

# “JOHN A. MACMILLAN: PIONEER MISSIONARY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND THE BELIEVER’S AUTHORITY”

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## Abstract

Many people associate teaching on spiritual warfare and the authority of the believer from charismatic or Word of Faith sources, especially like Kenneth Hagin. However, the original source of teaching on this doctrine comes from classic holiness roots in the Higher Life and Keswick movements, especially from John A. MacMillan, a missionary, writer, editor, and professor with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. In 1932 he wrote a series of articles entitled “The Authority of the Believer,” eventually published in book form, distributed widely and republished in other periodicals. MacMillan had a remarkable and extensive ministry in the exercise of the authority of the believer and spiritual warfare spanning more than thirty years. His experiences include divine protection, healing, divine intervention, power encounters with demonic forces, and teaching on territorial spirits and generational bondages. Numerous evangelical and charismatic leaders have quoted or referred to his teachings and principles.

**Keywords:** authority of the believer, spiritual warfare, throne life, territorial spirits, C&MA, Higher Life, Keswick, charismatic, binding, loosing.

Banyak orang mengasosiasikan pengajaran peperangan rohani dan otoritas orang percaya dari karismatik atau sumber Firman Iman, terutama seperti Kenneth Hagin. Namun, sumber asli dari pengajaran doktrin ini berasal dari akar kekudusan klasik dalam gerakan Higher Life dan Keswick, terutama dari John A. MacMillan, seorang misionaris, penulis, editor, dan profesor dengan Christian and Missionary Alliance. Pada tahun 1932 ia menulis serangkaian artikel yang berjudul “Otoritas orang percaya,” akhirnya diterbitkan dalam bentuk buku, didistribusikan secara luas dan diterbitkan di majalah lainnya. MacMillan memiliki pelayanan yang luar biasa dan luas dalam pelaksanaan otoritas orang percaya dan peperangan rohani yang lebih dari tiga puluh tahun. Pengalamannya termasuk perlindungan ilahi, penyembuhan, campur tangan ilahi, pertemuan kuasa dengan kekuatan jahat, dan pengajaran tentang roh teritorial dan perbudakan generasi. Banyak pemimpin injili dan karismatik telah mengutip atau memakai ajaran dan prinsip-prinsipnya.

Kata-kata kunci: otoritas orang percaya, peperangan rohani, tahta hidup, roh teritorial, C & MA, kehidupan tertinggi, Keswick, karismatik, mengikat, melepaskan.

Many people associate teaching on spiritual warfare and especially on the authority of the believer, from a charismatic source, usually Word of Faith leaders like Kenneth Hagin or Kenneth Copeland. Some evangelicals, such as Hank Hanegraaff and John MacArthur tend to regard exercise of the believer's authority and binding and loosing as excessive teachings of the charismatic movement.<sup>1</sup> However, the original source of teaching on this vital doctrine comes from classic holiness roots in the Higher Life and Keswick movements, especially from John A. MacMillan, a missionary, writer, editor, and professor with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). My doctoral dissertation presented a case study of the life, ministry, and impact of John MacMillan, particularly as it relates to the authority of the believer and spiritual warfare.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, a book was adapted from this dissertation, published as *A Believer with Authority: The Life and Message of John A. MacMillan*.<sup>3</sup> This paper is a distillation of the dissertation and book.

### Introducing John A. MacMillan

John MacMillan (1873-1956) was a Canadian Presbyterian businessman who became actively involved with ministry to Chinese and Jewish people in Toronto.<sup>4</sup> At the age of 41 he married Isabel Robson, missionary to China with China Inland Mission 1895-1906 and personal nurse to J. Hudson Taylor. Ordained in 1923 at the age of 49, MacMillan and his wife went to China as missionaries with the C&MA. He then became field director of the floundering C&MA mission work in

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<sup>1</sup> D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 142; Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1993), 131-135, 257-258; John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1991), 213-237; John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 360-361. The book *Binding and Loosing: Exercising Authority Over the Dark Powers* by K. Neill Foster and Paul L. King (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1998) addresses this particular area, providing a moderate position between the two camps.

<sup>2</sup> Paul L. King, "A Case Study of the Authority of the Believer: The Impact of the Life and Ministry of John A. MacMillan," D. Min. Dissertation (Tulsa, OK: Oral Roberts University, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Paul L. King, *A Believer with Authority: The Life and Message of John A. MacMillan* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2001). Available at [www.paulkingministries.com](http://www.paulkingministries.com).

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the biographical information in this paper is taken from John MacMillan's family and other genealogical sources.

the Philippines. Following the death of his first wife in 1928, he returned to North America to do pastoral and itinerant ministry. Subsequently, he became Associate Editor of *The Alliance Weekly* magazine, a member of the Board of Managers of the C&MA, and a professor at Missionary Training Institute in Nyack, New York, now known as Nyack College. In 1932 after nine years of many dramatic experiences with spiritual warfare, he wrote a series of articles in *The Alliance Weekly* entitled "The Authority of the Believer."<sup>5</sup> Eventually, they were published in book form, distributed widely and also republished in other periodicals. MacMillan had a remarkable and extensive ministry in the exercise of the authority of the believer and spiritual warfare spanning more than thirty years.

