

LIVING IN TWO WORLDS  
PASTORAL RESPONSES TO POSSESSION  
IN SINGAPORE

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## Abstract

Possession behaviour and exorcism have become more common in Singapore churches since 1972 with the increasing popularity and influence of the charismatic movement. This study aims to describe, analyse, and evaluate the responses of pastors in Singapore to people who display possession behaviour. The in-depth interview of 16 pastors involved in exorcism/deliverance ministry forms the primary material for this study and is complemented by interviews of subjects of possession, psychiatrists, and other informed persons. The study is divided into three phases.

In the descriptive phase (chapters 3-5), the pastors' worldview and understanding of the epidemiology, symptomatology, and therapeutic management of possession behaviour are described. They espouse a traditional spirit worldview which views life as a battle between God and a hierarchy of evil spirits who play an intimate role in the daily lives of people. People are believed to be possessed by evil spirits through contact with occultic and non-Christian religious practices. According to the pastors, people from the lower socio-economic strata, and those with emotional problems and other needs are predisposed to such contact: Demon possession is said to manifest itself through the emergence of an alternate personality, with accompanying personality and behavioural changes and disturbances. The pastors' respond in such instances by attempting to exorcise the "demon" through a deliverance session.

In the analytical phase (chap 6-7), the pastors' understanding, explanation, and response to possession behaviour is compared with competing paradigms from the scientific disciplines (eg psychiatry and social anthropology). The similarities between the two sets of discourses are shown using their epidemiological (and phenomenological) description of possession suggesting that they may be describing similar phenomena. However, the fundamental tension between the two discourses emerges when their hermeneutic understanding of possession is examined. This tension is centred in competing epistemological and cosmological assumptions. The pastors' accounts are constructed around a two-worlds worldview while the scientific accounts are based on modern science's one-world worldview. The pastors respond to the competing scientific paradigm by attempting to live between both their worlds in various ways. Some focus on the other (spiritual) world, while others attempt to live in one world at a time. Yet others try to live in between both worlds. Analysis of the pastors' approach shows that their demonological paradigms are created and

reinforced by various social and psychological factors largely centred around the theme of competition played in various arenas: ecclesiastical, religious, professional, and personal. While such hermeneutics of suspicion are employed to unmask the motivations of the pastors and the way their worldview is shaped, this does not mean that science and scientific explanations can provide the metanarrative with which we can evaluate the pastors' response.

The evaluative phase of the study (chapt7-8) develops this question further by looking at the limitations of modern science and contemporary theologies constructed around the scientific paradigm. This is done by examining the theological questions of epistemology, theodicy, and cosmology. The limitations of reductionist epistemologies and theodicies are shown with a critique of both modern science and theology, and charismatic demonology. The model of living in both worlds simultaneously is proposed using the cosmological understanding of Orthodox theology and Christology, thus recovering the patristic paradigm of a spiritual universe and embodied spirituality. The implications of this for pastoral responses to possession behaviour are then outlined centering on the theological vision of two co-existing worlds (a spiritual universe) and the pastoral task of unmasking and resisting evil in all its varieties and depth.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that it is my own work.

Robert M Solomon

7 October 1992

To

THE GLORY OF GOD

and

THE MEMORY OF MY PARENTS

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Possession Behaviour in Singapore

The phenomenon of "demon possession" has become more visible in recent years in the churches in Singapore. This is in part due to the rapid growth and popularity of the charismatic movement in the country. Along with this has come a new focus on phenomena such as tongue-speaking, supernatural healing, demon possession, and exorcism and deliverance ministries.

The following observations show the prominence that "demon possession" has come to have in the ministry of the Church, particularly in pastoral care. In their unique book Comfort My People - unique because it is the only book in lay Christian counselling, or for that matter in pastoral care, produced in Singapore by Singapore Christians - Isaac and Shirley Lim devote an entire chapter to "A Ministry of Deliverance"<sup>1</sup>. For Isaac Lim, a prominent Methodist minister, and his wife, deliverance ministry is one of the four vital counselling ministries in the Church<sup>2</sup>. The Lims argue for the reality of demon possession drawing their conclusions from their pastoral ministry and the evidence from the Bible. They also outline how one should handle cases of demon possession. The Lims developed their ministry of deliverance and exorcism in Wesley Methodist Church, the largest Methodist Church in Singapore, whose members come from the ranks of the middle-class and the various professional and prominent social circles. That their views were sympathetically viewed, if not enthusiastically espoused, is evidenced by their popularity in the church.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Lim and Shirley Lim, Comfort My People; Christian Counselling: A Lay Challenge, chap. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, chap. 6-9; the others being ministries of inner healing, prayer, and the Word.

The Anglican Church has in recent years increasingly taken on a more charismatic ethos and identity. This began in the early seventies with the former Bishop, Chiu Ban It, who experienced a baptism in the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>. His successor Moses Tay is equally charismatic. In an article The Parable of the Durian Tree, he considers deliverance (referring to exorcism) as one of the three components (the others being preaching and healing) of power evangelism or the "PhD" Ministry" as he calls it<sup>2</sup>. In addition, Tay has developed a diocesan lay training programme which consists of several modules or courses. One such module that was recently developed focuses on the deliverance ministry and it contains instruction on how to diagnose and deal with cases of demon possession<sup>3</sup>.

This growing interest in and awareness of the phenomenon of demon possession is not only confined to the clergy and the leaders of the churches. Demon possession and exorcism have always been one of the major concerns of the Pentecostals such as the Assemblies of God who came to Singapore in 1926, and their successors in the charismatic movement. This interest is seen among the ordinary members of the churches catalysed by pulpit teaching as well as the numerous books available in Christian bookshops on this subject. Other major catalysts are the many revival and evangelistic rallies where charismatic preachers and evangelists highlight the miraculous and powerful activity of the Holy Spirit including healing and exorcism. Such miracles are promised and emphasised in publicity material. This is further discussed in chapter two.

The renewed interest in demon possession and the apparent rise in this phenomenon among the churches in Singapore, and the need to understand the phenomenon culturally, scientifically and theologically in order to formulate appropriate pastoral responses provides the motivation and background to this study.

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<sup>1</sup> See Michael Harper, Bishop's Move.

<sup>2</sup> Moses Tay, "The Parable of the Durian Tree" in Bill Burnett (ed), By My Spirit: Renewal in the Worldwide Anglican Church, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> "How to Pray for Deliverance", Dioceses of Sabah & Singapore Lay Training Module 13, 2nd edn, 1987.

## 1.2 The Problem: Pastoral Responses to Possession

Our primary concern in this study arises from a practical need: what does a pastor do when encountering a person who displays possession behaviour as understood by himself or those around him? Our focus will therefore be on pastoral responses to possession in Singapore. The research proper will also be confined to the understanding, motivations, and actions, of the pastors who are involved in a ministry of exorcism in Singapore.

Any pastoral response to a case of "demon possession" arises from the existing understanding of the pastor as to what demon possession is and what dimensions are involved. The pastor could have an understanding of possession as a phenomenon related to the activities of supernatural evil spirits. Or the pastor may attribute the manifestations of possession to emotional problems that the subject was facing. The pastor may also see several dimensions at work in the phenomenon.

It follows that before we can discuss appropriate pastoral responses to the phenomenon of demon possession we need to examine and understand what "demon possession" is in general, and in Singapore in particular. Studies have been done on possession from various perspectives: medical, psychological, social anthropological and spiritual. Each particular perspective has its own terminology for the phenomenon which in fact reveals the assumptions and understanding of the phenomenon within that perspective. For instance, psychiatric studies tend to use the term "trance states" or less specifically, "altered states of consciousness". Psychological studies place the phenomenon within more general terms such as "hysteria". Anthropological studies use terms such as "spirit-possession" and "shamanism". Spiritual perspectives such as those in the pentecostal and charismatic movements use the term "demon-possession" which is derived from biblical and traditional Christian sources.

While there are different ways of looking at the phenomenon, it is important to begin with the question "what?" rather than "why?" since the latter can be answered satisfactorily only if the former is answered adequately. In order to examine what

possession is, the context, that is, the socio-cultural milieu within which the phenomenon occurs has to be studied together with the understanding and meanings given to the phenomenon by members within this context. The following phases in the study will therefore be followed: description, analysis, and evaluation. The questions below will help guide the direction of the study.

### 1.2.1 Description: An "Emic" Perspective

What is possession as understood by the pastoral practitioners of exorcism in Singapore? How is it understood, according to them, by those who are "possessed" and those who are "exorcised", and those who are related to such persons including friends, and relatives? How does the phenomenon manifest itself? Under what circumstances, where, when, and among whom does the phenomenon occur? What beliefs and attitudes are associated with the phenomenon? What social and cultural patterns, if any, are related to this phenomena and in what ways are they related? How do the pastors go about determining whether a person is "possessed"? In other words, what diagnostic categories and processes are utilised in helping a person who exhibits possession behaviour? How do the pastors seek to help the "possessed" person? What aspects of pastoral care and what therapeutic strategies are employed as part of the pastoral response to possession behaviour in Singapore?

These questions will help us to examine and describe in depth this phenomenon as it occurs in Singapore taking the context and its members into serious consideration. The major focus here will be on pastoral responses to possession and therefore the story will be told from the pastors' point of view. The description will thus take an "emic" perspective in keeping with the aim of understanding the phenomenon which is only possible if our starting point is "emic" in nature. In Singapore there are various "emic" understandings of the phenomenon. A pattern that is expected to emerge clearly in our study is the underlying Asian worldview and cosmology of Singapore's Asian communities. Almost all Singaporeans come from Asian cultures that have what

Hiebert describes as a three-level worldview<sup>1</sup> as opposed to a two-level worldview associated with post eighteenth century modern western society. In the two-tiered view of reality there are two categories: the natural this-worldly category which is the concern of science, and the supernatural other-worldly category involving God and other cosmic beings which is the concern of religion. In the three-tiered view of reality however, in addition to these two categories, there is also a middle zone that deals with a this-worldly spirit world<sup>2</sup>. According to Hiebert, it is this middle zone concern with spirits and other immanent supernatural forces that leads to the practice of folk religion<sup>3</sup>. The middle zone is concerned with such "power issues"<sup>4</sup> as life, health, suffering, fortune, safety, success in love and status, prosperity, and healing, and is an important part of Asian folk religion and spirituality. The importance and relevance of this in the Singapore context is seen in Alan Elliot's study of Chinese spirit-medium cults in Singapore where he describes the temple mediums (*tang-ki*) and their possession by spirits, along with the temple worshippers who consult the *tang-kis* with their problems<sup>5</sup>.

This descriptive phase of the study would thus attempt to describe and record the perceptions, attitudes, stories and explanations of the pastors using interview records, case studies, and other related sources. It is important that these be known for an adequate understanding of the phenomenon. The narrative falls naturally into three important sections: a) the pastors' worldview and their basic understanding of the phenomenon, b) their description of possession behaviour, and hence their diagnostic categories, and c) their therapeutic interventions. The pastors' worldview determines how they

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<sup>1</sup> Paul G Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle".

<sup>2</sup> See Rodney L Henry, Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Paul G Hiebert, Cultural Anthropology.

<sup>4</sup> David W Augsburger, Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures, pp. 33f.

<sup>5</sup> Alan J A Elliot, Chinese Spirit-Medium Cults in Singapore. See also Choong Ker Che, "Chinese Divination: An Ethnographic Case Study".

interpret the aetiology and symptomatology of possession behaviour, and this in turn defines their therapeutic stances. It is thus important to describe these various aspects before a proper analysis of the pastors' responses to the phenomenon can be undertaken.

### 1.2.2 Analysis: A Plurality of Narratives

Why does the phenomenon of possession occur? What explanations have been given in academic studies and literature? What forces are at work? How are they related to the situations in this study? How do the pastors live in the midst of a plurality of explanatory discourses? What factors determine their choice of alternatives?

Several studies on possession have been carried out in different fields and disciplines from various perspectives. However, the term "demon possession" has no currency in medical literature or diagnostic categories. Sheila Walker points out that the term "trance" is a western psychological and physiological scientific term while "possession" is a folk explanation<sup>1</sup>. This view is shared by Anthony Wallace who sees possession as a folk explanation for three kinds of psychosomatic behaviour: a) obsessive ideation and compulsive action, b) hysterical dissociation including multiple personalities and conversion hysteria, and c) hallucinations<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, Walker asserts that the most fundamental element in possession is a "neuro-physiological reaction to some kind of stress, often combined with other contributing physiological features, the manifestations of which are determined by cultural factors"<sup>3</sup>.

The founders of depth psychology, Freud and Jung, retained the basic idea of demons and spirits but explained them in terms of psychological processes. Freud postulated that demons were

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<sup>1</sup> Sheila Walker, Ceremonial Spirit Possession in Africa and Afro-America, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony F C Wallace, "Cultural Determinants of Responses to Hallucinatory Experience", pp. 59-60.

<sup>3</sup> Sheila Walker, Ceremonial Spirit Possession, pp. 25, 147.

imaginary projections of deep psychological conflicts within the person<sup>1</sup>; demons were thus merely the creation of the human unconscious. Jung too saw the issue along similar lines though he extended his explanation to beyond the personal unconscious through his notions of the archetypes and collective unconscious. Thus, for Jung and his followers, demons were archetypal complexes within the realm of the unconscious that seem to have an autonomy of their own<sup>2</sup>. In depth psychology we therefore note a change in language from that of medieval demonology to the more modern psychological language of the unconscious.

Possession in the modern era is thus seen as due to psychological dysfunctions rather than due to the influence of spiritual beings. Studies were thus conducted to find associations between possession behaviour and mental illness. Thus Bogoras<sup>3</sup> and Shirokogoroff<sup>4</sup> view many possession cases as "half-crazy" or "probably insane" while Krader<sup>5</sup> has linked possession with neurosis. Others have associated possession with acute schizophrenia (Silverman<sup>6</sup>) and hysterical psychosis (Langness<sup>7</sup>). Devereux goes further by seeing shamanism and possession states as reflecting a sick society ("culture-dystonic") just as a shaman or possessed person reflects a sick personality ("ego-dystonic")<sup>8</sup>.

These reports contrast with those that find no relationship between possession states and pathological personalities. For example, Shirokogoroff while he saw some cases of possession as

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<sup>1</sup> James Strachey (ed), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol 13, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> C G Jung, Bollingen Series XX, Vol 3, para 528; Vol 18, para 1473.

<sup>3</sup> W Bogoras, The Jesup North Pacific Expedition, Vol. II, p. 415.

<sup>4</sup> S M Shirokogoroff, Psychomental Complex of the Tungus.

<sup>5</sup> L Krader, "Buryat Religion and Society", pp. 322-351.

<sup>6</sup> J Silverman, "Shamans and Acute Schizophrenia", pp. 21-31.

<sup>7</sup> L Langness, "Hysterical Psychosis in the New Guinea Highlands: A Bena-Bena Example", pp. 258-77.

<sup>8</sup> G Devereux, "Normal and Abnormal: The Key Problem in Psychiatric Anthropology" in J B Casagrande & T Gladwin (eds), Some Uses of Anthropology: Theoretical and Applied, pp. 23-48.

probably insane, also noted that others were in perfect psychological health<sup>1</sup>. This has been supported by Nadel<sup>2</sup> and Butt et al<sup>3</sup>. Murphy in fact reports unusual mental health among shamans he studied in North America<sup>4</sup>.

Oesterreich in his classical study of possession, Possession Demoniactal and Other, defines the "demon" in cases of possession as the personification of a compulsion, for example, a sexual one<sup>5</sup>, and that it may be brought on by autosuggestion<sup>6</sup>. In a similar vein, Crapanzano views possession as a metaphor for psychological states such as extreme rage, sexual excitement, loss, prolonged erection and morbid depression<sup>7</sup>.

Possession has thus been variously associated with physiological changes in response to stress; psychopathology such as neurosis (arising from repression, compulsion and so on), hysteria, multiple personalities and schizophrenia, and as manifestations of deeper processes within the unconscious. That perhaps possession is associated with physiological changes is understandable but what is more difficult is the determination of the causative relationship between the two. The same applies for the evidence of psychological processes and the presence or absence of psychopathology. To describe psychological processes as a dimension of possession is quite different from claiming that it exhausts all explanations of the phenomenon.

Social anthropological studies have claimed to avoid the reductionism of biological and psychological studies by

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<sup>1</sup> Shirokogoroff, Psychomental Complex of the Tungus.

<sup>2</sup> S Nadel, "A Study of Shamanism in the Nuba Hills", pp. 25-37.

<sup>3</sup> A Butt, S Wavell & Nina Epton, Trances, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> J Murphy, "Psychiatric Aspects of Shamanism on St Lawrence Island, Alaska", in A Kiev (ed), Magic, Faith and Healing, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> T K Oesterreich, Possession Demoniactal and Other Among Primitive Races in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times, pp. 83, 97.

<sup>6</sup> T K Oesterreich, Possession, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> Vincent Crapanzano, "Spirit-Possession" in Mircea Eliade (ed), The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol 14.

attempting to seek in cultural and social factors the explanation and interpretation of possession. Lewis sees possession as an outlet for women in male-dominated societies<sup>1</sup> providing an oblique way of airing grievances and gaining some measure of satisfaction<sup>2</sup>. Similar patterns have been noted in the Indian, Chinese, and Malay contexts by Harper<sup>3</sup>, Yap<sup>4</sup>, and Freeman<sup>5</sup> respectively. Lewis also views possession as an outlet for the "ritualised rebellion" of those in lower socio-economic classes who feel a powerless helplessness<sup>6</sup> where the possessing alien spirits act as the "conscience of the rich and the powerful"<sup>7</sup>. Hence possession is an oblique way of protesting against oppressive situations without directly upsetting the social structures. It helps in the ventilation of frustration and aggression within an uneasy acceptance of the established order of things<sup>8</sup>. In a slightly more positive view, Walker and Kapferer see the main stresses and conflicts of society represented, acted out, and resolved symbolically through possession and exorcism. Thus possession/exorcism acts as a "social safety valve" and an aesthetic mode of social and psychological healing<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit-Possession and Shamanism, pp. 73f. Traditional Asian societies are known to be male-dominated; this is still evident in many parts of Asia, including many aspects of life in Singapore, especially in traditional families and social institutions.

<sup>2</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, p. 77. See also Melford E Spiro, "Some Reflections on Family and Religion in East Asia", in George A DeVos & Talao Sofue (eds), Religion and the Family in East Asia; Spiro sees possession states among Asian women as an outlet for frustrated libidinal needs as well as an attempt to alleviate their status (p. 48).

<sup>3</sup> E B Harper, "Spirit Possession and Social Structure", in B Ratman (ed), Anthropology on the March, pp. 165-177.

<sup>4</sup> P M Yap, "The Possession Syndrome: A Comparison of Hong Kong and French Findings", pp. 114-137.

<sup>5</sup> D Freeman, "Shaman and Incubus", cited in I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, chapt. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, p. 121. Also I M Lewis, Religion in Context: Cults and Charisma, pp. 29-34.

<sup>9</sup> Sheila Walker, Ceremonial Spirit Possession, p. 173; Bruce Kapferer, A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka, pp. 232-238.

Another social function of possession states noted by Lewis is that of maintaining public morality<sup>1</sup>. Lewis refers to central possession cults involving the possession by ancestral spirits which determine the moral codes of behaviour in that community<sup>2</sup>. A further interpretation of possession is that it is the projection by a disturbed group or family of negative or evil attributes on a selected individual - the "scapegoat" of the group<sup>3</sup>. The perspectives described above are essentially scientific in outlook and deny or ignore spiritual explanations.

Literature espousing a spiritual perspective, on the other hand, essentially begin with an acceptance of the reality of the spirit world. Books by charismatic writers such as John Wimber, Martin Bubeck, Rodney Henry, and Michael Harper take this position and are popular in the churches in Singapore<sup>4</sup>. The writers argue that the spirit worldview is in fact a biblical worldview. The ministry of Jesus is seen as the biblical paradigm for the contemporary ministry of deliverance in the Church<sup>5</sup>. They take seriously Jesus' understanding of the reality and activities of evil spirits<sup>6</sup>. Harper asserts that without such a basic knowledge of demonology, any evaluation of Christianity and other religions would be both faulty and misleading<sup>7</sup>. Edward Langton in his classic Supernatural argues for this position questioning the assertion that Jesus was merely accommodating to the existing

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<sup>1</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, chapt 5.

<sup>2</sup> Psycho-socially, could this be seen as similar to the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the Spirit emphasised in the charismatic movement?

<sup>3</sup> Michael Perry (ed), Deliverance: Psychic Disturbances and Occult Involvement, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> John Wimber, Power Evangelism, Martin Bubeck, The Adversary, Rodney Henry, Filipino Spirit World, Michael Harper, Spiritual Warfare, etc.

<sup>5</sup> See eg. Michael Green, I Believe in Satan's Downfall, pp. 127-30.

<sup>6</sup> See G P Duffield & N M Van Cleave, Foundations of Pentecostal Theology, p. 486; C W Conn, The Anatomy of Evil, p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Harper, Spiritual Warfare, p. 13.

worldviews of the people of his time<sup>1</sup>. He also uses biblical and historical sources to argue for the reality of a supernatural world which interacts intimately with the human world. Such writers while promoting a spirit worldview, nevertheless are aware of the "bizarre diagnostics" of some who blame the devil for all ills<sup>2</sup>. This however does not negate the importance of knowing "how to deal with evil spirits when they are detected"<sup>3</sup>

A similar spirit worldview (though not necessarily Christian in theological stance) is provided by parapsychologists such as Naegeli-Osjord who bases his view on an openness to the transcendent dimension and the importance of experience<sup>4</sup>. He attributes the difficulty psychiatrists and counsellors have in understanding possession to their rationalistic worldview and the religious nature of possession<sup>5</sup>.

Some have attempted interdisciplinary approaches. For example, both Walker<sup>6</sup> and Davis<sup>7</sup> have adopted a psycho-social perspective of possession. Davis interprets possession and exorcism in industrialised Japan as a psycho-social attempt to meet the challenges of life with "the courage of the primitive shaman and wizard" in order to relieve tensions and anxieties and to give hope amidst the rapid modernisation and social change<sup>8</sup>. Others such as Lhermitte<sup>9</sup>, White<sup>10</sup> and Peck<sup>11</sup>, being Christian psychiatrists, have used a psychiatric-spiritual perspective in

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Langton, Supernatural: The Doctrine of Spirits, Angels, and Demons, from the Middle Ages Until the Present Time pp. 275ff.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Harper, Spiritual Warfare, p. 15. I am not listing here authors with more extreme views who see eg. demons of constipation, headaches etc. Such books are freely available in Singapore and are popular in many circles in the Church.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Harper, Spiritual Warfare, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Naegeli-Osjord, Possession and Exorcism, pp. 4f.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Naegeli-Osjord, Possession and Exorcism, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Sheila Walker, Ceremonial Spirit Possession.

<sup>7</sup> Winston Davis, Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Lhermitte, Diabolical Possession, True and False.

<sup>10</sup> John White, Masks of Melancholy.

<sup>11</sup> Scott M Peck, People of the Lie.

interpreting possession. According to them, psychiatric or spiritual factors may be the significant factor in particular cases of possession. Only those with spiritual factors involving the activity of evil spirits are truly cases of demon possession. However, they also maintain that demon possession cases may also have associated psychiatric dimensions.

The value of the interdisciplinary approach is the openness towards other perspectives and the potential for overcoming reductionist perspectives. However, the interdisciplinary studies in this area generally lack breadth (in terms of multiple perspectives) as well as depth (particular contexts)<sup>1</sup>. It is hoped that the particular focus on the Singapore Church and the interdisciplinary nature of this study will provide adequate breadth and depth because possession, to be really understood, must be studied from various points of view since no simple explanation seems adequate to explain it<sup>2</sup>.

To summarise, what emerges from a survey of the literature is a host of narratives and discourses on possession. Essentially two poles are noted in the explanations. On one end are the perspectives based on the scientific paradigm; these include medical, psychological and socio-anthropological attempts to understand and explain possession behaviour. The other pole is represented by those that try to explain possession in terms of processes involving another world of spirits and demons. Some, for example, Peck and White (see above) have tried to live between these two worlds.

In the second phase of our study, we shall attempt to examine the various narratives situated in this continuum of explanatory discourses on possession. We shall also compare these discourses with those of the pastors and analyse how the pastors attempt to

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<sup>1</sup> See eg. Marc Cramer, The Devil Within. Cramer begins promisingly with a warning and criticism against the intellectual insularity and narrow particular views such as psychiatric or religious views but goes on to suggest that his understanding of possession as due to the activities of archetypal complexes in the collective unconscious (a Jungian view) is wide enough to address all the dimensions of possession.

<sup>2</sup> See Sheila Walker, Ceremonial Spirit Possession, p. 1.

deal with the alternative explanations. In other words, how do the pastors attempt to live in the two worlds (this and the other) found in their discourses? This depends largely on the worldview of the pastors. The descriptive phase would have outlined this worldview. Our interest in this section would be to seek to discover the factors that help to shape the spirit worldview of the pastors. For this, we shall suspend theological reflection and evaluation and use insights and tools from the sociology of knowledge to unmask hidden motivations and determining factors that underlie the pastors' choice of their particular worldview. Such a "hermeneutics of suspicion" is often lacking in discourses on possession that accept the reality of a supernatural other world and would thus be necessary if we are to become aware of how our knowledge and belief systems are shaped by our inner and outer worlds. However, this does not mean that we have to simply stand on the side of science and deconstruct religious beliefs such as those involving the spirit worldview. The hermeneutics of suspicion can be extended to the scientific paradigm itself. This problem will lead us to the third phase of the study.

### 1.2.3 Evaluation: Living in Two Worlds

Analysis of the various narratives on possession would show that there are two fundamentally opposed paradigms. On one hand is the paradigm inherent in the pastors' accounts which espouses the existence of two worlds, a natural world and a spiritual world. On the other hand, the scientific paradigm builds its discourses and narratives on the basis solely of this natural empirical world. This scientific paradigm is derived from the Enlightenment of eighteenth century Europe which sought to understand reality in terms of rationalist and empirical parameters. It has become the dominant pattern of rationality in the western world<sup>1</sup>, and through the globalising processes of colonisation and cultural osmosis, in different ways in many parts of the non-western world. In this framework, what cannot be understood rationally and proved or explained empirically is rejected as irrational or

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Pippin, Modernism as a Philosophical Problem, p. 148.

superstitious belief<sup>1</sup>. This has been the fate of many discourses from communities which differ from modern western societies both chronologically or geographically. We shall explore whether this is valid using philosophical and theological tools.

If the hermeneutics of suspicion is extended to the scientific paradigm itself, we shall see that just as religious beliefs are determined by social and historical factors, science is similarly determined<sup>2</sup>. Thus the dominance of science to the extent of excluding other perspectives can be challenged. The scientific paradigm in more recent times has been challenged from within the ranks of science itself, especially in the "hard sciences": physics and biology. Quantum physics, Einstein's theory of relativity, and Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty have all challenged the standard foundations on which much of science is constructed. For example, Bell's effect in which the influence that changes in the spin of one atomic particle has on its twin far away defies scientific concepts of cause and effect and challenges "commonsense ideas about the world"<sup>3</sup>. The possibility of alternative realities is spelt out by phrases such as "other worlds" used by contemporary physicists<sup>4</sup>. (Nevertheless, much of science is still theorised and practised according to the Newtonian model of a mechanical universe.)

Another challenge to the authority of science and the modern definition of rationality by science comes from postmodernist thinking. In postmodernist thought, science cannot be spared from the deconstruction that other discourses are put through by scientific inquiry<sup>5</sup>. Science cannot be allowed to become a

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism & Relativism, p. 48. As an example, see E B Tylor, Primitive Culture, vol 2, pp. 135-6.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Kuhn, Structure of Scientific Revolution; B Barnes, Scientific Knowledge & Sociological Theory; D Bloor, Knowledge & Social Imagery.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Zukav, Dancing Wu Li Masters, pp. 290-4.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Davies, Other Worlds. Davies refers to Hugh Everett's theory of the multiple worlds in which we live - often referred to as the "many-universes interpretation of the quantum theory"; see ch 7.

<sup>5</sup> see J F Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, pp. 64-5.

metanarrative in replacement of older primarily religious metanarratives. For the postmodernists, there are in fact no metanarratives, only a plurality of narratives.

Such challenges have several implications for our evaluation. Most explanations of possession behaviour that compete with traditional demonological discourses are based on the scientific paradigm. Many modern western theologians have rejected older demonologies because of their apparent incompatibility with modern scientific notions of reality; a classic example being the Bultmannian attempt to "demythologise" the Bible<sup>1</sup>. Have they been too quick to throw away the baby with the bathwater? The challenges to modern science from within and from postmodern philosophy mean that we need to reappraise discourses such as the older demonological narratives? What then are the implications for the spirit worldview of pastors in Singapore? These questions will be dealt with in our evaluation using resources from such traditions as Orthodox theology to help us in re-appraising the epistemological and cosmological paradigms dominant in scientific and modern theological discourses. The early Christian cosmological paradigm of a spiritual universe will be explored and its implication for pastoral theology, especially in the light of our study, will be discussed.

The scientific paradigm cannot of course be demolished and replaced completely. If so we will simply be replacing one metanarrative with another. We have to live more readily with a plurality of narratives. However, this should not lead to a cognitive and moral relativism that would paralyse pastoral responses to evil. Hence, our evaluation will significantly involve a reflection on theodicy since possession is placed within the realm of evil by pastors who deal with it. We shall attempt to understand the breadth and depth of evil in human experience. How then can we discern evil in the face of a plurality of discourses, and in light of the two worlds of demonological discourses? What implications are there for a pastoral response that is both therapeutically priestly and

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<sup>1</sup> see eg his "New Testament & Mythology" in H W Bartsch (ed) Kerygma & Myth.

ethically prophetic? We shall examine these questions in the light of the classical theoretical theodicies of Augustine and Irenaeus and their contemporary interpreters such as Hick, Plantinga and Swinburne, and the more practical theodicies of writers such as Koyama, and Noddings.

### 1.3 The Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is inherent in the above discussion. To summarise, this study has both theoretical as well as practical significance.

Theoretically, it fills an existing gap in both academic studies and in the theologising of the church in Singapore regarding the phenomenon of demon possession. Some scattered studies exist in Singapore on the subject. However they are outdated such as Elliot's study<sup>1</sup>, or are limited in scope and perspective such as Teoh's<sup>2</sup> and Kua et al's<sup>3</sup>. In the wider field, most of the existing studies on possession in general are limited in perspective either taking a psycho-medical, psycho-socio-cultural, psycho-spiritual or spiritual perspective. The importance of this study is that it seeks to take all the various dimensions into serious consideration. Moreover the Church has yet to produce any serious theological reflection on the subject. This study hopefully will in some measure fill these existing gaps in academic study and theological reflection.

More importantly, this study makes a small contribution to current debates on the meaning of human rationality and consciousness. The dominant western scientific definition of human rationality has come under increasing criticism from various quarters. The underlying issues here are epistemological and cosmological, and the spirit worldview represented by the

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Elliot, Chinese Spirit Medium Cults in Singapore.

<sup>2</sup> Teoh J I, "Chinese Spirit-mediumship: its socio-cultural interpretation and psychotherapeutic aspects", pp. 55-61.

<sup>3</sup> Kua Ee Heok et al, "A Cross-cultural Study of the Possession-trance in Singapore", pp. 361-364.

demonology of many pastors in Singapore provides an interesting context in which these problems are highlighted.

Practically, this study has pastoral as well as ethical significance. In my own experience as a pastor, I felt both inadequate and unprepared to meet the challenge of demon possession. My seminary training, though in an Asian setting, had little to say about the phenomenon, let alone the pastoral care in such situations. Moreover, I found my perspectives as a doctor of western medicine and my perspectives as an Asian pastor often in conflict in this area. Part of the problem was the lack of any serious reflection in the church on the phenomenon. The approach usually taken was often superficially pragmatic or limited in perspective. Moreover, while some guidelines exist in other churches<sup>1</sup>, no well-researched guidelines have been formulated in the Singapore Church. This study hopes to provide an inter-disciplinary reflection to enable an adequate pastoral response to be made in cases of possession. It would therefore meet an existing need.

Also, significantly, this study has several missiological and prophetic implications. In the missiological enterprise we are dealing with the encounter of different cultural worldviews and cosmologies. In traditional missionary thinking, the western worldview and categories have been too readily equated with the Christian worldview and categories; often non-western worldviews were dismissed as non-Christian or pagan<sup>2</sup>. However in recent times missiologists have become more sympathetic to non-western

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<sup>1</sup> Eg. The Ritual Romanum; Leon-Joseph Suenens, Renewal and the Powers of Darkness, (RC); John Richards, But Deliver us from Evil: An Introduction to the Demonic Dimension in Pastoral Care, and Dom Robert Petitpierre (ed), Exorcism: The Findings of A Commission Convened By the Bishop of Exeter, which led to House of Bishops, Report of Proceedings, 6:2 (July 1975), p. 361.; British Methodist Conference, "Statement on Exorcism", 1976; General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, "Report of the Working Party on Parapsychology", 21 May 1976. These documents generally take a cautious approach to exorcism; the last one goes further by questioning the value of exorcism in the ministry of the Church.

<sup>2</sup> See Rodney Henry, Filipino Spirit World, p. 34. Henry argues that the Asian spirit worldview of the Filipino is actually compatible with the spirit worldview of the Bible.

worldviews and are seriously questioning their previous assumptions. This study examines in a focused way the effects and issues related to the meeting and interaction of different worldviews and cosmologies. Another important missiological dimension is the concept of "power-encounter". Arthur Glasser has argued that it is only in meeting the challenge of the growing phenomenon of demon-possession (and other related phenomena) that there is a "serious confrontation of the hard realities of the spirit world"<sup>1</sup>. Michael Green, likewise, sees exorcism as a natural part of the growth and extension of the church into new areas of darkness<sup>2</sup>. One of the motivations for the missionary enterprise is to declare the victory of Christ over the "powers and authorities" (Col 2:15) through his death and resurrection and to witness the public spectacle of his triumph over them. The question of missiological and theological significance is: what is the nature of these "powers", and what is the breadth and depth of their influence? Since exorcism claims to deal with the demonic and evil, we need to examine the extent of evil in the world and the Church's task of resisting evil in human nature and community and in the larger cosmic dimensions. Our study will seek to examine these questions.

#### 1.4 METHODOLOGY

As this study is expected to have an outcome of practical significance to pastoral theology and care, it is necessary to reflect on pastoral theological method.

##### 1.4.1 Pastoral Theological Method

The term "practical theology" was first used by Schleiermacher<sup>3</sup> when he called it the "crown of theological studies". He saw the

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur F Glasser & Donald A McGavran, Contemporary Theologies of Mission, See John Nevius, Demon Possession and Allied Themes, which is a classic study of demon possession in the missionary situation.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Green, I Believe in Satan's Downfall, pp 146,147.

<sup>3</sup> See Alastair V Campbell, "The Nature of Practical Theology", in Duncan Forrester (ed), Theology and Practice, p. 10.

task of practical theology as the setting out of the method of "maintaining" and "perfecting". The tendency was to view practical theology as a servant and derivative of dogmatics and systematic theology. Eduard Thurneysen's A Theology of Pastoral Care follows this deductive model of pastoral care. According to him, pastoral care arises from the agenda set by the church, and in particular, the Word of God. In particular reference to exorcism, Thurneysen identifies pastoral care as exorcism - the freeing of people from bondage, superstition, anxiety, and the secular realms of politics and economics<sup>1</sup>. His portrayal of pastoral care has been criticised as a monologue rather than a dialogue<sup>2</sup>.

A reaction to the deductive model of pastoral care is the inductive model characterised for example by the American pastoral counselling movement. For instance, Seward Hiltner in Preface to Pastoral Theology, argues for the importance of listening to the context and drawing theological conclusions from such an exercise<sup>3</sup>. The danger of the inductive model is the tendency to neglect the text, that is, the Christian tradition. Browning uses such a criticism in his critique of the modern pastoral counselling movement in America and calls for a restoration of "the moral context of pastoral care"<sup>4</sup>. Thus, if the deductive model's weakness is its relative neglect of the context, the inductive model's weakness is its relative neglect of the text. In rejecting both models because of these weaknesses, Alastair Campbell proposes a dialogical model which sees practical theology and other disciplines having a lateral relationship rather than a linear one<sup>5</sup>.

Practical theology juxtaposes concrete situations of witness, celebration and service with the findings and

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<sup>1</sup> E Thurneysen, Theology of Pastoral Care, chap. 15.

<sup>2</sup> See Edward Thornton, Theology and Pastoral Counseling, pp. 48-55. Thurneysen's approach is "exclusively homiletical" for Thornton, emphasising proclamation at the expense of participation.

<sup>3</sup> Seward Hiltner, Preface to Pastoral Theology, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Don S Browning, The Moral Context of Pastoral Care.

<sup>5</sup> Alastair Campbell, "Nature of Practical Theology", pp. 13f.

formulations of the biblical, historical and philosophical subjects in the theological corpus. It does this not in order to correct according to some canon of relevance, nor in order to be corrected according to some canon of orthodoxy. It is more an exercise in creative imagination, and the interplay of idea and action, with all the ambiguity and inconclusiveness which this implies.<sup>1</sup>

In this study I have chosen this dialogical-interactional method where there is a hermeneutical relationship between the context and the Christian faith and tradition<sup>2</sup>. There is in this "situation-based method"<sup>3</sup> both practical relevance and theological integrity<sup>4</sup>, both sensitivity to the context as well as faithfulness to the text. Thus, as Gerkin puts it, with this method, we can both listen to the stories of the people as well as bear the Christian story and let these two encounter each other<sup>5</sup>. Thus faith and the concrete situation interplay in a hermeneutical relationship to do pastoral theology<sup>6</sup>.

#### 1.4.2 Description: A Qualitative Approach

I have chosen to first listen to the stories of the people and describe the context. This will form the descriptive phase of the study. A useful research strategy to employ here is a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one because it is especially useful when:

- a) research cannot be done experimentally, especially as in our study.
- b) there is a need to explore the process and meaning of events.
- c) there is a need to delve into the complexities, processes, and meanings of events.
- d) there is a need to understand the contextual framework of the

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> See Donald Capps, Pastoral Care and Hermeneutics, for a discussion on the hermeneutics of pastoral actions.

<sup>3</sup> Alastair Campbell, "Nature of Practical Theology", p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Charles V Gerkin, The Living Human Document: Re-Visioning Pastoral Counseling in a Hermeneutical Mode, pp. 26-28.

<sup>6</sup> David Lyall, "Doing Pastoral Theology" Newsletter of the Association of Pastoral Care, 1975, pp. 3-6.

phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

This is especially relevant in our attempt to describe the phenomenon of possession in Singapore. In short, the qualitative approach will help us to describe and later analyse the phenomenon in depth. A further value of the qualitative approach is that it gives adequate value to the data and the perceptions and understandings of the informants and participants in the study. Glaser and Strauss have dwelled on this point and suggested that there has been an overemphasis on verifying theory rather than on generating theory. They call for grounding theory on the data and suggest that qualitative research methods are best able to do this<sup>2</sup>.

I have therefore employed research techniques utilised in qualitative research, for example, as in the ethnomethodological approach for the above reasons. This approach gives sufficient emphasis to the insider's knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon and the social meanings given, and how these determine behaviour. These factors are important for without them, normative categories may be incongruent and irrelevant to the actual situation<sup>3</sup>.

One technique that I employed is participant observation by virtue of my own experience and observations in Singapore. This I think is valuable not only because it enables an "insider's" perceptions and views of the phenomenon but also because it reveals my own motivations and struggles associated with this phenomenon and research; it is helpful and important that these be known.

Another technique I have employed is the use of case studies. Because our focus is on understanding the pastors' point of view,

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B Rossman, Designing Qualitative Research, pp. 46-49.

<sup>2</sup> Barney G Glaser & Anselm L Strauss, The Discovery of Grounded Theory, pp. 15f.

<sup>3</sup> See Roy Turner (ed), Ethnomethodology: Selected Readings, for examples of the use of such an approach and related techniques in a variety of studies.

the cases will be told from the pastors' perspective. This again will aid us in an in-depth approach and examination of the issue. In some sense, this whole study is taking a case study approach especially in the background-description-analysis-evaluation format that I am taking<sup>1</sup>.

Further I significantly used interview techniques in gathering field data. This was the primary means of gathering the data and the interview material was a significant source of primary information. I interviewed people related to the case studies as well as pastors involved in deliverance ministries, and other significant members of the community. The value and strength of the interview technique is its flexibility, inter-actional nature and the opportunity to observe non-verbal indicators<sup>2</sup>. Again there is an opportunity to describe and examine in depth events, perceptions, reactions, and attitudes surrounding the phenomenon under study<sup>3</sup>. A sample of 16 pastors was established for in depth interviewing. As our focus is on responses of pastors who are involved in exorcistic and deliverance ministries in Singapore, the membership of this sample was accordingly determined. Many are already well-known in Singapore for their deliverance ministries. Others were included when their names were repeatedly mentioned when "asking around" in church and Christian circles in Singapore. A fuller profile of this sample is given in 3.1.

In addition to the above sources, I gathered several relevant self-report documents (especially those directly related to the cases) and other "emic discourses" such as pastoral diaries, write-ups, church newsletters and so on.

#### 1.4.3 Analysis and Evaluation: A Dialogical Approach

While it is vital to pay serious and close attention to the data and the concepts and understanding of the members of the

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<sup>1</sup> James Glasse, Putting it Together in the Parish.

<sup>2</sup> Irwin Deutscher, "Asking Questions (and Listening to Answers)" in Martin Bulmer (ed), Sociological Research Methods: An Introduction, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Marshall & G Rossman, Designing Qualitative Research, pp. 82,83.

community under study, such data alone are insufficient as a basis for analysis<sup>1</sup>. An academically viable exercise must involve both "emic discourses" as discussed above as well as the "etic categories" in the academic disciplines. This is also in keeping with our chosen dialogical pastoral theological method employed in this study. Thus we need to examine the perspectives and categories found in the academic disciplines that have studied this phenomena of possession. This should help us to take as many relevant perspectives as possible into consideration in a "unified global approach"<sup>2</sup>. In this study we will see how the "etic categories" compare with the "emic discourses". This should help us to analyse the phenomena in Singapore and to see what forces and relationships are at work. This should then help us to evaluate the pastoral responses to possession in Singapore which is the practical aim of this study.

### 1.5 Life History of this Study

The seeds for this study were sown in the tropical soil of Singapore where east meets west. As a pastor trained also in western medicine, I struggled with the increasing number of people who displayed possession behaviour in the various churches in Singapore and with the many responses that I saw in my colleagues and myself. The pastoral, and the deeper philosophical implications floated in the back of my mind.

Meanwhile I decided to do doctoral studies at New College and accordingly arrived one cold winter morning in January 1990 in Edinburgh. I set out to do research on the cultural interplay between Asian and western cultures partly because of its importance for my context in Singapore. In the back of my mind was the specific problem of possession. But who would dream of writing a thesis on possession in a western university, let alone New College with its tradition of Calvinistic theology and its broader environment of western empirical rationalism? At best, a study on possession would be accepted as an interesting

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<sup>1</sup> See Florian Znaniecki, "The Method of Sociology", in Martin Bulmer, Sociological Research Methods, for this argument.

<sup>2</sup> Gustav Jahoda, Psychology and Anthropology, p. 275.

research on some exotic non-western phenomenon reflecting vestiges of more primitive thought and imagination. But worse, it would probably be rejected as not an appropriate or relevant topic for a scholarly study in the area of practical theology.

Fortunately, this study on possession has seen the light of day. We are all children of our times and cultures. I therefore had to deal with western rationalism and a rejection of non-western perspectives and narratives. Not all the people I came into contact in the halls of academia were like this. There were some who were open to exploring such an issue as possession. However, the going was initially difficult. Hence, for a full year, I struggled in "naming the unnameable". Finally, the topic of possession was identified, owned, and adopted, thanks to my supervisors. I wrote up my thesis proposal which was accepted in January 1991. I was in business.

The first half of 1991 was devoted to designing and carrying out my field research. I met with Professor Robert Morris, Professor of Parapsychology in Edinburgh University who gave me valuable advice in the design of the field research. It was nice to be back in Singapore to do my research. I had a full schedule meeting primarily with the pastors in my sample. Pastors in Singapore, being busy people, we met in all kinds of places, in offices, restaurants, holiday resorts and so on. Slowly, my note books were filled with the contents of the interviews. I also collected boxes of used tapes containing records of the interviews; these had to be transcribed. The interviews were mostly enjoyable with many of the pastors telling interesting tales of the supernatural.

I also met with psychiatrists in hospitals and private practice; some of them being my friends. This meant hours of discussion ranging from clinical psychiatric practice involving possession behaviour to brief philosophical incursions into epistemology. My meetings also extended to others involved in professional counselling and the author of the book on the history of the Church in Singapore. On one occasion, (because I was doing research on possession) , I was called up in the middle of the night to attend to a young man who was believed to be possessed.

That night, I travelled to two hospitals and spent some time with the "possessed" man and his relatives. At other times I met with some people who had apparently been exorcised before and talked with them and their families.

I had to finally return to the cold rationality of Edinburgh where I spent some time submerged in the data that I had collected, trying to make some sense of it. Slowly I started writing up the initial descriptive chapters. Meanwhile I had contacted some practitioners of deliverance and exorcism in Scotland and England; some of whom I met and others with whom I corresponded. My research material expanded further.

The chapters of the thesis were steadily written up with the feedback from my supervisors and others. In March 1992, I had to return to Singapore and a dying mother. During that time I collected whatever additional information I could that I needed to complete my thesis.

Meanwhile I had occasion to attend a meeting of the Northern Region Deliverance Study Group which meets twice a year in Durham. I had come to know a few of its members. I was subsequently asked to give a talk at one of the group's meetings where I presented some of my research findings and had valuable feedback.

## 1.6 Outline of the Thesis

The second chapter sets out the background for our study. It is a brief but important portrait of the history and development of Singapore, dealing with social, cultural, political and religious dimensions. A brief history of the Church in Singapore is also given with special reference to the growth of charismatic Christianity.

Chapters three, four, and five are descriptive chapters setting out the descriptive phase of our study. Using primarily material from the interviews with the pastors, we describe their worldview and beliefs regarding possession behaviour and how or why it is

caused (chapter three), their diagnostic strategies (chapter four), and their therapeutic interventions (chapter five).

The analytic phase of this study is embodied in chapters six and seven. In chapter six, we examine the various scientific discourses on possession and compare them with the pastors' accounts. We draw out convergences and divergences in the various narratives and look at how the pastors attempt to live among the different discourses and between their two worlds. Chapter seven continues the analysis by examining the factors shaping the pastors' particular worldview. The dominant theme of competition, played out in ecclesiastical, religious, and professional arenas, is elicited as a major factor determining the pastors' choice.

Chapter eight deals with the evaluation of the pastoral response to possession using philosophical and theological tools. Three specific areas are examined: epistemology, theodicy and cosmology. The limitations of the epistemological and cosmological assumptions of modern science are discussed using resources from the Christian tradition, especially the Greek Fathers and Orthodoxy. Similar resources are utilised in examining the weaknesses of the cosmological, theodical and ethical paradigms evident in the pastors' responses to possession.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

#### 2.1 THE CONTEXT: SINGAPORE

Being the nearest Asian city to the Equator (137 km to the north), Singapore, with its main island and fifty four other islets (618 sq km) teeming with its 2.7 million multi-ethnic people<sup>1</sup>, has been declared a miracle<sup>2</sup>. When it reluctantly entered the world community as a small independent nation, few believed it could make it. Today, however, it is the nineteenth wealthiest country in the world on a per capita basis, ahead of Italy and New Zealand<sup>3</sup>. Among the community of nations in Asia, it has been grouped together with the "achievers"<sup>4</sup>. It boasts the best airport and the busiest port in the world.

##### 2.1.1 Beginnings: From Obscurity to Independence

Beginning as an obscure pirate-infested island<sup>5</sup>, Singapore was repeatedly attacked by surrounding powers and finally abandoned in the centuries preceding 1819 when Stamford Raffles, a British official of the East India Company set foot on Singapore, and

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<sup>1</sup> Chinese (76.5%), Malays (14.8%), Indians (6.4%), other minority groups (2.3%); see John Clammer, Sociology of Singapore Religion, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Woronoff, Asia's "Miracle" Economies.

<sup>3</sup> see Ron O'Grady, Banished: The Expulsion of the CCA from Singapore and its Implications, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Louis Hechanova, "Socio-Economic-Political Situation of Asia; the Church's Response", in Narciso C Dumalagan, (ed), Pastoral Care & Counselling in Asia, pp. 17, 18. The other "achievers" are Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong. The two other groups are the "strivers" (Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, India) and the "late-comers" (Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan).

<sup>5</sup> The earliest records date back to the 14th century eg. mention by the Chinese writer Wang Ta-Yuan and the Sejarah Melayu (Malay Annals).

with quick political footwork secured Singapore for Britain<sup>1</sup>. From then on, Singapore's history took a dramatic turn. Raffles' vision of Singapore as a free port at the service of Britain brought in a quick and massive tide of Chinese, Indians and others. Singapore's population increased from a handful of Malay villagers and pirates in 1819 to eleven thousand in 1824, and to a quarter million by 1911, with forty eight races speaking fifty four languages<sup>2</sup>. With Chinese, Indians, Indonesians, and others arriving from their crowded homelands in search of a better life, Singapore thrived as a port and commercial centre. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the introduction of Brazilian rubber trees into Malaya at the end of the nineteenth century further enhanced Singapore's importance. By 1903, it had become the world's seventh largest port.

The history of modern Singapore has not been without problems. Roaming tigers, epidemic diseases, Chinese gangs, and racial clashes were some important chapters in Singapore's history. The Japanese invaded Singapore in 1942 and renamed it Synan. Their attempt to "Japanise" the island failed; when Singapore was returned to the victorious British in 1945, sentiments for independence were rising in the local population who wanted neither British nor Japanese masters. Following an eventful history involving the clashes between the Communist Party of Malaya, other local political parties, Britain, and other players on the political stage, Singapore attained statehood in 1959, with the People's Action Party (PAP, led by the young Cambridge-educated Lee Kuan Yew who became and remained, until recently, as Singapore's first Prime Minister), coming into power and remaining in power till today. A merger in 1963 with Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak failed, with the expulsion of Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965. On 9 August 1965, Singapore became a sovereign, independent and democratic nation, the 117th member of the United Nations.

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<sup>1</sup> For an authoritative history of Singapore see C M Turnbull, A History of Singapore 1819-1988; more popular versions are Noel Barber, The Singapore History: From Raffles to Lee Kuan Yew, and H F Pearson, Singapore: A Popular History: 1819-1960.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Johannes Hoefler (ed), Singapore, pp. 46-52.

### 2.1.2 The Priority of Economic Growth

From the word "go", Singapore, finding herself in an improbable situation with no natural resources except her diverse peoples, had to fight for survival<sup>1</sup>. Rapid industrialisation and the maintenance of internal security became the paramount goals of the government<sup>2</sup>. The political culture of authoritative government and tightly regulated society was combined with the pursuit of rapid economic and industrial growth. Certain geopolitical developments and the shrewd pragmatic ability of the PAP leaders to turn adversities to their own advantage resulted in the rapid economic development and modernisation of Singapore. Singapore has seen a steady growth in its economy. Much of life in Singapore is geared towards feeding the economy. Efficiency, productivity, and excellence have become national and personal goals. There is an obsession with being "number one" in the league of nations in as many fields as possible. It is believed that anything less will result in the demise of the nation in a world which is seen as a hostile field of competitors. A thriving economy is seen as the only way for national survival. Anything that is perceived to threaten the economy such as political instability and the welfare state, are vigorously opposed as either dangerous or inefficient. Such single-mindedness has produced remarkable economic growth and a rapid transformation of the lifestyle of the people. The standard of living has improved greatly: people live in highly urban and modern flats most of which are owned by the tenants, the health and educational parameters are fast catching up with those in developed countries, public services are highly modernised and efficient. Singapore's economic influence and impact far outweighs its political significance as a small island state<sup>3</sup>.

Singapore's successes have not been achieved without cost. Turnbull identifies two "casualties" of the economic success of

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<sup>1</sup> C M Turnbull, History of Singapore, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis John Gayle, The Small Developing State: Comparing Political Economies in Costa Rica, Singapore and Jamaica.

<sup>3</sup> C M Turnbull, History of Singapore, p. 327.

the PAP government: democracy and socialism<sup>1</sup>. The government policy of "guided democracy" meant an authoritarian government which closely regulated all aspects of life and was impatient of criticism, thus exercising tight controls over the press and media. This resulted in ineffective opposition political parties and a populace which fell into the habit of following without questioning the directions of the political elite<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, public welfare schemes were minimised with the care of the needy and underprivileged passed on to families and charitable organisations. Moreover, the disparities in wealth which the government pledged to eradicate have largely remained or been accentuated with material success. Between 1959 and the early 1970s the wages of low-paid workers rose by only 5% in comparison to a 200-300% rise in executive-level salaries<sup>3</sup>. The personal and corporate pursuit of wealth and the ideal of self-reliant meritocracy have dulled the sensitivities of many to the needs of the marginalised or the injustices at different levels of the economy. Turnbull thus laments that Singapore is a "materialistic, competitive, success-worshipping society"<sup>4</sup>. On its part, the government, though aware of existing injustices in the economic system, overlooked this in its desire to "expand the economic cake before attempting to divide it up fairly"<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless the inequalities have remained. The government has sought not economic answers but social and cultural ones. It has attempted to instill moral values to remedy Singapore's "healthy but materialistic and not particularly caring society"<sup>6</sup>; the source of such values was sought among the Asian cultures in Singapore. Herein lies a tension.

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 311f.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 312-3.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>5</sup> C M Turnbull, History of Singapore, p. 313. She notes Lee Kuan Yew's comments in 1970: "We are developing painfully, unequally, often unjustly".

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 326.

### 2.1.3 A Clash of Cultures and Values

In its pursuit of wealth and rapid economic progress, the government had an eclectic approach to both Asian and western cultures and values. Only those Asian and western values compatible with rapid economic growth and social morality were espoused<sup>1</sup>. On one hand, the government sought to do away with old superstitions and habits and replace them with a scientific, rational and pragmatic approach leading to efficiency and productivity<sup>2</sup>. Lee Kuan Yew began as a socialist but he and the PAP quietly drifted away from formal socialism to become convinced believers in the free market economy<sup>3</sup>. With that, the door was wide open to western influences adding to the deeply felt British influence in Singapore due to its colonial past. English became the lingua franca in Singapore exposing Singapore to the English-speaking world, in particular, North America, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Singapore, as a result, has become a mixture of east and west<sup>4</sup>.

The confluence of eastern and western values, tradition and modernisation, can be seen in the changes taking place in family structures and functions. Das and Bardis in a survey of the family in several countries in contemporary Asia conclude that there are ten general trends: equalitarian family relations with less segregation and limited subjugation of women to an inferior status, greater individualism and independence, differentiation and specialisation of social institutions, urbanisation, family planning, social mobility, marital disruption, neglect and improper care for the elderly, formal education of children, and

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<sup>1</sup> See S Rajaratnam, "Asian Values and Modernization" in Seah Chee-Meow (ed) Asian Values and Modernization, p. 97. Rajaratnam in a speech in 1990 told Singaporeans that they must choose what to keep and what to discard in their cultures (The Straits Times, Weekly Overseas Edition, 16 June 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Eg. companies were urged to automate, robotise and computerise - see Woronoff, Asia's "Miracle" Economies, p. 132. See also Chan Heng Chee & Hans Dieter Evers, "National Nation Building in South East Asia" in Chen & Evers (eds), Studies in Asean Sociology, pp. 117-129.

<sup>3</sup> See Alex Josey, Lee Kuan Yew, in Hoefler, Singapore, p. 60. In 1976 the PAP resigned from the Socialist International.

<sup>4</sup> Dick Wilson, East Meets West: Singapore.

governmental influence on family activities<sup>1</sup>. Similar trends are seen in Singapore; they are viewed both positively and negatively.

A good summary of the major value systems related to the individual and society is contained in the Singapore government's attempts to formulate a national ideology. Four concepts have been proposed as forming the national ideology: a) placing the society before self, b) upholding the family as the basic building block of society, c) resolving major issues through consensus, and d) stressing racial and religious tolerance through harmony<sup>2</sup>. These values are essentially Asian in nature, and in particular, Confucian, where the emphasis is on the primacy of society and the family, and the need for harmonious relationships within these institutions. Such values will be threatened by extreme forms of individualism; perhaps the reason for the government's formulation of the national ideology is to stem, on Singapore's shores, the tide of western values, perceived as too individualistic for Singapore society<sup>3</sup>.

An important aspect of Asian culture is the central role of the family and its authoritarian structure. Traditional Asian societies focus on the right to authority based on the intrinsic merit of age<sup>4</sup>. This emphasis is reflected in the family too; for example the ideal Chinese family is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal<sup>5</sup> with well-defined intrafamilial roles and relationships. Hence, an important component of familial and social life in far eastern societies is ancestor worship which

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<sup>1</sup> Man Singh Das & Panos D Bardis (eds), The Family in Asia, p. 419.

<sup>2</sup> The Straits Times, Weekly Overseas Edition, 3 March 1990, p. 7. In fact, these values form the basis of a new civics/moral education programme in secondary schools which commenced in January 1992.

<sup>3</sup> See Lee Hsien Loong's comments on the topic in The Straits Times, Weekly Overseas Edition, 16 June 1990, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Robert J Lazar, "Asian Family and Society: A Theoretical Overview", in Man Singh Das, Family in Asia.

<sup>5</sup> Aline K Wong, "The Modern Chinese Family: Ideology, Revolution and Residues", in Man Singh Das, Family in Asia, p. 251.

serves to legitimise the status quo, and promote communal consolidation and solidarity<sup>1</sup>. Ancestor worship is thus in the same continuum as filial piety which is a key value in Asian culture<sup>2</sup>. Another important dimension of cultural values and norms is the place of the supernatural - an important component of Asian spirituality.

The tension between traditional Asian values and westernisation has led the government to be wary of an unchecked flow of western influence. At one point, Lee Kuan Yew urged Singapore to "look east" to Japan as a model of industrial and economic success<sup>3</sup>. Fearing the erosion of Asian values and authoritarian structures which were deemed to be necessary in running a tightly-knit and coordinated political apparatus, the government condemned independent criticism as an alien western tradition unsuitable for Singapore<sup>4</sup>. According to Confucian political philosophy, the nexus between a good government and its citizenry is familial. The government, as a father, is concerned about the greater welfare of its people, and, in turn, rewarded by filial piety and loyalty from its people. Statecraft is thus supposed to be an extension of family management<sup>5</sup>. Like a parent, the government has a say in all aspects of life, even the most personal matters<sup>6</sup>. It aims to educate through its famous campaigns (Keep Singapore Clean, Stop at Two, Speak Mandarin etc.), affect

<sup>1</sup> Kiyomi Morioka, "Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Japan: Continuity and Change", in Man Singh Das, Family in Asia.

<sup>2</sup> See Robert N Bellah, "Father and Son in Christianity and Confucianism", in William A Sadler (ed), Personality and Religion, pp. 158f.

<sup>3</sup> Woronoff, Asia's "Miracle" Economies, p. 352.

<sup>4</sup> See Peter S Chen, "Elites and National Development", pp. 17-25; and Chan Heng Chee, "The Role of Intellectuals in Singapore's Politics", pp. 59-64.

<sup>5</sup> See Wu Teh Yao, Singapore: The Republic of the 21st Century, Modernization in Singapore: Impact on the Individual, pp. 118,9. See also Leonard Lien Hsu, The Political Philosophy of Confucianism, pp. 105-127; and James Legge, Analects of Confucius, Book 2, chapt. 20.

<sup>6</sup> See John Andrews, "Lee's Legacy: A Survey of Singapore", The Economist, 22 Nov. 1986, p. 4. Premier Lee in a 1986 speech related "without remorse" how the government intervened on very personal matters - how one lives, who one's neighbour is, how or when one spits and what language one uses.

behaviour through a carrot and stick approach (fines for littering, spitting, failing to flush public toilets after use; rewards for those who have the "right" number of children), and sculpture society<sup>1</sup>.

Both Lee and his son, a key second generation government leader tipped to be Prime Minister in the not too distant future, have warned against the uncritical acceptance of western values<sup>2</sup>. Appealing to Asian values, Goh Chok Tong, who succeeded Lee as Prime Minister in November 1990, while promising greater freedom of expression, warned those who try to "rock the boat"<sup>3</sup>.

The government is very sensitive to any criticism that it is an oppressive and authoritarian regime. It has not hesitated in reacting against the western press with punitive measures for what it considers to be unfair and deceptive reporting<sup>4</sup>. This, along with the government's handling of opposition and dissent has been criticised in various quarters<sup>5</sup>. On its part, the government feels that it is not understood by others. It shows its record of impressive economic growth, high standards of living, remarkable corruption-free record and relative absence of the serious problems that other large and crowded cities face as a vindication of its authoritarian ethos.

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<sup>1</sup> Eg. in determining who should have children and how many as a matter of policy, and rewarding or penalising accordingly.

<sup>2</sup> Lee Kuan Yew in a speech in 1971: "We are a hard-working people. But if we let our younger generation go soft, or worse, get soft-headed, then there will be rapid decline. We must inculcate the values of their culture so that they will not imitate the foolish, reckless and dangerous things so many young people in the west are now doing." Hans Hofer, (ed), Singapore, p. 30. See also a report on Lee Hsien Loong's speech in parliament along similar lines in The Straits Times, Weekly Overseas Edition, 16 June 1990.

<sup>3</sup> The Straits Times, Weekly Overseas Edition, 16 June 1990, pp. 1,7.

<sup>4</sup> Magazines such as TIME and Far Eastern Economic Review were restricted in circulation for failing to publish the government's letters in full in response to negative reports contained in them.

<sup>5</sup> See eg. Ron O'Grady, Banished, in which he criticises the government for using the Internal Security Act (giving powers to the government to arrest and detain people without trial) to silence opposition.

#### 2.1.4 Singapore: Secular and Religious

Secularism in Singapore paradoxically coexists with religious revivalism. In the Christian Church, this has come largely in the form of the charismatic movement and intensive evangelistic outreach; we shall examine this in the next section. All the other religions are also undergoing revival and revitalisation, whether in the form of Islamic Dakwah, or the Buddhist Nichiren, or the Neo-Hindu Sai Baba movement<sup>1</sup>. There has been a palpable rise in the number of devotees attending temples, practising religious rites, and a refurbishing of the facades of the various religious communities with contemporary, modern, and vibrant images. This attraction to religion in Singapore exists in the face of one of the "costs" of the policy of rapid material success: stress, a feeling of emptiness, loneliness and alienation. Besides the stress of the "rat-race" in Singapore, some have suggested that the high population density, crowding<sup>2</sup> and high residential mobility have contributed to increased levels of stress and social pathologies. In addition, the pursuit of success and wealth has left little space for relaxation and more non-material quests such as relationships and spiritual fulfillment. This has caused an underlying frustration, helplessness and anxiety. The anxiety is further deepened by potential trouble in the nation-state. This may possibly arise from ethnic conflict; the current reinforcement of ethnic differences may hide underlying ethnic conflicts and anxieties. Trouble may also come from Singapore's neighbours, in particular Malaysia with whom Singapore has recently exchanged hostile words and symbolic actions. Thus the dehumanising and alienating effects of the modern economy coupled with the anxiety about underlying explosive situations in the future continue to make religious options and certainties an attractive refuge for Singaporeans.

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<sup>1</sup> see John Clammer, Sociology of Singapore Religion, ch 5,6

<sup>2</sup> Riaz Hassan, Social & Psychological Implications of High Population Density; Peter Chen, Ecological Distribution of Social Pathology in Singapore.

In summary, Singapore, in a short span of time, has been transformed from a struggling third-world nation to a highly modern, technological and economic city-state. This has brought rapid social changes and all that modernisation entails - westernisation and technology. The authoritarian government, which has had a major role in determining the nature and the rate of social and cultural changes in Singapore, has tried to stem the tide of this modernising and westernising influence by slowing down the erosion of Asian values, but it has had only limited success in this. On the other hand, secularisation seems to have led to a religious revivalism in Singapore. Science and the supernatural both thrive on the island; though this may seem to be a contradiction, they are both closely related. The relationship to the supernatural tends to be marked by the same manipulative pragmatism found in the technical, modern, and industrial spheres of life in Singapore.

## 2.2 THE CONTEXT: THE CHURCH IN SINGAPORE

The history of the Church in Singapore is covered comprehensively by Bobby Sng in In His Good Time: The Story of the Church in Singapore, 1819-1978<sup>1</sup>. Keith Hinton, drawing largely from this book, identifies 3 periods in the Singapore Church's history: "slow beginnings" (1819-1900), "seeds of hope" (1900 to 1950), and "harvest time" (1950s-1980s)<sup>2</sup>.

### 2.2.1 Slow Beginnings

Hinton points out that Christianity was introduced to Singapore and Malaya in a negative way - by gun-toting, immoral and persecuting Portuguese - which created a deep resentment against it. The Dutch were no better. This was unlike the earlier peaceful and natural introduction of Islam by Arab traders<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Bobby Sng, In His Good Time: The Story of the Church in Singapore, 1819-1978.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Hinton, Growing Churches Singapore Style, chapt. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp 14, 15.

When the British arrived, their initial concern was to build churches for their expatriate community but gradually the Scottish Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Methodists began their work among the local people. The churches were neither indigenous nor independent, neither were they relevant in their lack of concern and involvement in the various social scourges like prostitution, secret societies, and opium addiction besetting the island during this period<sup>1</sup>. The situation somehow improved in the first half of the 20th century with the greater openness of the locals towards the Church.

### 2.2.2 The Post-War Period: Conservatism and Growth

The stage was set for rapid expansion during the post-war period. With China becoming a communist state in 1949, there was an exodus of western missionaries and local Chinese from mainland China to Southeast Asia, including Singapore. This had several consequences. Firstly, the mission agencies which had worked in China now turned their attention and energy to countries like Singapore. Secondly, the communist victory in China and the brewing communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia led to a sense of urgency to evangelise the overseas Chinese<sup>2</sup>. Thirdly, many of the immigrant pastors and Christians came from Fukien province where conservative Reformed theology was dominant; they therefore brought with them a conservative brand of Christianity<sup>3</sup>. This was to result in a rising conflict with the liberal theology of many of the western missionaries and a hardening of the conservative stance of the pastors and the churches. The seeds for this conflict were also sown by conservative preachers from China such as John Sung who has a very significant influence in Singapore. Sung who reacted against his experience with the liberal theological education at Union Theological Seminary in Chicago by warning his followers against the "poison of liberalism"<sup>4</sup>, was

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, pp 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> Carl M Fisher, "The Relationship of Financial Subsidy to the Growth of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia & Singapore", STM thesis, Univ of Chicago, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Bobby Sng, In His Good Time, p. 256.

<sup>4</sup> Bobby Sng, In His Good Time, p. 256; also Quek Kiok Chiang, Far Eastern Beacon, Aug/Sept 1978, p. 2.

instrumental in promoting conservative Christianity among the churches. As Lau Teik Oon observes:

The reason why so many Chinese pastors are conservative is that they were revived through Dr Sung's Bible-centred preaching. He set the example. He took the Bible seriously and would expound the whole Bible chapter by chapter.<sup>1</sup>

The net result of these various factors and influences was the setting of the stage for a conservative evangelical and evangelistic Christianity in Singapore leading to a brisk growth in church membership and a hardening of the conservative stance of the churches.

This was further enhanced by other developments. From the 1950s onwards, new denominations entered Singapore and worked hard in evangelism resulting in rapid growth in the number of new churches and Christians<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, interdenominational parachurch organisations such as the Youth For Christ and Scripture Union had a significant ministry among young people leading to many conversions among them. This new generation of Christians joined hands with the older conservative Christians to challenge liberal Christianity. By the early 1950s, a fierce "battle for truth" involving churches, theological institutions, and the student body had developed arising from this desire for theological conservatism and what was considered to be faithfulness to the authority of the Bible<sup>3</sup>.

In the churches, there was a general suspicion, if not downright condemnation, of the liberal and "modernist" tendencies of the conciliar and ecumenical movement represented by bodies such as the WCC. The Bible Presbyterian Church was especially critical of any links with such organisations. In more recent years, the liberal Christian Conference of Asia was expelled from its headquarters in Singapore by the government without any challenge by the churches in Singapore. In fact, in 1988, major denominations such as the Anglican and Methodist Churches

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<sup>1</sup> cited in Bobby Sng, In His Good Time, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 248f.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 251.

withdrew their membership from the CCA. There are voices in these churches urging withdrawal from the WCC too.

Similar conservative sentiments were found in the arena of theological education. The Singapore Bible College (initially, the Singapore Theological Seminary) was established in 1952 by the Chinese Churches as a vanguard against liberal theology and as a conservative alternative to Trinity Theological College (started in 1948) where some of the western missionary lecturers were considered to be liberal. A former principal of SBC wrote:

The nineteenth century was characterised by tremendous changes in theological thinking. Liberalism, modernism, etc. with its own theories, questions, criticism, and denials regarding the Bible, God's holy Word, arose and spread with the result that the theological world almost lost its grip on truth, and the foundation of the Christian Church was shaken. At a time when true doctrine and the men to uphold it were scarce, SBC was founded by these Chinese brethren to take its stand for God and His Word.<sup>1</sup>

SBC has carefully maintained this conservative stance while TTC has moved towards it with the withdrawal of liberal missionary lecturers over the years.

The same anti-liberal attitude was mirrored in student movements and groups such as the Varsity Christian Fellowship (aligned to the Inter Varsity Fellowship in opposition to the Student Christian Movement)<sup>2</sup>, Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ etc.

### 2.2.3 Recent History: Impact of the Charismatic Movement

The more recent history of the Church has seen rapid growth. With brisk modernisation and a greater openness and attraction to western forms and ideas, the churches grew, aided by western missionaries and organisations including parachurch groups working among young people. The percentage of Christians in Singapore grew from 0.59% in 1940 to 1.86% in 1970 to 10.30% in

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<sup>1</sup> Yap Un Han, "Our Basic Principles", Singapore Bible College Bulletin, Oct 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Bobby Sng, In His Good Time, pp. 258f.

1980<sup>1</sup>. It was estimated that the figure was more than 18% in 1990<sup>2</sup>. This rapid rise has been essentially among the English-educated young people. This has given rise to a middle-class image of the Church.

