

BOOK REPORT
"THE UNSEEN REALM"
("RECOVERING THE SUPERNATURAL WORLDVIEW OF THE BIBLE")

Title and Subtitle of Book: "The Unseen Realm" ("Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible")

Author: Michael S. Heiser, A Scholar in the fields of Biblical Studies and the Ancient Near East, who is a Scholar in Residence at Faithlife. He has an MA in Ancient History from Penn, and an MA in Hebrew Studies and a PhD in Hebrew Bible and Semitic Languages from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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First Impressions: Wow! I have to say that this book has quite literally rocked my theological/hermeneutical boat. It has made me again mindful, and I think that it will make you again mindful that we cannot read the Bible through the lenses of our respective Christian traditions or doctrines. We must try to read it through the eyes of the ancient biblical authors and their audiences. Those ancient authors and the ancient people of their initial audiences (who we are taught to respect), unlike us supposedly "learned, non-superstitious" people lived in an Ancient Near Eastern World which had a deeply supernatural worldview. We speak, somewhat timidly and generally never in public about such matters as "spiritual warfare", the "devil", "demons", and even angels. We tend to read scripture in ways which gloss over those of its words which speak of such matters. We would be embarrassed to admit, publicly, that we truly believe that there are satanic spiritual beings, who we cannot see but who are at war with God and with us as Christians. Well, if we are to read the Bible as it is actually written, and try to do so through the eyes of its ancient authors and audiences, and if we truly believe what we sometimes say which is that "we must respect the original authors and audiences, and how they would have understood what they were saying and what they heard", then we have to, as our author urges, shed ourselves of our "rational" (in our minds at least) presumptions, yes presumptions against the supernatural and insert ourselves into an ancient world which had a deeply supernatural worldview. As our author states: "*Seeing the Bible through the eyes of an ancient reader requires shedding the filters of our traditions and presumptions. They processed life in supernatural terms. Today's Christians process it by a mixture of creedal statements and modern rationalism. I want to help you recover the supernatural worldview of the Biblical writers-the people who produced the Bible.*"

I have, probably arrogantly (and pride does get in the way of an awful lot) considered myself to have become a careful reader of the Bible. This book has truly shaken that self-opinion to its core. I have, admittedly, just glossed over passages of scripture which, if carefully read, and if carefully considered with other passages of scripture, seem to stand, even clearly stand for the proposition that there are spiritual, heavenly beings who have been created by God to work with Him and to assist his human creations in the administration and governance of this physical world, some of whom have been loyal to the Most High God, the Yahweh God, and some of

whom have worked against Him and continue to work against Him and who, in many respects actually have some charge or dominion over certain parts of this world and its inhabitants. Before I read this book I would have outright rejected the very idea that there could exist multiple spiritual beings who are called “gods” and that they might have opposed the Most High God, the Yahweh God. Yet, if you read this book and the manner in which its author, Mr. Heiser, has carefully established a clear train of thought, a mosaic of both Old Testament and New Testament passages and teachings which seem to clearly refer to multiple spiritual beings and their actions you have to come to the point where you might have to reexamine your prejudices against these supernatural propositions and you have to go back and re-read many passages of the Bible, if not the entire Bible with at least a view that such supernatural propositions are set forth in and taught in scripture, sometimes boldly.

In my stating my initial Impressions of this book, let me start with where our author starts, Psalm 82, which even in my English NIV translation appears to refer to multiple “gods” and the fact that some of them have transgressed and will be punished by the Most High God for their transgressions. That Psalm reads in part (again NIV translation): *“God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the ‘gods’: How long will you (apparently these other ‘gods’) defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? (Note: apparently speaking to some of these ‘gods’) I (Note: ‘I’, who is speaking is presumably the Most High God) said ‘you are ‘gods’, you are all sons of the Most High, But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler’...”* What? Who are these “gods” who are referred to as “the sons of the Most High”, and who have “defended the unjust and shown partiality to the wicked?” Who are they that they “must die like mere men”, and must “fall like every other ruler”? Well the footnotes in my NIV Bible do not begin to raise or even begin to answer these questions or to provide any clear explanation as to who these “gods”, who seem to be clearly referred to by God, the Most High God, as His sons and to be judged by Him might be. I assume that I have read this Psalm 82 many times. In fact I know that I have done so. Yet I never asked any of these questions. I have to admit, at least to myself, my failings in this respect. These failings then lead me to a personal re-examination of just how carefully I have read scripture and of the questions which I should have addressed to it.

