

## Power Play

### *Dominionism, the New Apostolic Reformation and “Binding and Loosing.”*

**"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ . . . ." 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, KJV**

Scripture teaches the existence of spirit beings beneath, around and above planet earth. The Apostle Paul stated that our struggle is **“not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”** (Ephesians 6:12; Compare Revelation 12:7, ff.; Daniel 10:13; Jude 9; etc.). An invisible war rages around us. We know it for two reasons: *first* the Bible tells us; and *second*, at one time or another, many of us have been drawn into it, into what has been called the conflict of the ages, the war between Satan, his hosts and God and His. Though the Lord owns the world, the usurper has carjacked it and now is taking it for a joyride until God’s powerful angel arrests, binds and imprisons him in **“the bottomless pit”** for a thousand years (See Revelation 20:1-3). But because Satan is **“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,”** there exists an ongoing conflict between God and the Devil, between good angels and evil spirits (Ephesians 2:2).

To fight this war, the apostle Paul instructs believers to **“Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil”** (Ephesians 6:11). One weapon in the divine arsenal is prayer. We are to fight the war **“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints . . .”** (Ephesians 6:18). Yet to this vital weapon the New Apostolic Reformation has added a innovative dimension—that of power praying which, they believe, binds evil spirits and looses good angels over geographical areas. But before dealing with this dimension of prayer, the context in which and the system by which those who espouse “binding-loosing” ought to be surveyed.

### **The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)**

#### *A Dominionist Agenda*

Despite that Jesus told his disciples His **“kingdom is not of this world”** (John 18:36), some Christians want to make it of this world. Despite that Jesus told His apostles that the kingdom is *not yet* (Acts 1:6-7), there are evangelicals who want it *now*. **[1]** Though both the Jews and Jesus understood the earthly manifestation of the kingdom of God belonged to the age to come (Matthew 12:32), there are those in the church who want it in this present evil age (Matthew 24:3; Galatians 1:4). **[2]** And to that end, they covet possessing the spiritual and temporal power to merge the spheres of heaven and earth (i.e., “as above, so below”) thereby ending “this evil age” and beginning “the age to come.” To this point the paraphrase of The Lord’s Prayer (**“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,”** Matthew

6:10) in *The Message* can be noted: “Our Father in heaven, Reveal who you are. / Set the world right, Do what’s best—as above, so below.” [3]

#### *Territorial Spirits and “Turf-Wars”*

Physical war is common to the human condition, so much so, that there’s hardly been a year in history where wars have not occurred. Essential to the dominionist agenda for planet earth is the assumption that invisible spirits affect the conception and outcome of these wars. Campbell explains why: “In addition to the fact that man has an evil nature, there are demonic forces that are constantly active, working through leaders of human governments.” [4] Paul tells us that ultimately, these wars are “against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12, NASB). In strategizing how to fight these wars, C. Peter Wagner postulates that individual demons, which have special names, possess dominion over certain geographical areas, something called “spiritual mapping.” [5] In other words, these “territorial spirits” have zip codes! [6]

After recounting the 21-day delay to the answer of Daniel’s prayer for reason of “**the Prince of Persia**” (Daniel 10:1-21), Wagner writes:

This story leaves us little doubt that territorial spirits greatly influence human life in all its sociopolitical aspects. And is also shows us clearly that the only weapon Daniel had to combat these rulers of darkness was warfare prayer. [7]

As to Daniel’s involvement in “warfare prayer,” John MacArthur observes: “The battle in Daniel 10 was fought in heaven, not on earth. It involved two angels and one demon, no humans.” [8] Further, after mourning, fasting and praying for three weeks over his vision of a coming conflict for the Jews and their Land, Daniel was unconscious (Daniel 10:1-\*9). Daniel would not even have known of the heavenly battle fought between the unnamed angel, Michael and “the prince of Persia” had not the angel of God revealed it to him! Daniel’s prayer had nothing whatsoever to do with binding “the prince of Persia” or loosing “Michael.”