One important factor in the rapid growth of the Church is the outbreak of the charismatic movement<sup>3</sup>. Hinton shows that the Assemblies of God have been the fastest growing denomination in Singapore from 1973 to 1983 with a decadal growth rate of 635%<sup>4</sup>. He attributes this to the dynamism of the charismatic churches with strong emphasis on dynamic worship, healing sessions, deliverance ministries and so on. The Pentecostal churches, of which the AOG is a component, began to have a significant influence following the visit to Singapore of Kong Mui Yee, a well-known converted Chinese film actress from Hong Kong, whose public meetings served to expose non-Pentecostal Christians to Pentecostal beliefs and practices such as "baptism by the Holy Spirit", speaking in tongues, miraculous healing and so on<sup>5</sup>.

This pentecostal influence had a major breakthrough into the major established denominations at the end of 1972 through the inroads of the charismatic movement. The Singapore press noted the outbreak of ecstatic prayer and glossolalia among students at the Methodist Anglo Chinese School<sup>6</sup>. Some of these boys who worshipped at Wesley Methodist Church prayed for their ailing minister and his subsequent deep spiritual experience further encouraged them to share their experiences with others<sup>7</sup>.

Meanwhile the Anglican Church went through more significant

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> The recent 1990 census showed that this was an over-estimation; the actual percentage being about 13%.

<sup>3</sup> See Walter Hollenweger, The Pentecostals for a comprehensive account of the origins of the Pentecostal movement and its development into the worldwide charismatic movement.

<sup>4</sup> Keith Hinton, Growing Churches Singapore Style, p. 115.

<sup>5</sup> Bobby Sng, In His Good Time, p. 290.

<sup>6</sup> "An Unhealthy Cult Spreading Among Young", Straits Times, 2 Nov 1972, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Bobby Sng, In His Good Time, p. 291.

changes. The then Bishop Chiu Ban It, who was attending an ecumenical conference in Bangkok, found himself going through a charismatic experience of speaking in tongues after reading Nine O'Clock in the Morning by Dennis Bennett<sup>1</sup>, a founding leader of the charismatic movement in the United States<sup>2</sup>. Thus began the transformation of the Anglican Church into a manifestly charismatic Church, with most of the clergy and many of the laity having the charismatic experience. The present Bishop, Moses Tay relates his own experience in The Parable of the Durian Tree<sup>3</sup>.

The charismatic movement has also made inroads into other denominations such as the Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, and Brethren Churches through its influence on pastors or members, or both. Even the Roman Catholic Church has a significant Catholic Charismatic Movement. The only denomination which has taken a strong stand against the charismatic movement is the Bible Presbyterian Church which has taken a separatist stand against many issues. But even the Bible Presbyterian Synod had to be dissolved because of internal divisions, in part due to the openness of some towards the charismatic movement.

Another phenomenon is the large number of independent churches or house churches<sup>4</sup>, many of them originating as breakaway groups from established churches. These churches are usually managed by strongly charismatic pastors and are known for their charismatic ethos and their aggressive evangelism. They operate from former cinemas and rented hotel premises.

The Full Gospel Christian Businessmen's Fellowship founded by Demos Shakarian in America<sup>5</sup> is also very active in Singapore

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<sup>1</sup> His testimony is found in Michael Harper (ed), Bishop's Move, see esp. p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, pp 4-6.

<sup>3</sup> in Bill Burnett (ed), By My Spirit: Renewal in the Worldwide Anglican Church.

<sup>4</sup> see Bobby Sng, In His Good Time, pp. 269f. See also Khong Yiu Lan, "A Study of a "Thaumaturgical" Movement in Singapore: The Christian Charismatic Renewal".

<sup>5</sup> W Hollenweger, The Pentecostals, p. 6f.

since its reorganisation in 1975<sup>1</sup> drawing its members from prominent professional and business circles in the nation; one of its members is the Anglican bishop. Other parachurch organisations sympathetic to or openly espousing charismatic doctrines and emphases are also active.

The charismatic movement has thus made significant and deep inroads into the Singapore churches and parachurch groups. Charismatic churches are marked by their exuberant worship services<sup>2</sup>, healing and deliverance ministries, aggressive evangelism and certain aspects of a prosperity and success gospel. This is increasingly popular in Singapore, aided by frequent visits from overseas charismatic preachers mainly from the west, and a whole range of books and other media written or produced by pentecostals and charismatics filling the growing number of Christian bookshops in Singapore, with some bookshops exclusively catering for such literature.

One offshoot of these charismatic influences has been a certain augmentation of conservative beliefs in the absolute authority of the Bible though the charismatics' use of the Bible tends to be rather fallacious. Another result has been an increase in aggressive evangelistic outreach coupled with the zealous conviction that the other religions are demonic counterfeits, and their adherents doomed to hell unless they are saved through determined evangelism. Some of these aggressive evangelistic activities have offended non-Christians and the concerned government has called up Christian leaders, telling them to take a less conspicuous evangelistic profile.

Another related result of the charismatic influences has been the increasing attention given to miraculous healing and exorcism. For example, in 1973, the Anglican Church held "Prayers for Healing Services" in which several healings and exorcisms are

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 6f.

<sup>2</sup> For a sociologist's description of a participative and expressive charismatic worship service in a "none too expressive culture" see John Clammer, Sociology of Singapore Religion, pp 47-9.

alleged to have taken place<sup>1</sup>. Healing and deliverance services and sessions have now become common enough in many churches. These are augmented by frequent public rallies in which healing and deliverance is promised.

The rising profile of deliverance and exorcism has already been noted earlier. At one point, it was so common and popular that members of some churches carried plastic bags to church services to collect the phlegm or vomitus that was expected to be expelled by a victim who was successfully exorcised. The incidence of possession and exorcism was frequent enough for the Graduate Christian Fellowship to organise a "Seminar on the Christian Approach to Demon Possession and Mental Health" on 30 April and 1 May 1982 in which, pastors, doctors and the Canadian author and psychiatrist John White participated.

While the novelty and euphoria of "successful" exorcisms were somehow "routinised", exorcisms are still important in many churches; often they have been accepted as part of the total ministry of the Church. As Clammer has noted the charismatic emphasis on personal piety and saving others has resulted in the preoccupation with spiritual gifts and evangelism with "very little relationship being perceived between these activities and society"<sup>2</sup>.

Meanwhile the Church in Singapore continues to grow in numbers and sees itself as a mission base for Southeast Asia and beyond. The Church is energetic and highly optimistic, reflecting the general mood of the nation as a whole. It is yet to be tested by adversity and the winds of ideological changes blowing through other places and churches.

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<sup>1</sup> Bobby Sng, In His Good Time, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> John Clammer, Sociology of Singapore Religion, p. 50, 51

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 POSSESSION: THE VIEWS AND BELIEFS OF THE PASTORS

In this and the following two chapters we shall look into pastoral beliefs and practices in relation to demon possession and deliverance ministry. I shall attempt to describe the pastoral discourses and responses as much as possible so that the reader can get a feel of the thinking and the experiences of the pastors. My primary material is basically derived from interviews I have had with sixteen pastors in Singapore. Other sources include interviews with expert respondents such as psychiatrists and counsellors, and additional material such as lecture notes on demon possession, a video tape of a Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship meeting in which testimonies of deliverance and instructions on demon possession were given. Other material include a taped deliverance session, and written case histories given to me by several pastors.

#### 3.1 Meet the Pastors

The sixteen pastors who were interviewed were selected on the basis of their experience in helping people who were believed to be demon possessed, or demonised as some of them prefer to call it. Some of them were already well known in Singapore for their involvement in the deliverance ministry. Others were contacted after enquiring from different people as to who in Singapore Protestant churches had such pastoral experience. The sample of pastors is restricted to the Protestant churches even though some pastors within the Roman Catholic churches could have been included. The reasons for excluding them are twofold. Firstly, the sample would be too large and the focus would become diffused. Secondly, it could have created a more diverse sample that could make analysis too complicated for this study.

Of the sixteen pastors, twelve are pastors of local churches; one is an elder in the church, another, a member of the pastoral team in his church. The remaining two are lay members of their

churches but actively involved and taking leadership in the deliverance ministry teams in their respective churches. These two have been included in the sample because of the pastoral nature of their role in their churches and because of their considerable experience in the deliverance ministry.

Only two of the pastors are women which is not surprising as it reflects the general pattern among pastors in Singapore. The youngest in the group is thirty one and the oldest fifty six. Four are in their thirties, seven in their forties and the remaining five in their fifties. Their experience in the pastoral ministry varied from seven years to twenty eight years. The majority of pastors had about ten to fifteen years of pastoral experience. Their experience in the deliverance ministry varied considerably. One of the pastors had encountered only two cases of demon possession while another had seen "more than six". Two had seen between ten to twenty cases while seven had seen around fifty cases. Two said they had seen about a hundred while another two had seen a few hundreds. The remaining pastor reported to have seen around a thousand cases in his experience.

The denominational affiliation of the pastors is as follows: Methodist (four), Anglican (three), Assemblies of God (three), Bible Presbyterian (three), Independent and Brethren Churches (three). All the pastors are of evangelical theological orientation. Many of them considered themselves as charismatic or were open to the charismatic movement. The Bible Presbyterian churches are known for being anti-charismatic; however, historically, some of their pastors have been involved in the deliverance ministry even before the current prominence of the charismatic movement in Singapore churches, and hence their inclusion in the sample.

Except for the two lay members who had no formal theological education all the others had varying levels of theological training and education. Three had doctorates in theological studies while five held masters degrees. The remaining six had obtained basic theological degrees in Singapore theological colleges and seminaries. Those with higher degrees had studied

in American seminaries and British universities.

Pastors in Singapore are typically busy people, especially those with large congregations (500-3000). However, many of the respondents readily agreed to be interviewed. Some of them appeared to be very confident of what they were saying. Others were more tentative and expressed their own difficulties in understanding the phenomenon. While one or two were suspicious as to the purpose of the interviews, the others were quite relaxed and tended to express strongly and confidently held opinions though some seemed to be hurried because of their busy schedules. The interviews lasted anywhere between two to four hours and were taped and transcribed.

### 3.2 The Pastors' Guide to the Spiritual World

The pastors took pains, usually at the beginning of the interviews, to explain that their approach to possession and the deliverance ministry is derived from their belief in the Bible's teachings regarding the spiritual realm.

#### 3.2.1 Spiritual Warfare

All of them believed in the existence of a personal devil and demons. The origin of the devil and demons is traced to the creation and the angelic rebellion against God.

The Bible is quite clear about the demons. In the beginning God made spirit beings, in other words, angels. Some of these angels rebelled against God and fell. According to Revelations 12:4, probably one third of the angelic population joined Satan in his revolt against God. These angels were banished from heaven. These fallen angels are what we call demonic spirits or evil spirits. They have changed sides and are locked into a stance against God. There is no repentance in them and they invade realms of humankind to afflict humans and to intervene in their affairs for their detriment. (P7)<sup>1</sup>

Demons are therefore seen as spirit beings that are in a state

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<sup>1</sup> Pastors are identified in this study by numbers to avoid naming them, thus keeping their identities confidential as requested.

of conflict against God and the human race. Hence there are two sides, or two kingdoms, according to P11: the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God which are locked in battle and conflict. These battles are said to often take place within human individuals.

I believe in a personal devil who is at war with God. The demonic manifestations in demonisation are the points of conflict that show the realities of this battle. As C S Lewis has said, "We are all battle fields within whom are claims and counter-claims." (P5)

The motif of spiritual warfare or battle is repeatedly seen in the pastoral accounts. Demon possession and demonic manifestations are believed to be the more serious and visible evidences of this spiritual battle. The church and her members, being identified with God, are expected to engage in this battle. Failure to participate in this battle or to be unaware of it, is to be ineffective in the spiritual realm. In order to engage in this battle, one is expected to be informed as to the identity and activities of the demonic and this information is supposedly gleaned from what the Scriptures teach. According to the Rev Philip Heng,

To win a war, game or contest, we must

- a) Recognise there is an opponent,
- b) Know the enemy/opponent well -
  - who he is, his personality
  - what he does, his work
  - how he works, his methods,
- c) Then carry on a war against him.<sup>1</sup>

Heng goes on to discuss the identity of "our enemy", the titles of Satan and his activities against non-Christians and Christians. He uses Scripture verses extensively to explore these questions. Satan is "real...not a weak foe...yet not very strong". According to Heng, he is very crafty and attacks people's bodies and minds. However, Heng emphasises, victory is

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Spiritual Warfare", mimeo, p. 1.

in Christ, and only in Christ<sup>1</sup>.

### 3.2.2 An Army of Demons

Some of the pastors believe that there is a hierarchical organisation within the world of the demons. This mirrors the organisation of the angels (eg. the distinction between the archangels and the angels in the Bible) and also what appears to be specialised functions of particular angels (eg Archangel Michael as the Messenger, and Gabriel as the Warrior Angel).

There is a hierarchy among the demons. The Bible speaks of principalities and powers. These are different kinds of demonic beings at different levels of the hierarchy. And Satan is the prince at the top of this hierarchy. He controls the demonic world in his battle against God. (P11)

Some pastors felt that knowledge of this hierarchical organisation may be useful in the exercise of the deliverance ministry. For example, when encountering a group of demons in a person, it is believed that to be effective one must deal with the most "senior" demon in the group of demons.

In Grace church, we got Tim<sup>2</sup> to come right in front of the pulpit area, and we went right into battle. As soon as we begin the battle, Tim's heart was greatly troubled, but thank God that his heart did not stop beating (his heart had stopped on a previous occasion). At one point of the battle, the spirit spoke to me and said that he was going to stop Tim from breathing, and he did it! Tim was not breathing when the spirit surfaced. What I did then was to command Tim to resurface and then he could breathe again. This problem went on for a while and I was quite desperate as to what I should do. I then decided to call Rev Aaron Tan for help. I tried several times to contact Rev Tan but could not get him at all. Finally I decided to call Pastor Kim Seng and Martha aside to tell them that I was going to give up the fight, when suddenly the evil spirit resurfaced and there was a great struggle, and we ran to help out, and it was at this point that I cried out to God to help fight this evil spirit. I remembered that when I prayed to God and committed this spirit Joo Lain to the Lord, that this spirit began to cry and was greatly afraid. I knew immediately that the spirit was losing the battle at this point. I sensed too that the spirit was ready to leave the body, I then commanded Joo Lain in Jesus' name to leave the

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> pseudonyms are used in all cases to protect the identity of people involved.

body and to go into hell, and he went out with a most deafening scream, and immediately Tim felt fine. No more heartache, or breathing problem. Praise the Lord indeed!

However, in the wee hours of that morning, Tim was again troubled, and this time with the same symptoms. He was troubled in his heart and was again trying to tear his flesh with his fingers. But thank God that four spirits using the name of Joo Lain were exorcised easily. Now why were there four other Joo Lains? Beloved, this is usually a deceiving trick of the demons. Let me explain. The main spirit Joo Lain had earlier been exorcised, and four other spirits using the name and characteristics of Joo Lain took over, of course hoping to confuse us. But thank God they were easily dealt with in Jesus' Name.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of a group of demons inhabiting a person, it is reported that usually there is a leader who "calls the shots". The other demons are believed to follow the orders and wishes of this presiding spirit. The most intense battle is said to take place in the exorcism of this chief spirit. Once this is done the expulsion of the rest would apparently be much easier as testified in the above case.

However some pastors, though acknowledging that there may be a hierarchy among the spirits, feel that it does not have any major significance in the ministry of deliverance (P3). In fact, P1 feels that it is dangerous to build any pattern based on the information given by demons or from their behavioural patterns.

I don't think there are real patterns because Satan is confusing. He is a born liar and will do all his best to deceive and confuse us. Sometimes our knowledge can be a hindrance in our ministry (P1).

### 3.2.3 Mug Shots of the Demons

The pastors had a fascinating list of the kinds of demons they have encountered in their deliverance ministries. The kinds frequently seen are those that are related to the gods and deities in Asian religions and mythology. A frequently encountered entity is the monkey god who is a popular deity in the Chinese pantheon of gods and goddesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Tan Eng Boo, "From Witchcraft to Christ", written testimony, nd.

This person was brought to me because he was suspected to be demon possessed. When I saw him, he began to act strangely; he started acting like a monkey, displaying the gestures and movements of a monkey jumping here and there. His facial expression was also monkey-like. He would return to normal and then start behaving like a monkey again. I found out that when he was young, he was dedicated to the gods. Yes, it was the monkey god. I had him renounce his links with the past and he was subsequently delivered. (P1).

Other spirits of deities include the spirit of "Kuan Yin" who is the goddess of mercy in the Chinese religion<sup>1</sup>. Animal spirits were also said to be commonly encountered. The most common of these is the snake spirit. This would be associated with the person behaving like a snake, writhing and sliding on the floor and hissing. Sometimes the identity of the snake spirit is supposed to be manifested in unusual ways like in the following case mentioned by P15.

Ah Hoon's father and mother were both mediums. She was a case of "mental nut" as well as "strongly demonic". We cast out all sorts of demons from her - a bird demon, a monkey demon, and a pig demon. The pig demon made her eat large amounts of food. She ate an extraordinary amount of food for a number of days. You wouldn't believe how much she ate. Somehow we couldn't completely deliver her. The team members began to wonder why there was no success. We self-examined ourselves to see if there was anything wrong with us. We all came to the same conclusion. The problem was with the patient. You see, in the daytime we would exorcise the spirits in her, but at night alone in her room, she would invite the spirits to enter her again. She enjoyed the attention given to her. Because of this we finally sent her back (from the home she was kept while being ministered to).

So in some cases God doesn't want us to deal with the spirits. In this case, the alarm clock would mysteriously ring in the middle of the night. We put all her things in a fire. The alarm clock rang again. Also from the fire came a little brown snake. Here the snake spirit was being broken and bound. At first I thought I was seeing things but this was verified by the other team members who also saw the snake coming out from the fire. Later I saw this woman's body writhing like a snake with all kinds of contortions. It was scary.

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<sup>1</sup> These observations are not peculiar to the pastors for they have been noted in ethnographic studies of spirit mediumship among the Chinese in Singapore. The four most common possessing "shen" (gods) among the Chinese mediums are the monkey god, the Third Prince, Kuan Yin, and Kuan Kong or Kuan Tai (God of War); see Lee Siew Chin, "Spirit Mediums: A Comparison", pp. 15f.

In the above example we note the identity of other kinds of animal spirits noted in the pastors' experience. Other spirit entities are presumably associated with human emotions such as "the spirit of fear", the "spirit of lust", and so on while others are linked with particular physical symptoms (eg. "asthma spirit") or diseases.

Another kind of spirit mentioned by some of the pastors is what has been called a "territorial spirit". This belief arises from passages such as Daniel 10 where it is believed that demonic spirits influenced the affairs of individual nations. P2 related an incident in which he believes he encountered such an entity.

During the Billy Graham Crusade (in December 1978), while I was praying in a group for God's blessings on the meeting, I had a vision of a beast-like spirit. I tried to pray against this spirit but I had great difficulty. I then had an impression from God. I felt God was telling me, "You can't do this". I realised that the entity I was dealing with was the spirit of Singapore. It was a territorial spirit and very powerful at that. We can affect specific spirits but it depends on God. This spirit had to be left alone.

This pastor felt that each nation had some ruling demonic spirit and that these spirits cannot be exorcised. However their powers can be limited through prayer. As an example he suggested that the Gulf War conflict was caused in part due to the activities of the demonic spirits of the nations concerned. The Christian is therefore to pray against these spirits and spiritual realities when he is praying for peace. This pastor believed that the hierarchy in the demonic world is not necessarily evil for it reflects an earlier original hierarchy related to creation and the angelic world. Hence he believes that a certain "protocol" was needed in dealing with demonic beings; even Jesus, according to him, treated demons with a certain amount of "decorum". Thus in this case, the "spirit of Singapore", being a territorial national spirit, had to be left alone, though fought against through prayer.

### 3.3 How People Get "Demonised"

We looked at the pastors' beliefs and concepts regarding why



people become demonised. This is explained in terms of the existence of a demonic realm populated by personal angelic beings in the constant state of conflict and warfare against God and his forces. This realm is led by Satan. Demon possession and demonisation are manifestations of this conflict between the "two kingdoms", but the kingdom of Satan is eventually doomed to failure.

We shall now look at the pastors' explanations and beliefs on how people get demonised and possessed.

### 3.3.1 Involvement in the Occult and Other Non-Christian Religions

The single factor most directly associated with possession found in the accounts of the pastors was a previous involvement of the subjects in the occult or non-Christian religions. This was also the commonest event in the personal history of the subjects before the manifestation of possession was seen.

#### A. Mediums and the Occult

All the pastors except P14 mentioned involvement in the occult as having a direct aetiological relationship to possession. Examples of the occult would include transcendental meditation, *tai-chi* (P1), yoga (P1 and P6), fortune-telling (P1, P3), astrology and horoscopy (P6, P10), palmistry (P6, P7), magic (P5, P7), martial arts (P6), and mediumship (P1, P3). Usually it is personal involvement in such activities that is believed to place the subject in danger of becoming possessed by demons. The subject may be a practitioner of these arts as illustrated by the following case narrated by P7:

(The pastor was speaking to a Bible study group in his church following the deliverance of a young woman who was involved in palmistry and horoscopy). Following the case of this young woman, I was telling the group to get rid of all such books (books on palmistry) when a guy stood up and said, "Tonight we have seen the power of God. But I have seen the power of the devil. It is the same."

Now this guy, Ah Soon, came from a family of four adopted children, all from different families. The step-parents wanted to make use of them as child labour. He therefore ran away from home and landed in several homes for the

children. In Malaysia he worked for a while as a house painter and a nightclub singer. The gangs in that area demanded protection money from him but he refused and was beaten up. Then he learned karate. Later he also learned black magic. He began to keep *kwee kiah* which are little child devils or familiar spirits which specialise in talismans. He got these in Thailand. Buddhist monks would dig into the bodies of stillborn babies, cut the umbilical cord and put the stuff into a test tube containing water and oil. Two pieces of wood would be stuck into the test tube. The soft wood would float while the hard wood would sink. These represent male and female elements. The test tube would be placed in an altar and the evil spirit would associate with this thing.

Now Ah Soon would pray to this *kwee kiah* and the evil spirit would reciprocate by giving him special protection. For example one night, he was assaulted but he did not feel any pain at all. That night at the Bible study I realised that I was dealing with a demonic case due to involvement in the occult. I told Ah Soon that Jesus had more power than the spirits. I advised him to get rid of his talisman. He agreed and we burned it at a rubbish dump. He received the Lord Jesus and was OK after that.

After this incident Ah Soon returned to his *kwee kiah* out of desperation because he was involved in some business venture and the gangs were after him for protection money and he was afraid since he did not pay his share. He therefore had further encounters with the pastor and was apparently finally freed and well subsequently. In fact, Ah Soon joined the pastor's deliverance team in the church.

According to the pastors, people are very likely to be demonised if they are mediums. The risk is also high if one seeks help from practitioners of occult and mediumistic arts, for example Chinese mediums, Malay *bomohs*, and Indian astrologers and palm-readers. In some cases, having a close relative practising these arts may allegedly put one at risk of demon possession by virtue of the fact that such practices open the door to demonic attacks which can affect both the practitioner and those near him or her as illustrated in the case of Ah Meng:

Ah Meng's mother is a medium and he basically helps her before she goes into a trance. He helps out in the preparation and the pre-trance rituals. He was not surprisingly demonised as a result and had to be delivered from his condition. (P6)

Two pastors felt that even the act of reading books and other

material on such occult arts can lead to demon possession. Heng warns that the reading of books on "Satanism, spiritism, the 'third eye', the 'sixth sense', U.F.O., 'Chariots of the gods' etc" may constitute contact with the occult and therefore puts the reader in danger of demonisation<sup>1</sup>. One pastor felt that even living near a place where mediums practice their occult arts may place one in danger of being affected by demonic powers (P2).

The following reasons were offered to explain the close relationship between the occult arts and demon possession. Many of these occult arts are demon inspired having been initiated and developed by people with interests in the demonic or by those who have been influenced strongly by demons. Moreover, the special powers required in some of them (eg. fortune telling, mediumship, magic), and the apparent beneficial effects of some of them (eg. transcendental meditation, yoga, *tai-chi*) are produced through the activity and influence of demons. Hence one plays into the hands of demonic powers by getting involved in these arts.

This negative stance against the occult is seen in terms of Biblical prohibitions against mediumistic practices as explained by P2:

Any contact between the spiritual world and the human world is prohibited. The only legitimate means is prayer. All other means are suspect. These are off-limit.

This position is underlined by Heng's warning that "involvement in the occult is sin against God" and that the person who dabbles in the occult is "breaking the First Commandment of God: Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Ex 20:3)"<sup>2</sup>. He further adds:

Those who consult the occult are actually consulting the Devil - Satan himself. Supernatural powers are only of 2 kinds - of God or of Satan. God's will is to be known through His Word (Jn 5:39; Ps 119:105). Any other quest for supernatural powers must lie in the lap of Satan...All supernatural powers, apart from God, are Satanic.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Heng, "Occult Happenings Today", p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2, 4.

It is because of this that all the pastors warn against any involvement in the occult. The range of what constitutes the occult varies from pastor to pastor. Almost all include mediums, temple priests, astrology, horoscopy, palmistry, ouija boards, fortune telling and black magic. Heng's list is quite comprehensive and includes, besides the above, practices such as physiognomy (reading the personality and fortune of a person by examining facial and head shapes, and skin blemishes and moles), phrenology (defined by Heng as "the study of bumps on one's head"), graphology (analysis of handwriting), necromancy (consulting the dead), black magic, white magic, clairvoyance, telepathy, all forms of divination (eg belomancy & hepatoscopy), third eye or sixth sense, crystal ball gazing, reading of tarot cards or tea leaves etc<sup>1</sup>. Such practices, according to P6, "leads to a surrender of the control of one's consciousness which leaves the demonic to infiltrate the consciousness."

#### B. Charms and Amulets

Some of the pastors related having seen people possessed as a result of possessing, carrying, or wearing charms, amulets and other religious artifacts. In one case mentioned by P15,

Swee Hoon was demonised and showed signs of violent behaviour. When I was approached for help I agreed and set out to see her in her home. She knew supernaturally that I was on my way even before I came to her home. She did not want me to come and was quite violent. I used the name of Jesus which quietened her. The spirit in her then started talking. I asked the spirit some questions as to its identity. It revealed that it had come from a tree in Jeruntut in Malaysia. At that point, the Lord revealed to me that the spirit was related to the necklace and pendent that she was wearing. He told me to snatch the necklace and pendent from her and throw them into the fire, which I set about to do. Swee Hoon panicked and her reaction was violent and panicky. But after I threw the items into the fire, she was delivered. She's been well since.

P15 was unable to say how the spirit was related to the ornaments but postulated that the ornaments which the lady bought from somewhere were probably charmed. A person possessing a charm or drinking something over which a magical spell has been cast can

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<sup>1</sup>. *ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

be considered to be affected by demons (P5). These articles are thought to be charmed by enemies of subjects out of anger, jealousy, or revenge (P7). Sometimes keeping religious artifacts, for example pictures, can apparently provide a door for demon possession, especially if these items were prayed over before.

One pastor (P2) explains why charms, amulets and the like are dangerous:

Except for prayer God forbids any contact between the spiritual realm and the human world. The problem with charms and amulets is that they serve as illegitimate mediums of communication between the spirit world and the physical world. It is true that animals, trees and so on can actually serve as vessels for such communication to take place but this is clearly prohibited in the Bible. Just because they may seem to work, people should not be fooled by it. These practices are off-limit.

Many examples of such charms were provided by the pastors most of which are included in Heng's list: 1) charms and amulets - sticks, stones, paper (in capsules), cloth, medals, medallions, bangles, necklaces, rings, needles, rosaries, jade, animal organs, tooth or bone of wild animals, 2) paper charms (*hoo*) usually yellow in colour and written over in ink or blood, 3) cloth charms - yellow or red in colour and cylindrical or triangular in shape, 4) flags - usually triangular and multicoloured with a dragon on them, 5) wrist band of cloth often obtained during religious pilgrimages to Kusu Island, a popular offshore island with religious significance, 6) *kwee kiah* - a test tube containing two pieces of wood: one hard, one soft, with a piece of umbilical cord floating in oil, 7) *pat-kwa* an eight-sided figure used for fortune-telling, 8) Pork-skin, mirrors fans and leaves used to ward off evils, and 9) Clothing blessed at a temple and stamped with the temple chop<sup>1</sup>. It is no surprise therefore that the pastors strongly urge their members to stay away from such objects and practices.

God not only commanded the extermination of everything connected with heathen worship, God also expected believers to maintain the proper attitude towards heathen paraphernalia. (emphasis his)

a. We must not desire the silver or gold on these forbidden

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "What To Destroy In Exorcism", p. 3.

articles.

b. We must not take them unto ourselves.

c. We must not bring them into our houses at all.

d. We are to "detest" and to "utterly abhor" them.

e. We are to cease from mentioning the names of heathen gods - so as to erase them from our memory. God does not want any vestige of false worship to remain amongst His people, not even in their memories. He wants a complete break from previous false religious worship.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Non-Christian Religions

Besides the occult and charms per se, many pastors assert that involvement in non-Christian religions can predispose one to demon possession (P5, P7, P15) due to the presence and influence of "demonic elements" in these religions. Some pastors identified subjects from particular religious groups such as Muslims (P12, P13), and Buddhists (P10), or those with particular religious worldviews such as pantheism (P2). Thus being a non-Christian may apparently increase one's chance of being possessed (P6). Certain religious activities are considered to be especially related to demon possession, especially idol worship (P12, P13). This relationship is explained by one pastor:

The Bible teaches against idolatry. This is because behind the idols are spiritual powers that operate to deceive people and to keep them in bondage and in fear. We must stay away from all of this. Those who worship idols may become affected by these demons. (P6)

Closely linked to idol worship, according to some of the pastors, is the Chinese practice of ancestor worship which can also lead to demonisation (P12, P13). Even living in a house containing idols can expose one to demonic attacks according to one pastor (P9). One is also supposed to be at greater risk if one eats food offered to idols (P6). In the case of Ah Meng who assisted his mother in her mediumistic activities as described earlier,

One day after he had assisted his mother in her preparations to go into her trance activities, he was confronted by the spirit that was controlling his mother. The spirit asked him, "If you don't worship me, why do you eat my food?". You see, eating food offered to idols can have effects on the person. He may become demonised. (P6).

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

The religious practice of dedicating infants to gods can result in demon possession in later years according to ten of the pastors. Dedication to gods can apparently result in the dedicated person coming under the power of the demonic forces which are behind the idols and gods. The conflict is thought to arise and surface especially when the person becomes a Christian when sometimes signs of demon possession are manifested. This view is echoed by Isaac and Shirley Lim in their reference to such persons:

We have observed that sometimes a new convert may manifest a demonic presence in his life, This is not because the demonic spirits have just entered the young Christian's life, but that the demonic spirits within him are now wanting to get out. These, having found a lodging place in his life due to his pagan past, may now be finding it uncomfortable dwelling in the life of this new convert, and are attempting either to cause the new convert to return to his pagan ways or to come out of him. We have found that a ministry of deliverance will enable this new convert to experience total release.<sup>1</sup>

Similar dynamics are believed to be involved when someone visits a temple where idols are worshipped. One is supposedly entering the domain of demons and may become "infected"; frequent visits to temples can therefore result in "demonisation" (P3). It is claimed that incidental visits can also be dangerous. One pastor (P8) had seen a person who visited a Buddhist temple in Thailand as a tourist becoming demonised; this process has been called "innocent contact" (P11):

I know of this lady who was not very strong in the Lord. She went on a tour to Thailand and while there she visited various Buddhist temples. She came back from Thailand very troubled. She had lost her joy. Later we found out that she was possessed by a snake god associated with the temples she visited. She was subsequently delivered. Visiting temples is out. It is common sense since temples are enemy territory. We should not be curious or interested in temples or what goes on inside them. To visit a temple is to participate in that religion and it opens the person to demonic attacks.

Some pastors felt that the effects of occult involvement can be seen down generations (P1, P3, P7, P12). Even curses can, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Lim & Shirley Lim, Comfort My People; Christian Counselling - A Lay Challenge, p. 100.

claimed, be transmitted down generations (P11)<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the aetiological locus for a subject's demonisation lies not in his own life situation but in his forefathers'. P7 illustrated this point with a story of a Bible College graduate who one day went into speaking in tongues. The pastor felt that these were "demonic tongues". He explained, "This man was from Europe and he told a strange story of occult involvement in his ancestral past." This was surmised to have come down the generational line which eventually affected him adversely. He was "delivered" subsequently.

#### D. Can Christians be "Demonised"?

The question of whether Christians can be demon possessed was a particular problem which the pastors grappled with. They had differing opinions and experiences. One group of pastors reported that Christians can be demon possessed. In fact one pastor (P4) said that most of the cases he has seen of demon possession were Christians, especially those coming from non-Christian homes. Some of these Christians are believed to be possessed by "spirits" which hindered their Christian lives and kept them in bondage to sin such as spirits of lust, anger, gambling and so on (P11). Such Christians are judged as unable to become free from their sinful habits until they are delivered from the demonic powers keeping them in bondage. In other cases, "demons" presumably continue to reside in Christians after conversion; such demons are thought to have gained entry earlier on in the person's life through activities such as infant dedication to gods. These "demons" eventually manifest themselves in the Christian's life and need to be cast out. Some of the pastors in this group faced some difficulty initially in understanding how Christians can be demon possessed because of their theological understanding of the Christian life. A Christian is one in whom the Holy Spirit resides. The difficulty arises from the question

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<sup>1</sup> According to P8, the curse of some forms of physical diseases may also be passed down the ancestral line (a fact not dissimilar to general medical knowledge of inherited disorders and genetic dimensions of common diseases such as diabetes and so on). She added that one need not suffer such diseases and may have to be freed from this kind of curse through prayer and deliverance.

of how an evil spirit can reside together with the Holy Spirit in a Christian who is possessed. However, the pastors feel that they have to respect the evidence arising from their experience - that Christians can be possessed. Some of them resolve the problem by using the term "demonised" rather than "demon possession", the former being less specific about the location of the evil spirit in relation to the victim. One pastor understood the process using a trichomistic view of man.

I have a trichomistic view of man. Man is body, soul, and spirit. When a man is born again it is his spirit that is born again. The soul and the physical realm are yet to be given over to God. A Christian can therefore be demonised at the physical and soulish levels because these areas are not yet given to God. The will of the person operates at all three levels. A demonised person can therefore be helped when we speak to the person and his mind giving helpful instructions to the person to help him overcome the demonic forces. The person has to fight from the inside, that is, from his spirit. That will help him to be delivered. (P15)

The other group of seven pastors feel that the theological impossibility of an evil spirit cohabiting with the Holy Spirit in a Christian rules out any possibility of demon possession in a Christian. Therefore all cases of possession are non-Christians. However Christians may suffer from demonic activity in the form of "oppression" or "obsession", though they cannot be possessed.

A person coming to know Jesus Christ may need deliverance. But once someone is a Christian, he or she does not need deliverance. Yes, their problems may be aggravated by demons but they cannot be possessed because the Holy Spirit is in them and they belong to God. Sometimes, Christians apparently are possessed but we need to understand who these people are. They are people who think they are Christians. They come for prayer or come seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then they manifest signs of demon possession. They are in fact not really Christians. They had started going to church, sometimes church-hopping. They have never prayed the sinners prayer and had never really renounced their past religious involvements. Such people need deliverance.

One pastor (P14) did not have any view in this matter.

### 3.3.2 "Why People Get Involved in Occult, Mediumistic and Religious Practices"

Three reasons were offered as to why people get involved in occult, mediumistic and religious practices: curiosity (P5, P9, P10), a desire for attaining extraordinary knowledge and power (P2), and an attempt to seek help for problems, sometimes out of desperation (P2, P3, P11).

#### A. Driven by Needs and Problems

The commonest reason in the Singapore situation, according to the pastors, is the attempt to find solutions for practical problems with the help of the spirit world<sup>1</sup>. They reported that certain types of people were more likely to consult mediums and religious practitioners for spiritual advice and help. Three of the six pastors who said that they had seen more subjects of possession who had a lower educational background explained it in terms of a greater tendency among this group of people to consult traditional mediums and religious practitioners. P10 elaborated,

Most of the victims I have seen have an educational level below tertiary level. I think this is because those with higher education tend to look at religion as something that is not real. They therefore have no real interest in religion. On the other hand the people with less education tend to believe in spiritual matters and in religion. For their problems they often seek spiritual help and visit the *bomohs* and mediums.

Hence it is supposedly those with a lower education who, because of their greater interest and convictions, tend to get involved in religious and occult practices that predisposes them to demonic activities. Both P3 and P11 similarly see a link between

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<sup>1</sup> See Alan J A Elliot, Chinese Spirit-Medium Cults in Singapore, for similar observations. Elliot notes that spirit mediums were consulted in Singapore for all kinds of practical problems. These include various domestic problems such as an erring spouse or wayward children. Also included are troubles arising from physical, mental, or spiritual disturbances: eg. accidents, infertility, insanity, and possession by evil spirits. In addition, people consult mediums because of perceived bad luck, to obtain business advice or gambling tips, to choose auspicious dates, to seek protection, or to communicate with departed loved ones (pp 159f).

the tendency of the lower-educated to be more superstitious and the higher incidence of possession in this group of people. It is claimed that superstitious beliefs in ghosts, demons and so on causes much fear in such people and this exposes them to demonic influence (P11). These traditional cultural superstitious beliefs which are often held with much fear are also thought to increase the awareness of the people to the spirit world and hence to demonic activity. Their vulnerability is thus increased. The typical process (in this case involving someone with emotional problems) is described by Heng:

The demons seem to afflict weak-minded persons usually. The usual victimisation pattern seems to be this. Victim is weak-minded to begin with. The person is in trouble. The family consults a medium for help. The medium takes advantage of the situation and the person becomes the victim of both mental disorder and demonic attack.

P3 has offered an interesting explanation for the predominance of lower-educated subjects: satanic strategy. Whether one is demonised or not depends in part on whether one believes in demons. P3 hypothesises that there may be two reasons for Satan to operate in this way:

Most of the demonised I have seen are not very highly educated.

(Question: Any reasons for this?)

Well I hesitate to give any reasons. I can only be hypothetical here. We see a range of human types in the world, from the western educated to the primitive types. In this range we see an increasing number of cases of demonisation. The more you move from the western educated type to the primitive type the more demonisation there is. This is probably because of the greater presence of religious mediums. The environment is also more religiously charged.

I think Satan uses this for his own advantage. Among the western educated where there is less belief in demons and so on, demonisation doesn't become operative. Such people are not demonised because Satan doesn't want them to believe in the existence of demons anyway. It will suit his purposes if they are unaware of the spirit world. On the other hand, those who believe are further strengthened in this belief, especially in terms of fear for spirits and demons. This way Satan continues to terrorise them.

The Satanic strategy according to this pastor is to capitalise on the existing belief systems and worldviews. Satan wants to deceive those who do not believe in demons and the spirit world

by helping them to maintain their disbelief by not demonising them and producing all the usual disturbing symptoms; at the same time he wants to hold in bondage those who already believe in the existence of demons and spirits or those for whom these beliefs are held with extreme fear and trepidation - in such people demonisation creates more fear for the spirits which leads to deeper bondage. The relative differences in beliefs in spirits, ghosts, demons and so on between the highly educated and the lower-educated is reflected in the differences in the incidence of possession in the two groups. P3 however adds that this does not exclude the demonisation of intellectuals who do not entertain beliefs in the spirit world. They can still be demonised, according to him, because of other factors; they may also be demonised in a less spectacular way without arousing any suspicion in the victim or others close to them.

Another group of people who are considered to have a greater tendency to consult mediums and religious practitioners are those from the lower socio-economic strata of society. The poorer in society are drawn to seek help from spiritual sources, according to a few pastors.

Those from a lower economic background are more exposed to the occult and the mediums. This is because of their superstition and fears. They are therefore more open to the influences of demons. (P11)

Usually it is the more poorer who go to the fortune tellers and mediums. They seek help for their many problems and sicknesses. They are also looking for good fortune and solutions to their problems. (P1)

Though the majority of pastors did not report any patterns in the incidence of possession in such socio-economic terms, the few who reported such a pattern explained it in terms of occult and medium contact. Thus the poorer people in society are said to have a higher rate of contact with such practitioners because of their numerous problems due to their more unfavourable circumstances. They do so, it is postulated, because of their belief in the efficacy of the mediumistic practices. There may also be an element of desperation and helplessness. In addition, there may also be a hope to reverse one's bad fortune, and this is only done, it is believed, through the help of mediums and the

like who deal with the spirit world which influences one's life circumstances.

People located in particular age groups are also more likely to seek help from the practitioners of mediumistic and occult arts, according to some of the pastors. Though the majority of pastors did not report any clear pattern in the incidence of possession in terms of the typical ages of the subjects of possession, some have seen more younger subjects (P4, P5, P6, P10, P16). One pastor (P15) has seen two distinct age groups predominantly represented among the subjects: teenagers, and the elderly.

The older people tend to be more religious. They have a greater belief in the Chinese mediums. They believe in the reality of the spirit world. They believe, for example, that the soul of man is incomplete without spirits. They tend to be more involved in religious practices and tend to consult the mediums more. It is therefore more natural for them to visit mediums with their problems.

Likewise, the teenagers have their own needs. They want to have meaningful relationships and they are looking for an experiential religion. This, they sometimes try to find in the occult or other similar practices that open the door to the demonic world.

Unlike the above pastors who have seen more less educated and poorer subjects of possession, some others have had the opposite experience. Of the three who reported seeing more higher-educated subjects, one offered an explanation which is in terms of contact with the occult<sup>1</sup>:

I think the educational background of the person may play a small part. For example I have seen an engineer and a lawyer who were demon possessed. The better educated are better informed and more aware of current self-help techniques available in the marketplace. We can see this in the kind of books flooding the popular bookshops in Singapore. Many of these techniques are from the occult. People try them to help them solve their problems and to manage with life. In doing so they get locked into the demonic world.

For example the engineer I saw was possessed because of his

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<sup>1</sup> The other two thought that this was due to the profile of their contacts and clientele (they tend to be better educated) and the changing profile of Singapore's population, with more and more people being better educated. In this view, therefore there is no real significance between the incidence and aetiology.

involvement in TM (transcendental meditation), and the lawyer was involved in yoga. Both of them had to be delivered.

The above factors and processes represent one reason, according to the pastors' explanations, for people's contact with mediums and other religious practitioners. We may call these the "push" factors. People who perceive themselves to be suffering from difficult problems are said to consult such practitioners. It is more so with the less educated and the lower economic groups, partly because of their more pressing health, social and economic problems, and partly because of their greater belief in the necessity and effectiveness of such remedies. Ironically, the better educated may also have a higher contact with the occult, but the occult takes different forms such as modern self-help and mind-expanding techniques. Thus the better educated may not frequent the traditional bomohs and mediums but they may practice yoga or TM. For the pastors, the forms may differ, but the reality is the same. Mediumship, astrology, fortune-telling, TM, yoga and so on all belong to the realm of the occult with the direct influence of demons. It is argued therefore that anyone who gets involved in these increases his risk of demon possession.

#### **B. The Attraction of the Occult**

We shall now look at the second reason offered by the pastors as to why people become involved with the occult. These are the "pull" factors. "Curiosity" is the key according to some pastors (P5, P9, P10). According to one pastor, this curiosity is often seen among the better educated and those from the middle and upper social groups.

Many would say that those with little education are the ones who get possessed. But I have seen the well educated who became victims of possession...I have seen more rich, affluent and better educated cases than the wage-earners. The rich and the affluent feel quite empty. They also have a lot of time in their hands. So they try out the occult and play around in the world of the spirits. What they are seeking is power. They are looking for more power in their lives. The wage earners are too busy for all this. So there is less involvement like this among them.

Besides attributing this curiosity for the unknown and the esoteric to the better educated and the rich, another group identified in a similar way are the adolescents and teenagers. One pastor attempted to explain the phenomenon in the following way:

I have seen more people in their young teens right up to say about thirty years old. I don't know the real reason for this. I think they are probably more curious about the occult and start dabbling in it. Thus more of them become victims of possession.

### C. The Promise of Power and Knowledge: The Case of Martial Arts

The pastors' third reason for people's attraction to the medium and occult culture is another "pull" factor. According to one pastor, the central attraction here is some promise of secret knowledge and power found in the occult:

There is this seduction of secret knowledge found in the occult. The occult promises to give some sort of secret knowledge to people who will dabble in it. This is how people get attracted to the occult. The other thing that the occult promises is some extraordinary power for those who will practise it. Some people turn to the dark powers out of desperation. But others try out the occult to get secret knowledge and power. (P2)

One of the commonest forms of attraction in this light mentioned by many of the pastors are the martial arts. Heng names *bushido*, *karate*, *nunchaku*, and *tonfa* as examples of martial arts that are related to demon possession<sup>1</sup>.

One respondent, John Lam, a victim of possession related his own experience in this particular aspect. Lam, a vice-president in a large international bank, is presently actively involved in the deliverance ministry. He described how he got attracted to the martial arts and what effects it had on him.

When I was young, I practised martial arts. This went on during my university days. Later, while I was working, I found out that the martial arts draw a person through the attraction that physical power has...

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "What to Destroy in Exorcism", p. 5.

I went to a coffee shop in Toa Payoh. There a contractor friend related how he met an accident but escaped unhurt. This he claimed was due to his special powers. He then set out to demonstrate this. He took some bamboo chopsticks, put them against his neck and pushed them into his neck. The chopsticks broke. I was very impressed and wanted this kind of power. I asked the contractor about it and he brought me to a temple in Seletar. It was a farmhouse temple, a "fighting temple". I saw lots of disciples practising different kinds of Chinese martial arts. They were doing this flawlessly. I wanted this kind of power.

I was told by the people in the temple that I had to stand in front of the idols there and invite them into my heart. This I did. I commanded my soul to stand aside and invited the gods to come in. After this I was able to manifest the presence of gods. If it was the monkey god that entered, I manifested the monkey god in my actions. After this I was able to perform my martial arts with a blinding speed of execution. You know that the power exuding from you is more than physical power.

Lam asserts that "if we seek for power, even if it is not from God, it will come". But this power allegedly comes from the demonic realm and enslaves the power seeker. Lam explains how one can get deeper and deeper into the demonic aspects of the martial arts. He classifies martial arts into the "hard arts" and the "soft arts". One is usually attracted to the hard arts, such as *tae kwan do* first; here the emphasis is on external physical power. But then this type of physical power will eventually be limited by the physical realm. It is here that the "spiritual dimension opens up". This is when the martial arts exponent moves into the soft arts such as *tai chi*. The type of power shifts from an external focus to an internal one. Lam illustrates this progression with his own story.

Some time after my initiation at the temple in Seletar, I began to think about knives. Some guys in the martial arts were protected from metal blades. They cannot be hurt by knives. I now wanted this power too. There are three ways to get this kind of power. You can wear special amulets and be protected by them. Or you can have some writing done on you with a cockerel's blood. This writing fades with time and you will need "recharging" periodically in order for the protection to continue. The third and more decisive way is for writing to be done from the medium's or priest's spirit into your own spirit. This way your protection cannot be taken away. But the danger here is that should you need an operation, the surgeon's blade will not be able to cut through your skin. I was prepared to take this risk and go all the way.

The ritual involved my standing bare-bodied. There was some automatic writing going on. Two of the disciples at the temple held my hands. Three swords were produced, the northern sword, the southern sword, and the kris. A stack of joss paper was taken and sliced. Then my body was slashed front and back and the kris was used for straight stabs into my body. Guess what. The knives didn't cut me at all. From then on I had this special power.

But Lam described how he began to suffer various negative effects after that. He had to fight powerful obsessive thoughts that were very violent. He was also tormented by fear and he began to suffer from frequent asthmatic attacks. The asthmatic attacks would disappear, he said, whenever he was in the temple and especially when attending the healing services in the temple. But the attacks would resume whenever he left the temple. His troubles continued and got worse. Eventually he came into contact with a Christian group and was delivered after a spectacular deliverance session. Lam testified that he has been well since and is free from demonic attacks. He feels that his experience has equipped him to be involved in the deliverance ministry and has been active in warning people against involvement in the martial arts because of their occult and demonic aspects<sup>1</sup>.

### 3.3.3 The Drama of Resistance, Susceptibility, and Infection

The major way by which people become demon possessed, according to the pastors, is direct involvement or contact with the occult and mediumistic or religious practices. Sometimes certain "push" and "pull" factors influence the establishment or continuation of such contacts. These factors are believed to include one's educational level, economic status, age, curiosity about the unknown, and the quest for secret and esoteric power and knowledge, for example, through martial arts.

In addition to the above process, the pastors also included a more indirect method of demonic infiltration or invasion. This was largely described using what appears to be a medical model of resistance, immunity, susceptibility, and infection. It must

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<sup>1</sup> For example in a Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship lunchtime meeting which was videotaped; the tapes ("The Real Power Behind Martial Arts") are freely distributed.

be noted here however that these concepts are also largely part of the cultural worldview and understanding regarding disease and illness in general and the structure and functioning of the spirit world in particular. While viruses and bacteria are the major actors in the western drama of pathology and disease found in certain strands of Singapore's culture and ideology, spirits and demons are the major actors in the more traditional theatre of life in Singapore. While the actors may be distinctly different, it appears that the plot of the story is the same. Hence perhaps the similarity. We will look into this more closely in chapter six. Here we will focus on the pastors' description and explanation of the process by which people become "susceptible" to "demonic infection and invasion".

#### A. The Gap That Sin Leaves

While there is, according to the pastors, a general natural resistance to demonic intrusion in people, and in this case the best defence is in being a Christian, certain conditions and situations makes one "weaker" and therefore more susceptible to demonic attacks. Several examples were offered by the pastors. They include sinful acts and practices, negative and damaged emotions, cultural beliefs, stress and trauma. We shall look at each of this in some detail as the pastors explained them.

Many of the pastors (seven) mentioned that subjects may have been living in sin prior to their possession. Some of them may have "backslided" in their Christian life (P4) having also neglected their spiritual disciplines such as regular Bible-reading, prayer and church attendance (P8), or living a "vulgar lifestyle" such as frequenting discotheques (P15). Others may have been practising "sinful habits" such as smoking or drinking alcohol (P11, P12, P13).

Perpetual serious wrongdoing can result in demon possession. ..This includes immoral living and a free lifestyle. These sinful practices give a foothold for demons to enter the life of the person and to take possession of him. (P11)

The pastors thus believe that there is a relationship between

sinful living and indulgence, and possession<sup>1</sup>. In other words, it is presumed that the continued practice of a sinful habit may result in the possession of the person by a demon<sup>2</sup>.

The common explanation that the pastors gave for this relationship is based on the following ideas of resistance. Satan the tempter tempts people to sin against the laws of God; he does this with the aid of his many demons. The more one gives in to such temptations, the more he comes under the power of the demonic spirits. There will come a point when the person comes under bondage to the spirit related to the particular sin. Also, living in sin weakens the spiritual resistance of the person thus attracting evil spirits who find entry and possession of the person relatively easy because of the besetting sin. Sometimes living in sin leads one to other factors that also contribute to the eventual demonisation of the person. The following case narrated by P4 illustrates this.

Lucy a woman in her thirties has been a Christian for about five years, though for the past three years she has strayed away from the faith. Her commitment and interest has been nominal throughout. She has been married for four years and has 2 young children. Her marriage deteriorated because her husband is constantly away from home, and she felt that his affections for her has changed for the worse through the years. A male colleague began to show interest and concern for her. She started confiding in him and soon developed an interest in him and began an affair with him. It was only later that she discovered that her lover was heavily involved in the occult and that he actually earned some income as a medium. She also discovered that she has been placed under a charm by her lover. After this discovery, she wanted very much to leave him, but found that she was powerless to do so. Their relationship became more and more strained, and her lover became violent and demanding. On several occasions she was forced to drink various potions and charmed water. She was forced to carry a talisman, and several other forms of occult paraphernalia. She also

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<sup>1</sup> This is mirrored by similar observations in Christian literature from other contexts; eg see Graham Dow, Those Tiresome Intruders, p. 14; Michael Perry, Deliverance, p. 83; Matthew & Dennis Linn, Deliverance Prayer, p. 39. According to Perry, the desire for a person, thing or power may also be linked to possession; though he does not say whether this desire is sinful, the implication is that it is (p 83).

<sup>2</sup> Dom Robert Petitpierre, Exorcising Devils, pp. 50,51. Petitpierre, in addition, thinks that sinful practices can also result in demonic influences in the venue of such activities.

noticed certain behavioural changes. She was constantly depressed, and was often haunted by thoughts of suicide. Once she even thought of murdering her husband.

She sought help and was delivered after she was diagnosed as being demon possessed by the pastor and his team. Though the occult factors<sup>1</sup> were thought to be very important, that the adulterous behaviour of the woman was considered to be central in her problem is seen in the pastor's entitling of the case: "Adultery and Beyond".

The seven pastors who pointed to the relationship between sinful living and possession, saw it essentially in demonic dimensions. One's spiritual resistance is believed to be seriously breached by repeated and deliberate sin, thus opening the way to demonic intrusion. Some of the pastors also saw an intimate relationship between the sinful habit and the possessing spirit. Thus "the spirit of lust", "the spirit of defiance", "the spirit of gluttony" and so on were encountered by a few pastors who saw related problems in the subject (especially P10).

#### B. Drugs and Demons

The pastors believe that some habits become addictions due to demonic influence; this is especially so in drug addiction (P1, P11, P12, P13) which some pastors have noted to be closely related to demon possession. Both the addiction and the possession are believed to be closely intertwined. Probably at some point in the process of addiction, it is believed, there is demonic intrusion into the subject who then becomes helplessly addicted to drugs.

While being aware of the physiological dimensions of drug addiction, many pastors tend to see the problem in spiritual and demonic perspectives. They find support for their belief in the experiences of Christian organisations such as Teen Challenge which minister among drug addicts in Singapore. Many of the

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<sup>1</sup> We note here the frequently occurring occult explanation in the discourses of the pastors, and therefore its importance in their thinking.

pastors emphasise strongly spiritual explanations and dimensions in relation to drug abuse. They suggest that such habits reduce the spiritual resistance of the person to evil spirits. Moreover, it is asserted that evil spirits can get locked into the habit and exacerbate the addiction, thus introducing the demonic dimension into the problem.

### C. Emotional Susceptibility

The second major condition considered to "weaken" a person's resistance to the demonic and increase his susceptibility is negative emotional or mental states. All the pastors except one (P7) mentioned emotional and personality factors as having a significant aetiological relationship to possession. Six of the pastors reported that they have often noted the emotion of fear in the lifestory of the subjects. This fear could be related to the fear of the unknown or the fear of ghosts, demons, and spirits ("*takut hantu*"<sup>1</sup>, as P15 put it; he calls such people "psychoemotionally weak"). On the other hand an "unusual fear" (P11) or a "deeply embedded fear" (P16) can have its genesis in the subject's past (P8), often arising from some form of childhood trauma, usually associated with some form of emotional conflict, for instance, when as a child, the subject suffered rejection by the parents (P12 and P13). P12 told of an interesting case of a subject gripped by fear as a result of a previous traffic accident.

This young lady was involved as a child in a rather traumatic and near-fatal accident in a car which carried her and her father. After the accident, she was alright until many years later in adulthood when she suddenly developed a strange and gripping fear, which was found to be related to the previous accident. Soon she began seeing a blob many times which disturbed her. The blob would come near her and blow against her. It would also choke her and press on her chest. She was terribly frightened and came to us for help. We laid hands on her and prayed. When we did this she was thrown to the floor. We cast out the offending demon after which this young woman was free. Her symptoms disappeared and she was well.

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<sup>1</sup> Malay for "fear of spirits".

How was the subject's emotional fear and her state of possession related? P12 explained it in terms of "resistance".

People usually have some form of resistance against demonic attacks. However, when they suffer from emotions such as fear, especially excessive or great fear, their resistance is lowered. This opens the door for demonic influence. The demons can get a foothold in the person's life and begin to torment him.

Most of the pastors mentioned in this section showed a somewhat similar understanding of protection and susceptibility.

The presence of other negative emotions were also noted in subjects. P3 feels that there is reason to believe that such emotional states as depression, bitterness, and anger which is often internalised, provide "footholds" for the demonic to invade the subject. The foothold is provided when most of these negative emotions, including an "unforgiving spirit" remain unresolved and festering in one's life (P5) or when they become excessive in the form of extreme hatred, jealousy, anger or fear (P6). Such "emotional disturbances" (P9) may have their origins in childhood emotional trauma (P4) such as when a child's negative relationship with its parents results in feelings of inferiority, rejection, anger and so on. P3 states that

we can't run away from such facts when we help people who are demonised. The emotional state of a person has a bearing on his spiritual state. I think there is a relationship between damaged emotions such as bitterness, depression and anger, and possession. We are here entering the realm of the unknown. I am not sure that this is correct but I think there is reason to believe that these various states provide demonic footholds in one's life. Many of the possessed states are related to emotional turmoil, and here there seems to be a correlation between psychology and demonisation.

Sometimes, according to P12, the excessive negative emotions which provide a foothold for the demonic arises as a result of painful and confusing life-situations such as the sudden violent death of a loved one, an abortion or some such event.

According to the pastors, there also seems to be a relationship between certain types of personality and the phenomenon of

possession<sup>1</sup>. Several pointed out the susceptibility of people with a "weak personality" or "emotional and mental weakness" (P11 who attributes it to "a bad childhood upbringing", "excessive fear or timidity", and obsessions), or "emotional sensitivity or fragility" (P4) to demon possession<sup>2</sup>. Two pastors noted the likelihood of subjects to be melancholic in temperament. According to P5 they tend to be rather quiet and usually keep to themselves. P3 reported some cases where people manifest suddenly signs of demon possession after going through a period of deep depression. In the same vein, P14 notes the higher incidence of possession among those with a "pre-morbid personality" especially those with a "histrionic or hysterical personality".

#### D. Beliefs and Superstitions

Other conditions thought to lower the resistance of the person to demonic assault include cultural belief systems which are superstitious in nature. Whether one is possessed or not may also depend on the extent of one's exposure to cultural beliefs or other popular beliefs regarding the existence of the spirit world and the identities and activities in such a world according to a few of the pastors (P9, P15, P14). Exposure to superstitious beliefs in the culture may lead one to an "expectation" of becoming possessed ( P9), for example when accidentally breaking a taboo such as stepping inadvertently on the remains of the offerings to a god. Such people though possibly manifesting signs of possession in keeping with cultural beliefs and paradigms of possession, may not actually be demon possessed. On the other hand, such cases of possession may actually be demonic since demons may actually operate within the cultural framework of the people (P15). One pastor (P15) postulates:

The world of spirits is culturally conditioned. In Chinese culture, the spirit world is a hierarchical world, very much like the human world. In Chinese society, at the top was the Jade Emperor and beneath him were officials. Under

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<sup>1</sup> These personality problems may be caused by either genetic or environmental factors according to P9.

<sup>2</sup> Though P4 wondered too whether such emotional sensitivity and fragility was the cause, or rather the effect, of demon possession.

them were the heads of households. There is a similar parallel structure in the spirit world.

The pentecostals dealing with demons tend to identify spirits associated with the Chinese pantheon of gods. I am not surprised because I believe the spirits express themselves through the belief system of the people. Thus we encounter demons related to Chinese gods demonstrating their particular characteristics. But I must add something here. Sometimes this happens even in people outside the culture but inside the society. How do we explain it? I am not sure.

It is interesting to note here that the pastor seems to be suggesting that the structure, characteristics, and functions of the demonic world are significantly determined by cultural belief systems. In a sense cultural worldviews give life and form to the spirit world. However the pastor also maintains that the spirit world is also ontologically independent of cultural constructs. In other words, there is such a thing as a demonic world comprising spirit entities, organised in their own way and having their own particular characteristics. But often, this demonic world is said to interact with the human world along the contours of cultural beliefs and explanations. This is largely in line with the "Satanic strategy" (P3) of reinforcing people's fearful beliefs about the demons and their power, and thus keeping them in bondage.

Some of the other pastors did not quite put it this way. Some seem to believe that there were actually demonic entities who were, for example, the spirit of the monkey god, or the spirit of Kuan Yin, and so on. Most did not venture to hypothesise about the cultural worldview and the structure and identity of the demonic world. Only a handful of pastors, such as P15, tried to explain a link. However most believed that demons take advantage of people's superstitions and fears regarding the spirit world and use these for their own demonic ends. A few pastors (P9, P14) also thought that some cases of possession may not really be demonic and could be explained by cultural exposure and expectations.

#### E. Stress and Trauma

Stress and even physical trauma were mentioned as possible

factors that increase one's susceptibility to possession. One pastor explained the effect stress may have on a person.

The worries of life and all that can lead to possession. A person may not want to read the Bible or pray. She is frustrated with life. This will affect her body too. Spiritually she becomes weak also. She opens herself to attacks by demons. She can get confused and may even have suicidal thoughts. (P8)

Other pastors did not directly mention stress but suggested it in terms of emotional distress being a condition that may weaken the person's resistance to demonic intrusion. It must be said that one pastor (P14) who specifically mentioned stress as a factor tended to feel that such cases were not in fact true examples of demon possession. Such persons may be undergoing stress due to changes in their lives which they are unable to cope with. Or they may be going through difficult situations in their homes, places of work and so on. On the other hand, according to him, the stress may be more psychological in origin and nature due to the habitual neglect of certain areas of one's life.

Three pastors have noted physical trauma as a possible avenue by which demonic possession takes place (P15, P12, P13). All of them believe that physical trauma weakens a person's resistance to demonic intrusion and may serve as a route for demonic possession. According to P12,

I have seen people who met with a serious traffic accident who eventually get demonised. Trauma may lead to demonisation. Trauma is like a knife. It splits. It wounds a person and lays him open. It leaves a gap and his resistance becomes low. Evil then comes in and torments the person and can take possession of him.

This idea seems to be quite unique.<sup>1</sup> The pastors postulated that trauma such as traffic accidents are accompanied by shock and pain which make the person vulnerable or susceptible to

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<sup>1</sup> However some Christian literature have also suggested a similar connection. See Graham Dow, Those Tiresome Intruders, p. 16; Matthew & Dennis Linn, Deliverance Prayer, p. 139.

demonic intrusion<sup>1</sup>.

#### F. On Being a Woman

According to the pastors, being a woman may also increase one's vulnerability to demonic intrusion. This has been attributed to the emotional vulnerability of women. One pastor (P5) explains:

I have seen more women among those who have been demonised. This is probably because women are more sensitive emotionally. They are more vulnerable to destructive emotions.

For example, there was this lady Nancy who manifested signs of demon possession. She was once gang-raped and suffered terrible feelings about it. She was haunted by the experience. She was shattered by it. Through her destructive emotions she was demonised. We had to pray for her deliverance and she was finally freed.

This idea of emotional vulnerability was shared by P3 though he also noted that it "was not uncommon for men to be demonised". P15 also attributed the predominance of female subjects to their emotional susceptibility which was due to the fact that they belonged to the "weaker sex".

Besides emotional fragility the greater sensitivity of women to the spiritual dimension was offered as an explanation by some of the pastors. In one pastor's (P15) view:

Women are more susceptible (to demon possession). They are the weaker sex. We see this in the Garden of Eden (referring to the temptation story in Genesis). Women are more sensitive to the spirit world. The plus side of this is that they are more sensitive and responsive to spiritual things. However the minus side is that they are also more susceptible to the attacks of demons. Being women they are more easy victims of satanic seduction and attacks.

Women are supposed to be more sensitive and aware of both the good and evil aspects of the spiritual realm. This is supposed to explain why more women are involved in the life of the church and why they seem to have a deeper spirituality; here they are

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<sup>1</sup> Similar to Graham Dow, Those Tiresome Intruders, p. 16. Could the idea have come from such literature or were they generated by the experience of the pastors?

in touch with the good aspects of the spiritual world, namely God and all that is related to him. On the other hand, it also explains the predominance of women among those who manifest signs of possession, because of their sensitivity, and hence, their vulnerability to the activity of evil spiritual forces or spirits. This view that women tend to be more spiritual and religious, and therefore more exposed to the activities of both the benevolent and malevolent entities in the spiritual world was shared by P9 and P10; men, on the other hand, according to P9, were more materialistic and therefore less susceptible to these things.

### 3.4 Summary

1. The pastors' views and explanations about demon possession is based on an evangelical and literal interpretation of the Bible. It is derived from a theological position that believes in the reality of a spiritual war between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, and the existence of ontological evil personal spiritual beings in the universe.

2. Demon possession is believed to be primarily caused by various kinds of contact with mediums, and occultic and religious practitioners, and also charms, amulets and similar paraphernalia. Certain types of people have been identified as more liable to have such contacts either for pressing needs and problems (the less educated, poorer and older people) or because of curiosity (professionals, rich or younger subjects) and the pursuit of esoteric knowledge and power (martial arts exponents). They believe in the efficacy of these arts but may become demonised because of the intimate association of the demonic world with these practices.

3. It is also believed that demonisation may also result because of a weakness of one's resistance to demonic intrusion. Conditions producing this include sinful practices, drug addiction, emotional disturbances and so on.

We have seen in passing the elements of continuity and discontinuity between the pastors discourses and the cultural

constructs in Singapore. Why is there this pattern? Are there reasons that may clarify for us this relationship? We will seek to explore this in the later chapters using theological, social, cultural, and psychological perspectives. We will also see how the pastors' explanations of the phenomenon compares with other explanations such as those of social anthropologists, psychologists and psychiatrists, and how these different perspectives are related using different models of reality. But before that we shall endeavor to describe pastoral interpretations of possession behaviour and pastoral practices in such cases in the following two chapters.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 PASTORAL INTERPRETATIONS OF POSSESSION BEHAVIOUR

In the previous chapter we looked at the accounts of the pastors in terms of their beliefs about the phenomenon of possession and their understanding of the life situations and causes that lead to possession. In this and the following chapter we will look at the pastors' descriptions of what happens during the phenomenon. The next chapter will look at what the pastors do when faced with people who are "possessed", in other words, pastoral practice and care. Here we will focus our attention on the accounts of the pastors as to the behaviour of the "possessed" and the "manifestations" of possession as many of the pastors put it.

The literature describing possession behaviour and manifestations is vast and varied<sup>1</sup>. In this chapter we will describe the accounts of the pastors interviewed.

#### 4.1 Possession Behaviour and its Location

Various locations were reported as venues for the development and continuance of possession behaviour.

##### 4.1.1 The Home

The pastors found that the person who is possessed usually starts behaving abnormally at home and this is often noticed by his family members. P7 related the case of a woman who he believes was possessed by an evil spirit. He was called to see this woman whose son was a member in the pastors's church.

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<sup>1</sup> Eg, see Alan Elliot, Chinese Spirit-Medium Cults in Singapore, for a description of the possession of the *tang-ki* (medium) in Singapore, pp. 63f; Graham Dow, Those Tiresome Intruders, pp. 13f for a typical charismatic description; and Michael Perry (ed), Deliverance, pp. 84-86. For a psychiatrist's account, see Scott Peck, People of the Lie, pp. 224f. For a classical account, see K Oesterreich, Possession, Demoniacal & Other, Ch 2 & 3.

On the first night of the Bible camp, I was called to attend to this woman. I went to her place and had to descend three flights of steps. The lady had been banging the table for two hours. When I arrived she charged at me. Her eyes were fiery red. She was in her fifties and she was frail looking.

Apparently, the woman would charge at the pastor only to be stopped on her tracks by his authoritative command, "In Jesus' name, you sit down!". This happened many times. The pastor went on to find out the circumstances of this woman and learned that she was a spirit medium. He asked the woman's husband to "receive Christ", but "there was no decision". The woman then started speaking in Hainanese which the team members could not understand. The pastor left in search of the woman's son who was his church member. When he got back,

my two assistants (who were left behind) were sitting by the roadside despondent. They had given her a glass of water; then she had got okay. This was after they've said to her, "Only Jesus can deliver". But the woman's condition returned again. The next day, I sought help but could not find any. Finally an old missionary to China advised me, "Don't be fooled by the devil. He can understand any language.

Another session was held in the woman's home with the same events and results. A third session was held soon after in which the pastor was

determined not to be fooled. The family had a vacant house in China and were trying to decide what to do with it. They then decided to sell the house. That same evening when they made the decision, the mother (the "possessed" subject) got it. The spirit inside her had warned the family members, "If you sell the house, your mother will die. We are all staying there". These demons were claiming to be the spirits of the family's ancestors. I remembered not to be deceived by these spirits.

In this case, the possession behaviour of the subject evolved, developed and was dealt with by the pastor in the subject's home. Moreover, the family members were closely involved in the genesis and development of the problem. This is quite typical in the accounts of the pastors.

#### 4.1.2. The Church

Another significant context in which the behaviour of possession develops is the church. The following story related by P15 is an example of such an instance.

Paul was a third year engineering student at the university. At one of our meetings he started manifesting spiritual activity. He was shaking, trembling, and there were ecstatic utterances - what may be considered as normal things in charismatic circles. But it all depends on who is managing the person. The manifestations of Paul looked like a charismatic experience but we discerned otherwise and set about to deliver him from an evil spirit. When we confronted the spirit, he convulsed violently and was thrown to the ground.

Paul was later discovered to have a personal and family history of psychiatric illness. He was referred to a psychiatrist at the National University Hospital who was sympathetic to the assessment of the pastor. According to the pastor they "worked together"; the pastor "disciplined" and "controlled" him and in six months Paul was delivered according to P15 and apparently has had no relapse.

Isaac and Shirley Lim in Comfort My People observe that manifestations of demonisation may become evident in a new convert because "the demonic spirits within him are now wanting to get out"<sup>1</sup>. Similar manifestations may also occur during church services or when people are being prayed for. P9 explains,

I have seen occasions when people who come for prayer seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit manifest symptoms of demonisation. The trouble is that they think they are Christians but they actually are not. And so when we lay hands on them to pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit the demons inside them get disturbed and their true condition becomes clear.

Such people, according to this pastor, have had no previous abnormal or disturbed behaviour. They are said to function normally and no one suspects that they are demonised. Only when they are prayed for in church does their possessed state manifest itself and others become alerted to the problem. In addition, the

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac & Shirley Lim, Comfort My People, p. 100.

pastors said that in some cases manifestations of possession occur when someone is brought to church for other problems such as illness or for counselling.

#### 4.1.3. The Workplace

Besides the domestic and ecclesiastical contexts in which possession manifests itself and develops, this may also happen in the place of work. One pastor who also served as a chaplain in a mission school related one such incident.

