explain the origin of these so-called gods, but denies their deity and again clarifies that they are “wicked and impious demons.”⁴¹ Justin leaves no room to doubt that he believes that the gods of the Greeks and their associated manifestations are the product of real spirits: demons.

indeed like a temple made with hands. For it was full of idolatry, and was a habitation of demons, through our doing such things as were opposed to [the will of] God.” Barnabas, *The Epistle of Barnabas* (ANF 1:147), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.vi.ii.xvi.html>.

³⁸A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the Writings of Justin Martyr” (ANF 1:159), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.i.html>.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin* (ANF 1:163), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.ii.html>.

⁴¹Ibid.

Justin also emphasized, like other early church fathers, how the demons seek to deceive. He also explains more clearly that they are accusers who seek to “divert you from reading and understanding” the writing and teaching of Christian leaders.⁴² They work not only by attacking truth, but also through manifestations through “appearances in dreams” and “by magical impositions” to subdue hold mankind as “slaves and servants.”⁴³ Justin asserts that the believer is to “stand aloof from them (i.e. demons)” and “embrace chastity” while dedicating themselves to God and valuing Him above all other things.⁴⁴ Putting on righteousness is a key emphasis of Martyr’s approach to spiritual warfare.

Justin expounds on how “the demons still mislead men” through the example of the Samaritans Simon and Meander, “who did many mighty works by magic, and deceived many, and still keep them deceived.”⁴⁵ This view of spiritual warfare shows an integration of manifestation with deception through the examples of men. He reminds the reader that Simon appeared before the Roman people and senate during the reign of Claudius Cæsar, leading to his deification and honor through a statue.⁴⁶ Justin asks for the destruction of Simon’s statue as well as a reminder not to “be entangled by that man’s doctrines” but rather to “learn the truth, and so be able to escape error.”⁴⁷ Justin clearly emphasizes a truth encounter approach to spiritual warfare but also upholds the importance of destroying objects of false, demonic worship.

Lastly, for Justin’s first apology, he explains how some of the false religions, specifically in the temples of Greek gods, are but demonic imitations of biblical worship.

⁴²Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin* (ANF 1:167).

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin* (ANF 1:183).

⁴⁶See notes under Irenæus for a more detailed description of Simon.

⁴⁷Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin* (ANF 1:167).

He evidences this imitation in the practices of washings, libations, burnt offerings, sprinkling, and shoe removal, directly connecting this with a mockery of Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush.⁴⁸

Justin, *The Second Apology*. *The Second Apology of Justin* continues to reveal how deeply Justin understands spiritual warfare. He describes “the evil demons” as hating Christians and endeavoring to keep unbelievers “subject to themselves.”⁴⁹ He specifically credits the demons as influencing human judges with the purpose of putting Christians to death. He further credits the “influence of the wicked demons” for the suffering and persecution of some “earnest men, such as Socrates,” while others such as “Sardanapalus, Epicurus, and the like, seem to be blessed in abundance and glory.”⁵⁰

Despite the activity of Satan and his demons, Justin upholds each man's personal responsibility for his actions, asserting, “each man by free choice acts rightly or sins.”⁵¹ Demonic influence towards sin occurs through a multitude of avenues, “partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and the punishments they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, and incense, and libations, of which things they stood in need after they were enslaved by lustful passions.”⁵² Justin reminds us that Christ was incarnate partially “for the destruction of the demons.”⁵³

Interestingly, Justin points to the practice of exorcism. This is one of the earliest and most well attested references to the practice and office of exorcist. He

⁴⁸Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin* (ANF 1:183).

⁴⁹Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology of Justin for the Christians Addressed to the Roman Senate* (ANF 1:188), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.iii.html>.

⁵⁰Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology of Justin* (ANF 1:191).

⁵¹Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology of Justin* (ANF 1:191).

⁵²Justin Martyr, *The Second Apology of Justin* (ANF 1:190).

⁵³Ibid.

describes “numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city,” and how “many of our Christian men [are] exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate.”⁵⁴ He points out how these Christians “have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.”⁵⁵

Justin, *The Dialogue with Trypho*. A final important reference for understanding Justin’s understanding of spiritual warfare is found in *The Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew*.⁵⁶ This work is historically significant as “it is the first elaborate exposition of the reasons for regarding Christ as the Messiah of the Old Testament, and the first systematic attempt to exhibit the false position of the Jews in regard to Christianity.”⁵⁷ As Justin explains the faith to Trypho, he uses the opportunity to explain the devil and his demons as well as the corresponding aspects of spiritual warfare.

Justin characterizes Satan principally as a liar, “as therefore the devil lied at the beginning, so did he also in the end.”⁵⁸ Satan’s battle is clearly to “to deceive and lead astray the mind of man into disobeying the commandments of God, and gradually to darken the hearts of those who would endeavour to serve him, to the forgetting of the true God, but to the adoration of himself as God.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew* (ANF 1:194), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.iv.html>.

⁵⁷A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the Writings of Justin Martyr” (ANF 1:159).

⁵⁸Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew* (ANF 1:206).

⁵⁹Ibid.

Martyr describes the call for believers to “pray to be kept by Him from strange, i.e., from wicked and deceitful, spirits.”⁶⁰ He reemphasizes the specific needs for continual prayers of protection. He states that before conversion, believers served such demons, but now they have the power of Jesus’ name that “even the demons do fear; and at this day, when they are exorcised in the name of Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate, governor of Judæa, they are overcome.”⁶¹ In describing non-believers, Justin categorizes them alongside the demonic, as both refuse to obey the will of God and “do the works of the devil.”⁶² In such categorization, he affirms that there is no middle ground or neutral territory in spiritual warfare.

As mentioned in his *Apologies*, Martyr asserts that false religious practices originate with the devil and are but imitations of God’s great work. He points biblically to the Magi in Egypt and the false prophets in Elijah’s days but then connects such false worship to Greek gods such as Bacchus son of Jupiter, Semele, Hercules, Jove of Alcmena, and Æsculapius. Justin reminds the believer of his authority in Christ when they “exorcise all demons and evil spirits, have them subjected to us.”⁶³ He holds that this authority to overcome and subdue the evil spirits is effective over “every demon.”⁶⁴ Such authority is only definitively extended in the name of Christ, never in the names of “kings, or righteous men, or prophesy, or patriarchs” and only possibly if exorcised in the name of “the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”⁶⁵ He again

⁶⁰Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew* (ANF 1:209).

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew* (ANF 1:215).

⁶³Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew* (ANF 1:237).

⁶⁴Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew* (ANF 1:242).

⁶⁵Ibid.

reminds Trypho of how other Jewish and Gentile exorcists attempt exorcism with craft, but to no avail.

Justin Martyr exposes a comprehensive and thoroughly biblical understanding of spiritual warfare. He reveals that demonic possession and exorcism did not cease with the apostolic age but continued into the early church. He emphasizes the power of Christ's name and the knowledge of truth while condemning human-crafted techniques in spiritual warfare. Although some of Justin's other writings reveal some spiritual warfare themes, the *Apologies* and *The Dialogue with Trypho* presents an accurate understanding of his views and practices.⁶⁶

Irenæus

Irenæus (AD 120-202) was a young leader in the church, a student under Polycarp, who quickly rose against the Gnostic heresies.⁶⁷ In his principle work, *Against Heresies*, Irenæus connects the heresies to the work of the devil to include a similar reference as Justin Martyr did to Simon Menander.⁶⁸ He points to how Satan is “accustomed to lie against God, for the purpose of leading men astray.”⁶⁹ Satan's work

⁶⁶“But since the adversary does not cease to resist many, and uses many and divers arts to ensnare them, that he may seduce the faithful from their faith, and that he may prevent the faithless from believing, it seems to me necessary that we also, being armed with the invulnerable doctrines of the faith, do battle against him in behalf of the weak.” Justin Martyr, *Fragments of the Lost Work of Justin on the Resurrection*, (ANF 1:294), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.viii.viii.html>.

⁶⁷A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to Irenæus Against Heresies” (ANF 1:309), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.i.html>.

