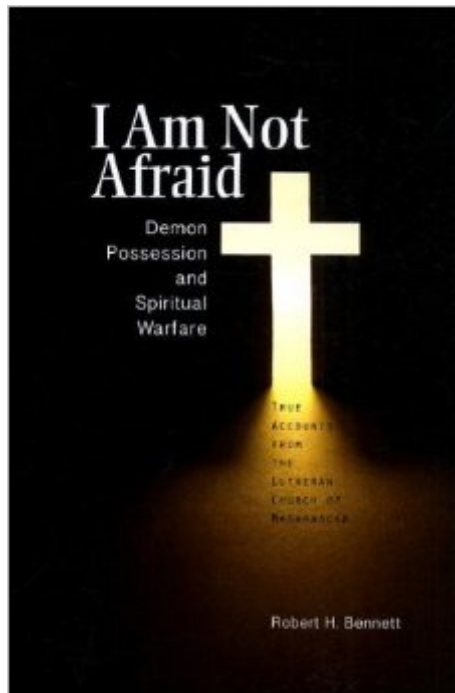


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I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession And Spiritual Warfare



Synopsis

While Africa and Madagascar seem like strange and faraway places, the world in which we now live has become much smaller than many of us could ever have imagined. Moreover, even our neighbors visit the local fortuneteller, read the horoscope page in the newspaper, and attend séances that seek to reach departed friends, lovers, and family members. Consequently, as we begin a journey into faraway places, we may soon find they are not as far away as we may have expected. from Chapter 3I Am Not Afraid is Rev. Dr. Robert Bennett's fascinating first-hand account of the spiritual warfare found within the Lutheran Church of Madagascar. Is spiritual warfare something new to the Church? Bennett reviews what the Bible, Church Fathers, and contemporary Lutheran leaders have to say. Part One includes 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 looks to the Bible and the Church for explanation and historical perspective on the spiritual warfare found in the Malagasy Lutheran 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? Bennett explores the views of Martin Luther and other Lutheran leaders, and finally provides some helpful contemporary material and resources for dealing with spiritual warfare in today's context. Includes a glossary of key terms, transcripts of personal interviews, bibliography, Scripture index, and subject index.

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Customer Reviews

This review, by Dr. Nicholson, has been provided courtesy of Desert Bible Institute [...] To be frank, I started *I Am Not Afraid*, by Robert H. Bennett, with a certain degree of dubiousness. My experience with exorcism as an American pastor and biblical scholar has been largely relegated to the sensationalized propaganda that Hollywood produces. I braced myself for an overly dramatic, highly emotional rollercoaster ride; that's not what I got. Regardless of your position on the topic, the reader quickly realizes that Bennett has organized his book in a logical, scholarly fashion. He includes primary source facts, examples, statistics, and interviews to support what he is saying. He uses an effective, organized pattern to present his information and is in no way dramatic or unbelievable. He explains the animistic belief system in Madagascar (as well as other countries) wherein spirits are invited (even begged) to enter a person to endow them with powers of prophecy, fortune-telling, and even healing. In that light, the plausibility of possession seems much more likely; moreover, what is disconcerting is the growing interest throughout the West in spiritualism, séances, Ouija boards, and other forms of spirit communication. The second half of his book is perhaps the most convincing. In it Bennett talks about the church and how the Western worldview varies radically from how Christianity is understood and practiced in most other parts of the world. He specifically talks about the Gospels and how the topic of exorcism is dealt with there. Bennett takes a provocative stance in looking at this part of scripture. Was possession unique to that time period? Were Jesus and the disciples just too unsophisticated to understand what was going on?

We have reached a stage in the history of American Christianity where missionaries from other parts of the world need to be sent here to remind us of the things we have cast aside. That's the takeaway from the scholarly look at the rite of exorcism in *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare* by Rev. Dr. Robert H. Bennett, a pastor in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Dr. Bennett, who also serves as Adjunct Professor of Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, had his paradigm forcibly shifted on a visit to Madagascar when a woman suddenly began convulsing during an "exorcism of place" at the beginning of a worship service. Almost as bizarre as the woman's behavior, to Western eyes, was the matter-of-fact response of the congregants, who clearly knew what they were dealing with and how to respond. This prompted a research project to explore that relationship of exorcism to the overall mission of the church--to preach the gospel and make disciples. The result is a book that is a much-needed reminder to the naturalistic Church in the West that the apostle Paul knew what he was about when he warned the church in Ephesus that our real struggle is not against human opponents, but against malevolent

spirit beings that seek to do us harm. I Am Not Afraid is a straightforward account of the encounters of the Lutheran Church in Madagascar with spirits that are trying to keep people in bondage. For the Malagasy people, there is no wall of separation between religious faith and everyday life. The spirit realm is a given, like gravity. When early converts from their traditional animistic religion encountered pushback in the form of demonic oppression and possession, they recognized it for what it was.

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