I must also now ask myself other questions, which are addressed by our author through what he calls the “supernatural worldview” of the biblical authors and of their initial audiences. Some of such questions are:

- What is the real significance of “idols?” Why would any idiot worship some man created, inanimate statue or image?

- What is this business about the snake or serpent misleading Eve, who, it is reasonably assumed would have been an intelligent woman who had direct communications with her creator, the Most High God? Did snakes or serpents actually talk?

- The Book of Job refers to “The Satan”? Who was “The Satan”? Does that refer to the Devil, who we call “Satan?”

- Why do there appear to be references in scripture to nations other than Israel as having “gods”?

- Who are the “Nephilim” referred to in Genesis 6, the start of the story of Noah?
- In the “War” and “Total Wipe Out” passages, including those in Joshua, why did a good God appear to direct that certain peoples, including women and children be wiped from the face of the earth? What rational answer can be given to this question?
- Who was God talking to in Genesis 1:26 when he said “*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...*”? Who was “us”? To whom was He speaking?
- Who was/is the “Angel of the Lord” or the “Angel of God” who is referred to at numerous places in the Old Testament?
- Who did Jacob/Israel wrestle with?
- There are numerous references in the Old Testament to God’s actually appearing in human form or angelic form before, and conversing with a human being, including, of course, Abraham, Moses, Jacob and the prophets. Did the Most High God actually personally appear in human or angelic form before these people, particularly since scripture would teach that the very viewing of the actual essence of God would be humanly fatal?
- In the story of the Tower of Babel, Genesis 11, it is stated that “*the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building ...(and said)... ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come let us go down and confuse their language so that they will not understand each other’*” (emphasis added) Who was “Us”? To whom was the Lord speaking?

Well, in this book our author answers these questions and many others by taking his stated “supernatural worldview” of the ancient biblical authors and their audiences, as well as of the peoples of the other nations of the Ancient Near East which had an impact upon these ancient authors and audiences (including those of, for example, Egypt and Babylon) and then by building a mosaic of scriptural passages and teachings which provide answers to these questions and many similar questions. I am not going to here try to provide the author’s answers to these questions. I leave it to the reader to seek such answers by his or her own reading of this book. However, the manner in which the author, in this book, answers such questions and many others has caused me to reexamine by “biblical worldview” in my reading and study of scripture. I am not, at this point, completely convinced that our author’s views are entirely correct but I have to admit that they have caused me to begin to, hopefully carefully, reexamine my own views. I believe that this book will cause you to engage in a similar reexamination of your views of Scripture.

To What Audience/Readers Is This Book Directed: I will come back to this matter later in this Report. However, it is appropriate to address the matter of this book’s intended audience at this early stage in this Report. This book is truly an academic book. It is not directed to the general audience. It is not directed to those who I might refer to (and I don’t mean this in a disparaging manner) as the “everyday Christians” who make up our American congregations. While it is very well written, in language which is clear and concise, and while it is not difficult to read, it is not a book that is going to be of much benefit to the day to day, down to earth pastor, or to the average American Christian who is looking to scripture and to his or her pastor in order to find guidance as to how to better live his or her day to day life. The author admits that the book, which is very