There was this teacher (Theresa) in school who was always sick. She suffered great pain in her womb and suffered from infertility. Her grandmother was a medium though she herself was a Christian. I prayed for her and she manifested signs of possession. She spoke in two or three voices. One of the voices was the voice of her (deceased) grandmother. The voices were evil and defiant. These were the voices of the evil spirits inside her. I cast out the spirits though it was not complete. Later her sicknesses improved and she was subsequently able to give birth. (P11)

## 4.2 Pastors' Accounts of the "Manifestations" of Possession

We shall now describe the pastors' accounts regarding the "manifestations" of possession and demonisation. Essentially they mentioned four major categories of behaviour or symptoms and we will look at each of them.

### 4.2.1 The Presence of a "Demon(s)"

Almost all the pastors mentioned that one of the major aspects of possession behaviour is the manifestation of a possessing spirit inside the victim. This alternate personality is supposed to be different from the personality of the victim. In the interpretation of the pastors, it is an alien spirit; to be more specific, an evil spirit that has invaded the personality and body of the victim.

The pastors see the evidence for this alien possessing entity in the way the victim talks and behaves. They believe that the possessing entity seeks to take control of the various faculties

and organs of the victim of possession.

#### A) Vocal and Speech Changes

Most often the spirit is alleged to take over the vocal cords of the person and utter its own speeches. This is evident, according to the pastors, in a change in the voice of the victim.

In many cases the person speaks in a different voice. A woman may speak in a man's voice or a man may speak in a woman's voice. A soft-spoken person may speak in a loud and rough voice and so on. The voice may also sound eerie and sinister. (P1)

One of the manifestations of possession is that the person begins to speak in another voice. It can be an evil kind of voice, a threatening sort of voice and can be quite frightening. It can make your hair stand. (P16)

The person might speak in a changed voice, different from his normal voice. This is due to the activity of the spirit which has taken possession of his vocal cords. (P10)

Besides the change in the voice, the content of the speech of the changed voice is also used as evidence for the presence of an alien possessing spirit. The spirit might identify itself. It might also challenge the group of people attempting to deliver the person who is possessed.

As we gather to deliver the person, we wait in prayer for God's direction. Sometimes the spirit responds first asking something like "Why have you come?". In such circumstances, we usually silence the spirit and ask him to leave the person. (P1)

According to the pastors the changed voice may also speak in a foreign or unknown language. This is apparently often in a language that the possessed person has had no previous knowledge of as explained by this pastor:

At times, the person goes into a trance. He may begin speaking in a different language, a language that he has never learned before. In this case the demon is trying to speak through the victim. (P6)

The pastors recognise that in charismatic practice and experience, people do speak in other tongues (glossolalia), hence there is a problem in determining whether someone speaking in

other tongues whether known or unknown, is speaking because he is filled with the Holy Spirit or because he is possessed by an evil spirit. Apparently the pastors are able to distinguish between the two by looking at the context of the situation and by looking at the overall behaviour of the person. Pastors such as P15 assert that this can be done through spiritual discernment. In the case involving Paul (4.1.2) who delivered "ecstatic utterances" in a church meeting, P15 remarked that

we have to find out who is in control of the person. Is it the Holy Spirit or is it an evil spirit. Spiritual discernment is needed in such cases. Here we discerned that it was a demonic case. We were not fooled by what looked like a charismatic experience. So we challenged the demonic spirit and the demonic manifestations became much more obvious to us.

B) **"Characteristic Behaviour Patterns": gods, animals and others**

According to the pastors, the presence of an alien demonic spirit is manifested not only through vocal and speech indicators but also through the behaviour of the possessed person. At times the subject is reported to behave and act out the characteristics of the possessing spirit. If the spirit is a god, then the characteristics attributed to it are acted out. A common possessing deity reported by the pastors is the Chinese monkey god. The following is an account of a young Chinese national serviceman who was exhibiting trance behaviour and was believed to be possessed by the monkey god.

The incident took place at an army camp where the medical officer was called by some soldiers to come and help a soldier who was having a trance. The soldier was standing on a grassy slope and appeared to be in a trance oblivious of his surroundings. His eyes seemed to be looking at a distance with no particular focus or recognition of surrounding persons and objects. Occasionally his face grimaced as if in anger. His nostrils would flare and his mouth express anger. This threat of violence was further enhanced by his hand gestures and posturing. He did not speak but made soft grunting noises. He would move about his hands as in martial arts postures. Now and then he would leap around following the facial and limb gestures of a playful monkey. The soldiers around him were afraid to go near him or restrain him so that he could be given a sedative injection by the medical officer to calm him down. They were afraid that they would be attacked by the monkey

god possessing him and that the spirit may transfer onto them should they touch him<sup>1</sup>.

The pastors commented that by observing the behaviour of the possessed they get an idea of the identity of the possessing deity because of the well-known characteristic postures and behaviour of some of these gods and goddesses. One pastor (P1) reported seeing a person who was possessed by a "laughing Buddha". In this case the possessed was a medium and he reportedly exhibited the constant laughing behaviour attributed to this deity. Another pastor described a case in which he apparently cast out a Hindu god.

One day in church, a Hindu girl prayed and accepted Christ. She then started doing a Hindu dance. A few of us prayed in tongues. It took us forty five minutes to cast out this spirit. It was a Hindu spirit associated with her big pottu<sup>2</sup>. We had to bind this spirit. Finally we managed to get the spirit out of her. Sometimes the Lord reveals to us the identity of a specific god such as the Hindu elephant god. If so, the treatment is specific. We name the spirit and get it out. At other times the treatment may be more general. (P8)

Thus, according to the pastors, the possessed person may scratch like the Chinese monkey god<sup>3</sup> (P12, P13), or dance like the Hindu Natarajan (Lord of the Dance) or Siva as he is more popularly known, or protrude the tongue with a frown on the face as the Hindu goddess Kali is known to pose in statues. These behaviour patterns are explained by them as due to the identity of the possessing spirits. The behaviour of the possessed is thus supposed to help identify the possessing spirits in many cases. This apparently helps in the effective expulsion of the demonic spirits. Sometimes the possessing spirits are said to have animal characteristics and identities. A common favourite in the

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<sup>1</sup> I witnessed this incident.

<sup>2</sup> the dot applied over a woman's forehead that has religious (the Hindu god Siva's third eye), and cultural (identification of the married woman who wears a red pottu as compared to the black pottu of the unmarried woman) significance.

<sup>3</sup> See Lee Siew Chin, "Spirit Mediums: A Comparison", p. 13 for a description of the typical behaviour of the "monkey god" according to her observation of spirit mediums: jumping on chairs and tables, and peering into the distance with the right hand shading the eyes. Possession by the Third Prince is supposed to typically produce loud screeches.

accounts of the pastors is the snake spirit which makes the possessed person behave and move like a snake<sup>1</sup>. A good example of this is the case of Ah Hoon mentioned in the previous chapter (3.2.3). The following case is slightly more complex and was retold by P4. He was conducting a two-week evangelistic mission in Indonesia. After speaking at a women's fellowship meeting, P4 made an altar call which produced many responses. One of those he prayed for was Purna who responded with uncontrollable crying and rapid body swaying. Later P4 was sent for to help Purna.

I was brought to an *atap* house. Upon entering it I saw several men and women pinning a woman to the floor. I soon recognised it was Purna. She was struggling, her face hideously contorted with pain and anger. She hissed very loudly, like a snake. One of the men in the room explained to me that Purna was very disturbed after the service. When the women decided to pray for her, she immediately reacted and began to manifest in this manner. I called her several times by her name. After a while she responded. She stopped struggling and quietened down. I asked a lady to bring her something hot to drink and put her to sleep. I then requested that we minister to her the following day.

The pastor attributed her condition to her past involvement in the occult. When she was twelve she apparently "committed her life to the Lord". She was also actively involved in *karate-do* in her school. However, she was unable to excel in this sport and sought the help of a *dukun* (medium) to obtain physical strength and capability to do well in her sport.

Her first visit to this *Dukun* was a nightmare. She was asked to cut herself and to drink her own blood. She was given a secret mantra and was asked to be faithful in chanting this mantra...At his death-bed, her father (also a medium) wanted an heir to continue his craft. He called his daughter to him and asked his daughter to embrace him as he expired. Purna recounted that she felt something came into her when her father breathed his last.

The pastor reported that Purna was subsequently delivered after much struggle the following day. Apart from the snake spirit other animal spirits have also been encountered by some of the

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<sup>1</sup> John Nevius reported that the Chinese (in China at the end of the nineteenth century) believe that most evil spirits were either snakes, foxes and weasels; Demon Possession, p. 71. The pastors did not mention foxes and weasels though (because such animals are not found in Singapore?).

pastors. For example, one pastor (P16) remembered a lady who he said was possessed by several animal spirits.

The lady had many animal spirits such as a cat, a tiger, a leopard and so on. She was doing many animal sounds and behaving like the animal spirits in her. She would meow like a cat. Then suddenly she would roar like a tiger. And then she would become another animal and so on.

Not all the pastors had encountered such animal spirits. For example, P2 mentioned that he had not seen any victim of possession acting like an animal though he listed this as a possible manifestation of demon possession.

Apart from the spirits of deities and animals other spirits may also produce characteristic manifestations according to some of the pastors<sup>1</sup>. For instance P8 describes the behaviour of a "spirit of lust".

When this woman was slain<sup>2</sup>, her legs were wide open in an indecent way. The spirit of lust was in her and she had to be delivered.

In some cases, the pastors said that the possessing entity may manifest itself as a departed human spirit (ghost), usually that of some relative. However, all, but one pastor, insisted that departed spirits are not responsible for possessing people, and that in such instances, the possessing spirit is actually a demon impersonating as a ghost.

The so-called "ghosts" which we sometimes see in cases of demon possession are actually demons impersonating. These are familiar spirits. They are evil spirits, demons. We must not believe what they say or claim to be. The Bible says that when people die, their souls don't return to earth. In fact, we are forbidden to make any contact with them. So, these so-called ghosts are in fact the evil spirits trying to deceive people. (P7)

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<sup>1</sup> A view similar to that of American Roman Catholic charismatic authors Michael Scanlan & Randall Cirner, Deliverance from Evil Spirits, pp. 95-7. See also Francis MacNutt, Healing, pp. 229f.

<sup>2</sup> a word used by pentecostals and charismatics to describe the phenomenon of falling to the ground as a result of being "slain in the Spirit". Here the pastor uses the term to describe a similar phenomenon except that there was allegedly a demonic factor involved.

#### 4.2.2 Reaction to Christian Symbols

Another major manifestation of possession reported by the pastors was the adverse reaction produced in the possessed subjects by Christian symbols and acts.

##### A) The Bible

For example the subject may react negatively to the Bible or to the reading of the Bible. One pastor remarked that often in cases of possession there is a

reaction when Scripture is read or when the name of Christ is mentioned. The victim may give an angry stare or there might be a sudden change of disposition. The person may also lose control of himself. The reaction is often dramatic and antagonistic. (P5)

Other pastors (such as P16, P7) agree with this observation. P11 described how in certain circumstances

When I begin to read the Word of God, the person will begin to reject what I read and there may be a reaction. He might become violent, or appear very troubled. There may be violent shaking and contortions or the person may go into a trance state when the Bible is read.

Sometimes the possessed person is said to react violently to the presence of a Bible and may try to reach out to grab the Bible threatening to tear it.<sup>1</sup>

##### B) Prayer

Prayer has also been reported by the pastors to produce adverse manifestations. P4 explains

Reaction to prayer can vary. Sometimes it is less obvious. In one particular case, as I closed the first counselling session in prayer, I noticed that the counsellee's eyes were flickering. She was very restless and was breaking into a cold sweat. When I asked the counsellee to pray aloud she found it very difficult. These things may not mean anything but they are signs pointing to some possible demonic presence in the person. The person may feel different reactions to prayer. For example, he may feel

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<sup>1</sup> I have seen this in deliverance sessions.

different kinds of emotions, fear, anxiety, anger and so on. Or he may feel hot or in some cases, cold. On the other hand they may not feel anything at all because of the presence of the spirit. We can ask the counsellee how he felt during the time of prayer.

This was explained by one pastor (P3) as due to the fact that "prayer disturbs the spirit". The spirit is apparently tormented and manifests its presence through the disturbed behaviour of the victim. The pastor further related his experience in some cases of laying hands on people to pray for them only to have them "slain in the spirit" after which demonic manifestations would take place.

The belief that prayer exposes the evil spirits in the victims is taken seriously by many pastors. Two of them (P12, P13) mentioned that this is important in the pastoral care of people who are possessed.

Prayer will inevitably produce manifestations in the victim. This is the key in our deliverance ministry, especially in diagnosing the situation. When we are not sure about a case, whether it is demonic or not, we will pray for the person and look for any manifestations of demons. It is a good test and helps us to discern the spirits.

In the same vein, another pastor (P7) uses this relationship between prayer and demonic manifestations to aid in his diagnosis.

A good spiritual test is to read the Bible or ask the person to pray with you. Or you can tell the gospel. See how the person reacts. There may be physical violence or the person may become abusive in his language, or he may pretend that he is not hearing you. If there is an unusual reaction to the gospel, prayer and the Bible, it is most likely to be a case of demon possession.

### C) Ritual and Creed

Besides negative responses to prayer and the Bible or its reading, the victims of possession are also reported to be unable to perform Christian acts or believe Christian doctrines. Even if they try, they apparently face great difficulties. For instance, according to P2, the victim usually "can't pronounce

the name "Jesus". In fact, one pastor (P10) feels that this may be helpful in determining whether someone was really suffering from demon possession. He thinks that

if the counsellee can say the name of Jesus without difficulty then he is possibly suffering from an emotional problem and not a demonic case. When there is an evil spirit inside the person he will have great difficulty pronouncing the name of Jesus and will show much resistance and may say another name or look mockingly.

Moreover, according to the pastors, the possessed individual will also show great difficulty in religious acts such as praying or reading the Bible. P10 remarked that the person "will find it very difficult to pray or to concentrate when we are praying". In addition the subject may also have much difficulty reading the Bible when asked to do so as testified in the following case mentioned by P1:

Recently the sister of one of our church members started hearing voices. She suffered from choking sensations and shortness of breath. She kept saying, "I'm going to die". she was brought to the hospital where the doctor who saw her - he was a Christian doctor - he was clearly convinced that it was not a medical or psychological problem. She was hearing voices that were urging her to kill her family members.

We (his deliverance team) met her and one of the significant things we found was that she had great difficulty reading Scripture. We opened the Scriptures to Psalm 23 and we asked her to read it. She started, "The Lord..." and then suddenly gagged and was not able to continue with her reading. We prayed for her and commanded the evil spirits in her to leave her. The interesting thing is that as the spirits were cast out one by one she was able to read the scripture passage more and more. Finally when all the spirits were cast out, she was able to read the Bible without any difficulty.

Apparently the possessed individual may also exhibit great difficulty in listening to or agreeing with Christian doctrines and repeating statements of Christian commitment and beliefs. We have already seen how some pastors (eg P7) reported witnessing strong negative reactions to "a presentation of the gospel". One of them (P6) described how he uses the response of the subject to doctrinal questions to assess whether he was suffering from demon possession.

Normally, I ask them very simple questions. In I John chapter 4, we are told to test the spirits. And so I ask simple questions such as "Who is Jesus?", "Where did he come from?", "How did he die?", and "What is the significance of the blood of Jesus?". My questions will centre on the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the gospel. If the person is truly demonised, he would be reluctant to hear about or talk about the Lord.

It was admitted by some of the pastors that it was not always so simple or easy to discern between the demonic and the non-demonic. In the following case we note what is alleged to be the deviousness of the possessing spirit when the pastor employed some tests to determine whether a demonic spirit was present in the counsellee he was helping.

The demonised person will not or cannot do certain things. For example in one case, we asked the counsellee to pray in Jesus' name. She could not say the last part of the prayer. Then I asked the person to say, "Jesus is Lord" and she repeated after me. I was a bit puzzled at first. Then I asked her to say "Jesus is my Lord" and she was not able to say it. She can say "Jesus is Lord" but not "Jesus is my Lord". The demons can be very devious and we have to be very careful and vigilant. It requires a lot of discernment.

#### 4.2.3 Disturbed Behaviour

A recurrent manifestation of possession mentioned by all the pastors is some form of disturbed behaviour exhibited by the possessed. The pastors reported seeing a wide range of such disturbed behaviour. The person may display some form of dysfunctional behaviour or abnormal behaviour not consistent with his normal self or behaviour. He might also display disturbed perception and thought. Moreover, according to the pastors, he may also show behaviour that may be violent, defiant, or suicidal.

##### A) Violence and the Threat of Violence

The pastors asserted that inevitably most of the subjects fall into some form of violent behaviour. This may be seen either in the way they speak or in the content of their speech. It is also

often seen in their actions and gestures. For example according to P12 and P13 when the possessed individual is confronted the evil spirit in him surfaces and makes the victim behave in a violent manner, sometimes trying to physically assault the deliverance team members. One pastor explains what he thinks happens in such situations:

When we begin our ministry to the demonised person, the process can take some time. The person begins to enter a deep state of inability to control himself...he might scream and shout uncontrollably. Such persons are not able to control themselves though they are sometimes aware of what is happening. This is because their faculties are taken over by the demonic spirits. (P15)

P2 remarked that the subject would behave as if a great and intensive struggle was going on inside him and he would often produce "violent screaming and frothing of the mouth". This belief that the victim was experiencing some form of inner torment was shared by other pastors (eg P12, P13). According to P12:

The victim suffers from some form of torment. There is always torment. The demons torment the victim and this has varying effects and produces different types of symptoms with varying levels of intensity. Sometimes the person behaves violently or may threaten to harm us or himself. We may have to at times restrain him to avoid someone getting hurt.

Likewise, Philip Heng advises those who seek to engage in the deliverance ministry to "look out, he (the possessed individual) may sometimes strike out at you!"<sup>1</sup>. P15 remembered a demonised woman who was "quite violent". According to him the "name of Jesus quietened her...there is no need to shout at the person".

#### B) Disturbed Perception

The victims also show disturbed perception and thought according to the accounts of the pastor. This may be in the form of hallucinations, usually auditory. However, the pastors often think that this is not in fact the kind of hallucination that occurs in some mental diseases but rather due to the activity of

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 3.

the demonic spirits taking possession of the victim.

Visual hallucinations in the form of visions were also mentioned by some of the pastors, for example, P16. The following case was told by a pastor to describe the kind of demonic visions that victims sometimes apparently suffer from:

Mary was a lady in her early thirties. She was a new Christian when I first saw her. Her complaint was insomnia and frightening dreams and visions. Mary has been receiving frightful dreams and day visions for some time. She was afraid that these experiences together with her insomnia would disrupt her work and lower her performance. She was counselled by a lady church worker.

One day, Mary felt very depressed. She went to a Bible college to seek prayer support from her friend who was studying there. During prayer, Mary saw a frightening vision. She saw a large but dimly lit room. At the centre of this room was an altar of some sort covered with black cloth. On this altar lay a naked woman. She was strapped onto the altar, screaming but unable to move.

A man wearing a black cloak came into the hall. His face was hidden under a hood. He carried with him a large silver knife. He stood next to the altar, and, after some chanting, plunged the knife into the woman. He then stood by the altar, laughing in the most sinister way. At this point of the vision, Mary could not stand it any longer. She got up and ran out of the college. (P4)

According to P4, Mary's problem was demonic in origin. He believed that this arose as a result of her interest in Rosicrucianism through the influence of her friend, which led her to read books produced by the cult. The pastor added that:

On one occasion, when she was reading the book, she suddenly felt an eerie presence in her room. This experience affected her so much that she returned the book to her friend the next day.

The pastors therefore argue that the hallucinatory symptoms suffered by demonised people are not due to mental illness but rather produced by the demonic spirits that had invaded the victim. Philip Heng thinks that such hallucinations may be evidence for what he calls demonic obsession (as opposed to demonic oppression or possession).

Obsession: This is an attack upon and control of the

person's mind by evil spirits. The demon is not in the person, but is controlling the person's mind from outside the person.

Evidence

- a) The person claims to hear voices speaking to him, calling to him, scolding him.
- b) Sees dark objects, life-like figures, unearthly figures following him or appearing to him...<sup>1</sup>

The pastors also noted that demonised people may suffer from disturbances in perception. In the case of Mary described earlier, P4 said that during the deliverance session he conducted for her, "she would say that at times she felt very cold inside, and at times she felt as though a furnace was burning inside her". She apparently "shivered uncontrollably" off and on during the prayer session. Another pastor (P6) reported that at times the victim might feel a "burning sensation in the body" or may feel as if "people were trying to strangle him". Again these disturbances are attributed to the activity of the demonic spirits that are believed to be in the victim.

C) Sleep and Other Disturbances

Certain types of dysfunctional behaviour were mentioned by the pastors such as insomnia (P7, P12, P13), nightmares (P11, P13, P12), "irrational behaviour" (P14), and extreme emotions (P6). According to one pastor (P7) prolonged periods of insomnia may be an evidence of possession:

Demon possessed people may suffer from insomnia. You see, if it is a medical or psychiatric case, the person will be able to sleep. Demonic cases don't sleep. Even if they are lying down, they are not sleeping. I have actually monitored demonic cases and have found this to be true. Demonic cases can also go on for long periods without food and drink.

According to this pastor, this is part of the demonic aim to torment the person and destroy his body. The same applies to nightmares. P11 thinks that demon possessed individuals "suffer constantly from nightmares" and this causes them to be very tired; he believes that it exacerbates their condition. It was

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 4.

also reported that some subjects become extremely frightened and anxious (P6). Some are said to display

an irrational kind of behaviour. They may be talking rubbish or go into a catatonic state. Sometimes they are highly paranoid - verging on hallucinations. There may also be a disorder in their thinking.

P15 agrees that "sometimes they (the possessed) act like mental patients. They see things, hear things, smell things". he thinks that their thinking may also be disturbed; sometimes this takes the form of uncontrollable indecent thoughts that trouble the victim.

The behaviour of the possessed may take on more hysterical like features according to many of the pastors.

The person may have a fit of coughing. Or he may spit repeatedly. He might also choke and gag. The person may also laugh and mock at the people around him. Or he may suddenly cry. It can be quite bizarre. The person may also go into all kinds of physical contortions. He might throw back his head, or perform exaggerated movements. There may be wild flailing of the arms or he might start crawling on the ground. (P1)

At times, according to P4, the physical contortions may become uncontrollable and appear similar to a person having an epileptic fit<sup>1</sup>.

The possessed have also been seen to display defiant behaviour. P11 told of a lady in his church who he said had a "defiant spirit". She acted strangely in church, according to him, often challenging and defying the authorities in the church. Defiant behaviour during deliverance sessions was said to range from mocking the deliverance team to threatening to hurt them.

Many of the pastors also recalled cases where the possessed individual displayed suicidal behaviour. Often this is supposed to take the form of attempted suicide (P2). This behaviour is believed by pastors such as P12 and P13 to be due to the suicidal

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<sup>1</sup> cf with Perry's claim that there is sometimes loss of control of bodily functions resulting in vomiting, micturition, and defaecation; Deliverance, p. 88.

suggestions made by the possessing demonic spirits to the victim who hears these suggestions in the form of voices relentlessly speaking to him. One pastor asserted that

To get the victim to commit suicide is the ultimate aim of the demon that is possessing him. The demon will try all its best to get the person to commit suicide. I find that this is a recurring pattern in my experience in this ministry. (P6)

Alternatively, the demons are alleged to cause physical phenomena that threaten the life of the victim as the case of Tim illustrates (3.2.2). Pastor Tan Eng Boo describes how Tim showed very distressful symptoms during a deliverance session. According to him, Tim "felt his heart tearing apart".

Tim was really suffering a great deal. He was trying to tear his shirt and to dig into his flesh to reach his heart. The suffering was so unbearable for him that it came to a point when his heart stopped beating and he completely stopped breathing for about a minute or so. We applied the heart massage and also applied artificial respiration on him. He was revived and again his heart would stop beating. This happened for two or three times; I was really desperate at Tim's condition. It was the first time that I am facing such a serious spiritual battle. I really did not know what to do...the amazing thing was that as soon as I stopped that battle, Tim was able to stand up and was perfectly well!...

At one point of the battle, the spirit spoke to me and said that he was going to stop Tim from breathing, and he did it! Tim was not breathing when the spirit surfaced. What I did then was to command Tim to resurface and then he would breathe again.<sup>1</sup>

#### D) "Introvert and Quiet Spirits"

The disturbed behaviour that the possessed are said to manifest as we have seen above are generally the "noisy" kind. However, disturbed behaviour can also apparently be of the "quiet" variety. One pastor (P11) spoke of "extrovert spirits" and "introvert spirits". According to him the extrovert spirits will manifest in an extrovert fashion with the victim screaming or behaving violently. On the other hand, the introvert spirits will

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<sup>1</sup> Tan Eng Boo, "From Witchcraft to Christ", pp. 2-3.

tend to be quieter; to recognise the presence of an introvert spirit may therefore be that much more difficult. Unlike the fearful sounds made by many subjects, such people may be "very quiet" (P6).

The quieter version of the disturbed behaviour of the possessed may take the form of a trance like state<sup>1</sup> (P16, P11). They may appear very tired and exhausted (P11). One common description in the accounts of the pastors is in terms of the eyes - "dull glazed eyes" (P11), "glazed look" (P1), "glassy look" (P10, P6), "eyeballs dilated" (P10), and "widening eyes" (P1). Apparently the subject may also refuse to look at the exorcist, especially when he is commanding the spirit to leave (P6). It is popularly believed that one must look directly into the eyes of the possessed person in order to achieve control and contact with the possessing evil spirit.

Many times you can see the face of the demon possessed person - there will be a veil of darkness over their face. It is as if there is a barrier between you and them, as if you have difficulty getting through to them. Some demon cases can't have eye contact. I remember one such case - a Taoist priest who actually kept and fed demons...Some spirits are dumb and will refuse to respond to your questions.

#### E) Physical Illness

Some pastors described cases in their experience in which they believe that demon possession manifested through physical illnesses<sup>2</sup>. An example is the case of Theresa described earlier where she suffered from a gynecological problem. The following is another case:

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Underwood points out that the English word "possession" was derived from the Middle English word "giddig" meaning "to be possessed by a god". He associates this word with the other derivative "giddiness" (or ecstasy); Exorcism!, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Popular beliefs that demons have the power to cause physical illnesses have been noted among the Chinese (John Nevius, Demon Possession, p. 63), the Malays (Haji Moktar bin H Md Dom, The Bomoh and the Hantu, pp. 35-43; for a typical case see pp. 16-24), and in Southeast Asia in general (E B Tylor, Primitive Culture, Vol 2, p. 126).

I remember one case where this person made a deal with the devil. He knew of his condition. Although he did not manifest in the usual way he was still demonised. I realized this because he was suffering from a recurrent fever and was constantly tired. Medical treatment did not do much for him. I discerned that his problem was demonic. Sure enough he admitted to making this deal with the devil. He had to be delivered and he had to renounce his association with the devil before he recovered from his physical symptoms. (P3)

Not all pastors agreed with this alleged relationship between illness or disease and demon possession. According to P2, for example, there is no relationship between physical disease and possession, or between physical healing and exorcism.

I don't believe that Satan can give cancer. But if we happen to have cancer, Satan can use it for his own purposes and torment us with it. No, exorcism is not related to healing. We must beware of the "ghost under every chair" syndrome.

#### 4.2.4 Extraordinary Abilities and Powers

The pastors pointed out that possessed individuals may display extraordinary physical, mental and spiritual feats.

##### A) Unusual Strength

Many of them (eg P1, P4, P6, P12, P10, P13, P15) related how subjects show abnormal levels of physical strength. A common way of describing this was to say that a number of men (ranging from four to six) either were not able or had great difficulty in restraining a woman or a young girl.

a small girl overcoming four men. (P1)

five men were needed to pin down a frail-looking woman. (P4)

four men were needed to hold one young lady. (P12)

six guys could not put down one arm of a girl. (P15)

This "unnatural strength", according to P6, is an example of the kind of powers that possessed people will be able to manifest, things that "a normal person will not be able to do". One pastor

(P15) advised that such feats of "abnormal strength" cannot be overcome by physical means on the part of those delivering the victim; "only prayer can resolve the problem". Isaac and Shirley Lim have described a boy who had unusual physical powers:

We once ministered to a young boy who was demon possessed. Although he was young, he had the ability to perform feats that were startling. Untrained, he had the strength to bend iron rods and to perform martial arts.<sup>1</sup>

Besides such physical powers one pastor (P10) claimed that some demon possessed subjects can practice levitation.

### B) Psychic Abilities

Possessed subjects are also reported by the pastors to occasionally display clairvoyant and other psychic abilities. P15 told of a case of a possessed woman who showed the ability to know and predict the future. According to him, her claims to know the future were proven to be true when the predicted events happened. Isaac and Shirley Lim describe a case in which such powers were displayed:

There is sometimes a change in mental ability. The demonized may seem to possess occult and psychic powers like telepathy, clairvoyance and the ability to predict. Sometimes they possess unusual knowledge of things, and even understand languages unknown to them. We were once ministering to an elderly lady who when in a state of demon possession could predict by name the people who were to enter the room. She could for example accurately predict: "Pastor Isaac Lim is coming up the stairs now." In a few minutes, Isaac walked in as she had predicted.<sup>2</sup>

The pastors believe that such powers are given to the possessed by the possessing spirits. According to them, such people may have been seeking such powers and abilities or the manifestations may be incidental to the demonic presence within the individual. However demon possession is not always related to extraordinary feats for sometimes, it is reported, demon possession may manifest in the physical weakness and anaemic appearance of the

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Lim & Shirley Lim, Comfort My People, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 107-8.

subject<sup>1</sup>.

#### 4.2.5 Other Manifestations: Odours and Technical Malfunctions

One pastor (P8) asserts that "the person will have bad breath, there is always a foul breath". Isaac and Shirley Lim seem to agree when they list among the symptoms of demon possession, the exuding of "fetid breath" by the demon possessed<sup>2</sup>. One of the pastors claimed to smell the presence of evil spirits

Well you need the gift of discernment for these things. I have this gift. I know when these foul spirits are around. I can smell them out. There is actually a bad smell in these cases. It is not for everyone. Not everyone can smell it. You need the gift. Such people have a characteristic bad smell coming from their body. It defies rational explanation. You have to know it intuitively. Of course, I don't jump hastily into conclusions. I look at the other signs. But this can be a very useful ability to have. (P11)

Moreover extraordinary physical manifestations may sometimes occur in the vicinity of the possessed, according to P7. He explains:

Abnormal things happen. Clocks move from side to side. Fan blades move in the reverse direction. Tape recorders start on their own or don't work for no reason at all. Lights can come on or off suddenly. The question is why at that particular time? Strange things can happen to cars too. Brakes can give way, the radiator boils...Part of the reason for all these is that the demons want to cause fear.<sup>3</sup>

In a similar vein, Heng lists "malfunctions of vehicles and telephones" as one of the main weapons of the demons.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.3 Diagnosis and Discernment: How the Pastors Go About It

We have seen that the pastors have described a wide range of "manifestations" that people apparently display when they are

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>3</sup> John Nevius has reported similar "paraphenomena" eg. doors opening and shutting on their own; Demon Possession, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Heng, "Fighting the Demons", pp. 3-4.

possessed. That many of these symptoms and behaviour patterns are also seen in other conditions is recognised by most of the pastors. How then do they know when someone behaving in the manner they have described is actually suffering from demon possession? The pastors' response to the problem of diagnosis is to: a) categorise different types or levels of demonic influences, b) come up with a battery of tests to determine the presence of an evil spirit, and c) rely on intuitive feelings about the condition of the subject.

#### 4.3.1 A Classification System: Oppression, Obsession, Possession

Philip Heng has categorised demonic attacks into demonic oppression, obsession, and possession. For each of these conditions, he has suggested the typical manifestations and symptoms. We shall look at his classification and description in detail because it both summarises the manifestations we have been looking at, and it shows how some of the pastors have attempted to classify the phenomenon of "possession".

Heng believes that oppression, obsession, and possession are "three levels of demonic attack on the human". According to him oppression is the "attack..on the body by evil spirits". Evidences for this demonic condition include:

- a) Pressure on the chest during the semi-conscious state.
- b) "throttling" or "choking" sensation during conscious or semi-conscious state so that person finds great difficulty in saying the name of Jesus.
- c) Eye-lids twitching uncontrollably.
- d) Skin on forearm appearing to jump.
- e) Burning sensation travelling up the arm, zero-ing in on the chest.
- f) Sometimes visible blue-black marks as if pinched or punched.
- g) Victim's arm feels as if it is being broken although there is no physical contact with anyone.<sup>1</sup>

Heng says that oppression can afflict both non-Christians (to frighten them so that they will seek spiritual help) and Christians, especially those who engage in occultic practices. He also shares that people involved in the deliverance ministry

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 4.

may be attacked by demons in the form of oppression.

Obsession, according to Heng, is an attack by demons on the mind of the person. The demon is alleged to control the person's mind from outside. He lists the evidences for this condition:

- a) The person claims to hear voices speaking to him, calling to him, scolding him.
- b) Sees dark objects, life-like figures, unearthly figures following him or appearing to him.
- c) Has wild, fearful or strange dreams.
- d) The person appears to have a double-mind, alternating between faith and doubt, trust and fear, etc.
- e) The demons can instil thoughts that do not belong to the person.<sup>1</sup>

Like oppression, obsession is also said to afflict both Christians and non-Christians. It is supposed to particularly affect "weak-minded persons", those in contact with the occult or non-Christian religious practices, those with "extreme passions" or pride, and those in contact with gangsterism.

The most serious of the three types of demonic attacks, according to Heng, is the state of possession where "the demon enters the person's body, takes up residence therein and controls the person's behaviour". A drastic change is said to take place in the person's thought processes and actions and "the demon's ultimate aim is to cause the death of the victim"<sup>2</sup>. A possessed person is said to typically behave in the following way:

- a) Person goes into a trance.
- b) Person takes up posture of the gods.
- c) Performs dance or act characteristic of that god.
- d) Hands will make gesture which is trademark of god, eg. pig, snake.
- e) Person will have unusual strength.
- f) Speaks in tongues, uses language(s) clearly outside normal scope of victim.
- g) Speaks in voice not his own.
- h) Makes bird-like sounds.
- i) Personal evil habit accentuated.
- j) Performs shameless acts, exposes self shamelessly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing with Demonic Cases", p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

Heng implies here that Christians cannot be possessed, a view shared by some of the pastors. He is here using the trichomistic anthropology of classical western philosophy and Christian theology to distinguish between demonic attacks on man's body, mind, and soul. Heng admits that his classification of demonic attacks was influenced by reading books by some western pastoral theologians.

When I came back from the United States in 1963 after my studies, I began encountering cases of demon possession. I got engaged in spiritual warfare. I tried sharing these things with various local pastors but they were all out of their depth at that time. I couldn't get much help from local pastors. So I read books by Merrill Unger and Kurt Koch and found them very helpful<sup>1</sup>. From my experience and my reading I tried to work out a theology.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the pastors share Heng's views no doubt due to the fact that some were trained by Heng or were influenced by Heng as they readily admitted. However, Heng's rather clinical classification has been modified by these pastors. One pastor (P16) has added the term "demonisation" to the list; this "includes all categories" of demonic attacks on a person. He further adds,

Possession is clearly demonic. It is when the demon comes right into the person. Obsession is external, the demon is outside the person. It tries to influence the mind of the person. It is actually very close to psychological problems. I am not sure whether they (demonic oppression and psychological conditions) are closely related. Oppression is a condition involving both psychological as well as spiritual areas. In actual cases of the demonic (possession) I use the term possession or demonisation and I will manage the situation accordingly. If I think it is obsession or oppression, I will try to exclude the demonic and then refer the person to the psychiatrist.

A simpler classification is employed by some pastors (P9, P8, P10). For P9, in possession the demon is in the person while in oppression, the demon is external to the person. This is important in P9's case because this pastor has taught in his

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<sup>1</sup> Eg, he showed me the following books by these authors in his library: Kurt Koch - Between Christ and Satan, Satan's Devices, Christian Counselling and Occultism; Merrill Unger - Biblical Demonology, Demons in the World Today, What Demons Can Do to Saints. These books share a conservative evangelical approach to the subject.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Philip Heng, 16 May 1991.

church that Christians cannot be demon possessed. Thus demonic cases are classified into possession (afflicting only non-Christians) and oppression (afflicting both Christians and non-Christians). The classification allegedly determines the type of pastoral care given to the victim. In cases of possession "deliverance is needed, the demon must be cast out"; while in people suffering from oppression, "the pastor must still speak to the enemy but he is addressed differently; he is commanded to leave or withdraw". We note here that the pastor's classification serves to reinforce his theological position and to resolve the problem of Christians manifesting signs of demonic troubles<sup>1</sup>.

Not all the pastors however stressed on the need or the importance (theological or therapeutic) of such classification systems. P8 agreed that there is a difference between oppression and possession; "in oppression you can still talk to the person sensibly, but in possession, he is fully under the power of the spirit". However, "in practice it does not make much difference". Many pastors seem to take this position. If they feel that there is some demonic attack on the person, the response is nearly always an attempt to cast out the offending demon. (We will look at this more closely in the next chapter). P15 speaks for many pastors when he said,

I have no time to play with words - oppression, possession etc. If the person is bothered by demonic spirits, I deal with the problem. I don't think the different terminologies make any difference in the actual deliverance ministry. The important thing is to engage in spiritual warfare and to help the person.

Another pastor added a warning against categorisations and classifications. Regarding terms such as possession and oppression he said with a note of irritation:

I don't think there is a need for classification...We must be careful of reading too much into the evidence. We must not look for patterns because I don't think there are any real patterns in this business. You must remember Satan is confusing. He is a liar and will try to confuse and mislead us. I must caution against this idea of becoming a

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive discussion on this issue, see C Fred Dickason, Demon Possession and the Christian, also Don Basham, Can A Christian Have a Demon?.

specialist in this field. We should not operate on our own strength. We are merely channels. The clearer the channel, the better it is. Sometimes our knowledge can be a hindrance.

Similarly P11 remarked, "I am a practitioner, not an analyst".

#### 4.3.2 Thinking of Other Possibilities

Nevertheless this still leaves the pastors with the problem of determining when a person is demonised and when he is not. Their pastoral response to the counsellee will depend on this important assessment. When they are faced with a person who appears to be "demon possessed" what other possibilities do they think about? In other words, what is the usual differential diagnosis? Many pastors mentioned that they will try to exclude psychiatric or mental disorders since admittedly many of the "manifestations" of possession may also be seen in various mental illnesses. According to P4,

Possession is a category of its own. But the symptoms may also be seen in schizophrenia or dementia. Sometimes it is a case of demon possession, sometimes it is shizophrenia, but sometimes it can be both. It is very difficult if you are looking for a formula. We must exclude medical causes but sometimes in emergency situations where urgent help is needed, you have to make up your own mind.

One pastor (P1) added that a child's fantasy can sometimes present as a case of possession. He recalled a case of a child who "made it up" telling stories of alien beings and so on; he was apparently influenced by films like "Star Wars". This pastor also mentioned post-natal depression and grief as possible conditions which may be mistaken for possession. However, he emphasised that "a deliverance case would be clear cut". Another pastor mentioned that cases that appear like possession may actually be due to physical or psychological causes.

I will talk to the person and get him to relax. Sometimes it is a mental problem. They are merely demonstrating how they have learned to express anger. It is a form of attention seeking. I will just firmly tell them, "Stand up! There's nothing wrong with you", and they will return to normal behaviour. I am sometimes called to a group who are apparently "delivering" someone. I sometimes feel that it is not really a case of demonisation. Sometimes physical fatigue can cause symptoms that may be mistaken for

demonisation.

One pastor (P5) said that his diagnostic procedure in cases that are apparently demonic in nature will involve three stages: a) exclusion of medical factors, b) exclusion of psychiatric factors, and c) examination for spiritual and demonic causes. He mentioned that of the suspected demonic cases he has seen, most have turned out to be people suffering from psychiatric or psychological problems. "Demonic cases would be less than 10%". He did not give any details of psychiatric conditions that the pastor should exclude. This is no surprise since he is not trained in psychology or psychiatry. He mentioned the case of a lady in his church who wondered whether she was being troubled by demons. She was seen by a psychiatrist and was diagnosed to be having "panic attacks". The pastor said to me that he had not heard of the condition before. To make up for his deficient knowledge in psychiatry and psychology, the pastor said that he worked closely with doctors and psychiatrists. Some of the psychiatrists named confirmed this<sup>1</sup>. There is some amount of cooperation between pastors and psychiatrists in this area. In some interesting cases, pastors involved in the deliverance ministry are invited to attend and participate in case conferences in the psychiatric hospital in Singapore. Of course, only pastors well-known to be "balanced" in the subject are invited. The psychiatrists who work with them are Christians who are sympathetic to the idea of demon possession.

#### 4.3.3 The "Gift of Discernment"

However not all the pastors seem to work closely with doctors and psychiatrists. Some pastors simply said that they would "exclude other causes" (P6) when they encounter possible cases of demon possession without being able to elaborate on these other causes. Others mentioned the possibility of medical and psychiatric conditions presenting as possession but did not give sufficient evidence that they worked closely with medical personnel. Almost

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<sup>1</sup> Eg Dr Douglas Kong, a psychiatrist in private practice, & Dr Y C Lim, consultant psychiatrist at Woodbridge (psychiatric) Hospital. They also named some of the pastors in our sample as those who refer cases to them now and then.

all the pastors did not have medical professionals in their deliverance teams. Some like P5 refer frequently to doctors and psychiatrists when in doubt while others do not. Even if they do, some pastors value their own judgement more than that of the medical specialists. For instance P15 said,

Yes, in terms of diagnosis, I sometimes refer to the psychiatrists and psychologists in my church especially if there is a possibility of some kind of psychiatric problem in the person. It is helpful. That is why I asked one of the doctors in my church to go and study psychiatry...But I am still the boss. I have the final say about the condition of the person.

Many of the pastors referred to this kind of discernment as being of great importance in identifying a person who is possessed (eg P1, P2, P5, P9, P10, P11, P15). According to P11, "the gift of discernment is very important in deliverance ministry". He claimed to have an intuitive gift of "smelling out" the presence of demons. Another pastor talked of this intuitive ability in terms of "vibes" (vibrations):

You need discernment in such cases. Sometimes they act very religious, very pious. They are possessed by a spirit of religiosity. You have to be sensitive in your spirit and discern what is going on. I remember this Indian who was very religious. You won't suspect anything. When he came to our church, I felt bad vibes about him. I knew that he was possessed by a demon. Sure enough, our friend was involved in adulterous relationships but deceiving people with his religious and pious behaviour...So, we need discernment. If there are no vibes, we can presume that there is nothing (demonic) there. But sometimes demons are very good at concealing their presence, especially the very high ranking ones.

Sometimes discernment is said to be needed to decide that a person is not actually troubled by demons as testified in the following case related by P1. Jason was a church worker who came to this pastor for help thinking that he was being troubled by demonic spirits:

Jason was involved in the deliverance ministry himself. He started behaving oddly for some time. He would look at himself in front of the mirror and command the evil spirit in him to leave. The other pastors in his deliverance team all prayed for him but they all felt that he had no evil spirit. Another pastor he consulted also told him that he's got no (evil) spirit.

When he came to me, I prayed for discernment; you need discernment in such cases. He would start coughing and spitting when we began praying. He also went into the ritual of praying for himself (self-exorcism). His strange reaction to prayer could have been due to demonic causes and so I prayed for discernment. As we talked I felt in my heart that there was no (evil) spirit. I sensed that he was a perfectionist and was feeling unworthy because he thought he had failed in his ministry. This was confirmed when I offered him a tissue. There was no saliva on the tissue. He was able to terminate the symptoms at will. I shared with him my assessment and he agreed with it. He was finding some excuse for his low self-esteem. His manifestation was a learned thing, for example, his sweaty palms. Also his wife was frustrated with him. So, his problem was an emotional thing. He agreed with what I said. He subsequently improved.

P11 describes this ability as "discerning the human spirit". According to him, the pastor has to employ his gift of discernment to distinguish between the subject's "own spirit", or the "spirits of others" (living persons who are strongly influencing him), or evil spirits possessing the person. He would often ask the question, "Is it his own human spirit, or is it another's, or is it an evil spirit?". Apparently he will know by intuition.

This alleged ability to discern is supplemented by an examination of the history of the subject. Many of the pastors mentioned that the background and history of the person helps them to decide whether he is demonised (P5). According to P11, the history, behaviour patterns and relationships of the person are important in the process of discernment. The pastors usually look for aspects in the history that they think are important. This is based on the beliefs they have regarding the kind of activities and situations that lead to demon possession or increased susceptibility to it as we saw in the last chapter. In other words their beliefs about possession will determine the kind of questions they will ask the subjects. Inevitably, any history of occult involvement or possession of charmed objects will be taken as strongly suggesting demon possession.

#### 4.3.4 Making Sure: "Testing the Spirit"

While recognising the difficulties they sometimes face in

differentiating demon possession from other conditions, the pastors have developed some tests to "confirm" the presence of an evil spirit. Certain responses to these tests are considered to be pathognomonic of demon possession. We have already mentioned some of these in the earlier discussion.

1. Demon possessed people will have difficulty or inability to say the name of "Jesus" (P2). For P10, if the counsellee can say the name, his problems are not demonic but probably emotional.
2. Antagonistic responses to prayer, Scripture, and Bible reading because such activities disturb the evil spirit (P3, P11, P12, P13).
3. "Testing the spirit" or "Spiritual Test" (P6, 7). Heng calls it the "Demon Test" and describes it:

Applying the Demon Test - 1 John 4:1-4, 1 Cor 15:3,4

Go on with questions about the Lord Jesus Christ - the Devil's most fearsome Enemy!

- a) Ask who is Jesus? Where was Jesus born?
- b) Do you confess that Jesus has come in the flesh?
- c) Who was Jesus' mother?
- d) When did Jesus come to earth?
- e) How did Jesus die?
- f) What came out of Jesus' wounds when He died on the Cross?
- g) What is the significance of Jesus' precious blood?
- h) What does the precious blood of Jesus do for us? for you?
- i) Three days after Jesus was crucified, what happened to Him?
- j) Where is Jesus now?
- k) Do you believe that Jesus is coming again?
- l) What will Jesus do when He comes again?

N.B. All these questions centre on the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Return of the Lord Jesus Christ - the Heart of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Heng asserts that if a person is "truly demonised, he will be very reluctant to hear about Jesus, much less talk about Him". He instructs the deliverance minister to "look him straight into the eyes" when asking the subject the above questions. The following reactions to the questions are apparently indications of demonisation: screaming, restlessness, whining, innocent,

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 3.

moronic look, pretending to faint, fiercely staring, gritting the teeth, sounding fearful or annoyed, pretending to ignore, becoming very quiet or striking back physically. Heng urges the deliverance minister not to be fooled by any refusal to answer; instead he is to persist with his questions, even commanding the subject in Jesus' name to answer the questions.

This concept of testing the spirits is derived from New Testament passages such as 1 John 4:1-4 and largely takes the form of a doctrinal test that tends to resemble a catechistic or baptismal examination. The verbal as well as the non-verbal responses to the questions are used as indicators of possession.

Besides such doctrinal questioning, other markers of possession as described by the pastors have already been mentioned above. They include the "smell test" used by pastors such as P8 and P11 who claimed that possessed people would normally exude some kind of foul body or breath odour. This is apparently different from the normal odours of people. The ability to go without sleep, food and water is also considered as a classical sign of possession. Some pastors such as P10 are more or less sure that a person is possessed when a "spirit" in the person talks to him or reveals its name.

#### 4.4 Summary

1. The pastors' description of possession behaviour and their interpretative procedures are more or less consistent with their beliefs as set out in the previous chapter.

2. Possession behaviour is attributed to the "demons" that had invaded the subject. Therefore the pastors see personality and vocal changes, and fearful or antagonistic reactions to Christian symbols and doctrines (as they see them) as manifestations of the possessing spirit. The pastors have also identified what they think are some typical behaviour patterns of various spirits, mostly having to do with deities in popular Asian religions, or with animal identities or characteristics. The spirits are also believed to cause disturbances in the normal physical, emotional, social, and intellectual functioning of the victim. Unusual

features were also mentioned; including poltergeist type occurrences (technical malfunctions), and the display of what was assumed to be extraordinary physical and psychic powers.

3. The pastors were aware that there were some similarities between possession behaviour and emotional or mental disorders and that sometimes possession behaviour can be faked. However, when a "demon" speaks or behaves through the victim, or when there is a strong reaction against the Christian faith, they would almost invariably judge that the person was demon possessed.

4. To aid their assessment they use various "tests". Certain typical "demonic" behaviour patterns and vocal responses would weigh heavily towards a diagnosis of demon possession. Such is the process by which the pastors generally determine whether a person is demon possessed. Often relying on their own intuition or discernment, sometimes seeking medical and psychiatric opinion, and often employing particular doctrinal and religious tests, the pastors eventually make their decision. This assessment then determines how they set out to help the "possessed" which we will see in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 PASTORAL PRACTICES IN DEALING WITH THE "POSSESSED"

Once the pastors ascertain that the person is demon possessed or demonised, they typically arrange a deliverance session in which they attempt to free the person from his or her demonic troubles. We will now look at the details of what goes on in these sessions and how the pastors go about to help the victim.

#### 5.1 Choosing the Venue for the "Deliverance Session"

Several pastors indicated that it was best to carry out the deliverance sessions on the church premises (P1, P2, P3, P6, P8, P12, P13, P16).

##### 5.1.1 Reasons for Choosing the Church

Many reasons were offered to explain this preference. Firstly, because the deliverance sessions can often be noisy, pastors (P5, P6) feel that there would be less problems with the public if the sessions are held in the church rather than in the Housing Development Board flats in which most Singaporeans live<sup>1</sup>.

P6 explains,

Well, I prefer to conduct the deliverance sessions in church. This is for practical reasons. The victim can be quite noisy and violent and the sessions can be quite long. So we don't want to disturb the neighbourhood. This is avoided when we have it (the deliverance session) in church.

Secondly, many of the pastors feel that having the family members of the victim around during the deliverance session may be disadvantageous and unhelpful. One pastor (P1) explained that it may lead to embarrassment of the victim in the eyes of his family members. According to him the person "can have psychological problems later on" in his relationship with his family since they

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<sup>1</sup> These flats are built in a very compact way and noise travels easily within these estates.

would have "seen him possessed and under the control of demons". Another pastor (P5) added that watching a parent or relative manifesting symptoms of possession and going through a deliverance may be quite traumatic to a child.

I prefer not to have the session at the person's home. It is better to have it in church. In the person's home, when the children are at home, it is not very good. I remember a case - a lady who was demonised. She requested prayer and I had to do it in my house. She was quite violent.

According to him, the frightening and violent scenes in a deliverance session rule out having children around and this would be difficult to observe in the victim's home. Even if the children are kept in a separate room, it is often impossible to keep them from hearing what may be very disturbing sounds.

One other reason against conducting a deliverance session at the subject's home was explained in terms of the danger of "transference":

I think it is better to have the session at church. It's better than the (victim's) home. At home family members are around and some of them may be non-believers. Because of these they can be subject to spiritual attacks if we are not careful. The departing evil spirits may attack them since they are not protected...So if we have no choice and have to have the session at the person's home, we must bind the spirits so that they will not attack the other members of the family especially the unbelievers. (P8)

Therefore, to avoid such "disturbances at home" pastors prefer to conduct sessions away from the victim's home but if they have no choice in this matter, they will keep the family members from witnessing the proceedings.

Having the deliverance session in church is believed to give the victim a clear choice of whether he wants help or not, and this is supposed to be very important in determining the outcome of the session, according to P3:

Normally I expect them (the subjects of possession) to come to church. If they come, it means they want to be helped...they want to be delivered. And that is half the battle won. If they don't want to and we force the demons out, the demons will usually return.

Almost all the pastors believe that this willingness on the part of the victim is crucial in deliverance ministry and many would not proceed with the deliverance if such cooperation is not forthcoming (ie. when the victim is in his normal state). Philip Heng offers similar reasons for choosing the church as the venue for deliverance sessions:

The interview should best be held at the church.

a) Coming to the church shows desire and seriousness on the part of the patient or interested parties to see the patient well.

b) Shows faith and trust in our God.

c) Gives respect to our God - by expecting patient to come to God's House (emphasis his)<sup>1</sup>.

Although most of the pastors were careful to stress that their choice of the church for a venue had nothing to do with any sacramental ideas about the church being a holy place, at least one of them suggested that it "symbolised the presence of God" (P3) and that this was helpful to both pastor and counsellee.

Conducting the session in church also apparently gives the pastor a greater sense of control according to P2. The pastor has greater flexibility and control in deciding where, how, and for how long the proceedings are held. He also has a greater say in who participates or observes the session. These are some of the advantages of territorial familiarity and control.

#### 5.1.2 Private Session or Public Event

The church is also preferred because it tends to be "quieter and more private" than a typical family flat (P4). Many of the pastors ( P1, P2, P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14) stressed the importance of privacy, even in the church, when conducting a deliverance session. This is to avoid any stigma that may eventually be attached to the victim as a person who was demon possessed (P9, P10). (In one church when I asked about the possibility of meeting some former victims of possession in his church, the pastor replied that many of them had left the church for other churches mostly because they were embarrassed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing with Demonic Cases", p. 1.

experience). For similar reasons, one pastor (P5) made it a point to conduct deliverance sessions in church privately to "avoid any sensationalising of this thing".

Privacy was also said to be important because of the confidential and sometimes embarrassing aspects of deliverance ministry according to P8:

It is better to have these sessions in private. Many of the things revealed during the session are of a confidential nature and it may not be good for the person or his family members for such confidential matters to become public knowledge. Some of the manifestations can also be quite shameful, you know, like ladies pulling up their skirts. It is for this reason that I prefer private sessions.

One pastor (P14) also believes that a public session increases the "chances of misdiagnosis" for according to him, the "context" can sometimes "create the diagnosis". Not all the pastors, however, shy away from public deliverance sessions in church. One pastor (P3) saw a place for public sessions as an object lesson for his members:

Sometimes it can be quite disruptive or disturbing. If manifestations happen after the (worship) service and when we do deliverance, the others wonder what is happening. So I usually do it (deliverance session) in a room in the church. If manifestations occur in public, I'll have the person brought to this room. Unless of course, my intent is to help the members (of the church) see the power of God. If that is the case I'll conduct a public session in front of the members for them to appreciate that demons exist and to be convinced of God's power over them.

Such public demonstrations are employed by some of the pastors to warn and educate their members regarding the demonic world and the "unseen spiritual warfare". P15 asserts: "My preference is, I'd rather demonstrate the power and the presence of God to my church members".

Thus we see that most of the pastors preferred to conduct their deliverance sessions in church and these sessions would be held in private unless some of them believed that a public session would help to educate and strengthen the beliefs of their members. But some were also open to conducting the sessions wherever necessary. P15 declared:

Generally I go for private sessions more than public sessions because I don't want to frighten others. But I'll take the devil on anywhere, but not on the enemy's territory of course. So, no deliverance in temples and no cursing of temples. But other than that, anywhere.

Another pastor spoke of "custodied treatment" in a hospital when the victim is excessively violent and needs sedation and restraint. In such cases, he would pray for the person's deliverance in the hospital. Yet another pastor said that he usually sees possessed people in his counselling centre as they are referred to him. Nevertheless the most likely place in which deliverance is carried out is the church (prayer room, sanctuary, and pastor's office).

## 5.2 A Matter of Timing

Many of the pastors related that they would deal with possession "then and there" (P2).

I handle the cases as they turn up. I don't wait to deal with the problem. You can't wait...with the person manifesting and sometimes becoming violent. So (I deal with the cases) as and when the manifestations occur. (P1)

One pastor attributed this need for urgency to the condition and state of the victim who may exhibit suicidal tendencies.

Cases of demon possession must be handled as soon as possible. To wait too long can be dangerous because some cases are clearly suicidal. If we leave the case too long they may end up with a suicide or hurt themselves badly. (P16)

Another pastor, while mentioning that the pastor has to respond promptly to any manifestation of demon possession, also stressed that he would not be dictated to by the "demons" as to how long the session will continue. He feels that it is important to set some control over the timing of the proceedings.

If a person is demonised, there should be no waiting (to deal with the problem). You've got to attend to the person as soon as possible. But it may not be necessary to go round the clock. It is within our control to set the limits. We can bind the spirit when we want to stop the deliverance session so that we can continue at a later time. We bind the spirit by naming it. Then it won't disturb or torment the person until the next deliverance

session. Initially, when I was green (inexperienced), I spent a lot of time going round the clock. We would spend a whole night and longer attempting to cast out the spirit. Naturally we were very exhausted and it was very difficult for the team members as they were working people and needed to go to work the next day. So we gradually learned that we can bind the spirit and put it out of action until a later time. We must not be taken for a ride by the evil spirit. (P6)

While some pastors would respond urgently or promptly to people who are possessed others would be more cautious. One reason for this would be to allow time for a proper assessment of the situation and to decide on what course of action to take as the following pastor explained:

When we deal with the problem depends on our therapeutic orientation and it depends on the urgency of the situation. In such cases (of possession) I think there should be no intervention until a fair assessment has been made. Often there is no need for any hurry. (P14)

There is also the question of maintaining control over the situation and on the timing and duration of the deliverance sessions as the following pastors explain;

One pastor believes in twenty four hours surveillance. The patient is kept in the pastor's house and observed and monitored. I don't think this is advisable both for the pastor and the patient. It will be too taxing for the pastor and it is not good for the patient - later he won't be able to cope. If the patient is violent we can give custodied treatment. I'll get him admitted at Woodbridge or NUH<sup>1</sup> and deal with the problem from there. Yes, as to timing and when we should deliver the person, I am usually cautious. (P5)

I will dictate the time. Sometimes the demons use delay tactics to lead the counsellor astray or to tire the counsellor. So I am very careful not to be misled. To avoid this I usually counsel such people by appointment. This way I can have control over the timing. (P4)

P4 further pointed out that he needed some time initially to interview the subject of possession to establish his areas of need and to understand the underlying problems. According to him

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<sup>1</sup> Woodbridge Hospital, which is the only psychiatric hospital in Singapore, and National University Hospital, a teaching Hospital with a Department of Psychological Medicine. Admission at Woodbridge has a far greater stigma than in a psychiatric ward at NUH.

there are many phases in dealing with a possessed person, the initial phases being: "initial encounter", "initial interview", and the "actual session"; one therefore has to have some preliminary time before any deliverance is attempted.

Other reasons offered by the pastors for some delay in time initially before exorcism have to do with the preparation needed on the part of both the deliverance team member and the subject of possession. P15 said that time may be necessary to prepare the subject adequately for the actual deliverance session.

Sometimes the manifestations (of possession) occur during the worship service but at such times I refuse to be distracted in worship. The problem will have to be dealt with later. Usually I will give time for the person to be prepared. He must get ready, he must want to be treated. For example, he may be gripped by fear. We will have to extend grace to him and build up his faith. When he is ready, then the deliverance will be effective.

The deliverance team members can also join in the preparations of the victim, according to one pastor (P11). He advocates a time of initial counselling "to help the person know what has invaded him". In addition, he believes that sometimes a period of fasting and prayer preceding the deliverance session may be helpful as "it shows earnestness" on the part of the subject in wanting to be delivered. The deliverance team members, it is said, can also fast and pray, especially when it promises to be a "difficult case", as Heng points out using the example of the exorcism of the "lunatic child" found in Mt 17:14-21; Mk 9:17-29; Lk 9:37-42; according to him, "there is a need for prayer and fasting in exorcism - at times"<sup>1</sup>.

For several reasons therefore, some of the pastors have evolved a more controlled environment in dealing with people who are "possessed". What began as tentative and awkward reactions to possession grew into more confident responses in which the pastor increasingly "called the shots" even in the matter of timing and duration of deliverance sessions. At the Anglican Church of Our Saviour, deliverance sessions are held on a weekly basis. Since 1987, the church has decided to organise the many exorcisms and

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Demonism in the New Testament", pp. 7-8.

deliverances that were taking place by designating Wednesday evenings as the time in which people who required deliverance were prayed for. Appointments are made for counselees to meet with any of the seventeen trained deliverance team members in the church. The minister explains:

We like to set our own time to deal with cases of demonisation. And so for the last three or four years we have set aside Wednesday evenings for deliverance sessions. We have an organised team to handle the cases and I think this is a more systematic way of doing things.<sup>1</sup>

According to the leader of the deliverance team in the church, Douglas Koh, his co-leader makes all the appointments linking counsellor with counsellee. The programme for the evening is as follows:

7.30 pm. Time of Worship  
8.00 pm. Ministry in different rooms  
9.30 pm. Sessions end<sup>2</sup>

Koh explained that if there was a need for a further time for deliverance, the session for the evening would be adjourned and the proceedings would be continued the following week. According to him about four to six persons would be seen on a typical Wednesday evening and about three of them would be "new cases". Such cases would usually be referred to them by the pastors of the church when they meet them in the course of their pastoral ministry.

### 5.3 Deliverance Teams

All the pastors preferred to work in teams:

...there should be at least two members...(P8)

...we usually have two or three in a team...(P9)

...we operate in pairs. It is a biblical practice, and always the same sex unless there is an emergency. (P12)

...we organise a group of about three to five people when the need arises. (P6)

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<sup>1</sup> Rev Derek Hong, in an interview on 26 April 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Koh, interview on 26 April 1991.

### 5.3.1. Reasons for Working in Teams

Several reasons were put forth for this preference. Many of the pastors mentioned that it was better to encounter the "demonic" as a group rather than as individuals because of the strength of numbers (P8). Besides such "moral support" (P4) in a group, many pastors saw the strength of the deliverance team in terms of the "power of corporate prayer" (P9, P10). This is especially so when there is unity in the team (P16); according to P8, "the team members must flow in the Spirit" and this would provide strength and unity which are apparently necessary for a successful outcome.

It is good to work in a team situation. It is good to have intercessors around. When you have a team, you will have people available who can pray and intercede, and this is extremely helpful in the deliverance ministry. (P11)

For the same reasons one pastor has at least two persons in his teams, "one to talk" to the spirit and subject, "and one to pray" (P9). Another related purpose for working in groups, according to P15, is so that "the whole thing is not so frightening". The presence of several people in the deliverance team is also alleged to aid in the creation of a "spirit of worship", which, according to P15 was needed in encountering the "demonic":

I prefer to work in teams in our church. The team members provide a back up team in worshipping the Lord as we proceed with the deliverance. They will bring the presence of God into the situation and thus make a hard time for the demons.

The pastors also prefer team ministry because the deliverance sessions can reportedly be long and very tiring (P9, P10, P11).

Deliverance ministry can be physically very tiring and that is why I prefer to work with a team. I remember once, we had a long seven hour session. It would have been very difficult and not advisable to have a session like that when you are alone. (P1)

I prefer to work with a team because this kind of thing can be very taxing and one person will not be able to handle it well if he is alone. (P5)

This can be a tedious job and for one person to handle it on his own can be very difficult. Also it is very time consuming. It is better to share out the workload and the

responsibility. (P6)

I think in deliverance work it is wise to work in a team...It is emotionally draining and one needs the support of others (P14).

It is also believed by some of the pastors that working in groups helped in the process of making decisions, that is, making the diagnosis and deciding on the course of action to take. According to P5, "discernment is easier in a group". P14 agrees and feels that a group facilitates consultation and minimises mistakes by overenthusiastic deliverance workers. This is particularly so, P15 believes, because of the deceptions of the "demons".

Sometimes the demons have a number of tricks and will go on to deceive us. It is therefore helpful to have a team because those who are not directly speaking to the demons can pray and discern what is going on. Their input can be very helpful during the session. (P15)

A few other practical reasons were also mentioned by the pastors for their preference for deliverance teams. "It is prudent," according to P1, "to have a team who will also be witnesses of what is happening in the room, especially if the subject is a lady". P4 agrees that a group prevents any "scandal" from developing. The presence of extra hands can also apparently be put to practical use, for instance when they are needed to restrain the subject when he turns violent or restless (P4).

Some pastors consider deliverance groups as training grounds for the newly initiated (P9, P10). For P15, deliverance groups provide:

a good learning experience for my members. It provides exposure for the others. It is like Jesus and his disciples. He brought them around and allowed them to watch himself at work. The disciples learned from their observations. They learned by participation. Similarly I have others in my team to let them watch and learn. They learn by doing. There will be mistakes here and there but I let them learn from their mistakes.

### 5.3.2 The People in the Deliverance Teams

We looked at the pastors' preference for deliverance teams and

their many reasons for this choice. Now we shall look at who constitute these teams. To begin with, most of the pastors were or are still leaders in the deliverance teams in their churches. Some have relinquished active leadership to others for the pursuit of other pastoral duties, especially in rapidly growing churches. Nevertheless such pastors still exert much control over what takes place in terms of deliverance ministry. For example one pastor wanted to be around when I interviewed the leader of his deliverance team "to answer the theological questions" and he corrected his colleague on some matters during the interview.

The other members of the deliverance teams are those in the church who have been selected by the pastors for several reasons to be involved in this kind of work in the church. Two of the pastors reported that they had clearly defined membership in these teams. P1's church had a team comprising "about thirty to forty members" out of whom smaller teams would be formed to handle various cases. In P12's case the church had a deliverance team of almost twenty identified members. These were "trained" to deal with cases of possession. In the other churches, there were no definite deliverance groups.

We don't have a permanent team in the church. (P15)

There is no definite group in the church as the deliverance team. There is an ad hoc group but no regular team. There are certainly no professional exorcists as such in the church. Deliverance is part of the pastoral care of the church. (P11)

I work with others but there is no particular group in my church. We have an unofficial group but there is no particular training programme or something like that. The reason for that is that I have limited resources. (P2)

One pastor (P7) said that he has medical doctors (but no psychiatrists) in his deliverance teams while another (P6) said that he tries to have some medical professionals in his teams. However, the majority of pastors admitted that they had no medically trained people in their teams. Some of them declared that they would make up for this by consulting doctors if they felt that it was necessary (P12, P13, P16). According to P5, he would consult a doctor if it was a "long case". P11 mentioned that he would consult a psychiatrist if he thought that the

patient was "mentally weak". Some pastors however, though they consult medical doctors, take the medical opinions with a "pinch of salt" as P15 asserts,

I sometimes refer to the psychiatrists and psychologists in my church especially if there is a possibility of some kind of psychiatric problem in the person...But I am still the boss. I have the final say about the condition of the person.

One pastor (P14), though, stressed strongly that "professionals are definitely recommended" to be part of the deliverance team to avoid mistakes.

We shall now look at what sort of people the pastors look for to form their deliverance teams. The most frequently mentioned quality required was that such people should be "mature" (P4, P5, P9, P10, P15). This was explained in several ways. For example, P9 and P10 insisted that "brand new Christians" should not engage in this ministry, members "must have walked with the Lord for a while". For another pastor maturity also included the ability to remain calm and not be afraid when dealing with the "demonic".

Only the more mature Christians should be included in the teams. In one case, there was this problem of transference. Well the spirit told the group that it would possess somebody in the team. Some of the team members were quite frightened until someone said to the spirit, "It's a lie". In another case, a charismatic group was trying to exorcise a spirit inflicting a lady. They asked her to vomit as part of the exorcism procedure. Instead of the patient vomiting, one of the team members did. (P5)

P11 thinks that transference can actually take place and stresses that "no weak fearful Christians" should be in the deliverance team because "they can get infected" by the evil spirits<sup>1</sup>; thus members must be "strong". Maturity, for P1, meant that the person should not be

a struggling person. At certain points, I will advise this kind of person to stay out of the team until they have sorted out their own problems. Otherwise it may be a hindrance to the team and to the ministry and there may be problems. (P1)

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<sup>1</sup> a fear shared by Robert Petitpierre, Exorcising Devils, p. 161.

Three pastors (P2, P9, P10) pointed out the necessity for team members to be "discerning". Members are expected to be "persons who understand the spirit realm" (P9). Some pastors (P9, P10, P16) also mentioned that team members must have been adequately trained; this includes training "in everything from praying to encouragement" (P9). Except for two churches which had a more formalised training procedure and more clearly defined membership in the teams, most of the other churches have very flexible arrangements for training. Training mostly consisted of "on the job training" (P12), observing and eventually participating in the deliverance teams. One Anglican pastor said training also includes attending talks on spiritual warfare and taking the module on deliverance ministry which is part of the diocesan lay training programme.

According to some of the pastors (P1, P12, P13), team members must also be able to show love and compassion.

Those involved must have a caring heart. They must be prepared to love the person long after the session (P1)

Others insisted that team members "must be strong in the Lord and prayerful" (P8), and "must know the Word" since the Bible can be effectively used in the deliverance ministry (P9, P10). One pastor (P6) expected the members to be "holy". While some pastors felt that there should not be "professional exorcists" in the church (eg P11), and that this ministry of exorcism should be open to any committed Christian, many also felt that it was not for all to participate. There is an element of self-selection in that pastors expect team members to have "a sense of being called" to this kind of ministry (P4). On this basis, and on the basis of the qualities described above, the pastors then "select" their team members (P3). One pastor stressed that it was important who was around during the deliverance and explained his "ministry of exclusion".

I use the presence of the Lord to minister. And that is why I have to exercise the ministry of exclusion...Certain people don't want to be (should not be?) around. They will be a hindrance to the ministry. We see this in Jesus' healing of Jairus' daughter. Jesus excluded many while ministering. So those who will hinder the ministry, I will ask them to stay out. (P15)

## 5.4 The Deliverance Session

We shall now look at the pastor's description of what happens at the deliverance sessions and why they have these sessions.

### 5.4.1 The Purpose of Deliverance Sessions

Almost all the pastors stressed that deliverance is only meaningful in the context of salvation. One pastor explains:

There must be a clear cut goal for what you are trying to do. The goal is salvation and evangelism - for the person and his family. If we lose track of this goal, then the pastoral ministry will be affected. What we do in deliverance must have this clear goal in mind. (P16)

They believe that there is no point in delivering somebody from demons if the person has not given his life to Jesus. Many pastors referred to Jesus' statement in the NT that exorcised demons will return to a person with more demons if the person's heart has been swept clean but not filled by the presence of God (Mt 12:43-45; Lk 11:24-26). Hence, many pastors argued that they would not proceed with an exorcism if the victim does not believe in Christ and "pray to receive Christ".