### MacMillan's Exercise of the Authority of the Believer

John MacMillan's practice of the authority of the believer began when as a businessman he was informed that the house next to his house caught on fire. Calmly, "he committed the crisis to God in prayer, claiming divine protection according to Psalm 91:10 that 'no destruction would befall the house.'" He drove home to find out that the fire had miraculously stopped at a wooden fence that separated the two houses.<sup>6</sup>

MacMillan turned his business over to another man when he left for the mission field, designating a portion of the profits to go to his missionary support, but the man reneged on his contract, failing to forward the funds. Speaking with the believer's authority, MacMillan prophesied, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." Eventually the business went bankrupt. So through MacMillan's application of the believer's authority, he was vindicated and the dishonest contract-breakers suffered the judgment of God.<sup>7</sup>

On the mission field in China an Asiatic cholera epidemic threatened the mission. MacMillan again confessed Psalm 91:3, "Surely he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly pestilence." He prayed, "May we be enabled to keep the Home 'in the secret place of

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<sup>5</sup> John A. MacMillan, "The Authority of the Believer," *The Alliance Weekly*, Jan. 9, 16, 23, 30; Feb. 6, 13, 20, 27, 1932; *The Alliance Weekly*, Mar. 9, 1935, 147; John A. MacMillan, *The Authority of the Believer* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Rev. Jay Smith (C&MA chaplain), letter to author, Sept. 24, 1998. Smith, as a student at Nyack, lived with the MacMillans 1952-1956. MacMillan later wrote out of his own proven experience about the authority of claiming divine protection from Psalm 91 in "Raging Chariots," *The Alliance Weekly*, May 15, 1937, 307; see also John A. MacMillan, *The Adult Full Gospel Sunday School Quarterly*, Dec. 27, 1936, 40. I personally visited MacMillan's home and found that there was little space between the houses, showing how miraculous the protection from fire really was.

<sup>7</sup> Journal of John MacMillan, May 4, 1923; Apr. 2, 1924; May 19, 1924; Aug. 18, 1925; Mar. 31, 1926; notes from C&MA Archives.

the Most High and under the shadow of the Almighty.” They emerged victorious and received divine protection from the plague.<sup>8</sup>

MacMillan told of how C&MA missionaries would claim land from demonic control in China and bind the powers of darkness. On a certain occasion, the missionaries took possession of a piece of land and began moving logs. Evil spirits resisted the takeover by projecting a supernatural voice from a log. The voice in the log threatened, “Don’t you dare move it!” The missionaries were not taken aback, but rebuked the voice. They then removed the log without any further incident and gained the victory over the dark powers.<sup>9</sup> MacMillan’s most dramatic illustration of exercising the authority of binding and loosing occurred in 1924 when several missionaries were kidnapped. As MacMillan and the remaining missionaries exercised the believer’s authority of binding and loosing, the missionaries were released without harm.<sup>10</sup>

John MacMillan’s exercise of the authority of the believer and engagement with the powers of darkness increased during his ministry in the Philippines. He exercised authority over nature, binding the Enemy as a tree fell toward him and the mission buildings. As a result, the tree fell between the buildings, causing no harm to the buildings or himself. MacMillan perceived in this startling occurrence of divine protection a spiritual message from the Lord, “The way out is blocked—is it not a gracious call to prayer, lest the great adversary block our efforts and shut us up in a small place? We have prayed for the binding of the strongman—we must watch and pray that the strong man does not bind us.”<sup>11</sup> As he took authority over tobacco addictions, many people were set free and in one district in the Philippines, all the believers stopped growing tobacco.<sup>12</sup>

Another remarkable and dramatic demonstration of MacMillan’s authority as a believer resulted in miraculous healing of his broken leg. Retired pastor Otto Bublat recalls that MacMillan described the incident years later in a class at the Missionary Training Institute: “Once on an emergency mission trip where he was alone on the rainy slippery trail, he slipped and broke his ankle. . . . His only recourse was the Lord since he was alone and about twenty miles from even a first aid station. In simple faith, he stepped out and began walking those many miles. He

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<sup>8</sup> MacMillan Journal, Sept. 26, 1924; Oct. 4, 1924; Nov. 6, 1924.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. Paul Valentine (Minister-at large for the C&MA), phone interview, Oct. 23, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Foster and King, *Binding and Loosing*, 247-248.

<sup>11</sup> MacMillan Journal, Sept. 26, 1926.

<sup>12</sup> “Cleansed Within,” *The Alliance Weekly*, Jan. 14, 1939, 19; *Full Gospel Sunday School Quarterly*, Aug. 9, 1953, 17-18.

got home safely, and shortly thereafter had the ankle X-rayed. There had been a clean break, but it was perfectly healed.”<sup>13</sup>

MacMillan frequently exercised authority over demonic occult powers in China, the Philippines, and later in North America. On one occasion, a spiritist witchdoctor was performing a ceremony, chanting in a trance-like mediumistic state and calling on the spirits. A drum in the room began to beat in rhythm without anyone touching it. Then it rose to the ceiling in a state of levitation. MacMillan walked into the room, took authority over the spirits, rebuking them in the name of Jesus Christ. The drum immediately dropped to the floor and ceased pounding.<sup>14</sup> This was a strong demonstration of what we call today a “power encounter.”