⁶⁸“Thus, then, the mystic priests belonging to this sect both lead profligate lives and practise magical arts, each one to the extent of his ability. They use exorcisms and incantations. Love-potions, too, and charms, as well as those beings who are called ‘Paredri’ (familiaris) and ‘Oniopompi’ (dream-senders), and whatever other curious arts can be had recourse to, are eagerly pressed into their service. They also have an image of Simon fashioned after the likeness of Jupiter, and another of Helena in the shape of Minerva; and these they worship. In fine, they have a name derived from Simon, the author of these most impious.” Irenæus, *Irenæus Against Heresies* (ANF 1:348), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.ii.xxiv.html>.

⁶⁹Irenæus, *Irenæus Against Heresies* (ANF 1:552).

from the beginning was to murder and lie, and “the truth is not in him.”⁷⁰ The length and subject of Irenæus’ work might lead one to believe he might make more spiritual warfare references. Although Irenæus’ focus is principally on directly addressing the Gnostic heresies, he indicates an understanding of the underlying problem.

Hermas

The Pastor of Hermas (c. AD 160) was “one of the most popular books, if not the most popular book, in the Christian church during the second, third, and fourth centuries. It occupied a position analogous in some respects to that of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* in modern times.”⁷¹ Its authorship is not certain, but its writing was early and its influence was immense. Origen considered it “divinely inspired,” while “Irenæus quotes it as Scripture,” and Eusebius mentions that many considered it an “admirable introduction to the Christian faith.”⁷²

The second book of *The Pastor of Hermas* has three “commandments” with overtly spiritual warfare focused titles. The sixth Commandment is titled, “How to Recognise the Two Spirits Attendant on Each Man, and How to Distinguish the Suggestions of the One from Those of the Other.” The seventh Commandment is titled, “On Fearing God, and Not Fearing the Devil.” The twelfth Commandment is titled “On the Twofold Desire. The Commandments of God Can Be Kept, and Believers Ought Not to Fear the Devil.”

In the sixth Commandment the writer describes believers as inhabited by two angels, the angel of righteousness and the angel of iniquity. He implores the reader to “understand them, and trust the angel of righteousness; but depart from the angel of

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to The Pastor of Hermas” (*ANF* 2:3), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.ii.i.html>.

⁷²Ibid.

iniquity, because his instruction is bad in every deed.”⁷³ Although this commandment seems to imply that demons can possess believers, this commandment is best understood to describe the spiritual battle for our minds. The writer seeks to inspire the reader to awareness of and resistance to Satan’s temptations both in deceit and in behavior.

The writer uses the seventh Commandment to encourage the believer not to fear the devil, “for, fearing the Lord, you will have dominion over the devil, for there is no power in him.”⁷⁴ He instructs the believer to fear the Lord in such a way that one not only avoids “that which is evil,” but does “that which is good.”⁷⁵ A proper understanding of the power of the Lord is essential to a biblical understanding and application of the fear of the Lord.

The twelfth Commandment of Hermas again encourages the believer not to fear the devil because he cannot “hold sway over the servants of God, who with all their heart place their hopes in Him.”⁷⁶ He argues that the devil can wrestle against believers but true believers will resist the devil strongly and cannot be overthrown. He states that Satan has no way of entering into (possessing) believers and instead goes into those whom are empty (non-believers).⁷⁷ Instead of fearing the devil, the “angel of repentance” reminds believers that he was sent to be with those “who repent with all your heart, and to make you strong in faith.”⁷⁸ In the midst of repentance, there is not only

⁷³Herms, *The Pastor of Hermas* (ANF 2:20), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.ii.iii.html>.

⁷⁴Herms, *The Pastor of Hermas* (ANF 2:25).

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Herms, *The Pastor of Hermas* (ANF 2:29).

⁷⁷“So also the devil goes to all the servants of God to try them. As many, then, as are full in the faith, resist him strongly, and he withdraws from them, having no way by which he might enter them. He goes, then, to the empty, and finding a way of entrance, into them, he produces in them whatever he wishes, and they become his servants.” Ibid. This quote shows the early church understanding that only non-believers can be demonically possessed/inhabited.

⁷⁸Ibid.

strengthening, but there is healing of “former sins” by Christ.⁷⁹ No matter the “threats of the devil,” the believer must “fear them not at all, for he is powerless as the sinews of a dead man.”⁸⁰ Apart from Justin Martyr, the writer of *The Pastor of Hermas* provides the most depth and understanding to seeing the spiritual warfare beliefs and practices of the early church.

Tatian

Tatian (AD 110-72) was an Assyrian believer and a student of Justin Martyr who eventually lived in Antioch.⁸¹ In his *Address of Tatian to the Greeks*, he depicts demons in a frenzied attack against mankind, attacking through attempts to pervert their minds. He describes these demons as sometimes making themselves seen, exhibiting themselves in a way that leads men to fear or honor them. Demons, Tatian holds, “depart in terror” when “smitten by the word of God” which then leads to the sick being healed.⁸² In another section, Tatian describes people entering into relationships with visiting demons. Those struggling with sickness, love, hatred, and revenge seek demonic assistance under false promises and assurances.⁸³

Tertullian

Tertullian (c.AD 145-220) was an early and extensively published author in the church.⁸⁴ In his premier work, *Apology*, he affirms the existence of demons, saying that

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to Tatian the Assyrian” (*ANF* 2:61), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.iii.i.html>.

⁸²Tatian, *Address of Tatian to the Greeks* (*ANF* 2:65), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.iii.ii.html>.

⁸³Tatian, *Address of Tatian to the Greeks* (*ANF* 2:72).

⁸⁴Allan Menzies, “Introductory Note to Tertullian” (*ANF* 3:3), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.iv.ii.html>.

they are well known by both believers and philosophers. He mentions Socrates himself as self-attesting to a relationship with a demonic spirit from childhood.⁸⁵ He emphasizes their subtleness while unashamedly seeking the ruin and destruction of mankind through disease, calamity, and temptations. He states that “we are not cognizant of their actions save by its effects” due to their invisible and intangible nature.⁸⁶ He affirms that the only “authority and power we have over them is from our naming the name of Christ, and recalling to their memory the woes with which God threatens them at the hands of Christ.”⁸⁷ It is with this fear of Christ’s judgment that demons do become “subject to the servants of God” and “at our touch and breathing . . . they leave at our command the bodies they have entered, unwilling, and distressed, and before your very eyes put to an open shame.”⁸⁸ Historian, Henry Kelly, explains that “No one was more aware than Tertullian of the demonic influences that surrounded the people of his day.”⁸⁹ Tertullian, in his lengthy description on repentance and baptism, places great emphasis on the confession of sins.⁹⁰ Kelly summarizes Tertullian’s understanding of how to fight the demonic, writing,

⁸⁵Tertullian, *The Apology*, (ANF 3:17), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.iv.iii.html>.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Tertullian, *The Apology*, (ANF 3:36).

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Henry A. Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology, and Drama* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 107.

⁹⁰“They who are about to enter baptism ought to pray with repeated prayers, fasts, and bendings of the knee, and vigils all the night through, and with the confession of all bygone sins, that they may express the meaning even of the baptism of John: ‘They were baptized,’ saith (the Scripture), ‘confessing their own sins.’ To us it is matter for thankfulness if we do now publicly confess our iniquities or our turpitudes: for we do at the same time both make satisfaction for our former sins, by mortification of our flesh and spirit, and lay beforehand the foundation of defences against the temptations which will closely follow. ‘Watch and pray,’ saith (the Lord), ‘lest ye fall into temptation.’” Tertullian, *On Baptism* (ANF 3:669), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.vi.iii.i.html>. Corresponding scriptures are found in Matthew 3:6 and Mark 1:5.

Tertullian did not indicate the existence of, or feel the need for, any special rite designed to set men free from the demonic influence when they became members of the Christian community—in addition, that is to the act of renunciation, and, of course, baptism itself.⁹¹

Tertullian's description of exorcism is consistent with an emphasis on the power of Christ's name with minimal focus on human power techniques. The power lies in the truth of God contained in the name of Christ. The vast scope of Tertullian's writings necessitates much greater attention than this section allows.