heavily footnoted with lengthy footnotes that justify a thorough reading, is intended for the theological academy, and not particularly for those American Christians who are struggling with the day to day challenges of leading a Christ centered and governed life. Most American Christians are struggling with just trying to understand and apply the basic or core teachings of scripture, and burdening them with what the Bible teaches about this eye opening, perhaps paradigm shifting Supernatural Worldview will not be of much assistance to them in their daily struggles or even in their efforts to strengthen their faith and love of God. However, for pastors who are trying to serve the populations of those cultures which have a more supernatural view of life (as opposed to our American, so called “rational”, “reasoning”, “non-superstitious view of life) such as those of South America and Africa and the Near East, this book might well provide such pastors with information and tools which will assist them in relating to the people of such populations. Believe me, I am not seeking to in any way be critical of this book. It is very well researched and clearly written, and the author’s conclusions are supported by many citations to scripture and literature which appear, both in the body of the text and in extensive, lengthy footnotes. This book can be of great help to the American Theological Academy by reminding it, yet again, that the Bible must be read from the point of view of its ancient authors and ancient initial audiences, and that those individuals had a very heavily weighted supernatural view of the world and of life and had beliefs that supernatural, unseen “gods” and other spiritual beings would have substantial impacts on their lives. One can argue that the academy does not do a very good job of trying to enter into the supernatural mind set of the Biblical authors and their audiences. The academy (and most of us American Christians for that matter) tend to just skim over the supernatural, which is considered to be “irrational” or “superstitious” if you will. Perhaps this book can help those of the academy to seek to find ways to communicate with (and to find ways to help pastors and Christian leaders communicate with) “rational” American audiences about what the Bible appears to say about the supernatural, and “spiritual warfare” (e.g. Ephesians 6:10-18) matters which the academy (and us for that matter) seem(s) to be hesitant to address for fear that we might be called “nuts”.

Overview Of The Books Contents/What Is The Author Doing With What The Author Is Saying/What Does The Author Seek To Accomplish With This Book: Our author wants to take us back to the days of the biblical authors and their intended/implied initial audiences. In addition he wants to take us back to the days and religious practices and beliefs of the peoples of those nations and societies and cultures of the Ancient Near East which were the close neighbors of Israel, and which included those nations from which the ancient people of Israel migrated (to wit: Egypt) and to which they were exiled (to wit: Syria and Babylonia). All of these ancient authors and people, without exception, had a supernatural worldview. They believed that their lives and their successes and failures, including military successes and failures were directed or governed by unseen spiritual beings, supernatural beings who, with their councils or associates lived in and governed from high places, places in the clouds. They believed that each nation had its own god or gods, and that these gods could war with each other. The ancient Israelites, who were products of these Ancient Near Eastern Cultures, also had a supernatural worldview. Most, if not all of the biblical authors came from such a worldview. In the case of the Old Testament

authors, they sought to distinguish their God, the Yahweh God, the Most High God from the gods of the surrounding nations and cultures and to place Him above such gods. Many of the Old Testament narratives sought to distinguish the God of Israel from gods of other cultures, and the actions of their God (including those of creation) from the actions of these other gods. (Note: The reader might be interested in going to the podcasts of the Bible Project, where the commentators compare and contrast the biblical creation narratives of Genesis with the creation narratives of the surrounding cultures.)