For nearly three years he battled the principalities and powers in the Philippines and encountered personal attack upon him and his wife. In the midst of his wife’s grave illness he wrote in his diary: “We are, by prayer in Jesus’ name, dislodging the spirits that have bound the people of this field. It seems to me that an infernal fiat has gone forth that we must be crushed. But, ‘rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; though I fall, I shall rise.’ God is with us and we shall live and triumph.”<sup>15</sup> His wife died a month later, but her death was not a defeat for MacMillan and the Philippine mission. Rather, it galvanized and united people in prayer more and more. The morale and fortitude the Enemy tried to destroy was actually strengthened. His son Buchanan remarked, “This seemed to be the beginning of a new era of spiritual life in the mission field, that . . . has been singularly unresponsive and discouraging.”<sup>16</sup> The loss that resulted in the breaking of John’s heart actually became a breakthrough—a breaking of the Enemy’s stronghold on the peoples of the Philippines. The outbreak of revival for which MacMillan had been earnestly praying and waging war for more than three years began the latter part of 1929 as the floodgates opened and hundreds were converted in the ensuing months. MacMillan’s legacy continues into the twenty-first century, for out of the Philippine mission that MacMillan revitalized, the C&MA has grown to be the largest evangelical Protestant denomination in the Philippines today. All this has been the outcome of the exercise of the authority of the believer.

MacMillan was a trailblazer in the concept of “territorial spirits,” describing what he called “praying geographically” in dealing with

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<sup>13</sup> Rev. Otto Bublat, letter to author, Jan. 7, 1998. Bublat was a student of MacMillan’s at Nyack 1938-1941.

<sup>14</sup> Rev. Richard Barker (retired C&MA pastor), phone interview, Jan. 19, 1999. Rev. Barker was a student of MacMillan’s in the early 1950s.

<sup>15</sup> MacMillan Journal, July 24, 1928.

<sup>16</sup> Buchanan MacMillan’s Philippine Archive Notes.

demonic strongholds over a region. He appealed for intercessors at home “to roll back the powers of the air, and make it possible to bring the Truth to bear on these regions where the devil is blocking the way.”<sup>17</sup> He had viewed his battle for Isabel’s life as an “infernal fiat” intended to crush them because they were dislodging the spirits that held the territories of the Philippines in darkness. MacMillan’s colleague Robert Jaffray also taught:

There are veritable princes of darkness who, under Satan, hold dominion over these lands of earth where the Gospel message has never been given. The missionary who goes ‘over the top’ and enters them will surely meet with these princes of darkness who are appointed by Satan. There was a ‘Prince of Persia’ and a ‘Prince of Greece’ in Daniel’s day, against whom ‘God’s chief princes’ fought (Dan. 10). There is today a Prince of Tibet, of Afghanistan, of Cambodia, of Arabia, of Mohammedanism, of Bolshevism, who are prepared to defend their lands and the people who are under their dominion against the message of the Gospel. But thank God, we go forth at the command of One who is infinitely greater than all the princes of darkness.<sup>18</sup>

MacMillan was also a pioneer of recognizing and dealing with generational bondage. Predating modern teaching on “generational sin” and “generational curses” by decades, MacMillan warned on the basis of Exodus 20:5, of the consequences of sin being visited upon succeeding generations, what he called “an inexorable law of return and of increase,” and the “principle of heredity.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *The Adult Full Gospel Sunday School Quarterly*, Aug. 9, 1953, 18; John A. MacMillan, “Our Mohammedan Problem in the Philippines,” *The Alliance Weekly*, June 22, 1929, 404; John A. MacMillan, “Let Down Your Nets for a Draught,” *The Alliance Weekly*, Dec. 28, 1929, 833; Benjamin Y. Mendoza, *The Philippine Christian Alliance: First Seventy-Eight Years*. Self-published and printed in the Philippines, 1985, 46-47; Robert Ekvall, et al., *After Fifty Years: A Record of God’s Working Through the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1939), 233, 234 for more on MacMillan’s pioneering concept of “territorial spirits” and “spiritual mapping,” see “Praying Geographically,” *The Alliance Weekly*, Sept. 14, 1946, 579.

Also, at that time MacMillan’s friend Frank Laubach, had become a semi-invalid, submerged in deep depression and defeat. He returned a new man in 1930 to discover a breakthrough in literacy and evangelism, for which he would become world-famous. Helen M. Roberts, *Champion of the Silent Billion: The Story of Frank C. Laubach “Apostle of Literacy”* (St. Paul, MN: MacAlester Park Publishing Co., 1961), 68-69; Marjorie Medary, *Each One Teach One: Frank Laubach, Friend to Millions* (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1954), 28ff.

<sup>18</sup> R.A. Jaffray, “Our Great Unfinished Task,” *The Alliance Weekly*, July 9, 1927, 456.