Minucius Felix

Minucius Felix was a contemporary of Tertullian who penned *Octavius* (c.AD 210) as a feigned dialogue between a pagan and a Christian.⁹² In his writing, he describes the work of demons at several points, describing both their possession and mental attacks.⁹³ He also describes in detail how the demons are connected with idols, statues, mediums, oracles, and predictive signs.⁹⁴ He argues that demons “are both deceived, and they deceive.”⁹⁵ These false spirits “weigh men downwards from heaven, and call them away from the true God to material things.”⁹⁶ Felix vividly describes demonic possession, exorcism, and dialogue as well, explaining how they have communicated themselves as the gods of the Greeks and seek to keep unbelievers away from Christians.⁹⁷ Overall, Felix describes a plethora of power-encounter type approaches to

⁹¹Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism*, 107.

⁹²A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to Minucius Felix” (*ANF* 4:169), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.iv.ii.html>.

⁹³Minucius Felix, *Octavius* (*ANF* 4:173), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.iv.ii.html>.

⁹⁴Minucius Felix, *Octavius* (*ANF* 4:190).

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶*Ibid.*

⁹⁷“They disturb the life, render all men unquiet; creeping also secretly into human bodies, with subtlety, as being spirits, they feign diseases, alarm the minds, wrench about the limbs; that they may constrain men to worship them, being gorged with the fumes of altars or the sacrifices of cattle, that, by remitting what they had bound, they may seem to have cured it. These raging maniacs also, whom you see

spiritual warfare while reinforcing that their goal is to deceive and distract humanity away from the truth of God.

Origen

Origen (AD 185–254) was an early leader of the church at Alexandria, helping to develop many of the foundational doctrines of the early church. Although some of his hypotheses would later be exposed as incorrect and heretical, his writings and teachings are of immense value to understanding the theology of the early church.⁹⁸ In his *Origen de Principiis*, he describes the devil and his demons and how “the Church has laid down that these beings exist” but “had not explained with sufficient clearness” what they are or how they exist.⁹⁹ Origen describes a renunciation of the devil in baptism,

We come to that moment when we made these promises, this declaration to the devil. Each of the faithful recalls when he came to the waters of baptism, when he received the first seal of the faith and approach the fount of salvation, the words that he pronounced then; he recalls his renunciation of the devil. He promised to resort to none of his pomps and his works and not to submit to any of his servitudes and his pleasures.¹⁰⁰

rush about in public, are moreover themselves prophets without a temple; thus they rage, thus they rave, thus they are whirled around. In them also there is a like instigation of the demon, but there is a dissimilar occasion for their madness. . . . A great many, even some of your own people, know all those things that the demons themselves confess concerning themselves, as often as they are driven by us from bodies by the torments of our words and by the fires of our prayers. Saturn himself, and Serapis, and Jupiter, and whatever demons you worship, overcome by pain, speak out what they are; and assuredly they do not lie to their own discredit, especially when any of you are standing by. Since they themselves are the witnesses that they are demons, believe them when they confess the truth of themselves; for when abjured by the only and true God, unwillingly the wretched beings shudder in their bodies, and either at once leap forth, or vanish by degrees, as the faith of the sufferer assists or the grace of the healer inspires. Thus they fly from Christians when near at hand, whom at a distance they harassed by your means in their assemblies. And thus, introduced into the minds of the ignorant, they secretly sow there a hatred of us by means of fear. . . . Thus they take possession of the minds and obstruct the hearts, that men may begin to hate us before they know us; lest, if known, they should either imitate us, or not be able to condemn us.” Ibid.

⁹⁸A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the Works of Origen” (*ANF* 4:223), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.vi.ii.i.html>.

⁹⁹Origen, *Origen de Principiis*” (*ANF* 4:239), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.vi.v.i.html>.

¹⁰⁰Origen, *Homilies on Numbers* 12.4 in Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2009), 445.

In *Contra Celsus*, Origen references the exorcisms that Christ performed and refers to how Christians of the day powerfully performed exorcisms through the “grace which is in the word of Christ,” rather than through the wisdom and learning of men.¹⁰¹ He continues on, emphasizing the power of prayer in exorcism of both humans and animals.¹⁰² Origen also directly connects false religions and their worship in idols, altars, and temples to direct demonic worship.¹⁰³

Cyprian

Cyprian (AD 200-258) was the “spiritual son and pupil of Tertullian” but also known as the “Ignatius of the West.”¹⁰⁴ In his *Treatises*, he begins by emphasizing the unity of the church. He argues that as Satan’s schemes are thwarted, such as when Christians leave false religions, he attacks in new ways through infiltration and division. Cyprian specifically describes these enemy attacks as occurring through “flattering and deceiving” and by Satan equipping his own ministers to invade the Christian church.¹⁰⁵ Cyprian’s awareness of the reality of spiritual warfare continues to reveal itself throughout his work in reference to the enemy and his ongoing, strategic attacks.

¹⁰¹“Because for the most part it is unlettered persons who perform this work; thus making manifest the grace which is in the word of Christ, and the despicable weakness of demons, which, in order to be overcome and driven out of the bodies and souls of men, do not require the power and wisdom of those who are mighty in argument, and most learned in matters of faith.” Origen, *Contra Celsus* (ANF 4:395, 613), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.vi.ix.i.i.html>.

¹⁰²“For ourselves, so far are we from wishing to serve demons, that by the use of prayers and other means which we learn from Scripture, we drive them out of the souls of men, out of places where they have established themselves, and even sometimes from the bodies of animals; for even these creatures often suffer from injuries inflicted upon them by demons.” Origen, *Contra Celsus* (ANF 4:639). This is the only reference that suggests demonic establishment over a place.

¹⁰³“Hence we are determined to avoid the worship of demons even as we would avoid death; and we hold that the worship, which is supposed among the Greeks to be rendered to gods at the altars, and images, and temples, is in reality offered to demons.” Origen, *Contra Celsus* (ANF 4:640).

¹⁰⁴A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Notice to Cyprian” (ANF 5:263), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iv.ii.html>.

¹⁰⁵Cyprian, *The Treatises of Cyprian* (ANF 5:421), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iv.v.i.html>.

Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers

Although the focus of this section of the dissertation is on the early church era, it is informative to see how the spiritual warfare understanding of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. This perspective is helpful in determining the continuation or cessation of particular aspects of spiritual warfare.

Eusebius

Eusebius of Cæsarea (c.AD 260-340) was especially known for his historical accounts of the early church.¹⁰⁶ His writings offer early and extensive accounts of the office of exorcist when referencing the existence of “52 exorcists” during the time of a Roman bishop named Cornelius (c.AD 250).¹⁰⁷

Novatian’s exorcism and baptism. Eusebius references how a convert named Novatian, who would eventually become a presbyter, was delivered of Satan’s possession by the exorcists.¹⁰⁸ Eusebius describes Novatian’s possession spatially, saying Satan “entered and dwelt in him for a long time” but does not relate how that possession manifested itself. He also describes how following his exorcism he became sick to the point of death. Novatian’s illness continued, but was relieved immediately following his baptism which is described as “irregular” due to it being conducted by affusion as a “clinical baptism.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶Arthur C. McGiffert “The Life and writings of Eusebius of Cæsarea” (*NPNF*² 1:3), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.iii.i.ii.html>.

¹⁰⁷Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (*NPNF*² 1:287), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.xi.xliii.html>.

¹⁰⁸“but Satan, who entered and dwelt in him for a long time, became the occasion of his believing. Being delivered by the exorcists, he fell into a severe sickness; and as he seemed about to die, he received baptism by affusion, on the bed where he lay; if indeed we can say that such a one did receive it.” Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (*NPNF*² 1:288).