With this supernatural worldview in mind, the author argues, very persuasively that we cannot properly read or understand large parts of the Bible, particularly including the Old Testament but also substantial parts of the New Testament, without trying to read and understand substantial parts of the Bible through a supernatural worldview, the supernatural lens of these ancient peoples. So while the author's starting point is Psalm 82, and its references to "gods" who are the "sons" of the Most High God, and to God's speaking to and condemning such "gods" he really takes us back to the very beginning, the creation story of Genesis, and he then proceeds forward through the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation and thereby ably builds a mosaic of Scriptural passages and teachings which demonstrate that God, the Most High God, the Yahweh God (who, in the Old Testament, appeared to His selected human beings in human or angelic form, including as the "Angel of God") created both spiritual and human beings which the author refers to as "the Imagers of God" (meaning God's representatives) to work in concert with God in the governance of the heavens and the earth. All of such Imagers were created by the Most High God, the Yahweh God. Such Imagers included spiritual beings, who were likely created at the outset, before the earthly creation efforts and the creation of the physical, human Imagers. Some of such spiritual, supernatural beings/Imagers are sometimes referred to in the Bible (e.g. Psalm 82) as "gods" (meaning gods of much lesser stature than the Most High God who created them). Some of these lesser "gods" made up (and one would surmise continue to make up), together with the Most High God, a Heavenly Council which has participated with the Most High God in the making of, and the implementation of decisions. Such Spiritual Imagers also included (and include) spiritual, supernatural beings of a lesser standing than such lesser "gods", who were to act (and act) as both messengers and implementers and a form of "administrators" in carrying God's messages to human Imagers and in the administration of God's creation. They were to serve (and serve) in the implementation of the decisions and commands of God, and sometimes in the decisions of the Heavenly Council. Such lesser spiritual beings included (and include) angels, of whom there were/are various rankings and hierarchy (for want of a better term) including, for example, archangels such as Michael and Gabriel, and angels of lesser ranks. So there was/is a hierarchy of leadership in the spiritual realm, with God, the Most High God at the head and with His Heavenly Council and other Spiritual Imagers being created to work with Him. God's created Imagers included (and include) in addition to these spiritual or supernatural Imagers, human beings, who were and are God's created Imagers. All of these Imagers, supernatural and physical (i.e. human beings) were to work for, and with the Most High God, the Yahweh God, in establishing and governing and stewarding God's creation, the Cosmos and the Earth so as to establish an Eden like place where God and His Heavenly Council and other spiritual Imagers would dwell with human beings,

much like the Eden described in Genesis and the “New Heaven and the New Earth” described in Revelation. So the author’s position is that there was/is a “Heavenly Council” of God, the Most High God, and of His lesser created “gods”, who dwell and meet in the dwelling place of God (initially Eden as described in the Genesis creation narratives) and who participate in decisions and the implementation of those decisions, and who are assisted in these efforts by spiritual Imagers of lesser rank, including angels.

Since the spiritual beings created by the Most High God, and the human beings created by Him were to be His “Imagers” (the author’s word, meaning representatives of God) God had to create them with the ability to reason and think, and to make decisions and choices.. They had to be capable of making decisions and choice. They had to be given a freedom of choice. Therefore, they could choose to do good (meaning follow God’s directions and commands) or to do evil. God’s plan of working with and through His “Imagers” would not work unless these Imagers had the independent abilities to think, reason and make choices. Throughout biblical history some (in fact many) of these Imagers (both human and spiritual) have made bad choices and have chosen to ignore the directions and commands of the Most High God. In the case of the many human Imagers who made these bad choices, God could well have abandoned His plan to use and work through human Imagers but He was committed to that plan. He has, therefore, worked and continued to work with and through both Spiritual Imagers and Human Imagers in following and implementing His plan, the ultimate outcome of which will be the establishment of an Eden Like, a Holy place as God’s Kingdom where He and His spiritual Imagers can reside with His human Imagers.

The author, with many Scriptural references, and many literary references, and extensive (and I mean “extensive”) footnotes goes through the entirety of the Bible and identifies the times and events of the meetings of and decision makings of God, with His Heavenly Council. He also identifies those actions of the Spiritual Imagers and human Imagers, which were in concert with God’s plan, and those which were taken in opposition to God and His plan. So the Biblical Meta Narrative described by our author is one of an ongoing battle, if you will, between God and His loyal Imagers, both spiritual and human, and those of His Imagers, particularly spiritual or supernatural Imagers who have chosen to oppose God and His plans. It is not possible to accurately summarize the author’s thesis, but, in short form and in no particular order, some of the points of this thesis are as follows:

1) Adam and Eve were, of course, the initial Human Imagers, but in some respect they were almost like lesser gods because they had a direct relationship with the Most High God, and possibly His heavenly Council, and resided with Him (and perhaps them) in His (and perhaps their dwelling place, Eden.

