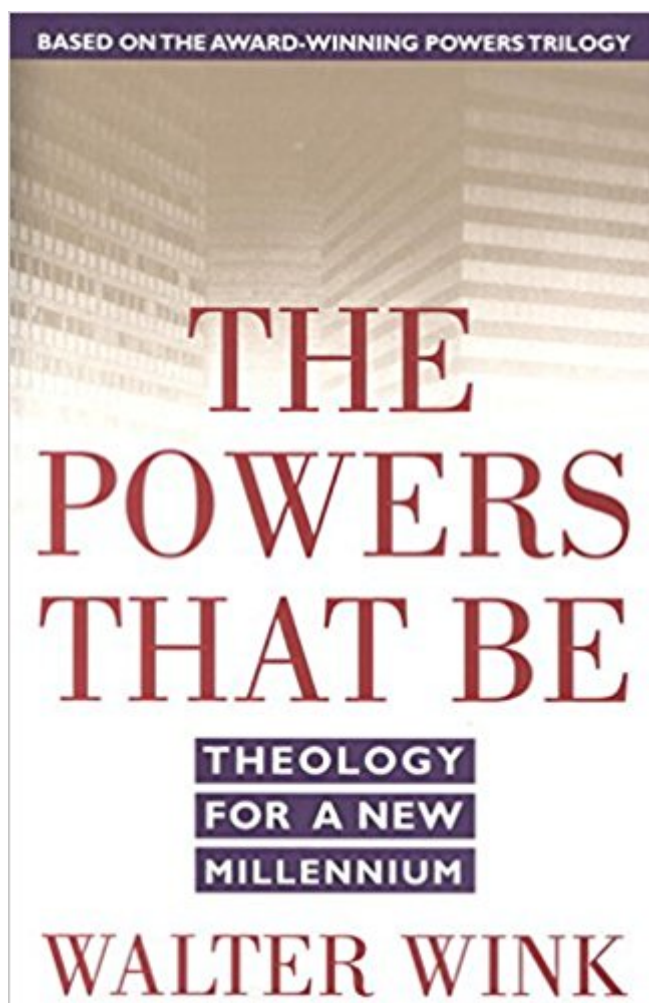


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# The Powers That Be: Theology For A New Millennium



## Synopsis

In our fast-paced secular world, God and theology are second-class citizens. Money, politics, sports, and science seem better suited to the hard realities of our world. As the church steeple has been eclipsed by the skyscraper as the centerpiece of the urban landscape, so has the divine realm been set aside in favor of more immediate human experience. One sad consequence of this shift is the loss of spiritual and theological bearings, most clearly evident in our inability to understand or speak about such things. If the old way of viewing the universe no longer works, something else has to replace it. *The Powers That Be* reclaims the divine realm as central to human existence by offering new ways of understanding our world in theological terms. Walter Wink reformulates ancient concepts, such as God and the devil, heaven and hell, angels and demons, principalities and powers, in light of our modern experience. He helps us see heaven and hell, sin and salvation, and the powers that shape our lives as tangible parts of our day-to-day experience, rather than as mysterious phantoms. Based on his reading of the Bible and analysis of the world around him, Wink creates a whole new language for talking about and to God. Equipped with this fresh world view, we can embark on a new relationship with God and our world into the next millennium. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

"Perhaps we are not accustomed to thinking of the Pentagon, or the Chrysler Corporation, or the Mafia as having a spirituality, but they do," writes Walter Wink. In *The Powers That Be: Theology for*

a New Millennium, Wink returns to the ancient view of a world filled with angels and demons, powers and principalities, and reinterprets these notions for contemporary people. Wink's book is a challenge for Christians to wake up and become dangerously different, by objecting to the Darwinian games of domination that prevail in many of our governments, corporations, and churches. The book also offers stunningly gracious comfort, by showing that we are all caught up in this game, that the game is even a part of our gift, and that as long as we live in the world, not a single one of us can be pure, but we're called, all of us, to be holy. --Michael Joseph Gross --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

In our fast-paced secular world, God and theology are second-class citizens. Money, politics, sports, and science seem better suited to the hard realities of our world. As the church steeple has been eclipsed by the skyscraper as the centerpiece of the urban landscape, so has the divine realm been set aside in favor of more immediate human experience. One sad consequence of this shift is the loss of spiritual and theological bearings, most clearly evident in our inability to understand or speak about such things. If the old way of viewing the universe no longer works, something else has to replace it. *The Powers That Be* reclaims the divine realm as central to human existence by offering new ways of understanding our world in theological terms. Walter Wink reformulates ancient concepts, such as God and the devil, heaven and hell, angels and demons, principalities and powers, in light of our modern experience. He helps us see heaven and hell, sin and salvation, and the powers that shape our lives as tangible parts of our day-to-day experience, rather than as mysterious phantoms. Based on his reading of the Bible and analysis of the world around him, Wink creates a whole new language for talking about and to God. Equipped with this fresh world view, we can embark on a new relationship with God and our world into the next millennium. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Thought provoking and insightful study of how we came to be in the mess we are in theologically and politically. Had he lived, Prof. Wink would have a few choice words for us now as we deal with this unprecedented presidential election in 2016. Here is a sample: The myth of redemptive violence is, in short, nationalism become absolute. This myth speaks for God; it does not listen for God to speak. It invokes the sovereignty of God as its own; it does not entertain the prophetic possibility of radical judgment by God. It misappropriates the language, symbols, and scriptures of Christianity. It does not seek God in order to change; it embraces God in order to prevent change. Its God is not the impartial ruler of all nations but a tribal god worshipped as an idol. Its metaphor is not the

journey but the fortress. Its symbol is not the cross, but the crosshairs of a gun. Its offer is not forgiveness but victory. Its good news is not the unconditional love of enemies but their final elimination. Its salvation is not a new heart but a successful foreign policy. It usurps the revelation of God's purposes for humanity in Jesus. It is blasphemous. It is idolatrous. And it is immensely popular. (pp.61-62)