The person must pray to receive Christ or at least agree to do so. And he must confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is central. If he does not agree or refuses to do this I will cease the session. I will not proceed further because there is no point to go any further. (P15)

The person must recognise his real problem and close the door (to the demons) by receiving Jesus Christ and committing his life to Jesus Christ. There is this evangelistic element in this ministry. It is more important than deliverance...I don't do deliverance in non-Christians unless they are willing to change and convert (to the Christian faith). (P11)

Many pastors also feel that it is important for the family of the victim to share his motivation in wanting to be healed and his positive response to the Christian faith (P2, P6, P8, P9, P10). For this reason, one pastor stresses that he requires the family members to accept the Christian faith too; otherwise that may become a hindrance in his work:

If the problem is something spiritual (demonic), I will tell the person and his family about the Gospel. I will also tell them about spiritual warfare etc. And I will see if the family prays to receive Christ. If they don't, I don't proceed (with the exorcism). There was a young man in National Service . One of his friends died. This young man was startled by the sudden death of his friend. Then, later another friend also died. This affected our young friend and he went to a temple for help. He saw a medium who said that the problem was that this fellow's soul had gone for a walk. At home his head would be fixed to the floor. The medium released him with a snap of his finger. He wanted money from this family. You see, this medium had sent a manipulative spirit to disturb this young man. Troubled, he went to many temples. Early one morning, this guy's head started shaking endlessly. The sister finally prayed to receive Christ. Then I went to visit this man. His house had thirty idols... (P7)

The cooperation of the family members may also be required later for the abstention from certain religious practices. For example, P6 said that he would not carry on with a deliverance if the family members do not agree not to consult mediums later on after the session.

Thus we note that the pastors do not see deliverance and exorcism as an end by itself but as a means to the larger purpose of seeing the victim and his family converted to Christianity. Thus they make it a point to explain whenever they can to the victim about "the reality of God, Satan, and the fact that Satan has been defeated" (P1) before proceeding with the deliverance.

#### 5.4.2 The Method of Deliverance

Some pastors declared that they did not have any particular method during the deliverance sessions (P3). P10 described his sessions as "a simple process" with "no set ritual"<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless there are certain elements and procedures that were commonly found in the pastoral descriptions of the deliverance sessions.

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<sup>1</sup> Christian rituals are found in Philip Weller (ed), The Roman Ritual, (Roman Catholic); & Robert Petitpierre, Exorcism, (Anglican). For Chinese ritual strategies in the Taoist tradition, see John Lagerwey, Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History, pp. 272f.

### A) A Time of Teaching and Instruction

Some pastors would spend some time at the beginning of the session instructing the subject as to what was happening. One pastor listed some of the things he would normally say:

I would brief the counsellee - what deliverance is all about, how in Jesus Christ's time he did many things including casting out evil spirits. I will tell them about certain things they must comply with in order for the deliverance to be successful, for example, forgiveness, renunciation, repentance, calling on Jesus Christ, affirming Jesus' lordship - how he can release himself to be freed from curses. After all this I will ask him to pray. (P12)

### B) Prayer

All the pastors mentioned prayer as an important part of the deliverance session. It is said to be useful at several points of the session. For instance, one pastor (P8) mentioned that he would start the session with "prayer and worship". Team members would be told that "if anyone gets a word from the Lord, then that person will be the leader" even though the team has a recognised regular leader. Such a leader would apparently do most of the talking while the others would join in support and prayer. According to this pastor, "everyone must cooperate and follow". Thus prayer, in this case, is said to establish leadership and unity in the team.

Prayer is also said to be helpful because of its tendencies to produce "demonic manifestations" (P1). It is believed therefore to bring the battle out into the open.

Usually praying in the spirit will bring out manifestations; foaming, falling, shaking. When we call out the spirits, more manifestations will occur: sticking out of the tongue, rolling eye balls etc. (P8)

When such manifestations occur during prayer it is an indication to the pastors that a demon or a group of demons are at work in the victim. The pastors then intervene accordingly. If there are no clear hints as to the diagnosis, prayer can also be helpful according to P9.

I will talk with them (the subjects) and pray with them. I will observe and pray to understand what the problem is...It is a process of praying and talking. This helps us in discerning the real situation. We can't just go by external signs. Satan can imitate even speaking in tongues. So we need to pray to help us discern what the real problem is (P9)

Prayer is also considered by the pastors to be important when expelling the "demon" from the victim. One pastor (P9) related how he uses prayer to "bind the spirit" while others described how the team members would support in prayer when the leader casts out the "demon". The subject is also asked to pray at appropriate moments, for example, when asking for God's forgiveness, or when committing his life to Christ, and so on. Prayer is thus considered by Heng as one of four main weapons in the hands of the Christian who does battle with Satan<sup>1</sup>.

### C) Songs and Hymns

Songs and hymns would also be often sung at deliverance sessions according to the pastors. Hymns and Christian songs, like prayer, are believed to produce demonic manifestations and thus aid in establishing the diagnosis. The demons are said to "react" in such occasions because they are disturbed by these songs (P16). According to P8, sometimes the "demon pretends to leave but when we begin to sing, the manifestations come on again".

As to what type of songs are sung, P5 revealed that they usually choose those that speak about the name of Jesus or his power. Two pastors described these songs as "spiritual warfare songs" and "songs of victory" (P9, P10). Heng has listed some titles:

#### Songs/Choruses Commonly Used

- a) There Is Power In The Blood
- b) In The Name Of Jesus, We Have The Victory
- c) Blessed Be the Name
- d) His Name Is Wonderful
- e) He Is Lord, He Is Lord
- f) At The Cross
- g) Living, He Loved Me
- h) Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Fighting the Demons: Focussing Faith Through Prayer on the Victim", p. 3. Heng's other weapons are the Scriptures, hymns & choruses, and the Lord's Supper.

- g) Victory, Victory In The Blood Of Calvary
- j) Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest Name I Know
- k) Crown Him With Many Crowns<sup>1</sup>

At times the subjects would be asked to sing along; occasionally they would be able to do so, at other times they are said to produce strong reactions against the singing.

The songs are believed to create an atmosphere of worship in which the presence of God is felt and manifested. To achieve this some members are reported to "sing in the Spirit", involving singing in tongues (P8). One pastor stressed and testified that singing and worship itself can directly result in deliverance. He told the following story to illustrate:

Hilda was a woman who had severe manifestations. She would suffer from unconscious attacks when she would go into coma that would last for a few days at a time. So we were asked to help her. We tried delivering her. In the beginning the demons instructed us to do many things. They said that if this or that thing was done they would leave the person. At first we were taken in by them and followed their instructions. Then I realised that generals don't take orders from privates. So I had the group stand up and we started worshipping the Lord. We ignored the devil. And sure enough deliverance followed. As we were worshipping, I saw something like snow flakes falling from above. It was a very beautiful sight. Fantastic. The snow flakes floated down and as they touched this woman she was delivered... As far as I know she has had no relapse since then. (P15)

#### D) Using the Bible

The Bible is also frequently used in deliverance sessions by the pastors (P5, P6, P8, P16). It is believed that, like prayer and hymns, reading the Bible can produce strong reactions from the "demons" (P16). Besides helping to identify the presence of spirits, the Bible is also used as an offensive tool in the deliverance proceedings. P6 calls the Bible "the sword of the Spirit" and urges team members to rely on it when they engage in deliverance ministry. Philip Heng has termed certain Bible passages as "spiritual ammunition":

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 8.

Recommended passages of Scripture

- a) Psalm 32 - Blessing of sins forgiven
- b) Psalm 31 - Trust in God
- c) Psalm 29 - Power in God
- d) Psalm 27 - God our light and salvation
- e) Psalm 23 - The Shepherd Psalm
- f) Psalm 51 - Plea for God's mercy
- g) Psalm 57 - Plea for God's mercy
- h) Psalm 56 - Confidence in God
- i) Psalm 62 - Confidence in God
- j) Rev 12:7-12 - war in Heaven, defeat of Satan
- k) Rev 20:1-10 - Satan in Lake of Fire
- l) 1 John 4:1-4 - Testing the spirits
- m) James 4:6-10 - Secret of victory
- n) 1 Peter 5:6-9 - Resisting the Enemy<sup>1</sup>

Such passages are used in challenging the "demons" as well as counselling and encouraging the subject. They also serve as guidance for the team members. Besides using Scripture as "spiritual ammunition" in the encounter with the demonic, some pastors use it as a means of assessment of how successful the deliverance has been. We saw previously (4.2.3.c) how one pastor associated the progressive ability of the subject to read Psalm 23 with her progressive deliverance from "evil spirits".

E) Talking to the "Spirits"

Another important aspect of the deliverance sessions is the conversation that goes on between the deliverance team members and the "evil spirits". Though many pastors think that they should not speak to the spirits (P1, P3) or should "try to avoid it" (P12, P13, P7, P9), they nevertheless admit that often it is unavoidable.

It was reported by the pastors that often the "demon" believed to be in the person starts speaking in a voice different from the normal voice of the victim. In such circumstances the pastors have two choices, either to ignore this voice or to respond to it. One pastor who did not believe in any value in conversing with these "spirits" explained it in terms of the deceptive nature of the spirits.

No, we should not talk to the spirits. After all, they are

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 8.

liars and out to deceive you. For some people talking to spirits may be attractive as it promises to reveal some things about the spirit world. But we can easily be led astray if we believe what the spirits say. So there is no point talking to the spirits in the hope that they will say something useful to us... Remember that Satan is out to confuse us. (P1)

Another pastor (P4) used a slightly different explanation; he felt that since deliverance ministry should focus on the victim rather than the "demon", one should avoid any conversation with the "demon".

Discernment and experience is needed when we deal with evil spirits. We should not engage in unnecessary conversations with these evil spirits. If it keeps talking, I will insist on the spirit to keep quiet. I prefer to concentrate on the counsellee more than on the particular demon. (P4)

According to this pastor, a further reason for discouraging conversations with spirits was that what they say may serve to confuse or affect the team members negatively.

We should not take what the demons say seriously. Sometimes they can throw the team into discord. I remember a case where the evil spirit said, "I've got something against you (P4), I know your secret." Now this was very disturbing and some of the team members were confused. I called off the session and spoke to the team members. It was only after we talked and realised what the demon was trying to do that we resumed the session... Sometimes the spirit can threaten the team members - that it will harm them or their family members. (P4)

Some pastors refrain from talking to the spirits because they want to prevent any "plea bargaining" on the part of the "demons" (P11). P11 feels that the task of the deliverance team is "to exorcise" and not to engage in "plea bargaining" or any other conversation or negotiations with them. For him, the demons are "lying spirits" and therefore "usually it is not wise to converse with them".

Nevertheless, other pastors felt that conversations with the "demons" can be useful sometimes. For example, some try to identify the demons from such conversations.

I will ask the demons to name themselves and how many there are in the person. The names will reveal what sort of things the person has been dabbling in. Such information is

useful in deliverance ministry... but there should not be too much conversation with the spirits. (P10)

We can ask the demon to identify itself. According to some senior people (in the deliverance ministry) knowing the name of the demon provides us with a hold on the demon. (P5)

I may try to identify the demon. It may take some time to reveal its name but this practice is scriptural. It will help us to command the spirit to leave. (P16)

It is believed by many pastors that knowing the name of the "spirit" will help in its expulsion from the victim. Thus in Tim's case (3.2.2), the pastor and his team spent a long time before the "spirit" told them its name, San Kah Chye whom the pastor describes as "the fat laughing Buddha...second only to Buddha"<sup>1</sup>. In this session, of which tapes exist, the team members kept insisting that the demon identify itself<sup>2</sup>.

Not all pastors however agree on this. One pastor (P2) felt that the identities revealed by the "spirits" may not be true or helpful to know in the deliverance process.

Sometimes the spirits reveal their identities. They tell us their names. But I have a healthy scepticism about this and so I don't engage in too much conversation. After all, the spirits have no real identities, so whatever they reveal about their identities is of no real help...if we do it properly, the spirit can be forced to tell the truth. (P2)

It is for the same reason that one pastor (P6) who used to ask the "demons" for their names has gradually changed his mind about it.

You can ask the name of the spirit. You say, "In the name of Jesus Christ, tell us your name." Sometimes they tell, sometimes they don't tell. This asking of names is a pattern we see in Jesus' ministry. The purpose for this is to help us in commanding the spirit to leave but now I think maybe it is not necessary. In some cases, we did ask some other things from the spirits but on looking back, I think this talking with the spirits may not be

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<sup>1</sup> Tan Eng Boo, "From Witchcraft to Christ", pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> I listened to the two tapes of the session. For a long time the team members asked repeatedly for the "demon" to identify itself. The response was often a loud howl, and sometimes, silence. At some points, the leader asked whether it was San Kah Chye. Finally "it" admitted to this.

necessary...because they lied. (P6)

Besides asking the "demons" for their names, some pastors believe that they can supply them with other forms of useful information such as the circumstances leading to the possession and the problems of the person.

Sometimes a dialogue is carried out (with the spirits). This may reveal the person's problems and may be helpful in psychotherapy and after-care in follow-up later on. (P15)

We can question the demons, for example, as to how they came in (to the person). This information can be useful so that later we can tell the victim not to go back to whatever caused the demons to enter him in the first place. (P16)

The general consensus among the pastors however is that conversation with the spirits should be kept to a minimum wherever possible mainly because whatever the spirits reveal and say may not be trustworthy or true information anyway. For this reason some pastors restrict their talking to the spirits to "rebuke them" and when casting them out (P9). In other words, they refuse to listen to what the spirits have to say. Others try sometimes to force the spirits to tell the truth by commands such as "In the name of Jesus, I command you to tell the truth".<sup>1</sup> Only one pastor had a totally different perspective and said that he would usually treat the "spirits" as being part of the person.

I tend to treat "spirits" as part of the person, the whole person. I go along with the history and consider the "spirits" and their manifestations as parts of the whole...I incorporate all these things in the way I help the person. (P14)

#### F) Talking to the Subject

During deliverance sessions, team members may also talk to the victim. Usually the purpose is to give instructions or

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<sup>1</sup> Eg. in the tape recording of the deliverance session for Tim (3.2.2).

exhortations to the subject of possession<sup>1</sup>. Exhortations will take the form of urging the victim to fight back against the "demon".

The patient will alternate between himself and the demonic power. Whenever he is conscious and himself, a lot of exhortation and encouragement is given. We will call on him to resist the devil. (P5)

It is believed by many pastors that the success or failure of the deliverance session depends greatly on the level of volitional involvement of the victim. According to P15, he often speaks "to the person and his mind" during the deliverance session and urges the person to "fight from inside, from his spirit". This apparently helps. Exhortations can also take the form of a call to make a commitment to Jesus Christ.

There will be two personalities speaking, the victim and the demon speaking through his voice. I will speak to both personalities...I will bind the demon. I will also speak to the person and get him to confess Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. I will ask him to say that Jesus is Lord. (P10)

Besides exhortations, instructions are also often given to the patient. They are told what to do and how to deal with whatever they may be feeling or going through in the session.

We have a checklist which we go through with the victim. It deals with the history of the person, and his involvement, both spiritual and moral. After that he is to remain silent. The counsellors then command the spirits to leave. The victim is told not to fight any feelings that he may be feeling such as retching. He is asked to let it happen...we usually have a bucket (lined) with plastic bags for this purpose. We tell the person to be relaxed and not to be fearful. (P12)

Much of the conversation of the deliverance team members takes the form of exhortations and instructions. In deliverance sessions I have observed or listened to in tapes, the major part of conversations is that between team members and the "demons". Most of the time, attempts would be made to identify the "demons"

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<sup>1</sup> See Samuel & Donna Southard, "Demonizing and Mental Illness (III), Explanations and Treatment: Seoul", pp. 132-51; they found exhortation as an important pastoral method employed by Korean pastors in such cases.

or to expel them from the person. The "demons" would respond in various ways: resistance and opposition, threat, loud screams, and finally surrender and compliance with the instructions from the team members. Conversations with the subject are limited. A few pastors however, thought that this was not desirable.

If it keeps talking, I will insist on the spirit to keep quiet. I prefer to concentrate on the counsellee more than on the particular demon...My approach is very counsellee-oriented. I am more interested in the end result. The important thing is the faith factor, whether the person recovers faith in God, and whether his relationship with God is strengthened. So I do a lot of counselling during the session. In fact the format of the session is very much that of a counselling session. It is more an interview kind of situation. For example, I will ask the person whether he can identify any reasons for his situation. After prayer, I will ask how he felt during prayer, whether he had any emotions. Did he feel hot or cold, very nervous or afraid, or didn't feel anything?.. I am more interested in the underlying problems, for example, adultery, the need to forgive etc. Manifestations and signs are not important. What is important is the resolution of problems and the willingness of the person to return to the Lord. (P4)

According to this pastor, he would focus on the problems of the person, whether it is a need to repent from sin such as adultery, or a need to forgive or be forgiven, and so on. He said that he would deal with each problem one after another and deal with the demonic manifestations as and when they occur. The person's problems provide the agenda. P14 agrees and feels that it is important to talk with the subject and determine his underlying problems. According to him "Satan can use personality problems as a way of disturbing a person's life" but this does not necessarily call for an exorcism or deliverance. He personally prefers to counsel subjects rather than to exorcise and calls his approach "Christian intervention". If the subject insists on exorcism, P14 has no problems in sending the counsellee to another pastor who is more inclined to do it. He then resumes his counselling sessions with the subject after the "exorcism".

#### G) "Casting out the Demon(s)"

One of the most spectacular and the most important aspects of the deliverance session, in the opinion of the pastors, is the expulsion of the demon or demons from the victim. This, for them,

is the *sine qua non* of the deliverance session. It is believed to deal with the root cause of the person's problem. According to P1 and P11, it brings out into the open the "encounter" or "straight-on encounter" with the demonic.

### 1. Authority

The pastors understand their role in such an encounter as that of "exercising authority" in the name of Jesus Christ (P1). Philip Heng suggests the following command to be said to the demon:

In Jesus' Name, I command you foul damnable spirit (get the spirit's name) to leave so-and-so and go to the Lake of Fire now.<sup>1</sup>

Isaac and Shirley Lim find in such a command a pattern already established in Scripture and suggest that the deliverance team member must exercise his authority over the evil spirit.

When the Counsellor ministers for deliverance, he addresses the spirit and says, "I command you in the name of Jesus to come out of him/her". This command is in fact used by Paul in Philippi...Firstly, it is an address of authority. It is not an appeal to the demonic spirit to leave, but it is a command to leave. There should be no hesitation when a command of this nature is made. The counsellor can speak quietly, but he needs to address the demonic spirit with authority.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the pastors agree that it is important to show authority over the evil spirits. Therefore it is believed that "there should be no appeasement" of the spirits (P12, P13); neither should "plea-bargaining" be allowed according to P11. In other words, the pastors do not believe in making any deals with the spirits or in listening to any of their requests. The spirits are told repeatedly to leave. As the Lims point out, the spirits are commanded "with authority" and this often means using a loud and

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Isaac Lim & Shirley Lim, Comfort My People, p. 108. Graham Dow, Those Tiresome Intruders, p. 21, says "I tend to raise my voice a bit because I need to take confidence and act as someone commanding the intruder to leave" but at the same breath adds, "But noise is not necessary and can be distracting, frightening, or simply a sign that our faith is weak."

authoritative voice when talking with the spirits. Though some of the pastors, along with the Lims, stress that the counsellor need not use a loud voice to assert his authority over the demon, in practice, many deliverance team members use raised, threatening and antagonistic voices when addressing the "spirits".

## 2. Using the Name of Jesus

The name of Jesus Christ is used frequently as it is believed to have special authority and power over the "demons". The Lims argue:

The Counsellor addresses the demonic spirit, not in his own authority, but in the name of Jesus Christ. It is in the name of Jesus that the demons must bow in the acknowledgment of His Lordship over all of creation. Paul says in Philippians 2:10-11 "That at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." The disciples of Jesus understood the power of His name when they said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17) (emphasis theirs).<sup>1</sup>

## 3. On Naming the "Demon"

Besides using the name of Jesus, the name or names of the offending "demons" are also used; this time to issue specific commands directed at the particular "demons" troubling the victim. It is believed that naming the demon forces it to a corner and ensures maximum authority over the demon.

The Counsellor, if he knows the name of the spirit, should address the spirit by its name (Mark 5:9). For example, spirit of the monkey god, spirit of kuan yin (Chinese Goddess of Mercy), spirit of fear, etc. It should be noted that there are times when the spirit does not want to reveal its identity. At other times it gives fake names to confuse the Counsellor. In these situations, the Counsellor can still expel the Devil in the name of Jesus and not be side-tracked into "name-hunting".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Lim & Shirley Lim, Comfort My People, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

#### 4. The Expulsion

The identified "demon" is commanded to leave the victim and this may result in a struggle between the "demon" and the deliverance team members as Isaac Lim reports:

The Counsellor should command the demonic spirit to come out or depart. The Counsellor does not appeal or plead for the demonic spirit to depart. He commands the demonic spirit to depart. Sometimes the spirit might respond by refusing to depart. I (Isaac) remember ministering to a lady possessed by several demons. As I commanded the demons to depart, a voice responded by saying, "I do not want to go. I'd like to remain here." To this question I replied by saying, "If you do not leave this child of God now, then I will ask Jesus to torment you." Immediately there was a loud scream, and the demons left the lady and she was delivered. The name of Jesus has power and authority."<sup>1</sup>

According to one pastor (P1) this kind of struggle between the deliverance team and the "demon" may take "anywhere between ten minutes to four to five hours". For example, in the case of Mary described by P4 (4.2.3.B), she was reported to have suffered from severe headaches, uncontrollable shivering, fits of fainting and involuntary muscular movements during the deliverance sessions; the final session was long:

The final counselling session was perhaps the most violent. As we prayed we commanded the spirits to leave her. They answered, using her voice, "No we won't go...we won't go." This went on for a while. We continued to persist until finally they cried, "We'll leave. We'll leave." She then coughed and vomited some yellow phlegm. (P4)

The expulsion period may be further prolonged if there are numerous "demons" which means that there need to be as many "expulsions" from the victim. This is illustrated in the story of Lucy told by P4 (3.3.3.A):

She stood up, and began to dance, humming a foreign tune as she went along. Her eyes were closed and she seemed very absorbed in the movements of the dance. Gentle attempts to get her attention failed. I took her by the shoulders, shook her gently several times, calling her name as I did this. She came to her senses, and we were able to resume our conversation. I asked her if she knew what she was doing. She said that she did, except that she was unable to

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

stop her actions. It was as if she stood outside of herself, watching her own actions. We continued to pray for her. When she was reasonably composed, I tried to lead her again in the prayer of repentance and deliverance. When she was about to rededicate her life to the Lord, her behaviour began to change again. She stood up, took a few steps, and then sat down on the floor. She sat in a semi-lotus position, and started to chant what seemed to me to be a Thai chant (I cannot say this for certain, since I do not know the Thai language).

As we continued to pray for her, she started to scream and shout. A voice (not her own) came from her vocal faculties, defiant and unwilling to obey our commands, saying that "it" has been in her for a long time, and that she had always belonged to "it". We continued praying until, in a violent struggle, "it" came out of her. She exhaled forcefully, and we could see that she was very near exhaustion. We rested for a while before continuing.

The ministry period continued for nearly four and a half hours, during which time several expulsions were made. I do not want to make this a truism, but it seems to us that commands that were directed at such natural emotions like "anger", "hate", "bitterness", "revenge" and "jealousy" provoked an unusually violent response. Such responses also occurred when "depression", "suicide" and "adultery" were mentioned. The most violent response occurred when "witchcraft" was named, and when Lucy was asked to renounce her lover and the spirits that he served.

After the ministry time, Lucy was able not only to pray the prayer of forgiveness and restoration with us, but was able to pray on her own. Though she was evidently very exhausted, yet she was able to display a certain radiance and joy that was most definitely missing when she first came to us. (P4)

##### 5. If the "Spirit" is Stubborn...

The pastors describe the "expulsion of demons" from the victim as a dramatic encounter between them and the "demons" in which process the "demons" often put up various levels and forms of resistance. They either resist the pastors' command for them to leave or they attempt to make a deal with the pastors. They are often said to assert that the victims belong to them or that they have been resident in the subject for such a long time that they were reluctant to leave. In such instances, Heng recommends that the deliverance team member should "torture the demon by singing songs on (the) Blood of Christ (and) speaking about the Gospel -

the Birth , Life, Death and Resurrection of our Lord"<sup>1</sup>. The pastors feel that sometimes the stubborn refusal of the demon to leave may be due to the lack of commitment of the victim in wanting to renounce past sinful practices and relationships. P1 explains:

Our experience shortens the time (of the deliverance session). The factors that lengthen the time have often to do with the person being unwilling to let go, for example, an adulterous relationship. Once this takes place, the demon will no longer have a hold on the person and will leave quickly.

Sometimes it is reckoned by the pastors that the reason for the demon's refusal to leave may have to do with their own commitment to Christ. Thus Heng suggests that

- If demon is stubborn,
- a) Christian may need to renew faith in God's Word.
  - b) Confess sin - not in the presence of evil spirit.
  - c) Renew vows of committal to Christ.
  - d) Hold out till demon leaves.<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, we noted earlier that one pastor (P15) and his team members apparently went through "self-examination" when they did not have any success in casting out a "demon" from a lady they were trying to help. They were all reported to have come to the same conclusion after this self-examination: the problem was with the patient. This is often the case in deliverance sessions. The victim is believed either to have not renounced past sins and practices or to have inadequately committed his life to Christ. Thus in situations when the "demons" refuse to vacate the person, pastors often attempt to urge the person to repent from his sins, renounce his past practices and commit his life to Jesus Christ. Heng believes that it may be necessary for the family of the victim to also believe in Christ and to remove idols and other religious articles from their home.

From experience, if the family whole-heartedly believes, the deliverance comes swift and sure. Where they still are not convinced about Christ and His deliverance, it is best not to proceed. Let them try their gods until there is no hope. Hold out for the highest stakes - the family's

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing with Demonic Cases", p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing with Demonic Cases", p. 8.

salvation. It is best if the family will themselves remove the idolatrous paraphernalia and hand them over. This shows faith on their part: this confirms their intention to give up their previous worship. However, if they request the Team to remove idolatrous things, we may proceed. It is best if they help voluntarily and surrender the required articles.<sup>1</sup>

If all these attempts to force the "demons" out of the victim fail, the pastors are left with a few choices. Some continue to the point of exhaustion attempting to exorcise the person, for example in an all-night session. This was especially the case in the earlier experiences of the pastors. But according to them, as they got more experienced in the deliverance ministry, most have learned to limit the deliverance sessions to a few hours at the most. If at the end of the session they were not successful in "casting out the evil spirit", they would end the session by "binding" the spirit and arranging for another session in the near future (eg refer to P6's comments, 5.2). The spirits are bound and told not to disturb the person. At times several sessions are held until the person is delivered. P15 tells of one lady who took a year to be delivered:

Deliverance can be gradual - like mental illness. This is unlike (what) the Pentecostals (say). They have no patience. Of course, in some cases, there is dramatic recovery though. I remember a case which took a whole year to deal with. This lady looked haggard and wretched. When I met her, I had a word of knowledge and knew that she was demonised. She knew that I knew. I came straight to the point. She had been to Bali which is a very demonic place and got affected there. At times she had vulgar thoughts and produced vulgar speech - blasphemous speech. I met with her regularly and each day I would read the Bible with her. This produced gradual cleansing of her life. I advised her not to take the autosuggestions of the devil. We must teach them about the authority of Jesus and that Jesus is Lord and that He is with us always - to stand authoritatively on it and to resist the devil...She is fine now. (P15)

In other cases, after several unsuccessful attempts to "cast out the demons" the deliverance team may give up. This may be explained as "in some cases, God doesn't want us to handle" (P15). This may be attributed to the patient's unwillingness to repent or give up his occult or non-Christian practices, thus apparently giving the demon a strong reason not to leave. In

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

other situations, for example at the Wednesday deliverance sessions at the Church of Our Saviour (5.2), the deliverance teams are instructed that if more than four or five sessions are held without any successful deliverance, they are to refer the matter to the senior leaders in the church for further review.

#### H) How the Pastors Know that "Demons" have been "Cast Out"

One pastor (P8) claimed that "sometimes we'll just know when the person has been delivered", referring to an intuitive sense. Many others attempt to look for more tangible evidence for what they consider as the departure of the evil spirit from the victim. The following are said to be signs of a successful deliverance.

##### 1. The Storm and the Calm

Firstly, some pastors believe that when the "demon" leaves there are typical signs. The person (or rather the exiting "demon") is said to produce a loud scream followed by convulsions and a period of muscular flaccidity.

When the demon leaves, there is usually a loud scream. The person falls down or doubles up and he has tremendous strength. Often four to six men are needed to hold the patient down. Then suddenly his body becomes completely limp and he has an air of serenity about him. (P5)

There are two phases in this description: a period of heightened disturbed behaviour followed by a phase of calm serenity. In the first phase, besides fitful "convulsions" (P8), some subjects have been reported to "froth from the mouth" (P6) or to "cough out thick phlegm" (P3)<sup>1</sup>. After such a fitful performance, the

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<sup>1</sup> See Graham Dow, Those Tiresome Intruders, p. 21 where he claims that most spirits leave through the victim's mouth, other exit points through which they are reported to leave are the eyes, "sexual orifices", fingers, etc. Like Dow, Macnutt too speaks of coughing & retching when the spirit leaves (Healing, p. 232). (Not all charismatics consider this to be normative or scriptural; see L G McClung, "Exorcism" in Dictionary of Pentecostal & Charismatic Movements). This is not uncommon in non-Christian circles in Singapore eg. Ju Shi Huey, "Chinese Spirit Mediums in Singapore" in John Clammer (ed), Studies in Chinese Folk Religion in Singapore and Malaysia, p. 33 where she reports violent coughing at the end of a Chinese medium's trance.

victim is described as "suddenly awakening to the normal self" (P6). A similar account is found in Isaac and Shirley Lim's Comfort My People:

Some time ago, we prayed for a woman who had come to the altar for ministry. She requested prayers for a troubled marriage relationship. As we prayed for her, she began to sway and then manifest signs of being demonized. She told us that the demon was in her stomach and then as we continued to pray, she told us that it had moved to her head. She held her head as though in pain. We laboured in prayer, and suddenly she went limp. We asked her if the demonic spirit was still there. With a smile of relief on her face, she said that it had left her.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. "A Change in Personality"

Secondly, there is said to be a change in the person's overall disposition (P10), personality (P16), and behaviour (P5, P7) in the long term. Negatively, the person's disturbed behaviour is reported to cease.

There will subsequently be an absence of previous symptoms such as wild dreams, nightmares, fear, behavioural patterns and so on. (P4)

There is a relief of the symptoms or a subduing of them. (P14)

The symptoms from the past will disappear, for example, insomnia, fear. We'll know that the spirit has left when he stops manifesting. (P13)

There will be no more tormenting. He will no longer hear the tormenting voices. He will be delivered from them. (P11)

In other words, the victim is believed to stop behaving abnormally because of the departure of the "evil spirit" which apparently produced the disturbed behaviour in the first place. Thus, the person is said to "return to his normal self" when a deliverance is successful (P16). The subject is reported to feel a "sense of release and liberation" as a result of the successful exorcism (P12, P13, P4).

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Lim & Shirley Lim, op. cit., p. 109.

More positively, the "delivered victim" is said to show positive features emotionally and behaviourally. He is said to experience and portray emotions such as joy and peace (P4).

The victim will experience a sense of release. He will be in a relaxation mood. There will be a sense of peace. The face changes too. There will be a glow about the person which is quite characteristic. (P12)

The person will be relieved and show joy and peace in his face. The body would also become limp because it is less tense. (P10)

The person will have a sense of peace and an awareness of the love of God. (P1)

He is also said to become "of sound mind" (P11, P1). P1 described how he would "test the soundness of the spirit" by asking the subject simple questions.

### 3. Positive Response to the Christian Faith

Thirdly, the subject is said to be able to respond positively and favourably to the Christian faith when the "demon" has left. This contrasts with the usual difficulties in this matter which the subject displays when he is "possessed". After deliverance, the subject is reported to affirm Christian beliefs without any difficulty. For example, P10 said that the person would be able to "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" while P1 asserted that the subject would now be able to mention the words, "Blood of Christ" without any adverse reactions.

The subject is also believed to be able to read the Bible and pray without any difficulty following a successful "exorcism".

The person is free to confess Christ, read the Bible, sing, and pray. (P7)

He will be able to confess the name and the lordship of Christ. He'll be able to mention the words "blood of Christ". Of late, I also found out that he will be able to read Scripture without difficulties. (P1)

Occasionally, according to some of the pastors, there might be physical healing following a successful exorcism. P12 and P13 argued that physical healing is related to the deliverance

ministry since demons can be the cause for illness. We noted this in the case of the school teacher Theresa, as related by P11 who believes that she was healed from her gynaecological condition as a direct result of her deliverance from the "demon" that was tormenting her (4.1.3). One pastor (P4) believed that "divine healing" is a possible consequence of deliverance though he admitted that he had not seen such an event himself. Another pastor postulated that "exorcism is not related to healing" since he believed that Satan cannot produce illness but may use pre-existing illness to trouble the victim (P1).

It has been asserted by some of the pastors that "the person will know if he is truly delivered" (P11, P16). According to P15, this is often the case. We thus note that the pastors rely on intuitive feelings (both theirs and the subject's), and on the presence of what they consider to be signs of the "demon's" departure from the victim. Nevertheless, some of the pastors said that they would also be wary in their assessments "because the demons can deceive" (P4). In P8's opinion, "sometimes the demons can pretend" that they have left the person. In such instances, this pastor would get the group to sing Christian songs which would inevitably produce the "demonic" manifestations again. Another pastor adds that one has to be careful if there are more than one spirit in the victim (P16).

Once it is determined that the "spirit" has left the person, pastors usually employ various measures to ensure that there is no relapse and that the "spirit" does not return. This is mostly done through the post deliverance after care which we will describe shortly. One practitioner of deliverance ministry, the vice-president of a major American bank in Singapore, told of the importance of "closing the third eye" of the victim. He testified of his own deliverance from "demon possession" as a result of his previous involvement in the martial arts. He described how he helped in the deliverance of another such victim.

There was this case of a man involved in *chigong* (a form of Chinese martial arts)...After successfully delivering him, the Lord reminded me that I had to do something else. I had to close his third eye. The third eye is in the forehead. You can hear, taste, etc through this third eye. It is the route through which demons enter the person. So it has to

be closed. I closed this person's third eye with the blood of Jesus. (He gestured indicating that he used his palm placed on the person's forehead).<sup>1</sup>

### I) Sacrament and Ritual

Some pastors felt strongly against the use of sacraments or ritual in the deliverance session mainly because of their negative stance against sacraments in pastoral care in general<sup>2</sup>.

I am against the use of ritual or the ritualistic use of sacraments. One person in our group uses oil but personally, I don't think there is a place for the use of oil. I am against ritualism because it promotes superstition and that is not good. (P1)

There is no need for sacraments during the deliverance session. Anyway, we don't give the sacraments (Eucharist) to non-Christians. We must remember that it is Jesus who casts out the spirits and not the sacraments or anything like that. (P11)

I don't use sacraments in deliverance ministry because Jesus didn't. (P3)

Sacraments may not be necessary during deliverance. In the scriptures, none is used. I do not know in what way they can be effective. It is the name of the Lord that is the weapon against the demons. (P6)

There is therefore, in some pastors, an aversion to sacraments during deliverance session due to an emphasis on the name of Jesus as the sole means of successful exorcism and the belief that there is no scriptural sacramental model for the deliverance ministry. Nevertheless, other pastors believe in a limited place for some ritual and sacramental use of things during deliverance. By far the commonest practice in this regard is the use of oil. This is based on the pastors' understanding of James 5:14: "Is any of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, 8 May 1991. This idea is also found in studies of Chinese spirit mediums. See Lee Siew Chin, "Spirit Mediums", p. 14 for the description of slapping the forehead to close the third eye of the possessed person. Bill Subritzky, a popular Australian charismatic speaker in Singapore speaks of "closing the navel" of the victim, Demons Defeated, pp. 184f.

<sup>2</sup> cf Graham Twelftree, Christ Triumphant, pp. 184f for a similar stance, which was vigorously criticised by John Richards, Church Times, 27 March 1987.

over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord".

Sometimes we anoint the person with oil. (P12)

I am open to the use of sacraments. I think it is okay to use Holy Communion and oil during the session but no salt or holy water<sup>1</sup>. (P2)

I use oil sometimes during the session because the practice is found in the Bible. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. But I don't give Holy communion during the sessions. (P16)

Here, P16 nevertheless would try to "avoid touching the spirit-possessed person" unless he can't help it ("often, in practice, you may have to hold the person"). This precaution is taken "because of the belief in transference" :that the spirit can be passed from person to person through physical contact. Apart from the use of oil and the occasional use of the Eucharist, one pastor related how he used "triple anointing" once.

I think there is a place for sacraments. Once I used triple anointing in church. I say triple anointing because there was the anointing of water, oil and the Holy Spirit on the person. (P15)

Another pastor described how the leader of her deliverance team uses paper and the sign of the cross sacramentally when praying for the deliverance of the victim:

I myself have so far not used sacraments. At times Sister Monica (the Team leader) tears a paper with a sign of the cross on it and places the torn bits all over the body of the victim<sup>2</sup>. I think we have to do this sort of thing as the (Holy) Spirit leads us. (P8)

For one pastor (P14), sacraments "make sense in some situations".

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<sup>1</sup> unlike Catholic and Anglican practices elsewhere; see Matthew & Denis Linn, Deliverance Prayer, pp. 22f; Robert Petitpierre, Exorcising Devils, p. 167; Exorcism, p. 21. The Linns claim that demons can know the difference between holy and ordinary water. Holy water is also used in non-Christian contexts in Singapore eg among faith healers and mediums according to W K Tay, T G OH, K E Wong, A Study of Psychiatric Patients Who Seek Faith Healers. Lee Siew Chin reports that holy water is sprinkled on mediums to end a spirit possession trance (Spirit-Mediums, p. 14).

<sup>2</sup> For a similar practice by Chinese spirit mediums using charm papers, see Ju Shi Huey, "Chinese Spirit Mediums in Singapore", & J D Vaughan, The Manners & Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements, p. 95.

According to him they "give some form" to what is being done and they are "more for the doer than for the done". He feels that since some people respond positively to rituals, they can be utilised during deliverance ministry "as a form of communication". In spite of such sentiments and opinions, the general stance of the pastors was against the use of sacraments and rituals or for only a limited use of them in the deliverance ministry.

## 5.5 After the Deliverance Session

The pastors described several things that happen following what is believed to be a successful deliverance session.

### 5.5.1 Destruction of Religious and Occult Objects

Some pastors make it a point to remove and destroy religious objects and other things that are believed to have provided the "demons" the reasons for entering the victim.

Following the person's deliverance, we may need to cleanse his house and remove all the idols that he has been worshipping. (P3, also P12, P13)

After the session, (religious) artifacts in the victim's house, especially if the person was a medium, must be removed and destroyed. This we do by discernment. (P2)

In his instructions to deliverance team members, Philip Heng has produced a long list of objects to be destroyed when the victim is delivered<sup>1</sup>. Most of these have to do with religious and occult practices. For example, Heng lists the following from Chinese religions: religious books such as Tao Te Ching and Analects of Confucius; replicas of Buddhas and Chinese gods including those in cutlery, letter openers and ornaments; all kind of charms and amulets (including the paper and cloth varieties); triangular flags, rosaries and beads; vessels used for worship; idol shelves and ancestral tablets; joss sticks and oil used in worship; *kwee-kiah* (test tube containing two pieces of wood and a piece of umbilical cord floating in oil) and *pat-kwa* (eight-sided figure

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "What to Destroy in Exorcism".

used for fortune telling) and so on<sup>1</sup>.

From Hinduism, he lists: religious books (Vedas, Upanishads); images and pictures of gods; peacock feathers, oil lamps, altars, garlands, incense sticks, and "pictures of departed loved ones if worshipped". From Islam, Heng's list contains: magic needles, verses from the Koran in steel capsules, and *jimat* (sacred stones)<sup>2</sup>. Heng also includes articles used by Roman Catholics: rosaries, pictures or medallions of saints, statues, relics, the missal, holy water, palm leaves and so on<sup>3</sup>.

According to Heng, books and literature from various cults are also to be destroyed, the cults ranging from Bahaiism to Branhamism, and from Mormonism to Moonism. In addition, Heng calls for the destruction of objects associated with the occult such as ouija boards and books on horoscopy, palmistry, magic, ESP, spiritism, witchcraft, yoga, ghost stories etc<sup>4</sup>. Other items in Heng's long list include: certain science fiction books and those on U.F.O.s; The Psychologist magazine, The Chariots of the Gods; books and gear related to the martial arts such as *bushido*, *karate*, *nunchaku*, and *tonfa*; pornography of various kinds; "curios from temples, mosques"; the "peace-sign"; stones commonly sold by Nepalis on Singapore roadsides; pictures of violence; tapes and records of the film "Jesus Christ Superstar"; dresses or shirts with pictures of dragons, peacocks, and gods; "anti-god ideologies" (evolution, "desiderata" etc); Mad magazine, and articles with horoscopic signs<sup>5</sup>.

Heng instructs that the articles are to be removed "in the Lord Jesus' Name" and destroyed in the following way:

If the offending article is small enough, eg. yellow paper or cloth charm,

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> as recommended by Kurt Koch, Occult Bondage & Deliverance, pp. 90f; & Merril F Unger, Demons in the World Today, pp. 199f, authors who have influenced Heng.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Heng, "What to Destroy in Exorcism", pp. 4-5.

- a) You may burn it right in the living room of the house, in the family's presence. Do use a tin-can or basin. Exercise great care not to burn down the house.
- b) If it is impractical to burn the articles in the living room, then try the garden or rubbish-bin at the road side.
- c) If this is impossible, then try the community rubbish dump.
- d) Or church compound.

Articles that are to be burnt outside the living room may be put into paper bags for easier carrying. We have found a large gunny-sack most practical. A small hand-axe, a hammer and screw driver too are standard equipment for removing idols and idol-shelves.

Where the idol shelf is part of a cupboard, we have found it necessary to remove the cupboard too - to remove all vestige of past religious practices. You may have to hire a lorry and do it the next day. The idea is to make a clean break with the past (Deut 7:5).

Articles that can burn, should be burnt. Where it involves metals or ceramics, we smash them and pass them through the fire nonetheless (Deut 7:25,26). Don't spare the articles, however expensive they be - lest you be snared. Resist temptation to sell the articles for money, to melt down or to exchange for something else. Don't keep them as curios or as samples, either. One brother did this and nearly broke up his home. These things are potent. Especially in the case of expensive articles, such as jade or gold, preferably destroy in the family's presence or with witnesses. We must not give cause for misunderstanding or suspicion.

After burning, whatever debris is collected (with a changkol) and thrown into the trash-can. Sometimes it may be necessary to wrap in some old newspaper in order not to cause suspicion or offence to the dustbin men or trash collectors.<sup>1</sup>

The detailed description above illustrates how common a practice it is to remove especially idols and what are considered to be religious objects. As can be seen above, it arises from the belief that the demonic operates extensively in non-Christian religions and that destruction of non-Christian religious objects is commanded in the Bible. No doubt, such a practice may be frowned upon by non-Christians and some pastors seek to be sensitive to this as seen in Heng's attempt not to offend non-Christian rubbish disposal workers. In seeking to remove religious objects from the homes of subjects, pastors face problems when the family members do not agree with the pastors'

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "Dealing With Demonic Cases", p. 6.

methods. Hence Heng instructs the "delivered" subjects of possession:

Do not destroy an idol that does not belong to you. If the object did not belong to you, leave it alone eg. idol that belongs to the family. You simply renounce your own past connection with it. Do not attempt to destroy it unless your parents willingly give their permission and come to Christ.

Never destroy any occultic or religious paraphernalia that belongs to someone else unless the owner gives his/her permission willingly. Such actions can have serious repercussions on the exorcist/the exorcised from the owner/or the demon. (emphasis his)<sup>1</sup>

### 5.5.2 Counselling

Besides the removal and destruction of such articles, the "delivered" person is sometimes met by the pastor for "counselling and prayer" (P3, P4, P5, P12). Otherwise, he is "passed on to others (in the church) for follow up" (P9). Isaac Lim has given an example of such post-deliverance counselling. His counsellee Mary was just delivered from a demon and Lim went on to counsel her further:

I felt led to counsel further with Mary. As I spoke to her, I realized that Mary had harboured hurt feelings. She had suffered from an inferiority complex and for some time had harboured hatred and bitterness against her colleagues who had bullied her. She also harboured bitterness against her family whom she felt had looked down on her because of her inability to earn more than her other siblings. To make matters worse, she had for some time been having an affair with a married man and the sense of guilt was overwhelming her.

I spoke to her of the love of God and the fact that God loved her as she was. That afternoon, Mary cried her heart out. She poured out all her grievances; she expressed her hatred of her colleagues and the resentment she had for her family. Through the process of counselling, Mary repented of her sins, sought forgiveness for her bitterness and hatred, and was released from the bondage of the evil one. I also met with Mary's parents, and after several sessions of counselling with Mary and her parents, she finally found herself able to cope with the stress of life. Mary became a Christian, and so did her family. Mary had become free

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Heng, "What to Destroy in Exorcism", p. 2.

because Jesus had set her free.<sup>1</sup>

Some pastors spoke of such emotional experiences as "inner healing". P3 said that inner healing may be carried out "if needed" while P14 commented that "a lot of healing is inner healing" involving mental and emotional dimensions. According to him, some kind of "internal resolution" or "inner reconciliation" is necessary in subjects of possession if they are to experience true deliverance. Another pastor (P12) noted that he has seen a lot of emotional healing take place in victims of possession following the deliverance session:

Often emotional healing takes place. This is inner healing and is related to cases of rejection and self-image problems. This is very common. The person may have to experience forgiveness. There is usually a lot of crying which brings release. Then healing begins to take place.

#### 5.5.3. Teaching and Instruction

Post-deliverance counselling sessions do not always have to do with emotional and psychological healing. Some pastors described such sessions more in terms of teaching and instruction (P11, P16). The subjects would be taught not to "go back to old practices" as these are believed to have caused the original problems with the "demons" (P6). P5 explained that he would teach "the victim what's meant to be delivered"; he would also "share the Word of God" with the person and teach him to "claim the name of Jesus".

"Discipline" was considered by some of the pastors to be very important (P4, P12, P13). According to P12, this meant, "living a life of repentance" and "adopting a personal life style" that moved away from sinful living and practised such Christian disciplines as daily Bible reading and prayer<sup>2</sup>. One pastor would sometimes "discipline" the "delivered" victim in his home:

I would put the person through discipline - Word of God, Bible study, prayer etc. The person would stay in my place

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Lim & Shirley Lim, Comfort My People, pp. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup> See Don Basham, Deliver Us from Evil, ch 13.

and we'll keep watch over her and regulate her life...creating a spiritual climate where the devil doesn't want to stay around. (P15)

This pastor emphasised the importance of teaching the subject how to live a "devotional life, walk with the Lord, and practise the presence of the Lord". P9 described this process as "spiritual parenting".

#### 5.5.4 A Circle of Friends

It was important, the pastors said, for the subject to be encouraged and supported in a group, whether it is a "care group" (P5), "Bible study group" (P9, P10), "cell group" (P11, P16), or "a circle of friends" (P4). The purpose is to help establish "supportive relationships" (P5) and to enable the community to support and encourage the person. In this way, it is hoped by the pastors, that relapses will be prevented and that the person may be helped to be integrated into the life of the church (P1, P14). Relapses are believed to arise from a return to non-Christian religious or occult practices, or to sinful living, or to the lack of commitment to Christ. Thus the help groups aim to encourage the person to stay away from his past practices and to live a committed Christian life.

#### 5.5.5 Becoming Part of the Church

The person is further integrated into the church by being baptised if he was not already so (P11). In addition, many of the pastors said that they would also seek to convert the family of the subject.

We follow-up the victim and his family. The family members usually become Christians after the experience. This also helps church growth, by the way. (P16)

We would usually engage in evangelism to the family. We'll tell them, "It is important for all of you to believe Christ and to be of one mind in this matter". (P3)

It is therefore not unusual for entire families to be converted to Christianity and to become church members after the "deliverance" of the subject as we noted in Mary's case above.

### 5.5.6 Taking Care of Other Matters

Some pastors would on occasion refer the subject for medical treatment, especially if they thought that medicine would help the person recover from exhaustion (P5, P8), lack of sleep (P5, P6), malnutrition (P7), or to improve the person's appetite (P6) or treat his self-inflicted wounds if any (P7). These are all conditions related to the person's state of possession or the deliverance session. If the person was previously on medication given by a psychiatrist,

after deliverance, I don't tell them to go off medication. I ask them to see the doctor. Usually there is a period of time before they come off the medication completely - but all this done on the advice of the psychiatrists. (P9)

One pastor (P15) thought that sometimes medical treatment served as a placebo. For example, "water injection may be helpful for the person's own peace of mind"; thus the pastor would send the subject for such treatment if he thought it might help. Others mentioned that they would send the person for medical treatment if they thought that he was suffering from a "psychological problem" (P16) or an "associated organic problem" (P4). Yet others such as P9 and P10 felt that there was no need for any medical treatment in people who were truly possessed and delivered.

Sometimes the person may be helped financially, according to P7 who believes in helping the "total person" and meeting all his needs. The whole process of follow-up may take anywhere between three months (P1) to a year (P15). The purpose of follow up may be summarised as follows:

- a) Get the person to renounce past practices and to destroy religious and other objects believed to be related to his "possession".
- b) Prevent him from returning to these things.
- c) Teach him to "live the committed Christian life".
- d) Get him and his family members to join the church and become active members.
- e) And thus, prevent a relapse.

## 5.6 Summary

1. The pastors' therapeutic attempts in response to possession behaviour are consistent with their general worldview and understanding of the aetiology and symptomatology of possession behaviour.

2. In any situation where a person is believed to be suffering from a demonic cause, the solution inevitably is an exorcism or deliverance session. Though many pastors use theoretical categories such as oppression, possession, and so on, in practice, their response is always exorcistic if demonic influence is suspected.

3. The central feature in the deliverance session is the expulsion of the "demon" from the subject. The sessions have a tense atmosphere with strongly coercive pressure on the subject to follow the directions of the deliverance team, the members of which are selected carefully to avoid doubts and disputes during the process of exorcism. The team leader tends to be authoritarian while the session focuses on limited conversation with the "demon"; such conversations are antagonistic, highly-charged, and confrontational in nature. Conversation with the subject is greatly limited to the giving of instructions during the deliverance session.

4. The main purpose of the exorcistic enterprise is to secure the conversion of the subject, and, if possible, his family. The follow-up, accordingly, is designed to maintain the subject's commitment to the church and Christianity.

5. Non-Christian religions, the occult, and non-evangelical Christian denominations and sects are closely associated with the demonic by the pastors. This is seen in the identification of demons with such movements, organisations, and practices, the destruction of religious paraphernalia as part of the exorcism, and the doctrinal and evangelistic focus of the deliverance session.

Thus far we have described pastoral beliefs, interpretations, and practices in relation to the phenomenon of spirit possession as told by the pastoral practitioners themselves. In the next two chapters we will examine these discourses in the light of other narratives of possession (medical, psychological, social anthropological, theological etc) and attempt to understand the factors influencing the pastoral responses to possession in Singapore.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6.0 PERSPECTIVES AND MODELS OF POSSESSION

In the previous three chapters, the beliefs, interpretations, and practices of the pastors regarding possession behaviour were described. In the process, we were in fact describing another world - the world of spirits. Though we noted some variety of views among the pastors, the majority held a particular worldview as evidenced in their accounts. In this worldview, the other world of spirits plays an important part in the lives of people in this world. This perspective, however, does not share a similar monopoly in other circles, in particular, academic circles, especially in the human sciences. It is to these other perspectives and narratives of possession behaviour that we will turn our attention to in this chapter. The language of these scientific and academic discourses will be more familiar to those in academic disciplines because it is based on a perspective that is squarely rooted in this world of nature and human culture which is the underlying paradigm of modern science. In these scientific discourses, we will discover that the other world of the pastors is either rejected or ignored. In other words, in the scientific discourses on possession, the other world is considered to be either false or irrelevant.

When we compare the discourses of the pastors with those from the scientific disciplines, we will note the tensions produced by the different perspectives as well as some similarities. To enable us to compare the two discourses, we shall explore two important themes in the various accounts. The first part of this chapter will be concerned with examining the epidemiological factors identified in the scientific discourses; in chapter three, we dealt with the same in the pastors' accounts. When comparing the two, we will find that there is a striking similarity in the epidemiological contours of the two discourses. In other words, both accounts identify the same type of people who are likely to display possession behaviour. This suggests that the two discourses may be describing the same phenomenon. However, this

initial convergence disappears conspicuously when we look at the hermeneutic aspects of the two discourses. Though similar factors are identified, grossly divergent explanations are offered by the pastors on one hand, and the scientists on the other. This divergence is more clearly seen when we explore the second theme in the discourses - "pathology" - in the second part of this chapter. Several explanations are offered as to the nature of possession behaviour. The striking contrasts between the pastors' explanations and those of the scientists will highlight for us the clash of worldviews between the two groups. The nature of this clash is based on both epistemological and ontological grounds. For the scientists, there is only one world, this world of nature and culture. For the pastors, there are two worlds, this world and the other world of spirits; for them, this other world is more important and gives meaning and helps us to understand this world. This clash of epistemologies and ontologies is a crucial challenge to the pastors. We will end this chapter by examining how the pastors attempt to meet this challenge of competing perspectives, and how many of them try to live between both their worlds.

## 6.1 EPIDEMIOLOGICAL FACTORS: DIFFERENT STORIES

Several lifestyle factors of the subject have been identified by proponents of different perspectives as contributing or related to the phenomenon of possession. It is interesting to note that in identifying and describing these factors, there is much congruence in the various accounts. We shall look at some of the major factors.

### 6.1.1 Occult and Religious Involvement

We have already noted that for the pastors, this is the most important and commonest factor related to possession. Contact with mediums is considered as a major reason for possession behaviour. So is participation in non-Christian religious practices and occultic involvement. The possession or wearing of charmed paraphernalia is also considered to be a significant factor (3.3.1).

In one sense, the medical and social scientific accounts concur with these observations. The relationship between mediumship, spirit medium cults and possession has been frequently noted in scientific literature, especially in the anthropological discourses (eg Lewis, Kiev, Iida)<sup>1</sup>. Lewis notes a definite relationship between shamanism and possession; the shaman or medium operates through possession either by a god or demon. Whether the possession is seen as good or bad depends on the identity of the possessing spirit, whether divine or demonic. Likewise, Kiev describes the central role of possession in the spirit cult of voodoo in which the voodoo *loa* (spirit deities) after being invoked through incantations, prayers and symbolic offerings, possess individuals in the voodoo congregation in order to help the group and to interact with them. In comparing psychiatric patients who were possessed and those who were not, Iida found that the possessed group was more likely to have consulted fortune tellers, faith healers or religious priests. The scientific accounts, therefore, generally agree with the pastoral accounts in terms of the close relationship between contact or involvement in mediumistic cults and practices and possession. However, the explanations of how these contacts lead to possession are quite different.

The scientific discourses attempt to explain the relationship in terms of cultural dynamics. Cultural belief systems are considered to play a crucial role in the phenomenon of possession especially in the context of occult and mediumistic practices<sup>2</sup>. Susceptibility to possession is increased by cultural beliefs on spirits and spirit possession. Hence people practising or coming into contact with mediumistic practices are liable to display possession behaviour because of the underlying cultural expectations. Along with the cultural expectations exist the process of cultural conditioning and learned behaviour patterns. Possessed subjects, therefore, are believed to become possessed

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<sup>1</sup> Eg. I M Lewis, Religion in Context, p. 82f; Ari Kiev, "Spirit Possession in Haiti", p. 133; Junzo Iida, "The Current Situation in Regard to the Delusion of Possession in Japan", p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Colleen Ward & M Beaubrun, "Psychodynamics of Demon Possession", pp. 201, 205.

because of a process of learning, mimicry, and modelling<sup>1</sup>. Kua et al, in their study of subjects of possession trance, found that twenty nine of the thirty six subjects had witnessed a trance during their childhood; this trance was usually performed by a traditional healer during religious festivals<sup>2</sup>. Hence medium cults function by reinforcing beliefs in spirits and providing idioms and models for possession behaviour. Thus, the proponents of this view are not surprised by the close association between contact with medium cults and possession behaviour.

The pastors however interpret the situation differently. They primarily use spiritual dynamics and suggest that demonic factors are at work in mediumistic practices. They moreover consider practices such as TM, yoga, playing with ouija boards, taking part in seances etc. as other occultic practices that pull in the demonic into human life. This is in line with what has often been written in Christian literature which discuss possession, exorcism and deliverance ministry. There is often a clear link between occult involvement and possession in this literature though there is a wide spectrum of opinions regarding the dynamics involved.

Three main reasons are offered for the relationship between the occult and possession. Firstly, it is suggested that psychological factors, especially subconscious forces and complexes are surfaced when one, for instance, plays with the ouija board or sits in a seance. It is argued that these subconscious factors are then mistakenly thought to be demons or spirits in possession behaviour. MacDonald writes:

Occult practices and their psychological and spiritual effects are legion. From the seemingly innocuous following of horoscopes, the reading of tarot cards and the ouija board, right through the slavish following of sects, cults and satanism, people may be seriously disturbed by the powers of suggestion or from within their own subconscious, or become tragically enmeshed in the forces of evil.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ari Kiev, "Spirit Possession in Haiti", p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Kua Ee Heok et al, "A Cross-Cultural Study of the Possession Trance in Singapore", p. 362.

<sup>3</sup> David MacDonald, "Deliverance", p. 3.

MacDonald suggests here that people exposed to occultic practices are more prone to display possession behaviour because such practices invoke deep and disturbing subconscious psychological conflicts within the person. This may lead to distressing psychological disturbance. He uses a depth psychological perspective here though he accepts that spiritual demonic forces may be operative in rare cases. Perry seems to agree when he described the process by which dabbling with the ouija board releases unconscious repressed material. The ouija board can thus be a dangerous practice "in a situation where there is no trained and knowledgeable counsellor at hand to deal with material with which the conscious mind cannot cope"<sup>1</sup>. A similar position is taken by Petitpierre who thinks that occultic involvement is unhelpful and dangerous mainly in psychological terms as it brings into the person's life situation "bad unconscious influences"<sup>2</sup>. Roman Catholic pastor Alphonsus Trabold sees the psychological forces at play in a more neutral light for he feels that occultic practices bring forth extrasensory powers which can be good as they represent the original psychical powers of man; however, because they can be easily abused, occultic involvement can be dangerous<sup>3</sup>.

The second explanation in Christian literature linking occult involvement and possession is that discarnate human spirits or ghosts come into the situation, for example in seances and other mediumistic practices. Petitpierre believes that ghosts or departed spirits can be involved with "place memories". They may not be seen but they can affect people by causing unhappiness and nervous tensions in them<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Perry, "Theological Perspectives on Possession", p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Dom Robert Petitpierre, Exorcising Devils, ch 12. According to Petitpierre, occultic involvement is also unhelpful theologically as it brings in non-Christian views of the integration of good and bad, and spiritually because of demonic influence sometimes.

<sup>3</sup> Father Alphonsus Trabold as quoted in Robert Pelton, In My Name, p. 180. See also John Richards, "Spirit of Evil?", p. 25 where he argues that the "paranormal is not necessarily - or even mostly - supernatural" but is a result often of human factors.

<sup>4</sup> Petitpierre, Exorcising Devils, pp. 50-51, ch 7, 8.

Thirdly, it is believed that demons operate during occultic practices and infect the practitioners or the participants<sup>1</sup>. Like our pastors, Richards thinks that this is the main way by which people get possessed. He locates demon possession at the end of a spectrum of evil influences on human life, ranging from no influence to full influence. While processes such as suggestion lie at the lower end of the spectrum, possession lies at the opposite end where there is a "100%" influence of evil. Such instances, he argues, are usually reached through involvement in witchcraft and black magic since such practices involve the deliberate seeking of evil<sup>2</sup>. Others echo this warning, for example, Dow, Koch, and the Linns<sup>3</sup>. According to the Linns, evil spirits can gain entrance into a person who is involved in the occult arts.

Of the three explanations (depth psychological, human departed spirits, demonic non-human spirits), our pastors are more ready to accept the third while generally not subscribing to the other two. That they do not subscribe to the psychological explanations may be explained by perhaps their lack of familiarity with depth psychology. What is more surprising is their rejection of the second explanation (ghosts and departed spirits) since beliefs in ghosts and possession by ghosts is part and parcel of the Asian cultures in Singapore. We will consider this more closely in the next chapter. Suffice it to say, at this point, that the pastors agree with the other perspectives on possession in terms of phenomenological description, but not in the hermeneutical interpretation of factors believed to be related to possession behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf eg with Augustine's view that all magical arts have malign spirits behind them; G R Evans, Augustine on Evil, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> John Richards, "The Minister and the Deliverance Ministry", pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Graham Dow, Those Tiresome Intruders., p. 14 (warning against witchcraft, spiritualism, occult books, horror films, horoscopes, masonic practice); Kurt Koch, Occult Bondage., pp. 33f, 98f (warning against any mediumistic contact); Matthew and Dennis Linn, Deliverance Prayer., p. 94.

### 6.1.2 Psychological Factors and Mental Illness

We have also already seen how the pastors associate the relationship between negative and disturbed emotions such as fear, depression, bitterness, anger, and so on with the onset of possession (3.3.3.D). Mental illness and personality disorders were also mentioned as related factors.

The association between such factors and possession behaviour has been repeatedly noted in medical and social scientific studies. Kiev, in a study on spirit possession in Haiti, reported that he found elements of paranoid delusion and psychosis among those who were possessed, and concludes:

The similarity of possession phenomena and psychiatric illness...suggests a strong relationship between the two and adds weight to our formulation of ritual possession as an acceptable form of "going crazy".<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, others have identified various other psychological stresses and disturbances as factors leading to possession behaviour. Neurotic disorders, inferiority complexes<sup>2</sup>, guilt, especially that which is related to sexual conflicts<sup>3</sup>, neurotic depression<sup>4</sup>, and "constitutional neurosis"<sup>5</sup> have been suggested. In other words, a person is said to be possessed because of an underlying psycho-neurosis<sup>6</sup> essentially arising from anxiety or depression due to various psychological processes<sup>7</sup>. Anxiety and

<sup>1</sup> Ari Kiev, "Spirit Possession in Haiti", pp. 135-136, 138.

<sup>2</sup> Ari Kiev, "Pentecostal Sects", p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> J I Teoh, "Chinese Spirit-Mediumship", p. 55; see also Orhan M Ozturk, "Folk Treatment of Mental Illness" in Ari Kiev, Magic, Faith & Healing, p. 361.

<sup>4</sup> Colleen Ward et al, "Demon Possession", pp. 201, 207.

<sup>5</sup> S G Lee, "Spirit possession among the Zulu" in John Beattie, Spirit Mediumship & Society in Africa, p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Lhermitte, Diabolical Possession True and False, p. 87. Lhermitte terms such cases as "pseudo-diabolical possession" (ch 2) as compared to genuine demoniacal possession (ch 1).

<sup>7</sup> John Kennedy, "Nubian Zar Ceremonies as Psychotherapy", pp. 189, 193-4. Kennedy believes that the majority of zar patients he studied suffer from anxiety reactions or hysteria. See also Colin Ross et al, "Multiple Personality Disorder; An Analysis of 236 Cases", pp. 413-8. In their study of the 236 cases of multiple personality disorder (which has been closely

depression may present in the form of hysterical features<sup>1</sup> or compulsive behaviour<sup>2</sup> which are culturally interpreted as demon possession<sup>3</sup>. This association of possession with hysteria is further evidenced by the DSM-III classification of dissociation disorders which are given an independent identity from other forms of hysteria<sup>4</sup>.

While some have noted general psychopathology claiming that people exhibiting possession behaviour suffer from a wide variety of psychopathology<sup>5</sup>, and are "psychiatrically unbalanced"<sup>6</sup>, others have attempted to link specific psychiatric conditions with possession. Schizophrenia has been proposed by many probably because of apparently similar symptomatology: hallucinations, thought and behavioural disturbance and so on. In his much-quoted classic study of Chinese patients in a mental hospital in Hong Kong, Yap diagnosed sixteen of the sixty six cases as schizophrenic thus noting the high incidence of schizophrenia in

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related to possession), Ross et al have noted that 63.7% of the patients had received a previous diagnosis of affective disorder and 44.3% anxiety disorder (p. 415). While this may reflect misdiagnosis or psychiatric conditions predisposing to MPD, the authors think that it is possible for MPD to be present concurrently with other psychiatric conditions such as depression, panic disorder and so on (p 416).

<sup>1</sup> Colleen Ward et al, "Demon Possession", pp. 201, 207. Ward's 4 cases of demon possession consistently show "a tendency toward hysterical features, sometimes in conjunction with neurotic depression".

<sup>2</sup> T K Oesterreich, Possession.

<sup>3</sup> See P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome", pp. 120, 135.

<sup>4</sup> Saxena et al, "DSM III Subclassification of Dissociation Disorders Applied to Psychiatric Outpatients in India", pp. 261-2. The authors argue for the inclusion of "possession disorder" as a separate nosologic entity under atypical dissociation disorders.

<sup>5</sup> Leonardo Alonso, William D Jeffrey, "Mental Illness complicated by the Santeria Belief in Spirit Possession", p. 1190.

<sup>6</sup> See John J Heaney, The Sacred and the Psychic: Parapsychology and Christian Theology, pp. 36f. See also Juan Cortes & F Gatti, The Case Against Possession and Exorcism, Henry Ansgar Kelly, The Devil, Demonology & Witchcraft.

people with possession behaviour<sup>1</sup>. Likewise, Iida in a Japanese study, noted that most of the patients studied were schizophrenic, and he suggests that "the delusion of possession" is part of the symptomatology of schizophrenia<sup>2</sup>. In her study of Balinese trance states, Belo invited psychiatrist van Wulfften Palthe to assess the cases of trance who distinguished two forms: firstly associated with schizophrenia where an alien "something" has entered the personality, and secondly associated with hysteria, where there was a temporary but total change of the personality into another being or object<sup>3</sup>.

We therefore note that there are similarities in the identification of psychological factors in both the pastors' accounts and in the scientific literature. However, the explanations of how these factors are related aetiologically and dynamically to possession behaviour differ markedly between the two.

Psychiatric, and sometimes anthropological literature major on psychiatric and psychological explanations. The thesis that the phenomenon is a socially acceptable expression of psychogenic conflicts has its numerous proponents in medical and social scientific fields<sup>4</sup>. According to them, these conflicts which are often part of normal human experience arise from psychological denial and repression. The denied and repressed emotions are, it is argued, usually held in abeyance by defence mechanisms which may become inadequate in stressful situations leading to psychological conflicts. Depending on social and cultural factors there are apparently different ways of resolving these conflicts

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<sup>1</sup> P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome", p. 120. According to him 32 of the patients were suffering from hysteria (or "pseudo-psychotic hysteria" as he chooses to call it), 16 were diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia, 8 from depression (with hysterical features), 4 from mania, and 6 from various confusional states due to organic causes (pp. 120, 135).

<sup>2</sup> Junzo Iida, "Delusion of Possession", p. 24. See also Ari Kiev, "Spirit Possession", p. 135 for the link between paranoid delusions (closely associated with schizophrenia) and possession.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Belo, Trance in Bali, pp. 5-10.

<sup>4</sup> Marc Cramer, "Psychopathology & Shamanism in Rural Mexico: A Case Study of Spirit Possession", p. 68.

usually through some form of catharsis. Possession is seen as one such socially and culturally determined way of releasing and relieving such emotions, conflicts, tensions and anxieties<sup>1</sup>. This is achieved through a process of dissociation<sup>2</sup> in which the separation of some parts of personality function from the rest serves to alleviate suffering from excessive tension and stress through abreaction and catharsis<sup>3</sup>. Through possession behaviour, one is able to manifest his repressed emotions, publicly or privately; the repressed parts of the self incorporates one or more secondary personalities, and in the case of demon possession, a demonic entity. This demonic idiom allows the expression of repressed impulses and feelings within a socially sanctioned and understood context while exonerating the individual since the behaviour is attributed to the possessing spirit(s)<sup>4</sup>. In this way possession behaviour is believed to help the individual to find relief from feelings such as anxiety, guilt<sup>5</sup>, shame and frustration<sup>6</sup> arising from repressed conflicts. In highly stressful situations, a person's mental health can deteriorate without such avenues of release as possession. Thus possession behaviour not only has a therapeutic function in that it "permits abreaction, and wards off cognitive and perceptual disorganisation" but also a preventive role in being "a last ditch defence against personality disorganisation and psychosis"<sup>7</sup>.

In comparison to this understanding, the pastors, many of whom would accept this discourse on possession involving emotional and

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<sup>1</sup> Winston Davis, Dojo; Magic & Exorcism in Modern Japan, pp. 302, 150.

<sup>2</sup> James N Lapsley and John H Simpson, "Speaking in Tongues", p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Winston Davis, op. cit., p. 97; Kua Ee Heok et al, "Possession Trance in Singapore", p. 363. Lapsley & Simpson are describing the mechanism or process while Davis & Kua et al are describing the end result.

<sup>4</sup> Kua Ee Heok et al, "Possession Trance in Singapore", p. 363.

<sup>5</sup> Ari Kiev, "Pentecostal Sects", p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> Winston Davis, Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan, p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> Gnanath Obeyesekere, "The Idiom of Demonic Possession; A Case Study", pp. 97, 105.

psychological dimensions as a valid description of the dynamics of possession, do not however think that this explains all cases. They again incorporate the spiritual dimension to explain what happens in possession. We noted how beliefs about susceptibility to demonic intrusion are prevalent among the pastors (3.3.3). Hence, according to them, emotional problems and mental illness may reduce the normal defenses of the person against demonic attacks, thus leading to eventual "demon possession". Or such disturbed people may consult mediums and other non-Christian religious healers for help thus making themselves open to direct assaults by "demons".

### 6.1.3 Socio-Economic Factors

Though the majority of the pastors did not notice any demographic patterns in terms of the socio-economic background of the subjects of possession, some did identify certain socio-economic factors which they believed were related to the incidence and onset of possession behaviour.

#### A. Phenomenological Convergence

The major factors identified by scientific studies are listed below. When compared with those identified by the pastors, there is a close phenomenological resemblance between the two groups of accounts.

##### 1. Gender

More pastors noticed this feature more than any of the others discussed in this section. Nine of the sixteen pastors said that they have seen more female subjects of possession (3.3.3.E). One pastor (P11) noted a more complex pattern where he has seen more female subjects in "minor cases" and more male subjects in "heavy cases". Only one pastor had the experience of ministering to more male subjects of possession as compared to female subjects and he was unable to offer any reasons. (It is likely that his clientele may be predominantly males, or that the number of cases seen by him may be too small for him to notice any significant

patterns<sup>1</sup>). The rest reported that they did not notice any clear patterns in terms of the sex distribution of the subjects of possession whom they have seen.