#### *Apostolic Authority*

To win the territorial battle to pray down God’s kingdom now (Matthew 6:10), the New Apostolic Reformation has revived the office, authority and powers of an apostle, powers that include the ability to “bind” demons and “loose” angels over geographical areas, something called “warfare prayer.” In a book for which C. Peter Wagner wrote the Foreword, the author defines apostle “as one who is called and sent by Christ to have the spiritual authority . . . to successfully reach and establish people in Kingdom truth and order . . .” [9] The key here is the claim to spiritual authority like unto that which the original twelve disciple/apostles possessed, an authority that included the ability to “bind” and “loose” (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:22-23). To the point of reviving the office/authority of an apostle, it can be noted that Paul identified to the early church those who claimed to be apostles but were not. To the Corinthians he explained:

**But what I am doing, I will continue to do, that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about**

**which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles [pseudapostolo], deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles [apostolous] of Christ.** (2 Corinthians 11:12-13, NASB)

In light of Paul's warning that pseudo-apostles were operative then might it not be discerned, in light of the revival of these new apostles in the NAR, that the same deception is being perpetrated now? **[10]**

#### *Powers Greater than Jesus' [11]*

After stating the Holy Spirit endowed Jesus with the power for His miraculous ministry, something the Synoptic Gospels portray and that Jesus claimed was the case (Mark 3:22-30; Matthew 12:22-29; Luke 11:14-26), and based upon his interpretation of John 14:12 (Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.), C. Peter Wagner states his power premise for "the postdenominational-apostolic church": "We today can expect to do the same or greater things than Jesus did because we have been given access to the same power source." **[12]**

*Hum . . . greater things than Jesus.* Oh, really? Jesus WORDS and WORKS were *exceptional*. **[13]** By the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:22-32), they were a testament to His incarnation and deity. So upon hearing the words of Jesus, the civil officers remarked to the scribes and Pharisees who brought Jesus to them: "**Never did a man speak the way this man speaks**" (John 7:46). Who today can speak as Jesus spoke? Upon healing the paralytic to prove He had the power to forgive sins, the observing crowd glorified God saying: "**We have never seen anything like this**" (Mark 2:12, NASB). Who today can heal a paraplegic in a moment of time? Upon speaking a storm into stillness, Jesus' disciples asked, "**What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?**" (Mark 4:41). Who today can control the weather? Who today can raise the dead? (John 11:43-45). Who today can feed a hungry crowd by multiplying five barley loaves and two small fishes? (John 6:1-14) While the church today, because of Jesus' atoning death, resurrection and ascension/glorification in heaven, may do greater works in terms of *their scope*—they are not limited to a small land and people, Palestine and the Jews—Christians do not do greater works in terms of *their substance*. The problem with the New Apostolic Reformation's idea that they can do "greater works" of substance than did Jesus is that by comparison, the Person and Work(s) of Christ are made to appear *unexceptional*, even mundane. We turn now to the aspect warfare prayer. **[14]** Is "binding and loosing" in the Bible really as the NAR claims—the power to control evil and good spirits respectively?

#### *Binding and Loosing*

To neutralize, even reverse, the decadence of western civilization, something for which demons are thought to be responsible, requires that, from the perspective of the New Apostolic reformation, Christians engage in prayer that will bind those evil entities that are controlling society's seven mountains—business, government, family, religion, media, education and entertainment. The Lord has, so the NAR believes, empowered today's Christians, some in a more dynamic way than others, with the authority to bind evil spirits and loose good ones.