Summary: *The Powers that Be - Theology for a New Millennium* by Walter Wink If you are a business person, this book is for you. If you work with the poor or care for justice, this book is for you. If you are an educator/trainer, this book is for you. If you are a pioneer, a leader, a parent or in government, this book is for you. Walter Wink has been on my radar screen for many years but in reading recently from N.T Wright, Greg Boyd and Rob Bell and their references to Walter Wink, I had to buy this and get started on his books. In 1993, *Engaging the Powers* and the *Powers* trilogy won several awards. *The Powers that Be* are a shortened version, particularly of *Engaging the Powers* and I was not disappointed. It was so rich that I had to stop on several occasions, pray, re-read and pray again. This happened throughout the reading of *The Powers that Be*. I also needed to keep my dictionary close at hand. This is a book that covers a lot of ground related to :worldview, the Powers and their domination system and how history belongs to the intercessors and prayer warriors. Powers also tackles the hard words of Jesus and what he was meaning in the coming of the Kingdom of God which made so much sense. He underlines that evil is not just personal but structural and spiritual and on page 31, states that "Any attempt to transform a social system without addressing both its spirituality and its outer forms is doomed to failure." He looks at Jesus' words in the context of the first century and their meaning then. Somehow we can read the Bible and translate it into our modern day context. Jesus' words were so radical for the day, we would miss the equivalent today because we would not go radical enough. In Jesus' answer to domination, he identifies domination, equity, non-violence, women, purity and holiness, family, law and sacrifice and it is worth the whole book. You will be deeply challenged but you will understand why Jesus' words seemed so strong, even at times questionable. You will have some 'aha' moments and then serious reflection as to what does this mean for me right now, when you read this book. He spends quite a bit of time on the major idol today and calls it, "the myth of redemptive violence" and how we can break the spiral of violence. Jesus offers a radical third way and you will be amazed and deeply challenged to action at what he says. How do we stand up against the powers that continue to oppress? How do we see God's kingdom coming now on earth as it is in heaven. This is not for the faint-hearted or those who are passive, this is for the courageous and he is calling this generation for action and to engage The

Powers That Be. I will close with a few of Wink's comments on prayer on page 196-197 " Prayer in the face of the Powers is a spiritual war of attrition. When we fail to pray, God's hands are effectively tied. That underlines the urgency of our praying. Prayer that ignores the Powers ends by blaming God for evils committed by the Powers. But prayer that acknowledges the Powers becomes an indispensable aspect of social action....we are emboldened to ask God for something bigger. The same faith that looks clear-eyed at the immensity of the forces arrayed against God is the faith that affirms God's miracle-working power. Trust in miracles is, in fact, the only rational stance in a world...."Read this book and get more engaged in seeing God's kingdom coming where you live and work.

I read *The Powers That Be* to introduce myself to Wink's thesis on the Powers and principalities. It did not disappoint and this has encouraged my reading of the Powers series. I find Wink and easier read as a lay pastor and minister without becoming too laden with scholastic terminology that may cause me to misinterpret the author's intent. I do find this enlightening as an "armchair theologian". On to the Powers series, then, as Wink himself suggests in the Epilogue (Chapter 11), to read the Powers series in reverse order.

Walter Wink's work is extraordinarily deep and affecting. It is equal parts psychology, philosophy, and comparative religion, and will give the reader a great deal to think about. Mr. Wink's book was one of Stuart Wilde's early influences, and it is easy to see why it was so powerful in directing him on his incredible journey in self-development. Very clearly written and illustrated and highly recommended.

I read the entire "Powers Trilogy" about two years ago, and am thrilled that this book was put out to somewhat summarize the trilogy at a popular level for those who don't want to tackle the entire trilogy. Like the Trilogy, this book surveys the Scriptural data for the origin and nature of the "powers" and then focuses on how these powers influence our world and how followers of Jesus should live in response. This is an extremely insightful book and contains much information that would be helpful for learning how to live as a follower of Jesus in this world.

Friends have always needed language wherein to map out and work with the psychological aspects of doing business, and that includes recognizing "group-think" and "mindset" as a real phenomena. The Greeks used to narrate their accounts in terms of deities, in myth, and we find this mode of

abstracting perpetuated in both philosophy and depth psychology. I'm glad the Quakers are not forgetting to think in terms of Powers. I hope this means they'll be regaining their stature as movers and shakers in the business world, per Quakernomics and the 1790s, though of course using updated tools (both physical and metaphysical).

I knew Wink before he went to college. He never disappointed me in ethics, scholarship, character or life. This book was just another example of Walter's courage, mindfulness and thoughtfulness.

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