¹⁰⁹“There is no reason to doubt that Novatian received clinical baptism, as here stated by Cornelius. This does not imply, as is commonly supposed, that he was of heathen parentage, for many Christians postponed baptism as long as possible, in order not to sacrifice baptismal grace by sins committed after baptism. We do not know whether his parents were heathen or Christians. Upon the

The office of exorcist. Eusebius also references exorcists being persecuted along with other leaders of the churches in “Asia Minor and Syria during the time of the emperor Diocletian (c.AD 284-305).”¹¹⁰ An explanatory note accompanying this writing explains that “although we find exorcism very frequently referred to by the Fathers of the second century, there seems to have been no such office until the third century, the present being the earliest distinct reference to it.”¹¹¹ This nineteenth century historian continues his explanation by stating, “In the fourth century we find the office in all parts of the Church East and West. Their duty was to take charge of those supposed to be possessed of an evil spirit; to pray with them, care for them, and exorcise the demon when possible.”¹¹²

Matrydom of exorcists. Eusebius graphically describes this time of persecution, explaining,

What was to be seen after this exceeds all description. A vast multitude were imprisoned in every place; and the prisons everywhere, which had long before been prepared for murderers and robbers of graves, were filled with bishops, presbyters and deacons, readers and exorcists, so that room was no longer left in them for those condemned for crimes.¹¹³

objection to Novatian’s ordination, based upon his irregular baptism.” Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:737).

¹¹⁰Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions*, 112. “What was to be seen after this exceeds all description. A vast multitude were imprisoned in every place; and the prisons everywhere, which had long before been prepared for murderers and robbers of graves, were filled with bishops, presbyters and deacons, readers and exorcists.” Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:328).

¹¹¹“Explanatory Note number 2125: ‘The Exorcists likewise constituted one of the inferior orders of the clergy; but although we find exorcism very frequently referred to by the Fathers of the second century, there seems to have been no such office until the third century, the present being the earliest distinct reference to it. In the fourth century we find the office in all parts of the Church East and West. Their duty was to take charge of those supposed to be possessed of an evil spirit; to pray with them, care for them, and exorcise the demon when possible.’ See Bingham, *ibid.* chap. 4.” Arthur C. McGiffert “The Life and writings of Eusebius of Cæsarea” (NPNF² 1:3), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.iii.i.ii.html>.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:849).

Eusebius' description of these martyrs is specific, naming and describing who they were. One of the first martyrs was Procopius who was "a lector, interpreter, and exorcist in the church."¹¹⁴ Alphæus was another martyr who was "a reader and exorcist in the church of Cæsarea."¹¹⁵

One of the more graphic accounts is of Romanus, another exorcist who also served as a deacon in the parish of Cæsarea. Romanus's execution in Antioch is described with great detail for his level of boldness and courage in facing death,

Being arrested for his boldness, he proved a most noble witness of the truth, if there ever was one. For when the judge informed him that he was to die by fire, he received the sentence with cheerful countenance and most ready mind, and was led away. When he was bound to the stake, and the wood piled up around him, as they were awaiting the arrival of the emperor before lighting the fire, he cried, "Where is the fire for me?" . . . Having said this, he was summoned again before the emperor, and subjected to the unusual torture of having his tongue cut out. But he endured this with fortitude and showed to all by his deeds that the Divine Power is present with those who endure any hardship whatever for the sake of religion, lightening their sufferings and strengthening their zeal. When he learned of this strange mode of punishment, the noble man was not terrified, but put out his tongue readily, and offered it with the greatest alacrity to those who cut it off.¹¹⁶

The specific examples and detail descriptions offered by Eusebius gives a brief glimpse at the courage and examples of those who served Christ as exorcists in the early church.

Demonic sacrifices. Eusebius also helpfully provides examples of the ongoing demon worship during the time of the early church. He describes a human sacrifice at Cæsarea Philippi when a Christian named Astyrius boldly intervened for God

¹¹⁴"The first of the martyrs of Palestine was Procopius . . . We learn from the longer account that he was a lector, interpreter, and exorcist in the church, and that he was exceedingly ascetic in his manner of life." Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:886).

¹¹⁵Explanatory Note: "We learn from the Syriac version that Zacchæus was a deacon of the church of Gadara, and that Alphæus belonged to a noble family of the city of Eleutheropolis, and was a reader and exorcist in the church of Cæsarea." Arthur C. McGiffert "Explanatory Note" in Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:888).

¹¹⁶"What occurred to Romanus on the same day at Antioch, is also worthy of record. For he was a native of Palestine, a deacon and exorcist in the parish of Cæsarea." Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:889).

to rebuke the demon in order to “bring the men’s delusion to an end.” Immediately following his request to God, his prayer was publicly answered as “the sacrifice floated on the surface of the fountain. And thus the miracle departed; and no wonder was ever afterward performed at the place.”¹¹⁷

Eusebius describes two young virgin girls who were seized by demon worshippers to be raped, but escaped and committed suicide rather than “surrender their souls to the slavery of demons.”¹¹⁸ He continues to describe “two other virgins in the same city of Antioch who served God in all things” but were captured and “the worshipers of demons commanded to cast them into the sea. And this was done to them.”¹¹⁹

Eusebius describes a Roman Emperor, Maxentius, who “resorted to magic. And in his divinations he cut open pregnant women, and again inspected the bowels of newborn infants. He slaughtered lions, and performed various execrable acts to invoke demons and avert war.”¹²⁰ Another Roman leader from the East, Caesar Maximinus, is

¹¹⁷“Among these is also the following wonder. At Cæsarea Philippi, which the Phoenicians call Paneas, springs are shown at the foot of the Mountain Panius, out of which the Jordan flows. They say that on a certain feast day, a victim was thrown in, and that through the power of the demon it marvelously disappeared and that which happened was a famous wonder to those who were present. Astyrius was once there when these things were done, and seeing the multitude astonished at the affair, he pitied their delusion; and looking up to heaven he supplicated the God over all through Christ, that he would rebuke the demon who deceived the people, and bring the men’s delusion to an end. And they say that when he had prayed thus, immediately the sacrifice floated on the surface of the fountain. And thus the miracle departed; and no wonder was ever afterward performed at the place.” Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:783).

¹¹⁸“For, she said, that to surrender their souls to the slavery of demons was worse than all deaths and destruction; and she set before them the only deliverance from all these things,—escape to Christ. . . . cast themselves into a river which was flowing by. Thus they destroyed themselves.” Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:861-62). The explanatory note to this passage sheds light that this is a unique scenario in the early church where suicide is described in a positive light. In other places it is universally condemned.

¹¹⁹“Thus they destroyed themselves. But there were two other virgins in the same city of Antioch who served God in all things, and were true sisters, illustrious in family and distinguished in life, young and blooming, serious in mind, pious in deportment, and admirable for zeal. As if the earth could not bear such excellence, the worshipers of demons commanded to cast them into the sea. And this was done to them.” Ibid.

¹²⁰Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:871).

described as honoring his chief of sorcerers and magicians “with the highest rank. Becoming exceedingly timid and superstitious, he valued greatly the error of idols and demons. Indeed, without soothsayers and oracles he did not venture to move even a finger, so to speak.”¹²¹

Apphianus: Gospel proclamation in face of demonic worship. Under the same ruler, the population of Cæsarea was ordered to offer sacrifices, with each person’s name being called individually to ensure compliance in the year AD 306.¹²² Eusebius points out how a fearless youth,

while no one was aware of his intentions, eluded both us who lived in the house with him and the whole band of soldiers that surrounded the governor, and rushed up to Urbanus as he was offering libations, and fearlessly seizing him by the right hand, straightway put a stop to his sacrificing, and skillfully and persuasively, with a certain divine inspiration, exhorted him to abandon his delusion, because it was not well to forsake the one and only true God, and sacrifice to idols and demons.¹²³

This young man’s name is revealed to be Apphianus.¹²⁴ His story continues that after proclaiming the gospel to Governor Urbanus, he was seized, tortuously beaten, and thrown into prison along with his friends.¹²⁵ Apphianus was again tortured and beaten for a night and day in an effort to get him to recant his faith.¹²⁶ Steadfast in his

¹²¹Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:872).

¹²²“For in the second attack upon us under Maximinus, in the third year of the persecution, edicts of the tyrant were issued for the first time, commanding that the rulers of the cities should diligently and speedily see to it that all the people offered sacrifices. Throughout the city of Cæsarea, by command of the governor, the heralds were summoning men, women, and children to the temples of the idols, and besides this, the chiliarchs were calling out each one by name from a roll, and an immense crowd of the wicked were rushing together from all quarters.” Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:895).

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴“Such was the death of the wonderful Apphianus. It occurred on the second day of the month Xanthicus, which is the fourth day before the Nones of April, on the day of preparation.” Ibid.

