This timely publication introduces the joyous salvation that Christ’s mission brings to nations globally in His stead, by His command and promise, who conquered sin, death, and devil victoriously and vicariously. Dr. Bennett opens up fascinating insights into foreign realms of Madagascar and its flourishing Lutheran Church, reaching across barriers of disbelief, paganism, idolatry—liberating from the clutches of evil. He demonstrates how this merciful deliverance was part of Christ’s Gospel and the Church’s mission from the start. May this receive all the attention it deserves and invite many to study the exiting world of faithful missions in Africa!

—Bishop Dr. Wilhelm Weber
Lutheran Church in Southern Africa

This is truly a remarkable book. Written with genuine pastoral concern by a minister of the LCMS, it first introduces the reader to the practice of exorcism in the Malagasy Lutheran Church based on the author’s original field research before surveying relevant biblical episodes and Lutheran teachings on demonic possession and exorcism. Based on well-documented doctrinal reassurance, Bennett encourages pastors and others to learn from the African sister church how to make people experience the “joy from deliverance of bondage.” Everyone engaged in pastoral ministry will greatly benefit from studying this book.

—Christoffer H. Grundmann
John R. Eckrich University Chair in Religion and the Healing Arts
Valparaiso University
Author of *Sent to heal!* (2005).

Although thoroughly Lutheran, this timely work will be of interest not just to Lutherans and to those who share all its perspectives. It will be
of interest to readers interested in the global church, in current views about demonology, and in Reformation views and especially historic Lutheran views about demonology. I found this book too fascinating to put down, especially in the interviews section; the field observations offer a distinctive contribution.

—Craig S. Keener, MDiv, PhD
Professor of New Testament
Asbury Theological Seminary

The activity of the devil and his demons is readily denied by many Christians in the United States and Europe. Therefore, I find it amazing to finally find a book in the English language that correctly understands and faithfully depicts the Malagasy Lutheran Church, particularly the department of the *Fifohazana*. Through his research, Dr. Bennett has provided an opportunity for English readers to gain an understanding of Malagasy context and reality. This book demonstrates the scriptural basis of the *Fifohazana* movement’s theology and practice.

Dr. Bennett is one of the few scholars who have shown interest in this area as a researcher. He opens a window for continued research into an area of theology that has been long lost to Western Christianity. Dr. Bennett’s discovery of Confessional Lutheranism as found in the Malagasy Lutheran Church provides others with an opportunity to understand how Confessional Lutheranism can deal with the spiritual problems of this age.

This book is also helpful for the Lutheran Church of Madagascar as it continues to catechize its members and to battle the ongoing influences of syncretism and postmodernism found in liberal theology.

—Rev. Dr. David Rakotonirina
Bishop of Antananarivo
Madagascar

Dr. Bennett writes about an important aspect that has been almost forgotten in our spiritual understanding and practice of God’s Word. Describing the Malagasy Lutheran context, Dr. Bennett, in this outstanding book, helps us to look at Scripture and Lutheran theology in our postmodern context and rediscover a spiritual struggle that directs our ministry to the ultimate authority of Jesus over Satan and his allies. The Western Church can once again examine exorcism,
demon possession, and spiritual warfare, and in an evangelistic context practice the Christian faith with the power of the Holy Spirit.

—Reverend Professor Clóvis Jair Prunzel
Concordia Seminary and ULBRA, Brasil

Upon reading Dr. Bennett’s book, we are reminded that there are angels among us—both the holy and the evil. In his study of the Lutherans in Madagascar, Dr. Bennett shows that these Christians must deal with the devil and his angels directly as did our Lord and the apostles. The Malagasy Lutherans, perhaps more than their western brothers and sisters, understand God’s Word and Sacraments to be the means by which our Lord works through His Church to release people from demonic control, bring them into Christ, and Satan’s kingdom of darkness is pushed back and held at bay.

Dr. Bennett’s Book, I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare, is a gift to the Church, for in it is presented a view of spiritual warfare and exorcism that is grounded in the Scriptures and connected to the life and work of the Church—a much needed perspective for the modern Christian.