2) The snake or serpent described in the narrative of the Fall was likely a Heavenly/Spiritual Imager, who might well have been a member of the Heavenly Council, so, to some extent one might sympathize with Eve’s being misled by this being. In any event, the author proposes that this being was a supernatural or spiritual being, who appeared in physical form to Eve and who carried out one of the early acts of defiance of the Most High God. The author at least suggests that this being was/is the evil being we identify as “the devil” or “Satan”. (Note: The author identifies “the Satan” of Job as being a lesser functionary in the Spiritual

Realm who had a role comparable to a current day “prosecutor” and whose job was to prowl the earth and heavenly realms seeking to discover beings who were acting in opposition to God.)

3) Although they were evicted from Eden, Adam and Eve, and their offspring through Abel and Seth were to continue as God’s earthly Imagers, although they were reduced to toil outside of the boundaries of Eden, the dwelling place of God.

4) Some of God’s Spiritual Imagers chose to mate with female human beings (a bad choice), resulting in the production of the Nephilim referred to in the Flood and Noah Narratives of Genesis 6, et. seq. This is a very important (for the author’s thesis) event in biblical history because, from Genesis 6 forward there were ongoing, God directed efforts to wipe the Nephilim and their descendants from the face of the earth. The author, in fact, surmises that many of the “wipe out”, “total kill” instructions and actions (including those of Joshua for example) were given and carried out as a part of an ongoing “war” (if that is an appropriate term) with these descendants, many of whom resided in Canaan. Goliath, for example, was one of these descendants. (Note: Biblical hyperbole notwithstanding the author is of the belief that while the Nephilim and their descendants were people of great height for their ancient times, they, including Goliath were probably no more than about 6 feet 6 inches in height, which would make them a giant” to Israelites who were likely about 5 feet tall.)

5) Apparently, when God sought to repopulate the earth through the descendants of Noah some Nephilim survived (meaning survived the flood) and produced descendants, many of whom came to reside in Canaan. They were the giants or large people encountered by the spies sent by Moses to spy out the Promised Land and its people. The author surmises that many of the instructions from God to wipe out inhabitants of Canaan were directed to wiping out these descendants, and, possibly not other peoples of the inhabitants of Canaan.

6) The story of Babel and of the tower of Babel was a hugely significant event because, when God (and His Heavenly Council) confused the languages of the people of Babel, a great deal more was done. He scattered the peoples among a number of nations (70) and assigned lesser gods of the Heavenly Council as gods of and over each of these nations. So, in effect, each nation had its own “god.” Following the Babel event, God immediately initiated His plan to eventually reunify in His kingdom, under his kingship the peoples of all of these nations, and to reconciled the peoples of all of the nations to and with Him. However, the “gods” or Spiritual Beings who were given charge over peoples and nations were not inclined to give up their territories easily, and they have continued, and continue throughout biblical history to opposed God’s plans for reunification and reconciliation.

7) Almost immediately following the Babel event, God initiated the first step in His plan for such a reunification of all peoples under His kingship, and not the kingships or rule of the other “gods” who were assigned to one or more of the nations. Each of the steps/actions taken by God to further his plan of reunification has been opposed by one or more of the other “gods” or spiritual beings. The initial step for reunification can be found, of course, in the Abram/Abraham narratives. Upon the conclusion of the Babel narrative, the Abraham narrative commences. God, through Abram/Abraham, in effect, selects as “His Nation” what became the Nation and people of Israel. He was to be their God. While each of the other nations was assigned its “god”, He would be the God of Abraham and his offspring through Isaac, the people and nation of Israel.