¹²⁵“Thereupon, he of whom we are speaking, and that instantly, as might have been expected after so bold a deed, was torn by the governor and those who were with him as if by wild beasts. And having endured manfully innumerable blows over his entire body, he was straightway cast into prison.” Ibid.

¹²⁶“There he was stretched by the tormentor with both his feet in the stocks for a night and a

faith, he was then was burned alive but still refused to recant his profession of faith.¹²⁷

Finally, his tormentors cast him into the ocean and the crowd witnessed a “marvelous sight” when,

But what happened immediately after this will scarcely be believed by those who did not see it. Although we realize this, yet we must record the event, of which to speak plainly, all the inhabitants of Cæsarea were witnesses. For truly there was no age but beheld this marvelous sight. For as soon as they had cast this truly sacred and thrice-blessed youth into the fathomless depths of the sea, an uncommon commotion and disturbance agitated the sea and all the shore about it, so that the land and the entire city were shaken by it. And at the same time with this wonderful and sudden perturbation, the sea threw out before the gates of the city the body of the divine martyr, as if unable to endure it.¹²⁸

This martyrdom of a youth, in defiance of “idol and demon” worship in Cæsarea, attested to by one of the most well-known church historians, is important to recognize and remember. These martyrdoms attest to the reality of the demonic and the determination of believers to remain faithful to God, no matter the cost to themselves.

Demonic immorality and Constantine’s fidelity. Eusebius also specifically mentions Emperor Constantine’s destruction of a particular idol temple at Aphaca, whose demon was known by its name Venus, and whose focus was on “destroying men’s bodies with effeminacy.” Eusebius explains,

It was a school of wickedness for all the votaries of impurity, and such as destroyed their bodies with effeminacy. Here men undeserving of the name forgot the dignity of their sex, and propitiated the demon by their effeminate conduct; here too unlawful commerce of women and adulterous intercourse, with other horrible and

day; and the next day he was brought before the judge. As they endeavored to force him to surrender, he exhibited all constancy under suffering and terrible tortures. His sides were torn, not once, or twice, but many times, to the bones and the very bowels; and he received so many blows on his face and neck that those who for a long time had been well acquainted with him could not recognize his swollen face.” Ibid.

¹²⁷“But as he would not yield under this treatment, the torturers, as commanded, covered his feet with linen cloths soaked in oil and set them on fire. No word can describe the agonies which the blessed one endured from this. For the fire consumed his flesh and penetrated to his bones, so that the humors of his body were melted and oozed out and dropped down like wax. But as he was not subdued by this, his adversaries being defeated and unable to comprehend his superhuman constancy, cast him again into prison. A third time he was brought before the judge; and having witnessed the same profession, being half dead, he was finally thrown into the depths of the sea.” Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:896).

¹²⁸Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:896).

infamous practices, were perpetrated in this temple as in a place beyond the scope and restraint of law.¹²⁹

Constantine is also described as ordering the destruction of a temple dedicated towards the healing demon Æsculapius at Ægae in Cilicia along with many other temples dedicated towards demons.¹³⁰ Eusebius helpfully highlights and praises Constantine's obedience to and love towards God in describing his actions in contrast to his predecessors who worshiped and celebrated the demonic.¹³¹

Athanasius and Cyril

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. AD 298-373) was an early church father especially known for his role in the Arian controversy at the Council of Nicæa (AD 325).¹³² He makes particular reference to the symbol of Christ's cross as a form of power against demons.¹³³ Cyril of Jerusalem (c. AD 313-386) also makes similar references to

¹²⁹Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:1344).

¹³⁰Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:1345).

¹³¹“At a time when four emperors shared the administration of the Roman Empire, Constantius alone, following a course of conduct different from that pursued by his colleagues, entered into the friendship of the Supreme God. For while they besieged and wasted the churches of God, leveling them to the ground, and obliterating the very foundations of the houses of prayer, he kept his hands pure from their abominable impiety, and never in any respect resembled them. They polluted their provinces by the indiscriminate slaughter of godly men and women; but he kept his soul free from the stain of this crime. They, involved in the mazes of impious idolatry, enthralled first themselves, and then all under their authority, in bondage to the errors of evil demons, while he at the same time originated the profoundest peace throughout his dominions, and secured to his subjects the privilege of celebrating without hindrance the worship of God.” Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History* 4:43, CCEL 1165; “And he alone of all who have wielded the imperial power of Rome, being honored by the Supreme Sovereign with a reign of three decennial periods, now celebrates this festival, not, as his ancestors might have done, in honor of infernal demons, or the apparitions of seducing spirits, or of the fraud and deceitful arts of impious men; but as an act of thanksgiving to him by whom he has thus been honored, and in acknowledgment of the blessings he has received at his hands. He does not, in imitation of ancient usage, defile his imperial mansions with blood and gore, nor propitiate the infernal deities with fire and smoke, and sacrificial offerings; but dedicates to the universal Sovereign a pleasant and acceptable sacrifice, even his own imperial soul, and a mind truly fitted for the service of God.” Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF² 1:1487-88).

¹³²Archibald Robertson, “Life of St. Athanasius and Account of Arianism” (NPNF² 4:14), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.v.ii.i.html>.

¹³³Athanasius, *One the Incarnation of the Word* (NPNF² 4:36), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204.vii.ii.html>.

the power of the sign of the cross.¹³⁴ Cyril mentions “exorcised oil” as “a charm to drive away every trace of hostile influence” in a way that is similar to “the breathing of the saints and the invocation of the Name of God.”¹³⁵

Ambrose

Ambrose (AD 340-397) was an archbishop of Milan, referred to by Augustine as “a faithful teacher of the Church, and even at the risk of his life a most strenuous defender of Catholic truth.”¹³⁶ In a lengthy and detailed description of the church’s practice of baptism, Ambrose makes mention of an interesting renunciation component to the process of baptism. Ambrose describes the new believer, immediately before baptism, facing west and renouncing “the devil and his works, the world with its luxury and pleasures.” After this renunciation towards the devil, “as it were to his face,” Ambrose describes the initiated Christian turning to face to the east and “to Christ, and beholds Him face to face” as he prepares to enter into baptism.¹³⁷ This renunciation is similar in form to exorcism and renunciation rites communicated by Tertullian (c.AD

¹³⁴Cyril, *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem* (NPNF² 7:82), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.ii.xvii.html>.

¹³⁵“For as the breathing of the saints, and the invocation of the Name of God, like fiercest flame, scorch and drive out evil spirits, so also this exorcised oil receives such virtue by the invocation of God and by prayer, as not only to burn and cleanse away the traces of sins, but also to chase away all the invisible powers of the evil one.” Cyril, *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem* (NPNF² 7:147).

¹³⁶Philip Schaff, “Prolegomena to St. Ambrose” (NPNF² 10:12), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf210.iii.html>.

¹³⁷“After this the Holy of holies was opened to you, you entered the sanctuary of regeneration; recall what you were asked, and remember what you answered. You renounced the devil and his works, the world with its luxury and pleasures. That utterance of yours is preserved not in the tombs of the dead, but in the book of the living. . . . You entered, then, that you might discern your adversary, whom you were to renounce as it were to his face, then you turned to the east; for he who renounces the devil turns to Christ, and beholds Him face to face.” Ambrose, *On the Mysteries* (NPNF² 10:315), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf210.iv.v.html>.

145-220), Hippolytus (AD 170-236), Origen (AD 185–254), Cyprian (AD 200-58), and Augustine (AD 354-430).¹³⁸

Augustine

Augustine (AD 354-430) was “the greatest and most influential of all the Christian Fathers.”¹³⁹ His impact on church theology was monumental. As the church matured and expanded, his writings reveal the ongoing consideration and practice of spiritual warfare. In his message, *On the Creed: a Sermon to the Catechumens*, he references the ongoing process of exorcism, stating that “even little children undergo exsufflation, exorcism; to drive away from them the power of the devil their enemy, which deceived man that it might possess mankind.”¹⁴⁰

In *The City of God*, Augustine describes demons as “false and deceitful mediators” who seek to turn Christians “aside and hinder our spiritual progress; they do not help us towards God, but rather prevent us from reaching Him.”¹⁴¹ Augustine argues that spiritual warfare not only prevents salvation, but also prevents sanctification. These brief references represent a much wider collections of Augustine’s theological and practical consideration of spiritual warfare.