—Rev. Thomas W. Dunseth
Associate Director of Deaf Mission for Asia, Lutheran Friends of the Deaf/Mill Neck Family of Organizations
Missionary pastor for the Deaf in the Michigan District, LCMS
I AM NOT AFRAID: DEMON POSSESSION AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

TRUE ACCOUNTS FROM THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MADAGASCAR

ROBERT H. BENNETT

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Talk of exorcism, demonic possession, and spiritual warfare is likely to evoke some suspicion among Christians from North America and Europe. Even though these realities are spoken of in the Holy Scriptures and attested to the history of the Church catholic, they are apt to be dismissed or explained away by Christians living under subtle influences of Enlightenment skepticism. Such was not the case for Martin Luther, who knew that “sin, death and the Devil were not a theological problem to be solved—they were enemies to be fought against. The problem of evil is not primarily a problem within the sphere of the intellect, and it would be foolish to try to solve it there. The true fight is not carried out with syllogisms, but with prayer and preaching.”1 Luther’s spiritual offspring in the Malagasy Lutheran Church resonate with the Reformer’s profound understanding of the old evil foe’s attacks on body and soul, in his effort to unseat Christ Jesus. Malagasy Lutherans can teach us how to pray the Seventh Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Deliver us from evil,” with an awareness that we are praying against the Adversary as we call upon our Father to rescue us from every evil.

Having been to Madagascar several times in the last few years both with seminarians on study trips and as a guest lecturer, I have seen much of what Robert Bennett writes about in I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare. Norwegian Lutheran missionaries came to Madagascar in 1866. The legacy of their dedicated and often painful labor is a large and growing Lutheran Church that is maintained by a confessional, conservative Lutheran theology and is marked by a vibrant life of mercy and outreach. One of the elements distinctive of the Malagasy Lutherans is the practice of exorcism in evangelization and spiritual care. Robert Bennett, who has made numerous trips to Madagascar to do field research for this book, examines the phenomena of demonic activity along with the

1 Esko Murto, “An Iron Wall on Our Side: Martin Luther’s Understanding of the Christian Devotional Life as a Battleground Against the Devil” in Theology is Eminently Practical: Essays in Honor of John T. Pless, edited by Jacob Corzine and Bryan Wolfmueller (Fort Wayne: Lutheran Legacy Press, 2012), 130.
practice of exorcism in the Malagasy context. For this reason alone
his book represents a major contribution to missiological research
giving us a glimpse into the revival movement (fifohazana), life in the
toby (encampments of mercy operated by the church to provide
holistic care), and the extraordinary work of the mpiandry (lay people
trained and commissioned by the church) who serve to evangelize,
show mercy, and guide converts to the pastor for catechetical
instruction and Baptism.

Yet there is much more to Bennett’s work that will benefit not
only missionaries but also theologians and pastors. North American
pastors are also confronted with circumstances that give evidence of
demonic activity and are often uncertain how to respond. Lutheran
Service Book: Pastoral Care Companion (St. Louis: Concordia,
2007) contains a section of resources under the heading “Occult
Practices and Demonic Affliction” providing pastoral guidance,
biblical readings, Psalms, hymn stanzas, and prayers for pastors to use
in situations such as these. These resources were not available in
previous agendas and pastoral companions of The Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod or other North American Lutheran bodies. Bennett’s
biblical and theological treatment of the demonic will assist pastors
seeking to minister to people who experience satanic attack. I Am Not
Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare fills a void in
Lutheran pastoral theology; it will be practically helpful to pastors
confronting this dark albeit often disguised spiritual condition in our
culture.

The magisterial, two volume work, Miracles: The Credibility of
links Jesus’ exorcism of demons and unclean spirits with what
Bennett and others have observed in Madagascar.\(^2\) Keener also
provides strong arguments to counter the skepticism of both those
who would dent the veracity of the New Testament accounts as well
as their counterparts in places like Madagascar. I Am Not Afraid:
Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare rightly deserves a place
alongside of Keener’s exegetical treatment as a particular Lutheran
contribution. Dr. Bennett, who is also a parish pastor, has provided
readers with an engaging and carefully documented study that will

\(^2\) Craig Keener, Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts (Grand
help western readers learn some valuable lessons from our Malagasy brothers and sisters. Indeed, we do have much to learn and we should be grateful to Dr. Bennett for giving us a readable and interesting introduction.

John T. Pless
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Fort Wayne, Indiana
Ash Wednesday, 2013
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I would like to thank and acknowledge the many people of Madagascar who have patiently endured hours of my questioning and who have welcomed me into their homes and churches during the time of my field research. This book was only possible because of the tremendous love and openness extended to me. Without their openness and willingness, it would have been extremely difficult to collect the data necessary for this research.