In their fictional book *The Ahriman Gate*, authors Thomas and Nita Horn create the following scene that popularly depicts the worldview that underlies “binding and loosing.” As he excitedly raises his voice, a chapel speaker says:

How many times have we stood in this chapel, singing, “We’ve got the power, in the name of Jesus [?] We’ve got the power, in the name of the Lord! Though Satan rages, we will not be defeated. We’ve got the power in the name of the Lord! [15]

Then the speaker exhorts:

Let’s practice what we preach, and do what we’ve been appointed to do. Let’s storm the gates of Hell with prayer. Let’s bind principalities and powers and let loose those angelic influences over our city. [16]

Amongst NAR dominionists, binding and loosing prayer is essential to thwarting demonic influence and reversing the moral meltdown characterizing the current collapse of Western-Christian Civilization. But does this method really agree with Scripture?

To discern if this method of spiritual warfare is consistent with the way in which the Lord and His apostles instructed believers to fight the battle, the phrase to “bind and loose,” and one similar, “to remit and retain,” must be inspected. The concept appears three times in the Gospel record: Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18; and John 20:23. In order, and giving the most attention to the first mentioned, we will look at these texts to determine if they warrant any thinking that believers possess the prayer power to bind evil spirits and loose good ones.

***Matthew 16:19: And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.***

Though subsequently the Lord extended the authority to bind and loose to the other apostles (Matthew 18:18), in this instance, as based upon his confession that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God”—a confession that heaven, not flesh and blood, had revealed to him—Jesus extended authority to Peter alone. This is born out by both the context and the verbs. First, of the disciple/apostles, only Peter confessed Jesus to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The other apostles did not yet “get it.” Therefore, Jesus did not extend the authority to bind and loose to them then. Second, the verbs are singular. The Lord says to Peter, “whatsoever thou shalt bind [singular] on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose [singular] on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The Greek verbal construction evidences that Peter’s authority to bind or loose was not to be auto-engendered. Before anything could be bound or loosed on earth in the church, it first had to be bound or loosed in heaven. The words of Jesus to Peter can be translated:

*I [Jesus] will give the keys [i.e., the authority] of the kingdom of heaven to you [Peter], and whatsoever you bind on earth shall already have been bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall already have been loosed in heaven. [17]*

As the translation communicates, any initiative for “binding and loosing” comes from heaven. The Lord merely extended the authority to Peter to ratify on earth those issues that had already been determined in heaven. [18] Any binding or loosing of things on Peter’s part was contingent upon their already having been bound or loosed in heaven. Peter possessed no unilateral power to bind or loose. He could only do so in accord with a heavenly mandate.

This order from above to below may explain why for reason of Satan’s accusations against Joshua the high priest, “**the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee . . .**” (Zechariah 3:2); and why in his contending over the body of Moses with the devil, Michael did not dare to “**bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee**” (Jude 9). Only the Lord and His angels (messengers) possess power to limit or loose Satan (Revelation 20:1-3, 7-8; Compare 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6.).

Of course, the question must be asked . . . what did Peter’s authority—the keys of the kingdom of heaven—encompass? In other words, Peter was given authority to do what?

We must note first that his delegated authority involved cooperating with Jesus in building His church. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus would initiate the building of His church from heaven. Peter then would administrate the building of the Lord’s church on earth. This is evidenced at Pentecost (Acts 2). As pointed out by John Lightfoot (1602-1675), in Jesus’ day the phrase to “bind and loose” was a common Judaic expression that referred to the authority of the rabbis to settle matters of “doctrine, and in judgments.” [19] As to binding and loosing, Lightfoot concludes:

When the time was come . . . [Jesus] granted Peter here, and to the rest of the apostles, chap. xviii. 18, a power to abolish or confirm what they thought good, and as they thought good, being taught this and led by the Holy Spirit . . . [20]

In other words, Jesus granted to Peter, and subsequently to His other apostles, the authority to administer, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance (John 16:12-13), what beliefs and behaviors were to be acceptable in building His church. In, with and by the Holy Spirit, who’s purpose was to bear witness to Jesus Christ (John 15:26-27), Jesus authorized Peter and these other apostles to both monitor and regulate the life of the new born and infant church He was going to build. As Jesus told the apostles: “**Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come**” (John 16:13). In this way, those things bound or loosed in heaven would and could be bound or loosed in the church by these apostles. Under the Spirit’s guidance, Jesus authorized His apostles to be the authoritative agents of dispensational change from Judaism to Christianity, from Israel to the Gentiles, from Law to