¹³⁸“And a deacon should carry the oil of exorcism and stand on the left hand of the presbyter, and another deacon shall take the oil of the thanksgiving and stand on the right hand of the presbyter. And when the presbyter has taken hold of each one of those who will be baptized, let him command him to renounce [*apostassesthai*], saying: ‘I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy service and all thy works.’ And when he has renounced all these, let him anoint him with the oil of exorcism, saying, ‘Let all spirits remove far from thee.’ And then let him give him to the bishop named, or [to] the presbyter who stands at the water for baptizing.” Hippolytus, *Apostolic Traditions* in Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism*, 89; “The idea of renunciation is, of course, present in all religious conversions and initiations. When a person turns from one form of life to embrace another, the old ways must necessarily be rejected, especially those practices most inimical to the new beliefs and style of life.” Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism*, 94-105.

¹³⁹Philip Schaff, “Preface to The Confessions and Letters of Saint Augustine” (*NPNF*¹ 1:5), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.ii.html>.

¹⁴⁰Augustine, *On the Creed: a Sermon to the Catechumens* (*NPNF*¹ 3:370), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103.iv.vii.ii.html>.

¹⁴¹Augustine, *The City of God* (*NPNF*¹ 2:176), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.IX.18.html>.

John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom (AD 347-404) is argued to be “the greatest pulpit orator and commentator of the Greek Church, and still deservedly enjoys the highest honor in the whole Christian world.”¹⁴² In his *Treatise on the Christian Priesthood*, Chrysostom highlights the importance of understanding the spiritual warfare that rages around humanity. He describes a massive and comprehensive military battle in human terminology, only to relate that if one could see the “devil’s most gloomy battle array” they would realize it to be a “far greater and more formidable conflict.”¹⁴³ He argues that no man must be unaware of “the wounds given by the devil” lest “his danger becomes the greater for his insensibility.”¹⁴⁴

Chrysostom refers to demons as “unclean spirits” that “will not cease assaulting to the last breath” and as creatures that hold “many forms of craft and deceit.”¹⁴⁵ He holds that humans have two options in life, “either to fall and perish unarmed, or to stand equipped and ever watchful.”¹⁴⁶ Chrysostom continues to elaborate on the devil and his demons, explaining that he gives so much attention to this doctrine because it “is full of security for you. For he is an enemy and a foe, and it is a great security to know clearly, the tactics of your enemies.” He describes spiritual warfare as “not ordinary matters” but a complicated battlefield that pits the “faithful against unbelievers” but also “the faithful against the faithful.”¹⁴⁷ The controversial nature of

¹⁴²Chrysostom, *Prolegomena* (NPNF¹ 9:6), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf109.iii.ii.html>.

¹⁴³Chrysostom, *Treatises Concerning the Christian Priesthood* (NPNF¹ 9:74), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf109.iv.viii.html>.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Chrysostom, *Treatises Concerning the Christian Priesthood* (NPNF¹ 9:74).

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Chrysostom, *Three Homilies Concerning the Power of Demons* (NPNF¹ 9:178), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf109.x.ii.html>.

spiritual warfare is one which begs the depth of consideration that Chrysostom gives it.

In series of sermons on demons, Chrysostom communicates,

alternately the note of warning and encouragement,—warning against that weakness, indolence, languor of moral purpose which occasions a fall,—encouragement to use to the full all the powers with which man is gifted, in reliance on God’s forbearance and love, and on His willingness to help those who do not despair of themselves.¹⁴⁸

The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers communicate a biblically balanced reminder and warning of the importance of understanding spiritual warfare. Their descriptions are in line with those of the early church era.

The Seven Ecumenical Councils

In addition to looking at the early church fathers for insight into their understanding of the theology and practice of spiritual warfare, one can also look to early church doctrine. This doctrine is often best seen through the first seven ecumenical councils: First Council of Nicaea (AD 325), First Council of Constantinople (AD 381), Council of Ephesus (AD 431), Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), Second Council of Constantinople (AD 553), Third Council of Constantinople (AD 680), and Second Council of Nicaea (AD 787).

The Canons of the Holy and Altogether August Apostles is a collection of early church law, most of which are prior to AD 300. In one of these early canons, a prohibition is given against clergymen with “devils.”¹⁴⁹ At the Synod of Laodicea (AD 363), there is a prohibition given against the clergy and priesthood practicing magic, enchantment, astrology, or math. Clergy are also prohibited from making “what are

¹⁴⁸W. R. W. Stephens, “Introduction to The Three Homilies Concerning the Power of Demons” (*NPNF*¹ 9:177), accessed December 30, 2013.

¹⁴⁹“If anyone has a devil, let him not be made a clergyman, neither let him pray with the faithful; but if he be freed, let him be received into communion, and if he is worthy he may be ordained.” *The Canons of the Holy and Altogether August Apostles* (*NPNF*² 14:594), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xvii.iv.html>.

called amulets, which are chains for their own souls.”¹⁵⁰ *The Canons of the Two Hundred Holy and Blessed Fathers Who Met at Ephesus* (AD 431) describe and condemn a Messalian sect that believed “that everyone inherited from his ancestors a demon.”¹⁵¹ The Canons of the Council of Orange (AD 529) addressed the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius in salvation. In its seventh canon, they assert that a false understanding of agency in salvation occurs when one “is led astray by a heretical spirit.”¹⁵²

At the fifth ecumenical council, The Second Council of Constantinople (AD 553), Origen is anathematized regarding some of his particular views regarding demons.¹⁵³ A continuation of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, The Canons of the Council in Trullo, met in approximately AD 691. One of their canons describes the punishment of those who feign demonic possessions and manifestations, stating that “they should be subjected to afflictions and hardships of the same kind as those to which they who are truly demoniacally possessed.”¹⁵⁴ A 12th century commentator on this canon, John

¹⁵⁰“The Anathematizations of Emperor Justinian Against Origen . . . V. If anyone shall say that a psychic (ψυχικήν) condition has come from an angelic or archangelic state, and moreover that a demoniac and a human condition has come from a psychic condition, and that from a human state they may become again angels and demons, and that each order of heavenly virtues is either all from those below or from those above, or from those above and below: let him be anathema. . . VI. If anyone shall say that there is a twofold race of demons, of which the one includes the souls of men and the other the superior spirits who fell to this . . . VII. If anyone says or thinks that Christ the Lord in a future time will be crucified for demons as he was for men, let him be anathema. . . IX. If anyone says or thinks that the punishment of demons and of impious men is only temporary, and will one day have an end, and that a restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) will take place of demons and of impious men, let him be anathema.” *The Canons of the Synod Held in the City of Laodicea, in Phrygia Pacatiana, in which Many Blessed Fathers from Divers Provinces of Asia Were Gathered Together* (NPNF² 14:151), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.viii.vii.iii.xli.html>.

¹⁵¹*Note on the Messalians or Massalians* (NPNF² 14:241), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.x.xvi.xvi.html>.

¹⁵²*Canons of the Council of Orange*, Bible Study Tools, accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/creeds/canons-of-the-council-of-orange.html>.

¹⁵³*The Anathematizations of the Emperor Justinian Against Origen* (NPNF² 14:320), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xii.x.html>.

¹⁵⁴*The Canons of the Council in Trullo* (NPNF² 14:392), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xiv.iii.lxi.html>.

Zonaras, says that even in his day people made the same claim to demonic possession.¹⁵⁵

An additional canon from Trullo states that those “who tell fortunes and fates, and genealogy . . . those who are called expellers of clouds, enchanters, amulet-givers, and soothsayers” should be thrown out of the church.¹⁵⁶

The Epitome of the Definition of the Iconoclastic Conciliabulum held in Constantinople (AD 754) represented that the introduction of icon worship through the pictures of the Saints was “introduced by the devil” and was not to be followed.¹⁵⁷ In the seventh ecumenical council at the Second Council of Nicaea (AD 787), bishop Basil of Ancyra asks to be restored to fellowship while resisting future “fraud of the devil.”¹⁵⁸ He mentions the “grace” bestowed by the Apostles and Fathers “even down to us today” for “the healing of diseases and the curing of sicknesses and the casting out of devils.”¹⁵⁹

The Protestant Reformation Forward

During the Protestant Reformation, occasional references to spiritual warfare are seen through some of the church’s leaders, confessions, and catechisms. Martin Luther (AD 1517) suggests that evil “is the pure work of the devil” and acts through human devices such as “fire-brands, bullets, torches, spears, and swords,” but only “where God permits” and emphasizes repentance as a crucial element in the life of

¹⁵⁵John Zonaras, “Ancient Epitome of Canon LX in The Canons of the Council in Trullo” (*NPNF*² 14:392), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xiv.iii.lxi.html>.