<sup>19</sup> MacMillan, *The Adult Full Gospel Sunday School Quarterly*, Oct. 10, 1943, 6. Chaplain Jay Smith comments on MacMillan’s teaching, “Breaking family curses was not a concept articulated in those words in the 1950s; but John felt strongly that demonic

### *The Development of Teaching on the Authority of the Believer*

John MacMillan was not the first to teach principles on the authority of the believer, but he was apparently the first to combine many of those principles together into one treatise and to expand upon them, thus becoming the seminal writer on the concept. The notion of the authority of the believer arose originally out of the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and developed embryonically. A. J. Gordon notes that Swiss healing movement leader Dorothy Trudel realized the authority of the believer, declaring that it is the believer's privilege to be kings and priests of God.<sup>20</sup> The Keswick and Higher Life movements picked up the theme with their emphasis on Covenant theology and the privileges and inheritance of the saints through the Covenant. In 1885 Andrew Murray was teaching that believers have authority: "Church of the living God! Your calling is higher and holier than you know! God wants to rule the world through your members. He wants you to be His kings and priests. Your prayers can bestow and withhold the blessings of heaven."<sup>21</sup> He quoted famed Scottish preacher and hymn writer Horatius Bonar, saying, "God is seeking kings. Not out of the ranks of angels. Fallen man must furnish Him with the rulers of His universe. Human hand must wield the scepter, human hands must wear the crown."<sup>22</sup> In 1895, as interim successor to Charles Spurgeon, A. T. Pierson taught, "Obedience to Him means command over others; in proportion as we are subject to Him, even the demons are subject to us in His name."<sup>23</sup> Pierson also taught "the authority of faith": "This we regard as the central, vital heart of this great lesson on Faith. The Master of all girds the servant with His own power and entrusts him with authority to command."<sup>24</sup> The concept of the believer's authority was also taught in germinal form by Pierson's friend A. B. Simpson, founder of

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hold on some had its roots in family history, in spiritism, occult, drugs, etc, and referenced the Old Testament Scripture that speaks to the iniquity of the fathers being visited on the children." Letter from Rev. Jay Smith.

<sup>20</sup> A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of Healing*, quoting Trudel in *Healing: The Three Great Classics on Divine Healing* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1992), 215.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), 136; see also 116-117, 178.

<sup>22</sup> Murray, 136.

<sup>23</sup> A. T. Pierson, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1980), 92.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur T. Pierson, *Lessons in the School of Prayer* (Dixon, MO: Rare Christian Books, n.d.), 59. This was republished in *Herald of His Coming* under the title of "The Authority of Faith." A. T. Pierson, "The Authority of Faith," *Herald of His Coming*, July, 1953, 7.

the C&MA, in an article entitled “The Authority of Faith” based on Luke 10:19.<sup>25</sup>

Another article by Simpson used a policeman analogy of spiritual authority: “I give you authority.’ This is the policeman’s badge which makes him mightier than a whole crowd of ruffians because, standing upon his rights, the whole power of the state is behind him. . . . Are we using the authority of the name of Jesus and the faith of God?”<sup>26</sup> MacMillan, further expounding upon the idea in *The Authority of the Believer*, changed the illustration from a mob to bustling traffic stopped by a policeman at a busy intersection.<sup>27</sup> This illustration from Simpson and MacMillan has since been frequently used to describe the believer’s authority.

At a China Inland Mission conference in 1897 Jessie Penn-Lewis, whose writings MacMillan absorbed, taught on the believer’s position in Christ according to Ephesians 1 and 2.<sup>28</sup> Also about 1897, A. B. Simpson, also began teaching the believer’s position in Christ according to Ephesians 1.<sup>29</sup> MacMillan’s book *The Authority of the Believer* is a more thorough exposition of the position of the believer according to Ephesians 1 and 2, expanding on the germinal thought of both Penn-Lewis and Simpson. Alluding to Simpson’s exposition of Ephesians entitled *The Highest Christian Life*, MacMillan wrote, “The Epistle to the Ephesians is the manual of the higher life. In a fuller degree perhaps than any of the others its leads the believer up to the heights of fellowship, of authority, and of victory.”<sup>30</sup>

The concept of throne life described by Simpson is one of the foundational principles of MacMillan’s understanding of the authority of the believer. MacMillan declared that the believer can assert “in prayer the power of the Ascended Lord, and the believer’s throne union with

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<sup>25</sup> A. B. Simpson, “The Authority of Faith,” *The Alliance Weekly*, Apr. 23, 1938, 263.

<sup>26</sup> A. B. Simpson, “Spiritual Talismans,” *The Alliance Weekly*, June 14, 1919, 178. Simpson taught that authority on the basis of Luke 10:19, as the authority to act as Christ’s law enforcement officer, as a legal authority as a representative of the government of the King. A. B. Simpson, *Christ in the Bible* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1992), 4:338.

<sup>27</sup> MacMillan, *The Authority of the Believer*, 11-12.