8) So God did not, following the flood and the Tower of Babel event (which were initiated by the wrongful, God opposing actions of Spiritual and Human Imagers) abandon His plan of bringing all peoples together under His kingship. He continued, and continues today to work for the completion of the plan and the reunification of all of His people, with Himself and His Spiritual Imagers in an Eden like setting, likely as described in Revelation. The overarching mega narrative of the Bible describes the workings of this plan. One of the key events which marks the workings of this plan was the Pentecost event of Acts 2 where (according to the author's well documented thesis) Jews from each of the 70 nations (or their successors) to which the people had been scattered in the Babel narrative were present, a situation which "started", if you will, the re-unification of the Kingdom of God, under His kingship. Paul's missions are also hugely significant because his, Paul's goal was to reach and evangelize, and bring to Christ and God the peoples of each and all of the geographic areas of the scattered 70 nations, the westernmost one being an outpost of what became Spain or the Iberian peninsula. Paul actually sought help for his travels to Spain from the people of the house churches of Rome through his Epistle to the Romans.

9) In the end all of the peoples of all of the nations of the world will be re-united in an Eden the "New Heaven and the New Earth."

10) Since human beings could not view/see the true essence of God, and survive, as that essence would be completely overwhelming to them and would destroy them, God chose to appear to humans in both human and angelic form. Such appearances are referred to at many locations in the Old Testament, including those references to the appearance of "the Angel of God" or "the Angel of the Lord." Such appearances of God to human beings, in human form continued in the New Testament through the physical person of Jesus. Many, if not all of the biblical references to the "Angel of God" are actual references to God Himself, that is that "the Angel of God" or the "Angel of the Lord" and God are one and the same being. The author argues that God's choosing to appear, in human form or in angelic form, as described in the Old Testament, were comparable to God's again choosing to appear in human form through the human person of Jesus, who was both human and divine. He was God in human form. He has, since his physical death, continued to work with God's human Imagers through the His/God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. So the author finds the beginnings of the descriptions of the Trinity in the Old Testament's descriptions of God's appearance to some of His human Imagers in either human or angelic form (i.e. the Angel of God).

11) God's battle with the "gods", the lesser gods of the various nations, and with spiritual Imagers of God who chose the path of evil was ongoing and is ongoing today. Of course, key elements or components of God's plan to win this battle/war were His human incarnation in the human person of Jesus, and the death and resurrection of Jesus. While there are Old Testament references which, to some extent foreshadow these events those references are somewhat cryptic and unclear. In the author's view the evil spiritual beings, and lesser gods (probably including the "chief" evil being who we refer to as the devil, as there was/is likely a hierarchy of evil spiritual beings) were not going to give up their territory without a fight. Pursuant to the author's thesis, if

these evil spiritual beings were aware of the fact that God's plan included the death of Jesus, they would not have killed Jesus, thereby trying to thwart God's plan. So God sought to conceal this part of His plan from the evil ones. God sought to conceal His plan from the lesser gods (and probably their leader, the devil) who, had they known of the key component of this plan (the death and resurrection of Jesus) they would not have killed Jesus. He so sought to conceal His plans through the incomplete, or cryptic Old Testament references to His plans.