I would especially like to single out the Rev. Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo. Dr. Randrianasolo not only provided the aid of his graduate class of the SALT Seminary as interviewers to collect the numerous data contained within this dissertation, but also acted as field director, translator, and informal advisor throughout the entire process of this research. He has become a dear friend and valued consultant providing reliable guidance throughout the research process while at the same time ensuring that the Malagasy Lutheran Church is properly represented within this book.

I also want to thank my wife, Angela, and children, Robert, Joseph, Amy, and Kate without whose support this book could not have begun to be accomplished. In addition, I must thank my advisor, Rev. Dr. Detlev Schulz and his wife Cornelia for providing fellowship and lodging opportunities as I traveled between my home in Michigan and my residential requirements at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. In addition to her incredible hospitality, Cornelia has also tirelessly devoted her time by providing editorial assistance throughout the writing process.

Finally, I give thanks and praise to my Lord Jesus Christ who has faithfully worked through the numerous individuals that have delivered the Holy Word and the Holy Sacraments to me, thereby connecting to the forgiveness provided though His life, death, and resurrection. The most noteworthy of these being the sainted Rev. Dr. Ralph Fisher who not only continually spoke the Gospel into my young ears, but also instilled within me a strong desire for higher learning. To God be the praise.
ABBREVIATIONS

AIC  African Independent Church
FJKM  Fiangonan’i Jesoa Kristy Eto Madagasikara—Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar
FLM  Fiagonana Loterana Malagasy—Malagasy Lutheran Church
LMS  London Missionary Society
LWF  Lutheran World Federation
NMS  Norwegian Mission Society
SALT  Sekoly Ambony Loterana momba ny Teolojia (Malagasy Lutheran Graduate Seminary located in Fianarantsoa)
KEY TERMS

*ambirorandrano.* A spiritual being that resembles a mystical mermaid. May also be called *Zazavavindrano* or *Zazavavirano.*

*angabe.* Great ghost or the oldest ghost.

*angatra.* A ghost.

*Antakarana.* Name of the region and consequently of a tribe, who lives in the region of Antsiranana or former Diego Suarez.

*betsimisaraka.* It is one of the eighteen tribes of Madagascar. They live on the east coast in the region of Toamasina or former Tamatave.

*bilo.* A possessing entity (many time of a snake or animal spirit) originating within the Antandroy and Bara tribes.

*dady.* Royal relics of the kings.

*doany.* Royal ancestral spirits.

*famadihana.* A ceremony that consists of removing the remains of ancestors from the family tomb and wrapping them in new shrouds.

*fanahy ratsy.* Evil spirit.

*fifohazana.* Term used for the revival movement in Madagascar.

*fitampoha.* Royal bath, bathing of the royal relics.

*helo.* Spirits that are known for possessing people without their invitation.

*kasoa.* A spiritual possession that appears as madness connected to love affairs.

*lamba mena.* A decorative cloth for wrapping the body.
KEY TERMS

lolo. Name of a nature spirit; literally: butterfly.

maha-lonaky. What makes one old and wise man. In some cases, it is linked to an active role in traditional religion.

Malagasy. Refers to the inhabitants of the island of Madagascar.

matoatoa. A ghost.

moasy. Herbalist-healers. May be used as a synonym for ombiasy.

mpiandry. Shepherd; special trained laity within the Fifohazana who commits their lives to live as servants to Jesus.

nenilava. Tall mother; the name given to revival leader Volahavana Germaine who is specifically attached to the Ankarmalaza toby.

njarinintsy. A ghost. The literal meaning is that which “makes you cold” (opposite of warm), or can mean, “that which frightens.”

ombiasy. Healer, seer, advisor, spirit medium, shaman.

razana. The collective body of ancestral spirits.

sikidy. Divination system written in Arabic script dating back to pre-colonial Malagasy history.

toby. Revival center, camp, place of healing that provides for the sick whereas clergy and doctors work together in a holistic way to care for the people.

tromba. Ancestral spirit; spirit possession ceremony.

vazimba. Original inhabitant, spirit of original inhabitants.

mivoaka. Depart; go out.

zanahary. The name of the creator god.