<sup>28</sup> Jessie Penn-Lewis, *The Warfare with Satan* (Dorset, England: Overcomer Literature Trust, 1963), 63, 65. Later, in 1912 she and Evan Roberts included a short section on the believer’s authority in their book *War on the Saints*. See Jessie Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts, *War on the Saints—Unabridged Edition*, Ninth Edition (New York: Thomas E. Lowe, Ltd., 1973), 259-262.

<sup>29</sup> Simpson, *Christ in the Bible*, 5:413-414. For more on this, see Paul L. King, “The Restoration of the Doctrine of Binding and Loosing,” *Alliance Academic Review*, ed. Elio Cuccaro (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1997), 57-80.

<sup>30</sup> MacMillan, *The Adult Full Gospel Sunday School Quarterly*, Oct. 28, 1934, 12.

Him.”<sup>31</sup> Again he writes, “Where in faith the obedient saint claims his throne-rights in Christ, and boldly asserts his authority, the powers of the air will recognize and obey.”<sup>32</sup> Commenting on Exodus 17, he writes, “The rod [of Moses] symbolizes the authority of God committed to human hands. By it the holder is made a co-ruler with his Lord, sharing His throne-power and reigning with Him. ... So today, every consecrated hand that lifts the rod of the authority of the Lord against the unseen powers of darkness is directing the throne-power of Christ against Satan and his hosts in a battle that will last until ‘the going down of the sun.’”<sup>33</sup> The theme of throne life permeated the Keswick, Higher Life, and Overcomer movements. For a full study on the concept of “Throne Life,” see my book *Come Up Higher: Rediscovering Throne Life—The Highest Christian Life for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.<sup>34</sup>

### MacMillan’s Impact on Evangelical Christianity

MacMillan’s first and almost immediate impact on the evangelical world came just a year after the publication of his series of articles on “The Authority of the Believer” in *The Alliance Weekly* in 1932. The seventh edition of *War on the Saints* by Jessie Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts, published in 1933, included in its introduction a reference to MacMillan’s recent writing: “It is perhaps striking that in recent months a magazine so well informed of Christian work in many lands as *The Alliance Weekly* of

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<sup>31</sup> MacMillan, *The Authority of the Believer*, 49.

<sup>32</sup> MacMillan, *The Authority of the Believer*, 55.

<sup>33</sup> MacMillan, *The Authority of the Believer*, 93, 96.

<sup>34</sup> Paul L. King, *Come Up Higher: Rediscovering Throne Life—The Highest Christian Life for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Tulsa, OK: One Seed Press, 2013). In 1888, George B. Peck, a friend of A. J. Gordon and A. B. Simpson, wrote his book *Throne-Life, or The Highest Christian Life*, in which he wrote concerning “throne-power,” or the “command of faith.” George B. Peck, *Throne-Life, or The Highest Christian Life* (Boston, MA: Watchword Publishing, 1888), 171, 174-175, 177. Also in the late 1800s George D. Watson, popular Methodist holiness leader affiliated with the C&MA, wrote *Steps to the Throne*. George D. Watson, *Steps to the Throne* (Cincinnati, OH: Bible School Book Room, n.d.). In 1906, Jessie Penn-Lewis wrote a booklet entitled *Throne Life of Victory*, which was hailed as “God’s answer to powers of darkness.” Brynmor Pierce Jones, *The Trials and Triumphs of Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis* (New Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1997), 136; see also Penn-Lewis and Roberts, *War on the Saints*, 183. MacMillan developed his concept most directly from George D. Watson’s book *Bridehood Saints* in a chapter entitled “The Hand on the Throne” (also one of MacMillan’s sub-titles). Compare MacMillan, *The Authority of the Believer*, 93-96, with George D. Watson, *Bridehood Saints* (Cincinnati, OH: God’s Revivalist, n.d.), 117-118, 120-122. For a comparative analysis, see King, “A Case Study of the Authority of the Believer,” 274, 289-290, note 43.

America, should feel it necessary to publish some very able articles by The Rev. J. A. MacMillan dealing with demon possession.”<sup>35</sup>

The British deeper life periodical *The Overcomer*, founded by Jessie Penn-Lewis and edited by J. B. Metcalfe, also published MacMillan’s articles in the 1930s.<sup>36</sup> MacMillan’s sequel article “The Authority of the Intercessor” eventually was included with *The Authority of the Believer* and produced in book form.<sup>37</sup> MacMillan’s 1948 series of articles in *The Alliance Weekly* on demonization and deliverance ministry were compiled together in a small book entitled *Modern Demon Possession*, later republished with additional material under the title of *Encounter with Darkness*.<sup>38</sup> These writings have been referenced again and again through the years by ministers and theologians alike.

*Herald of His Coming* became a popular interdenominational evangelical newspaper in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>39</sup> The editor of the monthly journal wrote regarding *The Authority of the Believer*, “This is so far as I know the very best presentation of the great subject of the believer’s place and power with the Lord Jesus to be found anywhere.”<sup>40</sup> Hence, this journal became one of the most extensive disseminators of MacMillan’s teachings in the mid-twentieth century evangelical community.