This very sketchy summary does not begin to do justice to the author's very well thought out, extensively documented (through numerous scriptural citations and citations to other literary sources, including the inter-testamentary books), very well written book. However, this summary gives you the general idea of an outline of the author's position that the entire Bible reflects the supernatural worldview of all of the ancient biblical authors, both Old Testament and New Testament. As I review my statements and outline set forth above, I come away with a fear that these statements and outline make it appear that the author's thesis and book are somewhat "weird", if you will. Perhaps that is putting it mildly. Let me assure you that such is not the case. In this book the author does a masterful job of crafting a "supernatural worldview" of the biblical narratives and of the biblical meta narrative. In short, he, through a masterful, well thought out and well presented argument sheds (at least for me) a new light, a supernatural light on the story of the Bible. Maybe this supernatural light will not appeal to many American Christians, who tend to think of themselves as being "rational", "realistic" "non-superstitious" thinkers, and who tend to just gloss over teachings about the devil, demons, spiritual beings and spiritual warfare. However it is sure a light which can help us to better understand, and to relate to and with people from countries who do have a "supernatural worldview" view the world, such as those from some African nations and South and Central American nations. They are much more readily inclined to accept the fact that there are in existence spiritual beings, who we cannot see, and some of whom are at war with us and with God. Candidly, I think that their view, and the view of the author might well be the correct view, although I am not fully ready to accept the entirety of the author's thesis or his view of all of the events of the Bible to which he refers. I am more than willing to accept the author's thesis that the biblical authors had a supernatural worldview and that we must try to inject ourselves into that worldview in reading the Bible, and that by doing so we can better understand parts of the Bible and some of its more puzzling passages, but I want to be very careful in just accepting, on a blanket basis, a supernatural theme for the entire biblical meta narrative. As is the case with all academic, theological assertions some personal, critical thinking is required.

How Can This Book Be Used In Instructional Settings, Such As, For Example, In A Class On Biblical Hermeneutics: As I stated above, the author states that this book was created for the academy. While it is not all that difficult to read, it is certainly an academic tome. It is not directed to the pastors of most American Christian congregations, although it can be of some use to them as as background or supporting material which might well be of use to them if they are confronted with difficult questions about the existence of the devil or spiritual warfare, or about some biblical passages, such as, for example, Psalm 82 or Ephesians 6:10-18. The book might

be of more use for individuals in the capacity of a teaching pastor. My fear is that, while the conclusions of this book might well be accurate (and I fear that some of them might be overstated), they don't do much to enlighten or help many of the average American Christians who make up our congregations. Those people would simply be confused by, or even put off by the propositions of this book. Their culture biases or prejudices will simply not allow them to give more than passing thought to the supernatural, or, in some cases, even to the existence of the devil or spiritual warfare. If we want people to accept the basic, core tenets of Christianity, and to accept Christ and His gift of forgiveness, we need to be very careful in injecting into their consideration matters which they are culturally led to consider as being just plain weird or superstitious. So, in my view at least, this book is a "research" or "study" resource, which should be read, hopefully absorbed and then put on the shelf by Christian pastors and leaders for future research or writing efforts, or to be used when they are confronted with questions about the devil, Satan, demons, evil spirits or spiritual warfare or similar topics. It is not a "day to day" book. It is an academic, theological book.

How Should One Read This Book? Well the answer to his question involves another question. That other question is: "What Do You Want to Use This Book For?" If you are engaged in theological research or an effort to write a piece of theological literature then you need to read, study, and contemplate the whole book, in concert with a companion study of Scripture and the relevant passages therein, as well as many of the literary sources cited by the author in his extensive footnotes. On the other hand, if you just want to know that the book exists and what is in it, and whether it might be of future use to you in responding to some difficult questions, then just reading the Introduction and the Last Chapter, and the excellent compilations and summaries which appear in obvious form at the conclusion of each section of the book, will let you know what is in the book and whether or not you are interested in it and want to read it in its entirety. In any event the book is a good shelf resource. If questions about "the devil", "Satan", "Spiritual Warfare" or similar topics come up then the book should be pulled off the shelf and consulted in order to provide, or to assist in providing excellent answers to, or at least background material for answers to these questions.

Some Additional Personal Musings: This Report is far too long. However, I cannot help but add to it some additional, personal thoughts. I have, in reading this book, and in thinking about it and in drafting this report wondered whether some of our author's conclusions are over stated or over sold. These concerns might well arise from my personal background. I am educated as an engineer and as a lawyer. I practiced law, extensively. Educations and experience in engineering and law are not those which are calculated to give one an open mind. So I have, admittedly, tended to just "pass over" or just give very "passing thought" to those passages of Scripture, and those teachings which appear to refer to a supernatural world. I, like many American Christians just want to get down to the basics. However, I have, over the past decade or so, been engaged in what I thought was a detailed study of the Bible, and a study of the field of Biblical Hermeneutics. Reading this book and preparing this report have caused me to engage in a self-examination. These efforts have caused me to wonder just how well or how much I have really