Grace. [21]

In this regard, it should be noted that in the spiritual turf wars raging over control of this planet, the idea of “binding” evil spirits or “loosing” good ones is not evident in the contexts where Jesus gave His apostles the authority to bind and loose. Any such understanding is fictional. [22] Jesus’ promise that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” refers to His building the church, *not* rescuing a state. Further, defeating the enemies of the church, whether spiritual or physical, or any combination thereof, is His work for He promised, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). From heaven and through His Spirit, Jesus is building His church which is why binding and loosing must occur *up there* before it can occur *down here*.

**Matthew 18:18: Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye [the disciple/apostles] shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**

In this instance, Jesus extends to the other apostles the authority that initially, He endowed Peter with. The above commentary on Matthew 16:19 is equally applicable to this setting with the understanding that the authority Jesus grants is corporate to the apostolic band of men.

**John 20:22-23: And when he [Jesus] had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them [the disciple/apostles], Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.**

This narrative relates Jesus’ post-resurrection commissioning of His disciple/apostles. In His “remitting and retaining” statement, Jesus is not licensing sacerdotalism, the “ism” claiming that Jesus endowed church hierarchy with authority to forgive sins. Like Matthew 16:19, the verbal mixture of the principal clauses communicate that before an individual was to be treated as forgiven by the apostles on earth, that person needed to first receive God’s forgiveness from heaven. This explains why Peter told Simon the Sorcerer, “**Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee**” (Acts 8:14-25).

Above all else, absolution remains the prerogative of God and His Christ (Mark 2:5-7). Presumably, this would happen in accord with a believer’s confession of Jesus as Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9-10). Heaven alone possesses the power and authority to forgive sin, and unless sins are remitted heaven they cannot be remitted on earth. In this instance, Jesus did not endow His disciple/apostles with carnal authority to bind malevolent demons or loose benevolent angels by power praying.

## Conclusion

Devils don’t make us do it! Attributing the ills of western society and its decline to the influence of dominionist demons neglects the greater cause for the demise; and that is, the sinfulness of the human heart. The key to reforming society is the revival of the heart of man. In His

antediluvian assessment regarding the “state of the world,” Scripture tells us that God looked down from heaven and **“saw that the wickedness of man [‘adam] was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts [the idolatrous imaginations] of his heart was only evil continually”** (Genesis 6:5; Compare Jesus’ assessment in Mark 7:15-23, and Paul’s in Romans 1:18-3:18.). God attributed the prevailing wickedness over the earth to *‘adam*, and not to dominionist demons with zip codes, even though they are mentioned in the context (i.e., **“sons of God,”** Genesis 6:2). The Old Testament history of Israel records the failure of God’s dominion over Israel for reason of that people’s lawlessness. So who are Christians to think they’re any different? (See Romans 11:21-22.) So, hypothetically, assuming prayer warfare can bind territorial demons in spiritual turf wars, we are still left with humanity’s rebellious sinful nature to deal with—something the Reformers called “total” or “radical” depravity—a nature that finds itself addicted to **“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”** (1 John 2:16; See Jeremiah 17:9). So as Cassius tells his friend: “The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars, but in ourselves if we are underlings.” **[23]** This depravity is something no hocus-pocus of binding and loosing will cure. Only the Gospel is **“the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”** (Romans 1:16).

