

Paul G. Hiebert's "The Flaw Of The Excluded Middle"

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I. Introduction

In the first half of the twentieth century American evangelicals wrote relatively little about the subject of demons or Satan. But in the 1970s through the 1990s literally hundreds of books were published on the subject, many of them achieving high sales figures, such as two of Neil Anderson's spiritual warfare books, both published in 1990: *Victory over the darkness* which sold over 2 million copies/and *The bondage breaker* which sold over 1.2 million copies. Frank Peretti's spiritual warfare fiction (1986; 1989) reached an even broader audience.

One central influence on spiritual warfare writings was the experiences of American missionaries abroad, with many key spiritual warfare authors being themselves missiologists and former missionaries (such as Timothy Warner, Charles Kraft, or Peter Wagner). Paul Hiebert's influence on spiritual warfare ideas was not through writings that competed at the popular level, say, with Neil Anderson, but through more scholarly writings which influenced those who wrote for broader audiences. Possibly the most influential article written in this era related to spiritual warfare is Paul Hiebert's 1982 "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," an article which clearly influenced a wide variety of missiologists and spiritual warfare authors, including John Wimber (1985, 82-90), Neil Anderson (1990a, 30-35), Edward Murphy (1992/2003, 3ff.), Alexander Venter (2009, 35-49), and scores of others. David Hesselgrave viewed the publication of this article as "tremendously significant" and noted that it had "been published, reviewed, and acclaimed in a great variety of contexts" (Hesselgrave 2005, 194). It was recently reprinted in Orbis Books's *Landmark essays in mission and world*

Christianity (Gallagher and Hertig 2009), and is so well known among missiologists that the *Evangelical dictionary of world mission* has a separate entry on this article (Moreau 2000, 363).

II. Article Summary

Hiebert began his article by suggesting that J...

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