Much of the literature on possession in the human sciences show that women are predominant among those possessed. This has been noted in many anthropological<sup>2</sup> and psychiatric<sup>3</sup> studies. Only an exceptional few studies have found no gender differences in the incidence of possession such as those by Freed and Freed<sup>4</sup> and Iida<sup>5</sup>. Freed and Freed found seventeen males out of thirty eight cases of ghost possession and assert that their findings support no predominance of female subjects in contrast to popular notions among the villagers regarding the restriction of the condition largely among women. Likewise Iida, in his study of the "delusion of possession" among psychiatric inpatients found gender to be not significant. In spite of such studies however, the general consensus in the literature is that more women exhibit possession behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> The literature on possession does not generally support the observation that more males are seen as subjects of possession. One of the exceptions is Colleen Ward's study of ritual trance and ceremonial possession during the annual Thaipusam festival celebrated by Hindus in Malaysia and Singapore. Ward noted that "the vast majority of Thaipusam devotees are male" and suggests that this may be due to the "prestige value" of the ritual trance which includes the apparently painless but spectacular piercing of the body with skewers. She sees the Thaipusam celebrations as a "tribute to male vanity", hence attracting young men who indulge in the elaborate piercing and animated dancing so characteristic of this festival. Ward's observation is atypical because of its particular context and the socio-cultural dynamics attributed to this particular festival. Colleen Ward, "Thaipusam in Malaysia: A Psycho-Anthropological Analysis of Ritual Trance, Ceremonial Possession & Self-Mortification Practices", pp. 307-34.

<sup>2</sup> Eg. I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion; Bruce Kapferer, A Celebration of Demons; Michael Lambek, Human Spirits: A Cultural Account of Trance in Mayotte,

<sup>3</sup> Eg. P M Yap, "The Possession Syndrome"; T K Oesterreich, Possession; Colin Ross et al, "Multiple Personality Disorder"; Shekhar Saxena et al "DSM III Subclassification of Dissociation Disorders". The last 2 articles use different nosological entities following psychiatric diagnostic categories.

<sup>4</sup> Ruth S Freed & Stanley A Freed, "Ghost Illness in a North Indian Village", pp. 117-23.

<sup>5</sup> Junzo Iida, "Delusion of Possession", pp. 19-27.

## 2. Educational Level

Of the nine pastors who noticed patterns in this respect, six reported seeing more subjects of possession who were less educated (3.3.2.A). This generally concurs with the accounts from the human sciences. Though many academic studies and discourses, especially the anthropological ones, do not look out for the educational background of subjects of possession as a possible contributing or precipitating factor in possession, those that do, almost always show that among the subjects of possession, more have a lower educational background, for example those by Yap, Iida, Kiev, Kua et al, and Adityanjee et al<sup>1</sup>.

In his study of Chinese patients suffering from the possession syndrome in Hong Kong, Yap found fifty seven out of sixty six in the sample with no formal education or only primary education - "an unduly large proportion of illiterates and an unduly small proportion of the well-educated<sup>2</sup>". Even while accounting for a possible bias in the composition of the mental hospital population (from which Yap took his sample), he still finds evidence to conclude "that lack of education predisposes towards the syndrome"<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, in a study in the Singapore context, Kua et al found that among thirty six national servicemen referred to the psychiatric hospital for possession trance, one of the characteristic features of the group was a "poor educational level" with ninety percent having had less than six years of formal schooling (primary education)<sup>4</sup>. In another Asian context, Adityanjee observes that "possession syndrome in India occurs generally in the lower levels of literacy"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome"; Junzo Iida, "Delusion of Possession", Ari Kiev, "Spirit Possession", pp. 133-8; Transcultural Psychiatry, Kua Ee Heok et al, "Possession Trance in Singapore", pp. 361-4; Adityanjee et al, "Current Status of Multiple Personality Disorder in India", pp. 1607-10.

<sup>2</sup> P M Yap, "The Possession Syndrome", p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Kua et al, "Possession Trance in Singapore", p. 362,3.

<sup>5</sup> Adityanjee et al, "Current Status of MPD", p. 1610. See also J S Teja et al, "Possession States in Indian Patients", pp. 71-8 for a similar conclusion.

Only rarely do studies such as these which seek to find patterns in terms of educational levels, find no clear pattern. An example is Saxena et al's examination of the histories of sixty two patients suffering from "atypical dissociation disorder"<sup>1</sup>. Twelve (19.4%) of the patients were illiterate; on the other hand seven (11.3%) had a college education<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, most of the other studies show the predominance of lower levels of education among subjects of possession.

### 3. Economic Factors

Though most of the pastors did not see any patterns, the few who did (five) mentioned seeing many subjects from the lower socio-economic groups<sup>3</sup>. The link between lower socio-economic backgrounds and possession behaviour has been more clearly shown in epidemiological studies of possession looking for patterns in the socio-economic status of possession subjects; they have almost invariably reported the higher incidence of the phenomenon among people belonging to the lower socio-economic groups (Kapferer, Yap, Lewis, Kiev, Kua et al, Adityanjee et al, Teja et al).

Kapferer's investigation in Sri Lanka shows that public exorcism is a "peasant working class phenomenon"<sup>4</sup>. Yap's study in Hong Kong concurs with this when he found thirty eight out of forty three subjects belonging to occupations of low status which were significantly over-represented when compared to the numbers in the general population<sup>5</sup>. Only rarely do studies suggest a higher incidence among the middle and upper classes<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> according to the DSM III Classification; this diagnostic entity includes "possession disorder".

<sup>2</sup> Shekhar Saxena et al, "DSM III", p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> though two of them also mentioned seeing more from the upper classes, ie. the cases were clustered at the two extreme ends of the social spectrum.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Kapferer, Celebration of Demons, pp. 34-5.

<sup>5</sup> P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome", p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> eg. the study of a Sino-Malay spirit medium cult in Malaysia in Raymond L M Lee, "Dancing with the Gods: A Spirit-Medium Festival in Urban Malaysia", pp. 355-66. Moreover, Lee's particular study while noting the "attraction of a large number

#### 4. Age

All six pastors who recognised a pattern in this respect said that younger people seem to be more susceptible to possession. This again agrees with studies in the academic literature on possession seeking to establish such patterns. Though the actual age range of the young in these studies varies from study to study, the general pattern is one involving teenagers and young adults (Kapferer, Iida, Stirrat, Ross, Teoh, Kua, Langley). Only a few studies establish no such patterns (Yap, Freed and Freed). Yap analysed his sixty six cases of possession syndrome for age distribution and found no significant pattern when compared with the age distribution in the general population<sup>1</sup>. Likewise Freed and Freed found that their thirty eight cases of ghost possession in India varied in a wide range of age groups, from a four year old to a seventy five year old subject<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless the predominant view among social anthropologists and psychiatrists is that possession is more common among younger people<sup>3</sup>, whether the group is defined as those who are "in their adolescence or early maturity"<sup>4</sup>, or in their youth<sup>5</sup>, or in their twenties<sup>6</sup>, and so on. According to Kua et al and Ross et al, most of the subjects were below twenty five years old at the time of onset of the condition, or in their twenties and thirties when first diagnosed<sup>7</sup>.

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of middle-class English-educated Chinese to the cult" is not conclusive in that most of these people were only observers of the possession trance of the mediums even though they were intimately involved in the ritual proceedings. (p. 367). Lee explains this attraction of middle class people to the cult functionally; it provides a source of religious satisfaction to Chinese who are unfamiliar with traditional folk beliefs.

<sup>1</sup> P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome", pp. 116-7.

<sup>2</sup> Freed and Freed, "Ghost Illness", p. 620.

<sup>3</sup> See "Report of the Working Party on Parapsychology", Church of Scotland, May 1976, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> R L Stirrat, "Demonic Possession in Roman Catholic Sri Lanka", p. 151.

<sup>5</sup> J I Teoh et al, "Chinese Spirit Mediumship", pp. 56-7.

<sup>6</sup> Junzo Iida, "Delusion of Possession", p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Ross et al, "Multiple Personality Disorder", p. 416; Kua et al, "Possession Trance in Singapore", p. 363.

## B. Hermeneutical Divergence

We thus note here that there is a general similarity in the identity of factors said to be associated with possession, both in the accounts of the pastors and in the human sciences. However, the explanations of how these factors cause possession behaviour differ markedly as we will now see.

### 1. Gender

Explanations in academic literature are mostly socio-cultural in nature. Though they vary in content, the general thesis is that possession behaviour is a socially acceptable way for women to ventilate their frustrations. Since women are generally in positions of relative discrimination and powerlessness, they tend to be more prone to possession.

Lewis has noted that possession is prevalent in male dominated societies such as are found in India, Southeast Asia and so on<sup>1</sup> and concludes therefore that possession cults dominated by women are "thinly disguised protest movements"<sup>2</sup>. Through possession behaviour, suppressed and oppressed women can express their feelings through flamboyant and rebellious behaviour, normally considered taboo in society<sup>3</sup>, for example when attempting to show erotic feelings towards men, or jealousy and anger against husbands who are unfaithful, or planning to take additional wives, or when trying to seek appreciation and attention, a view Lewis finds support for from other studies in other cultures, especially by Harper, Freeman, and Yap in the Indian, Malay and Chinese cultures - cultures which are present in Singapore<sup>4</sup>.

An alternative though related view suggested by Wilson views possession not as a "war between the sexes" as Lewis asserts, but

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<sup>1</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> E B Harper, "Spirit Possession and Social Structure", in B Ratman (ed), Anthropology on the March; D Freeman, "Shaman and Incubus"; P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome".

as a result of status ambiguity arising from conflict within the same sex<sup>1</sup>. Thus according to Wilson, women are possessed because of their conflicts with other women. However, this still does not explain why more women are possessed. Wilson ventures to suggest that this is due to the fact that women, especially married women, face greater status ambiguities because their social identity which is derived from their husbands is threatened by the practice of polygamy. This ambiguity is made worse by the peripherality of women in the society<sup>2</sup>.

A third psycho-social interpretation is offered by Obeyesekere in his study of demonic possession in Sri Lanka<sup>3</sup> where he proposes that the role learning in early childhood by women involving the drastic socialisation of sexual and aggressive drives results in psychological repression which may lead to hysterical dispositions in women<sup>4</sup>. The culturally imposed restrictions on female roles and behaviour are temporarily lifted during possession trance, hence allowing the female subjects the opportunity to project their psychological conflicts onto the idiom of possession which is thus a "culturally-sanctioned fantasy"<sup>5</sup>.

While Lewis, Wilson, Obeyesekere, and others find the aetiological locus for possession in psychological conflicts in women arising from socio-cultural restrictions<sup>6</sup> which lead to

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<sup>1</sup> Peter J Wilson, "Status Ambiguity and Spirit Possession", p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 372-4. See also Barbara Wright, "Dance is the Cure: The Arts as Metaphor for Healing in Kelantan Malay Spirit Exorcisms", p. 8. Wright suggests that *Main Peteri* ceremonial exorcism is effective in situations involving unpleasant status changes eg. wife to widow or divorcee, and maiden to wife. Because most unwelcome status transitions involve women, they tend to be more prone to possession.

<sup>3</sup> Gnanath Obeyesekere, "Idiom of Demonic Possession", pp. 97-111.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 100,101.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>6</sup> See also John Kennedy, "Nubian Zar Ceremonies as Psychotherapy". The zar possession cult in this study was "primarily an adult female activity reflecting Nubian social conditions of sex-separation, low female status, restriction of women from religious participation, an unbalanced sex ratio,

marginalisation<sup>1</sup> or subordination and also competition (Wilson), a totally different interpretation is given by Stirrat in his study of demonic possession in Sri Lanka<sup>2</sup>. Stirrat, who found that eighty percent of all the possessed were women, turns "the focus away from the minds of those who are actually possessed towards the processes by which people come to be labelled as possessed"<sup>3</sup>. Possession is more a social definition and diagnosis rather than a self diagnosis. Therefore the reason why more women are possessed depends not so much on the psychological make-up of women or the conflicts arising from their social status, but rather on the cultural idioms of possession. In Sri Lankan culture, women are considered to be "weak"; hence they are susceptible to the activity and attack of demons. Therefore more women tend to be labelled as possessed; the pattern of possession being defined by the ideology of possession<sup>4</sup>. Kapferer agrees with Stirrat and explains the phenomenon in terms of the "symbolic identity of women". The domestic activities women are involved in, such as cooking and cleaning, put them in closer contact with pollution. This is further seen in funerals, where women are generally found nearer the corpse, and in the feminine conditions of menstruation and childbirth. The cultural identity of women therefore as mediators of nature and culture makes them the "symbolic vehicles for the manifestation of disorder in the world around them"<sup>5</sup>.

The pastors' accounts generally lack such explanations of the conflict women face in terms of sexual inequality, marginalisation, and competition either among themselves or against men. They largely explain the higher number of women subjects in terms of their greater susceptibility to demonic infection and intrusion (eg P15 - 3.3.3.F). This has been further

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marital insecurity, and relative isolation" (p. 189).

<sup>1</sup> See Myrtle S Langley, "Spirit Possession, Exorcism and Social Context: An Anthropological Perspective with Theological Implications", pp. 226-235.

<sup>2</sup> R L Stirrat, "Demonic Possession in Roman Catholic Sri Lanka", pp. 133-57.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>5</sup> Kapferer, Celebration of Demons, ch 5.

associated with what is believed to be the emotional lability and more acute sensitivity to the supernatural in women (eg P5 - 3.3.3.F). In P15's words, "women are more susceptible...(because) they are the weaker sex...(and) are more sensitive to the spirit world". The explanation is essentially spiritual rather than social or psychological.

## 2. Educational Level

Some social scientific studies have explained this pattern by implying that people with lower education may be marginalised and frustrated as a result. This makes them more liable to display possession behaviour as a way of expressing their frustration or anxiety<sup>1</sup>. Adityanjee et al incorporate the psychological dimension by stating that people from lower educational levels also belong to lower socio-economic classes; it is in social groups such as these that child neglect is often seen. This results in deep psychological conflicts within the individual who then manifests possession behaviour later in life.

This explanatory discourse differs from that of the pastors who essentially explain the higher incidence of possession among the lower educated in terms of spiritual dynamics even though sometimes they do include cultural factors in their explanations. It has been argued by the pastors that lower educated people tend to be more exposed to mediums and occult practices in the context of seeking help for their problems; it is this occult and religious involvement that leads directly to demon possession (3.3.2.A). Moreover lower educated people tend to subscribe more readily to beliefs in the spirit world. The anthropologists would stop there and say that the incidence of possession is related to the extent of the cultural and superstitious beliefs among the people. The more superstitious they are in terms of beliefs in spirits, the more cases of possession there will be because of the cultural expectations and exposure. It is interesting that though two pastors think that such beliefs affect the incidence of possession, yet they still explain the mechanics and dynamics

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<sup>1</sup> See Myrtle Langley, "Spirit Possession, Exorcism and Social Context", p. 231.

of spirit possession spiritually in terms of the "satanic strategy" that P3 suggests (3.3.2.A).

### 3. Economic Factors

Most of the explanations given in academic literature are psychosocial in nature and have to do with marginalisation<sup>1</sup> and social deprivation that people from the lower socio-economic classes tend to suffer from<sup>2</sup>. They face social powerlessness and economic difficulties and are often in very dire circumstances; usually there are few outlets for expression for their anxiety and frustration, and even to temporarily escape from their predicament. Possession provides one such outlet for them to "escape impossible situations"<sup>3</sup>. People with low social status are in a situation of relative social anomie<sup>4</sup>; they can face tremendous psychosocial tensions and anxiety and may need such escape routes as possession behaviour. But more than this, it can also help them to ventilate their emotional and psychological tensions and frustrations regarding their lack of social mobility<sup>5</sup>. Beyond this, possession behaviour may move from mere ventilation to rectification; it can give power to "the poor, downtrodden and oppressed peasantry with an opportunity to enact the parts of gods, becoming for brief periods lordly, omnipotent figures"<sup>6</sup>. As Kapferer puts it, it gives the possessed a certain degree of control over situations in which they may be disadvantaged by virtue of their lower social status<sup>7</sup>. If not, at least the "drama makes aware the social condition and

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<sup>1</sup> See R L Stirrat, "Demonic Possession", p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> see S G Lee, "Spirit Possession Among the Zulu" in John Beattie, Spirit Mediumship & Society in Africa, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Ari Kiev, "Pentecostal Sects", p. 134.

<sup>5</sup> Colleen Ward, "Thaipusam", p. 316.

<sup>6</sup> Ari Kiev, "Spirit Possession", pp. 136-7.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Kapferer, Celebration of Demons, p. 35. In this case, the possessed retained some control over their own religious and ritual actions since the middle-class controlled the Buddhist temples. In addition, possession, according to Kapferer, has curative and entertainment aims.

contrasts between the working class and the poorer class"<sup>1</sup>. The demons in possession act to symbolise the subordination and difficulties of the working class in society "since demons are the terrors which prowl at the base of hierarchy" in the worldview of the people; the demonic therefore becomes a metacommunicative of the dynamics of class.

A further psycho-social explanation given by Adityanjee et al is based on the assertion that people in lower socio-economic classes tend to have greater levels of childhood neglect which leads to psycho-social tensions predisposing the sufferer to possession behaviour later in life<sup>2</sup>.

It is to be noted here that the explanations provided by the literature for the higher incidence among people from lower socio-economic situations is generally along psycho-social lines derived from the social analysis of the context. The pastors on the other hand tend not to notice any pattern socio-economically; those who do so explain it culturally - superstitions - but overlay it with spiritual explanations. The superstitious poorer classes are more exposed through their beliefs to demonic occultic practices; hence the higher incidence of possession.

#### 4. Age

Several explanations have been offered in the human sciences to explain the phenomenon. Kapferer has suggested that children and the very young tend not to be possessed because possession behaviour, being a learned behaviour, needs an adequate process of "socialisation into the culture of demonic illness". Furthermore, children, with their limited linguistic abilities will find it difficult to follow ritual instructions during the process of exorcism ceremonies<sup>3</sup>. This however only explains why few children are found among those possessed but does not explain why more youths and young adults are seen. Others attempt to explain this essentially using the concepts of marginality and

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Adityanjee et al., "MPD in India", p. 1610.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Kapferer, Celebration of Demons, p. 57.

liminality. The youth in society may suffer marginality, not being in the centre of power structures or at the top of the hierarchy<sup>1</sup>. This is especially so in rigid social structures as in traditional Chinese societies<sup>2</sup>; it causes much resentment and frustration in the part of the marginalised youth who, through possession behaviour, may find a culturally sanctioned way of alleviating "the resentment and hostility which naturally builds up against the elders and the customs and conventions imposed by a society on its youth"<sup>3</sup>.

Along with this sociological dimension, there may also be psychological factors at play. Young people, especially adolescents, live in a period of flux often living with imprecise roles, that is, living in a period of liminality. Stirrat explains,

Among females, the greatest number of cases are of young women between the ages of puberty and marriage...Girls between puberty and marriage are in a "betwixt and between" stage. They are neither children nor fully adult women. They are sexually mature but still unmarried, and marriage is the correct state for sexually mature women. They are in a marginal state and therefore vulnerable to demonic attentions... Turning to males...there is a concentration of cases around the age of adolescence between the attainment of some sort of sexual maturity but before the final attainment of full maturity through marriage. Again they are in an anomalous state, neither children nor adults, and thus, like their female counterparts, they are more prone to possession than older or younger males.<sup>4</sup>

Stirrat incorporates this observation within the cultural framework in that society in Sri Lanka; the people believe that the adolescents in their liminal states are more prone to demonic possession by virtue of their liminality. Hence more of them are diagnosed as demon possessed since the diagnosis is essentially a social process and a socially derived label. Others give a more psychological explanation suggesting that it is the psychological

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<sup>1</sup> Myrtle S Langley, "Spirit Possession, Exorcism & Social Context", p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> J I Teoh et al, "Chinese Spirit Mediumship", pp. 56-7.

<sup>3</sup> Myrtle Langley, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>4</sup> R L Stirrat, "Demonic Possession", p. 154. See also Myrtle Langley, "Spirit Possession, Exorcism & Social Context", p. 233.

stress of living in a liminal state that gives rise to possession behaviour<sup>1</sup>.

In contrast, the pastors in our study while noting sometimes that more young people are possessed, explain that pattern largely in spiritual terms. The young are affected because of "push" and "pull" factors leading to their greater involvement in the occult or drug addiction which are practices said to be closely associated with the demonic (3.3.2.A; 3.3.3.B).

To summarise, the pastors' identification of socio-economic factors is in general agreement with those identified in the human sciences. However, there are two major divergences. First, the pastors are less ready to identify such factors; many in fact reported not noticing any patterns. This is understandable in view of their focus on the spiritual realm. If possession is caused by demons, then socio-economic factors must play no role or at best only an associated role. Thus, for those pastors who note some patterns, these are generally seen only in relation to the occult and the demonic. In other words, the socio-economic factors are only important in as far as identifying the types of people who are most likely to be attracted to the occult and mediums (by push and pull factors), leading, as it is believed, to demonisation. No other stories are sought in the patterns<sup>2</sup>. This is the second major divergence between the two groups of accounts. The pastors' stories have a supernatural theme, while the scientific stories are based upon entirely natural social themes.

#### 6.1.4 Sin and Other factors

The relationship between sinful living and indulgence and possession noted by many of the pastors is mirrored by similar

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<sup>1</sup> eg. Myrtle Langley, "Spirit Possession, Exorcism & Social Context".

<sup>2</sup> cf Erika Bourguignon, Religion, Altered States of Consciousness & Social Change, p. 327, where she notes that the frequency of demonic possession in third world contexts was strongly related to the presence of social oppression and societal stagnation.

observations in Christian literature from other contexts (Dow, Perry, Linns)<sup>1</sup>. In other words, the continued practice of a sinful habit may result in the possession of the person by a demon. Petitpierre, in addition, thinks that sinful practices can also result in demonic influences in the venue of such activities<sup>2</sup>. According to Perry, the desire for a person, thing or power may also be linked to possession; though he does not say whether this desire is sinful, the implication is that it is<sup>3</sup>.

This relationship between sinful living and possession is not picked up in the scientific literature unlike many of the other common epidemiological observations. However, on closer observation, there may be parallels. Firstly possession is sometimes attributed to the breaking of taboos or ritual uncleanliness. Secondly, possession has also been associated with feelings of guilt and shame as we have seen when discussing emotional and other psychological factors related to possession<sup>4</sup>. Thus there may be a phenomenological similarity here too, though different terminologies and idioms are used. The primary idea is that there is some contravention of generally accepted norms. This may be explained in cultural terms in that the cultural worldview incorporates negative reinforcers against such norm-breaking or law-breaking behaviour; the warning being that one can be affected by evil spirits in such cases. On the other hand, the scientific literature has also explained the phenomenon in psychological terms in that norm-breaking behaviour creates guilt or shame feelings. Such feelings are then projected onto external images of evil such as demonic beings. Thus Cramer asserts that possession is the result of the "inability to accept personal evil or shadow complexes on a purely personal level". Hence "what is naughty or lusty or outrageous becomes immoral, sinful and evil"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Dow, Those Tiresome Intruders, p. 14; Michael Perry, Deliverance, p. 83; Matthew & Dennis Linn, Deliverance Prayer, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Dom Robert Petitpierre, Exorcising Devils, pp. 50-51.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Perry, Deliverance, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> eg Teoh et al, "Chinese Spirit Mediumship", p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Marc Cramer, The Devil Within, pp. 262-3.

While Cramer has a causal viewpoint, others employ a more functional perspective in explaining the phenomenon. For example, Kiev and Ozturk suggest that possession behaviour serves to reduce guilt<sup>1</sup>. Thus one is possessed because one wants to resolve the guilt feelings associated with some perceived transgression of the law or norm in the internal (personal) and external environment (interpersonal and social) of the person. Hence we note here that the social scientific discourses describe the phenomenon in a different way and explain it either culturally as a preconceived cultural concept attempting to put limits to norm-contravention, or psychologically as a guilt reducing phenomenon. Some Christian literature seem to agree with this view. For instance, Richards argues that possession is commonest among Christians where there are few occasions for specific confession and forgiveness of sins. He writes:

What some see as "the spirit of evil" is usually little more than sin - sin that has not been dealt with, sin which has grown into a habit - and habits, as we all know, begin with us having them, and end with them having us! When this situation is allowed to go unchecked, then individuals grow into a state of bondage to their habits and style of life, a bondage which is basically to their own "lower natures" rather than to any alleged take-over by evil spirits (1 Pet 2:11)<sup>2</sup>.

In contrast, the seven pastors who pointed to the relationship between sinful living and possession, saw it essentially in demonic dimensions (3.3.3.A). One's spiritual resistance is seriously breached by repeated and deliberate sin, thus opening the way to demonic intrusion. Some of the pastors also saw an intimate relationship between the sinful habit and the possessing spirit. Thus "the spirit of lust", "the spirit of defiance", "the spirit of gluttony" and so on were encountered by a few pastors who saw related problems in the subject. The spiritual dimension thus takes predominance here.

Six of the pastors extended "sinful habits" to drug addiction (including alcoholism and smoking; 3.3.3.B)). This association

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<sup>1</sup> Ari Kiev, "Pentecostal Sects", p. 135; Orhan Ozturk, "Folk Treatment of Mental Illness", p. 361.

<sup>2</sup> John Richards, "Spirit of Evil?", pp. 25-6.

has been noted in other discourses such as Christian literature on possession<sup>1</sup> and anthropological and psychiatric literature<sup>2</sup>. William Sargant in his classical study of possession asserts that "drugs have been used from time immemorial to induce feelings of possession by gods and spirits"<sup>3</sup>. He traces this association from the ancient possession cults which used drugs and sacred plants to the modern experimentation with LSD by various people. The use of trance inducing fumes and drugs has also been noted by anthropologists and psychiatrists studying possession and trance<sup>4</sup>. The explanations take a largely physiological dimension as the title of Sargant's book suggests. The smelling of fumes and incense is said to provide the hypnotic "olfactory stimulation"<sup>5</sup> that leads to altered states of consciousness such as is found in possession trance. Besides the hypnotic effects of drugs (especially fumes), drugs can also operate in other ways. They can produce hallucinations by affecting the central nervous system<sup>6</sup>; moreover they can lower the usual conscious defenses, thus allowing for the emotional release that may be associated with the effects of drugs - drug abreaction<sup>7</sup>. Also, drugs can also cause organic damage leading to the delusion of possession<sup>8</sup>.

Some Christian pastoral discourses agree with this largely physiological explanation for the link between drugs and

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew & Dennis Linn, Deliverance Prayer, pp.12, 94; Church of Scotland, "Report of the Working Party on Parapsychology", p. 10; Michael Perry, Deliverance, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Ross et al, "MPD", pp. 415-6; Raymond Lee, "Dancing with the Gods", p. 358; William Sargant, The Mind Possessed, ch 8. It is interesting that Ross et al in a study of MPD (closely associated with possession) note that 31.4% of the cases of MPD were previously diagnosed as cases of substance abuse. This may not be a misdiagnosis; there may actually be a significant relationship between substance abuse & MPD.

<sup>3</sup> William Sargant, The Mind Possessed, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Eg see Raymond Lee's description of the use of *kemunyan* (benzoic) fumes in the Kelantanese *Main Peteri* trance (Lee, "Dancing with the Gods", p. 358)

<sup>5</sup> Colleen Ward, "Thaipusam", p. 320.

<sup>6</sup> William Sargant, The Mind Possessed, ch 8.

<sup>7</sup> See William Sargant, The Battle for the Mind, ch 3.

<sup>8</sup> See Alonso et al, "Mental Illness", p. 1190.

possession. The Church of Scotland report notes that people who take or are addicted to drugs are more susceptible to possession, and explains this in terms of the hallucinatory effects of the drugs<sup>1</sup>. Thus it is argued that they are not truly demon possessed; their possession is due to the hallucinations produced by the drugs. The pastoral care of the person would thus not be exorcism but counselling and medical treatment related to the drug problem. Perry agrees suggesting that people with alcohol or drug problems may present as cases of "false possession"<sup>2</sup>; suggesting that the problem is not demonic but medical.

The pastors on the other hand do not agree. Though they seem to be aware of the physiological dimensions of drug addiction, they also tend to see the problem essentially in spiritual and demonic terms (3.3.3.B). They find support for their approach in the experiences of those ministering among drug addicts in Singapore. Christian organisations such as Teen Challenge report that many drug addicts need a deliverance type of ministry to help them overcome their addiction. This experience is sometimes mirrored in other contexts, for example in the experience of charismatic American pastor David Wilkerson, who, incidentally, founded Teen Challenge in America. Wilkerson reports a success rate of seventy seven percent in treating drug addicts as opposed to twenty nine percent in the New York State programme. Because Wilkerson employs the demonic perspective and uses deliverance ministry significantly to help drug addicts, the implication is that drug addiction is significantly related to demonisation<sup>3</sup>. The pastors therefore incorporate a significant spiritual and demonic dimension into the problem of drug addiction and substance abuse. They see a vicious cycle in which such addictive practices lead to a breach in the spiritual resistance of the person, thus allowing demons to enter him and placing him in deeper bondage to the addiction.

In summary, we note that when comparing the accounts of the pastors and those in the human sciences, there is a striking

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<sup>1</sup> "Report of the Working Party on Parapsychology", p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Perry, Deliverance, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> See Matthew & Dennis Linn, Deliverance Prayer, p. 12.

resemblance in the description of the phenomenon of possession. Identified epidemiological factors are similar though the emphasis varies; the pastors majoring on contact with the occult and mediums, with the others majoring on social and psychological factors. The major difference in the accounts lies in the hermeneutical interpretation of the phenomenon. The pastors rely heavily on spiritual explanations which are ignored by the others who explain the phenomenon naturally.

## 6.2 The "Pathology" of Possession: How Many Worlds?

The reason for the interpretive differences of the phenomenon is the worldview that is utilised. This worldview, we saw, determines how the pastors interpret and respond to subjects of possession. It also determines what kind of explanations are put forward to make sense of epidemiological and behavioural characteristics of possession behaviour, which have also been interpreted by others, especially those in the human sciences, in a different way. In the previous section we noted that though similar epidemiological factors were identified in the different discourses, the explanations regarding the aetiological and dynamic dimensions of these factors differed markedly between the pastors and the scientists. This difference will become much clearer when we look into the nature and "pathology" of possession as understood in the two discourses. The scientific discourses are rooted in "natural pathology" while the pastors look for explanations in other realms. In other words, the question, "What is spirit possession?" is answered very differently in the two discourses. This provides a challenge to the pastors and this is best illustrated by first looking at competing perspectives in Singapore, and then looking at the larger scientific scene.

### 6.2.1 Competing Explanations in Singapore

The pastors' explanations are not the only ones existing in Singapore, as evidenced by the following examples. Tsoi, being

a psychiatrist himself<sup>1</sup>, offers an essentially psychiatric explanation. In a study of five hundred and fifty five patients diagnosed as having schizophrenia and admitted to Woodbridge Hospital, he discovered that forty six percent of those who had paranoid symptoms (thirty percent) believed that they were charmed (*kongtow*) or disturbed or possessed by spirits<sup>2</sup>. According to Tsoi, these delusions are the result of cultural influences, and if severe, may lead to "a spirit possession syndrome" which is a "rare manifestation of schizophrenia, but is occasionally found in cases of hysteria or personality disorders". Besides paranoid ideas, Tsoi also mentions other major symptoms of the group of patients with schizophrenia: auditory hallucinations, insomnia, aggressiveness, abnormal behaviour, disturbed behaviour, suicidal ideas, violence, "talking nonsense", etc - symptoms described by the pastors as related to demon possession<sup>3</sup>. Hence Tsoi attributes possession behaviour to schizophrenia.

A physiological explanation is offered by Ward in her study of possession trance during the Hindu festival of *Thaipusam*<sup>4</sup>. Ward suggests that the trance is induced by various techniques and is in fact a physiological state of altered consciousness. Various social pressures motivate such behaviour which are also strengthened by socio-cultural beliefs.

Teoh shifts the focus away from physiological processes towards psycho-social dimensions. He argues that possession states are more common in rigid and tightly knit societies that put a premium on conformism and postulates that

if an individual is concerned or disturbed by a social

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<sup>1</sup> Being the Professor (& Head of the Dept) of Psychological Medicine at the National University of Singapore & the National University Hospital.

<sup>2</sup> Tsoi Wing Foo, "Mental Health in Singapore and its Relation to Chinese Culture" in Chinese Culture and Mental Health, pp. 237-8.

<sup>3</sup> See also Tsoi, W F, & Chen, A J, "New Admissions to Woodbridge Hospital in 1975 with special reference to schizophrenia", pp. 275-9.

<sup>4</sup> Colleen Ward, "Thaipusam".

issue, which he cannot consciously change, the best culturally sanctioned solution is to be possessed by a spirit which is a mechanism that allows for an escape from these cultural pressures. Since possession is culturally sanctioned, heavily institutionalised and socially acceptable, it provides a legitimate outlet for one's socially undesirable impulses and desires. It offers an opportunity for the expression of much repressed and suppressed feeling and thought, and sets to motion an abreactive phenomena which eliminate frustrations that previously disturbed the individual.<sup>1</sup>

Teoh suggests that possession trance allows a person to play roles not normally available to him and that this has therapeutic effects while also maintaining the cultural value of saving face and denying the existence of any personal or interpersonal problems<sup>2</sup>. Leong shares a similar view in a more positive and functional perspective by viewing possession by departed relatives as a

dramatic context in which the basic values of Chinese family life are reaffirmed - where filial piety is expressed, responsibilities and duties pointed out and relationships between one another and their (departed family member) healed or strengthened.<sup>3</sup>

Thus possession behaviour is said to fulfill various useful social functions, in maintaining an ongoing social relationship with the dead, and in solving family disputes and problems with the aid of a third party, that is, the "departed soul".

#### 6.2.2 The Nature of Possession: Scientific Explanations

We saw earlier some of the alternative explanations of possession in Singapore. These have been derived from the medical and social sciences as they were developed in the west. The corpus of scientific literature on possession behaviour in various disciplines have by and large attempted to explain the phenomena from a naturalistic point of view. The primary argument is that demon possession is a cultural construct or a mistaken notion of some other condition which can be explained naturally. Thus Tay

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<sup>1</sup> Teoh, J I, "Chinese Spirit-Mediumship", p 56.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 61, 59.

<sup>3</sup> Vicki Leong, "The Seance", p. 54

et al argue that mental illness has been attributed (wrongly) to spirits or demons by a significant number of patients' relatives in Singapore<sup>1</sup>.

A host of explanatory discourses exist in scientific literature on possession. As we have already noted many of these, here we will only summarise and list the major ones using the following three categories:

#### A. Primarily Physiological and Biological Explanations

Many have argued that possession is a trance state in which an altered state of consciousness is produced following various physiological processes such as sensory deprivation. According to Goodman et al, these are some of the "biological commonalities" in all possession states, which are then modified in terms of manifestations, by cultural variations<sup>2</sup>.

Such trance states are believed to serve various functions through the "hysterical dissociation"<sup>3</sup> that takes place. They are supposed to provide a means of escape, however temporary, from personal and social stresses in the life situation of the subject; in this way catharsis is said to be achieved<sup>4</sup>. Also, group support for the subject is said to be initiated or strengthened<sup>5</sup>. Kua et al agree in their study of possession behaviour in Singapore that such manifestations evoke appropriate responses and support from the family for the person<sup>6</sup>. In addition, Sargant has argued that possession states have been manipulated by religious leaders to reinforce their particular

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<sup>1</sup> W K Tay et al, "A Study of Psychiatric Patients", table 8.

<sup>2</sup> Felicitas Goodman et al, Trance, Healing, & Hallucination, pp. 104-5

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Wallace, "Cultural Determinants of Responses to Hallucinatory Experiences", pp. 58-68.

<sup>4</sup> Colleen Ward et al, "The Psychodynamics of Demon Possession", p. 201.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p 207.

<sup>6</sup> Kua Ee Heok et al, "Possession Trance in Singapore", p. 363.

doctrines<sup>1</sup>.

Thus spirit possession is considered as a folk explanation of physiological trance states<sup>2</sup>, and a "final common pathway for many different forms of human expression and experience, both adaptive and maladaptive", hence serving biological, psychological, and social functions<sup>3</sup>. It is claimed therefore that the two crucial questions of the nature (what) and function (why) of possession behaviour have been answered.

#### B. Primarily Medical and Psychological Explanations

This group of explanations owe largely to the depth psychological understanding of possession seen in pioneers like Freud and Jung. For Freud, spirits and demons are "only projections of man's own emotional impulses"<sup>4</sup>. He explains that the states of possession described in older literature correspond with "our neuroses" and that the process involves the substitution of a Father-figure<sup>5</sup>. Jung had a more mystical perspective and saw demons as "autonomous figures and thought forms"<sup>6</sup>. He explains possession using psychological dynamics involving complexes ("emotionally toned contents having a certain amount of autonomy"<sup>7</sup>) within the unconscious.

Demonism (synonymous with demonomania = possession) denotes a peculiar state of mind characterised by the fact that certain psychic contents, the so-called complexes, take over the control of the total personality in place of the ego, at least temporarily, to such a degree that the free

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<sup>1</sup> William Sargant, Battle for the Mind, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Sheila Walker, Ceremonial Spirit Possession

<sup>3</sup> Arnold M Ludwig, "Altered States of Consciousness", in Raymond Prince (ed), Trance & Possession States, pp. 85f.

<sup>4</sup> James Strachey (ed), The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol 13, p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, Vol 19, pp. 72f.

<sup>6</sup> C G Jung, Bollingen Series XX, 2nd edn., Vol 3, para 528. A similar view incorporating Christian theology and symbols is seen in Morton Kelsey, Discernment: A Study in Ecstasy and Evil.

<sup>7</sup> C G Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 91. Following Jung, Gross has argued that "spirits are the archetypical symbols for complexes" in D H Gross, "A Jungian Analysis of New Testament Exorcism", p. 185.

will of the ego is suspended. In certain of these states ego-consciousness is present, in others it is eclipsed. Demonism is a primordial psychic phenomenon and frequently occurs under primitive conditions (good descriptions in the New Testament, Lk 4:34; Mk 1:22; 5:2 etc.). The phenomenon of demonism is not always spontaneous, but can also be deliberately induced as a "trance", for instance in shamanism, spiritualism, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Jung further saw possession pathologically as "partly psychogenic neuroses and partly schizophrenia"<sup>2</sup>. Drawing from this tradition, it has been argued that possession is a metaphor for various emotional states such as extreme rage, sexual excitement, morbid depression, love, prolonged erection, and any experience in which the subject feels "beside himself"<sup>3</sup>. Obeyesekere agrees by calling possession an "idiom" for underlying psychological conflicts, thus associating possession behaviour with psychogenic conflicts and psychopathology<sup>4</sup>.

Various attempts therefore have been made to locate possession behaviour within psychiatric nomenclature and classifications. Possession has been commonly seen as a hysterical condition<sup>5</sup>; in fact, in his classical study, Yap locates almost half his patients under the diagnostic entity of "hysteria"<sup>6</sup>. If possession has been identified as hysteria, its functions have been postulated variously as enabling the transference of psychogenic conflicts and fears through conversion reactions

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<sup>1</sup> C G Jung, Bollingen Series XX, Vol 18, para 1473.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, para 1474. Following Freud & Jung, the Objects Relations School sees the demonic as a metaphor for introjected bad objects which are identified as an evil self (W R Fairbairn, An Object Relations Theory of Personality, p. 70). Thus it is argued that the therapist and exorcist are both dealing with the same natural phenomena but with different techniques; see J D Henderson, "Exorcism, Possession & the Dracula Cult; A Synopsis of Object Relations Psychology", p. 627.

<sup>3</sup> Vincent Crapanzano, "Spirit-Possession", in Mircea Eliade, The Encyclopedia of Religion, p.13.

<sup>4</sup> Gnanath Obeyesekere, "The Idiom of Demonic Possession", p. 100. See also Marc Cramer, "Psychopathology & Shamanism", pp. 67-73

<sup>5</sup> Anne Maguire, "Psychic Possession Among Industrial Workers", pp. 376-8. See also Juan B Cortes & Florence M Gatti, The Case Against Possessions & Exorcisms, pp. 154f.

<sup>6</sup> P M Yap, "The Possession Syndrome", p. 120.

(Cortes, Maguire<sup>1</sup>), or the expression of collective grievances and a sense of helplessness in the face of social conflicts - the hysterical reaction becoming thus a safety valve<sup>2</sup>.

Possession has also been viewed as an obsessive-compulsive disorder<sup>3</sup> where the obsession is personified as a demon, and as a form of depression. Referring to Chinese culture, Singer argues that there is no word for depression in the Chinese language and that depressive states are projected into the cultural notion of possession<sup>4</sup>. In addition, certain psychiatric conditions, such as Tourette's syndrome in which the patient exhibits outbursts of temper, and motor and vocal tics in the form of coprolalia (bad or blasphemous language), have been suggested to explain possession behaviour<sup>5</sup>.

A psychiatric nosological entity which has been having increasing currency especially in North American psychiatry is multiple personality disorder (MPD). Some have suggested that MPD and the possession state are similar, or at least variants of a similar psychiatric condition<sup>6</sup>. Ross, for example, shows that almost half of his MPD patients showed alter personalities identified as demons or departed human spirits<sup>7</sup>. It is easy to see from comparing the symptomatologies of MPD and possession why they have often been thought to be identical; for example Kenny has concluded that the difference between the two is a culture-specific bias<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Maguire ("Psychic Possession among Industrial Workers") points out that physical symptoms such as dermatological rashes may even be produced without any underlying organic pathology.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Lee, "Hysteria Among Factory Workers", in Evelyn Hong (ed), Malaysian Women: Problems & Issues, pp. 76-8.

<sup>3</sup> T K Oesterreich, Possession, pp. 83-97

<sup>4</sup> K Singer, "Cross-Cultural Dynamics in Psychotherapy", in Jules H Masserman (ed), Social Psychiatry, (Vol 2), p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> Basil Jackson, "Reflections on the Demonic" in Montgomery, Demon Possession, ch 8, p. 265.

<sup>6</sup> Shekhar Saxena et al, "DSM-III"; M D Adityanjee et al, "Current Status of MPD in India".

<sup>7</sup> Colin Ross, "Multiple Personality Disorder", p. 415.

<sup>8</sup> M G Kenny, "Multiple Personality & Spirit Possession", pp. 227-58.

Possession has also been associated with more serious psychopathology, in particular schizophrenia, a common form of "psychosis"<sup>1</sup>. Several studies of possession states in shamans have set out to show serious psychopathology<sup>2</sup>, though it must also be said that the opposite is also true<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the symptoms of disturbed mood, affect, and thought has led psychiatrists to think that possession was a symptom of schizophrenia. Thus Iida argues that the idea of being possessed is a paranoid delusion associated with some forms of schizophrenia<sup>4</sup>, while Kiev and Obeyesekere postulate that possession is a "last ditch defence against personality disorganisation and psychosis", and if that fails, a culturally acceptable form of "going crazy"<sup>5</sup>.

### C. Primarily Sociological and Cultural Explanations

Most of these have to do with marginalisation, liminality, rapid social change, and social homeostasis.

Possession behaviour is said to be associated with the marginalised in society such as women, the poor and others who feel powerless, who use it as an "oblique aggressive attack" against those who frustrate them<sup>6</sup>. This may be in the smaller familial or communal context in which frustration arises as a result of competition between the sexes (Lewis) or within the

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<sup>1</sup> P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome"; Ida Macalpine & Richard Hunter, Schizophrenia 1677; P M Van Wolffen Palthe in Jane Belo, Trance in Bali - Palthe, invited by Belo to assess the cases, distinguished them as cases of schizophrenia & hysteria; Belo disagrees arguing that there was no basic psychopathology since when out of trance, the subjects were normal (pp. 5-10).

<sup>2</sup> eg J Silverman "Shamans & Acute Schizophrenia", pp. 21-31; L Langness, "Hysterical Psychosis in the New Guinea Highlands", pp. 258-77. For a more comprehensive survey, see I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, ch 7.

<sup>3</sup> Eg J Murphy, "Psychiatric Aspects of Shamanism" in Ari Kiev, Magic, Faith & Healing; A Butt et al, Trances, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Junzo Iida, "Delusion of Possession".

<sup>5</sup> Gnanath Obeyesekere, "The Idiom of Demonic Possession", p. 105; Ari Kiev, "Spirit Possession in Haiti", p. 138.

<sup>6</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion; Raymond Lee, "Hysteria Among Factory Workers".

same sex (Wilson<sup>1</sup>), or in the larger national and political context<sup>2</sup>, where ethnic and political tensions find expression through possession behaviour in certain socio-cultural milieux.

Possession is also said to be linked with liminal rites of passage as Stirrat argues<sup>3</sup>. According to him, demonic possession serves as a rite of passage for those who are in a liminal situation. It helps people to express their liminality and to be reintegrated into society. Using similar arguments, Wright suggests that it is those who suffer unpleasant status changes (such as new wives of arranged marriages, widows, and those who face the prospect of additional wives in a Muslim household) who are most prone to possession behaviour<sup>4</sup>.

Rapid social change, especially in traditional societies, is also believed to give rise to possession behaviour<sup>5</sup>. People face new problems and stresses, and may feel helpless and confused amidst rapid social changes. Possession behaviour is thus said to have tension management and relieving functions<sup>6</sup>. It also apparently equips the subject with means of aggressive self-assertive and problem solving behaviour<sup>7</sup>. It is also said to serve a socio-homeostatic and stabilising function in that when rapid social change results in social disintegration, possession cults are believed to "tighten the social structure" by reviving neglected religious and cultural practices, which, Prince argues, will result in the restoration of mental health in the community, since social disintegration and mental dis-ease are related<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Wilson, "Status Ambiguity and Spirit Possession".

<sup>2</sup> Colleen Ward, "Thaipusam in Malaysia", Susan Ackerman & Raymond Lee, Heaven in Transition.

<sup>3</sup> R L Stirrat, "Demonic Possession in Roman Catholic Sri Lanka", pp. 133-57.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Wright, "Dance is the Cure".

<sup>5</sup> John Beattie & John Middleton (eds), in Spirit Mediumship & Society in Africa, pp. xxviii, xxix.

<sup>6</sup> Choong Ker Che, "Chinese Divination", p. 92; Winston Davis, Dojo: Magic & Exorcism in Modern Japan, p. 302.

<sup>7</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, p. 204.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Prince, "Possession Cults & Social Cybernetics", in Prince (ed), Trance & Possession States, pp. 160-1.

Further socio-homeostatic functions are attributed to possession behaviour in that they are said to facilitate the resolution of interpersonal conflicts in the family and in the larger social context, in addition to facilitating communication. It is in this sense that Metraux sees possession as a theatrical facility, often with comical elements, for the free expression and frank outbursts of otherwise inexpressible emotions and desires<sup>1</sup>. Thus possession behaviour is believed to be a safety valve for social conflicts which allows expression without disrupting the social framework<sup>2</sup>. Sometimes, the subjects achieve what they want and have their grievances met by those who consciously or unconsciously understand the subject's problems. If successful, subjects may learn to use possession behaviour to manipulate those around them to get what they want<sup>3</sup>.

Additionally, possession behaviour is also said to "structure inchoate feelings"<sup>4</sup> and therefore aid in communication, especially between spouses<sup>5</sup>. The "spirit" is used to form a triadic relationship and serves as a "middleman" to facilitate communication between living individuals. A similar positive approach is taken by Spring when she argues that the illnesses related to possession behaviour are real (mainly women's diseases such as infertility and gynaecological problems, and paediatric conditions). According to her, possession serves as a mechanism by which ritual groups can be formed to enable curative and support functions to be expressed<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Metraux, "Dramatic Elements in Ritual Possession", pp. 18-36. See also Bruce Kapferer, A Celebration of Demons, & I Sow, Anthropological Structures of Madness in Black Africa, pp. 109-11.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Lee, "Hysteria Among Factory Workers"; I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion.

<sup>3</sup> Walter & Frances Mischel, "Psychological Aspects of Spirit Possession", pp. 249-60.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent Crapanzano in Crapanzano & Vivian Garrison (eds), Case Studies in Spirit Possession, p. 16. See also E R Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Lambek, "Spirits & Spouses: Possession as a System of Communication"; Human Spirits.

<sup>6</sup> Anita Spring, "Epidemiology of Spirit Possession Among the Luvale of Zambia, in Judith Hoch-Smith & Spring (eds), Women in Ritual & Symbolic Roles, p. 188.

To summarise, we have noted various explanations offered in the medical and social sciences to explain both the nature and functions of possession behaviour. The obvious characteristic is the use of naturalistic explanations, whether, physiological, psychological, or sociological, and the absence of supernatural dimensions in the narratives. This may be due to the anti-supernaturalistic stance generally seen in the "sciences", or to the notion that science does not deal with metaphysical problems as Jung points out; referring to demons as "unconscious powers", he declines to comment whether they are metaphysical facts, for this has to do with faith rather than science<sup>1</sup>. In effect, the scientific discourses confine their explanations to this world and either reject or ignore the other world believed by the pastors.

Therefore, the various scientific explanations pose a problem for the pastors' discourses as they imply alternative and competing explanations. They challenge the pastors' assertion that there is such a thing as demon possession; according to them, possession is not due to demons but to psychological, social, and physiological disturbances in the life of the subject. For them, demon possession can be entirely explained naturally. The pastors respond to this in several ways.

The pastors' response can best be understood by considering the two worlds, the natural world and the supernatural world as forming two polarities between which lies a spectrum of possibilities. The scientists locate their discourses at the natural pole. For them, the other pole has no ontological significance. In other words, it is merely a reflection of this world in the minds of people. Demons do not exist, and therefore demon possession does not actually take place. This is unacceptable to the pastors for whom both worlds exist. In fact, because they tend to view the other world as more fundamental and important, their discourses tend to cluster around the pole of the supernatural world. They thus attempt to counter the "one-world" paradigm of the scientists with their "two-worlds" paradigm. A spectrum of possibilities exist as to how one can

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<sup>1</sup> C G Jung, Bollingen Series, Vol 18: pp. 1504-5.

bridge the gap between these two worlds. We shall look at some typical attempts of the pastors to bridge this gap.

A few have responded by majoring on "other-world" language to explain various human conditions and problems. For instance, some pastors have said that some cases of demon possession are mistaken for mental illness. Reflecting Omand's arguments that "possession is often mistaken for sickness, especially mental sickness", P8 remarked,

If a person is possessed, the whole body can be affected. this can be mental or physical. We actually can find many cases of possession in Woodbridge (psychiatric) Hospital.

In such instances, it is felt that the person's real problem is not his symptoms of mental illness but rather his state of possession<sup>1</sup>. Here the pastor is rooted more in the other world and its language rather than in this natural world. Explanations are found in the spirit world. With this stance the pastor is reflecting a mirror image of the stance of the scientists. He tends to often limit his discourses in terms of the supernatural world and views the natural world as but a pale reflection of the spirit world.

### 6.2.3 Commuting Between Two Worlds

Some pastors choose to accept a few of the alternative scientific explanations especially those dealing with psychological and psychiatric dimensions. However, they also draw a sharp distinction between these and their own explanations. Thus in their universe of possibilities, there is a place for purely psychiatric problems which may appear initially as other conditions, but there is<sup>1</sup> also a place for demon possession cases<sup>2</sup>. In other words, the problem is centrally located in

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<sup>1</sup> Psychiatrist Kenneth McCall says the same thing when he asserts that cases of demon possession have sometimes been misdiagnosed as schizophrenia, hysteria, or psychopathology - "Taste & See", in John Montgomery (ed), Demon Possession, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> Based on the argument that the Bible distinguishes between demon possession and mental & other illnesses eg in Mt 8:16; 4:24; Mk 1:32; Lk 4:40-41; 6:18; 7:21. (See John Nevius, Demon Possession, pp. 180f; Timothy Pain, Deliverance, pp. 50-1). For

either this world or the other, but not in both at any one time. This perspective is reflected in both the diagnostic and therapeutic strategies of the pastors.

In diagnosis, the pastors set out to determine whether it is a psychological/psychiatric or spiritual problem. This is done in two ways. Firstly, medical causes are apparently ruled out before a spiritual diagnosis is considered as indicated by the following pastors:

I will consider personality problems, psychosis or medical problems first...discount everything before considering the possibility of demonisation. (P2)

I take a tough posture of disbelief. First of all, I will see if it is medical problem. If nothing is wrong medically, then I'll wonder if it's a psychiatric problem. If that is also negative, then I'll see if there is anything wrong emotionally or relationally. If all these show nothing wrong, then I'll check for spiritual causes by looking into the history, for example, occult involvement, temple visits, superstitions etc. (P7)

Other pastors (P1, P5, P6, P11) share a similar approach<sup>1</sup>. P5 who takes a medical-psychiatric-spiritual diagnostic route illustrated his approach with this story:

A lady and her husband came to see me. They were worried that she might be having a spiritual problem, wondering whether there was something demonic in it. She suffered from periods of anxiety, perspiration, and palpitations. I wondered whether it was a medical problem, perhaps a thyroid problem. However, in her case, there was no medical problem. I then told her to see a psychiatrist who diagnosed that she was suffering from panic attacks.

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a contrary position, see Barker, "Possession and the Occult", p. 247 where he argues that possession and illnesses are not clearly differentiated in the Bible and that there are no clear patterns. Another view is that there is an evolution of thought in the synoptic gospels. See Ramsay Michaels, "Jesus & the Unclean Spirits" in Montgomery, Demon Possession, pp. 48-9 where it is argued that while Mk differentiates the 2 categories, Mt places demon possession under the larger category of illness, & Lk shifts from a Markan to a Matthean position. This view is shared by Graham Twelftree, Christ Triumphant, ch 4.

<sup>1</sup> cf the RC Rituale Romanum, which gives guidelines to differentiate between demon possession & illnesses; Montague Summers, The History of Witchcraft & Demonology, pp. 209-11, 238-40.

In this case, the pastor accepted that it was a psychiatric problem and ceased his diagnostic activity. Not all the pastors, however, sought to exclude natural causes before considering spiritual explanations. Some chose to do the reverse<sup>1</sup> as in the case of P15 who feels for bad vibes when meeting people suspected to be demonised - "If there are no vibes, we can presume that there is nothing (demonic) there." After excluding demonic causes, the pastor will then look for more naturalistic explanations for his counsellee's condition. Likewise, P1 who said that he will explore three areas (medical, emotional, and spiritual) said that he will look for emotional causes last after excluding the other two.

This dualistic perspective is further seen in the therapeutic approach taken by these pastors. Thus P15 explained that

if the problem is psychiatric, then there is no exorcism. What the person needs is a ministry of love, peace, and forgiveness. But if the problem is demonic, then I would challenge the demons, expose them and do an exorcism.

Using the same argument, P9 and P10 feel that persons who genuinely suffer from demon possession do not need psychiatric treatment. For similar reasons, one pastor insisted that exorcism was not related to physical healing, thus suggesting that a person may either suffer from demon possession or medical disease but not both. Some pastors expressed confidence that their dualistic view was also shared by medical doctors whom they knew. One (P11) recalled a doctor to whom he had referred a patient saying that

if it is demonic, then medicine cannot help. If medicine helps, then it cannot be demonic.

Another pastor told the story of a doctor at Mount Elizabeth Hospital who, after examining a particular church member's sister who had auditory hallucinations "was clearly convinced that it was not a medical or psychological problem" but a demonic problem. The pastor therefore took over the management and

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<sup>1</sup> See Timothy Pain, Deliverance, p. 73, where he recommends an exorcism-psychiatric treatment-exorcism approach rather than the reverse.

performed an apparently successful exorcism (see 4.2.2.C).

We note therefore that some pastors tend to respond to the various alternative explanations of possession by accommodating them; that is, they accept both worlds but locate problems in only one of these worlds at any one time. Demon possession is considered as an issue dealing with the other world.

#### 6.2.4. Living Between Two Worlds

Others try to locate possession at the interface of both worlds. It is argued that demonisation and other problems, especially physical, mental and psychological disturbances may co-exist in the same person<sup>1</sup>. Thus some pastors claim that they have seen demonised people present with a physical problem or disease.

Demonisation...may cause physical symptoms such as a severe headache or backache, with no medical reasons. I mean, the doctors cannot find anything wrong physically. (P3)

Demons are also at times associated with specific physical diseases, for example a "demon of asthma" which P15 said he exorcised from someone for whom he "prayed quietly"; the person was said to have gagged, choked, and felt "something come out". One pastor (P2) attributed this association between physical illness and demonisation to the ability of demons to inflict physical harm on people. To illustrate, he mentioned the case of David Watson who he thought was "attacked" by demons because he was particularly effective in the Christian ministry; hence his medical problems (cancer, from which he died) was the result of such a spiritual battle. The pastor's verdict was: "we lost this one".

Many pastors also expressed the opinion that mental and psychopathology often co-exist with demonisation. For example, P3 postulated that

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<sup>1</sup> cf Scott Peck, People of the Lie, pp. 211-19; Lechler in Koch, Occult Bondage, p. 160; John White, Masks of Melancholy, ch 2, Francis MacNutt, "The Imperative Need for the Church's Involvement in a Deliverance Ministry" in Linn & Linn, Deliverance Prayer, for a similar position.

I think there is a relationship between damaged emotions such as bitterness, depression and anger, and possession. ...these various states provide demonic footholds in one's life. Many of the possessed states are related to emotional turmoil, and here there seems to be a correlation between psychology and demonisation.

It is thus believed that "there is some overlap" (P5) between the spiritual and psychological dimensions; this is explained mainly through the concept of "footholds" (eg P3, P5) for the demonic provided by various emotional states. For the same reasons certain personality types (eg "melancholy, inferiority types" - P3) are believed to be more closely related to possession.

Because "psychological problems can be mixed with spiritual problems", these pastors say that they look out for such mixed cases when they diagnose the person's problem. Thus for P4, many cases of possession may be purely due to possession, or purely due to schizophrenia, or due to both conditions (4.3.2), a view shared by other pastors such as P16 who told the following story to illustrate:

Sharon was a woman who we thought was demon possessed. She had many symptoms. For example, she felt that something was choking her throat. She also heard voices. She said that there was this demon talking to her, and that Jesus was also talking to her. Sharon's husband brought some (Chinese) monks to help her. They gave her (charm) water to drink and bathe. That didn't help. So she was brought to me subsequently. I had about four or five sessions with her. At first, the (deliverance) team felt that it was a case of demon possession. Later we changed our mind and referred her to a psychiatrist. We worked with him and she was given psychiatric treatment. Sometimes it is difficult to get patients to believe that they are not possessed. Well, Sharon is still attending church. She's on medication. She's had a deep, deep fear embedded in her...I now think that she was possibly demonised. She had a child spirit in her when we delivered her. Yes, in her case, I think the problem was both psychological and spiritual. The demonic can cause psychological problems...but I won't imply this link in all cases.

This assimilative approach in diagnosis<sup>1</sup> is also seen in the case of some physical illnesses. For example, in the case of Theresa,

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<sup>1</sup> cf Evelyn Frost, Healing, who argues for a "double diagnosis" in such cases taking into account both supernatural and natural processes (pp. 46-7).

P11 diagnosed an underlying demonic problem related with her gynaecological problems (4.1.3)<sup>1</sup>. A similar suspicion is exercised by some of the pastors when encountering people with addiction problems. Thus, for P11, Christians who are addicted to smoking, alcohol, or drugs usually need deliverance from the "demons" who are enslaving them. In addition, certain sexual practices such as homosexuality are said to be related, in many cases, to demon possession (P11)<sup>2</sup>.

It is in the therapeutic strategy that this assimilative and interactional approach is more clearly seen. Several pastors stressed the importance of post-deliverance counselling. Most of this would be performed by themselves or by selected individuals in the church. People who are exorcised are seldom referred to psychiatrists even though some pastors said that certain people may need both deliverance as well as psychiatric treatment (P3). This is understandable since one of the main criteria for a successful exorcism is the subject's return to normality. Any residual symptoms would be minor. The persistence of disturbed behaviour will be seen as a continuing sign of possession and at best, a partial success in exorcism, and not as the symptoms of underlying or related mental or emotional disturbance following a "successful exorcism". (We shall look at the problem posed by this in chapter eight).

Any recourse to other professional assistance following exorcism is usually limited to sending the subjects for supportive medical treatment, such as for exhaustion. One pastor (P15) said that he may sometimes send a subject for a placebo "water injection" by a cooperative doctor in order to help the person's recovery following an exorcism.

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<sup>1</sup> Such views are not unknown, though rare, in medical circles. See eg Prof Cedric Wilson, "The Association Between Allergic Disease, Entities, Multiple Personalities, & Medical Dowsing", pp. 215-27, where he believes that allergic diseases may be related to spirit intrusion.

<sup>2</sup> An interesting case is described by David Barlow et al, "Gender Identity Change in a Transsexual: An Exorcism", pp. 387-95, where a transsexual being prepared for sex-reassignment surgery undergoes "sudden and massive behavioral change observed & objectively measured" after an exorcism.

Most of the counselling is done within the church. If the pastor believes that there are some serious emotional problems related to the person's demonisation, he would do the counselling immediately after the exorcism, as is seen in the Lims' account of Mary in their book<sup>1</sup>. Counselling is seen by some pastors as an indispensable partner of exorcism.

Deliverance ministry has to include counselling. Counselling will trace the source of the problem...Deliverance is just the removal of the evil spirit. For example, the person may have had problems in his childhood. Due to his parents, he may suffer from inferiority complex. He may have been badly treated and suffer rejection as a result. These problems have to be sorted out. (P3)

Often such counselling takes place in the continuing context of demon possession. For P4, if such post-deliverance counselling is not given and the underlying emotional "footholds" for the demonic not removed, the subject may have a recurrence of his "demonic" problems. A form of counselling mentioned by some of the pastors is "inner healing" (P3, P8, P12, P13). P8 remarked that all cases of possession need inner healing following an exorcism. This is often practised by "counselling prayer" and apparently results in the resolution of deep-seated emotional problems. One pastor (P15) claimed that he gave "psychotherapy" after an exorcism. The agenda for this is sometimes obtained through his conversations with the possessing entity during the exorcism when he attempts to discover the person's underlying problems.

When a person's physical illness is believed to be related to demonisation, some pastors believe that physical healing will follow the exorcism (P12). P11 in fact asserts that in such cases,

the spirits of infirmities must be identified and expelled. They can cause acute arthritis, epileptic fits, barrenness, and so on. These sicknesses can't be healed until an exorcism is done. And sometimes, the illness will disappear after the exorcism.

He went on to illustrate his point with the case of Theresa who

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac & Shirley Lim, Comfort My People, pp. 93-5.

apparently recovered from gynaecological problems following an exorcism (4.1.3)<sup>1</sup>.

In short, many pastors incorporated the scientific perspectives into their own scheme of things. In possession, it is believed that both worlds come together and interact in a complex interplay. It must also be noted that in this modified scheme, the spiritual explanations of the pastors still retain a dominance over and above the more natural explanations and processes. This is evident in both the diagnostic and therapeutic approaches. In diagnosis, many tend to believe that possession can either lead to physical illness or be caused by underlying "emotional footholds". Disturbed behaviour in the subject arouses suspicions of demonic activity. The demonic dimension has a significant place in the pastors' diagnostic categories. In helping the subjects, many pastors also subscribe to the belief that even if a person is suffering from a physical illness or a mental disorder, these problems can only be effectively dealt with after an exorcism. In some cases, they claim that these other problems are dramatically resolved after the exorcism. In other words, events in the other worlds are seen as determinative of events in this world. The other world becomes prominent and momentous in the life lived between both worlds.

### 6.3 Summary

In comparing the accounts of the pastors with those in the human sciences, we note a remarkable similarity in the phenomenological description of the characteristics and behaviour of the possessed. This must indicate that the various narratives on possession are based generally on a similar underlying phenomenon. However, while there is agreement in the description, there is a marked difference in the interpretation of the phenomenon. Though the "scientific" perspectives vary in their own focus and approaches, they all seek to explain the phenomenon naturally, either physiologically, psychologically, sociologically, behaviourally, or culturally. The supernatural

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<sup>1</sup> A similar story is told in Tidings (published by Wesley Methodist Church, Singapore), Mar/Apr 1991, p. 11.

explanations offered by the subjects and other practitioners such as the pastors are either denied or ignored. The multiple discourses on possession in fact create a polarity between two worlds, this world of nature and culture, and another world of spirits.

The pastors in Singapore live in a situation where there are many perspectives on possession. They have to contend with the scientific perspectives as expressed by psychiatrists and sociologists in Singapore. The scientific worldview is based exclusively on this world and tends to deny the existence of the other world of the pastors. For the pastors, the challenge is to argue for the reality of their other world and to attempt to live between both worlds. The polarity between both worlds represents a spectrum of possibilities and we have seen some "snapshots" of typical options of the pastors along this complex spectrum. Some mirroring the scientists, have chosen to live and speak very much in terms of the other world. In the process, they tend to override the natural explanations of the scientists with their own spiritual explanations for the phenomenon. Others attempt to live in both worlds, commuting between the two. The borders are clearly drawn. Problems are situated in one of the worlds at any one time. In this way, the explanations of the scientists are accommodated but kept separate and distinct from the pastors' own explanations. In this way the pastor gets to keep his other world and live in it while minimising any infringement of the scientists' world on his territory. The territories of the secular professional and the religious professional (ie the pastor) are clearly differentiated. Another typical response is to locate possession at the interface of the two worlds, and therefore to live between both. However it is noted that a hierarchy is created in this model with the supernatural explanations taking precedence over the natural explanations. This world is explained in terms of the other world. We have also seen that the pastors focus more on psychiatric and some psychological perspectives rather than on socio-anthropological perspectives which are largely absent or at best minimal in their discourses.

The above are some locations along the spectrum between the two

worlds that the pastors choose to live and function in. However, it must also be noted that many pastors show some mobility along the spectrum of possibilities. For example P15 said that "if the problem is psychiatric, then there is no exorcism" but also that he usually gives "psychotherapy" to subjects after an exorcism. This apparent contradiction is also seen in pastors who said that they would first exclude natural causes (medical, psychiatric) and then spoke of the relationship between possession and psychological disturbances (eg P5, 6, 7). This ambiguity may reflect the complexity of cases, but more likely, the pastors' continuing difficulties in trying to live between their two worlds. In any case, our analysis shows that they tend to live near the other world and order their lives and ministry on that basis.

In the next chapter, we will examine the factors shaping the pastors' responses and their attempts to live between both their worlds.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7.0 THE SHAPING OF THE PASTORS' WORLDVIEW

In the previous chapter we noted how the pastors' interpretations and responses to the phenomenon were largely determined by their worldview. This was seen in both their explanations of observations made regarding the type of people who tend to get possessed, and in their diagnostic and therapeutic stances. It was also seen in the way they responded to the presence of competing perspectives and narratives on possession. We propose in this and the next chapter that, if the pastors' are to respond to possession with an adequate level of theologically and scientifically informed intentionality, then they must embark on the dual tasks of developing awareness and undertaking evaluation. This chapter will be concerned with the first of these tasks.

#### 7.1 Knowledge and Belief

We noted in chapter three (4.3) the pastors' difficulties in their diagnostic exercises when dealing with a possessed subject because of the similarities in the manifestations between demon possession and mental illness or emotional disturbance as they understood these conditions. In spite of calls by some for deliverance ministry to emulate the clinical and objective science that medicine or psychology is perceived to be<sup>1</sup>, it must be noted that in reality, as in the case of our pastors, much of the diagnosis depends on a subjective intuitive process which the pastors term "the gift of discernment". This is evidenced by the attempt to "smell" (P11) or feel through "vibrations" (P15) the presence of demons in the subject, or the less spectacular intuitive sensing of a demonic presence employed by most of the other pastors. The importance of this process is underlined by Southard in his study of Korean pastors dealing with possessed

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Howell Everson, Handbook for Christian Exorcists.

people<sup>1</sup>. Whatever the nature of this intuition may be, it is strongly influenced by the person's worldview for it functions through the grid and categories of the pastors' worldview. In other words, this intuitive process is informed by the person's worldview.

This intuitive diagnosis is augmented by the pastors' questioning of the subject's involvement with non-Christian religious and occultic practices. The kind of questions asked of the history of the subject, and the interpretations made of them is again strongly determined by the pastors' worldview. This worldview also determines the genesis, administration, and interpretation of the "confirmatory" tests carried out by the pastors (4.3.4). In a sense, therefore, Stirrat is right in pointing out that it is the ideology of possession that determines the patterns of possession<sup>2</sup>. If one believes that visiting temples leads to demon possession, then he would look out for, and in fact create such associations. While bracketing, for the time being, the question of the reality of demon possession, we can say that one side of a two-way process is the creation of the category of demon possession by the pastors. Through the influence of their worldview in their interpretive stances, the pastors decide who is possessed and who is not. What the pastor then does with the subject is therefore determined by his worldview. The understanding of the worldview is therefore crucial in our analysis of the pastoral responses<sup>3</sup>. Hodges asserts,

The grounds of belief are subtle and profound, and the question cannot be dealt with in isolation. What a man thinks of it will depend upon many things - the picture of the universe and man's place in it which he carries about in his head, his readiness to take seriously a record of experience which is not laboratory experience and cannot be reproduced at will under set conditions, his ability to find a meaning in assertions which cannot be reduced to a summary of physical observations, his attitude to Scripture and tradition.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Southard, "Demonizing and Mental Illness", p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> R L Stirrat, "Demonic Possession", p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> See Michael Perry, "Theological Perspectives on Possession", p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> H A Hodges, "Angels & Human Knowledge" in E L Mascall, Angels of Light & the Powers of Darkness, p. 1.

Chapter three outlined the main contents of the pastors' worldview as it pertains to possession. Here we will embark on an examination of the factors shaping this worldview. Why do the pastors hold to this particular worldview? Our theoretical guide for this analysis will be what is called the sociology of knowledge.

With the onset of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century western world, previously held beliefs were questioned by various thinkers. Science became increasingly more important and emerged as the dominant authority together with rationality and empiricism. Marx's thinking was a landmark in that he pointed out how ideas and beliefs are socially determined. For him, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness"<sup>1</sup>. Contrary to Weber, Marx held that material reality determined ideology and beliefs. Thus for him, religion was the "opium of the people" being an ideology perpetrated by the ruling classes to maintain their advantage over the working class. Freud used similar arguments but located the source of the "illusion of religion" in the intrapsychic conflicts in people. For both Marx and Freud therefore religious ideas were not true knowledge but beliefs distorted and shaped by class or psychological conflicts. In their ideas lay the seeds for a sociology of knowledge and it was Karl Mannheim and Robert Merton who initiated this discipline.