As Jesus demonstrated in His temptation (Matthew 7:1-11), the most effective spiritual authority the Christian can employ in the conflict of the ages, the war between the Ruler (God) and the Rebel (Satan), and presumably including the minions of demons that serve him, is God’s Word. As V. Raymond Edman (1900-1967) wrote:

The discipline of discernment requires that we follow the tenets of divine revelation, lest we fall before the wrath of the tempter. We are to meet his subtlety, selfishness and sophistry in the same way as did the Captain of our salvation, with the unequivocal statement, “It is written” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). **[24]**

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## ENDNOTES

**[1]** Beginning with the Moral Majority (Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, et. al.) during the latter part of the previous century, there now appears to be five or more dominionist strands at work both inside and outside Christendom: *first, the Roman Catholic*, which reached full flower in the Medieval Age and continues to this day (Augustine’s *City of God*); *second, the Neo-Calvinists* who are attempting to exert influence upon our pagan culture, i.e., Piper, Mohler, et. al. Unlike Luther and Calvin who used the political apparatus of the state to persecute dissidents like the Anabaptists, Neo Calvinists do not appear intent to do so; *third, the emergent*, a strand that in its kingdom now social gospel approach to reforming society has wedded to liberal social and political causes, i.e., Brian McLaren, Jim Wallace, Leonard Sweet, and others; *fourth, the New Apostolic Reformation*, a strand which concerns itself with the spiritual warfare necessary to conquer the 7 influential mountains of society, i.e., C. Peter Wagner, Mike Bickle, Cindy Jacobs and company; and *fifth, the New Age*, a eastern-mystical strand that divinizes man and nature (pantheism), i.e., Ken Wilbur, Matthew Fox, Marianne Williamson, Neal Donald Walsch, and so forth. To these could be added the humanist and Islamic strands. How, whether or when the aggregate of these ideologies/religions will collectivize in a last ditch effort to save the planet from extinction is anybody’s guess. Yet, the biblical prediction of a one world government-

religion portends the time of a final rebellion at the end of this current evil age when these disparate strands will develop, whether wittingly or unwittingly, a common cosmic consciousness that will continue to **“take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us”** (Psalm 2:2-3; See Revelation 13:1-18.).

[2] As attested by Jesus and Jewish and Christian writings, history is viewed to consist of two periods: this age and the age to come. The current world order began with the creation and fall and “is marked by trouble, evil, and the power of Satan . . .” The coming world order will commence with divine judgment and retribution. Evil will be eliminated and “God will create a new heaven and a new earth.” See Jacob Neusner, Editor in Chief, *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period 450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996): 19. Obviously, it does not lie within the power of dominionists to render divine judgment. The Father has committed such to the Son (John 5:22). Neither does it lie within their power to create a new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:10-13). Only the sovereign God is capable of doing such. Therefore, any human agenda designed to bring about God’s kingdom on earth before He institutes it is illusory (Acts 1:6-7; Matthew 24:36).

[3] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message//Remix: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2003): 1775.

[4] Donald K. Campbell, *Daniel: God’s Man in a Secular Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1988): 151.

[5] C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer: How to seek God’s Power and Protection in the Battle to Build His Kingdom* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992): 143-160.

[6] In the NAR’s turf wars, one must ask when might the movement begin to advocate a postmillennial “replacement theology”; that in the overall attempt to bring down God’s kingdom to earth, the postdenominational church replaces Israel as the elect vehicle through which God’s kingdom will be brought down to earth.

[7] Ibid. 66. References to territorial spirits—**“the prince of Grecia,”** etc.—abound in the book.

[8] John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Meet the Enemy: Arming Yourself for Spiritual Warfare* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992):43.

[9] Emphasis added, David Cannistraci, *The Gift of Apostle: A Biblical Look at Apostleship and How God is Using It to Bless His Church Today* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996): 29. In the Foreword, C. Peter Wagner endorses the book writing, “Inherent in today’s postdenominational churches is a structure commonly known as ‘apostolic networks,’ in which both the gift and office are recognized and accepted.” (12).