Even more significantly, Paul Billheimer, a Bible college president and radio preacher in the Wesleyan holiness tradition, frequently spoke

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<sup>35</sup> Penn-Lewis and Roberts, *War on the Saints*, n.p. It goes on to quote a lengthy section of MacMillan’s writing. Shortly after this, the articles were published in pamphlet form.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Dr. Keith Bailey. Bailey first became acquainted with MacMillan’s articles on the believer’s authority in the 1940s when someone gave him copies of *The Overcomer* from the 1930s in which he discovered MacMillan’s series.

<sup>37</sup> John A. MacMillan, “The Authority of the Intercessor,” *The Alliance Weekly*, May 23, 1936, 334. It was also produced in pamphlet form, then later published by another evangelical organization. John A. MacMillan, *The Authority of the Intercessor*, Minneapolis, MN: Osterhus Publishing Co., n.d.

<sup>38</sup> John A. MacMillan, “Modern Demon Possession,” *The Alliance Weekly*, July 24, July 31; Sept. 4, Sept. 11, Sept. 18, 1948; John A. MacMillan, *Encounter with Darkness* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1980), 9.

<sup>39</sup> It featured articles by many evangelical leaders including Keswick and Higher Life holiness writers such as A. B. Simpson, A. W. Tozer, G. D. Watson, A. T. Pierson, Oswald J. Smith, and others.

<sup>40</sup> They advertised and reprinted MacMillan’s works several times between 1948 to 1956. James A. MacMillan, “The Authority of the Intercessor,” *Herald of His Coming*, June 1952, 11. The editors mistakenly listed his byline as “James A. MacMillan.” See also Lulu Jordan Cheesman, *Herald of His Coming*, Apr. 1952, 12; Lulu Jordan Cheesman, “Oppression, Obsession, and Possession,” *Herald of His Coming*, Aug. 1953, 7; J. A. MacMillan, “The Authority of the Believer,” *Herald of His Coming*, Apr. 1954, 4; *Herald of His Coming*, Apr. 1956, 7; also *Herald of His Coming*, Sept. 1956, 6.

and wrote on MacMillan's themes, declaring on the basis of Ephesians 1 that believers are "made sharers potentially of the authority which is His. They are made to sit with Him. That is they share His throne."<sup>41</sup> He became a leading holiness proponent of the overcoming Christian life. Thus Billheimer's popular book *Destined for the Throne* is based on and birthed out of MacMillan's principles.<sup>42</sup>

The most widespread referencing of MacMillan's material by an evangelical occurs in the writings of Merrill F. Unger, one-time Foursquare Church minister who became a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. Unger was a 1934 graduate of the Missionary Training Institute at Nyack. Although he graduated the semester before MacMillan joined the Nyack faculty, he likely had known of MacMillan and his popular classic. He makes four references to MacMillan in *What Demons Can Do to Saints* and eight references in *Demons in the World Today*.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This and other parts of the article are virtual quotes of MacMillan's words. See King, "A Case Study of the Authority of the Believer," 271-273. It can be observed that some citations are a shortening or paraphrase of MacMillan; others are virtually word for word. Billheimer does acknowledge that some of his material comes from another source. He gave a radio message entitled "Deliverance from the Hands of Our Enemies," which was printed in *Herald of His Coming* in 1952. He did not mention MacMillan by name, but shared his themes almost verbatim. Paul E. Billheimer, "Deliverance from the Hands of Our Enemies," *Herald of His Coming*, Jan. 1952, 3. On other occasions he expanded upon MacMillan's themes. Paul E. Billheimer, "Man Was Made To Have Dominion Over the Works of God's Hands," *Herald of His Coming*, July 1951, 4; see also Paul E. Billheimer, "Prayer Controls Events," *Herald of His Coming*, June 1951, 2. After MacMillan's "The Authority of the Believer" was republished by *Herald of His Coming* in April 1954, an article by Billheimer on authority and deliverance was published a month later as a follow-up. Paul E. Billheimer, "Awake, Awake . . .," *Herald of His Coming*, May 1954, 6-8. See also Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined To Overcome* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1982), 10. Additional influence from MacMillan can be observed in Billheimer's more recent book *Destined for the Throne*. Though he does not make reference to MacMillan, he does make mention of some of the same themes of the authority of the believer based on Ephesians 1:20-22 taught by MacMillan in his chapters entitled "Christ's Gift of Authority" and "The Legal Basis for the Authority of the Church." Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne* (Ft. Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), 57-81.

<sup>42</sup> Compare MacMillan, *The Authority of the Believer*, 22; "Commanding God," *The Alliance Weekly*, Oct. 7, 1939, 626; "The Kingdom of the Messiah," *The Alliance Weekly*, Feb. 17, 1940, 98; "Behavior in the House of God," *The Alliance Weekly*, Oct. 29, 1949, 690; MacMillan, *The Adult Full Gospel Sunday School Quarterly*, Sept. 4, 1949, 31, with Billheimer, *Destined To Overcome*, 36. Compare also "Facing Deadly Foes," *The Alliance Weekly*, June 3, 1939, 338, with Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 40. See King, "A Case Study of the Authority of the Believer," 275-276.