Zazavavindrano. See ambirorandrano.
PART ONE

THE MALAGASY STORY
CHAPTER ONE

DEPART YOU EVIL SPIRITS

_He uncovers the deeps out of darkness and brings deep darkness to light._

—Job 12:22

In August 2007, I visited Toliara, a town off the coast of western Madagascar. My purpose was to attend a five-day worship event sponsored by the Fifohazana movement of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. At the conclusion of each day’s events, the participants, who numbered in the thousands, would line up in rows while others would stand between them dressed in white gowns. After a few hymns, Bible readings, and a short expository sermon, the people began to speak in unison, “Depart you evil spirits in the name of Jesus.” What I had ventured into was a mass exorcism. I immediately noticed that this exorcism was not focused on any specific individuals, but upon the place itself and the general assembly. Later, I learned that the exorcism was meant to cast out any evil that may have been residing in the area of the general assembly and to identify anyone who may be possessed or stricken by an evil spirit. Thousands of people were sitting upon the dirty ground watching the ritual. One woman, who sat outside the group observing the commotion, began to change her demeanor. She began screaming and making wailing sounds. Those speaking the exorcistic words moved to her location and began speaking directly to her, “Depart you evil spirits in the name of Jesus.” She flung her body up and down upon the ground, but those present restrained her and continued to call upon the name of Jesus. As time went on her reactions grew in intensity until finally she began to pray in the name of Jesus. At that time, everything seemed to quiet
and return to normal. A spirit had possessed her. Similar events occurred in the crowd over the coming days. What was going on in the minds of those who experienced possession? This book answers this question by thoroughly examining the phenomena of exorcism found in the Lutheran Church of Madagascar (FLM). The focus of this book is from a Lutheran Christian perspective; however, the data provided crosses over denominational lines making it accessible to anyone seeking to learn more about the topic of exorcism. While some may conclude that this topic is out-of-date or fanciful, there are many who are searching for direction in the area of exorcism. This book is an excellent resource, especially in a time when the Western world seems to be reverting to paganism.

BEGINNINGS

My interest in the Malagasy Lutheran Church began in 2006 when I met Dr. Joseph Randrianasolo, who would quickly become one of my best friends and mentors. Dr. Randrianasolo grew up in a syncretistic Roman Catholic home in Madagascar. His family attended church, and they also participated in the traditional religions of the Malagasy people (animism.) At age twelve, Randrianasolo, at the request of his family, entered a Roman Catholic seminary to begin training for the priesthood. When Randrianasolo reached adulthood, he was ordained. While performing his duties as a priest, he began to notice the work of a Lutheran movement called the Fifohazana. While attending one of their gatherings he observed an exorcism. What happened next came unexpectedly: he lost consciousness and fell to the ground. Those present saw him in convulsions and recognized that he was under attack by demonic forces. The mpiandry (laymen who work with the ordained clergy) ran to his side and began to focus their exorcistic words on him. After regaining consciousness, he vowed to leave both the Roman Catholic priesthood and the traditional religions of his family to become a Lutheran pastor. He would also study the ways of the mpiandry, eventually becoming one of its leaders. This began his thirty-plus year career as a Lutheran pastor, seminary professor, and exorcist. It is only through the friendship of this man that I was able to write this book. His leadership within the movement allowed me to obtain an insider’s perspective of the Fifohazana movement (revival movement) and access to hundreds of converts who had entered the Christian Church through the exorcistic rituals of
the Malagasy Lutheran Church. This book is about them, the trials they faced before coming to the Christian faith, and their new lives of freedom lived in the church.

Part one of this book focuses specifically on the spiritual warfare found within the Malagasy Lutheran Church. Included in this section are recent conversations dealing with spiritual warfare, an introduction into the Malagasy Lutheran Church, and the traditional Malagasy worldview. These are the stories of those who have been rescued from the darkness of sin and brought into the light of the Gospel.

Part two of the book looks to the Bible and the Church for explanation and historical perspective on the spiritual warfare found in the Malagasy Lutheran Church. Is spiritual warfare something new to the Church? Is it something only found in the time of Jesus and the apostles? What has the Church said in the past about such activities? Part two of the book examines many of these questions by reviewing the New Testament’s spiritual warfare themes, exploring the views of Martin Luther and other Lutheran leaders, and finally providing some helpful contemporary material and resources for dealing with spiritual warfare in today’s context.

**WHAT’S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF MADAGASCAR?**

The Christian Church continues to see considerable growth on the island of Madagascar. The total population of this island is not overwhelming (approximately 21 million).\(^1\) However, the rate of Christian conversion requires any student of Christianity to take notice. While just over half of the island’s population (52%) follows the traditional religion of animism, the Christian Church (41%) continues to increase in size and influence within the culture. The Lutheran Church of Madagascar has experienced an increase of approximately three million members just over the past decade.\(^2\)

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\(^2\) This number is an estimate. Because of the remoteness of the Island and the lack or reporting procedures found within the FLM no reliable number is available at the time of this writing.
majority of this growth is conversion growth from the animistic population. Many believe that *mpiandy* movement is the most influential factor in the growth of the Malagasy Lutheran Church.3

The term *mpiandy* is associated with the *Fifohazana* movement or revival.4 This movement has dispatched thousands of trained evangelists into the countryside who are prepared to deal with the daily problems of the population, such as sickness, poverty, and spiritual matters. They not only evangelize the native peoples, but also minister to them daily, through their interactions and prayers. Hymns, Bible study, and preaching are integral to the daily lives of the people.