¹⁵⁶*The Canons of the Council in Trullo* (*NPNF*² 14:393).

¹⁵⁷*The Epitome of the Definition of the Iconoclastic Conciliabulum held in Constantinople (A.D. 754)* (*NPNF*² 14:543), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xvi.x.html>.

¹⁵⁸*The Seventh Ecumenical Council. The Second Council of Nice. Extracts from the Acts* (*NPNF*² 14:533), accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xvi.v.html>.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*

believers.¹⁶⁰ In *The Augsburg Confession* (AD 1530), Philip Melancthon writes that the “Cause of Sin” is the “will of the wicked, of the devil and ungodly men.”¹⁶¹

In *The Geneva Confession* (AD 1536), John Calvin labels Catholic churches as “synagogues of the devil” since “the Gospel is not declared, heard, and received.”¹⁶² John Calvin, in his *Institutes* (AD 1536), makes many references to spiritual warfare, to include descriptions of the great number of demons and Satan’s destructive schemes.¹⁶³ He elaborates that “Satan cannot possibly do anything against the will and consent of God” but also describes the powerful, ongoing work of the unclean spirits.¹⁶⁴ Calvin also cautions believers from erring in imagining that “they have no enemy and thereby be more remiss or less cautious in resisting.”¹⁶⁵ *The Scots Confession* (AD 1560) explains how Satan has tried from the beginning to associate his followers with Christ’s church.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰“Evil Angels” in Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 643, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hodge/theology1.iv.xiii.iv.html>.

¹⁶¹Philip Melancthon, *The Confession of Faith: Which Was Submitted to His Imperial Majesty Charles V At the Diet of Augsburg in the Year 1530*, 19, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/confessions/the-augsburg-confession.html>.

¹⁶²John Calvin, *The Geneva Confession*, 18, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/confessions/the-geneva-confession.html?p=2>.

¹⁶³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 140, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iii.xv.html>.

¹⁶⁴John Calvin states that “God thus turning the unclean spirits hither and thither at his pleasure, employs them in exercising believers by warring against them, assailing them with wiles, urging them with solicitations, pressing close upon them, disturbing, alarming, and occasionally wounding, but never conquering or oppressing them; whereas they hold the wicked in thralldom, exercise dominion over their minds and bodies, and employ them as bond-slaves in all kinds of iniquity. . . . I deny that believers can ever be oppressed or vanquished by him. They are often, indeed, thrown into alarm, but never so thoroughly as not to recover themselves. They fall by the violence of the blows, but they get up again; they are wounded, but not mortally. In fine, they labour on through the whole course of their lives, so as ultimately to gain the victory, though they meet with occasional defeats. . . . For as believers are recognised to be the sons of God by bearing his image, so the wicked are properly regarded as the children of Satan, from having degenerated into his image.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 140. This quote advocates for a sort of self-recovery of believers.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶“Since Satan has labored from the beginning to adorn his pestilent synagogue with the title of the Kirk of God.” *The Scots Confession*, 18, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/confessions/the-scots-confession.html>.

In *The Heidelberg Catechism* (AD 1563), one of the great comforts of the believer is in knowing that Christ has “delivered me from all the power of the devil.”¹⁶⁷ In understanding sin, *The Heidelberg Catechism* explains that sin occurs through “the instigation of the devil (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Genesis 3:4) and his own wilful disobedience.”¹⁶⁸ This catechism also teaches that believers are to petition God for help, for their “mortal enemies, the devil (1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:12) the world, (John 15:19) and our own flesh, (Romans 7:23; Galatians 5:17) cease not to assault.”¹⁶⁹ Believers are called to preserve and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so that they “may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare (Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33), but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).”¹⁷⁰ *The Heidelberg Catechism* is one of the earliest uses of the terminology of “spiritual warfare.”

The Second Helvetic Confession (AD 1566) describes the devil and demons, while describing the process of repentance as a “sincere turning to God and all good, and earnest turning away from the devil and all evil.”¹⁷¹ The writer also describes at baptism how believers “are enlisted in the holy military service of Christ that all our life long we should fight against the world, Satan, and our own flesh.”¹⁷² *The Second Helvetic Confession* argues that exorcism was added to baptism such as one of man’s devices and

¹⁶⁷*The Heidelberg Catechism*, 1, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/catechisms/the-heidelberg-catechism.html>.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁷⁰*The Heidelberg Catechism*, 127.

¹⁷¹“Others fell of their own free will and were cast into destruction, becoming enemies of all good and of the faithful.” *The Second Helvetic Confession*, 7-14, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/confessions/the-second-helvetic-confession.html>.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 20.

not in the example of Christ.¹⁷³ Finally, the *Second Helvetic Confession* provides helpful understanding to the apparition of spirits as “laughingstocks, crafts, and deceptions of the devil.”¹⁷⁴

Outside of the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church published the *Rituale Romanum* (AD 1614) to give specific instructions and clarity to the exorcism process.¹⁷⁵ *The Westminster Longer Catechism* (AD 1648) references demons, consultations and oaths with the devil, and sanctification as essential in understanding spiritual warfare.¹⁷⁶ *The London Baptist Confession* (AD 1689) identifies one avenue of temptation being from the “power of Satan.”¹⁷⁷ *The Episcopal Catechism* (AD 1789) specifically requires the renunciation of Satan at baptism.¹⁷⁸

Charles Hodge (AD 1797-1878) makes many references to Satan and his demons in his doctrine of angelic beings.¹⁷⁹ Hodge explains that Christians are to be

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴“APPARITION OF SPIRITS. Now what is related of the spirits or souls of the dead sometimes appearing to those who are alive, and begging certain duties of them whereby they may be set free, we count those apparitions among the laughingstocks, crafts, and deceptions of the devil, who, as he can transform himself into an angel of light, so he strives either to overthrow the true faith or to call it into doubt. In the Old Testament the Lord forbade the seeking of the truth from the dead, and any sort of commerce with spirits (Deut. 18:11). Indeed, as evangelical truth declares, the glutton, being in torment, is denied a return to his brethren, as the divine oracle declared in the words: ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead’ (Luke 16:29 ff.)” Ibid., 26.

¹⁷⁵*Rituale Romanum*, accessed December 30, 2013, <http://www.sadena.com/Books-Texts/Roman%20Rite%20of%20Exorcism.pdf>.

¹⁷⁶*The Westminster Longer Catechism*, 19, 105, 195, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/catechisms/the-westminster-larger-catechism.html>.

¹⁷⁷*The London Baptist Confession*, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/confessions/the-london-baptist-confession.html>.

¹⁷⁸“Question 94: What is required of us at Baptism? Answer 94: It is required that we renounce Satan, repent of our sins, and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.” *The Episcopal Catechism*, 5, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/catechisms/the-episcopal-catechism.html>.