[10] On this point the remark of one Pentecostal theologian ought to be noted. He wrote (Italics his: “*The 12 apostles directly commissioned by Jesus had no successors.*” See French L. Arrington, *Christian Doctrine: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Volume 3 (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1994): 191. Another informs: “After the first century ‘apostle’ and ‘evangelist’ were used rarely to describe leaders. In the Apostolic Fathers ‘apostle’ occurs only at *Didache* 11.3 . . .” See Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996): 213.

[11] In some instances, at both an individual and collective level, these revivalists believe themselves to be “little christs” or elohim possessing the power to pray down and work up God’s kingdom on earth. See my article, “Did Jesus Teach the Divinity of Humanity?": <http://herescope.blogspot.com/2010/08/did-jesus-teach-divinity-of-humanity.html>.

[12] Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 54. Wagner here quotes himself from an earlier book: *How to*



*Have a Healing Ministry* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1989): 114.

[13] Carson notes: “Nor can greater works mean ‘more spectacular’ or ‘more supernatural’ works: it is hard to imagine works that are more spectacular or supernatural than the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the multiplication of bread and the turning of water into wine.” D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991):495.

[14] Wagner states: “We are justified, therefore, to use interchangeably the terms ‘overcome,’ ‘conquer’ or ‘bind’ when we describe our activity in taking the offensive against the enemy in spiritual warfare.” See *Warfare Prayer*, 60.

[15] Thomas & Nita Horn, *The Ahriman Gate* (Sisters, OR: Musterion Press, 2005): 198.

[16] Ibid. Emphasis added. Other quotes relating that prayer can “bind and loose” dominionist demons are mentioned in Gaylene Goodroad’s article, “Militant Prayer: Taking Spiritual Dominion over Dark Angels.” See *Herescope* blog, September 23, 2011.

<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2011/09/militant-prayer.html>.

[17] Wesley J. Perschbacher, *Refresh Your Greek: Practical Steps for Reading the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989): 73. The periphrastic construction (finite “be” verbs *’éstai* + future perfect participles, *dedeménon* and *leluménon*) suggests this timing. Keener states that “the mixture of verb tenses allow the interpretation that they [Peter, Matthew 16:19, and the other disciple apostles, Matthew 18:18] merely ratify the heavenly decree”. See Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999): 430.

[18] Ryken remarks of “binding”: “The most mysterious and overtly theological references are Jesus’ use of the imagery of binding to show the efficacy of earthly decisions in spiritual matters in the heavenly realm.” See Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, “BIND, BOUND,” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998): 92. In contrast and as noted in the previous footnote, the verbal tenses indicate the reverse to be the case. The imagery of “binding” shows the efficacy of heavenly decisions in spiritual matters in the earthly realm, decisions that were initially to be mediated by Peter (Matthew 16:19), and then by other disciple-apostles (Matthew 18:18). In all decisions, the efficacy of the decisions moved from heaven to earth, not from earth to heaven.

[19] John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica: Matthew-I Corinthians*, Volume 2, Matthew-Mark (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, Reprinted from 1859 edition): 240.

[20] Ibid. *The Jewish New Testament Commentary* follows a similar interpretative path. Commenting on Matthew 18:18-20, and after noting that “the passage is not about prayer,” Stern writes that, “*Yeshua*, speaking to those who have authority to regulate Messianic communal life (vv. 15-17), commissions them to establish New Covenant *halakhah*, that is, to make authoritative decisions where there is question about how Messianic life ought to be lived.” See David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992): 57.

[21] In this transition, I note that the church does not replace Israel. God is not through with the Jew. In the times of renewal when “the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,” then the Lord will graft the natural branches back into the Olive Tree of His blessing for the world (Romans 11:1-36, \*25).

[22] Hagner does admit that “‘Binding and loosing’ can be regarded as the language of demon exorcism . . . but this interpretation cannot be made to fit the context.” See Donald A. Hagner,

*Matthew 14-28: Word Biblical Commentary*, Volume 33B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1995): 472-473.

[23] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.135. Online: <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/quotes/juliusquotes.html>.

[24] V. Raymond Edman, *The Disciplines of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press, 1948): 171.