The universal Church can benefit by learning from the Malagasy Lutheran Church about the realities of the existence of Satan, his activities, and Jesus’ victory over him.5 The western world is in transition with paganism on the rise. Spiritualism is progressively becoming a dominant religious preference within a postmodern age.6 The Malagasy Lutherans have adapted their approach to reach the animistic population by relying upon the Holy Scriptures as the foundation of their approach. They have addressed the problem of mingling traditional religions with the purity of the Gospel (syncretism) head-on in a society, which at its roots inherited such practices from its earliest recorded history.7 The Malagasy Lutherans have at the same time refused to accept the enlightenments denial of spiritual forces, which interact with humanity. The *mpiandy* movement mobilizes their members to go out and tell the good news.

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4 “The term revival tends to bring with it a lot of baggage in the American context. Such a term carries with it the baggage of the highly charged emotional revivals of early American history. This ‘baggage’ should not influence our understanding of what is occurring in Madagascar. The revival that is taking place in the Malagasy Lutheran Church is very objective in nature centered on an orderly proclamation of Holy Scripture.”


of the Gospel in a way that answers the questions of their society—questions such as spirit possession and the power of the ancestors. If the western world is reverting to an animistic worldview, the Western Church could do well to learn from the Malagasy Lutherans.

RECENT CONVERSATIONS AND LITERATURE

It is hard to avoid the staggering growth of the Malagasy Lutheran Church and other African Independent Churches (AIC). There has only been minimal literature produced describing the mpiandry movement of the Malagasy Lutheran Church, especially if one restricts the search to the English language. However, within recent years, this trend has begun to change. Two of the in-depth works produced are The Fifohazana, edited by Cynthia Holder-Rich, and Shepherds and Demons, a doctoral dissertation, now a book by Hans Austnaberg. Each is laden with information and research not previously available to the western world. Holder’s book contains a series of essays that describe the basis and history of the Fifohazana movement. Austnaberg narrows his research to the topic of exorcism in the movement. Both of these books are helpful; however, they lack an insider’s perspective. Austnaberg claims to have accomplished this perspective, but his research is demonstrative, rather than representing individual narratives. Rather than following Austnaberg’s and Holder-Rich’s methodology we will capture the lived experience of the people through a series of interviews, which describe how the members of the mpiandry view the events surrounding their own conversion experiences and how exorcism is used as one of the primary tools of the Church. The graduate students of the SALT Seminary in Fianarantsoa have graciously conducted many of the interviews that make up this book. Dr. Randrianasolo

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8 The mpiandry acts in conjunction with the Fifohazana movement, which is a recognized department of the Malagasy Lutheran Church.


10 Austnaberg, Shepherds and Demons, 15.

11 This was the first Lutheran Seminary to be established in the Malagasy Lutheran Church. It is still located in Fianarantsoa, a large city found in the southeastern portion of the island. The students of this seminary are seeking graduate level
translated all the interviews to insure continuity. Four main areas make up the structure of the interviews. The first question seeks an understanding of the respondents’ worldviews prior to their conversions. The second seeks to answer how those interviewed became associated with the Malagasy Lutheran Church. The third question gets to the heart of this book, that is, how the people understand their conversion experience and what, if any, function exorcism played in that conversion. Finally, the fourth question provides a glimpse into the cultic lives of the converts now that they are members of the Malagasy Lutheran Church. These questions are the focus of part one of this book and bring an insider’s perspective of those who have experienced demonic oppression, possession, and exorcism, and have been set free through the means of the Word of God. Jesus has said, “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28–30). Through the gift exorcism, Jesus continues to provide rest to a people caught in the deep darkness of demonic possession. It is my hope that this book brings peace and rest to many who are searching for answers to questions of demonic oppression and possession.