<sup>43</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 94-97; Merrill F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1971), 122,

In addition to numerous citations of MacMillan's published writings, he included a lengthy, previously unpublished letter written by MacMillan, describing a significant and difficult case of exorcism that took place in 1951 at Nyack.<sup>44</sup> It is apparent that Unger, himself a scholar, regards MacMillan as an authority on dealing with demonic forces. Unger has become the foundational scholarly work on spiritual warfare and demonology upon which other academic study has been built.<sup>45</sup> Unger's theology, in turn, was influenced in part by MacMillan.

Many other evangelicals have cited MacMillan and/or his themes, including Moody Press, Baptist pastors C. S. Lovett and Ernest Rockstad, Episcopalian John Richards, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School professors Tim Warner and Wayne Grudem.<sup>46</sup> Mark Bubeck, in his 1975 book *The Adversary* quotes from MacMillan's *The Authority of the Believer*, avowing, "This is one of the finest expositions on the subject and basis of the believer's authority that I have ever read."<sup>47</sup> Professor Ed Murphy, in his monumental volume *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, frequently cites Unger and uses a variation of MacMillan's policeman

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123, 193-195, 199, 203, 204, 207; Merrill F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press, 1952).

<sup>44</sup> Unger, *What Demons Can Do to Saints*, 94-97.

<sup>45</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Your Adversary, the Devil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1969), 156-165. Charles Kraft, *Defeating the Dark Angels* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publishing, 1992), 79-98.

<sup>46</sup> A portion of MacMillan's *Modern Demon Possession* was reprinted in a compilation of experiences of many missionaries dealing with demonic forces. See *Demon Experiences in Many Lands* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1960), 132-136. See also C. S. Lovett, *Dealing with the Devil* (Baldwin Park, CA: Personal Christianity Chapel, 1967), 140, 141. John Ellenberger, missionary to Indonesia and former missions professor at Alliance Theological Seminary, notes that the deliverance ministry of Ernest Rockstad was derived out of MacMillan's ministry and teaching, in particular, the use of the 1 John 4:3 method of testing spirits. Rockstad became a mentor to Ed Murphy, a missionary and professor who authored *The Handbook of Spiritual Warfare*, the most comprehensive study on the subject to date. C&MA missionary and missions professor Samuel Wilson makes reference to MacMillan's *Encounter with Darkness*, calling it "an old but reasonably sound exposition of the power given to believers by our identification with Christ." Samuel Wilson, "Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare," reprinted on the Internet (<http://www.episcopalian.org/TESM/writings/spirwil.htm>) from the *Journal of the Academy of Evangelism in Theological Education*. See also John Richards, *But Deliver Us From Evil* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1974), 233; Timothy Warner, *Spiritual Warfare: Victory Over the Dark Powers of Our World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 74; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 426-428, 435. For fuller documentation and discussion, see King, "A Case Study of the Authority of the Believer," 276-280.

<sup>47</sup> Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 115.

illustration.<sup>48</sup> Dr. Neil T. Anderson cites MacMillan as foundational to his Freedom in Christ Ministries: “John MacMillan’s published work on the authority of the believer greatly influenced the development of my own thinking.”<sup>49</sup> MacMillan’s works and concepts have been cited as standard fare in scholarly books and bibliographies, and have been highly regarded by evangelical leaders and academics from a variety of backgrounds.

### MacMillan’s Impact on the Charismatic Movement

The greatest popular dissemination of teaching on the authority of the believer has been through the charismatic movement. In fact, it has been so much so, that some have erroneously believed that the concept originated with charismatics, or more specifically, the Word of Faith movement. The periodical *Herald of His Coming* had circulated among Pentecostals, as well as the evangelical community, so undoubtedly the Pentecostal movement picked up the concept of the authority of the believer from MacMillan’s material that was featured from time to time.

The first known recorded impact of John MacMillan’s teaching in Pentecostal/ charismatic circles is found in the Pentecostal publication *Herald of Faith*, which featured news and articles about Pentecostal ministries. Beginning the June 1963 issue, MacMillan’s booklet was published for three months as a series of articles, advertised as a “new series of articles that will thrill our readers.”<sup>50</sup>

The major impact of MacMillan’s writings on the charismatic movement comes from the teachings of Kenneth Hagin. In 1967 Hagin began teaching on the authority of the believer in churches and on radio. Also in that year, his booklet *Authority of the Believer* was published, MacMillan’s book verbatim.<sup>51</sup> In his 1984 edition retitled *The Believer’s*

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<sup>48</sup> Ed Murphy, *Handbook of Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993, 1996), 20, 49-51, 277, 300, 477, 539, 541, 542, 544, 545. Though he does not mention MacMillan, in a personal interview he confirmed to me that MacMillan’s writings have influenced his ministry and teaching. Phone interview with Ed Murphy, Nov. 6, 2000.

<sup>49</sup> Neil T. Anderson, front cover endorsement of King, *A Believer with Authority*.