Mannheim argued that ideologies and ideas of utopias were socially and historically determined<sup>2</sup> while Merton stated that social acts had both manifest as well as latent functions. It is these two basic concepts that we will employ to analyse the factors shaping the pastors' worldview. To do this is to begin to understand the pastors' responses and to build a framework within which these can be evaluated. For the pastors' it creates "the possibility of stopping in our movements, looking up and perceiving the machinery by which we have been moved"<sup>3</sup>. We will

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<sup>1</sup> K Marx & F Engels, Selected Works, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Mannheim, Ideology & Utopia.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Berger, Invitation to Sociology, p. 199.

suspend theological evaluation for the time being and bracket the question of the reality of demon possession. Our interest here is to read the lines, and in between the lines, of the pastors' discourses to elicit both the manifest and latent functions of their beliefs on possession.

## 7.2 Factors Shaping the Worldview of the Pastors

We shall identify various ways in which the particular beliefs of the pastors are socially and psychologically determined. This is not to say that there is no voluntaristic element in the genesis, maintenance, and modification of this worldview. However, in order to effectively discover social and psychological unconscious processes influencing this worldview, we temporarily suspend such philosophical and theological concerns.

### 7.2.1 Theology and Survival

The factor which the pastors were most aware of as having an influence on their worldview is their theological orientation and convictions. The Churches in Singapore have generally shared a conservative and traditional Christian tradition. This is partly due to the influence of the missionaries who planted churches in Singapore. But it is also partly due to the social and historical environment inherent in Singapore as Clammer points out. According to him, there is a tendency for religions in Singapore to be more conservative than elsewhere. He points out that the Christian Church is more traditional, just as Hinduism is more ritualistic, than similar institutions elsewhere<sup>1</sup>.

#### A. Theological Reaction

One of the foundations of the conservative evangelical stance of the Singapore churches is the belief in the Bible as the infallible and inspired Word of God. This means that when it

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<sup>1</sup> John Clammer, Singapore: Ideology, Society & Culture, p. 53.

comes to understanding the demonology represented in the Bible, the evangelical choice is a literal interpretation. Demons do exist and exorcisms did take place.

This traditional position was challenged and undermined in the West through the development of the Enlightenment and the onset of scientific rationalism and empiricism and humanistic liberal theology. Prior to this the belief in Satan and evil spirits was prevalent in keeping with a literal biblical interpretation. The Enlightenment changed this through its naturalistic worldview. This led to the argument that the exorcisms in the Bible were cultural first century explanations of what we now know to be natural phenomena. Others such as Strauss<sup>1</sup> and Bultmann argued for a mythological interpretation of these exorcism stories. Bultmann, for example, did not believe in the actual existence of demons and spirits. They had a mythological rather than an ontological significance<sup>2</sup>.

Many theologians have followed this tradition, For example, Fuller writes:

of course, we no longer believe in demons...We need not eliminate the devil from the catechism but we must interpret what he stands for. He stands for a supra-personal reality of evil, something outside ourselves which gets us in its grip. The old mythology may still be used, but it must be understood as a symbolic expression of the realities of human experience.<sup>3</sup>

Others have rejected traditional demonology either because "twentieth-century western-cultured man"<sup>4</sup> no longer accepts such explanations for this phenomena, or because such a demonology leads to an "incoherent theodicy"<sup>5</sup>.

Such dismissal of traditional demonology on naturalistic and

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<sup>1</sup> D F Strauss, Life of Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> R Bultmann, "New Testament & Mythology" in H W Bartsch (ed) Kerygma & Myth, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> R H Fuller, Interpreting The Miracles, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Wilson, "Exorcism", p. 293.

<sup>5</sup> Brian Hebblethwaite, letter to the Church Times, 6 June 1975, p. 12.

mythological grounds is unacceptable to conservative evangelicals because it challenges the foundational beliefs of evangelical theology, especially in the literal and infallible authority of the Bible. Like Wesley who declared that "the giving up of witchcraft is in effect the giving up of the Bible"<sup>1</sup>, the Singapore pastors have argued that the abandonment of traditional demonology would undermine evangelical Christianity and the authority of the Bible. In this spirit, P12 asserts:

Theology has to have a biblical worldview. A lot of theology is based on a secular philosophical and humanist basis. But our experience of dealing with demonisation authenticates biblical standards and biblical norms. The Bible is correct rather than western secular theology.

Here a competitive stance is developed between the pastors and "western secular theology". We must note the two elements: "secular", and "western". The threat posed by "secular" (also described as "liberal" and "humanist") theology is met directly by a reiteration of traditional demonology and a defence of the Bible. Most of the pastors assumed the validity of biblical accounts and pointed to them as forming their ideas on demonology. They accepted the classical Augustinian understanding of demons as fallen angels<sup>2</sup> (eg P4) and history as a conflict between the two kingdoms<sup>3</sup> (eg P15). In other words, for them the demonic world is real and crucial in the understanding of the Christian faith and New Testament teaching<sup>4</sup> (though some evangelicals like Martin Lloyd Jones do not consider a belief in demons and the Devil as a touchstone of the Christian faith<sup>5</sup>). This is evident in our survey of the beliefs of the pastors (3.2). Thus one function of the pastors' worldview is to reiterate conservative evangelical beliefs and to defend them against liberal theology. This is evident in the statements of the pastors who saw their experience in deliverance ministry as

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in G W Kisker, The Disorganised Personality, 2nd edn, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> G R Evans, Augustine on Evil, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> cf Kurt Koch, Occult Bondage, pp. 25-6 for similar ideas.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, p. 237.

<sup>5</sup> as cited in John Richards, "Towards a Diocesan Exorcism Policy", p. 8.

a vindication of their theological beliefs.

It confirms what I have always believed about the place of the Devil in the universe (P5).

It affirms that the Devil is active. There is such a thing as the devil, and his forces. Our experience also reminds us that we are involved in real spiritual warfare. But it also shows us the power of our Lord. The Evil One is a defeated foe at the cross. We shouldn't be overwhelmed by him. Our victory is in the Lord. (P6)

It makes us more biblical. It proves to us that evil is real. (P15).

Since this worldview is deemed as vitally important, great care is taken to form and maintain it. This is done through theological education and the continuing education of the pastors. In theological school, the pastors are taught the fundamentals of conservative evangelical theology and biblical studies. It is here that their worldview is formed and reinforced. We have already noted that all our pastors were educated in conservative theological institutions. Most were educated in Singapore where all the seminaries are conservative. Only Trinity Theological College was once considered to be "liberal" due to the presence of some western missionary lecturers, but the college has long since shed its liberal image. Those who went to overseas institutions for further studies also attended conservative schools. This has been a significant influence on the worldview formation and development in the pastors.

However, one feature in the attitudes towards their conservative evangelical theological education becomes evident in many of the pastors' discourses. Some have contrasted "theology" (referring to both liberal theology as well as the conservative theology they imbibed in their theological schools) with "experience".

I was taught in Bible College that Christians can't be possessed. They can only be oppressed. But in actual experience, the manifestations are similar and so it is difficult to differentiate. (P5).

Some theologians are theologically profound but practically impotent people. The deliverance ministry challenges the direction of western theology. Both the scientist and the theologian need to take a look at it seriously. (P4)

Theology doesn't have all the answers to demon possession. Sometimes it is not possible to explain things theologically (P3).

We as Christians, especially the non-Charismatics, associate demons with other religions but not in the Christian context. Our demonology is only theoretical. (P15)

The above sentiments are not expressed against the evangelical content of the type of theology taught in the Bible colleges that the pastors studied but in the divorce between theory and practice. The pastors' complaint is that conservative theology is not translated into conservative pastoral care. This is perceived as a problem in western theology, even evangelical theology where there is believed to be too much reliance on rationalism and science. Thus P15 complains:

People say demons belong to the Middle Ages. Science has become God. The scientific worldview is too strong in the church. This view is changed when we have experience. We are often shaped by our theology which is very cerebral. But theology must be conditioned by our experience.

Hence, the theological education of the pastors while forming the basic world view of the pastors also produces a paradoxical reaction against its own tendency towards rationalism and theory at the expense of experience. The pastors therefore need to modify their evangelical worldview that can both counter liberal theology (threatening their views of the Bible) as well as conservative western theology (tending to alienate theory from practice). The demons needed to become actively real. The genius of the charismatic movement is that it provides a haven for such a worldview.

It has been suggested that the charismatic movement and its emphasis on possession and exorcism arose as a reaction against secularising tendencies both in and outside the Church<sup>1</sup>. Langley suggests that just as the Montanist movement (which some have compared with the charismatic movement) in the early church was a reaction against the secular tendencies already at work in the church", and a "protest against the growing worldliness of the

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<sup>1</sup> Myrtle Langley, "Spirit Possession, Exorcism & Social Context", p. 242.

church at large"<sup>1</sup>, the contemporary charismatic movement is also a reaction against secularising tendencies in the twentieth century<sup>2</sup>. It provides an alternative source of certainty and absoluteness amidst the erosion of the traditional authority of dominant social institutions induced by modernisation and secularisation<sup>3</sup>. (However, the response to modernisation is not only reactionary but also ironically adaptive as Bellah et al point out: the charismatic movement is also an attempt to embrace the modern<sup>4</sup>).

### B. Pragmatic Concerns

Many of the pastors revealed that their beliefs in the spirit world were strengthened and their involvement in deliverance ministry was initiated after personal exposure and involvement in charismatic renewal.

I have been involved with the renewal movement since 1972. It was then that I was exposed to the reality of power encounter. (P11)

When people are exposed to charismatic meetings where they see manifestations, then they become aware of these things. (P12)

This contact with charismatic Christianity has come in various forms. Firstly, it has come through changes in favour of the charismatic movement in certain denominations such as the Anglican Church in Singapore. The charismatic experience of the former Bishop Chiu Ban It led to the rapid transformation of the denomination. Today, the incumbent Bishop Moses Tay continues to promote charismatic expressions "from the top". This has resulted in most of the pastors adopting a similar theological and pastoral culture since they receive support from both the "top'

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<sup>1</sup> Willistan Walker, A History of the Christian Church, rev edn., pp. 55-6.

<sup>2</sup> Myrtle Langley, op cit., pp. 240-2.

<sup>3</sup> see D M Kelley, Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in the Sociology of Religion; E D O'Connor (ed), Perspectives on Charismatic Renewal; K & D Ranaghan, Catholic Pentecostals, for similar views.

<sup>4</sup> R Bellah et al, Habits of the Heart: Individualism & Commitment in American Life, 1985.

and the rank and file of the church. Because of the complexity of the situation, some pastors feel compelled to adopt this worldview. (We will examine this further later)

Secondly, many denominations such as the Methodists and Presbyterians have seen sections of their churches (both clergy and laity) becoming charismatic in outlook and practice. Apart from initial difficulties, there is now a somewhat happy truce in which the charismatics are slowly gaining influence. Charismatic services are openly held, healing and deliverance sessions have become acceptable, and charismatic speakers are often invited to speak in the churches. Because of this, more pastors are exposed to charismatic influence. One of the major influences in the various denominations has been the Assemblies of God (AOG) which has seen rapid growth in recent times. It has also become prominent in developing some of the largest churches in Singapore. Because of Singapore's limited physical size, it is inevitable that the lively services, the focus on charismatic gifts including healing and exorcism, and the rapid growth of the denomination would catch the attention of clergy and members of the other denominations. There are possibly two pragmatic reasons motivating them to espouse similar styles of church-life: firstly to grow as fast as the AOG; secondly, to prevent members from leaving for the pentecostal or more charismatic churches. Not all denominations respond this way however. The Brethren churches in Singapore, probably because of their dispensational theology have been slower to latch on to the charismatic movement. P14 claimed that there are hardly any cases of possession in Brethren churches because of the denominational stance. On the other hand, the Bible Presbyterian churches, though openly critical and antagonistic towards the charismatic movement, have had pastors deeply involved in deliverance ministry. Philip Heng, a pastor in the denomination was an early and prominent "exorcist" on the Singapore scene. He has also trained many other pastors in exorcism. However, recently the denomination has asked him and some of his colleagues to stop or attenuate such deliverance ministries. We thus note the role of denominational leadership in modifying worldviews both towards and away from charismatic ideology, the reasons being doctrinal or pragmatic in nature.

The third mode of contact is through charismatic literature which has slowly gained prominence in Christian bookshops which in the last fifteen years or so, have multiplied many times. In our pastors' case, many mentioned several authors and books on demon possession which they have read. Some of the authors mentioned are John Wimber, Peter Wagner, Derek Prince, Kurt Koch, Michael Green, Merrill Unger, David Watson, John White, Bill Subritzky, Don Basham, Ken Blue, James Dobson, and G E Ladd. Most of these authors subscribe to a "spiritual warfare" model of reality and take demon possession seriously. Such books have been an important influence in the formation and maintenance of the pastors' worldview.

To summarise, the pastors are influenced by the conscious need to protect their religious beliefs against liberal Christianity that questioned the authority of the Bible, and traditional evangelical western Christianity which is perceived as too cerebral at the expense of experience. This is well summarised by P11 who said that

generally when the church is influenced by secularised liberal theology and the so-called conservative theology, it has tended to be sceptical about the reality of demons or demonisation. But thanks to the charismatic renewal they have increasingly become more open to reality.

While this identifies the manifest functions of the pastors' worldview, the more latent and unconscious functions can only be understood in terms of pragmatic strategies for denominational survival and a reaction to the disturbing and highly rational and scientific mode that is necessary for the economic growth that Singapore is so concerned with. The charismatic worldview provides a religious worldview<sup>1</sup> in opposition to the secular worldview associated with modernisation and industrial expansion. The notion that secularisation leads to the decline of religion as seen in the west does not hold true in Singapore as noted by

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<sup>1</sup> See M G Barker, "Possession & the Occult", where he argues that the charismatic emphasis on demons is a reaction to the denial of the spiritual world in the modern world rather than being a result of the activity of Satan. (p. 248)

Clammer<sup>1</sup>. In Singapore, secularisation has in fact produced religious revival. In this respect the pastors' worldview of the demonic is a reaction strengthened by the inroads of secularisation (but it has not escaped secularising tendencies as we will see in the next chapter).

We have already noted the inherent competition between denominations (eg Anglican and AOG), and between denomination and sects (independent charismatic churches of which there has been a proliferation in recent times), both in terms of numerical growth and in terms of the potential attraction of charismatic churches. To avoid being left behind and possible "sheep loss" to more attractive competitors, denominations have to consider espousing the charismatic practices<sup>2</sup>. This includes demon possession and exorcism. Some have openly done this, for example the Anglicans; others hesitate, for instance the Brethren, and many others such as the Methodists are gradually adopting the various charismatic practices. The worldview espousing traditional demonology is therefore held for various reasons but it is also given theological significance as being faithful to evangelical Christianity and biblical authority as well as taking religious experience seriously<sup>3</sup>. We now move to another important influence on the pastors' worldview.

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<sup>1</sup> John Clammer, Singapore: Ideology, Religion, Culture, p. 51. For a discussion of the difficulties of employing western concepts of secularisation in analysing the relationship between secularisation and religion in Singapore, see Clammer, The Sociology of Religion in Singapore, ch 8.

<sup>2</sup> See Olga Hoyt, Exorcism, where she notes that Protestants turned to the Roman Catholic Church in 19th century England because it had a place for exorcism while the Protestant churches did not espouse similar beliefs in demon possession & exorcism. (p. 45)

<sup>3</sup> See P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome", p. 135, where he observes that the prevailing theology determines the nature and theology of possession. He claims that because there is no Satanic figure embodying absolute evil in Chinese culture, the cases of possession in Hong Kong tend to be less severe than those in France where Christian concepts of the Devil are embedded in the culture.

### 7.2.2 Culture: Friend or Foe?

The pastors demonstrate an ambiguous attitude towards the Asian cultures, especially with the concepts that have to do with the spirit world<sup>1</sup>. On one hand the pastors accept and utilise cultural perceptions and theories of the spirit world. They find in the basic structures of Asian cosmologies, an ally against secular and naturalistic worldviews in churches influenced by western theology and rationality.

#### A. Culture as Friend

All the pastors indicated that the spirit worldview incorporating beliefs in demons and spirits was basic to Chinese, Indian, and Malay cultures, and that most Singaporeans still believed in such ideas<sup>2</sup>. P11 explained,

The non Christians (in Singapore) believe in demonic powers. That's why they have temples, you know, to ward off spirits. They believe in good spirits and bad spirits. What they do is to placate these spirits. Of course, they are fuzzy about who's the deliverer. These beliefs are seen even among the educated. Business and professional people, even PM Lee, believes in *feng shui* (Chinese geomancy).

Academic studies on Singapore culture and beliefs confirm this observation by the pastors. Tham has noted that

belief in spirits or alternatively belief in the possession of essence by things and objects both living and non-living remains fundamental in the Chinese religious belief system.<sup>3</sup>

Of the more than three hundred Chinese temples in Singapore, at least half the number have a resident medium who go into a daily

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<sup>1</sup> See Richard Niebuhr's classic discussion of the relationship between Christ and culture in Christ and Culture. Possible stances are: Christ against culture, above culture, of culture; Christ and culture in paradox, or Christ as the Transformer of culture. Here, the pastors have an underlying "Christ against culture" stance, though in reality they have also imbibed cultural ideas and beliefs.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the historical events influencing the predominant Chinese culture in Singapore, see Tsoi Wing Foo, "Mental Health in Singapore", pp. 231-3.

<sup>3</sup> Tham Seong Chee, Religion & Modernization, p. 8.

trance to advise the stream of help-seekers who visit such temples<sup>1</sup>. Such spirit mediumship practices attract Singaporeans despite modernisation<sup>2</sup>. The prevalence of such beliefs even among those engaged in the highly rationalised practice of business and commerce is demonstrated in an incident some years ago in a large Singapore hotel. The fountain in the hotel grounds malfunctioned frequently for which a spiritual cause was eventually diagnosed. A Taoist priest was called to conduct an appropriate ritual after which it was reported that the fountain functioned without any problems<sup>3</sup>.

P4's assertion that Singaporeans have no problems accepting the notion of demon possession (cf 3.3.2.A; 3.3.3.D) is supported by the findings of Tay et al who found that the relatives of thirty eight percent of psychiatric patients who sought faith healers (mostly Chinese mediums), attributed the problem to demon possession or charms<sup>4</sup>. The pastors' lament therefore that such openness to demon possession is not shared in some churches in Singapore and they attribute this to rationalised western theology as we saw earlier. P1 expresses such sentiments:

The majority in Singapore - there is a general acknowledgment of the spirit world, for example among the Buddhists. It is true even among those without any religion. In the church on the other hand, there is an ignorant level. Some Christians and churches are ignorant and unaware of the spirit world.

The pastors therefore see an alliance between their worldview and the spirit worldview of the Asian cultures in Singapore. It is thus inevitable that there would be many similarities in the practices of the pastors and those outside the church. The following are a few examples:

1. Names of demonic entities. Many of these are taken from the

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<sup>1</sup> Alex Josey, Singapore: Its Past, Present & Future, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Tsoi Wing Foo, "Mental Health in Singapore", p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> Tham Seong Chee, Religion & Modernization, pp. 62-3.

<sup>4</sup> W K Tay et al, "Psychiatric Patients Who Seek Faith Healers", Table 8, cf stress (23%), mental illness (8%), and others eg insomnia, fear, bad luck, drug abuse, brain damage (22%).

pantheons of Chinese and Hindu religions, for instance, the monkey god, Kali, Kuan Yin, the Smiling Buddha etc<sup>1</sup>. The gods (or demons, as the pastors interpret) who are popularly believed to possess people are the same in both the pastors' experience and in the larger culture (3.2.3).

2. Ideas of sorcery. The belief in the power of charms and amulets expressed by many of the pastors is similar to those found in the larger culture (3.3.1.B)<sup>2</sup>. So is the belief that people can be possessed by spirits sent by jealous others (P7) though some of the pastors considered such beliefs as superstitious (P1).

3. The belief in immunity, resistance and susceptibility to demonic intrusion expressed by the pastors (3.3.3) has also a wider circulation in Singapore, for example the notion that women are more susceptible during pregnancy and the postpartum period<sup>3</sup>. In popular culture one is more susceptible when one's "luck" is low and this condition can be caused by various factors such as illness, worries, fright, fear, and so on<sup>4</sup> - conditions similarly identified by the pastors.

4. The belief in territorial spirits. Some pastors (eg P2) expressed belief in territorial spirits (3.2.3). In other words, the spirit has a right to its territory and is offended by any intrusion into it; its power is particularly evident in its own territory. This belief is also popularly seen in Singapore<sup>5</sup>. People are afraid to offend territorial spirits and find ways to

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Lee Siew Chin, "Spirit Mediums", pp. 15f. Lee identifies the 4 most popular shen who possess mediums in Singapore: the monkey god, the Third prince, Kuan Yin (goddess of mercy), and the God of War (Kuan Kong).

<sup>2</sup> See Tsoi Wing Foo, "Mental Health in Singapore", pp. 237-8.

<sup>3</sup> Tham Seong Chee, Religion & Modernization, p. 68. hence the confinement period for women is taken seriously.

<sup>4</sup> Choong Ker Che, "Chinese Divination: An Ethnographic Case Study", p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> See Tadao Sakai, "Some Aspects of Chinese Religious Practices and Customs", pp. 133-41, for the idea of "local gods of the soil" in Chinese religion.

appease them, for example when building or demolishing buildings on these sites. It is common, for instance, to find altars to such spirits in construction sites.

5. The association between illness and demons. The belief that spirits and spiritual forces can and do influence both physical and mental health is well rooted in the Asian cultures in Singapore<sup>1</sup>. These same ideas are shared by many of the pastors as evident in their discourses (4.2.3.E).

6. Ritual and Sacrament. Holy water is commonly used in spirit mediumship and exorcism rituals outside the Christian church in Singapore<sup>2</sup>. Though many pastors shied away from this practice, a few (eg P8, P15) used water to anoint; the pastors depended more on anointing with oil as it was believed to be permitted and prescribed by the Bible (5.3.2.I). In addition, in Asian exorcistic rituals, dramatic elements are also incorporated such as singing and chanting of the story of a deity. This is similar to the pastors' use of songs and scripture reading during deliverance sessions. Clients are also frequently given *fu* or charm papers<sup>3</sup>. The action of Sister Monica in P8's deliverance team of placing on the victim's body torn bits of a paper with a sign of the cross on it is very similar to this practice (5.3.2I). The closing of the third eye is also practised by the mediums through the slapping of the victim's forehead. The spirits are believed to gain entry through this "third eye"<sup>4</sup>. It is interesting that the bank vice-president (Lam) mentioned

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<sup>1</sup> Kua et al, "Possession Trance in Singapore", p. 321; cf A L Gwee et al, "A Study of Chinese Medical Practice in Singapore", pp. 2-7; and C T Tan et al, "Psychiatric Patients who Seek Traditional Healers in Singapore", pp. 643-7. For Malay concepts see John Gimlette, Malay Poisons & Charm Cures, and Barbara Wright, "Dance is the Cure", pp. 7f.

<sup>2</sup> Lee Siew Chin, "Spirit Mediums", p. 14, W K Tay et al, "Psychiatric patients who seek Faith Healers", Moktar Dom, The Bomoh & the Hantu, pp. 35-43.

<sup>3</sup> Yellow paper on which the medium writes something sometimes with his blood, which is then burnt and the ashes used as medicine, or is wrapped up & used as a talisman to ward off evil spirits. see Tsoi Wing Foi, "Mental health in Singapore", p. 241.

<sup>4</sup> See Lee Siew Chin, "Spirit Mediums", p. 14.

earlier who provides leadership in a large charismatic organisation and who is actively engaged in deliverance ministry shares similar ideas and practices (3.3.2.C).

7. The notion that spirits exit through bodily orifices. Some of the pastors spoke of the victim vomiting (eg P1), coughing out phlegm (eg P3) and so on when the spirits leave the body (5.3.2.H). Such views and practices are also common among the spirit mediums in Singapore<sup>1</sup>.

It may be argued that the similarity between the pastors' practice and cultural norms may not be due to direct influence. For example anointing with holy water is also practiced in other cultures and Christian contexts<sup>2</sup>. The belief that demons exit through orifices has the same wider currency<sup>3</sup>; likewise the idea of territoriality of spirits<sup>4</sup>. There are several possibilities here. The pastors may have been influenced by their own cultures and also by reading about other Christian and non-Christian contexts. There may also be a somewhat universal phenomenon across various cultures regarding these practices and their efficacy. What is more important for us is to note the pastors' acceptance of such practices and beliefs in their deliverance ministry. In this respect culture is seen and used as an ally against a secular and rationalistic worldview.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ju Shi Huey, "Chinese Spirit Mediums", p. 33; cf Daniel E Valentine, Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> See Robert Petitpierre, Exorcism, p. 21f (Anglican); Linn & Linn, Deliverance Prayer, ch 1 & Michael Scanlan et al, Deliverance From Evil Spirits, ch 9 (RC).

<sup>3</sup> See Thomas Graham, Medieval Minds, p. 15. The medical practices of heating, trephination, venesection, & using emetics in former days were, according to Graham, originally performed to let out the spirits possessing a victim. See also Francis MacNutt (RC, USA), "Church's Involvement in a Deliverance Ministry", p. 129 where he claims that spirits leave via coughing; and Graham Dow (Anglican, UK), Those Tiresome Intruders, p. 21 for the idea that spirits leave through the orifices.

<sup>4</sup> Eg the ever-present spirit houses in most houses in Thailand to provide the territorial spirits a home and avoid offending them. Territoriality is also a popular belief in charismatic circles; see Peter Horrobin, Healing Through Deliverance, pp. 62f.

## B. Culture as Foe

However, the pastors' ambiguity towards culture is seen in their rejection of various elements pertaining to spirit possession and exorcism in Asian cultures. One obvious example is the rejection of the belief that people can be possessed by departed human spirits. The popular belief in ghosts and departed human souls and the need to maintain a positive link between the living and the dead exists strongly in Singapore together with the rational and logical mindset necessary for a rapidly developing urban economy<sup>1</sup>. Hence the Chinese have their *Ching Ming* festival (festival of homage to ancestors), and the Hungry Ghosts Festival on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. The Malays likewise during the annual *Hari Raya Puasa* festival visit the graves of their loved ones in the morning; during the *Nisfu* night they offer prayers for the dead in mosques. The Indians too, during *Chithirai Paruvam*, spend the day in fasting and penitence in order to secure the peace of the departed; on *Deepavali* day, they also believe that departed souls return to earth to receive offerings. The general belief therefore is that the worlds of the living and of the dead are inter-related, and the attitude towards the departed is one of respectful fear, often leading to activities involving the placating of departed spirits in case they turn malicious, for example during the Hungry Ghosts Festival.

It is therefore surprising that the pastors reject what is a traditional belief in their own culture. (What is also intriguing is that beliefs in ghosts and their interference in human affairs are held by pastors such as Perry, Petitpierre, and the Linns in the western context where the popular worldview is much less spiritistic than in Singapore)<sup>2</sup>. Only one pastor was clearly open

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<sup>1</sup> Tham Seong Chee, Religion and Modernization, ch 5. See also Bruce Kapferer, A Celebration of Demons; and Ruth S Freed & Stanley A Freed, "Ghost Illness in a North Indian Village", pp. 117-23, for similar beliefs in other cultures.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Perry, Deliverance, pp. 96f; Robert Petitpierre, Exorcising Devils; see also Kenneth McAll, Healing the Family Tree. Even in the Indian context, popular charismatic evangelist D G S Dhinakaran who has a substantial following in Singapore believes that if a person dies before his allotted time on earth

to the possibility of the activity of departed spirits in possession (P14). Another pastor did describe a case in which he suggested the possibility of a departed spirit at work:

A top executive of sane mind was suffering from cancer. He was an idol worshipper and also worshipped his ancestors. He became possessed and manifested many disturbing signs. He went through a deliverance service in which a familiar spirit was revealed. It was commanded to leave and when it did so, I saw an image of an old man leave. I could not recognise the figure but wondered whether it was the man's departed grandfather.

When the pastor related this incident, his senior colleague who was with him challenged the view theologically; the pastor quickly modified his position and agreed that all familiar spirits are actually demons in disguise. This view that manifestations of ghosts are in fact "demonic impersonations" was shared by almost all the pastors (4.2.1.B). They strongly denied that ghosts exist, only demons masquerading as ghosts to deceive people. They argued that this is taught in the Bible and to think otherwise is to ignore biblical warnings against dealing with departed spirits<sup>1</sup>

Why do the pastors reject the ghost beliefs in Singapore? A clue can be found in their rejection of certain exorcistic rituals like the use of holy water (5.3.2.I). The use of holy water is closely associated with the Roman Catholic Church (which is considered by many Singapore Christians as heretical and in fact compared with the other non-Christian religions) and the other religions. In other words, the rejection of ghost beliefs is partly motivated by the need to show the uniqueness of their Christian faith. If they accept the ghost theory, then there is no necessity for victims to come to the pastors for exorcism since other practitioners such as the mediums can handle such cases effectively mostly through the placation of such spirits.

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is lived out in full, he is condemned to roam the earth as an evil spirit till his time is up - Healing Stripes, Madras: CLS, 1979, pp. 33-4. See also Lionel Caplan, "The Popular Culture of Evil in Urban South India" in David Parkin (ed), Anthropology of Evil, p. 121.

<sup>1</sup> An interesting reappraisal of this issue by British evangelicals is in Michael Mitton & Russ Parker, Requiem Healing who argue for a return to some form of ministry to the dead.

The pastors avoid this by identifying all possessing spirits as evil. Therefore no placation (*berjamu hantu*)<sup>1</sup>, no "plea-bargaining" (P11; 5.3.2.E). The mediums are therefore depicted as wrong and dangerous. This competitive environment with other religions and religious practitioners becomes more evident when we look more closely at the motives and strategies of the pastors in deliverance ministry vis a vis non-Christian religions. This we will do next but before that we will summarise here by saying that the pastors' ambiguous relationship with the indigenous Asian cultures reflects their use of the cultural worldviews to augment their stance against secularism and rationalism (as seen earlier) but also their discomfort at the close relationship between Asian cultures and Asian religions. They therefore selectively use cultural paradigms and practices for their purposes of highlighting the spiritual world as well as the uniqueness of their faith.

### 7.2.3 Religions and Religious Practitioners: Milieu of Competition

Singapore is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation. The fact that the island is small in size and that rapid modernisation and industrialisation has caused people to seek some comfort in religion means that the various religions are in competition for the souls of Singaporeans<sup>2</sup>. Several studies have accurately noted a general religious resurgence in Singapore through both renewal of established religious organisations and the multiplication of various religious sects. How has the Christian church responded to this phenomenon?

#### A. Exorcism as a Response to Other Religions

It is common for the churches to compare the non-Christian religions to the Canaanite religions in the Old Testament and the

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<sup>1</sup> The ritual performed by Malay bomohs; Moktar Dom, The Bomoh & The Hantu, pp. 35-43.

<sup>2</sup> Religion plays an important part in the daily lives of the people eg. 35% of a sample of parents said they seek religious help when they have problems with their children. Survey on Family Life, pp. 4-12.

pagan religions in the New Testament and to draw lessons and models from the way ancient Judaism or early Christianity responded to these religions. Caird has examined this tension between Yahweh and the pagan deities in the Old Testament and suggests three ways in which this conflict was resolved in the history of Israel<sup>1</sup>. Firstly, there was syncretism at the popular level with the acceptance of both the older *El* and the younger *Baal* in worship. This was severely condemned by the prophets. Secondly, the Israelites responded by suppression; the prophets who took this position dismissed the pagan deities as of no consequence. Thirdly, the Israelites subordinated the various pagan deities into their own theological system through the concepts of *bene elohim* and so on (cf Deut 22:8,9). Each nation was believed to have its own angelic ruler or guardian. Subsequently, the *bene elohim* were seen increasingly as malevolent fallen angels which through their union with women gave rise to demonic beings.

The pastors' response is similar to the third way: subordination and demonisation. They strongly reject the syncretistic approach and find the suppressive method too dismissive of the spirit world and therefore unhelpful<sup>2</sup>. Regarding syncretism, P12 stresses:

Deliverance ministry is very important for doctrine. Our experience in deliverance ministry speaks strongly against any kind of syncretism or universalism. The name of Jesus Christ agitates something in the person. The situation is one of conflict rather than tolerance.

For the pastors, their experience of exorcising demons out of individuals previously associated with non-Christian religious

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<sup>1</sup> G B Caird, Principalities & Powers, pp. 2-5.

<sup>2</sup> see Merrill Unger, Biblical Demonology, p. 1 where he criticises the weakness of this approach: "Without such basic knowledge (demonology) the student of religion, no matter what his qualifications for his task may otherwise be, cannot be expected to make accurate evaluations or reach valid conclusions. His estimate both of Christian & of non-Christian religions must be expected to be faulty and misleading." Many of the pastors, influenced by Unger, share his belief that idols & gods = demons.

practices proves that these religions are demonic in nature<sup>1</sup>. It further serves to strengthen their resolve not to syncretise vis a vis the other religions in Singapore, and their theological arguments against any form of universalism. In other words, it is used as an apologetic for the uniqueness of their Christian message and for their extensive evangelistic activities among the non-Christians. This is understandable in the light of the religious competition in Singapore. But it has also got to be understood in terms of political constraints imposed by the government upon the church to curb its evangelistic activities. Leaders from the other religious groups have repeatedly expressed concern over the church's widespread evangelistic campaigns amongst their followers. There is a general feeling that the church is growing rapidly at the expense of the other religious communities. This is evidenced by the comments made by the former Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew: at the opening of a new parliament, he noted that the Christians were over-represented in parliament; and at another occasion, he assured Singaporeans that Singapore will never become a Christian nation despite the reports of rapid church growth<sup>2</sup>. Church leaders have been told to "go easy on evangelism"; evangelism among Muslims is strongly discouraged by the government even though the constitution guarantees such rights to the church. While there have been many inroads made into the domains of other religions, there have also been several repercussions against the church's evangelistic activities. One such example is the "witnessing" done by doctors in government hospitals among patients which produced several letters in the press asking them to limit themselves to the healing of bodies. Such reactions have caused the government to caution and restrict the church's evangelistic activities. The churches have generally chosen not to challenge this and have told members to differentiate between evangelism and proselytisation and to be more sensitive to the feelings of the other religious communities. In this context, the deliverance ministry is very significant because it serves to reject calls for religious

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<sup>1</sup> cf with a similar view in Merrill Unger, Demons in the World Today, p. 10: "the history of religion is an account of demon-controlled religion".

<sup>2</sup> See comments by Bishop Ho Chee Sin of the Methodist Church quoted in Now, April 1991, pp. 6-7.

tolerance by national leaders and to challenge the restrictions imposed on church evangelism; this is done in an indirect way that avoids any open conflict with the authorities, hence its value.

Caird's second approach of suppression is also rejected by many of the pastors as typical of traditional western rationalistic theology and missiology. Compared to the Pentecostal and charismatic recognition of the spirit world, the suppression approach is not attractive to those who subscribe to a spirit worldview<sup>1</sup>. In other words, it cannot effectively make new converts of them<sup>2</sup>. Hence the pastors choose Caird's third method of subordination which has many antecedents. Russell observes that historically, when a religion replaces another, (eg in ancient Greece and Rome), the old set of gods were made into evil spirits<sup>3</sup>; thus for Justin Martyr in the early church, the pagan gods were actual demons<sup>4</sup>. A similar process is seen in the discourses of the pastors as evidenced by P12's comments:

All the gods who possess people such as Kuan Yin, the monkey god, the snake god, the Hindu goddess Kali - are all demons. This happens when the victim worships these gods. They take possession of the person<sup>5</sup>.

Such a stance is understandable in a culture where the spirit worldview has an important place. In such a culture, it is not very convincing to suggest that the ideas concerning the spirits that populate the spirit world are either wrong or false<sup>6</sup>. What

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<sup>1</sup> Cecil Robeck, Charismatic Experiences in History, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that in Singapore, Hinayana Buddhism does not have many followers among the Chinese. Tham suggests that this is because of the absence of a spirit world in its theology in contrast to the popular beliefs in ghosts and spirits among the Chinese - Tham Seong Chee, Religion & Modernisation, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey B Russell, The Prince of Darkness, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> See Poh Boon Seng, Christian in Chinese Culture, ch 5.

<sup>6</sup> cf Andrew Igenozza, "Christian Theology and Belief in Evil Spirits", pp. 39-41 where he argues that a rationalistic worldview that excludes the spirit world robs Christianity of both its relevance and dynamism, especially in such contexts as Africa where the spirit worldview is predominant.

is more convincing is to say that the spirits and gods are evil and less powerful than the God one preaches<sup>1</sup>. This is exactly what the pastors set out to do. In other words, the competition between Christianity and the other religions is played out on thaumaturgical rather than on theoretical or philosophical grounds. That this is so is evident in the concept of "power encounter" employed by many of the pastors (3.2.1). Deliverance ministry therefore highlights the conflict of powers rather than the encounter of ideas; this being consistent with the priority of pragmatism over ideology in Singapore.

The deliverance ministry has an important place in the total ministry of the church. It highlights the power of Christ over supernatural forces. (P3)

#### B. Exorcism as an Evangelistic and Pedagogic Tool

The pastors therefore see the deliverance ministry as an indispensable part of the evangelistic ministry of the church. A strong motivation for a pastor to become involved in deliverance ministry is its evangelistic consequences. Several pastors declared that they would only exorcise a person if he, and in many cases, his family, want to become Christians (5.3.1).

It is important that the person wants to become a Christian...The deliverance ministry is normative for Christian ministry, like in the New Testament. It should not be seen as something extraordinary. This ministry is very important in respect to evangelism. We can't penetrate pagan strongholds if this aspect is not understood or exercised (P12).

There must be a clear cut goal for what you are trying to do. The goal is salvation and evangelism - for the person and his family. (P16)

The person must pray to receive Christ or at least agree to do so. And he must confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is central. If he does not agree or refuses to do this I will cease the session. I will not proceed further because there is no point to go any further. (P15)

Evangelism to the family (of the victim) is important. We

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<sup>1</sup> cf Graham Dow's statement that his successful deliverance ministry convinces him of the Holy Spirit's immense power - Those Tiresome Intruders, p. 22.

will tell the family members, It is important for all of you to believe in Christ. You all must be of one mind if we are to successfully cast out the evil spirit. (P3).

Two pastors (P12, P13) routinely conduct a "service of deliverance" for all baptismal candidates<sup>1</sup>. Set within the larger context of evangelism, the reasons for the beliefs and practices of the pastors become clearer. The thaumaturgical focus and the demonisation of the subject's former gods and religious practices provides a powerful rationale for the subject to convert to Christianity. It assures the person of the wisdom of his choice and of the greater power of God. In one charismatic theologian's words, "deliverance is a sign of the Good News about Christ and assures people of the power of God unto salvation"<sup>2</sup>. It also provides a structured means by which a clean break can be made with former religious allegiances and practices. This is clear in the practices of renunciation, during, and the subsequent disposal and destruction of religious paraphernalia following a deliverance session (5.5.1) - involving the process of "house cleansing" (P4, P12 etc). The pastors are also able to reduce the attrition rate because of their warning that the person's former religious practices and contacts were the reason for his demonisation and that they are forbidden to return to these (P6). In part, this serves to debunk the efficacy of religious objects, say in Chinese religion, which are claimed to protect the practitioner or wearer from evil, for example the *Pat-Kua*, the eight-sided trigram<sup>3</sup>. According to P12, the deliverance ministry shows the "harmfulness of fortune-telling, occult, heavy metal music, fantasy games etc". The association of temple visits with demon possession and therefore its prohibition by the pastors (eg P8, P11) further minimises subsequent reversion by the new member. This is made more necessary by the tendency, especially among the Chinese to resort to various religious practitioners for help when in trouble<sup>4</sup>. The pastors also warn their new

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<sup>1</sup> see Henry Kelly, The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology and Drama, for an account of a similar practice in the early Church and its eclipse in modern times.

<sup>2</sup> Rodman Williams, Renewal Theology, p. 263.

<sup>3</sup> cf Alan Elliot, Chinese Spirit Medium Cults, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Elliot, Chinese Spirit Medium Cults, p. 92.

converts that returning to sinful practices can bring about a new attack from the demonic world; P11 reminds his members that they can be possessed if they give in to "lust, anger, gambling spirits, homosexual practices, smoking, alcohol, and drugs". The exorcism ritual therefore helps to incorporate a new member in the Church and to keep him there. It has both initiatory as well as retentive functions<sup>1</sup>. Walker has suggested that exorcism has an important missiological function when it is used as "religious propaganda" to set up a new religion and to displace older religions<sup>2</sup>. This is seen to some extent in the Singapore context<sup>3</sup>.

Other actors in the field of religious competition in Singapore are the occult and the New Age movement. They receive the same treatment by the pastors as the other religions discussed above. The process of encounter seen earlier applies here too. Some of the occult practices mentioned by the pastors have to do with practices within the mainline religions. Others, however, have more to do with the New Age Movement. In many ways, the New Age Movement and the charismatic movement are parallel movements in that they both represent a reaction and an attempt to shift paradigms against the rational, scientific, and materialistic worldview that followed the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century<sup>4</sup>. In other words, both movements are in direct competition to win new adherents, as a result of which the New Age movement has tended to dismiss the theistic worldview of the charismatic movement as outdated, paternalistic and oppressive,

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<sup>1</sup> Ari Kiev says the same thing when he postulates that possession (and in our case,) exorcism validates the belief system of the people (in our case of the beliefs of the pastors and their churches) and maximises the subject's appropriation of a "newer, healthier role in the community" - "Spirit Possession in Haiti", in Raymond Prince, Trance & Possession States, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> D P Walker, Unclean Spirits, pp. 1f.

<sup>3</sup> cf C De Wet, "The Challenge of Signs & Wonders in World Missions for the Twentieth Century", in L G McClung (ed), Azusa Street & Beyond, 1986, pp. 163-4 where he argues that exorcism is the only way to successfully deal with the worldview of the Animists and the unseen spiritual resistance in the Muslim world - a typical charismatic position.

<sup>4</sup> As suggested by Philip Lucas; see John Drane, What is the New Age Saying to the Church?, pp. 48f.

while the charismatic movement has demonised the New Age Movement. This conflict helps us to understand in part the long list of New Age practices in the pastors' discourses that are associated with demon possession<sup>1</sup>.

To summarise, the worldview of the pastors provides an apologetic and offensive tool in the face of religious competition<sup>2</sup>, comprising the various Asian religions, sects, New Age groups and practices, and so on. It does so by encountering the claims of the other religions on thaumaturgical and moral grounds. In other words, their worldview considers the powers and practices in the other religions as evil and relatively powerless compared to the Power which they promise<sup>3</sup>. This serves the larger purpose of evangelism as well as having initiatory and retentive functions vis a vis church membership. This worldview also allows an indirect invalidation and resistance against political constraints on the evangelistic incursions of the church into the domains of the other religious communities.

#### 7.2.4 Roles, Status, and Personal Factors

In our discussion so far, we note the emergence of the dominant theme of competition, both between the various denominations and sects within the Christian tradition, and between the various religious communities and groups in Singapore. The theme of competition is extended further when we look at more personal levels.

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<sup>1</sup> cf John Drane, What is the New Age Saying, p. 207, where he argues against equating NAM with "blatant demonism".

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, exorcism was used both by the Protestants and the Roman Catholics during and after the Reformation to discredit each other. Also the RCs attempted to show the theological validity of their various rituals (which the Protestants challenged) through the success of their exorcism rituals. They also exorcised demons which apparently praised Protestant theology, thus suggesting that Protestantism was demonic. See D P Walker, Unclean Spirits, pp. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> See M Northcott, "A Survey of the Rise of Charismatic Christianity", p. 273 for a description of similar hostile attitudes and the demonisation of other religions in neighbouring Malaysia.

### A. Competing with Doctors

The pastors have traditionally been given the role of caring for a wide range of their members' needs. The growth and establishment of the medical field in Singapore in the last few decades, and the introduction of psychological and medical vocabularies to describe people's ills has meant the erosion of the traditional role of the pastor. As an example, the depressed person now has a wider choice in seeking help. He can either see a general practitioner or a psychiatrist. The pastor is just another option, considered if the problem was thought to be spiritual in nature. Prior to the advent of the charismatic movement in 1972, the average pastor's therapeutic choices were limited to advice giving and prayer, and this was sometimes deemed inadequate if the counsellee or his relatives thought that the problem had to do with spirits or charms. Thus many were tempted to seek help from the traditional mediums who specialised in such matters<sup>1</sup> because of their "cultural consonance"<sup>2</sup>. Therefore the mediums were also competitors to the pastors. This competition has become more intense with the introduction of deliverance ministry as both the pastors and the mediums are now dealing with the control of the spirit world.

The pastors respond to this competition in the role of caring by embracing the spirit worldview both in theory and practice. As MacNutt warns, if the pastor and the church does not take the question of demon possession seriously and accept traditional demonology, Christians will be forced to seek help from the "wrong sources": "either in psychiatric hospitals or witch doctors"<sup>3</sup>. The adoption of such a demonology is expressed in several ways. Firstly, with regards to the medical practitioners, some pastors tend to dismiss the medical and psychological

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<sup>1</sup> See Rodney Henry, Filipino Spirit World, ch 8; Henry points to the weakness of the traditional western missionary approach that excluded the spirit world - this forced Filipinos with problems to seek spiritual help elsewhere, among "out-of church practitioners of the spirit world".

<sup>2</sup> J I Teoh, "Chinese Spirit-Mediumship", p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Francis MacNutt, "The Imperative Need for the Church's Involvement in a Deliverance Ministry", pp. 133-9.

explanations of certain maladies as reductionistic and off the mark (6.2.2). This is to say that the doctors are sometimes, if not often, wrong. Secondly, many pastors (6.2.3) limit the encroachment of the medical world into their territory, thus preserving their role as much as possible. In this way, distinct lines are drawn between the therapeutic efficacies of the medical and pastoral professions and direct competition is therefore minimised. In other words, the message is that while the doctors have their place in helping people's ills, in some cases, their therapeutic intervention is useless if the problem is demonic - here, only the pastors can help. Thirdly, several pastors also (6.2.4) argue for the intervention of both the medical and pastoral professions. Here they are saying that the doctors' treatment of patients suffering from maladies associated with demonisation would be limited since the root problem is not taken care of. In other words, the doctors need the pastors' help for a completely successful treatment of the person.

Whatever the argument implied - the doctors are wrong, helpless in some cases, or limited in others - it is justified and rooted in the spirit worldview adopted by the pastors.

#### B. Competing with Mediums

In relation to the mediums, however, the pastors are unable to use such arguments because they are not willing to share any territory with them. This is understandable because they occupy the same territory as both deal with the spirit world. The mediums are therefore more direct competitors to the pastor, whose response is to demonise the mediums and their practices and thus repudiate their powers. This is evident in the pastors' strong associations between medium contact and demon possession. The subjects are asked to promise not to return to mediums and temples and warned that their problems will return if they do so<sup>1</sup>. The continuing popularity of medium consultation<sup>2</sup> and the

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<sup>1</sup> Poh Boon Seng, Christian in Chinese Culture, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> cf Teoh Seng Hock, New Nation, 2 Dec 1978, p. 4, Teoh a government psychiatrist revealed that 70% of the patients at Singapore's Woodbridge (psychiatric) Hospital had been to spirit mediums; see also W K Tay et al, "Psychiatric Patients who seek

pragmatic tendency among the Chinese to resort to several agencies for help<sup>1</sup> necessitates such measures.

### C. Exorcism and Occupational Prestige

In dealing with their competitors, the pastors are enhancing their status as well as strengthening their roles and the justification of their jobs and ministries. A recent study on social class in Singapore done by sociologists Quah et al show some findings that will help us in our analysis. In their survey of occupational prestige they found that

a) the occupational prestige of the Protestant pastors was inferior to many other professions. The pastors scored 44 in the Singapore Occupational Prestige Score (SOPS) compared with the highest of 97 and 96 for doctors and university lecturers<sup>2</sup>. Other occupations which scored better than the pastors include secondary school teachers (74), nurses (56), engineers (95), etc. The pastors are in the same league of occupational prestige and status as coffee house proprietors (46), foremen (46), policewomen (43), and housewife (42). This relatively low prestige is not commensurate with the educational level of the pastors most of whom have at least one degree.

b) the religious occupations<sup>3</sup> recorded the highest standard deviations as compared to the lowest standard deviation for, say, the top professional categories. This suggests that Singaporeans disagree more regarding the ranking of these religious occupations. This is possibly because of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic context in Singapore with people from different religious communities seeing their own religious leaders as

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Faith Healers", Table 9; of those who consult traditional healers, 91% see Chinese mediums, 7% Malay bomohs, & 2% Christian pastors.

<sup>1</sup> Alan Elliot, Chinese Spirit Medium Cults, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Stella Quah et al, Social Class in Singapore, ch 4. The comprehensive details are found in Appendix 2.

<sup>3</sup> the SOPS scores are: Roman Catholic priest (47), Muslim Imam (40), Buddhist monk (30), Hindu priest (29), Taoist priest (23).

having a high social prestige. However, Quah et al observe from their findings that this explanation is only valid for the Catholics and Muslims<sup>1</sup>. This suggests that for the Protestant pastors, they not only have to contend with those outside their churches in whose eyes they have a relatively low prestige, but also some of their own members who share a similar perspective.

The relatively lower social prestige and the lack of unanimity among Singaporeans and especially in the church regarding the prestige of the pastors adds pressure on the part of the pastors to find status-enhancing activities to counteract trends that threaten to marginalise them<sup>2</sup>. Besides such measures as carrying personal pagers and working in well-equipped modern offices, engaging in deliverance ministry also contributes to status enhancement. This will become clearer when we examine certain social changes that have taken place in terms of the professions. With modernisation and industrialisation, and the rapid growth in knowledge and technology, increasing specialisation has taken place in many fields. In the caring professions, this has resulted in a proliferation of specialists both in the medical and counselling fields. On the other hand, by definition and practice, the pastoral ministry is a generalist occupation. Traditionally, the pastors have taken care of individuals and families from the cradle to the grave. Today many of these functions have been taken over by doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, parenting experts, funeral directors, self-improvement gurus and the like. With the emphasis and value placed on specialist knowledge and skills, the pastor who is a generalist faces the danger of being perceived as good in nothing and therefore of no real help in the various

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<sup>1</sup> Quah et al, *ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> cf Myrtle Langley, "Spirit-Possession, Exorcism & Social Context", p. 242 where she observes somewhat similar dynamics in Britain. According to her, the climate of scientific optimism in the 1950s and early 1960s resulted in the decline of religion. Also the lower professional and middle classes, including the clergy were marginalised. The marginalised clergy needed a new role and hence their attraction to neo-Pentecostalism which gives them the new role of charismatic leader. See also Stephen Pattison, A Critique of Pastoral Care, pp. 20-21 where he uses similar arguments to explain the attraction of pastors towards counselling training and roles.

aspects of life. There is no market or respect for the generalist pastor. In this light, engaging in deliverance ministry makes the pastor a specialist with particular skills and knowledge. A niche and market is therefore created.

#### D. The Attraction of Exorcism: Personal Reasons

The deliverance ministry may also meet some other personal needs. According to McAlear and Brennan, the deliverance ministry tends to attract those who are temperamentally authoritative, those with a peculiar fascination with the demonic, and those seeking simplistic solutions to complex problems<sup>1</sup>.

The traditional authority of the pastor in the church has also been eroded over the years with the general membership becoming better and highly educated and the resultant sharing of power between laity and clergy. The deliverance ministry, on the other hand, restores the authority and power of the pastor. This is evident in several ways. Firstly, the pastor is seen as spiritually potent and mature and his stature is enhanced. Secondly, the pastor can handle any defiance against his authority by associating the defiant member's behaviour with demonisation, as the following story illustrates:

There is this case of a lady in the church. She has a defiant spirit. She and her husband have problems. It is a clear case of she having a religious spirit. She would behave strangely in church. Many people have prayed over her but have not succeeded in casting out the evil spirit. You see, her permission and agreement is needed.

Apparently, the woman has defied the authority of the pastor and his team of leaders. This phenomenon is found sometimes not only between pastors and their rebellious members but also among pastors as P16's story shows.

I don't believe in spirits of lust, fear etc. Once at a meeting, one prominent pastor in the deliverance ministry was saying that many people at this meeting had spirits of fear. I disputed with this pastor who then accused me of

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<sup>1</sup> Richard McAlear & Elizabeth Brennan, "Deliverance: A Perspective From Experience", in Matthew & Dennis Linn (eds), Deliverance Prayer, p. 164.

having a "spirit of deception".

It shows the authority enhancing function of certain aspects of the spirit worldview of some of the pastors. Thirdly, pastors such as P11 who declared "I am the boss" when it came to the final diagnosis in a given situation<sup>1</sup>, are insisting on their authority over and above other opinions, including medical ones (4.3.3). The practical problem is that the busy pastors may soon have to delegate deliverance functions to others - assistant pastors or lay people<sup>2</sup>. However, they still retain their authority. In deliverance teams, they are clearly the leaders. Most pastors said that they have no problems with difference of opinions. This is probably because of the choice of "like-minded" individuals for the deliverance teams, and also because the pastors insist on their own leaders (5.3.2). When there are several deliverance teams in the church the pastor, takes over-all authority and responsibility for them. Thus, because deliverance ministry confers and reinforces authority, P12 speaks for many pastors:

I aspire to have the same power that Jesus had.<sup>3</sup>

Richards has rightly warned against the danger of being

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<sup>1</sup> cf R L Stirrat, "Demonic Possession", p. 153; the Catholic priest in Sri Lanka has the final say in the diagnosis, and he derives much authority and power from this privilege of labelling and determining the nature of the person's problem. Such practices may also give an added advantage; the pastor can pick and choose his demon possession cases, hence ensuring a high success rate in exorcism, thus maintaining and enhancing his popularity and authority - cf Bruce Kapferer, Celebration of Demons, p. 59, where he notes such careful selection of cases by exorcists.

<sup>2</sup> The hidden benefits of including the laity in deliverance ministry is their mobilisation (having them do something) and the new sense of social and religious importance that is accorded them.

<sup>3</sup> cf T W Adorno et al's classic study, The Authoritarian Personality, where they argue that such people tend to have a power-oriented, exploitatively dependent attitude in relationship to God and others, in addition to displaying prejudice, conventionality, rigidity, and repressive denial. In this respect, the strongly antagonistic stance against non-Christian religions and the excessive demonisation of life shown by some of the pastors may be partly explained by their authoritarian profile.

influenced by such unconscious needs leading to a preoccupation with deliverance ministry:

Spiritual "maturity" seems to me to be a great problem; or at least recognising it. We are faced with strange paradoxes and quirks of the human mind. It is quite clear that those who push themselves forward in this (or any other area of Church ministry) are those least likely to be the right people. Those who are mentally a little unstable are usually foremost in rushing into counselling roles, and the role of the exorcist appeals to those who need a position of "power" and spiritual status over those around them.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the pastors also shared how they were exposed to the spiritual world during their early days. Many (such as P5, P6, P7) recalled living near Chinese temples and witnessing the spirit possession of the temple mediums (*tang-ki*). One pastor told of how he experienced demonic attacks himself before becoming involved in deliverance ministry.

When I was in secondary three, I had a strange experience. I was suddenly paralysed. I couldn't breathe, I couldn't see, shout or move. I was very frightened. I then cried out to the Lord. Then I saw a bright golden light flash past. After that I was okay...The second time I had a brush with demons was in 1972 when I was in hospital. One day I was suddenly flung out of bed. I knew it was demons who were bothering me. I wanted to give up my life. I had many visions. I saw a red demon. I heard God saying: "You have to fight for it". Six months later I was healed of my asthma and TB. By this time I was already speaking in tongues and prophesying. I was afraid that I was going out of my mind. But later, I found out about Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement and I realised what was happening in my life. (P15)<sup>2</sup>

This apparent sensitivity and exposure to the demonic world continues when the pastors start engaging in deliverance ministry. A few pastors mentioned how they continue to be attacked by demons because of their ministry but expressed

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<sup>1</sup> John Richards, "The Minister & the Deliverance Ministry", p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> cf with Derek Prince, a popular leader in charismatic circles who himself was once demonised prior to his involvement in charismatic and deliverance ministry; Don Basham, Deliver Us from Evil, pp. 104-5.

confidence that they were victorious<sup>1</sup>.

A lot of people would retreat from the deliverance ministry because of the fear of being attacked by the demons. We also have such attacks but we are victorious in Jesus Christ. One day, after deliverance ministry, I went to a shopping center with my friend. There were some Japanese people and some lion dance was going on. We were suddenly both attacked. I felt a choking sensation while my friend felt needles in her head. Once we ran and got onto the road, we were free. (P8)

One day, on my off day, I took my wife for shopping. As we passed a shopping center, my wife wanted to stop there but we had already passed. My feelings then were very interesting because I believe there was demonic interference. I suddenly experienced angry and violent thoughts - beyond myself. I realised what was happening, prayed, and the attack was over. (P7)

Whether such experiences show greater sensitivity to the spiritual world or an obsessive preoccupation with that world<sup>2</sup>, the point is the openness to the demonic world that the pastors have. This was further enhanced by the experience by many pastors of coming under some mentor who was involved in deliverance ministry (eg P1, P5, P7, P8, P15, P16). Several pastors also shared how they developed their deliverance ministry by "trial and error" (P12). It is in this process that they are most influenced by the popular culture of pragmatism.

The rapid social changes in Singapore produce much stress and people have problems coping<sup>3</sup>; this is often converted into

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<sup>1</sup> See Jack Dominion, "A Psychological Evaluation of the Pentecostal Movement", p. 295, where he argues that groups and group leaders suffering from unconscious fear and uncertainty tend to be obsessed with the devil, demons, and evil.

<sup>2</sup> The pastors follow Peter Horrobin's explanation that demons attack those involved in deliverance ministry because of their displeasure at the pastors' successful incursions into demonic strongholds. Thus the problem is not in the pastor (emotionally or spiritually). Healing Through Deliverance, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> See Dennis Gayle, The Small Developing State, pp. 121f. The stress comes from various social changes including family life; see Man Singh Das et al, The Family in Asia, p. 419. Further stress comes from the climate of perfectionism and stifled creativity as pointed out by MPs Heng Chiang Meng & John Chew, Straits Times (Overseas Edn), 16 June 1990, p. 4.

physical and behavioural disturbances<sup>1</sup>. Often, when pastors are approached for help, people have usually sought medical help but to no avail<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the pastor faces tremendous pressure to provide an efficacious solution to the counsellee's problems. By a process of trial and error, the pastor may find out that if he adopts the spirit worldview of the counsellee and if he practices deliverance, the person is apparently healed<sup>3</sup>. What begins as a heuristic exploration may lead to a more dogmatic and confident position, without the pastor realising the strong influence of pragmatism on him, both to satisfy the client as well as to be able to do something that "works"<sup>4</sup>. P4's disdain of "theologically profound but practically impotent" ministers highlights this influence<sup>5</sup>.

The pastor also faces pressure to adopt a spirit worldview when his church members who are exposed to charismatic teachings and influence, expect him to engage in deliverance ministry similar to that of charismatic leaders; if the pastor fails to do so, he

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<sup>1</sup> ie somatization; Tsoi Wing Foo, "Mental Health in Singapore", p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> See Ari Kiev, "Implications for the Future" in Kiev, Magic, Faith & Healing, p. 457, where he writes about the stresses brought on by change: "when efforts to cope with new threats and challenges lead to failure, individuals naturally turn to those sources of comfort that were successful in combatting unpleasant emotional states in the prechange period."

<sup>3</sup> Colleen Ward et al, "Demon Possession", p. 207, suggest that exorcism in pentecostal circles "offers strong social bonds and group support within a well-defined subculture". If this is true, then exorcism provides an attractive choice for pastors who are sought for help by lonely people in a stressful society.

<sup>4</sup> cf John Nevius, Demon Possession, pp. 9, 262. Nevius, a western missionary to China in the late 19th century began with the sceptical view that the notion of demon possession belonged to a primitive worldview. His views changed after his experiences in China. To what extent was this change inspired by pragmatic concerns and the pressure on him by the pragmatic spirit worldview of the Chinese? Bruce Kapferer has suggested the process of reciprocal validation between exorcist and client, Celebration of Demons, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> See John Richards, "The Minister & the Deliverance Ministry", p. 9 where he warns against being unhealthily influenced by "job expectancy" (filling the shoes of a predecessor or some other person) or the pastoral need of some individual (need to do something about it). Such considerations may influence a pastor's adoption of charismatic demonology.

may be judged as "not spiritual", and without much spiritual power. He will thus lose his credibility in the eyes of his members. The pragmatic concerns of personal survival in ecclesiastical contexts may also be an important factor that fosters the adoption of charismatic demonology by the pastors. If that works in terms of personal popularity and authority, and church growth, heuristic beliefs become confidently held dogma. In so doing, the pastors, by an osmotic process, begin to share the popular fear of the unknown<sup>1</sup> which is identified with the spirit world which is then sought to be controlled and manipulated<sup>2</sup>. Complex problems are simplified in terms of the spirit world and social reassurance<sup>3</sup> is achieved in the manipulation and mastery of this spirit world.

Our analysis therefore shows that McAlear and Brennan's postulation mentioned earlier is generally true in the Singapore situation. The promise of authority, and control over the spirit world<sup>4</sup> are strong influences fostering the adoption of a charismatic demonology, both in theory and practice.

Finally, the social milieu may have a part in the shaping of the pastors' worldview. The description of the Montanist movement in the early church as a protest by the politically impotent against rigidly stratified society<sup>5</sup> can be applied in the Singapore

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, ch 6, where he notes that in the 3rd & 4th centuries, Roman power decreased causing insecurity and fear in the people; this resulted in a resurgence of dualism and a proliferation of demons.

<sup>2</sup> The whole focus of Chinese spirit mediumship is the control of "luck" as noted by Alan Elliot, Chinese Spirit Medium Cults, p. 21. See also Clarence Snelling & Oliver R Whitley, "Problem Solving Behaviour in Religious & Para-Religious Groups", in Allan W Eister (ed), Changing Perspectives in the Scientific Study of Religion, p. 331; in such groups there is a "noticeable strain or predisposition toward reductionism in the sense of cutting down or narrowing the "size" of the world in order to make it more "manageable".

<sup>3</sup> Jane Belo, Trance in Bali, p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> Arnold Ludwig, "Altered States of Consciousness" in Raymond Prince (ed), Trance & Possession States, p. 89 where he observes that possession and exorcism enable people to exert some control over the unknown.

<sup>5</sup> Myrtle Langley, "Spirit-Possession, Exorcism & Social Context", pp. 238-9.

context<sup>1</sup>; this may explain in part the popularity of the charismatic movement, the modern equivalent of the Montanist movement. The paternalistic state, the over-regulation of life<sup>2</sup>, and the constant change in Singapore<sup>3</sup> produces stress which needs to be released. For the subject of possession, possession behaviour provides this outlet. For the exorcist, there is now a sense of potency and power where there was only a general sense of social and political powerlessness. For both subject and exorcist, and the other participants, deliverance gives a sense of control over their affairs<sup>4</sup>. It is therefore not surprising that the spirit worldview coexists with the rational-economic-technical worldview in Singapore<sup>5</sup>. Both have to do with control and power. On one hand, the Asian worldviews in Singapore have been modified by the rational pursuit of economic well-being and the "cumulative role of science and technology in shaping belief

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<sup>1</sup> J I Teoh, "Chinese Spirit-Mediumship", p. 56 - Teoh observes that traditional Chinese society is extremely rigid and puts a premium on conformity and consistency in behaviour.

<sup>2</sup> John Andrews, "Lee's Legacy", pp. 3, 18f. PM Lee is quoted as having once said, "We decide what is right. Never mind what the people think - that's another problem". John Clammer describes Singapore as a planned city rather than a natural city, Singapore: Ideology, Society, Culture, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> John Clammer, Singapore: Ideology, Society, Culture, p. 1; this is further enhanced by the obsession with excellence and the pursuit of becoming "number 1" in as many things as possible in the world community (cf former PM Lee's speech, The Straits Times (Weekly Overseas Edn), 3 Mar 1990, p. 24). See also Jeffrey Burton, The Prince of Darkness, p. 15 where he compares the demonology of ancient Egypt & Mesopotamia; according to him demonology in Mesopotamia was more developed and pronounced because it was relatively more unsettled nationally. In other words, the greater the instability, the more the demons.

<sup>4</sup> Tham Seong Chee, Religion & Modernization, pp. 21-2; he suggests that rituals in Singapore (cf exorcism) are performed to effect control not by rational-technical means but by manipulating potent symbols; this being a reaction to cumulative desacralisation caused by manifest policy, bureaucratization & rationalisation. Tham is right; also rituals (including exorcism) incorporate the same technical pragmatic and manipulative elements of the worldview they are supposed to react against (cf p. 144, 149).

<sup>5</sup> Chan Lai Huat, "The High Cost of Dying", p. 16, observes that science and superstition exist side by side in Singapore. Modernisation in Singapore has not resulted in the same level of secularisation in the west; rather it has produced a resurgence of religion according to Fred Van Der Merden, Religion & Modernization in Southeast Asia.

and perception"<sup>1</sup>. But the spirit worldview is not eliminated; in fact it is reinforced through a new resurgence because it compensates for the stresses created by the rationalistic worldview<sup>2</sup>. At the superficial level the two worldviews may seem antithetical. But on a deeper level, they are complementary in serving the same purpose - economic survival and mastery, and social stability and adaptation within this context. Therefore the spirit world and high technology can coexist<sup>3</sup>, in fact, as in Singapore, it is inevitable that they co-exist. If this is the case, then the pastors, for their own personal reasons and because of the pressure put on them by subjects of possession and their own church members may more readily adopt, consciously or unconsciously, a charismatic demonology.

### 7.3 Summary

We have noted the dominant theme of competition running through our analysis of factors shaping the worldview of the pastors. This competition is located at various levels. At one level, it is between the various denominations and theological traditions in the church; whether it is between liberal and evangelical, and charismatic and non-charismatic wings of the church. Though the defence of the biblical teachings on the demonic and the importance of experience are the stated reasons for the adoption of the pastors' worldview, the underlying issues of competition and conflict unmasked by our analysis are very important and illuminative. The pastors and their churches are in competition with other perspectives. Moreover, their adoption of charismatic demonology serves as a resistance to secularising and rationalistic tendencies, including the threat to their notions of biblical authority and certainty.

At another level, the competition is in the arena of a plurality of religions in Singapore; most of which in their popular forms

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<sup>1</sup> Tham Seong Chee, Religion & Modernisation, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Winston Davis, Magic & Exorcism in Modern Japan, p. 302.

<sup>3</sup> cf Bishop Moses Tay's "Parable of the Durian Tree" which embraces both the spirit-world and the computer world in its analysis.

give an important place for the spirit world. To accept this worldview but to demonise the characters who populate it is to underline the uniqueness of Christianity and to legitimise and augment the evangelistic activities of the church amidst resistance against this from the other religious communities, and to some extent, the government. The charismatic demonology of the pastors also serves important initiatory and maintenance functions in terms of church membership and serves to minimise backsliding.

On a different level, the competition is played between the pastors against medical and counselling personnel on one hand, and against traditional healers and mediums on the other. In the light of the relatively low level of the prestige of the pastor (due to social changes especially in the helping professions) and the multi-religious nature of Singapore, adopting a charismatic demonology offers a specialist image to the pastor and carves a niche in the helping professions. In promoting the spirit worldview, the pastors can compete against the other helping professions, for example doctors, counsellors etc. But in so doing they find themselves in direct competition with the traditional healers in the community who share a similar view. This competition is dealt with through the demonisation of these traditional healers and all their practices.

It would help us and the pastors to become aware and to understand these underlying motivations and factors influencing and shaping their worldview<sup>1</sup>. We can stop here and suggest that the pastors' charismatic demonology is totally determined by such unconscious factors, that is, these factors are responsible for the genesis, maintenance and shaping of the pastors' worldview. But to say so would result in some very serious problems which will be listed here briefly and examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

1. It will result in the mistaken claim that science deals with truth and knowledge while religious views such as the pastors'

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<sup>1</sup> We must beware of our mixed motives according to Frank Wright, Pastoral Care for Lay People, pp. 97-8.

are merely beliefs. The sociology of knowledge which we used to do our analysis above has also been used to undermine the supremacy of science in modern thinking. While Durkheim, Mannheim, and to a lesser extent, Merton, excluded scientific knowledge from the persistent and critical challenge which they imposed upon other forms of knowledge including religious knowledge, others have challenged the objectivity of science and science's claims to true knowledge. In other words, they have argued that scientific knowledge is determined by social and historical factors just as other forms of knowledge are.

Kuhn in his now famous The Structure of Scientific Revolutions challenged Popper's ideas of how science was done. Popper claimed that although we can never conclusively prove the truth of a theory, we can prove its falseness<sup>1</sup>. This is the basis of the scientific enterprise and scientific knowledge. In this sense only scientific knowledge is acceptable knowledge. In our case, the pastors' notions of the spirit world cannot be categorised as scientific or knowledge because they cannot be falsified; thus they are invalid. On the other hand, Kuhn attempted to show that in practice, science is not a highly rational activity. Rather than testing theories by falsification, scientists test theories against their scientific paradigm which is the popularly held current worldview in the scientific community. The paradigm can change if there is sufficient evidence to overthrow it. However, because scientists tend to ignore or reject evidence against their paradigm during "periods of normal science", the paradigm can only be changed through "revolution" by overwhelming evidence. Kuhn has thus shown the over-estimation of science's rationality. Equally, Horton has shown that conversely the rationality of traditional belief has also been under-estimated<sup>2</sup>. According to the school represented by Kuhn and Horton, scientific knowledge cannot be set apart from political, moral, and religious views because they are all socially determined. The implications of this are well-represented by Barnes, Bloor and

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, pp. 51f.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science", pp. 50-71, 155-186.

their Edinburgh School in their call for a "strong programme" in the sociology of knowledge<sup>1</sup>. According to them, political, economic, and professional interests are very important determinants of particular beliefs. Bloor argues that scientific theories, methods, and notions of acceptable data are all socially derived, and therefore scientific knowledge is a social component since it is a "theoretical vision of the world"<sup>2</sup>. Such criticisms will help us examine the scientific explanations of possession more critically, and prevent us from over-relying on science in our evaluation of the pastors' responses, but it also poses the problem of cognitive relativism as a consequence. We shall explore some solutions to this problem below.

2. To stop here would also result in the problem of reductionism. To use scientific principles derived from the human sciences to examine possession and understand the dynamics underlying the pastors' responses is very helpful as we have seen. But to explain it entirely on the basis of scientific paradigms is inadequate analysis. To rely entirely on the evaluation of one paradigm (scientific) on another (religious) is to be reductionist. As Langton has argued, we will be falsely extrapolating science onto metaphysics<sup>3</sup>.