2. The SALT Graduate Seminary in Fianarantsoa Madagascar.

degrees, all of whom have already completed undergraduate degrees at one of the denomination’s six regional seminaries located on the island.
CHAPTER TWO

DRAMATIC CONVERSIONS

MAKING SENSE OF POPULAR SPIRITUAL WARFARE THEMES

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

—Ephesians 6:12

If you go to any bookstore these days you will find dozens of books referring to spiritual warfare, demonic activity, and exorcism. Hollywood continues to release movies on the subject, and popular news programs run stories that represent an upswing in such interests. Most of these books, movies, and television programs remain lost in the things of fantasy. This chapter will present some of the helpful books and authors on the subject while keeping the conversation historically and biblically based.

POWER EVANGELISM

The terms “power evangelism” and “power encounters” are foreign to many Christian vocabularies. Power evangelism is a term introduced by the John Wimber, Pentecostal preacher and former pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Anaheim, California. Wimber introduced this term in one of his early books, which carried the same title, Power Evangelism. Early in his book, Wimber defines
the word power in view of the kingdom of God.¹ Wimber suggests that when one becomes a Christian, one enters into a spiritual battle with Satan.² Moreover, Wimber understands Christians to be instruments of the kingdom, who have the responsibility to be witnesses to the power of Jesus.³ He believes God works through individual Christians to fulfill His will. Wimber describes a “power encounter” as an encounter between man, Satan, and God.⁴ He defines a “power encounter” as a demonstration of Jesus’ power over all false gods and spirits that men seek to worship.⁵ For Wimber, “power encounters” include exorcisms and healings.

David Burnett describes power encounters in more detail in his book titled, Unearthly Powers: a Christian’s Handbook on Primal and Folk Religions. Burnett finds power encounters to be the activity that frees those lost in satanic darkness. For Burnett, demons are cast out, not through the means of a ritual, but instead through the action of Jesus. He understands the final goal of a power encounter to be freedom from idols and false worship.⁶ However, unlike Burnett, Wimber does not find a power encounter as the final goal, but only a necessary step along the way. Conversion, for Wimber, requires something else—the power encounter must accompany what he calls “power evangelism.” Wimber means the presentation of the Gospel, namely, the work of Jesus upon the cross and His resurrection from the grave. Wimber is clear; a miracle or sign cannot rescue the sinner from damnation. Only the substitutionary work of Jesus can bring life to the spiritually dead.⁷

For Wimber, power evangelism is not something found within men. Nor is it something that man can manipulate or control. To suggest such would be to embrace a magical understanding, such as animism. At the same time, Wimber maintains the necessity of divine

² Wimber and Springer, Power Evangelism, 38.
³ Wimber and Springer, Power Evangelism, 43.
⁴ Wimber and Springer, Power Evangelism, 52.
⁵ Wimber and Springer, Power Evangelism, 53.
⁷ Wimber and Springer, Power Evangelism, 15.
DRAMATIC CONVERSIONS

power as an important part of the equation, especially to tribal people who worship in traditional ways. Wimber understands people to be in bondage to sin and evil. Therefore, power is necessary to free them. He finds the power of God a necessity to break through the resistance that all people have toward the Gospel. Yet, according to his critics, Wimber adds to the Gospel a supposed power that is outside of the modern-day worldview. Wimber denies such claims and insists that he is only speaking in-line with the Bible. Wimber suggests that many in the modern world have missed this essential aspect of evangelism. While Wimber’s idea of power evangelism may be questionable by many, his point properly describes the situation in Madagascar when the first western missionaries arrived. They were preaching the Gospel, and as a result, conversions were occurring. However, with the conversions, many strange signs were happening. People were screaming out as they fell upon the ground and convulsed at the preaching of the Gospel. Faced with this strange behavior, the missionaries were at a loss as to how to respond. The Fifohazana movement filled this void.

Paul Hiebert, a well-known missiologist and author, shares Wimber’s concern. Hiebert offers some additional warnings concerning the complications of power encounters. One warning is the possibility of becoming too reliant upon demonstrations of power rather than the Word of God. Hiebert finds such a reliance on power to result in ritualistic magic, rather than reliance on the grace of God and the authority of Jesus. Hiebert’s point is a reasonable starting point; however, the fact remains power encounters and power evangelism continue to be a significant occurrence in the clash that occurs between the Gospel and the traditional religions of Africa. The leaders of the Lutheran Church of Madagascar share Hiebert’s caution concerning the term “power evangelism.” Randrianasolo warns:

Pentecostal doctrines tend to stress more on the Holy Spirit while still talking about Jesus Christ and more on miracles or extraordinary happenings than true conversions of the heart. Therefore, from that perspective, power evangelism may just

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