tried to read Scripture through the eyes and mind sets of those who wrote it, and those who were intended to be its initial audience. Quite obviously these ancient people did not think about the world, the cosmos, or their lives as we think about those matters, or certainly as I think about them. They had a strong belief in the supernatural, and in the presence of unseen beings who had a strong influence on their lives and on the world. These beliefs had to have had a strong influence on what they wrote (or first spoke, if we honor their oral tradition) in the Bible. God chose to work through them in telling the original audiences and us about Himself, and His Nature and Character and His desires for how we would relate to Him and each other and His creation, and about what He had done and was doing. I know that the theory that God “accommodated” (i.e. the theory of “accommodation”) what might have been the shortcomings of and errors of the knowledge of these biblical authors in His inspiration of what they wrote has fallen into some disrepute, but I have to believe that it is reasonable to think that He used what they knew and what they believed to inspire them to state and teach, in their terminology things which truly and accurately described God and His Nature, Character, Intentions and Desires and what He did and was doing. He would not have inspired or allowed for errors in these essential matters, but he would have allowed for matters to be stated in terms which the Biblical authors would have understood, using their worldviews. So if we believe that all of Scripture was divinely inspired, and is completely truthful, at least in these essential respects (i.e. God’s Nature, Character, Desires and Intentions, etc.) what do we make of such passages as Psalm 82, or other references in the Old Testament where God is said to have been speaking to someone else in His realm (or to “us”, meaning some beings in His non-earthly realm), or the Old Testament passages which state that God appeared to human beings, or the New Testament teachings that Jesus was tempted by the Devil or cast out demons, or Ephesians 6:10-18 which clearly speaks of spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6:12 states: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.”* (Emphasis added) If Paul, a very brilliant man and the chosen apostle to the gentiles of Jesus, who was constantly inspired by the Spirit of Jesus believed and taught that there are evil spiritual beings who are at war with us, then who am I to argue against that belief. So, all of this said, my final personal thoughts about this book are: 1) I am not able to accept a conclusion that every event described in Scripture was dictated or caused by some spiritual agent, other than possibly God, but 2) I do totally accept the author’s teaching that the biblical authors and initial audiences had a strong supernatural view of the world and life which strongly influenced what they said and wrote, and 3) In the case of some Scriptural passages you have to read them with an underlying belief that they do accurately speak of the supernatural and of unseen, supernatural spiritual beings who have had, and in some cases continue to have a strong influence over what has happened and continues to happen in the world, and that some of such unseen, spiritual beings are at war with God and his loyal spiritual forces and with us, and 4) In the case of other Scriptural passages it might be reasonable to conclude that the supernatural worldview influenced Scriptural writers to attach a supernatural explanation to an event or circumstance for which we now believe there was a natural or scientific explanation, as they knew nothing of modern science and had to describe that which they were trying to describe using terminology which they understood. For example (and I do not want to overstate this

conclusion because I am not at all sure that I am right) those passages which describe Jesus as casting out demons might now be understood as describing Jesus as healing an individual afflicted by a disease, such as epilepsy. I am not sure what difference that makes, as, regardless of whether the explanation for “demons” was a supernatural or a medically natural one, Jesus obviously did something that no, non-divine person could do. What He did was miraculous, regardless of the cause of that which He cured. My point is simply that it is reasonable to believe that Scriptural writers, who strongly believed in the supernatural would have seen events, even naturally caused events through a supernatural lens and would have described such events using the language of such a lens, which was all that they knew or understood. If we think about things in this vein it might help us to understand some puzzling passages of Scripture.

Many apologies for the length of this Report. Its length probably evidences my personal struggle with this book and how I might best understand it and use it.

Respectfully Submitted
Dan Simon