¹⁷⁹“As to the power and agency of these evil spirits, they are represented as being exceedingly numerous, as everywhere efficient, as having access to our world, and as operating in nature and in the minds of men. The same limitations, of course, belong to their agency as belong to that of the holy angels.

aware of demonic attacks and “called upon to resist them, not in their own strength, but in the strength of the Lord.”¹⁸⁰ He gives attention to demonic possession in the Scriptures, explaining that possessions still may occur but that “we should abstain from asserting the fact of Satanic or demoniacal influence or possession in any case where the phenomena can be otherwise accounted for.”¹⁸¹

The Baltimore Complete Catechism (AD 1885) also describes Satan’s temptation and how in order “to overcome his temptations we need the help of God.”¹⁸² Charles Spurgeon explains in *A Puritan Confession* (AD 1855) that Christ has purchased freedom “from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law . . . from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin.”¹⁸³ In many of his sermons, Spurgeon shows an ongoing awareness of spiritual warfare. One of his sermons, “Satan Considering the Saints,” he describes how Satan seeks to do Christians great injury, cause worry, prevent their usefulness, and incite error.¹⁸⁴ In another sermon,

(1.) They are dependent on God, and can act only under his control and by his permission. (2.) Their operations must be according to the laws of nature, and, (3.) They cannot interfere with the freedom and responsibility of men.” Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 643.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹“These demoniacal possessions were of two kinds. First, those in which the soul alone was the subject of the diabolic influence, as in the case of the ‘damsel possessed with a spirit of divination,’ mentioned in Acts xvi. 16. Secondly, those in which the bodies alone, or as was more frequently the case, both the body and mind were the subjects of this spiritual influence. By possession is meant the inhabitation of an evil spirit in such relation to the body and soul as to exert a controlling influence, producing violent agitations and great suffering, both mental and corporeal. . . . There is no special improbability in the doctrine of demoniacal possessions. Evil spirits do exist. They have access to the minds and bodies of men. Why should we refuse to believe, on the authority of Christ, that they were allowed to have special power over some men? . . . We are not to deny what are plainly recorded in the Scriptures as facts on this subject; we have no right to assert that Satan and his angels do not now in any cases produce similar effects; but we should abstain from asserting the fact of Satanic or demoniacal influence or possession in any case where the phenomena can be otherwise accounted for.” Ibid.

¹⁸²*The Baltimore Complete Catechism*, 230-32, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/catechisms/the-baltimore-complete-catechism.html?p=5>.

¹⁸³Charles Spurgeon, *A Puritan Confession*, 20, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/confessions/a-puritan-confession.html?p=2>.

¹⁸⁴Charles Spurgeon, “Satan Considering the Saints,” A Sermon (No. 623) delivered April 9, 1865 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, England, accessed January 4, 2014,

“The Devil’s Last Throw,” Spurgeon shares his uncertainty about Satanic possession while admitting that “some men exhibit symptoms which are very like it.”¹⁸⁵ He affirms Satanic attacks through blasphemous thoughts in his own mind and recounts the torment of individuals as they seek to come to Christ.¹⁸⁶ Spurgeon asserts that when someone becomes a believer possession is no longer an issue, for if “Christ turns the devil out of him he shall enter into that man no more forever.”¹⁸⁷

Summary of the Historical Understanding of Spiritual Warfare

As the writings and experiences of the early church fathers show, spiritual warfare has consistently revealed itself in history in both evangelism and discipleship. In surveying the history of the church, it is clear that certain aspects of spiritual warfare seem to not be emphasized. There are no apparent references to territorial spirits or strategic level spiritual warfare. Rituals or formulaic prayers are seldom described or encouraged and amulets are clearly discouraged. Ancestral spirits are only referenced in relation to a condemned heretical cult. Dialoguing, naming, and human techniques are rarely discussed.

<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0623.htm>.

¹⁸⁵“The present existence of demons within the bodies of men I shall neither assert nor deny; but certainly, in our Savior’s day it was very common for devils to take possession of men and torment them greatly.” Charles Spurgeon, “The Devil’s Last Throw,” A Sermon (No. 1746) delivered June 10, 1883 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, England, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1746.htm>.

¹⁸⁶“I will tell you what happened to me. I was engaged in prayer alone in a quiet place one day when I had just found the Savior, and while I was in prayer a most horrible stream of blasphemies came into my mind, till I clapped my hand to my mouth for fear that I should utter any one of them. I was so brought up that I do not remember ever hearing a man swear while I was a child; yet at that moment I seemed to know all the swearing and blasphemy that ever was in hell itself; and I wondered at myself. I could not understand whence this foul stream proceeded. I wrote to my venerable grandfather who was for [sic] sixty years a minister of the gospel, and he said to me,—‘Do not trouble about it. These are no thoughts of yours; they are injected into your mind by Satan. The thoughts of man follow one another like the links of a chain, one link draws on another; but when a man is in prayer the next natural thought to prayer is not blasphemy; it is not, therefore, a natural secession of our own thoughts. An evil spirit casts those thoughts into the mind.’” Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Spurgeon, “The Devil’s Last Throw.”

The armor of God analogy as a spiritual warfare metaphor and concept is consistently reinforced through the teachings and writings of the church fathers. Power in spiritual warfare is found through humility, prayer, the name of Christ, a truthful understanding of God, and the Word of God. Satan's attacks are seen on an individual level through deception, temptation, heresies, idol worship, false religions, sickness, and mental attacks. The devil also attacks the church corporately through heresy, division, and complacency.

Exorcism is mentioned and described in church history, leaving no room for doubt that "numerous accounts of demonization and exorcism as well as descriptions of the deceptive work of demons in pagan religions fill the writings of the church fathers."¹⁸⁸ Despite the attention given to exorcism, believers are consistently referenced as not being possessed. When described, exorcism appears to happen at the point of conversion, when there is found "clear accounts of initiatory rituals directed against evil spirits."¹⁸⁹ Demonic manifestations and apparitions are referenced, but caution is given in regard to since deceptions can occur in spiritual warfare. Repentance, renunciation and "confession of all their previous sins" were also seen as an important connection with baptism either as an exorcistic or apotropaic practice.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions*, 25.

¹⁸⁹"They are described or alluded to in the writings of Tertullian in Carthage and in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus in Rome." Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism*, 81.

¹⁹⁰"The devil was associated with the rule of the world both by Theodotus and by Christian and Jewish tradition, so that, if orthodox Christians began to renounce both the world and the world ruler Satan in imitation of the gnostic precedent, they could do so with no suggestion of heterodoxy. Even before the time of Theodotus, in fact, Justin Martyr said that Christians had renounced (*apotassesthai*) the things that were in the world (*kosmos*); and as I noted earlier, he also spoke of their renunciation of idols, which he regarded, so to speak, as *machinae ex diabolo*. The so called *Second Letter of Clement to the Corinthians* also mentions a renunciation of the world, using the word, *aiōn*, meaning 'age.' Tertullian, Augustine, and Rufinus (the later as translator of Origen) use the corresponding Latin word *saeculum* (rather than *mundus*, the equivalent of *kosmos*) when speaking of renunciation of the world, which they linked to baptism" (Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism*, 96). Kelly goes on, "Tertullian, however, regarded it not as exorcistic but rather as apotropaic, that is, as directed against lapses into sin in the future. He advises candidates to devote themselves before baptism to much prayer, fasting, kneeling, and watching, and to confess all their previous sins, so that the past might be atoned for and defenses acquired for resisting future temptations." (ibid., 106). Apotropaic practice is to prevent future attacks or to diminish their power.

Early Christian references to the demonic can be found in the writings of Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Athanasius and many other early church fathers. Not only is spiritual warfare documented constantly “through the whole time period of the ancient church,” but spiritual warfare is also seen during the Middle Ages, the Reformation, and the early post-Reformation.¹⁹¹ Exorcism practices seem “to diminish in the Middle Ages,” but are still referenced among the Germanic tribes, Norwegians, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Martin Luther, the Catholic Church’s 1614 *Rituale Romanum* (exorcism guidelines), and other sources.¹⁹² The existence and activity of the devil and demons are widely evidenced and commonly believed across the history of the church until the post-Enlightenment era.

This survey of the historical writings, characters, and confessions of the Christian Church reinforces the importance of having an historical understanding of spiritual warfare. Power encounters through exorcism are mentioned throughout this church history. The greatest emphasis of early church writings is not on the power and responsibility of the priest or church leader, but on the power of Christ and the responsibility of the believer. Regardless of the frequency and consistency of spiritual warfare accounts in history, these experiences, teachings, and theologies must always be examined in light of Scripture.

¹⁹¹Oscar Skarsaune, “Possession and Exorcism in the Literature of the Ancient Church and the New Testament,” in *Deliver Us from Evil Consultation* (Nairobi: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization 2000), accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/historical-overview-1.html>.

¹⁹²Tormod Engelsviken, “Historical Overview 3,” in *Deliver Us from Evil Consultation* (Nairobi: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2000), accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/historical-overview-3.html>.