<sup>50</sup> J. A. MacMillan, “The Authority of the Believer,” *Herald of Faith*, June 1963, 9, 10, 23; July 1963, 9-11; Aug. 1963, 8, 10, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Hagin, “The Authority of the Believer,” sound recording (Tulsa, OK: n.p., 1967). Like Billheimer, Hagin quoted MacMillan’s writing extensively so that some have accused him of plagiarism, though others have exonerated him. See Kenneth Hagin, *Authority of the Believer* (Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications, 1967). See my dissertation for a discussion of this controversy. See also Dale H. Simmons, “Mimicking MacMillan,” unpublished term paper, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Apr. 23, 198; McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 69-71. On the other hand, other scholars have

*Authority*, Hagin acknowledged his indebtedness to MacMillan: “Then [in the 1940s] I came across a wonderful pamphlet, entitled *The Authority of the Believer* by John A. MacMillan, a missionary to China who later edited *The Alliance Weekly*.”<sup>52</sup>

MacMillan’s concept of the authority of the believer has been propagated widely in the charismatic movement, predominately through the teaching of Kenneth Hagin. Other Word of Faith leaders such as Kenneth Copeland and Charles Capps have further expanded upon Hagin’s teachings on the authority of the believer.<sup>53</sup> Though their present form and application differs in some respects from MacMillan’s original teaching, MacMillan’s basic principles furnish the foundation of contemporary charismatic understanding and practice of the concept.

Other charismatic leaders have made use of MacMillan’s concepts and/or writings on the authority of the believer and spiritual warfare as well, including Wayne Grudem, Michael Harper, Don Basham, Dick Leggatt, and *New Wine* magazine.<sup>54</sup>

Jack Hayford provided an endorsement of my book *A Believer with Authority*, writing, “Paul King reminds us that the authority of the believer has always been present where Christ’s sent-servants pursue His heart and mission with boldness and full accountability to the Church’s call to arise.”<sup>55</sup>

Other evangelical writers influenced by MacMillan have also impacted the charismatic movement. Paul Billheimer’s books and teachings, founded in large part by MacMillan’s principles, have been popular among charismatics.<sup>56</sup>

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refuted the charge of plagiarism. See William DeArteaga, *Quenching the Spirit* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1992), 228-229.

<sup>52</sup> Kenneth Hagin, *The Believer’s Authority* (Tulsa, OK: Rhema Bible Church, 1984).

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Copeland, “Prayer of Binding and Loosing,” Ft. Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, sound recording, 1987; Charles Capps, *Authority in Three Worlds* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1982).

<sup>54</sup> Michael Harper, *Spiritual Warfare* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos Intl., 1970), 26, 29, 56-59, 68-69, 116; Don Basham and Dick Leggatt, *The Most Dangerous Game* (Greensburg, PA: Manna Christian Outreach, 1974), 128; Don W. Basham, *Manual for Spiritual Warfare* (Greensburg, PA: Manna Books, 1974); Don W. Basham, *Can a Christian Have a Demon?* (Monroeville, PA: Whitaker House, 1971). Erik Krueger and Ron Milton, “Prayer Works,” *New Wine*, Feb. 1980, 27-28. For fuller documentation and discussion, see King, “A Case Study of the Authority of the Believer,” 283-285.

<sup>55</sup> King, *A Believer with Authority*, endorsement page.

<sup>56</sup> Oral Roberts University has used *Destined for the Throne* in a course on prayer for several years. Billheimer also appeared a number of times on the charismatically-oriented Trinity Broadcasting Network—TBN. Because of his connection with TBN and a questionable interpretation of a certain passage of Scripture, Hank Hanegraaff

This review has demonstrated that John MacMillan's ministry and writings have exercised great influence in these significant contemporary Christian streams. In many instances, MacMillan has not been given credit for his role. The impact of MacMillan has continued through the book *Binding and Loosing: Exercising Authority over the Dark Powers* by K. Neill Foster and myself, and my book *A Believer with Authority: The Life and Message of John A. MacMillan*, in which we cite MacMillan's principles and experiences.<sup>57</sup>

Whether dependence on MacMillan's concepts has been direct or indirect, his thought has been seminal to most teaching on the authority of the believer that has followed. In some cases, his principles have been expanded upon and modified, sometimes in ways he would not agree with or approve of today (such as "little gods" and "name it and claim it").<sup>58</sup> Former Nyack College President Rexford A. Boda (a student of MacMillan) aptly summarized MacMillan's contribution: "In his ministry and writing, he laid down the basic principles which, in theory and practice we, the Body of Christ, continue to work out in the battle for souls as we approach the twenty-first century."<sup>59</sup>

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mistakenly labeled Billheimer as a cultic faith teacher, not knowing his teaching comes out of the classical holiness camp. Hanegraaff, 164-165, 383, 396.

<sup>57</sup> See Foster and King, *Binding and Loosing*, 13, 18, 62, 67, 107, 119, 135, 138, 247, 248. In fact, my dissertation was birthed out of *Binding and Loosing* in order to bring to light the extent and significance of MacMillan's contribution.

<sup>58</sup> King, "A Case Study of a Believer with Authority," 389-410. See also Paul L. King, *Only Believe: Examining the Origin and Development of Classic and Contemporary Word of Faith Theologies* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> Rexford Boda, "J. A. MacMillan and Spiritual Warfare," *Communicate*, 8, no. 4 (May 1998), 1.

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