3. We cannot explain all our ideas and beliefs entirely on deterministic terms. To explain the pastors' worldview entirely on social and psychological factors is to reduce all phenomena to cause and effect, deterministic dynamics at the expense of legitimate voluntaristic aspects. In other words, one's views are not only determined, but they are can also be chosen. By the same token, one can also be committed to one's chosen ideas. To think, as some of the pastors seem to suggest, that all their beliefs are the result of conscious choices and commitment is to be naively ignorant of the very important psychological, social, and cultural factors that shape our ideas, beliefs and responses. But to deny the elements of choice and commitment is to be equally

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<sup>1</sup> B Barnes, Scientific Knowledge and Sociological Theory; D Bloor, Knowledge & Social Imagery.

<sup>2</sup> David Bloor, Knowledge & Social Imagery, ch 2, pp. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Langton, Supernatural, p. 252.

naive.

From the above three problems, we can derive and summarise the agenda for the next chapter. The human sciences have helped us to understand the psychological, sociological, and biological dimensions of possession and avoid a simplistic and inaccurate understanding of the phenomenon. Our more direct concern in this study is the pastors' responses to the phenomenon; here, the human sciences have helped us in unmasking hidden motives and determinants and thus the latent functions of charismatic demonology. This increases awareness. But awareness without evaluation is unhelpful in pastoral theology<sup>1</sup>. It is evaluation that we will turn to in the next chapter. The problem is: on what basis do we do our evaluation? The "strong program" in the sociology of knowledge and the development of postmodernist philosophy have deconstructed all illusions of objective knowledge. Science has been equally deconstructed. This has resulted in either cognitive relativism, or worse, cognitive nihilism. We cannot of course live in such nihilism or extreme relativism. Glover and Strawbridge have suggested a way out of the problem by suggesting a) structuralism and b) critical theory as possible solutions<sup>2</sup>. Their solutions, used in a modified way, will provide us with the tools to evaluate the pastors' responses. The structural criteria will be provided by theological paradigms; here we will be using theological understandings of God, evil and man to evaluate the pastors' responses. The other evaluatory tool will focus on various levels of conflicts, in the person, in society, and in the metaphysical realm, to help us with a pastoral evaluation of the responses of the pastors. We will thus be engaged, in the next chapter, in a theological and pastoral evaluation of the pastors' worldview which continues to determine their responses to the phenomenon of possession.

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<sup>1</sup> cf with many modern psychotherapies which focus on awareness. To just become aware that I am angry is quite different from understanding why I am angry and what I can do about it.

<sup>2</sup> David Glover and Sheelagh Strawbridge, The Sociology of Knowledge, pp. 67-70.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8.0 Living in Two Worlds: Theological Vision and Pastoral Task

In the previous chapter, we undertook to examine, using sociological and psychological tools, the factors shaping the pastors' particular worldview. Why did they hold their specific beliefs and conduct themselves in a certain way? We elicited some obvious reasons from their discourse but in addition also unmasked more unconscious and covert motivations and factors for their choices. The previous chapter would thus help the pastors to become more aware of their own motivations. But our task does not end here. We noted also that the pastors' worldview was not only determined but was also a matter of deliberate choice and commitment. This requires us to undertake the second part of our reflection which is to evaluate theologically and pastorally the responses of the pastors to possession. To adopt a purely deterministic paradigm and to stretch it to its logical conclusion of cognitive and moral relativism, as well as nihilism is untenable and, as we discussed in the previous chapter, this is avoided by the kind of evaluation that we shall undertake in this chapter.

We shall begin with the theological evaluation; three particular areas concern us at this point: epistemology, theodicy, and cosmology.

#### 8.1 The Clash of Epistemologies

The theological problem posed by a phenomenon such as possession involves a "clash of epistemologies"<sup>1</sup>. Each perspective on possession is derived from a particular epistemological basis. Russell has identified three general modes of thought (or paradigms) that exist at the end of the twentieth century: a) the

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<sup>1</sup> John White, "Problems & Procedures in Exorcism" in John Montgomery (ed), Demon Possession, p. 282.

traditional Judeo-Christian worldview, b) the traditional scientific materialist worldview, and c) New Age thought<sup>1</sup>. In much of the literature on possession the clash has been especially between the Christian and the scientific worldviews.

### 8.1.1 The Dominance of Scientific Epistemology

For several centuries in the west, the Judeo-Christian worldview of two worlds, one natural, and the other supernatural (or spiritual) populated by God and good spirits (angels) as well as evil spirits (the devil and demons) was the dominant paradigm. Thus many disturbing conditions were attributed to the activities of evil spirits. The major disease theories at this time were based on this two-worlds worldview. In addition to "disease-object intrusion," people believed also that disease can be caused by loss of the soul, spirit intrusion, breach of taboos, and sorcery<sup>2</sup>. This however was to change when the Enlightenment took hold of Europe in the eighteenth century.

On the one hand, the Newtonian mechanical universe of cause and effect became the basis for physical science which in turn laid the foundations for the scientific paradigm that has come to dominate much of the western world<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, Hume's empirical methodology pushed metaphysics to the periphery<sup>4</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, pp. 1-4

<sup>2</sup> Henri Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious, ch 1.

<sup>3</sup> According to Karl Lowith, Meaning in History, the modern notion of progress marking the thoughts of thinkers from Voltaire to Marx is a "secularisation of the eschatological pattern of Christian progress" (p 2).

<sup>4</sup> see David Hume, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, sect 10, #86-101, pp. 109-31 for his arguments against miracles, and therefore, by implication against the supernatural, let alone its interaction with the natural. For a critique, see Colin Brown, Miracles and the Critical Mind, pp. 79-100, 430-42. Hume concluded his Enquiry by limiting real knowledge to mathematics and the experimental sciences; he was sceptical of the validity of theological and metaphysical statements: "When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain

net result of these paradigm shifts was the gradual disappearance of the supernatural world in popular consciousness, and a more radical dismissal of the "other world" in academic circles. As far as possession was concerned explanations were sought in the physical and social world rather than in a spiritual world. Ideas of possession were seen as "primitive"<sup>1</sup>; demon possession became the ancestor of dynamic psychiatry, exorcism was replaced by psychotherapy, demons by unconscious processes<sup>2</sup>. Freud thus dismissed the reality of demons and explained possession behaviour as a neurosis caused by the projection of unconscious conflicts<sup>3</sup>. His view was to become the major perspective in the psychiatric and anthropological explanations of possession<sup>4</sup> which we saw in chapter six - alternative explanations that pose a challenge to traditional "spirit" discourses including that of the pastors.

With the dominance of the scientific worldview, many theologians modified their theology and worldview to be in line with the scientific paradigms. Dennis Nineham is an example; for him biblical demons (following Bultmann) can be explained in terms of modern science. He further stressed that advances in medicine and psychology excluded demons, possession and exorcism<sup>5</sup>. Hebblethwaite, likewise declared that human evil was "rooted in the physical organic world"<sup>6</sup> while Peacocke, in an even more explicit manner, laments that the "occult, demonological and 'supernaturalist' mythology threatens modern scientific

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nothing but sophistry and illusion (#132).

<sup>1</sup> E B Tylor, Primitive Culture, vol 2, pp. 135, 136.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious, ch 1.

<sup>3</sup> S Freud, On Creativity and the Unconscious, p. 265.

<sup>4</sup> eg the view that demons are personifications of the various hazards of life projected to an imaginary supra-human world (Beattie & Middleton, Spirit Mediumship & Society in Africa, p. xix), that possession was a transitory escape from reality (P M Yap, "Possession Syndrome", p. 126), or a primitive delusion (Junzo Iida, "Delusion of Possession") and so on.

<sup>5</sup> Dennis Nineham, The Use and Abuse of the Bible, pp. 116f. see also R Bultmann, "New Testament & Mythology" in Kerygma and Myth, ed H W Bartsch, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Hebblethwaite, Church Times, 6.6.75, p. 12.

understanding so painstakingly constructed"<sup>1</sup>. As Paston has pointed out, theological reflection on the problem of possession was strongly influenced by the prevailing worldview<sup>2</sup>. As the demonological language was displaced by psychological language, (as when people previously believed to be afflicted with demon possession were increasingly labelled as suffering from multiple personality disorder in the mesmerist literature at the end of the eighteenth century<sup>3</sup>), theologians modified their language too<sup>4</sup>.

### 8.1.2 Limitations of Scientific Epistemology

There are serious problems in transferring the authority once given to the Bible and Christian revelation to science and the scientific method as some theologians have done. Firstly, radical sociologists of knowledge such as Kuhn, Bloor, and Barnes have challenged the notion that only scientific statements are facts, all other statements, including religious ones being merely beliefs. For them, science is based on a priori assumptions and shaped by historical and social factors just as religious beliefs are<sup>5</sup>.

Secondly, the scientific discourses have certain limitations which we must appreciate. Science, by virtue of its methodology, deals only with the material and empirical world. If there is another non-material dimension to reality then science is unable to fathom that dimension. Therefore, science can neither confirm

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<sup>1</sup> A R Peacocke, Creation and the World of Science, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Monroe Paston, "Possession & Trance States; A Protestant View" in Raymond Prince (ed), Trance & Possession States, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> John Down et al, letter to American J of Psychiatry, 147:9(1970):1260.

<sup>4</sup> For a criticism of such "cognitive adjustments" and progressive dismantling of the supernatural, see Peter Berger, A Rumour of Angels, ch 1. Are the theologians guilty of drinking too deeply from secular wells and thus rejecting their own theological heritage?

<sup>5</sup> See 7.3. Also Thomas Kuhn, Structure of Scientific Revolutions; David Bloor, Knowledge & Social Imagery; B Barnes, Scientific Knowledge & Sociological Theory.

nor deny the existence of evil spirits<sup>1</sup>. Neither can it prove nor disprove the reality of demon possession for demon possession is neither logically nor empirically impossible<sup>2</sup>.

Modern medicine, psychiatry, psychology, and to some extent, sociology, are all constructed on the basis of scientific principles but these disciplines, some more than others, are not as scientific as they first seem to be. Psychiatry is a case in point and we shall look at it since psychiatric explanations compete with traditional demonology. The diagnosis of schizophrenia which has been closely associated with possession behaviour (eg Yap, Iida, Tsoi; see 6.2.2.2) has come under criticism from psychiatrists such as Laing and Szasz. For Laing, "schizophrenia" is only "assumption, theory, hypothesis but not a fact"<sup>3</sup>. In a more all-encompassing way, Szasz deplores psychiatric diagnoses as "stigmatizing labels, phrased to resemble diagnoses, and applied to persons whose behaviour annoys or offends others"<sup>4</sup>. Many of the psychiatric diagnoses such as obsessive compulsive disorder, dissociative state, manic-depression etc are descriptive rather than explanatory. Therefore, when psychiatric diagnoses are applied to people displaying possession behaviour, they may be dealing with only a limited aspect of the phenomenon. Hence Russell argues:

The argument that demonic possession as described in the New Testament can be explained in terms of modern psychiatry is irrelevant to the Devil, for it improperly conflates demons and Devil, physical distress and moral evil, into one category. Medicine may understand physical symptoms better than demonology does, but the Devil primarily represents moral evil, and science and medicine by definition cannot treat questions of morality. The concept of radical evil embodied in the Devil cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Velthuysen, "A Practical Theological Examination of Inner Healing", p. 219. See also Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, p. 5 where he extends this argument to all fields of human enquiry: "No one can say what the devil is or is not in absolute reality because we have no propositional access to realities beyond the human mind".

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Lewis, "Criteria for Discerning of Spirits" in John Montgomery (ed), Demon Possession, p. 354.

<sup>3</sup> R D Laing & A Esterson, Sanity, Madness & the Family, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Szasz, The Myth of Mental Illness, p. 275.

outmoded or superseded by any developments of modern science.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover many of the "scientific" psychological and psychiatric explanations of possession behaviour are based on concepts of the unconscious and its parts and processes as proposed particularly by Freud and Jung. Freud's architecture of the unconscious, like the notions of demonology, can neither be scientifically proven nor discredited. Though Freud was heavily influenced by his biological and neurological orientation, his ideas regarding unconscious processes, such as the Oedipus complex<sup>2</sup>, are to be found more in the realm of "myth" than scientific fact. This becomes clearer when we examine the theories of Jung, a protege of Freud. Jung was greatly influenced by alchemy, myths, and eastern religions in his formulation of such ideas as the shadow, collective unconscious, complexes and so on. But his ideas too are more mythological than scientific<sup>3</sup>. They are interpretations rather than scientific observations. Perhaps, because of his religious temperament, Jung refused to dismiss completely the notion of God and demons. He claimed that as a scientist, it was beyond the limits of his scientific discipline to prove or disprove the ontological reality of God and demons though he identified autonomous complexes which he associated with demon possession<sup>4</sup>. Freud was more presumptuous with his theories and went on to dismiss God and demons as merely neurotic projections from the human unconscious<sup>5</sup>. Instead, he had merely replaced one set of language with another, both lying outside the modern scientific territory. The question therefore remains whether depth psychological explanations of possession used in scientific perspectives are more scientific (and realistic) than demonological ones. Dynamic psychology is a child of traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> outlined in his Interpretation of Dreams.

<sup>3</sup> C G Jung, Archetypes & the Collective Unconscious, C G Jung & C Kerényi, Essays on a Science of Mythology. Cf H Murray (ed) Myth & Mythmaking.

<sup>4</sup> C G Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 91; Bollingen Series, 7:110, 153, 370, 149.

<sup>5</sup> S Freud, A Neurosis of Demoniactal Possession, pp. 436-7.

demonology and spiritualism as Ellenberger has shown<sup>1</sup>. It was born and developed through the influence of various social factors just as the older demonology was shaped<sup>2</sup>. If demonology is a social creation, then depth psychology is also one. Depth psychology may therefore represent a linguistic change rather than a more accurate scientific account.

The explanations offered by the more decidedly laboratory based behavioural and neuro-psychologies sound more convincingly scientific. However, explaining away possession behaviour as merely due to physiological changes due to stress situations is to be guilty of reductionism. Life is a holistic phenomenon and such scientific reductionism which attempts to explain a phenomenon through the study of its minute parts is bound to fail in understanding the totality of that particular phenomenon. Unfortunately, the main ethos of western scientific thought has been reductionist over the last three centuries<sup>3</sup>, and therefore scientific explanations of possession behaviour tend to be reductionist in orientation. It is this reductionism that proponents of both the traditional Judeo-Christian worldview<sup>4</sup> and the more recent New Age worldview<sup>5</sup> have criticised. Interestingly, some leading scientists themselves have admitted to the fallacy of scientific reductionism and have called for a more holistic approach to the study and understanding of phenomena<sup>6</sup>. We must realize then that scientific explanations whether physiological, psychiatric and psychological, do shed much light on the nature of possession but they need not tell the whole story because of their limitations and tendency to be reductionist.

Anthropological and sociological explanations of possession have

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious, ch 1.

<sup>2</sup> which is what Ellenberger has so ably shown in his book.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Davies, God & the New Physics, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> see Gary Collins, "Psychological Observations on Demonism", in John Montgomery (ed), Demon Possession, p. 238: "We need to move away from a rigid adherence to empiricism and naturalism".

<sup>5</sup> Hans Naegeli-Osjord, Possession & Exorcism, pp. 3f, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Davies, God and the New Physics, ch 5.

professed to be more holistic in their approach taking social and cultural factors into consideration. Anthropologist Kapferer has argued:

Central to my overall argument is that illness demonically conceived is not reducible to terms independent of its demonic conception...Physical, mental and social disorder can be idioms of demonic maleficence (and not just vice versa)...Thus no theoretical orientation (western medical, psychological, psychoanalytic, sociological) is privileged in the explanation of demonic illness. A reduction, therefore, of the demonic to analytical terms which deny the integrity of the demonic as a phenomenon in and of itself, distorts and limits understanding...the demonic identity of the patient is an integral aspect of the illness itself. The illness, then, is not simply a cultural expression of deeper-seated physiological or psychological or sociological troubles effectively translatable into the terms, for example, of a western scientific discourse. I do not mean by this that the physiological and psychological difficulties of a patient, independent of a demonic conception, are not important to an understanding of a patient's condition. I insist, however, that the demonic is not just an idiom in which disorder and suffering is comprehended, or a medium for intersubjective understanding within a particular culture; it is, rather, the illness, its disorder and suffering.<sup>1</sup>

Kapferer can extend his holistic approach only as far as the community he was studying for he later concludes that the demonic is a "fatal twist of the culture, the inversion and negation of its order". Demons, for him symbolise the "destructive possibilities of a cultural and social order"<sup>2</sup>. There is no mention here of the actual beliefs within the community in a spirit world.

A third problem with relying solely on science to understand possession is that science which has been dominated by western scientists, has shown a western bias against non-western cultures and ideas central in such societies. Peck has rightly pointed out that possession has not been scientifically (and seriously) studied in America and Europe. Instead studies have been confined to anthropological investigations of the phenomenon in "primitive" cultures; this reflects a cultural bias<sup>3</sup>. Have

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Kapferer, Celebration of Demons, pp. 87-8.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Peck, People of the Lie, p. 230.

western scientists, because of this bias, failed to fully understand possession? Writing about the ritual dramas of primitive man, Becker says:

when western man first crashed uninvited into these spectacular dramas, he was scornful of what he saw. That was because...western man was already a fallen creature who had forgotten how to play, how to impart to life high style and significance. Western man was being given a brief glimpse of the creations of human genius, and like a petulant imbecile bully who feels discomfort at what he doesn't understand, he proceeded to smash everything in sight.<sup>1</sup>

This negative attitude to non-western and traditional cosmologies has been further extended to the biblical accounts of possession and exorcism with the suggestion that Jesus' belief in the devil and demons was just a part of the primitive worldview of his culture. This attitude is both ethnocentric and chronocentric<sup>2</sup>. It arises from a misunderstanding of the domains and limitations of science and the scientific method. We should thus take seriously Drane's advice that one should beware an intellectual imperialism that tries to rationalise what is happening in other places (referring to the third world)<sup>3</sup>.

The limitations of science are leading some scholars to be more open to the cosmologies represented by non-western cultures and the biblical world which were disparaged by the naturalistic and materialistic "one-world" cosmological model of western science. The biblical worldview arises from the Bible's recognition, not only of the material world, but also the spiritual world, and the intimate interconnectedness of both<sup>4</sup>. (In this view, the spiritual world has both good and evil spiritual beings who have access to the material and human world and who influence the

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Becker, Escape from Evil, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> see Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, p. 260. Such chronocentrism relativises the past but absolutises the present - Peter Berger, A Rumour of Angels, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> John Drane, What is the New Age Saying to the Church? p. 241.

<sup>4</sup> See Emmanuel Lartey, Pastoral Counselling in Intercultural Perspective, ch 3; and Rodney Henry, Filipino Spirit World, for a generally positive comparison between this worldview and non-western worldviews.

lives of its occupants<sup>1</sup>.

### 8.1.3 Towards a Better Epistemology: Knowing Different Worlds

Some scholars have moved somewhat nearer to the "two-worlds" worldview. Mircea Eliade has referred to the two "modes of being in the world": the sacred and the profane. According to him, pre-agricultural and agricultural man lived in a sacralised cosmos. Regrettably, modern man, however, lives in a desacralised world<sup>2</sup>. What Eliade laments is the loss of the "other world" and the language of the sacred in the discourse of modern man. This has distorted modern man's understanding of the cosmos, for "the world becomes apprehensible as world, as cosmos, in the measure in which it reveals itself as a sacred world"<sup>3</sup>. In similar vein, Tambiah, referring to Levy Bruhl's concepts regarding the multiple orderings of reality, calls for two equally valid and important orientations to the world: a causal and instrumental mode represented by the technical, rational and scientific mindset; and a participatory and fusing mode represented by a religio-magical mindset<sup>4</sup>. Science must be given its proper (but limited) place in the scheme of things. It has many valuable uses in helping our understanding and lives but it cannot be the only perspective in life<sup>5</sup>. Theologians who had bought the "one-world" desacralised worldview have also done some rethinking. Thus Karl Heim speaks about standing in "two spaces":

We stand in two spaces at once, spaces with contracting structures. The one space is the space into which we have been born, together with all other beings. In this space we live and think and explore in accordance with the generally accepted methods of natural science together with all the others. We can communicate with all other human beings in a way which ensures mutual comprehension and general agreement. The second space is that which is disclosed to us only by a "second birth"; as it were by a "second

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<sup>1</sup> John Nevius, Demon Possession, p. 243; cf P7's comments in 3.2.1.

<sup>2</sup> Mircea Eliade, The Sacred & the Profane, "Introduction", pp. 10f.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley Tambiah, Magic, Science, Religion, & the Scope of Rationality, pp. 100-10.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 154.

sight". With regard to this second space we can communicate only with those who have undergone the same experience as ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

On another front, a similar movement is taking place in philosophy, in what has been termed as postmodernist thought (also termed "modernism" by Daniel Bell, "modern" by Foucault, and "modernity" by Habermas). Postmodernism goes beyond the modern "hermeneutics of suspicion" exemplified by the theoretical discourses of Freud in psychology and Marx in sociology (see 7.1). Postmodernists have criticised such theoretical frameworks which are based on some metanarrative. Lyotard, in what has become a key text for postmodernist thought, The Postmodern Condition, attacks all grand narratives as legitimating myths of the modern age<sup>2</sup>. He identifies some of these "myths": the progressive liberation of humanity through science, and the restoration of a unified universally valid knowledge for humanity through philosophy. For Lyotard, such metanarratives are myths; he thus argues against any "universal knowledge" or foundationalism<sup>3</sup>. Postmodernism is thus conceived of as a state in which there is a "permanent and irreducible pluralism of cultures, communal traditions, ideologies, "forms of life", language games" etc<sup>4</sup>.

Lyotard's attack on the certitude of modernity is extended to the modern scientific enterprise. According to him,

Science possesses no general metalanguage in which other languages can be transcribed and evaluated...There is no reason to think that it would be possible to determine metaprescriptions common to all...language games or that a revisable consensus like the one in force at a given moment in the scientific community could embrace the totality of metaprescriptions regulating the totality of statements circulating in the social collectivity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Heim, Christian Faith & Natural Science, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, pp. 31f.

<sup>3</sup> See also Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, and Richard Rorty, Philosophy & the Mirror of Nature, for similar attacks on the attempt by modern philosophy in seeking for a foundation and absolute bedrock of truth.

<sup>4</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, "Is there a Postmodern Sociology", p. 225.

<sup>5</sup> J F Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, pp 64-5.

For Lyotard therefore, the supreme intellectual authority of natural science which has been a key pillar of the Enlightenment and the modern period<sup>1</sup> is both naive and ethnocentric<sup>2</sup>. In modern thought marked by rationalism and the central authority of science, it is common to reduce and translate alternative non-conventional forms of knowledge to the canons of scientific discourse. What cannot be assimilated, translated or reduced is thus rejected as "pseudo-knowledge"<sup>3</sup>. This has been the fate of the traditional discourses especially arising from non-western societies in the onslaught of colonial (and neo-colonial) globalisation of the western scientific and rationalistic discourses. Such a foundationalism based on the scientific metanarrative is unacceptable to postmodernists who reject legitimation by any universal grand theory but instead espouse legitimation which is plural, local, and immanent<sup>4</sup>.

The postmodernist criticism of grand narratives is a welcome corrective against reductionism where the particular is extrapolated and universalised such as is evident in the reductionist explanation of the totality of human experience using scientific discourses. It also helps to lend a new voice to non-scientific and non-rationalistic (as opposed to irrational) discourses especially from the non-western world which have been drowned or marginalised by the globalised discourses (through colonialism) of the modern west. The discourses on demons and possession such as that of our pastors will thus be probably better heard in a postmodernist rather than a modernist milieu<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless there are serious problems in

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Pippin, Modernism as a Philosophical Problem, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> for a similar attack on science and its role in our lives, see Paul Feyerabend, Science in a Free Society.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism & Relativism, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Fraser & Linda Nicholson, "Social Criticism Without Philosophy: An Encounter Between Feminism & Postmodernism", p. 377.

<sup>5</sup> But the pastors and the postmodernists would make strange bedfellows firstly because the pastors, like the scientists, rely on a metatheory of reality; and secondly because the pastors' moral absolutes derived from this metatheory differs markedly from the lack of and abhorrence of any moral absolutes among the Neo-Nietzschean postmodernists. See Jonathan Friedman, "Cultural

espousing postmodernism uncritically. In the postmodern universe described by Baudrillard, theories float unanchored; "all that remains to be done is to play with the pieces" - the postmodernist universe of nihilism is devoid of meaning<sup>1</sup>. It is this nihilism and irrationality that has led critics such as Karl Popper and Jurgen Habermas to challenge postmodernism as a threat to theoretical and practical rationality<sup>2</sup>. It is untenable to debunk metanarratives unless such postmodernist narratives claim to be metanarratives themselves. In other words, "one cannot consistently state the case for relativism without undermining it"<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, postmodernist thought while providing a corrective criticism of metatheory, philosophy and knowledge, is grossly deficient as a critical theory of society<sup>4</sup>. Habermas, thus rightly finds an absence of the concept of substantive justice in postmodernist discourses<sup>5</sup>. While postmodernism may provide a more sympathetic ear to the possession discourses of the pastors, it cannot help us to evaluate the moral configurations of the pastors' responses to possession. For that, we must turn to the following reflection on theodicy. Also, postmodernist institutionalisation of nonrationalist tendencies may have swung too far in the pendulum swing of ideologies; as a reactionary ideology, postmodernism may have unhelpfully abandoned rationality which would have provided it balance and credibility<sup>6</sup>. Scientific discourses need not and should not be

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Logics of a Global System: A Sketch", p. 453 where he notes that while the modern paradigm gives way to postmodernism in the west, it is on the rise in Southeast Asia in the form of neo-Confucianism.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Baudrillard, "On Nihilism", p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Popper, The Open Society & Its Enemies, 5th edn; Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity", pp. 3-14. Note eg Popper's horror at the rampant growth of subjectivism and relativism.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism & Relativism, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> cf J F Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, pp. 11-14 where he calls for social reconciliation without social criticism.

<sup>5</sup> see Scott Lash, Sociology of Postmodernism, pp 100f.

<sup>6</sup> James Bell, The Cultural Contradiction of Capitalism; F Jameson, "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"; Nancy Fraser & Linda Nicholson, "Social Criticism Without Philosophy"; have all attempted to combine both postmodernist and modern ideologies - they call for the strengthening of social bonds through some rational framework:

the metanarrative in society, but they still remain as important partners in the community of narratives.

In short, the worldview/epistemology of the pastors is therefore a necessary corrective to the modern scientific view in that it retains or rediscovers the two spaces or the two worlds in which we live (which is a postmodern more than a modern stance epistemologically but not ethically as we have seen). However, we face the question of how we should live in these two worlds. Should we attempt to live in one world at a time or at the interfaces of the two worlds? Before attempting to evaluate the pastoral responses, and to help us do so, we need to consider the other theological issues at hand: theodicy and cosmology.

## 8.2 Theodicy: Evil Masked and Unmasked

Because the pastors attribute much of the world's evil to the activities of Satan and his demons, it is important for us to reflect theologically on the nature and source of evil. That evil exists in this world is both perceptible and discernible. It is this reality of evil that has been a problem in a theistic framework and the discipline of theodicy deals with just this problem.

### 8.2.1 Theodicy: Persistent Problems, Attempted Solutions

The problem for theodicy has been well-summarised by David Hume. Repeating Epicurus' old questions and referring to God, he asks,

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?<sup>1</sup>

It appears that the three sides of the propositional triangle - God is omnipotent, God is benevolent, Evil exists - cannot be fitted together into a logical triangle, thus creating a trilemma. One of the statements has to be false. No one would say

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religion for Bell, the Marxist utopia for Jameson, and feminist theory for the others.

<sup>1</sup> David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Pt 10.

that evil does not exist unless he agrees with the Hindu philosopher that evil is only maya or illusion. This leaves either a weak or a malevolent God. It is this problem that has been addressed by Christian theodocists over the centuries. Generally there have been two major arguments in Christian theology: the "free will" defence, and the "soul-making" defence. The free will defence, attributed to Augustine<sup>1</sup>, states that evil exists because of the actions of free and rational but fallible creatures. God desired to create spirit beings and man with a free will. With that freedom lay the potential for evil which was unfortunately realised. Thus Augustine believed that evil has a history since it began with the Fall<sup>2</sup>. Soul making theodicy is often attributed to Irenaeus, and is based on the premise that evil and suffering is permitted to equip us for heaven and the life to come<sup>3</sup>. Both these arguments have their modern proponents, for example, Plantinga for the free will defence, and Hick for the soul making theodicy. Others, like Swinburne, have adapted the free will defence to argue that evil is logically necessary for the existence as well as the avoidance of moral and human evil<sup>4</sup>.

Yet others have seen no necessity to believe in or defend the Christian omnipotent and all-loving God. Thus evil has been explained in terms of an indifferent God (Camus), or a mischievous God (Russell), a bad God (Jung), an incomprehensible God (Kafka), or a finitely powerful God (Kushner)<sup>5</sup>. The fault, and therefore the responsibility for evil has been attributed to God. In his The Devil, Russell has pointed out that in the Old Testament, earlier ideas attributed both good and evil to God (eg

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<sup>1</sup> see On Free Will in John Burleigh (ed), Augustine: Earlier Writings.

<sup>2</sup> see Larry Bouchard, Tragic Method & Tragic Theology, pp 52-64.

<sup>3</sup> See John Hick, "An Irenaean Theodicy" in Stephen Davis, Encountering Evil, pp. 39-52; for Irenaeus' views, see Against Heresies, Ante-Nicene Library, Vol 1, pp. 315-567.

<sup>4</sup> See Alvin Plantinga, God & Other Minds, ch 5; The Nature of Necessity, ch 9; John Hick, Evil & the God of Love, parts 3,4; Richard Swinburne, Existence of God, ch 11.

<sup>5</sup> See David Birnbaum, God and Evil: A Jewish Perspective, ch 1.

Is 45:6,7). It was only later, through Persian influence, that the Israelites began to think of an evil being, Satan, as the cause of evil in the world<sup>1</sup>. Jung considers such differentiation unhealthy, and the result of the repression of the unacceptable and bad. He therefore finds the Christian Trinity an incomplete idea and prefers the Eastern quarternity as a more complete symbol; the fourth member of Jung's quarternity is therefore the devil, who he claims to be God's lost characteristic<sup>2</sup>. In a similar vein, Alan Watts postulates that Satan is the "left hand" of God just as the Son is the right hand<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, Loomis' claim that God is "split" together with man; hence we should "come to accept even in our God the negative that until now we have invested in the Devil"<sup>4</sup>.

This attribution of evil to God has been unacceptable to many Christian theologians. Christian theology has largely identified Satan as the source, and free will as the process, by which evil exists in the world. This was the position taken by Augustine who believed in the existence of the devil and demons, but also that they have been defeated already by Christ. Demon possession strengthens this argument; thus, as Davis has pointed out, possession can also serve as a "form of theodicy"<sup>5</sup>. Many of the pastors have embraced a theodicy that points a strong hand at the devil and demons; it is a theodicy that greatly relies on charismatic demonology as we noted in chapter three.

Yet many others have sought answers for the problem of evil, not in the supernatural realm, but in the human world. A paradigm shift took place after the Enlightenment which saw the growth in materialism and secularism; hence the Devil was considered as merely a metaphor for human evil<sup>6</sup>. Evil was humanised and seen more in terms of finitude and badness rather than in its more

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Russell, The Devil, ch 5.

<sup>2</sup> C G Jung, Psychology & Religion, pp. 73-4.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Watts, Beyond Theology: The Art of Godmanship, pp. 76f.

<sup>4</sup> Earl Loomis, The Self in Pilgrimage, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Winston Davis, Magic & Exorcism in Modern Japan, p. 149.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, pp. 240-1.

radical and absolute forms as was traditionally believed. Hence Becker declares that man is evil "not because he is vicious, but because he is frightened"; he therefore suggests that evil is redeemable and that there is a ray of hope in what appears to be a pessimistic situation<sup>1</sup>. He explains further that man's innate and all-encompassing fear of death compels him to try transcending death through the adoption of dominant hero systems and symbols in the culture. It is this, according to Becker, that brings forth evil<sup>2</sup>. As an extension of this idea, other thinkers, such as Rousseau, have located evil in society; hence evil has social rather than metaphysical significance<sup>3</sup>. This brings us to the problem in evaluating the pastors' responses to possession. The scientific discourses claim that the issue is human (whether personal or social); the pastors often insist that the issue is metaphysical.

Ancient Greek tragedy sought to explore this problem through drama, and this is helpful for our reflection and evaluation of metaphysical and humanistic conceptions of evil. In Greek drama, tragedy was attributed to both *ate* (delusion sent by the gods) and *hubris* (human pride). *Ate* pointed to the exteriority of evil while *hubris* pointed to its interiority<sup>4</sup>. The Greeks were right in suggesting that evil is irreducible. On one hand there is a tension between *ate* and *hubris*. On the other hand there is a tragic collusion of which Dehl has wisely commented:

The demonic forces have a powerful ally, a fifth column within every man - the old man, the Adamic nature, the flesh, which, along with this worldly system and the devil, forms a powerful triad of evil, caricature of the Holy Trinity.<sup>5</sup>

It is therefore unhelpful and unwise to attempt to reduce evil in a simplistic manner. The dangers of such reductionism can be seen both in the discourses of the pastors as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Becker, Escape from Evil, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. xvii, 136.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, p. 215.

<sup>4</sup> Larry Bouchard, Traagic Method & Traagic Theology, ch 1.

<sup>5</sup> D G Dehl, "The Cosmocrats: Diabolism in Modern Literature" in John Montgomery (ed), Demon Possession, p. 114.

scientists.

### 8.2.2 Reductionist Approaches to Evil and their Dangers

To reduce evil, as some of the pastors do, to a kind of "pandemonism"<sup>1</sup> with a resulting demonomantic<sup>2</sup> vision of seeing demons everywhere poses serious theological problems<sup>3</sup>. Firstly, it veers towards an unChristian dualism contrary to the sovereignty of God. It also tends to deny the victory of Christ over demonic powers. Secondly it denies the freedom of choice and the consequent responsibility that God has given man. Thirdly, it denies the reality and depth of sin and the fall, and the redemptive and sanctifying work of God. Fourthly, it exaggerates the discontinuity of the spiritual from the material realm<sup>4</sup>.

Besides the theological problems, pandemonism also has serious pastoral problems. Firstly, it can breed neurosis<sup>5</sup> and thus pose a major obstacle to spiritual maturity<sup>6</sup>. Secondly, it tends to ignore, often to the "possessed" person's detriment, his real problems. It tends to downplay natural factors, causes and dynamics. Thirdly, it can also pose a serious hindrance to the development of moral maturity in that demon-obsession can blind one to more serious, and often, more real forms of evil elsewhere, in society and culture.

On the other hand, the scientific discourses on possession also pose serious theological and pastoral problems when they tend towards a reductionist approach. A dismissal of the spiritual realm altogether in the understanding of human phenomena challenges any theistic theology, let alone Christian theology.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Perry, "Theological Perspectives on Possession", p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Leech, Social God, pp. 93-4.

<sup>3</sup> see John Richards, "Spirit of Evil?", p. 24 for a helpful discussion.

<sup>4</sup> J I Packer, "Theological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement", Pt 1, pp. 17f.

<sup>5</sup> Kurt Koch, Occult Bondage & Deliverance, p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> J I Packer, "Theological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement", Pt 1, p. 19.

Moreover, the repudiation of the demonological component of this spiritual world is problematic in view of the Biblical record, not to mention the tradition of exorcism in church history, especially in the early church<sup>1</sup>. Dunn and Twelftree, in their study of exorcism in the New Testament, argue that "it would be flying in the face of the evidence and a grave abuse of the historical critical method to dispute the essential historicity of the Gospel narratives which depict Jesus as a successful exorcist"<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the "accommodation theory" that claims that Jesus was indulging in the mistaken primitive worldview of his time when he used the language of possession and exorcism, gives rise to further problems for it leads to an arbitrary and selective acceptance of portions of the New Testament and the charge that the other religious and moral teachings too were tainted by a primitive and unscientific culture. Moreover, a selective acceptance of the spiritual realm, including only the good but not the evil, as has been done by many theologians in the west who have been influenced by modern scientific and humanist thought has its own theological problems as Collins points out:

It would seem to me that the follower of Christ must also believe in the literal existence of the devil and his demonic forces. Only by the most ingenious of hermeneutical gymnastics could one accept the Bible's teaching about the reality and divinity of Christ and then reject the reality of the devil.<sup>3</sup>

No theodicy that does not take the devil and radical evil seriously is likely to be persuasive in the light of the depth and extent of evil in the world<sup>4</sup>. Psychiatrist Scott Peck has claimed that most cases (ninety five percent) of possession behaviour can be explained by natural psychodynamic processes but the remaining cases cannot be explained naturally unless we

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<sup>1</sup> see Evelyn Frost, Christian Healing, ch 4, 7; Morton Kelsey, Healing & Christianity, ch 7,8.

<sup>2</sup> James Dunn & Graham Twelftree, "Demon Possession & Exorcism in the New Testament", p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Collins, "Psychological Observations on Demonism" in John Montgomery (ed), Demon Possession, p. 238; contrast with Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol II, pp. 79-193, who accepts divine ecstasy but not demonic ecstasy.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Russell, The Devil, p. 228.

consider "subnatural" factors<sup>1</sup>.

Both an obsession with the demonic and a dismissal of the demonic amounts to a reductionist view of evil and suffering in the world. This gives rise to two dangerous errors<sup>2</sup>. Firstly, in its more deterministic forms, such reductionism can lead to the abdication of personal responsibility and the mistaken blaming of others (one's upbringing, family and social circumstances etc, or on the other hand, some demon) which or who are imagined to be the cause of suffering and evil. This is the weakness of a hyper-supernaturalist and the anti-supernaturalist orientations<sup>3</sup>. Secondly, a reductionist view leads to a myopic view of evil and leads proponents to look for evil in the wrong places, and thus miss the presence of evil where it really matters.

Thus an extreme charismatic demonology which narrows down the repertoire of radical evil to just demon possession, and an extremely naturalistic scientific view of evil as due only to badness or imperfections in individuals and society with the rejection of any consideration of radical metaphysical evil are both bound to fail in dealing with real evil. What is needed is a moving away from a myopic vision of evil to a more extensive theology of the demonic, incorporating both the Greek *ate* and *hubris*. Richards has rightly observed that "it is far more serious to fail to have a theologically adequate doctrine of evil than merely to deny a personal devil"<sup>4</sup>. To become obsessed with demons and their apparent work in individuals, as some of the pastors have done, creates several problems. Firstly, the behaviour of the possessed is more disturbed than evil. They seem to be sick rather than malevolent. The behaviour of any of the possessed described by the pastors cannot compare in depth of

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Peck, People of the Lie, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> See C S Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, p. 9 for his well-known and much quoted words: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors".

<sup>3</sup> M G Barker, "Possession & the Occult; A Psychiatrist's View", p. 248.

<sup>4</sup> John Richards, "Towards a Diocesan Exorcism Policy", p. 8.

evil to the atrocities committed in Auschwitz, or the torture centres in the world, or the behaviour of men inflamed with ethnic hatred who would throw babies up in the air and catch them on the points of their bayonets before their mothers' eyes<sup>1</sup>. But it may be argued that in the Gospels, the possessed were also similarly disturbed rather than expressing raw evil; in fact some of them were also physically sick. However the use of Scripture by the charismatics to support their demonology is rather naive and imbalanced as Packer has noted<sup>2</sup>.

The simplistic demonology of the charismatics fails to appreciate adequately the complexities, ambiguities and mysteries in the scriptural accounts of the demonic, as pointed out by writers such as Richardson and Perry. To begin with, the Old Testament does not portray the kind of demonology that many of the pastors exhibit. In fact, in its earlier parts, the Old Testament attributes both good and evil to God. It is strictly monotheistic. Where "Satan" is mentioned, it is often used as an ordinary noun (meaning, "adversarial") rather than as a proper noun<sup>3</sup>. In Job, the classic book on theodicy in the Bible, Satan is portrayed more as a functionary in Yahweh's court rather than as a diabolical adversary who has been cast out of the heavenly court. In view of this, Langton and Russell have suggested that the Jews, during their exile and the intertestamental period, imbibed the popular demonology in the surrounding regions. Because of their strict monotheistic faith, they did not accept a purely Persian type of dualism but developed a modified dualism

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<sup>1</sup> as so graphically described by F Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> J I Packer, "Theological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement", p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> It is first used with the ordinary meaning of adversary in 1 Sam 29:4 & Num 22:22. Later, in Job 1:6-12; 2:1-10 & in Zech 3:1, it is used with the definite article "ha" connoting the supernatural adversary par excellence. Only in 1 Chr 21:1 (contrast with the parallel 2 Sam 24:1) is it used as a proper noun. The transition from 2 Sam 24:1 to 1 Chr 21:1, it is argued, represents an evolution from strict monotheism to a modified dualism. See Alan Richardson (ed), A Theological Word Book of the Bible, pp. 17-8; Michael Perry, Deliverance, appendix 1.

with room for diabolical angelic beings<sup>1</sup>.

Whatever the case, in the Gospels, a different understanding of demons emerges. Jesus is portrayed, among other things, as a successful exorcist. But even in the Gospels there is some diversity among the writers as Twelftree has noted. For example, John fails to include any case of exorcism unlike Mark who fills his pages with such instances<sup>2</sup>. When we move to the Epistles, there is a silence about demons, and the language of theodicy takes a perceptible change when Paul emphasises human sin and bondage to it. He also uses more the language of "principalities and powers" rather than that of demons<sup>3</sup>. What he in fact does is to point the finger at larger and more significant evils as compared to demon possessed people. P12's assertion that exorcism is normative in the New Testament (7.2.1) is thus doubtful.

It is important for us to realise the complexity of the biblical account of the demonic, and the element of mystery in its portrayal of evil. A superficial reading with the embracing of demonomania will distract us from unmasking, identifying, and responding to other more serious and widespread evils in the

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Langton, Essentials of Demonology, pp. 220-2; Jeffrey Russell, The Prince of Darkness, ch 3.

<sup>2</sup> For John, Christ's defeat of Satan was eminently through the cross and had no place for exorcisms unlike the synoptic gospels (contrast 14:30 & 16:11 with Mk 3:22-7; Mt 12:24-9; Lk 11:15-22). While Mark's first miracle is an exorcism (1:21-8) and four of his thirteen healing accounts are exorcisms, the importance of exorcism decreases as the gospel progresses. Matthew plays down the importance of exorcism (4:24 contrast with Mk 1:32f; 3:11); also his first reference to exorcism is negative (7:22). Exorcism in Matthew serves to bolster the credentials of Jesus. Luke is the most consistent in underlining the importance of exorcism but he is also the least clear in drawing a distinction between healing and exorcism (4:38f; 13:10-7); he broadens the scope of the demonic to include sickness as a whole. See Graham Twelftree, Christ Triumphant, ch 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rom 8:38f; 1 Cor 15:24f; Col 2:8-15. "Demons" appears only in 1 Cor 10:20f. For Paul, all the powers and demons are dealt with decisively at the cross (Col 2:8-15). See also David Augsburg, Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures, p 308; the primary locus of evil in the NT is not in troubled persons but in the social and political institutions that had become idolatrous, totalistic and dehumanising in relation to their subjects (1 Cor 2:6; 15:24-6; Gal 4:3; Eph 1:19-21; 6:12; Col 1:13,16; 2:8,15,20).

human world<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, to reduce evil to human weakness and wrongdoing (as the scientific explanations, and theologies influenced by science, portray) is to be myopic to larger, transhuman evils. One only has to think of natural disasters and accidents and the extreme forms of human evil to be reminded of this.

Evil cannot thus be reduced without affecting a proper theological and pastoral response to it. It must be located in the two worlds. The biblical picture of metaphysical evil is necessary to understand evil's cosmic and transhuman proportions. But this evil is closely linked with human evil too. To reduce evil to one of these polarities will result in the fallacies discussed above. When we look at evil in this world, there are also several layers of reality which we need to consider. Evil is not only personal but also manifested in collective structures. It is both private and public. The weakness of the pastors' approach to possession is that it tends to focus on private "evil" at the expense of public evils. Evil has been "privatised". The significance of this to Christian witness becomes clearer when we realise that as evil becomes more public, religion tends to become more private<sup>2</sup>. Song has gone so far as to claim that evil is indeed a public challenge to God rather than a private enterprise<sup>3</sup>. If this is the case, then a privatised approach to evil such as an obsession with demon possession and exorcism would entail, would leave the real evils in the different levels of human community unaddressed and unchallenged. This remains a serious danger in the pastors' approach.

### 8.3 Cosmology: Embodied Spirituality and a Sacred Cosmos

A third key theological issue in our study has to do with cosmology. In cosmology our concern is to understand the true nature of the universe and to discern what reality consists of.

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn Buzzard, "Introduction" in John Montgomery, Demon Possession, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Nugent, Masks of Satan, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> C S Song, Third Eye Theology, p. 212.

Our earlier examination of the epistemological and theodical aspects leads us to consider the cosmological implications. When considering the changes in epistemological understanding that have taken place in western and modern thought, we mentioned tentatively that there is a need to reconsider more traditional cosmologies if we are to respond accurately and appropriately to phenomena such as possession behaviour. In this section, we shall explore this further. Cosmology also influences the kind of theodicy we embrace, and therefore the kind of responses we make to the presence or manifestations of evil. It is therefore essential that we look at it.

### 8.3.1 The Eclipse of a Spiritual Universe in Modern Cosmology

In considering cosmology, we need to return to the earlier Christian cosmologies. Early Christian cosmology accepted the existence of both material as well as non-material reality. In this respect, the early theologians also struggled with the problem of the relationship between these two worlds but as Thomas Torrance has pointed out, patristic theology rejected spatial notions of space when speaking of the relationship between the universe and God<sup>1</sup>. Philip Sherrard notes that patristic theology had an underlying platonic understanding that "it is perfectly possible to envisage a substance which is a unity - as consisting of more than one substance actually present in it"<sup>2</sup>. This cosmological understanding laid the foundations for the subsequent Christological, Trinitarian, and anthropological doctrines of the Church during the first few centuries.

However this cosmological view changed drastically in medieval theology. This was due largely to the introduction of Aristotelian thought into theological categories. Aristotle rejected Plato's idea of universals, and therefore also the notion of participation, that is, of one substance in another, or of the particular in the universal and vice versa<sup>3</sup>. Further, the Aristotelian idea of space as a receptacle led theologians

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Torrance, Space, Time & Incarnation, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Sherrard, The Rape of Man & Nature, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 48f.

and philosophers to think of God in a spatial manner<sup>1</sup>. Thus because the material universe occupies space-time, it was concluded that God must occupy a different space apart from time. Such notions led to the separation of the natural realm from the spiritual realm. The two worlds which existed together in patristic thinking were thus disconnected and alienated in medieval scholastic theology<sup>2</sup>. This was to have disastrous consequences in theology, philosophy, and science.

The separation of the two worlds took a further leap in Aquinas' notion of man as a complete being without the body<sup>3</sup>. Descartes extended this idea further by introducing his notions of a radical dualism between soul and body, and between mind and matter<sup>4</sup>. In Kant's thought too, there was a "radical dichotomy between phenomenon and idea" and a more decisive separation of the *mundus intelligibilis* and the *mundus sensibilis*<sup>5</sup>. Thus the two worlds were not only separated but also increasingly isolated from one another. This cosmology became the basis for the development of modern science as is evident in Francis Bacon's call for the separation of philosophy and religion:

The divorce between philosophy and science is absolute: concern for the spiritual is banished from the study of physical phenomena and all scientific knowledge must be derived from the observation of a natural world regarded as a self-subsistent entity.<sup>6</sup>

It is only a short step from this notion to the eventual eradication of a spiritual world from the cosmology of modern

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Torrance, Space, Time & Incarnation, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> cf H B Nebelsick, Circles of God, ch 3-5. The reaction to the earlier dominance of theology over science was the eventual and unfortunate divorce between the two enterprises.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man & Nature, p. 59. For detailed discussions, see T F Torrance, Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge, ch 1; Colin Brown, Christianity and Western Thought, ch 11-17.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> as seen in Kant's dissertation in 1770; Thomas Torrance, Space, Time & Incarnation, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Bacon, Advancement of Learning, II, 6, i, 24, 3; see Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man & Nature, p. 95.

science<sup>1</sup>. This has led to reductionism in modern science and attempts at demythologisation in liberal theology as we saw earlier. Such a reduced mechanistic cosmology is incompatible with the reality of what Sherrard calls a "spiritual universe"<sup>2</sup>. In his Rape of Man and Nature, Sherrard rightly makes a case against depending on the modern scientific worldview and views modern science as having originated in a "loss of memory" as well as representing a "revolt against heaven" in that it has rejected and denied a spiritual realm<sup>3</sup>. He further laments the capitulation of all disciplines, especially theology, to this scientific worldview. Earlier we noted the epistemological shortsightedness of science when it projects its discourses onto the metaphysical realm<sup>4</sup>, and also the shortsightedness of liberal theology which has embraced modern scientific epistemology. Here, we note a similar and equally serious limitation in the cosmology of modern science and liberal theology.

It is in this respect that the charismatic demonology as represented by the worldview and practices of the pastors in this study appears at first sight to be a welcome correction to the truncated cosmologies described above. This is because they reintroduce the reality of a spiritual world and therefore return to a two-worlds cosmology. However, on closer examination, we will see serious weaknesses in the way the pastors attempt to relate the two worlds. In practice, they tend to dichotomise the two worlds by trying to live in one world at a time, or emphasising the other world. The practice of "exorcising" demons and banishing them to the other world represents the same separation of the two worlds that took place in medieval theology. This is not surprising since much of charismatic

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<sup>1</sup> cf Owen Chadwick, Secularization of the European Mind, 162-3 where he describes the polarisation and conflict between science and religion which was "hypostasised, science and religion were blown up into balloon duellists, science containing all knowledge, religion containing no knowledge".

<sup>2</sup> Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man & Nature, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 98, 83.

<sup>4</sup> cf Mary Midgley's criticism of science's empirical methodology based on Humean atomism which sought to explain all reality through empirical units of experience; Wisdom, Information and Wonder, p. 186.

demonology, though apparently religious, is based on underlying secular notions. Thus charismatic demonology and practice will probably repeat history in that the two worlds, which it reintroduces, will become separated, isolated, and the other world eventually denied.

### 8.3.2 Rediscovering a Spiritual Universe: Orthodox Theology

For a more Christian cosmology, we need to go beyond charismatic theology. The Christian tradition that best contains a Christian cosmology is patristic theology, because it holds to both worlds (like the charismatics) and links these two worlds in a most helpful and realistic way (unlike the charismatics). This patristic cosmology has been preserved in Orthodox theology<sup>1</sup> and unfortunately lost in western and reformation theology as Torrance reminds us<sup>2</sup>.

Eastern Orthodox thought rejected all dualistic concepts of the cosmos, but instead sought to link the material and spiritual worlds intimately<sup>3</sup>. Orthodox cosmology was derived from its understanding of Christology which became a central concern in the history of Orthodox theology. Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God is *theanthropos* or the God-Man. This doctrine is embodied in the various Church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries and in the writing of the Greek Fathers<sup>4</sup>. According to Athanasius, "he became human that we may become divine; he revealed himself in a body that we might understand the unseen

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<sup>1</sup> a small group of theologians have already called for a return to the traditional cosmology of the Greek Fathers; see eg. Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man & Nature, pp. 17f; Michael Northcott, The New Age & Pastoral Theology, pp. 26f.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Torrance, Space, Time & Incarnation, pp. 58f; the rare exception was John Scotus Erigena along with a handful of others.

<sup>3</sup> Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Way, pp. 58-9.

<sup>4</sup> See Hans Von Campenhausen, The Fathers of the Greek Church; see also D S Wallace-Hadrill, The Greek Patristic View of Nature, for a discussion on the high view of nature shared by the Greek fathers which is related to their understanding of the Incarnation.

Father"<sup>1</sup>. Jesus was defined as having two natures, the one fully divine and the other fully human, in his one *hypostasis* or person. Thus there was one person with two natures. Jesus is thus the mediator who brings together heaven and earth. In Him the two worlds come together. As Sherrard puts it,

It is in Christ that the wall of separation between heaven and earth, the supernatural and the natural, the sacred and the profane is destroyed in the living sacrament of the divine love and presence. God's enhumanisation has not only "taken manhood into God"; it has also taken the whole created world into God, has resurrected it and transfigured it in its very depths.<sup>2</sup>

The mediatorship of the Incarnation is emphasised in all the major events of Christ's life such as his birth, baptism, transfiguration, resurrection and ascension. Writing on the final events in Christ's earthly life contemporary Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky writes,

On the cross Christ reunited the whole of the terrestrial cosmos to Paradise: for he allowed death to enter him to consume it by contact with his divinity, the darkest place on earth becomes radiant; there is no longer any accursed place. After the Resurrection the very body of Christ mocks spatial limitations, and in an integration of all that is sensible, unifies earth and heaven. By the Ascension, Christ reunites the celestial and terrestrial worlds, the angelic choirs to the human race. Finally, He who sits at the right hand to the Father introduces humanity above the angelic orders and into the Trinity itself; and these are the first fruits of cosmic deification.<sup>3</sup>

Here Lossky is reiterating what Maximus the Confessor, considered as the father of Orthodoxy, stated so clearly in his Ambiguities,

On the cross, He unites paradise, the dwelling place of the first men before the fall, with the terrestrial reality where the fallen descendants of the first Adam now dwell...Finally, like a new cosmic Adam, He presents to the Father the totality of the universe restored to unity in Him, by uniting the created to the uncreated.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. Athanasius, The Incarnation Of The Word, 54; see Tony Lane, Book of Christian Thought, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man and Nature, pp. 40-1.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Lossky, Orthodox Theology, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> St Maximus, De Ambiguis, PG, vol 91, 1308. See Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, p. 137.

This Orthodox Christology is the basis for the tradition's anthropology and spirituality. Christ is seen as a model for man. Just as two natures coexisted in the one person of Jesus, man too is the carrier of two "substances". In other words, he is a "soul-body" encompassing both worlds; according to Maximus, the body and soul are complementary and cannot exist separately<sup>1</sup>. The same idea is seen in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers who understood man as a "microcosm" who united in his "hypostatic existence" both the "intelligible" and sensible" aspects of creation<sup>2</sup>. If man is a soul-body living in two worlds, then his destiny is to perfect the unity between the two worlds; this is the underlying theme of "deification" around which Orthodox spirituality is constructed. This is best seen in the Orthodox understanding of sacrament<sup>3</sup> and the centrality of the Eucharist in Orthodox liturgy, for in the Eucharist, the two worlds come together<sup>4</sup>. This coming together of the two worlds is to be extended from man to the whole of created reality. As Meyendorff, asserts,

This reunion of heaven and earth, anticipated in the Eucharist, is the eschatological goal of the whole of creation. The angels contribute to its preparation by participating invisibly in the life of the cosmos<sup>5</sup>.

Orthodox cosmology is therefore one that sees a sacralised cosmos. It focuses on the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual worlds through the process of "perichoresis", a theological term employed in Orthodoxy to understand the Incarnation, and defined by Sherrard as the "dynamic co-

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<sup>1</sup> St Maximus, Ambiguities, 7; PG, vol 91, 1109cd.

<sup>2</sup> see John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> Wallace-Hadrill has pointed out that for the Greek Fathers, nature was sacramental; Greek Patristic View of Nature, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> One reason for the 11th century schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, apart from the "*filioque*" phrase was the use of unleavened bread in Western liturgy. The Eastern Church compared unleavened bread to a lifeless or soul-less body. Here an important point is to be noted. The Eastern Church considered the Eucharist to represent the coming together of both worlds. Hence, also their rejection of the Western Church's teaching that the elements of the Eucharist are shadowed by the reality of the other world. See John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, p. 136.

penetration of the uncreated and the created, the divine and the human"<sup>1</sup>. This perichoretic relationship between the two worlds is essential in understanding the true meaning and destiny of human beings and creation. A secular or desacralised world such as that of science and modern society, is at best a "fallen and defective state of creation"<sup>2</sup>. It is an idea foreign to the theology of the Greek Fathers<sup>3</sup> and Orthodox theologians such as Maximus, for whom:

God is the origin, intermediary state and consummation of all created things, but as acting upon things not as acted upon...he is origin as Creator, intermediary state as provident ruler, and consummation as final end. For as Scripture says, "All things are from Him and through Him, and have Him as their goal" (Rom 11:36).<sup>4</sup>

Creation thus depends on God for its existence. There is no such thing as desacralised nature for creation's destiny is to participate in God. As Meyendorff has warned, "a scientific knowledge which would ignore this ultimate meaning of creation would, therefore, be dangerously onesided"<sup>5</sup>. The Greek fathers, while taking great care not to totally identify God with creation<sup>6</sup> through their differentiation between divine essence (which is transcendent and imperceptible and therefore does not

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man & Nature, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> John Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> Origen even went as far as suggesting that planets possessed souls and that stars have rationality; (The Principles, praef.x; i.7.3.4; Contra Celsum, V.10); see Wallace-Hadrill, Greek Patristic View of Nature, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> St Maximus, Two Hundred Texts on Theology & the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God, I:10, in Palmer et al (eds), The Philokalia, II, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, p. 134.

<sup>6</sup> which would be pantheism. Though Origen's thought has influenced Orthodox theology, his notions of an eternal cosmos (see The Principles, I:2,10. Origen spoke of an eternal world of "intellects" rather than of matter) tended toward a form of pantheism and was stoutly resisted by the Greek Fathers such as Maximus who taught that creation was not co-eternal with the Creator (Four Hundred Texts on Love, IV:6, in Palmer et al (eds), Philokalia, vol 2, p. 101.) See also Wallace-Hadrill, Greek Patristic View of Nature, pp. 128f.

participate in creation) and divine "energies"<sup>1</sup> (which while being totally divine nevertheless participate in creation fully, in fact they are the very centre and *logoi* of creation), also emphasised the mutual co-existence of both worlds in an intimate perichoretic relationship.

When we come to patristic thinking on evil and the demonic, the relationship between the two worlds becomes even closer since evil was considered as part of the created order rather than the uncreated realm. There was no need to differentiate here between essence and energies, between transcendence and immanence. The Fathers recognised the existence of demonic spirits - in fact their writings mention them frequently - but they saw them not in terms of essence or nature (*physis*) but of a state or condition (*exis*) of nature<sup>2</sup>. The evil spirits were intimately connected to the wrong use of passions. The demons, "the enemies of our life", operated through the "tyranny of passions"<sup>3</sup>. Maximus himself identified evil as a fallen condition of nature and will.

Some say that there would be no evil in the created world unless there were some power outside this world dragging us towards evil. But this so-called power is in fact our neglect of the natural energies of the intellect. For those who nurture these energies always do good, never evil. If this, then, is what you too wish to do, get rid of negligence and you will drive out evil, which is the wrong use of our conceptual images of things, followed by the wrong use of the things themselves...

Since self-love is, as I have said, the origin and mother of evil, when this is eradicated all the things which derive from it are eradicated as well. For when self-love is absent, not the slightest trace or form of evil can

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<sup>1</sup> eg St Maximus, Ambiguities, PG, vol 91, 1308b; St Basil, Epistle 234 (ad Amphilochium), PG, vol 32, 869ab; St Gregory Palamas, Capita, Physica, Theologia, Moralia et Practica, 69, PG, vol 150, 1169c; St Dionysius the Areopagite, cited in V Lossky, Mystical Theology, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> V Lossky, Mystical Theology, p. 128; Orthodox Theology, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> St Theodorus the Great Ascetic, A Century of Spiritual Texts, 44, 91; in Palmer et al (eds), Philokalia, vol 2, pp. 21f.

exist in any way at all.<sup>1</sup>

The practical focus here is ethical rather than ontological. Two important points must be noted here from the patristic understanding of the demonic. Firstly, while God was totally immanent as well as transcendent in relation to creation, evil's relationship with creation was immanent, there being no place for any transcendence. The evil spirits were after all a part of the created realm. Thus the material and the spiritual worlds, as far as evil is concerned are very intimately related indeed. Secondly, evil spirits were seen as realities with which we struggled throughout our lives<sup>2</sup>. The primary image was continuous struggle and victory rather than the exorcism and eviction of the evil spirits from our world. The Fathers resisted against evil through an intensive examination of their spirituality and ethics<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the simplistic approach of driving out evil spirits from our world, as is the case in much of charismatic demonology, is to fail to grasp the reality that we live in both worlds at the same time and that evil is to be resisted and overcome through personal and social ethical reflection and action.

### 8.3.3 In Two Worlds: Without Separation or Confusion

In summary, the Greek Fathers and Orthodoxy emphasise the intimate interconnectedness and mutual co-existence of the material and spiritual worlds. The weakness of modern scientific cosmology lies in its failure to apprehend this reality. The same weakness is seen in a secularised vision of the world which has failed to realise that we live in a sacralised cosmos and that a desacralised or secular cosmos is a false and dangerous vision. It is an attempt to live in only one world. At best this

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<sup>1</sup> St Maximus, Four Hundred Texts on Love, 2:82; Various Texts on Theology, 1:33; in Palmer et al (eds), Philokalia, vol 2, pp. 79, 172.

<sup>2</sup> eg St Maximus, Two Hundred Texts on Theology, 2:79; Four Hundred Texts on Love, 2:92; 3:92 in Palmer et al (eds) Philokalia vol 2, pp. 157, 81, 98); St Theodoros the Great Ascetic, Theoretikon, in Palmer, op cit., pp. 39, 45.

<sup>3</sup> eg St Maximus, Four hundred Texts on Love, 2:13, in Palmer et al (eds), Philokalia, II, p. 67.

represents a loss of meaning for ourselves and the created order. But more seriously it represents a "diabolic" rebellion against the divine realm without relating to which we cannot exist as Sherrard has so convincingly argued<sup>1</sup>. The charismatic demonology of many of the pastors in this study is a welcome return to the two worlds. However, unlike the Greek fathers, they have failed to unite the two worlds in keeping with a proper understanding of the relationship between these two worlds. A helpful reminder would be the Christological definition by the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451:

...one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognised in two natures (*en duo phusein*), without confusion (*asugkhutos*), without change (*atreptos*), without division (*adiaretos*), without separation (*achoristos*), the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person (*prosopon*) and subsistence (*hypostasis*) not as parted or separated into two persons (*prosopa*) but one and the same Son and Only-begotten, God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ...<sup>2</sup>

If Jesus is to be a model for humankind and creation, as the Greek fathers believed, then we must bring together the two worlds, but without confusion or separation. The weakness of pantheistic cosmology is that it represents the confusion of the two worlds. The problem with the pastors' approach is the tendency to separate the two worlds. The cosmology of modern science and liberal theology is the result of such a separation to the extent of eliminating the other world altogether, or in Northcott's words, "the evacuation of God from nature and the cosmos"<sup>3</sup>. The pastors' strategy of attempting to live in one world at a time or highlighting the other world at the expense of this world represents a dangerous separation of the two worlds.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man & Nature, is an impassioned plea to return to a spiritual universe; he vigorously criticises the modern scientific worldview. see especially pp. 116f.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Bettenson (ed), Documents of the Christian Church, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Northcott, The New Age & Pastoral Theology, p. 27.

#### 8.4 Pastoral Responses to Possession: Critique and Proposal

We shall now attempt to evaluate, in the light of our previous theological reflection, the attempts of the pastors to commute between both their worlds. In chapter six, we noted several ways in which the pastors have attempted to commute between both their worlds, that is, the natural and the supernatural worlds. A few chose to define human problems mainly in the terms and language of the other world (6.2.2). While the advantage of this position is that it highlights the existence as well as the importance of this other world, its weaknesses far outweigh its usefulness. It tends to trivialise the natural and human world which runs contrary to the Christian notion of embodied human being, especially as evidenced in the Old Testament and in Orthodox theology as we have seen. As Sherrard observes, in patristic thought, the body and the soul are permanently united in man<sup>1</sup>; they cannot exist separately according to Maximus<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, their separation at death is unnatural; hence the need for future resurrection. Salvation is based not on dematerialisation, but on resurrection<sup>3</sup> and involves the coming together of the two worlds of nature and grace<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the danger of ignoring, and therefore not addressing, the real human (psychological, social, cultural factors) problems underlying possession behaviour is inherent in the approach that minimises this world. The subject is therefore often not really helped through this approach. If he seems to improve, it is often transitory or superficial, and it does not solve the real problem. It therefore has little priestly as well as prophetic usefulness in that it both fails to locate the real problem, and therefore solution, to the person's condition, and it tends to be confused and mistaken in the naming of evils and their sources; human evils are often

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man & Nature, p. 37. Irenaeus, in his Against Heresies, (V.6.1), reiterates the idea that the whole man is a being in whom the soul and the "flesh" come together in union; see Wallace-Hadrill, Greek Patristic View of Nature, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> St Maximus, Ambiguities, 7, PG, vol 91, 1109cd; see John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Way, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Vladimir Lossky, Mystical Theology, p. 126.

projected and blamed on the evil powers of the other world. In other words, it fails to take seriously the centrality of the incarnational as well as the hamartological and soteriological aspects of Christian theology.

Many other pastors chose to commute between both worlds by living in one of the worlds at any one time (6.2.3). Possession behaviour is judged either as due to natural or supernatural causes. While this approach again helpfully points to the place of the other world, its weaknesses are many too. It tends to simplistically separate the two worlds where there is no separation. It dichotomises and dissects where there should be no division. It tends to be unifocal rather than multifocal in its aetiological and dynamic understanding of possession behaviour<sup>1</sup>. It therefore fails to understand and acknowledge the complexity of human problems. It limits the usefulness of the priestly aspects of pastoral responses to possession by unhelpfully compartmentalising the diagnostic and therapeutic considerations. It also fails prophetically in that it fails to recognise the collusion of both worlds in the genesis and perpetration of evil. Its theodicy is therefore simplistic. More seriously, it separates the two worlds and is in danger of repeating the mistake of the Enlightenment: the denial of the interconnectedness of the two worlds and the reality of a sacred cosmos. Such an approach faces the danger of embracing the Cartesian separation of the two worlds and the subsequent dismissal of the other world as in modern science and thought<sup>2</sup>.

A more promising approach is that taken by those pastors who choose to focus on the interface of both worlds when responding to possession behaviour (6.2.4). It takes both worlds seriously and accepts the multifocal and complex nature of possession behaviour. Therefore diagnosis and therapy has an interdisciplinary flavour, at least in theory. Pastors cooperate with psychiatrists and doctors. However, there are several

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel & Donna Southard, "Demonizing & Mental Illness (III)", pp. 285,286.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Sherrard, Rape of Man & Nature, pp. 60-1; 69-71, 83.

weaknesses in this approach too. Firstly, the pastors tend to give greater attention to the factors associated with the other world. Demons are expelled before counselling and other help is given. A greater participation of medical and other professionals in both the diagnostic and therapeutic stages would be more helpful and useful. Also, in this approach, the pastors tend to be solely concerned with a pathological perspective of possession. If someone is seemingly possessed, it is thought that there is something wrong with the person, whether the cause is believed to be natural or supernatural, or a combination. There are two problems here. Firstly, not all possession behaviour may be pathological if we take into consideration the anthropological arguments that possession behaviour may be helpful as a homeostatic or communicative social phenomenon, thus meeting personal and communal needs (Lambek, Spring, Sow, Metraux; see 6.2.2.3). Secondly, if there is a "pathology", it tends to be individualised while the larger social and cultural foci of this "pathology" are overlooked. These two problems arise from a limitation of the dialogue on the phenomenon of possession between Christian theology and secular scientific disciplines to that between theology and medicine and psychiatry. This is not only evident in the pastors' discourse but also in many Christian discourses on possession. The perspectives and explanations from sociological and anthropological paradigms are only scarcely present, if not absent, from the pastors' reflections. It would help greatly if the pastors become more familiar with these perspectives and attempt to dialogue with them. A more meaningful interface between both worlds should take the whole gamut of human life in this world into consideration. It should also take a wider aspect of life and evil than the obvious "pathological" behaviour of disturbed people. We therefore propose an alternative way of commuting between both worlds. But before that, we will summarise here.

Our foregoing reflection suggests the fallacy of limiting all human experience in terms of only this world, but that we should

be open to parallel worlds and realities<sup>1</sup>. Further, the pastors' division of the other world into benevolent and malevolent realms is theologically more viable as well as intellectually more satisfying in keeping with the reality of radical evil in human experience. However, the pastors' attempt to commute between the two worlds has many serious problems and weaknesses in their different forms. Firstly, it tends towards a dangerous separation of the two worlds and has the potential for developing the notion of a secular world and a distant or eventually non-existent spiritual world - a process we saw in the Enlightenment and the subsequent centuries. Secondly, such a response tends towards a solely pathological and individualistic approach to possession. The absence of social anthropological thinking in the pastors' reflection is partly responsible. But this is also due to a poverty in ethical reflection and an attempt to simplistically reduce irreducible evil; in the pastors' case, evil is often reduced to the activities of evil spirits. This is a failure to accept the often irreducible and complex nature of evil in the world. It may be a short cut attempt to avoid having to really grapple and live with the radical and actual evils in the world. Our reflection on theodicy demands a more complex, extensive and interactive approach to evil than that taken by the pastors. We suggest the following model.

We propose that a proper response to possession would involve not living mainly in the other world, nor in one world at a time, nor in the borders between the two worlds, but living in both worlds simultaneously. In other words, both worlds are intimately intertwined and affect each other. This understanding is found in patristic theology, especially as preserved in Orthodoxy. In this way this world is sacralised and the other world is embodied. Since possession is attributed to evil, this model also encourages a deeper and more extensive understanding of the nature of evil in the world. Evil is not reduced to either world

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<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that some voices from physics, the modern queen of sciences, have begun to challenge the old mechanistic clockwork notion of the cosmos, on which the "one world" cosmology is based. See Paul Davies, Other Worlds, especially ch 7. Quantum physics rejects Newtonian physics which permits only one universe.

and is recognised as an inherent reality of human existence. Evil is not only expressed through individuals, and here we remember that possessed individuals are disturbed more than evil, but also through social institutions and cultural practices. Evil is therefore seen in a wider arena. The advantage of this perspective is that it helps both in the priestly and prophetic elements of the pastoral responses to possession. It will look at the whole spectrum of human life to locate the dynamics of possession. It will use all forms of therapeutic help, and it refuses to be diverted from engaging with more serious forms of evil in other theatres (eg social, economic, institutional, political) of human life. One danger to be avoided in this model is the identification of both worlds to the point of relapsing to the "one world" paradigm. This is best done by remembering the irreducibility and seriousness of radical evil, and also the Nicene and Chalcedonian Christology which brought the two worlds together without confusion or separation<sup>1</sup>.

#### 8.5 Living in Two Worlds: Pastoral Ministry and the Demonic

We shall now conclude by working out some important implications of our theoretical and theological reflections for pastoral ministry. We noted previously the irreducibility of evil as well as the intimate relationship between the two worlds of the pastors. The ensuing discussion follows our understanding of the mutual co-existence of the two worlds, and a wider and deeper perspective on evil. Our earlier reflection indicated the danger of projecting human evil onto demonic figures in the other world. It is vital that while evil cannot be easily reduced, it must be accurately named and identified in its multiple forms<sup>2</sup> if it is to be addressed adequately. In the tendency to locate evil in the demons believed to be possessing a subject, pastors may fail to

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Torrance, Space, Time & Incarnation, pp. 80-1. See also the previous discussion in 8.3.2.

<sup>2</sup> see Walter Wink, Unmasking the Powers, pp 43f where he identifies three types of demonic manifestations: outer personal possession, collective personal possession, and inner personal demonic. The first two require some form of exorcism, personal or collective; the third needs integration within the human personality.

see evil elsewhere.

#### 8.5.1 All in the Family?; Integration or Exorcism

Firstly, the evil may be due to intrapersonal dynamics. Kapferer and Yap, following Mead's notion of the two phases of self, have postulated that possession is due to the unusual predominance of the "Me" (socially determined aspect of the Self) at the expense of the "I" or ego<sup>1</sup>. Similar notions have been expressed by others. It is believed that in possession some aspect of the subject's personality which has been repressed, disowned and fragmented becomes dominant and literally possesses the person; these fragmented parts of the self are mistaken as demons<sup>2</sup>. This is not a new idea as even Plato defined sin as the rising up of a part of the soul against the whole<sup>3</sup> which is sound theology and psychology in contrast to a simplistic demonology that is too ready to put the blame on the demons. To mistake what is human for the demonic is both theologically wrong and psychologically harmful. It would leave fragmented parts of the self disowned and unredeemed and runs contrary to the healing of the whole man that Christ offers. If possession is due to the fragmentation of the self, then pastoral care should focus on integration rather than exorcism. For example, the pastor should help the subject recognise and deal with his own envy or anger rather than exorcising the "spirit of envy" or the "spirit of anger". Exorcism would only serve in the persistence of the projection mechanism, and hence the deception and illusion<sup>4</sup>. Instead, to help the subject integrate both the acceptable and unacceptable parts of himself through other modes of pastoral care, such as counselling and prayer, would help the person to resolve his

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Kapferer, Celebration of Demons, pp ix-xii; P M Yap, Possession Syndrome, pp. 127f.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Dominion, "Psychological Evaluation of the Pentecostal Movement", p. 296.

<sup>3</sup> as noted by Wayne Oates, Religious Dimension of Personality, p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Perry, "Theological Perspectives on Possession", p. 174.

inner conflicts and thus grow towards wholeness<sup>1</sup>. It is highly likely that many of the pastors, like much of charismatic exorcisms, may not be dealing with demons at all in their deliverance ministry<sup>2</sup>. In such cases, a refusal to "talk with the spirits" (5.3.E) and a persistent attempt to cast them out does not lead to a genuine and helpful dealing with the person's problems. The subject is likely to be suffering from not dealing with personal sin or emotional trauma, in which case he needs forgiveness and healing rather than exorcism. To simply exorcise may not meet the person's real needs. We note that many pastors do incorporate forgiveness and counselling in their deliverance sessions which may in fact help the subject even though exorcism may be a mistaken response, but this does not mean that the deliverance sessions as they are conducted, with exorcism as the major theme, are acceptable because of inherent dangers in exorcism which we shall see later.

On the other hand, to reduce all possession phenomena to hamartological and psychological terms is also undesirable. Integration is not always the right response; removal and expulsion may be needed in some cases<sup>3</sup>. Radical evil, often identified in Satan, is irreducible and cannot be integrated, according to Wink<sup>4</sup>. In some situations it may be necessary to

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<sup>1</sup> cf Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis & Religion, pp. 101-2 where he argues that man needs to be integrated into a unity; Abraham Maslow, Motivation & Personality, pp. 177-80 also says the same thing: healthy people are those whose inner dichotomies are resolved; Martin Buber, Images of Good and Evil takes the same position from a theological perspective - for him, man is created with two urges: passion which is evil and direction which is good. Both are necessary. This knowledge of duality is the biblical "knowledge of good and evil". When both aspects of human motivation are synthesised, man, like God, is able to transcend the duality (pp. 79-83). See also Rollo May, Love & Will, pp. 123, 137, 173.

<sup>2</sup> as noted by Scott Peck, People of the Lie, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> Graham Dow, "The Case for the Existence of Demons", p. 207; See also Robert Petitpierre, Exorcising Devils, ch 12 where he warns against uncritically accepting non-Christian views on the integration of good and evil.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Wink, Unmasking the Powers, p. 28. But even Wink falls back on the language of integration when he interprets Rev 14:10; 4:6; 15:2 as the sublimation of Satan in God's presence when "Satanic libido is turned into heavenly passion" (p. 40); see also pp. 125-6.

separate the confused fusion of the demonic and the human through exorcism<sup>1</sup>. In cases where there is a strong infiltration of the demonic in a human situation, relying solely on psychiatric or medical help may be inadequate for psychiatrists are not trained to diagnose spiritual problems<sup>2</sup>, and psychiatric intervention offers only partial solutions in such circumstances<sup>3</sup>. This does not mean that exorcism should be readily attempted for exorcism sessions are marked by the real possibility of serious abuses such as psychological manipulation, and physical harm<sup>4</sup>. Here, Orthodox understanding of an embodied spirituality and a sacred cosmos is very helpful. We live in both worlds. All phenomena have a spiritual dimension. Even if the person's problem is understood to be mainly psychological, spiritual resources can be employed in the healing of the person. In fact, the Fathers responded to the demonic through self-examination and repentance. The desert Fathers, for example, were very aware of the deep shadows within their personalities; by being aware of them and in dealing with them through prayer, they experienced integration and wholeness rather than repression and schism within themselves.

We can respond to the demons by either trying to exorcise them out of this world, or by recognising their reality and continued presence in our world and therefore resisting them continuously. In the former mode, the focus is on driving the demons back into the other world and keeping them out of this world. In this respect, the pastors' tendency to dwell at the boundaries of the two worlds and their focus on driving out the demons is unhealthy and prevents any real engagement with the evil and problems in this world. Eliade describes the primeval notion of the axis mundi or cosmic pillar which links the natural and the spirit

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<sup>1</sup> as understood in traditional societies - R L Stirrat, "Demonic Possession", p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> John Richards, "Barnsley Exorcism Case: Confusion of Thought", Church Times, 4 Apr 1975, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> as readily admitted by psychiatrist John White, "Problems and Procedures in Exorcism", p. 285.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix I for a discussion of the dangers of exorcism sessions and some possible safeguards.

worlds<sup>1</sup>. While such a paradigm is useful in sacralising the world, it is unhelpful if evil (and the divine) are only restricted to the axis mundi, cosmic centre or sacred zone for it would wrongly dichotomise the sacred and the profane. For the same reason Turner's liminal "betwixt and between" would also inaccurately reduce and restrict evil away from this world, putting the blame on chaos rather than order, and anti-structure rather than structure itself<sup>2</sup>. In reality, we normally live in both worlds, the sacred and the profane, the structural and the liminal; only rarely do we live between the worlds. Possession and exorcism are thus not helpful concepts in the normal practice of pastoral care. More helpful would be bondage and deliverance. In the latter paradigm, demons will always be here since we generally live in both worlds simultaneously<sup>3</sup>. The Christian's task is not to expel them but to resist these demonic powers. This would mean that we would have a wider perspective of evil and that we would look for human sin and evils and those places where these work in alliance with demonic powers. It also follows that we would avoid reducing evil only to the language of pathology and the individual by extending our horizons to all aspects of human collective activities, and even beyond to cosmic dimensions.

The problem with the pastors' discourses lies not only in what was said but also in what was not said. There is a general poverty of social and moral languages in the accounts of the pastors. Pastors such as P12 ("Deliverance ministry shows that evil is real") and P4 ("Demon possession expresses the reality

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<sup>1</sup> Mircea Eliade, Sacred & Profane, pp. 37f.

<sup>2</sup> As Turner himself notes (The Ritual Process, p. 107), in urban societies, liminality becomes a central goal of religion; this focus on living in liminality between the worlds produces a "split between liminality and structure" according to Browning (The Moral Context of Pastoral Care). This split is unacceptable as it leads to a neglect of the moral problems and questions in this world, which is a tendency in charismatic demonology.

<sup>3</sup> This is the understanding in Orthodox theology. See eg. V Zarine, The Foundations of Orthodox Asceticism, for an analysis of the processes by which the demonic regularly tempts human beings: through subconscious thoughts, leading to seduction and to union with the evil will. See also Vladimir Lossky, Orthodox Theology, p. 133.

of evil") show a truncated understanding of evil. The manifestations of evil are severely limited to possession behaviour. Moreover, such possession is strongly associated with involvement in competing religions and a narrow understanding of sin which tends to be limited to the realm of sexual misbehaviour and substance abuse (see P11, 12, 13 and the story of Lucy in 3.3.3.A). This reduction of evil to possession which is in turn limited to religious affiliation and sexual mores seriously hinders a broader and more accurate understanding of evil, and therefore also a more appropriate and biblical response to evil.

One helpful way of describing a theologically informed pastoral response to possession is to use the paradigm of story<sup>1</sup>. When the patient or his relatives bring the story of demon possession, what do we do with that story? We can, like many of the pastors, accept the story and share in it by performing an exorcism. But this is often unhelpful for reasons already mentioned. However, some, especially western anthropologists and pastors, suggest that it may be helpful to go along with the story because of the placebo effect and the related efficacy<sup>2</sup>. In fact some have even suggested that shamanistic exorcism may be a better alternative to psychotherapy because of its cultural consonance<sup>3</sup> and wholistic approach<sup>4</sup>. While this argument has a limited validity,

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<sup>1</sup> We are here following the responses to people's story suggested by Carolyn Bohler in "The Use of Storytelling in the Practice of Pastoral Care", pp. 63-71. For other accounts, see Charles Gerkin, The Living Human Document; Blair Robertson, "Storytelling in Pastoral Counseling", pp. 33-45; Michael Jacobs, "The Use of Story in Pastoral Care", Pt 1 & 2, 14-21; 12-17.

<sup>2</sup> John Orley, Culture & Mental Illness, p. 53; Michael Perry, "Theological Perspectives on Possession", p. 178. For the placebo effect, see Frank Jerome, Persuasion & Healing, ch 4. See also Ari Kiev, "The Study of Folk Psychiatry", p. 5 where he notes that 65%-75% of neurotic patients & 35% of schizophrenic patients improve after treatment regardless of the type of therapy. Interestingly, could the apparent improvement following charismatic exorcisms be largely due to this placebo effect?

<sup>3</sup> Vivian Garrison in Case Studies in Spirit Possession, p. 441; I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, p. 199; Raymond Prince, "Indigenous Yoruba Psychiatry", p. 288; Bert Kaplan & Dale Johnson, "Social meaning of Navaho Psychopathology & Psychotherapy", p. 215; T Maniam, "Exorcism & Psychiatric Illness", pp. 317-9.

<sup>4</sup> John Kennedy, "Nubian Zar Ceremonies", p. 193.

it is not generally acceptable firstly because it is rather patronizing in attitude. Secondly, it may give the illusion of problem resolution while the real underlying problems are not tackled. Thirdly, it diverts the attention and resources away from the real and more dangerous evils in the world.

Because of the above reasons, the pastor can choose to reject or ignore the story. This may be helpful especially if the story is brought by relatives of the subject who unconsciously want to make a scapegoat of him<sup>1</sup>. It also helps to dispel neurotic and unhealthy, and mistaken preoccupations with demons. It would allow both subject and pastor to explore more accurately the real underlying problems.

Alternatively, the pastor can choose to work with the subject in changing the story by suggesting alternative interpretations of the story. In this way, the real demonic powers and their actual activities and spheres of influence are unmasked. In other words, radical evil is accepted as real and the demonic language still utilised but the sphere of demonic activities is extended to include the larger human world. The person may not be possessed but suffering from the consequences of demonic powers at work, not necessarily directly in the individual life of the person, but perhaps also in collective spheres in family, church, nation, and society. If this is the case, the demon is not exorcised but resisted. Thus the "living simultaneously in two worlds" mode is utilised. This will help us to deal with evil not only in individual and pathological contexts but in larger social and moral contexts.

#### 8.5.2 Towards Wider Horizons: The Demonic and Society

A preoccupation with privatised evil prevents such widening of horizons leading to a myopic view of evil. This is a major weakness in the charismatic demonology of the pastors. A narrow individualised perception must be broadened to include social and

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<sup>1</sup> Possession behaviour may be the result of the victim becoming a scapegoat for the evils of the larger community; see David Augsburger, Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures, pp. 294-5.

systemic dimensions in the identification of problems and tensions. Here, the insights on possession in social anthropology will be immensely helpful. The pastors must be open to the possibility of possession behaviour as the result of oppressive and stifling social structures and expectations (Lewis) and other social stress factors<sup>1</sup>. The essential problem may not be with the person but with the collective system, be it the family, church, organisation, community, or nation. To merely help the person to release his stress (through exorcism or counselling) and therefore cope with the system is to merely help the person to adapt himself to the system without critically looking at the collective dimension. The pastor thus becomes a servant of the system, no matter how unjust, oppressive or unredeemed it is. He is merely a priest who helps the stragglers and the fragile to catch up with the demands of the system and cope with them. His prophetic role as cultural and social critic is therefore relinquished. He is a servant of the system rather than a servant of God and the Kingdom<sup>2</sup>.

It is in this light that the social anthropological insights into possession helps the pastor to unmask conflicts in the larger spheres of life. However, the pastor need not restrict himself to the "one-world" worldview of most of these discourses, for it does not mean that there is nothing demonic in these social processes responsible for producing possession behaviour in the subject. Here again the "living in two worlds" paradigm is more helpful than the "living between the worlds" paradigm. In the former, we would appreciate and recognise the spiritual matrix on which social institutions and processes are constructed.

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<sup>1</sup> I M Lewis, Ecstatic Religion; cf Erika Bourguignon, Religion, Altered States of Consciousness & Social Change, p. 327; G Carstairs & R Kapur, The Great Universe of the Kota, pp. 110-2, for evidence for the clear correlation between the incidence of possession and social oppression.

<sup>2</sup> James Logan ("Controversial Aspects of the Movement") has observed that the charismatic movement "rides on the tides of upward social and economic mobility" (p 41) thus attracting businessmen to its leadership; hence leading to an accommodation to cultural values such as success & wealth. This also inhibits protest and impedes beneficial social changes (Thomas O'Dea & Janet O'Dea Aviad, The Sociology of Religion, p. 16); in this respect, exorcism only consoles the frustrated and the deprived instead of dealing with the underlying social problems and evils.

Wink's idea of the two poles of social realities is most helpful here.

"the principalities and powers" are the inner aspects of any given manifestation of power. As the inner aspect they are the spirituality of institutions, and the "within" of corporate structures and systems, the inner essence of the outer organisations of power. As the outer aspect they are political systems, appointed officials, the "chair" of an organisation, laws - in short, all the tangible manifestations which power takes. When a particular Power becomes idolatrous, placing itself above God's purposes for the good of the whole, then the Power becomes demonic.<sup>1</sup>

If a particular social institution or cultural practice has spiritual undertones, then we must deal with both the natural as well as the spiritual dimensions together. This is not achieved by exorcising the demonic powers from these social realities but in exposing, resisting and challenging them. This has profound significance for both the diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of an adequate response to possession. It means we must look for the demonic powers in unexpected places, and having unmasked them, resist them. It means doing away with the artificial split between private and public values (and the split between the two worlds), and the preoccupation with only private values and evils produced by the rationalisation, rapid social change and pluralism of modern society<sup>2</sup>. The deliverance ministry, like any other practice of Christianity, cannot be isolated from its social and cultural context<sup>3</sup>. The charismatics, Leech complains, often lack a theology of structural sin (and evil) and tend to limit the presence of evil to possession. Their individualistic and uncritical approach often leads to a collusion with social evils and the status quo, to which they seek to help their clients to adjust<sup>4</sup>. A preoccupation with exorcism seriously limits and diverts the Church's fight against evil as Richards warns:

Any emphasis on the liberation of individuals through

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Wink, Naming the Powers, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Don Browning, Moral Context of Pastoral Care, pp. 26-1007.

<sup>3</sup> John Kavanagh, Following Christ in a Consumerist Society, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Leech, Social God, pp. 92-4

exorcism is hardly a feather in our cap, it is probably merely a puny effort at an individual level to fight what we should be fighting nationally and internationally at every level, political, social, racial, and economic.<sup>1</sup>

The search for evils in the broader social spheres is consistent with New Testament teaching for Paul did speak of "principalities" and "powers" as significant forms of evil against which the Church should engage<sup>2</sup>. Berkhof has interpreted these powers to be "structures of earthly existence" and not as fallen angels. They are evil in that they only perform half their function and therefore estrange us from the real meaning of life<sup>3</sup>. He argues that non-Christian religions promote a life in subjection to these powers but this must not lead to their condemnation as demonic (as many of the pastors do) while we should also avoid any syncretism<sup>4</sup>. In a similar way, Van den Heuvel and Caird have defined the Pauline "powers" to be depraved or demonized natural and social powers<sup>5</sup>. However while helpfully widening the context of evil<sup>6</sup>, these discourses do not satisfactorily connect the two worlds; the other world is almost insignificant. On the other hand, Wink's concept of the bipolarity of collective structures links both worlds more accurately. It takes both worlds seriously, though at times Wink himself tends to go so far as to make both poles identical that he tends to dwell only in this world<sup>7</sup>. Orthodox theology, as we saw earlier, offers a better model in its consistent portrayal of a spiritual universe, and this is most helpful in any response

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<sup>1</sup> John Richards, "The Minister & Deliverance Ministry", p. 5; cf with Franklyn Balasundaram, "The Voice & the Voices", p. 245 for a similar comment.

<sup>2</sup> see Roy Yates, "The Powers of Evil in the NT", pp. 100-3.

<sup>3</sup> H Berkhof, Christ & the Powers, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Van Den Heuvel, These Rebellious Powers; G B Caird, Principalities & Powers.

<sup>6</sup> contrast with P T O'Brien, "Principalities & Powers & Their Relationship to Structures", who in his criticism against these interpretations of the powers as too closely identified with social structures, limits them unfortunately to the individual and personal sphere.

<sup>7</sup> Unmasking the Powers, pp. 125-6; and in his suggestion that all experience is embodied experience - Naming the Powers, p. 122.

to the demonic. It avoids both the dangers of confusion and separation when we relate both worlds<sup>1</sup>.

If the powers cannot be banished through exorcism, they should be unmasked and challenged. In the Singapore context, several social realities can be identified as potential and actual playgrounds for demonic powers. The unrestrained pursuit of money is an evil that must be challenged<sup>2</sup>. It is futile to exorcise demons from individuals when the cause of their problems lie in the stress, competition, and dehumanisation that arises from lives that are designed to be merely producers of wealth and consumers of the products of this world<sup>3</sup>. The economy too can be idolised when life is ruled by an economism that judges what is economical to be good, and that which is uneconomical to be bad or evil; when one's identity is distorted to "I am because I produce" and "I am because I shop"<sup>4</sup>. While economism has promised and produced a "saturation culture"<sup>5</sup>, in its idolised form it has exacted a costly toll from individuals and societies<sup>6</sup>. Such a demonised economy may be directly or indirectly related to possession behaviour as Shusterman seems to suggest:

The Rortian non-self is indeed the ideal self for the powers governing a consumer society; a fragmented, confused self, hungrily acquiring as many new commodities as it can but lacking the unity, integrity and agency to challenge either its habits of consumption or the system which manipulates and profits from them.<sup>7</sup>

but in either case it must be engaged if we are to adequately

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<sup>1</sup> See the discussion in 8.3.2; also Thomas Torrance, Space, Time & Incarnation, pp. 80-1.

<sup>2</sup> cf Kosuke Koyama, No Handle on the Cross, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> cf with the criticism of unrestrained capitalism and the market economy in John Kavanagh, Following Christ in a Consumerist Society, pp. 150, 151; Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, ch 5.

<sup>4</sup> see Jon Woronoff, Asia's "Miracle" Economies, p. 124 where he notes the high priority given to the economy in Singapore.

<sup>5</sup> Kosuke Koyama, Three Miles an Hour God, ch 44.

<sup>6</sup> see John Andrews, "Lee's Legacy", p. 3; Ho Wing Meng, Asian Values & Modernisation, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Shusterman, "Postmodernist Aestheticism: A New Moral Philosophy?", p. 352.

challenge demonic powers.

Economism has to be challenged both on moral as well as on psychological grounds. Alatas traces the dominant theme of economic growth and prosperity in Singapore to its preoccupation with national survival since its separation from Malaysia<sup>1</sup>. He notes a compulsive focus on economic survival and suggests that the national consciousness of Singapore should explore the question, "Survival for what?" Similarly John Kavanagh warns of the danger of a mindless and idolatrous capitalistic consumerism that is anti-Christian<sup>2</sup>. McFarlane finds in capitalist society a strange paradox. He sees evil lying at the heart of the good in capitalist society where private vice, passions and selfish interests are needed to produce public good<sup>3</sup>. This painful paradox must be recognised. Singapore faces the danger of becoming a materialistic fast-paced society that consciously or unconsciously runs away from its own brokenness and frailty. The compulsive attempts to achieve material success, prosperity, and supremacy<sup>4</sup> may be an unconscious strategy to deny human weakness and frailty, disease and death, sin and suffering. Neurotic economic activity and productivity may be an unhealthy way of dealing with guilt<sup>5</sup> or anxiety<sup>6</sup>. There is a tendency in this to create idols; for modern man, his house, car and bank balance become his immortality symbols<sup>7</sup>. The need to succeed or to be seen as successful enhances the mask-wearing tendency in Singapore society. Becker argues that "man's natural and inevitable urge to deny mortality and achieve a heroic self-image

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<sup>1</sup> Syed Hussein Alatas, Modernization and Social Change, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> John Francis Kavanagh, Following Christ in a Consumerist Society, pp. 150, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Alan McFarlane, "The Root of all Evil", in David Parkin (ed) The Anthropology of Evil, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Prime Minister Lee's speech in Feb. 1990 in which he stressed the importance of excellence, of being number 1 in as many fields as possible. The Straits Times, Weekly Overseas Edition, 3 March 1990, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Becker, Escape from Evil, pp. 28, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Norman O Brown, Life Against Death, p. 272.

<sup>7</sup> Becker, Escape from Evil, p. 85.

are the root causes of human evil"<sup>1</sup>. In a similar vein Christopher Nugent writes in Masks of Satan of a "demonology of masks" and a "theology of the face"<sup>2</sup>.

Another social reality that can be easily demonised is technology. Koyama warns against the idolisation of technology<sup>3</sup> which can dehumanise us well as lead us idolatrously and superficially to attempt to manipulate God through technique. In this respect, ironically, even the revolt against technologism, such as charismatic theory and practice of demonology is, is made through technique, as is evident in the manipulative strategies often found in exorcism rituals; such a technological mindset has been criticised as a result of demonic deception by Wink<sup>4</sup>. The increasing technologisation in Singapore<sup>5</sup> has speeded up life and tended to squeeze out the human element in social transactions. This has a dehumanizing and widespread effect on life as a whole and must be thoughtfully and prayerfully challenged wherever it has been taken over by the powers.

There are also other darker sides to Singapore society which must be examined, owned and resolved; activities which tend to be neglected in the pursuit of demons and evil in possessed individuals. Storkey offers her own glimpse of Singapore's dark side<sup>6</sup>; the persistence of class structures and the poor, and the unfair treatment of foreign workers in Singapore. This observation has some truth, for example, the distribution of wealth has remained the same over the years despite the increasing prosperity of Singapore<sup>7</sup>. The structures distributing the nation's wealth have therefore been untouched and unchallenged. Moreover, stories of the abuse of foreign maids are

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<sup>1</sup> Becker, Escape from Evil, p. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Nugent, Masks of Satan, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Kosuke Koyama, Three Miles an Hour God, ch 10.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Wink, Unmasking the Powers, p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> cf the high use of mobile phones, computers, fax machines etc.

<sup>6</sup> Elaine Storkey, "Has Singapore Made It?", p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Alex Josey, Singapore, p. 118.

found periodically in the newspapers, and more commonly in the everyday informal conversations of people. There is a general lack of compassion for these foreign workers, and a lack of understanding of their predicaments among Singapore employers, even among the Christians.

Race may become another demonised social structure, with the present strengthening of ethnic boundaries. Racial prejudice, popular characterisations of the different races, insensitivity to minority concerns and cultures may all lead to serious problems and serve in the propagation of evil actions and processes.

There are other larger social and international systems that need to be considered when we think of evil and demonic powers. War, nuclear stockpiles, the destruction of the natural environment and resources, poverty, hunger, and an unfair world economic system which operates on the competitive basis of the survival of the fittest, thus threatening to reduce all of life to a matter of economics and power, are some aspects of this international system. These have to be addressed by the Church if it is to effectively challenge the demonic powers and radical evil as it exists in our world. The Church must critique all human cultures which tend to create rivals, and then, enemies and subsequently violence and war<sup>1</sup>. The culture of individualism which supports and promotes a competitive and adversarial way of life, as evident in national and international political, social, and economic life, must be challenged for its high potential for evil. Strategies and methods which are designed to create strangers, rivals and enemies must be unmasked as evil. Noddings has argued that the root of many of these evils is the neglect of human relation<sup>2</sup>. The structures and systems which reduce humanity and dehumanise people must be seriously engaged if we are to consistently and resolutely resist evil.

To summarise, we note that in responding to a possessed subject, it is helpful and necessary to have a larger view of evil powers

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<sup>1</sup> Nel Noddings, Women & Evil, pp. 188f.

<sup>2</sup> Nel Noddings, Women & Evil, p. 205.

at work. The problem may not be with the person but with the system in which he lives and works. This may have directly caused the person's problems. In such instances, it is better to unmask such demonic infiltration and challenge it rather than to exorcise it. The powers will not go away, for we live in both worlds simultaneously<sup>1</sup>; but people, either the possessed, or those around him including the exorcist, or both, can renounce their alliance with such powers working through social and cultural processes. In this way, real evil is being dealt with and the person's underlying problem is also taken care of. As Augsburger has put it:

Regardless of whether the pastoral counsellor perceives the demonic as ontologically, socially, culturally, or functionally evil, diagnosis of the oppressive state is necessary for effective pastoral psychotherapy, or general pastoral care<sup>2</sup>.

The oppressive state is often social and cultural in nature and our conscious or unconscious collusion with it must be unmasked and renounced; thus the evil is resisted.

Even if the surrounding context does not play an important role in the genesis of the subject's possession behaviour, and this is quite unlikely anyway, the exorcist must still look more carefully and frequently at the social arena to unmask the powers for the evils in society are often personified and symbolised in demonologies<sup>3</sup>. To be preoccupied with demon possession is to miss the real spiritual battles that matter and the real conflicts between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of darkness.

In all the above instances, the "living in both worlds" paradigm is the most helpful. It takes both worlds seriously. It looks for evil in all spheres of life where the demonic powers attempt to create idols. It accepts the fact that the powers will always be

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<sup>1</sup> contrast with Wink's notion of symbolic acts of social protest as an explicit rite of exorcism - Unmasking the Powers, pp. 66-7.

<sup>2</sup> David Augsburger, Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures, p. 303.

<sup>3</sup> Mansell Pattison, "Psychosocial Interpretation of Exorcism", p. 9.

around and cannot be simply exorcised out of existence. Exorcism is therefore quite inappropriate in most cases and gives a false sense of victory, change and transformation. Instead what needs to be dealt with is the unholy alliance of human sin with the demonic powers seeking to work in personal and collective structures and processes. It calls for both repentance and renunciation, which incidently are elements in the exorcism ritual which are most helpful but their importance is drowned by the exorcism metaphor which encourages a passive and deterministic attitude in the subject. Instead he should actively repent and renounce without having the issues confused, distorted and diluted. Moreover, the truth of the matter is that such repentance and renunciation is not only necessary in the part of the "possessed" but more so in all of us who are "normal" good Christians. It is also a continuous process. A "pedagogy of the oppressor" is needed through which we are taught important lessons in mediation, moderation, and sharing so that we will refrain from participating in the evils which oppress and inflict pain, separation and helplessness in individuals and communities<sup>1</sup>.

For the above reasons, it is better to speak of demonisation - bondage or sinful alliance with the demonic powers - rather than possession; and deliverance rather than exorcism. There may be the occasional instance when a subject is demonised to the extent of needing an exorcism in which case it should be carried out with all the necessary safeguards<sup>2</sup>. In most situations however, we are dealing with various degrees of alliance with evil powers. Everyone has to examine his own sin and alliance with the powers. This is the root of a prophetic ministry out of which a truly pastoral concern can be born.

### 8.5.3 Back to Christology: Some Closing Reflections

An adequate Christology was the basis for the understanding in patristic theology that we live in a spiritual universe. We have seen how such a Christology helped the Fathers to develop a

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<sup>1</sup> Nel Noddings, Women & Evil, pp. 168f.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I.

cosmology that related both worlds adequately, and this Christological reflection has helped us in our own deliberations. Here, we will conclude by drawing two more implications from such a Christology. Firstly, the cross was a better response to the demonic than exorcism<sup>1</sup>. Jesus knew that the demonic powers will always be with him for even after his temptation in the wilderness, he could not permanently drive these powers away from his life and ministry (Lk 4:13). Instead of exorcising them, he resisted them; his strategy and eventual victory was through the cross. The cross will help us to face suffering which is a primary pastoral responsibility<sup>2</sup>. One of the major weaknesses of charismatic demonology is its inability to face suffering squarely and realistically<sup>3</sup>. It often leads to an easy triumphalism that tries to sneak into Easter without having to struggle through Good Friday. Such triumphalism prevents any real incarnational solidarity with the world's genuine problems; it fails to be touched by the world's sufferings<sup>4</sup>. This leads to alienation from the real world; it is this that often needs deliverance. Instead, a practical approach, more than a theoretical one, is needed especially in the light of the suffering and evil in our world. Noddings identifies such a practical approach to evil as the feminine perspective. She criticises traditional theodicy because of its fixation on the intellectual defence of God (a masculine obsession according to her). She proposes instead the path of a morality of evil derived from the experience of oppressed women in human history. According to her, the basic conditions of evil are pain, helplessness and separation; evil is anything that induces or neglects these conditions<sup>5</sup>. While Noddings tends to simplistically dichotomise masculine and feminine approaches to evil, her arguments for becoming involved in evil and suffering rather than trying to explain evil are pertinent and eminently

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<sup>1</sup> see Alan Olson, Disguises of the Demonic, pp. 131-2.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Oden, Pastoral Theology, p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Northcott, "Charismatic Christianity in Malaysia", pp. 274-5.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Wink, "God is the Intercessor", p. 23

<sup>5</sup> Nel Noddings, Women & Evil, pp. 95f.

helpful<sup>1</sup>. The danger of a preoccupation with exorcism is that it is often more an attempt to explain evil (ie theodicy) rather than a genuine attempt to do something about it (ie Christian praxis). Even though it appears "practical", it is often merely a convenient practice influenced by multiple motivations, as we saw in the previous chapter, rather than an authentic Christian praxis which would involve a crucified, prophetic, and compassionate engagement with evil. An easy theoretical theodicy, instead, would often create more evils through the neglect of existing evils or even in the sanctioning or propagation of evil, for example, in the infliction of pain to accomplish ends just as the God of theodicy is believed to do so<sup>2</sup>.

The crucified approach also enables us to challenge the powers through "powerlessness", a method employed by Jesus himself at the cross<sup>3</sup>. This will be a welcome antidote to the unhelpful (unhealthy and sinful) obsession with power often seen in the engagement with the powers through exorcism. In her book on hospice care, Sheila Cassidy compares the carer with the women standing helplessly at the foot of Christ's cross<sup>4</sup>. The book contains an interesting series of drawings depicting the caring relationship<sup>5</sup>. In the first two pictures, the doctor and the pastor are seen with the tools of their respective trades, the pastor with the elements of the Eucharist, and the doctor with his stethoscope. In the third picture, the helper has run out of his tools but he still has his counselling skills. The final picture shows both the helper and the patient naked. The helper has run out of tools and techniques, but, in his powerlessness, he does not desert the sufferer. He stands his ground, as it were, at the foot of the cross. This provides a rather refreshing balance to the rather one-sided shamanistic miracle-worker images so prevalent in Asian society, and especially in the Singapore of wonder-men, and smart leaders and technocrats, and in the

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

<sup>2</sup> Nel Noddings, Women & Evil, p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> Sheila Cassidy, Sharing the Darkness: The Spirituality of Caring, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 61-64.

charismatic churches with their many wonder-working pastors who promise to free sufferers from their tormenting demons. The cross also points one to the need to confront one's sin and alliance with demons located in social structures<sup>1</sup>. It depends on self-examination and cultural criticism. It also points to the ultimate weapon against the powers - the new life in Christ<sup>2</sup> which will seek costly expressions of love and ethics in a world whose various dimensions are infiltrated by the powers.

An adequate Christology is thus needed. It is dangerous to dwell on a demonology without the saving balance of a Christology. Richards and Pain have both argued that the proper theological response to demon possession is not a demonology but a Christology<sup>3</sup>. Both are correct in pointing to the danger of being engulfed deeper and deeper in a demonology which does not take seriously the Lordship and victory of Christ over the demonic powers. The focus should be on Christ rather than the demons, as Barth has argued<sup>4</sup>. This is again best achieved by living in both worlds than by living between the worlds. By living in both worlds, we acknowledge our ongoing battle with the powers who are intimately associated with all the spheres of human life and therefore will not go away. Our responsibility is to expose them and renounce their power over us by submitting to the lordship of Christ. In this way we can live in both worlds and Christ can be Lord in both.

Our Christological faith is expressed through prayer. Living in two worlds and having to deal with the entrenched demonic powers leads us to the necessity of prayer, a resource which has not been adequately developed in charismatic exorcism. Such prayer will help us in our responsibility of naming and unmasking the powers; it will also help us to engage with them. The advice of

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<sup>1</sup> James Wheeler, "Deliverance Within the Total Ministry of the Church", pp. 179-80.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Yates, "The Powers of Evil in the NT", pp. 110-11.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Pain, Deliverance, pp. 17-8; John Richards, "The Ordinary Christian & Spiritual Warfare", p. 2 where he argues that the term demon-ology is a contradiction: the logical study of chaos is impossible.

<sup>4</sup> K Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol 3, p. 519.

Maximus the Confessor on dealing with the demonic is very helpful here.

The demons either tempt us themselves or arm against us those who have no fear of the Lord...But whatever line of attack they choose, let us repel them by keeping our gaze fixed on the Lord's example...get rid of negligence and you will also drive out evil, which is the wrong use of our conceptual images of things, followed by the wrong use of things...contemplation brings relief to the intellect possessed by evil spirits and frees it from the bad conscience which chokes it...since self-love is, as I have said, the origin and mother of evil, when this is eradicated all the things which derive from it are eradicated as well. For when self-love is absent, not the slightest trace or form of evil can exist in any way at all.<sup>1</sup>

Maximus' approach involves repentance from the wrong use of concepts and things, negligence, and self-love, and the contemplation of Jesus. Unlike this approach, simplistic exorcism gives us a false and easy sense of victory and attempts to dislodge the demonic powers rather than challenge our alliance with them. Prayer, on the other hand, continuously looks to Christ to judge our sins and our demonic coalitions as an ongoing process. Prayer arising from this Christological vision will help us to become aware of our own personal and corporate sins and evil. It will reassure us of God's forgiveness and thus wean us away from our fearful, defensive, and self-preserving poses from which much human evil arises. But prayer will also expose the powers entrenched in our personal and social spheres, and our own collusion with them or victimisation by them. Prayer will thus help us to repent, renounce, and challenge the powers. Our Christological perspective will remind us of Christ's victory over the powers, but also show us the cross through which this was possible<sup>2</sup>. In other words, it will help us avoid both the easy non-incarnational triumphalism characterised by much of charismatic demonology, and the frozen despair and passivity when

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<sup>1</sup> St Maximus, Four Hundred Texts on Love, 2:13, 82; Two Hundred Texts on Theology, 2:50; Various Texts, 1:33; in Philokalia, II, pp. 67, 79, 149, 172.

<sup>2</sup> Kallistos Ware, The Orthodox Way, pp. 110-11; St Chrysostom exhorts: Let none fear death, for the death of the Saviour has set us free; Christ is risen and the demons have fallen; Christ is risen and the angels rejoice.

confronted by evil that leads to either a withdrawal from life or a resigned fatalism or complicity with evil.

This crucified and victorious Christ must help us "demolish strongholds" and every pretension (2 Cor 10:3,4). This is often achieved through the prayerful and critical reflection on the human condition and human society. It must involve incarnational and redemptive involvement in the world we live in. Often, it may be a costly engagement with the powers, and if we are willing to go with Christ to the end, he might bring us to a cross, and beyond to victory. This is his way, and our imagination must be engrossed with his Kingdom rather than be led astray by false kingdoms or play foolish games in them.

#### 8.6 Summary: The Two Worlds and The Art of Unmasking Evil

The pastors' responses rightly challenge the desacralised one-world worldview of much of the scientific discourses on possession in particular, and of modern rationalistic science and theology in general. The epistemological reductionism of a materialistic scientific worldview is untenable not only in the light of biblical and traditional Christian theology, but also in view of postmodern plurality and the latest challenges even from within modern science. The other world is indeed returning with a new vengeance as seen in the rapid growth of New Age ideas and the Christian charismatic movement.

The pastors are right in pointing to two worlds. The other world also provides a place for radical transhuman evil which should not be diluted with humanistic language. However, we also noted several weaknesses in the way the pastors connected the two worlds. The two worlds were at times too neatly and unrealistically dichotomised. At other times, they were only connected at the interfaces. And sometimes, there was a preoccupation with the other world at the expense of this world. In terms of evil, while evil has its transhuman dimensions, it may be pastorally more significant to locate evil in its human dimensions. This is a major weakness of the pastors' approach. On the other hand, western theologians who have tended to humanise evil have overdone it to the extent of ignoring the other world.

To avoid these various problems, it is best to connect the two worlds by living in both worlds simultaneously. This approach has various advantages. It has a more extensive perspective of evil as inherent in the human condition, involving both personal and social dimensions. It also helps us to face our collusion with the powers from the other world through oppressive human structures. Additionally, it points us to the right response to evil: not exorcism, but exposure and resistance; since both worlds are interlinked we have to continuously engage with the members of the other world, they cannot be "wished out" of existence. Only rarely do we have to travel to the borders between both worlds to resist the demons by "casting out the spirit" through exorcism; here exorcism must be carefully engaged in with the necessary safeguards. But, often, it is a harmful procedure, and at best an inaccurate response. Firstly it may seek to remove what should be integrated in the character of the person. The "demon" in a possessed person may be a part of his personality that has taken over the whole. This part is not demonic, it is human; what is demonic is the sinful attitude of this part. What is needed here is not exorcism but repentance, acceptance and integration.

More seriously, exorcism may distract the pastor from dealing with real expressions of evil, in personal, and especially in corporate realms. It is here that we note a significant absence of social and moral discourse in the accounts of the pastors. Spiritual blindness to evil in self and society is a result of such a narrow view of evil. Evil has to be resisted in the larger spheres of this world; a pathological and individualistic perspective on possession is most unhelpful in this regard. Evil must therefore be exposed prophetically and resisted incarnately and sacrificially. Exorcism, as practised by the pastors is more a theoretical theodicy than a practical one. A true engagement with evil powers lies more in the territory of the cross. Here, insights from women thinkers such as Noddings and Cassidy are most helpful and form a corrective to the kind of responses to evil that are characterised by charismatic demonology and exorcisms - responses that are based on explanation, control and power (which Nodding attributes to masculine perspectives) rather than on compassionate engagement and powerlessness that these

women suggest. The cross represents the latter perspective and would therefore provide a theological corrective and guide to pastoral responses to possession which tend to be superficially triumphalistic.

We live in both worlds. The other world cannot be ignored. Neither can this. We must live continuously in a sacralised cosmos and must practice an embodied spirituality if we are to live in both worlds. And, the other world has many characters. It is most unhelpful and dangerous to fix our imagination mostly on the malevolent parts of this other world. Christ is a most eminent and supreme figure in this other world. Thus a Christology based on a crucified but victorious Christ, more than a demonology, will help us in responding appropriately to the presence of evil in both worlds. More importantly, in this way Christ becomes Lord of both worlds and his kingdom will be established in both.

## APPENDIX ONE

### Exorcism: Dangers and Safeguards

If a pastor strongly feels that a person is suffering from the inordinate grip of the demonic on his life, how does he go about helping the person to become free? The comments of P5 are helpful:

I suppose the problem of demon possession is like a house full of rats. It was Charles Kraft who used this analogy. What do we do with the rats? Shall we go for the rats directly and try to get rid of them one by one? Or shall we look at the house and see what in it, for example, rubbish, leftover food etc, have attracted the rats? We then remove the rubbish and the rats will eventually go away.

Does the pastor deal with the demons or with the situations in the person's life which have attracted them? For several reasons, it is better, using P5's analogy, to clean the house rather than catch the rats. There are many inherent dangers in the exorcism rituals popularly practised in charismatic circles. Exorcism is a drastic measure with its many risks; it has been described as "spiritual surgery"<sup>1</sup> and rightly so for it warns us against scalpel happy spiritual surgeons who are guilty of overkill, trying to use a bulldozer to crack a nut<sup>2</sup>. The exorcism session is usually highly charged with the dynamics of power (cf the exorcism of Tim in 3.2.2 and 4.2.3.C, and of Lucy in 3.3.3.A and 5.3.2.G4); unfortunately power is often abused<sup>3</sup> often leading to what MacNutt calls the "spiritual rape" of the subject by

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Peck, People of the Lie, pp. 222f; John Richards, Exorcism, Deliverance & Healing, p. 7: "Exorcism is to healing ministry as surgery is to medicine".

<sup>2</sup> John Richards, "The Minister & the Deliverance Ministry", p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> see Scott Peck, People of the Lie, pp. 211-2 where he relates exorcism with psychotherapy but considers exorcism dangerous because of the issue of power. Richards offers a solution by differentiating authority and power; in exorcism authority, not power, should be exercised. In practice, it is not easy to differentiate so. John Richards, Exorcism, Deliverance & Healing, p. 17.

exorcists who themselves are emotionally disturbed<sup>1</sup>. The exorcism further tends to reinforce unhealthy and mistaken notions of the magical manipulation of the other world<sup>2</sup>. Worse, as C S Lewis warns, it can give rise to both subject and exorcist, of the illusion of being changed or delivered where in reality, neither the underlying problems have been identified nor appropriate steps taken<sup>3</sup>. A further problem in relying solely on exorcism when the activities of a spirit from the other world are suspected is posed by some theologians<sup>4</sup> who have suggested departed human spirits as one possible cause of possession behaviour. If this is true, then these spirits should be ministered to rather than expelled in an antagonistic warfare mode. While Mitton and Parker's Requiem Healing has started exploring this possibility, there is a general paucity of such reflection in Christian, including evangelical and charismatic circles where such ideas are highly suspicious. Finally, the exorcism paradigm tends to focus on the "demons" rather than the human subject. It is pastorally more meaningful and appropriate to deal with the person and his life situation rather than with the "demons", many of whom are not really so anyway.

It is for the above reasons that even if an inordinate demonic presence is suspected, "cleaning the house" may be a better strategy. It takes the focus away from the demon to the person. By "starving the demonic"<sup>5</sup>, one uses ordinary spiritual and psychological processes and therefore focusing on sin more than

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<sup>1</sup> Francis MacNutt, Healing, pp. 225-6. Cf the infamous "Barnsley case" in England: The Times, London, 26 Mar 1975, p. 4, which led to an open letter written by 65 theologians led by Geoffrey Lampe & Don Cuppitt, who argued that exorcism was a dangerous and theologically incorrect procedure, and that the proper way to deal with the problem was through repentance, faith, prayer and the sacraments (The Times, 15 May 1975). The case also resulted in official studies and statements on exorcism in the major denominations in Britain.

<sup>2</sup> John Richards, Exorcism, Deliverance & Healing, p. 17; W Elwyn Davies, "Victims Become Victors", p. 306.

<sup>3</sup> see Wilkie Au, By Way of the Heart, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> eg Michael Perry, Deliverance, p. 96; James Wheeler, "Deliverance Within the Total Ministry of the Church", pp. 87-9.

<sup>5</sup> Ann Ulanov, "Psychological Reality of the Demonic", pp. 135f

the devil in dealing with possession behaviour<sup>1</sup>. In this way the focus is not on battling with evil spirits but on the deliverance of the person to loving and committed relationships<sup>2</sup>. This achieves moral as well as therapeutic results which are often lacking in simplistic exorcism procedures. As Collins points out, counselling itself is a form of exorcism, and pastorally, a more appropriate response in most cases of possession<sup>3</sup>.

However, if it is still felt that an exorcism is called for, as in some highly resistant situations where other less severe methods do not seem to help, it should be carried out carefully with certain safeguards. Peck has suggested a list of safeguards to prevent the exorcism from becoming a violation of the subject<sup>4</sup>. Firstly the individual must give his informed consent to the procedure. Many of the pastors said that they would try to get the person's cooperation and consent. However there is often a coercive element in the process when they insist that the person must convert to Christianity. At other times, when possession behaviour occurs spontaneously, such procedures are overlooked when the pastors instinctively engage in an exorcism ritual (cf the story of the Hindu girl told by P8 in 4.2.1.B; cf 5.2). It would be safer for the pastor to calm the person and attempt to talk to him subsequently to assess the situation rather than take such a drastic step, as P14 suggested in contrast to many of the other pastors. Secondly, Peck suggests that there should be an objective record kept of the session, either through audio or video recording. This again may be helpful in protecting both subject and exorcist against abuse and later litigation respectively. It may also help in subsequent counselling. Peck is right in pointing out that the greatest safeguard is love for it is only love that can help differentiate between helpful intervention from manipulative and violative actions by the exorcists. Love will also help to keep the focus

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<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Suenens, Renewal & the Powers of Darkness, pp. 31-42.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew & Dennis Linn, Deliverance Prayer, p 11.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Collins, "Psychological Observations on Demonism", p. 248.

<sup>4</sup> Scott Peck, People of the Lie, pp. 214-5.

on the person rather than on techniques, demons, and easy victories. It will concentrate on delivering the person to God rather than on winning a battle against demons<sup>1</sup>. This is sometimes best done through silence which can penetrate the pretense of the demonic rather than by noisy and nervous verbal battles as is the usual case in charismatic exorcisms<sup>2</sup>.

Additionally, exorcism sessions should always be followed by carefully and compassionately conducted counselling activities, for as Peck notes, after exorcism, the old complexes are still there, but without the old energy<sup>3</sup> (cf P4's comments: "Deliverance has to include counselling. Counselling will trace the source of the problem. Deliverance is just the removal of the evil spirit"). Here, the pastors' general lack of training in counselling is often a hindrance<sup>4</sup>. For this reason, it is important for the pastors to work closely with professional counsellors, doctors and psychiatrists. The team approach is thus important. It utilises a wide range of resources and prevents hasty decisions and abuse. It also provides a community within which the sufferer can find healing<sup>5</sup>. The deliverance teams described by the pastors in 5.3 are a good starting point though they need to include a wider range of people with differing professional qualifications, backgrounds and views if they are to be fully beneficial. The groups must move beyond the concepts of reinforcement and pedagogy to include critical and interdisciplinary functions. In this respect, it is best to have carefully thought out and adequately debated guidelines on exorcism in the church. Only two out of the sixteen pastors reported having written guidelines in their churches (P1 and P7). P1 was not willing to provide a copy of his guidelines ("it is confidential") while P7's guidelines were actually copies of his lectures on demonology. Five of the pastors claimed they had unwritten guidelines, one suspects, largely in the form of verbal

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<sup>1</sup> John Richards, Exorcism, Deliverance & Healing, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> see Scott Peck, People of the Lie, pp. 223-4.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Peck, People of the Lie, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel & Donna Southard, "Demonizing & Mental Illness III", p. 150.

<sup>5</sup> Scott Peck, People of the Lie, p. 228.

instructions. Of the remaining nine pastors who did not have any form of guidelines, five stressed that there was no need for any.

No, we don't have any guidelines, It's just a matter of common sense, balance and mature understanding...There is no need for it. It can become mechanical. We learn by doing and experience. Anyway, most deliverance principles are in the Bible (P11).

We have no guidelines. Is there a need? No. I mean, look at Jesus. He didn't write anything. The important thing is relationship. A lot of things are in the air. The Holy Spirit is at work. We must be open to him (P15).

Such sentiments tend to be naive and evasive as they prevent serious reflection and debate on the subject. Instead, producing a set of guidelines would be most useful; the process will encourage critical discussion while the product will minimise abuses and guide practice.

In short, it is often best to take an integrative rather than an exorcistic approach to possession behaviour when the problem is intrapersonal rather than demonic. Even if it is demonic, it is preferable to "clean the house" through counselling, spiritual direction, medical intervention etc, rather than to "go for the rats". A decision to conduct an exorcism should be an interdisciplinary one and should not be lightly taken; and the session must be conducted and documented carefully. It should only be done in the rare instances when the pastor has to move to the boundaries between both worlds to resist the demonic through exorcism. But then, we should normally live in both worlds rather than between the worlds as we have argued in this study.

APPENDIX TWO

DIOCESES OF SABAH & SINGAPORE  
LAY TRAINING

## MODULE 13

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# HOW TO PRAY FOR DELIVERANCE

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1. What is deliverance?
2. What are demons?
3. How do people come under demonic influence?
4. When is deliverance needed?
5. How to prepare the church for deliverance
6. How to prepare yourself to minister deliverance
7. How to prepare the counsellee for deliverance
8. How to conduct the deliverance
9. How to deal with common problems
10. How to help the counsellee to remain free

## LESSON 1: WHAT IS DELIVERANCE?

### 1. THE MEANING – To set free from Satan's control Col 1:13

Degree of control	Characteristics	Remedy
Obsession	Lusts, addictions, or being trapped in any form of bad habits.	Simple Deliverance
Oppression	Living in constant fear or gloom; negative outlook towards life.	Simple Deliverance
Possession	Loses control of one's own faculties; being 'taken-over' by demonic powers	Solemn Deliverance (Exorcism)

### 2. THE BASIS

#### 2.1 Jesus' victory on the cross:

- out of death into life Jn 5:24
- out of slavery to sin into freedom from sin Rom 6:6-7; I Jn 3:8
- out of fear into liberty Heb 2:14-15
- out of Satan's power into God's kingdom Acts 26:18

- #### 2.2 The "PhD" ministry – Preaching the gospel, healing and deliverance are inter-related, and must be seen as part and parcel of Jesus' ministry. This is the pattern for the ministry of the Church today. Mk 6:7-13; Lk 7:21,22

### 3. THE MINISTRY Lk 4:18,19

- #### 3.1 Releasing – Involves breaking Satan's hold on people. Jesus has won the war. Christians are to do the 'mopping-up operations' Rom 16:20
- #### 3.2 Receiving – Involves helping people receive and enthrone Christ as Lord in their lives Mt 12:43-45
- #### 3.3 Rejoicing – Involves helping people live in the joy of the Lord and experiencing freedom, victory and abundant life Phil 4:4-8

### 4. MISCONCEPTIONS

- #### 4.1 Demons everywhere – amplifying demonic activity unnecessarily.
- #### 4.2 Demons nowhere – disbelieving and discounting demonic activity
- taking the 'd' out of the devil
  - disbelieving in a real and personal devil

### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

Read either *Spiritual Warfare* by Michael Harper or *Hidden Warfare* by David Watson.

## LESSON 2: WHAT ARE DEMONS?

### 1. DEMONS ARE FALLEN ANGELS

- |       |  |                    |
|-------|--|--------------------|
| 1.1   | Satan was created an archangel, also called devil, Lucifer   | Ezek 28:12-19      |
| 1.1.1 | Perfect and beautiful  | Ezek 28:12         |
| 1.1.2 | Powerful   | Ezek 28:14; Jude 9 |
| 1.1.3 | Personal and real – viz personal names, character, acts.   |                    |
| 1.2   | Demons are Satan's angels who were cast out together with him from heaven (Rev 12:4, 7-10,12) because of |                    |
| 1.2.1 | Sin, unrighteousness   | Ezek 28:15,16,18   |
| 1.2.2 | Pride  | Ezek 28:17         |
| 1.2.3 | Rebellion – wants to be God  | Is 14:12-15        |

### 2. DEMONS ARE EVIL SPIRITS

- |     |                              |                      |
|-----|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2.1 | Organized under Satan        | Matt 12:26; Eph 6:12 |
| 2.2 | Personalities without bodies |                      |
| 2.3 | Evil, wicked                 | Mt 12:45             |
| 2.4 | Unclean                      | Mk 1:26,17           |
| 2.5 | Liars/deceivers              | Jn 8:44; 2 Cor 11:14 |
| 2.6 | Murderers                    | Jn 8:44              |
| 2.7 | Powerful                     | Lk 8:29              |
| 2.8 | Numerous                     | Mk 5:8-9             |

### 3. DEMONS OPPOSE THE WORK OF GOD – (Satan means adversary)

- |       |                           |   |
|-------|---------------------------|---|
| 3.1   | In creation               |   |
| 3.1.1 | Destroy                   | Job 1:8-12; 2:1-7                         |
| 3.1.2 | Tempt                     | Gen. 3:1-7                                |
| 3.1.3 | Possess                   | Lk 8:27                                   |
| 3.2   | In redemption             |   |
| 3.2.1 | Oppose prayer             | Dan 10:10-13,20                           |
| 3.2.2 | Fight against saints      | Rom 8:38,39; 1 Pet 5:8                    |
| 3.2.3 | Blind people to the truth | Mt 16:21-23; 2 Cor 4:4;<br>2 Cor 11:13-15 |

### 4. DEMONS ARE DEFEATED FOES

- |     |  |                   |
|-----|--|-------------------|
| 4.1 | Jesus has destroyed the works of the devil                     | 1 Jn 3:8          |
| 4.2 | Jesus has rendered the devil powerless                         | Heb 2:14; Mk 1:27 |
| 4.3 | Jesus has triumphed over spiritual rulers and authorities      | Col 2:15          |
| 4.4 | Jesus has delegated to His disciples the authority over demons | Mt 10:1; Lk 9:1   |

#### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

List the names by which Satan has been called in the Bible and in your discussion try to learn, from the names, the ways in which he attacks us.

## LESSON 3: HOW DO PEOPLE COME UNDER DEMONIC INFLUENCE?

### 1. SATAN OR DEMON WORSHIP

### 2. DEDICATION TO THE GODS

2.1 Offering of the child to obtain healing and other benefits

2.2 Writing the spirit's name on the child's back/shirt

2.3 Recording of the child's name in the temple

### 3. IDOL WORSHIP

3.1 Idol worship is forsaking God – e.g. drinking “Fu-Shui” Deut 32:15-18

3.2 Idol worship involves fellowship with demons –  
e.g. eating food offered to idols 1 Cor 10:20, 21

3.3 Idol worship is a curse Ex 20:5

### 4. WITCHCRAFT/OCCULT

4.1 Biblical examples Lev 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut 18:10-11

4.2 Modern examples: horoscopes, clairvoyance, fortune telling, spirit of the coin, ouija board, astrology, palmistry, “Feng-shui”, consulting mediums, bomohs, initiation ceremonies (secret societies, Freemasonry)

### 5. PSYCHIC EXPERIENCES

5.1 Transcendental meditation (TM), Yoga and other forms of non-Christian meditation where the mind is left ‘blank’. Demons then enter this void.

5.2 ESP, Mind over Matter

5.3 Drugs – e.g. Hallucinogens, mind-altering drugs

### 6. HABITUAL SINS

6.1 Sexual sins

6.2 Addiction

6.3 Unforgiveness

6.4 Stubbornness and unrepentant spirit, pride, greed

### 7. UNCONTROLLED EMOTIONS

7.1 Frights and fears

7.2 Anger, jealousy, hatred Jas 3:14-16

### 8. WRONG TEACHING

8.1 Wrong understanding of the Lord Acts 8:18-24; Col 2:16-23

8.2 Deceived by doctrines of demons 1 Tim 4:1-3

### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

Prayerfully consider whether you have been involved in the above areas before.

If so, repent and seek God's forgiveness and renounce all known activities or interests.

## LESSON 4: WHEN IS DELIVERANCE NEEDED?

1. **WHEN POSSESSED:** loses control of normal faculties and will – eg. uncontrolled gestures, speaking in another voice, trance, unlearned kungfu manifestations.
  
2. **WHEN OPPRESSED:** living in a spiritual gloom
  - 2.1 Beset by fear – of being possessed, of mediums, of demonized people, of death
  - 2.2 Seeing things, shadows; hearing voices; nightmares of corpses, demons
  - 2.3 Fear of spiritual/demonic retribution
  - 2.4 Depression
  - 2.5 Some sicknesses Lk 13:10-13,16
  
3. **WHEN OBSESSED:** caught in a trap, addicted
  - 3.1 Sexual sins
  - 3.2 Addiction – eg. drugs, smoking, drinking
  - 3.3 Excessive cleanliness or dirtiness
  - 3.4 Paranoia
  - 3.5 Guilt – including unforgiveness
  - 3.6 Hopelessness – through failures, inferiority complex
  - 3.7 Uncontrolled emotions – ruled by emotions
  
4. **AT SPECIAL TIMES:**
  - 4.1 At Baptism
  - 4.2 When receiving the Holy Spirit
  - 4.3 At times of personal renewal: crucify the flesh Gal 5:24; Col 3:5, 8  
resist the devil Jas 4:7

**WARNING:** Do not go “Witch-Hunting.”

### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

With reference to Acts 16:16-34 note the way Paul exercised the gift of discernment and his wisdom in handling the situation.

- (a) How did he discern the need for deliverance?
- (b) How did he decide the timing for deliverance?

## LESSON 5: HOW TO PREPARE THE CHURCH FOR DELIVERANCE

1. UNDERSTAND OUR MISSION Mt 16:18,19
    - 1.1 In the Old Testament, the children of Israel were to destroy the works of the devil completely
      - 1.1.1 Destroy the idols Ex 23:24; Num 33:50-53; Deut 7:5
      - 1.1.2 Witchcraft and occult practices forbidden Deut 18:9-13
      - 1.1.3 Even Judaistic idols were destroyed Num 21:6-9;  
e.g. the bronze serpent II Kings 18:4
    - 1.2 In the New Testament, Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil – 1 Jn 3:8; Mt 12:28
      - 1.2.1 By overcoming Satan with the Word Mt 4:1-11
      - 1.2.2 By casting out unclean spirits Mk 1:21-28
      - 1.2.3 By setting people free from the bondage of Satan Lk 13:11-13,16
    - 1.3 Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel, heal the sick and cast out demons Mk 3:14,15; 16:15-18; Lk 9:1,2  
Deliverance is to be exercised in conjunction with evangelism and healing.
      - 1.3.1 Philip Acts 8:4-8
      - 1.3.2 Paul Acts 16:16-18; 19:11-12
  2. CHOOSE THE TEAM: team members should be
    - 2.1 Mature: not new Christians
    - 2.2 Spirit-filled: endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit especially discernment of spirits, Word of knowledge, Word of wisdom
    - 2.3 Ready: spiritually prepared and right with God and man
    - 2.4 Stable: mentally and psychologically
    - 2.5 Available: prepared to spend extended time in ministry
    - 2.6 Submissive: working towards unity of spirit in the team
  3. MOBILIZE FOR PRAYER
    - 3.1 Inform key leaders – e.g. Pastor, Elders, Home Cell Group Leaders
    - 3.2 Activate prayer support group – e.g. prayer chain, intercessions
    - 3.3 Organise a prayer team at the place of ministry. Others can pray at home, individually or in groups
    - 3.4 If possible, pray with fasting
    - 3.5 Be open to the Holy Spirit's leading for the ministry. Communicate with the ministry team what the Holy Spirit reveals
  4. ORGANIZE A CARING COMMUNITY
    - 4.1 For the counsellee deliverance is a traumatic and tiring experience
    - 4.2 He needs love, care, guidance, patient support and to be integrated into the church
- ASSIGNMENT:
1. Ask mature people with experiences of deliverance ministry to testify about it.
  2. Encourage teaching or Bible study programme on the subject of 'Deliverance'.

## LESSON 6: HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF TO MINISTER DELIVERANCE

### 1. WHAT YOU MUST KNOW

- |       |  |                       |
|-------|--|-----------------------|
| 1.1   | Spiritual realities: forces in rebellion against God |                       |
| 1.1.1 | Satan and his schemes                                | Eph 6:11,12           |
| 1.1.2 | Kingdom of darkness                                  | Col 1:13              |
| 1.1.3 | World under power of Satan                           | 1 Jn 5:19             |
| 1.2   | Christ's triumph over Satan:                         |                       |
| 1.2.1 | His purpose  | 1 Jn 3:8              |
| 1.2.2 | His victory  | Phil 2:9-11; Col 2:15 |
| 1.3   | Your authority                                       |                       |
| 1.3.1 | To bind  | Mt 16:19              |
| 1.3.2 | To tread upon  | Lk 10:17-19           |
| 1.3.3 | To cast out  | Mk 16:17              |
| 1.4   | Your weapons   |                       |
| 1.4.1 | Prayer   | Mk 9:29               |
| 1.4.2 | Praise   | 2 Chron 20:21-22      |
| 1.4.3 | Name of Jesus  | Phil 2:10; Acts 16:18 |
| 1.4.4 | The Word   | Acts 8:4-8; Eph. 6:17 |
| 1.4.5 | Blood of Jesus                                       | Rev 12:11             |
| 1.4.6 | Testimony  | Rev 12:11             |

### 2. WHAT YOU MUST DO

- |     |  |                       |
|-----|--|-----------------------|
| 2.1 | Submit to God,                         | Jas 4:7               |
| 2.2 | Confess all known sins                 | Jas 5:16; Prov. 28:13 |
| 2.3 | Fast and pray                          | Mk 9:29               |
| 2.4 | Depend on the Holy Spirit              | Acts 5:1-10; 16:16-18 |
| 2.5 | Know your scriptures                   | Mt 4:3-11             |
| 2.6 | Be willing to give time                | Lk 4:40-42            |
| 2.7 | Beware of spiritual pride              |                       |
| 2.8 | Seek prayer support of other believers |                       |

### 3. WHAT YOU MUST NOT DO

- |     |  |               |
|-----|--|---------------|
| 3.1 | Don't rejoice that spirits are subject to you  | Lk 10:17-20   |
| 3.2 | Don't do the work of the Lord with ulterior motives  | Mt 7:21-23    |
| 3.3 | Don't meddle with the spirits unless you have the authority of Christ                      | Acts 19:13-17 |
| 3.4 | Don't seek for the spirits, they'll manifest when there is the presence of the Lord anyway | Lk 8:28       |

### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

Study Mark 5:1-20. What encouragement does the passage give us in deliverance ministry?

## LESSON 7: HOW TO PREPARE THE COUNSELLEE FOR DELIVERANCE

Help counsellee:

### 1. COME TO JESUS

- 1.1 Talk about his problems and need for Jesus
- 1.2 Surrender the situation to Jesus
- 1.3 Receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour
- 1.4 Think about Jesus alone: focus on Him – on the Cross  
on the Throne 1 Jn 3:8  
Col 1:13-14; 2:15
- 1.5 Call on the Name of Jesus Phil 2:9-11

### 2. FORSAKE SINS

- 2.1 Pride: be humble Jas 4:10; 1 Pet 5:6
- 2.2 Unforgiveness: be forgiving Mt. 18:32-35
- 2.3 Specific sins: be honest 1 Jn 1:8,9

### 3. RENOUNCE THE DEVIL (refer to Lesson 3)

- 3.1 Religious bondage
- 3.2 Occult and witchcraft
- 3.3 Psychic experiences
- 3.4 Habitual sin
- 3.5 False doctrine

### 4. SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY OF

- 4.1 Jesus Phil 2:10,11
- 4.2 The Word Prov 30:5, Is 40:8; Heb 1:3
- 4.3 God's ministers Acts 20:28-32
  - 4.3.1 Trust your counsellor
  - 4.3.2 Confide in him
  - 4.3.3 Obey his counsel and co-operate with him

### 5. CHECK ATTITUDE

- 5.1 True repentance
- 5.2 Real desire to be free
- 5.3 Willingness to do what God requires

### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

Differentiate between the TRUST the counsellee should have in you and the DEPENDENCE he should have on Christ.

## LESSON 8: HOW TO CONDUCT THE DELIVERANCE

### 1. OBTAIN “HOME-GROUND” ADVANTAGE

- 1.1 Church, prayer room, ministry or counselling rooms.
- 1.2 A suitable Christian home.
- 1.3 A private place without non-Christian on-lookers and where the ministry team and prayer teams are comfortable.
- 1.4 A place where drinks, tissue, mop, pail and other necessary equipment can be readily available.

### 2. CONTROL THE TIME

- 2.1 If possible, make the appointment to the ministry team's advantage.
- 2.2 Set a time frame – e.g. 2 hours per session. Make another appointment if necessary.

### 3. CAST IT OUT! (This section assumes that the counsellor has been prepared. See Lesson 7)

A suggested procedure:

- Praise and worship. Sing in the Spirit.
- Pray for God's protection over counsellor. Pray in tongues.
- Discern and identify the controlling spirit(s).
- Command the spirit not to harm the counsellor.
- Command it to leave in Jesus' Name. Use personal pronouns 'I' or 'we'. Acts 16:18.  
No need to shout. Exert your authority.
- Keep on at it – Lk 8:29 (Gk. – had been commanding).
- If demon is stubborn, ask it for its name. Then command it to leave by name.
- If still stubborn continue praying in tongues and worship the Lord.
- Persevere. Christ has obtained the victory.
- Build faith in the counsellor. He can hear you though he cannot respond.  
Call him by his real name. He can co-operate and command the demon to leave using his thoughts.
- Discern whether the demon has left. If counsellor is rational, ask him – he may know.

### 4. IF PROBLEM PERSISTS, REFER TO GUIDELINES IN LESSON 9 AND APPLY AS APPROPRIATE

### 5. HELP COUNSELLOR RECOVER

- 5.1 Lots of love and assurance
- 5.2 A hot drink or blanket
- 5.3 A place to rest and sleep
- 5.4 A suitable counsellor to follow-up

### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

Try to learn from and participate in an actual deliverance under the guidance of experienced leaders.

## LESSON 9: HOW TO DEAL WITH COMMON PROBLEMS

### 1. STUBBORNNESS

- 1.1 The key to successful expulsion of demons is prayer and fasting Mk 9:29
- 1.2 It may be necessary for counsellee to confess or renounce before the minister Jas 5:16;  
Prov 28:13
- 1.2.1 Confession involves willingness and sincerity, never by force or coercion Lk 4:34
- 1.2.2 Renunciation involves destroying books, idols, charms etc that are an abomination to the Lord Deut 7:23, 26
- 1.3 Pray for wisdom and discernment to identify 'controlling' spirits Rom 8:15  
 e.g. spirit of bondage Lk 13:11  
 spirit of infirmity 1 Sam 28:7,8  
 familiar spirit 1 Jn 4:3  
 anti-christ spirit
- 1.4 Persist e.g. Jesus had been commanding .... Lk 8:29-30

### 2. VIOLENT MANIFESTATIONS

- 2.1 The devil tries to inflict harm and fear, create doubt and deception through such manifestations like vomiting, coughing, mutilating, showing unusual strength Mk 5:1-13  
 e.g. Gerasene demoniac
- 2.2 Can be subdued by:
- 2.2.1 Word of authority and command Mt 12:29; 16:19; Mk 5:8
- 2.2.2 The Blood of Jesus Rev 12:11
- 2.2.3 Singing/praying in the spirit 1 Cor 14:14-15; Eph 6:18

### 3. BLASPHEMY AND ACCUSATION

- 3.1 It is Satan's nature to blaspheme against God and accuse and condemn believers. Therefore do not be alarmed by it! Rev 13:1, 5-6; 12:10
- 3.2 Overcome this by
- 3.2.1 Worshipping Jesus and exalting His Name Phil 2:9-11
- 3.2.2 Confessing your own sins to God and submitting to Him Jas 4:7; 1 Jn 1:9
- 3.2.3 Binding the power of evil, loose praise & worship

### 4. FEAR

- 4.1 Of retribution and other consequences Acts 19:16
- 4.2 Demons cannot harm if counsellee submits to and trusts Jesus
- 4.2.1 Demons fear the Name of Jesus Acts 19:15
- 4.2.2 Jesus has overcome them all 1 Jn 4:4; 2 Kings 6:16

### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

- Share experiences of problems in deliverance and how they have been overcome.
- Fast and pray regularly as a spiritual discipline. You don't have to wait for a crisis before you do so!

## LESSON 10: HOW TO HELP THE COUNSELLEE TO REMAIN FREE

1. PRAY FOR THE HEALING OF THE WHOLE PERSON 1 Thess 5:23
  
2. PRAY FOR THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
  
3. PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD Eph 6:10-20
  - Belt of truth
  - Breastplate of righteousness
  - Shoes of the gospel of peace
  - Shield of faith
  - Helmet of salvation
  - Sword of the Spirit
  
4. FEED UPON GOD'S WORD
  - 4.1 Scripture memorisation
  - 4.2 Consistent and systematic reading
  - 4.3 Bible study group
  
5. JOIN THE CHURCH
  - 5.1 For encouragement Heb 10:24-25
  - 5.2 For strengthening in faith Rom 10:17; Mk 4:24
  - 5.3 For cultivating right relationships Phil 4:8; Rom 12:2
  
6. KEEP YOURSELF FREE
  - 6.1 From sins – pursue holiness 1 Cor 6:19-20; Heb 12:14
  - 6.2 From past practices and influences e.g. temple visits 2 Cor 6:14
  - 6.3 From complacency – be vigilant 1 Pet 5:8
  
7. CLAIM PROTECTION AGAINST AN 'EVIL' HOME OR WORK ENVIRONMENT
  
8. MAKE JESUS CENTRAL Jn 12:31-32

### ■ ASSIGNMENT:

What does the confession "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3) mean in practice and how can a counsellor be helped by it? How can the counsellor resist the devil (Jas 5:7; 1 Pet 5:9) in order to remain free?

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